



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

αwakenings

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries ::::: September 2017 :::::



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Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery

“To what am I to compare this generation and what is it like? It is like children seated in the marketplaces who addressing the others say: ‘We fluted for you, but you would not dance; we wailed, but you would not cry.’ For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and you say: ‘He has a demon!’ The son of humanity came, eating and drinking, and you say: ‘Look! A person who is a glutton and drunkard, a chum of tax collectors and sinners! But Wisdom was vindicated by her children.’” (Q 7:31-35)

Companion Texts:

Matthew 11:16-19: To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

‘We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.’

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

Luke 7:31-35: “Jesus went on to say, ‘To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other:

“We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not cry.”

‘For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, “He has a demon.” The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, “Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” But wisdom is proved right by all her children.’”

This month’s saying is one of my favorites. Let’s dive right in.

Market Places

One of the key images in this saying is “the market-place.” In Ancient Greece, the agora, a “gathering place” or assembly,

” was the center for city politics, sport, religion, and art.

Easton’s Dictionary tells us further that the agora was “any place of public resort, and hence a public place or broad street (Matt. 11:16; 20:3), as well as a forum or market-place proper, where goods were exposed for sale, and where public assemblies and trials were held (Acts 16:19; 17:17). This word occurs in the Old Testament only in Ezekiel 27:13. In early times markets were held at the gates of cities, where commodities were exposed for sale (2 Kings 7:18). In large towns the sale of particular articles seems to have been confined to certain streets, as we may infer from such expressions as ‘the bakers’ street’ (Jer. 37:21), and from the circumstance that in the time of Josephus the valley between Mounts Zion and Moriah was called the Tyropoeon or the ‘valley of the cheesemakers.’”

So in 1st Century Jewish culture, the agora or marketplace was where social, political and economic life happened. When Jesus refers to the marketplace, he is describing an civic gathering.

This Generation

I hear some frustration in this saying. Both John the Baptist and Jesus had cast before the imaginations of their generation a vision of a society that was very different than the society they lived in. They weren’t simply waiting for Rome to collapse before reorganizing; they were working toward a new social order, which Jesus referred to as the “Empire” of God.

In God’s order, people took responsibility for taking care of people. And God’s order was a new social structure subversively seated in the shell of the old Imperial order. God’s order primarily focused on the local scene rather than the entire Empire, and offered a new day for local laborers (see Matthew’s parable in Matthew 20:1-16).

Their vision involved resource sharing, food distribution, wealth redistribution, and care for the sick. It was a society centered in solidarity, interconnectedness, and interdependence. The point I want you to focus on most this week is that God’s “empire” was not a future state waiting for Rome to fall or Jerusalem to

cont’d on page 3

This Generation and the Children of Wisdom

(Being awake to today’s Liberation movements.)

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

“Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.”

– Jeremiah;
Jeremiah 22:3

Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

"The blasphemy resulting from bad apologetics will always be pardonable . . . What is not pardonable is using theology to turn real human liberation into something odious. The real sin against the Holy Spirit is refusing to recognize, with 'theological' joy, some concrete liberation that is taking place before one's very eyes."

Juan Luis Segundo
Capitalism Versus Socialism: Crux Theologica



***This Generation...* cont'd from page 2**

be liberated. It had begun already, while the current power structure existed, to help the very people being exploited. It presented people caring for people in place of hierarchical institutions. It showed people a means, a way, to take care of each other.

And yet, neither John, nor Jesus, nor their followers could awaken the larger portions of their lethargic society who seemed to be waiting for something big. They were piping and singing and yet the largest sectors of their society would not dance, and they would not cry in response to the children's wailing. They were asleep. Passive. Complicit. Remember, this was a time when Jesus' followers and John's followers were, although sizable, still a minority within their larger Jewish communities. We'll explore further in next month's saying why Jesus' group of followers remained smaller.

The Asceticism of John

Asceticism is a lifestyle of abstinence, temperance, and withdrawal. An ascetic

person doesn't participate in luxury or simple pleasures. Luke seems to hint that John's asceticism was rebellion against the Priestly aristocracy to which his father belonged.

John chose a version of Judaism that rejected economic exploitation of the poor in the name of YHWH. And yet he was accused by the religiously wealthy and elite of having "a demon."

Jesus the Socialite

Jesus, on the other hand, did not choose the wilderness of the countryside. He chose the larger city metropolises of Galilee. He blessed the poor and pronounced judgment on the rich. (Luke 6:20, 24). Luke portrays Jesus proclaiming thirteen woes (or curses) on that group. Some scholars attribute the origin of the woe oracle to the cultic practices of curses (see Deuteronomy 27:15-26). The book in the Hebrew scriptures that holds the record for "woes" is Ezekiel and it only includes six.

As we considered last month, the wealthy tax collectors responded to

John and to Jesus and Jesus embraced and welcomed them. Jesus includes a tax collector among his disciples and after Zacchaeus repents of stealing and promises to redistribute his wealth, Jesus says, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9).

The tax collectors like Zacchaeus, whom the *religious* wealthy labelled as "sinners," shared the *same* economic class with them. The religiously wealthy and the tax collectors differences were in their feelings toward Hellenism and its influence in Judaism, but economically, *they were very much the same*. The well-to-do more fundamentalist rich regarded themselves as morally superior to those who were listening and responding to John and Jesus. They gathered around Jesus and he shared bread and wine with them. Yet his only reward was that those who saw themselves as superior to that crowd viewed him as a glutton, a drunk, and a chum of tax collectors and sinners. This couldn't have been said about John. But it was said about Jesus.

Asleep

A meme came across one of my news feeds last year that I think summed up the scenario nicely. It stated, "1% control the world. 4% are sellout puppets. 90% are asleep. 5% know and are trying to wake up the 90%. The 1% doesn't want the 5% waking up the 90%." If we were to view 1st Century Galilee through the lens of those categories, Jesus would certainly have been a part of the 5% calling for nonviolent resistance to Roman and Jewish oppression of the poor, and for a just distribution of food and resources. Our sayings last week and this week teach us that the religious authorities refused to respond positively to John and Jesus, and instead undermined their influence in order to keep the "90%" asleep.

Sophia's Children

Just as a tree is known by its fruit, "Wisdom is vindicated by her children." I love the feminine imagery used for wisdom in this week's saying.

In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures), the Greek word for wisdom in Proverbs 8 is "Sophia." Feminine imagery for wisdom has an

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This Generation... cont'd from page 3

intriguing history in Hellenistic Judaism. Philo of Alexandria was a philosopher and a contemporary of Jesus of Nazareth who lived from 25 BCE to 50 CE. As a Hellenistic Jew, Philo attempted to harmonize Platonic philosophy with Judaism. He used the Greek word *logos* to represent *sophia* (or wisdom), and in the gospel of John, this became the word used to describe Divine Wisdom and the mysterious form of a pre-existent Christ. *Sophia* has a long history with feminine imagery for the Divine, and affirms that women bear the image of God just as much as men.

I like the fact that the Q community preserved this scene with Jesus stating that his teachings were an expression of the way of *Sophia*. Within a 1st or 2nd Century context, this would have subtly subverted social patriarchy.

Today

Last year, I read a book entitled *Markets Not Capitalism* by Gary Chartier and Charles W. Johnson. Gary Chartier is an associate dean of the School of Business and an associate professor of law and business ethics at La Sierra University. Charles Johnson is a research associate at the Molinari Institute and a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, and has published the *Rad Geek People's Daily* weblog at radgeek.com since 2001.

What I appreciate most about this book are the articles by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Benjamin Tucker from the later 19th and early 20th Centuries. As I got to the end of the book, I was overwhelmed by two thoughts: First, how

deeply asleep those who are comfortable in our society are today: people don't seem to really desire freedom as much as they desire comfort, and as long as they are comfortable, they will trade almost anything. Second, how awake those are who are deeply discomforted by the present economic and political system are: these are the very ones Sayings Gospel Q would have referred to as the "poor," the "hungry," the "mourning." Howard Thurman referred to them as the "disinherited." They are the oppressed, marginalized, and subjugated. They live with an urgency about justice, out of necessity, that those who are comfortable in privileged positions fail to understand. And when any attempt at waking up society is made, a multitude of methods (shame, status quo explanation and apologetics, social exclusion, protest and coercion) tell people to simply roll over and go back to sleep. In this saying we encounter Jesus's call to WAKE UP!

Wake up to the call of living compassionate, involved lives with those presently suffering from injustice, violence and oppression. Wake up and "put your hand to the plow" alongside those who are working for their own liberation. Wake up to the reality that we are not free till everyone is free. Wake up, and, in the words of this week's saying, "dance" with those rejoicing in hard-won victories, "mourn" with those whose victories are yet future, and work, work hard, toward that day imagined in Micah where "everyone" will one day "sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid" (Micah 4:4).

Let others call you a "friend" of those labeled in our time as tax-collectors and

sinners were in the time of Jesus. Let them accuse you as they did Jesus of having a "demon," being a "glutton," or being a "drunkard." These accusations are the status quo's efforts to keep you quiet, passive, and compliant. So keep speaking your truth into the darkness of injustice. And may it not be said of any of us:

"To what am I to compare this generation and what is it like? It is like children seated in the, market-places who addressing the others say: 'We fluted for you, but you would not dance; we wailed, but you would not cry.'" Sayings Gospel Q 7:31

HeartGroup Application

1. This week, sit down with your HeartGroup and write out, together, what it looks like to be awake to injustice, oppression, and violence in our world today.
2. Discuss three visible manifestations in this list that resonate most deeply with your group.
3. Pick one of those three to lean into this week individually and as a group. Focus on practicing them in your day-to-day life.

We are in this together. You are not alone. Jesus's "empire" of God is a world where people take responsibility to share with and take care of people. I'm so thankful that you are here. Together we can make a difference.

Keep living in love till the only world that remains is a world where only love reigns.

I love each of you dearly.

See you next month. ■

RHM's 2017 Annual Reading Course Book for September

Peace in the Post-Christian Era

by Thomas Merton

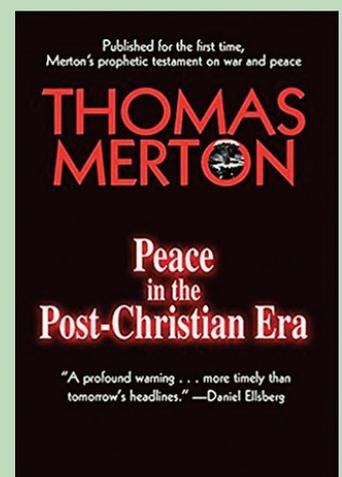
Merton's book, banned for forty years, for multiple reasons is just as relevant today as it was when it was first written.

It is with solemn purpose that we at RHM add this volume to 2017's annual reading course for September.

"Writing at the height of the Cold War, Merton issued this passionate challenge

to the idea that unthinkable violence can be squared with the Gospel of Christ. Censors of Merton's order blocked publication of this work, but forty years later if you substitute 'war on terrorism' for 'war on communism' Merton's message remains eerily topical."

If you use Amazon.com, please consider using Amazon Smile and selecting Renewed Heart Ministries as your charity at no additional cost to you.



Last month in the U.S. we witnessed the evil display of racism and white supremacy/nationalism in Charlottesville, VA. We at Renewed Heart Ministries reaffirm our commitment of solidarity with Black, Latino, Native, Arab, Asian, Jewish, Muslim, immigrant communities, women, our LGBTQ siblings, and to the organizations of the working class who are engaging the work of opposition to the white, male agenda of power. Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, in a presentation on Misogyny, Heterosexism, and Homophobia, rightly reminds us, "We must recognize the intersecting realities of all of these. That misogyny,



heterosexism, and homophobia are all a part of a social political narrative of power. That is they are all a part of the white, patriarchal, imperialistic, capitalistic power. Misogyny, heterosexism, and homophobia are secreted by that narrative, and they feed the agenda of white, male hegemony.

In as much as non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual persons can be effectively marginalized, can be set against one another, and in as much as marginalized communities marginalize and oppress one another, well then. The white, male agenda of oppressive power has been served." We at Renewed Heart Ministries affirm the work of those who stood in a position of opposition and resistance in Charlottesville, VA last month, as well as those all across the nation. And we will continue to do our part in participating in the work of making our world a safe, just, compassionate home for us all.

#Charlottesville

Lewisburg's Solidarity Vigil

Last month, Crystal and I attended a solidarity vigil here in Lewisburg in response to the racism and white supremacy demonstrated in Charlottesville, VA. The event was initiated by Greater Greenbrier Indivisible and The Women's March - Lewisburg and took place in what we here in the 'Burg affectionately call "The Green Space" which is our central, public gathering area downtown. Those who contributed with music, poetry, or comment were Joan Browning, Neely Seams, Jules Kessler, Episcopal priest Betsy Walker, Mayor John Manchester, Event Organizer and professor at West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine Cici McLay, Richard Dulee and myself as director of Renewed Heart Ministries.

I was honored to stand alongside all of my fellow citizens, both those who attended as well as those who participated. I was especially honored to speak alongside Joan Browning who is a veteran of the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

"Joan C. Browning grew up on a small farm in rural Georgia. She went from picking a hundred pounds of cotton a day to volunteering with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. She participated in the Paine College Steering Committee demonstrations in Augusta, GA, in April 1961, and with the Atlanta Student Movement sit-ins in Atlanta in 1961-63, and was one of nine Albany Freedom Riders on the last freedom ride.



The first in her immediate family to attend college, she was asked to leave Georgia State College for Women in Milledgeville in 1961 because she had worshipped at a black church. Thirty years later she completed her B.A. degree at West Virginia State College, a historically black institution. She worked in human relations and anti-poverty programs through the 1970s, following grants through the Southern Regional Council, National Urban League-Southern Regional Office, American Civil Liberties Union, American Friends Service Committee, and anti-poverty agencies, especially Volunteers In Service to America (VISTA). She was an organizer of the Federation of Southern cooperatives.

Now a freelance writer and lecturer living in the mountains of Greenbrier County, WV, she continues to express the values that drew her to the freedom movement. She actively supports public schools, public and school libraries

and youth through Little League, 4-H Clubs, and other youth programs. She is also the development consultant to the Greenbrier Community College Foundation and a member of the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals' Fatality Review Committee, which advises the Court on ways to prevent spousal murder in domestic violence incidents, and was an advisor to the Governor's Race Initiative." (from crmvet.org/vet/browning.htm)

We have a lot of work still to do to end racism, both systemic and private, here in Lewisburg, as this event demonstrated. The responsibility for ending White Supremacy in all its various forms sits on the shoulders of our white population. It is our work to do. And we at Renewed Heart Ministries continue to affirm our commitment to participating in this work.

You can read a write up by one of our local news outlets about this event at <http://bit.ly/RegisterHeraldLewisburgVigil>.

The Sayings of Jesus Asheville, NC, August 4-5

Last month, I was also in Asheville, North Carolina at the First Congregational UCC church in Asheville. Renewed Heart Ministries rented space there to host our weekend event titled the *Sayings of Jesus: The intersection of Faith and Social Justice*.

It was such a pleasure to see so many of my old friends again, and to make some new ones, as well. We had a wonderful time together as we considered in the gospels, how, rather than fixating purely on pacifying guilt or working to ensure people can go to heaven when they die, we see a Jewish Jesus working to bring love, compassion, and justice into the lives of people here and now. Today in our society, we are plagued by the sickness of racism, misogyny, elitism, heterosexism, transphobia, and more. Jesus as the great healer and justice worker offers us not a difficult path to postmortem bliss, but a risky way of being a source of life, healing and liberation in our world today. More than just privatized peace-of-mind, Jesus offered a distributively just path towards peace on earth.

This was the first weekend event of our new 500:25.1 project. If you're not familiar with our new project, you can find out more at <http://bit.ly/RHM500251>. There you can find out why we have begun these new events, how you can support these events, and best of all, how you can have us come to your area, too!

This new series, The Sayings of Jesus, will be a continuing series to which we will be adding presentations this fall, as we go along. Presently we have posted the three presentations I gave in Asheville on our website at <http://bit.ly/SayingOfJesus>. You can listen to them there. They are:



Jesus from the Edges

The relevance of social location and learning how to listen to the voices, stories and perspectives of those on the undersides and margins of our society, including the poor, and also the virtue found in the voices of women, people of color, and our LGBTQ siblings.

Featured Text:

"Looking at his disciples, he said: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.'" Luke 6:20

Jesus and Nonviolence

Far from being a doormat, Jesus's teachings on nonviolent resistance offer us creative and tangible examples of how to reclaim our own humanity, to affirm ourselves when our self is already being sacrificed, as we resist dehumanization of both oppressed and oppressors.

Featured Text:

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles." Matthew 5:38-41

Jesus and the Way

How the resurrection at end of the Jesus story gave rebirth to the hopes of the dispossessed and marginalized in the first century, and inspired them to the actions of righting their relationship between themselves and their self, between themselves and others, between themselves and God as taught in the sermon on the mount, in the golden rule and in the teaching to show love above all else.

Featured Text:

"In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!'" Luke 24:5-6

We received a lot of fantastic feedback from those who attended this first event. If you'd like to support these events please go to: <http://bit.ly/RHM500Support>

Or you can mail your contribution to:

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Every amount helps.

Thank you to all who attended. We are already looking at the possibility of doing this again next fall in the Asheville area.

And to those who are supporting these events, I just can't thank you enough. Your support and partnership with RHM makes all of this possible. Without you we could not continue to exist, and be a positive voice for change in our world today. Together we are making a difference.

Remember, we are in this together. You are not alone. We are connected. We belong to each other. We are part of one another. We not only share each other's fate, we are each other's fate. Wherever this finds you this week, keep living in love, keep following Jesus, and keep engaging, actively doing your part to shape our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for us all. Till the only world that remains is a world where only love reigns.



In order to be fully free, you will finally have to stand up to those who say they represent me.



Monthly Budget Goal:
\$15,834.00

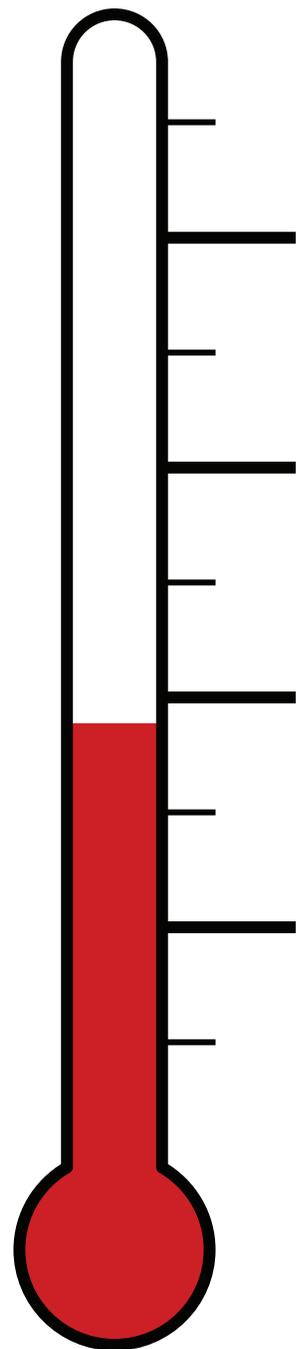
July's Contributions:
\$9,436.74

YTD Budget: \$110,838.00

YTD Received: \$71,508.59

GOAL: \$190,000

2017 Annual Budget



Schedule

OCTOBER 13 - 15, 2017

Garden Grove Church
Garden Grove, CA, USA
269.277.1226

OCTOBER 27 - 29, 2017

Loma Linda Filipino
Adventist Church
Redlands, CA, USA
209.403.1335

NOVEMBER 3 - 12, 2017

Tollgate Adventist Church
Pensboro, WV, USA
304.659.3112



New episodes every Friday!

The Jesus For Everyone podcast

Where we discuss, each week, the intersection of faith and social justice and what a first-century, Jewish prophet of the poor might offer us today in our work of survival, resistance, liberation, restoration, and transformation.

iTunes: itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/renewed-heart-ministries/id442036678?ign-mpt=uo%3D4

RHM's website:
renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts



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Renewed Heart Ministries is a not-for-profit group that is passionate about rediscovering, following and helping others rediscover the teachings and sayings of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. We believe these teachings have an intrinsic value in informing the work of nonviolently confronting, liberating and transforming our world into a safe, more just, more compassionate home for us all.

Everything we do here at Renewed Heart Ministries is for free. Even the many educational events that we do in various venues. If you'd like to support our work you can make a one-time gift or become one of our monthly contributors by going to RenewedHeartMinistries.com and clicking the donate tab at the top right.

Or you can mail contributions to:
Renewed Heart Ministries
P.O. Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Also, please sign up for our free resources and remember, every little bit helps.

Anything we receive over and above our annual budget we happily give away to other not-for-profits who are making both systemic and personal differences, significant differences, in lives of those not presently benefited but the status quo.

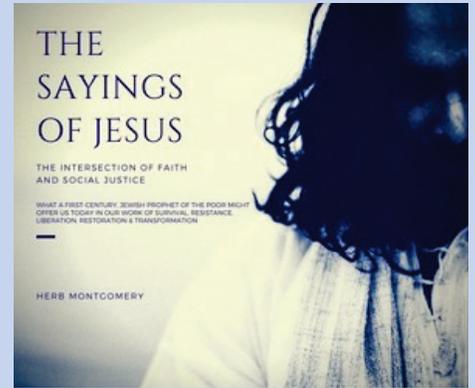
And to those already supporting the work of Renewed Heart Ministries, your generous support makes it possible for us to exist and to continue being a presence for positive change in our world. So with all of our hearts, "Thank You."

Together we are making a difference, till the only world that remains is a world where only Love reigns.

Featured Presentation

Nonviolence has often been co-opted by a privileged sector of the Christian church and society to call those most vulnerable to remain passive in response to injustice. Jesus taught a self-affirming, nonviolent resistance in response to dehumanization. Far from being a door-mat, Jesus called his followers to a disruptive means of transforming our world.

It's our pleasure to feature this month, the second presentation in our new series ***Jesus and Nonviolence***, by Herb Montgomery.



We have had an overwhelmingly positive response to our new **500:25:1** project. What is our **500:25:1** project? We are asking **500** people to sign up to support RHM with **\$25** a month for only **one** year, to help us launch self hosted events all around the nation. You can find out more about these events, how you can support these new events, and best of all, how you can have us come do an event in your area by going to <http://bit.ly/RHM500251>.

On August 4 - 5 we launched our first weekend **500:25:1** event in Asheville, N.C. You can read all about it inside. We still have quite a way to go toward reaching our funding goal. To those of you who

have already signed up to be one of our **500**, thank you! Without you we could not continue to exist and to do the work we believe is so vital at this time. For those of you who would like to support our new project you can do so by going to <http://bit.ly/RHM500Support>, or you can mail your support to:

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Thank you, in advance.

With much love and gratitude,

Herb Montgomery
Director of RHM



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