



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

# αwakenings

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



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Featured Presentation

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#### Follow RHM!



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Renewed Heart Ministries

#### Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery

*"Interpretations are not eternal. They change with time. As we see the harmful fruit of present interpretations, we can make those interpretations give way to new ones, in the hope that new interpretations will bear the fruit of life. And if we see that our new interpretations also do harm, we will challenge them too. The goal is to continue to seek life-giving interpretations for all, work with people's well-being and thriving in our hearts, and transform our world into a safe, just, compassionate home for us all. Anything less is not faithful to Jesus or the Spirit of our various sacred texts. Every time you're tempted to mistake your interpretation for the sacred text itself, remember that interpretations are temporary. It's okay for them to change, as long as what they change to is life-giving for all."*

"But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one iota or one serif of the law to fall." (Q 16:17)

#### Companion Texts:

**Matthew 5:17-18:** "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

**Luke 16:17:** "It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law."

This week we see Jesus' Jewishness. We see a Jesus who holds the Torah in high regard. For him, the Torah is eternal. The Jesus of this week's saying is not teaching a new religion or trying to replace a current one. This Jewish Jesus is offering an interpretation of the Torah that includes a preferential option for the poor, the disenfranchised, and the marginalized.

Jesus's interpretation contrasted with the elites in Jerusalem, and also differed from the populist Pharisees' interpretation. The Pharisees opened the privilege of adhering to the Torah's purity codes to a wider social group, but still left themselves in the position to control who was centered and who was pushed the margins. Jesus didn't withdrawal from society and politics like the

Essenes, nor did he champion raising the sword in revolt like other Judean Messiah figures during the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. His interpretation stood out from all of these.

Jesus's interpretation of the Torah centered those on the edges of his society and invited them to be seated too alongside others at a shared table. Some have labeled him as radical; others as simply compassionate and just in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets. For our purposes this week, we can say that, at minimum, it was still Jewish and the Torah was still central. His teachings appealed to the poor and out-cast because he was interpreting the Torah, not because he offered something novel to replace the Torah.

Luke's use of this week's saying reassured those who were suffering violence because they followed Jesus's interpretation and social vision. You can read about that here.

Matthew's use of this saying is quite different from Luke's. Luke's gospel explained how what began as a Jewish movement of the lower class became so populated by Gentiles from the middle and upper classes. Matthew's gospel, on the other hand, corrects many of the mistakes Mark's gospel makes about Jewish culture, which leads many scholars to believe Mark's gospel was primarily for lower class Gentile followers of Jesus. Matthew's version of the saying is about completion and assures the community that Jesus had not come to supersede the Torah. Two words in the saying that help us understand this are "fulfill" and "accomplished." Let's look at both.

The Greek word translated as fulfill is pleroo. Pleroo means to fill to the full like a 1<sup>st</sup> Century fishing net full of fish, or to level up a hollow place in the ground by filling it with dirt. It means to fill to the very top, to the brim. It's as if Jesus is saying that contemporary interpretations of the Torah were leaving gaps and weren't full.

Some parts of the Torah made provisions for the poor, that Pharisaical teachings negated. These were hollow places in their caretaking, hollow places that Jesus claimed to be filling up. With Jesus, those being kept on the margins, even by the Pharisees' interpretations, were to be welcomed, affirmed and included. They were valuable. They, too, were the children

**cont'd on page 3**

## No Serif of the Law to Fall

[This is part 228 of an ongoing series on the *Sayings of Jesus*. You can find the beginning of the entire series at: [renewedheartministries.com/Esights/01-08-2016](http://renewedheartministries.com/Esights/01-08-2016)]

by Herb Montgomery

## Quotable Quotes

*"Open your mouth for the voiceless, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge justly, defend the rights of the poor and needy."*

– Proverb 31:8-9

Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.





## ***No Serif of the Law... cont'd from page 2***

of Abraham (cf. Luke 19:9).

The second word is translated as accomplished is *ginomai*. *Ginomai* carries with it the idea of becoming: something comes into existence or onto the stage; something appears in public. I hear Jesus saying that his interpretation is not a destruction of the Torah, but simply an interpretation coming onto the stage that sought to reprioritize the poor and socially vulnerable.

This is a rich teaching for us today.

Not all of the vulnerable sectors of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish society were addressed by the Torah's provisions, or even by the teachings of Jesus. I believe we must build on Jesus' work and include those who today should also be affirmed and valued. Who are vulnerable among us today? Is it the estimated 2,150 to 10,790 transgender military personnel now being targeted and scapegoated in the U.S.? Is it the DACA Dreamers whom some believe legislators will try to use to bargain for border wall funding? Is it people of color who continue to be the victims of implicit bias and systemic racism in this country? Surely the vulnerable includes Native people still fighting to preserve their right to clean drinking water despite the U.S. and state-protected oil industry. It includes women disproportionately targeted by diminishing access to women's health services.

What does it mean to stand up for the vulnerable even while being accused of "destroying the Torah?" For Christians today, advocating for the vulnerable is sometimes met with the accusation that we are ignoring, throwing out, or contradicting the Bible. White Christians in antebellum America placed before Christian

abolitionists the false choice of holding onto their abolitionism or holding onto the scriptures. Sternly those Christians told abolitionists that they could not continue to hold both. My own faith tradition still struggles to recognize women have equal status as men. Those institutions who are for ordaining women ministers are being given the same ultimatum: "the scriptures or the ordination of women," it is said, "you can't hold on to both." I also know something about this. Over the last two years, I have had cancellation after cancellation from those concerned by my and RHM's affirmation, welcome, and inclusion of our LGBTQ siblings. These Christians have claimed that we have "abandoned the clear teachings of the Bible."

But those standing alongside the vulnerable in our society today could follow Jesus's teaching here and say to those holding on to old and destructive interpretations of sacred texts, "Do not think we are abolishing our sacred text. We aren't throwing out the scriptures; we are simply interpreting the text in a way that fills up the glaring gaps in interpretations that are destroying vulnerable people. We aren't destroying the scriptures; we are replacing interpretations that destroy people with interpretations that give life and liberate."

For those who feel like they must choose between people's well being and fidelity to a sacred text, that's not the choice at all. You may have to let go of destructive interpretations of your sacred text. You may have to let go of the way you have viewed your sacred text. But you can still be an affirming Christian and hold your sacred text in a way that understands that text that affirms people. Choose people. Value people. When you do, you'll see you aren't destroying your text, but interpreting

it in a way that, like Jesus and the Torah, includes those who are presently being harmed. Interpretations are not eternal. They change with time. As we see the harmful fruit of present interpretations, we can make those interpretations give way to new ones, in the hope that new interpretations will bear the fruit of life. And if we see that our new interpretations also do harm, we will challenge them too. The goal is to continue to seek life-giving interpretations for all, work with people's well-being and thriving in our hearts, and transform our world into a safe, just, compassionate home for us all. Anything less is not faithful to Jesus or the Spirit of our various sacred texts. Every time you're tempted to mistake your interpretation for the sacred text itself, remember that interpretations are temporary. It's okay for them to change, as long as what they change to is life-giving for all.

***It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one iota or one serif of the Torah to fall.*** (Q 16:17)

## **HeartGroup Application**

In the context of working alongside the vulnerable and advocating for their rights, a verse that Jesus would have grown up hearing read in the synagogues is:

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute." Proverbs 31:8

I would add today that many of those who can speak up for themselves are speaking up, so add your voice to theirs. The work of reclaiming of your own humanity is bound up with theirs. Speak up in tangible, concrete ways.

I shared this quote from Dr. Martin Luther King some weeks ago:

"The other myth that gets around is the idea that legislation cannot really solve the problem and that it has no great role to play in this period of social change because you've got to change the heart and you can't change the heart through legislation. You can't legislate morals. The job must be done through education and religion. Well, there's half-truth involved here. Certainly, if the problem is to be solved then in the final sense, hearts must be changed. Religion and education must play a great role in changing the heart. But we must go on to say that while it may be true that morality cannot be legislated, behavior can be regulated. It may be true that the law

**cont'd on page 4**

cannot change the heart but it can restrain the heartless. It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me but it can keep him from lynching me and I think that is pretty important, also. So there is a need for executive orders. There is a need for judicial decrees. There is a need for civil rights legislation on the local scale within states and on the national scale from the federal government." (Western Michigan University, December 18, 1963)

This week, I want to emphasize that social location matters. Some people can't afford to wait for an inside-out approach, for a future kingdom or new social order. Some people are dying now.

As I've shared, change happens from the outside in, not from the center, but from the edges or margins inward. The same is true for people. It took people outside of me to change me. Spiritual disciplines and community rituals also shape people over time. The gospels portray a Jesus who gave his listeners a list of practices that would change the way they saw, thought, and felt about themselves and the others with whom they shared their world.

Sam Wells, in the introduction of Ched Myers' *Binding the Strong Man*, draws a line in the sand:

"We seem to have picked up the idea that holiness is a trance-like sense of peace and well-being in relation to those all around, an experience of floating on a magic carpet of tranquility. Wherever that picture of holiness came from, it certainly wasn't Mark's Gospel. Jesus is constantly having heated debates with everyone who held Israel in check. The one thing everyone seems to agree on today is that there's plenty wrong with the world. There are only two responses to this – either go and put it right yourself, or, if you can't, make life pretty uncomfortable for those who can until they do. When we take stock of our relationship with the powerful, we ask our-selves, 'Does the shape of my life reflect my longing to see God set people free, and do I challenge those who keep others in slavery?'"

How do we, in the short term, make life uncomfortable for those who can change things until they do? One way to do that is by connecting with your elected officials.

1. This week, find out the name and phone number of the following and write them down:

Your Federal House Representative  
Your Federal Senators

Your State Governor  
Your State House Representatives  
Your State Senate Members  
County Officials  
City Mayor and Council members

2. Check out the following two websites: [indivisibleguide.com](http://indivisibleguide.com) and [5calls.org](http://5calls.org)

On these sites, you'll find helpful instructions for how to connect with your officials in memorable and effective ways to create the changes you'd like to see.

3. If this is new to you, start out by making one phone call a week. Then graduate to two or three.

There is a world of difference in attempting to gain political power to enforce your own version of morality, and standing along side those whom others would try to use political power to further marginalize and adding your voice to say "no." I will not allow you to use political power to harm others. I will raise my voice with the prophet Isaiah and say, "Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees." (Isaiah 10.1)

If you can put something right yourself, then by all means, take action and do so. If you do not have the power to change much larger systems that perpetuate injustice, take stock of your relationship with those in power and make their life pretty uncomfortable until they make those changes. Stand in solidarity with those on the edges and undersides of society. Reclaim your own humanity by working alongside those engaging the work of reclaiming theirs.

Where you are, keep living in love. Keep engaging the work of survival, resistance, liberation, reparation and transformation. Change is possible. The moral arc of the universe can bend toward justice if we choose to bend it that way.

Thank you, also, to each of you who are supporting our work here at Renewed Heart Ministries. We have multiple events coming up this fall. If you'd like to support our work you can do so at by going to: [renewedheartministries.com/donate/](http://renewedheartministries.com/donate/)

Please consider becoming one of our monthly donors. Together we are making a difference. If you prefer, you can also mail you support to:

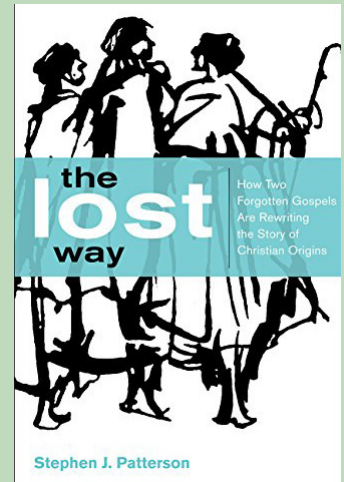
Renewed Heart Ministries  
PO Box 1211  
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Thank you in advance for your partnership. I love each of you dearly. ■

## RHM's 2017 Annual Reading Course Book for October

### ***The Lost Way: How Two Forgotten Gospels Are Rewriting the Story of Christian Origins***

by Stephen Patterson



Two month's ago we featured James Robinson's book *The Gospel of Jesus* which explores, not a gospel about Jesus, but the Jesus' original audience might have heard. This is a perfect follow up to that book.

"Patterson explains how scholars have uncovered a Gospel that preceded at least three of those in the Bible, which is called Q. He painstakingly demonstrates how historical evidence points to the existence of this common source in addition to Mark – recognized as the earliest Gospel – that both Matthew and Luke used to write their accounts. Q contained a collection of Jesus' teachings without any narrative content and without accounts of the passion, though being the earliest version shared among his first followers – scripture that embodies a very different orientation to the Christian faith."

Remember, if you use Amazon.com, please consider using Amazon Smile and selecting Renewed Heart Ministries as your charity to support our work. You can do so at: [smile.amazon.com/ch/20-8663541](http://smile.amazon.com/ch/20-8663541).





## RHM's 500:25:1 Project UPDATE!

### ***A new way to participate in the RHM community***

We just held our fall board meeting here at RHM, and we are super excited as we consider potential locations for our new self-hosted events in 2018. As we ponder the things that are transpiring around the U.S. presently, we are impressed again of the need for Renewed Heart Ministries' work. RHM edifies and educates. Our focus is on helping Christians discover the intersection of their own faith in a God of love and the work of social justice. We believe that Christians in the west are especially in need of rediscovering the teachings of Jesus and how those teachings implore us stand in solidarity with those being oppressed, and to work along side those communities toward systemic change. The Hebrew prophets did not call for charity. They called for justice. They did not call for temporary, bandaid solutions, but for systemic change. As Emilie Townes so eloquently states, "When you begin with the belief the God loves everyone, justice isn't very far behind." We help people discover how

to concretely impact the suffering in our world.

Beginning this past August, we started taking our educational weekends on the road in a new, self-hosted format. You can read about our first event here. After one of our more recent events in Phoenix, an attendee wrote to us:

*"I heard Herb speak today for the first time and was deeply moved by his presentation. I came away understanding The Lord's Prayer from a new perspective and committed to become more involved in social justice. Thank you for your honesty and ability to shed new light on basic truths."*

### **Our 500:25:1 Project**

This fall will determine how much we are able to do in 2018. We are asking for 500 people to support these new events with a donation of \$25 or more each month—for one year! With your support, we'll be able to work where people can be challenged, changed, inspired to make a difference in communities we wouldn't typically be able to reach. These events will continue to be free of charge. Freely we have received, and we want to continue giving freely too. For RHM, these new self-

hosted events will cost us more than our traditional seminars. Instead of relying on organizations to commit to covering our travel expenses and host us, with our new self-hosted weekends RHM will have to cover travel and space rental costs ourselves. This is where you, as one of our 500 people, will be able to help. We've already had a tremendous response to 500:25:1 project. We are just over 1/5 of the way to our goal of 500 people. Thank you to each of you who have already signed up!

If you have not yet done so, can we count on you to be one of 500 folks who partner with us for 500:25:1?

You can sign up to partner with us in this new venture at:

**<http://bit.ly/RHM500Support>**

Let us know if you'd like RHM to host a weekend in your town and we'll add it to the calendar!

Thank you so much for helping us to take this next step!

Sign up online at:

**<http://bit.ly/RHM500Support>**

Or you can mail your support to:

Renewed Heart Ministries  
PO Box 1211  
Lewisburg, WV 24901

With much love and gratitude,

Herb Montgomery  
Director | Author | Speaker  
Renewed Heart Ministries

"Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1:17)

**New episodes every Friday!**

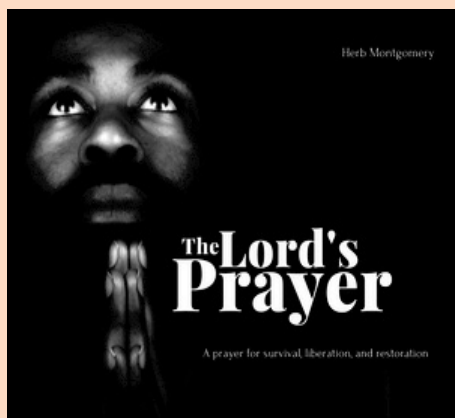
## **The *Jesus For Everyone* podcast**

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:** <http://bit.ly/JFEPodcast>

**RHM's website:** [renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts](http://renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts)





## A New Series on RHM's Website!

***The Lord's Prayer: A prayer for survival, liberation, and restoration***

**Phoenix, AZ, USA  
September 1-2, 2017**

Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of sharing a new series from Renewed Heart Ministries entitled *The Lord's Prayer: A prayer for survival, liberation and restoration*.

These talks were presented at the

Adventist Worship Center (AWC) in Phoenix, Arizona. I always love my time with AWC, and this time was no exception. It was good to see my friends there again. I was deeply encouraged as well to meet some new faces, too. During the discussion times at the end of each presentation we engaged in rich dialogue. One of the attendees, whom I had just met during this visit, shared via our website later that evening.

*"I heard Herb speak today for the first time and was deeply moved by his presentation. I came away understanding The Lord's Prayer from a new perspective and committed to become more involved in social justice. Thank you for your honesty and ability to shed new light on basic truths."*

And she was not alone. I heard repeatedly words of appreciation for what many felt was "permission" to engage societal injustice as a part of their faith tradition. Engagement. That's what's so encouraging about these types of responses. These are not theological debates that leave us only intellectually stimulated while the

world around us is left unchanged. The fruit of weekends like this one are that we leave better equipped and motivated to take action in engaging the work of making our world a safe, just, compassionate home for us all, especially the most vulnerable among us.

We've posted this new series on our website for you to be able to explore as well. You can do so at:  
[renewedheartministries.com/presentation/](http://renewedheartministries.com/presentation/)

This series contains three presentations:

***On Earth as it is in Heaven***

***Enough Bread for Today***

***A Path Toward Compassion and Justice***

Our hope, as you listen, is that your heart, too, will be both renewed and inspired to take action as we, together, continue to engage our work today of survival, resistance, liberation, restoration and transformation.

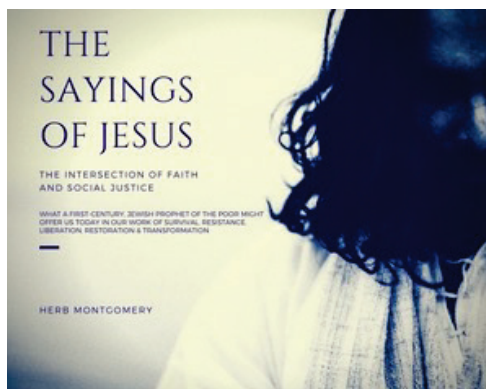
Thank you, also, to those who are supporting our ministry. Without you we could not continue our much needed work, today. Together we are making a difference.

## We've updated our Sayings of Jesus series!

***The Sayings of Jesus: the intersection of faith and social justice***

**Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
September 8-9, 2017**

Last month, I was invited to share a weekend of presentations from our Sayings of Jesus series at the Good News Fellowship church in Toronto. It was a fantastic weekend of seeing old friends as well as making new ones. This was my first time speaking to the Good News Fellowship congregation, and one thing I was super impressed with was their concern for the well-being of others and their willingness to engage the work of listening to the voices of those who inhabit a different social location than one's own. This congregation's willingness to entertain different perspectives on social issues, especially the perspective of the more vulnerable sectors of our society,



was refreshingly beautiful.

I was hosted by my dear friends Andrew Dykstra and Jerry McKay. They were so kind and generous, touring me around their city of Toronto outside of the times I was scheduled to speak. They introduced me to all of their favorite things about their beloved city. It was wonderful time, and I'm deeply grateful for their hospitality.

We have updated our *Sayings of Jesus* series on our website with the presentations from last weekend. I feel they are the most easy to understand

versions of these topics presented to date. It's my hope that as you listen, your heart, too, will be renewed and that you will be inspired to take action as we, together, allow the sayings of Jesus to inform our work today of survival, resistance, liberation, restoration and transformation, till the only world that remains is world where only love reigns.

[renewedheartministries.com/presentation/](http://renewedheartministries.com/presentation/)

If you have been blessed by RHM's work and would like to support weekend events like these all around the country, you can do so by going to:

[renewedheartministries.com/donate/](http://renewedheartministries.com/donate/)

Every amount helps. We could not continue our work without you. Together we are making a difference.

Thank you to the Good News Fellowship congregation for your invitation and for hosting such a beautiful and transforming weekend.

And thanks to each of our donors for supporting this ministry. I appreciate each of you, dearly.

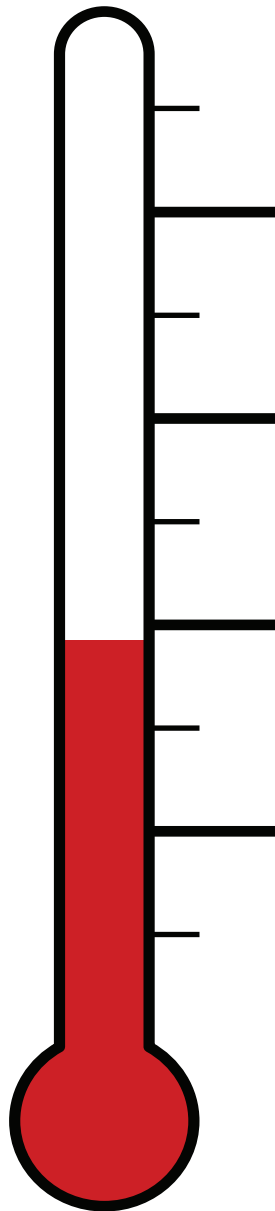
**Monthly Budget Goal:**  
**\$15,834.00**

**August's Contributions:**  
**\$8,136.34**

**January–August Budget:**  
**\$126,672.00**

**January–August Received:**  
**\$72,513.59**

**GOAL: \$190,000**  
2017 Annual Budget



## Sign Up for RHM's Free Resources!

Daily Quotations in your email inbox, weekly articles, podcasts, and ministry updates, monthly newsletters, and more.

**Sign up now so you don't miss a thing!**

<http://bit.ly/RHMSignUp>

## Schedule

### OCTOBER 13 - 15, 2017

Garden Grove Church  
Garden Grove, CA, USA  
269.277.1226

### OCTOBER 27 - 29, 2017

Loma Linda Fillipino  
Adventist Church  
Redlands, CA, USA  
209.403.1335

### NOVEMBER 3 - 12, 2017

Tollgate Adventist Church  
Pennsboro, WV, USA  
304.659.3112

### DECEMBER 10 - 17, 2017

Cruise With A Mission  
Eastern Caribbean  
304.520.0030



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 hold in various venues. You can support our work either with a one-time gift or by becoming one of our monthly contributors by going to [RenewedHeartMinistries.com](http://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 personal, systemic and structural differences in the lives of the less privileged.

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."

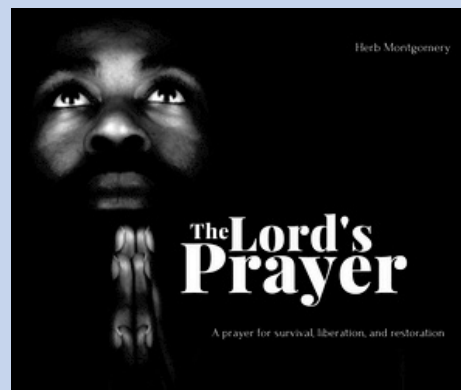
Together we are making a difference, till the only world that remains is a world where only Love reigns.



RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

## Featured Presentation

The way in which we pray shapes us into being who we are. In Matthew, Jesus teaches us to pray a prayer that has the potential to shape us into being people of compassion, passionate for the just distribution of God's earth for all of God's children. It's a prayer that can inform and empower us in our work of transforming our world into a just and safe home for all. This month we'd like to feature the first presentation in our new series on this prayer, *On Earth As It Is In Heaven* by Herb Montgomery. It's our hope that your heart will be renewed and that you will be in-spired to action as we, together, follow Jesus in his work of survival, resistance, liberation, restoration and transformation.



This month's featured presentation:

***On Earth As It Is In Heaven*** by Herb Montgomery.

"WHEN YOU START WITH  
AN UNDERSTANDING  
THAT GOD LOVES  
EVERYONE, JUSTICE  
ISN'T VERY FAR BEHIND."

DR. EMILIE TOWNES  
JOURNEY TO LIBERATION:  
THE LEGACY OF WOMANIST  
THEOLOGY

RENEWEDHEARTMINISTRIES.COM



## Quotable Quotes

*"Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and will be repaid in full."*

– Proverb 19:17