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Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery



Last month online, we sent out an RHM News Update titled *A Special Request* (see <https://renewedheartministries.com/news/A-Special-Request>). The next day I received an email from one of our supporters that made my eyes tear up:

"Your work is wonderful, and I count it a privilege to help in my small way."

I shared how touching this token of appreciation was to me on Facebook and other supporters began commenting:

"Over 11 years ago, you presented at a series of meetings in our area. That was what pulled us (my wife and I) through to continue on a journey of following Jesus rather than a religion. We were at a pivotal place of deep personal crisis, ready to throw our towel in on God and religion. Inadvertently you gave us a third choice."

Other's chimed in,

"You completely changed the way I view God when I was 15 years old! I'm 21 now, and I still stand by those views!"

"You have done the same for me as well. I'm forever grateful."

"You are an inspiration of challenging the status quo and not being afraid..."

"You started opening my eyes to a beautiful 'Love Family' in which we are all included."

We at Renewed Heart Ministries believe that a different kind of Christianity is possible.

We believe another world is possible as well.

I want to thank each of you who have responded so far to our request to support RHM's work at this time of the year. As I shared previously, most things have cycles, and ministries have cycles, too. This is our twelfth year, and as we head into summer, this is one of the two times each year when the need for your support of RHM is both keenly felt, and deeply appreciated. In order to provide all of our resources free of charge we are directly dependent on your support.

With all that is happening right now both within Christianity and in our larger society our work is needed more than ever.

We want to thank you for enabling us to exist and continue to do our work through your generous support and your partnership through your sustaining contributions.

Together we are following Jesus' teachings (Luke 4:18-19), participating in his work of love, compassion, inclusion, justice and action. Together

we are making a difference, one heart, one mind, one life at a time. Together we are engaging our faith communities and our larger society, working for justice, compassion, and safety for all (Matthew 6:10).

To support our work, you can click **DONATE** on our website (renewedheartministries.com) to make a contribution online, or you can mail your gift to:

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

You can make your contribution a one time gift, or please consider becoming one of our continuing monthly sustainers by selecting the option to make your gift recurring.

Any amount helps, regardless of the size.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Till the only world that remains is a world where only love reigns.

From all of us here at RHM, thank you.

Herb Montgomery
Director
Renewed Heart Ministries



by Herb Montgomery

"And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness." (Mark 1:4)

Syracuse University's Counseling Center defines marginalization as "the process of pushing a particular group or groups of people to the edge of society by not allowing them an active voice, identity, or place in it...Some individuals identify with multiple marginalized groups, and may experience further marginalization as a result of their intersecting identities."

This week I ask what the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) have to say to those who live disenfranchised, disadvantaged, marginalized, and underprivileged in our society.

Mark's storytelling about Jesus begins very early on with the character of John the Baptist, who emerges as a Hebrew prophet in the wilderness calling for social change. The much later gospel Luke emphasizes this wilderness location by explaining that John's father is a priest (See Luke 1:5, 8-10). John's lineage allowed him to be a priest in the temple like his father, so it is telling that we instead see a John who isn't a priest but a prophet like Isaiah's voice "crying out" in the "wilderness."

The wilderness represents a marginal location in the Jesus stories: the edges of the Jewish society. It contrasts with Jerusalem, the temple state, and the elite who held positions of power and privilege in Jewish society. This is a Jewish story, and a story of Jewish voices in conflict with each other. It is the story of social

tensions between those at the center of their society and those on the margins. It's also a very human story. Every society includes a tension between those who are marginalized and those at the top and center of their social structure. When the status quo depends on marginalizing "a particular group or groups of people" Jesus' time in the wilderness reflects the power dynamics we find in that society. After Jesus interacted with John in the wilderness, Mark's gospel tells us that Jesus went straight away into the wilderness himself.

"At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness." (Mark 1:12)

Some Christian preachers use this passage to parallel Jesus' forty days in the wilderness with the Hebrew people's forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Mark does not explain how long Jesus spent there, and this parallel is often used to teach supersessionism. I do not read it this way.

I believe Jesus is making a social choice. He, like John, is choosing the wilderness as his starting point. From the marginalized region of Galilee, Jesus enters the wilderness after John, possibly to get in touch with his Jewish roots. His is a people whose origin stories were of enslavement, oppression, liberation, and brutal colonization of others. Jesus attempts to ground himself in his story as a Jew, within their wilderness origin story, and figure out how they got to where they are today.

So both Jesus and John emerge from a place of "wilderness." Ched Myers reminds us about the truth in this

story detail for those who today find themselves in "wilderness" locations.

"One of the first steps of hope for people in such wilderness places is to understand that their situation reflects social and political forces, not the divine will...While the margin has a primarily negative political connotation as a place of disenfranchisement, Mark ascribes to it a primarily positive theological value. It is the place where the sovereignty of God is made manifest, where the story of liberation is renewed, where God's intervention in history occurs." (Ched Myers, *Say to This Mountain: Mark's Story of Discipleship*, p. 12)

Mark explains that when John is arrested, Jesus comes out of this wilderness location and does not straightway begin preaching in the more centrally located Jerusalem and Judea. Instead, Jesus enters the marginal region of Galilee.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:14-15)

If Judea is a marginal region within the larger Roman empire, Galilee is a marginal region on the edges of Jewish society. In Jesus' day, it was the buffer region between the Jewish population and the largely non-Jewish population beyond Galilee. In Mark, Jesus begins his work here, among those who would have been the marginalized in his society. Consider his teaching as well. Whom does he speak in solidarity with in his teachings?

"Blessed are the poor [broken] in spirit...
Blessed are those who mourn...
Blessed are the meek...
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness [distributive justice]...
Blessed are the merciful...
Blessed are the pure in heart...
Blessed are the peacemakers...
Blessed are those who are persecuted...
Blessed are you when people insult you...
Blessed are you when people persecute you...
Blessed are you when people falsely say all kinds of evil against you...
You are the salt of the earth...
You are the light of the world."

(Matthew 5:3-14)

continued on page 4

In this teaching, Jesus is in solidarity with those who have been pushed to the edges and undersides of his society and are trying to survive there.

Notice, too, those final two statements I quoted from Matthew 5. Jesus states that those on the margins of society are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. This was centuries before refrigeration and the harnessing of electricity. Salt preserved food.

I want to offer a word of caution about the imagery of light in our context today. RHM's book of the month for May is *Womanist Midrash: A Reinroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne* by Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney. In a statement circulating the internet this past Easter season which was attributed to Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney (I still cannot for the life of me find where she said this, but this does sound like her) we read, "We can celebrate the light of Easter without demonizing darkness and reinscribing a white supremacist dialectic on Christ and the resurrection. My blackness is radiant, luminous and will not and does not need to be made white as snow. The blood of Jesus will not make me white. We must learn to talk about brokenness in the world with our reducing evil to darkness and goodness to light. Blackness is God's good gift." (From more from Gafney go to www.wilgafney.com)

We can celebrate light without demonizing darkness. Today we understand that life requires both light and dark. What's important is balance, a life-giving equity, rather than one or the other. I can understand the original use of this language and also understand that that use is no longer appropriate today.

Yet in the Jesus stories both images point to the marginalized of Jesus' society. That's the point Myers is making above. In the Jesus stories, the edges of society hold a "primarily positive theological value. It is the place where the sovereignty of God is made manifest, where the story of liberation is renewed, where God's intervention in history occurs."

Change happens from the outside in, from the bottom up, from grass roots movements. It is the voices sharing the experiences of those surviving on the edges of our society that tell us whether

the status quo is just or unjust, life-giving or lethal. We can choose to listen to these voices or not. We can choose the way of life or not. We can choose those things that preserve society, like salt, or that which cause societies to self-destruct. Those who are in power and privileged have very little insight into how systems enfranchise some and disenfranchise others. At best they continually risk underestimating the damage done to those who do not share their social location. Change, renewal, intervention, salvation, often emerges from the edges, the "wilderness" locations. And this is one of the first truths we bump into in the Jesus story.

Today, a person can be marginalized on the basis of their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, education, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, ability, and more. Many marginalized people face exclusion for multiple intersecting traits, too. In whatever area of your life where you face marginalization, contrary to narratives of those at the top or the center of society, the Jesus story tells us that God is with those on the margins, those working in "the wilderness." And we are working with God when we are working in solidarity with them. ■

Book of the Month for June 2019

A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things

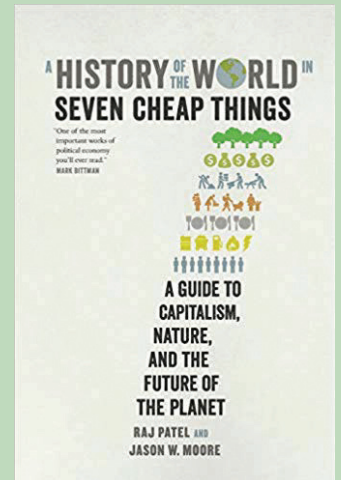
by Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore

Here at RHM we believe that part of following Jesus' commission of reshaping our society in such a way that also good news to the poor (Luke 4:18) includes understanding how we arrived at our present structure which creates inequality and poverty. If we do not understand our history we will repeat its mistakes in our future.

This book was recommended by one of our supporters and has turned out to be one of best books we have read so far this year. It's our pleasure to feature it as June's book of the month.

"Nature, money, work, care, food, energy, and lives: these are the seven things that have made our world and will shape its future. In making these things cheap, modern commerce has transformed, governed, and devastated Earth. In *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*, Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore present a new approach to analyzing today's planetary emergencies. Bringing the latest ecological research together with histories of colonialism, indigenous struggles, slave revolts, and other rebellions and uprisings, Patel and Moore demonstrate that throughout history, crises have always prompted fresh strategies to make the world cheap and safe for capitalism. At a time of crisis in all seven cheap things, innovative and systemic thinking is urgently required. This book proposes a radical new way of understanding—and reclaiming—the planet in the turbulent twenty-first century."

[You don't have to order this book through amazon.com, but if you do, please consider using Amazon Smile (smile.amazon.com) and selecting Renewed Heart Ministries as your designated charity for a portion of your purchase to be donated to RHM at no additional cost to you.]



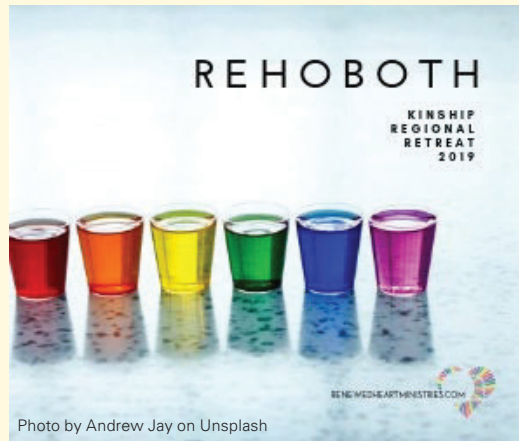
Rehoboth

Kinship Regional Retreat May 2-5, 2019

Last month I had the pleasure of presenting at Kinship's Region 2, annual weekend retreat at Rehoboth Beach in Delaware.

For those of you who may not know what Kinship is, Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International (Kinship) is a diverse, multi-generational worldwide community of individuals who are somehow connected to the Adventist community. SDA Kinship is the only organization for current or former Adventists who identify as LGBTIQ+. Kinship is not a change-oriented ministry. Their mission is to provide a safe spiritual and social community to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex current & former Seventh-day Adventists around the world, their families, and those who support them. Some members still attend Adventist churches and others have moved on in different directions. It is also part of Kinship's mission to educate church leaders (pastors, teachers, and administrators, etc.) to understand the LGBTIQ+ community better and to learn how to create safe spaces. (For more info see: <https://www.sdakinship.org>)

I spoke on the relevance of Jesus as a first-century, Jewish prophet of the poor from the marginalized region of Galilee, emerging as an itinerant



teacher in the "wilderness" and what these locations might say to the Christian LGBTIQ+ community today. One's social location matters. And the Jesus of the gospels practiced an inclusive priority for those on the margins of his society.

Many LGBTIQ+ Christians find a wellspring of wisdom within the Jesus stories as they continue to work toward inclusion and equality both in their various faith communities and their wider society.

To listen to the two presentations I shared at Rehoboth at renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Rehoboth.

If you would like more information on Renewed Heart Ministries' affirmation and support of our LGBTIQ+ family and friends read:

Calling Good Evil (Part 1 - 5)
at renewedheartministries.com/Eights/02-08-2019

or listen to the podcasts at renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts

And listen to:

Jesus' Preferential Option for the Marginalized: LGBTQIA Identities and the Image of God at renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts.

I want to thank Kinship for the invitation to share. And I want to thank each of those who attended. I had a wonderful time seeing you again, and for some of you meeting for the very first time.

If you have been blessed by our work here at Renewed Heart Ministries, I want to take the opportunity this month to reach out to you and ask you to support our work. This is a time of the year when the need for your support is keenly felt as well as deeply appreciated. You can support our work either by clicking on the donate page on our website or by mailing your support to:

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

You can make a one time gift, or please consider becoming one of our continuing monthly sustainers.

Any amount helps, regardless of the size.

Thank you in advance for your support. We simply could not exist nor continue our important work without you.



Are you getting RHM's free resources in your inbox?

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

**Visit renewedheartministries.com
and click "Sign Up!"**

Schedule

JULY 12, 2019

Wild Goose Festival

Hot Springs, NC

304.520.0030

Quotable Quotes

"We can come to know the world as paradise when our hearts and souls are reborn through the arduous and tender task of living rightly with one another and the earth. Generosity, nonviolence, and care for one another are the pathways into transformed awareness. Knowing that paradise is here and now is a gift that comes to those who practice the ethics of paradise. This way of living is not Utopian. It does not spring simply from the imagination of a better world but from a profound embrace of this world. It does not begin with knowledge or hope. It begins with love."

— Rita Nakashima Brock
& Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker;
*Saving Paradise: How Christianity
Traded Love of This World for
Crucifixion and Empire*, p. 409

"Stop asking God to bless what you are doing and get involved in what God is already doing, because it's already blessed."

— Bono;
Keynote Address at the 54th National
Prayer Breakfast; February 2, 2006

"There are some upon this earth of ours," returned the Spirit, "who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name, who are as strange to us and all our kith and kin, as if they had never lived. Remember that, and charge their doings on themselves, not us."

— The Ghost of Christmas Present;
A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens



Photo by Nicole Honeywill on Unsplash

Have you benefited from RHM's work?

We at Renewed Heart Ministries are asking our followers to share their stories of how RHM has been a blessing to you. We believe every person's story matters and every person's voice has value. Sharing our stories is one of the ways that we bring change and heal our world. Hearing one another's stories empowers us to let go of our fear of one another and enter into compassion. Listening to

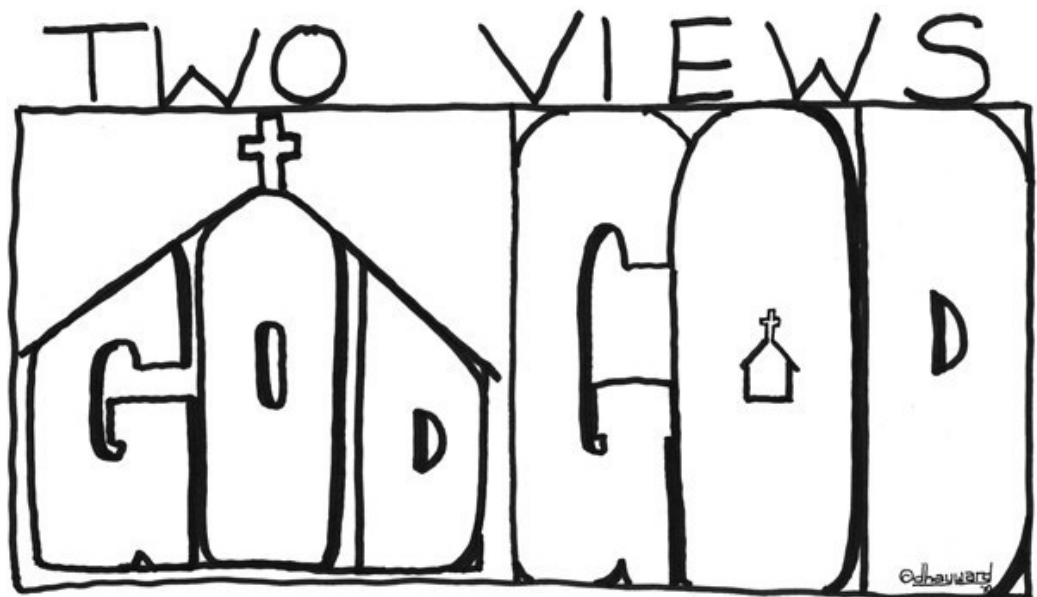
the diverse experiences of one another's lives leads us to replace insecurity with a much broader understanding of each other and our larger world.

We want to hear your story! And if you give us permission, we may feature your story in one of our upcoming newsletter issues so your story can help others, too! (But only if you give us permission.)

Will you share your story with us?

Send your story of how you have been positively impacted by the ministry of Renewed Heart Ministries by emailing: info@renewedheartministries.com.

We look forward to hearing from you.



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The “Jesus For Everyone” podcast

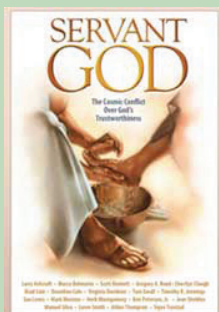
New episodes every Friday!

A weekly podcast where we discuss where faith in Jesus and social justice work for the vulnerable today intersect and what a first-century, Jewish, Galilean prophet of the poor might offer us today in our work of survival, resistance, liberation, restoration, and transformation.

renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts

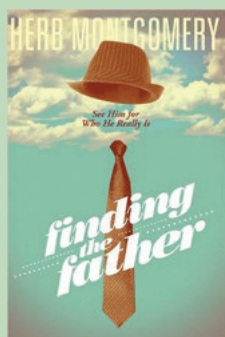
Audiobooks *free* on RHM's Website!

**Listen now at:
renewedheartministries.com/Audio-Books**



Servant God: The Cosmic Conflict Over God's Trustworthiness

Written by 16 Contributors including Herb Montgomery



Finding the Father
by Herb Montgomery

The RHM team, in any given month, consists of a small team of 10–12 people working either full-time, part-time, or as volunteers dedicating hundreds of hours to make what we do possible. If you find blessing, encouragement, and renewal here, please consider becoming one of our Monthly Partners with a reoccurring donation or by making a one-time gift.

**2019 Full Year Budget Goal:
\$185,000.00**

**January-April Budget Goal:
\$61,668.00**

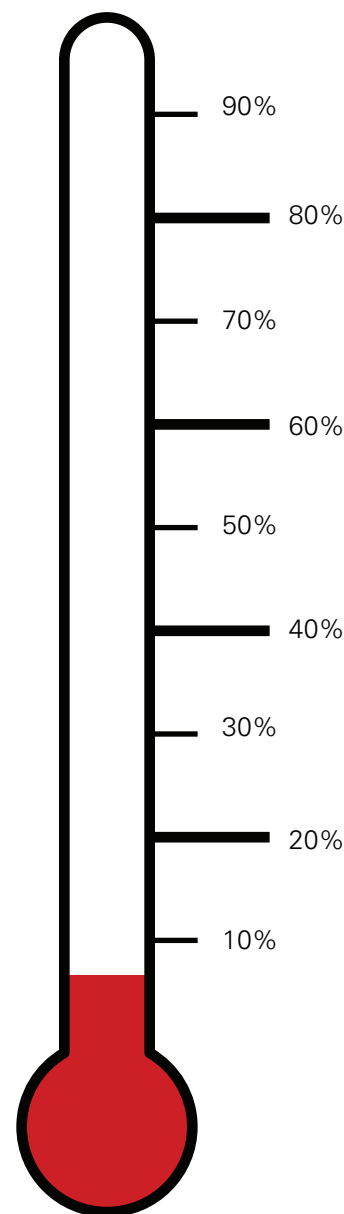
**January-April's Contributions Received:
\$32,900.96**

**April Contributions Goal:
\$15,417.00**

**April's Contributions Received:
6,215.76**

To support our work and help us grow, go to renewedheartministries.com and click “donate” or mail your contribution to:

**Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901**



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** 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 people who are 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

In *Say to this Mountain*, Ched Myers reminds us that "One of the first steps of hope for people in such wilderness places is to understand that their situation reflects social and political forces, not the divine will."

This month, we are featuring the second presentation from Herb's weekend in Rehoboth, *Choosing Life on the Edges*. For all those following Jesus in "wilderness" locations, it's our hope that your heart will be renewed and your spirit encouraged as you listen to this timely presentation.

Choosing Life on the Edges by Herb Montgomery.



"To paraphrase a well-known text of Pascal, we can say that all the political theologies, the theologies of hope, of revolution, and of liberation, are not worth one act of genuine solidarity with exploited social classes. They are not worth one act of faith, love, and hope, committed—in one way or another—in active participation to liberate humankind from everything that dehumanizes it . . ."

GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREZ
A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

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