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Herb Montgomery

Renewed Heart Ministries

Working for a World of Love and Justice



Before we begin this month's newsletter, I want to stop for a moment and ask for your support. Renewed Heart Ministries is a nonprofit organization working for a world of love and justice. We need your support to bring the kind of resources and analysis RHM provides.

Intersections between faith, love, compassion, and justice are needed now more than ever.

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to Renewed Heart Ministries, today.

To do so, either go to our website at renewedheartministries.com and click "Donate" on the top right, or if you prefer to make a donation by mail, our address is:

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

And to those of you out there who are already supporting this ministry, I want to say thank you. We could not continue being a voice for change without your support.

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-June Budget Goal:
\$92,502.00

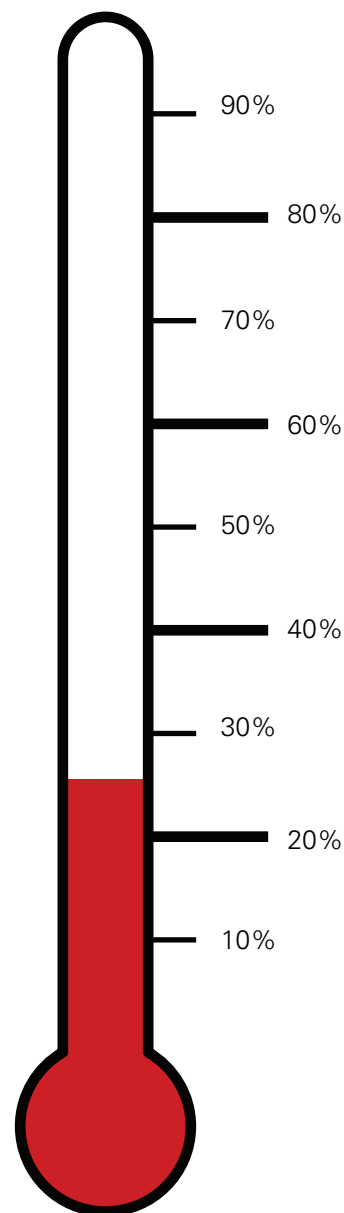
January-June
Contributions Received:
\$46,085.90

June Contributions Goal:
\$15,417.00

June Contributions Received:
\$6,095.79

To support our work
and help us grow, go to
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Whether you give \$5 or \$5,000,
every amount helps us continue our work.



New Book Update "Finding Jesus"

We have great news about Herb's upcoming book! We've received the edits back and we are working with graphics designers on layout and design, a cover design and possible kickstarter for this project this December.

That means we will go to print in January

and are hoping for this new volume to go on sale February 2020.

We are beyond excited, and everyone who has read the drafts up till this point are excited, too!

We'll keep you posted as we progress. We finally have a concrete availability date:

Finding Jesus
by Herb Montgomery
Available February 2020!



Photo by Aung Soe Min on Unsplash



Checking Your Privilege

RENEWEDHEARTMINISTRIES.COM

Photo by Bud Helisson on Unsplash

by Herb Montgomery

In Luke's gospel we read a story of Jesus rebuking his disciples: "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, 'Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?' But Jesus turned and rebuked them. Then he and his disciples went to another village."

(Luke 9:51-56)

Let's get a little background on who the Samaritans were. To the best of our knowledge, this 1st Century group had Hebrew roots and focused on Mt. Gerizim rather than Jerusalem. The traced their lineage back to Ephraim and Manasseh of the northern tribes of Israel. When Israel returned from captivity and attempted to rebuild the temple, Jewish people in Jerusalem refused to allow Samaritans to join them in rebuilding the temple. This was a time when Jewish people feared their identity was at risk of being lost. During periods like this, hard lines are often drawn between insiders and outsiders. Jewish

rejection of Samaritans thus led to open animosity, resentment, and even hostile violence between the communities. Samaritans erected their own temple on Mount Gerizim, which Jewish people destroyed in 130 BCE. The Samaritans built a second temple at Shechem.

Bitter hatred between Jews and Samaritans continued to escalate, and the gospel stories were written during this period. It was dangerous for Jewish travelers to travel through Samaria. According to Josephus, "Now there arose a quarrel between the Samaritans and the Jews on the occasion following. It was the custom of the Galileans, when they came to the holy city at the festivals, to take their journeys through the country of the Samaritans. And at this time there lay in the road they took, a village that was called Ginea: which was situated in the limits of Samaria, and the great plain; where certain persons thereto belonging fought with the Galileans, and killed a great many of them." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 20, Chapter 6)

Reparation and reconciliation efforts between adherents of Samaritanism and Judaism throughout the centuries have been attempted. (For an excellent summary of the Samaritans and the challenges in understanding who they were in the 1st Century, see "Samaritans" in Craig A. Evans, et al. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, InterVarsity Press, 2005, and *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, WB Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2019.)

Given this history, I find fascinating the story of Jesus rebuking his disciples' violent attitude toward the Samaritans.

I live in a predominantly White area of West Virginia. I was born and raised

"We can do better than defensiveness. In this story of Jesus I hear the call to lay mine down... Another world is possible. But we're going to have to learn to listen to those whose experiences are less privileged and end the very system of privilege if we are to get there."

here, and though we moved away when I became an adult, we moved back to take care of my mother who since passed away. I remember a time when a dear friend of mine who is Black visited us. As we walked through the grocery store together, she blurted out, "Two."

"Two?" I asked.

"Yeah, that's how many non-White people I've seen since I've been here."

Europeans first settled in my little town in the mid 1700s, and we just elected our first Black mayor. We still have a long way to go in my area of this state in the work of racial justice.

From time to time I hear people attempting to define justice efforts as "reverse racism" and getting upset whenever White privilege is even brought up. Crystal and I were standing with other parents at my daughter's high school and talking about privilege and racial injustice. One of the dads blurted out, "I'm never gonna apologize for being born White!" I shook my head. Crystal tried to help him understand. He didn't get it and I don't think he really wanted to.

In the story we began with, Jesus doesn't take a defensive stance when the Samaritans refuse him lodging. In fact, he rebukes his disciples for their desire to retaliate against what they deemed as inhospitality. For crying out loud! Did the disciples actually think the Samaritans should offer thirteen Jewish men lodging given all that Jewish men had done to them?

I want to imagine that Jesus understood.

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Book of the Month for August 2019

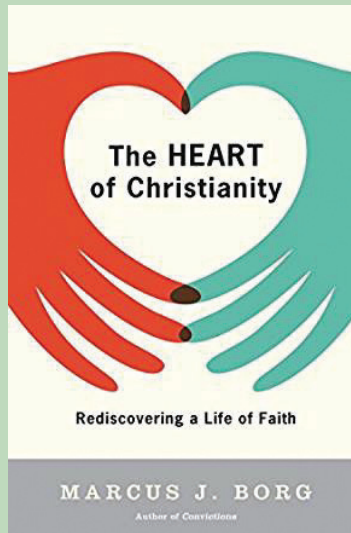
The Heart of Christianity

by Marcus J. Borg

Borg's *The Heart of Christianity* is divided into two parts. The second part I wish every Christian would read. The first part I don't believe is for everyone. Part 1 is for those for whom the kind of Christianity they grew up with, no longer works. If you need a new way to practice your faith, If you love Jesus, but struggle with where Christianity is today, this book is for you.

In *The Heart of Christianity*, world-renowned Jesus scholar and author of the best-seller *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* argues that the essential ingredients of a Christian life—faith, being born again, the kingdom of God, the gospel of love—are as vitally important today as they have always been, even during this time of conflict and change in the church.

Borg wants to show us, as today's thinking Christians, how to discover a life of faith by reconceptualizing



familiar beliefs. Being born again, for example, has nothing to do with fundamentalism, but is a call to radical personal transformation. Talking about the kingdom of God does not mean that you are fighting against secularism, but that you have committed your life to the divine values of justice and love. And living the true Christian way is essentially about opening one's heart—to God, and to others. Above all else, Borg believes with passion and conviction that living the Christian life still makes sense.

[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.]



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

Testimonies

“I just love Herb and this ministry. Have been following him for several years and can't get enough of it. He brings the sayings of Jesus to light in such a clear and beautiful way as he relates it to our society today.” – **MS**

“You are an inspiration of challenging the status quo and not being afraid...” – **MP**

“You started opening my eyes to a beautiful ‘Love Family’ in which we are all included.” – **SF**

“You bring a unique and wonderful perspective to understanding Jesus in our world today.” – **KP**

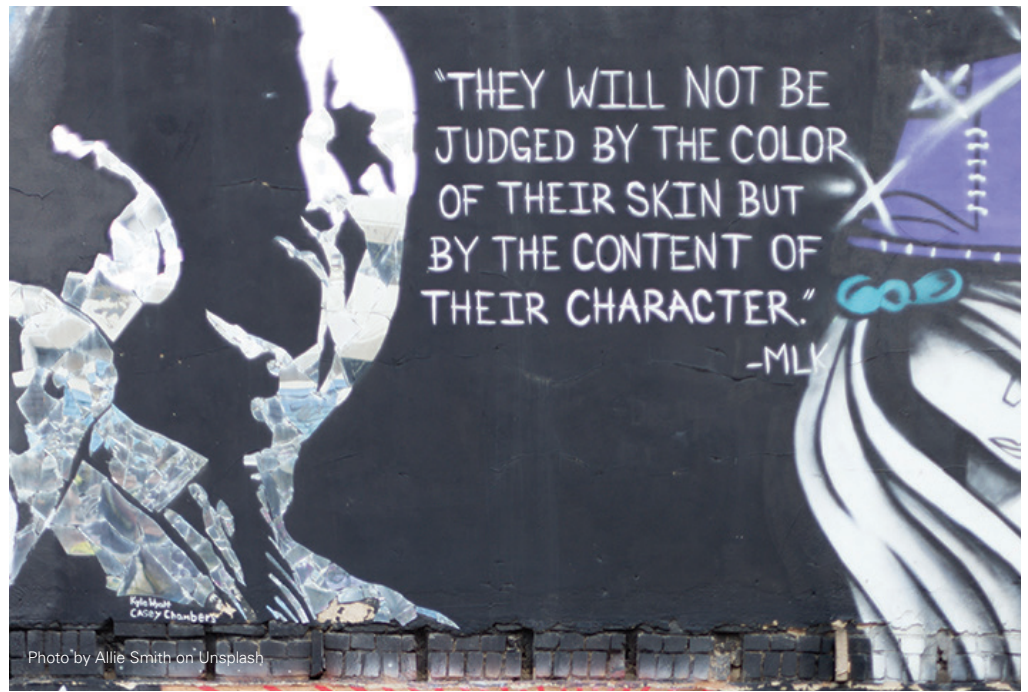
“I just want to thank you for all you give and the message you share! It has changed me and is healing my family. ‘Thanks’ could hardly be enough but I just want you to know how deeply grateful I am.” – **NG**

“I have a love/hate relationship with Herb and RHM. I love this ministry because it shows me things like I've never seen them before, but I hate it at the same time because it challenges me to my core and calls to me to rethink things and ultimately to change. I totally get why Herb says that in his following Jesus, some days, he is just white knuckled. But no matter how much I'm challenged, I want to thank you, Herb, truly for all you risk for the Kingdom. It has challenged and yet changed my life.” – **KG**

That he didn't fault the Samaritans. That he knew the Samaritans had a right to set the healthy boundaries they needed. I find it interesting that he didn't lecture the Samaritans on their need to show him, a Jewish man, some enemy-love. I want to believe that Jesus understood the Samaritans' right to self-determine whom they would and wouldn't offer lodging to. Social location matters, and I want to believe that Jesus is not just rebuking his own disciples for being offended but also taking the side of the Samaritans.

I've worked with multiple organizations in my town that are engaged in racial justice work here, and I continually have to choose to check my privilege. Sometimes I get it right, and sometimes I screw up and have to make things right. I've learned that what is okay for someone in one social location to do is not always okay for those in other social locations and vice versa. At a Christian conference event a couple years ago, a very popular, Christian preacher and author shut me out of the conversation and challenged my call to build egalitarian, mutual participation in Christian circles. Later that week, a friend who is queer and Latinx told me that another White straight male, an invited speaker, needed to bow out of a panel they were on to allow room for other voices and other perspectives. My beliefs about egalitarian, mutual participation in Christian circles were challenged again, but differently. Some would see these as the same thing, but, no, social location matters. It is perfectly right for people whose social location is less privileged and whose voices are typically excluded to demand a seat at the table instead. This is very different from someone whose social location is privileged demanding their voice be the only one heard.

If these thoughts are new to you, a great discussion of the principles of racial justice is *Teaching Tolerance's White Anti-Racism: Living the Legacy*. Answering the question, "What are the common mistakes white activists make when trying to be allies to people of color?" Yvette Robles, a Chicana and Community Relations Manager in Los Angeles, responds, "Not acknowledging that they have power and privilege by the mere fact that they are white. That is not to say that other parts of



their identity can't lead them to feel powerless, for example, being white and gay, or being white and working class. Another mistake I see is when white activists try to emulate a different culture by changing how they act, their speech or style of dress. It's one thing to appreciate someone else's culture; it's quite another to adopt it."

Georgette Norman, an African American woman and director of the Rosa Parks Library and Museum, adds, "The most common mistakes white activists make are setting an agenda with the illusion of inclusion, and having to have a franchise on comfort. God forbid a person of color says or does anything to make white activists feel uncomfortable. That means there can be no discussion of race and no challenge to their privilege, which means no challenge to their power."

Sejal Patel, a South Asian American woman and community organizer in South Asian immigrant communities answers the same question: "White anti-racists make a mistake when they shut out the poor and uneducated and keep in those 'in the know' to decide what's good for people of color. No movement can work where there is divisiveness. Also, if people of color want to have their own space and place in certain aspects of society—say for a weekend or a month—they shouldn't have to feel like they are being exclusive for doing this. White activists need to understand that society is their space and place

every single day, and they shouldn't feel threatened or left out."

I interpret Jesus in this story as acknowledging the degree of Jewish power and privilege he held in contrast with the Samaritans in his society. He respected their space. Jesus wasn't offended by them protecting their space. In fact he rebukes his fellow Jewish male disciples for taking offense and becoming defensive (offensive).

The disciples could have found biblical examples to use to justify their retaliation of "calling fire down from heaven." They could have used Elijah's words in 2 Kings 1:10: "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!" They could have appealed to other stories like the tale of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, where even "the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the LORD out of the heavens." (Genesis 19:24).

Jesus could have become defensive and chosen to use any of these stories against those who received Jewish violence, and he didn't.

So what can people of privilege learn from this story?

Check your defensiveness.

I just finished reading the late James H. Cone's posthumously published book,

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RHM's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/

This past month...



Change is Brewing

And, unlike in Jesus's saying, there are many "laborers" teaching values that parallel and sometimes even center the values and ethics found in the Jesus of the gospels. Some of these laborers are within Christianity, but quite a few of them are not. It is this universal set of values that we must begin to recognize. To each of you out there laboring for change, you're not alone. Keep living out those values, living in love, setting in motion a different tomorrow.

Read more at: patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/07/change-brewing/



Sheep Among Wolves and the Power of Community

"This vision involves embracing an ethic of risk...we are also reminded that our hope is not in following heroic, unilateral liberators but in discovering and applying the power of mutual, participatory, non-violent communities."

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/07/sheep-wolves-power-community/



A Primer on Self Affirming, Nonviolence (Part 1)

"But today most of Christianity either rejects Jesus' nonviolence outright or embraces nonviolence in a way that leaves marginalized and exploited people passive in the face of injustice and harms them. There are alternatives... I want to offer an interpretative lens that I refer to as Self-Affirming Nonviolent Resistance."

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/07/primer-self-affirming-nonviolence-01/



Taking the Challenges of Societal Change Seriously

"Either way, the confrontation in this passage, for me, is hard. It's a serious wake-up call to us to genuinely understand what we are signing up for when we choose to lean more deeply into and begin following the teachings of the historical Jesus. This journey is not for those who desire to remain comfortable..."

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/07/taking-challenges-societal-change-seriously/



Staying Awake

"These accusations are the status quo's efforts to keep you quiet, passive, compliant, and asleep. So keep speaking your truth into the darkness of injustice..."

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/07/staying-awake/



Learning to Listen to Someone Else's Truth

"Someone else's truth is unrecognizable to us. In that very place, a humble posture of listening becomes important as we labor to transform our world into a safer, more just, more compassionate home for us all...As we each listen to the stories of those whose experience differs from our own, we can learn to build communities where each person receives what is necessary for them to thrive and develop into the best version of themselves that they can be."

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/07/listen-somone-elses-truth/



Liking Jesus, But Not Christianity

"If today you find yourself resonating with Jesus's socio-political-economic teachings, but out of step with most things Christian or religious, you are not alone. You're in the right story..."

Read more at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/07/liking-jesus-not-christianity/

Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody: The Making of A Black Theologian. In one portion, Cone recounts how many of his white listeners responded when he spoke out on loving his own blackness and embracing Black Power:

"When I spoke of loving blackness and embracing Black Power, they heard hate toward white people. Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and James Baldwin confronted similar reactions. Any talk about the love and beauty of blackness seemed to arouse fear and hostility in whites." (James H. Cone, *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody*, Orbis Books. Kindle Edition, Kindle Location 592)

We can do better than defensiveness. In this story of Jesus I hear the call to lay mine down.

Straight people can choose to listen to LGBTQ people rather than be defensive.

White people can choose to listen to people of color rather than be defensive.

Cis men can choose to listen to women, cis and trans, rather than be defensive.

Cis folk can choose to listen to trans folk rather than be defensive.

Non-disabled folk can choose to listen to disabled folk rather than be defensive.

Wealthy people can choose to listen to the poor and working classes rather than be defensive.

Wisdom is not the sole property of those who are most widely read or who have gained the most academic accomplishments.

Another world is possible.

But we're going to have to learn to listen to those whose experiences are less privileged and end the very system of privilege if we are to get there.

"When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, 'Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?' But Jesus turned and rebuked them."
(Luke 9:54-55)

HeartGroup Application

1. Can you name a time when listening to someone else's experience made a significant change in your own understanding?

2. Share with the group what it was that actually changed.
3. How can we make a practice out of learning to listen to others?
Be creative.
4. Choose something from this discussion and put it into practice this week.

Thanks for checking in with us. I'm so glad you're here.

Today, choose love, compassion, taking action and seeking justice.

Together we can choose to take steps toward a world that is a safe, compassionate, just home for us all. I love each of you dearly. I'll see you next month. ■



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

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

**Go to
renewedheartministries.com
and click "Sign Up!"**

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.

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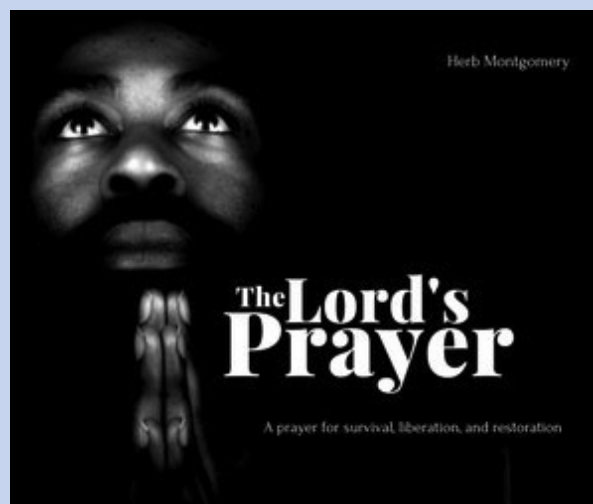
Featured Presentation

This month we are in the middle of our online eSight/podcast series titled *A Primer on Self-Affirming Nonviolence*.

We thought what better presentation to go along with this online series than this presentation from our Audio series on the Lord's Prayer on non-violence, as well. It is

our hope that your heart will be renewed and your feet set in motion to follow Jesus more deeply as you listen to this month's presentation:

A Path Toward Compassion and Justice by Herb Montgomery.



"Seeing the opposite of justice as mercy distorts what the Bible means by justice. Most often in the Bible, the opposite of God's justice is not God's mercy, but human injustice. The issue is the shape of our life together as societies, not whether the mercy of God will supersede the justice of God in the final judgement."

Marcus J. Borg

The Heart of Christianity: Discovering a Life of Faith
How we can be passionate believers today

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