

RENEWED  
HEART  
MINISTRIES



# αwakenings

∴ THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES ∴ SEPTEMBER 2019 ∴



## Inside This Issue:

### Page 2

*RHM Working for  
a World of Love  
and Justice*

Budget Thermometer

New Book Update  
*Finding Jesus*

### Page 3

*A Primer on  
Self-Affirming  
Nonviolence (Part 1)*

### Page 4

Book of the Month  
for September  
*Jesus for Everyone*  
Podcast

### Page 6

RHM's  
*Social Jesus* Blog  
on Patheos

### Page 7

RHM's Free Resources

### Page 8

Featured Presentation

RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

P.O. Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901

Phone: 304.520.0030

Email: [info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)

Follow RHM!



@RenewedHeartMin



Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery

# Renewed Heart Ministries

Working for a World of Love and Justice



I want to 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.

*Help Christians be better humans.* Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to Renewed Heart Ministries, today.

To do so either go to our website at [renewedheartministries.com](http://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 already are supporting this ministry, I want to say thank you. We could not continue being a voice for change without your support

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

**January-July Budget Goal: \$107,919.00**

**January-July Contributions Received: \$51,211.29**

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

**June Contributions Received: \$5,125.39**

To support our work and help us grow, go to: [renewedheartministries.com](http://renewedheartministries.com) and click "donate"

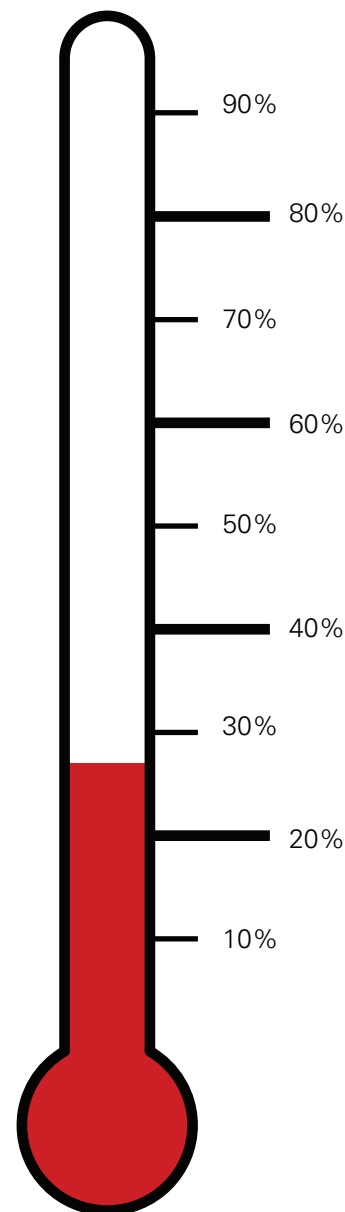
or mail your contribution to:  
Renewed Heart Ministries  
PO Box 1211  
Lewisburg, WV 24901

**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.

**Support the work of Renewed Heart Ministries by making a tax-deductible donation, today.**

**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.

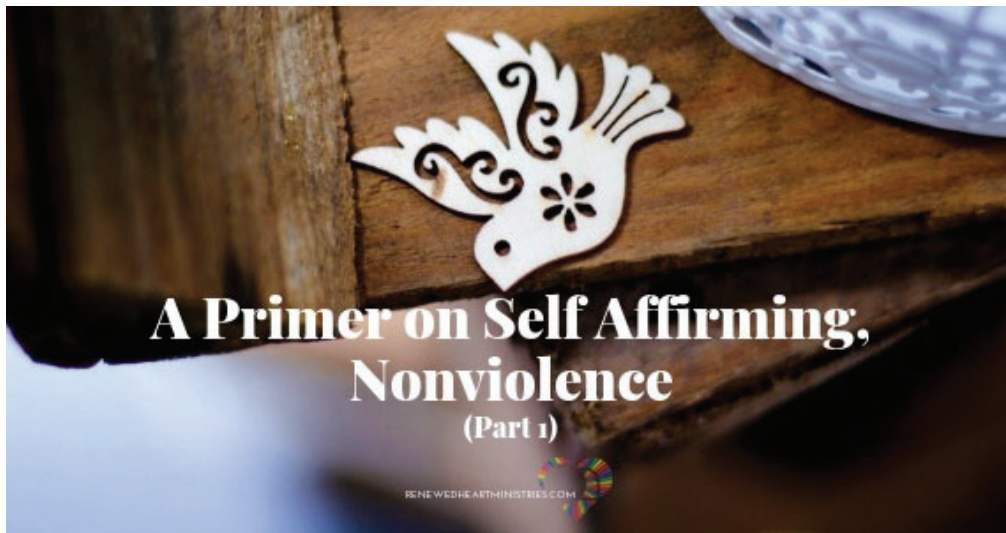
We are beyond excited, and everyone who has read the drafts up till this point are excited, too!

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



## A Primer on Self Affirming, Nonviolence (Part 1)

RENEWEDHEARTMINISTRIES.COM

Photo by Tamara Menzi on Unsplash

**"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."**

by Herb Montgomery

Seven years ago I wrote a series on Nonviolence. Much has changed for me since then. Originally, my understanding of nonviolence had been deeply influenced by those who define nonviolence in a way that is root-ed in self-sacrifice. I've grown to understand nonviolence differently. I've grown to see that this way of defining nonviolence is itself violent. A healthier, more life-giving form of nonviolence is needed. This is significant enough for me that I believe a rewrite of that series seven years ago on nonviolence is important. In the words of Katie Cannon from the introduction of Delores Williams' classic *Sisters in the Wilderness*, "Theologians need to think seriously about the real-life consequences of redemptive suffering, God-talk that equates the acceptance of pain, misery and abuse as the way for true believers to live as authentic Christian disciples. Those who spew such false teaching and warped preaching must cease and desist." I have so much gratitude for Cannon and others for helping me see this. I have thought seriously in response to womanist and feminist critiques of defining nonviolence in ways that are rooted in self-sacrifice and the myth of redemptive suffering. It is as a result of listening to these critiques that I feel that this revision is needed.

Let's begin.

In Matthew's Gospel we read these words:

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'

But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too. And if someone takes you to court to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. And if one of the occupation troops forces you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two miles. When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow something, lend it to him. You have heard that it was said, 'Love your friends, hate your enemies.' But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become the children of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil. Why should God reward you if you love only the people who love you? Even the tax collectors do that! And if you speak only to your friends, have you done anything out of the ordinary? Even the gentiles do that! You must be perfect—just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:38-48)

When it comes to nonviolence in general, it seems to me that Western, Americanized Christianity has lost its way. Maybe we've forgotten what the road we're supposed to be on even looks like. Since Jesus spoke the above words two millennia ago, followers and non-followers alike have read them and struggled to interpret and apply them in life-giving ways. I want to offer an interpretative lens that I refer to as *Self-Affirming Non-violent Resistance*.

The first word I want to focus on is

"Nonviolent."

Today, many Christians say that Jesus' teaching on nonviolence is only for certain groups, certain time periods, or certain cultural circumstances. Even so it is obvious that Jesus taught a form of nonviolence. Further, too often Christians who do teach nonviolence teach a self-sacrificing form of nonviolence rather than a self-affirming form. I once did this myself because during the first 300 years of Christian history, many Christians interpreted Jesus' teaching as self-sacrificing nonviolence, too.

But listening to marginalized communities and their experiences with nonviolence opens up new understandings of what Jesus may have originally taught.

I am fully aware that some supporters of Renewed Heart Ministries who are wonderful Christians have a different opinion from me on this topic and do not subscribe to nonviolence. Thank you for tracking with us on this series anyway. It would be easier for you to focus on things that don't pull you out of your comfort zone. Through this series, we will look at this subject again, secure and confident in our love, respect and consideration of each other.

I want to also speak to those who subscribe to self-sacrificial nonviolence. Our social structures already deny justice and full humanity to so many people. They're forced to deny their selves. For this sector of society, I don't believe Jesus would teach them to further sacrifice themselves in a society that already requires that. I believe Jesus'

*continued on page 5*



# Book of the Month for September 2019

## *Reading the Bible from the Margins*

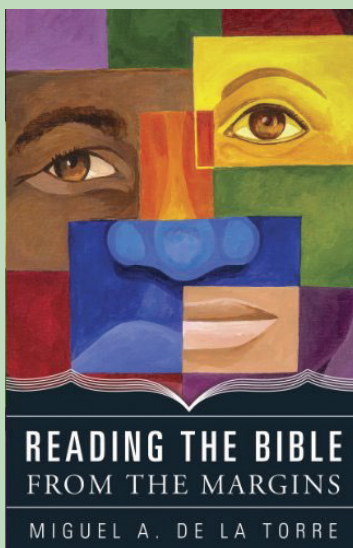
by Miguel A. De La Torre

This is one of our favorite books we are recommending this year. If you are unfamiliar with how social locations impact interpretations of the sacred text of the Bible, this book is a fantastic introduction

The gospel is thriving on the margins of society. The question for the rest of society is whether we will participate.

This introduction focuses on how issues involving race, class, and gender influence our understanding of the Bible.

Describing how “standard” readings of the Bible are not always



acceptable to people or groups on the “margins,” this book offers valuable new insights into biblical texts today.

[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**

## Quotable Quotes

*“Violence can beget fear, stalemate, annihilation, dominance, or more violence, but it cannot beget love, justice, abundant life, community, or peace.”*

— Rita Nakashima Brock  
& Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker;  
*Saving Paradise*



form of nonviolence gave marginalized people a way to affirm themselves, affirm their humanity, to hold on to their selves in a world that would either prefer they did not exist or demand that they “go back to where they came from.”

Nonviolence, even self-affirming nonviolent resistance, is a disposition, an attitude, and a way of life where the means and the ends are aligned. We do not choose the way of violence in order to maintain peace: Jesus’ way of peace *disrupted* unjust systems. Jesus’ way arrived at peace through resistance, by establishing distributive justice for all, especially those our communities push to the edges and margins.

Today we have overwhelming evidence that the early followers of Jesus were nonviolent. Over the church’s first three centuries, those who held onto nonviolence drifted into more self-sacrificing forms of it. Yet their testimony for some form of nonviolence is still relevant and challenging to Christians today who reject nonviolence completely, regardless of its form. The U.S. Christian church has become something that early Christians wouldn’t recognize. The statements that follow are representative of the voices in Christianity for its first 300 years.

“We (Christians) no longer take up sword against nation, nor do we learn war any more, but we have become the children of peace.” —Origin

“And shall the son of peace take part in the battle when it does not become him even to sue at law? And shall he apply the chain, and the prison, and the torture, and the punishment, who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs?” —Tertullian

“Anyone who has the power of the sword, or who is a civil magistrate wearing the purple, should desist, or he should be rejected.” —Hippolytus

“Rather, it is better to suffer wrong than to inflict it. We would rather shed our own blood than stain our hands and our conscience with that of another.”

—Arnobius

“It makes no difference whether you put a man to death by word, or rather by the sword, since it is the act of putting to death itself which is prohibited.”

—Arnobius

“When God forbids killing, he doesn’t just ban murder, which is not permitted under the law even; he is also recommending us not to do certain things which are treated as lawful among men.” —Lactantius



Photo by Priscilla du Preez on Unsplash

In some of these statements we see love and nonviolence defined by the early church leaders as self-sacrifice, the willingness to suffer for the benefit of someone else. We’ll discuss this at greater lengths in this series when we listen to feminist and womanist voices and their critique. For now, Marcus J. Borg sums up the concern of self-sacrifice in his book *The Heart of Christianity*:

“Oppressed people, in society and in the family, have often been told to put their own selves last out of obedience to God. When thus understood, the message of the cross becomes an instrument of oppressive authority and self-abdication.” (p. 112)

Defining nonviolence as self-sacrifice for the oppressed has proven itself to be a violent form of nonviolence.

In this series I hope to offer an alternative view.

I interpret Jesus’ teachings on nonviolence similarly to Walter Wink who states that Jesus’ nonviolence gave oppressed communities, a way to “assert [their] own humanity and dignity...refuse to submit or to accept the inferior position [and] expose the injustice of the system.” (in *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*)

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.

In this series, we will consider Jesus’

sayings on the subject of nonviolence. We will then address frequently asked questions about applying nonviolence. Lastly we will listen to objections and critiques, not from those who would use violence to dominate or subjugate others, but from communities for whom a form of nonviolence has left them further oppressed, exploited and subjugated.

My hope is that we will arrive at a form of nonviolence that’s not only faithful to the Jesus story but that’s also life-giving and that bears the fruit of liberation, too.

This series is going to be a wonderful journey of discovery for us, regardless of where we begin. Whether we agree at the end of this series or not, our understanding will be greater as we explore what we believe and why.

We’ll begin in *Part 2*. For now, it will be enough for us to contemplate what this passage may hold for us today:

**“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too. And if someone takes you to court to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. And if one of the occupation troops forces**



# RHM's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/)

*This past month...*



## ***Our Communal Interdependence Versus Individualistic Independence***

Let's lean more deeply into our shared lives. Let's find ways relevant for our world today of acknowledging and tapping our interdependence and shared power, the power of community.

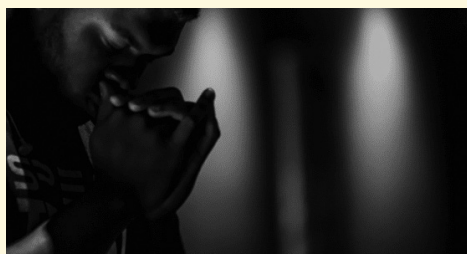
Read more at: [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/07/communal-interdependence-individualistic-independence/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/07/communal-interdependence-individualistic-independence/)



## ***Reading Jesus from the Margins***

For many, only when they discover for themselves the Jesus in the story from the perspective of their own social location do they realize there is an alternative, story Jesus that's radically different than the Jesus they encountered in the religion that formed around him.

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/reading-jesus-margins/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/reading-jesus-margins/)



## ***A Prayer for Societal Justice and an End to Violence***

We can make a choice to subvert our culture's tendency to value property over people or even treat people as property, and instead place people before both profit and property. The power of this choice should not be underestimated. It is the very stuff that has the potential to change our world.

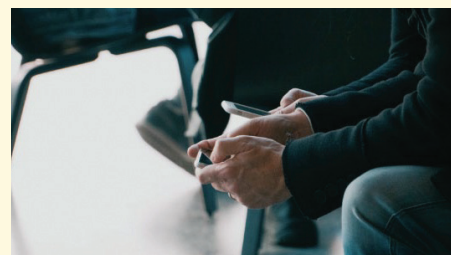
Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/prayer-societal-justice-end-violence/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/prayer-societal-justice-end-violence/)



## ***Beatitude for Those Who Perceive God in the Othered***

But all of this drives home the point. This reformulation is the result of what the vulnerable see! Those in positions of privilege and power in our society are so indoctrinated and socialized that they don't even see what is so wrong and dangerous about the traditional description of love-as-atoning sacrifice.

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/god-othered/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/god-othered/)



## ***Responses of Passive Apathy***

Change doesn't have to come through such violent upheaval. It could start today. Here. Now. With you and with me, if we will choose it.

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/responses-passive-apathy/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/responses-passive-apathy/)



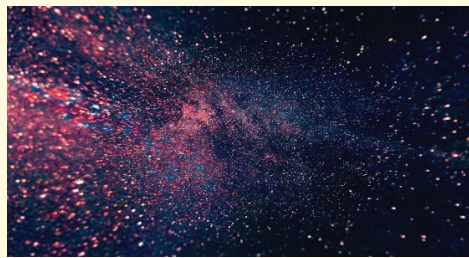
Photo by Rebecca Matthews on Unsplash



## Jesus and Marginalized Communities

The Jesus we meet in the Jesus story resonated with the marginalized and oppressed of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. It makes perfect sense that those who share that experience today will see within the Jesus story things that others in a more dominant social position will initially miss.

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/jesus-marginalized-communities/](http://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/jesus-marginalized-communities/)



## Responding to Rejection

I can't help but notice that history is cyclical. We in our society today may be being faced with similar choices between what we have now and a path of nonviolence and resource-sharing.

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/responding-rejection/](http://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/responding-rejection/)



## Listening to Those on the Margins and the Gendering of God

We can listen to the most vulnerable. We can hear from their experiences whether or not our "revelations" or interpretations of sacred texts produce good fruit, whether interpretations are life-giving or oppressive to those on the margins.

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/listening-margins-gendering-god/](http://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/listening-margins-gendering-god/)



## Things Only Seen by Those on the Margins

It doesn't matter the reason for subjugation or marginalization in domination systems. It's not the reason for the exclusion that Jesus rejects, but the exclusion itself!

Read more at [patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/things-seen-margins/](http://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2019/08/things-seen-margins/)

...Nonviolence continued from page 5

you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two miles. When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow something, lend it to him. You have heard that it was said, 'Love your friends, hate your enemies.' But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become the children of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil. Why should God reward you if you love only the people who love you? Even the tax collectors do that! And if you speak only to your friends, have you done anything out of the ordinary? Even the pagans do that! You must be perfect—just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

(Matthew 5:38-48)

## HeartGroup Application

1. This week, discuss whether or not you subscribe, at least in principle, to some form of nonviolence.
2. In what areas of your life are you practicing nonviolence? What do these practices look like?
3. What questions do you have about nonviolence? Have your group email some of those questions in to us here at Renewed Heart Ministries and they may just end up in this new series! I'd love to hear what you're thinking.

Thanks for checking in with us.

Wherever you are, keep choosing love, compassion, action and reparative and distributive justice.

Another world is possible, if we choose it. I love each of you dearly. ■

To continue this series go to: [renewedheartministries.com/Esights/08-02-2019](http://renewedheartministries.com/Esights/08-02-2019)

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

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

**Visit [renewedheartministries.com](http://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.

RENEWED  
HEART  
MINISTRIES



## Featured Presentation

This month, we are still in the middle of our online eSight/podcast series titled, *A Primer on Self-Affirming Nonviolence*. We thought we'd feature a summary presentation of this series that Herb gave in Australia last year by the same title *Self-Affirming Nonviolence*. Jesus' hope for the world was change.

Too often, nonviolence becomes violent when it teaches those whose selves are already being sacrificed to sacrifice themselves even more. 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:

***Self-Affirming Nonviolence*** by Herb Montgomery.



"In reality, the gospel is thriving in the margins of society. The real question facing the center, accustomed to confusing its interpretations with the biblical text itself, is whether those at the center will also participate in the body of Christ that already exists in the margins of society."

Miguel A. De La Torre  
Reading the Bible from the Margins

RENEWEDHEARTMINISTRIES.COM

