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P.O. Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901

Phone: 304.520.0030

Email: info@renewedheartministries.com

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of Love and Justice*

Renewed Heart Ministries is a nonprofit organization working for a world of love and justice.

We need your support to offer the kind of resources RHM provides.

Helping people find the intersection between their faith, compassion, and justice is work that continues to prove deeply needed.

Please consider making a donation to support Renewed Heart Ministries 'work, today.

You can donate online by clicking online at **renewedheartministries.com** or you can make a donation by mail at:

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



"The Jesus of John calls us to not let go of life but to take hold of it, to stand up for that which is life-giving, and to stand alongside the oppressed in our fight against injustice and death in all its expressions. May the same Advocate Spirit that took the side of the oppressed, marginalized, and those pushed to the edges of society in the Jesus story be found again, poured out on us as Jesus followers again today."

Spirit of Advocacy

by Herb Montgomery

Our readings this week are from John 15 and 16:

"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning. (John 15:26-27)

"But I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them. I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am

going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. " (John 16:4-15)

As we mentioned last week, these two passages belong to a section of John's gospel referred to as the farewell discourses. John 16 includes themes repeated throughout farewell addresses: departure and Jesus being on the way to "the Father" (cf. John 13:33, 36-37; 14:2-4, 28), Jesus' promise to send the Spirit as an advocate (cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26), the work of the advocated to guide them into truth (cf. John 14:6, 16-17). It's worth noting how clear and direct Jesus' speech is in these passages compared to his parables and sayings in the synoptic gospels. In those versions of the Jesus story, Jesus speaks much more cryptically, in parables and

metaphors. John does not include that kind of speech.

In the passage this week, Jesus uses the term advocate for the promise of the Spirit. This concept would have held a certain meaning for the original audience, the community of early Jesus followers. By the time John's gospel was written, the rift between Christians and the Jewish people had become wide, and so John not only includes conflict between these two now-separate communities, but also an alarming amount of anti-Jewish descriptions and antisemitic characterizations of those referred to as "the Jews." Given how Christians have treated our Jewish siblings throughout Christianity's history, we must be extremely careful with the gospel of John, and not perpetuate stereotypes or actions that have harmed or even proven lethal to Jewish people. This caution applies to the term "advocate," too.

Consider the following passages in John's version of the Jesus story where being removed from the synagogue is a penalty for Jewish people who follow Jesus.

"His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Anointed would be put out of the synagogue." (John 9:22)

"Nevertheless many, even of the authorities, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue." (John 12:42)

John's Jesus repeats the warning in John 12: "They will put you out of the synagogues." (John 16:2)

For that first audience, "advocate" would have called to mind actual legal proceedings Jewish leaders instated against Jesus' followers. The theme of being brought to trial appears in the early synoptic gospels as well:

"When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit." (Mark 13:11)

"When they hand you over, do not worry

about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." (Matthew 10:19-20)

"So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict." (Luke 21:14-15)

"When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say." (Luke 12:11-12)

Can we reclaim this idea of advocacy in life-giving ways within our social context today?

Advocacy means to publicly support a particular community, cause or policy.

In the Hebrew scriptures, advocacy meant perceiving God's role in our world (God as advocate of the oppressed) as well as the role God's people were to fulfill.

"God *judges* in favor of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry." (Psalm 146:7, italics added.)

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

"Happy are those who are concerned for the poor; the Lord will help them when they are in trouble." (Psalms 41:1)

"Open your mouth for the voiceless, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, And defend the rights of the afflicted and needy." (Proverbs 31:8-9)

"How terrible it will be for those who make unfair laws, and those who write laws that make life hard for people. They are not fair to the poor, and they rob my people of their rights. They allow people to steal from widows and to take from orphans what really belongs to them." (Isaiah 10:1-2)

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6)

"A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth..." (Isaiah 42:3-4)

Too often, we as Christians have become fixated on helping people reach a post-mortem heaven or escape some mythical hell: our focus is always on tomorrow and never on today. But if we would be humble enough to learn from our Jewish siblings, remembering Jesus himself was a Jew long before the Christian religion ever existed, we would learn how to effectively engage systemic injustice in our world. The Jesus story calls Jesus' followers to advocacy in the here and now. I so deeply appreciate the words of the late Rev. Dr. James H. Cone on this point

"The Christian community, therefore, is that community that freely becomes oppressed, because they know that Jesus himself has defined humanity's liberation in the context of what happens to the little ones. Christians join the cause of the oppressed in the fight for justice not because of some philosophical principle of "the Good" or because of a religious feeling of sympathy for people in prison. Sympathy does not change the structures of injustice. The authentic identity of Christians with the poor is found in the claim which the Jesus -encounter lays upon their own life-style, a claim that connects the word "Christian" with the liberation of the poor. Christians fight not for humanity in general but for themselves and out of their love for concrete human beings." (James H. Cone; *The God of the Oppressed*, p. 135)

This weekend, we celebrate Pentecost, which memorializes the pouring out of the Spirit on the early church. What did it look like when this Advocate Spirit was poured out on Jesus? How did that Spirit characterize his life work?

"The Spirit [advocate] of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to

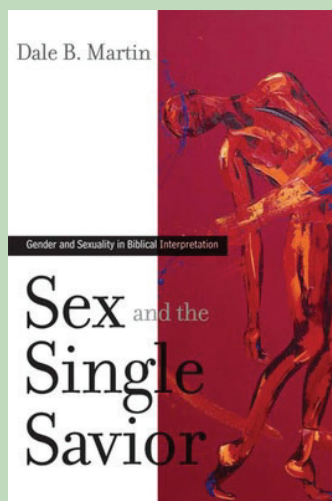
RHM's Recommended Reading for June

Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation

by Dale B. Martin

Probing into numerous questions about gender and sexuality, Dale Martin delves into the biblical texts anew and unearths surprising findings. Avoiding preconceptions about ancient sexuality, he explores the ethics of desire and marriage and pays careful attention to the original meanings of words, especially those used as evidence of Paul's opposition to homosexuality. For example, after a remarkably faithful reading of the scriptural texts, Martin concludes that our contemporary obsession with marriage--and the whole search for the "right" sexual relationships--is antithetical to the message of the gospel. In all of these essays, however, Martin argues for engaging Scripture in a way that goes beyond the standard historical-critical questions and the assumptions of textual agency in order to find a faith that has no foundations other than Jesus Christ.

Remember, 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.



Spirit of Advocacy continued from page 3

proclaim the year of the Lord's favor [cancellation of all debt]." (Luke 4:18-19, cf. Isaiah 61:1-2)

The Jesus story calls to us to have this same Spirit mark our lives today too!

I'll close this week with words from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that still give us much to consider:

"You may be 38 years old, as I happen to be, and one day, some great opportunity stands before you and calls upon you to stand for some great principle, some great issue, some great cause. And you refuse to do it because you are afraid. You refuse to do it because you want to live longer. You're afraid that you will lose your job, or you are afraid that you will be criticized or that you will lose your popularity, or you're afraid that somebody will stab or shoot or bomb your house. So you refuse to take a stand. Well, you may go on and live until

you are ninety, but you are just as dead at 38 as you would be at ninety. And the cessation of breathing in your life is but the belated announcement of an earlier death of the spirit. You died when you refused to stand up for right. You died when you refused to stand up for truth. You died when you refused to stand up for justice." (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Ebenezer Baptist Church; 11/5/67; Atlanta, GA)

This is especially applicable given the recent events in Palestine. The Jesus of John calls us to not let go of life but to take hold of it, to stand up for that which is life-giving, and to stand alongside the oppressed in our fight against injustice and death in all its expressions. May the same Advocate Spirit that took the side of the oppressed, marginalized, and those pushed to the edges of society in the Jesus story be found again, poured out on us as Jesus followers again today.

This Pentecost, may this be not merely our prayer, but our choice as well.

Are you taking advantage of all of RHM's *free* resources?

**Sign up today so you
don't miss a thing! Go to
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and click "Sign Up!"**



HeartGroup Application

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/ Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. What does advocacy look like for you and how does it inform your own Jesus following? Discuss with your group.
3. What can you do this week, big or small, to continue setting in motion the work of shaping our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for everyone?

Thanks for checking in with us, today.

Right where you are, keep living in love, choosing compassion, taking action, and working toward justice. ■

SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Recent Posts from RHM's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/



The Inherent Relationship of Love and Justice (Part 1)

"There is a way to teach God's love that is complicit in oppression and is harmful to marginalized communities. There is another way to teach love that can be foundational to the work of transforming our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for everyone."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/05/inherent-relationship-love-justice-part1/

The Inherent Relationship of Love and Justice (Part 2)

"Love that only leaves the privileged in a conscience-appeased state so they can sleep better at night isn't a love worth having."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/05/inherent-relationship-love-justice-part2/

The Inherent Relationship of Love and Justice (Part 3)

"We can explore ways that understanding Universal love that lead us, not to private, assured passivity, but to the work of remaining in that love by shaping our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for each and every one of us."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/05/inherent-relationship-love-justice-part3



Hated by the Right People (Part 1)

"Being hated by the world is a theme in many sectors of Christianity that has been sorely abused."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/05/hated-right-people-part1

Hated by the Right People (Part 2)

"Too often we can conflate criticism and hate. Someone not liking something doesn't mean they want it destroyed. And yet, if you find yourself being genuinely hated as a Jesus follower, it's important to consider how much social location matters."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/05/hated-right-people-part2

Hated by the Right People (Part 3)

"If we find ourselves opposed by the marginalized because we are actually standing between them and justice, obstructing their path toward a society that recognizes their full humanity, then we need to seriously address why it is that our story is so fundamentally different from the Jesus story that we hold so dear."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/5/hated-right-people-part3



Spirit of Advocacy (Part 1)

"Given how Christians have treated our Jewish siblings throughout Christianity's history, we must be extremely careful with the gospel of John, and not perpetuate stereotypes or actions that have harmed or even proven lethal to Jewish people."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/05/spirit-advocacy-part1

Spirit of Advocacy (Part 2)

"If we would be humble enough to learn from our Jewish siblings, remembering Jesus himself was a Jew long before the Christian religion ever existed, we would learn how to effectively engage systemic injustice in our world."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/05/spirit-advocacy-part2

Spirit of Advocacy (Part 3)

"It's a story that is intended to awaken in us the choice to shape a different kind of society, where those presently marginalized are centered, where surviving is replaced with thriving, a society that is a safe, compassionate, just home for everyone."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/05/spirit-advocacy-part3



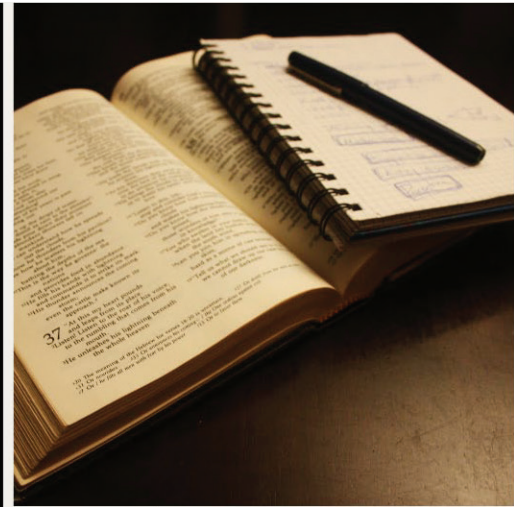
Weekly Zoom HeartGroup on Wednesday Nights

Each Wednesday evening, Glendale City Church will be hosting a Zoom-HeartGroup led by Herb Montgomery. Our discussion each week will focus on the content in Renewed Heart Ministries weekly eSight articles and the *Jesus For Everyone* podcast published each Friday. The time of each Zoom session will be on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. Pacific/ 10:00 p.m. Eastern.

Email info@renewedheartministries.com to receive the link for the Zoom meeting.

EPISODE 373: A BETTER WAY TO TELL OUR STORIES

"Classifying our flesh, bodies, and material world or nature as, at best, unimportant or disposable and, at worst, evil or something to be saved from has yielded deeply harmful, destructive fruit throughout Christian history . . . That disregard then led to a privatized, personal, individualistic form of Christianity that was complicit in the oppression of vulnerable populations. We encounter the fruit of this today whenever Christians speak negatively of social justice and related movements for a more equitable society . . . Are there better ways to tell our stories?"



New episodes every Friday!

The *Jesus For Everyone* podcast.

A weekly podcast where we talk about the intersection of faith and societal justice and what a first-century, Jewish prophet of the poor from Galilee offers us today in our work of compassion, love and justice.

renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts

Last Month's Events

Last month, I had the privilege of sharing with three congregations, two via Zoom and one in person.

The two Zoom gatherings I was invited to speak at were Good News Fellowship in Toronto, Canada and Tacoma Spanish Adventist Church where my presentation was translated by Pastor Art Geronimo. The service I was invited to speak at in person was here in Lewisburg at the Edgewood Presbyterian Church for Pentecost Sunday on what it looks like in our



societal context today to be people under the outpouring of the Spirit.

I want to thank all three congregations for inviting speak last month with you. Participating in each event was a genuine blessing.

Sincerely,

Herb Montgomery
Director I Renewed Heart Ministries

Renewed Heart Ministries is a nonprofit organization working for a world of love and justice. We need your support to impact lives and provide the kind of resources and analysis RHM offers.

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

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

To do so online go to renewedheartministries.com and click "Donate." 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.

**2021's Projected Budget
Goal: \$185,000.00**

**May's Budget Goal:
\$15,416.67**

**May's Contributions
Received:
\$4,904.79**

**2021 Budget Goal
Through May:
\$77,083.35**

**2021 Contributions Received
Through May:
\$34,160.25**

**Whether you give
\$5 or \$5,000,
every amount helps us
continue our work.**

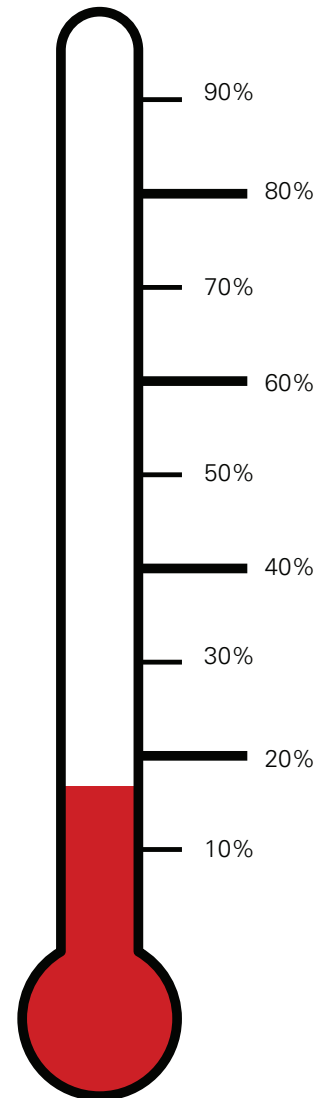


Photo by Freya Wang on Unsplash.com

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:
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Lewisburg, WV 24901

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

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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Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

"Whoever loves
has been born of
God."

1 John 4:7

#HappyPrideMonth



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