

RENEWED
HEART
MINISTRIES



αwakenings

∴ THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES ∴ JULY 2021 ∴



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Herb Montgomery

RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES



*Working for a World
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.

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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.

A Preferential Option for the Excluded

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading is from the gospel of Mark.

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes,

"This is what liberation theologians refer to as a preferential option. The word preferential means a preference or partiality and implies favor or privilege. The word option does not mean that the preference is optional, but rather implies a choice between multiple possibilities. In other words, a preferential option means a deliberate choice among many possibilities and the choice to prefer those whom the present system marginalizes or makes vulnerable to harm."

I will be made well." Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered,

he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat. (Mark 5:21-43)

The story of Jairus' daughter and I have history. Over twenty years ago now, between our elder daughter and our younger daughter, Crystal and I went through the horrible experience of having two still births back-to-back. During this chapter of our lives, we were both pretty fundamentalist, and the story of Jairus' daughter, especially the phrase talitha cum, held special meaning for us.

Today, this story is meaningful to me for different reasons. As is typical in the gospel of Mark, our reading this week includes one story interrupted by another. Mark repeatedly uses the narrative technique of interrupting one story with a secondary one. The first story envelopes a second story to direct listeners' focus and understanding of both.

We are meant to compare these two stories, giving both stories space to explain the other. One hint of this is their parallelism: Jairus' daughter is 12 years old and the woman with the vaginal hemorrhage has suffered for 12 years as well.

The contrasting social locations of these recipients of Jesus' work is one of the most consequential comparisons for our justice work today. We'll discuss more in a moment which social location is centered.

There is so much to address in both of these stories. Worth exploring in our limited time this week is the woman's willingness to violate the letter of the Torah and her community's taboos about uncleanness and touching those considered unclean. By violating those

rules, she arrives at the life-giving spirit and intention of the Torah according to her interpretation. Imagine how the woman in this story had to wrestle with the Torah's commands to find the courage to reach out and touch even the hem of Jesus' garment.

"When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. Anyone who touches her bed will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. Anyone who touches anything she sits on will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, they will be unclean till evening. If a man has sexual relations with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean. When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period. (Leviticus 15:19-25)

In the longest of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Temple Scroll, we read of special places, quarantine spaces, that were to be kept outside the city and its population for lepers, those with skin diseases, those "afflicted with discharge," menstruating women, and women giving birth (see Johann Maier, *The Temple Scroll: An Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, p. 14). Can we reclaim this idea of advocacy in life-giving ways within our social context today?

This passage from Leviticus, the social taboos for those considered unclean, and restricting those considered unclean to areas designated for quarantine away from the rest of the community might also explain why she was so reluctant to come forward in the story. She feared reprisal for the violation of even being in a crowd bumping into each other, much

less touching Jesus too.

This leads me back to the subject of social location and the tension we find in this narrative between the stories of Jairus' daughter and the woman sick for 12 years. Not all teachings are universal. Today, some things are acceptable for those in marginalized social locations, but not acceptable, or even offensive, if practiced by those who are more centered or socially privileged. There are things women can say and do that men should not. There are actions appropriate for Black communities and other communities of color that are not acceptable for White people. During Pride month, for example, there are some actions that straight people should not do because they would be appropriative. Social location matters.

When we read this week's narrative, we typically contrast the social locations of Jairus, a named synagogue leader, and this nameless woman who, because of her condition, is meant to live her life in quarantine and exiled from the rest of the community, including her family.

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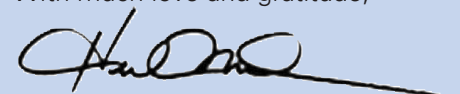
Last Month's Events

Last month, I had the privilege of being invited to speak at the Edgewood Presbyterian Church. You can access this presentation on Edgewood's Facebook page, available for public viewing, at: facebook.com/EdgewoodPresbyterianChurch/videos/418528402552827

The title of the presentation I gave was *A Preferential Option*.

Thank you so much for your support that makes opportunities like this possible.

With much love and gratitude,



Herb Montgomery
Director I Renewed Heart Ministries

But the story actually prioritizes and centers this marginalized woman over the named, male, synagogue leader.

This is what liberation theologians refer to as a preferential option. The word preferential means a preference or partiality and implies favor or privilege. The word option does not mean that the preference is optional, but rather implies a choice between multiple possibilities. In other words, a preferential option means a deliberate choice among many possibilities and the choice to prefer those whom the present system marginalizes or makes vulnerable to harm.

In this story, Jesus practices a preferential option for someone his society is excluding, and he deliberately chooses to prioritize her over someone his society shows great preference for. The fact that the male synagogue leader gets a name in this story while the woman remains nameless is a hint.

Consider the playground teeter-totter for a moment. When one side is lifted up higher than the other, placing the same equal force on both ends of the board would result in no change whatsoever. For the board to balance, one side must receive the upward force or pressure while the other side is left alone.

In the same way, in a hospital, more critical cases are prioritized over less critical ones, and not because some lives are more valuable than others but because some lives are in danger of greater threat. This is exactly the reality missed by those who respond to Black Lives Matter with "All Lives Matter." It's because all lives matter that Black lives matter. Black lives are under greater threat in our present system and therefore, Jesus followers especially should practice a preferential option for Black lives.

The practice of a preferential option is also at the heart of the reparations debate, which received media attention this spring around the anniversary of the Tulsa Massacre. Tulsa was not an isolated event. All throughout this country, systems and individuals who practice a preferential option for Whiteness have stolen generational wealth from Black communities. For

RHM's Recommended Reading for July

Belonging: A German Reckons with History and Home

by Nora Krug

*Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award *Silver Medal Society of Illustrators*

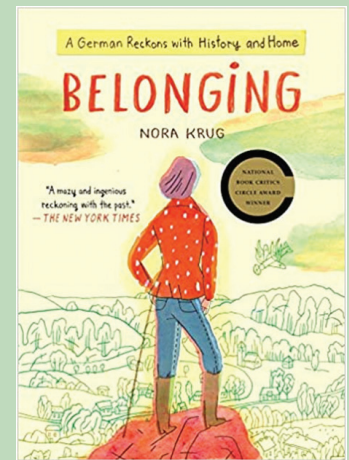
*Named a Best Book of the Year by *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *NPR*, *Comics Beat*, *The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and *Library Journal*

This "ingenious reckoning with the past" (*The New York Times*), by award-winning artist Nora Krug investigates the hidden truths of her family's wartime history in Nazi Germany.

Nora Krug was born decades after the fall of the Nazi regime, but the Second World War cast a long shadow over her childhood and youth in the city of Karlsruhe, Germany. Yet she knew little about her own family's involvement; though all four grandparents lived through the war, they never spoke of it.

After twelve years in the US, Krug realizes that living abroad has only intensified her need to ask the questions she didn't dare to as a child. Returning to Germany, she

equity to be reestablished and for distributive justice to be achieved, we must now practice a preferential option for those whose material wealth has been stolen. 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



visits archives, conducts research, and interviews family members, uncovering in the process the stories of her maternal grandfather, a driving teacher in Karlsruhe during the war, and her father's brother Franz-Karl, who died as a teenage SS soldier. In this extraordinary quest, "Krug erases the boundaries between comics, scrapbooking, and collage as she endeavors to make sense of 20th-century history, the Holocaust, her German heritage, and her family's place in it all" (*The Boston Globe*). A highly inventive, "thoughtful, engrossing" (*Minneapolis Star-Tribune*) graphic memoir, *Belonging* packs the power of Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* and David Small's *Stitches*" (*NPR.org*).

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.

pushed to the edges of society in the Jesus story be found again, poured out on us as Jesus followers again today.

In the game of Monopoly, you can't give one player an advantage and then half-way through the game say preferential options are now unfair so no one gets any special treatment. That would leave the original preferential treatment in place. No, a preferential option must benefit those who've been disenfranchised until each person can

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SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



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

Articles posted each week at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/



A Better Way to Tell Our Stories (Part 1)

"We encounter the fruit of this today whenever Christians speak negatively of social justice and related movements for a more equitable society."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/05/better-way-tell-stories-part1/

A Better Way to Tell Our Stories (Part 2)

"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."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/05/better-way-tell-stories-part2/

A Better Way to Tell Our Stories (Part 3)

"Do we find teachings lifted up in the Jesus story that aid our work of healing our world's pain today? If we do, then it is in this healing that our passage rings true."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/05/better-way-tell-stories-part3/



Binding the Strong Man (Part 1)

"Outgrowing these values is often part of the work we must do to participate in making our world a safe and equitable home for everyone. We must build on the good we gained from our families and also be willing to evolve beyond the harmful. Speaking out when one's extended family is aligned with the opposition is difficult. I know this personally."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/06/binding-strong-man-part1/

Binding the Strong Man (Part 2)

"These are not just stories of mythical demons and exorcisms. That shallow understanding misses the broader point. These stories are political."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/06/binding-strong-man-part2/

Binding the Strong Man (Part 3)

"Today our strong man could be capitalism, White supremacy, Christian nationalism, cisheterosexism, and more. All of these working separately and together comprise the strong men that we must bind in our time."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/06/binding-strong-man-part3/



Misclassifying As Weeds (Part 1)

"This week's reading is asking us to check our assumptions about what we have classified as weeds. What if we've made a mistake? What if we've judged something to be a harmful weed, but that judgment is quite incorrect?"

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/06/misclassifying-weeds-part1/

Misclassifying As Weeds (Part 2)

"Similarly, the call to affirm, embrace, and include LGBTQ Christians in the church is not a call to affirm things that are intrinsically harmful but a call to help us recognize that the LGBTQ community should not be on the 'harmful' list in the first place."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/06/misclassifying-weeds-part2/

Misclassifying As Weeds (Part 3)

"I have a hunch that some translators may be trying to avoid the misogyny in the original text. Yet these translations produce demonstrable bodily harm to a group of human beings, and that fruit should warn us about their roots."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/06/misclassifying-weeds-part3/

experience an equitable chance in the game. Only then will both sides of the table be playing with the same rules.

Pride month is another example. The LGBTQ community has been shamed into hiding, denied basic human rights of employment, housing, and basic accommodations, and so during Pride month people can reject that shame and heterosexists' attempts to label them as "less than." Pride is not, as some Christians say, a rejection of humility. Pride for the LGBTQ community rejects being labelled as of less worth than others. Those who are falsely claiming that we should also have a "straight pride" month ignore the fact that we already have twelve months in a year when straight people are prioritized and told that they belong. As an LGBTQ friend of mine says, "LGBTQ Pride is the opposite of shame, not the opposite of humility."

What this story doesn't address is the way that Jairus' daughter remains subsumed by him and his social location. A good question for us to wrestle with today is what is the right preferential option for Jairus' daughter, the actual patient? Does she have to pay for the social status of her father? In the end, Jairus' daughter also receives healing. In the end, both parties receive what they need. But to arrive there, Jesus chose a preferential option for a nameless woman forced to live on the outside of her community, over prioritizing the named leader that typically would have received the priority over others.

Who is the Jesus story calling you to practice a preferential option for this week?

HeartGroup Application

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. Who is the Jesus story calling you to practice a preferential option for this week? Share with your group.

EPISODE 377: A PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE EXCLUDED

"This is what liberation theologians refer to as a preferential option. The word preferential means a preference or partiality and implies favor or privilege. The word option does not mean that the preference is optional, but rather implies a choice between multiple possibilities. In other words, a preferential option means a deliberate choice among many possibilities and the choice to prefer those whom the present system marginalizes or makes vulnerable to harm."



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

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. ■

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**

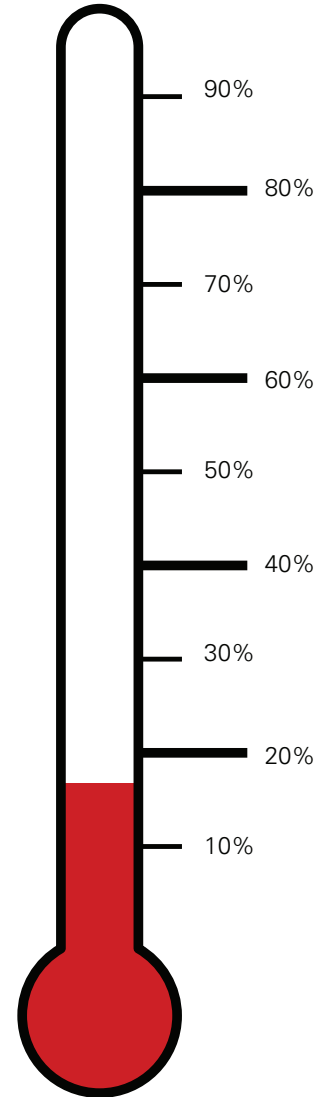
**May's Budget Goal:
\$15,416.67**

**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.**



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.



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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.

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.

"The same dynamics can be seen in the nineteenth-century debate over slavery and the twentieth-century debate concerning women in leadership in the church. In each of these cases, the Bible was not simply discarded when it didn't cohere with changes happening in society. Instead, the changes happening in society and across cultures caused people to go back to the biblical texts and read them with fresh eyes – looking more deeply and searching for different underlying values and forms of moral logic that they had not seen so clearly before."

JAMES V. BROWNSON
BIBLE, GENDER, SEXUALITY:
REFRAMING THE CHURCH'S DEBATE ON SAME-SEX
RELATIONSHIPS

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