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Renewed Heart Ministries

Follow Herb!



@HerbMontgomery



Herb Montgomery



A Shared Table 2021

We are so excited to be able to be offering this opportunity again after having to cancel this event last year due to the pandemic.

This month, become one of our monthly sustaining partners and receive a handmade **Renewed Heart Ministries Shared-Table Pottery Bowl** made by Crystal and Herb as a thank you gift for your support..

To become a monthly sustaining partner, go to renewedheartministries.com/donate and sign up for an automated recurring monthly donation of any amount by clicking the "Check this box to make it a monthly recurring donation" option. Or if you are using Paypal, select "Make this a monthly donation."

Once November has ended, we will be sending out these lovely bowls for the holiday season.

In the gospels, Jesus teaches a gospel of loving our neighbors, being committed to caring for one another, a gospel of a shared table of inclusion, especially of

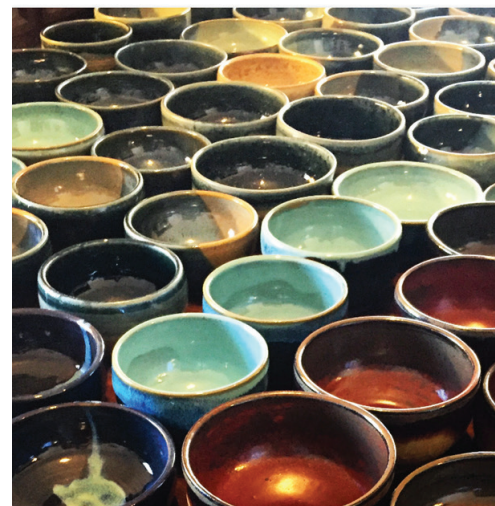
the marginalized. Jesus modeled this gospel by a life spent healing hurts in our world, and challenging the systems responsible for that harm.

Jesus' gospel of a shared table is what this pottery bowl represents.

Our prayer is that each time one of our bowls is used you will be reminded of Jesus' gospel of love and caring. They also make a great gift or an excellent conversation starter, as well.

Thank you for partnering with us to further the work of love, compassion, justice, and taking care of one another. Together we are working toward a safer, more compassionate, and just world both for today and for eternity.

If you are already one of our sustaining partners making a monthly automated donation each month, we want to honor your existing continued support of Renewed Heart Ministries, too. You'll receive one of our Shared Table Pottery Bowls for 2021 as a thank you, also.



Crystal and Herb are so excited to be donating these bowls again this year.

From each of us here at RHM, thank you for your support of our work.

We wish you joy, peace, happiness, and blessings as we enter this year's holiday season. Your support sustains our ongoing work in the coming year.

Both within our world as well as our various faith communities, together we will continue being a voice for change.

**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.

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

You can donate online by clicking "donate" at renewedheartministries.com

Or you can make a donation by mail at:

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

And to those of you out there who already are supporting this ministry, we want to say **thank you**.

We continue being a voice for change because of you!

Unleash Generosity


GIVING
TUESDAY

Let's build a more just + equitable world through generosity.

November 30, 2021

November 30 is #GivingTuesday this year!

This year we are asking you to support the work of Renewed Heart Ministries on this special day!

All contributions this #GivingTuesday 2021 to RHM will be matched, dollar for dollar, thanks to a generous and kind pledge to from a few of our supporters.

#GivingTuesday is a global day of giving that harnesses the collective power of individuals, communities and organizations to encourage philanthropy and to celebrate generosity worldwide.

#GivingTuesday is held annually on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving (in the US) and the widely recognized shopping events Black Friday and Cyber Monday to kick off the holiday giving season and inspire people to collaborate in improving our communities and to give back in impactful ways to the charities and causes they support.

#GivingTuesday is a global giving movement that began in 2012 that has been built by individuals, families, organizations, businesses and communities in all 50 states, and in

countries around the world.


#GivingTuesday is endeavoring to transform how people think about, talk about, and participate in the giving season. It inspires people to take collective action to improve their communities, give back in better, smarter ways to the charities and causes they believe in, and help create a better world.

#GivingTuesday demonstrates how every act of generosity counts, and that they mean even more when we give together.

Every year millions of people come together on this special day to give back and to support the causes they believe in.

This November 30th, consider making a donation to support the ongoing work of **Renewed Heart Ministries** as one of your chosen nonprofits and help make this #GivingTuesday the best one yet.

On November 30th, go to **renewedheartministries.com** and click "Donate."

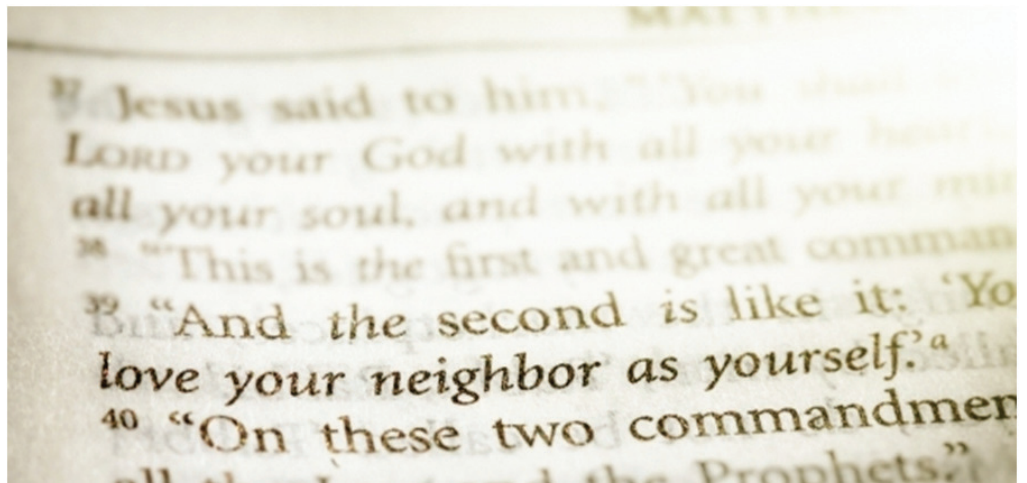
We can't thank you enough for your support! 

Seeing Others As Part of Ourselves

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from the gospel of Mark. The Rev. Dr. Wilda C. Gafney translates this passage in her *A Woman's Lectionary For The Whole Church, Year W*:

Now, one of the biblical scholars came near and heard them [the other biblical scholars, the chief priests, and the elders] discussing with one another, and seeing that Jesus answered them well, the scholar asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is: *Hear, O Israel: The Holy One our God, the Holy is one; you shall love the Holy One your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.* The second is this, *You shall*



"The closest I will ever come to meeting God in this life is you...No one should be excluded from our core practice of loving our neighbor as ourself. We are, after all, connected. We are extensions of each other, and part of the same human family. What affects one, impacts all. You are part of me and I'm a part of you. "

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love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." Then the biblical scholar said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that, 'God is one, and besides God there is no other'; and to love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself. This is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that the scholar answered wisely he said, "You are not far from the reign of God." After that no one dared to ask Jesus any question. (Mark 12:28-34, page 271)

This week's story comes at the end of a series of confrontational challenges between Jesus and others (see 11:27, 12:13, 12:18). By contrast, this interaction is friendly, and I'll explain why I think so in a moment.

First, let's unpack what the narrative says is happening.

A scholar who overhears Jesus' discussions is impressed with him. He then asks his own question of Jesus, and Jesus' answer in Mark is squarely in the Jewish tradition of the Pharisaical school of Hillel. Rabbi Hillel reportedly once answered a similar question with the response, "What you find hateful do not do to another. This is the whole law. everything else is commentary. Now go learn that!"

So the scholar's question was not only common among Jewish scholars by Jesus' time, but Jesus' responses in Mark are also the core confessions of Judaism:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

Many scholars have noticed that Mark's Jesus replaces "all your soul" with "all your mind," a signal that Mark's audience was influenced by the Hellenized world.

RHM's Recommended Reading for November

Liberation Theology for Armchair Theologians by Miguel A. De La Torre

In this helpful addition to the *Armchair Theologians* series, Miguel A. De La Torre provides a concise overview of the global religious movement known as liberation theology that focuses on defining the major themes of this movement, as well as dispelling some common misconceptions. Liberation theology attempts to reflect upon the divine as understood from the poor, the marginalized, and the disenfranchised. The key figures, historical developments, and interfaith manifestations are all explored in this thorough introduction. Expertly written by De

Jesus also quotes Leviticus in his reply:

"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. " (Leviticus 19:18)

This passage has an interesting context itself. It comes at the end of a list of prohibitions regarding oppression and exploitation of the poor and/or economically vulnerable:

"When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God."

"Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another."

"Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight."

"Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD. "

LIBERATION THEOLOGY for Armchair Theologians



Illustrations by Ron Hill

MIGUEL A. DE LA TORRE

La Torre and accompanied by Ron Hill's illustrations, this book will serve as a primary text for those who may have little knowledge of or have never heard of liberation theology.

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.

"Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly." (Leviticus 19:9-15)

Many today tout loving your neighbor as a religious tenet, but Leviticus shows it originally had very real world economic, social and political implications.

So, again, our story in Mark comes at the end of a series of confrontational challenges, but we get a picture from this exchange of a Jesus who was challenging a system within Judaism, not Judaism itself. Jesus is faithful to Judaism's core religious beliefs in this story, and at the same time he is also hotly engaged in calls to return to his interpretations of what it meant to be faithful to Torah as he witnessed people being harmed by the system. This is not a Christianity versus Judaism story, then. This is a story that says, yes, Jesus is challenging those in power within his society, but he is doing this as a Jewish man himself and out of concern for what

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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

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/



Damage Mitigation Versus Changing the System (Part 1 of 3)

"Gospel stories like this one have repeatedly been the seed of society perceiving people with disabilities or different abilities as either less-than or associated with evil."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/10/damage-mitigation-versus-changing-system-part1

Damage Mitigation Versus Changing the System (Part 2 of 3)

"Can we follow the values we have found to be life-giving in the Jesus story while acknowledging many of the ableist ways the Jesus story is told in our sacred text?"

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/10/damage-mitigation-versus-changing-system-part2

Damage Mitigation Versus Changing the System (Part 3 of 3)

"It's not enough to remove the basis for people being treated as less-than. We must also challenge the very systems the create less-thans and greater-thans."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/10/damage-mitigation-versus-changing-system-part3



No More Slaves (Part 1 of 3)

"Crucifixion was not a passive acceptance of abuse and injustice. It was Rome's punishment for those who refused silence in the face of oppression and injustice."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/10/no-more-slaves-part1/

No More Slaves (Part 2 of 3)

"I appreciate the emphasis on not encouraging lordship, and we must also be honest that our sacred texts and narratives do endorse slavery and its hierarchy."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/10/no-more-slaves-part2/

No More Slaves (Part 3 of 3)

"If we take seriously Jesus' call for no more lords, and we work for a world where there are no more, we will by that same effort create a world with no more slaves as well."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/10/no-more-slaves-part3/



Getting Free from Fear and Facing the Future Together (Part 1 of 3)

"The greater the wealth disparities within economic systems, the stronger the critique for those who have the heart to listen and understand."

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/10/getting-free-from-fear-facing-future-together-part1/

Getting Free from Fear and Facing the Future Together (Part 2 of 3)

"We read this story too individualistically in our culture today. Societal, systemic change begins with understanding"

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/10/getting-free-from-fear-facing-future-together-part2/

Getting Free from Fear and Facing the Future Together (Part 3 of 3)

"Christians have always come up with ways around stories like these in the gospels. What if we allowed ourselves to be confronted by stories like these, instead?"

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2021/10/getting-free-from-fear-facing-future-together-part3/

Upcoming Events!

NOVEMBER 20, 2021

Good News Fellowship (via Zoom)
Toronto, Ontario Canada
304.520.0030

DECEMBER 18, 2021

Good News Fellowship (via Zoom)
Toronto, Ontario Canada
304.520.0030

it means to be a faithful Jewish follower of the Torah, not as someone who is anti-Jewish.

Lastly, the scholar talking with Jesus quotes two passages from the Hebrew scriptures that affirm Jesus' response:

"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6:6)

"With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:6-8)

For these writers, love of neighbor is greater than ritual adherence and/or forms of worship.

This exchange between Jesus and the scholar brings to my mind an extended passage from Karen Armstrong that I read years ago and that I believe captures the spirit of Judaism and what early Jesus followers were trying to become. I offer this passage both to affirm Judaism and to critique more regressive and fundamentalist forms of Christianity, which seem to me to making a comeback in our culture.

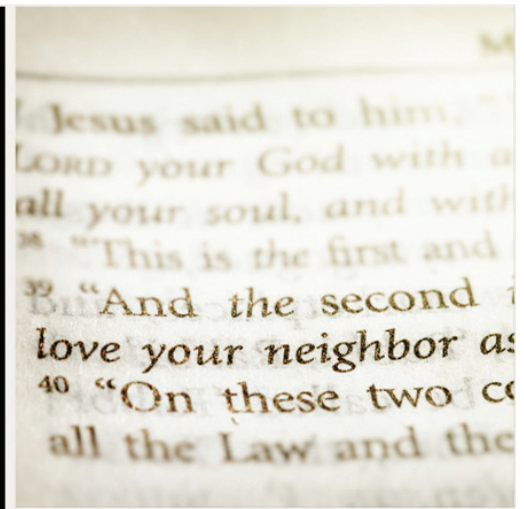
"In Rabbinic Judaism, the Jewish Axial Age came of age. The Golden Rule, compassion, and loving-kindness were central to this new Judaism; by the time the temple had been destroyed, some of the Pharisees already understood that they did not need a temple to worship God, as this Talmudic story makes clear:

It happened that R. Johanan ben Zakkai went out from Jerusalem, and R. Joshua followed him and saw the burnt ruins of the Temple and he said: 'Woe is it that the place, where the sins of Israel find atonement, is laid waste.' Then said R. Johanan, "Grieve not, we have an atonement equal to the Temple, the doing of loving deeds, as it is said, 'I desire love and not sacrifice.'"

Kindness was the key to the future;

EPISODE 394: SEEING OTHERS AS PART OF OURSELVES

"The closest I will ever come to meeting God in this life is you . . . No one should be excluded from our core practice of loving our neighbor as ourself. We are, after all, connected. We are extensions of each other, and part of the same human family. What affects one, impacts all. You are part of me and I'm a part of you."



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

Jews must turn away from the violence and divisiveness of the war years and create a united community with "one body and one soul." When the community was integrated in love and mutual respect, God was with them, but when they quarreled with one another, he [sic] returned to heaven, where the angels chanted with "one voice and one melody." When two or three Jews sat and studied harmoniously together, the divine presence sat in their midst. Rabbi Akiba, who was killed by the Romans in 132 CE, taught that the commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" was "the great principle of the Torah." To show disrespect to any human being who had been created in God's image

was seen by the rabbis as a denial of God himself and tantamount to atheism. Murder was a sacrilege: "Scripture instructs us that whatsoever sheds human blood is regarded as if he had diminished the divine image." God had created only one man at the beginning of time to teach us that destroying only one human life was equivalent to annihilating the entire world, while to save a life redeemed the whole of humanity. To humiliate anybody—even a slave or a non-Jew—was equivalent to murder, a sacrilegious defacing of God's image. To spread a scandalous, lying story about another person was to deny the existence of God. Religion was inseparable from

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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 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**

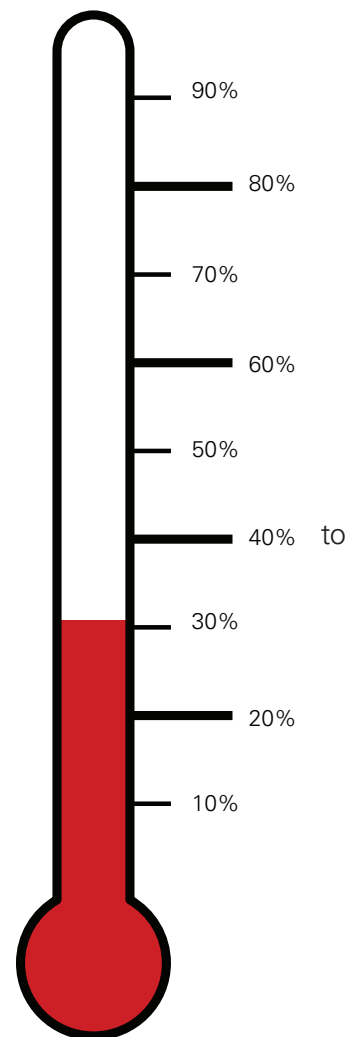
**September's Budget Goal:
\$15,416.67**

**September's Contributions
Received:
\$6,441.63**

**2021 Budget Goal
Through September:
\$138,750.03**

**2021 Contributions Received
Through September:
\$56,304.18**

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



Seeing Others... continued from page 6

the practice of habitual respect to all other human beings . You could not worship God unless you practiced the Golden Rule and honored your fellow humans, whoever they were." (Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions*, Kindle Locations 7507-7540)

I love this way of defining what it means to be faithful to one's own spiritual journey. As I've often said, the closest I will ever come to meeting God in this life is you, whomever you are, for you, like everyone else I meet, are all unique and yet in this one way alike: you bear the image of God.

I have to ask why our story ends with Jesus saying this scholar was only close to or not far from the reign of God? Why was he deemed close yet not there? Was it because he was interpreting his scriptures in life-giving ways , but was s till committed to a system Jesus felt was damaging marginalized and vulnerable

people in his own society? Was his scholarship correct, but his employment or survival somehow complicit in harm? Why did Jesus say he was only close? We can't know because the story doesn't say. But it is something to ponder.

And that leads me back to the words of Rev. Dr. Gafney one more time. I love this statement from her lectionary comments about this week's passage. She rightly states:

"If our gospel proclamations are not true for the most marginalized among us— women, nonbinary folk, trans folk , gender non-conforming folk, and LGBTQIA folk— then our gospel is not true." (p. 273)

We could add more communities to Rev. Dr. Gafney's list here. The point, though, is that no one should be excluded from our core practice of loving our neighbor as ourself. We are, after all, connected. We are extensions of each other, and part of the same human family. What affects one, impacts all. You are part of me and I'm a part of you. Together, we get to

determine what kind of people (no pun intended) we will be.

HeartGroup Application

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/ Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. How does seeing others as part of ourselves impact our work for societal justice as well as how we relate to one another within our various faith communities? 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. ■

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.

RENEWED
HEART
MINISTRIES



Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

"America's greatest social movements—for civil rights, immigrants' rights, women's rights, union organizing, queer and trans rights, farmworkers' rights, indigenous sovereignty, and black lives—were rooted in the solidarity that came from shared grieving. First people grieved together. Then they organized together."

VALARIE KAUR
SEE NO STRANGER
(P. 58-59)

renewedheartministries.com



Weekly Zoom HeartGroup Every Wednesday Night

"I've experienced paradigm shifts in my thinking that are transforming my spiritual journey."

That's what one participant recently wrote. Each Wednesday evening, Glendale City Church hosts 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 us at info@renewedheartministries.com to receive the link for the Zoom meeting.

