



# Awakenings

*"Only by love is love awakened."*

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries :::::: Volume 8 :::::: Issue 7 ::::::



## Inside This Issue:

### Page 2

I'm Not Wearing It If  
They Are Wearing It, Too

### Page 3

Testimonies

### Page 4

Ministry Update:  
Finding the Father

### Page 5

Ministry Update:  
The Jesus Dialogue

### Page 6

Social Justice; or,  
God Loves Us

Schedule

### Page 7

Testimonies

New Book!

### Page 8

Featured Presentation

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## I'm Not Wearing It If They Are Wearing It, Too

by Herb Montgomery

### Quotable Quotes

“Jesus practiced a radical Pharisee-infuriating, boundary-pushing, kosher-challenging hospitality. Do you?”

—Brian Zahnd

***“And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless.”***  
—Matthew 22:12

I have to admit that I hate nametags. I'm often invited to an event to speak and I will, along with everyone else that attends, be handed a nametag to wear around my neck. I've spent some time trying to figure out what the big deal is. I mean, what is this aversion to nametag wearing? What is it that internally kicks and screams every time, refusing to allow me to hang this around my neck?

To the best of my understanding, I think there is something broken inside of me that always craves to be different. If everyone else is doing something, I'm not interested. My kids are the same way. They will either love something before it becomes popular or when it ceases to be so, but they will never love something when everyone else is doing it, too.

Okay, enough of this invasive introspection; I want us to consider a story in Matthew's gospel that Jesus tells the chief priests and Pharisees.

*“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: ‘Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’” But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the*

*wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

There is much that could be said on this story, but the last thing I want to do is turn this into another commentary. What I'd rather do is simply point out a few statements in this story for your contemplation and see if Jesus doesn't show you the same thing he showed me recently.

The first part, no doubt, is a prophetic warning concerning the fate that was looming before Jerusalem if her path was not altered. What happens next in the story though, is an affront to all of us.

*“Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready...Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’”*

Everyone? Everyone gets invited? Yep, the story is too pointed to evade. Jesus purposefully makes sure to add, “both good and bad.”

What happens next we don't want to encounter. We'll come up with any convoluted and complicated theological exposition of what the wedding garment is to evade what Jesus is saying here, rather than letting the story speak to us.

*“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless.”*

Don't define the garment to have some spiritual application that allows you to evade the story's point. The question I want to ask you this week is why did this guest refuse to wear a garment?

cont'd on page 3

# Testimonies

“Dear RHM, Thank you so much for tirelessly sharing Jesus with us. Keep up the good work” - **SF**

“What a wonderful gift of the picture of God you continue to give us. God bless you as you share God with others too.” - **MA**

“Thank you RHM, for your message and your heart. God has and is working beautifully through you. RHM is such a blessing.” - **LL**

“God bless RHM. We are so thankful for your work in sharing the love of Jesus with us. RHM is a ministry that facilitates change in others as they encounter Jesus’ love. From all the way back to when RHM first started to these most recent publications, we have been so truly blessed. Thank you for all you do.” - **KF**

“Thank you Herb, you have helped start a fire!” - **LC**

“The picture of God I continue to get from you and this ministry is changing my life. Thank you so much.” - **D**

## *I'm Not Wearing It...* cont'd from page 2

What was it about wearing that garment, along with all those “bad people,” that caused something inside of him to kick and scream in resistance, not permitting him to bring himself to wear it?

A friend of mine wrote a response to last week’s eSight/podcast on Jesus’ radical inclusivity, which I believe captures what was going on inside our guest most eloquently.

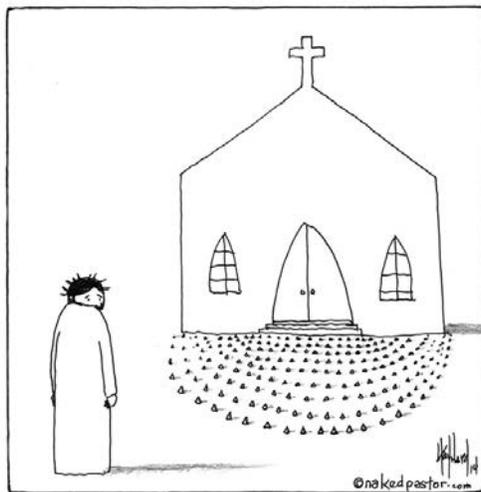
*“[Last week’s eSight] is the Magna Carta. It should be the 95 Theses nailed to the front of every church in North America. It will be rejected, however. If history tells us anything, the world will hate it, reject it, blame it—and destroy it. We are in love with exclusive offers, private clubs, the top of ladders and those that are good at climbing them...[This is] the perspective that we must carry as our light burden—the cross we carry on the trail he has given us. But hard dang work. Thanks for putting it all together. And then Spirit, to figure out how to apply it, and strength to keep it, against the inevitable tide that is coming.”*

What I love most about this statement is the keen perception that we are addicted to systems rooted in exclusivity rather than inclusivity. This is true of us whether we are speaking politically, religiously, or economically. What Jesus is whispering to the religious exclusivists of his day is that if any are lost at last, it

will not be because they did not accept the invitation themselves. It will be because they could not accept those who were also “let in.” They could not accept the *absence of distinction* between them and the other guests. The rejection of the king’s garments by this guest is not a rejection of the garment for himself. It is a rejection of the garment for all of those in the room that he feels should be excluded, a radical inclusivity that he will have no part in. This is not a rejection of “clothes.” This is an inability to accept those whom we feel should be excluded. It’s as if this guest is saying, “I’ll be damned if I’m going to wear the same thing as them!” (Think of the words of the prophet Jonah.)

*“Where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Gnashing of teeth is not torture. It’s



anger. (See Luke 13:28; Job 16:9; Psalms 35:16; Psalms 37:12; Psalms 112:10; Lamentations 2:16; Acts 7:54, cf. Matthew 8:12; Matthew 13:42; Matthew 13:50; Matthew 22:13; Matthew 24:51; Matthew 25:30.) It’s anger that someone you thought should be excluded is actually included. It’s anger that, for all of your smug assurance that your place at the table was secure, you find yourself outside looking in through the window at those who you feel are morally inferior to yourself, while they are enjoying the feast and you are not. It is the ability to accept the invitation for oneself in one hand while holding on with the other to an inability to accept that someone you feel should be excluded was not merely invited, but is enjoying the party instead of you.

The exclusion that this man sought to stand up for backfires against him. This man could have been simply protecting the purity of the “wedding feast,” standing up for what he felt was right, doing something he considered to be expected of him, but in the end, the only one that ends up being left outside is himself.

The exclusion that this man sought to stand up for backfires against him. This man could have been simply protecting the purity of the “wedding feast,” standing up for what he felt was right, doing something he considered to be expected of him, but in the end, the only one that ends up being left outside is himself.

This is the older brother of the prodigal. This is the Jonah that would rather be dead than in a world alongside those Ninevites. (Jonah 4:2-3) It is the “The Pharisee, standing by himself... praying ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.’” (Luke 18:11)

The holidays are coming, and as we looked at last week, we are all children of the same Divine Parents. As we look around this world, we see our fellow siblings. And we are all going to have to learn what it means to sit side by side

cont'd on page 4

*I'm Not Wearing It...* cont'd from page 3

around the same family table once again. The parable of Matthew 22 was not about a man's rejection of a garment. It was about a man's refusal to wear a garment along side of the others in the room who were wearing it, as well. Clothing wasn't being rejected... people were. If any are cast out in the end, it will not be because they didn't accept the invitation themselves. The guest accepted the invitation for himself and showed up. But once he got to the party, he couldn't stomach the lack of distinction made between himself and the kind of people who were his fellow guests ("Both good and bad"). If any are cast out in the end, it won't be because of a failure to accept an invitation for

themselves, it will be because they could not embrace the acceptance of someone else whom they felt shouldn't have been invited along side of themselves.

### HeartGroup Application

1. This month, I want you to spend some time in quiet contemplation within this story. Who is it that if you looked around the wedding hall and saw standing there dressed just like you, would make you take off your wedding garment? Is it someone from your past? Is it a group of people in our present? Is it someone who has hurt you, from which you still need Jesus to bring healing? Is it someone who maybe hasn't hurt you, but is someone who has committed atrocities toward others? Think deep.

Is it someone different than you? A political persuasion? Economic philosophy? Ethical standard? Or religious belief? Is it someone of a different color, gender, status, or orientation? Who is it, in this world, that to see them included would send you over the edge?

2. Now take that person and sit with them and with Jesus during prayer each day this month and ask Jesus to show you what they look like from His eyes. Journal what He shows you.
3. If you can, please share with your HeartGroup this what Jesus did in your heart this month.

Till the only world that remains, is a world where love reigns. ■

## MINISTRY UPDATE

### Finding the Father

Jacksonville, FL | June 6-7, 2014

It has been quite some time since I've shared with a church like the one I just encountered in Jacksonville, Florida. The rich cultural diversity of Southpoint's Adventist Church is honestly astounding.

Friday night, at the request of the pastor, I shared the story of my experience with my father. I don't share that story much anymore since it has come out in print, and it was a blessing to revisit it. From that story, we then launched into a weekend of comparing contemporary pictures of God within Christianity with the God we see in the Jesus of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The contrast was astounding! We began with looking at the common ways of perceiving God that exist within Christianity, in terms of the subject of human suffering. (Much of this is covered in my book, *Finding the Father*.)

Then we moved into Jesus's revelation

about the radically inclusive favor of God, and the overwhelming conclusion that if any are left in outer darkness in the end, it will not be because they could not embrace God's love for themselves, but rather that they could not embrace God's love for someone else that they thought should be included. The rich cultural diversity of this group created a really special synergy for this presentation, as we all moved further into what the composite of Jesus' Kingdom here on earth actually looks like.

Lastly, we spent some time looking not theologically but narratively at the story of Jesus's unjust execution and the Father's resurrection of Jesus. We spent some time contemplating what it means that the God of the Hebrew and Christian narratives embraced becoming a victim of our political, economic, and religious systems, and conquered those very systems through a Resurrection. The early church of the book of Acts believed it was part of a new world created through this resurrection, where Jesus' Kingdom had been established once again on this Earth and Jesus-followers went forth making disciples of this radically inclusive Jesus.

This was a community centered on the way of mercy, not sacrifice. The church's members rejected the sacrificial systems of our world, becoming sacrifices themselves in the footsteps of their Jesus, as a witness to the reality that this world was being put right by the Resurrected One. We looked at the implications for us today in joining the Jesus revolution. We looked at what it means for us to embrace Jesus too. What does it mean to allow Jesus to put us right (justification) so that our stories can join His story in putting the world right (restorative justice)?

It was an amazing weekend, with an overwhelmingly positive response.

I was so blessed by our time together with Jesus at the Southpoint church in Jacksonville. And judging by the responses of those who attended, I was by far not alone in that blessing.

For all who were praying for this event, thank you. Your continued support of Renewed Heart Ministries is what makes these events possible. Together, we are putting on display what a world changed by Jesus looks like.

I love you guys. Thank you. ■

# MINISTRY UPDATE

The Jesus Dialogue  
Summersville, West Virginia  
May 16-24, 2014

For those of you who were praying for this event in Summersville, West Virginia, I want to once again say a deep heartfelt thank you. I want to do something a tad bit different this time.

Each of you knows what The Jesus Dialogue event is, and what topics are addressed within each presentation each night. (That series is on our website for anyone to listen to.) So rather than recounting to you what subjects were covered, I want to share with you a handful of written notes that were shared with me, thanking me for the presentations that were given.

Some of these were from regular attendees at that church, and others of these are from those who were attending for the first time.

*"I have been so blessed and changed by hearing your messages. I was such a pleasure to meet you and to get to*

*know you this week."*

*"Superb! Lots of new avenues for thought and the continued lifting up and expanding on Jesus."*

*"Thank you so much for your presentations. It was very enlightening. I thank God for you. God bless you in all you do."*

*"Thank you for sharing a beautiful picture of God. It is a perspective that is needed in all our lives. Quite amazing. God bless you as you continue to proclaim His love."*

*"What a blessing your meetings have been—a totally new way of looking at stories and verses that have been read many times, but never with a different set of eyes. I've never met anyone who has done more study of culture, word meanings, and ways of looking at things. Thank you for dedicating your life to helping us see Jesus (and thus God) in a new way and how it relates to me!"*

*"Thank you for teaching us so much this week and for sharing Jesus with us."*

*"These have been great presentations...I have learned a lot, even though I could not make it to all of the sessions. I'll be listening online. I hope that you will continue to be invited elsewhere as well to share this good news message with others."*

*"This is a new way of seeing Jesus. Thank you. Thank you so much for what you do."*

*"I so appreciate your presentations. The cultural context, Jesus' Kingdom of love in action, everything! Please keep sharing this. It is making a difference."*

Here's the point. Lives were touched last week, both for this present age and for the age to come. A difference was made in how people see God and in the life they want to live as a conduit of that God's love flowing out to this world. And I could not have done any of it without you—yes, YOU. Your continued prayers and support of Renewed Heart Ministries is what enables events like this to happen. As many of you know, we practice what Jesus commanded when He said, "freely you received, freely give." We don't make any profit from events such as these; they are purely for the Kingdom. Your support enables the next person to hear it for free, and if we ever receive more than what we need, we pass that on to charities that are making tangible differences as well relieving the suffering taking place all around us on this planet. Together we are enlarging the Kingdom. Together we are making a difference.

## Quotable Quotes

"We tell you the gospel: What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by resurrecting Jesus."

—Paul ; Acts 13:32-33



# Social Justice; or, God Loves Us

by Herb Montgomery

I recently received an invitation to come and speak at an event. The invitation had one stipulation: "We ask that you don't talk about any topics related to 'social justice,' but simply keep to topics reminding us how much God loves us." I thought I had misheard the voice on the other end of the line. I asked, "Excuse me?" The sentence was repeated; I had heard it correctly the first time.

The group that had invited me was simply trying to stay away from any topic that might be controversial given the vast differences among their audience. They wanted to discuss topics everyone could agree on. And while I completely understand the desire to avoid unnecessary conflict, there is a problem with the "can't everybody just get along" approach: a problem that arises when we sit in a place of privilege over those who, as a result of our privilege, are experiencing oppression, injustice, and violence. Honestly, when the request was made to me, I couldn't believe what I had just heard. In all the years that I have been doing this, I had never heard such a request put that bluntly.

Imagine Amos or Isaiah being told to only preach about smooth, uncontroversial things. Being told to just preach peace, peace, peace.



Here is just a sampling of the words of Amos and Isaiah:

This is what the LORD says: *"For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. They sell the innocent for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed."* (Amos 2:6, 7)

To Israel, Isaiah preached: *"Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah! "The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?" says the LORD. I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow."* (Isaiah 1:10-17)

Another example from Amos:

*"I hate, I despise your religious festivals; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!"* (Amos 5:21-24)

Peace is not the absence of conflict. It is the presence of justice: restorative justice.

## Schedule

**AUGUST 15-17, 2014**

Kapolei HeartGroup  
Kapolei, HI  
808.224.7873

**SEPTEMBER 7, 2014**

Rhema Christian Center  
Lewisburg, WV  
304.645.6999

**OCTOBER 3-5, 2014**

Loma Linda Filipino  
Adventist Church  
Redlands, CA  
909.798.3822

**OCTOBER 6-11, 2014**

Pacific Union College  
Angwin, CA  
707.965-6311

**OCTOBER 24-26, 2014**

Cornerstone Adventist  
Community Church  
Coquitlam, BC Canada  
604.723.3433

I could be wrong, but it felt like I was hearing a contemporary version of requests that have been made before:

They say to the seers, *"See no more visions!"* and to the prophets, *"Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions."* (Isaiah 30:10)

There is something significantly wrong with an approach to Christianity that is concerned only with personal forgiveness, personal acceptance, and personal pardon; an approach that allows us into eternal bliss without any concern for the hell that many around us are living through here and now.

N. T. Wright defines personal justification as God's work in putting a person to

**cont'd on page 7**

## Social Justice... cont'd from page 6

right, so that person can participate in, and witness to, the putting to right of the oppression, injustice, and violence in the world around us (i.e., justice).

Alister McGrath states, *"The doctrine of justification has come to develop a meaning quite independent of its biblical origins."* Now, he says, it refers only to *"the means by which man's relationship to God is established."* In an *"emphasis quite absent from the New Testament,"* justification has come to hold a meaning quite independent of its Pauline origins, where it is rooted in the Hebrew hope not of getting to heaven, but of a day when all injustice and oppression on this earth would be put right by the Messiah (See *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification from 1500 to the Present Day*).

In his new book *Farewell to Mars*, Brian Zahnd describes the desolation brought about by defining "justification" as personal and private with no impact on justifying the world around us. The "justification" that had infected Bible-believing southern slave owners in the 1800's:

*"They prayed a sinner's prayer, 'got right with God,' and kept their slaves. They had a faith that would justify the slave owner while bringing no justice to the slave. They had faith that gave them a ticket to heaven and a highway to hell. The religious fervor in the conservative churches of the South only served to convince them that they were blessed*

*by heaven. They were quite certain God smiled upon their deep devotion to their southern-fried Jesus. If they had to go to war to preserve their freedom, so be it—God was on their side. They were sure of it. But there would be hell to pay."*

This is why Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would later preach, *"How often the church has been an echo rather than a voice, a tail-light behind the Supreme Court and other secular agencies, rather than a headlight guiding men progressively and decisively to higher levels of understanding."*

Does God love us? Absolutely. But He also loves those people that the price of our privileges weighs heavily on. To acknowledge God's love for us as a force that leaves us little changed, but enables us to sleep more soundly while we continue on with business as usual in the face of the injustice around us, is dangerous. To do so is to repeat the mistakes of ancient Israel. It is to promote the cancer of Constantinian Christendom. We must understand not only how much God loves us, but also how much God loves others. We must allow God's love for them to transform us from the inside out.

We want assurance of our own "justification." But, may that justification (that "being put right") be not only about our own entry into heaven, but about participating in the justification of the world around us as well. May we join Jesus' present work of the Kingdom, where heaven is reunited with earth once again. (cf. Revelation 21 & 22)

## Testimonies

"Dear Herb, Thank you for taking you time to share your view of God. It has completely changed my view of God too. You've been an inspiration to me" - **H**

"Thank you RHM for all you do to show so many of us who God really is. God bless you!" - **T**

"I wanted to slip you this little note to thank you for coming to my school and sharing with us about God. I'm one of those students you were talking about. Your talks this week have really helped me. They have given me hope. You've given me a new way to see God, to understand myself, and to treat others, especially the way I'd like to be treated. I have you and Jesus to thank for this week. Thank you." - **DD**

"I wanted to let you know that your ministry is an inspiration to me. In 2007 you came to Alberta and spoke at CUC and at the time it was exactly what I needed to hear and I think it saved my faith. Thank you." - **DB**

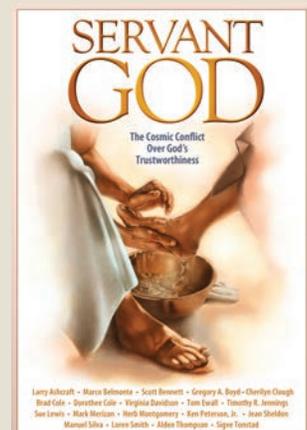
## New Book!

*Servant God* by a multiple authors including Herb Montgomery.

Now Available from RHM's resource center in Hardback for \$34.95.



Or you can snag a Kindle copy for only \$9.99 from Amazon.com!



# Featured Presentation

In Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul writes, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: 'Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'" As followers of Jesus, we have no use for a justification for ourselves that doesn't also lead to the justification of the world as well. Followers of Jesus are not interested in a "gate pass" to some far distant heaven, but the reuniting of heaven with earth once again. Followers of Jesus have embraced God's work of putting them to right (justification), as they step into



the larger picture of God's work of putting the world to right (justice). Followers of Jesus are

to bear witness to what a world put right by Jesus looks like. A "Ticket to Heaven" approach to Christianity has lulled the church to sleep. Rather than witnessing to the arrival of Christ's Kingdom, she has historically been "the last to the party" when it comes to matters of putting injustice, oppression and violence to right in the here and now. The Kingdom has come. The Kingdom was the central theme of Jesus' teachings. It's time for the Kingdom to become the central theme of today's Church, as it was in the first century, once again. It's time to "Awake!" This month's featured presentation *The Awakening* by Herb Montgomery.

Renewed Heart Ministries provides its resources free of charge. Jesus commanded, "Freely you have received, freely give." We at RHM take this command very seriously. Philosophically we have a difficult time charging money to people for things God has given us for free.

In order to do this, we are entirely dependent on the contributions of our supporters. If you would like to make a one-time gift or offer monthly support, please send your contributions to the following address:

**Renewed Heart Ministries  
P.O. Box 1211  
Lewisburg, WV 24901**

Contributions can also be made online at:  
[www.renewedheartministries.com](http://www.renewedheartministries.com)

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