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# #1 New Release on Amazon!

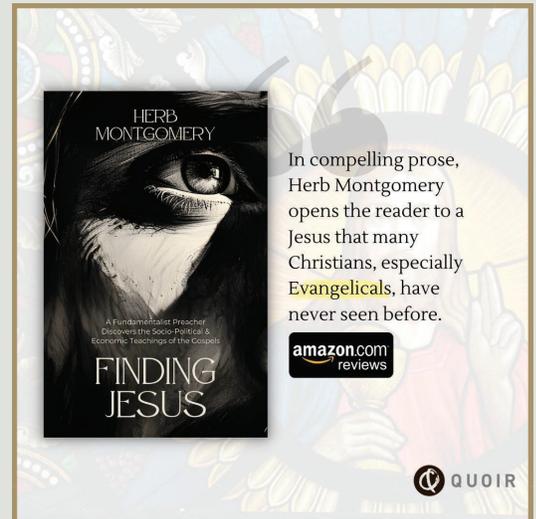
## *Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels* (2nd Edition)

In *Finding Jesus*, author Herb Montgomery delves into the profound and often overlooked political dimensions of the gospels. Through meticulous analysis of biblical texts, historical context, and social discourse, this thought-provoking book unveils the gospels' socio-political, economic teachings as rooted in a profound concern for justice, compassion, and the well-being of the marginalized. The book navigates the intersections between faith and societal justice, presenting a compelling argument for a more socially engaged and transformative Christianity.

Readers will journey through the Gospel narratives, discovering the ways in which the Jesus of these stories challenged the political and religious establishments of his time. Herb Montgomery draws parallels between the societal issues faced by the people of Jesus' era and the

challenges of the present day, sparking reflection on the role of faith in addressing contemporary political and social issues.

*Finding Jesus* is not just a scholarly exploration; it is a call to action. It challenges readers to reevaluate their understanding of Christianity's role in public life and to consider how the radical teachings of the gospels can inspire a renewed commitment to justice, equality, and compassion. This book is a must-read for those seeking a deeper understanding of the social implications of Christian faith and a blueprint for building a more just and inclusive society.



## Upcoming Events

**APRIL 20, 2023**  
**Good News Fellowship**  
Toronto, Ontario Canada

**For more info or the Zoom link, email us at:**  
info@renewedheartministries.com  
**or call: 304.520.0030**



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Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.



***“Easter reminds us that our story isn’t about dying either. Our story is about how life can overcome death even when death is wielded as a weapon of injustice or used as an attempt to keep us down. The God of the resurrection story is on the side of the oppressed, marginalized, and downtrodden. And the power that can save our world is not one that appeals to more dying, but to a refusal to let go of life.”***

## **The Good News Is About Life and Love, Not Death and Dying**

by Herb Montgomery

This week, our readings are from the gospels of John and Mark:

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well

as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I

will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her. (John 20:1-18)

And Mark:

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid. (Mark 16:1-8)

With these passages, the lectionary calls our attention to the earliest telling of the resurrection story in the gospels and the latest. What jumps out to me first is the evolution of women’s role in the stories. In Mark, women choose to be silent. But in John’s gospel, not only are women the first to announce the resurrection, but also, and in uncharacteristic fashion, the gospel names a specific woman (Mary) as the first among them to proclaim the good

*continued on page 4*

...*Good News...* continued from page 3

news of the resurrection.

Many scholars date the writing of the book of Mark as the same time as the pseudo-epistles of Paul. While the author of Timothy was telling women to be silent (cf. 1 Timothy 2:12), Mark's gospel is showing us what would have happened in relation to the resurrection if they had been. As patriarchal forces in the early church were gaining power and influence and women began to be marginalized in the Jesus movement (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:34), Mark's gospel warns us of such non-egalitarian trends. The implication is, "Thank God women were not silent!" Because if they had been, we might never have heard the good news of the resurrection.

This leads me to what I believe was the original good news of the gospel for the early Jesus movement. The good news of the gospel was not that Jesus was crucified or had died for anyone, but that Jesus was alive! The cross had been reversed, overcome, and undone! And the news about that could not be contained!

Consider these passages that emphasize the preaching of the church in the books of Acts. Notice they aren't merely preaching Jesus crucified. They are announcing Jesus has been resurrected!

With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of

the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33)

You crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. (Acts 2:22-24)

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. (Acts 2:32-33)

You handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, but God raised from the dead. (Acts 3:12-16)

...Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead. (Acts 4:10-11)

The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. (Acts 5:30-32)

They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day. (Acts 10:36-43)

Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead...And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for

us, their children, by raising Jesus. (Emphasis added) (Acts 13:35-38)

The good news for those in the book of Acts was not that Jesus had died, but that Jesus, whom the state had executed, had been brought back to life!

Whatever we make of these reports today, the lessons in these stories' emphasis are not from Jesus' dying but in the undoing of his death. The story is one about the ability of truth to overcome falsehood, of life to triumph over the death-dealing agents of our world, for love to conquer hate. Injustice doesn't have to have the last word in our stories.

The good news, to use the words of Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, was that the "crucifying powers of evil" have been defeated!

The resurrection is God's definitive victory over crucifying powers of evil... The impressive factor is how it [the cross] is defeated. It is defeated by a life-giving rather than a life-negating force. God's power, unlike human power, is not a 'master race' kind of power. That is, it is not a power that diminishes the life of another so that others might live. God's power respects the integrity of all human bodies and the sanctity of all life. This is a resurrecting power. Therefore, God's power never expresses itself through the humiliation or denigration of

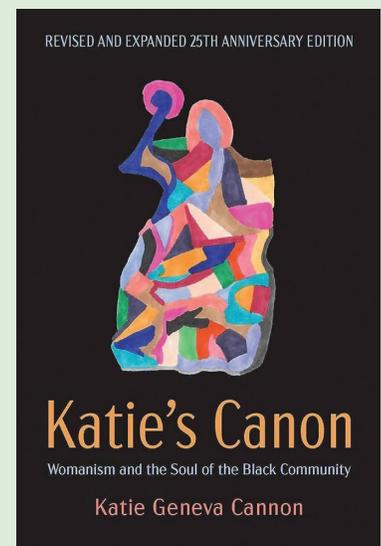
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## RHM's Recommended Reading for April

***Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community***  
***Revised and Expanded 25th Anniversary Edition***

by **Katie Geneva Cannon**

*Katie's Canon* is a selection of essays written for a variety of occasions throughout Cannon's celebrated career. This new edition contains three additional essays and a new foreword by Emilie Townes. The volume weaves together the particularities of Cannon's own history and the oral tradition of African American women, African American women's literary traditions, and socio-cultural and ethical analysis. The result is a classic. Cannon addresses racism and economics, analyses of Zora Neale Hurston as a resource for a constructive ethic, the importance of race and gender in the development of a Black liberation ethic, womanist preaching in the Black church, and slave ideology and biblical interpretation.



# SOCIAL JESUS

*A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice*



## Last month's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos



### ***Good News Is About Life and Love, Not Death and Dying, Part 1***

The original good news of the gospel was not that someone had died. It was about life and love, not death and dying.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/03/the-good-news-is-about-life-and-love-not-death-and-dying-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/03/the-good-news-is-about-life-and-love-not-death-and-dying-part1/)

### ***Good News Is About Life and Love, Not Death and Dying, Part 2***

Whatever we make of these reports today, the lessons in these stories' emphasis are not from Jesus' dying but in the undoing of his death.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/good-news-is-about-life-and-love-not-death-and-dying-pt2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/good-news-is-about-life-and-love-not-death-and-dying-pt2/)

### ***Good News Is About Life and Love, Not Death and Dying, Part 3***

The good news is that hate doesn't have the last word. We can choose love and life as the last word for our stories too.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/good-news-is-about-life-and-love-not-death-and-dying-pt3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/good-news-is-about-life-and-love-not-death-and-dying-pt3/)



### ***The Harmful Myth of Redemptive Death, Part 1***

Our reading has a history of justifying death or abuse for those in marginalized social locations or in predatory personal relationships.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/harmful-myth-redemptive-death-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/harmful-myth-redemptive-death-part1/)

### ***The Harmful Myth of Redemptive Death, Part 2***

This prioritizes the oppressor's or abuser's need for redemption over and above the rights of those being harmed, included in losing their most basic right: to simply exist and live.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/harmful-myth-redemptive-death-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/harmful-myth-redemptive-death-part2/)

### ***The Harmful Myth of Redemptive Death, Part 3***

Love can conquer hate, and, in the end, justice, love and life will have the last word. No matter how hopeless the present moment, our story isn't over yet.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/harmful-myth-redemptive-death-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/harmful-myth-redemptive-death-part3/)



### ***A Socially Engaged Gospel, Part 1***

We must begin with honesty about how either of these two focuses can divert our attention from being socially engaged.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/socially-engaged-gospel-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/socially-engaged-gospel-part1/)

### ***A Socially Engaged Gospel, Part 2***

It doesn't matter which of these ditches we fall into. Our beliefs should make us a more socially engaged in relation to our world today.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/socially-engaged-gospel-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/socially-engaged-gospel-part2/)

### ***A Socially Engaged Gospel, Part 3***

You can't love others and not care about being socially engaged in the areas they suffer from the way our society is shaped.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/socially-engaged-gospel-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/03/socially-engaged-gospel-part3/)

## Weekly HeartGroup on Zoom Every Wednesday Night!



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.

Each Zoom session will be on Wednesdays at 7pm Pacific/10pm Eastern.

To receive the link for the Zoom meeting, email us at: [info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)

...*Good News...* continued from page 4

another. It does not triumph over life. It conquers death by resurrecting life. The force of God is a death-negating, life-affirming force.” (Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, pp. 182-83).

And a few pages later:

“What the resurrection points to, however, is not the meaning of Jesus’ death, but of his life.” (Ibid. p. 188)

The powers of the status quo had attempted to silence Jesus’ life-giving, “saving,” redemptive work. Yet through the narrative element of the resurrection, this attempt to end Jesus’ work is turned into a mere interruption. Whereas the cross was the state’s attempt to stop Jesus’ salvific work, the resurrection causes that work to continue despite the cross, and to especially continue in the lives of Jesus’ followers as we seek to be conduits of life, healing, and liberation our own contexts today.

Christianity isn’t a death cult. I agree with womanist matriarch Dr. Delores Williams, who has been relentless through the years in pulling back the curtain and showing us the intrinsic harm of faith traditions that find meaning in Jesus’ death on a cross: “Jesus came for life and to show us something about life and living together and what life was all about” (in Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas’ *What’s Faith Got to Do With It?*, p. 90)

Williams also wrote:

“Christians...cannot forget the cross, but neither can they glorify it. To do so is to glorify suffering and to render... exploitation sacred. To do so is to glorify the sin of defilement.” (Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God Talk*, p.132)

So for me, the Jesus story isn’t about death. Easter reminds us that our story isn’t about dying either. Our story is about how life can overcome death even when death is wielded as a weapon of injustice or used as an attempt to keep us down. The God of the resurrection story is on the side of the oppressed, marginalized, and downtrodden. And the power that can

save our world is not one that appeals to more dying, but to a refusal to let go of life.

Hate doesn’t have the last word. The Jesus story doesn’t end on Friday evening. And we can choose love and life as the last word for our stories too.

## Discussion Group Questions

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week’s eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. How does focusing on the resurrection rather than the crucifixion as the redeeming element in the Jesus story shape your own experience as a Jesus follower? Share and 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.

I want to say a special thank you to all of our supporters out there. And if you would like to join them in supporting Renewed Heart Ministries’ work you can do so by going to [renewedheartministries.com](http://renewedheartministries.com) and clicking *donate*.

I want to also say a special thank you this week to Quoir Publishing, Keith Giles who wrote the foreword to my latest book, all the special people on our launch team, and all of you who made this release a success.

*Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political and Economic Teachings of the Gospels* is available now on Amazon in paperback, Kindle and soon also on Audible in audio book format.

As always, you can find Renewed Heart Ministries each week on X (or Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and



## *Just Talking* with Herb and Todd

Each week, we’ll be talking about the gospel lectionary reading for the upcoming weekend. We’ll be talking about each reading in the context of love, inclusion, and societal justice. Our hope is that our talking will be just talking (as in justice) and that during our brief conversations each week you’ll be inspired to also do more than just talking.

If you teach from the lectionary each week, or if you’re just looking for some thoughts on the Jesus story from a more progressive perspective within the context of social justice, check it out, you might like it.

You can find the latest show on YouTube at: [@herbandtoddjusttalking](https://www.youtube.com/@herbandtoddjusttalking)

Please Like, Subscribe, hit the Notification button, and leave us a comment. All of this will help us get this new YouTube channel off the ground. Thanks in advance for watching!



**Announcing a  
NEW Podcast!  
The *Social Jesus*  
Podcast!**

The *Jesus For Everyone* podcast is changing its name and joining a new podcast network over the next few weeks.

We'll announce on our website when this new transition is complete and where the new episodes will be available!

...*Good News...* continued from page 6

Meta's new Threads. If you haven't done so already, please follow us on your chosen social media platforms for our daily posts. Also, if you enjoy listening to the *Jesus for Everyone* podcast, please like and subscribe to the JFE podcast through the podcast platform you use and consider taking some time to give us a review. This helps others find our podcast as well.

And if you'd like to reach us here at Renewed Heart Ministries through email, you can reach us at [info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com).

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

I love each of you dearly. ■

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The work of helping people find life-giving ways to live out their faith through love, compassion, and justice are needed now more than ever. At Renewed Heart Ministries, we provide resources of faith and healing with the aim of renewing hope and inspiring action as we allow the Jesus story to inform each of us as we work together to shape our world into a compassionate, just and safe home for everyone.

Renewed Heart Ministries is a 501(c)3, grassroots ministry on the margins that prioritizes the needs of marginalized communities, especially those who have been the recipients of misinformed, faith-based harm. Your support enables us to be a life-giving, healing light in our faith communities and continue to be a voice for desperately needed change.

***You get to decide what shape our faith communities take and what voices get to be heard.***

You can support Renewed Heart Ministries with a one-time gift or by becoming one of our monthly contributors. Your donation can be made online at:

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or by mail at:

Renewed Heart Ministries  
PO Box 1211  
Lewisburg, WV 24901

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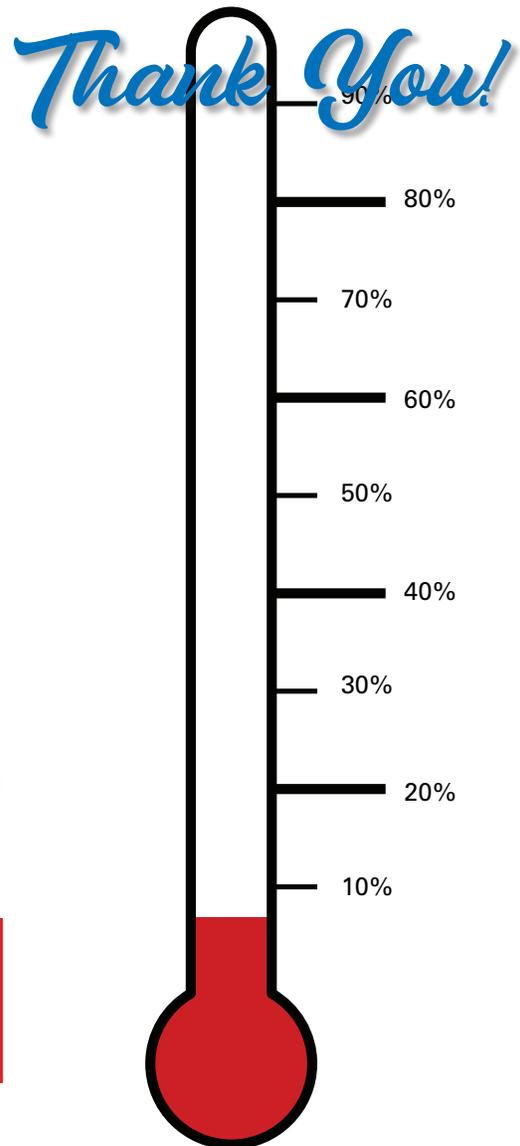
**Whether you give \$5 or \$5,000, every amount helps us to continue our work.**

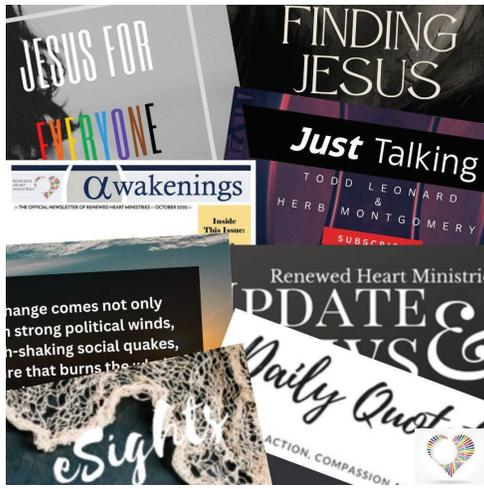
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**2024 Projected Budget  
Goal: \$150,000.00**

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**Donations Received as of  
March 31, 2024:  
\$12,223.76**

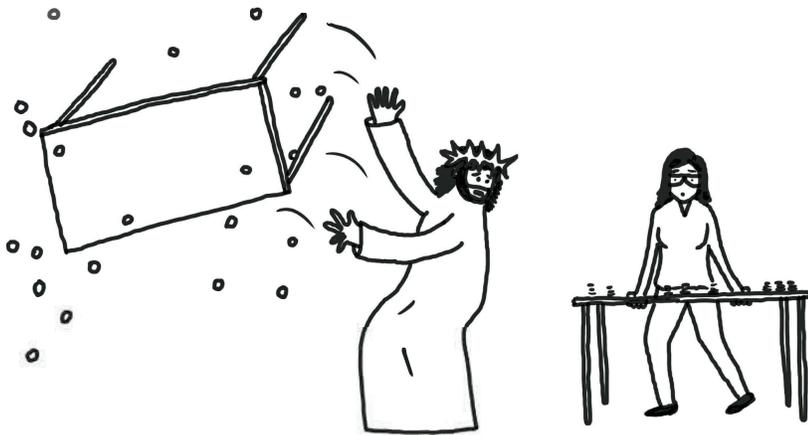
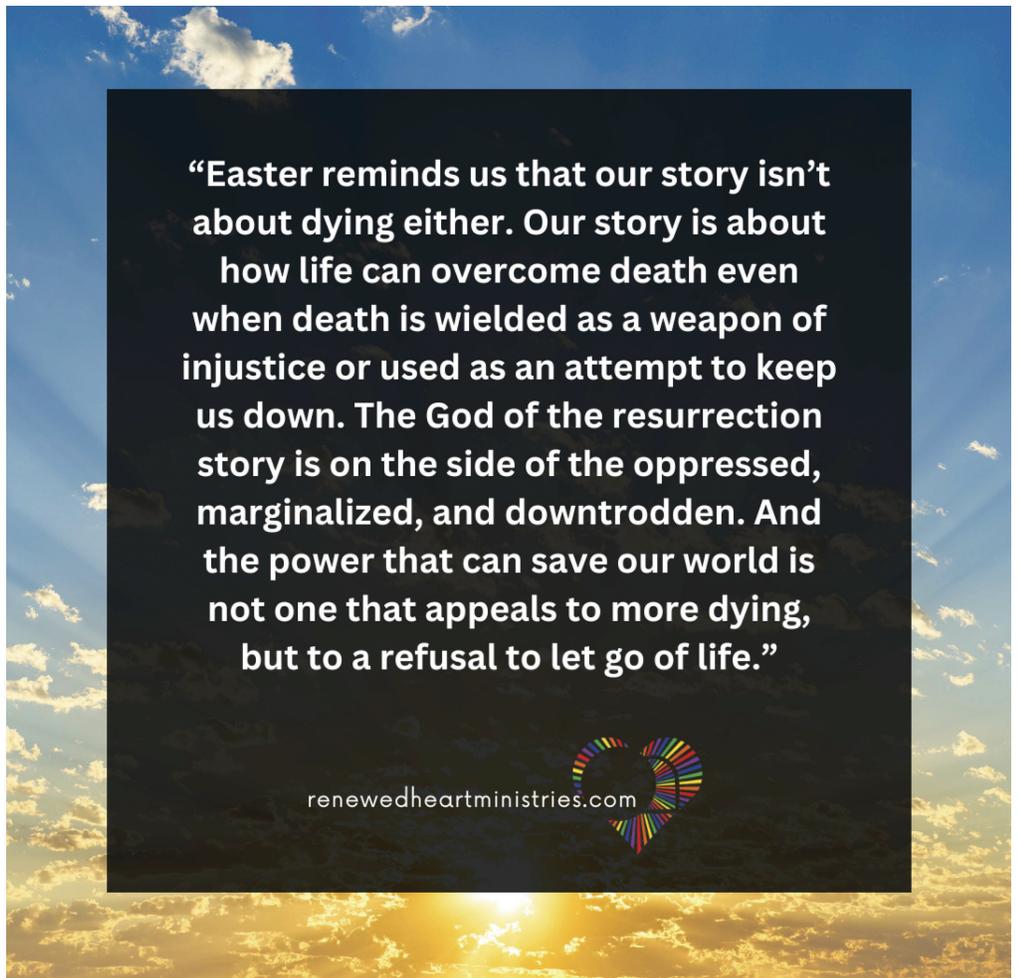




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**"AND NOW YOU JUST FLIP IT LIKE THIS!"**

## *Testimonies*

**"Someone put *Awakenings* on my work desk last month! So thankful for your ongoing ministry!" – TR**

"Wow, this is revolutionary and absolutely thrilling! Oh, if only people can grasp this and actually put it into practice." – WK

"You completely changed the way I view God when I was 15 years old! I'm 21 now, and I still stand by those views!" – CR

"I just love Herb and this ministry. Have been following him for several years and can't get enough of it. He brings the sayings of Jesus to light in such a clear and beautiful way as he relates it to our society today." – MS