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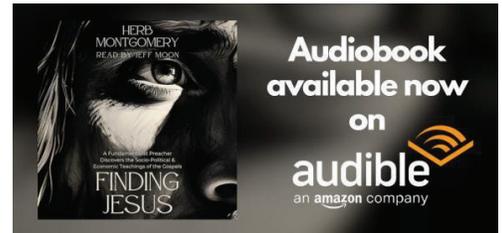


Thank You!

We want to take this moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of our supporters for your invaluable role in the Renewed Heart Ministry community and for your dedication to our mission of fostering love, justice, compassion, and healing. **Your support is the bedrock of our work. Your support empowers us to do what we do.** At a time when ministries like ours are being asked to achieve more with fewer resources, your support is incredibly important, and we want to simply say thank you. Whether in our larger society or within our local faith communities, Renewed Heart Ministries remains committed to advocating for change, working towards a world that is inclusive, just, and safe for everyone, and being a source of love in our world. From all of us here at Renewed Heart Ministries, thank you for your generous support.

We deeply appreciate each and every one of our supporters.

If you'd like to join them in supporting our work, please go to: renewedheartministries.com and click on "Donate" or you can mail your support to: Renewed Heart Ministries, PO Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901



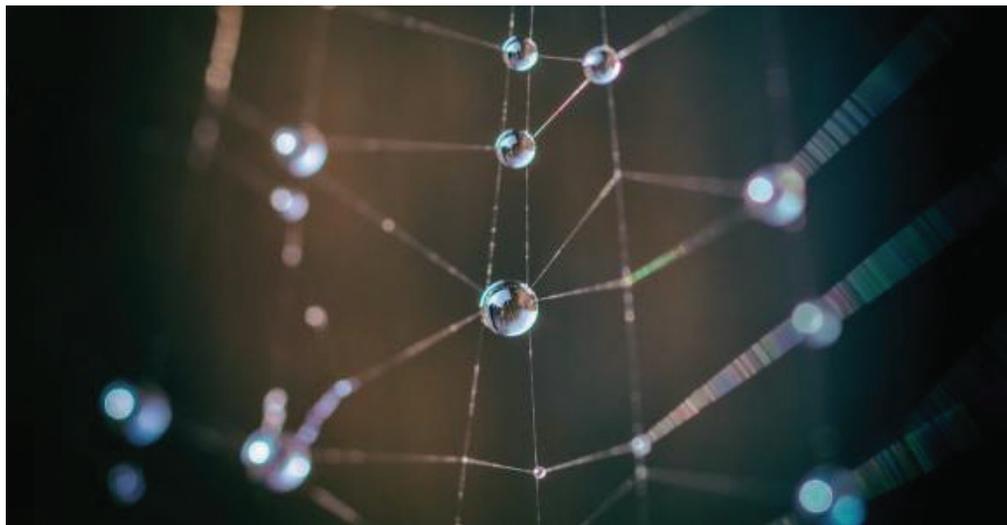
Audiobook Now Available on Audible!

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

by Herb Montgomery

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.





Embracing our Dependency

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this month is from the gospel of Mark:

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. These were his instructions:

“Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place

and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. (Mark 6:1-13)

This reading begins with the statement that a prophet is without honor among those most familiar with them. Most Jesus scholars believe this is one of the earliest statements actually made by the historical Jesus. Our reading states that Jesus wasn’t able to do many miracles in his home town because of their lack of faith. Did no one brought there sick to him as they had done in all the previous locations Mark described? The story doesn’t say. It only says that Jesus couldn’t do in his home area what he had done elsewhere.

What really grabs my attention this week is Jesus’ instruction as he sends out the twelve disciples (Mark 6). This is not a plan of individualism, or a plan of self-reliance or self-sufficiency. This instruction makes the twelve completely dependent on the ones they will be ministering to. There is a lesson here for us today, and we’ll get to it in just a moment. But first, consider there are actually two versions of this instruction in the Jesus story. One version is here in Mark. Luke’s gospels contains both versions (Luke 9:1-6; Luke 10:1-12). Matthew’s gospel combines the two versions in Matthew 10:1-15.

Again, this is a plan of dependence, and it may be difficult for us in our culture to get our heads around. From the very

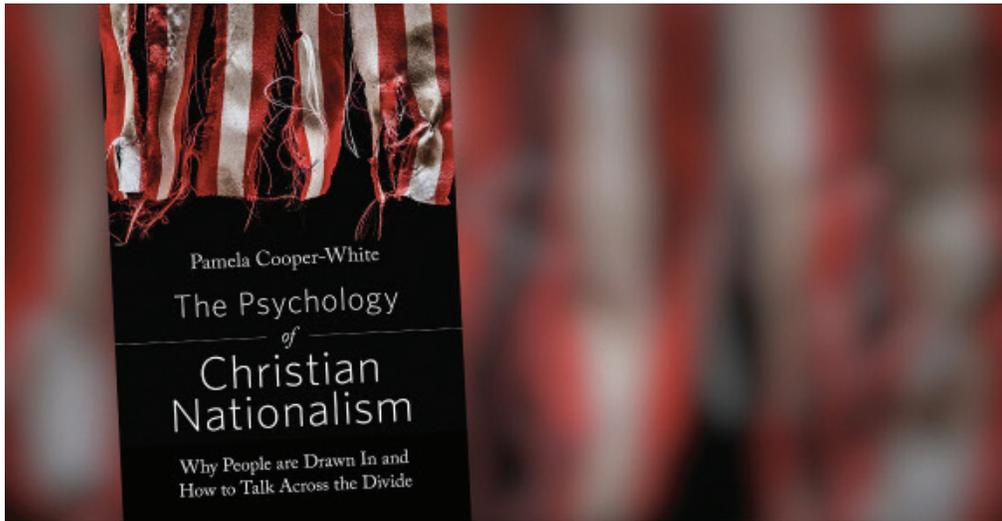
first moments of our lives, those of us living in Western cultures today are acculturated into an individualist way of relating to those around us. We place a high value on being independent or self-reliant—being able to take care of take care of ourselves without being dependent on others.

In nature, though, we are actually dependent on much that is around us including others in our various communities. It is this dependence in our community and our communities’ interdependence with other communities that Jesus’ instruction to the twelve calls us to lean into. Stephen Patterson describes it this way:

What does it actually mean for the empire of God to come? It begins with a knock at the door. On the stoop stand two itinerant beggars, with no purse, no knapsack, no shoes, no staff. They are so ill-equipped that they must cast their fate before the feet of a would-be host. This is a point often made by historical Jesus scholar John Dominic Crossan. These Q folk are sort of like ancient Cynics, but their goal is not the Cynic goal of self-sufficiency; these itinerants are sent only for dependency. To survive they must reach out to other human beings. They offer them peace—this is how the empire arrives. And if their peace is accepted, they eat and drink—this is how the empire of God is consummated, in table fellowship. Then another tradition is tacked on, beginning with the words ‘Whenever you enter a town.’ This is perhaps the older part of the tradition, for this, and only this, also has a parallel in the Gospel of Thomas (14). There is also an echo of it in Paul’s letter known as 1 Corinthians (10: 27). Here, as in the first tradition, the itinerants are instructed, ‘Eat what is set before you.’ Again, the first move is to ask. The empire comes when someone receives food from another. But then something is offered in return: care for the sick. The empire of God here involves an exchange: food for care.” (Stephen Patterson, *The Lost Way: How Two Forgotten Gospels Are Rewriting the Story of Christian Origins*, p. 74-75)

Individualism too often denies the reality that we are connected to each

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RHM's Recommended Reading for August

The Psychology of Christian Nationalism Why People Are Drawn In and How to Talk Across the Divide

by Pamela Cooper-White

Winner of a 2022 Foreword INDIES Award Gold Medal

How do we overcome polarization in American society? How do we advocate for justice when one side won't listen to the other and cycles of outrage escalate?

These questions have been pressing for years, but the emergence of a vocal, virulent Christian nationalism have made it even more urgent that we find a way forward.

In three brief, incisive chapters Pamela Cooper-White uncovers the troubling extent of Christian nationalism, explores its deep psychological roots, and discusses ways in which advocates for justice can safely and effectively attempt to talk across the deep divides in our society.

... [Dependency](#) continued from page 3

other. What one does affects others. What affects one affects others. Many struggled to grasp this reality in the recent Covid pandemic in relation to mask-wearing and vaccinations. Independence, individualism, and a resistance to being told what to do came face to face with us having to work together and do what would be safest for our communities. The needs of the many were at times in opposition to individuals' wishes and we all made choices revealing where our priorities and values really were.

Jesus' instruction to the twelve in our reading this week points us toward community rather than individualism.

Consider this commentary by James Robinson:

[Jesus's] basic issue, still basic today, is that most people have solved the human dilemma for themselves at the expense of everyone else, putting them down so as to stay afloat themselves. This vicious, antisocial way of coping with the necessities of life only escalates the dilemma for the rest of society...I am hungry because you hoard food. You are cold because I hoard clothing. Our dilemma is that we all hoard supplies in our backpacks and put our trust in our wallets! Such "security" should be replaced by God reigning, which means both what I trust God to do (to activate you to share food with me) and what I hear

God telling me to do (to share clothes with you). We should not carry money while bypassing the poor or wear a backpack with extra clothes and food while ignoring the cold and hungry lying in the gutter. This is why the beggars, the hungry, the depressed are fortunate: God, that is, those in whom God rules, those who hearken to God, will care for them. The needy are called upon to trust that God's reigning is there for them ("Theirs is the kingdom of God")...Jesus' message was simple, for he wanted to cut straight through to the point: trust God to look out for you by providing people who will care for you, and listen to him when he calls on you to provide for them." (James M. Robinson, *The Gospel of Jesus: The Search for the Original Good News*, Kindle Location 138)

Jesus was shaping a community that was a community of dependence as soon as it arrived on a person's doorstep. It called a person to embrace taking responsibility for making sure others had what they needed as the first step in embracing that community. It was a test. And if someone was not willing to embrace the ethic of mutual aid and resource-sharing, the disciple was to shake the dust off their feet and move on to find those that would.

I'm reminded of the work of Peter Kropotkin, a Russian activist, writer, revolutionary, and philosopher who lived in the late 19th and early 20th Century. In his book *Mutual Aid*, he commented on Darwinism's survival of the fittest with remarks relevant to our point here:

"While [Darwin] was chiefly using the term [survival of the fittest] in its narrow sense for his own special purpose, he warned his followers against committing the error (which he seems once to have committed himself) of overrating its narrow meaning. In *The Descent of Man* he gave some powerful pages to illustrate its proper, wide sense. He pointed out how, in numberless animal societies, the struggle between separate individuals for the means of existence disappears, how struggle is replaced by co-operation, and

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SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Last month's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos



Not Spiritualizing the Material, Part 1

One of the unique elements here is a tendency to convert the material into spiritual, and then emphasize the spiritual as more important.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/07/spiritualizing-material-part1/

Not Spiritualizing the Material, Part 2

Spiritualizing the gospel, focusing on saving souls while ignoring suffering bodies, over and over again has produced destructive fruit.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/07/spiritualizing-material-part2/

Not Spiritualizing the Material, Part 3

We don't need to be continually spiritualizing the material. Justice and saving bodies is as much a part of this tradition as savings souls.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/08/spiritualizing-material-part3/



Transcending, Escaping or Engaging and Transforming, Part 1

And although all of the gospels may have had a common ancestor in these stories,

John's version is a bit different.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/07/transcending-escaping-engaging-transforming-part1/

Transcending, Escaping or Engaging and Transforming, Part 2

In the synoptics, this theme describes that which has emerged within our world for impacting and transforming our present world.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/07/transcending-escaping-engaging-transforming-part2/

Transcending, Escaping or Engaging and Transforming, Part 3

In the synoptics, the story demonstrates the power of love, compassion, and justice in transforming our material world.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/07/transcending-escaping-engaging-transforming-part3/



Jesus Following and Social Justice, Part 1

This solidly characterizes both traditions as standing in the long Hebrew prophetic tradition of social justice.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/07/jesus-following-social-justice-part1/

Jesus Following and Social Justice, Part 2

In these stories, we don't encounter a focus on going to heaven when we die, but establishing social justice now here on Earth.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/07/jesus-following-social-justice-part2/

Jesus Following and Social Justice, Part 3

Loving others means being concerned with what materially affects them. Not being concerned with matters of social justice is a failure.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/07/jesus-following-social-justice-part3/



Embracing our Dependency, Part 1

This is not a plan of individualism, or a plan of self-reliance or self-sufficiency. This is a plan of dependency.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/07/embracing-our-dependency-part1/

Embracing our Dependency, Part 2

Independence, individualism, and a resistance to being told what to do came face to face with us having to work together and dependency.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/07/embracing-our-dependency-part2/

Embracing our Dependency, Part 3

The very first test was one of dependency. How would they respond to one on their door step with no bread, no money, and no extra clothing.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2023/07/embracing-our-dependency-part3/

Weekly YouTube Show!

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** @**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!



... *Dependency* continued from page 4

how that substitution results in the development of intellectual and moral faculties which secure to the species the best conditions for survival. He intimated that in such cases the fittest are not the physically strongest, nor the cunningest, but those who learn to combine so as mutually to support each other, strong and weak alike, for the welfare of the community. 'Those communities,' he wrote, 'which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring' (2nd ed., p. 163).

Lastly this week's reading says the twelve went out and preached that people should repent. It helps me to remember that Christianity didn't exist yet so this is not a call to join a group. Rather, this call to repent should be understood in the communal context that Hebrew prophets would have used rather than the individualistic way many sectors of Christianity later interpreted it.

The Hebrew prophets called for societies and communities to experience group repentance to stop

social injustices (Isaiah 59:20; Jeremiah 5:3, 8:6, 15:19; Ezekiel 14:6, 18:30-32; Hosea 11:5). They called communities to consider how they were relating to the most vulnerable among them and to rethink how their society was shaped. They called them to repent by embracing justice and making sure everyone in their society was cared for.

This calls me this week to reassess my own understanding of Jesus-following. Is my Christianity all about getting to heaven and saving my own individual soul? Or does following Jesus call me at the very first to be concerned with someone's present material need? Are there any in my community that have "no bread, no bag, no money, no clothing"? And if so, how does following Jesus inspire me not just to act through charity, but to also make sure everyone has enough to thrive and charity becomes obsolete? The very first test for someone who encountered one of these twelve was not how they responded to a gospel presentation on Jesus' death, heaven or hell, or whatever gospel topic is too often the soundbite version of sharing Christianity today. The very first test was how would this person respond

to someone on their door step with no bread, no money, and no extra clothing.

There's a lot here to consider.

Discussion Group Questions

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your discussion group.
2. What are some of the ways you perceive us to be connected to and dependent on one another for our well being? 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 and clicking *donate*.

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

... **Dependency** continued from page 6

Facebook, Instagram and Meta's Threads. If you haven't done so already, please follow us on your chosen social media platforms for our daily posts.

If you would like to listen to these articles each week in podcast form, you can find The Social Jesus podcast on all major podcast carriers. If you enjoy listening to The Social Jesus Podcast please take a moment to like and subscribe and if your podcast platform offers this option, consider taking some time to leave us a positive 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.

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

I love each of you dearly. ■

You can find Renewed Heart Ministries on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and Meta's new Threads. If you haven't done so already, please follow us on your chosen social media platforms for our daily posts.

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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:

renewedheartministries.com

or by mail at:

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PO Box 1211
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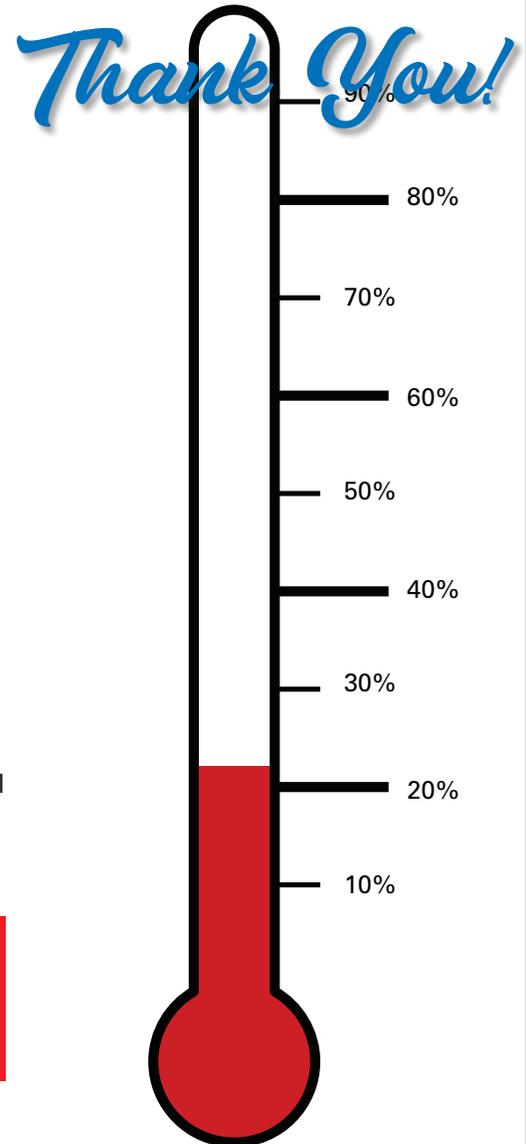
Please make sure you are receiving all of RHM's free resources by going to our website and clicking "sign up."

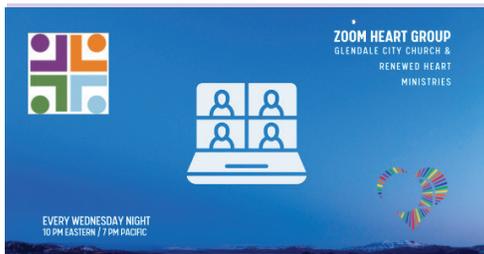
Whether you give \$5 or \$5,000, every amount helps us to continue our work.

And **THANK YOU** for reading, listening to, sharing and supporting RHM's work. Thank you for the decisions you make every day to make our world a safer, compassionate, just home for everyone. Thank you for your dedication to engaging our world and the care you demonstrate, and for being such an important part of our community.

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

**Donations Received
as of end of July 2024:
\$34,927.13**



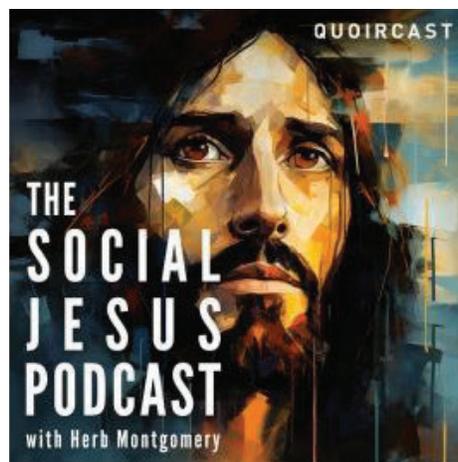


HeartGroup on Zoom Every Wednesday Night!

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 *Social Jesus* podcast published each Friday.

Each Zoom session will be held on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. Pacific/10:00 p.m. Eastern.

To receive the link for the Zoom meeting, email us at: info@renewedheartministries.com



Announcing a NEW Podcast!

You can find the *Social Jesus* podcast now at: <https://the-social-jesus-podcast.simplecast.com/>

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