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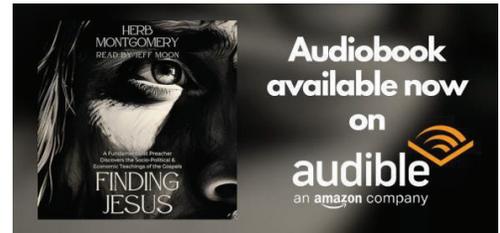


## Thank You!

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](http://renewedheartministries.com) and click on "Donate" or you can mail your support to: Renewed Heart Ministries, PO Box 1211, Lewisburg, WV 24901

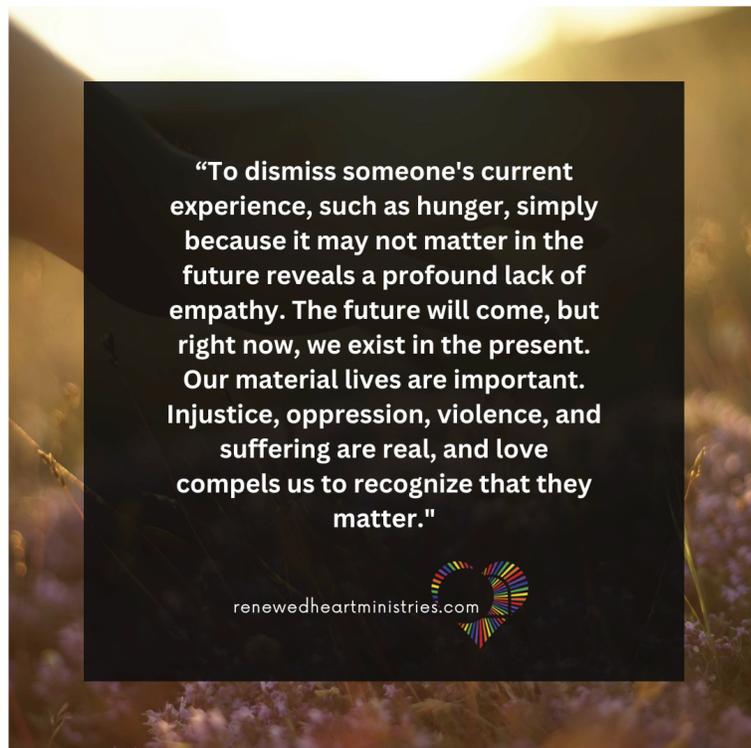


## Audiobook Now Available on Audible!

*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.





# Morality, Culture Wars, and Consent

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this month is from the gospel of Mark.

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)

So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?”

He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

“ ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”...

Again Jesus called the crowd to him

and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them...For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” (Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23)

The first thing that jumps out to me (because we spent so much time in August in the gospel of John. The first thing that jumps out to me in Mark is who it defines as opposing the Jesus movement. In John, it’s Jesus versus Jews in general. It’s Christianity versus Judaism. We have discussed at length how harmful this Christian anti-semitic trope has been and continues to be.

In Mark, however, the narrative is Jesus versus Pharisees. The debate is within Jewish society, an argument between Jewish voices arguing with other Jewish voices.

Nonetheless, in the same way that John over generalizes and lumps all Jews together, Mark over generalizes and lumps all Pharisees together. This has led many Christians to use the term “Pharisee” as a pejorative term. That is anti-semitic, and Christians today need to stop using the term Pharisee as a negative. The Pharisees were a religio-political party whose members held a spectrum of beliefs. Pharisees in the House of Shammai were at one end of the spectrum and were the most restrictive. Pharisees in

the House of Hillel were on the other end of the spectrum and defined Torah observance as love, and specifically love of neighbor. After the time of Jesus, the school of Hillel became the dominant group in the Pharisees and later evolved into Rabbinic Judaism. It interpreted the entire Torah through the lens of how one treated their neighbor. Jesus’ teachings (with the exception of debt cancellation and divorce) were much the same as the Hillelian Pharisees in this regard. The debate we encounter in Mark 7 is with Pharisees on the most outwardly restrictive end of the spectrum.

The Pharisees were just one of many religio-political groups at the time of Jesus who competed for social authority and positions of influence and power. Isenberg gives us a window into understanding the social context of our reading this week:

“The Pharisees, as other groups, engaged in interpretation of the written Torah...[but] distinguished themselves from other groups by a peculiar claim for the authority of their traditions and, by extension, for the authority of the Pharisaic traditions. They established their right to interpret authoritatively by placing themselves in a chain of tradition going back to the original revelation of Torah at Mt. Sinai and then by putting the contents of their interpretive activities into that very revelation. This they did by telling a myth which reports that both Written and Oral Law were revealed on Mt. Sinai.... Such claims to authority put them implicitly in competition with the other groups that claimed and had legislative authority, the priests and their supporters, the Sadducees.... It is reasonable to assume that they clashed on the matter of the Oral Law, and there is reasonable evidence from Josephus and the rabbinic literature to support the assumption. Certainly the matter was worth disputing since the outcome of the argument established who had control over the redemptive media in Jewish Palestine (Isenberg, quoted in Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus*, pp. 220-221)

Another thing that may be difficult for

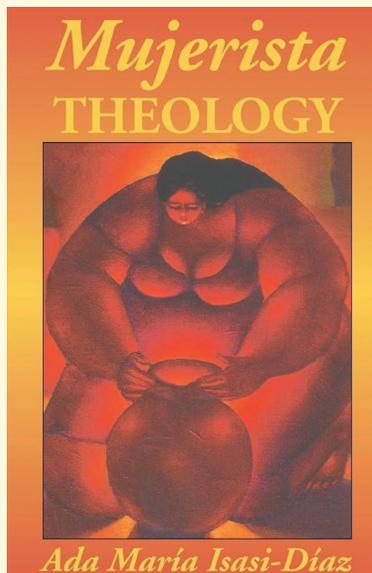
*continued on page 4*

# RHM's Recommended Reading for September

## *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*

by Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz

*Mujerista Theology* is a comprehensive introduction to Hispanic feminist theology written from the heart and the convictions of experience. Continually drawing on her Cuban roots, Isasi-Diaz focuses on the life journeys and struggles of Hispanic women as she develops a theology to support and empower their daily struggles for meaning. With her own life journey always firmly connected to the grassroots experience of Hispanic women and to the struggle for liberation, Isasi-Diaz is a major spokesperson for the continuing need for liberation theology today. The first part of *Mujerista Theology* describes the experience of self-discovery: what it is like to live in a foreign land as the oppressed "other." The second part focuses on the methodology of doing mujerista theology and its major themes: solidarity, empowerment, anthropology, encountering God, and liturgy and rituals.



Here, Jesus moves the focus from outward washing to what is transpiring on the inside of a person. "Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them...For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come."

Then Mark lists behaviors that actually defined morality in the community for whom this gospel was written. Morality, remember, is socially defined. Morality begins with what a culture defines as right and wrong, as good or bad behavior. Individuals then decide what they define as moral behavior in agreement with or in contrast to the morality of their culture. Some moral positions have been proven to bring harm intrinsically, and are present within all cultures. Other moral issues have been deemed harmful by specific cultures and are only prohibited in those cultures. We can learn a lot by listening to the morality of other cultures as they can reveal things our own culture has yet to learn. Listening to others has the power to reveal to us areas where, as in our reading this week, we may be disregarding something that is intrinsically harmful while prohibiting things that are intrinsically life-giving. How many times have we grown up to discover that something we thought was wrong wasn't harmful at all while those things we used to deem as perfectly fine in reality were hurting or damaging us? It's helpful for those of us living in religious or theistic cultures to remember that something is not wrong simply because our God said so. Something can be deemed wrong because it is intrinsically harmful and some things have been mislabeled by all cultures.

What first hints to me that Mark's list was shaped by its culture is the inclusion of "adultery." At the time this was written, adultery was not egalitarian. The concern was never for a woman whose husband may have cheated on her, as our culture often defines adultery today. Adultery was defined only as when a man engaged in sexual intercourse with a woman who was betrothed or already married

### *Morality...* continued from page 3

us to wrap our heads around today is that the practice of washing in our reading was before the discovery of germ theory. Perhaps people in that culture noticed a link between people who got sick and those who didn't wash their hands before eating. The sect of Pharisees we are reading about this week had ritualized the practice of washing one's hands and attached moral value and worth to it. It was not simply a health practice. It was a practice within a set of behaviors that defined whether the person washing their hands was themselves was morally pure or unclean.

In our reading this week, Jesus contrasts the inconsistency of being fastidiousness about hand washing while having utter disregard for the moral demand of caring for one's parents in their old age:

"And he continued, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own

traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.' But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)—then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." (Mark 7:9-13)

Next in our reading, we encounter Jesus discussing the practice with his disciples:

After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.) (Mark 7:17-19)

*continued on page 6*

## SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



# Recent “Social Jesus” Blog on Patheos



### **Right Now Matters, Part 1**

This final passage sums up the four messages of this chapter. It is important to remember, right now matters.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/right-now-matters-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/right-now-matters-part1/)

### **Right Now Matters, Part 2**

We live in the right now. Love demands that our material existence, injustice, oppression, violence, and suffering, right now, matters.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/right-now-matters-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/right-now-matters-part2/)

### **Right Now Matters, Part 3**

The future will come. But right now, we are alive. We live in the present. Right now matters for all who are alive right now.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/right-now-matters-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/right-now-matters-part3/)



### **The Evolution of the Eucharist, Part 1**

Our reading this week is the Johannine’s community’s nod to the Eucharist. In John’s gospel, Jesus’ last supper is quite unique.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/evolution-eucharistpart1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/evolution-eucharistpart1/)

### **The Evolution of the Eucharist, Part 2**

At these stages, this shared Eucharist meal was still about mutuality and resource-sharing, ensuring that there was no need among them.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/evolution-eucharistpart2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/evolution-eucharistpart2/)

### **The Evolution of the Eucharist, Part 3**

It would be transformative for privileged sectors of Christianity to listen to Eucharist interpretations from marginalized faith communities.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/evolution-eucharistpart3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/evolution-eucharistpart3/)



### **The Bread of Life, Part 1**

Before unpacking the bread of life, responsible commentary on John must repeatedly correct the way the Jews as a whole are villainized here.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/bread-life-part1-2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/bread-life-part1-2/)

### **The Bread of Life, Part 2**

Interpretations of the bread of life that are only about death management, ironically, are death-dealing. Life-giving interpretations ask us to consider how we are alive.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/bread-life-part2-2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/bread-life-part2-2/)

### **The Bread of Life, Part 3**

Bread of life interpretations should move us, not toward the immaterial, but to shape our material world in compassion and justice.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/bread-life-part3-2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/bread-life-part3-2/)

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## 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](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)



# JUST TALKING

TODD  
LEONARD

HERB  
MONTGOMERY

SEASON 2, EPISODE 25: MARK 7.1-8, 14-15, 21-23. LECTIONARY B, PROPER 16

[YOUTUBE.COM/@HERBANDTODDJUSTTALKING](https://www.youtube.com/@herbandtoddjusttalking)

## 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](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!

#### **Morality...** continued from page 4

to another man. Adultery did not refer to sex with a single woman. It only concerned itself with the property rights of the man to whom the woman belonged (see *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4). This is because the culture making this list was deeply patriarchal. Today, many of us have experienced how deeply destructive a culture and practice of patriarchy intrinsically is. Adultery can still be part of our morality discussion today, but we should define it in more egalitarian ways to honor the rights of all partners, to all people in marital or committed relationships deeply harmed by the un-consented, violating fracture of those commitments.

Culturally, it's still easy for us today to say amen to most items of this list. Some of them are universal. Things like theft, murder, greed, malice, deceit, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly (recklessness) are things that many of us could still agree violate the golden rule of treating others the way we would like to be treated and doing no harm to other people. Where we get into culture wars today is in how to define sexual immorality and lewdness. I find it ironic that those who are quick

to accusing others of sexual immorality are most often guilty themselves of the immorality of arrogance. And however we land on what we define to be sexually immoral or lewd, our own sexual ethic should at least include consent and the practice of doing no harm. Too often what certain sectors of Christianity define as sexually immoral is between two consenting adults and hurts no one. We must ground discussion on what is and isn't sexually immoral on a definition of morality that looks at the intrinsic results of the behaviors in question, not just imposed dogma. Is something intrinsically death-dealing or is it life-giving and mislabelled? We too often turn our gaze and pretend not to notice things that are intrinsically death-dealing while we scrutinize and forbid behaviors that intrinsically do no harm.

So, while holding in our hands the golden rule, let's begin a discussion on consent. Genuine consent has five foundational qualities. It must be ongoing. Anyone can change their mind about what they are doing at any time, and so consent can be retracted at any time. Consent must be freely given. Someone's yes must be offered without them feeling pressured, forced, or afraid to say

no. Consent must be specific. Saying yes to one act doesn't mean you've said yes to others. Consent must be enthusiastic. This means actually wanting to do something, and not feeling like you should or that you have to do something. And lastly consent is informed. Consent is violated by lying or deceiving someone. (For more info see [www.nsvrc.org/](http://www.nsvrc.org/))

Beginning any discussion on sexual immorality at the much deeper level discussion of consent, sets us up for a discussion that many raised in Christian purity culture have never had. Discussions on consent allow us to uncover a more holistic way of understanding and defining sexual morality.

Consent is an egalitarian discussion. It doesn't privilege any gender above another, or penalize one while ignoring others. Beginning the discussion of what is sexually moral and what is sexually immoral with discussion of consent includes us all.

### Discussion Group Questions

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your discussion group.

*Morality...* continued from page 6

- If you were to rewrite the internal list here at the end of our reading this week for us today, what would your internal list include? Share and discuss with your group.
- 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*.

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

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. ■



## Upcoming Events

**SEPTEMBER 21, 2024**

**Good News Fellowship**

Toronto, Ontario Canada

**For more info or the Zoom link, email us at:**

[info@renewedheartministries.com](mailto:info@renewedheartministries.com)

**or call: 304.520.0030**

RENEWED  
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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.***

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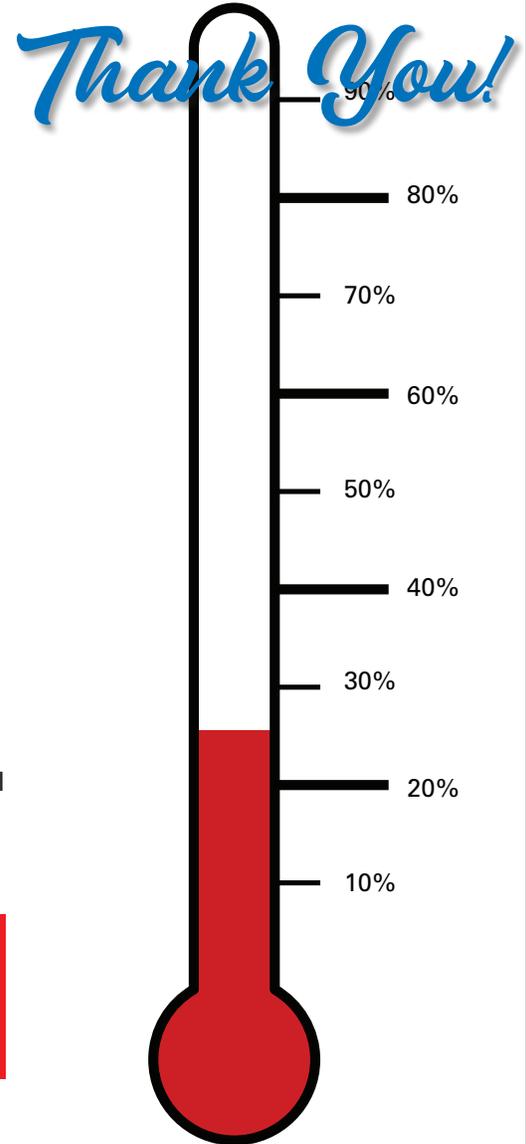
Please make sure you are receiving all of RHM's free resources by going to our website and clicking "sign up."

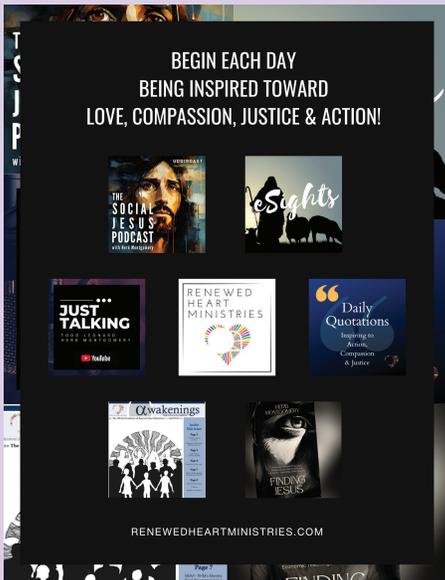
**Whether you give \$5 or \$5,000, every amount helps us to continue our work.**

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 Aug. 2024:  
\$39,598.04**





## Are you receiving all of RHM's free resources each week?

You can find Renewed Heart Ministries on X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and Threads for our daily posts. Our JFE podcast can be subscribed to through the podcast platform you use. You can also receive inspiration in your inbox from RHM delivered to you email inbox daily or weekly.

**Sign up today so you don't miss a thing!** Go to [renewedheartministries.com](https://renewedheartministries.com) and click "Sign Up!"

**LOVE IS AN ART  
AND YOU'RE  
THE ARTIST.**

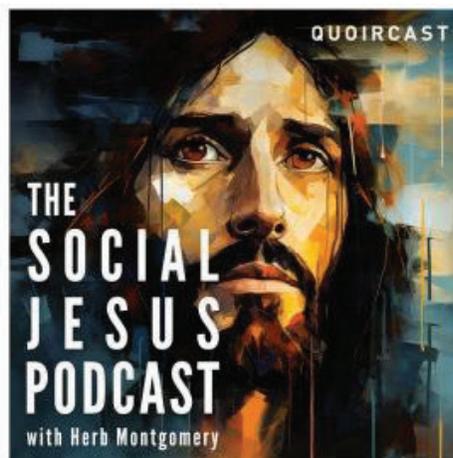
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Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.



## Announcing a NEW Podcast!

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



## Testimony

"I looooooove your ministry and your passion for fairness, equality, and justice!! That's the 'Jesus message'." – RP