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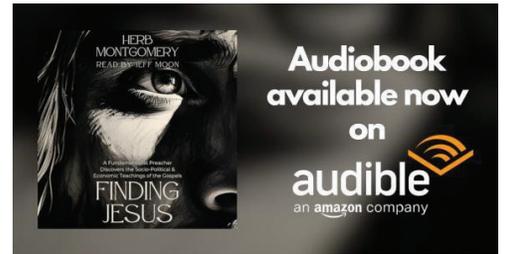
## Thank You!

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



Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.



## 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.



# Servants of the Most Vulnerable

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this month is from the gospel of Mark:

They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.” He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me. (Mark 9:30-37)

There’s quite a bit for us to unpack this week.

First, our reading affirms the resurrection in a way that the Markan community for whom this version of the Jesus story was written would have

expected. In this narrative, Jesus knew he was going to be resurrected all along. It was only the disciples that didn’t understand what was going to happen.

But what grabs my attention most in our reading this week is the argument by the disciples over who was the greatest disciple of Jesus’ and how Jesus responded.

Jesus turns our hierarchical ways of structuring our communities upside down. He is a genuine anarchist in the truest definition of the term: one opposed to hierarchal ways of structuring society. What our passage also reveals is that the Markan community must have needed to address this issue. I can easily imagine debates in the early Jesus movement after Jesus’ death over who was the greatest of his disciples, especially as some of them competed for positions of power and influence.

Mark’s gospel doesn’t completely eliminate hierarchical structure here, but instead defines leadership in the community as about serving community needs, not simply holding a position of power over others. We find this echoed in other parts of the Christian scriptures:

“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; *not*

*lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”*

(1 Peter 5:1-3, emphasis added.)

I do want to offer a word of caution here. We must hold serving others in tension with other values. Without that balance, it can be death dealing. It can lead those being subjugated and/or exploited to passively accept their exploitation rather than correcting their exploiters.

Consider how women have been subjugated by patriarchal Christianity. Rather than addressing patriarchy and moving toward a more egalitarian community, the “greatest is a servant and the first shall be last” rhetoric has often been misused. Rather than correcting those seeking positions of status over others (like the disciples in the original story), it has been used to encourage women to accept their subjugation to and exploitation by men in the church as “Christlike.” Mary Daly writes:

“The qualities that Christianity idealizes, especially for women, are also those of a victim: sacrificial love, passive acceptance of suffering, humility, meekness, etc. Since these are the qualities idealized in Jesus “who died for our sins,” his functioning as a model reinforces the scapegoat syndrome for women.” (Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, p. 77)

This has not only been historically true for women but Christian slave masters also used this rhetoric against their slaves. We have examples of this even in the Christian scriptures themselves. It didn’t take long before Jesus’ words intended to address and correct those seeking status over others were twisted and used against those being suppressed. One example can be found in the epistle to the Ephesians:

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.” (Ephesians 6:5)

There are other examples in the letter to the Ephesians too: not only slaves being taught to accept their subjugation and exploitation, but also women and children.

*continued on page 4*

# October's Recommended Reading

## *Heartache of Promise: A Prison of Silence Unlocked*

by Merita Atherly Engen

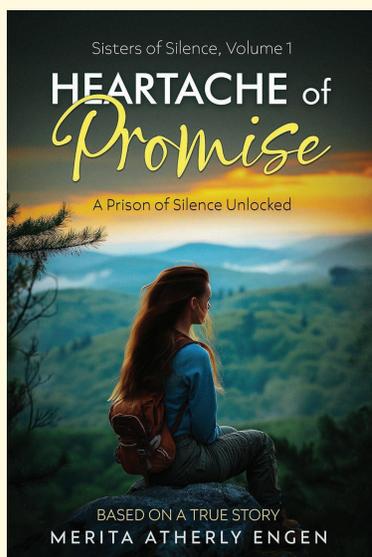
A compelling critique of purity culture and the silence it imposes on countless individuals, woven through one woman's deeply personal journey to liberation.

Can a lost self ever be restored?

Rose-Marie Clarke lives in a culture of silence and "perfection" with an undertow of family secrets. In this dynamic, she fails to recognize her deep love for one man. She ignores her heart until she can no longer hear it, making choices that can never be undone.

Failing to recognize the lie she is living, Rose-Marie strives to obtain love's promise within a marriage, with children, poverty, and a fledgling faith.

When her first love returns, Rose-Marie's repressed emotions awaken, but fear arises. Is emotional honesty worth the risk of losing all she's worked for? Does God have the answers to free her heart?



### **Servants... continued from page 3**

"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands." (Ephesians 5:22)

"Children, obey your parents." (Ephesians 6:1)

When we compare these passages to our reading this week, I find a stark contrast. Rather than telling children to be obedient to the adults in their lives, Jesus uses his lesson on service to teach adults about how they should treat children, the most vulnerable among us. Rather than calling for slaves to obey or women to submit, Jesus is instead calling anyone who wants to serve the Jesus community to intentionally practice a preferential option for the most vulnerable among the community. In that society (and most societies) that group is children.

This makes me ask the question: are we misusing the teachings of Jesus today to further deepen others' subjugation? Or are we practicing a preferential option for the most vulnerable in our

communities, seeking to serve rather than possessing status, and calling for and working toward changes that eliminate subjugation altogether?

It makes a big difference whether Jesus' words in our reading this week are used as a corrective for those seeking standing and status, and whether we define leadership in the Jesus community as about serving the needs of the community especially those most vulnerable to injustice. Are we taking Jesus' words about service and encouraging those who are vulnerable to passively accept subjugation in our culture? Are we using Jesus' teachings to ensure that leadership is life-giving, or are we flipping Jesus' script and using his teachings in ways that dehumanize and devalue some people's intrinsic worth.

Some may consider this to be a subtle difference, but it makes a huge difference. One way to tell the difference is to ask yourself who is being addressed: those in power and

being corrected for how they lord their authority over others, or those being lorded over and encouraged to passively accept their experience?

In the very next chapter of Mark, Jesus addresses this issue again when he says:

"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. *Not so with you.* Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." (Mark 10:42-44, emphasis added.)

How we shape our faith communities matters. And these words offer wisdom in our justice work in our faith communities and in the wider society. When we vote for leaders, are we voting for leaders who have at heart the well being of even the most vulnerable among us? Do they care about the actual needs of the community they are seeking to serve or are they primarily concerned about themselves and what they want from whatever leadership role or office they are seeking?

As I consider the political season we are presently in here in the United States, I hear wisdom calling to each of us from these words in Mark's gospel. Consider the record of those seeking office from our local communities all the way to the Office of the President. Do they really care about others or do they only want your vote? Ask yourself, how do those asking for your support treat those who most vulnerable to injustice, subjugation, and exploitation in our society?

Character matters! Is their character such that seeks to serve themselves or to genuinely serve the people? "Anyone who wants to be first, must be servant of all."

### **Discussion Group Questions**

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

*continued on page 6*

## SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



# Recent “Social Jesus” Blog on Patheos



### ***Inclusivity and Taking Care of the Vulnerable, Part 1***

Love, inclusivity, justice doesn't need everyone to be the same in every detail. Inclusivity is comfortable with diversity.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/inclusivity-taking-care-vulnerable-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/inclusivity-taking-care-vulnerable-part1/)

### ***Inclusivity and Taking Care of the Vulnerable, Part 2***

A central theme of our reading this week is what Liberation Theologians call a preferential option for the most vulnerable.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/inclusivity-taking-care-vulnerable-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/inclusivity-taking-care-vulnerable-part2/)

### ***Inclusivity and Taking Care of the Vulnerable, Part 3***

We are called to affect and transform our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for everyone, especially our most vulnerable.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/inclusivity-taking-care-vulnerable-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/inclusivity-taking-care-vulnerable-part3/)



### ***Servants of the Most Vulnerable, Part 1***

Our reading turns hierarchical ways of structuring our communities upside down, defining leaders as being servants the community's needs.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/servants-most-vulnerable-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/servants-most-vulnerable-part1/)

### ***Servants of the Most Vulnerable, Part 2***

It wasn't long before these words on being servants intended to correct those seeking status were twisted and used against the vulnerable.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/servants-most-vulnerable-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/servants-most-vulnerable-part2/)

### ***Servants of the Most Vulnerable, Part 3***

Or are we flipping this script and using this teachings on being servants in ways that dehumanize, devalue, and subjugate the vulnerable?

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/servants-most-vulnerable-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/servants-most-vulnerable-part3/)



### ***Refusing to Passively Endure Injustice, Part 1***

Whatever we make of the claim of messiah today, we must be intentional about holding any interpretation in a life-giving way for everyone.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/refusing-passively-endure-injustice-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/refusing-passively-endure-injustice-part1/)

### ***Refusing to Passively Endure Injustice, Part 2***

Passively enduring suffering doesn't give life. Life is found in our active resistance and struggle against suffering and injustice.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/refusing-passively-endure-injustice-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/refusing-passively-endure-injustice-part2/)

### ***Refusing to Passively Endure Injustice, Part 3***

Don't passively endure suffering. Don't give in when others try to persuade us to patiently endure rather than speaking out.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/refusing-passively-endure-injustice-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/refusing-passively-endure-injustice-part3/)



### ***Jesus, a Greek Woman and a Magical Cure, Part 1***

The first story in this week's reading is of a Greek woman who approaches Jesus on behalf of her daughter. There's a lot to unpack in this story.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/jesus-greek-woman-magical-cure-part1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/jesus-greek-woman-magical-cure-part1/)

### ***Jesus, a Greek Woman and a Magical Cure, Part 2***

Intersectionality is such a rich lens through which to relate to this Jesus story as we consider how it may inform our justice work today.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/jesus-greek-woman-magical-cure-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/jesus-greek-woman-magical-cure-part2/)

### ***Jesus, a Greek Woman and a Magical Cure, Part 3***

Today we need more than magical cures that enable people to do better in our economy's game. We need a world where we all win together.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/jesus-greek-woman-magical-cure-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/09/jesus-greek-woman-magical-cure-part3/)



### ***Morality, Culture Wars, and Consent, Part 1***

They were just one of many religio-political groups in the first century using morality debates to compete for social authority.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/morality-culture-wars-consent-part-1/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/morality-culture-wars-consent-part-1/)

### ***Morality, Culture Wars, and Consent, Part 2***

This was not a health practice. Hand washing was being used by those in power to define people and their standing in the community.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/morality-culture-wars-consent-part2/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/morality-culture-wars-consent-part2/)

### ***Morality, Culture Wars, and Consent, Part 3***

Consent is an egalitarian discussion. It doesn't privilege any gender above another, or penalize one while ignoring others.

[patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/morality-culture-wars-consent-part3/](https://patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2024/08/morality-culture-wars-consent-part3/)



# JUST TALKING

TODD  
LEONARD

HERB  
MONTGOMERY

LECTIONARY READINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF LOVE, INCLUSION, & SOCIAL JUSTICE

[YOUTUBE.COM/@HERBANDTODDJUSTALKING](https://www.youtube.com/@herbandtoddjustalking)

## 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 social 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** @**herbandtoddjustalking**.

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!

#### *Servants...* continued from page 4

- How have you witnessed the servant model used in both healthy and unhealthy ways in your own experience? 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](https://renewedheartministries.com) and clicking **donate**.

My latest book *Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political and Economic Teachings of the Gospels* is available now on

Amazon in paperback, Kindle, and also on Audible in audio book format.

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.

Thank you for listening to *The Social Jesus* Podcast. If you enjoyed this podcast please take a moment to like and subscribe and if the podcast platform you're using offers this option, please 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](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. ■



## 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)

You can find RHM 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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## Upcoming Events

**OCTOBER 19, 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

## Announcing a NEW Podcast!

You can find the *Social Jesus*  
 podcast now at: [the-social-jesus-  
 podcast.simplecast.com/](https://the-social-jesus-podcast.simplecast.com/)



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.***

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](https://renewedheartministries.com)**  
 or by mail at:

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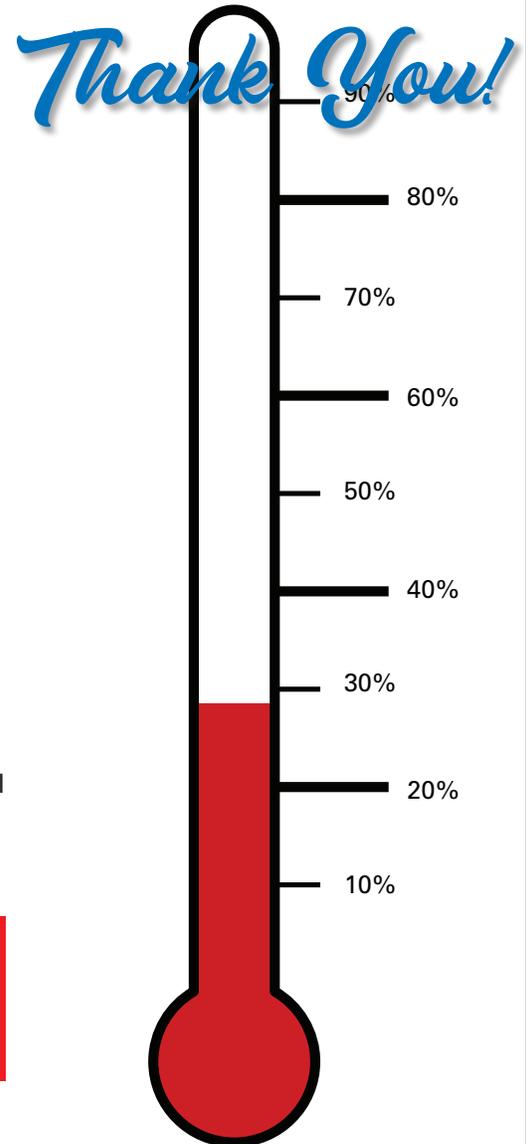
Please make sure you are receiving all of RHM's free resources by going to our website and clicking "sign up."

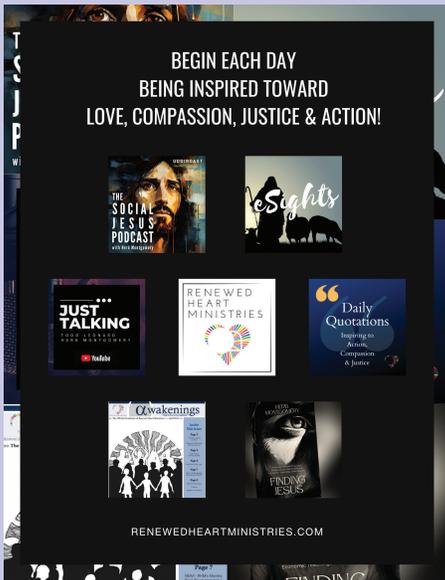
**Whether you give \$5 or \$5,000, every amount helps us to continue our work.**

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 Sept. 2024:  
 \$42,729.79**





## 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.

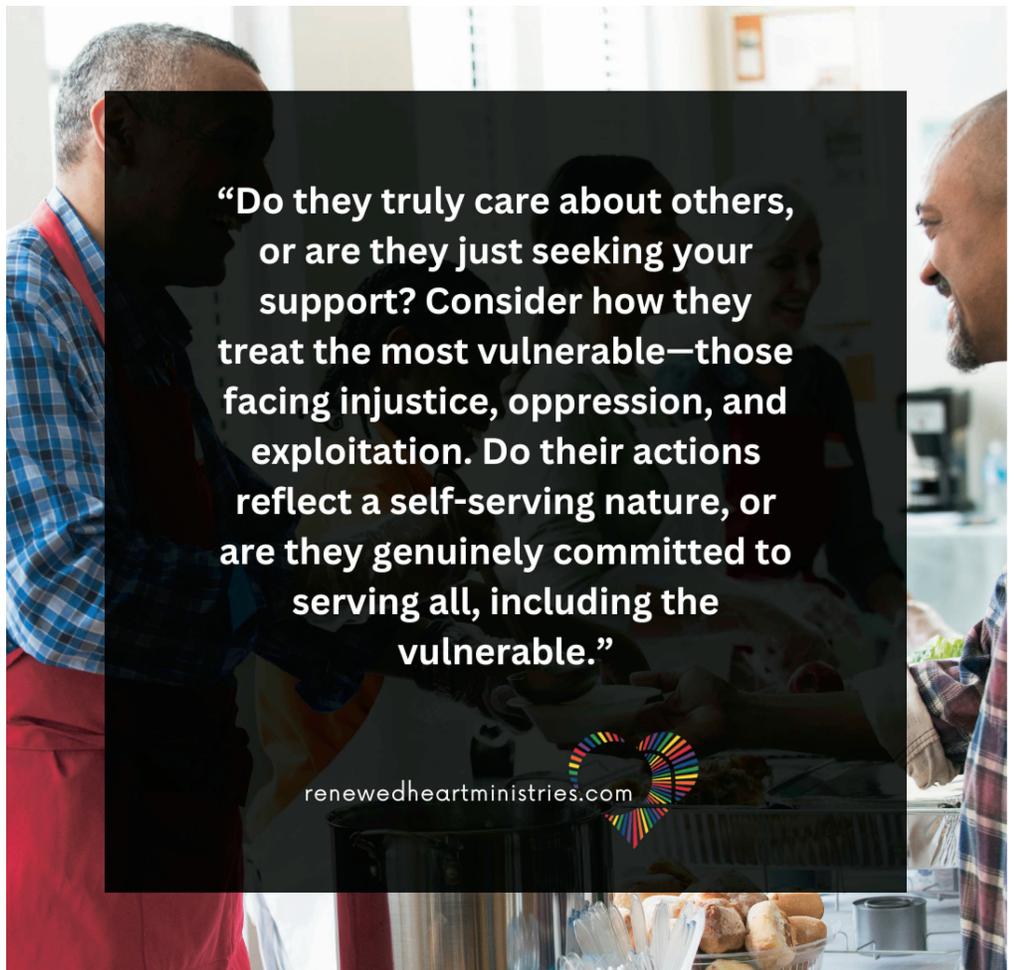
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Go to [renewedheartministries.com](https://renewedheartministries.com) and click "Sign Up!"

## Testimonies

"I love listening to your presentations online. They truly bless me. They are unlike any other that I have ever heard...Your words have given me light. Enough to believe that there is possibly more." – JB

"My life has been radically changed through listening and reading the material on your website." – PT



**"Do they truly care about others, or are they just seeking your support? Consider how they treat the most vulnerable—those facing injustice, oppression, and exploitation. Do their actions reflect a self-serving nature, or are they genuinely committed to serving all, including the vulnerable."**

