RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

awakenings

::: THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES ::: OCTOBER 2026 :::

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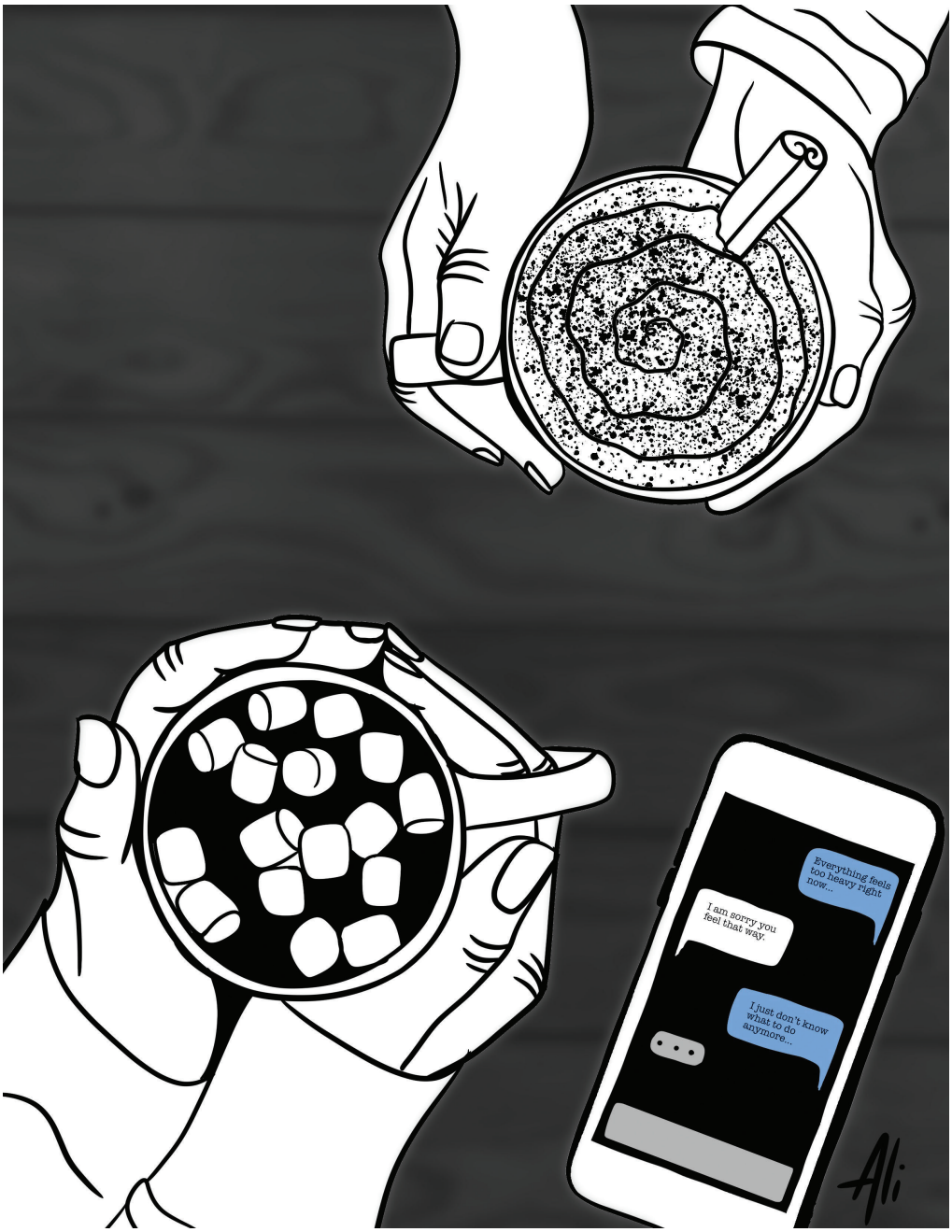
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Thank You!

We want to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you who supports the work of Renewed Heart Ministries. Your generosity makes it possible for us to continue our mission of love, justice, and compassion, even in a time when ministries like ours are being called to do more with less.

Your support means the world to us. Whether we're speaking into the broader society, engaging within our faith communities, or working one on one alongside others endeavoring to follow Jesus' teachings of love and justice, we remain committed to advocating for a world that is inclusive, just, and safe for all. **Your partnership helps keep our work alive.**

From all of us at Renewed Heart Ministries, **thank you**. We are so deeply grateful for you, and **we couldn't do this work without you**.

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:

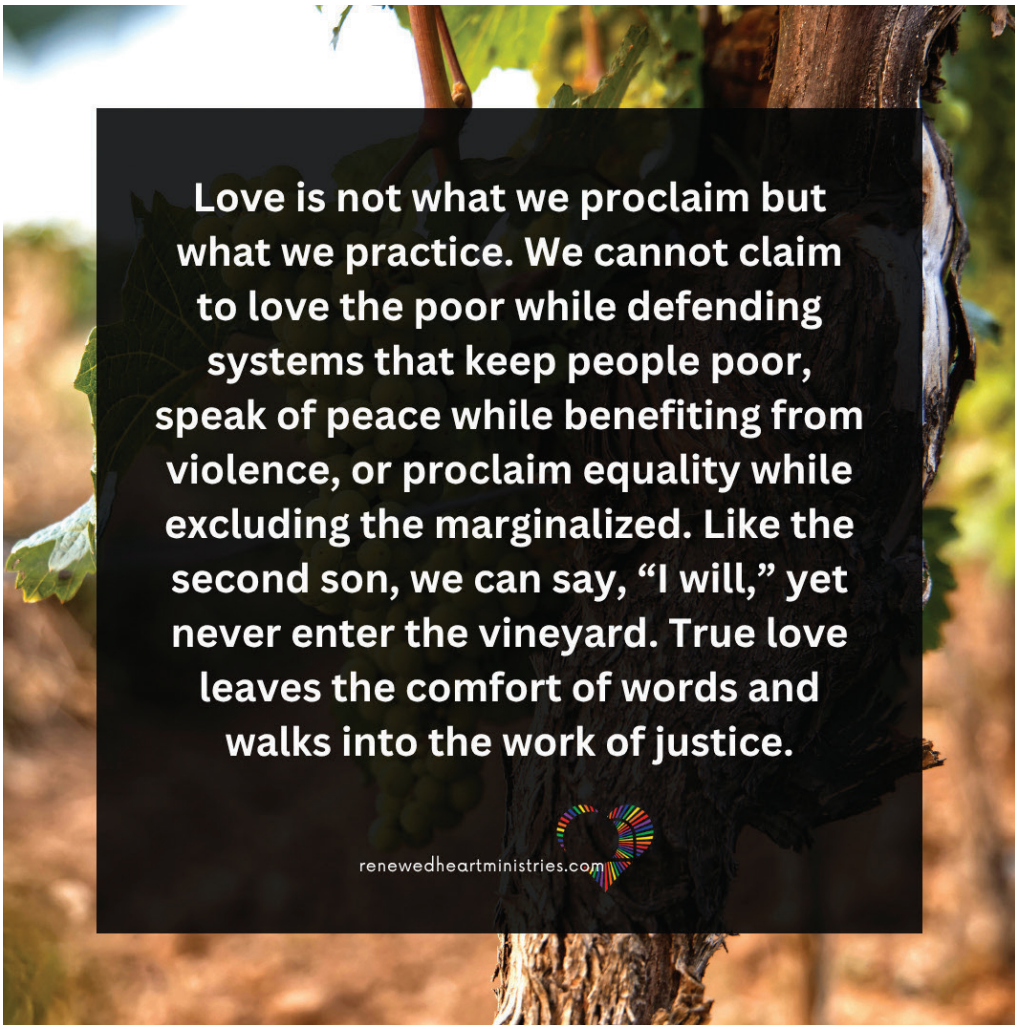
Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg WV, 24901



A podcast where we talk about the intersection of faith and social justice, and what a first-century, Jewish, prophet of the poor from Galilee offers us today in our work of love, compassion and justice.

Find The *Social Jesus* Podcast at:
https://the-social-jesus-podcast.simplecast.com/

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Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.



Actions Over Words

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading this week is from the Gospel of Matthew:

Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"

Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?"

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin'—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet."

So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'

" 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

"Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.

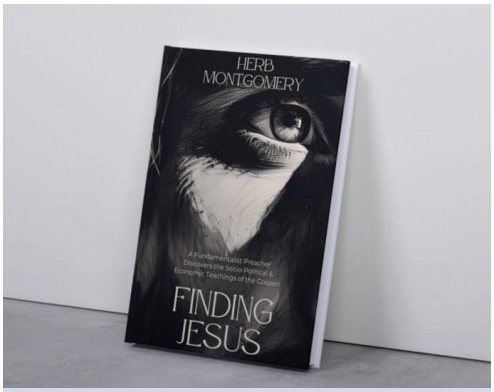
"Which of the two did what his father wanted?"

"The first," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him. (Matthew 21:23-32)

The encounter between Jesus and the chief priests and elders in our reading this week is a deeply political confrontation disguised as a theological question. Jesus has entered Jerusalem, challenged the economic practices of the Temple, and openly taught the people there. The chief priests and elders, the leading authorities within the Temple state, approach him and ask, "By what authority are you doing these things?" Their question is not merely about religious credentials. It is about power: Who gave Jesus permission to challenge the established social, economic, and political order?

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Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels

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.

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.

Available Now On Amazon!

October's Recommended Reading

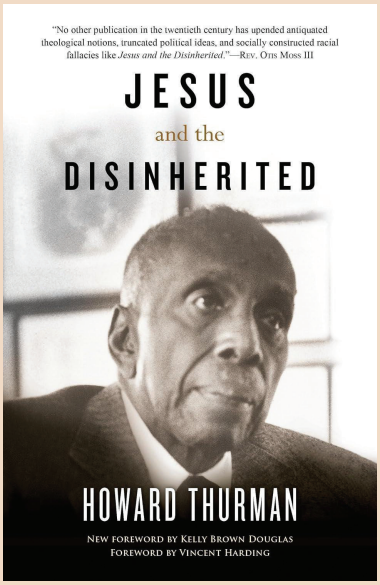
Jesus and the Disinherited

by Howard Thurman

Foreword by Kelly Brown Douglas and Vincent Harding

Famously known as the text that Martin Luther King Jr. sought inspiration from in the days leading up to the Montgomery bus boycott, Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited* helped shape the civil rights movement and changed our nation's history forever.

In this classic theological treatise, the acclaimed theologian and religious leader Howard Thurman (1900-1981) demonstrates how the gospel may be read as a manual of resistance for the poor and disenfranchised. Jesus is a partner in the pain of the oppressed and the example of His life offers a solution to ending the descent into moral nihilism. Hatred does not empower–it decays. Only through self-love and love of one another can God's justice prevail.



Actions Over Words **continued from page 3**

In Jesus' time, the chief priests and elders represented the institutions that governed religious life and exercised significant political and economic influence. The Temple was more than a place of private spirituality. It was a center of wealth, power, sacrifice, taxation, and social hierarchy that answered directly to Rome. But in the Jesus story, Jesus challenges the Temple state's practices. Those in authority recognized that his message threatened more than theology; it also threatened systems that benefited from inequality and control.

Jesus responds to these leaders by asking them about John the Baptist: "Where did John's baptism come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?" This question exposes the leaders' political calculation and concern for authority, but they do not openly answer Jesus. The passage says that if they acknowledged John as a prophet, they would have to explain why they rejected him. If they denied John's legitimacy, they feared the people's reaction: the people believed John to be a prophet.

Their silence reveals an important lesson: unjust systems often protect themselves with calculating actions rather than truth. The leaders don't ask, "What is right?" They instead ask themselves, "What will happen to us if we give this answer?" Their concern is preserving their position.

Jesus exposes that kind of leadership. In Jesus' social vision, genuine authority is not established simply by holding an office, possessing institutional approval, or maintaining control over others. Authority must be measured by its relationship to truth, justice, and the service of the people most affected by the system. John the Baptist had no Temple office, no institutional power, and no elite credentials. Yet the people recognized his prophetic authority because he spoke truthfully and called people in his society to change their unjust practices.

This passage challenges the assumption that political and religious leaders should automatically be trusted simply because they occupy positions of authority. Jesus doesn't teach blind obedience to institutions. Instead, he exposes institutions that have become more concerned with protecting themselves than with serving the people.

Ultimately, the chief priests and elders answer, "We do not know." Jesus in turn refuses to answer their question. Those who refuse to honestly confront injustice are often incapable of recognizing genuine moral authority when it stands before them.

The meaning of this story is therefore profoundly relevant to our time. Jesus confronts a leadership class that has confused institutional power with moral authority. He exposes the way that those in power can become trapped by fear of losing privilege and public support. And he reminds us that true authority is found not in titles or status, but in courage, truth, justice, accountability, and a commitment to the well-being of the people.

Next in this reading, we encounter Jesus' story of the two sons. This story carries a powerful message because it challenges the tendency of religious and political authorities to judge people according to their social status, reputation, or outward words rather than according to their actual lived transformation. Jesus tells the story as his response to the chief priests and elders, the powerful leaders of the temple state. These leaders were not merely religious figures in the modern sense. They also possessed social, economic, and political influence. Their authority allowed them to define who was righteous, who was sinful, who belonged, and who stood outside the boundaries of respectable society.

In Jesus' story, the first son initially refuses his father's request to work in the vineyard. His words are disobedient. Yet he later changes his mind and goes to work. The second son gives the correct answer at first. He says, "I will, sir," but his words are never followed by action. Jesus asks which son actually did what the father wanted, and the answer is obvious:

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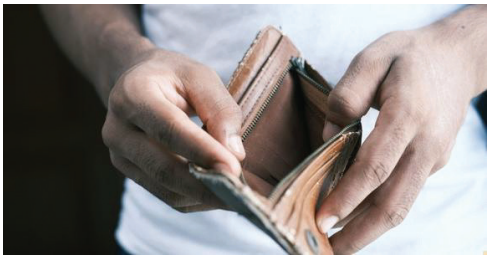
Recent *Social Jesus* Blog Posts on Patheos:



Forgiveness: Healing or a Tool of Oppression?
(Part 1 of the series *Liberation Shared*)

Forgiveness can be a profound act of healing, but requiring forgiveness can itself become a form of oppression.

https://www.patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/09/forgiveness-healing-tool-oppression/



An Old Story of Debt Cancellation
(Part 2 of the series *Liberation Shared*)

This story of debt cancellation challenges the idea that forgiveness means allowing injustice to continue. The first mercy was to be shared.

https://www.patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/09/story-debt-cancellation/



The Last Shall Be First
(Part 1 of the series *The Last Shall Be First*)

The story ultimately imagines an economy organized around human need rather than human competition where justice is about more than equality.

https://www.patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/09/last-shall-be-first/



The First Shall Be Last
(Part 2 of the series *The Last Shall Be First*)

Justice can mean more than giving everyone an equal chance. It can mean people with differing abilities contributing to the common good.

https://www.patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/09/first-shall-be-last/



By Whose Authority?
(Part 1 of the series *Actions Over Words*)

Just authority is found in courage, truth, justice, accountability, and a commitment to the well-being of the people.

https://www.patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/09/whose-authority/



Two Sons and a Vineyard
(Part 2 of the series *Actions Over Words*)

The story of two sons challenges us today to stop confusing respectability with right and to consider actions over claims.

https://www.patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/09/two-sons-vineyard/



The Parable of the Vineyard and the Politics of Justice
(Part 1 of the series *Who Owns the Vineyard? Jesus and the Politics of Justice*)

The vineyard reminds us that eventually exploitation requires violence. Maintaining injustice depends on preventing questions.

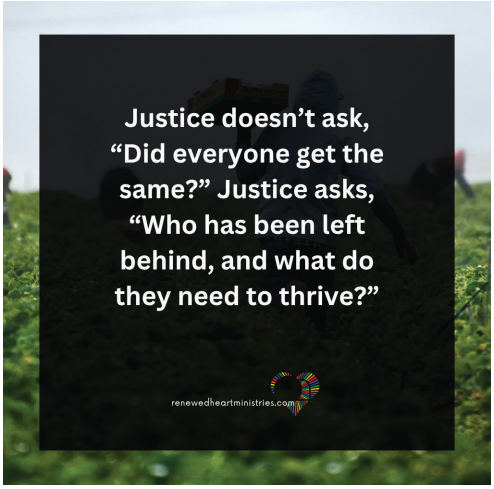
https://www.patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/09/vineyard-parable-politics-justice/



The Stones the Builders Reject
(Part 2 of the series *Who Owns the Vineyard? Jesus and the Politics of Justice*)

This metaphor calls us to look again at those our societies reject. Who is at the center, and whose exclusion maintains that center?

https://www.patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2026/09/stones-builders-reject/

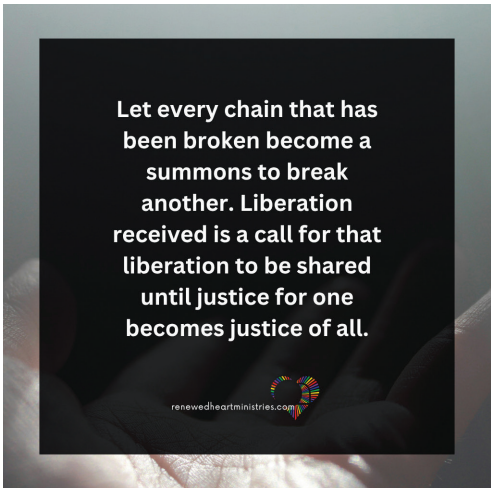


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Actions Over Words **continued from page 4**

the one whose actions ultimately answered the father's request, even though his first response in words was wrong.

The significance becomes unmistakable when Jesus identifies tax collectors and prostitutes as those entering the kingdom of God ahead of the religious authorities. These were people whom the elders and chief priests had labeled as morally inferior. Tax collectors were often associated with exploitation and collaboration with systems of imperial domination. Prostitutes occupied a deeply stigmatized social position and were frequently treated as though their identities could be reduced entirely to their social status. Both groups were marginalized, judged, and excluded by those who considered themselves righteous.

But Jesus' words radically overturn that social hierarchy. He refuses to accept that social respectability is the same thing as righteousness. Those who have been publicly labeled as sinners are capable of hearing a call to justice and participating in the work of justice. Meanwhile, those with religious authority may speak the language of obedience while refusing to change their behavior.

This story therefore warns against a faith that is satisfied with correct language, public declarations, performance, religious credentials, or moral reputation as ends in themselves. Justice requires more than saying the right things. It also requires actual choices in direction toward justice and away from injustice. So a person or institution may claim to love the poor while supporting systems that keep people poor. They may speak about peace while benefiting from violence. They may proclaim equality while excluding marginalized people. Like the second son, they may say, "I will," while never entering the vineyard.

The vineyard in the story can be understood as a symbol of the work necessary to create a more just world. We have work to do: feeding people, challenging oppression, repairing harm, dismantling systems of exclusion, and building communities where those who have been pushed aside are welcomed and valued.

The story calls us to actions rather than to mere claims. The first son changed in his choices, not just in his words. The tax collectors and prostitutes labelled sinners by the elite power brokers of Jesus' society responded to Jesus' calls to justice. Those whom society deems as "less than" are often the first ones to do so. This story challenges communities today to stop confusing respectability with righteousness and to measure faith not primarily by what people claim to believe but by whether they are willing to change and join the work of love, justice, and liberation.

I want to share one last word regarding one of the two communities that are specifically named in this week's reading: sex workers. The spirit and example of Jesus in the Gospels should lead us to pursue justice for sex workers by refusing to treat anyone as disposable, morally inferior, or beyond the reach of dignity and compassion. Again and again, Jesus moved toward people pushed to the margins by religious and social systems. Rather than condemning them, he shared tables, restored dignity, and challenged those who used morality to justify exclusion. Following Jesus in this context means listening to sex workers, defending their humanity, and working for their safety and freedom from violence and exploitation. It means challenging poverty, stigma, and systems that deny people meaningful choices. Jesus calls us to stand with those society marginalizes and to build a world where every person is treated with compassion, justice, and sacred worth.

Justice for sex workers begins with recognizing their full and equal humanity. Too often, sex workers are spoken about as problems to be solved, moral failures to be condemned, or victims without agency. When we commit to justice, we reject this dehumanization and insist that no person loses their dignity because of how they survive economically.

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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

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, Lewisburg, WV 24901

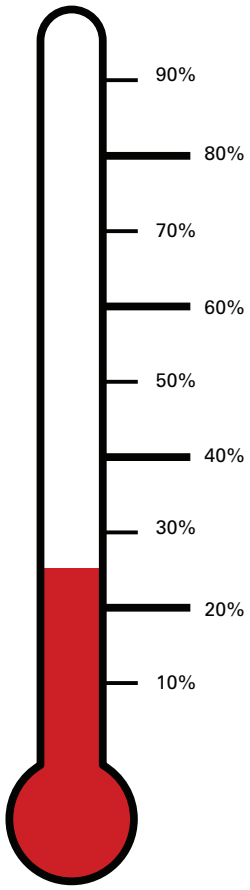
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***every amount helps us* to continue our work.**

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

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.

2026 Projected Budget Goal:
$150,000.00

2026 Donations Received:
$38,370.56



Thank You!



Upcoming Events

DATE CHANGE!

OCTOBER 24, 2026
Good News Fellowship
Toronto, Ontario Canada

For info or Zoom link, email:
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Actions Over Words **continued from page 6**

Sex workers, like all workers, deserve safety, freedom from violence, access to health care, housing, and legal protection. They should be able to report abuse, exploitation, assault, or theft without fearing humiliation, discrimination, or punishment. Justice also requires confronting the economic conditions that produce poverty, homelessness, inequality, discrimination, and lack of opportunity and so make survival increasingly difficult. A just society should expand people's options rather than punish them for the options available to them. Justice must also distinguish between respecting the agency of adults and opposing exploitation, coercion, trafficking, and abuse for everyone. Protecting vulnerable people should never require stripping others of their humanity.

At its heart, justice asks us to see sex workers not as disposable people at the margins, but as neighbors. Their safety matters. Their voices matter. Their needs matter. Liberation means creating a world where no one is exploited, criminalized for surviving, or denied dignity, and where every person has the resources, justice, and freedom necessary to flourish.

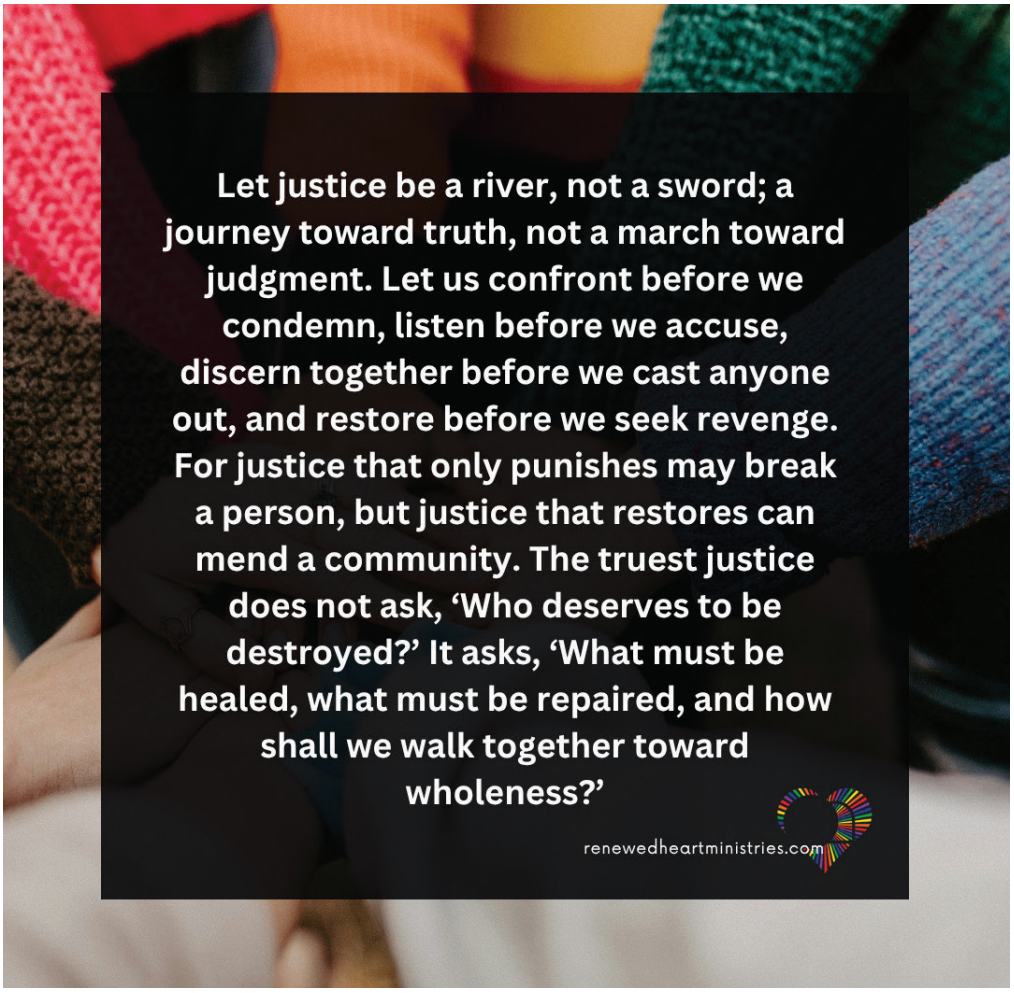
Testimonies

"I heard Herb speak today for the first time and was deeply moved by his presentation. I came away understanding The Lord's Prayer from a new perspective and committed to become more involved in social justice. Thank you for your honesty and ability to shed new light on basis truths."

– AP; Phoenix, AZ

"I would like to thank you for all the time you spend, and the sacrifices you make to do what you do. I am a life who has forever been changed because of this ministry. Thank you." – JM

"Words cannot explain what my heart is feeling. I am so blessed to have these presentations. Thank you!" – Anonymous





Weekly HeartGroup on Zoom Every Wednesday Night!

Each Wednesday evening, Renewed Heart Ministries hosts a Zoom-HeartGroup led by Herb Montgomery. Our discussion each week will focus on the content in RHM's weekly eSight articles and the Social Jesus podcast. The time of each Zoom session will be 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

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