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FOR WHO I INCLUDE
THAN BE INCLUDED
FOR WHO I EXCLUDE



From all of us here at Renewed Heart Ministries to all of our LGBTQ friends, family, supporters and RHM team members, happy Pride Month! We are so glad you are here!

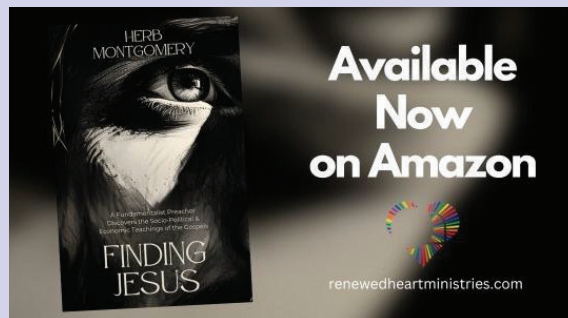
Finding Jesus: A Fundamentalist Preacher Discovers the Socio-Political & Economic Teachings of the Gospels

by Herb Montgomery

Available now on Amazon!

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.



Thank You!

We want to take this moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of our supporters for your support of Renewed Heart Ministry's work of love, justice, and compassion. At a time when ministries like ours are being asked to achieve more with fewer resources, your support is so deeply appreciated, 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. From all of us here at Renewed Heart Ministries, thank you for your generous support.. **We deeply appreciate 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

From all of us here at Renewed Heart Ministry,

THANK YOU.

Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.



Loving One Another and Distributive Justice

by Herb Montgomery

Our reading is from the gospel of John:

When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:31-35)

Loving one another was a central value in the Johannine community. We see evidence of this in all their writings in our sacred canon. One example is in 1 John 4:8:

“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

In the short film *Journey to Liberation: The Legacy of Womanist Theology*, which I watched last year, Dr. Emile M. Townes states, “When you start with an understanding that God loves everyone, justice isn’t very far behind.” This statement resonated so deeply for me that it brought tears to my eyes.

Before I became an ally to trans people, and before falling out with many of our early followers, I had spent years speaking, writing, and teaching on the universal love of God for everyone (see *Finding the Father*.) Yet one response I repeatedly heard during our transition as a ministry was that people couldn’t understand what made us shift from God’s love to God’s justice. I spent countless hours trying to help folks understand that love means justice. They aren’t separate! Justice is the fruit of love, and you can’t genuinely have one without the other. As Cornel West famously stated, “Justice is what love looks like in public.”

What do I mean by the term justice?

Justice is distributive. Speaking of how the Hebrew scriptures define justice, John Dominic Crossan writes, “The primary meaning of ‘justice’ is not retributive, but distributive. To be just means to distribute everything fairly” (John Dominic Crossan, *The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of the Lord’s Prayer*, p. 2).

If we believe in universal love in our time, why wouldn’t that belief lead us toward compassion, action, and ensuring a distributive justice for all?

Distributive justice in the early Jesus communities was the outgrowth of Jesus’ teaching of a God that loves all universally:

“Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no

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The Social Jesus Podcast

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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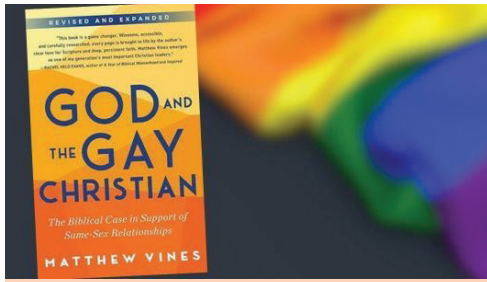


Upcoming Events

JUNE 21, 2025

Good News Fellowship
Toronto, Ontario Canada

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



Recommended Reading for June

God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships (Revised and Expanded)

by Matthew Vines

The landmark book exploring what the Bible actually says—and doesn't say—about same-sex relationships.

As a young Christian man, Matthew Vines harbored the same basic hopes of many young people: to one day share his life with someone, to build a family of his own, to give and receive love. But when Vines realized he was gay, those hopes were called into question. The Bible, he'd been taught, condemned gay relationships.

Feeling the tension between his understanding of the Bible and the reality of his same-sex orientation, Vines devoted years to intensive research into what the Bible says about homosexuality. He asked questions such as:

- What was the real sin of Sodom?
- What did Paul have in mind when he wrote about same-sex relations?
- Is mandatory celibacy biblical?
- Can same-sex marriage fulfill Scripture's vision for marriage?

Accessibly written and carefully argued, this expanded edition of *God and the Gay Christian* includes an updated introduction, two new chapters, and two new appendices. In the book, Vines engages with leading critiques of his work and shows readers how affirming same-sex relationships can go hand in hand with maintaining moral boundaries and upholding an orthodox Christian faith.

Loving One Another... continued from page 3

storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!" (Luke 12:24)

"Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!" (Luke 12:27-28)

"[God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:45)

Jesus' God universally loved even the ravens and lilies, therefore Jesus envisions God as also concerned with distributive justice for us. For Jesus, God's love was at the root of God's radical vision for a world in which all had enough.

A God who indiscriminately loves is also a God who indiscriminately and justly sends rain and sunshine on the objects of that love. Jesus is standing firmly in his own Jewish tradition when he connects love and distributive justice. Consider these passages from the Hebrew prophets where love and distributive justice are intrinsically connected:

"In love a throne will be established;
in faithfulness a man will sit on it—
one from the house of David—
one who in judging seeks justice
and speeds the cause of righteousness." (Isaiah 16:5, emphasis added.)

"But you must return to your God;
maintain love and justice,
and wait for your God always." (Hosea 12:6, emphasis added.)

Calling for distributive justice was a way in which the Hebrew prophets spoke truth to power:

"For I, the LORD, love justice;
I hate robbery and wrongdoing.
In my faithfulness I will reward my people
and make an everlasting covenant with them." (Isaiah 61:8)

"Hate evil, love good;
maintain justice in the courts.
Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy
on the remnant of Joseph." (Amos 5:15)

"Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed." (Isaiah 1:17)

As we mentioned last week, it is this preoccupation with distributive justice that defines whether someone in the Hebrew culture "knew God."

"He defended the cause of the poor and needy,
and so all went well.
Is that not what it means to know me?"
declares the LORD (Jeremiah 22:16)

Jeremiah states that someone's understanding of the Divine should inevitably work its way out in whether they defend the oppressed and vulnerable rather than drive oppression, marginalization, and/or exploitation. According to Jeremiah, to know the Hebrew God accurately is to defend the vulnerable. Gustavo Gutiérrez confirms this interpretation:

"For the prophets this demand was inseparable from the denunciation of social injustice and from the vigorous assertion that God is known only by doing justice. (*A Theology of Liberation: 15th Anniversary Edition*, p. 134)

Gutiérrez also writes, "To know God is to work for justice. There is no other path to reach God." (*Ibid.*, p. 156)

The Hebrew sacred text is repeatedly concerned with a societal, distributive justice (see Exodus 21:2; Exodus 22:21-23; Exodus 22:25; Exodus 23:9; Exodus 23:11; Exodus 23:12; Leviticus 19:9-10; Leviticus

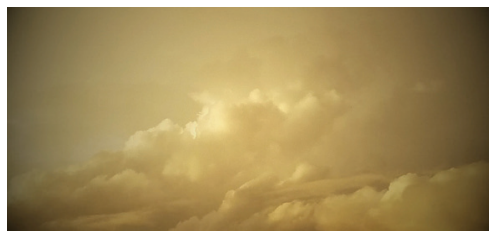
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SOCIAL JESUS

A Blog Exploring the Intersection of Faith and Societal Justice



Recent Social Jesus Blog Posts on Patheos:



Varied Ascensions and One That Points to Justice

(Part 1 of Carrying on the Work of Love and Justice)

There are two distinct versions of the ascension story in the gospels. The one in our reading this week points to justice.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/05/varied-ascensions/

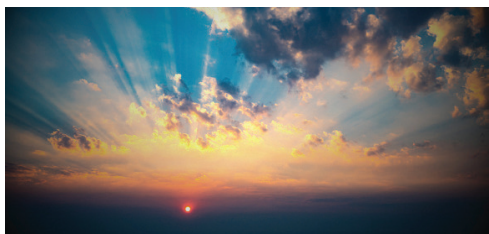


Repentance and Forgiveness as Political Not Personal

(Part 2 of Carrying on the Work of Love and Justice)

John's repentance was not for personal, private, individual sins, but for community sins, social and political choices.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/05/repentance-forgiveness-political-personal/

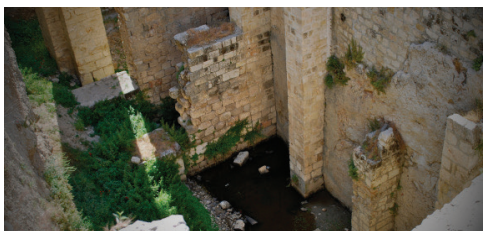


A Gospel With Social Justice Implications

(Part 3 of Carrying on the Work of Love and Justice)

Faith without works of justice was worth nothing. A gospel without social implications was to be deeply questioned and rejected.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/05/gospel-social-implications/



A Liberatory Theology of Disability and the Pool of Bethesda

(Part 1 of The Jesus Story and Living with Disabilities)

The story of pool of bethesda is just one example of narratives in the gospels that make living with disabilities difficult.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/05/pool-bethesda/



The Problematic Disabilities Language in the Gospels

(Part 2 of The Jesus Story and Living with Disabilities)

The gospel authors use disabilities to provide a context for other debates. I wish these authors had handled disabilities with greater care.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/05/problematic-disabilities-language-gospels/

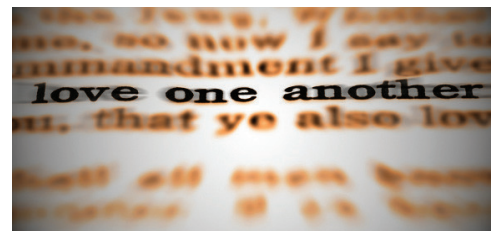


Disabilities and Narratives of Inclusion and Accessibility

(Part 3 of The Jesus Story and Living with Disabilities)

These narratives challenge theologies and practices that result in the lack of accessibility for those with disabilities.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/05/disability-narratives-inclusion-accessibility-change/



Justice and the Call to Love One Another

(Part 1 of Loving One Another and Distributive Justice)

They aren't separate! Justice is the fruit of loving one another. You can't genuinely have one without the other.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/05/justice-love-one-another/

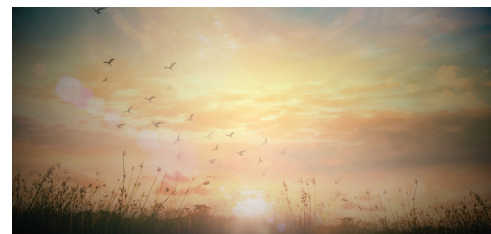


Distributive Justice is Intrinsic to Universal Love

(Part 2 of Loving One Another and Distributive Justice)

In both the Hebrew prophets and the Gospels, love and distributive justice were described as intrinsically connected.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/05/distributive-justice-intrinsic-universal-love/



How Love and Social Justice are Connected

(Part 2 of Loving One Another and Distributive Justice)

Those believing they understand God's love should be the loudest in the room opposing the injustices of classism, racism, sexism and more.

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2025/05/love-social-justice-2/



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 [@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!

What people are saying about *Just Talking* –

"I'm definitely enjoying these discussions. Helps clearly bring the love and teachings of Jesus into focus for me."

–Commenter

Loving One Another... continued from page 4

19:34; Leviticus 23:22; Leviticus 25:2-7; Leviticus 25:10; Leviticus 25:23; Leviticus 25:35-37; Leviticus 26:13; Leviticus 26:34-35; Deuteronomy 5:14; Deuteronomy 5:15; Deuteronomy 10:19; Deuteronomy 14:28-29; Deuteronomy 15:1-18; Deuteronomy 24:19-21; Deuteronomy 26:12; 2 Kings 23:35; Nehemiah 5:1-5; Job 24.2-12, 14; Isaiah 3:14; Isaiah 5:23; Isaiah 10:1-2; Jeremiah 5:27; Jeremiah 5:28; Jeremiah 6:12; Jeremiah 22:13-17; Ezekiel 22:29; Hosea 12:6-8; Amos 2.6-7; Amos 4:1; Amos 5:7; Amos 5:11-12; Amos 8:5-6; Micah 2:1-3; Micah 3:1-2; Micah 3:9-11; Micah 6:10-11; Micah 6.12; and Habakkuk 2:5-6).

This tradition continues in the more Jewish portions of the New Testament texts (see Luke 6:24-25; Luke 12:13-21; Luke 16:19-31; Luke 18:18-26; and James 2:5-9).

It makes perfect sense, then, that a Jewish prophet of the poor from Galilee who in the 1st Century traversed the region teaching about a God who loved ravens, lilies and all people too, would live, teach, minister, protest, and be crucified in profound solidarity with those suffering injustice in his society.

If we define politics as the distribution of resources and power, the gospel has real political implications that we must not hide or hide from. The portions of the New Testament believed to have been written by the Johannine community are the portions of the New Testament most preoccupied with defining God as "Love." They don't miss the connection between love and justice either:

"How can the love of God be in anyone who has material goods and sees a sibling in need and yet refuses help? ...Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." (1 John 3:17-18)

I want to close this week with one more statement by Gustavo Gutiérrez that it would be well for us to spend this coming week contemplating:

"This does not detract from the Gospel news; rather it enriches the political sphere. Moreover, the life and death of Jesus are no less evangelical because of their political connotations. His testimony and his message acquire this political dimension precisely because of the radicalness of their salvific character: to preach the universal love of the Father is inevitably to

continued on page 7

"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."

James 2:14-17

renewedheartministries.com

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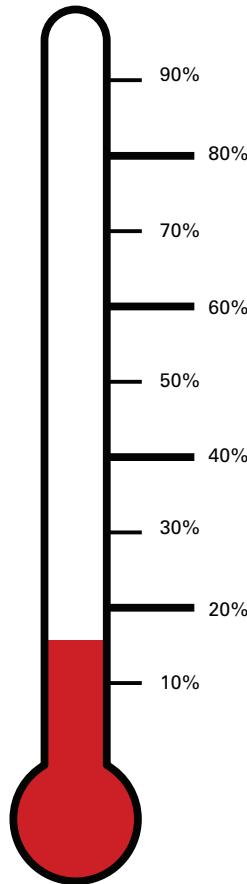
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And **THANK YOU** for reading, listening to, sharing and supporting RHM's work. Thank you for the decisions you make every day to make our world a safer, compassionate, just home for everyone. Thank you for your dedication to engaging our world and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







2025 Projected Budget Goal:
\$150,000.00

YTD Budget \$75,000
YTD Donations Received:
\$22,734.76

Thank You!



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-  renewedheartministries.com

Loving One Another... continued from page 6

go against all injustice, privilege, oppression, or narrow nationalism. (*A Theology of Liberation: 15th Anniversary Edition*, p. 135).

Those who believe they understand God's love should be the loudest in the room opposing the injustices of classism, racism, misogyny, patriarchy, bigotry to and erasure of our LGBTQ siblings, and more. To believe in universal love is to work for a distributive, societal justice for those who are the objects of that universal love. As James Baldwin wrote in *The Fire Next Time*, "If the concept of God has any validity or any use, it can only be to make us larger, freer, and more loving. If God cannot do this, then it is time we got rid of Him."

Discussion Group Questions

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's podcast episode with your discussion group.
2. How are love and justice intrinsically connected for you? 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.

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



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

You can find RHM on Blusky, Facebook, Instagram and Threads for 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 your email inbox daily or weekly.

Go to renewedheartministries.com and click "Sign Up!"

Sign up today so you don't miss a thing!

"Woe to you shepherds who only take care of yourselves! . . . You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured . . . You have ruled them harshly and brutally."

Ezekiel 34:2-6



Weekly HeartGroup on Zoom Every Wednesday Night!

Each Wednesday evening, Glendale City Church hosts a Zoom HeartGroup led by Herb Montgomery. Our discussion each week will focus on the content in Renewed Heart Ministries weekly eSight articles and the *Jesus For Everyone* podcast published each Friday. 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

When someone tries to take away your rights, that's called persecution. When someone else gets rights you already enjoy, that's called sharing.

