

“Humankind: a Hopeful History” — 49-10
PAUSE TO CONSIDER: REFLECTIONS ON SESSION #10

1. Choosing the right book is like deciding upon a location to visit. Each time we are invited to spend time with new thoughts, rework old thoughts, share ideas and enjoy time together. We are so blessed to be able to bring to our study learners from a wide variety of backgrounds, religions, educational experiences and stations in life. **January 23, 2023 will soon be here.** I used to write down the number of sleeps remaining in the school year on the blackboard in the early days and the white board more recently so... we have 56 more sleeps until we begin Session 50!!!
2. I’m giving Rutger a final opportunity to influence us with this video. “The Right Side of History.” Begin at 1:00 — and if you wish to listen to Kara Swisher, continue to the end, otherwise stop at 13:30.



3. **Thank you, Bernard and Sheryl,** for your opener and closing. Bernard read to us an excerpt from *Illuminata* by Maryann Williamson — Clearing up the past. Summarizing, he reminded us that we all make mistakes, have regrets, have blown opportunities but the good news is that when we are ready, God is willing to start over with us... “See the light and it will be reflected... open your eyes and chaos will be no more.” In searching for exact quotes by Williamson, I discovered some amazing videos.

Sheryl closed with four excerpts from “The Book of Qualities” by J. Ruth Gendler: Courage which follows, Trust, Compassion and Truth.

“Courage has roots. She sleeps on a fu- ton on the floor and lives close to the ground. Courage looks you straight in the eye. She is not impressed with powertrippers and she knows first aid. Courage is not afraid to weep and she is not afraid to pray, even when she is not sure who she is praying to. When Courage walks, it is clear that she has made the journey from loneliness to solitude. The people who told me she is stern were not lying, they just forgot to mention that she is kind.”

Gendler refers to Trust as the daughter of Courage, at home anywhere, not fragile. Compassion was a vulnerable child who was teased for being too sentimental. Her strength grew with age. Truth was personified as a blond male, one who loves to tell a good story, has a fierce temper (in order to be heard), is willing to wait and is gentle.

Lots of food for thought. Thanks again, dear friends.

4. Rule #10 — Be realistic — Here is an audiobook reading of Bregman’s “Utopia for Realists.” Well worth the 6 hours of listening (I’m listening while writing our Pause for Consideration #10.) Many of the facts he includes in this book were related to us by Jock McTavish over the years when he was a co-leader of Monday Night Book Study with Wayne.



5. Wayne reworked his initial questions: I repeat them for you.

1. What Planet am I on? became **Do you have a priority for caring for others?**
2. What Wolf am I feeding? **Do you engage in compassionate behaviour, readily?**
3. How can my faith help me deal with a book like this? **Are you finding ways to grow your faith as we dig more deeply into this material?**

6. Housekeeping: Here is a link to our Christmas Newsletter— lots of choice. When I mentioned to my grandchildren last night that there were only three more Sundays until Christmas and I met lots of argument. True, Christmas falls on Sunday so we have the 4th, 11th, 18th and then Christmas!!

https://mcusercontent.com/b751bde2d62296218188e3f29/files/b4966cdf-6f3a-3cac-86af-ffee0a128992/Advent_2022_Newsletter.pdf

You will have to copy the address and put it into your search engine to get your copy.

7. As Wayne led us through the 10 Rules to Live By, some rules seemed to be more intriguing than others: Here are some of the comments:

#3 Ask more Questions — the book by Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*, raised the issue regarding the inappropriateness of some charitable donations sent to faraway countries are sometimes more detrimental than good — from Bregman, “Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you, their tastes (needs) may be different.” (386)

#4 Temper your empathy; train your compassion. — professional distance in caring professions is often wise. Boundaries are important. Compassion is Empathy plus Action.

#6 Love your own as others love their own — While living in other countries, acquaintances became friends and subsequent understandings of world news is filtered through these new understandings. “We are called to love and it’s by loving our own that we learn to love. Realizing the truth in this for everyone adds to our awareness. Here is a quote from Brian McLaren’s response to a question about the meaning of life — “Life is a gift and love is the point.”



Loving those close to us is not always easy.

#7 Avoid the News — this was a really a tough one to fathom. Some of us love listening to the news, reading the newspaper... However, so much of what we hear, see, read is pointedly biased. News has many focuses and without it, we cannot know what is happening at the local, provincial, federal, world levels. Ignorance is not bliss. The question of social media is that it is not going anywhere — new rules/guidelines are essential. News saturation

is a problem — we become desensitized. Algorithms push the news — almost engineered for us.

8. Breakout #1 was about remembering what we read and how we used our readings. Playgrounds were mentioned, a new view of Blitz of London WWII evolved, anecdotal understandings resulted. From Epilog: “Know Yourself” and rejection of self-help genre were highlights. Importance of travel in understanding each other is essential. Overall — a new look at Lord of the Flies, finding the story behind the news, hearing about Christmas Eve 1914 opened eyes to new understandings.

9. Breakout #2 was all about next session. Some titles: Braiding Sweet Grass, Five Little Indians, The Beekeeper of Aleppo, The Professional Librarian, True Reconciliation... we love to read. Feel free to add to our list over the next “56 sleeps.”

10. From Chat:

Jim: A major takeaway from Humankind for me was about placebo and nocebo effects... prophecies, both when they are positive or negative, tend to be self-fulfilling.

Happy Advent

Mike: The item that is at the top of my personal Bill of Responsibilities are don't expect, don't require, don't assume, do the work.

Wishing everyone a joyful and meaningful holiday season and a safe one with family!

Brenda This creates an awesome blessing to conclude our session #49.

This is a picture of the University of Calgary's campus in Qatar. Cheryl tells us that they offer Bachelor and Masters programs with a focus on Health promotion and disease prevention and community development.



11. Michael's Notes Chapter 13-end — Thank you so much for this very enjoyable review.

CHAPTER 13

265, he'd better not be dissing Business Administration. 4 years I spent getting that degree!

269-270, underlying all this, leadership is so much about listening and respecting instead of directing and shouting.

270, bottom. For the record, I *loathed* docketing my hours. Absolutely loathed it.

270, bottom, and there's probably a temporal cascade effect. As we've moved along in the last 40 or so years, there has been less and less long-term planning and thinking and more and more instant response-and-gratification motivation. Short-term goals are the only allowable goals any longer.

272, let's call it like he seems to be intimating. Managers are the corporate version of bureaucrats.

Managers thinking in a certain way and on a certain track. An old saying---it's great if you know every millimetre of your box. But if you can't cut your way out of the box and you can't draw a sphere, you may not be much good to anyone.

273, bottom. Slowly, but faster, my own company is starting to do this. There has been in the last 2 years a very strong push for every employee to craft their own learning curve. It's rather exhilarating in its way.

274, I think what's being described here is an adaptive and responsive model vs. one that is built "by the book". It looks like he wanted a different ending, so he wrote a different story. (De Blok)

"It's easy to make things hard, but hard to make them easy". Ooooh---I'm *keeping*\ that one!

CHAPTER 14

280, I'll spend some time on curiosity in my opening.

281, bottom, and into this flows the good-and-bad of IEPs—Individualized Education Plans

282. Sure thing. The easiest way to view this is to look at Lego itself. In my day, I had a few blocks of various types and colours and I could combine them and recombine them into anything I dreamed of. My nephew? He was ecstatic when I bought him the Colosseum (for a small fortune, BTW), which he followed every detailed instruction to the letter and finished in about 3 weeks. It's amazing and beautiful. But is it really lego anymore?

283, dolphins, too, love to play

291, dress codes too. I've never been a fan. Dress codes lock you in and lock everyone else out. This sort of thing, and what he's describing, is fundamentalism in the education sector.

293, I've said this for a long time now. Educators' primary role is no longer to be the dispenser of knowledge, but instead the catalyzer and facilitator of discussions and questions. A lot of teachers have had a hard time unlearning the knowledge-delivery model.

CHAPTER 15

298-300, a neat and inspiring story. He is, of course, transiting his discussions about business and education into the political arena now.

302, the problem is that trust is a particular language of its own. And most people have forgotten the words. But it can happen. From being told a story to writing the story, to being *in* the story.

303-304, perhaps it's the basic building block of mutual respect that has to be built back up. I've said that it's hard to build a house out of ashes. But maybe I should add that ashes are good for starting a fire.

304, bottom, this *can* have an effect. We get our health care more or less for free. I was much more appreciative of our system—and willing to pay the taxes---when they showed me a bill of how much one night's stay for me cost in the hospital.

305, the success stories about microloans, I feel, have the same basis---when the loan is passed on to another family in a village, there is almost an obligation to use it wisely and as effectively as possible because of the people who have come before.

306, that's fair. Read any sample Hansard record. There's a fair amount of smarty-smart sniping, even if some of it is good-natured. Not as much in Canada, there's still real statements made in debate, but even those are carefully crafted and maybe don't show a whole picture.

309, the things we share don't seem so remarkable. I tilt this a different way. The

things we share we don't perceive as costing us anything. There are probably still bumps in the road. The hoarding of toilet paper at the beginning of the pandemic comes to mind.

309 bottom, and beyond---now we have the metaverse---slicing up area that doesn't even physically exist.

310, all of this, it's a very fine idea, but for me it starts/started, I think, with meeting special yet ordinary people. I will share an old, old entry from the journals about a guy I still think about betimes, these 25 years later. He was exhibit A for "blokesmanship"—the science of being a decent and friendly human being:

My parents still do not, and will never need to know, that I trashed my rental car going across a pass in New Zealand at the start of the Aussie '98 trip. Remember, you're driving on the wrong side of the road and it's very difficult twisty-turny stuff. And, of course, there's so much distracting Tolkienvista to see. But none of that excuses me. I was on a <flat> portion when it happened. How humiliating. Anyway, my guess is that a rock must've caught under the wheel, cause it spun quite suddenly in my hand. Next thing I know. I was flying into the ditch at 90 clicks. Or more appropriately, the fencing. I took out 200 metres or so of it. Car was a mess. Fortunately, the fencing was on the left side. And I, of course, was driving on the right. So unhurt. In shock, mind, but unhurt. It couldn't have been 3 minutes later that a Kiwi stops by the side of the road and he says "Looks like you've had a little mishap". I could only nod. He obligingly offers me a spot in his car and drives me the rest of the way across the pass. He <offers me his hotel

room to stay in>. A total stranger. Between him and I, we managed to corral a tow truck, the driver and I went in, towed out my car, I got to my appointed stop and next day, the rental company drove a new car across and I continued on my merry way. Note 1: I had gone cheap on the deductible, so was forced to lose \$1,000. This was a very good thing as I'd been budgeting and counting pennies to that point. After the debacle, I said to heck with that and I had a much better time for the next 7 or so weeks. Note 2: I had brought some of my compositional tapes with me on the trip. When I got back to Christchurch, I put one in the mail with a thank-you note for John (the Kiwi). It was the least I could do. I never heard back from him after we exchanged a brief phone call while I was back there that week or so later, but I've never forgotten John's kindness. There are beacon-people like that. Note 3: When we drove across the pass again in the tour bus 9 days later, they had fixed the fence. Drat. I was looking forward to showing all my new friends evidence of my folly. I guess the penning in of the sheep is kind of important there. Note 4: What I learned...that you can never meet enough or know enough good people.

311 bottom – 314. The best example I can think of on this point are the Napa winemakers. In Napa, winemaking and selling of wine is a fiercely competitive environment and business. But in the fires of 2017 and 2020, that got put aside as competitors loaned space, generators and help to each other to get through the disaster. It was very uplifting to hear.

317, maybe the awkward start to this is Universal Basic Income.

322-323, amen brother. I am fully onboard with this. I have a superpower and I have come to know it. I bring out the best in people. Why? Because I see the best in people. I commit to seeing the best in people, to believing in them...and in their goodness. It's sometimes hard for me because in doing so I can dangerously ignore the flaws or bad in people, but I can't be any other person.

THE OTHER CHEEK

Yes. What *if* we assume the best? I have a superpower. I have come to realize that. I bring the best out in people. Because I see the best in people, that is my default. That can be dangerous because I can refuse to see the bad in people or the flaws in people too, but I'd rather be the person I am and try to continue along this path. I kind of learned this from my friend Jason Hill---the one who assumed you were his friend as soon as he met you, which meant if he could do anything to help you, he would---the one I spent no more than 12 occasions with before losing him to cancer at the age of 28. He continues to shape my life.

CHAPTER 16

328. Yep. If you treat people like crap, they'll act crappy

330, top, and it's the opposite of the Stanford experiment.

332-333, even back then, the disease of "first impression fever" seems to have been rampant. He retracted his findings—and no one listened.

335, graffiti on the walls. I won't get the pictures in time, but I will send the group some of Toronto's graffiti---it's artistic and beautiful and a mechanism for meaning

337, bottom—Zimbardo again. There's an ugly word he hasn't—and we haven't—used. Hoax

338, middle---the police misconduct side reached its headpoint here in Toronto during the G20 summit.

340, [George Floyd more recently, of course. Do some police and some police forces seek violence instead of looking to curb it? Maybe. For a look---a good one---at their side of the story, the documentary Coppers is extremely good.

341, it's a real stretch, but you could link smaller police forces with smaller/nomadic population groups and larger forces with citified civilizations (i.e. colonialism)

344, top, agree---you can't begin to understand the problems of war if you can't grapple with the much more difficult problems of peace

CHAPTER 17

348 bottom, Mandela. The most recent journal entry of mine—and the author rightly notes his history with violence at page 359:

** Dad calls heroes the first people who jump out of the trenches (and die). It's a bit cynical, yet tinged with realism. But, more germinally---do heroes need villains? Do heroes have to have *been* villains. Widely admired now, and with lots of good reasons, is Nelson Mandela. It's worth reproducing his famous response to P.W.*

Botha when he was asked to unconditionally reject violence as a political weapon. Here we go:

I am a member of the African National Congress. I have always been a member of the African National Congress and I will remain a member of the African National Congress until the day I die...

I am surprised at the conditions that the government wants to impose on me. I am not a violent man. My colleagues and I wrote in 1952 to Malan [then head of the government] asking for a round table conference to find a solution to the problems of our country, but that was ignored. When Strijdom was in power [1954–1958], we made the same offer. Again it was ignored. When Verwoerd was in power [1958–1966] we asked for a national convention for all the people in South Africa to decide on their future. This, too, was in vain.

It was only then, when all other forms of resistance were no longer open to us, that we turned to armed struggle. Let Botha show that he is different to Malan, Strijdom and Verwoerd. Let him renounce violence. Let him say that he will dismantle apartheid. Let him unban the people's organisation, the African National Congress. Let him free all who have been imprisoned, banished or exiled for their opposition to apartheid. Let him guarantee free political activity so that people may decide who will govern them.

I cherish my own freedom dearly, but I care even more for your freedom. Too many have died since I went to prison. Too many have suffered for the love of freedom. I owe it to their widows, to their orphans, to their mothers and to their fathers who have grieved and wept for them. Not only I have suffered during these long, lonely, wasted years. I am not less life-loving than you are. But I cannot sell my birthright, nor am I prepared to

sell the birthright of the people to be free. I am in prison as the representative of the people and of your organisation, the African National Congress, which was banned.

What freedom am I being offered while the organisation of the people remains banned? What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested on a pass offence? What freedom am I being offered to live my life as a family with my dear wife who remains in banishment in Brandfort? What freedom am I being offered when I must ask for permission to live in an urban area? What freedom am I being offered when I need a stamp in my pass to seek work? What freedom am I being offered when my very South African citizenship is not respected?

Only free men can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contracts. . . .

I cannot and will not give any undertaking at a time when I and you, the people, are not free.

Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return

Would he have been a hero—or as much of one—without Botha or De Klerk?

Pedestals and effigies are pretty similar, aren't they? It sure is an interesting track to follow---this need of people to have avatars and foci for the strong emotions of love and hate. And what happens to us if our heroes become villains or vice versa

I've said and I still say that I don't have any individualized or personal villains---there is no one I hate that much. My dad is at least one of my personal heroes. The villagers in France during WWII who helped save and protect my great aunt and my cousins---they are heroes to me. But the popularized idea of heroes and villains is critically tied to a quantum of populace. The masses have to be involved in creating such

*golems. The ultimate example has to be Trump--- a reviled villain to many, a redoubtable hero to others. Let's make little mistake that this Janus-type thing is probably a piece of most individuals who are given the label of hero or villain. What I want to really do some thinking about is why *this* particular construction and...well... myth....remains so pervasive, what drives the human need for these figures? A couple of thoughts---first, it deflects focus of the bad traits (or maybe even the good) from oneself. Except for Gru or Mini-Me, very few of us revel in being the villain. And maybe, the concepts also provide a dumpsite for the inexplicable or unknown or things we want and can't achieve and things we fear and can't understand. How much of heroes and villains, especially magnified by literature (and now social media), has become part of the strata of human society? We've also been locked into this idea for a very, very long time---in monotheism, all the way from Adam and Eve/serpent, through Pharaoh and Moses and into Jesus and Lucifer. Hinduism is more elemental, but Vishnu and Shiva reflect this to at least a degree. Either way you look at it, heroes and villains are both generally considered to be leaders of people. Or, more simplified. An avatar of good. And an avatar of evil. The problem with that? Almost every human being is an amalgam of these two things. So making heroes and villains is, possibly, the practice of creating a false other (and, very distantly, refracting back to help create a false self? That needs further mulling!). And who is defining good and who is defining evil?*

349, the Boer War and its gruesome level of casualties was the forewarning and precursor of WWI

352, Nathan Rutstein's quote keeps thundering at me. Prejudice is the emotional commitment to ignorance

352, middle, by all accounts, the same---neighbourhoods sticking together---was in play in the Troubles in Northern Ireland

353, middle, I can't think of a better example than me myself. I grew up with the United Nations for

friends. My ball hockey buds? A Muslim kid, an Armenian boy, a black fellow, a Latvian dude, a Greek guy, an Anglican kid. How about this? 40+ years later? I still remember all their names. Mahmood Mohamed. Sean Merjanian. Sam Soremekun. Ivars Rasa. George Sakellaropoulos. Mike Kaspro. All the parents got along fine. It was a hell of a thing to grow up with no inbuilt prejudices.

355-357, a wonderful story about people I knew nothing about.

358, contact...yes. A rather old journal entry, and one that I may have shared before with the group—I stayed friends with Chris and Dani for many, many years:

Here's something to munch on. What's the most important word in the English language?

a) peace

b) love

c) sorry

d) wine/beer/alcoholic beverage of choice

Would you pick any of those. For-GET it (though 'sorry' is probably a strong second choice). For me? The most important word in our language is "hello". What marvelous voyages of discovery can start with that word. Let me give you a recent example. On the Maritimes trip, I arrived tired and dusty at my B&B in Louisbourg after a heavy day of hiking and driving and picture-taking in Cape Breton. I showered and changed and went downstairs and, before flopping into a chair, I said "hello" to a couple of the other guests. Well, don't you know this led to a splendid dinner where I found out that they met in Paris (elderly couple from Maryland, he's American, she's French) and that they both loved wine and that George was an avid birdwatcher, having seen and recorded over 700 birds and that both have a deliciously dry

sense of humour. If I'm in their area of Maryland ever, you can be sure I'll be looking them up.

Next morning, I come down for breakfast, and after greeting George and Danielle I say to myself "well, things went pretty well last night, let's try this again". Sure enough, a "hello" exited my mouth and landed in the vicinity of a newlywed couple originally from Saskatoon who had been living in Halifax for the last couple of years. Well, don't you know that we spent the entire day together in Louisbourg and I hope I've made a couple new friends. Delighted was I to learn that they were moving to Kitchener (they've just now arrived) and I'm going to take them under my wing. Chris and Danielle (strange that, eh?) are the <niciest> people---he's coming to study neuroscience and she's here to study physical/speech therapy. What a wonderful word is "hello". IMHO.

360, 90%, that would have been no mean feat given the internecine struggles between the various black tribes.

361, as was commented on in group, from Brene Brown—it's hard to hate close up. What's interesting is the pan-global flavour of these findings.

362-363, ultimately, this chapter ends with the challenge---“can you change? Do you have the courage to change?”. Constand Viljoen did. In today's social-media-charged world, not everyone will.

CHAPTER 18

366-368, the Christmas Eve story is one I did know about

370, the movie 1917 was able to show this just a little

370 bottom, and now we get to the great crescendo of his work here. You need to accept that there will be some bad along with some good. My wine blog/community is a perfect example. There are sometimes strident conversations and more than a little unpleasantness (mostly in the “Asylum” category, i.e. non-wine threads and topics) and yet there is much that brings me in contact with and wanting to be in contact with so many...including those who incite, at times. I will admit, there are one or two people on the board that I never want to meet, but I have been constantly surprised at my first meetings with some others who I have considered to be pretty vitriolic and who in person turn out to be generous and fine people.

Social media offers a clear and present danger that we really haven’t faced before---a constant risk of multiple personality disorder, on a very large scale.

372, true. I visited in 2009. My to-be-friend Miguel looked askance at me when I refused to take a bus into the countryside, but that was where my head was at. We took a much more expensive taxi instead---much more expensive being a relative term, of course. At the same time, I’ve never forgotten my week in Cali. Throughout that time, I really didn’t feel threatened in any way. Instead, I felt that those people had a different cadence and rhythm to life, where conversations were much more important and material things much less important.

378. It’s a hard lesson to learn. In a way, it’s tied to the idea of being less.

12. Check out **MINISTRIES/ADULTSPIRITUALDEVELOPMENT** page if you wish to review many of our previous book studies on sduc.ca and see the pdf from last night.

- Pastoral Care Wednesday Morning 10:00 a.m. is a very welcoming place to be Wednesday morning. Eva will be hosting Wednesday’s gathering.
- And, if you missed last night’s session, find the pdf on sduc.ca / Ministries / Adult Spiritual Development or Events/ Monday Night Book Study.

Thoughtfully yours,

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