

“Humankind: a Hopeful History” — 49-01
PAUSE TO CONSIDER: REFLECTIONS ON SESSION #1

1. Thank you so much for being part of our Monday Night Book Study. Tonight was just like I dreamed it might happen — many people willing to share their thoughts and ideas. We are such an amazing group.



2. Karen McKeown alerted us as to the video of the boys as referred to by Bregman.
3. **“Man will become better when you show him what he is like.”** Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) Interestingly enough, on a recent viewing of the PBS documentary on the Holocaust, a major contributing factor to the apparent success of the Nazis was the gradual changing of the narrative. “How the Story is Told” was the chosen title of my thesis in 1992. It makes a big difference. Check out the summary of Ken’s opening below for times that were really overlooked by historians as they told the story of the 20th century.

Matthew Fox introduced me to the concept of Original Blessing in the 80s. It was a breath of fresh air for me. Here is an excerpt of his thinking so many years later.

“So much beauty, so much goodness, everywhere we turn. How can we succumb to taking for granted our healthy earth and sky, air and waters, animals, birds, fishes, our bodies and our communities? How can one not be “supremely thankful and grateful”

and not commit oneself to drinking deeply at the well of original blessing?" The book *Original Blessing* was published in 1983 and today, one can find many references to this book in conversation.

4. Notes on Ken's Opening: Thank you, Ken, for your overview of the book. We look forward to your summary!!

Ken referred to a quote that stated that the greatest successes of humans arose from goodness and cooperation. We have been fed a narrative — information, however, that we are self-centered. He asked us to recall pre-covid, when history recorded an era of globalism and free trade. Now, 2022, our news accounts are filled with climate disasters (Pakistan, Japan...) growing strength of dictatorships (authoritarianism) and economic woes. He raised four questions:

- a. Is the author too altruistic?
- b. Are we comfortable with Bregman's approach?
- c. How does our Christian faith fit in — born in sin, evil natured?
- d. How can we handle mis-info or dis-info? He hopes we are not entering a time of Post-Truth?

Ken, who admitted that he has read the book in entirety and referred to Bregman's 10 Rules to live by and being an historian himself, said that there were six major historical events of the 20th and 21st centuries that had been quite ignored by those who write the history:

- a. The myth of Easter Island. What does recent research show?
- b. The fictional story of the "Lord of the Flies" that became non-fiction to many.
- c. The Christmas Eve story of WWI during which the German and Allied forces joined together in the trenches in shared comradery.
- d. The WWII bomb blitz in London largely ignored by the British.
- e. The research showing how soldiers during wartime refrained from firing their rifles to kill their opponents (American Revolution)
- f. The cooperation of people during the Katrina Hurricane.

Ken referred to a former ACTS (Adult Spiritual Development Ministry) brochure that had our full name — Awakening Compassion through Theology and Spirituality. He thanked ACTS and celebrated our shared life experiences. (we are on our 49th book!)

5. Wayne had invited Eldon and Margie to tell us why they had championed this book for our study this fall. Here is a brief recap of **Margie's input**....

Margie read this book pre-Covid and has recommended it to many people including her daughter whose view of human nature has changed. Bregman is a well-published historian and his review of recent psychological studies challenges many existing opinions. His envisioning of democracy is enlightening and his Ten Rules for Life reveal wisdom to be considered (my words, not Margie's). She has read the book three times and is excited about our discussions and its connection to spirituality and compassion.

and **Eldon's**.

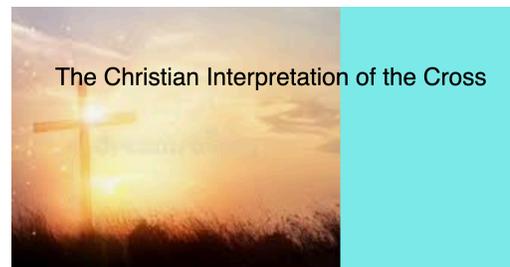
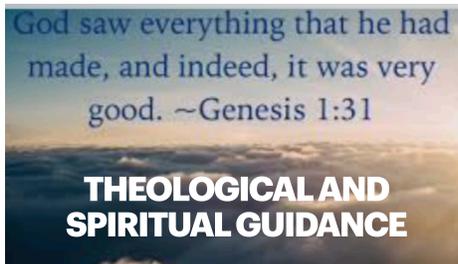
Eldon said that he was drawn initially to the book by Ken and Margie in conversation at previous book studies. He enjoys Bregman's writing and particularly enjoyed the dustcover and the sub-title — a Hopeful History. The world needs to be positive. He asked, "What are we hoping for?" He challenged some of the 10 Rules but read onward. He found that each chapter started a little negative and then, using historical data, became positive. We need more positive thinking. "An old guy's wish!"

6. A review of Wayne's input:

The theme of the book:

Human beings, we are taught, are by nature selfish and governed primarily by self-interest. This book sets out to prove that we are hard-wired for kindness, geared toward cooperation rather than competition, and more inclined to trust, rather than to distrust, one another.

Referring to his own theological upbringing, he discussed the role of Original Sin and Original Blessing in his personal life. Later on in the evening he shared with us two Christian concepts:



These concepts are about goodness and joy — Bregman's stance?

He used the questions raised by Bregman to help guide us through our study:

What planet are we from?

What wolf are we feeding? and

his question: How can my faith help me deal with a book like this?

Over the next nine sessions, these concepts will be explored.

7. Joan expanded on our hopes for Openings and Closings during #49. She hopes that folks will volunteer to open by reviewing the readings for the week in a general way — how did the readings impact your thinking? Ken did a great job of that tonight. Your opening needn't be long but could help set the tone for the evening's discussions. She also suggested that the same volunteer could close.

8. My input:

Dividing the readings into nine segments proved more difficult than usual. The Ten Rules to live by, as found in the Epilog, will have a role to play in each session. 49-01's rule was **"When in doubt, assume the best."**

Housekeeping involved a reminder about upcoming Thursday morning Bible Study on Zoom and Wednesday morning's Pastoral Care Zoom gathering — both at 10 a.m. If you know of folks who might enjoy either or both, give them the info so they can participate with us.

My struggle with the pop-up that appeared on your screen when I was sharing screen has been resolved, I hope. I've talked to the Apple folk and the Keynote Presentations people and Dave and I had a zoom meeting this morning with the Keynote fellow there to help out. Yahoo!

I have decided, however, in consultation with Wayne, that I will use individual slides more often and have more full zoom pages to view. P.S. if you set your screen from gallery to speaker, you will be able to see a bigger picture of the speaker.

As requested here are the reading assignments for the rest of the study:

September 26, Session 02: Prologue, 1. A New Realism 2. The Real Lord of the Flies, Part One — The State of Nature. **Think in win-win scenarios.**

October 3, Session 03: Chapters 3,4,5 **Ask more questions.**

October 17, Session 04: Chapter 6, Part Two: After Auschwitz, Chapter 7 **Temper your empathy. Train your compassion.**

October 24, Session 05: Chapters 8 and 9. Part Three: Why Good People Turn Bad **Try to understand the other even if you don't get where they are coming from.**

Oct. 31, Session 06: Chapters 10, 11 and 12. **Love your own as others love their own.**

November 7, Session 07: Part Four: The New Realism, Chapters 13 and 14. **Avoid the news.**

November 14, Session 08: Chapter 15 and Part Five: Turn the Other Cheek. **Cynicism is another word for laziness — don't punch Nazis.**

November 21, Session 09: Chapters 16, 17 and 18. **Come out of the closet – don't be afraid of doing good.**

November 28, Session 10: Epilogue and Summary Evening. **Be realistic.**

I didn't save a copy of the Chat for last night so I hope I didn't miss anything. I will try to retrieve it.

8. Joan closed last night with a quote and a prayer. Blessings to Eldon as he sets up his new household and to all. Have a great week.

9. Check out OVERVIEW subpage on MINISTRIES/ADULTSPIRITUALDEVELOPMENT page if you wish to review many of our previous book studies on sduc.ca

- **BiBle Study** on Thursday mornings on ZOOM at 10 a.m. Focus to be decided.
- Pastoral Care Wednesday Morning 10:00 a.m. is a very welcoming place to be Wednesday morning.
- Read Prologue, Chapters 1 and 2 for next week.
- And, if you missed last night's session, here is the pdf of the presentation.

Thoughtfully yours,

Brenda

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