

February 23, 2021

Good afternoon and it is another fine one. Sun is shining and the trees look like they have been loaded with white icing, unfortunately, mostly on the north sides!!! We missed the snow storm last night while we were busy with our Monday Night Book Study.

This winter's study has given us several challenges, including a study held over ZOOM. We have introduced Break Out Rooms and, from my perspective, we are really enjoying the opportunity to meet with three or four people for a more in-depth look at what we are learning from our study of Dr. Brown's book.

Michael has sent to us his notes on Chapter 3 and 4. See our website at sduc.ca **MINISTRIES/ADULT Spiritual Development**. His Opening for last night is attached as is the link to his Rabbi's sermon last week.

MICHAEL'S OPENING: FEBRUARY 22, 2021

That is one of my songs. I wrote it when I had no idea who Brene Brown was and I called it "Hard to Hate". I wrote it consciously thinking of how hard it *is* for me to hate. Our associate Rabbi, in her Sabbath sermon, challenged us to think of someone who has hated us or who we have hated and, if so, to let go of that hate. I can't think of anyone on either side of that equation. I hate brussel sprouts. I hate bad drivers. I hate the Red Sox when they play the Blue Jays—except if my fantasy baseball player on the team hits a 3-run double. Him I don't hate. But hate someone? No. The closest I have come is moderate dislike.

The Oxford English dictionary definition is "a very strong feeling of dislike for somebody". And the verb, "to dislike somebody/something very much".

Hate is grounded in passion---and it short-circuits logic and reason and....control. It gives you an excuse to act outside of your normal (moral) parameters. Is it then the ultimate guilty pleasure?

Because they operate on the same fuel source---passion---it is also easy/easier to disguise hate as love.

Ultimately, though, I think hating puts you in emotional jail. You can't grow, you can't see, you can't hear or listen. In a way, you remove yourself from the world. Part of hating is denying vulnerability—yours and the other person's. Above all, for me, hate is...the departure, the diminishment, of grace. And it is the dark opposite of mercy. It burns away one's spirit---from the inside as well as from the outside.

In this chapter, she talks about the idea of using find-and-replace in a Word document to replace "hate" with "pain". It's a good and interesting approach, but an equally good approach might be to replace the word "hate" with "work". Is it possible that hate comes more easily to hand because it *is* easy? Because it takes less or no work? It takes work to learn about someone, to know someone up close, to love someone. Because that forces you to be OK with their difference.

Attitude, right? So often hate is the fear of what is different from or to you. Instead of fearing difference, what if we embrace it, welcome it, revel in it, share in it. Learn from it. And---as Rabbi Sacks and many others have exhorted—let us dignify it.

This week, our synagogue announced that it had taken a decision akin to being an “affirming church”. I am very proud. Our synagogue has chosen to interpret our religion in tune with our times and, in stating it is ready to sanctify same-sex marriages, recognized that the elevation of two people’s souls by way of their union is a paramount “mitzvah” and that religion should serve at the pleasure of encouraging people to not only believe in God but believe in themselves and believe that they can realize the utmost of their potential. From Leviticus Chapter 18, verse 22, where “You shall not lie down with a male, as with a woman: this is abomination”, we have transmuted hatred and revulsion of times past into condoning love in all its forms in times present. My synagogue has exercised grace. And this gladdens my heart. Because it fans a hope that not all of human progress has come at the expense of our humanity.

I was struck particularly by a quote from Viola Davis near the end of this chapter, where she states that she wants to be translucent. I really like that, though I interpret it differently than she does. You let the light in, and you let your light out. And you also share the darkness of others and, especially, your own darkness, instead of confining it, bottling it up inside and letting it eat and destroy you from the inside. Where nobody can see in to help.



On chat last night, there was a movie recommendation for “**Boy**

Erased” and a quote from Daily Bread, “**Holy curiosity is challenging. It is disruptive. It requires discipline. And it’s redemptive. Because sometimes, if we listen long enough, if we’re curious enough to learn the how and why behind the who, we can reach breakthroughs. We can establish pathways of thinking that hadn’t been possible before. We can invite curiosity in others and nurture it into a better way forward.**”

A definition for fundamentalism was offered... “It’s not ‘here’s the problem, let’s fix it.’ It’s ‘you’re the problem, we’ll fix you!’”

NEXT WEEK— MID-SESSION SUMMARY EVENING #6

As I mentioned last night, I envision that we will have some video interspersed with break out rooms and large group sharing. Think about other books you have read that deal with some of the highlights of our study so far. I’ve identified a few of these for us to consider.

a. We have the Wilderness Images that Wayne has shared with us:

1. The concept of “Wilderness” exists in both Hebrew and Christian traditions.
2. The Hebrew People spent 40 years in the desert and Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness.
3. Wilderness can be a fearful place, a testing time, a time dedicated to purification, a time of preparation and a period of transition and/or transformation.

b. **From Chapter One:** Early in her speaking career, Brown learned that as long as she showed up as herself, talked about herself and what she had been doing, she was on her journey to “**True Belonging.**” (Maya Angelou)



c. From Chapter Two: The Gifts of Imperfection: Joseph Campbell’s Quest and Carl Jung’s Paradox

d. From Chapter Three: Music — Bunkers — Positive Forces

e. From Chapter Four: Anger — Dehumanizing — Conflict Transformation

Have a great week. Being a 1946 model, I’m hoping that this week we can get our immunization for COVID-19.

