

MuKappa Winter Retreat 2021

with Chris O'Shaughnessy

Session 1: Who are you?

Who are you when you can't do what you used to? When the markers that we used to define ourselves (friends, travel, change, etc.) are removed?

What do we do with everything that's gone on? How do we move forward into murkier unknown than usual?

Who you believe you are (which is heavily influenced by other people, circumstances, etc.) has a great effect on how you treat other people.

Ephesians 2:10 – “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

But what does that look like right now? Amidst everything going on?

Who you are is really a reflection of why you are:
you ARE because God LOVES YOU.

Your identity is important. Your story is important. You're here for a reason, and your journey matters and is tied into other peoples' journeys.

That means what you do does not actually define you: WHY leads to WHO leads to WHAT.

When we get things in the right order, there is freedom and there is purpose.

“Our very existence is one of the never-to-be-repeated ways God has chosen to express Himself in space and time. Because we are made in God's image and likeness, you and I are yet another promise that He has made to the universe that he will continue to love it and care for it.” (Brennan Manning)

Session 2a: Perception (Gratitude and the Past)

“The foremost quality of a trusting disciple is gratefulness. Gratitude arises from the lived perception, evaluation, and acceptance of all of life as grace – as an undeserved gift from the Father’s hand... acceptance of the gift is implicitly an acknowledgement of the Giver.” (Brennan Manning)

1 Thessalonians 5:18 – “In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

The ability to reflect on life and perceive EVERYTHING (every experience, memory, person, interaction, joy, tragedy, loss, gain, everything) as an undeserved gift is the core of living in gratitude.

Gratitude should be the lens through which we perceive reality.

Session 2b: Evaluation (Gratitude in the Present)

2 Corinthians 10:5 – “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

Obedience to Christ is love. It's the *why* behind the *what*. To evaluate what we're grateful for is to search the reason why: love. We are loved.

As God is bigger than our minds, we all create an 'image' of God... what is our image of God and how does it affect our perception of Him and our interaction with Him?

Evaluation through the lens of gratitude makes the present genuine.

Session 2c: Acceptance (Gratitude in the Future)

2 Corinthians 12:9, “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”

Psalm 56:11, “In God have I put my hope, I will have no fear of what man may do to me.”

After perception and acknowledgement, we must have acceptance. Truly, EVERYTHING, every breath, is an undeserved gift. We are not worthy, yet we are loved.

Gratitude boosts dopamine levels, it also increases activity in your social dopamine circuits making social interaction more enjoyable.

Gratitude also boosts serotonin. Finding things to be grateful for pushes us towards positive thinking (increasing serotonin in the anterior cingulate cortex)... These levels are boosted just for the process of searching, it’s not even dependent on whether we find anything!

You can influence your future by creating a framework of gratitude.

Being grateful for the grace that’s already in place for you helps you remember who you are: loved – and that has a huge impact on how you treat those around you.

“Before I am asked to show compassion toward my brothers and sisters in their suffering, I am asked to accept the compassion of Jesus in my own life, to be transformed by it and to become caring and compassionate toward myself in my own failure and hurt, in my own suffering and need. His love is not conditioned by what we are or do.” (Brennan Manning)

Session 3a: Purpose

So where do we go from here?

“This is what we are all dying for - something that demands we step up and become better, more focused people. Something that calls out the greatness that we hope is somewhere inside us.” (Rob Bell)

God loves us enough to call us to walk alongside Him as he refuses to give up on His dream for reality... and we get to take part. We were brought into reality with purpose.

One big question often asked in life is how can God tolerate so much pain and suffering? If there is a God what is He doing about everything going wrong on the planet?

“The sheer magnitude of evil that our age has witnessed in death camps, nuclear warfare, and internecine tribal or racial conflicts has not raised the question how can God tolerate so much evil, but rather how the more tangible reality of evil still allows the possibility of God’s existence.” (Brennan Manning)

Mark 6:30-44 – The apostles then met with Jesus and reported on all that they had done and taught. Jesus said, “Come off by yourselves; let’s take a break and get a little rest.” For there was constant coming and going. They didn’t even have time to eat. So they got in the boat and went off to a remote place by themselves. Someone saw them going and the word got around. From the surrounding towns people went out on foot, running, and got there ahead of them. When Jesus arrived, he saw this huge crowd. At the sight of them, his heart broke—like sheep with no shepherd they were. He went right to work teaching them. When his disciples thought this had gone on long enough—it was now quite late in the day—they interrupted: “We are a long way out in the country, and it’s very late. Pronounce a benediction and send these folks off so they can get some supper.” Jesus said, “You do it. Fix supper for them.” They replied, “Are you serious? You want us to go spend a fortune on food for their supper?” But he was quite serious. “How many loaves of bread do you have? Take an inventory.” That didn’t take long. “Five,” they said, “plus two fish.” Jesus got them all to sit down in groups of fifty or a hundred—they looked like a patchwork quilt of wildflowers spread out on the green grass! He took the five loaves and two fish, lifted his face to heaven in prayer, blessed, broke, and gave the bread to the disciples, and the disciples in turn gave it to the people. He did the same with the fish. They all ate their fill. The disciples gathered twelve baskets of leftovers. More than five thousand were at the supper.

God sends us. The world is in desperate need. God loves the world enough to send us as ambassadors of Jesus, who died for our sins. God loves us enough to let us be a part of His plan; that’s love. **We don’t just survive or exist - we have purpose, mission, meaning.**

TCKs have an important part to play in the world.

God loved you into creation, that is your identity – and He loves you enough that you play a part in His story... and I do believe TCKs have an important part to play.

Many of the characteristics we've seen in TCKs and studied for the last 60 years are now creeping into mainstream culture.

Thanks to social media, many are struggling with conflict resolution and it's hurting relationships.

Empathy has decreased more than 40% in the last 30 years.

These are both areas that TCKs have an advantage on knowing that work is needed. Healing can take place.

TCKs have a lifestyle that lends itself to building good empathetic muscles. We have to adapt, and to do that we have to take greater stock of what the people around us are feeling.

If we can learn to accept who we are as people loved by God, and allow that to inform who we are, what we can do is amazing. We can help be bridge builders in an ever-globalizing world moving closer and closer to our experience.

Ephesians 3:17b-19 – “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Session 3c: Croatian Train Liberations

1 Peter 5:10 – “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”



You have trains to liberate. You are a TCK. You have purpose in the world.

You are a preview of coming attractions, and well placed to be a bridge builder in an ever globalizing world.

Exodus 9:16 – ““But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth”

“Ultimately our gift to the world around us is hope. Not blind hope that pretends everything is fine and refuses to acknowledge how things are. But the kind of hope that comes from staring pain and suffering right in the eyes and refuses to believe that this is all there is.” (Rob Bell).

Please do keep in touch!

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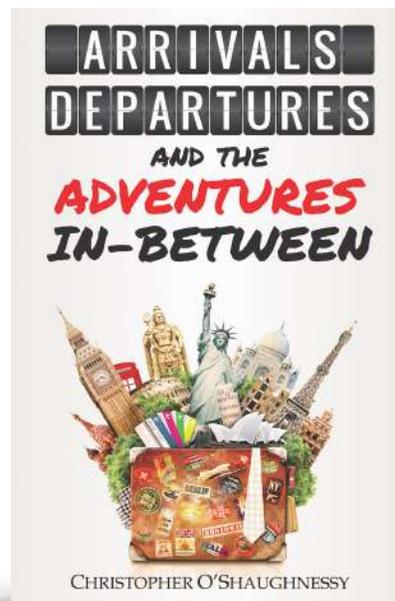
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