

Wise Man In The World

Dr. Chris E. Stout, Founding Director
Center for Global Initiatives

"The opposite of faith is not heresy, it is indifference." Elie Wiesel

General Points

I am told that no one will read anything in preparation for the retreat. I don't want to make a burdensome amount of work in preparation for attending, so there will be NO reading required for the retreat. Instead, I'll share their stories verbally and with slides.

But I will make all of the chapters from *The New Humanitarians* available to anyone who would like them—free for the asking to anyone.

My overall goal with this weekend is to learn from each other and those in the book in order to inspire personal commitments from each person to vow/plan to do more in the world. I know many are already doing so, in this case, I will challenge those to "crank it up a notch."

Here are some questions I'll be asking and we'll be discussing, so you may find it of value to think about:

The retreat is about examining service to others personally and collectively and making a difference in others' lives.

It is about deciding what can you/we do and what will you/we do,

It is about inspiration, examining our commitment to serve, being equipped to be effective, finding ways to stay the course, and planning our beginnings.

It is about being a wise man in the world.

Why did you come this weekend?

What do you want to take away?

What did you bring along?

What are your experiences?

What are your wants relative to this weekend and afterward?

What do you need?

Time Agenda

Friday Evening

6:00 – 7:00

Check in

7:00 – 7:45

Dinner

8:00 – 9:15

First Session – Framework – Their Stories And Our Stories

Introductory remarks

"Ground rules" for the weekend and the work

Tools and Gifts

Introductions of participants

My personal epiphanies

Story of the Starfish

Prelude to *The New Humanitarians*

9:15 – 9:30

Evensong

9:30

Fellowship

Saturday Morning

7:30 – 8:30

Prayer and breakfast

9:00 – 10:30

Second Session – Calling – Who are these New Humanitarians?

What called them?

Where the idea came from, the people, the works.

How am I similar?

What do we share in common?

What's my calling?

What would a framework for service in a world of infinite needs and possibilities look like for you?

Joining as well as making our own way.

10:45 – 12:00 **Personal time** – Bible passages and reflection: Romans 12: 3-8.

Who I am and what God is calling me to do?

Consider Christ's call to serve others.

12:00 – 1:00 **Lunch and hanging out**

Saturday Afternoon

1:00 – 2:30 **Third Session – Sorting Things Out**

Who are the people in the stories that touched us the most?

What did they do?

Are they unique or like us?

What belief, vision or motivation galvanized them to action?

What will it take for you?

Where did they get their strength to start and keep going?

How about for you?

How they got started

What drives them personally and spiritually?

How about for you?

What are their guiding principles?

What are yours?

What role does faith play for them?

How about for you?

What is their talent that led to success?

How about for you?

Ask the group what stories touched them and why

Blend in

Their vision

Their passion

Their courage

Their sacrifice

With ours...

What is calling us?

What are we going to do about it?

Spiritual foundation on using our gifts

Book foundation on how the people in the book used their gifts

Do we have to change to succeed?

What talents do we collectively and individually have and how can we use them?

2:30 – 2:45 **Break**

2:45 – 3:45 **Breakout/Small Group Discussion – How can we mobilize do something?**

What can each of us commit to doing to make the world better?

What tools do you have?

What tools do you need?

Timeline?

Deliverable?

3:45 – 4:00 **Small Group Report Outs**

4:00 – 5:30 **Personal time** – Bible passages and reflection: James 2:26, Luke 12:48,

What do I need to change in me?

Is it time to do more?

5:30 – 6:30 **Dinner**

Saturday Evening

6:30 – 7:45 **Fourth session – Succeeding – How To Stay The Course**

How do New Humanitarians keep on going?

Spiritual foundation on perseverance

What motivates New Humanitarians?

What motivates us?

What hinders us?

How do we stay the course?

Who did they/do we deal with setbacks?

How big is big enough?

How do we deal with the issue of infinite need and limited resources?

Parable of the starfish

What were their biggest challenges and how did they succeed

What did they have to personally change in their own lives?

How did they make up about life change?

7:45 – 8:00 **Break**

8:00 – 9:00 **Group Process – Planning – Personal and Group Action Plans, and I want to run an experiment with you...**

Discussion – How can we start something and then keep it going?

Spiritual foundation on commitment

Discussion

Is this an individual or a collective thing?

What are collective possibilities?

What are individual possibilities

Is this something new or an extension of something that is?

How can we organize deciding, committing, starting, managing, staying the course

How do we manage this new “something,” with family/friends, work, other obligations...

How do we gauge impact?

What methods of accountability do we employ?

Support from me/report to me

What risks are there?

Unintended consequences?

Personal?

Iatrogenic?

9:00 – 9:15 **Evensong**

9:15 **Fellowship**

Sunday Morning

7:30 – 8:30 **Prayer and breakfast**

8:30 – 9:30 **Making Personal Commitments Public**

What is my commitment?

What does my commitment mean? ... to me?to others?

How can we help each other?

9:30 – 10:15 **Wrap-up – Reviewing and committing**

Tools and Gifts

10:15 – 10:45 **Worship service**

Tools and Gifts

Participants will receive all 45+ Chapters from all three volumes of *The New Humanitarians*

Participants will gain ideas of Models

Participants will receive one hour of a literature/research review for your topic of interest, free

Participants will receive my personal help, free

Participants will receive access to my contacts, free

Film list (some great movies for inspiration/motivation):

To End all Wars (humanity in the face of atrocity)

City of God (street children and violence)

Welcome to Sarajevo (journalist experiences)

Blackhawk Down (military experiences)

Savior (military/moral experiences)

Shake Hands With The Devil (global injustice/trauma)

And the Band Played On (public health and politics of HIV)

Motorcycle Diaries (politics and health)

Hotel Rwanda (genocide)

Indochine (Vietnam)

Veronica Guerin (Irish conflict)

Beyond Borders (humanitarian healthcare)

Human Weapon (suicide bombers)

Ghosts of Rwanda (genocide)

Lord of War (weapons dealing)

Disease Warriors (global health)

Many more...

Social Entrepreneurship Principles

By John Marks and Susan Collin Marks

1. **Start from vision.** Our vision is to transform the way the world deals with conflict – away from adversarial, *win-lose* approaches to non-adversarial, *win-win* solutions. Everything we do must be consistent – or at least not inconsistent – with our vision.
2. **Be an applied visionary.** In order to change the world, it is necessary to break down complicated projects into finite pieces – and to make things happen. We strive to be incrementally transformational.
3. **Be prepared to deal with high levels of complexity.** When you intervene in complex systems, like international conflicts, you can be sure that there will be unexpected results.
4. **“On s’engage; et puis on voit.”** As Napoléon said, you become engaged, and then you see new possibilities. In our work, this translates into recognizing you cannot plan in advance the various steps to be followed or the results to be achieved.
5. **Practice aikido.** In the Japanese martial art of *aikido*, when you are attacked, you do not try to reverse your assailant’s energy flow by 180 degrees, as you would in boxing. You accept the attacker’s energy, *blend* with it, and divert it by 10 or 20 degrees in order to make you both safe. In our work, this means accepting a conflict as it is – while transforming it one step at a time.
6. **Make yes-able” propositions.** As Roger Fisher and Bill Ury wrote in their landmark book, *Getting to Yes*, everything works much better when people say “yes” to your proposals, which need to be both in their interest and in yours.

7. **Enroll credible supporters.** Social entrepreneurs, who usually operate on the cutting edge, are often seen as marginal – or even crazy. Having prominent supporters can be very helpful.
8. **Apply *fingerspitzengefühl*.** This is a German word meaning to have an intuitive sense of *knowing* – at the tip of your finger. Either you have it or you don't.
9. **Demonstrate *chutzpah*.** *Chutzpah* is a Yiddish word for *nerve* or *effrontery*. Or, as author Leo Rosten wrote, it is the quality "in a man who, having killed his mother and father, throws himself on the mercy of the court because he is an orphan." In our view, a social entrepreneur needs this characteristic, without being overly pushy or culturally inappropriate.
10. **Develop good metaphors and models.** Most people will not shift their attitudes and behaviors if they do not have a good idea of where they are headed. Metaphors and models – compelling stories – are crucial to the reframing process.
11. **Have a high tolerance of ambiguity.** If you are uncomfortable with not knowing where you are going and cannot deal well with the unexpected, you probably will not be a successful social entrepreneur.
12. **Find *trimtab* points.** On ships and airplanes, the trimtab, a tiny rudder at the leverage point, can turn the craft with a minimum of effort. Similarly, social entrepreneurs should find the places where their initiatives will have a large impact from a comparatively small input.
13. **Be persistent.** We cite the example a child's toy truck that advances until it hits a piece of furniture, backs off, and then finds another path forward.

An Example of Putting It All Together: The US and Iran

In 1996, we made a long-term commitment to improving Iranian-American relations, and we have stayed engaged ever since. (**Start from vision.**) We began by organizing a series of confidential meetings in Europe between high level, former US and Iranian officials. (**Be an applied visionary.**) Susan facilitated, and she quickly succeeded in enabling the group, instead of facing each other as adversaries, to work together on the shared problem of how to have a better relationship. After five such meetings, participants agreed on a blueprint for bringing the two countries back together. Unfortunately, neither group was successful in getting this new policy adopted when they went home. (**Be prepared to deal with a high level of complexity.**)

Then, an Iranian participant made an exciting proposal. ("*On s'engage et puis on voit.*") He suggested that one way to break the deadlock might be for Americans to return openly to Tehran where they had not publicly appeared in almost 20 years. He stated that any Americans who appeared in Iran would be criticized, but those who would be the least criticized would be wrestlers. Why wrestlers? Because in Iranian folklore, wrestlers are the great mythic heroes, and wrestling is still the most popular sport with the masses.

It was a plausible, culturally-appropriate way of not directly confronting the conflict but finding a way around. (**Practice aikido.**) When we returned to Washington, we arranged an introduction to USA Wrestling, America's national wrestling federation. It turned out that American wrestlers had recently been invited to Iran for a tournament, but for reasons that had to do with security and political difficulties, we were told that they probably would not be going. We helped convince USA Wrestling that it would be safe and desirable for them to participate. We proposed that we would look after the politics, while they would take care of the wrestling. (**Make yes-able propositions.**) We got an unofficial green light from the Clinton Administration, and we set up a meeting between Iran's Ambassador to the UN and USA Wrestling. (**Enroll credible supporters.**) In addition, we arranged with the Swiss Government, which represents US interests in

Iran, to welcome the wrestlers. We even were able to give the private cell phone number of the Swiss Ambassador in Tehran to USA Wrestling and said they could call him in case of trouble (**Demonstrate chutzpah**).

We were clearly in the right place at the right time (**Apply fingerspitzengefühl**). While we were making preparations, Iranian President Khatemi gave an interview to CNN, calling for a “dialogue of civilizations.”

In February 1998, John and the US national wrestling team flew to Tehran. It was an electrifying experience. The American wrestlers marched into the arena, proudly – but without chauvinism – carrying the American flag. The media beamed the scene around the world and contrasted it with the last time the flag had appeared in Tehran, during the hostage crisis, when it had been burned on a daily basis. We had created a vivid new global image. (**Develop good metaphors and models.**)

When we returned home, President Clinton invited the wrestlers and John to the Oval Office. The US Government wanted to send a positive signal to Iran, so our visit was filmed and then transmitted to Iran by satellite. (**Find the trimtab points.**) We had a vision that *wrestling diplomacy* would end in a breakthrough in relations, but for various reasons involving national egos and not paying enough attention to the needs of the other, the new day never dawned. It had been a heady ride, but we were not about to give up.

However, we faced an operational dilemma. What had once been a highly confidential project to improve US-Iranian relations had been spotlighted in the world’s media. So, we made a virtue out of necessity, and adopted a two-track strategy. (**Have a high tolerance of ambiguity.**) We decided both to sponsor public exchanges and to hold back-channel meetings. In fact, we came to see that the exchanges would provide cover for the meetings, and soon we were involved in Iranian-American film summits, film showings in both countries, visits of astronauts, and exchanges of environmentalists, academics, and doctors. As a professor at Tehran University put it, “What [Search for Common Ground] has been doing has had a profound effect on the psyche of both the [Iranian] public and the elite ... No other activities have had such an effect.”

In sum, we provide an active channel for dialogue and communication between the US and Iran, and we use our connections to seek peaceful solutions and implement projects on the ground. And we are operating by what we call the *Woody Allen principle*: namely, “80% of success is showing up.” With Iran, we have been showing up since 1996. On one level, our efforts might be seen to have failed, since Iranian-US relations sunk very low. Still, we are not deterred because we are committed for the long haul, and we believe we have accomplished a great deal. In fact, we know it is extremely important that we maintain contact, particularly at times when governments are barely talking. With most official channels closed, we remain well positioned to play a facilitating role toward better relations. To get an idea of the impact we can have, here is what a key Iranian ambassador said in 2005 about our role in looking for constructive solutions in the nuclear domain:

“I believe you saved our negotiations. Your ideas kept the negotiations going.... If there is any outcome of the negotiations that is to the satisfaction of both sides, it will be a derivative of the discussions of this group – with conditions that will make it possible for both sides to accept.”

If nothing else, we are relentless – with Iran and everywhere we work. (**Be persistent.**)