

## The Thrive! Endeavor® Second Book In Thrive! Series

Since the beginning of this universe, I watch. Over untold years and across untold worlds, I watched as things began, developed, matured, began dying, died and then began again. Each world is unique as is each inhabitant of each world. That continues to fascinate me. Each person, each community and each world is different and always should and will be.

As I watch this universe, I continuously look for those who are interesting with large positive potential. On Earth alone, there are so many creatures. On earth, humans are the most interesting for both their negatives and positives.

So much potential and yet their current path is filled with vulnerability, destruction and failings. Their future is at high risk. But the positive potential is there. If they can just find it. If they just use it. If they can and want to achieve their full potential, they will have a much better future.

If a truly better future is Earth's people's choice, the Thrive! Endeavor® provides the hope for the ultimate, positive future – All Thrive Forever®.



## The Thrive! Endeavor Second Book In Thrive! Series

# The Thrive! Endeavor



Gary "Chris" Christopherson  
Founder, Thrive!® And Thrive! Endeavor®

Nelson, WI

University Park, MD

The Thrive Endeavor®

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Gary “Chris” Christopherson  
Founder, *Thrive!*® And **Thrive! Endeavor**®

Nelson, WI

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## **Dedication**

*People who help build, achieve and sustain  
a surviving and thriving future for all forever.*

*Irene and Lynn Christopherson, nurturing and inspiring parents.*

*Dr. Patricia Haeuser, friend and supporter.*

## About The Author

**Gary “Chris” Christopherson** has a public service career spanning over 40 years. Throughout his career, he worked on national issues on building a thriving and surviving future, on health and human service strategy, policy, systems, models, performance, reform and management and on reducing vulnerability and improving health. Most recently he independently develops strategy, management, policy, models and tools for creating, managing and sustaining large scale change and for building a thriving and surviving future for all people, communities, countries and globally. This work can be seen at [ThrivingFuture.org](http://ThrivingFuture.org) (and his several other websites and blogs) and draws from 30+ years of experience in creating, managing, evaluating and sustaining large, positive and timely change at national and local levels in public and private sectors. He wrote and published public policy books ([ThrivingFuture.org](http://ThrivingFuture.org)) including **Thrive! Endeavor® - All Thrive Forever; Thrive!® - All Thrive Forever®; What will you do?® The Game. The Challenge; Thrive!® - People’s Guide To A Thriving Future [For All Forever]; Thrive!® - Building a Thriving Future; The Thrive!® Philosophy - All Thrive Forever; and Behavior Effectiveness Model (BEM) - Building Thriving Future Using BEM.**

His national and local public service includes: Associate Director, Presidential Personnel, Executive Office of the President, White House; Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary and Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, DoD; Senior Advisor to the Chief Operating Officer, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, DHHS; Senior Advisor to Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, VA; Senior Fellow, Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences; Chief Information Officer (CIO), Veterans Health Administration, VA; Director of Health Legislation, House Select Committee on Aging, U.S. House of Representatives, and Director of Special Projects, City of Milwaukee Health Department. He served both as political and career appointee. During most of his Federal career spanning 1983 to 2006, he served as member of the Senior Executive Service. He is an elected Senior Fellow of National Academy of Public Administration.

His art and writing career, where he is known as Chris and uses the signature “GChris”, also spans 40+ years. He is a sculptor of abstract art, focusing on mobile and stabile sculptures and creating over 200 sculptures, primarily working in wood and copper. GChris sculpture is mission-driven toward reducing vulnerability and building a thriving future for all forever. GChris sculpture supports our creating and sustaining large, positive and timely change and achieving a thriving future. His sculpture can be seen at [GChris.com](http://GChris.com). His GChris Sculpture Studio/Gallery is in an historic 1880s house and barn on a Mississippi River bluffside in Nelson, WI. Previously, his GChris Sculpture Studio/Gallery was in Georgetown, DC and University Park, MD. He wrote and published science fiction novels **The Thrive! Endeavor** and **black box** and children’s books **Angel, Creator of Artful Things** and **T!rrific [terrific] - What will you do to thrive?**

He endowed the Thrive! Scholarship at the University of Wisconsin (Madison) and donated his Mississippi River bluff and prairie land for the new Thrive! Park of the Village of Nelson (WI).

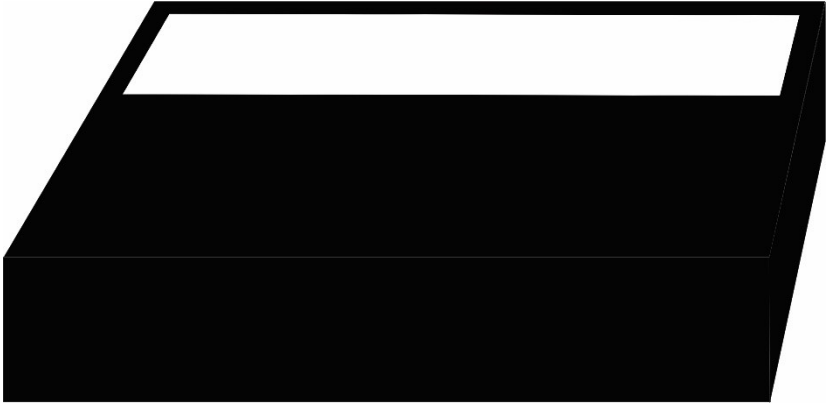
He lives in the Village of Nelson, WI and spent 30 years in University Park, MD in the greater Washington DC area. He went to elementary school in one-room Trout Creek schoolhouse and graduated from Nelson (WI) Grade School, and Alma (WI) High School. He graduated from University of Wisconsin (Madison) with a Bachelor’s in Political Science and a Master’s in Urban and Regional Planning. He also studied toward a doctoral degree at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health (Baltimore, MD)

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## **Prelude – black box [First book in Thrive! Series]**

Since some distant past, black box existed with unknown impact on Earth's people. For the first time in human experience, black box is revealed on the world's stage. On that stage walks a quiet shepherd, in human form, serving as black box's keeper. Is this the "devil's hand" reaching out and stripping away the human soul? Is this the path back to Eden or to fulfillment of the human species? The answer lies in unraveling "conversion", black box's transforming power.

**black box**, first book in the **Thrive!** series, drops us in current time to begin revealing a timeless force of unknown and potentially unlimited power to affect Earth's people. Black box, a seemingly simple device, appears and grabs the attention of all. Interpretations of its purpose and effect split the world. Into this is thrown a young couple, Taj and Jason, who, seemingly by accident, find themselves in possession of black box and begin to explore its possibilities.

Just as they uncover the first mysteries, powerful forces move in, grab the box and move to discover its full potential. Scientific and military interests collide. Potential for good or evil drives people into sharply opposing positions. Some believe the "devil's hand" is exposed and now threatens the human race. For others, the path to back to Eden is found and the clamor to take that path rises. Still others find black box as a way for the human race to achieve its full potential.

"Anticonversionists", heavily drawn from Earth's religious, join forces and fight to destroy black box before it corrupts or destroys the human race. A counter force, "conversionists", emerge and rally to support the human race's access to the box and the potential cleansing and enriching power of "conversion". "Conversionists" and "anticonversionists" engage in an aggressive struggle for black box's power and the human race's future.

With these opposing forces engaged, black box is probed and its power unleashed. The power to duplicate or alter inanimate and animate objects is exposed. The power to move objects through space, and potentially time, is revealed. Apparent effects on humans range from personal cleansing and enrichment to deletion of human experience.

Throughout all this, the mysterious individual, the "shepherd" and keeper of the box, intersects the lives of the world's leaders, government officials, the military, scientists and ordinary people. As the shepherd emerges more into our awareness, that quiet shepherd's hand is clearly at work and apparent accidents emerge as part of a larger design. Just when Earth's people seem on destruction's path, the shepherd's hand reaches out and temporarily pulls them back from the brink.

With the fate of the Earth's people potentially in their hands, Taj and Jason are given a vital mission and granted almost limitless power, the power of black box. The mission and the power to "do all the good that must be done."

Though more is known at the end of the book, black box's ultimate power remains an unknown to be explored in **The Thrive! Endeavor**, the second book of the **Thrive!** series.



## Prologue

### **Earth (Day -1. Worldwide).**

Since the beginning of this universe, I watch. Over untold years and across untold worlds, I watched as things began, developed, matured, began dying, died and then began again. Each world is unique as is each inhabitant of each world. That continues to fascinate me. Each person, each community and each world is different and always should and will be.

As I watch this universe, I continuously look for those who are interesting with large positive potential. On Earth alone, there are so many creatures. On earth, humans are the most interesting for both their negatives and positives. So much potential and yet their current path is filled with vulnerability, destruction and failings. Their future is at high risk. But the positive potential is there. If they can just find it. If they just use it. If they can and want to achieve their full potential, they will have a much better future.

-----

### **Earth (Current Path, 1,000 years in the future. Worldwide).**

Black box takes me into the current future. Not one I look forward to seeing.

As I walk through the ruins of a world once filled with great promise, I feel great sadness. Great promise has been lost.

The vibrant Earth of 1,000 years ago is gone. The vibrant human species of 1,000 years ago is gone. With them, most of what was good of plant and animal life is gone.

What was once a planet filled with life and color is now a planet filled with death and a deathly shade of gray.

Should Earth and its people see the consequences of its current path? If they did, would they change the path? Could they?

-----

### **Earth (Thriving Path, 1,000 years in the future. Worldwide).**

Black box takes me into an alternative future, a thriving future. This is the future I would hope for Earth and its people.

As I walk through the wonders of a world filled with great promise, I feel great joy. Great promise has been achieved.

The vibrant Earth of 1,000 years ago is gone. The vibrant human species of 1,000 years ago is gone. What is here is an even more vibrant Earth. An even more vibrant human species. Even more vibrant plant and animal life.

What was once a planet filled with life and color is now a planet filled with even more life and more color.

Should Earth and its people see this alternative future? This thriving future. If they did, would they change from the path? Could they?

-----

### **Earth (Day -1. Worldwide).**

Time is running out. Earth's future is at a tipping point. Humans are the most capable in their history. Humans have most endangered Earth's and their future.

Among the humans I observe and engage most with are Taj and Jason. In many ways they were and are not remarkable. Their development is positive, but again not remarkable. But things changed. Their lives changed.

They were given black box. They were given a mission. It provides hope to them. It provides hope to humans, to Earth and potentially beyond Earth.

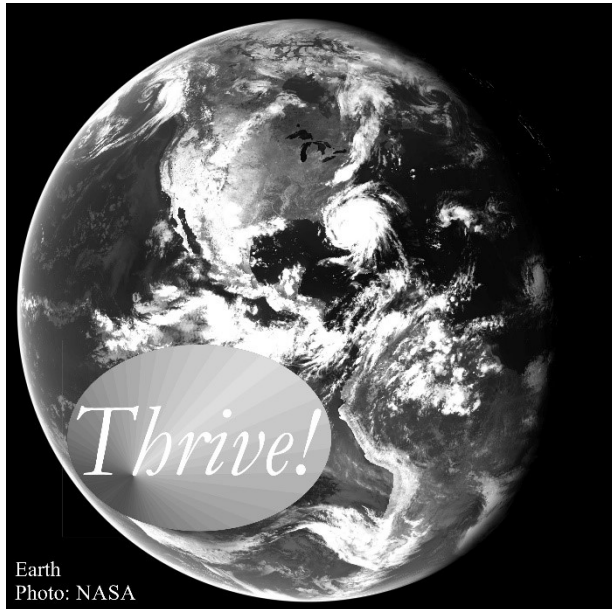
## The Thrive Endeavor<sup>®</sup>

This sets the stage for what should come next, the **Thrive! Endeavor<sup>®</sup>**. If this is Earth's people's choice, this endeavor provides the hope for the ultimate, positive future – All Thrive Forever<sup>®</sup>.

Some time has passed since when the focus was on black box and its powers. The world today still pays attention to black box but there are many other concerns. The world faces the next phase of its existence. Faces the very question of its continued existence.

Should I give them the choice?





## **Book 1. Choice and Consequences**







## **Chapter 1. Day of Choice**

### **Day 0 (0 DC (Days After Day of Choice))**

[Time moves ever so quickly now. Measured and lived not in years but in days or hours or minutes or seconds. More so now in seconds.]

#### **World (Day 0. New York, NY, United States).**

This year's United Nations meeting on global threats – nuclear, terrorist, hunger, disease, climate, inter-nation disputes, weak economy, poverty – is now in its second day. All the world's leaders are there. Leaders don't agree on which problem(s) to resolve. They don't even agree if there are problems to resolve. After two days of back and forth bickering, no progress is in sight. The three-day meeting is about to end prematurely.

In a dark corner of the room, a head is lowered in sadness. So much potential; so much failure. The head slowly raises. A look of resolve.

As the meeting is gavelled to close, the world leaders rise from their seats. Without warning, the room goes dark. Exit doors are sealed. Murmurs in many languages are heard.

Suddenly without warning, each leader finds her/his self back in her/his home country. But it is not today. It is 100 years from now. Each experiences the current path and its “bad” future for a day, a very long day. The bad future is one where all are highly vulnerable. Few, if any, humans are thriving. Human survival ends far too soon. Earth itself, as a habitable planet, ends too soon. The UN room goes bright. Doors remain sealed. Murmurs about what just happened.

After a minute, the room goes dark again. Again each leader finds her/his self back in her/his home country. But it is not today. Again, it is 100 years from now. Each is experiencing the surviving path and its “surviving”

future for a day, a long day. The surviving future is one where all are too vulnerable. Few, if any, humans are thriving. Human survival is longer but ends too soon. Earth itself, as a habitable planet, may end too soon. The UN room goes bright. Doors still sealed. Murmurs about what just happened.

After a minute, the room goes dark again. Again each leader finds her/his self back in her/his home country. Again, it is 100 years from now. Each experiences the thriving path and its “thriving” future for a day. The thriving future is one where all thrive forever. Human survival is longer and may or may not end. Earth itself, as a habitable planet, lasts much longer and well over one million years. This time the day is not long enough. The UN room goes bright. Doors sealed. Silence.

Then they realize something has changed. Two people stand silently in the center of the room. One of them holds a black object.

“Your choice,” a voice, Shepherd’s, comes from the back of the room. He also holds a black object.

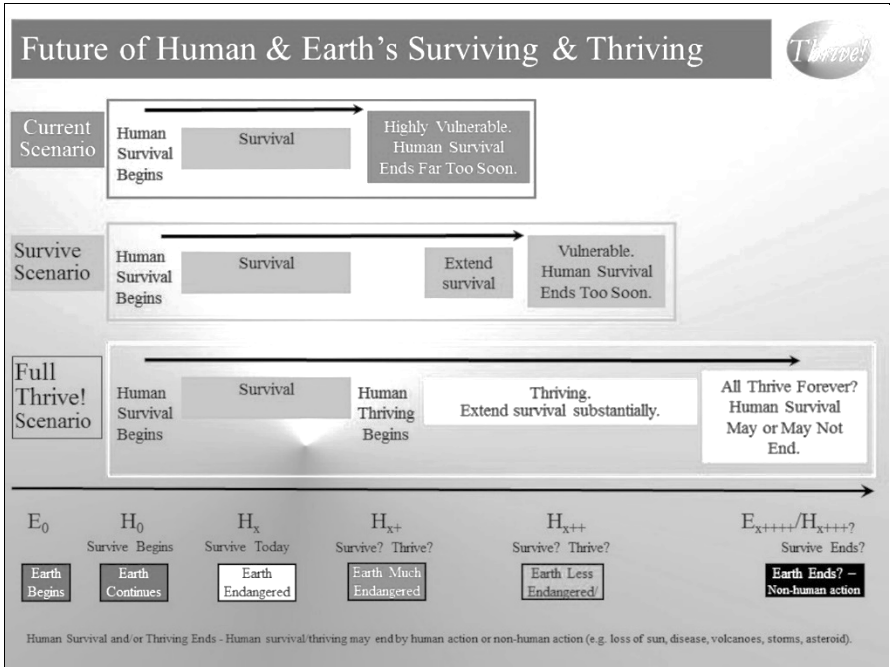
“One of these futures will be your future. You are at an historical tipping point. Your future is at the most risk in human history. You are the most capable in human history.”

“Again, your choice. The ‘bad’ future is the current path you are on. It is the current path you all have chosen. It is a very, very bad and short future. It will be your legacy. It will greatly disappoint your children and their children.”

“Now you may say that the ‘surviving future’ is good enough. Yes, it is okay. But it is far from fulfilling human potential. It is not one about which your children and their children will sing your praises. You will disappoint them.”

“As is your nature, humans need to survive and want to thrive forever. It is what is unique to the human species.”

“You say the ‘thriving’ is great but too hard. It is hard but not too hard. If you want that future. If you want to thrive. If you want to all thrive forever, it can happen. If you will it, it will happen. Again, your choice.”



“No doubt you noticed two people in the center of the room. Taj and Jason. Many of you know of them as the keepers of black box. If you choose the thriving future, they will help. You know from past experience some of what black box and they can do. With it, they can help you build and achieve the thriving future.”

“Again, your choice. Bad future. Surviving future. Thriving future. Choose wisely.”

Again shouts of fear and anger. First reaction is feeling threatened. Clear they will not make a wise or any other choice today.

“I am not surprised that you feel fear and anger,” says Shepherd. “A natural human reaction. An unfortunate human reaction. We leave now. We will observe your next steps. If you all decide to build the thriving future, we will return. We will help.”

Suddenly, they are gone. The doors unseal.

For weeks to come, the debate rages. The bad future continues to unfold.

But then a new set of voices begins to be heard. Across emedia the next generations speak. Louder and louder. Clearer and clear. More and more resolute. It is their future that the world's leaders are risking. The unfolding bad future is unacceptable. The surviving future is not good enough. They are tired of settling for bad choices or just okay. They want what humans could and should achieve. A thriving future. A future when all thrive forever.





## Chapter 2. Fear and Anger

Day 1 (1 DC)

**black box (Day 1. Washington, DC, United States).**

“Not surprising,” says Taj calmly. “We shocked them severely. They experienced an extremely disquieting view of alternative futures.”

“Agree,” responds Jason. “Didn’t expect anything else. Now we watch for any signs the world’s leaders or, if not them, the world’s people want to change to a different future.”

“You’re both right,” agrees Shepherd. “On the one hand, we watch and wait. On the other hand, we continue your good work. Your mission remains to do ‘all the good that must be done’.”

-----

All around the world, Taj and Jason have in place a system of monitors. People who watch for those situations where “a good must be done.” These monitors are connected to Taj and Jason in real time via various electronic means. They understand that the number of “goods that must be done” is very limited. These are not the “goods” that people should be doing themselves or for each other. These are unique “goods” that people can’t do without the help of black box.

Early morning, a text message pops up on Taj’s smartphone. A child will die in the next hour if Taj and Jason don’t help.

A large apartment building in San Francisco has collapsed due to a medium-sized earthquake. The building was designed to withstand such an earthquake but shoddy construction left it vulnerable. Deep down in the basement is a child care center with five children trapped. The child care staff have been killed. Water is seeping into the basement and filling it

with water. Already the water is three feet deep where the children are. There is no access point for the rescuers except through too many tons of concrete and metal.

As always in these situations, Taj and Jason need to decide whether or not to intervene

It is clear that the only way to save the children is black box.

Within minutes, Taj and Jason transport to San Francisco, a block from the collapsed building. Finding a vantage point to see the building without themselves being seen, they quickly assess their options. They could transport the children out but that would reveal Taj, Jason and black box. Better to avoid.

Instead, they use black box to open a human-sized passage in the concrete and metal. For the moment, it is hidden by a twisted metal plate.

In the basement, the water has risen to just a foot below the ceiling. The children are standing on tables to keep their heads above water. The water continues to rise.

A message is passed to the monitor. She quickly calls out to the rescuers, "There is an opening under that metal plate." She slips away.

Immediately, the rescuers rush to the metal plate and pull it off. Revealed is the passage that black box created just moments ago. Rescuers rush down through the passage and to the children. All are still alive. All are rescued.

A seeming miracle.

Assured that all are rescued, Taj and Jason touch black box and disappear. Then reappear back in their Washington home.

**Chris (Day 1. Western Wisconsin, United States).**

It is late night in a 125-year-old farm home on the side of a Mississippi River Bluff. Chris Path sits quietly on the deck and sips a dry Cabernet Sauvignon. The Mississippi River valley lies before and below him. Nearby are the soft lights of the small community. Farther out is the moon-lit river valley. Behind him the full moon softly lights the bluff tops and newly restored prairies.

Chris is coming up on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. He is not particularly unique standing at five foot nine inches. Neither heavy or thin. Blue eyes. Light brown hair and beard. Kind of an average man but who was considered highly intelligent, creative and caring. All of which will be important in the days ahead.

The news from the United Nations both surprises and doesn't surprise him. He knows Shepherd well. He knows Taj and Jason well. He knows their mission well.

Though he cares about the future, he is frustrated. He has disengaged. While in the age cohort of Current Gen, he doesn't belong. He is seen as "inconsistent" with Current Gen. He doesn't disagree.

And so, in this somewhat distant rural community, he focuses on his public policy and fiction writing and on his sculpting. In both, he lays out his own world and future view.

While enjoying this respite, he knows this is likely to change given yesterday's events.

Another sip of the dry, earthy wine.

As he relaxes, feet up, looking over the river valley below, he reflects on days past.

Chris was born near where he now lives. Born in a small rural hospital just across the river, he came into this world without great note some 50 years ago.

He and his family lived on a good-sized farm several miles east of where he now lives. The rolling farm occupied about a square mile of land. The

land varied from valley fields to bluffside forests to bluff top fields. A gentle creek ran through the farm's middle. Typical of farms of that time, there was a diversity of livestock (dairy cattle, beef cattle, chickens and pigs) and crops (corn, oats, alfalfa).

Early days on the farm, his family lived in a partial log farm house. Plumbing and bathrooms were limited. Bathroom was outdoor near the house. Wood-fired furnace. One chimney fire. Hand-crank, party line telephone. Telephone number was a long, a short and a long. Kitchen with sloping floor. Baby pigs sometimes kept warm behind the stove.

Nothing then to portend his future. Nothing to portend today's world.

### **The World (Day 1. Worldwide).**

Fear. Anger.

"How dare they?" is the cry often heard.

"A forced choice. Not acceptable!" is a common shout.

But then there is the fear.

"A bad future. A dying world? Surely this can't be true," say voices of skeptics.

And then there are the current leaders. Current Generation. Also known as Current Gen.

The President of the United States, believes the United States is "exceptional" and above all this negative outlook. She refuses to accept the "bad future". She labels Shepherd as purveyor of "gloom and doom" and "negativity". She dismisses the prospect of a bad future.

The President of China, believing in China's future preeminence, rejects the prospect of a bad future and the choices presented by Shepherd. While he sees the rest of the world facing a bad future, China is in control of its future, a very positive future. No negative future for China. Or so he hopes.



As for the United Nations, not much help there. While generally agreeing with Shepherd's assessment of the choices facing the world, there is not enough motivation to make a choice let alone enough ability to build a better future. The United Nations Secretary has been ineffectual. The United Nations, for all its potential, remains ineffectual.

On the truly negative side is Mr. Diamon, a global influencer and de facto global leader of Current Gen. Focusing on near term gains and profits, he views the long term future as someone else's problem, if it is indeed even a problem. He doesn't just disagree with Shepherd. He prepares to go to war with Shepherd.

And then there are conversionists and anticonversionists. Brought into existence and prominence with the discovery of black box, each group is not monolithic in their beliefs and opinions.

Generally, conversionists are more heavily Next Gen. An exception is their leader, Christopher Carey, a Current Gen.

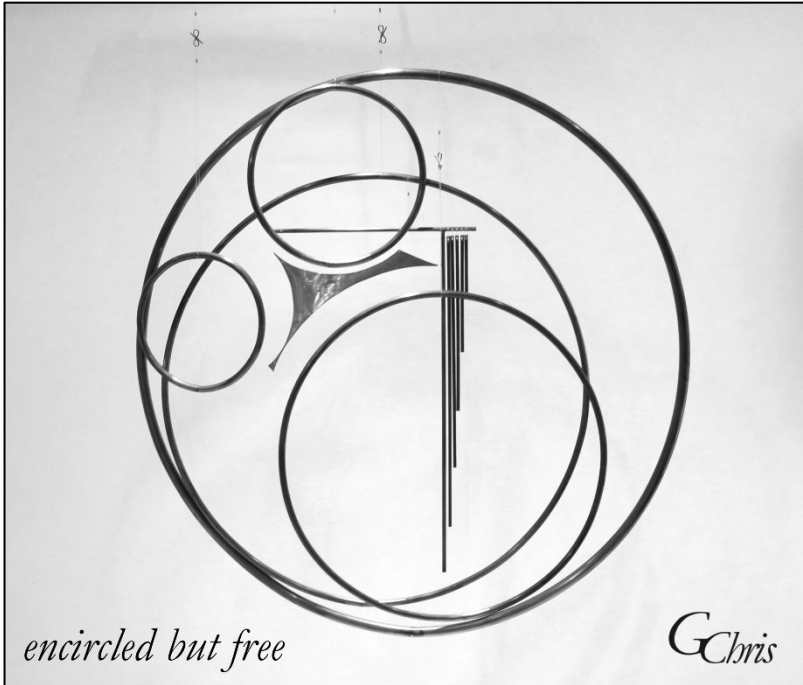
In the past, "conversionists", rallied to support the human race's access to the box and the potential cleansing and enriching power of "conversion". To the conversionists, black box was the equivalent of the "holy grail" and sought with the same fervor. Hiding or restricting use of the box was no less an outrage than a wall around Jerusalem. Conversionists demanded access to black box. They demanded the right to conversion. Pressure to bring black box into the open grows.

Anticonversionists are more heavily Current Gen. Their leader is Reverend L.O. Moses, also Current Gen.

A counter force, "anticonversionists", heavily drawn from Earth's religious, joined forces and fight to destroy the black box before it corrupted or destroyed the human race. Many anticonversionists embraced the view that the box has probably been on Earth for some time. Along with that, they believed that black box was used in that distant past. They saw black box as the devil's hand reaching into Eden. Without black box, many believed that God's original plan would be in place and "Eden" would exist. For them, black box was the source of original sin or the result of it.

However, there is much crossover. Many Current Gen are conversionists. Many Next Gen are anticonversionists.

Anticonversionists greatly distrust Shepherd. Conversionists still want black box and its potential for conversion. “Conversionists” and “anticonversionists” engage in an aggressive struggle for black box’s power and the human race’s future.





## Chapter 3. Descent

Day 14 (14 DC)

### **black box (Day 14. Washington, DC, United States).**

Amid all the furor these past two weeks, Taj and Jason focus on preventing bad things from happening. Fear and anger cause bad things to happen. Fortunately, most are relatively small with relatively small consequences. A few are big and bad. A few require black box intervention.

“Taj, wake up!” Jason shouts from downstairs, “Message for our monitor in Japan. An historic 8.8 earthquake just hit several miles off the Japanese coast. A tsunami warning has been issued. Load up!”

“Got it,” she shouts back. “I’ve got the box. Be there in a minute.”

Taj bolts downstairs, black box in hand.

“Do you have the coordinates for our transport?” she asks hurriedly.

“Got them,” Jason responds quickly and grabs the box. “Entering them now into black box.”

Putting their fingers to the box, they disappear from home and then reappear on the eastern Japan coast. According to the warning, this spot is ground zero for the oncoming tsunami, one that may rival the 2011 tsunami.

Sheltered in a small cove, they should be able to avoid observation while they and black box prevent the rapidly approaching disaster.

“The trauma of the 2011 tsunami is more than enough for any people,” says Jason with determination. “Let’s put some constraints on this one.”

Just several miles offshore the tsunami rushes toward land with nothing to stop it.

“It’s time,” shouts Taj as the noise level rises as the tsunami approaches.  
“Let’s do it!”

Together, Taj and Jason put their hands on the box and face toward the ocean. As they have done before, they carefully and simultaneously touch the box’s surface with their fingers. The box activates.

They can just barely see the massive wave coming toward Japan and them.

Then the box exerts its power on the massive wave. The over 100-foot-tall wave faces the counterforce of black box’s power.

Slowly and carefully, the wave lowers. Down to 75 feet. Then down to 50 feet.

It is getting close. Down to 25 feet. The wave nears the coast. Then 10 feet and getting lower.

Taj and Jason step back and quickly run up to higher ground.

The wave hits but with minimal damage. A seeming miracle.

“Let’s get out of here before someone notices us,” says Jason with some urgency.

Again they both touch black box. Instantly, they are back home, ready for what will hopefully be a restful rest of the day.

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Later that day, looting and rioting break out in several cities across the world. Most grows out of fear that the world is headed to a bad end. Paris is hit hardest. Paris needs help.

Being home only a couple of hours and turning on international news, Taj and Jason quickly realize their brief rest is over. A message comes in from their Paris monitor. Much more work to do.

“Paris”, sighs Taj. “We rest later. Need to get to Paris and help break the cycle of looting and violence.”

Moments later, they stand within several hundred feet of the center of the looting and riots. They realize they must act quickly.

“Hmmm. I feel a big storm coming on,” says Taj as she looks toward a dark cloudy sky. “Suspect that would put a damper on the rioters’ and looters’ enthusiasm.”

“Suspect you are right,” agrees Jason with a slight smile.

In the shadows of a narrow alley, Taj and Jason make their move. They touch black box and activate it.

Almost immediately, the clouds change just a bit. They become darker and more foreboding. Then the first bolt of lightning. The roll of thunder. Then more and more of each. The first drop of rain. The first hailstone. The first gust of wind. The first blast of cold air. Then more storm. And more. And much, much more.

Soon the unexpected storm has taken control. Everyone is running for shelter. Looters quickly drop their lootings. Rioters quickly drop their rocks and bottles. Lost is the enthusiasm for more damage.

After an hour the storm starts to abate. People exit the area seeking dry clothes, warmth and shelter.

Jason glances over to Taj and asks, “Can we go home now? This has been a really, really long and exhausting day.”

Taj nods yes, “Let’s go before anyone realizes what happened and how.”

Again, they touch the box. Again, they are home. This time for some well-deserved and needed rest.

“Nice work!”, says Shepherd smiling, his black box in hand. Then he disappears just as quickly as he appeared.

**Chris (Day 14. Western Wisconsin).**

Chris climbs the hill and picks his way through the heavy, thorny brush. Scratches on his arms and slight streaks of red. Just ahead is prairie remnant providing an open view of the valley below.

As he enters the prairie, he sees the big rock he remembers fondly. A great place to sit. A great place to view the valley and the creek running through it. A great place to think.

Settling down on the large rock, he reflects on the family farm that surrounds him. Forty years earlier, he first hiked up to this rock. He was a kid just beginning to help work the family farm.

His early years were of little note, except he had a very healthy imagination. This imagination, in part from having much time alone, manifested itself in play the role of hero whether in the fields or woods of the square mile of land that was the farm. In the woodshed, he experimented with household ingredients and broken things. Some he tried to fix. Some he tried to turn into something different.

Farm life was hard. Winter was too cold. Summer was too hot. The farm smells varied from soft and pleasant to harsh and bad.

But the animals were always great. Always appreciated the attention given them, especially when feeding.

But. Once in a while, their behavior was less than friendly. Especially, mothers with children. Nothing like getting chased up a steep hill by a charging beef cow protecting her calf. Amazing how fast they can move their thousand pound bodies up a steep incline. As the chase progressed, Chris was only a few yards ahead and about to be overrun. With the cow charging and nearly upon him, he stuck his arm out toward her. In that brief moment, the cow's concentration broke and she fell briefly to her knees. Having made her point and protected her calf, she was content to return back down the hill. He was content to give her all the space she wanted.

Rural education had its special moments as well. Just by the luck of his age and era, he started school in a one-room schoolhouse at the southern end of their farm. For those not fortunate enough to go to a one-room

schoolhouse, you missed it. Eighteen kids covering seven grades. One grade had no children. Bad year. As one of two first-graders, he sat in the front row, close to the action. All he had to do was do his own class work and then absorb all that was being taught around him. Not only did he get a good first-grade education but he also got bits and pieces of six other grades, all the way up to the eighth grade. Only one year but a great start. This broad exposure and his natural interest and curiosity set the stage for the learning yet to come.

After graduating from another small elementary school, he entered a small rural high school. During his senior year, sports dominated as this very small rural high school experienced a once-in-a-lifetime event – going to the State basketball tournament. A very good student, he received a very good education and graduated high in his class. This was a bit less noteworthy given there were less than 50 students in his graduating class.

Though many rural and farming stories could be told, it was important to survive intact. No herbicides causing nerve damage. No falls into a tractor's spinning power take-off. No falls off a tractor barreling down the paved road or down a narrow dirt hillside road. No cow running over or kicking you. No pig running you down in the mud. No being bitten by a surprised rattle snake.

His father was a hard driving father making a go of the farm he and his wife had put together. Generally, it was a successful farm.

His mother was a hardworking and caring mother who not only took care of child-raising and household duties but was also a partner in much of the day to day farm work.

Key to Chris' surviving and thriving were his parents. Father was the driving force but died in an accident when he was a high school senior. Mother was the caring force. This caring force continued through much of his life. Together their influence on him was great and lasting.

It was in his late high school years, that the name Chris came to signify more than just his name.

## **The World (Day 14. New York City, NY, United States).**

On the top floor of one of the tallest Manhattan skyscrapers, Diamon scans the New York skyline as the sun rises in the east. He prepares for war on Shepherd.

“How did I get to this moment?” he reflects.

Born some six decades earlier, his family was terribly poor. Barely enough food. A dilapidated row house. His father and mother both had part time blue collar jobs providing very little income. Educated in a rough urban school in New York, he made it through, barely. He survived by learning more street skills rather than book skills. After a brief stint in the Army, he attended and graduated from City University of New York.

Then it was time for business. Determined for his family to not be poor. He jumped into the construction business. There he found his calling. He could build buildings of any kind. The bigger the better. The bigger the more profit. Through Diamon Construction and other ventures he picked up along the way, he went from poor to a multi-billionaire.

There would always be a debate whether he had done it all on his own or had some “help” along the way.

It doesn’t matter now. He is extraordinarily rich and no longer beholding to anyone. Certainly not to government who he sees as holding him back rather than helping him succeed.

Behind him is a large black granite conference table. Around the table are many Current Gen leaders. All see Shepherd as a major threat to their view of and plans for the future. In Diamon, they see the one person who has enough motivation and ability to take on and beat Shepherd.

But now they argue. Shouting. Table pounding. Threats and counter-threats. Not a coherent adversary.

Diamon turns. Arguments stop. His no-holds-barred reputation precedes him.

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Noon. Diamon launches his first attack on Shepherd. Not knowing where Shepherd is, first attack is a verbal tirade. Physical attacks will come later.

In a broadcast across all eMedia – social media, email, texts, television, radio, Diamon challenges, “Contrary to fear espoused by Shepherd, our future is not bad. Contrary to Shepherd, our future will be great. That is, unless we let Shepherd control our future with his black box. We won’t! Stop Shepherd now and we ensure the great future we all deserve.”

And so, the “Stop Shepherd” battle begins.

As expected, fear and anger reign. Much already exists after the Day of Choice. Much more is fueled by Diamon’s attacks.

The world descends deeper into despair, further down the current path, and into the failed future.

Diamon’s attack, as he planned, re-opens and fuels the fear and anger of the anticonversionists. Once again, they see black box and Shepherd as the enemy. The enemy that must be stopped from any further destruction.





## Chapter 4. Next Gen

Day 30 (30 DC)

### **black box (Day 30. Washington, DC, United States).**

Once again, Taj and Jason's house gets more attention. While black box allows them to come and go as they wish, protestors periodically demonstrate on the front sidewalk. Though peaceful, no less angry.

"We agree," says Shepherd. "The time to sit back and just watch is over."

"Absolutely," declares Taj. "As the protests outside our house clearly demonstrate, Current Gen is not really open to dialogue yet. Next Gen seems more open. I believe we can reach them."

"The tricky part", cautions Jason, "is that while Next Gen is networked, its leadership and focus are not well formed."

"We can and should network with them via eMedia. A two-way dialogue may make our common interest clearer and begin to build the pathway to establishing that sense of community essential to achieving a better and thriving future."

Taj reminded them of the challenging task facing black box and them. "Part of building this community of interests is taking on a tough problem that concerns many of Next Gen. Think about the many bad decisions that many of them have made on social media."

Shepherd asks, "Just how would you remove bad or stupid things that Next Gen has put out onto social media?"

"We give them a one-time 'get out of social media' card," smiles Taj. "Here is how it works."

“Let me explain,” interjects Jason. “This is so cool.”

“Anybody, but especially Next Gen, can wipe out anything she or he has posted to social media, more broadly known as eMedia. A photo posted to image capable eMedia. A message posted to message capable eMedia. A blog. A website or parts of a website. The person chooses what to remove of what they posted.”

Taj jumps in, “Not only does this remove the posting but it removes all traces of that posting across the Internet. If it somehow shows up later, that is also removed.”

Jason clarifies “One exception are email and text messages. Since they often reflect agreements and understanding between two or more parties, we could not find a legitimate way to remove them.”

Shepherd asks with uneasiness, “Even with the email and text message exception, won’t that make law and intelligence communities unhappy?”

“Yes, to some extent,” replies Jason. “But this is only the information that the person ‘originated’ and not the information put in by others, for example law enforcement or intelligence communities. It also does not remove information based on what you do in other ways, like job history, purchases, or travel. It is also only one-time.”

“We believe that if you originated it, then you own it,” declares Taj. “And, again, it is only one time. If you do stupid or bad things in the future, that is on you and this tool is not available.”

“We call it the ‘Fresh Start’ tool. It is ready to deploy using the power of black box.”

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The next day the word goes out across eMedia worldwide. Fresh Start is checked by those Next Gen trusts. It is safe and effective. Downloads begin.

Millions upon millions of Next Gen and others, download Fresh Start and launch the tool. Within seconds, billions upon billions of personal postings

are gone forever. People get to start fresh. People know this is only a one-time event. From now on, whatever is posted is potentially forever.

While Current Gen leaders object, they are powerless to stop it. Some privately are relieved since they also have posted bad and stupid things over their lives.

For any downsides of removing this personal information, Taj and Jason believe the focus must be on the future. To the extent possible, the past should not bind the future. This removal is essential to building Next Gen trust and to the task ahead – building a thriving future.

### **Chris (Day 30. Western Wisconsin, United States).**

At his Mississippi River bluffside home, Chris climbs the snow-covered bluffs. In the deep snow, the hike is not easy. Insulated, waterproof, deep treaded boots. Trekking poles. Highly insulated clothes. All these help to make the cold climb easier.

After a half hour climb through the restored, snow-covered prairies, he reaches the bluff tops.

“What views”, thinks Chris. “Spread out before me is the whole Mississippi River valley. I can see 10-20 miles up and down the river. I can see the bluffs on both sides of the river. As I climbed, I came across many tracks of deer, squirrels, rabbits and foxes.”

As he sits down upon a large rock on the bluff top, he reflects on times 30 years earlier. These were the times and events that begin his adult life and career.

Just over 30 years ago, he left his small rural community to begin his college years at one of the largest public universities, the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Going from a community of a few hundred people to a community of tens of thousands was a jolt.

Though near the top of his class in the small rural high school, he was ill-prepared for the challenges. What made it worse was that he chose nuclear engineering, a particularly challenging degree. He was convinced that he could find a way to build a safe fusion reactor.

After a year or so, he realized that he had to change paths. He needed to pursue a degree that better fit both his interest and his ability. And so began his successful pursuit of a political science degree with a heavy smattering of philosophy. Both would serve him well.

But it was clear that he was bright but not particularly remarkable.

At the end of his college career, he had his first taste of politics. Getting involved in an ill-fated national campaign. His candidate was assassinated in the summer of that election. Though still feeling the loss, he later re-engaged in State and national level political campaigns.

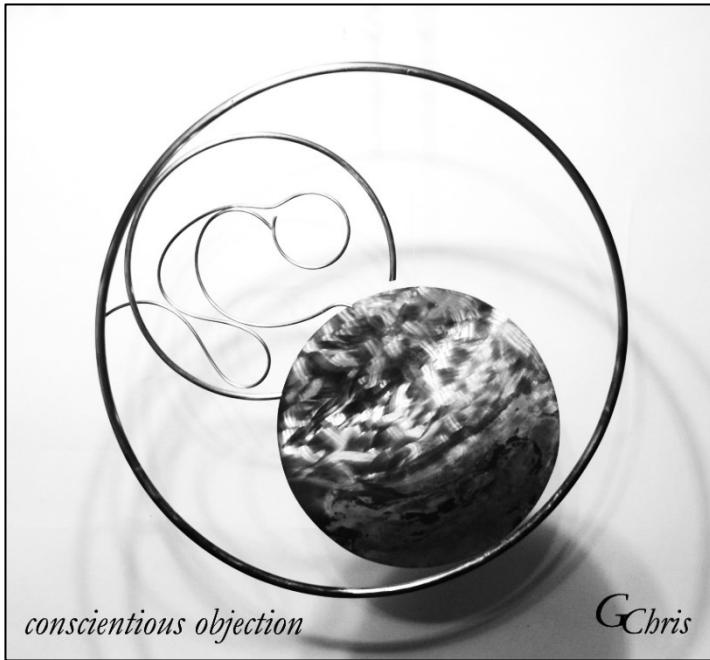
During this time, he met the great love of his life. A woman who was his intellectual equal or better. They cared deeply about each other. They were deeply in love. Thus began a partnership that would last two decades. While the marriage ended after two decades, the friendship continues.

His love of sculpting also began. His then-girlfriend and later spouse was engaged in an art course. The challenge for her was to create an Alexander Calder like mobile. The challenge was proving to be a bit too much of a challenge. She asked him for some help given he had a certain amount of skill with his hands. Together they created the mobile. Together they began creating and selling mobile sculptures. While she would later decide that sculpture was not a major interest and would stop sculpting, he continues. Hundreds of sculptures created. More to be created.

It was also around this time when he faced an extremely difficult choice. He was draft age with a low lottery number. As did many others of his age, he faced the choice of military service, jail, leaving the country or conscientious objection. Here there was no choice. Given who he was and what he valued, he was clearly a conscientious objector. Fortunately, he was ultimately granted that status. Consistent with his values, he carried out and completed his civilian service working on problem solving and conflict resolution.

During this time and in part drawing from his girlfriend's training, he developed a strong interest in human behavior. This, coupled with his other strong interest in strategy, served and continue to serve as a foundation for much of his later work.

As with earlier experience, this time and these relationships were formative in who Chris was and was to become.



### **The World (Day 30. Worldwide).**

Among Next Gen, anger emerges as they see no movement toward a better future. eMedia is on fire with the angry Next Gen voices. Protests move to the streets across the world. All express frustration and anger. All are peaceful. So far.

Day after day and hour after hour, Next Gen marched and shouted. On the streets of Chicago, New Delhi, London and Johannesburg, just to name some of the larger cities involved. But the protests reached further. Even small rural communities experienced protests.

Next Gen calls out Current Gen leaders. Challenges are issued. Calls are made for new leadership at all levels of government. Current Gen leaders see the protests and hear the calls. Calls they choose to ignore.

At an international meeting in Moscow of several world leaders on trade, the President of the United States, China and Russia meet privately. Together, they stand united against the challenges from Next Gen. To accept Next Gen's challenges is to potentially accept the consequences, their ouster.

A door opens in the side of the conference room. In walks a familiar figure and ally, Diamon.

"I think you all have a problem," he states definitively. "I think you better fix it and quickly. It's not going away."

"Next Gen has a dangerous thing," he asserts. "It is hope and faith. These are being quietly reinforced by the words and deeds of Shepherd and black box holders Taj and Jason."

"I do not think you fully understand the risk they pose. Their little stunt with Fresh Start just reminded Next Gen that the future is not bound by the past."

The Presidents mutter. Nod their heads in agreement.

"So act!" Diamon challenged. "Or, if you are too timid or weak, allow me to act on your and Current Gen's behalf. Trust me, I am neither timid or weak. Neither are my associates."

The Presidents pause. Then they realize what is being asked of them. Stay out of the war that is coming. Stay out of the war that Diamon is launching against Shepherd, one foundation of Next Gen's hopes.

Presidents, without a word, nod silently in the affirmative.

"A pleasure to collaborate with you all," states Diamon with a smug smile. "Now go wash your hands."

Diamon is gone.

Just minutes later, he is back on his private plane heading home to New York.

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Next day in New York, a meeting takes place in Diamon's office. Assembled are his new potential allies, the anticonversionists. Assembled are the most vehement anticonversionists. They will not rest until black boxes are destroyed and Shepherd is gone."

But the anticonversionists are wary of any association with Diamon. His reputation precedes him. His take-no-prisoners approach is well known.

But here they have the enemy, Diamon, of their primary enemy, Shepherd. So goes the saying, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." So they will listen.

"Welcome," says Diamon as a friend would say it. "I believe we have somethings in common. I believe we have a common interest. I know we have a common enemy."

"Up until now, you all have talked a lot and done nothing to remove that common enemy," chides Diamon. "As is the case with others to whom I have spoken recently."

The anticonversionists protest. They cry foul. They proclaim their resolve to solve the problem. But they say nothing to confirm that resolve.

"You are all talk," challenges Diamon. "But I offer a solution to your problem. I can and will do what you all have failed to do. I will make Shepherd go away forever."

"You won't even have to dirty your hands," he declares. "Just agree quietly. Just stay out of my way!"

Taken aback, the anticonversionists look sheepishly at each other. With exchanged glances, they know they will agree. And so, they do agree with almost invisible head nods.

"Thank you for your whatever," says Diamon mockingly. "You can leave now. Hand washing is available in the rest rooms down the hall to your right."





## Chapter 5. Struggle for the Future

Day 60 (60 DC)

**black box (Day 60. Washington, DC, United States).**

As each time zone moves through it evening news hour, a “live” broadcast briefly interrupts. Against a white backdrop stand Shepherd, Taj and Jason. Their words are brief. Their words to the point.

Shepherd speaks.

“60 days have passed since the so-called ‘Day of Choice’ with no positive action. To its credit, Next Gen and some conversionists are trying. But they have little to show for it. They continue to be thwarted.”

“World leaders. Current Gen leaders. It is you we speak to tonight. It is you who refuse to make positive change. It is you who would rather see the world head toward a very, very bad future. It is you who hold the world and its future hostage to your own short term self-interests.”

“You may think you will succeed. You will not. It is not us you should fear. It is younger generations and generations to come. Change or be changed. Build a surviving and thriving future or condemn your children and your world to a short and bad future.”

With that, the broadcast ends. World and Current Gen leaders cry foul. Next Gen sees hope.

But this hope is tempered by harsh reality. Conflict in the Middle East has reached new, destructive heights. Hundreds of thousands of refugees have already left their homes. But even amongst the willing countries, there is little room for any more. Hunger is increasing. Armies are advancing in sectarian battles. The situation is out of control. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people will die.

Current Gen is of little help. Sides are picked and armed. Caught in the middle are just regular people who, as a result, face death.

Next Gen disagrees. Though still without power and resources to make a difference, they call for an end to the conflict and immediate support for the people at risk.

Shepherd appears at Taj and Jason's house. He is not happy. They are not happy. They see the news. They see the rapidly increasing disaster in the Middle East.

Shepherd challenges, "Are your world's leaders really going to let all these people die? Is there no humanity left amongst them?"

"I wish we had a better answer," bemoans Jason. "Current Gen really seems to be a lost generation, lost in their own self-interest.

Taj jumps in, "Hope lies with Next Gen. At least they have the humanity, if not the power and resources. Before long they will have both. But not soon enough for the people of the Middle East."

"Shepherd, we are not about to let this happen," counters Jason. "We can apply a temporary fix to save lives and give Next Gen the time it needs.

"Taj, it's time to save some lives."

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Twenty-four hours later, Taj and Jason stand in the middle of the conflict. Warring armies on both sides of them. Impoverished, hungry and sick people all around them. Death is marching.

Jason leans near to Taj and declares, "Let's put the conflict on pause and open routes for food and medical supplies."

Taj and Jason use black box to quickly identify the electronic, chemical and physical "signatures" of each military and its weapons. Black box freezes both militaries in place. Anyone on the ground with a weapon cannot move. Any plane or helicopter not in the air is frozen in place. Any weapon, on the ground or in the air or on ships, will not fire or launch.

While planes and helicopters can fly, bombs cannot be dropped and will not explode.

Using black box, Taj and Jason clear the roads of all military vehicles, weaponry and soldiers. All are “pushed” to one side or other of the roads. All military planes and helicopters are cleared from runways. All remain frozen.

Taj and Jason had already notified humanitarian organizations that a two-day window was about to open. Be ready to move everything during that window.

And so the humanitarian organizations do. Planes full of supplies and relief workers land at key airports. Trucks full of supplies and relief workers roll across the desert. After great effort, two months of supplies and hundreds of relief workers are in place.

But there is fear that all this will be undone as soon as the militaries are unfrozen and resume their fighting.

The word gets passed that if any soldier, sailor or airman with a weapon tries to harm a relief worker or the people, those weapons will immediately vanish.

Some suggest that all weapons in the conflict should be made to vanish immediately. But Taj and Jason agree this is something for the warring parties, other countries and international organizations to settle. Hopefully quickly.

Shepherd is waiting at their house as Taj and Jason reappear.

“Good work!” applauds Shepherd. “Quite creative. Temporarily stop the conflict. Provide humanitarian relief but leave the long term resolution to those who are responsible. Save lives. Current Gen is blamed. Give Next Gen and the better parts of Current Gen more time.”

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A soft hissing sound in the basement. A faint smell of natural gas. The gas alarm sounds loudly.

Seconds later a fiery object breaks through the window in the next room. A flash. An explosion. The house disintegrates.

### **Chris and Faith (Day 60. Western Wisconsin, United States).**

Pre-dawn. Chris sits on his deck facing over the Mississippi River valley. A cloud-like fog hangs over the river. Black coffee in hand.

With all the world events happening around him, he is not in play. It's his choice, at least for now. He is torn. Years earlier, he was one of the world's leaders. Some good things happened. Some bad things happened. He was the person who tried to bridge conversionists and anticonversionists. For a while, it worked.

He is still weary. But he knew this brief rest was only a temporary respite.

But he still had a small amount of time. He could still reflect on what had gone before.

Ten years earlier at age forty, Chris was deep in his career of public service. His career, primarily in the U.S. Federal government, was broad in scope. His world covered major national public policy. His work often included running multi-billion dollar public agencies at the national level. Most people thought he was pretty good at it. A few disagreed.

His early career included developing an inner city health system for a large city. Later, he moved from the local level to the national level. Working as director of health legislation for a Congressional committee, he began to lay out his views on helping people who were disadvantaged.

Several years later, he got involved in a Presidential campaign. His candidate won and he first assisted with the transition and then served as a senior staff member with the Executive Office of the President.

Once his work there was completed, he returned to his health career with the Department of Defense. He ultimately directed their worldwide health system. From there, he continued with health at the Veterans Health Administration but with a stronger focus on technology as a support to improving health. In the final days of his Federal career, he served as Senior Advisor with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services,

leading the effort to build a strategic and operational plan for the future of these huge national programs.

Throughout his work career, he was a “true believer”. Government and its agencies existed to serve the public good. While he believed that to his core, many other government officials did not. They were more interested in advancing their own careers or their own pet interests.

And so, there were disagreements and conflicts. Many times he and the public good won. Sometimes he and the public good lost. But there was always a battle fought on behalf of the public good.

Out of that work would begin to emerge “Thrive!”. The vision of a thriving future for all forever. Before Thrive! could become a reality, groundwork needed to be laid. The theoretical and practical underpinnings. The philosophy - humans need to survive and want to thrive forever. The vision – all thrive forever. The strategy - create and sustain large, positive and timely change that builds and achieves a surviving and thriving future for all forever.

No longer married and not in a serious relationship. Still best friends with his former wife. Since the marriage ended, the right woman hasn’t come along. Maybe all for the better given what is happening and what is to come.

Beyond his public service work, sculpting continues. Over 200 abstract sculptures, mostly copper and wood, have been created. Many he gave away to family and friends. Several he donated to public organizations. For a year, he even had his own gallery in Georgetown area of Washington DC. Many he still has. Having moved passed “selling” his creation, he focuses on donating the sculptures for public good.



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Ten years ago, Faith Futura was 15 years old. Having just entered high school, she was both a typical Next Gen teenager and a very atypical Next Gen teenager. She was born and raised in north Baltimore to a middle class family. She was very smart and very creative. She was very attractive in her own unique way with distinct facial features, dark red hair, big blue eyes and a petite but strong body.

She was dating but nothing serious. Too soon in her mind. Also, no one was that interesting. She had other things to keep her attention.

She very much cared about others. She was becoming more and more intrigued by Next Gen. She was very frustrated with Current Gen and with the sad future facing her world. But what could she do about it.

Via eMedia, she tracked many communications. Bemoaning over Current Gen's power and Next Gen's powerlessness. Anger over hunger, poverty, climate degradation and war. Frustration over the prospect of a bad, short future.



She made her own thoughts known but with little effect. Someday she would help change the world, save the world, and build a thriving future. Someday. But not today.

So frustrating being only fifteen.

### **The World (Day 60. Worldwide).**

The press goes crazy over the explosion. Images of the disintegrated house are flashed worldwide by traditional media and go viral via eMedia.

Questions fly. What happened? Was it an attack? Were Shepherd, Taj and Jason in the house? If so, are they dead? Is this the end of black box?

Diamon smiles at his colleagues, “What a tragic accident. I sure hope nothing bad happened to Shepherd, Taj, Jason and black box. That would be such a shame. A really big shame.”

A colleague agrees, “It would be so sad. What would we do without them?”

“Plenty,” Diamon replies with confidence and anger. “Their little intervention in the Middle East was a mild annoyance. Their ‘Fresh Start’ intervention was a bigger annoyance. Black box interventions like these will not happen again.”

“And now we escalate.”

A battle wages between those who ignore Shepherd’s warning and those who heed the warning. Those ignoring the warning, mostly Current Gen, are still in control and temporarily shut down any Next Gen moves for change.

Diamon and his Current Gen people commit crimes against Next Gen. An up and coming Next Gen leader’s home is broken into. The home is trashed. The house is set on fire. A total loss.

Next Gen businesses are bankrupted. A thriving Next Gen business is given a substantial expansion loan. Just as soon as it expands and is growing to the next level, a well-funded competitor opens across the street.

The competitor drastically undercuts prices for the same product. Loan payments can't be made by the Next Gen. The business is forced into bankruptcy. Forced to close.

Next Gen leaders disappear. Two Next Gen leaders, one from China and one from England, meet in a cafe in Geneva, Switzerland. They are working to identify future Next Gen leaders to mentor. As they leave the café to return to their hotel, a Mercedes pulls alongside them. Guns are pointed. Orders given for them to get in the car. The Mercedes speeds away. Neither is heard from again.

Next Gen followers and conversionists are fired from their jobs. A Next Gen factory worker and her conversionist foreman are both fired. Explanation is that their work has been eliminated through incoming automation. A month later, the same work resumes with Current Gen people.

Conversionist activists are assassinated. On a lonely street in Moscow, a conversionist activist returns home after a conversionist meeting. He had voiced concerns about Current Gen government officials sending work and giving jobs only to Current Gen people. As he passes a dark alley, two men grab him and pull him into the alley. They beat him severely. He is bleeding severely. He is discovered the next morning dead.

Conversionists and anticonversionists are in a renewed war over black box and conversion. But the loss of black box may bring that to an explosive end. No black box; no conversion.

Still, there was the thought that Shepherd, Taj and Jason might have escaped. That black box might have survived. No bodies were found. No black box was found. Also, conversionists and anticonversionists are quite sure that a second black box still exists somewhere, probably still somewhere on Earth.

For anticonversionists, distrust remains. Conversion is wrong. Black box is wrong and must be destroyed.

For conversionists, hope remains. Conversion is good. Black box is good and must be accessible to all.

For the moment, trust is broken.



## Chapter 6. Impasse

Day 90 (90 DC)

### **black box (Day 90. Swiss Mountains, Switzerland).**

Safe. Barely.

Far away from their now disintegrated home in Washington D.C. Here Shepherd, Taj and Jason are in Shepherd's isolated mountain home, a home built by black box, heated and cooled by black box, and powered by batteries charged by black box.

Their Golden Retriever and black cat, both a bit upset, are safely by their side. Fortunately, both pets were in the room with them in the moments before the explosion. Fortunately, black boxes were in their hands. Both black boxes' emergency protocols activated. Instantly, Shepherd and they were safely transported here.

For now, they are safe from Diamon, who they strongly suspect was behind the explosion and attempt on their lives.

Their house's gas line ruptured and, somehow, gas kept flowing through it. It shouldn't have. The gas alarm went off, but too late to prevent the explosion. And then there was the Molotov cocktail thrown through the window. Clearly, the type of brazen attack characteristic of Diamon.

But it failed. It did not kill them. It will not stop them. Just increases their resolve. The mission remains.

No rest. The mission to do all the good that must be done demands their attention.

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A mutated Ebola virus emerges out of the African jungle's edge in the Congo. This is different. This is deadly. This is the world's greatest fear when it comes to infectious disease.

The initial transmission from a pet monkey to a human is silent. The monkey is infected but healthy. A silent carrier. The human is infected but healthy initially. A silent carrier.

Over the next week, the human carrier travels first to Brazzaville and spends a week moving in the most populated parts of the city. Then the carrier is off to college in New York. The flight departs Brazzaville and lands at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris. A twenty-four-hour layover. Plenty of time to interact with people in the airport. The flight takes off and then arrives at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York City. All along this trip, the carrier is healthy but infecting every person touched. Half of those infected are not getting sick but are silent carriers. Half of the infected are going to be sick in about 21 days and are silent carriers until then. That will be the world's first sign of the epidemic.

By the time the world gets the warning, thousands of people will be infected and be carriers. Tragically, there is a long incubation period, a transmission by contact rate of 50+ percent, an illness rate of 50+ percent, and a death rate after weeks of illness of 50+ percent. The mutated Ebola is now a worldwide epidemic and spreading at lightning speed. There is no cure.

Just as the mutated Ebola virus is about to expand exponentially worldwide, something seemingly inexplicable happens. Human to human transmission stops. Infected people stabilize and start to heal. Never in the history of humankind has a virus spread so quickly and widely. Never has a virus just stopped infecting and killing.

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Back at Shepherd's isolated home, Taj and Jason try to wind down and relax.

Taj warns, "This was not a human extinction event, but it had that potential. The world wasn't ready for this uniquely mutated disease. The world quickly needs to get ready if it happens again. Disease surveillance

needs to be better. Antiviral treatments need to be better. Public health interventions need to be better.”

“Absolutely,” chimes in Jason. “The world was lucky today. Without black box, the mutated Ebola might not have been stopped. But we learned more about black box today.”

“Yes,” says Shepherd. “Today you used black box in a new way. You identified the biological ‘signature’ of the virus. You projected black box’s power worldwide to sterilize the mutated Ebola virus. You used black box to find all the infected people and then to remove the virus’ deadly effects. Not exactly standard fare for black box but effective and life-saving. But, this was a one-time event for a particularly unique disaster.”

“Hopefully, this was a sufficient wake-up call to the world to be prepared when, and I believe it is when and not if, it occurs again. Whether it is a deadly disease we have yet to contact. Whether it is a known disease that mutates. All are potential disasters with human extinction potential.”

Taj interjected, “Just to keep them focused, we let the mutated Ebola virus live though we removed its ability to infect and kill. Even with a virus, we do our best not to kill it but only to remove the deadly effects.”

### **Chris and Faith (Day 90. Washington, DC, United States).**

Chris drives just under two hours from his home to Minneapolis International Airport. There he goes through a long, long security line and boards a crowded plane bound for Washington DC. A couple hours later, he lands at Washington National Airport, recently renamed. He boards Washington Metro subway headed for downtown. He drops his bags at his hotel, the historic Hay Adams, and starts walking toward the White House.

What he needed today was perspective. He needed to think. For him, the place to do that was standing just outside the black metal fence surrounding the White House. Now facing the south side of the White House, he is still not in play. He knows that is about to change.

Turning 180 degrees. Spread out before him are the great historical memorials – Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Franklin

Delano Roosevelt, Korean War, Vietnam War and World War II. They stand as reminders of great Presidents and deadly wars.

All are important to keep in mind when preventing a troubled future. All are important to achieving a thriving future. All are important in the days ahead that will require great leadership, great sacrifice, and great actions.

He reflects on what brought him to the moment and this place. He reflects on several years ago when he began to think beyond his Federal career. Sometime after that and building on his early career, he had an epiphany and the issue of human and world vulnerability became a major driving issue for his life. Building on his health career, a second epiphany was the issue of person-centered approach to health and the concept of HealthePeople, building a healthy and thriving future.

He reflects on the events of a year earlier.

By that time, the middle phase of his life was fully developed. Though he still had not found another woman who was “right” for him for a long term relationship, he was alright with that. His former wife was still his best friend. His time and his focus was going to be needed for more important things in the days ahead.

A bit later came the third epiphany, so germane to his current work. That was the concept of a thriving future. He called it “Thrive!”. He created this “living, breathing tapestry”. The virtual “tapestry” had many “threads”, all intended to support the Thrive! vision.

As threads in this tapestry, he wrote seven books on various aspects of the Thrive! vision, mission and strategy. He developed the various models and tools necessary to build and achieve the Thrive! vision. He developed and managed nearly a dozen websites. He had a couple of blogs. He had a strong presence on many eMedia platforms.

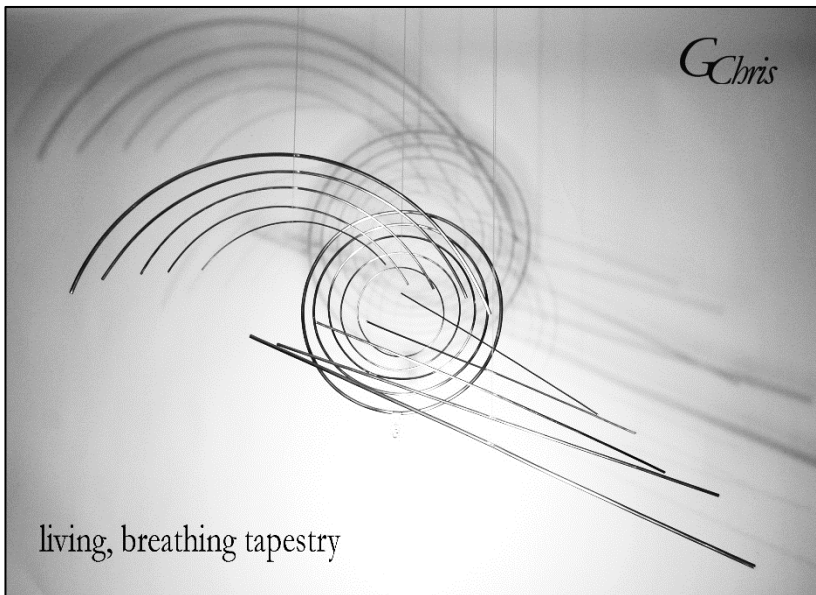
A major thread would emerge – the Thrive! Endeavor. To create and empower a vast, sustained human endeavor building and sustaining thriving and surviving future for all forever.

Supportive websites and blogs were created. eMedia used. Books written. All for the purpose of achieving a thriving future for all forever. No small vision.

But that wasn't enough. The "tapestry" needed the artful side as well. Many more abstract sculptures were created. More and more, the underlying theme was the Thrive! vision. Many more than 200 sculptures now exist with more to come.

Even that was not enough, he had to reach children and their families via writing and publishing. He wrote his first science fiction novel, just because he wanted to experience what it was like to write a novel with the theme of building a better future. Also, he wrote two illustrated children's books, because he wanted to learn what it takes to help children be creative in building a better future.

Thus was the living, breathing tapestry created. Thus was the foundation built for the Thrive! Endeavor.



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Faith is now 24. College, though not as easy as she expected, was behind her. She had done well and felt better prepared for whatever was to come in her life. Though her initial plan was to stop with her bachelor's degree in political science and philosophy from the University of Maryland, she didn't. She went directly into law school at Harvard. This was not easy.

Still, she succeeded and graduated in the top five percent of her class. Not first in her class but not too bad.

To get started with the next phase of her life Faith hired on with a national anti-poverty organization based in Washington DC. Not wanting to get isolated from the real world, her job included traveling to many of the poorest communities in America. In the last couple of months and in recognition of her motivation and ability, her work expanded and took her outside the United States to some of the poorest communities in the world.

She listened. She watched. She learned. She grew.

She awakened.

After having been absent from the Next Gen world for several years, she walked through the Washington DC Starbucks near Georgetown University, cup of French Roast black coffee in hand, found several of the most active Next Gen thinkers in America, sat down amongst them, and engaged.

### **The World (Day 90. Geneva, Switzerland).**

The world just survived a scare of epic proportions. So many came so close to dying. So ill prepared was the world.

The World Health Organization calls an emergency meeting of the world's best infectious disease experts. Unlike previous such meetings, the heads of nations insist on being there. They understood how close the world came to human extinction.

The leading experts are at a loss. How did this deadly disease spread so quickly and so silently? How did it stop so quickly and silently?

They also know the mutated Ebola virus still exists though it appears to no longer be contagious or deadly. But they are not certain.

Suspicion is that black box was involved. Some blame black box for the disease. Some thank black box for the rescue.



Taj and Jason went on eMedia to clarify, “The disease surprised us as much as it did you all. And yes, with Shepherd’s guidance we used black box to stop the quickly and silently spreading disease. We only did it because it was such a surprise and nothing else would have stopped the spread or the killing. Next time the world is on its own. Prepare.”

Current Gen world leaders are at the meeting and initially seem ready to do what is necessary to prevent a repeat.

Infectious disease experts from across the world call for immediate action. A worldwide disease surveillance system needs to be created. Information worldwide from health care providers and disease specialists would be fed into it. Information from the public would be fed into it. With it, early identification of disease outbreaks. Early intervention to contain the outbreaks.

They call for new vaccines that are more broad based and more available and affordable. New effective and affordable treatments for both bacterial and viral infectious diseases. New approaches to sustaining people who are infected with diseases for which a treatment is yet unknown.

But then the tone changes quickly. With Diamon’s quiet prodding, the leaders refuse to take responsibility, call it a one-time event, refuse to support the disease countermeasures, and put the blame on black box.

The President of China announces it was Shepherd and the black box that mutated the Ebola virus just so Taj and Jason could save the day with black box. Shepherd is to blame. The world needs to take only one action. Get rid of Shepherd and black box. Do that and the world will be just fine.

Initially, it seems that public opinion might just go the Current Gen way.

But then public opinion turns against Current Gen. People remember the Current Gen crimes occurring worldwide. People see Current Gen once again blaming others for their own failings.

Current Gen leaders back down.

In the end, the infectious disease specialists carry the day. Funding is provided. Disease surveillance systems established. New vaccines. New treatments. New care models for the untreatable.

In the end, it is Next Gen that gains strength. Many Current Gen start to listen to the younger generations – their children and grandchildren.

The battle between Current Gen and Next Gen reaches new heights. Much is verbal. Much is political. Some is death and destruction.

Conversionists and anticonversionists are in a stalemate. Conversionists believe Taj and Jason. Conversionists thank them for intervening and stopping the Ebola outbreak.

Anticonversionists believe the contrary and blame black box.

They are at an impasse. Nothing good is getting done. The bad path to a bad future remains the path being taken.

So far Diamon and his people are still winning.





## **Chapter 7. Vulnerable. But.**

Day 120 (120 DC)



### **black box (Day 120. Swiss Mountains, Switzerland).**

This is a fragile time for Earth and its people. As the current path to a bad future continues, there are faint glimmers of hope.

Looking toward the mountains surrounding Shepherd's home, Jason is curious, "What are their names? Why are they important?"

"Faith and Chris," responds Shepherd, with signs of affection. "Kind of like you two. They are somewhat ordinary people with extraordinary potential. They are emerging."

“You two need to start monitoring them. Protect them in the days ahead. If Diamon gets wind of them and their potential role, their lives may be over.”

A text message comes into Taj from one of her monitors. Monitors are people scattered across the world who keep Taj and Jason aware of developments potentially requiring black box intervention.

Taj jumps up from the couch and shouts, “Got to go.”

“As we feared, the worldwide drought is about to get much worse. New satellite data indicates that the hoped-for rain-producing systems in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans are dissipating. No drought relief in sight. No relief in time to save food crops across the northern hemisphere.”

“Without the rains, the result will be a catastrophic food shortage worldwide.”

“Wait,” cautions Shepherd. “Think about this for a moment. So far, black box interventions have been for one-time, unexpected emergencies. Black box is not to solve all of humans’ problems. It is to give them time so they can solve their own and build the thriving future.”

“Good point,” says Jason. “But counterpoint. Based on historical records, this is a once in five hundred years’ drought. Based on the world’s best climatologists, this one is not a result of climate change, though climate change is one factor.”

“Consistent with your admonition, black intervention is appropriate to deal with this essentially one-time event and give humans time to change their future.”

They look at Shepherd. When their eyes meet, they know they all agree. They know they and black box will intervene.

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In the one unused end of an orbiting space station far above Earth, Taj and Jason appear. Instantly, black box establishes a temporary Earth-like environment with breathable air.

“We need to get those tropical storms back up to strength,” says Taj with some urgency. “Not too strong to cause damage. But strong enough to provide the soaking, sustained rains necessary for food crops in the northern hemisphere.”

“Agree,” replies Jason as he pulls black box out of its case and floats toward Taj. “If we use black box to reassemble the rain systems we saw yesterday, rain will fall.”

“But,” interjects Taj, “we need to sustain these rain systems at the right level for several days to get sufficient soaking rain without triggering floods. A delicate balance.”

“Looks like we will be here for a while. We just need to figure out how to have black box sustain the rain systems.”

“We also need black box to provide support for our life functions, including food and breathable air.”

“Don’t forget there are astronauts at the other end of this space station,” reminds Jason. “We really need to be ‘invisible’ to them. It would not do for them to see us pulling off this intervention.”

“If known to the world, expectations would be that we should do more of this. Again, people would think black box and we are the answer. But that is not the right answer. The world’s people are the answer to surviving. The world’s people are the answer to a thriving future.”

Taj and Jason work with black box to create the rain-producing systems in both the Atlantic and Pacific. An hour later, the clouds form. An hour later, the first rain drops. For the next 48 hours, rain falls across parched lands of the northern hemisphere. A soaking not flooding rain.

They know one rain will not extinguish the drought. Over the next two days, black box and they create weather patterns most likely to provide periodic rains over the next few months.

**Chris and Faith (Day 120. Washington, DC, United States).**

Taking a late afternoon plane out of Minneapolis, Chris arrived last night, early evening.

After checking into the Hay-Adams, he felt restless and decided to go for a long walk to Georgetown where he had his sculpture gallery several years earlier. Hungry for pesto pizza, he went to one of his favorite pizza restaurants near M Street and Wisconsin Avenue. Good pizza with a good beer to wash it down.

As he was eating, he overheard a group of Next Gen activists at the next table getting fired up for tomorrow's rally. He noticed one young woman who was particularly articulate. She would be one to watch. Great to see the leadership emerging in Next Gen.

He also noticed a couple sitting a table away. They looked familiar. He noticed that they were paying close attention to the Next Gen activists' discussion and to the young woman. He thought they were also casting infrequent glances in his direction.

Big day tomorrow, time to head back to the hotel. A nice moon for the long walk back.

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Next morning. Chris pulls the curtains open and looks out over Washington. The sun is just coming up. Looks like good weather for the rally.

Only a month had passed since he was last here. A lot is happening. A lot is beginning to change.

As noon approaches, he changes clothes in anticipation of the rally. He starts the long walk to the Lincoln Memorial.

Much to think about today. Much to do today.

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That morning, Faith jumps out of bed in her Georgetown apartment and takes a warm shower. She thinks back to last night.

As her friends and she ate pizza and celebrated her 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, they discussed the future and how to achieve a better future.

During the evening when the discussion got a bit tedious for brief periods, she glanced around the restaurant. She noticed a couple at the next table having a night out. They were deep in some serious discussion. They also seemed to have an interest in the discussion that her friends and she were having. They were familiar but she hadn't taken the time to figure out how they were familiar.

She also noticed a nice looking, older man, probably about fifty, out by himself for the evening. A few times, they both glanced at each other. Not clear why. Somehow there seemed to be some kind of connection. Not clear why.

Great fun being with her Next Gen friends last night. Great debate. Tough debate. While they still have many differences, there is much they have in common. Key is their commitment to building a thriving future for all.

As she walked alone back to her apartment, she thought about the preceding four months. Having listened to the challenge laid down on the "Day of Choice", her friends and she made their choice. Now is time for action. Tomorrow's rally is the beginning.

Sun is up. 8am. Her appointment reminder sounds. She picks up her smartphone. Checks her text messages and emails. Eats a couple of granola bars. 10am. Her door bell buzzes. Her friends are here. Time to go.

The morning walk from Georgetown to the Lincoln Memorial takes them along the Potomac River. The sun is shining through white puffy clouds. Less than an hour later, they arrive at the Lincoln Memorial.

The "Call for Change" rally was called by the Next Gen activists. But the rally organizers are joined by many Current Gen. The first signs that a new alliance is being built across generations.

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Near the front, Chris looks around the crowd. He is somewhat surprised and greatly pleased to see the crowd's diversity. Gender. Race. Age.

People with disabilities. Messages on signs. Maybe this is the moment. Maybe it is time for him to get back into play.

He sees former Current Gen colleagues. He focuses on those who have similar, more progressive values. Re-discovering his own enthusiasm and finding common interest, he tells them about Thrive! and the Thrive Endeavor. He tells them about the books he wrote, the blogs and websites he created, he tells them about the Thrive! vision, mission, strategy and tools.

As are they, he strongly commits to building a thriving future. He wants it for all. He wants it to last forever. He starts to use the phrase “all thrive forever”. Highly optimistic but sends the signal he wants to send.

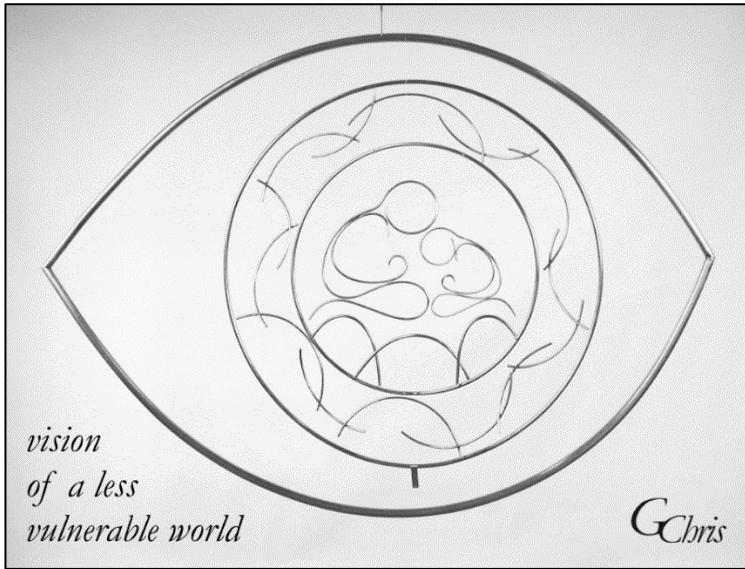
Faith is just ten feet away talking to her Next Gen friends about the need for change now. About the need for a thriving future.

Chris hears Faith talking. Faith hears Chris talking. They glance briefly at each other. They glance again and catch each other’s glance. It clicks that they were both in the same restaurant at the same time last night. They smile at each other.

A few moments later, Chris and Faith are introduced by a common friend who suggests they might collaborate. After a brief discussion, they both realize that they have a common interest. They want and need to be more focused. They need to get more involved. They may want to join forces.

A new alliance, crossing generations, may soon be formed.





### **The World (Day 120. Worldwide).**

At this moment and with impasse, the world and its people are at their most vulnerable. Hunger. Disease. Natural disasters. Deepening climate change. Energy shortages. Pollution.

For the moment, the northern hemisphere's drought has abated. Unexpectedly, rain systems that had dissipated had re-formed. They created the rain necessary to save most of the food crops. Forecasters now predict more favorable condition for periodic rains over the next several months.

A worldwide food shortage has been averted for now. Hungry people have food, or at least, most of them do. The overall hunger problem will take more than rain to solve.

As before, suspicions are that black box is involved. This is one case where there are few complaints. A few, like Diamon, think the worst. Think black box.

"They did it again," shouts Diamon angrily. "Shepherd and his people surely created this crisis just so they could come to the rescue. Don't trust them. Never did."

“For the moment, we will get the blame for not acting sooner. For not acting to prepare for the drought. For not acting to try to counter the drought’s effect. We will get blamed for not solving the whole hunger problem.”

“They may have won the day, but not the war. That we will win.”

Other than with Diamon and his allies, there are hints of something changing.

Conversionists and anticonversionists are both suffering. They both attack their leadership. They blame them for the impasse and the failure to address the world’s problem near and long term. Even more so, they blame Current Gen generally and Current Gen world leaders specifically.

Given the lack of other options, there are signs of more openness to Shepherd’s admonition and to black box as part of solution.

Signs are also that black box is understood to be only part of the solution. In the end, the world’s people are the solution.

Four months after “Day of Choice”, signs are that people, especially Next Gen, are ready to make a choice. Ready to choose a surviving and thriving future.

But Current Gen leaders are not ready to give up power, power they know may be slipping away. They turn to who they see as their last hope for retaining power. They turn to Diamon.

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“Just got the call, “advises Diamon, smiling smugly. “Current Gen is desperate. As expected, they want war. They want to win. But they want someone else to fight it for them. They want their hands clean for if they win or if they lose.”

“This may be our last chance,” warns Diamon. “If we don’t remove Shepherd quickly, we will lose as well. Patience has worn thin.”

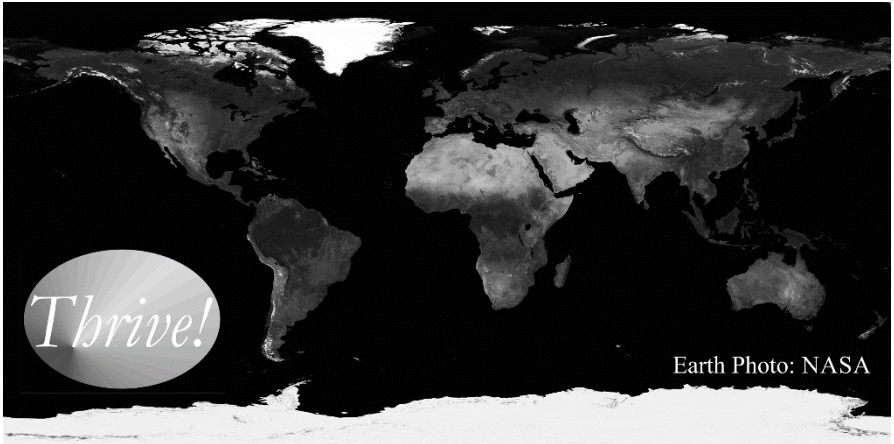
“Put out the word to all our people worldwide. Find me Shepherd’s hideaway. Find it now!”

“Put all our black ops resources on alert. Be ready to attack on a moment’s notice and with everything we have. We will only get once chance.”

“Know that Shepherd will be expecting us. Know that black box will be at the ready. Know that whatever power Shepherd and it have will be used.”

Later in the day, the word comes. An energy signature in a mountainous area of Switzerland suggests black box. Within minutes, the order is given. Within hours, black ops are in the air. The attack begins.





## **Book 2. The Thrive! Endeavor**





## Chapter 1. Enough

Day 180 (180 DC)

### **black box (Day 180. Swiss Mountains, Switzerland).**

Just sixty days earlier at noon in the Swiss mountains, the attack began.

An hour before the attack, a source, who was at the Diamon meeting but silent, sent an urgent text message to Jason, “Diamon attack imminent.”

As the attack began, Shepherd, Taj and Jason were ready. Black boxes were powered up.

Diamon’s black ops forces attacked aggressively but hit an impenetrable “dome” protecting Shepherd’s mountain home. Helicopters smashed into the dome. Planes crashed into the dome. Remaining aircraft pulled back to fire ordinance. Ground troops could not penetrate the dome. Ground forces fired ordinance.

Missiles exploded harmlessly against the dome. Bombs did not explode. Bullets ricocheted back toward the attackers.

Then it was over. Weapons vanished. Troops and ground vehicles were frozen. Remaining planes and helicopters were given 10 minutes to land at a nearby airfield. As soon as they landed, they were frozen. Pilots and aircrews were frozen.

Information was passed quickly to Next Gen forces who came within twelve hours to capture and remove all assailants and equipment.

The attack only lasted an hour. With black boxes, an hour was all that was needed to defeat Diamon’s attack.

Within minutes after the attack, across eMedia was spread the word, “Survived.”

Shortly thereafter, came more words, “Diamon forces attack failed. Diamon defeated. Diamon in hiding.”

Images flashed showing frozen assailants and their equipment.

And then a day later, another message, “Diamon is dead. Not by black box.”

Later, the story was expanded. While Current Gen leaders had put the wheels in motion to terminate Diamon, they didn’t have to. There are no “fingerprints”.

Current Gen leaders wanted no association with or fingerprints on the failed attack.

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As soon as the attack on Shepherd failed, Diamon knew. In his New York office, communications were active. Failure was clear.

Diamon knew what would happen next. No loose threads. He was the big loose thread.

Showing no emotion to his colleagues there with him, he calmly opened the door to his balcony. His children, Justine and Azrael, see him walk out onto the balcony. He walked slowly to the balcony railing and paused for a minute. Whatever he was thinking will never be known. He leaned over the railing and plunged to his death on the plaza below.

Justine and Azrael rush to the balcony and look down in horror.

Diamon was no longer a threat.

Current Gen was no longer a threat.



Having learned what happened in the Swiss mountains, no one in their right mind is ever going to try another attack on Shepherd. Shepherd and black box are a force not subject to defeat.

Some speculate whether a nuclear, chemical or biological attack would succeed. Key military strategists, without reservation, say no. They simply point to evidence coming from stopping the Ebola threat, stopping the military action in the Middle East, stopping the Tsunami wave in Japan, making it rain across the northern hemisphere, and stopping Diamon's attack in Switzerland. They are examples or appear to be examples of Shepherds and black box's power.

Having survived the "last gasp" attack by Diamon and Current Gen, Shepherd, Taj and Jason believe this is the moment. The primary adversary of a better future defeated. The world at the brink of disaster. So close to the world's final failure.



Across the world's eMedia resonates a single word, "Enough."

“Enough,” echoes Taj. “These six months have been pretty brutal, but maybe necessary.”

“Agree,” chimes in Jason. “Necessary in that the world had to try all the other options. Necessary in that Current Gen and Diamon had to try and had to be defeated by their own acts. Necessary in that the world’s people had to literally get to the brink of extinction.”

“We have their attention,” Shepherd asserts. “Now is the time to make our moves. It won’t be a straightforward, linear path. It will still be nonlinear marked with ups and downs and lefts and rights and progress and regress. Still, this is the tipping point when Earth’s people are most capable in history and Earth’s future is most endangered in history.”

“Now is the time for new leadership. Now is the time for Chris and Faith to step forward and fulfill their destinies.”

### **Chris and Faith (Day 180. Worldwide).**

Sixty days have passed since the “Call for Change” rally. So much has changed. So much is happening so fast.

Chris has emerged. Chris is now in full play. No longer on the sidelines, he is now the de-facto leader of the new Current Gen. While remnants of the old Current Gen are still in power, that is changing. Within two months, elections and other actions will likely result in new leadership across the globe.

Rallies occur throughout the world. Washington. Rio. New Delhi. Beijing. London. Cairo. Canberra. Moscow. Tokyo. Chris essentially lives on a plane. He is one of the featured speakers at each rally.

At the Beijing rally, like most of the other rallies, Chris’ name is called and he steps forward on the stage. One of the final speakers, he quickly captures the crowd.

“I come before you today as leader of the new Current Gen. The old Current Gen is either gone or about to be gone. They had their chance to make a choice. They had their chance to build a better future. But they did

not. They failed as leaders. They failed as stewards of Earth's people and of Earth."

"We, Current and Next Gen, will not repeat their mistakes. We, Current and Next Gen, will not fail Earth's people. We, Next and Current Gen, will not fail Earth."

"This is the beginning of a new future. No longer will it be about just self. It will be about self and everyone else. No longer will it be about just today. It will be about today and the near and far future. No longer will it just be about getting by. It will be about surviving and about thriving."

"Today we stand at the tipping point. We are the most capable in all of history. Our future is the most endangered in all of history. From this tipping point forward, we choose. We, Next and Current Gen, choose a surviving and thriving future for all."

As he steps back and exits the stage, he thinks back to an earlier speaker. Faith. They keep bumping into each other but never seem to have the chance to really talk. Given their rapidly expanding leadership roles, they need to really talk. They really need to work together.

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Faith has also emerged as a rapidly rising star of Next Gen. While not yet to the level of Chris, she will be there shortly. Already she is involved in meetings around the world. Already she is helping develop the strategy for making the choice and for building a better future. Already she is a prime motivator.

Just a short time earlier, Faith was called up to the same stage. She still gets nervous speaking before these huge rallies. Audiences are often in the tens of thousands. A few even larger. Not a trained speaker, she is getting much better at it. She is a great motivator. The loud and frequent applause and some standing ovations speak to that.

As a potential leader with great promise, her role is to show that Next Gen is ready.

"Today I come before you as a member of Next Gen. I come before you as a partner with the new Current Gen. Current Gen has much to unlearn.

Next Gen has much to learn. We will do it together. We will do it better than it has ever been done before.”

“On the Day of Choice, we were given a choice. But it wasn’t Shepherd who gave us that choice. Shepherd just reminded us what our choices were. Shepherd reminded us that we had to make a choice or live with the choices we have already made.”

“Well, let me be incredibly clear. We, Next and Current Gen will make a choice. In fact, we, Next and Current Gen, have made a choice. No to a bad future. No to just a surviving future. Yes. I repeat. Yes. We choose a surviving and thriving future for all. And, we want it to last forever.”

To a standing ovation, she bows and leaves the stage. She waits to hear the rest of the speakers. She is particularly interested in what Chris will have to say.

Frequently, Chris and Faith end up at the same meeting and at the same rallies. A few times on the same stage. So far, their contact has been limited to a brief exchange in a meeting, a wave, a handshake or a brief hello. They both want to have further conversation. They both feel it must happen. They both know it will come soon.

### **The World (Day 180. Worldwide).**

“Enough is enough” is the clamor worldwide.

The current path much be changed. No longer is a bad future an acceptable future.

The old Current Gen is disintegrating quickly. Their hold on power tenuous.

In democracies, Next Gen leaders are entering more and more elections. New Current Gen, breaking from the old thinking and old policies of old Current Gen, are entering more and more elections. Most are poised to win.

In nations without democratic elections, Next Gen and new Current Gen leaders are emerging quickly. Rising up through militaries. Rising up through families. Rising up through bureaucracies. Whatever the route to

power, Next and new Current Gen, are using those routes to ascend to power.

But this is very different. The time frame is very different. Change is not happening in years. Events are occurring at lightning speed. Change is happening in days. In hours. Sometimes in minutes.

With collaboration between Next Gen and new Current Gen, an unstoppable force is moving worldwide.

But there are also backslides. Conversionists and anticonversionists attack their respective leaderships more and more vigorously. Mostly, it is because the key leaders are seen as willing to cooperate and collaborate with others.

Some time ago, Christopher was removed from conversionist leadership. Many felt he wasn't aggressive enough in getting them access to black box and to allowing black box conversions. His replacement made great amounts of noise but did not make great amounts of progress. In fact, all he did was make enemies of almost everyone.

Next Gen never really connected with hard liner conversionists. Most Next Gen thought hard liners learned the wrong lesson from black box's existence and interventions. Black box wasn't about conversion. Black box was about becoming better people building a better future.

Current Gen, old and new, never liked conversionists. They identified more with anticonversionists. But they were even losing connection with the anticonversionists.

Similar to Christopher, Reverend L.O. Moses was kicked out of a leadership role with the anticonversionists. Too accommodating. Too open to dialoguing with conversionists. Too open to dialoguing with Christopher. With Shepherd.

The hard liners had won. But what had they won? Yes, there were no "conversions" per se. But black box still existed. Black box was still intervening, though in very positive, selective ways.

Every once in a while Christopherson and L.O meet out of the public eye. They sense that big change is coming. They realize their time is likely to come again. If so, they must be ready.

Part of their ongoing conversation is about two of the new players on the world stage. Of the new Next Gen leaders, Faith seems most intriguing. Seems most filled with positive potential. Of the new Current Gen leaders, Chris clearly stands out. They know his work. They know what he is trying to accomplish. Both seem like the kind of leaders with whom Christopher and L.O can and must work if the future is going to be a good one.



## Chapter 2. Power Lost

Day 240 (240 DC)

### **black box (Day 240. Swiss Mountains, Switzerland).**

“For all practical purposes, Current Gen leaders are a lost cause,” says Jason with dismay. “We tried to reach them, but to no avail.”

“The only path to a better future depends on Next Gen and the best of Current Gen.”

“Agree,” says Taj with some sadness. “Shepherd, any chance we are wrong?”

“I’m afraid not”, responds Shepherd. “Time to focus on the willing and able. The future depends on new leadership. Faith and Christopher are key.”

“First, we will help with the transition. Democratic leaders face elections within weeks. Non-democratic leaders will be ‘moved’ within weeks. Though a bit quick, this fits the direction the vast majority of people want to go. Our role is to speed up the process.”

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The word goes out that Shepherd, Taj and Jason are willing to help any democracy who wants to quickly upgrade or establish a modern election apparatus. Black box will duplicate electronic voting machines to make more machines accessible to more people. Almost immediately, most countries ask for help. Black box is put to work in country after country. Many thousands of electronic voting machines are duplicated and put into place.

Some countries move to also use internet-based voting. Working with election and technology experts, Taj and Jason show them how to set up such systems and make them easy to use and trustworthy.

For many countries, the leadership is non-democratic. Dictatorships. Monarchies. Theocracies. Plutocracies. Oligarchies. These governance systems face difficult choices, but, with a few exceptions, not the choice not to change. Changes vary. Move to another form of governance, such as a democracy. Turn over to Next Gen generation leaders. Expand leadership to include large numbers of Next Gen.

Some non-democratic leaders understand the powerful shift that is occurring and just want to personally survive with their families. Some such leaders understand but will resist to the death or something close to it.

Working with Next Gen leaders and the best of Current Gen leaders, strategies are developed for each country. Shepherd, Taj and Jason are clear that they will not choose the future leaders or governing systems. That is up to the people of each country. Once that decision is made, black box and they will help speed up the change.

Next Gen leaders and the best of Current Gen leaders make the decision in each country as to governing system and leaders.

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In an African country, the dictator and his family dine. Outside throughout the mansion, guards are suddenly frozen. Without notice, Shepherd, Taj and Jason appear. They utter a single phrase, "It's time." The dictator considers calling his guards. He stops. He looks at his family. He sits back down. He knows what the right answer is. He has known it for a long time. He acknowledges what will happen next with a barely perceivable head nod. Black box transports the dictator and his family to their new home. Moments later, new Next Gen leaders arrive and begin building the future.

An Asian monarch relaxes in the early morning and watches his family playing on the grounds. His eye catches his Next Gen daughter entering the room. She is not alone. He recognizes black box. She looks at him. He looks at her. He looks at black box. He knows it's time. First, he walks to the rest of his family and says it is time for new leadership and he will



abdicate in favor of his daughter. An hour later, the same word goes out across the country. Relief and cheers across the country. A new future begins.

In the United States, the President meets with her Cabinet and senior White House officials in the White House's Roosevelt Room. She asks if she has any chance of remaining President. Should she stay the course? Should she accept a quick election and run for re-election? Should she just resign? The debate in the room is intense. Several are defiant. Several say it's over. No consensus.

"Madame President," comes an unexpected voice from the corner. "The world has changed much in the past eight months. You had your chance to help this country build the future it desperately wants and needs."

Taj continues, "You made your choice. The consequence of your choice is your time is over. You can try for re-election. It is your right. But let me counsel you to the contrary. It is in the best interests of all that you not run. Accept the election. Quietly exit."

A few angry shouts in the room. Most are silent. The President knows the politics. The President accepts her fate. A Next Gen leader or one of the better Current Gen leaders will win the election and be sworn in as President.

And so it was across the world. All bad Current Gen leaders are gone. The good ones remain and are partners in building a better future. Many Next Gen leaders are now in their country's leadership positions.

### **Chris and Faith (Day 240. Paris, France).**

Fifty-year-old Chris is now the de-facto leader of the more open, more progressive element of Current Gen. The element has strong, positive cross-ties to Next Gen.

Only twenty-five years old, Next Gen's Faith fully emerges as one of the top five Next Gen leaders worldwide. She will soon rise to be the top one.

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The sun is just rising over Paris' Left Bank. Some Parisians are on their way to work. Some casually walk along the River Seine. Some are at their favorite cafe enjoying a leisurely breakfast of dark coffee and buttery croissants.

Faith enjoys her first sip of coffee. She is a bit anxious about meeting. While they have briefly met, they have never been able to find the moment to really talk. They have so much to talk about. They have so much to do.

She hears footsteps behind her and turns.

"Hi Faith," says the cheerful voice of Chris. "This is long, long overdue. A true pleasure to finally get to really talk."

"Hi as well," responds Faith with a soft smile as her anxiety diminishes. "We have crossed paths many times. A few meetings. A few waves. A few handshakes. A few compliments to each other during and around speeches."

"We both knew this moment was coming. Now it is here."

"Agree," affirms Chris. "Much change has already taken place. You have been playing a stronger and stronger role in changes to governing systems and leaders. Your work here in France as well as in England and Japan has been outstanding. Big changes. Relatively little resistance."

"It helps having friends like Shepherd, Taj and Jason standing in the shadows," smiles Faith. "Of course, they couldn't always remain in the shadows. Sometimes, they were more, shall we say, hands-on in speeding up the change."

"Same for my work in Beijing, Washington and Moscow," says Chris. "We are far down the road in Current Gen leader removals. Even as we speak, a few countries are going through their final throes of resistance. That will only last a few days at most."

"Are we really ready for what has to happen next," queries Faith, a worried look on her face. "It is one thing to be for something in the abstract. To be against something that is extremely unpopular."

“But to avoid the impending really, really bad future. To build a truly surviving and thriving future for all. That is truly scary.”

“What if we fail? What if we are no better at achieving a thriving future than the Current Gen leaders we just threw out? Having better intentions will provide no comfort if we end up with the same bad future.”

“Catch your breath,” responds Chris, calmly and putting his hand gently on her arm. “Yes, we have taken on an historic responsibility. Yes, the challenge is unprecedented. Yes, we might fail. But we will give the world the best chance ever to survive and thrive.”

“Keep in mind, we now have some very powerful friends with a very, very powerful black box. Already, we have seen what it and they can do. With them, we have a chance. A good chance.”

“I know, I know,” affirms Faith, a bit less anxious. She touches his hand. “But they are clear on the key point. While they will help, it is up to us.”

“They believe in us. They believe that just as humans have put us on the current path to a bad future, it is humans that can and will get us off that path. Get us on the path to a surviving and thriving future for all.”

“Time for us to walk over to the small art gallery across the street,” Chris interjects. “They await us.”

### **The World (Day 240. Worldwide).**

The current generation of leaders lose power and are removed worldwide by Next Gen in sweeping elections in democracies, in secession changes in monarchies, and in overthrows in other non-democracies. New Presidents of countries, including the United States, Russia and China. New United Nations Secretary General.

In change unprecedented in all of human history, all the world’s leaders have either been replaced or are leaders already strongly committed to building a better future.

Diamon committed suicide before he could be captured and tried for crimes against humanity.

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Looking down on the plaza where just two months ago they lost their father. While others saw justice, they saw nothing but injustice.

“Az, for two months, I have heard self-righteous voices proclaim how right it was that our father took his own life,” says Justine angrily. “Many were his enemies. Many were friends who turned on him and became his enemies.”

“His going after Shepherd was exactly what they wanted. He tried to end the scourge that is black box. He tried to end the alien Shepherd. And his ‘friends’ turned on him.”

“Traitors!” shouts Azrael. “Traitors to our father. Traitors to the human race.”

“Justy, this will not stand. Revenge will be upon those who accept black box help. Revenge will be upon Shepherd.”

Diamon’s daughter Justine and son Azrael prepare to exact their revenge. They believe, as did he, that Shepherd is the true demon. Black box is the demon’s weapon. The world faces Armageddon from Shepherd and black box.

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Over this brief time, anticonversionists also lose power. Frustrated, they threw out their leaders. L.O Moses had been one of the first to go, though possibly the least to blame. Some think she may still have a role to play in the days ahead.

The anticonversionists initially saw Christopher, leader of the conversionists, as much a demon as Shepherd. They had thrown him out as well. Having watched him over the past two months, they are less certain he is the enemy. They see him taking a very careful approach. They see him moving beyond black box conversions to a stronger focus on human progress.

He and L.O. maintain their close but cautious relationship.

The strongest move underway is to reach across to Chris, the new Current Gen leader. To some extent is it because black box is acknowledged to be part of the solution but only a limited part. It is because many anticonversionists point to his willingness to dialogue with the anti-conversionists. They also recognize his increasing influence and power.

As they begin to think more about the future, they recognize his positive relationship with Next Gen. While they are also watching Faith, here they are less comfortable. She is just too new.

Conversionist, as expected, see this differently. Though removing him from leadership, they have come to accept Christopher's approach to black box. While black box conversions may never be available, the lessons of black box conversion remain powerful. Many pursue personal conversion as individuals and with other conversionists.

Others now focus more on the future being built by people like Chris and Faith. They suspect Christopher is working with them both. They know Christopher, with his ability to bridge to the anticonversionists and to bridge Next Gen and parts of Current Gen, has become a powerful player in the future that is coming. A better future they hope.

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In a side alley to a small sculpture gallery in Georgetown part of Washington DC, a shadowy figure approaches a dimly lit door. Four taps on the door. It opens. The figure enters. A few moments later, another figure approaches the door, makes the signal and enters. Then a third. Then a fourth.

With the windows covered, there is only dim light from a single fixture. Then the light slowly brightens.

"Welcome," says a familiar voice. "Please excuse Taj, Jason and me for the small drama around this private meeting. We thought it was very important that the four of you and we meet."





## Chapter 3. In Control

Day 270 (270 DC)

### **black box (Day 270. Swiss Mountains, Switzerland).**

“Looking back on the Georgetown meeting, it was as challenging as we expected,” says Shepherd. “But it had to happen.”

“But you do agree it was great seeing and talking to Faith and Chris in Paris just before that meeting,” asserts Jason. “We changed a lot of things by working with each of them separately. But the plan was always to get them to join forces.”

“Most certainly,” chimes in Taj. “Two different generations. Two different people. Both with great leadership skill. Both destined to help build a better future.”

“But for Earth and its people to build a thriving future will need both generations. It will need all future generations. The challenge is that large. All, meaning all current and future generations. Thrive, not just getting by and surviving. Forever, not just today and the near future.”

Shepherd nods in agreement. “Our meeting in the art gallery was the right environment. Some of the world’s most creative art by some of the world’s most creative minds. We ask no less from Faith and Chris.”

“Chris brings a world of creativity, experience and skill and the trust of the best of Current Gen. Faith brings great enthusiasm, creativity and rapidly increasing skill. And critically, the trust of Next Gen. Most importantly, they trust each other. They believe they are a team that can help bring about a thriving future. They embrace the vision. They embrace the mission.”

“They understand that while we will be helpful, our role is only to remove barriers and to speed up the process. It is up to Earth’s people, including them, to build that future. The only way a thriving future will last is if Earth’s people build it and sustain it.”

“Sorry to interrupt,” Taj jumps in, “Speaking of help, we have a problem. Right now and far away.”

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In a small part of a country at war with itself, an ancient tribe tries to hang on. The attacks on them have been relentless. No food has reached them in over a month. They know tomorrow may be their last. Scouts just returned. Only ten miles away their attackers mass.

Under the cover of a moonlit night, the whole tribe makes their move toward the river. Their only hope is that the promised boats will be there to carry them across the mile-wide river. Their only hope is that the river is wide enough to protect them from their attackers.

Quietly, they cross the open three miles of land between their village and the river. Suddenly, anguished cries rise from the people nearest the river. No boats. Then a second wave of cries. All were sunk and their crews killed.

Then from the back of the people, a third wave of cries is heard. The sound of the attackers’ armed vehicles is heard. The sound is getting louder and louder.

Desperation. The whole tribe is trapped on open ground between the mile-wide river and rapidly approaching attackers. They have no weapons. They have no boats. There is no escape. Only imminent death approaches.

Hardly noticed in all the turmoil are two people standing on a high bank on the other side of the river. On their moonlit faces are only great concern and great urgency. They begin the rescue mission. Black box is activated.

Murmurs are heard from people closest to the river. The river is changing in a way that is unclear. A one-hundred-foot-wide part of the river seems to be solidifying like ice. But it is not ice. But it is solid like a bridge. It rises



just a few feet above the river. The moon highlights the running river with this new strip that starts from the near side of the river. The strip keeps extending toward the other side. It appears to reach the other side. One tribe member touches this new surface. It is hard. It is not slippery. It is walkable. But would it hold many people? Would it hold the whole tribe?

Suddenly, the two people with black box are on the near side of the river and amongst the tribe.

With quiet whispers from Taj and Jason there is assurance. “This is your ‘bridge’ to freedom. Yes, it will hold all of you. But all of you must go now. You must get across the river as fast as you can.”

Fearing more their attackers than any uncertainty about the “bridge”, the tribe moves onto the bridge and begins making their way to freedom.

But then the attackers arrive, weapons threatening. At the same time, attackers’ boats with threatening weapons appear on the river.

The tribe rushes to cross the river on the bridge.

Just as the attackers’ begin to fire on the tribe, something changes in the air between the tribe and their attackers. Almost unperceivable change.

Attackers’ bullets bounce off an almost invisible wall between the tribe and the attackers. Machine gun fire from the attackers’ boats bounce off the invisible wall.

Though very afraid, the tribe keeps moving across the bridge. The first of the tribe reach the other side.

Then an ominous sound. Two attack helicopters quickly speed toward the tribe on the bridge. The helicopters hover just above the river’s surface. Missiles and machine guns target the tribe. They fire. But the machine gun fire just bounces off the wall. Missiles just bounce off the wall and do not explode. The protective wall covers the tribe from on water, on ground and above ground attacks.

After almost an hour, the tribe makes it to the other side of the river. Relief. Then loud cheers.

A helicopter lands on the near side of the river. The attack commander jumps out and shouts, “Don’t be fooled, you aren’t protected by the river. We are coming to get you and will destroy you all without mercy.”

Then, just to the commander’s right, is heard Taj’s stern voice, “Commander, you are dead wrong! You will discard your weapons or you will never leave. You will leave now or you will never leave. These people are protected from the likes of you.”

“If you look to the other side of the river, many lights are now appearing. Military. Relief. Medical. They will protect the tribe. They will care for the tribe. They will feed the tribe.”

“You saw what we did with the river. After that, dealing with you and your people will take only seconds. Leave now weaponless or you will not leave at all.”

“Start walking.”

A defiant curse from the commander. He turns to his soldier’s to give attack orders. He then sees their fear. He knows his only choice is to start walking.

### **Chris and Faith (Day 270. New York, NY, United States).**

In just a few hours, they will both speak at the United Nations Special Meeting on the Future. They are the featured speakers.

It is time to re-visit the “Day of Choice”. Time to choose.

Sun is out. Relatively warm day. Much anticipation. The hotel room, with its balcony, overlooks Central Park. In the park below, many people are walking, running, biking, skateboarding. Something big is about to happen. Lots of conversation about what is about to happen. About what this means.

Much anticipation. Much anxiety.

Chris has been sitting on the balcony for almost an hour. Enjoying dark French Roast coffee and a chocolate croissant. Going over in his mind what it is he has to say today. What he had to do today.

“Chris,” comes a cheerful voice from the other side of the room. “Got much on your mind? Want to talk?”

“Morning Faith,” replies Chris, equally cheerful with a hint of anxiety. “Just a little on my mind. On our minds.”

“That’s the truth,” affirms Faith but showing her own anxiety. “Haven’t slept most of the night. Haven’t quite got this all figured out.”

“Okay if we do a final rehearsal of our UN duet? Only the whole world will be watching.”

“Let’s do it,” responds Chris with enthusiasm. “Day of Choice re-visited. At last, today is the day we all choose our future. The Earth and its people’s future.”

“Nine months ago, Shepherd, Taj and Jason laid it out quite clearly. Choose current path. Consequence is bad future. Choose survival path. Consequence is surviving future. Choose thrive path. Consequence can be thriving future for all forever.”

Faith jumps in, “The last days have been about rejecting the current path. Having moved Current Gen and their addiction to the current future choice, we are finally past that choice.”

“Question. Is everyone really ready to go beyond a surviving future. We hear a lot of the right words, like ‘we want to thrive’. But we have yet to see the behavior necessary to achieve a thriving future.”

“And that brings us to today. That brings us to all the countries assembled in one room waiting for us to weigh the choices, to make the final argument, to recommend the choice, and to get them to make the choice. The right choice.”

“Chris, you start with laying out the choices. A reminder. Move then into the benefits and consequences of the choices. Lay out why all of us have already rejected the current path and bad future. Lay out why a surviving

future is not good enough. Lay out how the Current Gen leaders have come to only one choice for Earth and its people.”

“Got it, Faith. Then you take over and lay out our recommended choice and why. Thriving future is what we choose. Humans, as a species, need to survive and want to thrive forever. Thriving future is the only future that meets human need and want. Thriving future is the only future that ensures we have an Earth upon which to have a future.”

“And then, with all the Next Gen enthusiasm and determination you have, bring them home. Bring them to their feet. Bring out the applause. Bring them to affirmation of a thriving future for all forever.”

“Now that was easy,” as Faith laughs and falls back on the couch.

She quickly gets back up. They move to each other as two kindred spirits with the weight of the world on their shoulders.

They hold each other tightly and tenderly.

Both anxious. Both committed. Both together.



**The World (Day 270. Washington, DC, United States).**

When the Georgetown meeting occurred last month, it was not the easiest of meetings. Christopher, L.O. Faith and Chris had never been in the same room. Christopher and L.O. had been both enemies and partners. Faith and Chris had just begun their collaboration. All four had never worked through what their interests might be. Whether or not they had common interests. Whether or not they could partner to build a better future.

L.O. was the first to speak, "I'm feeling pretty uncomfortable here. I appear to be the odd person out."

Christopher responded, trying to reassure L.O., "I don't think so. And you shouldn't feel that way. I think we are way past those days. We have both been bounced around a bit by our so-called friends and supporters."

"I don't totally disagree," says L.O., showing a bit less uneasiness. "I don't totally agree either. For the moment, I will listen."

“Good enough for now,” interjected Shepherd. “This is a very different world than just 270 days ago. New leadership is now in control. But that is not enough.”

“Decisions need to be made. Positive actions taken. Positive outcomes sustained.”

Faith inserts herself into the conversation, “Agree. We didn’t go through all this just to change the players and not change the outcome.”

“Next Gen is ready to step up. But we can’t do it alone. We need partners. We need as much of the good parts of Current Gen, conversionists and anticonversionists as we can get.”

“And let me say, it is a pleasure to meet you both. Chris and I both know what you have tried to do, what has been done to you, and what you have to contribute in the days ahead.”

“Let me associate myself strongly with Faith’s last words,” says Chris as he joins in.

“Faith knows that I’ve convinced the best of Current Gen to join this endeavor. They understand that many of them had to relinquish power. They understand this is now about future generations, including their children and grandchildren. Not an easy sell. They understand that Next Gen, with our help, is now in control.”

“L.O., I know more than most how difficult this is for anticonversionists,” interjected Christopher. “They are still suspicious of black box. Of Shepherd. Of Taj and Jason. They will probably always harbor some suspicion.”

L.O. responds, “So, recognizing the situation, where do we go from here?”

“This is really all up to the four of you,” responds Shepherd. “As you have already seen, black box and we are purely in a support role. To help prevent bad things from happening that are currently beyond your capability to prevent. To help speed changes that can happen without us but happen faster with us.”

“Faith. Chris. I will do my best to be helpful,” affirms L.O. “Some anticonversionists will join this endeavor positively. Others will not. Some will fight this as long as black box exists.”

They all agree on the steps ahead. They all shake hands and depart.

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Two weeks later, L.O. drives home alone. She knows this must be done but she knows how strong the opposition will be.

A van, that had been just behind her, speeds up and passes her just a few blocks from her home.

She turns into her driveway. Parks. Gets out of her car.

She thinks, “Much has happened. Much yet to happen. Nice to be home.”

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That same night and several miles away, Christopher pulls into his parking space. Leans back in the driver seat. Exhales.

“So much lies ahead,” he thinks to himself. “So much to achieve if we all can only work together.”

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L.O. hears a sound and looks back at the street. The van speeds by. Side door opens. Assault rifle fire blazes from the passenger side window and from the side door.

“My god,” cries L.O. as she stumbles forward.

More shots. L.O. falls to the ground bleeding.

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The night is late as Christopher exits his car and heads to his townhouse. The night is quiet. The streets are quiet. Almost nobody around. Just a couple of people hurriedly walking up the street away from his townhouse.

He walks up the steps, unlocks the door and walks in.

A flash. A loud explosion.

Christopher is blown out the front door, down the steps and into the street.  
Debris is everywhere. Blood is everywhere.





## Chapter 4. Decision and New Path

Day 300 (300 DC)

### **black box (Day 300. Swiss Mountains, Switzerland).**

Earlier that night, they sat quietly.

“At least we still have Faith and Chris,” says Taj with her head bowed. “We need to be there for them. To protect them. To help them when appropriate.”

“Agree,” responds Jason. “Their mission is now a lot harder. To get to a thriving future was never going to be easy.”

“As before, the keys are simple and powerful. Drive off the basic fact that humans need to survive and want to thrive. Get humans to move away from self only to self and others. Move away from today only to today, tomorrow and the far future. Move from just surviving to surviving and thriving.”

“Chris and Faith must move quickly,” cautions Shepherd. The longer they wait; the harder it will be. The more that black box will be needed.”

Shepherd did a quiet toast with Taj and Jason to Christopher and L.O., “Much honor for what they were willing to do. Much honor for their courage. Much sadness for their sacrifice.”

“This endeavor is now just that much harder without them.”

They raised their glasses. The gentle sound of glasses touching.

With great sadness, they head to bed and settle in for the night.

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Middle of the night. Jason's secure cellphone vibrates. A message appears on the screen. Still half asleep, he reaches over, picks up the phone and reads the message.

Taj, still half asleep, asks, "What's the message?"

Jason responds, "Our monitor in Mogadishu just got word that a freighter carrying over 250 Somalian refugees has lost power and is taking on water. The freighter is sinking and at risk of breaking up. Waves are 20-40 feet high. It is at least 600 miles east of the Somalian coast and 300 miles from Seychelles. No large ships are close enough to effect a rescue."

"What is that freighter and all those people doing way out there?" asks Taj incredulous.

"Unless we help, there is no way they'll survive. They are floundering in the dark."

Shepherd rushes into the room. "I heard the shouts. What is happening?"

Jason and Taj quickly explain the predicament. They quickly go to and fire up the large touchscreen computer. They pull up the map of Somalia and Seychelles and plot the freighter's location.

Shepherd cautions, "Too far from Somalia to transport people off the freighter to dry land there. Too far to safely transport directly to the freighter."

"Only option may be for us to transport to Seychelles and then onto the freighter. Once on the freighter, people can be transported to safety back onto Seychelles."

"We will need two black boxes and all three of us."

Not liking the option, they realize all the others are worse.

Fifteen minutes later, they stand on the shores of the Seychelles.

A minute later, they are on the deck of the sinking freighter.

It is clear this freighter and its people will not stay afloat long. They don't see any crew members.

"Focus. Let's get these people off the boat now," shouts Shepherd, as the ocean lashes loudly at the freighter. "I'll work the forward hold. You two work the aft. When we are done, we'll meet on Seychelles."

"Got it," shouts back Taj.

Jason and she transport to the aft hold.

Knowing they only have minutes, Taj and Jason quickly use black box to transport people in groups of twenty. Everything seems to be working and they are down to the last group.

Shepherd is also making progress and is down to about his last group. One of the crew rushes up to him and says there is a little girl, not breathing, at the very front of the hold. The crew member points to her. Shepherd transports the last people including the crew member. A quick run to the front of the hold and the little girl. She is lying face down. He turns her over. No pulse. She holds her stuffed bear so tightly.

At the same time, a crew member rushes up to Taj and Jason crying that there is a little girl at the back of the hold. She is badly injured. He points to her. They can barely see her. Before rushing back to her, they transport the last people and the crew member.

They see her lying face down. There is blood on her clothes. Taj reaches down and carefully turns her over. She's not breathing. She's holding her stuffed bear.

Then a flash. Then a loud explosion. To the front of the freighter, another flash and another loud explosion. Then a massive explosion.

### **Chris and Faith (Day 300. United Nations, New York, NY).**

Next Gen and Current Gen government and non-governmental leaders gather at the United Nations for an historic meeting. The United Nations

symbolizes much of the bad that happened in the past. Moving forward with the United Nations symbolizes the good that is to come.

“A moment of silence for the memories of those who have suffered,” Faith says to the assembly. “Though they were just beginning to help with the endeavor, Christopher, L.O. and too many others represent what we have lost. People who were willing to step away from the past to help build the future.”

Heads are bowed. Brief silence.

Faith and Chris have decided to tag team the assembly.

Chris opens the assembly, “Thank you all for coming. Much to do today. Much to do in the tomorrows to come.”

“Ten months have passed since the ‘Day of Choice’. We are ten months closer to the bad future. Time is not our friend. Bad past decisions are not our friends.”

“While we have talked and debated about the ‘Day of Choice’, this is the ‘Day of Choice’ for Earth and its people. Today we make the hard decision. Depending on that decision, we continue down the path to a bad future or begin a new path to a surviving future or a thriving future.”

Faith leans confidently into the second microphone, “Today, this room is made up of many people with many different histories and agendas. We have conversionists. Anticonversionists. Current Gen. Next Gen. We have many others who are not aligned with any of these. What we have here is people who will make or break the future.”

“This room is made up of the leaders of Earth and its people. This room is made up of decision-makers. The fate of Earth and its people will depend on what all of us decide before this assembly ends.”

Chris picks up, “Debate has occurred before today. Debate is over. It’s decision time.”

The tension in the room is high.

“First vote. Does this assembly vote to reject the current path, a path that almost all now agree will lead to a bad future?”

“Madame Secretary, I call for the yays and nays.”

It is clear that the yays dominate and that the rejection motion has passed.

“Madame Secretary, on this motion of such critical importance, I ask for a roll call vote.”

The roll call begins. Anxious eyes watch. The yays dominate, almost unanimous.

Faith leans forward, “Second vote. Does this assembly vote to reject the survival only path, a path that most if not all agree leads to survival but only survival? At best, only an okay future.”

“Madame Secretary, I call for the yays and nays.”

The yays appear to dominate and it appears the second rejection motion has passed.

“Madame Secretary, this vote appears closer. On this motion of such critical importance, I ask for a roll call vote.”

The roll call begins. More anxiety. The yays win by a solid but not overwhelming majority.

More noise. Even more anxiety in the assembly.

Chris and Faith stand together for the final vote.

Together, they speak, “Does this assembly vote to commit to the thriving path, a path that most if not all agree leads to both surviving and thriving.”

“Madame Secretary, we call for the yays and nays.”

Before she can call the vote, Chris and Faith motion for her to wait.

“Madame Secretary, on this motion of such critical importance for Earth and its people, we ask for a roll call vote.”

The roll call begins. High anxiety. The roll call ends.

“Madam Secretary, the results please.

To which the Secretary responds, “This assembly, with only two dissenting votes, approves this motion. With this vote, the assembly approves the thriving path to a thriving future for Earth and its people.”

The assembly all rise in quiet applause. Then the applause gets louder. And louder. And then the whole assembly applauds as loud as they can. Affirmative shouts are almost deafening.



### **The World (Day 300. New York, NY, United States).**

Far out in the Indian Ocean, a sleek, two-engine business jet circles at 20,000 feet. Far below on the ocean surface is a dark object. Then two flashes of light near the front and back of the dark object. Then the whole object is lit up with a series of flashes and then one last all-encompassing flash. Then darkness. No dark object.

“Well, that was great fun,” smirks Azrael. “A storm. A sinking freighter. Couple hundred refugees. Some C4. Two little girls. Expendable little girls.”

“Az, don’t forget three do-gooders,” chimes in Justine. “So caught up in rescuing humankind that they couldn’t see the threat.”

“And then boom. That C4 and rest of the C4 on the freighter is more than enough to put them and the freighter three miles down on the bottom of the Indian Ocean. Neither will ever be found.”

“Justy,” joins Azrael in an expression of false sadness. “So sad. So very, very sad.”

“For them,”

“Az, shall we return home and gloat some more?” Justine expresses gleefully.

“Yes Justy, father would be so proud,” responds Azrael, also gleefully. “The alien and the alien’s buddies are no more. Bye, bye.”

The Diamon jet turns for home. Makes its stops for refueling. Then home to New York. Flying into New York airspace, the jet then lands at Teterboro airport and taxis to the Diamon hangar.

The plane door opens and the air stair lowers to the ground.

As Justine and Azrael start down the stairs, they stop. Something is amiss. They recognize their black limousine but don’t see their security people.

Then five people in dark clothes stand up from the other side of the limousine.

“Did you think you could get away with this?” said the lead FBI special agent. “Anytime Shepherd, Taj or Jason go on a mission, they leave their destination and mission information with a trusted monitor. When they didn’t report in or return, alarms went off worldwide.”

“Ships had picked up the freighter’s distress call. Satellites picked up the explosions. Rescue ships found only debris.”

“We checked air traffic in the area and found only one plane. Yours. Adding two and two came up with the two of you having pulled off an attack on the freighter and on Shepherd. As you might guess, we don’t take kindly to that.”

“You both are under arrest. Come down now.”

Justine and Azrael look at each other. Then they both smile.

“I think you might be confused,” countered Justine. “I know you think you have us at a disadvantage. But the opposite is true.”

“You might want to take a glance at your chests. I think I see a bunch of red dots. Hmmm. Could that mean sniper rifles?”

“Stand down,” warns Azrael. “You are outnumbered and surrounded. No arrests tonight. No arrests any night.”

The FBI special agent looks at his red dots. He looks at the red dots on his fellow FBI agents.

“Stand down agents,” orders the FBI special agent. “Put down your weapons.”

“Az, I really think it is time for champagne, a really, really expensive champagne,” smiles Justine. “What a lovely, lovely night.”

They happily skip down the air stair.

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Just over a month ago in an isolated park near the center of Munich, Germany.



Two people, a man and woman, approach a park bench from opposite directions. Both wary. Of each other. Of who might see them.

This was an unlikely meeting of two polar opposites.

As they meet, no greeting. No handshake. They both sit down on the park bench. Silence.

Finally, the woman breaks the silence, “We both have a problem. The question is what are we going to do about it.”

“Agreed,” responds the man. “While I detest you and this meeting, it is necessary. In this case, the saying is true. ‘The enemy of my enemy is my friend.’ Or at least for the moment.”

“For your part of the conversionist movement, your greatest enemy is Christopher. He collaborates with some of our anticonversionists. He collaborates with Shepherd. Unacceptable.”

She nods in affirmation, “Unfortunately, you are correct. In your case, your greatest enemy is L.O. Moses. She collaborates with some of our conversionists. She collaborates with Shepherd. As you say, unacceptable.”

“So, we agree we both have a problem. We need to return to the purity of both our movements. We need to eliminate the collaborators.”

“For these next several days, we will not fight,” he says with resolve. “Each of us will eliminate the other’s problem. Then the war between conversionists and anticonversionists will resume. To use an old term, crisscross.”

She agrees, “It will resume. Whatever happens after that, it will be based on our core beliefs.”

“This will be our only meeting like this. Once our work is done, our next meeting will be on the battlefields as opponents.”

They stand. As they prepare to leave, they shake hands. Sealing the pact.

Not as friends. They walk away. Again in opposite directions.





## **Chapter 5. Day of “The Thrive! Endeavor”**

Day 364 (364 DC) (1 day before 1 year after “Day of Choice)

### **black box (Day 364. Swiss Mountains, Switzerland).**

Survived. Barely. Very barely.

It was close.

This time there is pain and suffering. Taj and Jason are cut badly. Both temporarily lose some of their hearing. Even Shepherd has lacerations.

Both black boxes safety protocols kicked in at the last moment. In that microsecond between the flash and the killing explosion, both black boxes threw their protective shields around Shepherd and around Taj and Jason. Both black boxes instantly transported them to the Swiss mountain home.

But even black boxes could not prevent all injury.

Going back to that night two months ago, there is concern.

“Wow, that was really, really close,” exclaims Jason loudly, compensating for the damaged hearing. “Thought we were goners.”

“All I remember is the flash and then being here. The pain came next.”

“This hurts,” complains Taj, also loudly, as she starts to treat her wounds. “Fortunately, all the body parts are accounted for. Fortunately, relatively little bleeding.”

Shepherd tries to calm them while also shouting, “Yes. We’re safe. But that was a lot closer than I like.”

“Black box safety protocols are designed just for this type of life threatening event. But the protocols take a microsecond to sense the threat, activate black box’s protective shield and transport capability, and execute the shield and transport. With a bomb blast, there is almost no margin for error or execution.”

“Who did this?” questions Taj angrily. “Who is so determined to get us, that they would go through this elaborate scheme? They had it timed down to the second.”

“The freighter. The refugees. The storm. The explosives. The complicit crew.”

“Clearly, it is someone who hates us that much and has the resources to pull this off,” suggests Shepherd. “There are few such enemies. The Diamon sibs come to mind. They still blame us most for their father’s death.”

“Bottom line is that the refugees are safe. That we are safe.”

“But they killed two children, two little girls,” counters Jason with extreme anger.

“I know, I know,” replies Shepherd. “Such a tragedy.”

“Let’s get some rest. We have some healing to do.”

All three recovered fully and resumed their work. Resumed their support of Faith and Chris.

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But the drama plays itself out further in the Teterboro hangar. The Diamon siblings prepare to hop into their limousine and disappear into the night.

The limo door opens. They prepare to slip in. Then they realize something is not quite right.

A hand reaches out, grabs Azrael, and pulls him into the limo. Justine stands not moving. Another hand reaches out and pulls her into the limo.

Guns are pointed at both of them. Handcuffs are quickly locked.

“Hope you enjoyed our little light show out there,” said a second FBI special agent. “We weren’t absolutely sure we had all your people taken down. Didn’t want to take any chances. Now it’s over.”

“Driver, let’s get them to the Federal building.”

“We’ll start with terrorism charges. Add a bit of assault and attempted murder. And then we’ll see what else might fit the two of you.”

“All your money and connections will not save you.”

“Though you think you were completing your father’s work. That you were avenging his death. The annals of history will say you failed on all accounts.”

Justine and Azrael look at each other, not really sure if they had succeeded or failed in killing Shepherd.

### **Chris and Faith (Day 364. College Park, MD, United States).**

Just over two months have passed since the UN Vote. With the vote behind them and the new world leaders ready to build the Thrive! Endeavor, much work lays ahead for Chris and Faith. In many ways, the removal of Current Gen leaders and the UN assembly vote was the easy part. Earth and its people are still on the bad path. Time to change that path. That is, if it was ever going to be changed.

Tapping into all their contacts and many others, Faith and Chris identify and pull together the best and brightest minds from around world and across the interest groups. Remarkably, this only takes a few days.

All who are asked say yes. All who are asked are on the next available flight. All who travel pay their own way. No questions. No hesitation. No one said no.

With support from the UN, the State of Maryland and University of Maryland and major global philanthropies, they acquire a huge office,

meeting and hotel facility on the University of Maryland campus just north of downtown Washington DC. With this facility, they work and live as a team.

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During one of the key meetings of the strategy team, they begin to develop the Thrive! Endeavor, the path to the thriving future. Chris' role is as chief strategist. Faith is chief motivator. But their roles overlap as do their lives.

In their first meeting, one of Faith's Next Gen people, very bright and very committed, raises the key question, "How can we possibly undo all the bad that has happened and then turn this around to build a thriving future?"

"Good question," responds Chris. "The key question."

"Faith and I have spent a lot of time with a lot of very smart people, including Shepherd, to figure this out. Let me walk this through. Faith, you jump in since a lot of this is a result of your thinking."

"First, what is this 'thriving future' we want to achieve? What will your life and our world be in a thriving future where all survive and thrive forever, to the maximum extent possible?"

"Let me suggest that for you and your family and friends, for you and your community, and for our world, a thriving future is a better life now and for the near and long term future. It is for people, plants, animals, environment. It is for all of the world's people. It is for Earth itself."

"When a surviving and thriving future is achieved, all people will be well. Not only will all people be well, but so will the Earth and its plants, animals and environment."

Faith takes over, "A thriving future is different and arguably better than anything tried or achieved in human history. Not just getting by or achieving a surviving future. A surviving future is necessary but not sufficient."

"It is a thriving future for all people and all future generations, a "50+ generation" strategy. Not just for some people or just for the current and next generation. It is a thriving future forever, a 1000+ year strategy. Not

just for today or just 100 years. It is also for Earth on which we live and depend, not just for people.”

“Helping achieve this surviving and thriving future is the Thrive! Endeavor - a vast human endeavor of you and all of us together striving for a surviving and thriving future. The Thrive! Endeavor strives for and envisions a surviving and thriving future forever for all, including the Earth on which we all depend.”

One of Chris’ people is a bit skeptical, “Okay, that’s what we want to achieve. But how?”

“Let’s lay out the Thrive! Endeavor,” starts Chris. “Let’s start with ‘why’ or motivation, the first key. Faith.”

Faith starts, “Why must you and we care about a surviving and thriving future for you and your friends and family, your community, your country and our world?”

“You and all of us want and need that future because of our endangered future and our human need to survive and desire to thrive.”

What drives us is that a person and a people need to survive and desire to thrive in the current world and a sustainable future world. This is the natural human force.”

“To truly satisfy this need and desire, we need the following. We, as a person and a people, need to survive and desire to thrive. We depend on other persons (a people) for survival and thriving, especially in the long term. Our need and desire applies to both the current and future world. Our future survival and thriving depends on there being a future world. Our future world must be sustainable and sustained to fully meet our need and desire.”

“But motivation is only one of the keys,” Chris interjects. “A second key is ‘how’ or ability.”

“Much of what we need to succeed already exists. It isn’t that the world doesn’t know how to build a thriving future. The strategies, models and tools pretty much already exist. We just need to use them well.”

“Recognizing that we can do all this better and faster with next generation approaches, our teams built the Thrive! Endeavor’s Next Generation toolkit.”

“So what are the elements in how we achieve a thriving future?”

“What the Endeavor does and how it does it is different than past and current approaches which have major limitations and defects. The Endeavor is unique and better. It strives to achieve a thriving and sustainable future for all forever, to the maximum extent possible. But it also helps ensure survival, a necessary but not sufficient step to achieving a thriving future.”

“It uses Thrive! Next Generation strategy, models and tools to create and sustain change and build thriving futures. No longer should we rely only on past approaches that failed or had limited success.”

“Finally, it creates a collaborative strategy with the necessary positive actions to build, achieve and sustain a surviving and thriving future.”

“Good job Chris,” Faith breaks in, “These are the basics. These are what will make the Endeavor a success. In the days ahead, we will put all this together into an operational Thrive! Endeavor.”

## **The World (Day 364. Worldwide).**

Since the “Day of Choice”, there have been many battles. There have been many losses. People have grown weary of destructive conflict. People want to be off the current bad path to a bad future. People want the thriving future agreed to just two months ago. Their impatience grows.

Over the past two months, the world watched the work in Maryland anxiously. Like waiting for a new Pope, people kept looking for the proverbial “white smoke”, signaling it had all been worked out. That the Thrive! Endeavor had begun. That a thriving future was coming.

eMedia was wild with bits and pieces coming out of Maryland. Was wild with rumors and speculation. Some was true. Much was not.

Still, there were growing signs of progress. There was growing hope.



About a month ago, the information coming out began to be more concrete. Was more hopeful.

Then the word from Maryland. The Thrive! Endeavor is ready to launch. It will be announced tomorrow. It will begin tomorrow.

eMedia gets hold of a proposed “People’s Constitution”, a constitution that bridges across countries and that encompasses all people. It goes worldwide.

In support of the Thrive! Endeavor vision and mission, the Endeavor adopts and embraces:

**“A People’s Constitution”** - “We the people, in order to form a more perfect union, commit to a thriving future for all forever.”

Some countries’ leaders are initially uneasy. Less so once it is explained. The “People’s Constitution” should be just this brief, understandable and powerful. It should not replace any country’s constitution. The intent is for it to be embraced by and acted upon affirmatively by all people forever.

Across the world, the proposed “People’s Constitution” is rapidly accepted. It is embraced with great enthusiasm.

But people want more. They want the full Thrive! Endeavor.

Then comes the Thrive! Endeavor.

Much of the Thrive! Endeavor developed in Maryland is released simultaneously with a worldwide broadcast. Released is the ‘why’ or motivation, the first key. Released is the ‘how’ or ability, the second key.

In the live worldwide broadcast across both traditional media and eMedia, Chris and Faith lay out the Endeavor.

Chris starts and asserts strongly, “You and all of us want and need a surviving and thriving future because of our endangered future and our human need to survive and desire to thrive.

“And only people can and must fix all that is broken.”

“And only people can and must build, achieve and sustain a survivable and thriving future.”

“And only all of us joined together can succeed due to the scope - all, level - surviving and thriving, and duration – forever - of the challenge.”

“For these reasons, building, achieving and sustaining a surviving and thriving future requires a vast, sustained Endeavor of all of us together.

Faith continues the push for the Endeavor, “What the Thrive! Endeavor does and how it does it is different than past and current approaches which have major limitations and defects.”

“The Endeavor is unique and better because it strives to achieve a thriving and sustainable future for all forever, to the maximum extent possible. But it also helps ensure survival, a necessary but not sufficient step to achieving a thriving future.”

“The Endeavor is all of us together.”

“Its vision is a surviving and thriving future for all forever.”

“Its mission is to create and sustain large positive and timely change that builds, achieves and sustains a surviving and thriving future for all forever.”

“Its strategy is to energize and empower all of us together in the vast, sustained human endeavor building and sustaining a thriving future.”

“Its call for action is to motivate all of us - individual people, groups of people, private sector organizations, governments - to create and sustain the necessary large positive change, and to work together to build, achieve and sustain a surviving and thriving future.”

“Who is and will be the Thrive! Endeavor?” poses Chris. “The Endeavor is all of us together building, achieving and sustaining a surviving and thriving future.”

“All of us together’ includes individual people, groups of people, private sector organizations and governments. ‘All of us together’ includes current and future generations. ‘All of us together’ includes you, and everybody’s family and friends, and every community, and every country, and every part of and our entire world.”

“Faith, continue.”

“Chris, key is who does what in the Endeavor?”

“Each and all of us should develop and take as many positive actions as we can. The more positive actions taken, the better for all of us.”

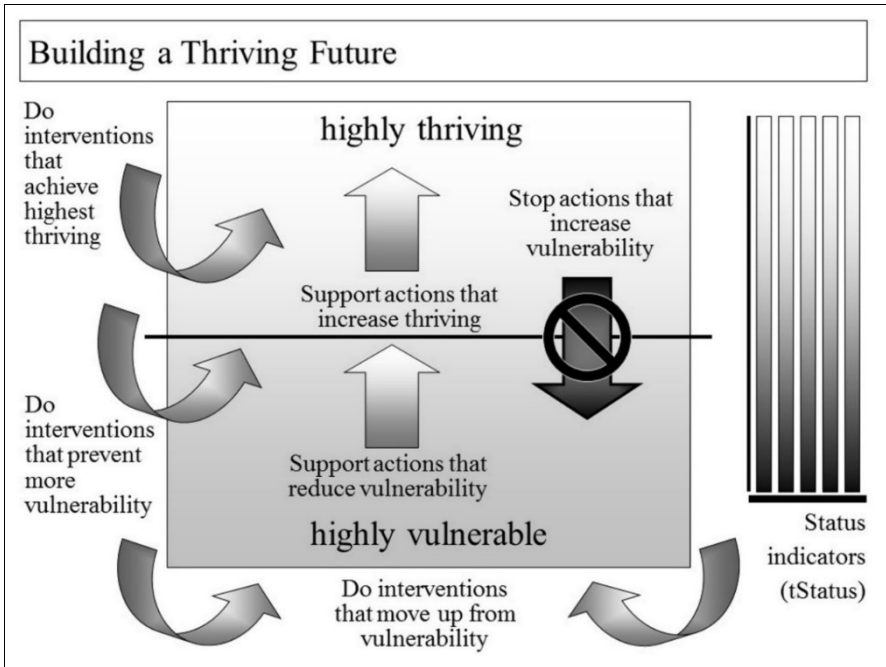
“Each and all of us should help build, achieve and sustain a surviving and thriving future for our family and friends. For our community. For our country. For our world, including the Earth on which we depend.”

“Via these actions and the Endeavor, each and all of us together should and can build, achieve and sustain a surviving and thriving future.”

“What positive actions are needed to bring about the needed changes that improve our current status enough to achieve the desired surviving and thriving status?”

“Each and all of us identify actions that support good changes that will help reduce vulnerability and/or improve and/or sustain surviving and thriving.”

“Likewise, each and all of us identify actions that stop bad changes that increase vulnerability or prevent or limit surviving and thriving.”



Chris and Faith join together for the conclusion, “When successful, all of us, current and future, should be performing well. Be well-off. Be well nourished. Be well housed. Be well protected. Be well educated. Be physically and mentally well. Personally grow and develop well. Live within good habitat. Not be vulnerable. Produce personal and public goods. Live within a stable, positive climate. And be sustained.

“But it is more than just people surviving and thriving. The Earth, plants, animals, environment upon which we depend should be surviving and thriving.”

“When successful, we and all future generations achieve the surviving and thriving future for all forever, to the maximum extent possible.”

“At this time in human history when we desire to thrive, when we need to survive, when our future is most endangered, and when we are most capable, the Thrive! Endeavor, all of us together, can and must build, achieve and sustain a thriving future for all forever.”



## **Chapter 6. “The Thrive! Endeavor”**

Days 365+ (365+ DC) (1+ year after “Day of Choice”)



**black box (Day 365. Washington, DC, United States).**

Over three months have passed since the extremists’ cowardly attack on Christopher and L.O.

Shepherd, Taj and Jason had monitors keeping a watch over both of them. They feared that such an attack might occur. Peacemakers often fall victim to the zealots of either side in a war of ideas.

Shepherd arrives within minutes to see the carnage outside Christopher’s townhome. He sees Christopher lying on the street in a pool of blood and not moving. He runs over to him. Little if any breathing. Faint if any pulse.

Black box in hand, he quickly checks Christopher to see if there is any chance of saving him.

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Jason and Taj appear nearby and run to L.O., lying there in a pool of blood. Not moving. They check her. Not breathing.

Black box in hand, they check L.O. for life signs. Initially, none. Then, a faint sign. A faint heartbeat.

They activate black box. Key here is to save her enough so that the rapidly approaching EMTs can continue the lifesaving effort, get her to a hospital and, hopefully, save her life.

They do that. They see the ambulance pull around the corner. They quickly walk up the driveway, are out of sight beside the house, and disappear.

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Shepherd, with black box, works on Christopher's damaged and almost lifeless body. He is not dead. But is so close. Shepherd is not entirely sure he will succeed. This is the worst case he has ever intervened on.

Black box stops the bleeding. Begins repairing key body functions.

For the moment, Christopher is stabilized. A siren. The ambulance with its EMTs is just a block away.

Shepherd slowly slides back into the crowd. Then out away from the crowd into a dark alley. Then disappears.

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Both L.O. and Christopher survive the attacks. But they are barely alive. Their recovery will be long and hard. Major disabilities will remain. No longer will they be able to lead conversionists and anticonversionists in the Thrive! Endeavor.

Within days, both conspirators are captured, along with their respective co-conspirators.

But the extremist elements fail in their objective.

In fact, the opposite occurred, leaders of both conversionists and anticonversionists reject and condemn the attacks and the extremist elements. Leaders, with the help of Chris and Faith, quickly assemble at the United Nations. As quickly, they acknowledge their differences. As quickly, they agree to join forces in the Thrive! Endeavor.

Though no longer active leaders, Christopher and L.O. now have more important roles. They are living martyrs. They symbolize the sacrifices and commitment necessary to build a thriving future.

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With the full launch of the Thrive! Endeavor and its worldwide support, black boxes play a different role. Shepherd, Taj and Jason play a different role.

Their role is now to help the Thrive! Endeavor. To help Chris and Faith in particular.

While their mission is still to “do all the good that must be done”, it is within a different context. It is within the context of a world that is now committed to achieving a thriving future for all forever. It is within the context of a world achieving, pretty much on its own, a thriving future.

black boxes are now more of a safety valve to protect the world from what it is unable to protect itself.

### **Chris and Faith (Day 365. College Park, MD, United States).**

Lunchtime. A small respite from the demands of the day. From the demands of the future.

Chris and Faith sit at their favorite café in downtown College Park. For some moments, they sit silently. Silence feels good. Being there together feels good.

Their partnership is now complete. Their partnership is being very effective. More so than either of them ever thought.

Relaxing in her chair and savoring her favorite Sauvignon Blanc, “Chris, thanks for all that has transpired. Initially, I brought great enthusiasm. You brought accumulated wisdom. We shared. We both grew.”

“Faith, my great thanks as well,” responds Chris as he raises his Cabernet Sauvignon in a bit of a salute. “Neither of us alone could have accomplished what we have accomplished together. We couldn’t have accomplished this without Shepherd, Taj and Jason.”

“Chris, they would humbly disagree,” Faith counters.

“But we would respectfully disagree with them on that point. It is by combining all our strengths and working together that we have achieved what we have achieved.”

“And will achieve what we have yet to achieve. And what we must achieve.”

“Working together has become much easier since we decided to both buy homes in nearby University Park and on the same block. A bit of luck that both came up for sale within a week of each other.”

“Dinner tonight?”

“Sure,” Chris agrees, a warm smile. “My turn to cook I suspect.”

“End of break,” says Faith. “But you are right about whose turn it is to cook.”

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The College Park enterprise continues and serves as the unofficial headquarters of the Thrive! Endeavor.

In the modern, highly connected world, reaching out worldwide is much easier. Is much faster. Acting at all levels – friends and family, community, country and worldwide – is also much easier and faster.



Continuing to communicate “why” the Endeavor is necessary. Continuing to disseminate “how” - the capabilities – to do the Endeavor is necessary. Continuing to discourage bad behaviors and encourage good behaviors is necessary.

Across the world, intricate networks of people are part of and carrying out the mission of the Endeavor. Some networks are families and friends. Some are communities – geographic and non-geographic. Some are countries. Some are people with common interests. Some with common or complementary abilities. Some are formal networks. Some are very informal networks. Together, they are the Endeavor. Together, they are making substantial progress.

Much of this is organic. With the guidance of the vision – a thriving and surviving future forever for all. For people, communities, countries and world. For everyone and everything. With the guidance of the mission - create and sustain large, positive and timely change that builds and achieves a surviving and thriving future for all forever. With the guidance of the Endeavor itself - create and empower a vast, sustained human endeavor building and sustaining thriving and surviving future for all forever.

The world is changing and very, very quickly. Not over years. But over days, minutes and seconds.

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Returning to work, Chris and Faith pull together a virtual meeting of their chief strategists and chief operations managers. They are scattered all across the world but communicate continuously and work together continuously.

Faith starts the meeting, “Welcome to you all. As always, our apologies for those where it is the middle of the night. Keep in mind that much of what we do is in the middle of the night here. All is fair when we share the pain.”

“Fortunately, less pain and more progress is what we see,” advises Chris. “Though early in the Endeavor, the early signs of positive change are already there.”

“Our worldwide network is quickly becoming operational. Our sensing system is already picking up the changes. Less bad behavior. More good behavior. As we look at our worldwide status indicators, they are already starting to change from red to yellow to green.”

“Chris is right,” chimes in Faith. “But there is so, so much yet to do. This will not happen overnight.”

“This path is nonlinear, like most of the world. There will be sidesteps. There will be backslides. As long as the overall trend is forward on the thriving path, then we have hope that the Endeavor will succeed. That a thriving future for all will be achieved.”

“All thrive forever.”

Across the network from all participants, “All Thrive Forever!”

### **The World (Day 365. Worldwide).**

All across the world, the Thrive! Endeavor is alive.

Old animosities are dissolving, though some slowly. New ones emerge but fewer and smaller than in the past.

In India and in other parts of the world, a huge cultural change has begun. “Untouchables” is a term that is being wiped from the vocabulary. Discrimination against so-called “untouchables” is being outlawed. But the behavior change is moving faster than the legal changes. People who were shunned in societies are now actively invited back into those societies. Persons who could only get menial jobs because of caste are now being offered the same types of jobs as everyone else. While much more needs to be done, the past is disappearing and the positive future is being built.

In the United States, the long history of discriminating against, destroying or enslaving whole groups of people is coming to an end. Native Americans, once targets of almost extinction, are more and more treated as full members of society with all the rights and privileges. African Americans, once enslaved, are more and more treated as full members of society with all the rights and privileges. Refugees, from many parts of the world, are more and more embraced as positive members of society with

all the rights and privileges. Women are more and more treated as equals. More and more discrimination in all forms is disappearing.

In the poorest parts of the world, including Africa and South America, the world community is embracing the challenge to eliminate poverty, hunger, poor shelter, violence and poor education. But the strategy is about helping people acquire the capability to build their own better future. To help them so they can and will survive and thrive.

Where the bad effects of climate change are destroying habitat, the world community is working on positive strategies that recognize the irreversible consequences of climate change and that build a positive future for those affected. As one example, while not all communities can be saved from the effects of rising oceans, they can find survivable places to live and prosper.

Education, long benefitting disproportionately the wealthier countries and communities, is being seen as an equal right for all children. It is being seen as essential to the future of Earth and its people. Achieving a thriving future will require that all people be as capable as they can be. Education is key.

The long history of health disparities tied to where you live and how you live is finally being addressed. New attempts to prevent illness and injury. New efforts to bring effective and affordable health care to everyone. New supportive approaches to helping people live healthier lives.

Rapidly disappearing is anyone who does not want to work and contribute to this thriving future. A new commitment emerges to finding a way for everyone who is able to contribute. For those with no ability, support is to be provided. For those with limited ability, a way is to be found to contribute that matches their ability. For those with full ability, a way is to be found to contribute that best matches their ability. For anyone who wants to increase their ability to contribute, support is to be given. Key is also to be earn enough to live a survivable and thriving life.

While much more needs to be done, the past is disappearing and the positive future is being built.

The Thrive! Endeavor has begun. A surviving and thriving future for all forever is being built.

## The Thrive Endeavor®

In an almost miraculous change, now only 365 days old, the world has gone from “Day of Choice” and “Bad Future” to the vision of “All Thrive Forever”.





## Chapter 7. Day of “All Thrive Forever”

Day 730 (730 DC)  
(2 years after “Day of Choice”  
(1 year after launch of “Thrive! Endeavor”)



### **black box (Day 730. Swiss Mountains).**

Dawn is just breaking over the snow covered mountains. Taj and Jason are just waking. Both are a bit weary from what has been a challenging year.

“Jason, time to get up,” says Taj as she gives him a soft kick. “Shepherd left a message that we need a breakfast meeting. Seven o’clock start.”

“I’m moving, a bit slowly, but moving,” replies Jason sleepily.

He had not slept well, feeling that something was changing.

A few minutes later, they both enter the kitchen and see Shepherd scanning the morning worldwide news. Nothing seems to be catching his attention. His attention seems to be elsewhere.

“Morning,” says Shepherd cheerfully. “Been busy I see.”

“Grab some coffee. Fresh chocolate croissants. Fresh raspberries. Fresh orange juice.”

“Nothing but the best for my good friends.”

“Okay, okay,” responds Taj with caution. “Something is going on here. Too chipper. Too much fresh.”

“You’re right,” says Shepherd, now less chipper. “We have something very important to discuss. Life is about to change for the three of us.”

“This has been coming for some time. I have been waiting for the right moment. For the right moment for Earth. For the right moment for you two.”

He pauses as if unsure he wants to say whatever he is about to say. But then proceeds.

“The time has come for me to withdraw from Earth. Always the plan. Just waiting for when the time is right.”

“No,” respond both Taj and Jason. “Why would you do that? We are doing so well. Earth is doing so well.”

Then they pause to reflect on what was just said.

Taj speaks first, “That’s the point. Isn’t it? With Earth and we doing well, the role of Shepherd changes. I guess we failed to notice you slowly withdrawing over the past six months. We didn’t want to notice.”

Jason joins in, “You were always up front on what the role of Shepherd is. You always told this is about Earth and its people fixing their problems and building a better future. We weren’t listening quite as carefully as we should have. We probably didn’t want to listen or accept what was coming.”

“Don’t worry,” Shepherd responds warmly. “I’ll always be here for you if you absolutely, absolutely need me. I truly believe you won’t. As you said, Earth and you two are doing so well.”

“Two black boxes remain on Earth. Yours and one other as backup.”

“But there are many challenges ahead for you two. Your role is still critical. Your role will continue to evolve as Earth and its people evolve.”

“Having had to say many, many good byes over time and many worlds, I make them very sweet and very short.”

“Take good care of each other. Take good care of Earth and its people.”

“Good bye my dear, dear friends.”

And then suddenly he was gone.

Taj and Jason both whisper “bye”. They tear up. They hold each other closely.

Only one reminder remains. On the table. Their black box.

On it was the first ever writing, an inscription, “To my dear, dear friends Taj and Jason. Shepherd.”

### **Chris and Faith (Day 730. Geneva, Switzerland).**

As Earth and its people leave the past for their new future, many things change.

Agreement quickly came that the United Nations, for all its good and not so good work, needed to be retired. A new worldwide organization was needed.

Six months ago, the Thrive! Endeavor took on a worldwide physical and organizational life. It was agreed that the location should be in a neutral country. And so it was set up in Geneva, Switzerland. A new building was built overlooking the lake.

Recognizing how networked the world now was, it was an electronic eMedia hub with the latest technology, the latest transmission capability, and the latest electric power system. There would be no downtime. The world has no downtime.

As agreement emerged about formalizing the Thrive! Endeavor, the question was who was trusted enough to lead it. Here the answer was obvious and without dispute. Chris and Faith, as a team.

They had given so much to bring about the Thrive! Endeavor. They had maintained their neutrality amongst all the interest groups. It was no longer Chris of Current Gen. It was no longer Faith of Next Gen. It was Chris and Faith of the Thrive! Endeavor.

Just two months ago, they were sworn in as Co-Leaders of the Endeavor.

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It is after midnight in Geneva. Just a short distance from the Thrive! Endeavor are two adjoined houses. Two people are still awake. A chilled bottle of Taittinger champagne is being shared.

“Amazing what has happened these past months,” says Faith as she settles in for the night. “Amazing what has been accomplished.”

“Absolutely,” responds Chris warmly. “Most of the world’s problems are well on the way to being fixed. Most of the world is now building the thriving future.”

“The Thrive! Endeavor formally exists. We have our own facility. We have our own core staff, though scattered across the world”

“And we have each other as partners,” responds Faith, even more warmly. “While we are only bit players, we are fairly important bit players.”

“Much of this would not have happened if we hadn’t met. If we hadn’t connected. If we hadn’t found each other as partners. If we didn’t continue as partners.”



“So true,” says Chris as he toasts Faith with his champagne glass. “Thank you.”

To which Faith responds, with champagne glass raised, “Thank you.”

They move next to each other and hold each other as two people who deeply care for each other.

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Even while Chris and Faith lead the Endeavor, they begin succession planning. Already, they search for the next generation of leaders and for the next generation after that. As is the case for Faith and Chris, they look for a two-person team. Two persons spanning generations. Two people who can lead. Two people who will be partners.

They know the Endeavor has achieved much success but they also know it will take much work to take on the challenges that remain. To achieve and sustain a thriving future.

### **The World (Day 730. Worldwide).**

A future begins where all thrive forever. The new path is challenging but the outcome is clear. No longer is there a split of conversionists and anticonversionists as they have found a way to survive and all thrive together. No longer is there a split of Current Gen and Next Gen as they have found a way to survive and all thrive together. This is a very different world than two years ago. A very different world than just a year ago.

Much of the first year of the Thrive! Endeavor has been about removing the negative. Fixing problems, many of which go back hundreds of years.

But this is changing. The Thrive! Endeavor is now about thriving. About achieving “all thrive forever.”

Energy conservation is no longer seen as a negative but as a positive contribution to the future of Earth and its people. People who conserve energy are applauded and held up as role models. Children help guide their parents on what all their family can do to conserve energy. Children help guide their communities on what can be done to conserve energy.

But is not just about conserving energy, it is about major increases in renewable energy. Every type of renewable energy is being assessed for its potential and for any potential negative consequences. “Smart responsible, renewable energy” is a catch-phrase for energy’s future.

Food is key to this thriving future. Not just to avoid hunger. Food is the human fuel that powers people’s ability to build this future. Current fruits, vegetables and grains are being refined, but not through genetic modification. Refined so they can be grown in more varied temperatures, in more varied rainfalls, and in more varied soils. Healthy food production is moving closer to where people will eat the food and is increasing to levels necessary to fuel thriving humans.

Education is now equally available worldwide. Educators are being trained in their home communities using the latest in educational technology. Students are being educated by the optimal combination of in-person educators, virtual educators, and electronic education tools.

Transportation systems for people and for goods now rely heavily on renewable fuel power. Air and train travel is faster and cheaper. Mass transit is more available, reaching to small communities and out into rural areas.

Housing design has become more flexible to fit people’s different needs and different preferences. “Smart houses” are not just electronically capable. They are highly energy efficient. Well insulated against heat and cold. Highly efficient heating and cooling systems. They are secure. Using effective personal and property security systems. They are work friendly. Enabling people to work at home. Enabling people to easily get to work away from home. They are person and family supportive. Providing environments supportive of personal and family life.

Social interaction, so critical to people achieving a thriving future, is still a work in progress. eMedia provides more and more ways to interact electronically. But it can also get in the way of true person-to-person interaction. Much work is being done to find the optimal blending of electronic interaction and direct human contact. Much depends on individual needs and preferences. Much depends on family and friends needs and preferences. Much depends on community needs and preferences. And then there are the country and global needs and

preferences. There is no one answer. There is no easy answer. And it will evolve as humans evolve.

A perfect world is far from being achieved. A thriving future is far from being achieved.

But progress. So, so much progress in such a very short time.

The new commitment is simple. All thrive forever.

Whether or not it can ever be fully achieved, the world commits to trying. The world commits to the Thrive! Endeavor. The world commits to achieving “All Thrive Forever”. If it is achievable, the world will achieve it.

If.







## Epilogue

Day 36,500 (36500 DC)

100 years after “Day of Choice”

Nearly 100 years of “The Thrive Endeavor” and “All Thrive Forever”

One hundred years later. The Thrive! Endeavor is a reality. All thrive forever is essentially a reality. Much work still remains in the centuries and millennia to come to ensure sustainability.

While Earth’s people chose the thriving future and are on that path, humans are human. Humans, with all their potential and aspiration and with all their vulnerability, might leave that path. The current thriving path is good. The future remains unwritten.

May all thrive forever. But will all thrive forever?

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One hundred years have passed since Earth’s “Day of Choice”. Earth is on its own, at least for now.

“For now, I have returned to my true home, far, far from Earth,” thinks to himself. “It is so different than Earth and yet so comfortable. At least it is for me.”

“As I look in the mirror, I see myself in my true form. Not human. This form is like no other non-Shepherd creature. More ‘spirit’ than corporeal. It is what allows me to assume any shape that my mission requires. Even Taj and Jason were unaware of my true form. They saw only the human form of Shepherd, the one that could feel pain and be injured. While the human form of Shepherd was vulnerable, the true form is not.”

“My home world, in many ways, is like my own form. There are no distinct shapes or boundaries. There is no time. There is no place. There is no constant. There is no equilibrium. There is only change. There is only growth. There is only the never-ending becoming and being. I relish that.”

“A Shepherd seldom has this luxury of being home. Shortly, I must return to my duties. To my mission.”

“I still feel the loss of Taj and Jason. They were good and dear people helping with a great mission. What started out with ‘do all the good that must be done’ evolved into supporting ‘all thrive forever.’ But like all humans, if they are so fortunate, their lives came to a natural end. They made it to their 90s. They made it there together. We got to say one last good-bye. I miss them.”

“No one is replacing them. Earth’s black boxes are secured on Earth. Always ready to resume their duties on Earth. But for now, they are dormant. If Earth stays on the thriving path, they will stay dormant.”

“In many ways, Earth’s people are so naïve. In their science fiction and in their thinking, they vacillate between Earth as the only habitable planet to Earth as only one of many. They vacillate between creatures outside of Earth as being all good to being all bad.”

“In truth, the universe is very complex with many habitable worlds populated by many diverse creatures. Some are ‘good’. Some are ‘bad’. Some just ‘are’. If we continue on the thriving path, ‘good’ will prevail. I hope good will prevail.”

“For this past 100 plus years, Earth’s people have wrestled with black boxes and with me. They continue to wrestle with both.”

“They know black boxes have enormous power. They don’t know the range of those powers. They don’t know the source of the power. They don’t know how black boxes work. They never will. That is why the term ‘black box’ is particularly appropriate.”

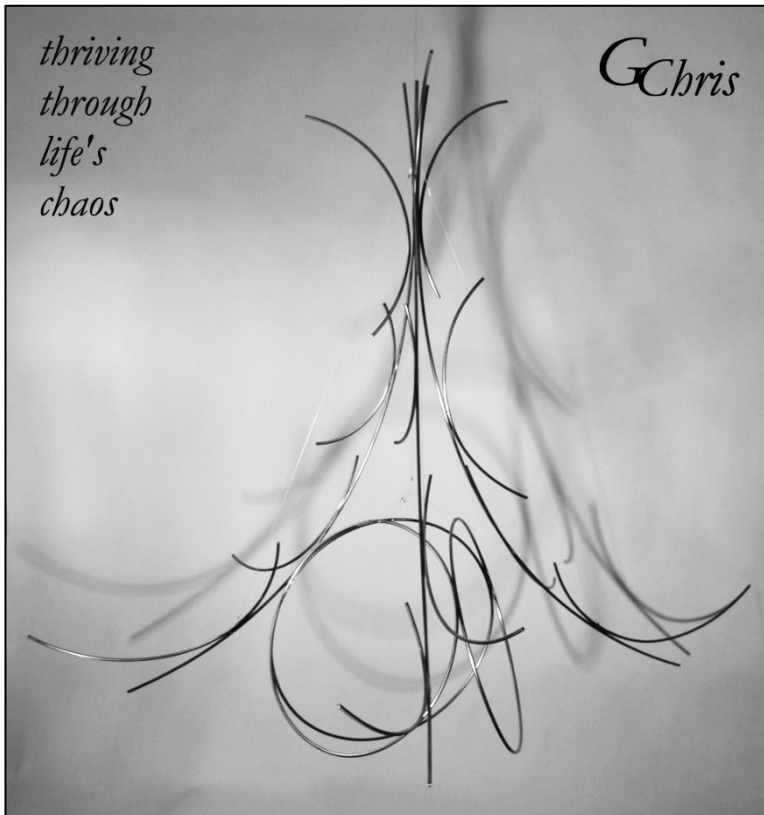
“As the years pass without black box interventions, black boxes become more and more distant memories. Become less reality and more myth.

“As for me, Earth’s people aren’t sure whether I am human or a non-human creature or a machine or a god.”

“I am not human. What I am requires understanding far greater than that currently possessed by Earth’s people.”

“They are not sure if I am the only Shepherd or one of a few or one of many. They may never know. Hopefully, they will never know.”

“I am not the only Shepherd. I am not the only possessor of black boxes. Not all Shepherds are benevolent. Not all Shepherds have as their vision and mission – all thrive forever.”









## **Appendix – Thrive! Endeavor Next Generation Toolkit**

If we are to achieve a better future, we need “next generation” strategies for solving large problems and creating and sustaining positive, large and timely change. We need them to build and sustain a thriving future. The **Thrive! Endeavor Next Generation Toolkit** strategies, models and tools are “next generation” strategy.

Most current policy and strategy models are too limited in scope for addressing today’s problems and wholly inadequate for succeeding with a much more challenging future. No single strategy, model or tool by itself will help us do all this. However, a “next generation” strategic framework coupled with a core set of “next generation” strategies, models and tools together can help. The core set and system of supportive models addresses persons, systems, motivation, ability, behavior, performance and its improvement, process measures, and, most importantly, positive outcomes and improved status.

### **Why Thrive! Next Generation Framework And Supportive Strategies**

Going back to what it means to be “next generation”, here is how they match up to the need.

- 1) They focus on individual “persons” -- individuals with unique abilities, motivation, and behaviors uniquely affected by and affecting their “environment.” “Person” aspects are addressed by the Behavioral Effectiveness Model (BEM) and the “Person-centered Model”.
- 2) They are designed to be more effective at addressing issue areas, especially large, complex ones.
- 3) They are designed to effectively handle the cross-cutting issues of a highly interactive and interdependent world.

- 4) They are designed to tackle issues as a system (e.g. a health system) interacting with other systems and within larger systems (e.g. communities, nations, broader areas).
- 5) They are designed to effectively handle “whole” systems, including whole communities, whole nations, and whole broader areas.
- 6) They are designed to effectively handle the future in terms of sustaining whatever progress we make and adjusting to a changing future.

### **What Is The Thrive! Strategy Core Set And How Does It Work In Supporting Thrive!**

What does the strategy core set include? As shown in Table A.1, the core set includes the overall Strategy, the Performance Improvement Model, the *via* Model, the Behavioral Effectiveness Model (BEM), the Person Model, the Population Model, the System(s) Model, the Strategy Model, and the Status Model. The overall core set and the supportive components can be applied to a single issue area, cross-cutting issue areas, and whole non-geographic populations, communities, nations and broader areas. They can be used as a set and each can be used independently as well.

### **Overall Thrive! Strategy and Strategy Core Set.**

**What is it?** As displayed in Figure A.1 and detailed in Table A.1, the overall strategy core set is a set of integrated, coordinated components to produce the necessary knowledge and an effective overall strategy with supportive strategies. By using the full core set, we can better identify and understand the targeted system (e.g., community, nation), decide what we want to achieve on a sustained basis, understand and select the target behaviors, design and select what interventions we need, and develop the overall strategy and supportive strategies to achieve the desired state. [Table A.1]

<b>Table A.1: Thrive! Strategy Core Set and Applicable Issue Levels and Scope</b>			
<b>Strategy Core Set</b>	<b>Issue Level and Scope</b>		
	Single Issue Area (E.g. Health)	Cross-cutting Issue Areas (E.g. Vulnerability)	Whole Community, Nation, Broader Areas
Overall Strategy	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
System(s) Model, Including “Ideal” Systems	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Performance Improvement Model	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<i>via</i> Model	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Behavioral Effectiveness Model (BEM)	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Person Model (applying BEM over individual person’s time & life stages)	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Population Model (applying BEM over multiple persons’ time & life stages)	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Strategy Model (strategies & interventions)	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Status Model	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

**How does it work?** It works through the systematic application of the core set by people who have both the motivation and the ability to help create and sustain positive, large and timely change.

Though the steps in Table A.2 imply their sequential application that is not always the case. Step 1 is important in our understanding what is the

current system, its status, its projected actions, and its projected people and population behaviors. Step 1c helps us organize that thinking of how we might get from the current situation to the desired status for the targeted system. Step 2 helps us work through what needs to be changed and how we might make that change. Step 3 pulls all this together to help us create and execute the overall strategy and supportive strategies. Step 4 is to make sure we evaluate how we are doing and provide input for changes in strategy. Step 5 focuses on the successful execution of the overall strategy and supportive strategies. Step 6 makes sure we understand that strategy is not static and needs to adjust to unanticipated input and environmental changes, and the strategy needs to be executed successfully on an ongoing basis.

### **Performance Improvement Model.**

**What is it?** The Performance Improvement Model lays out the process by which a desired performance or status (e.g. minimized vulnerability and maximized thriving, high health status, sustainable and good human and animal habitat, sustainable energy) is set and compared to the current status. Based on that, a strategy is developed that makes the necessary changes to achieve the desired performance or status. [See Figure A.1.]

**How does it work?** Based on an understanding of the system that is to be improved and its current status or performance level, a desired level of status or performance is chosen. The model is designed to help determine what it will take to achieve that performance or status level. [See Table A.3.]

**Table A.2. Overall Thrive! Strategy - Creating and Sustaining Positive, Large Change**

The overall strategy for creating and sustaining positive, large change is as follows:

1. Assess current and projected state of target issue area, cross-cutting issue, or “whole”.
  - a. Use Systems Model (including Ideal Systems) to understand targeted system (e.g. health system, community, nation) today.
  - b. Use Status Model to identify current status for “whole” (e.g., community, nation, broader areas), issue areas (e.g., health, education), or cross-cutting issue area (e.g., vulnerability, climate, habitat) targeted for positive, large scale change.
  - c. Use via Model to analyze positive/negative actions impacting or projected to impact issue, cross-cutting issue, or “whole”.
  - d. Use Person Model to identify what individual people are likely to do in future.
  - e. Use Population Model to identify what populations are likely to do in future.
  - f. Use Behavioral Effectiveness Model (BEM) to assess projected people behaviors.
2. Design strategy to achieve desired status for target issue area, cross-cutting issue, or “whole”.
  - a. Use Systems Model (incl. “Ideal Systems”) to identify desired future system state.
  - b. Use Status Model to identify desired status for targeted system.
  - c. Use Performance Improvement Model to identify changes, including behavior, needed to progress from current status and achieve desired status for targeted system.
  - d. Use via Model to identify potential interventions for creating and sustaining desired positive, large scale change.
  - e. Use Person Model to identify what individual people should do to help achieve the desired positive, large scale change.
  - f. Use Population Model to identify what populations of people should do to help achieve the desired positive, large scale change.
  - g. Use BEM to identify ability, motivation and desired behaviors that help achieve desired change and to develop supportive strategies to achieve desired behaviors.
  - h. Use Strategy and Supportive Strategies Model to identify and assess and organize supportive strategies (sets of interventions) for creating/sustaining desired change.

3. With above inputs, develop overall, self-perpetuating strategy for creating and sustaining desired positive, large scale change across target system.
4. Apply evaluation methodology for assessing strategies/interventions impact on near and long term status and implications for future interventions/strategies.
5. Execute overall strategy and supportive strategies successfully.
6. Adjust and execute overall strategy and supportive strategies to meet changing inputs and environment.

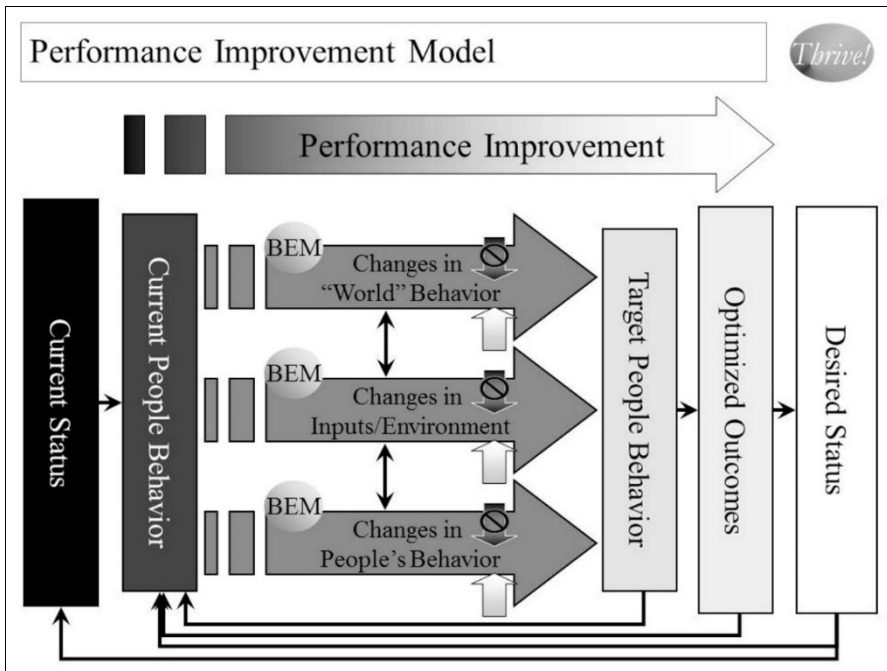


Figure A.1. Performance Improvement Model - Strategies for Improving Performance to Achieve Desired Status.

**Table A.3. Performance Improvement Model – Strategies for Improving Performance to Achieve Desired Status**

The overall strategy for improving performance is as follows:

1. Based on an understanding of the system that is to be improved, assess its current status or performance level.
2. Determine what should be the desired level of status or performance.
3. Assess what is the delta (difference) between those two levels.
4. Determine what outcomes need to be produced in order to achieve the desired level of status or performance.
5. Determine what people's current behaviors are.
6. Determine what people's target behaviors should be.
7. Assess what is the delta between those two sets of behavior and what behavior changes are desired.
8. Determine how "world", input/environment, and people behavior already occurring or projected to occur affect people behaviors. "World" behaviors are changes in people behaviors that are outside the system being changed.  
"Inputs/Environment" changes are non-people behaviors such as climate change, and plant and animal change.
9. Determine the set of strategies and interventions needed to change people behaviors by using other models, including the Behavioral Effectiveness Model (BEM), the *via* model, and the Person and Population models. These strategies and interventions may be applied to any or all of "world", input/environment and people behavior already occurring or projected to occur.
10. Measure the effect that these strategies and interventions are having on changing people's behavior, the outcomes and the status.
11. Feed the strategies and interventions into the Overall Strategy and Supporting Strategies.
12. Determine how changes in status, outcomes and behavior create a new level of "current" status, outcomes and behavior and rerun the Performance Improvement Model on an ongoing basis.

## ***via* Model.**

**What is it?** The *via* Model serves as a basic framework for interventions that improve the status of an issue area (e.g., health, vulnerability, environment) or a “whole” (e.g., a non-geographic population, a community, a nation, or a broader area). [See Figure A.2.]

**How does it work?** As detailed in Table A.4, the *via* Model includes what it is we want to achieve and avoid, how to work through interventions and actions that affect that achievement, and how to measure progress.

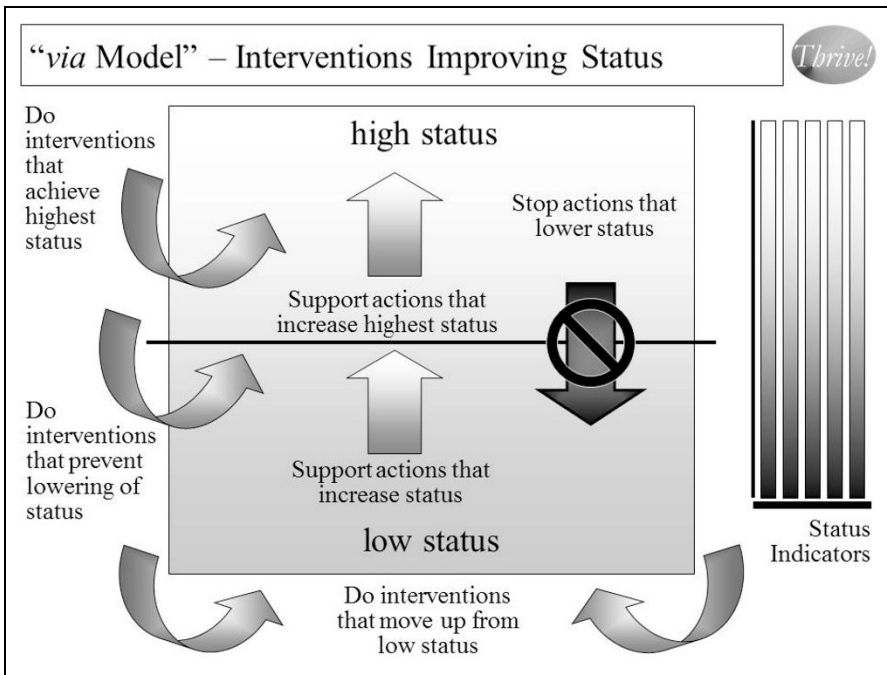


Figure A.2. “*via* Model” for Interventions Improving Status.



**Table A.4. via Model - Interventions Improving Status**

The via Model use for interventions improving status is as follows:

1. Decide what issue area or “whole” needs status improvement.
2. Decide what status indicators will be used to measure current and desired status.
3. Identify current and projected actions that affect status in one of the following ways:
  - a. Actions that lower status.
  - b. Actions that increase status for that portion above the mean or median.
  - c. Actions that increase status for that portion below the mean or median.
4. Identify what new interventions that positively affect status in one of the following ways:
  - a. Interventions that help achieve highest status, including supporting actions that further increase high or highest status.
  - b. Interventions that help prevent lowering of status, including stopping actions that lower status.
  - c. Interventions that help move up from low status, including supporting actions that increase status.
5. Measure the effect that the interventions are having on the current and projected actions and on the status indicators.
6. Feed the interventions into Overall Strategy and Supporting Strategies.

**Behavioral Effectiveness Model (BEM).**

**What is it?** The Behavioral Effectiveness Model (BEM) is built upon several related models from expectancy theory, instrumentality theory, theory of reasoned action, contingency theory, system theory, social cognitive theory, behavioral theory, etc. that have been in use and refined over 30-40 years. The approach is built upon the premise that a person or a population’s behavior is key to what creates and sustains positive change. [See Figure A.3.]

BEM's value lies in 1) being relatively parsimonious, 2) incorporating key aspects of other behavioral models, 3) being "computable" (i.e., it can use databases (personal and environmental characteristics, desired behaviors and tailored interventions)), 4) tailoring applicability to more than one person simultaneously by using individual characteristics and desired behavior(s) and 5) using evidence-based interventions that can be tailored to those characteristics and the desired behavior.

**How does it work?** As shown in Table A.5, the BEM model is designed to 1) apply interventions that help achieve the desired target behavior, 2) learn more about the person or population involved, 3) learn more about interventions and 4) learn more about the "system" in which intervention are used. It can also be used for prediction, analysis and program development and evaluation. The model can be applied to 1) an individual person, 2) populations whose characteristics are sufficiently the same, and/or 3) populations of individuals for which each individual gets a personalized and tailored intervention. The model can be linked to a database so that it can use and produce information and support personalized and tailored interventions:

- For any number of individuals and over any period of time
- For one-time behaviors and behavior over time
- For change in a single behavior and multiple behaviors.

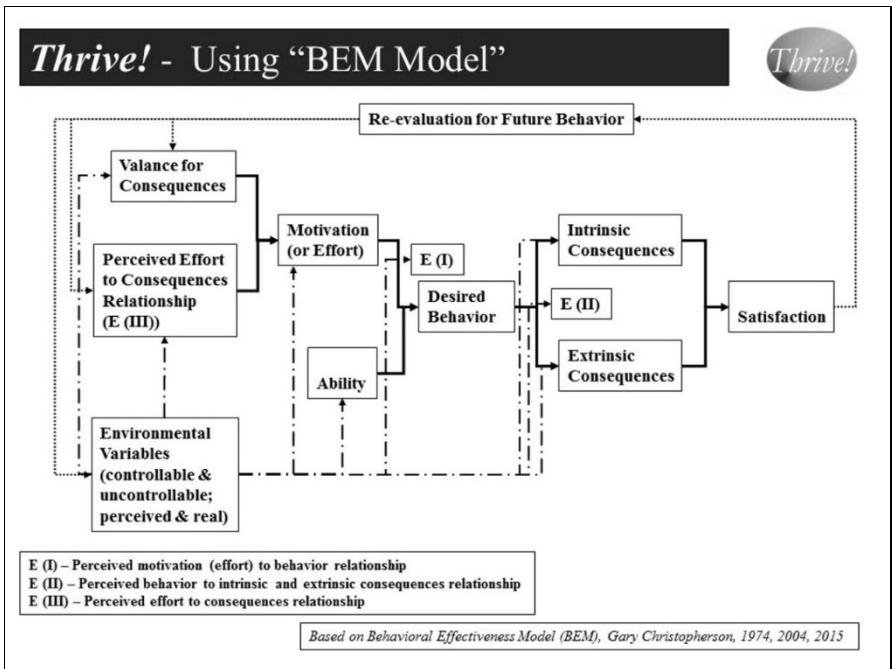


Figure A.3. “Behavioral Effectiveness Model (BEM) - Improving Personal Behavior/Performance

**Table A.5. “Behavioral Effectiveness Model (BEM)” –  
Improving Personal Behavior/Performance**

The BEM Model use for achieving desired behavior is as follows:

1. Identify the person or population whose behavior is targeted.
2. Decide what is the desired behavior or behaviors. Note that some behavior is one-time and some is recurring.
3. Assess motivation in terms of its current and future characteristics.
4. Assess ability in terms of its current and future characteristics.
5. Assess environmental variables, both controllable and uncontrollable and both perceived and real.
6. Assess how motivation, ability and environmental variables are likely to affect future behavior without further intervention.
7. Assess what are likely to be the intrinsic (internal to the person or population) and extrinsic (external to the person or population) consequences of projected behavior and what is likely to be the person or population’s satisfaction.
8. Assess how consequences and satisfaction are likely to affect future behavior
9. Assess how projected behavior, without further intervention, matches to desired behavior.
10. Assess what interventions will best move projected behavior to desired behavior for the near and long term.
11. Apply the interventions and assess their effect.
12. Adjust the interventions as needed over time and based on result.
13. Feed the interventions into the Overall Strategy and Supporting Strategies.

## Person Model.

What is it? The Person Model helps us to understand that each person goes through several life stages depending on how long they live. If status (e.g. health, income, performance) is to be improved, it is seldom a one-time intervention and generally should be done across the life span. As a result, the Person Model works by applying the Behavioral Effectiveness Model over an individual person's time and life stages. [See Figure A.4.]

**How does it work?** The Person Model, with BEM as the underlying model, recognizes that each person is different at the beginning, throughout the life stages, and near the end. For status to be improved, the strategy needs to be both specific to each person across the life span and effective for all persons across the life span. [See Table A.6.]

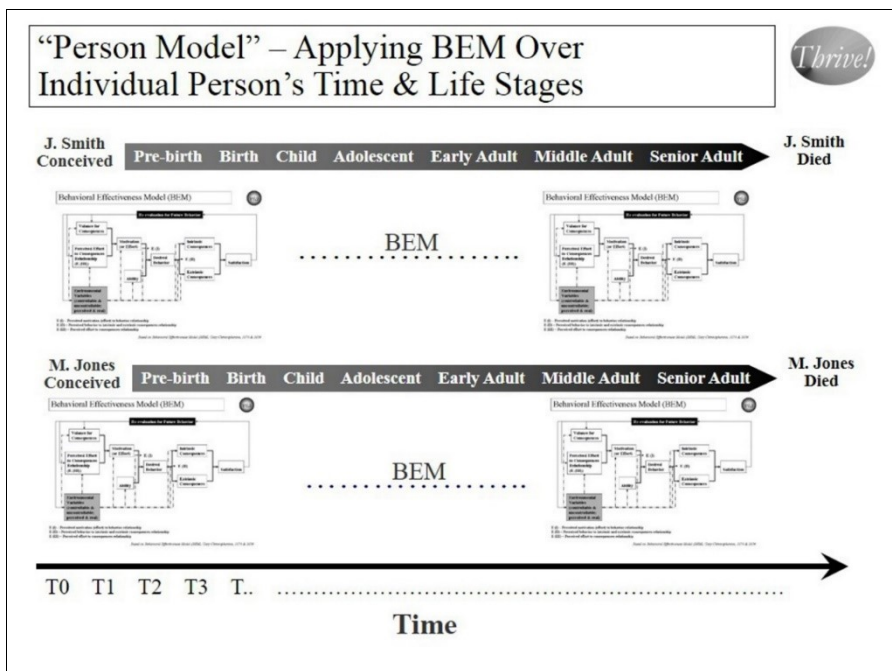


Figure A.4. "Person Model" – Applying BEM Over Each Person's Time and Life Stages.

**Table A.6. Person Model – Applying BEM Over Each Person’s Time and Life Stages**

The Person Model use for achieving desired behavior is as follows:

1. Identify the person or population whose behavior is targeted.
2. Decide what is the time frame or life stage(s) to be addressed.  
The preferred time frame is the whole life.
3. Decide what is the desired behavior or behaviors over time and through life stages.
4. Apply BEM model as a recurring model (running the model as many times as necessary) adjusting to changes in motivation, ability and environmental variables.
5. Assess what interventions will best move projected behavior to desired behavior for the covered time and life stage(s).
6. Apply the interventions and assess their effect on an ongoing basis.
7. Adjust the interventions as needed over time and based on result.
8. Feed the interventions into the Overall Strategy and Supporting Strategies.

## **Population Model.**

**What is it?** The Population Model addresses status from the perspective of what is happening at any point in time and the effect on a diverse or non-diverse population. Again, BEM is the underlying model for adjusting strategy to address points in time across persons and their life stages. This model also applies to other differences (e.g., racial, ethnic, income, vulnerability) in the target population [See Figure A.5.]

**How does it work?** The Population Model, with BEM as the underlying model, recognizes that strategy, at any point in time, must be both specific to each applicable person across the life span and effective across all persons across the life span. [See Table A.7.] Taking a time slice, the model recognizes that at any specific time, the target population likely includes persons from all different stages of life (pre-birth, birth, child, adolescent, early adult, middle adult and senior adult). At that time, each person has different status levels, different factors affecting status, and

different responses to endeavors at improving status. This can be seen in how major disasters (e.g., tsunamis, earthquakes, disease outbreaks, crop failures, and drought) affect people differently. This can be seen in how program interventions (e.g. education, housing programs, financial assistance, health insurance programs, heating assistance, taxes) affect people differently.

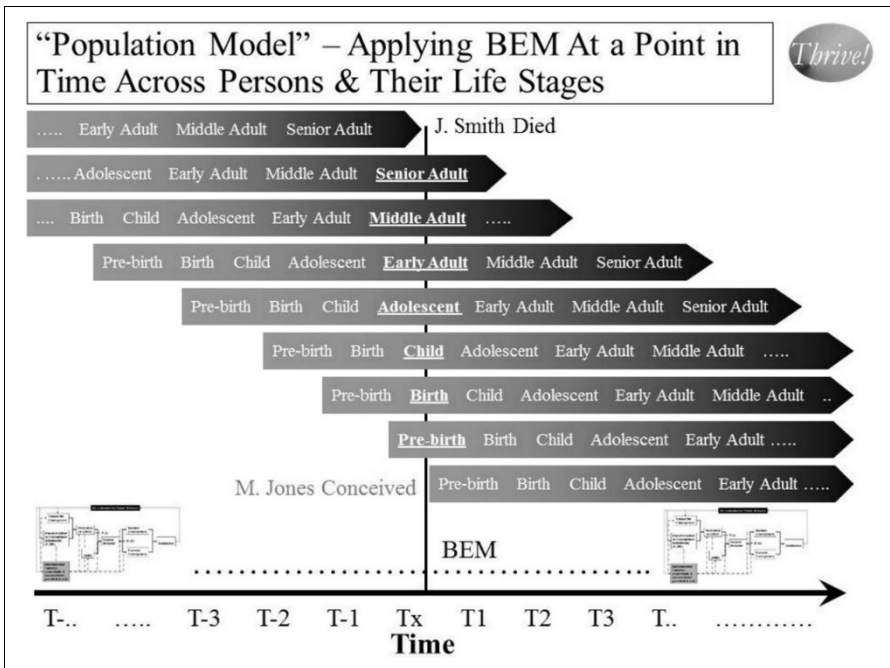


Figure A.5. “Population Model” – Applying BEM at a Point in Time Across Persons and Their Life Stages

**Table A.7. Population Model – Applying BEM at a Point in Time Across Persons and Their Life Stages**

The Population Model use for achieving desired behavior is as follows:

1. Identify the population whose behavior is targeted.
2. Decide what are the point(s) in time and life stage(s) to be addressed.
3. Decide what is the desired behavior or behaviors at different points in time across persons and their life stages.
4. Apply the BEM model across time and across populations and their life stages taking into account their differing motivation, ability and environmental variables.
5. Assess what interventions will best move projected behavior to desired behavior across time and across populations and their life stages.
6. Apply the interventions and assess their effect on a population on an ongoing basis.
7. Adjust the interventions as needed over time and based on result.
8. Feed the interventions into the Overall Strategy and Supporting Strategies.

### **System(s) Model (Including “Ideal” Systems).**

**What is it?** The System(s) Model views the world as a system of systems. When a strategy is being designed, it is important to determine what the target system is, what larger system it is part of, what its subsystems are, and what other systems it relates to. A system can be a community, a nation, or a broader area. It can be an issue area system such a health system, an education system, or an ecological system. The Ideal Systems Model, developed by people such as industrial engineers (e.g. Gerald Nadler) decades ago, is another key model for looking at how well a system could perform and how to achieve the highest performance for that system. [See Figure A.6.]

**How does it work?** For endeavors to improve status to be successful and sustainable, the strategy and its execution need to be systematic and positively change a system (a whole community, a whole nation or a whole broader area) of systems (e.g., health, education, employment/income, housing, habitat, climate) on a sustained basis. [See Table A.8.]



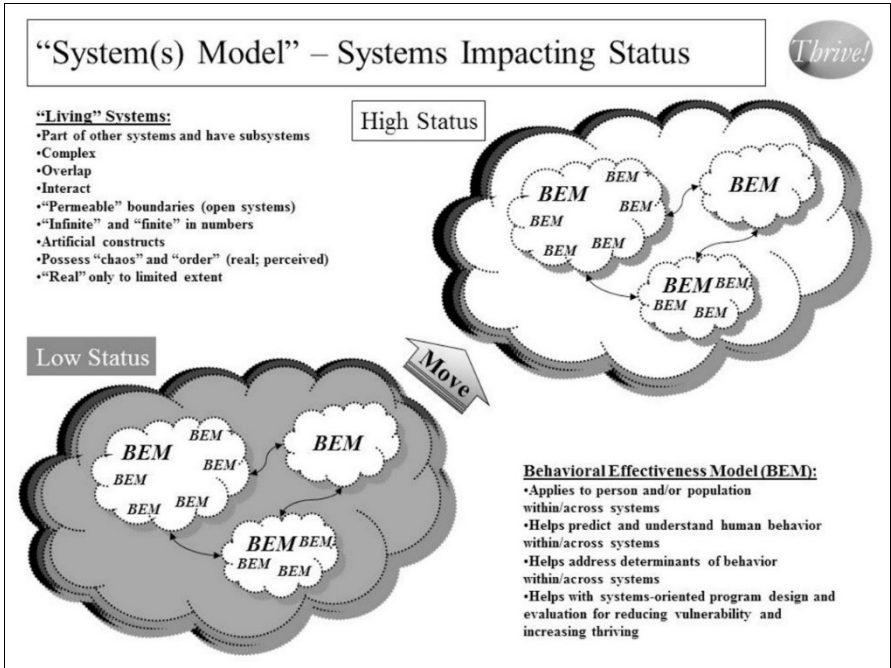


Figure A.6. Systems Model – Systems Impacting Status

In a systems model, there is recognition that systems are “living”. They change internally, impact other systems and are impacted by other systems. Systems are part of other systems and they have subsystems themselves. They are usually complex. They often overlap with other systems. They interact with other systems, sometimes fairly predictably and sometimes not. They often have permeable borders that are not always understood or constant. They may be nearly infinite in number. Often we apply an artificial construct to them to help us understand and work with them. Some systems are formal constructs and some are informal constructs. They may be or appear to be “chaotic” or “ordered”. They may be or appear to be “real”.

To positively change a system on a sustained basis, we need to understand the impact that existing and future systems will have on each person’s or a population’s status. We need to understand the impact of systems that we create, change or delete will have on other systems and, ultimately, on each person’s status.

**Table A.8. Systems Model – Systems Impacting Status**

The Systems Model use for achieving desired status is as follows:

1. Identify the target system within which status is to be improved.
2. Identify other systems that are related and might either be impacted or have an impact.
3. Identify the status (lower than desired) for the current system and key characteristics of the current system.
4. Identify the desired status and characteristics for the future system using the Ideal Systems Model.
5. Identify the key behaviors in the current systems and what they need to be in the future system.
6. Determine what changes need to be made to the current system to move it to the desired system.
7. Assess what interventions will best change the current system into the desired future system.
8. Apply the interventions and assess their effect on behavior change and on status.
9. Adjust the interventions as needed over time and based on result.
10. Feed the interventions into the Overall Strategy and Supporting Strategies.

Within “human” systems are real people (individual persons, populations of persons) and organizations (made up of persons) whose behaviors collectively help determine the behavior of the system. The Behavioral Effectiveness Model (BEM) helps us understand the behaviors and their determinants (ability, motivation, environmental factors) on an individual level and on a population of individuals level. In the systems model used here, there is recognition that moving from low status to high status requires moving individual behavior on a massive scale if it is a large system like the American “health system”. This movement includes the persons we want to move to higher status and the persons that help or hinder that movement.

As shown in Figure A.7, the Ideal Systems Model helps determine the desired system. It starts out by assessing the current system. It then sets what is the theoretical ideal system assuming there are no costs or constraints preventing us from reaching that system. The theoretical ideal

is a guide but is not reachable in the real world for the foreseeable future. Then the model helps us think through the options between the current system and the theoretical ideal system. The ultimate ideal system is one which imposes no constraints but is not yet feasible due to the “means” not yet being available. The feasible ideal system is one where the constraints are removed or reduced and the “means” are available. Finally, the recommended system is the best given the constraints and available means and is on the glide path to the ultimate ideal.

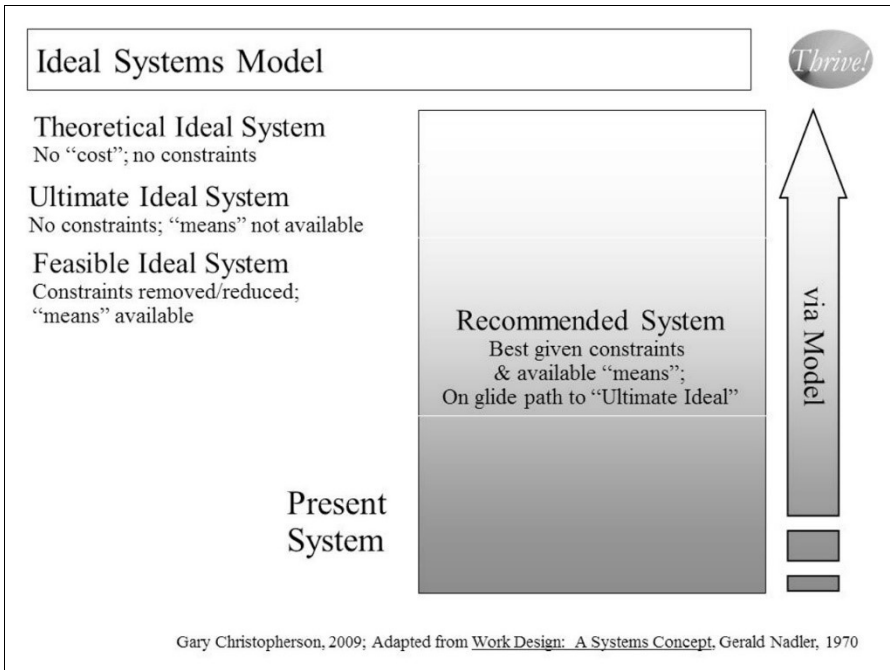


Figure A.7. Ideal Systems Model

## Strategy Model.

**What is it?** The Strategy Model builds on the above groundwork and brings this all together to develop and execute sustainable, effective strategies for improving status. It includes the model for building the strategies as well as the framework into which the strategies fit. The model includes both the overall strategy and supportive strategies and the actual interventions supporting the strategies. [See Figure A.8.]

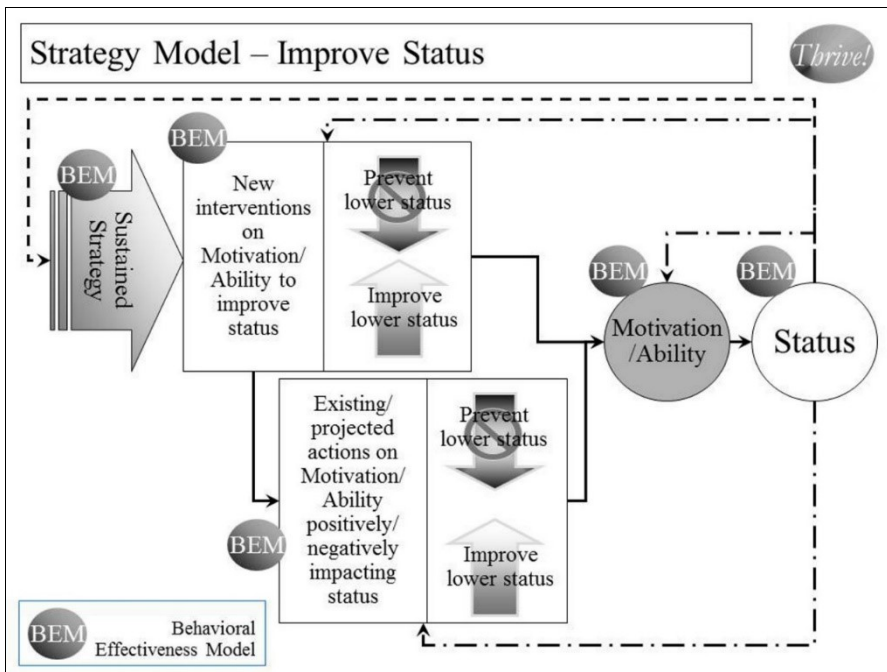


Figure A.8. "Strategy Model" – Improve Status

**How does it work?** The model brings together all the previous information into an overall strategy and supportive strategies to improve status (e.g. health, income, vulnerability, habitat, climate). [See Table A.9.]

**Table A.9. Strategy Model – Improve Status**

The Strategy Model use for achieving desired status incorporates previous work from the other models and input and is as follows:

1. Load the desired status and the associated indicators.
2. Load the optimized outcomes that will best produce high status.
3. Load the target behaviors that will best produce the optimized outcomes.
4. Use pathways to connect how the supportive strategies will best produce the target behavior. The pathways are customized to the issue area or “whole”.
5. Identify the specific supportive strategies that, working through the pathways will best produce the target behaviors.
6. Execute the strategy and its supportive strategies effectively.
7. Assess the progress on improving status. Assess the effectiveness of the strategy and its supportive strategies.
8. Revise strategy and supportive strategies as needed to be effective and sustained over time.

### **Status Model.**

**What is it?** The Status Model is used to identify the desired and current status for “whole” systems (e.g., a non-geographic population, a community, a nation, a broader area), issue areas (e.g., health, education) or cross-cutting issue areas (e.g., vulnerability, climate, habitat) that are targeted for positive, large scale change. It also includes the status indicators and their supportive measures such as those shown in Figure A.9.

**How does it work?** For endeavors to create and sustain positive systems to be successful, we need to determine how we are doing today, how we are doing as we progress to the desired system and how we are doing when we achieve and work to sustain the desired system. The Status Model helps do that as shown in Table A.10.

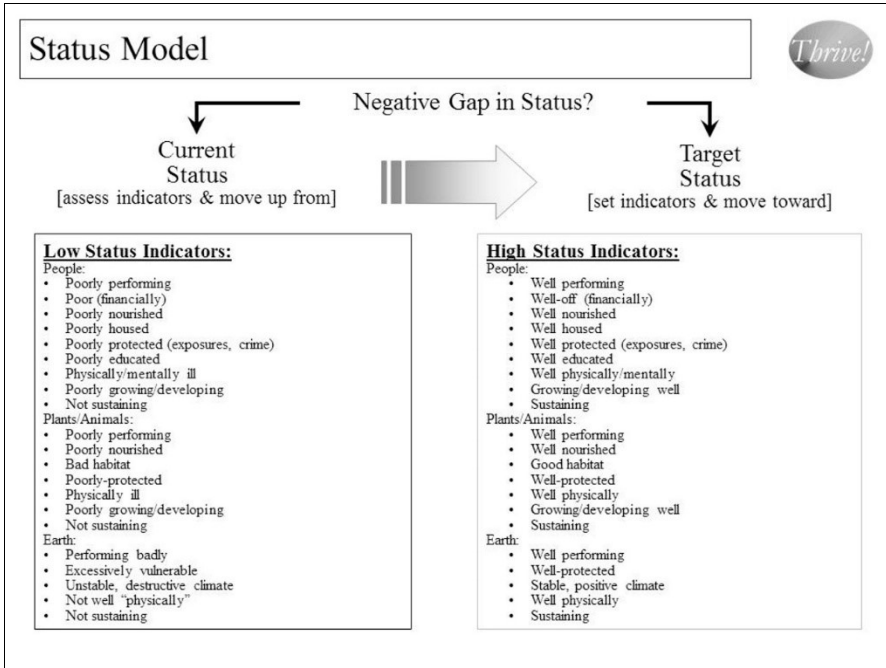


Figure A.9. Status Model

For the broader work on communities, nations and broader areas, the full set of status indicators is very large but can be grouped into high level categories with supportive measures. They should encompass all the significant indicators covering the full breadth of the target area. On the highest level, they must be meaningful enough to provide guidance on improving the whole target area as a whole system. They must be supported by clearly defined measures that can be measured by data that is available into the future. Further, the status indicators must be flexible enough to adjust to changing future conditions. With these status indicators, a strategy can be developed and its progress assessed.

**Table A.10. Status Model**

The Status Model is as follows:

- Determine what is the issue area, cross-cutting area or “whole” system for which the strategy is targeted and status indicators are needed.
- Decide how high, in general, is the desired status. Is it optimal? If not, how close can we get to optimal?
- Identify all of the indicators that, as a set, indicate the desired high status. These are the “Target Status” set of indicators.
- Decide what each indicator’s level should be to match the desired high status.
- Decide what each indicator’s level is to describe low status.
- To the extent needed, identify more detailed measures for each indicator.
- Assess the “Current Status”, i.e., the current level of indicators for the target population.
- Assess the “Negative Gap” between the current status and the desired target status. This is the gap to be closed with the overall strategy.
- Execute the status model effectively and measure progress.
- Assess the effectiveness of the status indicators.
- Revise status indicators, individually and as a set, as needed to be effective.

## **The Path Ahead**

Potential “next generation” models do exist for strategy at system (issue area, community, nation, broader area) and person levels. One such model is the **Thrive! Endeavor Next Generation Toolkit** - a core set and system of supportive models addressing persons, systems, motivation, ability, behavior, performance and its improvement, process measures, and, most importantly, positive outcomes and improved status. While parts of the strategy can be used independently, they have more power and are more likely to produce the best results when used as a full set.

The path ahead offers many opportunities, as outlined above, to tackle large, complex issue areas, cross-cutting issues and whole communities and nations. Aggressive use of “next generation” strategies can solve large problems and create and sustain positive, large scale change and a surviving and thriving future for all forever, to the maximum extent possible.



