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Time moves in one direction, memory in another- Willian Gibson.

So much time is wasted trying to look good. We try and do good things to make our history look shiny. The problem is that Gibson is right, over time, our memory of how we lived becomes different than the truth. How we loved is quite possibly different than how we are loved. I am amazed at how much effort is put into creating memories that don't hold up in the judgment of time. In the book, War and Peace, Tolstoy spends half the book trying to unravel why we had the war of 1812. In 1215 pages, he basically said time was far too kind to those making the decisions.

That is exactly how I look at love. We spend a ton of time trying to make love perfect. We are building a defense before God on how we have loved. It seems, for most, it's not so much about how we are loved but how we loved. Unfortunately, time does not care how we loved. The people in our lives will tell the truth. The Wizard of Oz led a life of deceit behind a curtain. Once exposed, he became a man of wisdom. The Tin man was warned that hearts are not unbreakable. The tin man pleaded *I still want one*. The Wizard looked at the man with great compassion and tells him **“A heart is not judged by how much you love; but by how much you are loved by others”**

It's just a movie, but I have always felt that movies and books were written by broken hearts. Sometimes it's a warning while other times it's a good-natured story to try and mend our hearts. Hearts unfortunately are breakable. I wrote in previous chapters that bad hearts come from broken hearts. We are all just children forge through tough lives. Some of us make it through with minimal scars. While, others are left holding their bleeding heart unable to plug the

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holes. That is where princesses and heroes are born. Someone needs to rescue a broken heart. In the meantime, we are asked to love. We are expected to love.

I do not want to spend this whole book having a pity party. Yes, my heart has been hurt. I am part of the bleeding hearts club. I know what mean is. I suppose that makes me an expert on love. It's not that I know how to love but rather I know what the absence of love feels like. I have spent my whole life trying to capture love. I am a student of the heart. My heart breaks so easily in mushy situations. I am not the tin man. I have a heart. Unfortunately, my desire to be loved has cost me dearly. A tin-plated body might have repelled a few stinging arrows and saved my broken heart.

1 Corinthians 13:12 **“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.”**

Paul wrote that verse in the desire to know himself better. He felt that it was just not possible until he meets God in heaven. How often do we think we know, but after the day is done we are questioning our motives, desires, and actions? I agree (surprisingly) that we really have no clue who we are. We blurt out words we can't take back. We do dumb things we cannot reverse. It seems we spend a lot of time trying to undo the things we do. They say depression is an epidemic. I don't buy that notion. I just think we over think ourselves far too much. We set up pictures of love and expectations that cannot be filled. Maybe we are trying to invent ourselves in every minute of every day.

To write about love should be easy. I have a deep well of experience. I also have a society that is addicted to love. Within all of us is a nature to give and get love. Even Hitler loved something. That seems so ridiculous, but he had children, and he had a mistress. He also had

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control and power for a time. I bet he loved that too. I could talk about love in terms of porn to love letters. People say they find love in many things. Read the first three verses of 1 Corinthians below. This is all of us in a nut shell.

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”

I have felt dirty in the presence of others because of my desire to be loved. I have felt dirty also because of the absence of love. I could go on quoting line after line about love. There are a million bleeding hearts out there quoting far-fetched ramblings about love. I want to talk about giving and receiving love. If we’re going to feel better about ourselves, we need to understand love better. If were to shed some of the dirt in our lives, then we need to be students of love.

It has only taken me nine chapters to reach this point. It looks like I’m bitter, angry, and spiteful. I hate being treated badly. I hate being shunned. Yes, I do, and who wouldn’t? I really am not a bitter person. I love life. I want to live, and I want to love. I just can’t stand not being loved. In reality, I wanted to paint a picture. I find that having you experience my pain will help you see your pain. There are two types of people I am reaching. One, is the hurting. To those who are hurt; there are others like you. There is life beyond the pain and shame. Secondly, there are those who hurt people. Maybe you just wanted to be noticed. Maybe you thought being the

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best was a great achievement. Is leaving a disaster in the wake of your greatness worth it? Is being unloved in history good enough for you?

This is such a cool topic. We can go anywhere with love. It's time to look one more time at bad love. This is the bridge to my book. We can be accused of making people feel dirty. We can be accused of walking around looking disheveled and dirty. It comes back to love. We expect too much from those around us. We expect too much from ourselves. Let's keep love in its proper place. Love is precious. Many people use it as a tool. That is too bad. It's such a great thing to have love. Why must we use it the wrong way? I think it's because it is powerful. Those who want it, treat it as a drug. Those who abuse it give it out as a drug to drive others nuts. It's either deny it or overdose on it. Let's talk about love baby!

From day one I was trained to love a certain way. I will give my mother credit. She knew compassion. My mother helped the elderly. She volunteered in the community. We did what was asked of us. I don't know the whole story, but my Dad actually had a trophy named after him. I believed he tried to love the community. When we moved, the community honored him with a trophy. Obviously, my Dad gave enough to be noticed and loved back.

I know a lady who says she cares for the community. At times, she has complained that the community should respect her more. She has been married 2 ½ times (very long story). Her kids are a disaster. What is her picture of love? Who loves this woman. My understanding is that she is a holy terror. What that means is she tries to be good and love the best she can. The flip side is she expects to be loved a certain way. Her view on love is a nightmare. True love should begin with no expectations.

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Surely Patrick we can have expectations. Ok, then take this inventory test. Do those that love you have to make you happy? Does that include mom and dad? Should you get a certain level of respect at work? Does that include all your co-workers and bosses? The knee jerk reaction is yes. We deserve love. We should expect a certain level of love. Here is another look at it. What if your expectations are low? What if abuse is love in your eyes? What if we are smothered with love by a spouse? Are they over baring or loving? Expectations are a tricky thing. It's even worse when it comes to love.

People use love to get what they want. Yes, I know it's not always true. Yet, I want to buy the perfect gift to see her smile. Why? It makes me smile. Does it matter if I buy her a gift on valentine's day? Trust me, it matters. If I don't smile it matters too. We love to be loved. The problem begins with our picture of love. We love being loved a certain way. If I had a dime for every time I heard someone say *you should sleep with a potential mate first*, I'd be rich. They say check him or her out in bed first. Test drive the car? Why? To see if it pleases you. Nobody ever buys or invests in things they hate.

So, with a picture comes power. If someone knows your love picture, then you're in trouble. They can and will use it against you. To love someone their way is not a bad thing. The problem is with the picture. If I can clearly see that a spouse wants sex a certain way, then give it to them. What if you don't want to do it that way? What if you don't feel like it? What if you use it to ask for favors? The picture is the problem. When we hang our happiness on specific things we get into trouble. Real love has no boundaries. That does not mean we have to do what people want. No, but it does mean we should be open to seeing love their way.

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I feel the problem with love pictures is that they are usually locked. These pictures are written in stone. We try out someone in bed because we were looking for something we like and want. If they do not fit our love picture then it's over. There is no discovery or different way. I learned a valuable lesson on love with my current wife. We never slept together before marriage. I fell in love with the person first. I had no clue about love. Yet, on the wedding night I found out I had pre-conceived expectations in bed. I thought that was the crescendo of being in love. Over the years, I have come to love her more by what she is and offers rather than what I want. That was hard to do, trust me. That is not the way most of us are wired.

I have not read or watched the recent book and movie called *Fifty shades of grey*. They say it is about domination and sexual perversion. I don't know. My understanding is that story is love addiction gone wrong. We expect things. We demand things. There are those who want to be spanked and hit in bed. There are those who don't. What is right or wrong? Can we use it against others? At work, we have those who are scared and shy. They are controllable. Do we abuse that right as their boss? Do you love controlling others? Admit it, you might. Church as an institution says it will love regardless of sin. It will not condemn the church at all costs. Even at the cost of corrupting the church? Why do you think they moved abusing priests instead of firing them? At all costs, we love first, even if it costs the victims.

Love must be respected. It is a powerful tool if you know who needs it. Unfortunately, we all need it. We all want it too. The need means we seek it. An over bearing person will find out what kind of love you like and exploit it. I am currently watching the British show called *Sherlock*. He is an analytical thinker. One woman loves him and he knows it. In one episode, he asked her to help him. He clearly knows she will because she loves him. In the end, she says to him “oh, you just needed my help.” He says yes, of course, I needed you.” The interesting part is

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the actor smiles because he knew darn well he was using her love to his advantage to get what he needed.

What happens when you get what you want all the time? It means that when you don't, holy fire and brimstone come crashing down on those who deny you. I read a great book called *Is it love or addiction* by Brenda Shafer. She talks the whole book about the picture of love we paint. How destructive it is to the victim. In a sense, she says we create the victim. For some reason, we choose people. I don't think we will ever truly understand how that works. Yet, we all try and repaint that person into the perfect mate. I think that is where the nag comes in. A nag just wants it to be a certain way. A nag can be male and female just to let you know.

How far are you willing to go to change someone? Oh, you're not like that? Do you suggest a certain movie? Do you hint at a spouse's clothing attire? Do you ever say “I don't like that.” How about saying “we never go out or I never get something.” We all do it. It's just that there are those who use it as a club and those who use it to club others. The club is done in the name of love. We either kill to get a certain love or die trying. We want those around us to be our love picture. When that does not happen, we begin to hate people and life. That is where depression and anger reside.

I really believe that most anger and abuse come from trying to make things work our way. I believe that I feel dirty at times because I expect to be accepted unconditionally. I also expect people to love me because I love. That is not always the case. I also feel that there are those I meet that treat me as if I'm dirty because they expect me to be a certain way. Their picture of a person is different than who I am. We all have people that seem to be our acid to our water. Whose fault is that?

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My look at love is based on what I have learned. I know people expect things from me. I know I cannot deliver all that they want. When they're disappointed I get my back up. I know I do. I love to poke the bear and that is not a good thing either. I spent a coffee date with a new friend warning him about who I am. I have been rejected so often that I have been reduced to warning people first. That is not a good way to start a friendship. Maybe I'm trying to weed out abusers that don't love unconditionally. Maybe, but I feel that I flinch when someone wants to know me. Abuse makes one flinch.

Ok, so here is the fulcrum in this book. What to do with the flinch. I will admit it is still a work in progress. I have not come to a definitive answer to avoid flinching at abuse. I have not cornered the market on feeling dirty in the presence of some people. Why do some acquaintances treat me as if I'm dirty? It lands within the fallout. I am neurotic, crazy, and sane all at the same time. They say only nutty people live in fear of being rejected. I doubt that because I have not met one single person who does not have hang ups. Not one. We all have expectations of love. We all have been disappointed. Once bitten twice shy is not a fabric of the imagination. Jilted lover movies and songs don't exist for no reason. Yet, I have read and researched till the cows came home and left again about understanding love. The answer always comes back to me.

The Christian group *Point of Grace* has a song called *Begin with Me*. Look at this set of verses from the song:

*Lord I know sometimes you look down and shake your head,
When we know what we should do, and do the other thing instead.
We're living in glass houses and we're thrown sticks and stones,
But the love that will come to us is the love that we have shown.*

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They then bust into the course saying *Begin with me*. I have written countless insights about looking in the mirror. During my hardest times, I have spent more time looking into the mirror than I could recall. I know I avoid looking in it too. Why? In the mirror, I am searching my eyes for answers. In avoiding the mirror, I know the answer. How cool is that! I bet I am the only person alive or dead who is searching for meaning and avoiding the truth all at the same time. Not! Many, if not all of us do it from time to time.

I still shudder in the mirror. During my divorce, I was forced to recreate myself. I was forced to look in the mirror. Unfortunately for me I also changed my point of view on God at the same time. It is not recommended to do both at the same time. I spent countless hours looking at someone in the mirror I could not recognize. That was horrifying. To find yourself means you need to know yourself better than you think you do. To know God is to throw out much of what you think is true. To have those two revelations crashing together at once in the mirror is a nightmare. Yet, all the counseling and all the books pointed back to me. I needed to be comfortable with myself. I needed to be certain of what I know. My 33rd year has been lost forever. It is a black hole in my life. I lost me and found me all at the same time.

Occasionally, in the Bible, are profound verses. Sometimes you read a verse or two and it goes in one eye and out one ear. At other times a verse hits you right between the eyes. Luke 15:32 has hit many right in the eye. It says **"But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."** Many of us know this as the ending to a parable by Jesus called *the prodigal son*. He was a spoiled son who looked at love a certain way. He found out the true meaning of love as he returned home. Being faced with himself away from family was all he needed.

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J Vernon McGee (a radio preacher) reversed it as the pig leaving the mud. The story goes that the boy left and found himself in the mud feeling less than a pig, less than a slave. J Vernon said the pig cleaned himself up but missed the mud. Then there is the faced himself part. The boy realized he had everything in life to begin with. The pig feels the same way. The pigpen was home for one of them’ yet for the other it was not. We will go to great lengths to find ourselves. Usually we discover that who we really are was there all along. The journey was needed to realize that.

Many people have said they lost themselves in a marriage. Some of those same people have decided to try another marriage to find themselves. What a horrible way to find yourself. It is never 100% someone else’s fault you are lost. Read the words *you are lost*. It does not say *they* lost you. Hansel and Gretel left bird crumbs so they would not get lost. They got into trouble by being enticed by a candy house. It was they who put themselves in peril. This is the era of the victim. We have marches everyday it seems for some victim of society. My kid loves to remind me that society is a fictitious entity. If that is true then society cannot be to blame, yet we march.

The problem comes back to me, it always begins with me. After a march, we come home. We look in the mirror. Did we win the day by the march? Do we find ourselves in a march? I hope not. Our identity is in the mirror, not in a group. That is why society is fictitious. We make up society. It exists because we exist. I know that educators have tried to teach children to find themselves in what they are. That means they embrace being gay. They embrace being shy. They embrace being female. However, there are female doctors. There are gay astronauts. There are shy teachers. Who we are and what we love are two different things.

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You can love being heterosexual but that does not affect your performance on the operating table. The patient does not care if your gay or hetero. Big deal if my teacher is shy. As long as I’m taught properly who cares. Being female is great. Being male is great. I know you might find this hard to understand these days but sexual orientation does not make you a better firefighter. This is connected to love because we make it that way. We love being female or gay. We love being a firefighter. Yet, a gay firefighter does not save any better than a heterosexual firefighter. They both do the same job the same way. Trained to fight fires. Not trained to fight fires the Heterosexual way.

It’s good to love what we do or what we believe. I would encourage anyone to embrace what they love. I love reading so embrace books. You might love being gay or Christian. Get involved in groups that love those things. Like-minded people work well together. It is though, important to distinguish between what we love and who we are. I fear we have lost that these days. There are so many people distraught because they are not accepted because they are gay or female. They create laws to make us accept them. For better or worse, it is a terrible day when we use force to be accepted .

Love is many things. I encourage you to read 1 Corinthians 13. Love is all those things. I feel the most important description of love comes in verse 5 *Love does not insist on its own way*. We are loved when love is free. You can believe in God or not. It is your choice given to you freely by God. You can take it or leave it. It’s your freedom. Why does God give us that freedom to reject him? God knew that love must not insist on its own way. Love must come from the heart naturally. We are free to kill and free to love. Now there are rules for our actions but we cannot be stopped to kill or love. How Mother Teresa and Adolph Hitler are remembered is another story. They both loved. I bet they both hated certain things too. It’s what you freely do

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with those things that's remembered. We never associate Mother Teresa with hate. We never associate love with Nazi Germany either.

Real love is within our reach. There are those who say only God gives us the ability to love. I struggle with that. I know some very loving people who hate God. I know some terrible people who say they love God. I struggle with love and God. I do believe God is love. I do believe that time with God will enhance our love. If we were made in the image of God, then I have to believe we were given a certain amount of love to give. We are remembered by what we did with it.

When we distort our picture of love then things go wrong. We expect to be loved a certain way. We are expected to love a certain way. It's true that real love does not insist on its own way. Many people have argued over what Jesus meant when he said "**Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.**" That is ultimate love. Jesus is not insisting on his own way. The Love of God for Jesus is not based on what God does. Jesus knows God the Father. God the Father knows Jesus. They love each other because they are free of expectations.

Here is my question to you. Do you love yourself based on what you have done or achieved? Do you love your spouse because they are the person they are, or by what they bring to the table? I love the dialogue between death and a character in the movie *Meet Joe Black*. Death wants to know what love is. The character says that he loves his wife because she accepts his worst traits and best attributes equally. Do you accept that about you? I feel less dirty in the presence of others squarely because I love myself unconditionally more today than I did years ago. It has been my pursuit to know me better. In University, the best thing I receiver was not

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education. The School prided itself on making us know and defend how God made us. I see me as an individual. I have things to offer. I love many things about me that others don't care for. That is their problem. I am as God said to Moses “I Am.” I am not God but I am Patrick Green Jr.

This sucks but you have heard this before. *To love others is to love yourself first.* If you don't love yourself then you cannot and will not love others. To make unrealistic pictures of love is a problem. Those pictures are based on unrealistic expectations. Nobody can be one hundred percent what you want. You will never achieve that one hundred percent of what you desire. Life does not work that way. It begins with you. Who are you? You are more than female or gay. Who are you? You are more than a doctor or mom. Who are you?

If we all loved ourselves unconditionally then I believe we have a chance to love others the same way. If we treat ourselves with respect, then we may respect others. It begins in the mirror. Do you respect where you are. Is it good enough. I have relatives that boast about their house. I have friends that boast about their sports team. If yours is not like theirs is that ok? We hate, envy, and lust because of what we don't have. Yet, we all have something. It begins with you. Listen to me: to love properly is not only going to church; it's not helping an old lady across the road; it's not a great night of sex. It begins with you and your expectations of love.

We consider people dirty because we expect certain things from them. We feel dirty because we expect people feel a certain way about who we are. Certainly, we act certain ways to entice feelings of superiority and feelings of being the victim. It goes both ways. In the end, it begins with you. Scrooge was to be remembered in the Movie *A Christmas Carol* by his skinflint ways. He made things worse by how he acted. The whole movie was spent remaking Scrooges

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perspective of himself and others. In the end, it said *he loved more than was expected*. The story began with trying not to think about scrooge. In the end, he was remembered for how he loved.

The trick in this all is the word *remembered*. I just went through the most uncomfortable event in the death of my mom. My wife asked me why I call her June more often than mom? That is an excellent question. There is not easy answer. My mom lived a complicated life. She was a hoarder, so she kept everything. She also could not let things go in her mind. That meant she collected feelings on things too. Those feelings had to be expressed. That might have caused some people like myself to remember her the wrong way.

My mom’s brother began the funeral with this statement *I’m glad she isn’t here to screw this up*. My mom knew how to ruin a good event like a wedding or dinner. She was a kind-hearted person that held on to too many worries, opinions, and regrets. Those things consumed her enough that it had to be let out from time to time. In those moments, she is not remembered well.

It leads me to this. How she treated love was different than most. Love might have been an argument to her. Again, it comes dauntingly back to the picture. What did the perfect relationship look like to my mom. What did the perfect life look like to her. Those expectations ruined her way of loving others. It also ruined how we remember her. We could see her loving heart in many things, yet something sad lingered.

In regards to love, how will you be remembered? If you don’t like what Scrooge saw of himself then maybe you need to learn to love yourself better. Possibly you need to love those around you better. Good friendships are void of expectations. We should not use love to get friends. We gain an abundant life by having good friends. Love is the wonderful by-product of

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friendships. Love is also the by-product of finding yourself. To love unconditionally creates good friendships.

I love beating a dead horse. Being loved by others begins with you. Discovering your purpose and talent will go a long way in seeing yourself more clearly. I feel that is where love begins. To love your way is so good. It makes you want to share that with the world around you. I feel my mom held on to the wrong things and it burned in her. My desire is that you burn with desire to share yourself. You burn with desire to see others blossom. Starting in the next chapter it begins with you. Yet, it really begins in the talents we have. Those things are the foundations that make up who you are. Let's open your world to “you” beginning with what you are as a person: your talents.