

Chapter 4 (Things)

It is good to have money and the things that money can buy, but it's good too, to check up once in a while and make sure you haven't lost the things money can't buy- George Horace

Lorimer

There is a great book out there called “*Is it love or addiction*” by Brenda Schaeffer. This gem opened my eyes. What would I change or do to make my picture of love come true? Did I have a picture of love? Would I change my character for love? How frustrating was it when the one I loved did not line up with that picture? In a sense, all hell broke loose. I tried to change her and me just to fit a love picture. All along the way I was losing more of me and more of our original relationship. I wasted time!

People will do anything to be satisfied. They will drink, steal, cheat and lie to get what they need. I mentioned Schaeffer’s book because we are addicted to being happy. What will you let own you just to be happy? For me it was her. I sacrificed everything for her. In reality I was even willing to sacrifice her. How so? I needed this girl to fit my love picture. Our relationship became a thing to be molded. A thing that I despised directly because it did not fit my love picture.

It all seems so confusing. Would I sacrifice me? What picture of love is worth dying for? Then we reach into alcoholism, drugs, porn and many other vices. This onion keeps peeling back and we reach in further to happiness, desires, and appetite. Peel off another layer and we risk sleep, health, and job security just to have a feeling, a person, a picture of love, happiness, and fulfillment. Peel it all the way down to comfort level, pride, and selfishness. The things of this world will let you be swallowed by them. People will pursue many things at all costs. It’s worth it, right? What things are a once in a life time opportunity? What’s a little pride and desire in the name of things?

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Deep at the core of the onion are things like women, money, men, and cars. It could be phones, movies, and status. What are the things you would sell your soul to have? Can love waste our time? I can see two trains of thought on this. One view is that if someone does not show interest, leave them be. The second, is that persistence can be good. People have pursued love just to prove they are their best mate. Sometimes we don't fall in love as fast as someone else. So, we try and push them in. Another view is jumping in too quickly only to find out it was all wrong. Where is the line that becomes wasted time? How much time should we spend trying to catch impossible things or impossible people?

I had a girlfriend in high school and I thought we were the best thing since the invention of sliced bread. I'd marry her one day. Then we split up. That was it, over and out. Someone told me to let her go. If it was meant to be, she will come back. Well, she did come back about a year and a half later. We got married and had kids too. I guess that saying was true. Yet, a friend of ours warned us not to do it. They said it wasn't right. That was crazy because she came back. Eleven years later we ended in divorce. Was all that time wasted? Did I chase fate?

The problem was this. That girl I fell for in high school, she had me with hello. That female (thing) was all I wanted. It took me a millisecond to jump back into her arms when she came back. Deep inside, she was all I ever wanted. All I had ever wished for. My goodness! Even when this woman cheated, I asked her to go sow her oats and I'll wait for her. How crazy is that. I was totally addicted to my picture of love. I thought it included her. Yet, over the years I could not possess her. Little by little I gave up everything (I was) to change. It demanded I change just to make her love me. I desperately needed to become what she wanted and she needed. It consumed me so bad that I went to counseling to fix my failings. I took anti-depressant pills because I was all wrong in the marriage. Unbeknown to me, I was being whittled

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down and destroyed one day at a time. I purchased this thing called a love picture (willingly) at the cost of me.

Eventually, she realized the truth that I was not the one. I did not share those same feelings although it was completely clear. Clearly, it was over before it was over. Why couldn't either of us see that in the beginning? It's the shiny thing we want so badly. The pretty girl my dad liked. She was all the things a guy wanted. Yet, my Ex was all the things a guy should avoid too. Who cares enough about those things? I was willing to destroy myself just to have that thing. The trouble with things is that they come and go. There is always the next thing. The one thing you don't want is to be with the "next" thing. You don't really want to be the "next" thing either. That never goes well.

All the wasted time sitting in the doctor's office. All the time taking pills I didn't need. All the worry, guilt, and thinking how much it was my fault. A fault that pointed out to me that I did not deserve the thing I wanted. Then there is the person who says *yes, but some people work it out. Some people should be pursued. It's not wasted time if you love them that much.* There inlays the rub. Hmm... Maybe you are the special one who wins. What if you just need to try a little bit harder. I got to tell you, with about six or seven billion people on this planet, that person (thing) you want is so special that they become your obsession? The only one (out of billions) that could possibly be Mr. or Mrs., right? Seriously? One thing I have learned in being married a second time. There is at-least one other person you can love. Possibly, someone else could love you too.

So, if it's not working should you leave? Just find another Mr. or Mrs., right. The thing with "things" is that they are all shiny in their own way. Yet, they are still a thing. The next girl just might be more like the first girl, but has different warts. The next guy just might be better in

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bed but worse in companionship. It's not that people are just things. Yet, we treat them that way. I want that person (thing). I feel great with that thing. When our desire for happiness revolves around a person or thing, Houston we have a problem.

The word "thing" is pretty simple. The dictionary basically says "a thing" is anything. Rocket science, right? It could describe a meeting, person, or a car. It's a strange word. Usually, you can pare it down to a single definition. Oh, no, not with this word. It's anything you want. Wasted time comes into play when you give some "thing" too much importance. So much pedestal space that you become smaller than you should be. What is missing rent to gambler? Punching a wife after drinking? What thing would change you? Even in church, I have seen pastors get so wrapped up in the God thing that people become secondary. Do you think God thinks people are secondary? Does he get wrapped up, distracted, and consumed? To God "things" are just that, "things." They are not as important than character, love, compassion and people.

The Bible warns against lust, pride, and many other things like adultery. People say adultery is not so bad. Oh really? How is deciding your spouse is not as good as someone else you want when your married? How can that be a good thing? Is it good for the spouse or the kids? I am going to say it now. Here it is. It is a waste of time chasing things. I suspect most careers fall in our laps. For a guy, how many girls could fall in our laps within a world of around 4 billion women? Is a cool car worth sacrificing everything else? I knew a woman who was a skin flint. She wouldn't really spend a dime on anything. Through the years, she loved to talk about their stocks. Their upgraded Winnebago. Then she retired and died soon after. Everything she owned went to her husband's second wife. My point? Don't be consumed with things. They are just things. Her whole life was spent by gathering things for someone else.

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No matter what we do in life, gathering things is a bad idea. Now let's not get silly. One car is fine. Three cars are silly. At any one time you can only drive one car. It's physics. My Dad is helping a guy build his house. They have an elevator to access four floors. There is a plant room, sauna room, and games room. I think there are at least six bedrooms each with a bathroom and walk-in closet. Here is the kicker. There are two people living in this house. Two!!! There isn't even a pool. Shameful! When I met my second wife, she had thirty-four pairs of jeans in her closet. Of course, she disputed it, so I counted them. Yep, she did not know she had thirty-four pairs of Jeans. Generally, you wear one pair at a time. What thing do you need thirty-four pairs of? Do two people need a mansion?

What things do you chase, desire, and gather? I am not here to bash people who own stuff. We all do. I know several garages in my neighborhood that are so full that the cars won't fit in them. I knew a lady that had a table covered with things six feet high. Where was the table? Lost deep within those things. Where was I in my first marriage? Lost within things. What things? Trying to mold my marriage into my picture of love. Trying to please a wife at all costs. Doing things like working all the overtime, raising the kids, and being overtired. What I really had no time for was loving my wife, me, or life. There was no time. We chase far too many unreasonable things just to pile them up under more stuff. We get buried in the end and the marriage ended up six feet under too.

Lumping people into the category called "things" seems so cold. People are not just things. True! Yet, people can become things. We can obsess over them. We can deny ourselves to be with them. I knew a guy who married his high school sweetheart. They divorced after about fifteen years. She cheated and he returned. Then she cheated again and he returned. Finally, he married another woman. She left him. Now he is married yet again. Don't tell me we don't treat

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people as things. Is marriage a thing to that man? I do think we fall in love. Just make sure they fall in love with you too. Marry them because you like their person more than what they do. People change. Don't make a person into something you adore, worship, and give yourself up for. Love their way, character, and style. Don't expect them to be what you desire or want in their person. What happens when they change over time, and they will. Your lover just might become a thing to be despised.

Don't waste your time chasing what does not really want to be caught. I know there is love at first sight. I have been there. It probably wouldn't help but a sign should be posted at all the high school entrances. "Ninety five percent of high school marriages end in divorce." Why? People change! From the age of seventeen to thirty they change a lot. Just let that roll around in your brain, ninety-five percent of high school marriages crumble. What if that sign saved twenty percent of them? How to not waste time 101. It begins with knowing what you want in yourself and in your spouse. Highschool is a thing we experience. So is work and events like a party. Don't attach a person to those feelings or good times. People are so much more than a skier or accountant. We tend to make that love picture all about what you see for them. Yet, rarely is it who they really are. It's wasted time falling for someone within the moment's attachments. Moments fade and reality bites. Just don't turn your relationships into a thing. A love picture thing.

Enough, talking about people. Chase them on your own time. How do we waste time with things? Like I said, we chase a picture of love. How much time are you willing to waste chasing love? I bet real love does not need to be chased. I have heard countless stories of people randomly falling in love by accident. The problem is that we don't look for the right signs. We

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don't want to hear the truth. We waste so much time shutting out the obvious because we want what we want. We see it and want it. The "it" is a thing.

Have you bought a car or jacket you could not afford? Did you buy that drink and it started a seven-day binge? So much wasted time has been experienced scrambling to fix our messes. My inability to listen cost me over twelve years with one woman who really didn't like me in the first place. Then it took me probably ten more years to find myself. That same "self" I denied in the mirror for years and years. You should not be totally lost at thirty-three years. old. I'll say this as plainly as I can. I don't put that much stock in things after my divorce. I love my current wife a ton but I would not sell my soul to keep her. I love my computer but I would not miss rent to have one. Things (to me) are just not that big as they used to be. They are just things.

Things are a collection of what? They are just stuff really. I have bought around nine cars in sixteen years. Been on countless trips. Does the first car or last trip mean as much as the next one? One day in the mall we saw a lineup that went for blocks. What were they lined up for? It was the latest iPhone. Good Lord! Lining up for hours over a new phone that you could have next week. I might line up for concert tickets or a one-time sporting event. Even they come and go, I get those special lineups. A phone? Sure, I would take a chance and walk up to a cute girl and ask her out. Stand in a line with other guys trying to woo her? Not! There are other fish in the sea. I sure don't think that way these days. If she needs to be hunted then I'm out. There is so much tunnel vision out there. We see that special person and want them so badly that nothing else matters. It's a phone people! It's a person! You don't need to line up for hours to buy a phone. To climb over mountains, oceans, and hills to have someone. That means you just crossed a sea of people just to have that special one on the other side. Really?

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We have been trained to think things matter more than they do. There are practical things and there are other things like three cars and a billion dollars. What about memories, feelings, and points in time. Are they a waste of time too? As in many things it's a yes and no answer. I have had discussions with many people on what we really need in life. In all honesty, my wife would like a bigger house. In all honesty I'd like a bigger stereo. I do have my eye on things. In high school I focused on girls. I focused on sports. It wasn't my thing to focus on homework, my future, and careers. I spent about eighteen years outside of high school focusing on living and working; parenting and my marriage. I want to kibosh the notion that life's trials made me who I am today. I suppose that's true. Yet, if I had not wasted so much time chasing things early on, I might have created a better life down the road. Instead, I wasted years doing all sorts of things that led me to look in the mirror (at some point) not knowing what I saw. Are all those points in time worth being lost at thirty-three years. old?

It's true, we don't need as much as we think. We do need experiences. We do need success and failures to shape us. Yet, what could we become? What could we have experienced if we took the time to stop and count our time? Wasted time is all about looking for the next thing. Looking anywhere but where we are. Patrick, the past is the past. That is true but the future is the future too. Some bright whip is going to say *I'm too old now*" Did some bright whip say all those years ago *I'm young, there is plenty of time*? I have sat in the cancer center with my wife. I guarantee you that all those folks were not saying there is plenty of time. Yet, I'm fairly sure they wanted a future. Had each of them wished they had done more with their lives. Did they wished they had not wasted so much time?

It does not take a rocket scientist to know that we are the sum of our experiences. What if we could control some of those experiences? Maybe change wasted time into opportunities to

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succeed and fail. Why must other people decide what we experience? Why must someone tell us who we should be and what we should do? After high school graduation I worked. It's all I did: a life of working for my family. Oh, I worked a ton. On my divorce papers is a comment by my Ex-wife *he was always working and was never really there for us*. I got to tell you that stung. If she preferred me at home then why had I wasted my time working so much? Just before our split-up I had worked a tremendous amount of overtime to take a family trip. Later on, I found out she hated the trip. It was part of why she left me. Don't waste your time just working. We are made for more than that.

I got to tell you. All those experiences from eighteen to thirty-three years old were mainly wasted time. All the things I was focused on were not focused on me. Those experiences used an empty shell of a man until it needed me no more. If I had gone to school first, then my experiences would have changed. If I had placed more importance on me, then my experiences would have changed. Possibly my thirties would have been more productive. I basically spent ten years (my thirties) discovering myself. This is not about wallowing in the past. I just want you to know that we are the sum of what we allow. The sum of the things we place importance on. It's wasted time when "we" are not included in our plans. You matter too. It's this way. You will waste time pleasing things and gathering things, or you will most certainly waste time rediscovering yourself later on when the things you held dear move on to the next thing.

I know some are saying *it is what it is, life happens*. I am just asking you; do you get to dictate any of the terms of who you become? There was a movie called "sliding doors." In it, the woman came to the sliding doors of a train. In that moment she makes two choices. One to enter and one to turn back. It was an interesting movie. The character split in two going two different paths. Both paths affected their friend's lives differently. She changed as well. I'm not writing

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about wasted time as something to mourn. It's not about wishing you could change it all. No, it's about changing your path choices from this moment forward. You can learn a thing or two from our past experiences. One of those things is how we treat ourselves. I was asked by a councilor if I had ever treated myself to a candy bar. Realize this, I was thirty-three years old. I answered no, I was always thinking of others first. She told me that was noble but foolish. Ask yourself this, who do you live with in the dark? In your private time? Do you think of that person? Love that person? Do you treat that person with honor and respect like you do the other things in your life?

We are in a shaming culture. People think this is a recent trend. People are now shaming their gender. Shaming skin color and life choices. Yet, I grew up in the 70's shaming culture. Your hair is too long and your pant cuffs are too short. They shamed us for the music we listened to and who we associated with. Shaming has always been there. Part of the shame game has been to put others first. Putting yourself first incites the shame of pride, selfishness, and arrogance. *Oh, you're just showing off. You're just being stuck up.* I have heard it all. I'd imagine the person in the mirror becomes a shameful thing to give a candy bar too. How dare I put myself first!

The people within your past did shame you just a little. They influenced your decisions in the future. We are just a little tentative with ourselves. People now do a self-check before they go into public. Are my clothes offensive? Did I choose my words wisely? Can I post it or choose to hide it? Some people from our past have influenced how we choose to live now. Maybe, we made these choices due to how people treated us in the past? It's not about firebombing people from your past. It's about recognizing who you associate with in the future. I hate to burst your bubble but you are the most important person you know. The most important person you can love. Just love everyone else first your whole life and see how that works out? You have no dreams? You have no desires? No favorite things? Instead, you're doing everyone else's favorite

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things. It's nice, noble, and heroic, but it's destructive to you and to those around you. You're not just a plaything that someone takes out of the closet when they need you. No, you're a real live person who loves real things. Yes, things that others don't.

So, here inlays the crux of it. Deep inside, people want to experience life just as much as another person does. When you deny yourself that pleasure all hell breaks loose? I'll look good on the outside while the inside screams. I'll sneak a bottle. I'll sneak sex from another. I'll sneak out to gamble. The unhappy public "you" creates a private "you" that nobody knows. How often when trouble hits do people say *I never thought that about them*. They said that because you lived two lives. Within those two lives you served two people: those around you and your inner desires. The two shall never meet. Oh, but they do meet because you can't serve two masters. Your brain will have a hard time choosing. In comes the mess that depression, suicide, and addiction cause. That's the destruction of trying to serve two things at once.

In my past marriage I will admit that I called my wife my own private nightmare. It was a terrible thing to say. She had every right to leave eventually. The reality was that I served her. Rightly or wrongly, I served her. Did I ever serve me? I secretly served myself porn. An addiction that I offered my wife. I secretly worked too much. Then I offered the family the money. This spiral twisted up until I hit anger, depression, and frustration. A frustration that said my wife was my private nightmare. No, I was my private nightmare. Not once did I ever ask her what she wanted in life. Not once did I ever ask myself what I wanted in life. This was not on her. I was only chasing things and not chasing me. My Ex took the fallout of my foolish endeavor to serve the wrong things.

You could see it in the things around me. We bought a TV and a car. We tried hard to pay off the mortgage. Yet, we never went away or on a date. How little did we spend on frivolous

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things like clothes and candy bars? Everything I did was to serve anyone but me. In the end I was serving things. I never even really served her either. I served a thing called marriage, the family, and a very small life. Think hard about this. My Ex became a thing to serve “my own private nightmare.” Work became a chore because I worked for money and not for fun. Yes, work can be fun! What about my kids? Did they ever really know me in their first five years? I knew a guy that worked two full time jobs. He died and I often joked that his kids did not know who the funeral was for. In my kids first five years daddy worked all night and slept all evening. Exactly when did we meet?

What do we desire? What are the things we would die for? A few of us were fixing music problems for an online church service. We ran into some technical issues with music. It came down to this. What is the hill to die on? Do we chance certain music and possibly get flagged for copyright, or do we protect the service and the message? The message was a hill to die on. The music was not. Better to save one and spare the other. It’s that way with things too. What are your hills to die on? A new phone? That pretty girl over there that loves to party? That rough good-looking guy that seems nice (seems). How about a job that is mundane? What is worth sacrificing a fun life? A fun job or money?

The reason I’m harping on how we view things is related to time and fun. Isn’t life supposed to be fun? I wonder sometimes if humans love living a tormented life. It’s just a job. It’s just sex, a spouse, or car. Yes, even a car. I stayed with my Ex even though I hated my marriage. I stayed with a job sixteen years even though I could not stand the company. I’ve been in this company thirty-five years now. When is a job or life supposed to be fun? Some well-meaning Christian will say it will be fun in heaven. In heaven! So, we are to experience no fun for about eighty odd years on this rock?

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Why do we choose to live? What do we live for? To be in a lineup for a new phone? Here is a breakdown of my thoughts on things. Let's say I did not date in high school. I went to university. I traveled Europe instead. Would I have had a crisis moment in my thirties? Maybe, but maybe not. I let life run me over when school ended. All my hopes and dreams died that day. I let life dictate who I married. Did fate demand it was her? Life dictated me being a father, staying in a thankless job, and doing nothing in my life. I realize not everyone is a star or writes a book. Yet, didn't the guy who invented the Hoola Hoop make a difference? Didn't my grade eight math teacher? Yes, I made a difference in my kids' lives. I swear I did not affect them half as much as I could. I worked midnights and was never there.

Are we wasting time gathering things? I gained a house, wife, and kids. I gathered stereo's, hockey cards, and books. There is meaning in those things. Yet, wouldn't I still have those things if I worked on me first? How much more could I have gathered between 20 and 40 years old if I worked on me first? My whole theory on things is this. We take the time to stand in lines and gather. We spend time chasing the opposite sex. We struggle in jobs, and struggle in finances. We all do. Yet, why do it this way? Why is it called the norm? Must we have all these things like marriage and money as fast as we can. It's like we have been conditioned through the games Monopoly and Life to gather as fast as we can. Yet, the more we chase and gather the more we waste time gathering.

There is a time to gather. There is more time to do that than we have been led to believe. Do you think that if you built up the (individual you) first that all these things would not fall in your lap? How about the girl that had big dreams? Then she got pregnant and many of her dreams faded away. She wanted love so bad. Do you think that the ones who went to university first did not find themselves during and after school? Didn't they find relationships after? Didn't

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they gather things along the way and after school ended? I suspect that they gained more. These people gained wisdom, education, and some great memories. What if they found themselves before they married? Isn't it better to know what you love before you buy it? I feel many people just buy, buy, buy, because they think they know. Just try out several girls. Try out several cars and careers. How much money is wasted trying? Build a life first and then live it. Duh! It's not rocket science.

Someone said *if you don't try then you won't know*. I say that is a lie. Try the right thing by knowing you a little better first. My daughter asked me how she can get a few important items. I told her to prioritize them. She seemed confused. The game or water bottle seemed more important than a blanket or a new wallet. I asked her to put all these things in a list from necessary to life and not so much. The blanket and wallet came first. Yet, that was not what her heart wanted. That is, it in a nut shell. We see a new phone and want it. The rent is necessary but it can wait. Why? It's because rent and socks do not pull on the heart. How can you prioritize if you don't have a handle on your own heart?

You know why marketing on Facebook only advertise what we click like on. It's watching our heart working. It knows what your heart's desire wants. Why do we not see advertisements for clothes and blankets half as much as cars and phones? We subconsciously press 'like' on our desires. In life we do it too. Sure, I could go to school but dam she is pretty. I could marry later and work on me. Yeah, but that takes time and has a worse sex life. Instead, we are pressing "like" on the next heart's desire.

I am convinced without a doubt that we have wasted a portion of our lives gathering things we would have eventually had anyways. Some business people say "time is money." How true is that! My theory is that the faster we chase things the more money is lost. Purchasing

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things needs to be focused and pointed. Instead, we cast our wallet wide and try it all. I read a book years ago called “I kissed dating goodbye” by Joshua Harris. He contended that dating was a waste of time because the right girl will come in time. Why mess around with the wrong girl. Instead, why not focus on becoming the best person for the right girl. How do we roll? Be half assed for the wrong girl. Duh! Divorce rates!

If we don't let things dictate our time then money will be saved. Time will be saved too. Who is the authority on time and money? I say God is, but on earth who is? I also contend you are. Far too often we let the media and people dictate where our money goes. Yes, God provides. Yet, the final decision is on you. It's your time and wallet. We gather far too many things. We focus on way too many desires. One of the things I have done in the last twenty years is slow down. I focus on three things: body, mind, and soul. I read, workout, and listen to God. I'd like to think this world has slowed down. I spend less. I worry less, stress less, and gather less things. Clearly, we all need a lot more of ourselves and a whole lot less of things.

In the next chapter I want to explore this further. There are several people I'd like to unpack in their story. Why are they where they are? How did the pursuit of things, life, marriage, and status change them? Why are they not happy today? What is really wrong in their lives? They are chasing the dream instead of building a solid life. Their lives have crumbled directly because they have put too much importance on things. They should have taken care of themselves. Built their own brand. The chase of life at high speed led to their misery. These people were so busy trying to win and gather that they inadvertently did not become the bright beacon that would have attracted the right mate, and attracted the right career. They may have not even attracted the right life.

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The things in this world are not that important! You need not sacrifice yourself to have them. They don't really care that much about you. Why? There just things. Don't waste that much time on them. Besides, you only have so much time anyways. You might as well live a fun life with the time you have. It's would be no fun sitting in a cancer clinic realizing you wasted your time chasing the wrong things.