

Chapter 3 (People)

People are people so why should it be you and I should get along so awfully- Depeche

Mode

I fear that people act like a broken record far too much. Their actions reflect history just repeating itself over and over again. Commonly, many people literally keep making the same mistakes. It's a rule of thumb that we should not generalize statements. You know the ones like society does, people do, and we all. I was encouraged in university to not generalize statements. Yet, people are people. I fear a ton of time is wasted trying to make ourselves happy. Conversely, we use people to do it. One tries to be a people pleaser to keep the peace. Another is afraid of not being accepted, so they compromise. Some people just want to be loved at all cost. So, the history of abuse plays on and on like a broken record. Wasted time loves people.

How many women stay with a bad man in hope of love? I have read stories of children being killed by a terrible boyfriend of the mother. In one story, a man fathered a few of the daughter's children. One sister said "that was the way it was." In the end, the mom killed one daughter to keep the story quiet. A woman cheats and the husband returns. She cheats again and he stays. A third time, and she takes the husband to court for the payments of another man's child. All of this mess could have easily been avoided if he had just walked away from a bad apple. Instead, he reached deep into the barrel creating years of wasted time.

Now, I've said this before, wasted time is subjective. Who knows why people do what they do? We could subjectively guess? Many people pass through our lives on a constant basis. I suppose each of us has a close circle of friends or a spouse that reflect who we are. Yet, family is different. We are like them but not like them. Family are people grown together in a home petri dish. Yet, we are different in so many ways. Whomever you encounter, they take up your time. I

Chapter 3 (People)

believe we learn from these people. They tend to demand much of our time. I suppose we spend a certain amount of that time pleasing them too. Subjectively, is it wasted time?

I can see a theme working its way into this book. Wasted time is a yes and no answer. Yes, people will change you. Why? It's because we can't avoid them. In the ancient world you could social distance yourself on a continent. Yet, with over seven billion people roaming around you these days we just can't avoid another person's bubble. I find the most common way we distance ourselves from people is with our mind. People play video games or maybe they read while being alone. Electronics has given us a way to shut people off. To keep people out of our real lives. We can walk around not seeing a thing with our nose stuck in a book. I believe we do this directly because we know that people affect us. Is social distancing all about trying to hold onto a piece of ourselves? So, yes, we could waste time avoiding people, and no, we need time apart from them.

People will force your hand when they look into your eyes. You have to look at them. Years ago, I had a conflict with my Ex. Duh, that's why she is the Ex! However, she made this comment "*your words say something but I see "you" in your eyes.*" That has stuck with me forever. I now look in the mirror and see those words in my eyes. What story are my eyes telling you? What this has taught me is about hiding. Many of us try not to make eye contact. We know that our all thoughts and fears are exposed though the eye. What better way to hide than by looking at a book or video game?

So, what does this have to do with people and wasted time? We hear people speak. Yet, many of us do not look into the eyes and watch them speak. A harsh word from loving eyes is good. Loving words from someone with cold dark eyes is bad. I fear that we waste a ton of time trying to interpret the words we did and did not hear. Yet, part of reading someone is with the

Chapter 3 (People)

eyes. That is where misconceptions arise. So, people then spend countless hours deciphering words. We roll them around in our brains asking ourselves questions like “*what did I do wrong*” and “*why did they say that?*” I love the other one “*what was that look for?*” It’s one of the human pastimes called *deciphering what people think of us*. How much time is wasted trying to understand people while not using all our tools like the eyes?

It’s not so much that time is wasted with people. It’s more that we spend time thinking about what people say and do. A certain amount of time deciphering the actions of others is good. We all need to take more time to understand and know people better. Yet, if we don’t add the eye test then some part of the knowledge is missing. Hence, people spend wasted time thinking and analyzing too much. The answer just might have been there at the beginning? It’s found in their eyes.

Have you ever known siblings to have a strained relationship for twenty years? Why? Is it possible that words got in the way? How should we solve problems? With texts? With emails? How about a face-to-face coffee date? You know people are people. That’s not generally how we roll with conflict. If it was that easy then strained long-term relationships would be few and far between. I am betting we have all had one. There I go again using a general term like all. Yet, I have asked around and many people have at-least one strained relationship. In so many instances we just let troubled relationships fester. We don’t like face to face confrontation. I’m betting we don’t want them to see our fear, insecurities, and the vulnerability in our eyes. Instead, distance screams “*I’m right*” or “*you owe me an apology!*” How often when strained relationships actually meet is there tears, hugging, and forgiveness? I bet it’s a lot.

Have you ever had your dog nip at you? Usually, we will forgive a dog for that. At some point we are scratching their ears and speaking baby tones too them. The dog is all about love.

Chapter 3 (People)

The nip is forgotten because that is what dogs do. Nips come from humans too. Yet, forgiveness is not that easy for us. When a person barks or bites at us we don't tend to scratch them behind the ears in love. It's like this. Pastor J Vernon McGee always kidded "you're in good company with your thoughts, but if you want to be right then chose mine." He is kidding. Yet, is he? A human nip gets this reaction "*how dare you.*" "*I am right and you need to apologize.*" So much time is wasted being angry without all the facts. Who cares why dogs nip, their dogs? We do care why people do.

My suggestion is stop right now. Stop trying to understand people without the eyes. I had a very strained relationship with my mom. To be fair (to me), she was a difficult person towards everyone. Yet, I suffered (probably her too) though thirteen years of silence because we could not talk properly. We lived over a thousand miles apart. How often had I seen her in the last twenty years? A handful? Thirteen years is a lot of wasted time brooding on both sides. Then she died. What I'm saying is go fix your misunderstandings face to face. There is a chance your eyes could solve the problem. Distance won't. It only creates more wasted time thinking, analyzing, and brooding.

Time will be spent working with people. The other day I served with a church group for the first time. One guy said that I am too easy to work with. That is funny (sort of). My boss at work has also told me I am low maintenance. I like that. I'm not Jesus. I do however try and work with people. One thing God gave me is this thought. Each person we meet was a child at one time. They have been changed by the world. Love the child and try and understand what is going on inside them. Half the time we will find out that adults are not that far from the child they once were. Kids make mistakes. They have fear and lack understanding. Isn't that a snapshot of those we work with? People complain without all the facts. They goof around on the

Chapter 3 (People)

job. I think people like to waste time at work directly because they wish they were still kids. Work can be serious business. Yet, sometimes we just need a playground. So, I play with them at work. I try and have fun. I do spend a certain amount of time listening and trying and understand. My limited time with people at work is not spent despising them. Instead, it's all about understanding their inner child.

However, there are some individuals we cannot reach. Try as we may, it will go badly. My mother loved confrontation. It was her thing. Why? I'm betting she had a very active mind. Late at night I'm sure she pondered more than she dreamed. My mom perceived more than she laughed. I have received so many four-page emails from her late at night. She would just explode. We will get into this deeper in another chapter. For now, let's just say that we need to try with people. It's probable and most likely that you will find common ground and understanding if you try. People are not all that hard to read if you're using your eyes. I think the eyes see and feel more than the words we hear. Stewing late at night just might make us hard to live with during the day.

Make three lists in your head and heart. The first of these is: *who are my dearest friends*. They are the ones you can tell everything to without fear of judgment and retribution. The second list are people you trust but *are more likely surface friends*. They are usually workmates, some family, and friends. Why are they not on the first list? There is just surface talk with them. You might discuss work or the weather. They volunteer with you. We won't tell them our life story because they are not that close. That includes family. I fear too much time is wasted trying to let people (in the wrong list) get close to you. Only certain people can handle your personal life. Your dearest friends can handle all of you. Surface friends don't want to. Some are just closer than others.

Chapter 3 (People)

Finally, we have *a block list*. That seems so nasty. A list like that is harsh and unloving. Yet, harsh, bad, and unforgiving individuals will suck the life right out of you. How much time should you spend getting your life drained? None! It's a tough thing to do but some people need to see the hand. The answer is *talk to the hand, I am saying no*. Yes, you are blocked on social media. How much negativity should you allow purposefully in your life? None! The world gives us enough of that. Don't keep some special negativity in your life just because your nice. Here is the rule of thumb on this one: 1 Corinthians 15:33 "*do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."*" I dropped the mic here.

Again, do people waste our time? You see I don't really think so. If we communicate properly' then certain people are in our lives for a reason. It should become clear: who we are close to you and who are just surface friends. People don't waste our time half as much as we like to think. We tend to place them in the wrong list. We can learn something from everything and everyone. From burning a finger to divorce there are things to be learned. Some say that God gave us cats and dogs to love us. Conversely, we love them to death as well. What if He gave us people? No matter who we encounter, it's all knowledge to be gained. Bad people give us caution. Good people make us love better. People are invaluable. Is it possible our good nature is invaluable to them too? Yet, to make the best of our time with people, we need to share deeply with the right people and distance ourselves from the wrong people.

Yes, a dog is man's best friend. Yes, a diamond is a girl's best friend. How many best friends do we have? It's strange but I wonder if this is true for many. Both of my wives are not friends with their maid of honor anymore. Why is that? We need people in our lives. I know so many people who said that wedding planning can be hell. From family to friends, we want people involved. Yet, why are there fights and agendas within a wedding? So much time seems

Chapter 3 (People)

to be wasted by who we choose to be close with. I wonder if those brides' maids were surface friends elevated to maid of honor? There are somethings that surface friends can't handle that close friends can. It's just that way. Why don't people let their pet be the best man or maid of honor? It just might have saved some wasted time arguing.

Family are people (I suppose). Why do we not get along (all that well) with family? Shouldn't they be above friends? The problem is simple. We pick friends but we don't get to pick family. There is freedom in being able to pick and choose who you spend time with. We are forced (by blood) to spend time with family. How much time do we waste trying to fit people into places they don't belong? I know that family is blood. It's too personal for our private lives. Maybe we see ourselves in them. Time with family can be so good. I loved those dinners and trips. Yet, our memories are small points in time. We all make much larger lives outside of family. I am not as close to family as I wish I was. With family, I prefer social distancing. I like my friends better. Don't waste your time trying to make family more than it is.

If there is one thing this virus isolation has taught me, we do desire people. I think people complete us. They say we need to self-isolate. Yet, I can assure you that people are coming out of the woodwork. Sure, people are trying to be cautious. Social distancing is working (sort of). However, I think we are beginning to hate it after about nine months. I was working on an Easter drive-in project (outside) for my church. The whole idea was to invite people to stay in their cars and watch the church service. It worked well. Yet, the crew setting up found themselves gathering, laughing, and conversating too much. After the event the pastor went around handing out food and water to the volunteers. We are not big fans of social distancing. I think we genuinely need people.

Chapter 3 (People)

It's a waste of time to purposely avoid people. What will you know without people? The news reports (not really) inform us. Music speaks to our feelings. Books tickle our brains. A sermon and lecture instruct us. Every little piece of visual and audible information can change us. Who created it all: it's people? What I'm saying is that it's never a waste of time with people. Every single one of those mediums are an extension of people. The scientist tells us. The music singer tells us. The book writer informs us. They are all people giving us a piece of themselves and what they know.

We are an incomplete picture. People are the missing pieces. How many people do you know who have said "*after all this time I did not know?*" It's a harsh fact that we are prideful creatures. We think we know more than we really do. All through our lives we think we know stuff. I was so sure that Christians were stupid. Believing in God was weak, petty and crazy. There is no God. Yet, one night I changed that stance when a person (Dr. Laura) gave me her point of view. I needed that. I do believe that I am ten times the person just because she added something to me.

A grade eight teacher added wisdom to me. My dad has affected me. I have a high school friends' group for over forty years. They have enhanced my life. If I was a puzzle, each person is a piece. I like certain music because of one friend. I love TV shows because of my current wife. Even my kids have added to me. Many other people fit into my life. I hopefully fit in theirs too. They teach us what they know. My dad always said that if he does not know something then he asks people a ton of questions. It's just that simple. Have you ever met those people who have an answer for everything? Do they know or do they want you to know? I have often wondered if they are just scared of not knowing. Imagine the time wasted not wanting to know more? People help you know more. I watch YouTube broadcasts about music, scientist, religion, and comics. I

Chapter 3 (People)

have never officially read a comic. Yet, I love comic expos and YouTube reviews. All types of information make us better people.

I suppose you could say that keeping time to yourself is smart. People are just a wind bag of wasted time. I say isolation is a waste because you are not sharing yourself. You are also not letting others share their life with you. Imagine the curator of a funeral home being the only one at your funeral. That person only knows about lowering the dead into the ground but they don't know you. In fact, nobody knew you? Imagine an archeologist finding your remains a thousand years later. No story, no artifacts, and no name. You just reduced to site 577. I can't imagine anyone wanting too purposely be nothing.

Isn't that a wasted life? All that time given to you and you never really existed. Would it be wasted time being missed, expected, and loved? Being given time to live should be a gift we look forward to like a present or a cake? What if your opinion changed me? It gave us something (we needed) to look forward to. Yes, we need people. I suppose we need the bad ones like a hole in the head. My wife and I were in Oahu. The cast of *Lost* were doing a last season red-carpet parade in-front of us. We had never watched the show. Yet, we stood there for hours waiting for them to arrive. People mean something to us. We went home and binge watched it. Those people at that event changed our lives. Maybe the ending of that show wasted our time.

People are also great "time" speed bumps. They can waste our time by having us slowly go over or around them. On the other hand, we could hit them unexpectedly giving our lives a jolt. However, people can help us with time management too. We have to slow down and love. Slow down and listen. Maybe we have to wait for others. I have felt that I wasted time with certain humans. You can't get it back. Yet, fate, providence or even maybe something divine felt you needed them. I hated the worst class in university. What the professor was asking of us was

Chapter 3 (People)

impossible. Yet, we all stuck it out. Each student has said they are better people directly because of that course. What seems like wasted time just might possibly be a blessing. What if fighting through people speed bumps was important?

People will challenge our time management. I am a sucker for women. If you want to distract me, just put a woman in my life. I had picked up my marks in Junior high school. Then I hit grade ten and women. My marks plummeted from the 95's to the 30's. I did manage to rescue my marks later. Later on in life, I became single (for several years) and was doing pretty well at being a Christian. Then another "she" came into my life. It's not pretty after that. My Christianity was bombed for a period of time. Yes, I managed to rescue my faith, but women are my downfall. What messes with your time management?

We are addicted to all types of people. This is interesting and tragic. I have wanted to honor good people in this world. So, I picked a person or two that I follow and promote. They were good people. They did great things. It's not about idolizing them half as much as telling their story of being good people to the world. Then Tiger Woods cheated on his wife. Another Christian artist went a different route in life. My beloved Taylor Swift started being different. In the end I had wasted time trying to make some people look good. It's no different for me with women. I have tried to elevate them beyond where they should be. To make sure they were my queen on a pedestal. Yet, I have had some terrible disasters within relationships. It feels like wasted time.

Now, let's be fair. Time spent learning from people is a great investment. However, expecting people to be what you want them to be; rather-than, what they really are is a recipe for disaster. Within my teenage years, it might have been better for me to be interested in my life first. To be a model of consistency for others. How ironic that I changed when girls entered my

Chapter 3 (People)

life. Hmm... why did things go wrong? Didn't they expect a rock? A consistent person in me? When your single the most important thing you can do is create a consistent person. Be who you are and not what others need or want you to be. Healthy relationships need to "begin" with a healthy strong "you." The worst thing is not knowing who you are while you're in a relationship. I suspect it's that way in many relationships. Who are you to those around you? What I'm painfully trying to say is don't waste your time (or theirs) being someone else. Don't waste your time trying to see someone as their not either. Be a strong investment in others.

I have a friend in Christian circles that says his life has meaning within his church. Oh boy, do I tell him? Do I let him in on the secret? People are in the church. In fact, the worst trait of a church is fake people. You know the ones. They pray, serve, and look squeaky clean. Yet, it's the Christian iceberg. There is the little bit that they let you see and a ton below the surface that's hidden. The worst thing my friend can do is put stock in people. I'm sorry but your defining features should come from your own life, church included. That should also include your hobbies, work, and interests. No one thing should define you. Certainly, not anything that involves imperfect creatures called humans.

Here is how you could waste time. I knew a guy that worked all the time. He was furious when they did not offer him overtime. The crazy part is this. One morning he and his wife began their commute to work. At some point he began to have chest pain. She begged him to turn around and head to the doctor. They turned back. Yet, along the way he said he felt better. Somehow, this man convinced her to return to work. Yep, he died. We are more than church. We are more than work. What do we put so much stock in that nothing else matters (including health)? They say that God gives us at-least three spiritual gifts to use in a church. We are not made one dimensional. Why? Because we tend (as humans) to make things our idol or God.

Chapter 3 (People)

People need to be multifaceted and multidimensional. It's a terrible waste of time trying to be defined by one thing.

In the Bible I might have idolized a man named Paul or David. Yet, if I knew them personally, I might think differently about them. Trying to find good people is impossible. I think it's a waste of time looking. Instead, I suggest that you to wait until good people are noticed. You will find them when their good deeds find you. Some people look for a mate. If you look at the history of dating its trial and error. That history is also filled with accidental introductions. It's when goodness finds goodness. That is hopefully how love begins. Sometimes were trying to force goodness to appear.

The trouble is in the looking. The trouble is in adjusting your life to find it. Don't waste your time. People that are your type will gravitate towards the things you love. Imagine finding a spouse doing the things you like too? How novel is that! I tell the story of a friend of mine who gave up on the dating race. He decided to go on a singing tour with another group of students across the country. A girl that he liked (unbeknown to him) decided to do the same thing. On the bus they met in the last two seats. They have been married for quite some time. He decided to not waste his time dating. Instead, he invested within himself and his talents. Yet, love found a way through.

We waste so much time trying to put people on pedestals. Enjoy them but know they are just people. Putting up posters and trinkets that remind you of them takes time. It also takes time removing them when they disappoint you. I think it might be better surrounding yourself with things that inspire you like quotes. Things that make you feel warm like pictures of fantastic sunsets. People on the other hand? Be cautious. They are human. People are people. We love to love them. We also love to hate them. Time is wasted when you love them too much and they

Chapter 3 (People)

disappoint. Instead, you could have been using that time making this world a better place. A world that has people in it.

In the Bible there is a statement within Romans 12 that says *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.”* In English it means that we should grow up being the difference in the world. A few people have stated that we should avoid the world as Christians. No matter your faith, the world is before you. As a person you are part of the whole thing. These same people say it's tough to know God's will. Yet, it's all here in that verse. Being the best, “you” is clearly God's will. Don't waste time trying to love people more than you love yourself. Don't love alcohol or sex more than you love how God made you. That is the point. Waste time (in a good way) by getting to know you better. Don't waste time trying to make an institution or people more important than they really are. Certainly not more important than you are.

You see people can be nasty. A nag could be described as someone who wants all your time. They are a life stealer. They want their life to mean more than your life. It's a waste of time pleasing them just to make them stop nagging. That will never happen. Once they own your time then it's not yours anymore. If you allow this to persist then it never will be your time. That is a waste. Imagine waking up the day after they die. What is your time? I heard a story of an old man who lost his wife. The pastor was concerned that this man was not sad or upset. They had been married for over fifty years. The concerned pastor asked this man if he could help him with the grief. The man exclaimed “Grief!” “I'm glad the bitch is dead.” What struck the pastor the most was not the bitch word. It was fifty years hating her. The wasted time waiting for her to die.

Chapter 3 (People)

If you're that unhappy then leave. Don't let fifty years of marriage be wasted in hatred. In reality that man never thought he was worthy enough to be himself. It's not important that his wife was nasty, a nag, or possibly really nice. He chose to despise her rather than create a good life for himself. Wouldn't it be ironic if that wife died peacefully knowing she did not have to put up with him anymore? I have no right to be disappointed in Tiger Woods or Taylor Swift. They are their own person. My expectations are my wasted time. They don't know me. I am not wasting their time. Yet, putting people on pedestals and higher planes than they really are is fruitless. What difference in this world does it accomplish?

Imagine the heartache you might carry because of others. Who wasted who's time? Was it the people or you? Like I stated in the first chapter, we have been given only so much time here on earth. Will you spend a portion of it wishing, hating, hoping, and expecting? Why not live now. Be the best "you" that you can be. Make other people's time worth something. Use your own time to make this world a better place. You will probably find that you like yourself better. That you enjoy humans more than you did. Use time so that it is memorable. Wasted time is not that memorable. In the end, you just end up with wasted time.

Don't misunderstand me. We should cherish moments with people. Moments in places like a church. Make yourself available to good organizations and people. Inspire them as much as they inspire you. It's great to honor one another. Just don't make them or you too high on the totem pole. Give your all to any relationship that is decent and good. Just don't expect them to make you happy and satisfied. You will only find that within your own being.

Finally, there is another side of time? People are on one side. That includes you. The other side are things, events, and moments. What are they to you? These things are in our memories just as much as people are. Which car did you have to own? What trip was a once in a

Chapter 3 (People)

lifetime thing? The anticipation of things goes a long way in our lives. Is it wasted time having something? Do we spend needless time wanting, desiring, and coveting stuff? What events are you waiting for? Let's talk about that next.