

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

“...life allowed to waste like a tap left running.” — Virginia Woolf

It's a war between two cups. In this corner, weighing an impressive two-hundred and thirty pounds (and looking perfect) is the cup half full guy. In the other corner, weighing at an unimpressive ninety pounds is the cup half empty dude who seems so negative. The referee for tonight's epic contest is popular opinion. This won't take long because we all know that positive thoughts always beat out the negative. Ahh. sort of?

I do believe that it's the chicken and the egg scenario. Who has the rights to your life? Is it the strong positive attitude or your weak negative posturing? I tend to believe Marry Poppins singing *a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down*. Buckley's cough syrup boasts that it tastes terrible but it works. Putting a little sugar in it wouldn't hurt either. What if we need a little positive and negative to help the life go down smoothly? What if it's not about the positive taking down the negative but both of them working together for your good. To be victorious!

Last chapter I wrote about Mark. There has not been a moment in his life that he has not said “the Lord is good.” I do commend him for his cup half full mentality. Yet, that has not stopped the dumpster fire that his life has become. I do believe the Lord is good. I like to quote the Bible from time to time.

2 Timothy 3:16 *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”*

I like this verse because it says so much. The Word of God is good for instruction. It's a wonderful tool for training. The cup half full guy is doing back flips right now. Oh, oh here comes the Debbie downers screaming at the positive guy. The Word of God is good for rebuking (nasty word) too. We need to use the Word of God to correct you. Your attitude needs adjusting.

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

What negative thoughts! Isn't a life with God supposed to be all roses? The Lord is good. Medicine can taste terrible but it is good for you. The Word of God could convict you but it is a good word. What appears to be a cup half full could taste like a cup half empty. Which fighter rules your heart and mind: Mr. positive or Mr. negative? I suspect God is the trainer in both camps.

A wasted life might look like wasted time. Yet, like God's word, it might be useful for teaching and rebuking. The time spent laughing and crying might be an investment in your future. It might? Yet, more and more I am beginning to believe that struggling on purpose is a waste of time. Believing that nothing is wrong and everything is good might be wasted time too. Maybe, just maybe, we need to fix problems to see things clearly. People seem to fight for good and ignore the bad. Others spend all their time on the ropes believing their doomed. So, which is it: fight or retreat? Should we look at life half full or half empty?

It's about balance in the ring. A little dancing, deeking, and knowing your opponent. Fight to win but know when to duck. You can't be just one way. We need diverse actions to win. How do you deal with disappointment while hiding under positive blankets? Not every day is roses. Being a Debbie downer is not great either. There are times when you must pick yourself up and push ahead. I feel both can be a waste of time because they both mislead. Each one hides the truth and covers fears. Yet, its fears, triumphs, and wisdom that makes your next story even better. Don't ignore the good or the bad just to pick a safe path. Life is a battle!

I suppose it's the *what if* thing. *What if* I did not like my path? *What if* I turned around and took another road instead? *What if* I did not meet that certain person. It might come down to what you really believe about predestination and fate. Are these concepts just a few pilons, speed bumps and walls in our life? Some people believe that they are destined to fail. Always looking

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

for the other shoe to drop. I know a few kind hearted souls who always believe that things will work out. Yet, God stated that it rains on the wicked and the good. Meaning that we must accept trials and success equally.

I have heard people say certain comments about drug addicts like *what a wasted life*. There was a young boy who decided to join a gang. His father had abandoned him, yet he still desired a male role model. A place to belong. He was just sixteen. Then in came the gang violence and the arrest. How can a (now) eighteen-year-old boy go to jail for twenty-five to life? He's just a boy. Then I hear the whisper in the back room *what a waste*. Is taking a wrong path a waste? What if you need a little of both to succeed? I just fear that we celebrate success and admonish failure. Did Edison do that as he learned a thousand ways not to make a light bulb?

Can a young boy learn from his mistakes? Can his father? Edison trying a thousand ways is admired. A young boy wasting away in jail for twenty-five years is not. Will he learn a thing or two? Sure, but success for dummies isn't running his story. Some choices create wasted time. People are always telling me to look on the bright side. What is the bright side of being in jail for a quarter of your life? This generation wants admiration for failings. Sometimes all you get is wasted time.

Let's go back to the Story of Mark in last chapter. Wasn't his twenty-year tumultuous marriage to his first wife training ground and instruction for his second marriage? Does his second Ex-wife think so? Will his third wife believe that? Third time is the charm you know. Is the mess his kids have become worth the twenty-year fight? Did his mess become their mess? Is it worth the time spent struggling in a bad marriage? Was it time wasted? If Jenny (from our first story) ends up divorced after she turns fifty, will it be wasted time? Will it be lessons learned if

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

she never marries again? What if these two people had chosen to think before they stepped into those relationships all those years ago?

I just want to be clear here. What is wasted time? Could fighting through a terrible marriage for twenty years make a wasted life? What does it mean if Jenny tossed her cheating boyfriend twenty-five years before? How many tears could have been saved on a different path? I told you she ended up cheating on her husband in a revenge rage. Was the hit on her character worth it? Look at the young boy in the story above. When his dad abandoned them, did his father's actions set up his boy to waste time in jail? Or, did this boy make bad choices? I just want to be clear here. Are we destined to fail or do we choose to fail? Could we choose better? Chose to win? I'm trying to tell you that choosing to fail or win (blindly) might be a twisted path of wasted time.

“Tread Lightly, she is near, under the snow. Speak gently, she can hear the daisies grow.”- Oscar Wilde

I love quotes that we can dissect and chew on. The quote above is a warning. Look at the decisions you have made? Did you tread softly? Did you stop and listen first? In Star Wars, The New Hope, Ben says to Luke *“The Jundland wastes are not to be traveled lightly.”* It means we need to know the path we're on. To be mindful of the dangers that lurk. Ignoring pitfalls might have you fall into one. Fearing pitfalls might mean you're stuck inside one. I prefer the full cup that says we will drink of the good and the bad to be made whole. A well-rounded person just might avoid some pitfalls!

I might want to send God a sternly worded letter on how we are constructed. People are made with multiple feelings. Why give a fallible creature senses, desires, and cravings? These

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

feelings push us all over the map. What pushed Jenny to stay with her husband after each cheat? What drove her to cheat herself? What drove Mark to stay with a reckless spouse? Was it to allow his children to watch and learn? What drove me to believe I had no worth? To be a slave to another human being? It's feelings! We want to be accepted, loved, and adored. Admit it, you do. It drives us to make choices. Sometimes it's so powerful that we make choices we usually wouldn't make. Jenny and Mark desired a certain picture of love. It drove their feelings hard. Made them blind to what happiness really is.

We have eyes, ears, and a mouth for a reason. It's how we take in everything around us. I see and I gain desires. I hear half the story and passionately get mad. People even drink to feel good. I doubt most people would agree with me that we are our own maker of wasted time. Our own worst enemy. They might retort: *life makes its own way for us or we're just pawns of fate*. If that were true then clearly, something is pulling the strings. Fate is a concept not a deity. Or is it? Is nature predestined? What about survival of the fittest? I can't count how many people defend Darwin, yet say we are shackled to fate. I think it's the human way of abstaining from responsibility. What if we tend to waste the time that is given? What if it's our fault, and not fate?

It's back to the *what if!* *What if* wasted time was truly our own fault? Here I go saying a cup half full thing: *what if you can fix it, change it? What if* you can take the appearance of wasted time and turn it into something better? *What if* life does not need to be wasted at all? This Black Lives Matter thing is raging at the moment. The other day I saw someone post that a black man was killed by police. You know the drill. Yet, he was a rapist and was trying to harm his kids by defying a court order. Yet, the BLM people are enraged. Someone on twitter harmlessly

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

asked the question “what if he didn’t rape her in the first place?” Would he have been in a position to be shot?”

To me, that’s it really. What place do you put yourself in? Why are you going to jail? Why are you divorced? Did you make choices that put yourself in harm’s way? Because, if you did then, just maybe, you are to blame. I know, the blame game is possibly a cup half empty construct. Who wants to accept blame for anything? Yet, understanding your role in the stories we forge is important. Should we have to blame? Is healing and moving on only possible through solutions and carcinogen distractions to feel positive vibes. I think healing also comes from learning through mistakes. Understanding what went wrong.

A comedian said once “why wish you were somewhere else?”

“You are where you are.”

“You can’t be somewhere else at the same time.”

What if the cup becomes full by changing where you end up? The positive result came from good choices? Just randomly reacting to life is a bad way to live. Imagine trying to have consistent order as a feather in the wind. You need a solid rock to change the rules. To change where you end up. The fact is that most people float through life. Every crisis produces a hot mess. How about an unexpected bill or baby? Just view Twitter for an hour, an exorbitant amount of people pushed the panic button. We let circumstances rule us, control us, and dominate us. Why do we blindly step on awkward paths? How about knowing where you are on purpose?

We are a consumer nation. Look at people getting up at four in the morning for a new phone. Why are they up: is it because the phone is cheaper or newer? Why must you get there

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

first? It's the fear of missing out. Literally (if I'm correct) no kids have died from Covid-19. I believe it's infected very few people under twenty. Yet, I have seen posts saying kids should not return to school because they might die. Really? Did that person believe cancer or the common flu would kill their kids last year? Even with cancer, people slap on sunscreen without knowing the chemicals in it. We don't question the latest fad or view. Just slap it on blindly. It's no wonder many of us are on paths strewn in the wind. On to the next calamity! How much time do we waste needlessly panicking?

Think about it. Some of those people spent five hours waiting for a new phone. Wasted time? How many other things must they have? I know a man who believed he had a hard life of disappointment. He drinks and does drugs. Life is hard he says. Yet, at forty-nine years old he is finally trying to get a career. I hope he succeeds! Yet, how much of those forty-nine years were wasted time? Does he realize that one little girl died at nine? Another just died at eighteen. Two young girls were just erased by a serial killer without really having a chance to live. Singer Gord Downy of the rock band The Tragically Hip died at fifty-four. Kelly Preston died at fifty-seven and Michael Jackson passed on at fifty. I could go on and on. I mention these people because many of them did something great with their lives. The two young girls didn't get a chance. Yet, this forty-nine-year-old man waited until now to try. What if he tried at twenty? That would have been twenty-nine years of extra time being way more successful than he had become.

Some will say, *Patrick, a few people are late bloomers*. I could buy that except prescription drugs for depression are flying across the counter at an all-time high. Authorities are concerned about power drinks, cigarettes, and booze. What is the real reason marijuana is becoming legal all over the world? People want the ability to stand still. The ability to escape life. How much time is wasted just trying to forget or feel comfortable within calamity? Is it

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

about people being late bloomers or is it more about a fire finally was lit under their donkey and they don't like it? Honestly, growth happens when we feel uncomfortable and pushed. I don't think people realize how much time is wasted avoiding a challenge.

Again, let's go back to the Bible and listen to Ecclesiastics. Realize that the man who wrote this had gathered more money, women, and riches in his lifetime than most. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastics 3:5-7

"A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak."

What does a wasted life look like? That ecclesiastics chapter in the Bible is good stuff. Maybe we are not gathering for the right reasons. There is a time for everything. I suppose that means there is a time to fail. A time to stand in line for a new phone. The best one, in my mind, is a time to hate and a time to love. A time to hate? You see, the troubles we encounter might be found in trying to make everything ok. Keeping a joint handy. Buying two power drinks just in case one is not enough. The new phone will increase your happy hormones. That could be said for a fling or stealing something. What gives you that rush? What keeps worry, hard work, and tough times at bay? Is it anything that distracts you from reality? Possibly, you might end up forty-nine years old and wondering if it's time to test reality? Passing aside twenty-nine years while fearing failure and defeat. Oh, how he could have embraced that challenge all those years before.

Again, Patrick, some of us might not be that strong. Yes, you believe in Darwinism, right? The survival of the fittest? What if it is as simple as you're going the wrong way? You're

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

taking the bad path? Is it really that you are too weak? That life has been too hard. What if you're making it harder than it should be? I knew a woman who was in a marriage for twenty-eight years. Within those years she also claimed that her husband raped and abused her repeatedly. For twenty-eight years! At what point was it enough? In the first year, fifth, tenth, twenty-fifth or twenty-eighth? Maybe, we willingly believe we are victims too easily? Did we decide that being called a victim is how we cope? Should there be twenty-eight years of coping?

So, some well-adjusted beautiful blonde marries a wonderful man. He treats her right and they own 2.3 cars and a big house. They are always going on trips and living the good life right next door to a lady in a terrible marriage of twenty-eight years. I can just see the woman looking over at the blonde getting into her new BMW. I wonder if she's silently saying "of course she's got the perfect life and perfect husband." She's hot and blonde. Yet, what if the hot blonde chose well. She expected life to be tough but worth fighting for. What if she did not consider herself a victim for twenty-eight years? This seems harsh, but I fear its reality for many people. I've heard them all One more chance to make him love me the right way. One more beer to ease the pain. One more dollar hoping to win the jackpot. How many "one more's" will turn a life around? How much time must be wasted looking for the "one more?"

Why call it a life wasted? I think on average, people live around seventy-one years according to the all-wise Wikipedia. Twenty-five years might be wasted trying to make someone love you properly. It's practically one third of your time on this earth. Put that into perspective. We spend about 5.4 minutes on average having sex. Most couples on average do this once a week. For fun let's say it's twice. That's 10.8 minutes per week. There is 10,080 minutes in a week. 43,800 in a month and 525,600 in a year. Are you ready for this? That's 561.6 minutes per year having sex out of 525,600 minutes. What it means is that 525,038.4 minutes are spent per

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

year doing something else. I'm not going to compound that over twenty-five years but a ton of time is spend enduring a bad marriage. Time spent enduring a terrible job. What if you spent that whole time calling yourself a victim? Yikes!

It might look like wasted time because it is. Let's look at wasted time differently. The cup half full guy thinks everything is good. He's the positive bright light. Is tears of disappointment and regret wasted time? You will learn from it, so of course it's not wasted time. Ok, but if that bad path was avoided, where are the moments of tears? What if a woman had sex 10.8 minutes a week and also cried from being abused 10.8 minutes a week? Good life well lived? The tears and sex balance themselves out. The positive guy will say at least the sex was good. Cup half full? There is always a chance the marriage will turn itself around. Ask the woman married to an abuser for twenty-eight years if that's working? The reason she ended up in my office is directly because it had never worked. She allowed that record to play over and over for all those years. Its time wasted.

Take another look at my friend Jenny. She has lived under the guise of a cheater (and many other things) for almost twenty-five years. If she finally got fed up at around fifty years old, will she then find true happiness? The single people I have known (over 50) find that the good ones are not available. They are all taken! Sure, they are out there, the diamond in the rough. The gem under the rock. It's far easier to find true love when you're younger. Many of the young are still available. All of this does not include the time she will need to find herself (lost in a bad marriage). The time she will need to date and lift rocks and search the rough for that one special diamond.

I am asking the question aloud! Why waste time failing to make a bad situation good? There are a few (diamonds) that people parade around saying look at theses. They are the

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

restored marriages. The restored alcoholic husband or abusive wife. Yes, we all have read the best-selling books parading the diamonds. However, we all know that (in reality) these stories are just diamonds in the rough. Restoration takes work, blood, sweat, and plenty of tears. What we don't see in the best sellers is the failures to achieve diamond status. Restoration is a rare gem.

Now don't mis-read me. We should all try. We should all hope and pray for restoration of a marriage. As friends, why not help where we can to solve that tough puzzle. But... and that's a big butt. People should not endure twenty-five years of hardship with a chronically horrible mate. They should not have to endure ridicule, rape, beratement, and a host of other nasty themes for twenty-eight years! As a nice Christian, should we really ask a troubled marriage to fight the good fight for that long? Are we asking people to waste one third of their lives fighting through a bad situation? I fear that some well-meaning people are just being armchair quarterbacks. Look at me, my marriage is good. Yours can be too. Yet, those quarterbacks have a good marriage. They know diddly squat about bad marriages. Except, in the books they have read by best sellers.

So, don't bother correcting mockers; they will only hate you. But correct the wise, and they will love you- Proverbs 9:8

There is truth in the Bible. It's not as dumb as you thought. I tell people to love their spouse. Love them to death. They will either hate you all the more or decide to love you back. The worst thing you could do is nag. Don't shut-off and become distant. You want to fix a bad relationship? Love them back all the harder. What kind of a person hates love? What kind of person hates effort to care? I thought they married you because they loved you. What type of love do you deserve? It's the love you give back. We all deserve to be loved. People say you should not demand love. Really? You don't have a right to be loved if you love?

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

Wasted time could turn into a wasted life. While running on the treadmill I was listening to “Indestructible” by Matthew Good. He writes “*We won't say a thing while you give your life away, give your life away, not a thing.*” He also adds “*Tomorrow we start again, tomorrow came and went.*” Indeed, it does almost every time. What begins as good intentions turns into bad results. You only have so much time to turn your life around. Usually, the abusers won’t say a thing as you throw your life away. Why? It’s because they are alive destroying you for fun. Do you really think the abusers don’t know what they are doing? Should we feel sympathy for them as you throw your life away?

Then came on the song “bruises” by Train. “*It’s good to let you in again, you're not alone in how you've been. Everybody loses, we all got bruises.*” It’s the story of a long-lost couple that probably fell apart badly. They say time heals all wounds and then Monahan writes “*I would love to fix it all for you (I would love to fix you too). Please don't fix a thing whatever you do.*” Then he ends with “*everybody loses, we all got bruises.*” I love how some music says *I’ve been there too*. Many of us have the same story. Sometimes in the perfect marriage or perfect Job we drift apart. Years later, we either avoid them or reminisce. However, sometimes we lose and carry bruises. Carry them for such a long time because we stayed or we refused to forgive.

These songs are usually written by those who have experienced wasted time. It makes the memories we wish we didn’t have. Yet, the paths we chose make those memories. Sometimes indestructible memories that linger. I love it that Train sings *don’t change a thing*. Basically, just leave it alone. I had a girlfriend in high school that amazingly I did not sleep with. We are still good friends thirty odd years later. Would it have been different if we had? I might have lost a friend. I also have a friend who I did sleep with all those years ago. Our paths cross from time to time but were not good friends. Some bruises separate like the song said.

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

Why not pick smarter paths. Should we just sleep with whomever just because we can? Leaving bruises all over the place. Is (in the moment sex) worth losing a friend? Was it time wasted? It is wasted to me if they're not my good friend thirty years later. Who are you friends with through twenty-eight years of abuse? People tend to hide their troubles. Most people have said they felt all alone and helpless. Imagine the time wasted being alone in an abusive relationship. Where are the memories of good laughter and fun times? Seems like wasted time ran you over, doesn't it?

Time should be precious. Your life should be precious. I can't understand why humans guard diamonds and money yet they will gamble with their time and lives. People fear viruses (apparently) yet they don't fear wasted time. Isn't each of our lives an hour glass running down? I know we don't want to look at it that way. Who can stop the grains of sand from falling? As kids, who really understands what an hour glass means to us? However, youth aside, I bet most people begin to make life altering choices in their twenties. It's troubling to me that we abandon dreams and visions (of what we could be) and manipulate our life according to winds of change. Is that how we should make the most of the little time we have?

There is this crazy story of a young girl that got pregnant around fifteen years old. She decided to keep the baby and double up her schooling. She wasn't going to let this deter her life's goals. She decided to be young mom and a career minded individual. This strong-willed girl did graduate early and did have the baby. The crazy part is a year or so later her house was broken into and she was murdered. Just stunning!

I'll end this chapter with this. That girl did it right. You don't know when your time will run out. Who lives that way? She went out swinging for the fences regardless of her circumstances. My Pastor said this past weekend "know the formula because the answer just

Chapter 6 (Wasted Life)

might change.” He stated that King David killed a lion, then a bear, and finally, he faced Goliath. Yet, he stuck to the principle that He was bigger with God over any foe. Have a winning formula for your life. Start now! The way to avoid wasted time is to not waste time trying to win. Don’t use a formula that causes you too continually loose either. Instead create a mentality of endurance and focus. Take the time to understand who you are. Write down who you want to be. Then make a path that embodies who you are. Walk a path towards who you want to be. Yes, Goliaths and babies will come but you are stronger than the bear and lion. It’s time to treasure time and your life enough to defend it at all costs. Let’s not waste any more time trying to defend everything that does not really matter. Fight the good fights!