

Classic Rock Insights into the Bigger Picture

The connection between classic rock lyrics and the bigger picture began to crystallize for me several years before beginning to write *Love Life 101*. I was signing up to teach about the mystic perspective in evening enrichment classes offered to adults by a local high school. I requested that a discount be given high school students to encourage them to attend. The program administrator responded, “The only way to attract high school students to these classes would be to bring in Jon Bon Jovi.”

At the time, I knew Bon Jovi was a rock star, but was not otherwise familiar with him or his music. Getting the attention of a celebrity for this type of project was not feasible. The classes went forward for a few years without the benefit of Bon Jovi or any other rock star. No high school students attended.

The Bon Jovi concept arose after work started on *Love Life 101*, but it was the music and lyrics rather than the rock star who sings them that stepped forward to help. I noticed a synergy between concepts I was trying to communicate and song lyrics that came to mind. At times, a song seemed to come out of nowhere and highlight a way of communicating a point. An early example was the Moody Blues’ song, *The Tortoise and the Hare*.¹ I do not recall how it came to my attention, but it played persistently in my head while I was working on Chapter 2 and inspired my use of that Aesop’s fable to make an important point in that chapter.

The autobiographies of Bob Dylan, Carol King and Keith Richards, three of the more successful songwriters in the past fifty years, independently describe their songwriting process. All three are skilled at crafting words, rhyme, chords and melody to make an excellent product. They each noted that there are special times when skill and intellect take a back seat. The song writer does not create the song. Rather, the song already exists and the song writer connects with it and writes it down on paper while he or she can still access it.

Carol King cites *Beautiful*² as an example. Long after the song was finished, someone pointed out to her that none of the lines in the chorus rhyme. Carol says that if she had been crafting the song, rather than merely capturing what was already there, she would have tweaked the words to come up with rhymes. Keith Richards describes writing a song in his sleep, waking at times during the night to record enough to help him remember it in the morning. These channeled songs come through the writer’s intuitive side and are more likely to have the deeper resonance that touches our souls with their truth.

An early draft of *Love Life 101* quoted lyrics that opened a window on the truth being discussed in a way that only poetry can. The quotes were positioned at the beginning of chapters and in text boxes located in the margins. At one point, over seventy songs were represented. Most were classic rock lyrics due to my familiarity with that genre. Undoubtedly excellent examples also existed in other musical and poetic genres. Eventually, the lyric quotes were scuttled due to difficulty in getting permission to use

lyrics from some of the songs. The only quote that remains from this lyric-riddled version of *Love Life 101* is a short excerpt from John Lennon and Paul McCartney's masterpiece, *All You Need Is Love*³, which is used to introduce the book.

The melody and arrangement of the songs quoted in the lyric version of *Love Life 101* were typically as inspired as the lyrics. If this discussion catches your interest, it is worth downloading the songs to create a personal collection for listening while contemplating the lyrics.

***Love Life 101* Introduction**

The lyric version of *Love Life 101* was introduced with a quote from Queen's '39⁴. Its lyrics, written by a band member with an astrophysics background, Brian May, explore Albert Einstein's mystic-like discovery that time is not the linear, absolute factor that we think it is. It speeds up or slows down depending on the influence of other factors such as speed of travel. In '39, a man sails off on a journey in search of a new world, presumably in space. He returns after a year of travel to find that the world he left behind has aged "many" years. His wife has passed on and his daughter has grown up.

Although this scenario wreaks havoc on our 3-dimension, 5-senses view of reality, Einstein and others have shown that it can happen given a fast enough space ship. Perhaps it is even theoretically possible to go back in time. Brian's chorus alludes to this by referring to the future as if it were the past. The traveler calls to his wife who is "many years away" asking her to leave him letters in the sand for the day they reunite in the land that their "grandchildren knew."

The message in *Love Life 101* is also intended to span space and time. It is a "letter in the sand" for the benefit of people who share a mystical connection, even if not a physical one. Brian May's excellent lyrics set that tone nicely.

Chapter One

Chapter One opens the door on a personal note by asking rhetorically whether I would have benefited from asking my parents about their love life experiences. Turning to my college-age children, who stand where I once stood, I reflect on how I have learned things along the way that would benefit my children, but wonder whether a typical 18-year-old adult could be expected to be interested. The purpose of the discussion initiated in *Love Life 101* is to stop each generation from having to learn the same lessons the hard way over and over again.

The lyric excerpts used to introduce the chapter were taken from Neil Young's *Old Man*⁵ and John Lennon and Paul McCartney's *All You Need Is Love*⁶. *Old Man* places us in the shoes of a 24-year-old man looking at a much older man and recognizes the similarities he has with the old man was. *All You Need Is Love* captures the most important lesson one generation could share with another. The love of which it speaks is much deeper and basic than romantic love. The only other songs quoted in Chapter One were Jim Croce's *The Hard Way Every Time*⁷ and Harry Chapin's *Cat's in the Cradle*⁸. Croce's lyrics reflect unapologetically on his past propensity to learn his life lessons the hard way. Chapin's lyrics involve a man who let his career distract him from setting aside time to spend with his son while he was

growing up. Now that the son is an adult, the father wants to spend more time with him, but the son is too busy with his own career and other distractions. The son has grown up with the father's example and has made the father's flaws his own.

Chapter Two

As I started to work with the lyric concept, I collected lyrics when I recognized their relevance. I lined them up like a person assembling a puzzle. Often, I had more pieces than the puzzle could hold, but in a few instances I encountered a gap in the puzzle that none of the existing pieces could fill. This was the situation I faced when looking for a song that would set the tone for Chapter Two.

Chapter Two introduces the "big picture" concept, which is called "the bigger picture" because we never really have a grasp on the entire picture. The fact that we cannot grasp everything does not excuse us from doing the best we can with what we have. There is more to our moment-to-moment choices than meets the eye. Understanding as much as we can about their context and implications helps us make more informed decisions.

Lacking an obvious candidate to introduce Chapter Two, I tried a Google search based on the key phrase "big picture" coupled with the term "lyrics." The search turned up several songs that simply did not fit. I kept digging and found a nugget in the Eagles' *Frail Grasp on the Big Picture*⁹ written by Don Henley, Glen Frey and Steuart Smith. The theme is established in the first verse: when we fail to learn from our past mistakes, we tend to repeat them – demonstrating a frail grasp on the big picture. The next two verses apply this theme to armchair politicians and the search for romance. The last verse turns the focus on religion. It was a good fit for the chapter.

Other songs that adumbrate the messages in Chapter Two include Joni Mitchell's *Both Sides Now*¹⁰, which explores how a situation can change 180 degrees because we gain more life experience or simply change how we perceive it. The objective facts do not change, but the way they affect our lives does. *Candle in the Wind*¹¹, written by Sir Elton John and Bernie Taupin, *Show Me the Way*¹², written by Dennis DeYoung of Styx, and *Garden Party*¹³, written by Rick Nelson, underscore the importance of being guided in our decision-making by wisely chosen principles or ideals. *Tortoise and the Hare*¹⁴, written by John Lodge of the Moody Blues, and *Wasted on the Way*¹⁵, written by Graham Nash of Crosby, Stills and Nash, show the importance to the trajectory of our lives of starting to make enlightened choices early in life and staying consistent and persistent all the way to the "finish line" even if progress appears slow at times.

Chapter Three

As explained in Chapter Three, once we grasp the bigger picture, we find that things that used to seem insignificant are important and vice versa. We learn that everything and every relationship has a purpose. The perspective on life choices gained from near-death experiences and the insights from mystics of many cultures and religions can help us better understand that purpose.

An excerpt from Carol King's *Only Love is Real*¹⁶ introduced the chapter in Love Life 101's lyric draft. Reflecting on her life, her old and new romantic relationships and her influence on her children, Carol realizes that the only thing that lasts and has meaning is the love we give and receive along the way. Out of all the ups and downs, the contriving and confusion, only love is real. Everything else is a passing illusion.

Other songs quoted in the chapter include *Kicks*¹⁷, written by Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil and recorded by Paul Revere and the Raiders. The lyrics speak to a girl pursuing "paradise" through "kicks" such as drugs, sex or alcohol binges. She is told that running back to kicks is nothing more than an attempt to run away from herself. Kicks do not fill the emptiness inside or give peace of mind. There is also a price to pay. The fleeting relief kicks provide becomes harder to find and increasingly dangerous. The girl is urged to get help to lose the kicks and find herself.

Dan Fogelberg's first big hit, *Part of the Plan*¹⁸, teaches that everything we encounter, whether it leads to love or tears, is part of the plan for our lives. John Lennon's *Instant Karma*¹⁹ warns that harsh karmic consequences flow from harsh choices, but that does not mean we should live in pain or fear. The lyrics urge us to recognize that our fellow man is our brother and let everyone shine. Bob Dylan's *Forever Young*²⁰ is a treasure trove of wisdom and mystic insight worthy of contemplation. The excerpt from *Forever Young* chosen for Chapter Three recognizes that helping others and letting others help us are both blessings. One without the other creates problems discussed in the chapter.

The Rolling Stones' *Paint it Black*²¹, written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, and Ray Stevens' *Everything Is Beautiful* underscore the importance of a choice that is constantly before us and looms large in the bigger picture: Is the glass half empty or half full? That which we choose to focus on becomes the basis for what we experience and the map for our path forward. *Paint It Black* comes from a place of pain and hurt. It would have us change the color of everything we see -- clothes, flowers, cars and doors -- to black so that they match the darkness of our mood. *Everything Is Beautiful* does the opposite, reminding us that everything and everyone has its own unique beauty. If we don't see it, it is our perspective that is at fault and it's time to get our mind straight so that our eyes are open to what is constructive in the situations we face.

Jimmy Buffet's *Cowboy in the Jungle*²² helped set the tone for Chapter Three's look at the bigger picture perspective that people on their deathbeds or in near-death experiences often have about what is important in life. Buffet's lyrics suggest that, in the end, a long life is a short stay and admonish us to trust our intuition. In Cat Stevens' *On the Road to Find Out*²³, the lyrics remind us that we have much to learn and life is a journey through time to "find out." John Lennon's *Mind Games*²⁴ teach that love is the answer and, like flower, we have to let it grow. James Taylor's *Shower the People*²⁵ asks us to let the people we love know how we feel. In *That's Why I'm Here*²⁶, James Taylor discovers his reason for being lies in the opportunities that arise to help others.

Don Henley's *Heart of the Matter*²⁷ reflects on the struggles and pain that often accompany relationships that break up. Henley observes that as he learns more, he seems to understand less and

has to re-learn past lessons. Henley concludes that the heart of the matter, the key to healing and starting over, is forgiveness.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four examines the factor that most influences whether we feel our lives have been meaningful or a waste of time. This factor is whether we feel we have accomplished something towards a higher purpose. The mystic perspective and near-death experiences teach us that the highest purpose we can pursue is to know God, that Creative Presence that ties everything together, on an intimate basis. A deeper look at the concept of God is required to get beyond the stereotypes and better understand the intimate relationship we are pursuing. We also need a deeper understanding of who we are because we emerge out of God and God is the core within each of us. Finally, the chapter discusses ways to recognize God's presence in others and our unique life mission. Properly understood, everything that occurs in our lives, whether romantic relationships, parenthood, career, hobby, windfall or tragedy, relates to the higher purpose and life mission from which meaning is derived. That is the bigger picture.

In the draft that included lyric quotes, the tone for Chapter Four was set by a trilogy of songs that highlight the search embedded in our DNA for a higher love that connects us all, the division between meaningful living and wasted time, and the emotional pain that comes from a discovery that a significant portion of one's life has been wasted. Jackson Browne's *Running On Empty*²⁸ looks back on a rock star's journey. Running at full speed at twenty-one, he felt he owned the road. Somewhere along the way the road morphed into one in which life feels crazy, survival and love are a struggle and he seeks a reason to believe. Friends who provided stability in younger years are struggling too. Yet he keeps running – running on empty, running blind, running behind. The clincher is he doesn't know what he's hoping to find.

*Higher Love*²⁹, written by Steve Winwood and Will Jennings declares there is a "higher love" without which life is wasted time. It could be hiding in our hearts or in the heavens. There is a deep yearning for this higher love. We try to see what the love would show us, but walk blind and miss the potential that is there. The higher love would lift us above all of the fear and apparent trouble we see everywhere. WE are urged to look for this higher love in our hearts and demand it with the light of a soul on fire.

*Wasted Time*³⁰, a song performed by The Eagles and written by Don Henley, Glenn Frey and Ed Norman, describes a woman who has just seen her latest romantic relationship dissolve in ashes. She is depressed and living day to day. Acutely aware of the years passing by, she is intimidated by the thought of starting over. Being alone at this stage of life was not something she expected, but what really haunts her is the prospect that all of those years invested in failed relationships were nothing more than wasted time.

Chapter Four's discussion of our highest purpose, intimacy with the higher Creative Presence that connects us all, is accompanied by excerpts from four songs written by well-established rock stars. Despite having access to all the material pleasures and privileges that accompany rock stardom, these

artists write about a drive to know a higher, deeper something that calls to us but also seems elusive. The songs are *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*³¹, written and performed by U2, *In the Passage*³², written and performed by Dan Fogelberg, *Who Are You*³³, written by Pete Townsend and performed by The Who, and *River of Dreams*³⁴, written and performed by Billy Joel. The music is great and the lyrics profound. If you purchase *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*, the version on the *Rattle and Hum* album is recommended because it was recorded live with accompaniment by a Harlem church choir that gives it another dimension. A video of the live performance is available on YouTube.³⁵ Billy Joel's *River of Dreams* also benefits from a gospel flavor.

The discussion on our individual, unique life mission is accompanied by an excerpt from *A Place in the Choir*³⁶, which is written and performed by Bill Staines. This is not really classic rock, although it was once recorded by the folk icons, Peter, Paul and Mary. If you are a parent, you might have purchased it for your children. The music is catchy, the lyrics are humorous and the message is dead on. All of us have a place in the choir and the music is diminished without our individual, unique contribution.

The discussion regarding our individual inner connection with God and the internal, intuitive source of guidance that emanates from that connection is adumbrated by quotes from *On the Road to Find Out*³⁷, written and performed by Cat Stevens and *Free Ride*³⁸, written by Dan Hartman and performed by The Edgar Winter Group. Both songs acknowledge that the real answers come from within. *The Logical Song*³⁹, written by Rick Davies and Roger Hodgson and performed by Supertramp, acknowledges the need to answer that very basic, but deep and important, question: "Who am I?"

The importance of distinguishing our true self from our ego and being true to our true self is echoed in quotes from *Forever Young*⁴⁰, written and performed by Bob Dylan, *My Way*⁴¹, written and performed by Paul Anka with a famous cover by Frank Sinatra, and *I've Got to Be Me*⁴², written by Walter Marks and performed by Sammy Davis, Jr. The way in which relationships can help us find our true self by forcing us to choose between what others would have us do and what our inner guidance calls for was aided by a quote from *At This Moment*⁴³, which was written by Billy Vera and performed by Billy Vera and the Beaters. *The Balance*⁴⁴, written by Graeme Edge and Ray Thomas and performed by the Moody Blues, conveys the enlightenment that comes from true self-discovery. An understanding of self aids in the understanding of others, exposes our own responsibility for the fear and anger we harbor and leads to an awakening of compassion and love. And with this, we are answered.

Chapter Four includes an analogy to a television game show, "Let's Make a Deal," to illustrate how our inner guidance can help us discern which life option, among those competing for our attention, better suits our life mission and pursuit of a meaningful life. An excerpt from *Door Number Three*⁴⁵, written and performed by Jimmy Buffet and Steve Goodman, was included because it captures the humorous side of Let's Make a Deal. It is short on mystic wisdom, long on fun, and the music is good.

An insightful line from Jackson Browne's *The Pretender*⁴⁶ was used to introduce the discussion about how the marital relationship is a working metaphor for understanding our intimate relationship

with God. In a marriage, we remain individuals but also become part of a union that has its own distinct personality. We have the same type of relationship with God.

Aspects of some romantic relationships are unhealthy. They present opportunities for personal growth and healing that challenge the relationship. For example, a co-dependency relationship in which a habitual victim is matched up with a habitual rescuer can be a very powerful bond that has to be overcome if either participant is to heal and grow. An excerpt from Fleetwood Mac's *Landslide*⁴⁷, written by Stevie Nicks, refers to this fear of a change that could disrupt a romantic relationship.

Finally, Chapter Four discusses how we come to know, in an intimate way, our relationship with God through an ongoing interactive dance. God acts, we respond. We make a choice and God responds. This dance goes on whether we know about it or not, but it is much more productive and grace-filled if we become aware of it and work with it. Prayer is one of the ways we can express ourselves in the dance. Anything that is important to us becomes a part of the dance and for most of us romantic relationships become important. During most of our lives we are either in a romantic relationship, seeking one or getting over one. Queen's *Somebody to Love*⁴⁸, written by Freddie Mercury, was used as a colorful example of one of these dance steps – a prayer to God for help in finding someone to love.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five is another instance in which I turned to Google to find lyrics on point. The chapter discusses the role of relationships as a catalyst for personal growth. Although we desire relationships where everyone gets along smoothly all of the time, the fact is that this rarely happens in any close relationship that lasts for a substantial amount of time. This is by design. Relationships include both “milk” that draws us together and “friction” that creates opportunities to work on our issues. Even relationships that do not survive the friction provide important opportunities to pursue our life mission and higher purpose.

With all of the lyrics available involving romantic relationships, and the supply is endless, none had come to my attention that dealt with this personal growth aspect. The Google search turned up two good ones. The quote used to introduce the chapter in the lyric draft came from *You Made Me Find Myself*⁴⁹, written by Desmond Child, Tina Arena and Ty Lacy. It was performed by Tina Arena. The lyrics speak from the perspective of a person who has been dumped by a romantic partner she had tried too hard to please. She had hung on every word her boyfriend spoke and tried to be the person he wanted her to be. Rather than being crushed by the ending of the relationship, she thanks her former boyfriend for the experience because it helped her find her own loves, her own dreams. The experience helped her find herself.

The second song found through Google and used in this chapter is *Mad at You*⁵⁰, written and performed by Joe Jackson. The lyrics speak from the perspective of a husband who finds a thousand reasons to be annoyed by his wife, the friction in the relationship, but is given pause by her “innocent eyes,” the milk. He is torn between the two, which is where the song ends. Carrying the concept forward, however, the greater progress comes not from changing the wife's behavior so that it suits his

expectations. Rather, progress comes from releasing himself from the expectations and personal issues that cause him to be annoyed by such petty stimuli.

*Wind Beneath My Wings*⁵¹, performed by Bette Midler and written by Larry Henley and Jeff Silbar, was used to highlight the synergistic function of relationships. The combination of a partner whose life mission centers on homemaking with a partner whose life mission involves more career and less home life provides an example. The relationship allows both to go farther in these pursuits than if they split the career and homemaking 50/50 each. For each, the other is the wind beneath their wings.

Finally, an excerpt from *He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother*⁵², performed by the Hollies and written by Bob Russell and Bobby Scott, underscores our interdependence in life missions and relationships. The relationships we develop are part of a plan developed before we were born. When we pursue our soul's mission in the context of a relationship, even if it causes friction, we are a blessing to ourselves and the other people in the relationship. When we fall short, as when we act unlovingly towards others, the impact is felt by other people as well as ourselves.

Chapter Six

Chapter Six examines the pivotal role of sexual attraction in romantic relationships from the perspective of the bigger picture. In the lyric version, the chapter was introduced by a trilogy of songs that set the tone. *Girl Watcher*⁵³, written by Buck Trail and Wayne Pittman and recorded by the O'Kasions, embodies the hormone-driven, male sexual attraction to females. *I Cain't Say No*⁵⁴, written by Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein II as part of the Broadway musical, *Oklahoma*, embodies the hormone-driven, female attraction to males. *Turn! Turn! Turn!*⁵⁵, an adaptation of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 by Pete Seeger and made popular in a recording by The Byrds, provides the message that brings the sex drive into harmony with the bigger picture: to everything, there is a season. The sex drive is quite natural and very important. There is a time to go with the sex drive, but also a time to rein it in. The true self, not the sex drive is to be the master and self-discipline needs to be sufficiently developed so that we have the ability to "hear" and obey the true self when the sex drive is making a lot of noise.

Classic rock and other popular music genres provide limitless examples of the sex drive in action. Romance is one of the most prevalent inspirations for song and sexual attraction is a defining attribute of romance. The songs selected for quotes in this chapter included The Eagles' *Life in the Fast Lane*⁵⁶, written by Joe Walsh, Don Henley and Glenn Frey, Jackson Browne's *Ready or Not*⁵⁷, Bob Seger's *Night Moves*⁵⁸, Jon Bon Jovi's *You Give Love a Bad Name*⁵⁹ and Meatloaf's classic, *Paradise By The Dashboard Light*⁶⁰, written by Jim Steinman. Excellent music and relevant lyrics.

Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven discusses the important insights we gain through recognizing inner guidance and the patterns that arise in our lives. This requires self-observation and working with what is learned. It helps us discover and heal destructive patterns that hinder our well-being and relationships. It can help us recognize our life partners when we meet them.

In the lyric draft, the chapter was introduced with an excerpt from Jim Croce's *Time in a Bottle*⁶¹. The song refers to having looked around enough to recognize one's life partner when they meet. Later in the chapter, a quote from Don Henley's *Heart of the Matter*⁶² provides a glimpse of self-examination for purposes of personal growth and healing. Reflecting on the struggles, challenges and contentment, what is it that led the couple to leave the relationship in search of more elsewhere? A quote from Phil Everly's *When Will I Be Loved?*⁶³, sang by the Everly Brothers, is an example of a destructive life pattern that needs to be recognized. Responsibility for these recurring patterns has to be accepted if there is to be personal progress. Similarly, an excerpt from The Eagle's *Already Gone*⁶⁴, written by Jack Tempchin and Robb Strandlund, captures a moment of self-discovery: we are responsible for our own happiness. Our tendency to blame others for our unhappiness is a fetter that holds us back. Our decision to take responsibility and move on sets us free.

Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight provides a bigger picture look at dating and dating strategies. It examines male-oriented strategies such as those taught by so-called "pick-up artists" as well as female-oriented strategies such as those advocated by the authors of *The Rules: Time-Tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right*⁶⁵. Although the strategies differ, both involve a substantial degree of gamesmanship aimed at getting the opposite sex to do what we want them to do. The chapter discusses how being guided by carefully chosen ideals helps us harvest the constructive fruits of the competing ideas we hear about dating while avoiding the pitfalls, including those that hinder our pursuit of our life mission and higher purpose. Finally, we discuss alternate resources for advice on constructive approaches to dating, including the wisdom of trusted adults who have been there before.

Finding insightful lyrics from good songs for this chapter was like shooting fish in a barrel. The chapter was introduced by an excerpt from Foreigner's *I Want to Know What Love Is*⁶⁶, written by band member Mick Jones. The lyrics aptly express the deep longing that drives our dating and search for a mate. It was followed by a long list of excerpts from songs that reflect the gamesmanship that is too often involved in dating.

- Jimmy Buffet's *Pencil Thin Mustache*,
- Elvin Bishop's *Fooled Around and Fell in Love*⁶⁷,
- The Rolling Stones' *Let's Spend the Night Together*⁶⁸, written by the classic songwriting duo, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards,
- Billy Joel's *The Entertainer*⁶⁹,
- Pat Benatar's *Hit Me With Your Best Shot*⁷⁰, written by Eddie Schwartz,
- The Spinners' *They Just Can't Stop It (Games People Play)*⁷¹, written by Joseph B. Jefferson, Bruce Hawes and Charles Simmons,
- Joe South's *The Games People Play*⁷²,
- Boston's *Peace of Mind*⁷³, written by band member Tom Scholz,
- Aerosmith's *What It Takes*⁷⁴, written by Steven Tyler, Joe Perry and Desmond Child,
- Steely Dan's *Reelin' In The Years*⁷⁵, written by band members Walter Becker and Donald Fagen, and

- Dan Hill's *Sometimes When We Touch*⁷⁶.

The chapter ends with a quote from Billy Joel's *Tell Her About It*⁷⁷, a song in which an older man who has learned some lessons the hard way is providing advice to a younger man about the importance of telling his girlfriend early and often how he feels about her. It blends nicely with the Chapter Nine discussion of the top nine tips on dating that parents and adults with substantial life experience wish they had known when they were young adults. These are the tips they would offer to younger adults if given the opportunity.

Chapter Nine

Although we all have the same higher purpose, the challenges we face, the opportunities presented and the ways we go about it are unique to each of us. In fact we agreed to the customized path before we were born. With each choice we make, we open some options on that path and close others.

Chapter Nine provides bigger picture advice to help make our individual journey down that unique path more graceful, less painful, more joyful and more productive. The title of the chapter is "Having the Time of Our Lives," and the song that introduced it perfectly in the lyric draft was Green Day's *Good Riddance (Time of Your Life)*⁷⁸, written by Billie Joe Armstrong. *Good Riddance* describes life as something over which we lack complete control. We get pulled in a direction and have to make the best of it. Life is unpredictable, but when we eventually look back on it, everything will make sense. It will be worth the time we invested in it. The title (*Good Riddance*) confirms that the song is statement of goodbye. As we part company, the writer engages in a clever play on words, hoping we had the "time of our lives."

That is also the message of Chapter Nine. We should have the time of our lives, but do so conscious of the bigger picture context. Make the best of the opportunities given, and in the end, we will see the method to the madness.

Romantic relationships are a great place to start. It does not matter where we are, what we have done or what we think of ourselves. Once we begin to realize we have a higher purpose, we have to start consciously working with it. The earlier in life we can do this, the better. Although looking forward it may seem like we have an endless supply of time, a quote from Jackson Browne's *The Pretender*⁷⁹ reminds us that is not the case. In the end, we realize our life passed "in the wink of an eye." Unfortunately, we waste so much of it.

Taking the higher purpose seriously does not mean that life should always be heavy, serious and ascetic. There is a time for everything, but our journey is much better when we can bring joy and constructive humor into our lives and the lives of people we meet. Three Dog Night's *Joy to the World*⁸⁰, written by Hoyt Axton, echoes this truth nicely with its unshackled, joyous tone and "joy to the world" refrain. How we choose to perceive our lives and whether we pursue things that interest us on a deep, soul level are a function of choices we make. Better choices in these areas help us expand and appreciate the best days of our lives, which is a cue for Brian Adams' excellent *Summer of '69*⁸¹.

A guaranteed feature of life is that it will take us out of our comfort zone from time to time. Being stuck in a comfort zone holds us prisoner to our fears and habits, which is why each of us is on a collision course with the zone boundary. Being conscious of this, there are opportunities to make progress in small ways that will help knock a big fear down to size by the time we have to face it. In any case, as noted in U2's *Stuck in a Moment You Can't Get Out Of*⁸², with lyrics written by Bono, the collision with our fears, doubts and habits is something that will pass, even though it may not seem that way at the time. Each of us must endure through the moments of testing.

Even our "mistakes," though they lead us on a detour or into unnecessary pain, become stepping stones toward our higher purpose when we begin to put them into proper perspective and learn from them. Our journey involves every aspect of our lives, from our romantic relationships to the sports we play and the jobs we endure. Spiritual lessons we learn in one aspect of our lives apply in every other aspect.

When we live our lives conscious of the bigger picture, we begin to march to the beat of a different drummer. This can make others uncomfortable at times and cause friction. It is important not to limit ourselves to the expectations and prejudices of those we encounter. The friction has a constructive purpose in our personal growth. Sometimes our choices become an example that helps others see their own lives and opportunities in a more constructive light.

The final point in Chapter Nine is that advice – good, bad or indifferent – is everywhere. It is up to each person to recognize what is useful and work with it, letting the rest go. In this way, we make our own recipe for our life mission and fulfillment of our higher purpose. Nobody can do that for us. We reap the benefits of constructive decisions and pay the price of imprudent ones. Each path is unique and the accomplishment is worth the effort. Like the tortoise who bested the hare, may we keep the final line in mind along the way.

The lyrics quoted in the lyric draft for this point include Kenny Loggins' *This Is It*⁸³, written by Loggins and Michael McDonald, *Desiderata*⁸⁴, written by Max Ehrmann and presented musically by Les Crane, and Jon Bon Jovi's *It's My Life*⁸⁵, which Bon Jovi co-wrote with Richie Sambora and Max Martin.

Love Life 101 Epilogue

The concluding tone for the lyric draft of the book was set by an excerpt from Frank Sinatra's *The Way You Look Tonight*⁸⁶, written by Dorothy Fields and Jerome Kern. The purpose of *Love Life 101* is to help others. When a reader makes it to the end of the book and takes what it has to offer to kindle the flame that lies within, it also warms my heart. We are one.

Daniel Flynn

¹ <http://www.metrolyrics.com/tortoise-and-the-hare-lyrics-moody-blues.html>.

² <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/caroleking/beautiful.html>.

3 <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beatles/allyouneedislove.html>.
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