

Don't be shackled by stuff



"I'm not supposed to tell this, but the true secret to happiness is having more stuff than everyone else!"

If someone had given you a horse in 1915 you would have been ecstatic. Horses were the primary means of transportation and were used extensively in agriculture. There were 26 million horses in America; one horse to every four people. The average annual salary was \$680; horses sold for around \$100. No wonder there were severe penalties for stealing horses.

Before the mechanization of agriculture and transportation, horses were indispensable.

But if someone tried to give you a horse today, you'd graciously decline. Because, what would you do with a horse? Where would you put it? How much would it cost to feed it? Who would take care of it? Why bother?

But let's not just talk about horses. Let's talk about furniture, clothes, cars, and other stuff. Most items depreciate in value as soon as they are purchased. When they become unnecessary, outdated, or broken they become a burden.

Do we really need so much stuff?

I once read of a nomadic tribe in Africa whose members refuse to accept gifts because if they accept a gift they'll have to carry it wherever they go for the rest of their lives. That might be a good standard by which we should judge the wisdom of buying something: Do I really want to be responsible for this thing for the rest of my life?

Before you buy something, ask yourself "Two years from now, will I be glad I bought this item? How about 10 years from now?" Also ask, "Will I have to paint it? Change the oil in it? Find space for it? Worry about it? Will it be used? Is it merely a status symbol? Who initiated this conversation? Have I seriously considered the pros and cons of owning this thing? Am I yielding to consumerism, materialism, or vanity? Will this object distract me from more important life-issues?"

Many years ago I committed to live with [100 or fewer possessions](#). The decision has simplified my life and allowed me to focus on more important issues.

The artist and philanthropist John Ruskin once said, "Every increased possession loads us with a new

weariness.” Let’s get rid of the horses.