

## **Discipline of Giving**

What did you think of the story of the rich and famous from 1923?

In case you never heard of any of these guys;

Charles M Schwab went from a laborer to president of U.S. Steel and in 1903 became President of Bethlehem Steel.

Samuel Insull started as T. Edison's secretary and ended up owning most of the utilities and railroads in Chicago including something called Consolidated General Electric.

Howard Hopson started as a utility regulator in New York and moved up to owning a conglomeration of gas and electric companies throughout New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Arthur Cutten hopped a train to Chicago at 18, got a job as a bookkeeper at a trading company and worked up to multi-millionaire wheat speculator.

Richard Whitney was president of the New York Stock Exchange (for four terms) and was considered the "hero of wall street."

Albert Fall a rancher, lawyer, miner, and U. S. Senator from New Mexico was appointed Secretary of Interior in 1921 under Warren Harding.

Jesse Livermore was known as the "Wall Street Wonder." He made (and lost) four separate multi-million-dollar fortunes. While his speculations are blamed for precipitating the Great Crash of 1929, he, himself, made over 100 million in the Crash.

Leon Fraser rose from private to major during WWI. He later became president of the Bank of International Settlements.

Ivar Kreuger was the "Match King" who founded and ran a multi-billion-dollar match conglomerate. His companies stocks were some of the most widely held stocks in the United States.

Most stories add Gene Sarazen who was the first golfer to win all four of golf's Grand Slam titles, won 38 PGA titles and invented the sand wedge.

This is a really great story. The only problem is that it isn't exactly true. The people are real, the details of their lives are tweaked a little bit. And as far as we can tell, there never was a meeting of these guys at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in 1923 or anywhere else at any time.

The story, pretty much the way it is in the book, has been constantly in circulation since 1948. It was published on a restaurant menu in the 1950's, in Ann Landers in 1989, published here 1991 and on the Internet again and again.

Don't blame the author for not getting the facts entirely right, his moral and his application to giving still stand. In 1991 it would have taken weeks in the

archives of Chicago and New York papers to research this story. (Snopes wasn't started until 1995.) And, after all, if you can't trust Ann Landers, whom can you trust?

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WARNING: Aside (Detour, Digression, Discursion, Divagation, Parenthesis, Ramble, Rabbit Trail, Tangent) Ahead. (Don't trip over the Soap Box)

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This does all tie in with the Discipline of Witness.

Anybody here ever get a letter or an email about FCC petition RM-2493 to ban religious broadcasting? The last one I got was an Internet petition. Internet petitions are pretty worthless anyway. We can get into that after the study if you want. It had about 800 names appended to it. And it was just one strand of thousands. Tens of thousands of people put their name on that thing and forwarded it to others and eventually a whole bunch of those names ended up at the FCC.

The fact is that RM-2493 was a proposal 34 years ago to limit ministries affiliated with universities from using channels that had been set aside specifically for education. It was submitted in 1974 and voted down by the FCC in 1975. They ruled, and this is a quote, "As a government agency, the Commission is enjoined by the First Amendment to observe a stance of neutrality toward religion, acting neither to promote nor inhibit religion."

But, over the next twenty years the FCC received 30 million pieces of mail about RM-2493. I couldn't find out how many contacts they have had since 1995. With the Internet, they probably can't count them. They can't kill the rumors. As a matter of fact, they've given up trying. But tell me, what do you think the people working at the FCC think of Christians? How about the guy who wrote the first one and sent it off? What were they thinking? What were they trying to accomplish? Discrediting the church comes to mind.

Don't just forward stuff. Check it first. Is it accurate? Is it logical? What does it accomplish? Make sure that it doesn't make your faith look foolish. Paul tells the Romans, ***For the name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you.***  
*Romans 2:2*

One more thing and we'll get to Giving. You agree to terms to use most every email service out there. You give your word. Most of those terms include prohibitions against messages that contain or could be considered junk mail, spam, chain letters, pyramid schemes, etc. I took those exact words from Hotmail. Keep your word! ***You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?***  
*Romans 2:22*

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And now, back to the lesson already in progress.

Dr. Hughes identifies five “growing delusions” on page 192:

1. A growing delusion that this world is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A growing delusion that they will be \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A growing delusion that “providing for one’s family” means \_\_\_\_\_.
4. A growing delusion that relationships will be \_\_\_\_\_.
5. A growing delusion that \_\_\_\_\_ will make them better people.

If these are delusions, what is the truth? The truth is that...

1. The truth is that this world is \_\_\_\_\_.  
***And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.***  
*1John 2:17*
2. The truth is that wealth doesn’t \_\_\_\_\_.  
***He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.***  
*Eccl. 5:10*  
***All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied.***  
*Eccl. 6:7*
3. The truth is that really providing for your family means \_\_\_\_\_.  
***And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.***  
*Eph. 6:4*
4. The truth is that wealth \_\_\_\_\_ us from relationships.  
***So, the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.***  
*1 Kings 11:9*
5. The truth is that you can focus on your life \_\_\_\_\_, or your life \_\_\_\_\_.  
***He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.***  
*John 12:25*

The “Grace of giving”

***And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in***

*complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

*2 Cor. 8: 1-9 NIV*

The author does a good job of relating giving and grace. There are a couple of things we need to highlight in this passage. First, where did the grace originate?

God gave them the grace to share beyond their ability with joy even in poverty and affliction. How did the Macedonians see their giving? Where was their attention?

Second, Paul states directly that giving is not a commandment. God wants us to excel in giving as He wants us to excel in all of His spiritual gifts. But it isn't a commandment. If it doesn't come from grace, it has no worth.

In verse 1 of chapter 6 of 2 Corinthians, Paul says, ***We then as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.*** Can you hear the Gospel and not respond? Can you be saved but not transformed? Can you have the power of Christ available and not avail yourselves of it?

Because we are not under the law and giving is not a commandment, I hesitate to put too much emphasis on the tithing laws of Israel. Remember though that Abraham gave a tithe of all to Melchizedek. Tithing then predates Israel and the law.

*For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.*

*Heb. 7:1-4*

If tithing predates the law and was made to Melchizedek who is (at least) a type of Christ, then shouldn't tithing to Christ continue as long as he is our High priest?

Let's look at Israel's tithes.

The Lord's Tithe, Numbers 18:21-29, Leviticus 27:30, Malachi 3:8

*For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, "Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance." Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak thus to the Levites, and say to*

*them: 'When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the LORD, a tenth of the tithe.*  
Num. 18:24-26

The Festival Tithe, *But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you.*

*Deut. 12:10-12*

*You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or of the heave offering of your hand. But you must eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God chooses, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all to which you put your hands.*

*Deut. 12:17-18*

Doctor Hughes makes this a second tithe, as do a number of others commentators. I'm not sure it is. I'm also not sure the details matter.

The Poor Tithe, *At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.*

*Deut. 14:28-29*

In addition to each of these, God was entitled to the Firstfruits. Firstborn, men and animals, first fruit, first crops, what ever came first was His. How much of the firstfruits did God get? With sons and animals, God was entitled to the whole thing. With crops, I'm sure that eventually the Jews figured out a way to calculate this, but off hand I'd say God got whatever was ripe the first time you harvested.

There were also freewill offerings. Not what was due, what it blessed you to give to God. These offerings were, like the Festival offering above, shared with everyone.

We are ignoring sin offerings, guilt offerings, trespass offerings and offerings related to vows. I'm sure that these things added up. Sin is expensive.

But, back to tithes, here is what I think. In the wilderness, things were simple. There were no crops. Everybody ate manna and quail provided by God. If they found a few dates, or the flocks increased on the march, a tenth went to the Levites and a tenth of that went from the Levites to the Aaronites, the priests. As everybody camped by tribe, with the Tabernacle and Levites in the center, you always knew where to take things.

In the Promised Land, things would change. There would be farms and cities and service industries and things would be much more spread out. The simple reading to me is that in the Promised Land the tithe was to be taken to the place where the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, was established two years out of three. If it was a long journey or the actual tithe was too difficult to bring, you could sell most things and bring the money. What usually happened is you brought the very best and brought money for the rest.

You got to share in what you brought, so going to Jerusalem and giving to God was a celebration. Everybody else got to share in what you brought so the celebration included the Levites, the poor and even your servants. Everyone was blessed when you went up to worship God!

Every third year instead of going to Jerusalem, you brought your tithes into storehouses in the towns where you lived. The poor and the Levites who were not serving in Jerusalem ate from that. The poor also had the gleanings from the fields and field “corners.” The third year after you stored your tithes you still went to Jerusalem and had a celebration. The priests and Levites in Jerusalem lived that year off of what they had saved and what they collected from other offerings.

As our book mentions, Jesus had a lot to say about money. As you read through this section, what hit you? What did you highlight? What was God saying?

Hughes lists four principles we should understand:

1. Giving is not a meritorious work. It will not enhance your standing with God. It will not make you better than other Christians.
2. Giving does bring blessing. But not if you give in order to receive a blessing. Remember Israel’s Sabbath years. Every sixth year God was to bless Israel with double crops so that they could have a Sabbath year. He never did. Every seventh year, Israel was supposed to leave the land fallow and live off of savings and what grew naturally. They never did. God blessed Israel every sixth year based on what they were going to do the next. Does that make your head hurt?
3. Giving that pleases God is generous and sacrificial, like His giving to us. If we think about what Jesus has done (and is doing for us) how can we hold back on what we give.
4. Giving is an act of worship. It is determined between you and God. Pray about it. Study. Listen to God. Then, do what He asks.

In the New Testament, things changed again. Rather than being rural and agricultural, Paul ministered to people in cities, business people, merchants, employees, and slaves. Rather than wait for the harvest, Paul instructs the Corinthians, ***On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. 1Cor. 16:2***

How do we apply this? Let's take the principles and keep it really simple. Giving should be an act of worship. Giving should be systematic. Giving should be personal and individual. Giving should be proportionate. Paul instructs us, ***So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 2Cor. 9:7***

Let's see if we can make this into some practical advice. Like Paul said, this is not a commandment (unless God tells you to do it.) A tithe is due the King of Righteous, the Prince of Peace. It is not commanded, but it should flow joyfully out of the grace we receive. It ought to be brought to the place God has set for us to worship. It ought to be brought week-by-week, as we prosper. Roughly two thirds of our tithe ought to go to support church ministries. One third ought to be for the poor and needy. (Some of this is done through the church.) The church itself ought to tithe its receipts to other ministries, missionaries or outreaches.

Is a tithe gross or net? How do you want your blessings, gross or net? Seriously, see what God says.

If you tithe, don't be proud. You are only doing what is right. The scriptures always talk about tithes and offerings. Free-will offerings go on top of tithes.

### **Discipline of Witness**

**Wit•ness** (wit'nis), *v.t.* **1.** to see or know by personal presence and perception. **2.** to bear witness to; testify to; give or afford evidence of. **3. to give testimony by word or deed to your religious faith.**

We talk a lot about witnessing, but not so much about witness. Why is that? What is the difference?

Let's look at Andrew – we don't find a whole lot about him in the Bible. I've put what we find in chronological order. Let's just see what the scripture has to show us about Andrew.

***Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?"***

*They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?”*

*He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).*

*One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.*

*Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).*

*The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” John 1:35-45*

Andrew was the first one to come to Jesus. He was called the *protokletos* or “First-Called.” He is never listed first. Matthew and Luke put him second after his brother Peter. Mark and Luke in Acts put him fourth after Peter, James and John. You’ll find him listed with them in Mark 13.

So, what happened to the Disciple of John who spent the day with Jesus?

We know from the next chronological appearance of Peter and Andrew that they did not stay with Jesus at this time. Jesus headed to Galilee where He found Phillip, who in turn found Nathaniel. Phillip becomes know as Phillip the Evangelist. Andrew becomes know as Andrew.

*Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”*

*And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Mark 1:14-18*

What is a fisher of men? How does that work? What is our Role? What do you think that Jesus meant?

*One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?” John 6:8-9*

The author makes Andrew an optimist for his actions at the feeding of the 5,000. What do you think?

*Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."*

*Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.*

*But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. John 12:20-23"*

*"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." John 12:32*

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says:*

*"In an acceptable time I have heard you,  
And in the day of salvation I have helped you."*

*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.  
2Cor. 5:17-6:2*

If you are in Christ, you are a new person. You are winsome. The things of God are in you. You have been reconciled to God and given the ministry of reconciliation! You are an ambassador! You can speak for God. You can act for God. You can, as an ambassador, introduce people to God. You have the privilege of taking people directly into the presence of God. You can bring people to Jesus, just like Andrew did and in the same way Phillip did.

Be an Andrew

"Hey, Joe, you look tired. Can I pray for you?"

"Why not? Couldn't hurt."

"No, I mean can I pray for you right now, right here?"

"Here? Now?"

"I'm not going to make a big thing about it, I just want to pray for you."

"O.K., I guess so."

"Dear Lord Jesus..."

There are two of you, you and Joe. You just gathered in Jesus name. Guess who promises to be there?

As giving begins with the grace of God and giving ourselves wholly to God, so does witness. Witness is how we live out all of the Disciplines we have studied. Dr. Hughes uses the word “winsome” to describe Andrew’s character. It means attractive, winning, engaging. We cannot win anyone if we are not winsome.

Is your walk with Jesus attractive? Is it working? Witness requires more than just the assurance that when you die you go to heaven. We must live like we are saved. We must live like the promises of God are true. We must display the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, self-control.

God’s purpose for us is that we will for all eternity be examples of His grace. We will glorify Him just by standing there. That we get to do so much more is extra blessing. The best way to witness, the best way to win some, is to begin to reflect that glory today.

It is God’s love that brings us salvation. Remember, we saw that God’s giving to us is what inspires our giving. Scripture says that it is God mercy that brings us to repentance. It is that love and that mercy show through us that will bring people to Jesus.

Preparation and Application
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1. Pray: Ask God to give you wisdom. Ask God to give you discipline. Ask God to speak to you clearly and give you grace to obey. Ask what He thinks of your giving and you witness.
2. Invest: Continue to meet with a brother from the study. Discuss what God is teaching you. Be accountable for your prayer times, Bible study and your witness. Seek counsel on what God is putting on your heart to do (or stop doing).

Reread and meditate on the scriptures from these chapters.

Write the things God is telling you in a prayer journal or a note to yourself. Make specific plans how you might accomplish these things. Commit to submit.

Look for opportunities to take someone into the presence of Jesus.

3. Read pp. 211 to 229 for next Monday. Highlight/underline things that stand out to you. Remember; read the Scriptures listed in the book as well as the ones referenced. Don’t skip over them.