

The Secret to Power in Business

by Glenn Clark

© 1945

VI. Tithing

Twenty years ago I read of a business man in Oklahoma named Mr. Page, whose wife was seriously ill. He had not been very religious before, but now he turned to God for help as he had never done before. He tried to pray but his prayers seemed futile. His wife grew steadily worse and worse. In desperation he turned to the Bible and asked God to tell him what was lacking in his prayer. He opened the Bible at random, and his finger fell on Malachi 3:10: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

"That passage gave me something definite and concrete to work upon," he wrote. "It suggested a way by which I would try to make my wife get well. I would tithe, and I would do it reverently and as joyfully as the saintly man would pray. I can't tell you what this practical outlet did to me. It saved me, if nothing more, from a serious case of nervous prostration. It gave me a greater peace and contentment than I had ever known before. But to my surprise and dismay, my wife did not get any better.

"A great, overpowering depression then came upon me. I had tried my only weapon and it had failed. I thought I was using a law of God as unfailing as the law of gravity, and it didn't work. I thought for a while I would go mad. Then I sat down and tried to think the whole thing out sanely and soberly. Suddenly it dawned upon me that I had been going at things from the wrong end. I had been thinking of results, not of the joy of giving. So I sat down and had a little talk with God. 'Lord,' I said, 'I am not making a bargain with you. I am doing this thing because it is the right thing to do. I am building this altar?not for myself, but for you. I am going to do this because it is the happiest thing I ever tried to do, and without it, life would not be worth the living. Take my wife if you want her, but don't make me stop giving to you something more besides.'

"Oh, what peace and comfort came to me after that! I went about my tithing as a painter turns toward his pictures, or a poet toward his poems. It was my little gift to God, and oh, how I loved the giving!

“Now comes the remarkable thing. My wife began to improve at once, and in a short time was completely well. She became a partner in my giving. As money came to us in ever-increasing amounts, and with never a failure to retard us, we blessed a tenth and gave it back, then a fifth, and now it is fifty-one per cent. No longer do I want him to be a minority shareholder in my life. I want Him to be my Senior Partner. I want him to own all I have, and let me be steward for a little while of that portion that falls to me.”

Matthias Baldwin, founder of the great locomotive works, made it his practice to set aside one-tenth of the earnings of the company to be used for religious and educational purposes. At one time his firm was encountering tremendous financial difficulties. He had no funds left to tithe with, so he made out notes signed by himself, which he later redeemed, all of which were paid. During this crisis, his associates asked him to stop his practice of tithing, but he cried, “Why, this is my one safe investment!”

A man who tithes said to me one day, “You can beat the bank of Monte Carlo once in a while but you can never beat the bank of God and His law. As ye give ye shall receive. It gives forth of its riches only to those who obey the law.”

So you absolutely recommend the law of tithing to everyone?” I asked.

“If for no other reason than mere security I recommend the act of tithing,” he replied. “I speak for it first of all because it has actually worked out that way with me, with unfailing certainty. I have sometimes found that insurance companies fail, but the God of the tithers, never. I have sometimes heard of banks failing in which money had been kept, but the bank where thieves do not break through and steal, nor rust corrupt, I have never known to fail. It is the surest investment a man ever made?paying his tithe to God.”

There is something mysterious about tithing, something akin to giving of oneself to others. It implies a surrender and an outflowing of oneself, together with one's substance, which furnishes for many men of action the closest thing akin to meditation and contemplation and prayer which they are capable of. Tithing becomes with some men almost synonymous to an act of communion?a communion service with God and man.

With those who use it as such, it brings peace, happiness, repose, and poise which, in the eager, mad rush for material advantage, is getting far too rare a thing among business men of America. Strange to say, no one realizes this lack more than the business man himself. No one craves it, hungers for it, and seeks it more zealously than he. Give me peace, give me power to “let go,” to “be still,” is the cry of thousands of business men today. They flock to the lakes in their vacation periods. They go fishing, they seek quiet and seclusion, but what they are really seeking is a chance to be quiet and find God. But without their knowing it there is a doorway to God right in their active work. The outward act of giving often opens the inward door of surrender. For every act of giving is a religious act?it is an eternal act?an act that lifts us into the realm of spirit for a moment?that unites us a little more with God?that makes us for a moment a partner with God.

If we depend upon the world's financial stability, riches are a very fickle thing. In Germany, the savings of a lifetime, by a single period of inflation, were simply wiped out as though they had been so much smoke. In England the application of a single tax stripped landlords of their vast estates and forced them into the ranks of the workers. In Russia the actual confiscation of large estates forced families, unused to labor for hundreds of generations, into the class of paupers. While we do not expect such events to happen in America, we still must admit that American business men are facing serious problems.

Yes, America business men are facing serious problems today. Those who find it hard to earn enough to keep pace with the growing demands of a rising standard of living are never free from the fear that something may any day happen to bring them to the door of dependence or of actual want. Those who have enough and to spare cannot be sure in an age of radical and uncertain legislation and of constantly changing movements in the business and industrial world, whether their businesses and investments may be safe.

What every man wants is security—safety. Many would willingly give up the hope of great riches if they could be sure of keeping and using what they actually need—what really belongs to them. Men have turned to all sorts of devices to bring this assurance, this security. But have they turned to the one safe place? Have they established the first and surest partnership of all?the partnership with God?