



of beauty. Wesley always came back to: "What would Jesus do?" And in this context, it was a solemn plea for simplicity.

3. Give All You Can.

This principle was the foundation of his triangular sermon. We are, he affirmed, to gain and save all we can *in order to be generous*. His view of giving was: Give to yourself money to fulfill your essential needs.

- a. Give to your immediate family and employees their fair share. He validates this principle with a text from 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if anyone does not provide for his

own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel," NKJV.

- b. Give to the *household of faith*. Meaning the organized ministry of churches, para church organizations, and Christian charities.
- c. Give to the greater society, which includes those who are unfortunate, such as the poor, homeless and destitute.

On this last point he would often switch the wording as he concluded his message from "give all you can" to "give all you have."²

Perhaps this concept of being totally dedicated to giving is best encapsulated by these words: *charity starts with the checkbook, but generosity starts with the heart.*³

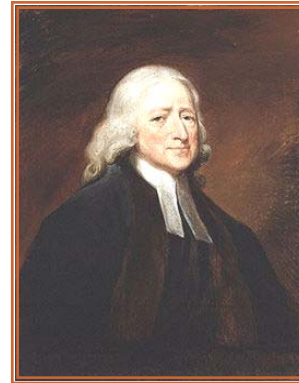
The Stewpot

A potpourri of practical ideas to help you become a better steward

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WHAT WOULD JOHN WESLEY DO?

By Gordon Botting, DrPH, CHES, CFO



The American people pride themselves on the amount of money they donate in time of crisis such as Katrina, Indonesia's 2007 tsunami, the disastrous earthquake in Haiti, last month's unexpected New Zealand earthquake and now Japan's heartbreaking devastation. It is true that Christian and secular organizations, relief agencies, charities, celebrities and individuals continually donate to these worthy causes. Our Heavenly Father wants us to be generous with those who have suffered loss because He is a charitable, big-hearted, open-handed Supernatural Being. Throughout history, godly

generosity has been one of the distinctive characteristics of Christian societies amplified by men and women who have been softened by the gift at Calvary.

One of the best examples of genuine generosity comes from the 18th century. John Wesley (1703–1791) and his musical brother Charles (1707–1788) are often credited as the cofounders of the Methodist church. Both were profound preachers and astute businessmen. Both were raised in a clergy home in

the small parish of Epworth, Lincolnshire, England. Their father, Samuel, ministered for forty years in this poor parish. Consequently, because John grew up in a lifestyle of destitution and hardship, he determined as a young man never to be in want but to live comfortably all his life.¹

One day while he was still at Oxford University, Wesley decided to purchase a few new paintings to decorate his dorm room. It was an exceptionally cold, wintery day and

"God sees the heart, not the hand — the giver, not the gift." Benjamin R. DeJong

Reference:

1. Samuel Wesley Internet article under *John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Life*.
2. John Wesley's *Trilateral* Internet article by Keith Drury.
3. Nyquist Paul, *True Generosity*, Today in the Word, Moody Bible Institute.

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Stewardship; a total lifestyle that involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality and finances.

“We hear a great deal about the Lord loving cheerful givers: we wonder where He finds them.” — Edgar Watson Howe



he noticed, when one of his chambermaids came in, that she had only a thin gown to protect her from the cold. Immediately, Wesley reached into his pocket

to assist this lady, but then realized he had only a few pennies left after paying for his new paintings. At that moment Wesley was convicted to change his spending habits. He then determined to limit his expenses so he could give more money to those less fortunate.

After Wesley finished his formal schooling and embarked on his career, he decided to continue this experiment of generosity. One year he earned 30 English pounds, a very good income for that time. That year he purposely chose to limit his daily expenses to 28 pounds so he could donate 2 pounds to the disadvantaged. The next year Wesley doubled his income and received over 60 pounds. So for another year he chose to live on 28 pounds and was able that year to give away 32 pounds. This became his life-long practice even when he was making extremely large amounts of money. One year

Wesley made the equivalent of \$1.4 million, yet even in that 12-month period he budgeted his living expense to 2% of the total and allocated the rest—98% to be given to those less fortunate. During his lifetime, he earned approximately \$30 million yet when he departed this life what remained was a well used pastor’s cloak, a few spoons and some assorted coins. What happened to his enormous income? He simply chose to die broke and give his money to the poor.²

John Wesley’s financial fundamentals was a sermon he preached entitled, *The Use of Money*, based on Luke 16:10. In this sermon Wesley stressed three central themes about the use or misuse of money. His major points are like the three sides of a triangle; “Gain all you can; save all you can; give all you can.” What did he mean by this uncomplicated message?²

1. Gain All You Can.

Wesley believed that Christians above all people should work hard, be industrious, diligent and accumulate as much money as possible. To him there was absolutely nothing wrong with accumulating wealth. In fact, he argued that Christians were “duty bound” to gain all the financial resources they could.

There is no question that Wesley followed his own advice. He was the top earning preacher of his era and probably of all time. Interestingly, Wesley did not have DVDs and CDs to sell! He received his money from donations, speaking appointments, books and what he called, *Penny Tracts*. “Wesley certainly makes today’s religious hucksters look like entrepreneurial slackers.”² Before you change your estimation of this great preacher’s philosophy, note that he balanced this gaining of wealth with five caveats.

- Under no circumstances were Christians to gain their wealth at the expense of their health or way of life.
- Christians should not gain riches through occupations that were deceitful and dishonest. He rejected employment where cheating, lying or avoiding taxes were the norm.
- Wesley maintained that no Christian should hurt his neighbor by increasing his wealth through gambling enterprises, pawn-broking, charging exorbitant interest on loans, and selling items below market value to jeopardize competition.

d. Christians should reject medical rip-off scams that swindle unsuspecting people out of their hard earned money. He called them “doctors that play with the lives and hearts of men to enlarge their own gain.”

e. Finally, he argued that Christians had absolutely no business in ventures that involved alcohol, immoral acts or any other activities that degraded nature or the human soul.

2. Save All You Can.

This second line of the triangle is not what some might think. Wesley was not concerned about the need to have many savings accounts, stocks, bonds or mutual funds. His idea was the need for Christians to be thrifty with their spending habits or in other words, to be financially frugal or prudent.

He warned about what would be appealing to the eye: expensive and extravagant clothes, elaborate houses, fancy garden landscapes and extraordinary decorations, expensive paintings and works of art and various other things that appealed to our sense



“There is no happiness in having and getting, but only in giving.” — Frank Wakely Gunsaulus