

# **THE SCIENCE OF GETTING RICH**

**The Original Classic**

**Includes bonus book**  
**The Science of Being Great**

WALLACE D. WATTLES  
with an introduction by  
TOM BUTLER-BOWDON



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## FOREWORD

When I began to study, and later teach and write on the subject of prosperity, Wallace D. Wattles was among my early influences. I marvelled them then, as I do now, at the succinct, deliberate, direct, unapologetic and uncompromising way he wrote on the subject – as early as 1910.

It has been said that “Poverty is a form of hell, caused by man’s blindness to God’s good.” The author knew this as he explained:

*Firstly*, the psychology of wealth; and, *secondly*, the definite steps to attain it.

He further stated: “There is a science to getting rich and anyone can do it. Indeed, it is your right to be rich and your life will be incomplete without it.”

Many success-themed authors followed him later in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, but none have surpassed his simple message: “Rich or poor, it’s good to have money.”

This book shows you how to do this and much more . . .

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Catherine Tonder".

## FOREWORD

Catherine Ponder is the doyenne of modern prosperity writers. Her work includes the classic, *The Dynamic Laws of Prosperity*, and more than a dozen other best-selling titles including *The Dynamic Laws of Healing*, *The Millionaire Moses* and *Open Your Mind To Receive*. Ordained a Unity Church minister in 1956, she launched three ministries in Alabama and Texas before establishing her global ministry in Palm Desert, California. Listed in *Who's Who* and *Who's Who In Religion*, she is a long-standing lecturer of note and a significant influence on writers in the inspirational field.

## AN INTRODUCTION

Tom Butler-Bowdon

*“Life has advanced so far, and become so complex, that even the most ordinary man or woman requires a great amount of wealth in order to live in a manner that even approaches completeness . . . To understand the science of getting rich is therefore the most essential of all knowledge.”*

Wallace Wattles

In 2004, Australian television executive Rhonda Byrne was at breaking point. A divorced mother of two dealing with her father's recent death, she was also having business problems. Her accountant had just phoned to say she was only a couple of months away from going broke, and she still had two films to complete.

At home one day, she poured out her troubles to her daughter, Hayley, who listened and tried to reassure her. She came back a minute later with a bundle of photocopied pages and gave them to her mother. It was a copy of *The Science of Getting Rich*. The old book “lit a fire in me”, she recalls. “It was exactly the opposite of the way I

thought life worked.”<sup>1</sup> She began researching the roots of Wattles’ philosophy, and within a year had produced her famous film, *The Secret*. Made for only \$3 million, *The Secret* sold two million copies in download and DVD format, with sales of the book version passing a million copies. Though it was based on interviews with contemporary ‘law of attraction’ teachers, she was quick to credit Wattles as her original inspiration. After a century of relative obscurity, her work brought Wattles back into the limelight.

Yet even now, what do we really know of Wattles or his book?

To understand *The Science of Getting Rich* and its power, we must get a sense of the time and context in which it was written. We will also briefly discuss its companion work, *The Science of Being Great*.

### WATTLES’ WORLD

In 1890s and 1900s America, many people felt oppressed by a system where great industrial trusts and extremely wealthy individuals held sway. Bill Gates is often seen as the richest capitalist of our age, but in relative terms he did not match the wealth of Rockefeller and Carnegie in their time<sup>2</sup>.

## INTRODUCTION

In a more brutal economic era without safety nets, the average person clung onto jobs they hated or kept up businesses that weren't doing well for fear of slipping through the cracks entirely.

From a poor rural family himself, Wallace Delois Wattles would not have escaped such fears. Not a great deal is known about his early life. He was born in rural Illinois in 1860. His father died when he was only 10, but his mother remained a strong part of Wallace's life, later living with him and his own family, which included wife Abby, son Russell and daughters, Florence and Agnes<sup>3</sup>.

Wattles had enjoyed only a rudimentary school education, and for several years worked as a farm labourer. However, by his mid-30s he had attained a reasonable, although hardly lucrative, position in the Methodist church. Though the records are scant, we can assume it was a ministry role.

## A NEW DIRECTION

In a time of change in American church circles, Wattles became attracted to reform preachers like George D. Herron, who was spreading the word of the 'social gospel', which held that Christ must be at the centre of economic and social life. When, in December 1896, he saw Herron

speak at a conference in Chicago, it changed Wattles<sup>2</sup> life.

Herron was controversial. From his examination of the life and teachings of Jesus, he argued that a form of socialism was the most humane and equitable form of political organization – in distinction to the ruthless, dehumanising forces of capitalism. Christian Socialists rallied against the ‘industrial despotism’ of late 19<sup>th</sup> century America, with its concentration of wealth and power in a chosen few. The system had led to corruption and monopolies, and crushed the ability of individuals to determine their destinies. Even worse, this view held, the established churches in America had offered no resistance to the damage that raw capitalism had done to the fabric of society<sup>4</sup>. Their unholy alliance with big industry was light years from what Christ would have wanted, Herron believed, and as he put it in one of his tracts, “The possession of power over others is inherently destructive both to the possessor of the power and to those over whom it is exercised.”

Wattles left the conference convinced of these ideas, but inevitably they ran counter to the Methodist church. Forced out of his job by the church, he began writing articles for *Nautilus*, a popular magazine based on ‘New Thought’ spiritual principles and

run by Elizabeth Towne. In these articles he developed a distinctive writing style and philosophy, and they became, along with weekly talks, his main source of income.

### THE RIGHT WAY TO RICHES

Wattles was by all accounts a loving father and husband, and took his breadwinner role seriously. He naturally wanted to give his family everything they wanted, and this meant attaining a level of private wealth. Yet he was not prepared to give up his Christian or socialist beliefs. How to reconcile the two?

When he sat down to write *The Science of Getting Rich*, it may have helped that Herron, his original inspiration, had become tarnished by a divorce scandal and his supporters had ebbed away. He may have felt free to pursue a less dogmatic vision of a Christian state. Indeed, compared to an earlier book he wrote, *Jesus: The Man and His Work*, the *Science of Getting Rich* does not assume Christian belief on the part of the reader.

Wattles had, anyway, been absorbing the ideas and teachings of a wide range of philosophers and religious thinkers, among them Leibniz, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Emerson and Swedenborg. He was

also influenced by Eastern religion. This philosophical and spiritual journey had brought him to a Monistic view of the universe, which holds that everything in space and time is a flowering or expression of the One Spiritual Substance. Monism's lack of distinction between Spirit and Matter implied that we could bring whatever we wanted into our lives merely through the power of directed, purposeful thought. In this insight, Wattles believed he had found the secret to prosperity. It did not involve battling others on the bloody field of capitalism, but instead developing a greater attunement to universal laws. This was the heart of his 'science' of wealth creation.

Metaphysically, Wattles could now justify the pursuit of wealth, but he knew that his potential audience was after something more direct and useful. So, in the first lines of *The Science of Getting Rich*, he notes that it is "not a treatise upon theories", but rather "intended for the men and women whose most pressing need is for money." He wanted to enrich his readers, but he also needed (given his principles and the circles he moved in) to avoid any of the grasping and greed of the capitalist ethos.

The book first affirms that the desire to have more and get more is good, a natural part of being human and what God wants for us. Yet such desires are to be realized through the *creative expression of the*



*individual*, not as a pawn in some battle between capitalist titans. The creative pursuit of a calling led to genuine abundance, whereas fighting with another over a particular resource or market rested on a false belief in scarcity, and was, ultimately, a life-defeating exercise. The spiritually right way, he argued, is through creative endeavour that expresses our individuality.

This is the book in essence, but let us go deeper.

### **WHY YOU NEED TO BE RICH**

*“You must get rid of the last vestige of the old idea that there is a Deity whose will it is that you should be poor, or whose purposes may be served by keeping you in poverty.”*

Christian belief in Wattles’ era came with a lot of baggage about money and wealth. Many believed that poverty meant purity, and wealth equated to sin. Against this, Wattles argues that the nature of life is continuous increase and expansion. Therefore, to grow and develop into everything we can be, we must be able to get our hands on the things we need. In his words, “We must get rich, so that we can live more.” The same thing that makes plants want to grow is

what gives us the urge for more: it is simply “Life, seeking fuller expression.”

On a practical level, the complexity and advanced nature of modern life means that the average person has to command a lot more resources in order to live a full life. You need money to fulfil any talents you have, and to have the time to allow your soul’s development to unfold; money to travel, to buy books, to surround yourself with art and beauty, all of which enrich the mind and make it more likely you can live a complete life. When you are a physical body and brain in a world governed by time and space, it is no use thinking of yourself as a spiritual being alone. To fulfil your spiritual potential, paradoxically you need to have command of physical resources, of *things*. And society is so organized that things cost money.

Learning how to become rich, therefore, is “the most essential of all knowledge”, Wallace ascertained.

### What makes you rich

What brings about wealth? Not environment alone, Wattles observes. If it was, all the people in one neighbourhood or city would be rich, while all those in another would be poor. In fact, you find rich people and poor people, often of very similar backgrounds, living near each other.

It is not a matter of choosing the right profession either, because people get rich in every field. If, then, given access to similar resources, one person stays poor while another becomes rich, is there not a ‘certain way’ that the rich person follows to do well? The certain way is not talent, because plenty of people with little talent become rich, while those with seemingly much are poor. In fact, Wattles observes, the rich do not possess talents measurably greater than the poor<sup>5</sup>.

Yet neither is wealth the result of thrift alone, since free spenders often end up rich. As Wattles bluntly puts it, “Talented people get rich; and blockheads get rich; intellectually brilliant people get rich, and very stupid people get rich . . . If anybody else in your town can get rich, so can you; and if anybody in your state can get rich, so can you.” You obviously need a basic ability to think, understand and act, but beyond this there is no requirement for brilliance.

So what *does* increase the probability you will get rich? The book gives some common sense advice: Go into a business you like which requires the expression of your talents; Work in a business in the right location, where it is likely to have a good market; And make sure your field or industry is growing.

Many people blame external circumstances for their current position, but Wattles warns us never to think that we are being kept down by ‘the boss’, or ‘the company’ or ‘the system’. We are where we are today because we simply have not bothered to understand the laws of wealth.

### **ALWAYS MORE THAN ENOUGH**

To make the most of *The Science of Getting Rich*, we have to really grasp its underlying philosophy of abundance. Portraying nature as “an inexhaustible storehouse of riches”, Wattles noted that when a particular resource appears to run low, humans always find or develop another, better resource to take its place.

‘Running short’ is a false concept, because the nature of the universe is perpetual creation. One of the more powerful lines in the book is: “*There can be no lack unless God is to contradict himself and nullify his own works.*” Lack has no objective reality, and is simply the absence of abundance. By focusing on abundance alone, we are focused on the essential truth of the universe.

If you have ever wondered why there are incredible riches in the world, yet you yourself are not, Wattles says, it is because you will have become too

focused on what you *don't* have. Instead, you must really appreciate wealth and see yourself as part of its flow. Change your mindset from the need to 'get' money, to being a living representation of prosperity itself.

### **MENTAL MECHANICS OF PROSPERITY**

Every chapter ends with a 3-point statement which readers are asked to make the basis of their new life. "The science of getting rich", Wattles states, "begins with the absolute acceptance of this faith."

In essence, it says:

Behind the physical appearance of the universe is a thought substance, or field of thought (variously called Substance or the Formless);

What is imagined in this field becomes reality;

Human beings, when they impress an individual thought within this universal thought field, see it naturally become realized.

There is only one 'Thinking Substance' from which all things come, so aligning yourself with the Source's field of thought means you become a sort of co-creator. You share its intelligence and creative

power. However, you must recognize that It, and not the world of appearances, is the real Truth that moves the universe. Impress within this universal field of thought what you want, and it cannot avoid coming to pass.

Some years later, Catherine Ponder, the doyenne of modern prosperity writers (see Foreword), echoed Wattles' thoughts when she wrote that the first thing a person must do to move into a state of prosperity is to recognize that "God is the source of your supply". That is, not the persons (e.g. a boss, a family member) or particular conditions (e.g. the economy) that *apparently* determine your prosperity. This is, of course, difficult to do, but both she and Wattles believed it to be the essence of personal power. A person who does so becomes master of their destiny and can have what they want.

### HOW IT ACTUALLY COMES

If our desires are heartfelt and beneficent to all, we shouldn't be shy about "asking largely". Wattles remembers that promise from the Bible: "It is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom".

Yet what we want is never conjured out of thin air as if by a genie. If we have impressed the image of it onto the universal thought field, Wattles

notes, it will surely come to us, but “*through the ways of established trade and commerce.*” We can relax and know that what we need will come, often in surprising ways. As there is never a limited supply, we don’t have to hurry, snatch, covet or steal.

The Universe naturally wants you to have everything you need to grow and advance, but Wattles includes a caveat: what you do in life must be in harmony with its good purposes. This means: Not desiring to be rich in order to live a life of excess, existing only for bodily pleasures; Not desiring to be rich just to please your ego, hankering after fame or to outshine others; and not desiring to be rich only to ‘save mankind’. Such nobility is certainly a part of life, but not all of it. God does not want you to sacrifice yourself for others. Extreme altruism is as much a mistake as selfishness. Instead, Wattles says, “you can help others more by making the most of yourself than in any other way.”

### **INSPIRING AND SPREADING PROSPERITY**

“Things are not brought into being by thinking about their opposites”, Wattles writes. If you want to help the poor, don’t go about studying the causes

or effects of poverty. Instead, get rich yourself, so that you can inspire the poor. Charity may help for a time, but people only ever lift themselves out of poverty by being inspired to do so. If you do ever speak of the poor, he advises, speak of them with an air of *congratulation*, *never pity*, for they are on their way to wealth.

Never talk about your past financial troubles, which will “mentally class you with the poor”, and furthermore “Never speak of the times as being hard, or of business conditions as being doubtful”. If you have accepted a certain new way of seeing the universe, don’t let yourself be exposed to conflicting ideas. “Think of the riches the world is coming into, instead of the poverty it is growing out of.”

In whatever line of work or business you are in, you will succeed and prosper to the extent that you offer others the possibility of increasing what they have, be it things, money, love or health. As Wattles puts it, “. . . all men and women are attracted to him who can give them more of the means of life.” Keep the image in your mind at all times that you are a person who advances others, who brings more life and more wealth to all. Let this be your Golden Rule: *what I want for myself, I want for everybody.*



## **BECOMING A CREATOR, NOT A COMPETITOR**

*“You must get rid of the thought of competition. You are to create, not to compete for what is already created . . . You do not have to take anything away from any one . . . You do not have to drive sharp bargains.”*

Central to the book’s message is that as unique, sovereign individuals, we progress most easily in life by expressing that individuality. It is unwise and unproductive to think that we need to advance ourselves at the expense of another.

Battling to get laws changed or railing against bankers is also a waste of our energies. “When you are in the competitive mind”, he notes, “you have lost the cooperation of the Mind of the Whole.”

The gains you make on the plane of competition either do not last (“yours to-day, and another’s tomorrow”) or they are spiritually unsatisfying. Competing suggests there is a finite supply of something that all must fight for, but in fact, if we are all trying to realise a personal vision of how things should be, there is no end to new products, services and wealth. You will have plenty of opportunities:

*“When you get out of the competitive mind you will understand that you never need to act hastily. No one else is going to beat you to the thing you want to do; there is enough for all. If one space is taken, another and a better one will be opened for you a little farther on; there is plenty of time. When you are in doubt, wait.”*

With echoes of a world economic crisis that would come almost a century after his book was published, Wattles writes: “The more men who get rich on the competitive plane, the worse for others; the more who get rich on the creative plane, the better for others.”

He warns that, if you are currently in a business that doesn’t give people real value, or takes advantage of them, “get out of it at once”.

## GRATITUDE

The whole process of getting in tune with universal law, Wattles says, can be summed up in one word: Gratitude.

He observes that, “Many people who order their lives rightly in all other ways are kept in poverty by their lack of gratitude.”

*“The grateful mind is constantly fixed upon the best; therefore it tends to become the best; it*