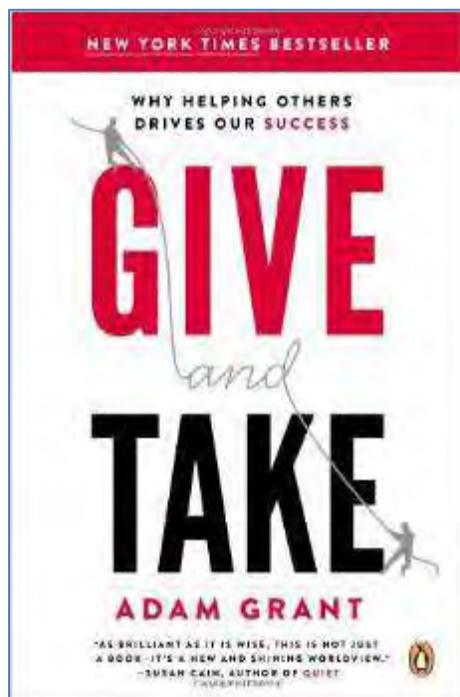


Give and Take - a book review

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Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success

Available on Amazon: *Give and Take*

The phrase “Give and Take” is familiar to those who have studied the teachings of Rev. Sun Myung Moon. Give and take relationships are what are responsible for all “existence, multiplication and action” according to the Exposition of the Divine Principle.

In his book, Adam Grant lays out through many stories about individuals and companies, how being a giver is the best choice for individuals and organizations. For instance, he talks about how venture capital funder David Hornik was known as a giver, really looking out for the best interests of the entrepreneurs he made proposals to fund. In the case examined in the book, this did not immediately lead to closing the funding deal for a sought after entrepreneur, but it did yield good results in the longer run.

Throughout the book, there are many examples of how this is true. Specific studies are cited, such as a study of those sales reps working for a large optician. Those who consistently were rated highest by customers also had the greatest sales and were rated as givers. They looked out for what is best for the customer. The Chapter on powerless communication also provides valuable insights into the best way to communicate with others. One way is through dominance and another is through building prestige. Prestige can be built by listening and being humble. These two styles are practiced by takers and givers, respectively.

The adage that “Giving comes first” from the Unification Principle, mentioned above, is shown in real life to be correct. Furthermore, there are fascinating corollary facts, such that the ideal number of hours to volunteer per year to have a positive effect on the giver of being happier and more satisfied is between 100 and 800 hours per year. Grant also points out that it is more effective to volunteer in one five hour chunk of time than to break the time up into, say, five one hour segments.

Also, I was fascinated with the story about name affinity, how a man accidentally contacted a man of the same name, and they became good friends. This would dovetail with the ideal that there is some affinity with those with your name, even if you are not related by blood. This could be good news for those looking to build a “tribe”, or a group of people that you influence in a positive, Godly, way.

In my experience within the Unification/Family Federation movement, the Founder, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, has made efforts starting in the 1980’s to transition the organization to have a more mutually cooperative, less leader-subordinate type of structure. Especially with the founding of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification in 1996, the direction was to disband the old “Unification Church”. Rather, we were to be part of a Federation of individuals/ groups/Churches that support the mission of the Family Federation.

Yet, why hasn’t the Family Federation organization, especially as an organization with the motto of “living for the sake of others”, not prospered more?

The book gives some insight when it talks about how one company dealt with a partner who was not looking out for the company’s best interest and taking advantage of the company for self gain. By realizing what the taking person is thinking, instead of just emphasizing with the other persons feelings or emotion, the business partner was able to devise a strategy to deal effectively with the situation, instead of just being a doormat. Further insight into how to deal with takers is gained in an interview of Give and Take author Adam Grant by Riv Kirkland of McKinsey & Company:

The negative impact of a taker typically exceeds the positive impact of a giver by a multiple of two or three to one. You find that it’s pretty easy for one taker to be the bad apple that spoils the barrel. But when you put one giver in an organization, it’s not like one good egg will always make a dozen.

I’ve spent a good chunk of time in the past year working with organizations on mechanisms for screening out takers. And I think what’s powerful about that is, if you can eliminate takers

from your organization, then you have givers and matchers. The givers will act more generously because they don't have to be paranoid that takers are out to get them.

Successful organizations need to have a strong culture of accountability and transparency. If there is not proper oversight and transparency then takers will spoil the barrel. I think this explains why the Unification/Family Federation organization has not grown more; some takers have been allowed to operate without accountability. This has a severe suppressant effect on the givers and matchers. This is especially a problem in religious organizations, where members are generally supposed to bow to authority figures even more than in other organizations. Adam Grant continues in his interview:

And the beauty of matchers, which is most people, is that they tend to follow the norm and reciprocate the way that they've been treated. So matchers act like givers in the presence of givers. They're also useful for dealing with—if you have clients, for example, who are takers—matchers will fight fire with fire when they have to.

Then the question is, "How do you screen out takers?" And there are a couple ways to think about this. One way to screen out takers is to recognize that they follow a pattern of kissing up/kicking down. If you're a taker, it's quite important to be a good faker when you're dealing with powerful people, because of course you want them to think well of you. But if you've never tried, it turns out to be a lot of work to pretend to care about every person you meet.

And takers tend to let their guard down a little bit when dealing with peers and subordinates, which means that you should be really skeptical of references that come from bosses. Lateral references and references from below are actually quite valuable.

There's also evidence that takers, when they talk about success, tend to use two words more than the rest of us, which are "I" and "me." And then, when they talk about failures, they tend to place blame externally. My favorite way of screening out takers is to present them with situational interviews.

Any organization would be wise to use some of these insights to improve the functioning of the organization. Especially, if the organization seems to be stalled in fulfilling its mission, it should take a hard look if there are places where takers have spoiled the apple barrel. If so, the book and interview gives advice on how can this be corrected and avoided in the future. The book, as well as the interview above gives a lot of actionable advice for organizations, as well as individuals looking to be more giving, and thus more effective, and ultimately, from the Divine Principle perspective, more Godly.

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