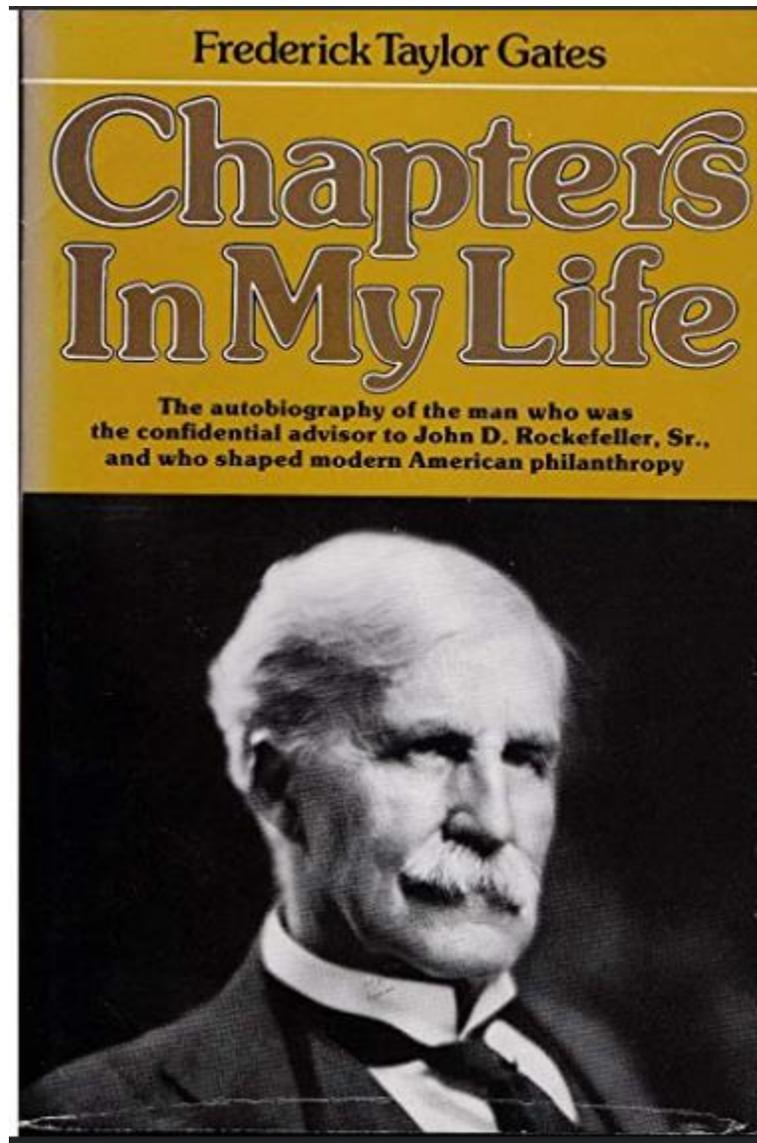


*Chapters in My Life*

By Frederick Taylor Gates



## Summary

1. Frederick Taylor Gates, the senior business and philanthropic advisor to John D. Rockefeller, recounts his life story and interaction with JDR

## Key Takeaways

1. Gates grew up in a relatively poor household but his parents were hard working and were never for want. Gates became a Baptist minister after graduating from Rochester and practiced for about a decade. He came into contact with JDR during his fundraising process for a Baptist university in Chicago. JDR was impressed enough with his acumen and common sense that he brought him on board, eventually to become senior business advisor for JDR's business and philanthropic decisions
  1. While preaching in Minnesota, Mr. Pillsbury approached Gates on how to handle his will and was taken in by the suggestion that he required Gates to take a year off from being a pastor to spread the message of the importance of Baptist advancement in the state. Gates ended up suggesting that Pillsbury donate \$50k, rather than \$200k, on the condition that the church match it and that he help raise the rest. Who else would volunteer to raise that kind of money themselves?
  2. Joined the Executive Board of the American Baptist Education Society and was central in communicating with Rockefeller on the importance of establishing a great Baptist university in central Chicago, what would later become the University of Chicago. Gates was named by Rockefeller to be one of the Trustees for the University of Chicago which he helped fund-raise for and then help lead.
  3. Dr. Harper was the University of Chicago's first president and had ambitious plans for the University. His expansion and spending put him at odds occasionally with Mr. Rockefeller but his vision helped make UChicago the incredible institution it is today
  4. Gates soon after moved to New York to help with Rockefeller's other benevolences and it was at this point that he turned away from the ministry. Gates helped to direct Rockefeller's fund and then lead and manage these companies, trusts or philanthropic organizations. Gates steered Rockefeller's donations towards the principles of scientific giving and eventually laying aside retail giving to individuals and local charities and fully entering wholesale philanthropy to approved public agencies. Gates had little business experience but Rockefeller

trusted that he would learn and put him in that position because Gates had a "great store of common sense." Gates responds by saying that, "his excuse is valid in its implication that common sense diligently applied is usually the best possible solvent of difficult business problems. Gates helped Rockefeller sell out of many poor investments which a "syndicate" of old friends and acquaintances had looped Rockefeller into but ended up being reckless

1. In his study of one of Rockefeller's mining investments in Colorado - "My self-distrust proved my salvation. I would not rely at all on any examination of mine. If these consolidated gold properties were what they were represented to be, they would be well known. They ought to be well known throughout Colorado. There must be men in Denver itself who knew of them. I could and would find out what experienced and reliable men in Colorado knew of these mines." He would come to find that Rockefeller's investment was in a complete fraud with no gold by conversing with these fluent miners and engineers
  2. This was too much for Rockefeller and it was then JDR invited Gates to be the independent agent in charge of both his philanthropic and personal investing decisions
2. On Children & Parenting
1. Never underestimate the impression something can have on a young child - the years of early childhood usually fix the character and destiny of the man
  2. It is a mistake to think children need to be harshly rebuked. To raise gentlemen and women, one must treat them in childhood with courtesy
  3. The parent can force an apparent but wholly deceptive victory by fear, for no victory is complete that does not carry the child's reason, and conscience, the victory of intelligent voluntary repentance
  4. Children should be taught to pray for what they crave and always in their own words or else the prayer rings hollow. Spent his entire adult life trying to erase his early religious training as he found it painful and stamped out his natural desire to do good. It is ideals lovingly cherished, not terrors, that educate the conscience and create character
  5. My parents talked over all their troubles with entire freedom in the presence of their children. I know no better way than free discussion in the presence of the children of the daily problems of the family, including its relations with others, if children are to be trained in such worldly wisdom as their parents have, and in the practical conduct of life

6. I find that praise and encouragement work wonders and it gets students much more interested and self motivated
  7. My mother told me to do everything I was told to do, be it high or low; shrink from no duty however difficult or distasteful, and do it, said she, just as well as you can. Do it better than others. Though you may not have as much talent as some, your labor in this way will always be in demand
  8. Beyond mere physical protection of the very little children, we sought to train our children to govern themselves. We tried to make love only the atmosphere of our home. in this spirit it was not necessary to treat them as underlings , but as friends. We advised, persuaded, encouraged, commended, rewarded them, but we sought never to command or forbid. The last word of all counsel was: such is our advice and our wish, but make your own decision; do as you think best. More often than not they begged us to make the decision for them, for they found it easier to be governed than to govern themselves. But self-control can be attained only by the habitual practice of it
  9. We did not spare expense at any point, because we thought that the taste for good music would be worth more - far more - to our children in later life than the inheritance of the money it cost
  10. The mind of the child grows not by absorbing the contents of books, but by intense, spontaneous, self-directed, mental action, just as the body of the child grows by intense, spontaneous, self-directed physical action in his plays. The mind and body are inseparable. They share a common life. We supplemented the schools with twice as much self-directed work and play outside the school hours. We made it a rule to provide at home all the tools, and all the chemical, physical and electrical equipment, apparatus, and material that our children wanted...We had given a minor place only to the study of books but had kept our children busy sixteen hours per day in self-chosen, spontaneous activity, as intense as possible and furnished with all needed facilities and tools
3. On Business & Philanthropy
    1. Every step a man takes in capacity to work, and to do better work will bring him into a higher plane - a plane in which there will be fewer competitors, greater demand and higher rewards
    2. I knew of course that no man becomes fitted for a new position of importance and responsibility, except by months or years of experience in the position itself and that in the process of becoming fitted there must be errors, embarrassments and chagrins

3. Worked for a Mr. Smith who was Scrooge-like but Gates stood up for what he believed was right and earned this man's trust. He learned the basics of banking and bookkeeping which would serve him well later in life
4. You need to be educated enough so that you can bring your ideas down to the point that common people can understand them
5. No man ever made such advancement in culture who did not early in life learn to save the minutes. Benjamin Franklin said "Time is Money." To you time is more than money. It is mental culture; it is reputation. It is power over men; it is success.
6. Doing much in a little time, the impression is apt to wear away. Don't hurry, take time
7. On fund raising - never tried to increase the subscription or even to get the last cent possible. We aimed to leave friends behind us, not enemies. It was up to them how much to donate and our job was to be grateful whether the donation was large or small
8. Medicine had become full of charlatans and had fallen behind many other sciences because it was not endowed at colleges and universities and the research had been left to itself and dependent on individual innovation. It became clear to Gates that medicine could not become a true science until medicine was endowed and qualified men were able to give themselves uninterrupted to the study and investigation of medical research. This was where Gates had an immense influence on Rockefeller. "This idea took possession of me. The more I thought of it, the more interested I became. I knew nothing of the cost of research; I did not realize its enormous difficulty; the only thing I saw was the overwhelming need and infinite promise, world-wide, universal, eternal.
9. On the Rockefeller Institute - The work of the Institute is as universal in its scope as the love of God. Other philanthropies are limited in their scope to individuals, to communities, to classes, to religions, to states, to countries, to nations. This philanthropy alone is as wide as the race. It knows no boundaries at all. Disease is universal and this is a healing ministrations, to prevent or destroy disease...It goes to the fountains of life itself. It deals with what is innermost in every man. For what is health? Health is happiness; mere health itself is happiness...And while we think of the universality of its scope and its elemental character, let us remember its permanency. The work is not for today alone, but forever; not for this generation, but for every generation of humanity that shall come after us. Thus every success is multiplied by infinity

1. The Institute soon became a "benevolent black hole" for world philanthropies and received appeals daily from every sort of agency of human progress and well-being the world over
10. Gates was also responsible for pushing Rockefeller to give outside his Baptist denomination and outside his own country, to all worth religions and humanitarian agencies everywhere
11. Gates became worried about the ever increasing fortune of the Rockefeller's and the potential social demoralization it could bring to descendants. So, he spoke to JDR and JDR Jr. about setting up great corporate philanthropies for forwarding civilization in all its elements in this land and all lands, limitless in time and amount, broad in scope and self-perpetuating. "I knew very well that Mr. Rockefeller's mind would not work on mere abstract theories. He required concrete practical suggestions, and I set about framing them." Suggested endowments to focus on higher education, medical research, fine arts, scientific agriculture, promotion of Christian ethics, promotion of intelligent citizenship and civic virtue and more
12. Rockefeller divorced himself from the philanthropic decisions in order to eliminate his biases and hopefully put the money to the best uses possible. "His satisfaction springs from deeper and more durable sources than human gratitude...His joy is the joy of achievement. He is after the end. He cannot sacrifice the end to the instrument, even when the instrument is himself."
13. Gates thought that some of the best and most important work of the whole foundation was through the Sanitary Commission which initially was set up to help eradicate hookworms from the South and eventually the rest of the temperate regions of the world
14. It was not Mr. Rockefeller's way to give words of praise to any of his subordinates. To others he sometimes spoke approvingly of me and of my work, and his words would reach me by round about channels. But to my face he never commended me...But just as I never consciously worked for salary, wealth, or position, so I worked not to secure but to deserve Mr. Rockefeller's approval.
15. JDR was never a "bull" or a "bear." He always followed the market, and never directed it. In every one of our great panics he did everything possible to sustain prices and was always a heavy loser in them. His optimism was incurable, and when panics were on and the credit of banks and individuals exhausted, he unlocked his vaults and loaned his securities without limit to banks and stressed debtors

16. Gates "combines business skill and philanthropic aptitude to a higher degree than any other man I have ever known."
17. Gates was the right man for the job because he believed deeply and irrevocably in the perfectibility of man and especially in the advancement of knowledge as the best means for reaching perfection
18. Both Rockefeller and Gates agreed on the importance of finding the best men available and leaving them free to do the job in their own way
19. As stated become more and more preoccupied with equality and uniformity, pluralism and excellence may increasingly become the responsibility of the private sector

#### 4. Other

1. Never enjoyed or profited from school but he did come to find his love for natural wood and music in school. The art of teaching consists in following nature's ways by study of the child
2. One cannot afford to read a book that is not with buying. Read with pen or pencil in hand and read only useful books
3. A man's temptations lie mainly in the realm of his powers
4. Genius is tempted to be original at the expense of truth
5. Avoid friction. There is such a thing as moral and intellectual friction. Fretting, worry, envy, jealousy, disputes, quarrels - these are all in the nature of friction. Avoid them as so much waste. Make all your power tell, and waste as little as possible
6. Avoid the habit of omniscience. Take suggestions. Take criticism. The man who is always right is either omniscient or a fool.
7. The fact is I know less about the Bible today than I did 30 years ago. I thought I knew something about it then but I have learned that I knew very little about it
8. The idolatry of general concepts - people bow down and worship general concepts such as church, nation, state, democracy. Pick these words apart, gentlemen, and find out what is in them
9. I believe that the love and good-will exemplified in the Spirit of Jesus are the secret of human well-being and that in this Spirit lies the hope of the race
10. None of the precious things in life can be bought with money and money, past a certain point, was more a burden than a gain
11. Mr. Rockefeller's habitual policy had been total silence under accusation
12. Humanity, as I said, must always live with Nature, with her forces and their reactions on mankind. For what is human progress? Ultimately it is this, just this,

and nothing else - an ever closer approach to the facts, the laws, the forces of Nature, considered of course in its largest meaning. Nothing else is progress and nothing else will prove to be permanent among men

What I got out of it

1. Amazing wisdom - not only about business and philanthropic savvy, but on how to raise children, deal with people and lead a happy, fulfilling and successful life

