

HACKED FOR GOOD

How the Most Selfish Thing You Can Do Becomes the Thing That Saves Us

Dr. Jeff Bullock | Free sample: the Prologue and Chapter 1

PROLOGUE: Glory Had No Column

In 1324, the man often called the richest who ever lived walked out of West Africa with a caravan so long it took the better part of a day to pass a single point on the road.

His name was Mansa Musa, the emperor of Mali. Historians still argue about his net worth because the honest answer is that the numbers stop meaning anything. His empire controlled a huge share of the world's gold, by some estimates as much as half of the supply moving through the medieval world. When he set out for Mecca, he brought tens of thousands of people, a line of camels heavy with gold dust, and an idea about wealth that almost no one with money has had before or since.

He gave it away.

He gave it on the road, far from home, where generosity bought him nothing but the act itself. To emirs and merchants and beggars. To strangers he would never see again. And when the caravan reached Cairo, he gave so much gold, so freely, that he moved the city's whole economy. The price of gold in Cairo collapsed and did not recover for more than a decade. One man's open hand moved a market the way a flood moves a riverbank.

Here is what I want you to sit with. Most kings are remembered for what they took. The land they conquered, the rivals they buried, the vaults they filled. Seven hundred years later, Mansa Musa is remembered for the opposite. He is remembered for what he gave.

I wrote a novel about him. In it, his treasurer keeps a perfect ledger, a column for every kind of money there is. Expenditure. Investment. Loss. Contingency. Every grain of gold accounted for. And one morning the king asks him a question that does not fit in any of

his columns. How much would we need to give away, he says, so that when our hands are empty, the story of our giving outlasts the stone walls of Cairo?

The treasurer goes looking for the right column. Glory had no column.

There was no line in the books for what giving returns. Because what giving returns does not fit in a ledger. It is bigger than the gold and it lasts longer than the man.

That instinct, to give, and to be made larger by it, is alive in you. It was installed before you were born. We can now point to the exact circuitry in your brain that lights up when you give, and we can prove that it pays you back in a currency more valuable than money. Your health. Your years. Your happiness. The people who will stand around you when you need them.

And yet.

We give less than we want to. We give later than we mean to. We feel worse about money, and lonelier in a crowd, than any generation that has ever lived. Somewhere between that ancient instinct and your actual Tuesday, something got in the way. Something got between you and one of the oldest, smartest moves a human being can make.

This book is about what got in the way. And how to move it.

I am going to show you that the same device that has been mining your attention for profit, the one in your pocket right now, runs on the exact circuitry that giving was built to use. I am going to show you how it got pointed at the wrong target, mostly by accident. And then I am going to show you how to turn it around, and hand it to you, so that doing good becomes as easy and as habit-forming as the thing you do instead.

It starts with a confession that is going to sound backwards.

The most selfish thing I have ever done is give my money away.

Let me show you why.

Chapter 1: The Most Selfish Thing You Can Do

People tell me I give away too much. Why are you putting so much knowledge about AI out there for free, they ask. You could charge for that. You worked for that. Some of them say it like a compliment. Most of them say it like I have lost my mind.

I learned to give knowledge away long before I ever coached anyone. I started as a community pharmacist, behind the counter at CVS, and the whole culture of that job is built on one move. You are the knowledge broker. People walk up and ask you anything. What this pill does, why their stomach hurts, whether the thing they read online is going to kill them. And you are trained to do one thing with that question. You tell them. You tell them for free. The community pays you to stand there and help, and helping is the entire job.

I carried that counter with me into the coaching room. I have an abundance of what I know. So handing a piece of it to you costs me nothing I will miss. And I have lived long enough to watch givers gain. It comes back. People learn that I am trying to help them, not to corner them, and that builds something money cannot. On top of all of it, giving feels good. I get joy out of the simple act of being useful.

Now here is the part that earns the word selfish, and I want you to sit with it, because it is the whole point of this chapter.

Giving generously is also a shield.

If I have already given you a great deal, you are far less likely to walk up and ask me for something hard, something outside my routine, something that would cost me a real afternoon. You would feel bad asking. Or you would go ask somebody else. Either way, my time stays mine and my routine stays intact.

I will be honest with you. I do not love doing hard things any more than you do. Free giving, on my terms, on my schedule, is easy. And it quietly keeps the harder asks away from my door.

Here is what most people believe about giving. It is something you do for other people, at a price you pay yourself.

Here is what is actually true. Giving is the best deal you will ever make, and the price you think you are paying is the down payment on the return.

Set heaven aside for a moment, and I hope you keep it. I am talking about your body, your mind, your years, and the people who will be standing in the room when the floor falls out from under you. I am talking about returns you can measure, in studies you can read, that show up whether or not you believe in any of it.

The most selfish thing you can do is give. That is a fact the world has hidden from you, and this chapter is where I take it back out of the dark.

The deal nobody read

When you give, you do not just feel good for a second. You get paid in a stack of currencies at once.

I am going to spend the next chapter walking you through the science slowly, because it is the foundation under everything else in this book. For now, the short version. Giving lowers your stress. It lowers your blood pressure. It pulls people who are depressed up out of it more reliably than a lot of things we charge money for. It helps you sleep. The research keeps finding the same strange result, that people who give more live longer, and the effect holds even after you account for how much money or health they started with.

And then there is the part nobody puts on the brochure.

When you give, people remember. Not the way you think, not as a debt they owe you, though sometimes it is that. They remember it as who you are. You become, in the mind of everyone who watched, a person who shows up. And a person who shows up is surrounded, slowly and then all at once, by other people who will show up for them.

I have come to think of it as the only insurance policy that pays before you file a claim. You spread good around you, year after year, in amounts small enough that you barely notice them leaving. And then one day your roof caves in, your business stalls, your name gets dragged, your father gets sick, and you look up and there is a wall of people between you and the worst of it. People you helped. People who watched you help others. The web you built without knowing you were building it.

You cannot buy that. You can only give your way into it.

The ladder

I want you to see this work at every altitude, because the principle does not care how much money you have.

At the top of the ladder is Mansa Musa, who I told you about. The man often called the richest who ever lived, and the thing he is remembered for, the only thing most people who know his name can tell you, is that he gave gold away until it changed the price of gold. He could have been remembered for an army. He chose to be remembered for an open hand. Seven hundred years later, the choice is still paying out.

Come down the ladder to our own time. Look at 50 Cent. Here is a man who came up the hardest way there is and turned himself into a builder. By the public record, he started a foundation, he talks openly about legacy and giving back, and he folds serving the people he came from into how he runs his businesses. He treats goodwill the way a smart man treats any asset, as something you accumulate on purpose, because it compounds. For him, the giving and the hustle are the same move. He gives because he is a good one.

Now stand him next to a different kind of success. There is a school of thought, and you can name your own example of it, that says the point is to win and hold. Make the money, show the money, keep the money, and owe the world nothing. I will not put unfair words in any one man's mouth, so let me put it as a philosophy of money rather than a verdict on a person. The hold-everything philosophy can make you rich. What it cannot make you is surrounded. It builds a pile, and a pile is a lonely thing to stand on. When the wind comes, and the wind always comes, the man on the pile finds out how few people are invested in his standing.

And then there is the bottom of the ladder, which is not the bottom at all. There is you.

You do not have an empire or a catalog. You have a paycheck with more month than money at the end of it, like most of us. And the deal is exactly the same for you as it was for the emperor. Give what you can, on purpose, to what moves you, and you buy into the same returns. The circuitry does not check your bank balance before it pays you back.

Then why don't we?

If giving pays out the way I am claiming, here is the fair question. Why are we so bad at it?

We are bad at giving for the same reason we are bad at sleeping, eating well, and sitting still. We now live inside a system built to capture every drop of our attention and point it somewhere else. Your selfishness was never the problem. The instinct to give is intact. It is just buried under a thousand small pulls, and every one of those pulls was engineered, most of them by accident, to be more immediate than the quiet good thing you keep meaning to do.

We give late because giving has friction and the feed has none. We give little because we have been sold a scarcity story about our own money. We give and then forget it, so the habit never forms, so the muscle never grows.

That is the whole problem this book solves. Your heart is fine. Your heart is Mansa Musa's heart. What nobody ever did was remove the friction, build the habit, and hand you the tool.

So that is what I am going to do.

By the end of this book you are going to understand the deal you have been leaving on the table. You are going to understand the exact mechanism that has been keeping you from it. And then I am going to give you a system, one that lives in your pocket next to the thing that has been stealing your attention, that makes doing good as easy, as daily, and as satisfying as the habit you would replace.

The man often called the richest who ever lived measured his wealth by what he could give away. The science says he was right. The phone in your pocket says it is finally possible for the rest of us.

Let me show you how the deal actually works.

Keep reading.

This was the Prologue and Chapter 1 of *Hacked for Good*. The rest of the book hands you the system: the science of the helper's high, how to engineer giving into a daily habit, how to make it spread, and the working app that does it in one tap.

Join the waitlist at the book's site, and start giving today at give.drjeffbullock.com.