

Life is how you live it...



not how you spend it.



Drew Fuller

Bill Cobbs

Abigail Breslin

Brian Dennehy

James Garner

theultimategift

From Inspiration to Implementation

A Guide for Reflection on "The Ultimate Gift" Film



SHARE THE GIFT. CHANGE THE WORLD.

Inspiration

From Inspiration to Implementation

A Guide for Reflection on “The Ultimate Gift” Film

A Guide for translating the values and insights offered by “*The Ultimate Gift*” film into a practical and lasting difference in your life, and those of others.

*By Paul G. Schervish**



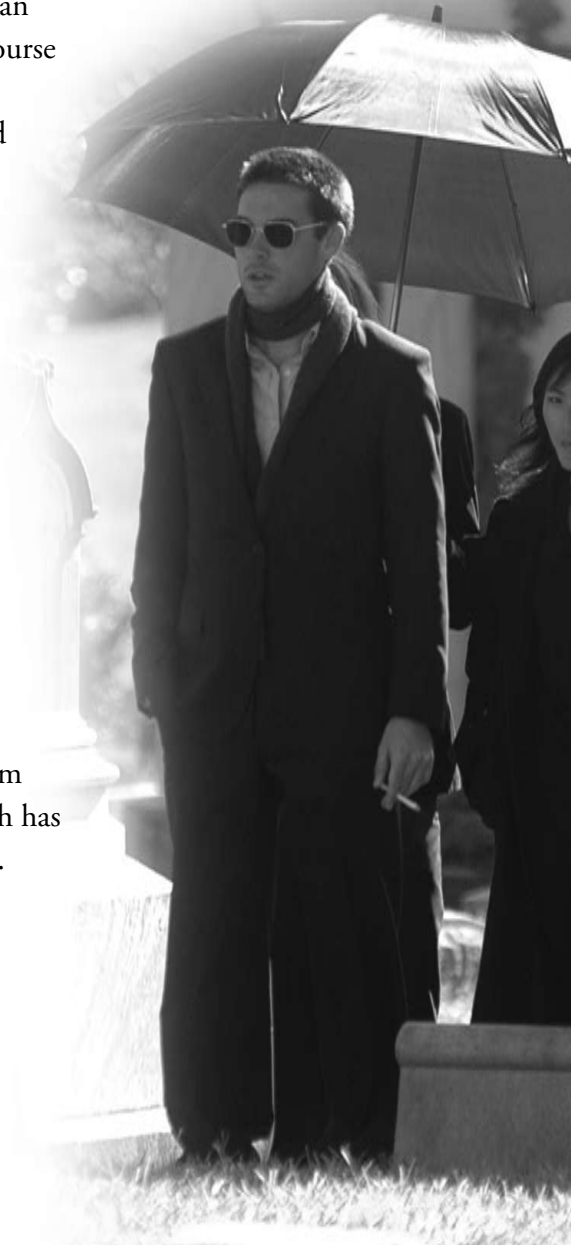
Paul G. Schervish is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center on Wealth and Philanthropy at Boston College, and National Research Fellow at the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy. He has advised the Ultimate Gift film project since its inception and is the author of the film guide, *From*

Inspiration to Implementation. He is senior advisor to the *John Templeton Foundation* and to the *Wealth & Giving Forum*, an international round-table for wealth holders to reflect on and discuss their charitable giving in a peer environment. He has served as Distinguished Visiting Professor of Philanthropy at the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy and as Fulbright Professor of Philanthropy at University College, Cork, Ireland. He has been selected five times to the NonProfit Times “Power and Influence Top 50.” In addition to being a faculty member of The Legacy Companies of Hingham, Massachusetts, Schervish serves as a consultant to financial and development professionals and to wealth holders. He provides them with expertise about the patterns and motivations of charitable giving, on the moral biography of financial life, and discernment as a spiritual process of conscientious decision-making around wealth and philanthropy.

The Ultimate Gift

About the Film

The Ultimate Gift is a story about a young man’s inspiring journey to discover the ultimate gift. At his grandfather’s death, Jason Stevens (Drew Fuller) is presented with an unlikely inheritance—a crash-course on life—taking him on a path that will change him forever and answer the ultimate question: “What is the relationship between wealth and happiness?” Featuring an all-star cast including Golden Globe winner and six –time Emmy nominee Brian Dennehy, Academy Award and Golden Globe nominee James Garner, and Academy Award nominee Abigail Breslin, the film is the winner of the Heartland film Festival’s Crystal Heart Award. Directed by Michael O. Sajbel, *The Ultimate Gift* is based on Jim Stovall’s best-selling novel, which has sold more than 4 million copies.





About this Guide

Use this Guide in whatever way it helps you. You may begin your reflections about the meaning of the film and the changes you immediately wish to make. You might wish to reflect on the topics by yourself, with your spouse, or with your children and friends. In addition, you might wish to discuss the questions and issues raised in the following guide with your clergy, financial advisors, and others to whom you turn for counsel. You might also make the Guide the basis for small group discussions among family and friends. The setting for these discussions might be in homes, schools, or

religious congregations. Civic groups and nonprofit organizations also have the potential as positive settings for such discussion.

Many Inspirations

Now that you have viewed *The Ultimate Gift* film, you are probably asking yourself just how you can bring the deeper purposes and aspirations the film portrays into your life.

Recall all the movies you have seen through the years that have made you think, feel, and contemplate your life; whether it's *Chariots of Fire*, *Pay it Forward*, *Terms of Endearment*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *Rudy*, *Breaking Away*, or *Surprised by Joy*. These motion pictures touched us all deeply. As you think of these movies, some of that emotion and intensity may flood back to you right now. However, like many of us, you probably have to admit that they made little or no lasting change in your life and the world around you.

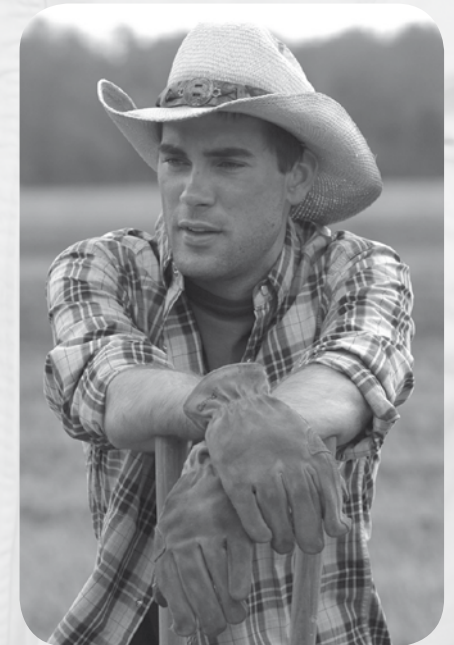
In the same way, all of us have read books, attended religious services, or heard inspirational speakers that led us to hope that the inspiration

we encountered during these experiences might seep into our lives and create the changes for which we all yearn. Sometimes we look for the key to a more successful business life, a happier marriage, a deeper relationship with our children, or a richer spiritual life. At other times, we seek the insight and energy to address a pressing societal problem.

Yearning for a Practical and Lasting Difference

Sometimes, these inspirational moments fail to produce a lasting positive change. Our enthusiasm may dissipate over time and not enough has been achieved that fulfills the initial hope for the worthwhile and desirable achievements we want to accomplish. It is not surprising then, that you might have mixed responses to the inspiration offered by “*The Ultimate Gift*.” You hope to internalize the inspiration of the film but fear that little lasting influence will occur. You may be the type of person who simply is not prone to immediate personal conversion. You might be someone who in the past has felt a call to change but received little guidance about the steps you could take to achieve it.

In either case, you find that the main factor that is lacking is a method to help you instill as deeply as you want into your daily life the renewals that are obviously worthwhile and you yearn to adopt.



How the Gift of the Film Can Become a Gift for Your Life

To avoid again being disappointed by a heartfelt inspiration that goes nowhere, we offer you “**The Ultimate Gift**” film guide, which we hope will help you translate the values and insights offered by the film into a practical and lasting difference in your life. It is a tool that we believe will help you keep the spirit of “**The Ultimate Gift**” alive. This guide will lead to reflection, decision-making, and action. This activity will fortify you to initiate effective action and will help you achieve significance for yourself and others.

“**The Ultimate Gift**” film demonstrates the kind of change that is possible for those of us who dig more deeply into:

- Who we have been and what we have done in the past,
- Who we are and what we are doing today, and
- Who we want to become and what we hope to do in the future.

There are many ways to look at the factors that impede or foster your search for a deeper life. “**The Ultimate Gift**” film invites you to approach things from the point of view of receiving gifts, feeling gratitude, and giving gifts to others.



We hope that this guide will help you to:

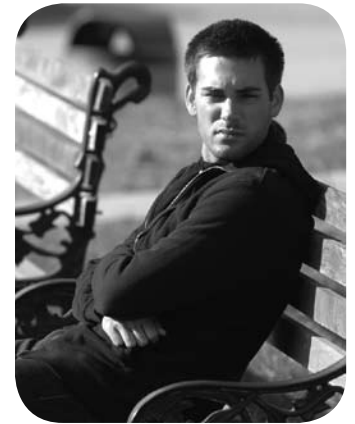
- Understand the gifts you have received,
- Deepen your gratitude for these blessings,
- Strengthen your soul, and
- Motivate you to impart life-changing gifts to those for whom you care—both close at hand as well as across the globe.

This guide is designed to take that movie-going experience of **The Ultimate Gift** and frame it in such a way that you can begin to make your life what you know it should be in order to create your own version of **The Ultimate Gift**. In this way, we can all begin to *share the gift* and *change the world*.

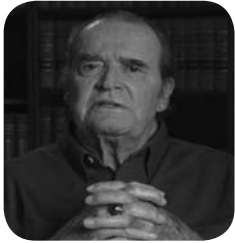
“**The Ultimate Gift**” Film— *Discovering It’s Impact and Meaning for You, And Your Next Steps*

The following questions and discussion topics will help you draw out your appreciation and reaction to the “**Ultimate Gift**” film. They elicit a series of reflections aimed at deepening your appreciation of the film, embedding its lessons, and inspiring new directions in your life.

1. What was the most inspiring aspect of the film for you? And why?
2. What was the most unsettling aspect of the film for you? And why?
3. Each of us is a complex personality which houses within us many, even conflicting, dimensions. As you review each character reflect on the following topics:
 - In what way does each of these characters represent a positive or negative dimension of who you have been, who you are now, and who you want to be?
 - Reflect on whether there was someone in your life like the character and how that person affected you for good or for harm.
 - Also consider what you would like to do in your life to advance the positive dimension of each character as part of your life.



The Main Characters



Red Stevens
in charge until the end,
but now with regrets
and amends to make



Jason Stevens
privileged, egocentric,
matured into a caring
and determined man



Emily
wise child within each
of us that needs healing



Alexia
vigilant mother who
cannot control fate



Ted Hamilton
faithful friend and
competent executor



Gus Calwell
tough love crmudgeon
and mentor

Other characters for which the same questions may be relevant for reflection:

Miss Margaret Hastings—compassionate and focused assistant

Red's sons: Jack and Bill—bottom line businessmen even in family matters

Red's daughters: Sarah (*Jason's mother*) and **Ruth**—socialites with an acquisitive consumer mentality

Bench Bum—instructor about the way of the street

Doctor Allen—concerned initiative

Caitlin—Jason's gold-digging, inconstant girlfriend

Nurse—nurturing and unconditional ally

Statue of Jesus—Symbolic of a welcoming presence in the face of fear – similar symbols present in all religions

Bella—librarian in Ecuador—a kind and inviting sister

Jason's driver and fellow prisoner in Ecuador—a sacrificial companion

Guerilla fighters—harsh intruders on well-laid plans

Hamilton's private detective—the dispassionate aide attentive to legalisms

Board Members—bottom-line investors who forget gifts they received



4. In what relationships and in what ways did the film prompt you to feel you are on the right path in your life?

5. In what relationships and in what ways did the film prompt you to feel you are on the wrong track?

6. What are the gaps the film alerts you to between where you are in life and where you would like to be?

7. What, in the light of the experience of the film, would you like to deepen about the use of your capacities and the achievement of your aspirations?

8. What is the message of the film for you about the connection between giving and receiving?

9. How in the film does receiving gifts with gratitude lead to giving gifts to others?

10. Below is a list of each of the gifts portrayed in the film. Please rank each of these gifts in order of your desire to make some degree of change for yourself or others in that particular area.

The Gift	My Ranking
Gift of Work	_____
Gift of Money	_____
Gift of Friends	_____
Gift of Learning	_____
Gift of Problems	_____
Gift of Laughter	_____
Gift of Dreams	_____
Gift of Giving	_____
Gift of Gratitude	_____
Gift of a Perfect Day	_____
Gift of Love	_____

11. Now having completed your ranking, look at the three (or more) gifts to which you attach the strongest desire for change and respond to the following in writing or through discussion:

Formulate a sentence or two from your heart about each of the gifts you selected

- How have these gifts been given to you or been denied you?
- What gratitude or hurt do you experience?

12. How have you given or wanted to give these gifts to others?

13. What additional time and effort am I going to commit to in order to achieve the desired changes?

14. How will I and my world be different as a result of these efforts at change?

We hope this journey through the gifts you have received, the gratitude you have experienced, and your renewed dedication to share your gifts has served you well. May the knowledge you have gained and the commitments you embark upon bring you an opportunity to heal wounds and generate new life.



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*Paul G. Schervish is professor of sociology and director of the Center on Wealth and Philanthropy at Boston College, and a member of the faculty of The Legacy Companies of Hingham, Massachusetts. I am grateful to John Dankovich, Peter Dubay, Scott Lebin, Tom Kennedy, and Jim Stovall for their invaluable suggestions and contributions.