# Presentation Script – Dr. Russell Herman Conwell

Hattie May Wiatt

“Acres Of Diamonds”

1. **Introduction**
   * Thank you for inviting me to make this presentation. The subject that I have selected is about two human beings, an inspiration, a dream, and the fulfillment of that dream, and also the legacy that the dream established. The dream was all about being of service to other human beings. I believe that all hospice work, all church work and all work in funeral service in a real sense mirrors this story and revolves around the basic noble ideal of being of service to one another. In fact on a personal note that is the very reason why I decided to become a funeral professional, and I am sure that we all that that motivation in common. So let’s begin our story.
2. **Russell Herman Conwell**
   * One of the most interesting Americans who lived in the 19th century was a man by the name of Russell Herman Conwell. Have any of you heard of him before? If not, it is not unusual, but when you hear the story of this man, his influence, his mission and his life’s work I believe you will remember him. He was born in 1843 and lived until 1925. He was a lawyer for about fifteen years until he was called to become a clergyman.
3. **The Power of Putting Others First**
   * Russell Herman Conwell was born in Massachusetts, and as you can see to your left he enlisted in “Lincoln's army” in 1862 and recruited a company of men from Massachusetts to serve and was commissioned as their captain and served until 1864. After the war he moved to Minnesota where he practiced law and started a newspaper. In 1868 he moved back to Massachusetts, where he submitted his stories about a trip he had made to revisit the battlefields of the civil war. Soon his reputation as a writer and speaker was established, and it was while he was out traveling that he heard the tale that would inspire his “Acres of Diamonds” approach to life. At this time he also left his legal practice and became a Baptist minister and started serving a church in Lexington, Massachusetts.
4. **The Worthy Ideal**
   * During his pastorate in Lexington Conwell was one day approached by several rag tag young boys. The boys had gotten together and decided that they wanted an education and the only learned man they knew was Russell Herman Conwell. At first Conwell was confused by this seemingly strange request – he thought the boys had no money, no prospects of getting money, and in these day the idea of student loans was as remote as putting a man on the moon. The boys explained their dream further – they did not want a degree from a university, they wanted an education. They knew they could never afford the degree, but they thought that Russell Conwell could teach them and then they would have an education. At this moment the idea of “The Worthy Ideal” was put in Conwell's mind, and the rest as they say is history. Conwell decided, at this moment, what he aim in life was, besides being a man of the cloth, that is. He decided to build a university for unfortunate, but deserving students. He did have a challenge however. He would need a few million dollars to build the university. Suddenly, Conwell remembered the story of “Acres of Diamonds” that he had heard during his trip to the old civil war battlefields. The story convinced Conwell that anyone with real purposes in life, well nothing could stand in the way of their success if and only if their purposes had a worthy ideal.
5. **Subsistence Farmer in South Africa**
   * Here is the story Conwell used to raise money. During his battlefield trip Conwell was tremendously intrigued by a true story – which even today has a ageless moral to it. The story is about a subsistence farmer who lived in South Africa. This poor farmer was one day visited by a visitor who told the man about vast diamond mines that were being discovered throughout the African continent. The farmer already knew that diamonds were being discovered in abundance all over Africa, and this prospect excited the farmer to much about the idea of making millions of dollars worth of diamonds for the taking that he sold his farm to the first buyer to head out to the diamond line.
6. **Rocks! Rocks! Rocks!**
   * The farmer knew what he had – rocks, rocks, and more rocks. Every time he plowed more of rocks emerged, they were all over the place. All the farmer could think of was a beautiful shiny perfect diamond. Thinking about the beautiful diamond was all he thought about, or even cared about. He had had enough of rocks.
7. **Wondering African Planes in Search for Riches**
   * The farmer took all the limited amount of money he had received from the farmer who had purchased his farm and bought his mining equipment. Over the next months and several years the former farmer who was not a diamond miner wandered all across the vast African land. From east to west, from north to south, from one end of the continent to the other the old farmer searched, and searched, and searched for his diamonds, for his financial wealth, for his fortune. He wandered all over and as the years slipped by he constantly searched for diamonds, wealth, which he never found.
8. **Despair** 
   * Eventually the old farmer went completely broke and in total despair he threw himself into a river and drowned. He never found one diamond. He never found his fortune. He never found anything that he was looking all over a earthly continent to find. Meanwhile, the new owner of his farm picked up an unusual looking rock about the size of a country egg while fishing in a stream with his son and put it on his mantel as a sort of curiosity.
9. **Right Under Your Feet – Kimberly Diamond Mine in South Africa**
   * In time a visitor stopped by the farm and in viewing the odd rock practically went into terminal convulsions. He told the new owner of the farm that the odd funny looking rock on his mantle was about the biggest diamond that had ever been found. The new owner of the farm confessed innocently, “heck, the whole farm is covered with them” – and sure enough it was. The farm turned out in the end to become the Kimberly diamond mine. . . .The richest the world has ever known.
10. **Acres of Diamonds – The Point of the Story**
    * You get the point of the story. The original farmer was literally standing on “Acres of Diamonds” until he sold his farm for greener pastures. Russell Herman Conwell learned from the story of the farmer and continued to teach its moral throughout the world in his mission to raise money to build a university. Dr. Conwell told this story “acres of diamonds” over 6000 times and raised approximately $6 million dollars to start his university for underprivileged deserving students. The university he founded was none other than Temple University in Philadelphia. However our story about Russell Herman Conwell serving others is not quite over.
11. **Hattie May Wiatt**
    * During his fund raising efforts by telling thousands of people the “Acres of Diamonds” story, dr. Conwell was summoned to Philadelphia to pastor grace Baptist church. This is before the $6 million dollars was raised. While Dr. Conwell was pasturing this church he encountered a little girl named Hattie May Wiatt whose portrait you see here. Hattie May Wiatt and a mere 57 cents changed Conwell's future forever.
12. **Hattie’s Sunday School**
    * Hattie May lived near grace church where the Sunday school was very crowded. Dr. Conwell noticed Hattie sobbing near the entrance to a Sunday school room. Seeing her shabby appearance Conwell took her by the hand a found a place for her in the Sunday school class. Hattie went home all smiles, she had found her place in the world, and Dr. Conwell dismissed the entire experience and moved on with trying to build the church.
13. **Temple Baptist Church**
    * In a short period of time Hattie may took ill and died in a wretched tenement building. Her parents called upon Dr. Conwell to preach the little girls funeral, and after the funeral Dr. Conwell was approached by Hattie May’s mother and was told that hat tie may had been saving money to help build a bigger church and handed Conwell a crumpled in which she had saved 57 cents. The next Sunday Dr. Conwell with tears in his eyes carried the little crumbled purse with 57 cents to the pulpit and told the story of her unselfish love and devotion. Dr. Conwell had a worthy ideal. He had the 57 cents turned into 57 pennies and when he told the congregation of Hattie May’s story the congregation agreed that each penny would be sold to different members for whatever they could afford. Dr. Conwell raised $250.00. Interestingly in time all 57 pennies were returned by the congregation to dr. Conwell and he later put them up on display under the portrait that the church commissioned in memory of Hattie May. The member of the church formed what they called the “Wiatt Might society” which was dedicated to making Hattie may’s 57 cents grow as much as possible. In time the “Wiatt might society” raised enough money to construct the new Baptist temple church which you can see in the two images at the bottom. The top image is old grace Baptist where Hattie may attended Sunday school.
14. **Temple University Hospital Complex**
    * Dr. Conwell had built a church. Now in 1892 he expanded his lecture series on the “Acres of Diamonds” and the rest as they say is history. Here you see the temple university hospital complex.
15. **Temple University School of Medicine**
    * In 1901 dr. Conwell opened up the temple university school of medicine.
16. **Burial Ground Temple University Campus**
    * Dr. Conwell continued to lecture and write authoring close to 40 books. Taking time away from his duties at the church and the university he traveled across the country still giving his famous “Acres of Diamonds” lecture to thousands. People never tired of hearing this noble story. After a lifetime of work, after a like time of growing in service to others Dr. Conwell died quietly in 1925, he was 82. He had served as the pastor at the Baptist temple for 43 years.
    * Today all one needs to do is visit Philadelphia to see the legacy of Russell Herman Conwell. It is everywhere. You can visit the Baptist temple which seat 3,300 or stroll over to the massive campus of Temple University. You can also visit the Sunday school building which was built so no little child would be left out. In one of the rooms of the Sunday school building is the portrait of a sweet faced little girl, Hattie May Wiatt, whose 57 cents so sacrificially saved, made such a remarkable history. Along side her picture is this portrait of her kind pastor, dr. Russell Herman Conwell. Dr. Conwell found truly found his “Acres of Diamonds.”
17. **Conclusion**
    * There is the story my friends. The story of a fulfilled mission to be of service to others. This is indeed a worthy idea. I would like to conclude by making the suggestion that is such complicated and stressful times as we all work in today trying to be of service to others - This is not easy, is it? Hospice, the church, the funeral home, any service giving attempt is packed with challenges. This is why I personally found this story to helpful and meaningful. It helps us to take a moment and quietly think about what we are doing, and also looking at our “Acres of Diamonds” and just possible take a look to see if we have 57 cents in our pockets. Thank you very much for your time, I appreciate this opportunity to share with you very much.