



Be Good, Be Wise

Using Ben Franklin's 13 Virtues
to Become a Better Man

*How to Improve Your Health, Wealth and
Relationships by Following a Great Thinker*

by *Andy Snyder*

MANWARD_{press}



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Following Franklin to Save Today's Men

*M*en today are in rough shape.

On one screen they're touted as sex-crazed rapists. The nightly news, for example, has had a field day charging one powerful man after another with crimes of the bedroom.

Most are guilty.

But when we change the channel or toss in a different movie, we get a different view. The Al Bundys and Homer Simpsons of the world are doltish, weak men who can barely live – let alone think – on their own.

We say it's not the man who's in rough shape.

It's the idea behind the man.

It reminds us of a quote that we fear the young among us might not fully understand.

Hell, they may even be offended...

"In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function," wrote C.S. Lewis in his 1943 book

Introduction

The Abolition of Man. “We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.”

Everywhere we look, we see these sad words in living color.

The Boy Scouts...

Toxic masculinity...

The death of marriage...

Even Penn State’s now infamous decision to shutter its Outing Club so it can keep students from straying (oh the humanity!) into the outdoors.

We’re making men “without chests” and expecting them to do great things. We’re cutting off what makes them men and expecting them not to scream in pain.

SAVING THE BOYS

The virtue and enterprise Lewis yearned for are not only missing... but no longer welcome.

Yet we still have what we were born with.

We’re no gelding. And we certainly want none around us.

Our mission is to end the castration of men. To do it, we must bring back the notion of virtue and honor – two ideas that have died right alongside the idea of what it means to be a man.

When it comes to sharing the gospel (a word, of course, that translates to “good news”) about virtue and honor, we feel obliged to turn to the famous writings of Ben Franklin.

At the mere age of 20, the great thinker was old enough to know he was too young to know much. He understood that if he wanted to be a good man, it wouldn't come easy.

He'd need to focus tightly on the task.

From his autobiography, we know Franklin used that logic to create a simple system meant to develop his character.

It became known as his 13 virtues.

They're as powerful today as they were in 1726.

HERE'S THE LIST:

1. ***Temperance.*** Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
2. ***Silence.*** Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
3. ***Order.*** Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
4. ***Resolution.*** Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
5. ***Frugality.*** Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself, i.e., waste nothing.
6. ***Industry.*** Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. ***Sincerity.*** Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. ***Justice.*** Wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

9. ***Moderation.*** Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. ***Cleanliness.*** Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes or habitation.
11. ***Tranquility.*** Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. ***Chastity.*** Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.
13. ***Humility.*** Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

13 STEPS TO BECOMING A BETTER MAN

Franklin, our research shows, would work on just one virtue at a time. He'd focus intently on it for a week and then move on to the next. He'd do it for 13 weeks, hitting each idea, then start over again.

In the essays that follow, we tackle each of these topics and put our unique spin on them. It's a nuanced look at the ideas that form the firm foundation of a good and wise man.

The castration of what we stand for must end. It'll be good for all of us.

Men today are in rough shape.

Virtue No. 1:

Temperance

*Embrace the “Difficult” Concept
of Voluntary Restraint*

When we walked into the Alaskan woods for the first time, we carried the baggage of modern society on our back.

We were overweight and gluttonous, and had no clue what we wanted out of life.

It's why we headed north.

We knew there was more. But we had a hunch it would take less to find it.

We've embarked on a bit of a journey with this book. We're exploring each of Ben Franklin's prized virtues.

They're the ideas he promised his fellow man would lead to better, happier lives.

When it comes to his first virtue... we're living proof.

Temperance. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.

When we curled up on a rock for our first night in Alaska, temperance was not a choice. All that we had was all we could fit in our bag.

There was no 60-ounce soda... no dulling our mind's thoughts with TV or booze... and not a single calorie to be wasted.

Since the true definition of temperance requires some sort of voluntary restraint, we couldn't yet define our hardship as Franklin's first virtue (aside from the fact, of course, that it was our own decision to pull up the roots of our life and head to the middle of nowhere).

As those first few tough days turned into weeks, the mandatory hardship turned voluntary.

As we settled in and found ways to get supplies from civilization, we quickly found that we didn't want them. There was fulfillment in not needing that stuff.

Understanding our yearnings and working to overcome them became energizing. Having less led us to more.

We felt better with nothing than we ever did with everything.

IGNORING OUR INSTINCT

The Catholic Church, of course, has lots to say about the subject. We won't stick our face down that rabbit's hole, but we will borrow a note from the church's encyclopedia.

It says that temperance "is concerned with what is difficult for a man, not in so far as he is a rational being precisely, but rather in so far as he is an animal."

Man is no different from the lion roaming the plains or the grizzly wading a river. We have desires programmed into us. They are hardwired souvenirs of ages gone by.

Controlling them is our greatest struggle.

That's where the notion of temperance comes in.

But let us be clear about something. It's important.

Temperance is not synonymous with abstinence. Oh no, that's a grave connection. In fact, the two are archenemies. Going entirely without is merely another extreme.

A good life, we say, consists of moderation in all things.

"Eat not to dullness," Franklin said, "drink not to elevation."

Amen.

TOUGH QUESTIONS

So how do we know when we've gone too far? We feared you'd ask.

That's the rub of it. We don't know. We can merely say with the wisdom of experience on our side that you'll know it when you see it.

Wake up in a ditch? Call for bail money?

Those are easy. A life of true temperance is not so clear.

How about these... Sacrifice a game with your daughter because you're too tired from work? Can't sleep because that extra slice of pizza at dinner gave you heartburn? Can't finish that book because of the new series on Netflix?

Ah... now we're getting somewhere.

On a rock in Alaska, it was easy to eliminate what ailed us. Back in the real world, it's hell.

Temperance

But here's what we learned way out there; it's the new baggage we carry on our back everywhere we go.

There are three ways to focus on a life of moderation.

First, **realize that our lust for comfort is also our enemy.**

It's what keeps us in bed in the morning. It's what keeps us from starting a new project. And, well, in the simplest terms, it's what keeps us from getting what we really want.

Living a temperate life, though, means we can control those desires. It means we can trade comfort for success – which feels a hell of a lot better.

So step one is to make yourself uncomfortable. Again, you'll know it when you feel it.

Step two is what was forced on us in Alaska. **Take less than you want.**

But here's the thing: You won't succeed in this endeavor unless you find joy in taking less.

Treat it as a victory. Tell your mind that you can control its lousy ancestral desires – that each time you do it you score another point in a game to take back control of your life.

Before long – we're living proof – you'll have more fun with less.

And, finally, the third step is a bit of a modern-day trap.

The “experts” of the day tell us to reward ourselves with a treat every once in a while. **Don't put your foot in that trap. It'll never let go.**

It's like telling the alcoholic it's okay to get drunk after a tough week at work.

Temperance

He earned it.

Or it's like telling the porn addict it's okay to unzip every once in a while.

Of course, the sort of temperance we're talking about doesn't go to those extremes, but the idea's the same. In fact, if you're seeing that big reward and you feel like modern society is telling you it's okay, go back to step two.

Have fun saying no.

Just as Franklin advised, spend a week on the idea. See what you can do with it.

More importantly, see what it will do to you.

But, my friend, be careful... everything in moderation.

Virtue No. 2

Silence

Keep Quiet... and Be a Better Man for It

Ben Franklin knew a thing or two about silence.

After all, it was his unique pen name Silence Dogood that serendipitously brought the young man from Boston to Philadelphia – the town that most Americans would wrongly say was where he was born and raised.

You see, Silence Dogood was a bit of a famous character in Boston.

Her snarky commentary and humorous take on local life (she once said that all Harvard was good for was teaching its students to be conceited) made her frequent newspaper columns quite popular around town.

But when Silence, well, went silent, readers wanted her back. They begged for her to reveal her true identity.

When 16-year-old Ben Franklin stepped into the light and admitted those were indeed his printed words, most folks were amused by the young man.

But his older brother – the man whose newspaper the columns ran in – wasn't so happy. He ran his sibling out of town... all the way to Philly.

To say then that Silence changed the shape of America wouldn't be an understatement.

When the young man first strolled into town in the fall of 1723, the fate of our nation changed for good.

But it wasn't some imaginary lady in Franklin's mind when he penned his list of 13 virtues three years later.

No, as we look at his second famed virtue, silence takes on an entirely different meaning.

Silence. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.

The idea has more merit today – a time when noise bombards us at every turn – than Franklin ever could have envisioned some 295 years ago.

THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT

Many great things have been said about the skill of remaining quiet.

Francis Bacon said, "Silence is the sleep that nourishes wisdom."

Our old pal Pythagoras believed, "Silence is better than unmeaning words." And even Abe Lincoln piped up when it came to the topic of being quiet. "I am rather inclined to silence," he said.

But it's what we found in the crinkled and yellowed pages of a 153-year-old copy of *The New York Times* that needs shouted from mountaintops these days.

Silence

Here's a bit of a piece published by the paper on June 9, 1865. It touted the virtue of silence and its ties to a couple of war heroes named Sherman and Grant.

There have been so many great reputations marred by spouting, that it is some consolation to feel that reputations which we all value so much as those of our two military heroes, are secure against all tarnish from the over free use of their tongues...

We have the comfort of knowing, however, that the two officers who reaped most glory in the war, are not likely to tarnish it by the utterance of idle words.

Few rags these days would ever print such humble words.

Lest we forget that it wasn't long ago that so many papers were dubbing the newly created word "victoriotic" – overly bragging about our own victories – the word of the summer.

Remaining silent isn't quite a popular theme these days.

Twitter... Facebook... internet comment boards... and even text messages make it oh so easy for folks to spout their thoughts and spill their "idle" words.

Nearly everywhere we look, somebody is begging to be heard.

But Franklin and all the wise men before and after him warn us to be careful. They are eager to remind us that math doesn't lie – our two ears always outnumber our one mouth.

SHHH... SAVE THOSE WORDS

Franklin's idea of temperance is a natural tie to the idea of silence.

We must use our words with the most restrained intent.

Silence

If it's trifle... if it's harmful... or if it's just plain boastful, let the words remain on the tips of our tongues. They won't die a painful death. Instead, they'll remain there, protecting our minds and our wisdom with the untarnished armor of modesty.

Take time to be silent.

Hold on to your halfhearted words. Let them grow into something bigger and much more useful.

You'll be a better man for it.

Silence Dogood said so.

Virtue No. 3

Order

Get More Done, Have More Fun

The drive from our remote cabin back to the relative civilization of home is about three hours.

Over the hills, across the ridges and through the vast hardwood forests that gave the land its name, the radio signal tends to come and go.

Most of the time we leave it off.

We'd rather listen to our thoughts... letting them meander and bounce around with the twists and potholes of the road.

But this time, we left it on. The news was simply too gruesome to turn off. Nearly every story detailed man's dire fate.

In our hometown, a cop was arrested for beating his wife.

Just south of us, a priest was thumbed for raping young boys years ago.

Meanwhile, a 16-year-old burglar ran over a cop and killed her... and another bullied kid walked into a school with a gun.

Something is wrong. Men are in trouble.

That was the only thing clear on the radio.

We were never so glad to lose the signal. Even the static that soon filled the truck seemed embarrassed of what it was forced to cover up.

SHARE THE WORD

But we came home to a refreshing note in our inbox. It reminded us that all cannot be bad... as long as we do good work.

“I have a good friend and veteran who gifts me the Manward,” the note said. “I enjoy your work. Keep the faith.”

As we turn our attention away from the bad news on the radio and instead focus on the good words of making men better, we beg you to keep that note in mind.

If we are to win – to keep this modern-day mental plague from spreading any further – we must be evangelical with our message. We mustn’t let the ease of status quo win the day.

It’s the ideal mindset as we turn to Franklin’s fourth virtue, “order.”

This one’s easy.

ORDER OUT OF CHAOS

If there were a singular ingredient in our recipe for success, this would be it.

Order. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.

Order

It's not hard to see why Franklin put it near the top of the list. Who doesn't want to have the time to get more done or have more fun?

Time, as we've written, is a slippery beast.

Each of us is given a finite amount. We can let the beast run amok and see where he goes... or we can wrangle that bastard and control his every move.

We don't watch TV.

It's a time killer... and a brain waster.

When we first gave it up years ago, we wondered how we'd fill the time. Now we wonder how we ever had time to sit on the couch and stare at the box.

Our system for creating order in our life is simple. It hinges on our daily planner. Each night, we ponder what we accomplished during the day and write down what we must get done after the sun comes up once again.

And, in a nod to Franklin, we give each task its time.

We create order out of havoc by carefully planning and measuring what we want to get done and what it will take to get it done.

Over the decades we've used our planner, it's paid off handsomely. It's allowed us to become a top-notch investor, writer, entrepreneur... husband and father.

Yes, we even schedule family time for the ones we love. We've taken slack for it. Outsiders think it's crazy to have to set "appointments" for the ones we love.

But they're wrong.

If we didn't do it, we argue, we'd be giving more order to our business life than our family life. That's a recipe for trouble.

For as Franklin begged us to understand, where there is order, there is success.

DO THIS NOW

Finally, dear reader, spread the word.

It's easy to tune in to the news and hear all that's gone wrong. Men are failing.

But they're not failing because they've chosen to fail.
No, they're failing because our society has led them astray.

It's up to us to bring the good news back to being a man.
Make time to do it.

Virtue No. 4

Resolution

Stay True (Don't Be Like Mike)

A man is only as good as his word.

If that's the case, Michael Rotondo is in trouble.

Big trouble.

The long-haired, unemployed 30-year-old with a criminal record who made headlines uses a lot of words... but few of them are any good.

"I've been a father for the past few years," he told reporters who asked why his parents were kicking him out of their house. "That's what I've been doing. I really haven't been pursuing a career."

Sounds noble, right? Who doesn't love a dedicated dad?

The trouble is Rotondo's not even allowed to see his son.

He lost those rights.

His words didn't match his actions.

“That’s why I’m not the CEO of a big company,” Rotondo said, seemingly convinced that the words were true.

“That’s why I’m living with my parents still.”

But the courts disagreed.

A judge in Camillus, New York, ordered the millennial’s parents had every right to kick their deadbeat son to the curb... despite the man-child’s insistence his focus was on being a dad and not sustaining himself.

STICKING WITH IT

Rotondo could certainly heed the advice of Franklin’s fourth virtue... resolution.

Resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought;
perform without fail what you resolve.

There’s no doubt the stay-at-home dad stated the best of intentions. He put parenting above his career ambitions.

It’s a worthy idea – one we’d tip our hat to... if it were true.

But Rotondo’s words were hollow. He had no resolve to get the job done.

In fact, when his parents told him to get a job and then offered him cash to move out, he argued in court that he should be given status as a “poor person.”

And while the basement dweller claimed he wanted a good relationship with his son, the relationship with his landlord parents was anything but good. In one instance, Rotondo likened it to living with “deaf people who don’t know sign language.”

“It’s not hard for me to live here,” he said. “I work hard to avoid circumstances in which we have to see each other.”

That’s not healthy.

We argue Rotondo has this all wrong. We say that in order to be a good dad, you must also be a good son.

The problem, Franklin would say, is that the kid has no resolve. His words are easy... but sticking to them is hard.

DO YOU WANT IT?

Of the 13 virtues we’ll look at, it’s “resolve” that has the longest, stickiest tentacles. It’s the trait in a man that snakes its way through everything he does. If he doesn’t have the will to get things done, well, he won’t ever get much done.

The other 12 virtues will fall apart.

Temperance is tough... without the resolve to get better.

It’s hard to remain quiet... when you don’t really want to be. And it’s hard to give each thing its place... when you really don’t care.

You get the point.

We don’t personally know Rotondo (he’s not the sort of Connection we’d want to make), but we are confident in our assessment of the man.

He’s got no resolve.

If he really wanted to see his son... he would. If he really wanted to be a dad... he’d get it done. If he really wanted to get out of his boyhood bedroom... he’d have had his boxes packed months ago.

Resolution

But his words are mere shells. They're noises with nothing behind him.

That's why he's a failure.

Franklin measured his resolve with a simple black mark. When he failed to do what he said he would, he'd make a black line in his journal.

It was a steady measure of his resolve.

By concentrating on eliminating those marks, Franklin upped his resolve and got more done.

He made his actions match his words. Try it... and see where it leads.

Virtue No. 5

Frugality

*Adjust Your Modern Mindset
and Do More Good*

We've gotten ourselves in quite a predicament.

You see, Mrs. Manward likes old windmills. We reckon that's what happens when you grow up on a big ol' Midwest cattle ranch.

We agree that there's something about their weathered, creaky spin that yearns to tell a tale.

They're the icons of a simpler time.

We've long had our eye on a beautiful windmill at a farm just down the road from us.

It stands tall like a metal-clad lighthouse, begging folks to take a look. "I'm working," it seems to whisper with each push of the breeze. "I'm still working."

We once joked to Mrs. Manward that if the farm was ever put up for sale, we'd buy it for her just for the windmill.

We'll never say such a thing again... because the world's most expensive windmill has hit the market.

DOWNSIZING

The property is gorgeous. We imagine we'd make a pretty penny charging young brides to live out their wedding fantasies saying their vows along the winding creek.

But the house, well, farmers don't spend much time indoors. There's not much there. We'd have to give up a lot... and perhaps we should.

It's a good reason for us to keep looking at Franklin's virtues, especially No. 5.

Frugality. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself, i.e., waste nothing.

If the farm becomes our new home... the home will certainly give us a reason to waste nothing – not a single square inch.

This is one of our favorite virtues because it's so darn contrarian.

Modern society is quite wasteful.

If it breaks... we buy new. If it looks old... toss it in the trash. If it isn't the latest generation... what good is it?

We get notes all the time from folks who don't have enough cash to invest. Or they say there's not enough time in the day to get everything done.

We say see virtue No. 5.

We bet they have all they need.

You see, frugality isn't just about being cheap with our money.

In fact, some say being stingy is a vice. We wouldn't disagree.

You see, just like so much of what we do, the idea has its nuances.

FEELING GOOD VS. DOING GOOD

We must read Franklin's words carefully. He doesn't tell us to be cheap or spend no money. Far from it.

No, he tells us to have at it... spend all we want. Just be sure that what we spend does "good to others or yourself." Those are powerful words.

Spend money on a new car to get to work... good to go.

Spend money on a fancy new car just to impress Tim across the street... shame, shame.

Spend time surfing the web looking for the next hot stock... good on you.

Spend time surfing the web looking for the next hot girl... we're sorry to hear it.

The lesson is clear.

We must spend our time, our money and our attention on things that do good for us or others. If it does us no good – if it only makes us feel good – then move on.

WALKING THE LINE

There's a careful balance in this idea... especially when the advice is coming from a guy who's made a career out of investing and making small sums of money into big sums of money.

If we're not careful, we'll look like a hypocrite.

That's why it's important that you know what's good for you.

There's nothing wrong with wanting more money. Wealth, after all, is the conduit to our Liberty. (Franklin died quite wealthy and quite free.)

But you must know why you want that money and what good you'll do with it once you get it.

And what's crazy is we've found that once this sort of plan is in place, accumulating large sums of money becomes that much easier.

It's because we begin to cut out everything that's wasteful. That windmill spinning on top of the hill is a fine example.

It's not flashy. In fact, the blades are showing the scars of a lifetime in the elements. Blizzard winds... hail... and blazing heat have born a patina that's as honest as it is ugly.

But the old thing turns with the wind and pumps water to the old homestead. Sure, it could be replaced with an electric pump that would hum quietly through the fiercest of gales... but that wouldn't do a whole lot of good.

Mrs. Manward, after all, doesn't have a love of pumps.

As we ponder the for-sale sign in front of the old farm, we must consider the good the land could do.

Freedom... self-sufficiency... feeding our neighbors. All good.

But then again... there's not much closet space.

We may need to test our frugality.

Virtue No. 6

Industry

*Lose No Time by Heeding Franklin's
"Forgotten Virtue"*

“There’s a car in there somewhere. Just keep digging,” the old man with the crazy gray beard told us. “You can keep any parts you find.”

We cleared out the mess and loaded the old hunk of metal – it could hardly be considered a car – onto the flatbed trailer.

We stepped back to survey what we’d gotten ourselves into. We didn’t see a whole lot. There was one fender... one door... and two wheels... The entire front suspension must have been donated to some other rolling charity.

For a 13-year-old, it was heaven.

But if we wanted to get where we needed to go, we had work to do.

We had three years – 156 Saturdays – and a rusty old toolbox to turn the pile of parts into an everyday driver.

We did it.

And we even picked up a trophy or two along the way.

It's tough not to think about the old car, our busted knuckles and the time we spent under the hood as we ponder Ben Franklin's sixth virtue.

"Industry need not wish," the long-haired forefather once wrote, "and he who lives upon hope will die fasting."

The lesson is clear.

We could have wished, begged or prayed for our first car... or we could have gotten our butt out of bed and made it happen.

But it's not quite that simple. There's a twist in our tale...

THE BEST WAY TO GET WHAT YOU WANT

Franklin's sixth virtue has often been called the lost or forgotten virtue. But we beg to differ.

We're convinced it's merely being misunderstood.

The mandate is clear. Here it is in his words...

Industry. Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

We're not sure whether it's written down anywhere, but it sure seems the opposite idea reigns true these days.

Work less... go to the beach more... watch this... then this... and you've got to see this.

Our culture, dare we say it, isn't all that industrious these days.

But we're not entirely convinced a workaholic mindset is what Franklin was aiming at.

That's why we beg lazy folks to pay attention to what's ahead.

As Robert Heinlein wrote in his book on the subject, "Progress doesn't come from early risers – progress is made by lazy men looking for easier ways to do things."

He's right.

The man who gets up with the rooster and stares at the clouds all day won't get much done. But the man who gets up early looking to solve a problem will surely succeed.

By his own admission, Franklin was a lazy man. But – and this is key – he believed his laziness was his advantage.

He worked hard... so he could be lazy.

He invented... he tinkered... and he modified... all to make his life easier.

It wasn't a flaw; it was his motivation. That's a very powerful idea and quite the twist on modern logic.

A LAZY MAN'S ADVICE

It reminds us of an idea taught to us by a man we admire – Frank Gilbreth, a pioneer in the study of industrial efficiency.

For one project, he studied bricklayers. He examined the best of the bunch... and the worst of the bunch.

We'd think he would have learned the most from the masters of their trade. But, no, it was the lazy who caught his attention.

Some of the biggest improvements in efficiency, Gilbreth believed, came from the men who were lazy – "so lazy that every needless step counted."

Ah, so there's our lesson.

Be lazy!

... Oh, you know us better than that by now. We'd never quit there.

That's only step one. First, identify the problem.

Step two requires us to do something about it. That's what Franklin is telling us to do in this sixth virtue.

Don't hope for a solution. Don't pray somebody else will carry your bricks. Do something about it.

Always be employed in something useful, Franklin wrote. But don't waste your time.

That's the key.

Know your task. Find the best way to get it done. And stick to it. Don't get distracted. And don't waste your time on other things.

FAST CARS AND FAST MONEY

Our first car is a fine example. We certainly had a problem. We had places to go... and no way to get there.

We could have walked. But that wasn't much good.

We could have whined and begged. But that wouldn't have worked.

Instead, we got to work and didn't stop until we had what we needed.

For many folks these days, the problem is money.

They need more.

But instead of finding the very best way to get it, they whine and moan about their problems.

But Franklin would remind us to lose no time. He'd tell us to always be working toward the goal. And he'd tell us to cut off everything that gets in our way.

It's a far different view of this misunderstood virtue.

Franklin isn't telling us to work from sunup to sundown. He certainly didn't. He's simply telling us to get off our butts and get the job done.

And don't quit... until it's done.

Virtue No. 7

Sincerity

*Tackle This “Sin of the Mind”
in Three Simple Steps*

Most folks don't know James Franklin.

And if they do, they put their finger on the wrong man...
a football coach.

But the James we're talking about was somebody far more
powerful and far more influential.

We argue James Franklin was perhaps the first purveyor
of “fake news.”

But authorities weren't quite as accepting of the concept
in the 1720s.

When the folks in charge realized *The New England Courant*
was printing words that mocked religion and the government...
they threw Franklin in the slammer.

Never one to give up when pushed by the government,
Franklin found a way around his legal order to stop publishing.

He tapped his apprentice – and younger brother – to take the top spot in the masthead.

That new publisher, of course, was Ben Franklin.

So we can't help but smirk when we see "sincerity" listed as virtue No. 7.

Sincerity. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.

After watching his brother get tossed in jail, the younger Franklin certainly had the topic on his mind.

His name didn't last long atop the rather hyperbolic rag though. Instead, he went on to launch his own publications – publications that were much more sincere.

A CRISIS OF TRUTH

We wonder what Franklin would think if he saw what we see today. Would he agree with us that we're living in a crisis of sincerity?

Everywhere we look, we witness the insincere.

On Facebook... where the news is doctored and the photos are cropped.

On TV... where we praise the reality show winner who out-duped the rest of the saps on the island.

In politics... where we're fine letting our leaders lie as long as it helps them get into office.

Heck, we even see it on the highway... with the man behind the wheel of a fancy car he can't afford.

But what's a man to do? We're not so conceited as to think we can stop a trend that seems to have gotten stronger with every tick of the clock over the last 250 years.

But we're no fool either. Only a dunce would toss up his arms and refuse to put up a fight.

So we'll shout as loud as we can and see just how many folks we can get to join us.

Pay attention and you'll see this fight isn't as tough as it looks.

WHAT WE CAN'T HAVE

You see, we don't believe insincerity comes from a man's lack of goodness. It's not because he yearns to do bad.

No. A lack of sincerity, we've found over the years, comes from wanting what we don't have... and probably shouldn't have.

It's true for the troll on Facebook.

It's true for the politician.

It's certainly true for the reality TV star.

And it couldn't be more obvious for the guy driving the Mercedes he'll never afford.

They all want something – whether it's money, power or simply the appearance of a good life – that they don't have.

It forces them to lie. It's their only option.

Thinking about it that way, you'll find tackling sincerity is much easier. It's no longer a sin of the heart... but a sin of the mind.

Sincerity

The heart does what it will. But the mind is easy to control.

It's an easy three-step process.

First, always be honest with yourself.

We've heard it best said to be "rigorously honest" with ourselves.

In other words, when our gut is telling us to do one thing but our brain is telling us something different, it's time to pause and reflect. It's time to have an honest conversation with ourselves and ponder our true motives.

Chances are... we're lusting after something we shouldn't have.

Once we know our true motive, it's a whole lot easier to navigate around it.

From there, focus intently on being consistent. Don't be one way with a certain person or group and then another way with other folks.

Be sincere all the time. Again, it must be rigorous honesty.

It's not easy.

That's why – step three – we must make a plan for daily reflection on the topic.

Each night, take five minutes to focus on what went right during the day... and what went wrong.

When were you sincere? When were you not? When were you focused so intently on something you didn't have that you misled or mistreated somebody?

Make it a habit... and it will become a habit.

Franklin was stern with his words. Use no hurtful deceit.

Sincerity

He didn't say use less of it. He didn't say it was okay to trick your political enemies. He said don't do it... speak only innocently and justly.

Always.

Think of what that would look like. Think of what the world would look like if everybody followed that simple mandate.

Now think of the world today.

We all have work to do.

Make it a habit.

Virtue No. 8

Justice

Make It Right, Make It Known

When will ignorant Americans tear down statues of Ben Franklin? When will they finally take to the streets and burn their \$100 bills just to erase his picture from the history books?

And when will emotion-fueled zealots stand up and call the man a hypocrite?

We ask these questions not to stir a fight (well, maybe a small one) but to open the door to a much more worthy and useful discussion.

You see, we can't help but stir a bit of controversy as we explore the eighth virtue... justice. This one gets a bit crazy.

Justice. Wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

When most folks these days think of justice, they immediately think of a courtroom or the act of hanging some barbarous murderer in the town's square.

While that's part of what Franklin meant here, pushing men to take the law into their own hands is hardly the Founding Father's intent.

No. To get to that, we have to know the man a bit deeper. We have to get back to those oh-so-jagged questions from the top.

THE TRUTH COMES OUT

It's no secret that Ben Franklin was a slave owner. We even know the names of the folks he owned: Peter, Jemima, Othello, George, John and King.

They were part of his net worth for more than 45 years.

Franklin also participated in the slave trade by publishing advertisements for slaves in his prized *Pennsylvania Gazette*. And when one would escape, he'd print a notice of that, too.

But even during the prime of the statue-removal boom in 2017, nobody was calling for Franklin's head.

We blame ignorance. But we also say Franklin's love of justice had something to do with it.

After all, Franklin didn't die a slave owner.

In fact, in 1787 the man became the president of the Abolition Society. And less than 90 days before his death, he took to Congress to bring a nationwide end to slavery.

He was passionate about the idea. For him, it was all about justice.

RIGHTING THE WRONG

You see, Franklin's definition of justice had very little to do with the law.

As he says in the line quoted above, “Wrong none by doing injuries.”

Clearly... slavery injured a whole lot of folks.

The man spent his final days working to right his wrongs. And that’s what we believe is the real lesson here.

Franklin could have quietly freed his slaves and moved on. It certainly would have been easier and far less controversial.

We reckon that’s the path that most folks took. And we reckon, too, that they would have thought justice was served. The injured, they’d say, had been set free.

But not Franklin.

His virtue continues “... or omitting the benefits that are your duty.”

A man has a duty, he believed, not only to do what’s right... but to make what’s right known to the world.

Given the context of the man’s career, it makes sense. As a newspaper publisher, he made choices every day about what to leave in and what to leave out. It would have been easy to omit a line or two of praise... especially about the opposing side.

Just pick up a rag of record today or turn on the TV to see what we mean.

But justice requires a different tactic.

JUSTICE IN ACTION

Our research makes it clear that Franklin feared apathy just as much as we hate it. And justice is the moral opposite of apathy.

We beg readers to look around.

Stick your hand over your brow and search for the many, many ways our culture has grown apathetic. Oh sure, folks take to Facebook to gripe about the social injustice of the day... but do they really expect change?

We certainly haven't seen it.

No, the sort of action we're talking about requires true motion, not just some feel-good tripe tapped out on a keyboard. We moan about politicians.

But who among us has put their name on the ballot?

We moan about our schools. But who among us has saddled up beside our kids to teach them a lesson or two?

And we moan about the death of the great American culture. But who among us has dared to do anything about it?

Going back to Franklin's words, we may be causing no injury... but we sure aren't doing our duty to stand up for what's right.

It's what led Franklin to work in hospitals... to start volunteer firefighting units... and to refuse to patent his inventions (it wouldn't do justice to others who could use them).

He took action. Justice, we've long found, is a complex recipe.

It's not for a small subset of our population to maintain, as is the modern belief. Oh no... that'd be trouble.

If we want true justice, all of us must work to bring it to life.

Aim for it and we guarantee you'll live a better, happier and more successful life.

Virtue No. 9

Moderation

Find the Middle Ground... and Stand Firmly

It's the death of the middle class...

There's no political middle ground these days...

Everybody's either a religious zealot or an atheist...

These are complaints that we hear often. They're examples of a culture that lusts for extremism. Our politics, our sports and even our weather live and die by the superlatives we use to describe them.

We don't need to tell you of the dangers of such a trend.

They're self-evident.

But as we look at Franklin's ninth virtue, we'll tell you that we agree with the wise old boy's take on the situation.

Here's the thing, though: Our interpretation of this virtue is much different from the typical deciphering of this mandate.

Moderation. Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

Moderation

Most folks who read those words take home a simple message: everything in moderation.

They believe Franklin was telling us not to indulge.

But that idea was tackled right at the start.

In his very first virtue, Franklin ordered us to live a life of temperance.

It'd be odd for the man who tells us not to go to extremes to double down on his message.

No, there's something else going on in this mighty mandate.

The power in this virtue lies in its second half – in those three complex words right in the middle. “Forbear resenting injuries,” he tells us.

Put simply, he's telling us not to be offended.

Ah... now we're getting somewhere. Now we're getting to a lesson so many Americans must take to heart.

Thinking through Franklin's words with this filter, we see that this virtue takes on a fresh and powerful meaning.

“WELL... I'M APPALLED”

We don't know if we're living in our nation's most extreme time. But we can recall no other period when folks were so divided and so easily offended by their neighbors' view of the truth.

Extreme extremism sure feels like a good way to describe it.

That's why Franklin's words are so powerful today.

He tells us two key things.

First, he orders us to live our lives in the middle. That idea is clear in all of his virtues. But in a world that has found a way to monetize polarization, living in the middle is a dying art.

In fact, we'd argue many folks these days find the idea appalling.

They want to be extreme. It's how they find their identities.

It's dangerous.

That's where the second half of Franklin's advice comes in. He tells us – except on rare occasions – to simply overlook somebody else's extreme views.

We must moderate our yearning to be offended. We repeat. We must let offensive ideas leave our minds just as easily as they entered.

Whooo-wee... the mainstream media is going to hate us even more. We're killing their business model.

WE DARE YOU...

With all the words from above in mind, we offer a bit of a challenge.

We dare readers to watch and read the news from one of the big cable news channels. Watch how the minutiae is turned into the extreme. Watch how the small is blasted into the big.

There will be no middle ground.

No, there can't be. Not in this culture of extremes.

There will be only love and hate.

Moderation

From there, we urge each reader to deliberately measure their reaction. Is it extreme? Are you offended by the opposing side's view?

If so, take time to ponder the idea.

You'll find moderation is far harder than you thought.

It takes a strong person to stand firmly in the middle... especially these days.

Virtue No. 10

Cleanliness

Don't Stink (And Don't Stop There)

“There is a suitcase full of human s— on the corner of Isis and 13th.”

That’s a quote at the top of a recent article that ran in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. It detailed how disgusting and dirty parts of the city have become.

It’s bad.

Meanwhile, on the nation’s other coast, Baltimore’s once-beloved Lexington Market has dealt with a bit of filth of its own.

As if the city needed another black eye, a shopper filmed one of the area’s iconic rabbit-sized rats prancing atop a few goodies inside a display cased filled with confectionaries.

“I saw a rat just running around, nibbling on pastries, cookies, cakes,” said the lucky fellow who got it all on video. “I mean, just a minute before that happened, they were just selling pastries to people. So that’s the appalling part.”

We've never been in the business, but we imagine rat footprints don't much help with cupcake sales.

CLEANING UP

Cities on both of the nation's coasts are working on some serious public relations issues.

It turns out, they've learned, that folks tend to want to live somewhere that's clean.

It's the oh-so-simple idea that takes us to the 10th of Ben Franklin's 13 virtues.

Cleanliness. Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes or habitation.

This one doesn't need a whole lot of translation.

Don't stink.

Get those stains out of your clothes.

Keep your home in order.

But our job isn't to stop at the obvious.

No, we must keep digging. We must do more than scratch the surface. We must hoe the row until all the weeds are gone.

A DIRTY DISEASE

You see, the folks in San Francisco really aren't all that mad about the suitcases of poop in their alleys.

It's merely the scab that's getting picked. The true wound lies well beneath it.

It's the same in Baltimore.

The poor rat isn't to blame. He's just doing what fat rats do.

Nah, it's really not the cleanliness of things that the internet haters are up in arms about.

Oh sure, rat hair isn't something we'd be all that excited to find atop our next wedge of cheese. But that's not the real problem.

Nope. The real problem is laziness.

Cleanliness, you see, isn't the disease. It's merely the symptom.

Laziness is the real culprit.

There's no discipline these days.

"They just got to clean them up," said one of the market's daily shoppers. "The market needs to get the holes so the [rats] can't keep coming in. It's common sense."

It's the same for the homeless folks in San Francisco. They simply need to go for a walk and stop pooping in suitcases.

But they don't.

That's the problem.

RISE AND SHINE

We argue this virtue could be erased and replaced with Franklin's long-touted idea of getting out of bed early. It's not the act of getting out of bed with the rooster's crow that makes us a better person... it's the discipline it takes that gets the job done.

When touting the gospel of rising before the sun, we were once asked if staying up late had the same effect.

The man asking the question claimed to be a “night person.” He said he’d get just as much work done in the evening and get just as much sleep... but didn’t think getting up early was necessary if he simply stayed up later.

Wrong.

Like we said, it’s not about the time or the work that gets done.

It’s about the effort... and the discipline.

It’s why keeping your house, clothes and body clean is so important. An organized home may not run all that more efficiently... but it will be run by a more efficient person.

That’s the problem in Baltimore, San Francisco... and so much of our nation. It’s what truly has folks so upset.

They know the problem isn’t rats and homeless folks. They know it runs much, much deeper.

The problem is a culture of people who are too lazy to do the hard work themselves. They’d rather rely on the government... rely on the system... or rely on a handout taken from somebody who’s not afraid to get up early to clean his own house.

Franklin was right.

We must not tolerate uncleanness.

It’s not because we fear a bit of rat droppings. No, we fear a city where the rats have more ambition than the humans.

Virtue No. 11

Tranquility

Let the Little Things Be Little Things

Pay attention. What follows may be the most useful and life-changing advice we have to offer.

It's a topic that affects all of us. And yet few folks will ever master it.

Get it right and you'll be happier, have better relationships and, guaranteed, find your business dealings are enhanced.

The idea comes to us as we wind down our deep dive into Ben Franklin's 13 virtues – the simple traits our hero believed would turn any man from good to great.

DON'T BE MAD

Like all of the virtues we've studied so far, No. 11 is deeper than it looks.

It's like one of those puddles that looks like it might only cover our ankles... but has the potential to put us on the nightly news as we stand on the roof of our car begging for help.

Tranquility

The words are simple:

Tranquility. Be not disturbed at trifles or at accidents common or unavoidable.

Stay calm, my friend. Don't get angry. Let the little things be little things.

If we were writing slogans to slap on the side of a coffee mug, the ideas would keep us busy for a week.

Then again, we don't recommend living your life based on what you read on the side of a coffee mug.

The truth is Franklin missed an easy shot here. Oh sure, he's dead-on right with his advice. Anger gets nothing done. But he fails to flip over the rock and grab the shiny nugget that lies directly under it.

At the root of anger, of course, is selfishness. Don't be selfish... and you won't get angry. Think about it. The car that cut us off in traffic... it did us no harm. And yet angry we get.

The kid who smart-mouthed us at the store... he knows not what he says. But yet we want to grab his arm and twist it until his jaw is resting on the floor.

We're selfish. We want to get there first. We don't want some punk taking stabs at our ego. But it gets worse.

We don't get our way at dinner... so we get angry at our wife.

We don't get recognition at the office... so we bad-mouth the boss.

And the ultimate example of selfish behavior... is what happens when our lover finds another lover. Many heinous crimes start with that oh-so-painful slash to a selfish ego.

Don't get angry, Franklin says. That's easy, we say, as long as nobody gets in our way.

THE REAL-WORLD SOLUTION

Of course, we share this planet with a few billion other selfish folks. Somebody is always going to stand in our way.

The trick, then, is to create the widest path possible to our goals. That way, we can walk around even the widest of fools.

We recommend three ways to do it. But only one of them – the most ironic of the bunch – really matters.

First, most selfish anger comes from having the wrong expectations.

We wanted our crabcakes broiled... not fried. We wanted the job done today... not tomorrow.

Don't get mad. Open your mouth next time and communicate.

Pretty simple.

Second, most selfish anger comes when folks have no idea they're being selfish.

When the car cuts us off in traffic... when the nightly news gets the story wrong... when a colleague cuts us off during a meeting.

They all make us angry because they somehow slow our progress – or at least our perceived progress.

The truth is that car in front of you won't make you any later to dinner. Everything on the nightly news is wrong. And, get this, if your career hinges on an outspoken colleague beating you to the punch... your career is in big trouble. Find a new one.

Tranquility

Misperception of what drives our egos is the fuel that feeds anger. The more there is, the hotter the fire.

And finally, if you're going to pay attention to just one idea, make it this one. It's the simplest and most effective.

To tell somebody not to be selfish is to tell them not to be human. Selfishness is what drives our culture, our economy and our science forward.

But how good is your selfishness if it keeps you from getting what you want?

In other words, if your selfishness makes you angry and your anger leads to trouble... something is wrong. You're not going to get what you want.

You must reroute that selfishness in a healthy direction.

It's easy. We must simply not worry about the ego-busting infraction in front of us and instead focus on the ego-driven prize that we're ultimately aiming for.

Telling off a cop may make you feel good today. But it will hurt tomorrow.

Be selfish. Just do what is best for tomorrow.

Franklin was right. Tranquility is good. Do not be disturbed. It's easy to say... and much harder to do.

Humans, after all, are a selfish lot.

Understand what makes you angry and control it, and you'll be a whole lot happier and more successful. Guaranteed.

Virtue No. 12

Chastity

*Learn From Franklin on the Tough Topic
(and Powerful Tonic) of Sex*

Oh, if ever there were a time we'd want to hand the pen to somebody else, this would be it.

When it comes to Franklin's 12th virtue, we're treading in dirty water.

Chastity. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.

Sex.

Everybody likes to do it... but nobody wants to talk about it.

But that's why we're here.

We didn't start Manward Press to talk about the mundane, the feel-good or the commonly covered.

Nope, our pen likes to get down and dirty.

A DIFFERENT VIEW

But what's there to say about sex that you haven't already heard? What's there to say that everybody from Dr. Laura to the big names in the Bible haven't already told us?

Don't cheat. Wait until you're old enough. And remember where babies come from.

And what's Franklin got to say with this virtue that he didn't already say in all his others?

We argue the man is repeating himself. He already told us to do everything in moderation. He already told us to live a life of temperance.

What's with the repetition? Is the great thinker running out of things to say?

We don't think so.

You see, it's important to remind readers here that Franklin wrote his virtues at the oh-so-virile age of 20. Frankly, we'd be worried if he didn't carve out some space for the topic.

It was surely on his mind... a lot.

But it was something else Franklin wrote when he was 39 years old that we must draw your attention to. It introduces a whole new idea... and led to some monumental changes in the fate of America.

You see, Franklin wrote a hypothetical letter to a young man in 1745. The note was apparently in response to the youngster's lust for the ladies. He wanted advice from a man with some experience and – if the rumors are true – a few notches in his headboard.

BAD ADVICE

The letter was dubbed “Advice to a Young Man on the Choice of a Mistress.”

The first few lines sum it up:

I know of no Medicine fit to diminish the violent natural Inclinations you mention; and if I did, I think I should not communicate it to you. Marriage is the proper Remedy. It is the most natural State of Man, and therefore the State in which you are most likely to find solid Happiness.

Nice and simple.

Save it for marriage... and keep it there.

But Ben Franklin knew the frailties of man.

He kept going when others stopped.

Instead of mandating abstinence from up high, heacknowledged the realities of lust.

And this is where he got himself into trouble... and where he ultimately (and unknowingly) preserved the nation’s powerful First Amendment.

Check it out...

But if you will not take this Counsel, and persist in thinking a Commerce with the Sex inevitable, then I repeat my former Advice, that in all your Amours you should prefer old Women to young ones.

Franklin went on to list his rationale with eight highly descriptive ideas – ranging from older women are better at conversation to they can best keep a secret.

His writing was quite detailed... but nothing you wouldn't see inferred or implied in a commercial pitching a little blue pill during the nightly news these days.

That's what's crazy... and the real lesson in all of this.

It turns out that few folks ever got to read Franklin's dear letter.

It was never published during his lifetime and was largely censored by future generations.

At first, the censorship was informal. Editors cut it out of their publications. Publishers chose not to print it.

But beginning in 1821, the censorship came from the state, with a few governors working to outlaw obscene literature. And by 1873, the trend had spread across the nation.

That's when Ulysses Grant put his presidential pen to the Comstock Act – a harsh law that penalized anybody who dealt in “obscene literature and articles of immoral use.”

SAY WHAT YOU WANT

The censorship lasted for more than a century. But by the mid-20th century, First Amendment advocates began to fight the idea.

Many of them brought Franklin's infamous letter to the court and introduced it as evidence.

Their aim was to show – under the current laws of the land – that one of the Founding Fathers of our nation would have been imprisoned for writing what he wrote.

The idea trickled up until Lady Justice took it to the highest court in the land.

That's when William O. Douglas took a tight look at what Franklin had written to us so long before and made a bold argument in defense of our right to say what we want:

The First Amendment was the product of a robust, not a prudish, age... This was the age when Benjamin Franklin wrote his "Advice to a Young Man on Choosing a Mistress" and "A Letter to the Royal Academy at Brussels." When the United States became a nation, none of the fathers of the country were any more concerned than Franklin with the question of pornography.

Douglas, by the way, lost his argument.

By a single vote, the Supreme Court decided that the First Amendment did not protect pornography or its import.

But clearly his voice was heard. The ruling has changed. And so has our culture's acceptance of obscenity.

It's that idea that both brings us back to modern times and begs us to look once again at Franklin's most controversial virtue.

We turn to Hollywood these days and see virtually nothing but sex and violence.

There's no moderation in sight.

The silver screen is full of "dullness," "weakness" and certainly the "injury of your own or another's peace or reputation."

Franklin, we fear, for all of his spectrum-stretching writing on the topic, would loathe it.

For he knows – and has dutifully shown us through his 13 virtues – that what flows through a man's mind eventually flows through his actions.

Chastity

Sex is a tough topic and a powerful tonic.

It sells. It motivates. And it destroys.

We advise readers to follow Franklin's advice.

We'd all be better off if more folks did. Our culture has forgotten the moral virtue of a healthy dose of chastity.

Virtue No. 13

Humility

*Quit Taking “Selfies”... Imitate These Two
Legendary Thinkers Instead*

It’s safe to say we’ve saved the toughest for last. Ben Franklin’s final of 13 virtues is quite bold.

As we unpack the idea, we’re bound to offend. We’re bound to stretch the limits. And, we’re sure, some will say we didn’t go far enough.

Perhaps... that’s exactly what the man intended when he wrote the simple line.

Humility. Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

Ah, humility. Could there be a better subject to cover in our modern world? Perhaps we’ll brag about our musings on Facebook. Maybe we’ll post a selfie of us holding our book on Instagram.

Or, maybe, we’ll quietly do what we do and let the work speak for itself. But this isn’t about us. We’re far too humble for that – at least that’s what we’re supposed to say.

OTHER VOICES

As Franklin said, when it comes to modesty, there are just two folks we need to follow.

We'll start with Jesus.

We could quote the Bible or go into a deep theological discussion, but that's been done by folks far more schooled than us. Instead, we'll simply scratch our head and wonder, what would Jesus do in these less-than-humble modern times?

In other words, what would Jesus' Facebook page look like?

There's no doubt, it could be quite a sight. Lavish dinners. Miracles. Hanging with celebrities.

After all, Jesus had some pretty strong Connections. He could have made everybody jealous of his lifestyle.

But we all know that's not what would have happened.

The Bible is filled with stories of Jesus riding lowly donkeys – the modern-day equivalent of an old Ford Pinto. It's filled with tales of helping the sick and washing the feet of the poor.

And in a verse that tells us all we need to know, it quotes Jesus saying, "I do not receive glory from men."

That's strong. It's certainly not good news for Facebook's share price.

So, then, where are we to get our glory?

We'll get there... but first Socrates.

We admire the man for many reasons. To our point, though, we tip our hat in acknowledgment of Socrates' great paradox.

That is... wisdom comes through recognizing our ignorance.

In his own words...

It seems that neither of us knows anything great, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know. So it seems I am wiser than he in this one small thing, that I do not think I know what I do not know.

They're powerful words for our modern look-at-me culture.

This idea is why we focus so intently on Know-How.
By learning, we don't just pick up a skill.

We pick up the understanding of just how much we don't know.

It's humbling... and it's powerful. It takes us back to the life-changing thread that weaves all of Franklin's virtues together.

SELFISH HUMILITY

None of us are perfect. Franklin often failed to live up to his own standards. He knew it, and he worked tirelessly to right his wrongs.

Franklin, we've found, wasn't a particularly religious man – at least not in the context of blindly following the teachings of others. He observed the Sabbath, but he didn't take the day to study the Bible. He studied himself.

He used the day to measure his standards and to mark his faults and successes. He contemplated himself versus his own morality.

That's the key.

He didn't spend his time comparing himself with his neighbors. He didn't look at the size of their house, the breadth of their bank account or the beauty of his neighbor's wife (okay, he likely did that on occasion). Instead, he spent his time looking inward... working tirelessly to improve himself.

Answer this... In our world of social media and nonstop political commentary, how many times a day do you see folks griping about others? "They should have done this..." or "Why don't they do that?"

It's garbage. It's a worthless, blame-others mentality.

As Franklin begs us in his final virtue, we mustn't care about others. We'll never be happy spying on the lives of our friends via Facebook. Instead, we must reflect on ourselves.

We must understand that we are all richly flawed.

None of us are perfect.

But happiness – true happiness – comes from humbly understanding who we are and who we want to be.

Bonus Virtue

Patience

Stop Wasting Money Today (It Will Pay Off Handsomely Tomorrow)

We're convinced that if we follow each of Ben Franklin's 13 virtues, we'll live a happy and successful life.

But living a happy and successful life with Liberty, with the financial freedom to live as we choose? Franklin has us covered.

First, we must applaud the man for his morals and ethics when it comes to politics. Few folks know it, but Franklin worked quite hard to get a few lines added to the Constitution.

He wanted to make it illegal for politicians to get paid.

Public servants working in a democracy, he said, should not do it for the money.

Obviously, his attempts failed. Politicians are paid handsomely. But as we learned by studying his virtues, the man did his best to do what was right, no matter the law.

That's why he did something spectacular with his money.

From 1785 to 1788, Franklin was the governor of Pennsylvania. It was a well-paying job... but it wasn't money that he wanted. So he set it aside. In all, he stockpiled 2,000 pounds sterling (just shy of \$10,000 in today's money).

He turned it into millions of dollars.

Here's how...

AN ODD JOKE

In 1775, a popular Frenchman mocked Franklin's famed Poor Richard by creating what he believed to be a more accurate representation of an optimistic, nationalistic American.

He called him Fortunate Richard.

The character was so excited about the fate of his new country that he left a small sum of money to it in his will. Fortunate Richard mandated that it be used only after it had collected interest for 500 years.

Franklin knew a good joke when he saw one. And he knew an even better opportunity. When the Founding Father died in 1790, it was revealed that he had left the 2,000 pounds he'd saved during his term as governor to his two favorite cities, Boston and Philadelphia.

But there were some odd mandates.

The money was divided equally and could be paid out only on two specific dates. After drawing interest for the first 100 years, \$500,000 could be used for public works projects.

After another 100 years, the cities could do what they pleased with the money.

But Franklin didn't just want the money sitting around in some bank account. He wanted it to go into the city and put young men to work. After all, it was a small apprenticeship loan from two friends that Franklin was convinced served as the foundation of his fortune.

Here's how Franklin laid out his demand:

The Trustees shall... let out the sum upon interest, at five percent, per annum, to such young married artificers, under the age of twenty-five years, as have served an apprenticeship in the said town, and faithfully fulfilled the duties required in their indentures, so as to obtain a good moral character from at least two respectable citizens, who are willing to become their sureties, in a bond with the applicants, for the repayment of the moneys so lent, with interest, according to the terms hereinafter prescribed...

The idea paid off. Not only did hundreds of folks get a head start in life thanks to Franklin's money... but the town made off quite handsomely.

At the end of the first 100-year period, Boston had \$391,000 in its coffers. As instructed, it used much of the money for public works... like starting the Franklin Union, a technical school. And, of course, it continued to loan the money to budding entrepreneurs.

Even after a majority of the funds were spent, the remainder continued to collect hefty interest.

In 1990, at the end of the second century, Boston's endowment was worth more than \$5 million. Philadelphia's (which was tapped for many more public works projects) was worth roughly half that.

THE VALUE OF TOMORROW

The lessons here are obvious.

First, we wish more politicians would follow this path. We'd have a richer country... not richer political dynasties. But more important, Franklin's act exemplifies the value of our choices today.

Franklin could have rewarded himself with any number of material things. He could have taken his 2,000 pounds and spent it on something flashy and bold.

These days, he'd tell himself "you only live once" and then head down to the local car dealer. But we know Franklin better than that. He understood that money has some value today... but it has immensely more value tomorrow.

Perhaps you don't want to gift a future fortune to Philadelphia (we certainly don't blame you). But Franklin's act begs us to understand the true cost of money. A buck spent frivolously today means we're giving up \$10 or more in, oh, say, retirement.

Every dollar we spend today is a few dollars we can't spend tomorrow. It's simple, yet it's the oh-so-powerful math that keeps so many folks from the future they deserve.

It leads us to vehemently disagree with one of Franklin's boldest and most famous proclamations.

"A penny saved is a penny earned," he said. But Franklin was wrong. A penny saved is a dollar earned.

If you want to get rich, stop wasting money today.

It'll pay off handsomely tomorrow.

Final Words

Benjamin Franklin didn't always live up to his own words.

In fact, scores of books have been written about his flaws.

Don't focus on what the man did, or how or where he messed up.

If you do, all you're looking for is an excuse for your own failures.

My advice is to focus instead on Franklin's words and what they mean to you.

No man is perfect. (We'd be out of a job if they were.)

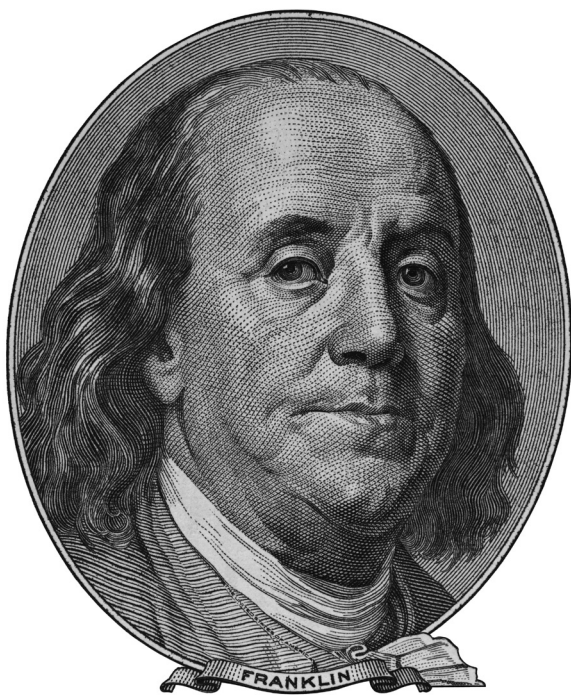
If living up to these lofty ideas were easy... if all we had to do was commit to them... we wouldn't have much to say.

But living a virtuous, good life is not easy. It takes constant effort and comes with constant failures.

It's not always about doing. It's about trying.

Failure is to be expected.

But in the end, you'll find yourself looking in the mirror at a better man for your efforts.



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