



Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue

By George Rogers

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Ever wonder what make Franklin tick? What got him up in the morning? What he thought about? What was important to him? Would you like to know the book changed his life and turn of thinking it gave him that guided his every endeavor?

The Art of Virtue captures in Franklin's own words his timeless thoughts on topics such as goal setting, personal achievement, obtaining wealth, preserving health, human relations, family living, religion, morality, aging and dying. Wit, wisdom and humor grace every page--entertaining, informing and inspiring the reader.

Consider this quote on happiness: ". . .as the happiness or real good of men consists in right action and right action cannot be produced without right opinion, it behooves us, above all things in this world, to take care that our own opinions of things be according to the nature of things. The foundation of all virtue and happiness is thinking rightly." Imagine how much easier our lives would be if we simply observed this one idea.

Contemplate this thought on education he published in 1728, "It is said the Persians in their constitution, had public schools in which virtue was taught as a liberal art or science, and it is certainly of more consequence to a man, that he has learnt to govern his passions in spite of temptation, to be just in his dealings, to be temperate in his pleasures, to support himself with fortitude under misfortunes, to behave in prudence in all his affairs and every circumstance in life; I say, it is of much more real advantage to be thus qualified, than to be master of all the arts and sciences in the world beside."

How might the world be improved if this were a primary objective of public education?

On finance, Franklin wrote, "Gain may be temporary and uncertain, but ever, while you live, expense is constant and certain; and it is easier to build two fireplaces than keep one in fuel; as Poor Richard says; so, rather go to bed supper

less than to rise in debt.” Know anyone who could benefit from that advice?

When serving as an ambassador to France during the Revolutionary War, Franklin received a letter warning him his valet was a spy for the French. He replied, “I have observed one rule which prevents any inconvenience from such practices. It is simply this—to be concerned in no affairs that I would blush to have made public and to do nothing but spies may see and welcome. When a man’s actions are just and honorable, the more they are known, the more his reputation is increased and established.” Know anyone whose life would have been made simpler by having been guided by a similar rule?

In writing to a friend a story from his youth in which he spent all his money for a whistle only to learn he could have bought the same whistle for a fraction of the price at a local store said that it proved to be a valuable advantage to him as he thereafter tried to avoid paying too much for his whistles. After observing several instances in life where he had observed individuals who paid too much for their whistles, he concluded, “In short, I conceive that a great part of the miseries of mankind are brought upon them by the false estimate they have made of the value of things, and by their paying too much for their whistles.”

Dr. Steven R. Covey wrote of the book, “An inspiring classic! Benjamin Franklin’s wit and wisdom brilliantly organized around today’s challenges.” Which is the important key to the value of Benjamin Franklin’s *The Art of Virtue*—it addresses problems we are experiencing as individuals on a daily basis in today’s world.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Franklin conceived of this book at the age of 26 but never actually got around to writing it. In 1986, editor George Rogers completed the task by gleaning Franklin's thoughts on the subject from his various writings. We could all use a little virtue these days, so libraries would do well to stock this volume.

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Review

"Perhaps more than any other 18th century notable, Franklin grappled with the 'codes of behavior' as they applied to the individual's place in the universe--how one might reach his or her potential for a meaningful existence in a world of uncertainty...I highly recommend the Art of Virtue to anyone concerned with self-improvement, or simply curious about what made Franklin tick." -- *Roy E. Goodman, Curator, American Philosophical Society*

In 1732, at the age of 26, Benjamin Franklin conceived the idea of writing a guide for living that he named "The Art of Virtue". Although he nurtured this idea of a book for the next fifty years, Franklin never completed the work before he died. 250 years later, George Rogers discovered a set of Franklin's writings in an old mansion in Tarrytown, New York. Inspired by what Franklin had to say, and believing his ideas to be of general benefit to all people, Rogers researched and organized Franklin's writings into the book Franklin had intended to write. The rather impressive result is Benjamin Franklin's The Art Of Virtue. This compendium of the famous wit and wisdom of Ben Franklin is as apt today as it was in the colonial era of our nation's founding. Benjamin Franklin's The Art Of Virtue is appropriate reading (and study) for all ages, in all conditions and walks of life. Benjamin Franklin's The Art Of Virtue is a yet another of Benjamin Franklin's many treasured legacies to the American people. --*Midwest Book Review*

From the Publisher

In 1732, at the age of 26, Benjamin Franklin first conceived the idea writing a book he wanted to title, The Art of Virtue. The book was to be based a method of self-improvement he had earlier developed and felt had been quite helpful to him. Though Franklin never completed this work, he nurtured the idea for well over fifty years of his life. In 1860, Franklin wrote to a close friend, Lord Kames:

I propose. . . .a little work for the benefit of youth, to be called The Art of Virtue. From the title I think you will hardly conjecture what the nature of the book may be. I must therefore explain it a little. Many people lead bad lives that would gladly lead good lives, but do not know how to make the change. They have frequently resolved and endeavored it; but in vain, because their endeavors have not been properly conducted. . . .

Most people have naturally some virtues, but none have naturally all the virtues. To acquire those that are wanting, and secure what we acquire, as well has what we have naturally, is as properly an art as painting, navigation, or architecture. If a man would become painter, navigator, or architect, it is not enough that he is advised to be one, that he is convinced by the arguments of his advisor that it would be for his advantage to be one, and that he resolves to be one, but he must also be taught the principles of the art, be shown all the methods of working, and how to acquire the habits of using properly all the instruments; and thus regularly and gradually he arrives, by practice, at some perfection in the art. . . .

My Art of Virtue has also its instruments and teaches the manner of using them. . . .

While writing his autobiography in 1785, Franklin commented on The Art of Virtue as follows, being fully persuaded of the utility and excellence of my method, and that it might be serviceable to people of all religions. . . . I purposed writing a little comment on each virtue, in which I should have shown the advantages of possessing it and the mischief's attending its opposite vice; and I should have called my book, The Art of Virtue.

But it so happened that my intention of writing and publishing this comment was never fulfilled. . . . the necessary close attention to private business in the earlier part of my life, and public business since, have occasioned my postponing it. . . . [and] it has hitherto remained unfinished.

Thanks to Mr. Rogers, The Art of Virtue which Dr. Franklin so long contemplated has now been masterfully completed. Providing marvelous insight into both his methods and his motives for self-improvement, the Art of Virtue is must reading for anyone serious about getting the most out of life.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Frances Carpenter:

The book Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue can give more knowledge and information about everything you want. Why must we leave the good thing like a book Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue? A few of you have a different opinion about e-book. But one aim that will book can give many info for us. It is absolutely proper. Right now, try to closer together with your book. Knowledge or details that you take for that, you are able to give for each other; you can share all of these. Book Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue has simple shape but you know: it has great and large function for you. You can seem the enormous world by wide open and read a guide. So it is very wonderful.

Steven Deloatch:

Nowadays reading books are more than want or need but also become a life style. This reading practice give you lot of advantages. Associate programs you got of course the knowledge the particular information inside the book which improve your knowledge and information. The knowledge you get based on what kind of publication you read, if you want drive more knowledge just go with education and learning books but if you want sense happy read one with theme for entertaining such as comic or novel. Typically the Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue is kind of book which is giving the reader unforeseen experience.

Robert Goddard:

The book with title Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue contains a lot of information that you can discover it. You can get a lot of profit after read this book. This specific book exist new know-how the information that exist in this reserve represented the condition of the world today. That is important to you to find out how the improvement of the world. This book will bring you throughout new era of the internationalization. You can read the e-book on your smart phone, so you can read that anywhere you want.

Daniel Caudle:

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