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**Subject:** John Walton Newsletter  
**Date:** 14 July 2011 10:03:06 AM

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### **Thirteen Virtues by Benjamin Franklin**

Franklin sought to cultivate his character by a plan of 13 virtues, which he developed at age 20 (in 1726) and continued to practice in some form for the rest of his life.

His [autobiography](#) lists his 13 virtues as:

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. "Tranquillity. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable."
12. "Chastity. Rarely use pursuit of sexual pleasure 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](#) ."

Franklin did not try to work on them all at once. Instead, he would work on one and only one each week "leaving all others to their ordinary chance". While Franklin did not live completely by his virtues and by his own admission, he fell short of them many times, he believed the attempt made him a better man contributing greatly to his success and happiness, which is why in his autobiography, he devoted more pages to this plan than to any other single point; in his autobiography Franklin wrote, "I hope, therefore, that some of my descendants may follow the example and reap the benefit."

**My comments:** When I was young I spent a lot of time reading biographies and autobiographies of great people. I also collected great sayings, and to make them to become part of me I taped them on the dashboard of my car or other prominent places so I could mediate on them. If all young people in their teens would do this they would live fruitful lives.

**I loved the Proverbs of Solomon:**

- 1 "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:
- 2 To know wisdom and instruction, To perceive the words of understanding,
- 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, Justice, judgment, and equity;
- 4 To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion—
- 5 A wise *man* will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,
- 6 To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles.
- 7 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, *But* fools despise wisdom and instruction."
- 8 My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother;
- 9 For they *will be* a graceful ornament on your head, And chains about your neck."

**Here it is in the Message version:**

- 1 These are the wise sayings of Solomon, David's son, Israel's king—
- 2 Written down so we'll know how to live well and right, to understand what life means and where it's going;
- 3 A manual for living, for learning what's right and just and fair;
- 4 To teach the inexperienced the ropes and give our young people a grasp on reality.
- 5 There's something here also for seasoned men and women,
- 6 still a thing or two for the experienced to learn—Fresh wisdom to probe and penetrate, the rhymes and reasons of wise men and women.
- 7 ¶ Start with GOD—the first step in learning is bowing down to GOD; only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning.
- 8 Pay close attention, friend, to what your father tells you; never forget what you learned at your mother's knee.
- 9 Wear their counsel like flowers in your hair, like rings on your fingers.

We frequently read Proverbs around the table every morning when our children were young. Oh! that all parents would do it.

22 "Simpletons! How long will you wallow in ignorance? Cynics! How long will you feed your cynicism? Idiots! How long will you refuse to learn?

23 About face! I can revise your life. Look, I'm ready to pour out my spirit on you; I'm ready to tell you all I know.

2: 3 That's right—if you make Insight your priority, and won't take no for an answer,

4 Searching for it like a prospector panning for gold, like an adventurer on a treasure hunt,

5 Believe me, before you know it the Fear-of-GOD will be yours; you'll have come upon the Knowledge of God.

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