

ONE CHAMPION'S ROADMAP TO SUCCESS

By Mark Bowser

Success leaves clues. In order for us to become champions, we must watch champions. If we model what they do, think what they think, believe what they believe, learn what they learned then we will get similar results. One such champion I think we can learn from is one of our founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin. His autobiography is probably one of the first American self-help books on the topic of success. Benjamin Franklin had a goal of *Moral Perfection*. Even though he never reached that goal, Franklin believes the endeavor for perfection made him a happier, more successful person. Franklin discovered that habit was the key to success. Franklin observed,

It was about this time I conceiv'd the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wish'd to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my care was employ'd in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another; habit took the advantage of inattention; inclination was sometimes too strong for reason. I concluded, at length, that the mere speculative conviction that it was our interest to be completely virtuous, was not sufficient to prevent our slipping; and that the contrary habits must be broken, and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct. For this purpose I therefore contrived the following method.

Franklin's method consisted of 13 virtues. He would focus on one virtue at a time. He would spend one week focusing on that virtue and then he would move on to the next virtue. Every night, Franklin would record in a book on his progress. He would mark every transgression he made that day not only in the virtue he was focusing on but in all 13 virtues. Hard you might say; difficult; take too much time! Well, the road to success has never been easy and that is why there is plenty of room at the top. Well, my friend, I am climbing the mountain of success and I want you with me. So, I suggest that we take Benjamin Franklin as one of our guides to the top of the mountain of success. Let's dig into each of his 13 virtues and his words of what they mean.

1. TEMPERANCE.

Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.

Franklin believed in being in control of mind and body. If we are out of control, then is it possible to succeed? I say no. Any success that might be accomplished while being out of control would come out of luck and would not be lasting.

2. SILENCE.

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

We have been told since childhood that if we can't say something nice then don't say anything at all. Good advice.

3. ORDER.

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

It has been said that many people spend an extra four hours every week looking for something they know is on their desk but still can't find it. Sound familiar? This happened to be the virtue that Franklin struggled with the most. For some of us, order is not an easy task to accomplish. But success moves with order. Athletes talk about getting "in the zone", writers and speakers talk about the outline that flows, and mothers talk about bedrooms that—well, you know. Success and order go hand in hand. I am not saying your desk, office, or room has to be spotless. What I am saying is that you have to have an order that works for you. Arrange your space so that every thing you need on a consistent basis is in easy reach. Arrange your time in a way that improves your productivity. For me, that means *Goalets List (to do list)*. Find what works for you and then stick with it.

4. RESOLUTION.

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

You know what you need to do to succeed. Now, go do it!

5. FRUGALITY.

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

Be wise with money. Be a good steward of all that God has blessed us with.

6. INDUSTRY.

Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

One of the areas that wastes a lot of my time is television. I love to veg out in front of the tube. However, I could be using that time to work on my dreams and goals. Now, don't misunderstand me, I am not saying don't watch T.V. I am saying that we all could probably watch a little less T.V. We need to plan our week. What shows do we really want to watch? Alright, then let's watch those. Where we will save a lot of valuable time is when we will stop watching shows we don't care about watching. We plop down in the chair, grab the remote, and start flipping. Don't see anything good there so let's flip some more. Before we know it, we have spent an hour flipping channels, watching nothing, and wasting time.

7. SINCERITY.

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

I believe the best way to accomplish this is to open our Bibles and live what we commonly call The Golden Rule. "Do for others what you would like them to do for you. This is a summary of all that is taught in the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7:12 NLT)

8. JUSTICE.

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

The Golden Rule pretty much sums this one up too.

9. MODERATION.

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

Forgive people. Most people who are rude to us or do something to hurt us are in fact hurting themselves. Love them. Find a need and fill it.

10. CLEANLINESS.

Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloaths, or habitation.

Is dressing for success really that important? I believe it is. I am not saying you have to have the best shoes and the most expensive outfits. Not at all. I am saying, we need to look sharp and smell good. Our first impression is important.

11. TRANQUILLITY.

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

Be proactive at all times. Have some quiet time everyday. A time to reflect and to think.

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.

King Solomon, the wisest of earthly kings had some great advise for all of us.

“Choose a good reputation over great riches, for being held in high esteem is better than having silver or gold.” (Proverbs 22:1 NLT)

“Drink water from your own well---share your love only with your wife. Why spill the water of your springs in public, having sex with just anyone? You should reserve it for yourselves. Don't share it with strangers.” (Proverbs 5:15-17 NLT)

13. HUMILITY.

Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

Many times when we think of humility, we think of mild mannered and weak. Nothing could be further from the truth. Humility is great strength. Humility is having so much confidence in yourself and the ability that God has given you that you don't have to brag. Jesus Christ never bragged. He told the truth with great confidence and conviction. That is the way I want to be. So as the little bracelets say, “WWJD” –What Would Jesus Do?

Well, there we have it, Benjamin Franklin's 13 virtues for success. If we follow them, how can we not reach the mountaintop of success? Even though we can not keep them perfectly, I am confident that we like Franklin will say, “But, on the whole, tho' I never arrived at the perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell far short of it, yet I was, by the endeavour, a better and a happier man than I otherwise should have been if I had not attempted it....”