



# Thirteen Week Course In Personal Betterment

Adapted from Benjamin Franklin's  
Personal Daily Book of Virtues

**I** made a little book, in which I allotted a page for each of the virtues. I rul'd each page with red ink, so as to have seven columns, one for each day of the week, marking each column with a letter for the day. I cross'd these columns with thirteen red lines, marking the beginning of each line with the first letter of one of the virtues, on which line, and in its proper column, I might mark, by a little black spot, every fault I found upon examination to have been committed respecting that virtue upon that day.

My intention being to acquire the habitude of all these virtues, I judg'd it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time; and, when I should be master of that, then to proceed to another, and so on, till I should have gone thro' the thirteen; and, as the previous acquisition of some might facilitate the acquisition of certain others, I arrang'd them with that view, as they stand above. Temperance first, as it tends to procure that coolness and clearness of head, which is so necessary where constant vigilance was to be kept up, and guard maintained against the unremitting attraction of ancient habits, and the force of perpetual temptations. This being acquir'd and establish'd, Silence would be more easy; and my desire being to gain knowledge at the same time that I improv'd in virtue, and considering that in conversation it was obtain'd rather by the use of the ears than of the tongue, and therefore wishing to break a habit I was getting into of prattling, punning, and joking, which only made me acceptable to trifling company, I gave Silence the second place. This and the next, Order, I expected would allow me more time for attending to my project and my studies. Resolution, once become habitual, would keep me firm in my endeavors to obtain all the subsequent virtues; Frugality and Industry freeing me from my remaining debt, and producing affluence and independence, would make more easy the practice of Sincerity and Justice, etc., etc. Conceiving then, that, agreeably to the advice of Pythagoras in his Golden Verses, daily examination would be necessary, I contrived the following method for conducting that examination.

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These names of virtues, with their precepts, were:

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 employ'd 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 extreams; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. **CLEANLINESS.** Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloaths, or habitation.
11. **TRANQUILLITY.** Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. **CHASTITY.** Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dulness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.
13. **HUMILITY.** Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

## Temperance

Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.

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# Silence

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## Order

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

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## Resolution

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

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# Frugality

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

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## Industry

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

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# Sincerity

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

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# Justice

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

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Moderation

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

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## Cleanliness

Tolerate no uncleanness in body, cloaths, or habitation.

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# Tranquility

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

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## Chastity

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

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# Humility

Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

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The morning question: What good shall I do this day??	5		Rise, wash and address Powerful Goodness; contrive day's business and take the resolution of the day; prosecute the present study; and breakfast.
	6		
	7		
	8		Work.
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	10		
	11		
	12		Read or overlook my accounts, and dine.
	1		
	2		Work.
	3		
Evening question: What good have I done today?	4		
	5		
	6		Put things in their places, supper, music, or diversion, or conversation; examination of the day.
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	8		
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	10		Sleep.
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