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The Way to Wealth

Benjamin Franklin (1705 - 1790)

Read by: Bob Gonzalez

Length: 24 minutes

Style: Solo

Language: English

Genre(s): Non-Fiction, Economics,
Education and Self-Help

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The Way to Wealth by Benjamin Franklin is America's first book on personal finance and in the opinion of many, probably the best. Originally written as a preface to the 1758 edition of *Poor Richard's Almanac* 25 years after its debut, *The Way to Wealth* collects the best of the adages and advice first published there. As Franklin often did, he structured the piece as a tale, introducing it as below.

I have heard, that nothing gives an author so great pleasure as to find his works respectfully quoted by others. Judge, then, how much I must have been gratified by an incident I am going to relate, to you. I stopped my horse lately, where a great number of people were collected at an auction of merchants' goods. The hour of the sale not being come, they were conversing on the badness of the times; and one of the company called to a plain, clean, old man, with white locks, "Pray, Father Abraham, what think you of the times? Will not these heavy taxes quite ruin the country? How shall we ever be able to pay them? What would you advise us to?" Father Abraham stood up, and replied, "If you would have my Advice, I will give it you in short; for A word to the wise is enough, as Poor Richard says." They joined in desiring him to speak his mind, and gathering round him, he proceeded as follows.

Father Abraham then proceeds to clearly and concisely deliver a secular sermon on the benefits of the consistent application of thrift and hard work to endeavors great and small. His counsel has been compelling, as the book has been printed in countless editions and sold millions of copies.

Benjamin Franklin (January 6, 1705– April 17, 1790) was a Founding Father of the United States and in many ways was “the First American”. A world-renowned polymath, Franklin was a leading author, printer, political theorist, politician, postmaster, scientist, inventor, civic activist, statesman, and diplomat. As a scientist, he was a major figure in the history of physics for his discoveries and theories regarding electricity. As an inventor, he is known for the lightning rod, bifocals, and the Franklin stove, among other inventions. He facilitated many civic organizations, including Philadelphia's fire department and a university. Franklin's first success was as a partner in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, a newspaper known for its revolutionary sentiments and criticisms of British policies. He became wealthy publishing *Poor Richard's Almanack* and *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. He was the British postmaster for the colonies and set up the first national communications network. From 1785 to 1788, he served as governor of Pennsylvania.

Franklin earned the title of “The First American” for his early campaigning for colonial unity and became a national hero when he spearheaded the effort to repeal the unpopular Stamp Act. As colonial spokesman in London and then as Ambassador to France, he exemplified the emerging American nation. An accomplished diplomat, he was admired among the French as American minister to Paris. Always looking ahead, toward the end of his life he freed his own slaves and became one of the most prominent abolitionists. Franklin was foundational in defining the American ethos. In the words of historian Henry Steele Commager, “In a Franklin could be merged the virtues of Puritanism without its defects, the illumination of the Enlightenment without its heat.” To Walter Isaacson, this makes Franklin “the most accomplished American of his age and the most influential in inventing the type of society America would become.” Fittingly, Franklin has been honored on coinage and the \$100 bill. Many streets, towns, counties, educational institutions, and companies have been named after him.