DISCOVERING
THE LAWS OF LIFE
BY JOHN MARKS TEMPLETON

Is God the Only Reality? (with Robert L. Hermann)
Evidence of Purpose (editor)
Looking Forward (editor)
Riches for the Mind and Spirit (editor)
The Templeton Plan (with James Ellison)
Global Investing the Templeton Way
(with Norman Berryessa and Eric Kirzner)
The God Who Would Be Known
(with Robert L. Hermann)
The Humble Approach
CONTENTS

Foreword by Norman Vincent Peale 1
Introduction by John Marks Templeton 3

WEEK ONE
A : The golden rule 9
B : Listen to learn 10
C : It is better to love than to be loved 12
D : Thanksgiving leads to having more to give thanks for 13
E : You cannot be lonely if you help the lonely 14

WEEK TWO
A : You are sought after if you reflect love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control 16
B : A smile breeds a smile 18
C : None knows the weight of another's burden 20
D : Agape given grows, agape hoarded dwindles 22
E : A measure of mental health is the disposition to find good everywhere 23

WEEK THREE
A : Giving friendship is more rewarding than giving luxuries 25
B : Love given is love received 27
C : Laws of life guide your actions and reactions 28
D : Pray without ceasing 29
E : The impossible is the untried 31

WEEK FOUR
A : I shall allow no man to belittle my soul by making me hate him 32
B : Success is a journey, not a destination 33
C : An attitude of gratitude creates blessings 35
D : Enthusiasm is contagious 36
E : You fear what you do not understand 37
WEEK FIVE
A : Love has the patience to endure the fault we cannot cure 39
   B : Nothing can bring you peace but yourself 40
   C : The unexamined life is not worth living 42
   D : Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul 43
   E : You are only as good as your word 45

WEEK SIX
A : Where there's a will there's a way 46
   B : The borrower is servant to the lender 48
   C : There is no limit in the universe 50
   D : A loving person lives in a loving world 51
   E : Count your blessings and you will have
       an attitude of gratitude 52

WEEK SEVEN
A : We learn more by welcoming criticism than by rendering judgment 54
   B : Life is ten percent what you make it and ninety percent how you take it 55
   C : When the one great scorekeeper comes, he counts not whether you won or lost but how you played the game 56
   D : We tend to find what we look for: good or evil, problems or solutions 58
   E : Fill every unforgiving moment with sixty seconds of distance run 59

WEEK EIGHT
A : Every ending is a new beginning 61
   B : The only way to have a friend is to be a friend 62
       C : Man is what he believes 63
   D : The dark of night is not the end of the world 65
   E : Revenge is devilish and forgiveness is saintly 66

WEEK NINE
A : Helpfulness, not wilfullness, brings rewards 68
   B : Birds of a feather flock together 69
       C : Crime doesn't pay 71
   D : You can make opposition work for you 72
   E : Small attempts repeated will complete any undertaking 73

WEEK TEN
A : No one knows what he can do until he tries 74
   B : "Tis the part of the wise man to keep himself today for tomorrow, and not venture all his eggs in one basket 76
C : Thoughts are things 78
D : As within, so without 79
E : A stitch in time saves nine 80

WEEK ELEVEN
A : Perseverence makes the difference between success and defeat 82
B : The secret of a productive life can be sought and found 84
C : Enthusiasm breeds achievement 86
D : The way to mend the bad world is to create the right world 88
E : It is better to praise than to criticize 89

WEEK TWELVE
A : Laughter is the best medicine 91
B : Progress depends on diligence and perseverance 92
C : Humility like darkness reveals the heavenly light 93
D : Love conquers all things 95
E : If you do not know what you want to achieve with your life, you may not achieve much 96

WEEK THIRTEEN
A : The greatest gift you can give another is the purity of your attention 97
B : Everyone and everything around you is your teacher 98
C : Hitch your wagon to a star 100
D : The price of greatness is responsibility 101
E : Good words are worth much and cost little 102

WEEK FOURTEEN
A : You can never solve a problem on the same level as the problem 104
B : Happy relationships depend not on finding the right person, but in being the right person 105
C : We receive freely when we give freely 107
D : The truth will make you free 108
E : If you would find gold, you must search where gold is 110

WEEK FIFTEEN
A : Habit is the best of servants, the worst of masters 111
B : Man cannot discover new oceans until he has the courage to lose sight of the shore 113
C : Men are punished by their sins, not for them 114
D : Accentuate the positive; eliminate the negative 116
E : Forgiving uplifts the forgiver 117
CONTENTS

WEEK SIXTEEN
A : The light of understanding dissolves the phantoms of fear 119
B : It’s better to lead than to push 120
C : Make yourself necessary to the world and mankind will give you bread 122
D : Love is something if you give it away 123
E : Thoughts held in mind produce after their kind 124

WEEK SEVENTEEN
A : Progress requires change 126
B : Chance favors the prepared 127
C : A good reputation is more valuable than money 128
D : Your life becomes what you think 130
E : To err is human, to forgive is divine 131

WEEK EIGHTEEN
A : What is of all things most yielding can overcome that which is the most hard 132
B : The seven deadly sins are: pride, lust, sloth, envy, anger, covetousness and gluttony 133
C : Never do anything that you’ll have to punish yourself for 136
D : It is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness 137
E : To be forgiven, we must first forgive 138

WEEK NINETEEN
A : Reverse the word EVIL and you have the word LIVE 140
B : He who has a why for which to live, can bear with almost any how 141
C : If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again 143
D : The family that prays together stays together 144
E : There’s as much risk in doing nothing as in doing something 146

WEEK TWENTY
A : Lost time is never found again 148
B : When you rule your mind, you rule your world 149
C : Happiness comes from spiritual wealth not material wealth 151
D : Once a word has been allowed to escape, it cannot be recalled 152
E : By giving, you grow 153
CONTENTS | ix

WEEK TWENTY-ONE
A : Enthusiasm facilitates achievement 155
B : You have the most powerful weapons on earth—
    love and prayer 156
C : No one can make you feel inferior without your consent 158
    D : Who gossips to you will gossip of you 159
    E : Find a need and fill it 161

WEEK TWENTY-TWO
A : If you are facing in the right direction,
    all you need to do is keep on walking 162
B : No person was ever honored for what he received,
    but for what he gave 163
C : World progress needs entrepreneurs 165
    D : Expect the best; convert problems into opportunities 166
    E : Give blessings 168

WEEK TWENTY-THREE
A : The seeds of destruction are sown in anger 169
B : You make yourself and others suffer just as much
    when you take offense as when you give offense 170
C : There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer 171
    D : The wise person looks within his heart
        and finds eternal peace 172
    E : Be prepared 174

WEEK TWENTY-FOUR
A : You are on the road to success if you realize
    that failure is only a detour 176
B : Thanksgiving leads to giving and forgiving,
    and to spiritual growth 177
C : Give credit and help to all who have helped you 179
    D : Self-control leads to success 180
    E : Your thoughts are like boomerangs 181

WEEK TWENTY-FIVE
A : Often, a pat on the back works better
    than a kick in the pants 183
B : A soft answer turns away wrath,
    but a harsh word stirs up anger 184
    C : Little things mean a lot 186
    D : To be upset over what you don’t have is
        to waste what you do have 187
    E : Honesty is the best policy 189
WEEK TWENTY-SIX
A : It is always darkest before the dawn 190
B : Healthy minds tend to cause healthy bodies and vice versa 192
C : To be wronged is nothing unless you continue to remember it 194
   D : What the mind can conceive, it may achieve 195
   E : Of all the things you wear, your expression is the most important 196

WEEK TWENTY-SEVEN
A : The pen is mightier than the sword 197
B : Wisdom is born of mistakes; confront error and learn 198
   C : Great heroes are humble 200
   D : You create your own reality 201
   E : A task takes as long as there is time to do it 203

WEEK TWENTY-EIGHT
A : Procrastination is the thief of time 204
B : If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all 206
C : You can build your own heaven or hell on earth 207
   D : Beauty is but skin deep 210
   E : Worry is a rocking chair that gives you something to do, but never gets you anywhere 211

WEEK TWENTY-NINE
A : Defeat isn’t bitter if you don’t swallow it 212
B : Where there is no vision the people perish 214
C : The greatness is not in me; I am in the greatness 215
   D : Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone 217
   E : If nothing is ventured, nothing is gained 219

WEEK THIRTY
A : Self-control wins the race 220
B : Love thy neighbor as thyself 222
C : Freedom is a fact of life 224
D : Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom 225
E : Thanksgiving, not complaining, attracts people to you 228

WEEK THIRTY-ONE
A : Ask not what you can expect of life; ask what life expects of you 229
B : A man can fail many times but he isn’t a failure until he begins to blame others 230
C : A soul without a high aim is like a ship without a rudder 232
CONTENTS

D : Beautiful thoughts build a beautiful soul 233
E : A happy person is not a person in a certain set of circumstances but rather a person with a certain set of attitudes 234

WEEK THIRTY-TWO
A : Seeking entertainment prevents greatness 235
B : What you resist, you draw to yourself 238
C : All sunshine makes a desert 239
D : Comparisons give us cancer of the soul 240
E : Whether you think you can or not, you are right 242

WEEK THIRTY-THREE
A : Use wisely your power of choice 243
B : Work is love made visible 244
C : No man is free who is not master of himself 246
D : By choosing your thoughts, you can create either hell or heaven on earth 247
E : The greatest charity is to help a person change from being a receiver to being a giver 249

WEEK THIRTY-FOUR
A : Leave no stone unturned 250
B : What we focus on expands 251
C : By free will each of us is a co-creator in life 253
D : Thoughts of doubt and fear are pathways to failure 254
E : If you can’t say something good, then don’t say anything 256

WEEK THIRTY-FIVE
A : Give the extra ounce 257
B : Success feeds on itself and creates more success 259
C : Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today 260
D : The things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal 262
E : What is done is done 264

WEEK THIRTY-SIX
A : It is not so much ours to set the world right, rather it is ours to see it rightly 265
B : We can become bitter or better as a result of our experiences 266
C : We carry within us the wonders we seek without us 267
D : Misfortunes can be blessings 269
E : Happiness pursued, eludes; happiness given, returns 270

WEEK THIRTY-SEVEN
A : No one’s education is ever complete 272
B : Failing to plan is planning to fail 273
C : By their fruits you shall know them 275
D : Instead of cynicism, try optimism 276
E : Tithing often brings prosperity and honor 278

WEEK THIRTY-EIGHT
A : The shadow of ignorance is fear 279
B : Imitate that person in history whom you admire most, after you list the reasons why you admire that person 281
C : You can be either part of the problem or part of the solution 282
D : Learn mind control 284
E : Use it or lose it 285

WEEK THIRTY-NINE
A : It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice 287
B : Those who seldom make mistakes seldom make discoveries 288
   C : The measure of a man's real character is what he would do if he would never be found out 290
   D : Change your mind to change your life 291
   E : You get back what you give out 293

WEEK FORTY
A : Minds are like parachutes—they only function when they are open 294
B : Progress and growth are impossible if you always do things the way you've always done things 296
C : Holding onto grievances is a decision to suffer 297
D : It is more rewarding to give than to receive 298
   E : Love the unlovable 299

Index 301
I have known John Marks Templeton for many years and have admired him greatly. From humble beginnings in a rural Tennessee farming community, he rose to lead a thirty-billion-dollar group of investment companies. His financial acumen and wisdom have helped thousands of investors, large and small, to grow their assets and develop wealth.

However, his financial skills and achievements are not what have produced my admiration, remarkable though they may be. What has impressed me most is his dedication and drive in the spiritual realm.

Long before he reached his present success, John Templeton awakened spiritually. Early in life, he began to tithe and to give his time unselfishly to philanthropic causes. He has since established several foundations to advance spiritual development. He has served tirelessly on the boards of key philanthropic and religious organizations. His most recent effort, the Humility Theology Information Center of the John Templeton Foundation, is typical, representing a commitment to discover and communicate the key factor in helping people develop humility, a spiritual quality that summarizes the character of Sir John.

Perhaps his best-known effort has been the establishment of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. Given annually, the monetary value of this award now exceeds that of the Nobel Prizes. The international importance of this gift has been recognized by no less than England’s Queen Elizabeth II, who knighted John Templeton in 1987 for his service to philanthropy.

Once, when I had a conversation with him about spiritual faith, he summed up his thoughts by saying: “The most important thing in human life is to seek and do the will of God. A person who does this is living by faith. He or she doesn’t have to look around trying to find faith; it springs from within.”

It is from this background, then, that Sir John has developed his wonderful collection of “the laws of life.” When I first heard of the
concept, that there are universal principles present in every society and every religion that can lead us to a common understanding, I knew he was on to something important. It has been my experience that he is correct, that these principles do exist and that we can write them down and teach them to future generations.

This aspect of teaching the laws is vitally important. In an interview with the Peale Center's Plus Magazine, Sir John shared what he taught his own children about happiness: "I taught them the principle of free will tied to happiness. Each of us is given a free will, and we can create our own happiness and our own heaven or hell. You can do it by choosing your thoughts. Choose negativity and you will get unhappiness and hell. Choose confident living and positive thoughts and you will produce a heaven of happiness."

This idea of teaching and learning is the key to Discovering the Laws of Life. Having passed my own 95th birthday, I know we never stop learning and needing to learn. Sir John has done us all a great service by distilling and passing on these principles that have guided his own life into happiness, success and incredible usefulness to others.

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

The Hill Farm
Pawling, New York
July 1993
INTRODUCTION

Following in the footsteps of Benjamin Franklin and others who have tried to pass on their learning to others, this book has been written from a lifetime of experience and diligent observation in the hope that it may help people in all parts of the world to make their lives not only happier but also more useful. It is intended for everyone, for the young who each day are being introduced to the laws that can make their lives more productive, as well as for the older and more experienced who seek confirmation and affirmation of the laws of life.

Outlined in my earlier book, The Templeton Plan: 21 Steps to Personal Success and Real Happiness, are some of the laws that should prove helpful as you proceed along the road to spiritual maturity:

• TRUTHFULNESS when a lie would be so much easier;
• RELIABILITY when you could slack off;
• FAITHFULNESS during moments of doubt;
• PERSEVERANCE when you think you’re too tired to go on;
• ENTHUSIASM while encountering roadblocks;
• ENERGY at the moment you feel burned out;
• HUMILITY while others heap praise on you;
• PLEASING others before thinking of your own pleasure;
• GIVING to others before thinking of receiving;
• LEARNING from others because you realize there’s so little you know;
• ALTRUISM even though you may sense around you an atmosphere of selfishness;
• JOY at the very moment when your prospects seem the darkest.

Indeed, this is a short list of the laws of life. There are many more laws, and, in this book, you will find 200 major ones, culled from a list of many hundreds. They come from a vast array of sources—from the
Scriptures, from storytellers such as Aesop, from scientists such as Isaac Newton, from artists and historians.

The poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote: "Lives of great men oft remind us that we can make our lives sublime and departing leave behind us footprints in the sands of time." The truth of this statement can be demonstrated if we look to the lives of the famous as well as the unsung heroes of the past and present, for there we will find many models for useful, happy living. And, when we examine their words and deeds, we will discover the principles that inspired and sustained their benefits to future generations.

Some laws in this book are based on quotations from sources as far-reaching and varied as Aesop’s Fables, Lao Tse’s Tao Te Ching and Wayne Dyer’s The Sky’s The Limit. Drawn from the scriptures of different traditions, as well as from schools of philosophical thought both ancient and modern, each quotation points to a particular law that holds true for most people under most circumstances. The essays are designed to inspire and encourage you—to help you consider more deeply the laws you live by and to reap the rewards of their practical application.

The laws described here are like tools. When you apply them consistently, they have the power to transform your life into a more deeply useful and joyful experience. Even if your life is already working well, it’s possible that it will work even better as you incorporate the wisdom contained in these pages. If I had found a book of 200 basic laws of life during my college years, I could have been far more productive then and in the years that have followed.

Although Discovering the Laws of Life can be read like any other book of inspirational material, its organization follows that of an academic study program. The laws are arranged into the forty weeks of the typical school year, with five days of "homework" for each week. At the end of that year, you will have read, studied and learned the meanings of the two hundred laws of life contained in this book. This organization should also prove useful for families who want to study these laws in daily sessions, for Sunday schools in many churches, for private religious schools and for public schools in those countries which permit or require schools to include religious education.

You may also benefit from the laws included here by applying them to various activities in your own life. For example, you might form an informal discussion group with your friends, or with a church or school group. Many people have benefited by coming together with others to explore topics of mutual interest. Such a group might share not only a variety of points of view on the importance and meaning of the laws of life, but can also provide support and encouragement for individual
members as they begin to make changes in their lives. If you choose such an approach, you might select a single essay, read it as a group and spend an hour or so discussing the ideas. Group trust should develop, allowing you to deepen your relationship to the concepts and to each other by sharing your personal successes and failures as you apply the laws to your life.

Once your group is working together effectively, you might select all the essays relating to a particular law—"Giving," for instance—and concentrate intensively on that law. Your group might then find a way to actively help other spiritual pilgrims. You might create a "Circulation Day" in your hometown. Those of you with things to give away could take those items to a central location where homeless people and others are invited to take what they need. The group would experience the great satisfaction of seeing their unwanted things put to good use by those who need them; they would also create a place in their lives into which more good could flow. From direct experience of this kind they could learn the truth of the statement, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Another approach is to use the ideas in this book privately. Try to set aside a block of time when you aren’t likely to be disturbed. When you feel your mind settling down, let yourself formulate a question about something that may be troubling you. With the question in mind, open Discovering the Laws of Life to the table of contents. Many times you may find the solution to a stubborn problem.

There are other ways to approach the ideas in this book so that they will be more real for you. If you don’t have access to a group, you may enjoy keeping a journal in which you can record your responses to what you’ve read. You may find that you can keep track of your goals and progress more easily if you keep to a regular daily or weekly writing schedule.

If you have a family, these essays could be a way to improve communication, especially with your children. In the early years, values are formed that affect the rest of your child’s life. As you discuss the laws contained in this book, you can play a constructive role in the creation of your child’s value system. For example, your child might like to read aloud one law at dinner for family discussion. If your child is an adolescent, the key to success may be to allow him or her to fully express opinions and experiences. Once your teenager has stated a position, you can present a particular law of life and discuss its many ramifications as simply another point of view without trying to pressure the child into agreement. In fact, in all likelihood you will not get instant agree-
ment, but you will have planted a seed that may bear fruit as he or she matures.

I'm confident that you will probably find other ways to use this wisdom of the ages, and, indeed, I would welcome the submission of additional laws as you think of them. Those that have stood the test of time may be incorporated in a future edition of Discovering the Laws of Life. It would also be helpful to know how you have used the book and what results you have had. Your ideas and reflections would be most appreciated.

Maybe one of the laws in this book will encourage you to try something that until now you've only dreamed of attempting. Maybe you will be inspired to create a laws of life contest in your own hometown. It would indeed be progress if the youth of this nation were to concentrate their efforts on the subjects of love, justice, kindness, friendliness, helpfulness, forgiveness, self-respect, charity and loyalty. If Discovering the Laws of Life can push that goal a few inches forward, it will have proven worthwhile.

A few years ago, I began offering support for a laws of life essay contest in my boyhood home, Franklin County, Tennessee. Mr. and Mrs. Handly Templeton help in running the program. Prizes for the essays—they run from one hundred to two thousand words in length—are awarded semi-annually, with a first prize of $2,000, a second prize of $800 and a number of runner-up prizes. The response has been gratifying. The number of entrants for each six-month period has risen to its present size of six hundred students. It would give me great pleasure to learn that your hometown wants to embark on its own version of the Franklin County program.

In my teenage years, I was inspired by the courage and vision of Rudyard Kipling's poem "If." This poem taught me to dream—but also to be master of my dreams. I learned from the great English poet that the earth belongs to us all and that, with courage and enthusiasm, progress is likely to follow. The final stanza of "If" still rings in my ears:

If you can fill the unforgiving minutes
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

Behind this book is my belief that the basic principles for leading a "sublime life," to paraphrase Longfellow, can be examined and tested just as science examines and tests natural laws of the universe. I have a vision that by learning the laws of life and applying them to everyday
situations, more and more people will find themselves leading joyous and useful lives.

It has been well said that “Life is a tough school because the exams come first and the learning afterwards.” This book is a small attempt to provide some learning before the exams arrive.

Without the help of many individuals who shared their ideas and wisdom with me, this book would not have been possible. Over the years I have employed most of these people for their help in providing ideas, writings, explanations, examples and editing for this collection of laws. Some of these contributors were ministers and lay people associated with religious groups; others were simply private individuals who share a similar hopeful outlook on life and a fundamental belief in the principle that “Life works better when you play by the rules.”


You may join this group by sending me a law of life you have discovered with an essay of five hundred to six hundred words about it. Your law may be derived from any religious tradition—Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and others, as well as Christian. If I decide to include it in a later edition of Discovering the Laws of Life, I will pay you $200. You may send your law to me in care of the John Templeton Foundation, P. O. Box 1040, Bryn Mawr PA 19010-0918, U.S.A.

JOHN MARKS TEMPLETON
The golden rule.

Jesus gave his own wording to the Golden Rule and it is expressed in various forms in every major religion. Similar ideas of conduct are found in the literature of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and in the writings of Aristotle, Plato and Seneca. Confucius taught the negative form. In Jewish literature the negative form of the Rule appears in various places as “What you hate do not do to anyone.” The words used by Jesus for the Golden Rule are found in Matthew 7:12 and also Luke 6:31. In five different translations of the New Testament the Golden Rule is stated in the following words:

1. *King James Version*:

   And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

   Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

2. *Revised Standard Version*:

   And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.

   So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

3. *New English Bible*:

   Treat others as you would like them to treat you.

   Always treat others as you would like them to treat you: that is the Law and the Prophets.