Worldwide
Laws of Life
OTHER BOOKS BY JOHN MARKS TEMPLETON

Discovering the Laws of Life

Is God the Only Reality?
(with Robert L. Herrmann)

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. Herrmann)

The Humble Approach

Evidence of Purpose (editor)
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Introduction

What is to become of me? What does the future hold? How can I set out on my own into a world that seems filled with conflict and strife? How do I cope with day-to-day pressures? How do I find peace in the midst of turmoil? What will allow me to be in the world, but not of the world? How can my life be useful and happy?

These are questions asked by many people today. Fortunately, there are positive responses and definite guidance that can enrich the life of every individual who sincerely seeks to learn.

To be a happy and useful person, it is important to understand and practice the *Laws of Life*. These laws are simply the “set of rules” by which we should live. They come from a vast array of sources—the major sacred Scriptures of the world; various schools of philosophical thought, both ancient and modern; storytellers, such as Aesop; scientists, such as Isaac Newton; and from various artists and historians—to name a few. There seem to be literally hundreds of such laws, and most families and religions seek to teach the laws they were taught. Some laws are so clear that most people can agree they are true. For example, honesty and truthfulness rank high as values in cultures and societies around the world.

Our stay on this small planet called Earth is a brief one, and we have an excellent opportunity to leave the world a better place than we found it through our choice of how we live our lives. One way to accomplish lasting improvement is to master the *Laws of Life*. 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 those of the unsung heroes of the past and
present. Here we find many models for useful, happy living. And, when we examine their words and deeds, we often discover the principles that inspired and sustained their benefits to present and future generations.

The world operates on spiritual principles just as it operates on the laws of physics and gravity. It is up to us to learn what these principles are and then choose to live by them. Let’s look at this idea. You might ask, “What is spiritual law?” We may answer that it is an invisible law and, being of spirit, is not dictated by the laws of our physical world. Spiritual law isn’t shaped by current opinion or whim. It is not determined by people. Spiritual laws are impartial because they apply equally to everyone throughout our world. They work without prejudice or bias at all times and in all places. These laws are self-enforcing and are not dependent on human authority or commandments.

Followers of the ancient Chinese sage Lao Tzu understood spiritual law as the Tao. The simplest interpretation of Tao, or spiritual law, is “This is how things work.” One way to comprehend this law is to realize the relationship between the mind and its thoughts, feelings, and ideas and the physical activities that give those thoughts, feelings, and ideas expression. There is a relationship between the invisible thoughts and feelings of our minds and the visible actions we take as a result of them.

Worldwide Laws of Life is aimed at assisting people of all ages to learn more about the universal truths of life that transcend modern times or particular cultures in the hope that it may help people in all parts of the world to make their lives not only happier but more useful. The two hundred laws of life that were chosen for this book are important and possible to apply in one’s life. Each law is presented in an essay format, with applications, opinions, stories, examples, and quotations offered to emphasize the validity of the law. Each quotation that serves as the title of an essay points to a particular law that holds true for most people under most circumstances. The material is designed to inspire as well as encourage you; to help you consider more deeply the laws you personally live by; and to reap the rewards of their practical application.

Although Worldwide Laws of Life may be read like any other inspirational book, its organization follows that of an academic study program. The laws are arranged into the forty weeks of a
typical school year. Alongside each essay, you will find wisdom quotes pertaining to the topic; and at the end of each week, you will find highlights from the material presented and guideline exercises for “living the laws.” At the conclusion of the recommended study process, you will have read and become familiar with the meanings of the two hundred laws of life contained in this book. The book’s format can provide useful guidance and a meaningful study program for individuals, families, study groups, organizations, colleges, and schools.

The laws described herein may be used as effective, practical, and workable tools. When you apply them consistently, you can draw forth 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 can work even better as you incorporate more of the wisdom contained in these pages. If I had found a book of two hundred basic laws of life during my college years, I could have been far more productive then and in the years that have followed. Possibly one of the laws in this book may encourage you to try something that, until now, you may have only dreamed of attempting!

Let’s look for a moment at some possible ways you may benefit from the laws by applying them to various activities in your life:

* An informal discussion group could be formed with your friends, or with a school, church, or social group. People often benefit by coming together with others to study topics of mutual interest. In addition to exploring a variety of points of view on the importance and meaning of the laws of life, support and encouragement for individual members of the group may be provided as they begin to make changes in their lives. If you choose this approach, you might select a single essay; read it aloud as a group; then spend an hour or so discussing the key ideas. This kind of sharing often develops trust and allows the group members to deepen their relationship to the concepts and to each other by sharing personal experiences as you apply the laws to your life.

* Another approach is to work with this material privately. Set aside a block of time when you are unlikely to be disturbed. As you relax and allow your thoughts and feelings to become peaceful and settled, think about something that may be paramount at the present moment in your life. This could be a
decision of some kind that you may be making, a situation or circumstance that could be troubling you, or you may simply be open and receptive for guidance. Choose your focus and formulate a relative question. Open *Worldwide Laws of Life* to the table of contents. Allow your eyes to scan the listing of essays until a particular one catches your attention. Then, open the book to that particular essay, and listen with inner perception to the message that may help to bring insight into your life.

* Individually, or in the group context, you might select all of the essays relative to a particular law. For example, you may choose “Giving” and then concentrate intensively on that particular subject. Brainstorm possibilities of ways of demonstrating this law. One idea could be to create a “circulation day” in your hometown. Those of you with things to give away could take these items to a central location where homeless people and others are invited to take what they need. Great satisfaction might be experienced in seeing unwanted things put to good use by those who need them. Of course, an activity of this kind creates a vacuum in the lives of the givers into which more good can flow! From this direct experience in working with a spiritual law, those involved may learn firsthand the truth of the statement “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

* If you don’t have access to a group, you may enjoy keeping a spiritual journal in which you record your responses to what you’ve read and to what is happening in your life. In fact, keeping a journal is highly recommended because activities will be offered in the “Spotlights” and “Living the Laws” sections that can serve as a bridge to take you from the teachings of the essays to their adventures in your everyday life. Writing encourages you to focus your thoughts and, more precisely, to identify your feelings. They—your thoughts and feelings—are the most vitally important part of your life. The more clarity and understanding you have in these areas, the richer can be your experiences.

I’m confident that you can probably find other ways to use this wisdom of the ages; and, indeed, I would welcome and encourage the submission of ideas and evidence for verification of any law by your sending in essays that either illustrate, support, or disprove any of the two hundred laws of life in this book. I am especially interested in scientific experiments or
studies of any laws of life. Can you, dear readers from around the world, also help me discover other spiritual laws in different countries that are not in conflict with any Scripture or prophet? It would also be helpful to know how you use this book and what results you may experience.

Rewards can be given for your assistance in discovering laws that may be different from, or more clear and workable than, the information expressed in this edition of *Worldwide Laws of Life*. Write an essay of 1,000 to 1,500 words about any law you have discovered. Your law may be derived from any tradition—Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, or others. I encourage scientists in any field to contribute. If I decide to use your material in a later edition, I will pay you $1,000. Your ideas and reflections can be mailed to John Templeton Foundation, P.O. Box 8322, Radnor, Pennsylvania 19087-8322, U.S.A.

The John Templeton Foundation also welcomes proposals from anyone with a doctorate degree in any science for financing statistical or other scientific tests to verify or falsify any one or more of these two hundred proposed eternal principles, or others not included in this book. The purpose is to continually improve these studies in a way readily acceptable worldwide!

A few years ago, I began offering support for a “Laws of Life” essay contest in my boyhood home of Franklin County, Tennessee, in the United States. Mr. and Mrs. Handly Templeton assist in operating the program. Prizes for the essays—which can 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 locality wants to embark on its own version of the Franklin County program.

You might even be inspired to create a “Laws of Life” contest in your hometown. It would indeed be wonderful progress if the youth of the world were to concentrate their efforts on the subjects of love, justice, kindness, friendliness, helpfulness, forgiveness, self-respect, charity, and loyalty. If *Worldwide Laws of Life* can push that goal a few inches forward, it will have proven worthwhile.

We presently live in a period of unprecedented discovery and
opportunity—a blossoming time for humanity. We also live in a world of dramatic changes—political, economical, cultural, scientific, and spiritual. Many people are searching for guidance, comforting words, inspirational thought, and practical and workable ways effectively to meet and handle the day-to-day circumstances and situations. This book is intended to assist the reader in looking forward with expectancy and hope. The subject matter of *Worldwide Laws of Life* and the sensitivity and arrangement of these materials allow the possibility for this book to be used in many nations as an inspirational textbook for courses in religion or ethics in many schools and colleges.

Because I know the value of *learning* the laws of life and *applying* them to everyday living, I would like to offer a prize of $5,000 to the school or college, and $5,000 to the teacher, for the best five courses taught at a school or college through June 30, 1999. To make this submission, the teacher should provide us with an essay describing how they used *Worldwide Laws of Life* as a textbook! To apply, please write to Worldwide Laws of Life Course Program, John Templeton Foundation, P.O. Box 8322, Radnor, Pennsylvania 19087-8322. To qualify, these essays of two to ten thousand words should contain an outline of how the material in the book was presented, a general profile of the students in the class, responses of the teacher and students to the material, and a summary of insights, perceptions, and actual results of working with the book.

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 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. By learning the laws of life and applying them to everyday situations, more and more people may find
themselves leading joyful 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 sincere attempt to provide some opportunities for learning before the exams arrive!

Acknowledgments
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 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.”


JOHN MARKS TEMPLETON
Worldwide
Laws of Life
Great teachers down through the ages have described the importance of our mind and of being master over our thoughts. Buddha said, “The mind is everything; what you think, you become.” Ramakrishna, the beloved Indian mystic put it this way: “By the mind one is bound, by the mind one is freed. . . . He who asserts with strong conviction, ‘I am not bound, I am free,’ becomes free.” William James wrote, “The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes of mind.” And Charles Fillmore, American cofounder of Unity School of Christianity, describes our mind in the following manner in The Revealing Word: “The mind is the seat of perception of the things we see, hear, and feel. It is through the mind that we see the beauties of the earth and sky, or music, of art, in fact, of everything. That silent shuttle of thought working in and out through cell and nerve weaves into one harmonious whole the myriad moods of mind, and we call it life.”

If you desire to understand the reason behind the statement “when you rule your mind, you rule your world,” it is important to take a look at what some religious teachers and spiritual philosophers call “Infinite Mind,” and “The Law of Mind Action.” Some say there is in reality one Mind, sometimes called “Spirit,” “God Mind,” etc. This Mind is the life, intelligence, power, and creativity in the entire universe. Yet, they say the Law of Mind Action includes a very important manifestation in which we are individual and yet remain a part of the whole. We have free will and are not puppets and can exercise the use of our free will. Here is the starting point of our actions, our spoken words, our thoughts, and even our feelings. It makes a great deal of difference in your daily life what you think about God, yourself, your family, your neighbors, your acquaintances, your
work associates, in fact, about everything! And as Joseph Addison said, “One of the most difficult things for a powerful mind is to be its own master!”

A positive attitude toward life can be difficult for some people to accept for it may seem unrealistic. These skeptics may find it hard to believe that positive thinkers can accomplish most anything they choose. But, with a positive attitude, your chance for success in any situation can be greater if you look for workable solutions rather than allowing negative thinking to limit your decision-making. Zig Zigler, a sales motivation expert, says, “Your business is never really good or bad out there. It’s either good or bad right between your two ears!” He describes the most essential component of successful selling as the ability to understand and meet the other person’s needs, saying, “You can get everything in life you want if you will just help enough people get what they want.” The ability to listen to others and appropriately interpret their needs depends to a great extent on a receptive mental attitude. Ralph Waldo Emerson emphasized the importance of the spiritual perspective in our life as well as the power of the mind when he said, “great men are they who see that the spiritual is stronger than any material force, that thoughts rule the world.”

Mary Kay Ash, founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics, is probably one of the most remarkable success stories of our time. Since 1963, her company has grown from a modest storefront beginning in Dallas, Texas, U.S.A., to an international multimillion dollar operation with a sales force numbering over two hundred thousand. Her approach to management is based on meeting the needs of others. With well-grounded Christian values contributing significantly to her business philosophy, she also asks everyone in her organization to focus on meeting the needs of others as their top priority.

It is essential to control the impulse to ask, “What’s in it for me?” before taking action. Selfishness overlooks a key principle to success—that of helping others. By observing and analyzing what makes successful people successful, a clear pattern emerges. First of all, they meet the needs of others because they feel good about themselves. Then, by subordinating their possibly selfish motives to the greater motive of being of service, they are able to negotiate successfully the programs in life they choose. As with successful men and women throughout the world, our success can also be proportionate to the number of people we have helped to grow and prosper.

Our thoughts are, most assuredly, things. They are conceived in the mind and travel through time and space like rip-
people in a pond affecting all that they touch. Thoughts are the building blocks of our experience. The world we see is the one we have created with our thoughts for “mind is the builder.”

**LAW 2**

*Where there is no vision, the people perish*
—Proverbs 29:18

An ancient proverb states, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” It is a way of saying that everyone needs dreams and a goal in order to live life fully and satisfactorily. If we don’t have a specific goal in mind or we don’t know where we want to go, we may be likely to end up in places not of our choosing. Establishing goals, along with guidelines on how to achieve them, helps to keep us focused and energized and often makes our lives more interesting, useful, and successful.

The story of Florence Chadwick provides a clear illustration of the importance of keeping our goals in sight. She swam the Catalina Channel in southern California and established national and international records. Chadwick then attempted to break the record for swimming the English Channel. On the day set for the Channel swim, Chadwick encountered heavy seas. However, because she had trained in the Atlantic Ocean, she was in peak condition and prepared to do battle with the large waves. Along with the rough weather, Chadwick encountered chilling cold. That was a problem, but, again, her training made a big difference. She was accustomed to cold water and her trainers had greased her body to help provide insulation from the elements. In addition, Chadwick’s trainers, rowing alongside her, were able to sustain her with hot soup from a thermos and comforting words of encouragement as she fought the cold, rough sea.

Yet, with all the planning and superior training, the one thing Chadwick and her trainers had not anticipated was fog. As a fog bank descended, visibility closed to only a few feet, obscur-
ing the horizon and distant shore. Chadwick started to flounder. With the loss of visibility, the ice-cold, heavy seas seemed to grow waves of towering proportions. Chadwick began to suffer cramps in her arms, legs, feet, and hands from the effects of the severe cold. Her muscles screamed in pain as she battled the huge waves. Finally, she asked her trainers to bring her on board and take her ashore.

Later, when she was warm and dry, newspaper reporters asked her if she knew that she’d been only a very short distance from the shore when she gave up her valiant effort for the record. She responded that even though her trainers told her the same thing, it simply hadn’t made a difference to her. “You see,” she said, “I lost sight of my goal. I’m not sure I ever had it firmly in mind.”

When we have no goal, or when our vision of the goal is obscured, we may lose our sense of purpose. Even when we’ve prepared ourselves well and have an aptitude for a given activity, poorly directed efforts can rob us of vital energy. We can spend a great deal of our time, money, and other resources running around in circles. Unless we create specific goals that match our purpose in life and unless we keep a clear vision of these goals, we may eventually falter and fail.

In his book How to Succeed, Brian Adams described how Henry Ford used the art of visualization to commence what became the second largest automobile company. Ford pictured in his mind’s eye the type of automobile he wanted to build at a price most people could afford. He created a mental blueprint of his dream car long before it was ever put to paper. Then he pictured great numbers of people buying and driving it. The idea of a low-priced car (below U. S. $500) was reasoned by his conscious mind as feasible. It was then accepted by his subconscious as an undertaking to be accomplished. It became only a matter of time before Ford’s vision became a reality.

Classic advice for golfers has been, “Keep your eye on the ball.” The professional knows it is virtually impossible to hit a golf ball if you’re not looking at it! If you want to be “on the ball,” it is important to decide how you want to make a difference in the world. Once you have your purpose clearly in mind, explore the various ways you can make it happen, and visualize the process you believe can work best. Set goals, do what it takes to accomplish them, and enjoy your process.

“Write down on paper your goal in life. With that down in black and white, we can get somewhere. Few can define their goal, much less write. You cannot find happiness until your goal is clear and in view.”

—Ross Byron