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### Wise Words Are Timeless Words

As a Founding Father of the United States, surely Benjamin Franklin knew what he was talking about. His clever, sensible sayings transcend generations and remain deeply ingrained in society today. A lesser known quotation of his emphasizes that the maintenance of this wisdom and virtue of America's citizens is of the upmost importance for the general public. His rationale for this statement lies in this belief that "wise and good men," rather than wealth or power, constitute a strong state. Franklin's assertion is still notably relevant and applicable to today's society.

The enduring topics which Franklin references in his quotation render his quotation as meaningful today as it was in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The wisdom which he mentions can be defined as the combination of experience and knowledge, and requires good judgment and sensibility. Virtue, on the other hand, refers to behavior demonstrating high moral standards. "Riches and arms" represent the indefinite battle for wealth and power. Wisdom, virtue, wealth, and power, all concepts central to Franklin's statement, have been applicable to each generation thus far and will be applicable to each generation to come. Thus, because of the timeless characteristic of their subject matter, Franklin's words remain relevant to modern America.

The application of having moral citizens presents itself in recent history and current crime rates in America. Considering the start of recorded history dates back 6,000 years, the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is relatively modern. The tragedy of the Nazi Holocaust may have been avoided to a great extent had collaborators consciously considered the moral

implications of their actions. A nation of people who share common, ethical moral values, is a strong nation, as its citizens are united in thought and action. Today, the morality of a country can be assessed partly through its crime rate. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the crime rate has decreased steadily and significantly over the past twenty years.<sup>1</sup> A low crime rate signifies a strong nation through the absence of abounding immoral action. With less crime, a nation runs more smoothly and can better accomplish its goals. Franklin's assessment of the importance of citizen morality still holds true, as does his opinion on the need for wisdom.

The crucial role that wisdom plays in the United States' current affairs is an application of Franklin's views on the concept. The 2008 recession had its roots in mortgage-backed securities. Banks readily gave housing loans to applicants that ordinarily would not be considered credible, and when borrowers could no longer afford their mortgages, the economy fell apart.<sup>2</sup> In other words, this recession, one of the worst in American history, was the result of the less than wise actions of those involved. Neither banks nor borrowers had the foresight to see the possible ramifications of their rash actions. The unfortunate result reveals the importance of wise citizens and how greatly wisdom, or a lack thereof, can affect the strength of a nation, just as Franklin proclaimed.

Since Franklin's remark still holds true today, it can be applied in a variety of contexts to better American society. In terms of education, the significance of wisdom and virtue can be reinforced; at home, children can be raised with the same principles in mind. Benjamin Franklin was a truly remarkable man in many aspects – as a pragmatic statesman, an inventor, and a writer. With reference to the relevance and applicability of

his mentioned quotation, having great foresight and an eternal quality to his ideas can now be added to his impressive list of achievements.

### Work Cited

<sup>1</sup>"Crime in the United States." *The Federal Bureau of Investigation*. U.S. Department of Justice, 2010. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Kowalski, Kathiann M. "CRASH! Where's My Money?" *Cobblestone* 32.5 (2011): 2. MasterFILE Premier. Web. 23 Oct. 2012.