

Always Make the Effort

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Of the Seventy



If you want to succeed, you need to concentrate, put forth effort, and be happy with what you are doing.

When I was 15 years old, missionaries used to eat with some of our neighbors. My older sister saw them coming and going every day, and she asked them if they were selling something. They said no, and that was the way they were introduced to our family. My father, my mother, and my brothers and sisters received the lessons and were all baptized. But I didn't join. At that time I was investigating another church, but I was sincerely searching.

The 10th of May in Mexico is Mother's Day. That day, my mother asked me if I loved her. I said, "Yes, I love you."

She bore her testimony to me and asked me to be baptized. I decided to get baptized that day. The following Sunday, I was confirmed and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. At that time my life completely changed. I started reading everything I could get about the Church, especially the teachings of Joseph Smith. I had faith, and as I studied, I accepted the teachings of the Church. My faith grew as I grew in the gospel.

Making the Effort

Before I tell you two stories from my life, I would like to point out something that I used to talk to my missionaries about when I was serving as a mission president. In *Preach My Gospel*,

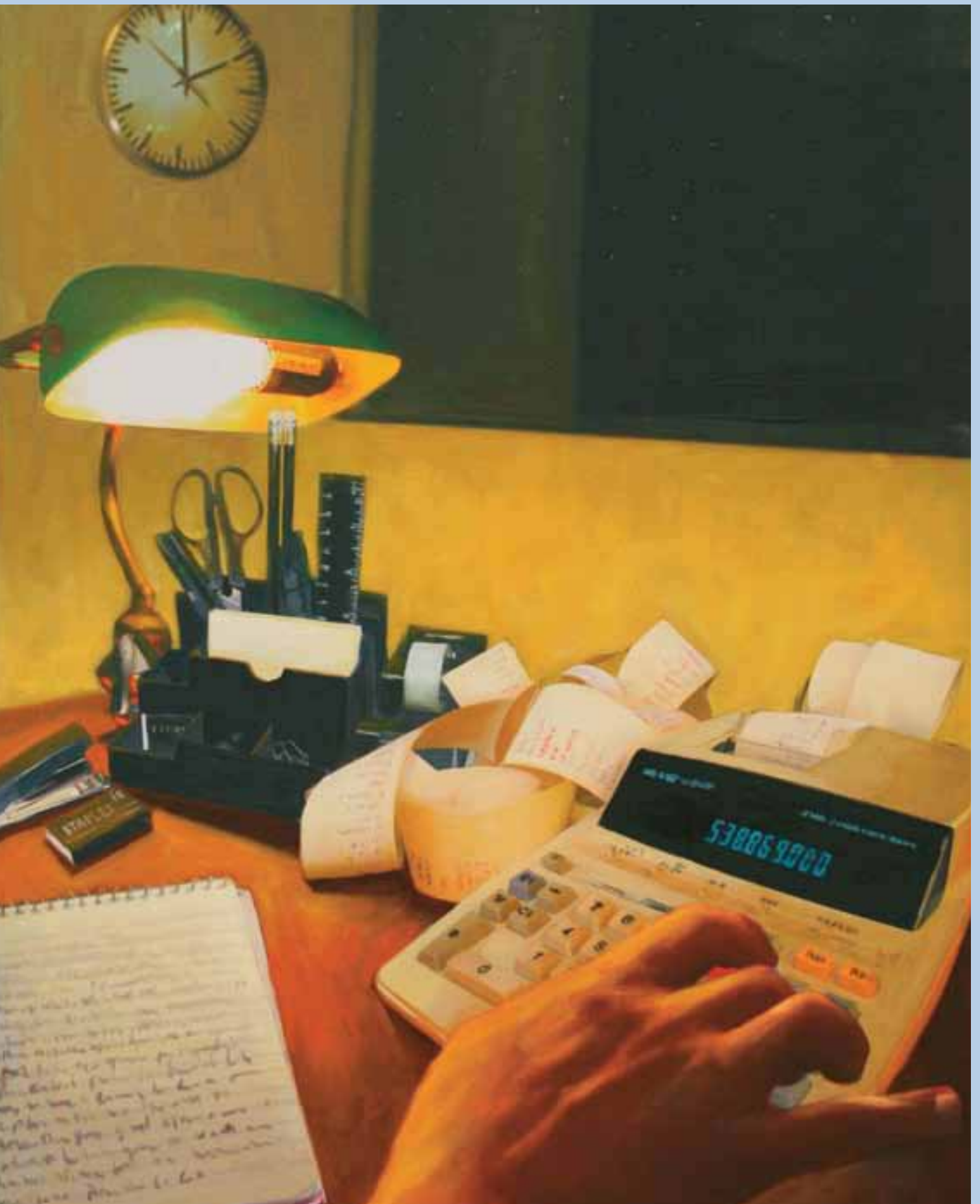
President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) is quoted as saying: "I have often said one of the greatest secrets of missionary work is work! If a missionary works, he will get the Spirit; if he gets the Spirit, he will teach by the Spirit; and if he teaches by the Spirit, he will touch the hearts of the people and he will be happy. There will be no homesickness, no worrying about families, for all time and talents and interests are centered on the work of the ministry. Work, work, work—there is no satisfactory substitute, especially in missionary work."¹

In the Spanish version of the *Missionary Guide*, which we used before *Preach My Gospel*, the word *work* was translated as *effort*. In addition to making an effort, you need to concentrate all of your time, talents, and interests. This focus is necessary for success. And if you are happy instead of angry or resentful, your work will lead to good things.

I learned this formula in my own life. I started working for a big oil company shortly after I was baptized. These truths about work came into my life and led to my progress in the company.

Practice Makes for Opportunity

One manager in particular at the company had a lot of power. He requested that each department send two people to help him do



an inventory. And he said the only requirement was that the people knew something about accounting.

I had studied at a trade school, and I had a certificate from my accounting classes. My department boss said, "Go tell him that you are going to help with the inventory and that you are an accountant." He wanted to see the reaction of the other man because I was so young.

When I arrived, the manager asked what I wanted. I answered, "I'm going to help you do the inventory." I did as I was instructed by my boss and told him I was an accountant. He laughed.

Then he said, "Well, Mr. Accountant, come to my chair. Take this adding machine, and add everything in every column as fast as you can."

I started with one finger, very slowly. He pushed me out of the chair and said, "You don't know anything; you are going to be punished. You are going to sit there in a chair in front of me for two weeks, watching how I do the work."

I moved to another chair. He said, "Watch me." He started adding so fast, not even looking at his hands. I was amazed. I thought he was joking about having me watch him work for two weeks, but he wasn't.

That first day I sat there for six or seven hours. That evening I stayed after work and waited for everyone to leave the building. Then I went to his office and changed the roll of paper in the adding machine and started practicing adding the same columns he did. For hours I worked and got faster and faster and faster. When I felt I was doing it as fast or faster than he did, I went to sleep for an hour or two.

The next morning I just washed my face and went out the front doors when they opened early, then walked in again after the manager arrived. I knocked on his door. He said, "OK, you sit there and watch what I'm doing."

When he started on the adding machine, he seemed slow to me. I had practiced for seven hours straight. I gently pushed him aside and asked him to sit in my chair. I started adding so fast. He was surprised.

He said, "What did you do?" He forced me to tell him. He said, "From now on, because you learned this, you will work with me, and I'm going to teach you everything I know."

I switched departments. After a few years he resigned, and I was able to take his place because of his recommendation. I used effort and concentration, and I was happy in what I was doing. I was not angry because he punished me at first.

The Secret to Succeeding

You can do any good thing. You just need to put forth the effort, the concentration, and be happy.

The company I was working for closed. I moved to Mexico City, and because I liked to work, I applied for a temporary job with an international editorial

company. They wanted me to take an inventory, which was something of a specialty with me. I did the inventory in two weeks. They offered me a permanent job at good pay, and I accepted.

I didn't speak English at that time. Our director, a man from Texas who didn't speak any Spanish, said to my boss, "This boy is doing good work. If he knew English, we would pay more. We would send him to New York for training, and he could eventually be a manager here."

When my boss told me that, I asked, "All I have to do is learn English?"

I was married by then. My wife spoke English because she was born in the Church colonies in Mexico. The first time I tried to speak a few words in English, someone told me not to try. It was not my gift.

Now I was motivated by the thoughts of improving my job position and having opportunities such as traveling to New York. I went to a language school and told them I wanted to learn to speak English as soon as I could.

They asked, "How much do you know?"

I said, "Not a word. Not even 'Good morning.'"

They said, "We have an intensive course: two weeks, 16 hours a day. Eight hours here with teachers and eight





hours in your home with tapes. It costs \$1,000.”

I said, “I can do that. I will ask for my vacation, and I can study 16 hours a day for two weeks.”

I went to my boss and said, “I’m going to learn English in two weeks, and you have to pay only \$1,000.” He laughed and said, “It is not possible. I learned in two years.”

I told my boss, “Ask the director to give me two weeks’ vacation and pay for the course. If after these two weeks I cannot talk to him in English, then you can take the fee out of my salary.”

He gave permission.

I went to the school. Every 45 minutes for eight hours, they changed teachers. They drilled and drilled the vocabulary, sentences, and conversations.

After eight hours in school, I went into the streets looking for English-speaking tourists to talk to. Then I listened to eight more hours of tapes.

The main reason I went to school was not to learn English. I really wanted to be a manager and go to New York City. Because I was

highly motivated, learning English wasn’t hard for me. I enjoyed every second of it.

When I finished the 224 hours of study, I could communicate somewhat in English. I knew that the test was communicating with my director. If I couldn’t, I would have to pay back the \$1,000. So I made up a plan. I would talk to him about all that I had learned. When I entered his office, I talked and talked for 20 minutes without letting him say a word. He said, “That’s enough. Send him to New York.” And I went to New York!

A Learning Experience

I can tell you that if you want to succeed in anything, you need to concentrate, put forth effort, and be happy with what you are doing. This approach can give you everything. You can learn much and achieve any worthy goal. Enjoy what you are doing, even if it is hard. Do it on a mission or in any aspect of your life. As President Benson said, “Work, work, work.” ■

NOTE

1. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 200.

After eight hours in school, I went looking for English-speaking tourists to talk to. I put forth the same kind of extra effort I had used to learn how to work an adding machine.