

TOSSING AWAY YOUR TIME

Don't take a chance on waiting 10 years to find out what you'll be like 10 years from now.

By David Dickson

Church Magazines

I glanced at the quarter in my hand and then eyed the 10-foot distance to the cement wall. The other kid's quarter had landed about six inches from the wall. Another good shot. He'd already won my first quarter last round. Now I had to win it back—and hopefully win an additional quarter from him in the third round.

You see, I wanted a soda with my lunch. And sodas cost 75 cents, which was 25 cents more than I had left after buying lunch at our junior high school cafeteria. Hence the contest.

I tossed my last quarter as skillfully as I could. I hoped for a lucky bounce that would put it closer to the wall than my opponent's, thereby making me the winner.

Nope. My fiendish coin hit the wall hard. I watched as it rolled back farther than my opponent's. He smirked and scooped up the spoils.

"Better luck next time," he said.

It would be an entire school year before it occurred to me that if I'd simply saved my change after lunch,

I could've bought a soda two days out of every three. At the time, though, the idea of turning two quarters into three or more with no effort was too enticing. I lost a lot of quarters that year.

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

As *For the Strength of Youth* says, "It is false to believe that you can get something for nothing" ([2011], 41).

In terms of money, it was easy to recognize in hindsight how dumb even the low-stakes coin gambling had been.

But what about gambling away or wasting our *time*? In the end we may find we face greater risks in wasting our time than in wasting money.

For example, the sheer number of

hours spent playing a video game or browsing Instagram—the life cost—can easily dwarf the financial cost of the game itself.

"Just because something is *good* is not a sufficient reason for doing it," taught Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time available to accomplish them. Some things are better than good, and these are the things that should command priority attention in our lives."¹

Doing these better things with our time is how we accomplish any worthwhile goal. In other words, getting something for something. It's the opposite of gambling away our time.

ROADSIDE LEGAL ADVICE?

Pretend you want to become a lawyer. The idea of battling for justice in the courtroom sounds like a cool career. Yet law school is so far down the road you can't even squint and see it in the distance. What, then, would be the best way to spend your time right now to achieve this goal?

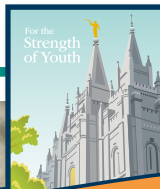
Do you set up a stand alongside the road, complete with a homemade



BECOME YOUR BEST YOU

"We become what we want to be by consistently being what we want to become each day."

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Transforming Power of Faith and Character," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 43.



WORK AND SELF-RELIANCE



sign to gain a little hands-on experience? “Disputes Settled: \$5—Future Lawyer at Your Service!”

No, not quite. We can’t just try our hand at practicing law any more than we can waltz into a hospital and see if we have any natural talent for administering anesthesia. Such professions require long years of training and certification before we can do the actual work.

But here’s the great part. We can still “be” that person right now anyway.

Working hard to clean out the garage—your latest Saturday chore—might not seem to have anything in common with preparing for an important court case, but in fact, they’re the same thing in principle.

Learning to work hard and complete a task to the best of your ability is precisely the skill set you’ll need for any chosen profession, for missionary service, education, marriage and family, Church service, and all the rest.

YOUR FUTURE YOU, RIGHT NOW

If we want to become someone great in the future, here’s the best and truest way to get there: *Be someone great right now.* Even if you’ve made mistakes in the past.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, “Our destiny is not determined by the number of times we stumble but by the number of times we rise up, dust ourselves off, and move forward.”² Heavenly Father stands ready to help.

Finishing your homework on time? That’s true greatness in action. Attending the service project even though you’d rather hit the movie theater with friends? Even *more* greatness in action.

Spending time on the best activities is not only how we find happiness and realize our potential down the road, but it’s also how we find happiness and realize our potential today.

So, spend your time purposefully. Your life is much too important to leave to chance. **NE**

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, “Good, Better, Best,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 104.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “You Can Do It Now!” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 55.

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM MADSEN