

GOOD WORK

BY ELDER STEPHEN B. OVESON

Formerly of the Seventy

Those who successfully seek out job opportunities gain a sense of accomplishment and security that is far superior to merely having fun.

One important need I see for you, today's young people, is to learn how to work. Everyone needs to feel at least partially self-sustaining and self-supporting, and I wonder whether these feelings may be slipping away or ignored.

I know you often have a difficult time finding jobs, but the problem can become worse if you have too many activities that take away from the opportunity to learn how to work. My observation is that many teens think they must constantly be dancing, playing soccer or football, or participating in other sports or recreational activities.

These teens seem to hope that participating in sports or recreational activities will somehow take care of all their other needs. I don't think it does, and I'm con-

vinced they must instead find other ways to learn how to work hard.

Learn While Young

I grew up in a small town and participated in a 4-H club that each year required me to purchase a lamb or a calf to raise. I had to maintain a workbook to keep track of what I paid for feed, veterinarian bills, and anything else I needed. The most memorable lamb I had was when I was nine. I bought a Southdown-cross lamb from a farmer and took good care of it. My dad helped me, and the county agent met with members of the club periodically to sign off in our workbooks. I

learned how to raise and show that lamb, including shearing it so it would look its best.

I ended up taking it to The Dalles,



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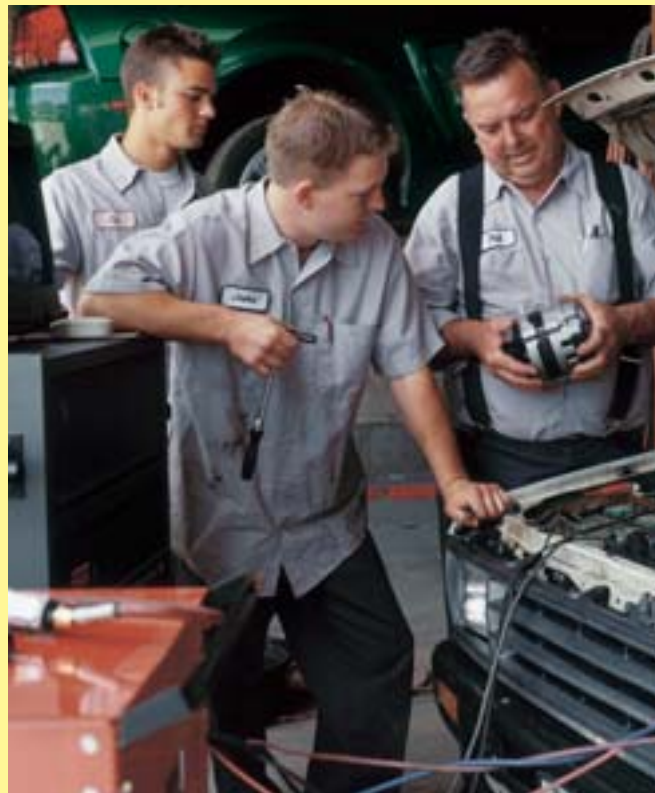
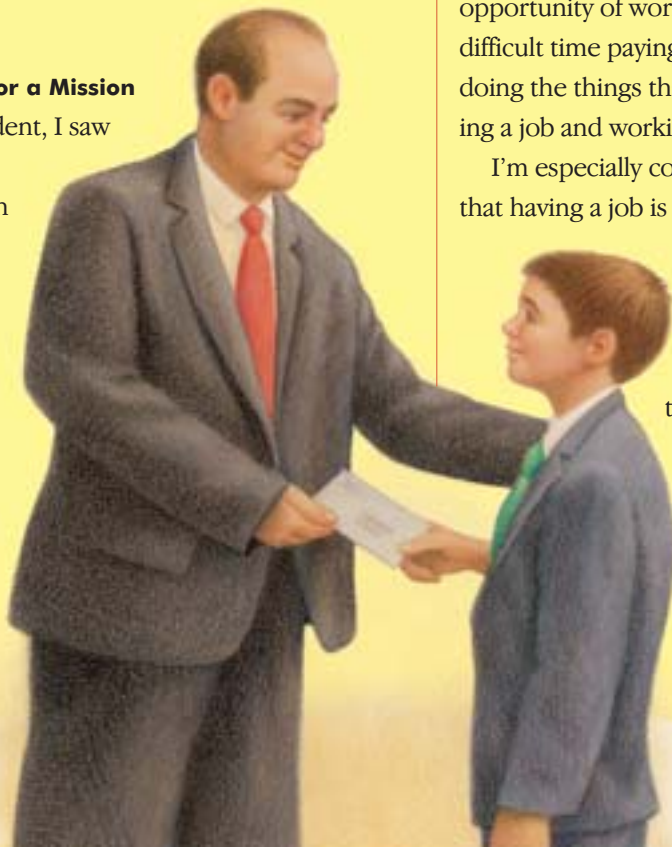




Oregon, livestock show, and I won the grand-champion prize. The lamb weighed 92 pounds, and I received \$2.50 per pound for my efforts. For a nine-year-old, that was a lot of money. And because of the records I had kept, I knew how much I earned after costs. For me, that was good training. For the last 20 years, I have been self-employed. I've paid my tithing on the same basis I learned when I was nine.

Work Prepares You for a Mission

As a mission president, I saw a lot of young men come into the mission field who had never paid tithing. They taught investigators the principle of tithing, citing scriptures and quoting prophets about the need to pay tithing, but they had no firsthand testimony of the blessings



PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

that come from paying tithing. Many of them saw their parents pay tithing, but they themselves had neither earned a paycheck nor felt the good feelings of giving 10 percent to the Lord. They were missing the feeling that comes from fulfilling that commandment of the Lord and supporting His Church.

I am afraid that young people who have not had the opportunity of working hard and paying tithing will have a difficult time paying their tithing and fast offerings and doing the things that those of us who grew up while holding a job and working hard learned to do.

I'm especially convinced, based on what I've observed, that having a job is one of the best ways possible to prepare for the rigors of serving missions.

I guarantee you will be a better missionary if you have experienced the success of working a job satisfactorily than if you have never held down a job. Jobs teach many kinds of skills—especially the ability to work hard and work effectively.

Many Ways to Work

You can learn to work in many ways. In my little town of 300

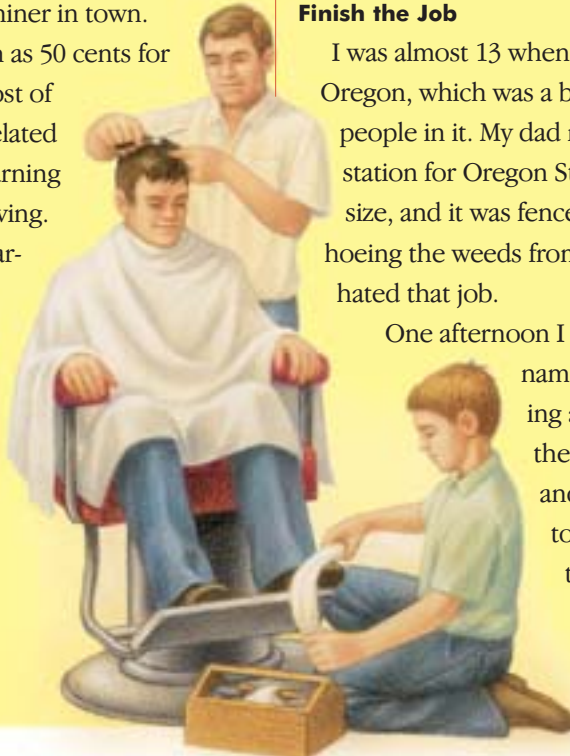


people where I spent the first 12 years of my life, I mowed many lawns for those who would pay me for that service. For a while, I also delivered *The Dalles Chronicle*, our local newspaper.

At that time, our town had only one barbershop, and it had a shoeshine stand in it. When I was 10 and 11, I reigned supreme as the best shoe shiner in town. Some Saturday nights, I got as much as 50 cents for shining a pair of shoes, although most of the time I received a quarter. I was elated with the feelings I experienced in earning my own money for spending and saving.

One lesson I learned from that barber in the town of Moro, Oregon, I have never forgotten. I came in late one day, and I started making up an excuse for my lateness. He got my attention and said, “Look, I’ve been in the army, and I’ve heard every possible excuse. Just tell me the truth, and we’ll get along fine.”

That counsel has stuck with me ever since. Every time I



start to make an excuse for a mistake, I remember that nothing is gained with the excuse process. As a result, one of my mottoes is “Don’t make excuses. Either do the job or don’t do the job. When appropriate, express sorrow for not doing the job—but don’t make excuses.”

Finish the Job

I was almost 13 when my family moved to Pendleton, Oregon, which was a big town to me with about 6,000 people in it. My dad ran the agricultural experimental station for Oregon State University. It was 168 acres in size, and it was fenced all the way around. I had a job hoeing the weeds from under the fence, and initially I hated that job.

One afternoon I was hoeing weeds with a friend named Arlen Jenkins. I was complaining and moaning and groaning about the hard work, but he looked at me and said, “You know, you really need to consider that if we weren’t doing this, we might be doing something worse.” That was his attitude. He was always happy doing any type of work



“Children need to explore many employment opportunities when they begin high school. Then when they marry and establish a home, they will be well on their way to a vocation or a trade that will return an income that will be sufficient to meet their basic needs.”

—Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Providing for Our Needs,” *Ensign*, May 1981, 86.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND

because he knew he could be doing something worse. I have tried to reflect that attitude in every job I have had since that time.

Many young people get into a job they don't like, and they give up. My advice to them is the following: Make a habit of doing the job until you get it done. Then, if you don't want to do that kind of work again, find something you do want to do.

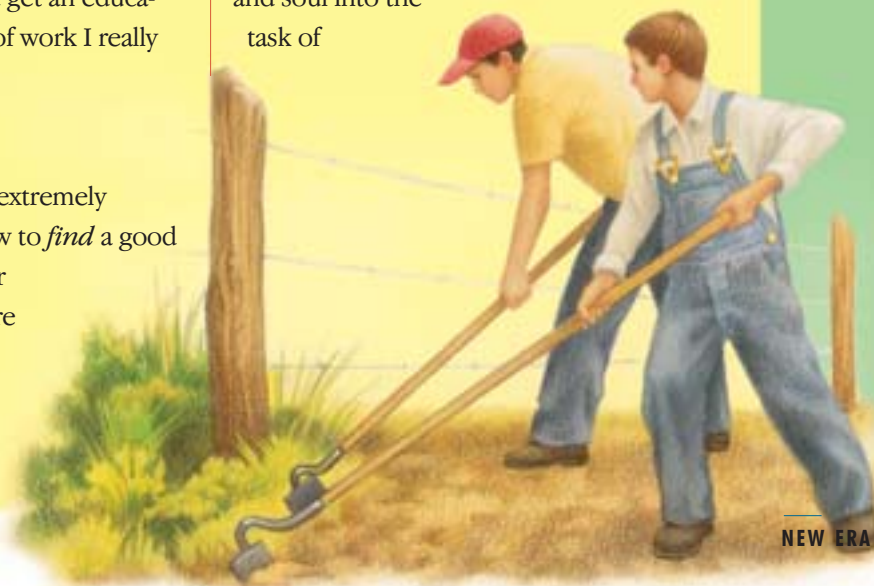
Because of the hard work I had experienced, I realized while I was young that I needed to go to college and get an education so I could do the kind of work I really wanted to do.

Finding a Job

Learning how to work is extremely important. But knowing how to *find* a good job is just as important. Your parents and grandparents are among your greatest resources. Consult them! The Church provides some really great training

for that purpose. The Church has professionals in employment resource centers who can help you figure out what you can do and how to do it and then send you out to get a job. You need to know how to dress, how to talk, and how to act during an interview.

Employers want to see someone who is neat and clean in appearance, who knows how to address others respectfully, and who shows a willingness to work. If you decide what you want to do and then really put your heart and soul into the task of



Reflect an attitude of self-fulfilling prophecy in connection with work. Say to yourself, “If others of my age and circumstances can find jobs, I can, too. It’s time to prove I’m as capable as others my age.”

getting that job, you will likely get it.

I see opportunities everywhere for young people to work. For example, I’ve often seen “Help Wanted” signs, and I’ve observed the difficulties of trying to find a good babysitter and of locating someone who wants to mow lawns.

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In many cases, today’s teens have traded skilled work for activities that are merely fun. But those who successfully seek out job opportunities gain a sense of accomplishment and security that is far superior to merely having fun. Through successful work experiences while you are young, you will begin to feel that you can support a family and help build the kingdom of God on the earth. **NE**



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FOUR STEPS TO FINDING THE RIGHT JOB

Can I offer to the youth . . . four steps which are important in obtaining the right employment. They are: first, to invite the Lord’s help in this important search; second, to plan ahead carefully; third, to gather all possible necessary information; and fourth, proper vocation or education preparation.

“The first step, prayer, must continue throughout the entire process. As we gather facts, make decisions, gain the appropriate training and experience, and then seek jobs, it is essential that we combine our self-reliant efforts with a humble, prayerful attitude. The decision is ours to make, but the Lord will increase our wisdom if we seek him earnestly.

“Planning ahead for a vocation is a very important second step. The sooner a young man [or woman] can begin the planning, the sooner he [or she] will begin to acquire the skills of that vocation.

. . .

“The third step, gathering facts, involves many

people and resources. Youth and parents should be able to draw upon the ward . . . employment resource person, school counselors, and others. Interviews with potential employers, visits to occupational locations, and actually working at different jobs will greatly broaden career perspective.

“Effective fact gathering includes a search to learn which vocations are in demand now and which will be in the future. . . .

“As the final step, when the decision has been made and the young person feels right about the decision, the preparation process should begin in earnest. Whether the training involved is an apprenticeship, university education, or a trade school, it is often an advantage to have formal, recognized training for a vocation. The best positions and the highest pay go to those who have adequately prepared themselves.”

—President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95), 14th President of the Church, “Prepare for Honorable Employment,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 123.