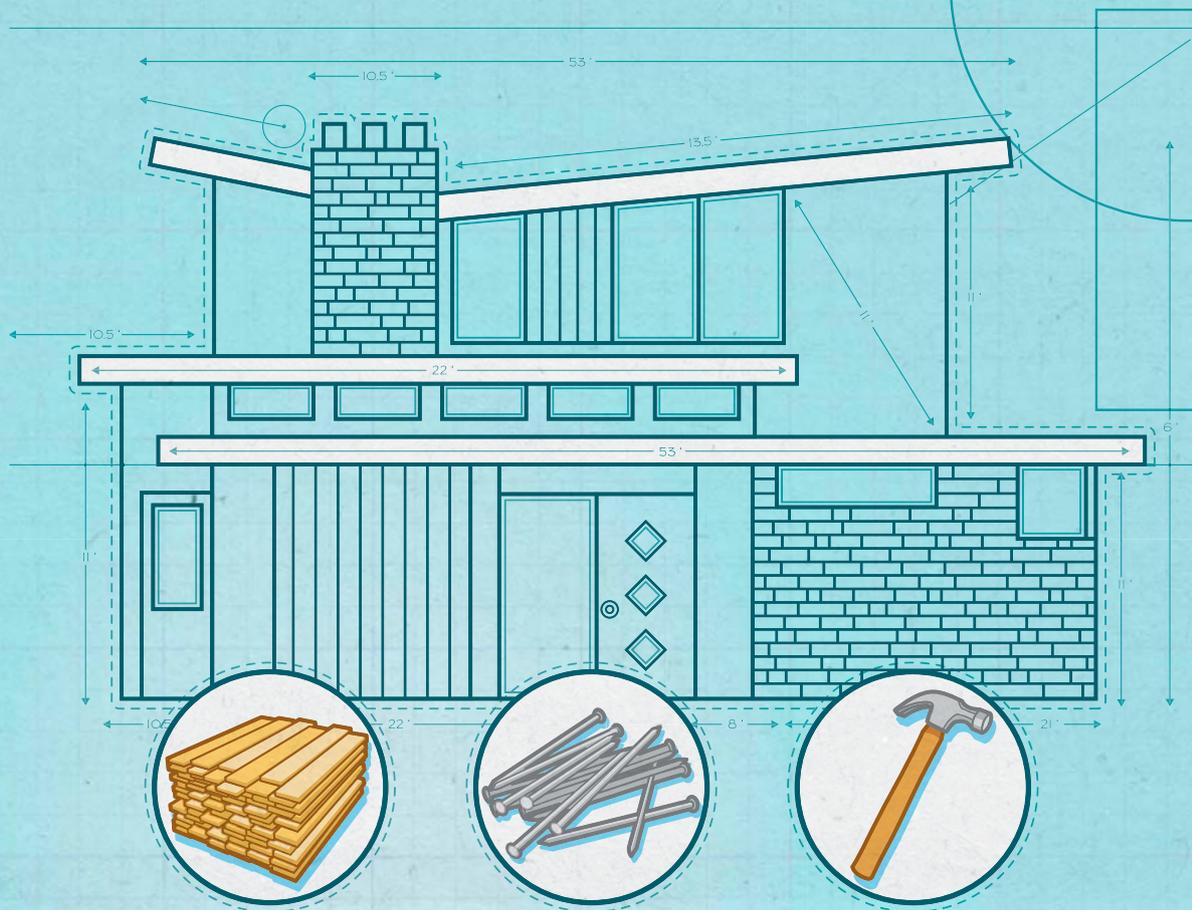


LET GOD BE Your Architect

*Your life can become better
than you've ever imagined.*

By David Dickson
Church Magazines



You can get through a lot in life by figuring things out as you go along. Whether that means blissfully ignoring written instructions on how to assemble furniture that came in a million pieces or teaching yourself to play a musical instrument by pounding out whatever notes sound the best, your capacity to learn through trial and error is practically unlimited.

Only thing is, it's usually not very easy that way.

Imagine something truly complicated. What if you were in charge of building your own home and had all the raw materials set out in front of you. Can you picture that huge pile of stuff? Boards, nails, pipes, wires, tools, and everything else you'd need to build an awesome house for you and your family.

Would you still want to make it up as you went along? Or would you want help from somebody who actually knows how to make the most of the materials?

Our path through life is the same way. We all need help building our lives. And there's no better builder to turn to than God.

As explained in *For the Strength of Youth*: “The Lord will make much more out of your life than you can by yourself. He will increase your opportunities, expand your vision, and strengthen you. He will give you the help you need to meet your trials and challenges. You will gain a stronger testimony and find true joy as you come to know your Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, and feel Their love for you” ([2011], 43).

When we obey God’s commandments and involve Him in our plans, we become who we need to become—not who we thought we wanted to be.

Here are a few people who, with God’s help, found a better path than the one they had picked for themselves.

Letting Go of Violence

In a video series on mormonchannel.org, a young man named Bubba shares his story about how his life was headed for disaster.¹ He had grown up in a violent home, where his father was murdered when Bubba was only three years old.

Bubba grew up choosing the same life he’d always seen. He joined a gang and started fights with anybody who crossed him. By high school he figured he would end up in prison before long. And he didn’t care.

God intervened. At this dangerous crossroads in his life, Bubba met a Latter-day Saint family who showed him loving kindness and goodness. He’d never been around people like this before—people who showed compassion and love. He started spending as much time with them as possible. When he asked the family why they acted the way they did, they said it was because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

He wanted to find out what they knew. He began praying and studying the scriptures. And soon he felt something he’d never felt before. “Surely there is a God, and He loves

me!” Bubba says. With God’s help, Bubba began to build his life over again with Jesus Christ as the foundation, leaving his old life behind.

“My nature changed. Who I am as a human being is different than who I was. Now I have a purpose. I have a destiny,” he says. “I have somewhere that I’m going.”

These days Bubba sees his future with brightness, faith, and hope. “I know that it is only through Jesus Christ, my faith in Him, that will help me get to where I want to be,” he says.²



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Changing Direction

President Hugh B. Brown (1883–1975), a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and of the First Presidency, shared an experience where God made more out of his life than he would have done on his own.

Hugh had been serving in the Canadian military and was in line to be promoted to general. He had been working, hoping, and praying for that promotion for 10 years.

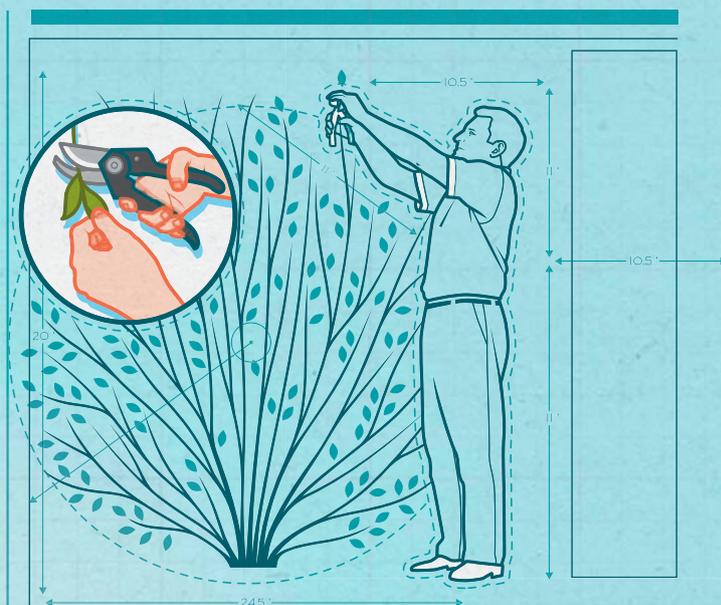
When the position became available, however, he was passed over simply because he was a member of the Church. That was literally the only reason, and they told him so.

Hugh was furious. He said: “I got on the train and started back . . . with a broken heart, with bitterness in my soul. . . . When I got to my tent, . . . I threw my cap on the cot. I clenched my fists, and I shook them at heaven. I said, ‘How could you do this to me, God? I have done everything I could do to measure up. There is nothing that I could have done—that I should have done—that I haven’t done. How could you do this to me?’ I was as bitter as gall.”³

Then Hugh remembered an experience from years earlier. He’d once bought a neglected farm that had an overgrown currant bush. Without trimming, that bush would never provide fruit. All it wanted to do was grow taller.

So Hugh trimmed it back severely. Afterward, he saw little drops of liquid at the end of each cut branch. They looked like tears. “I am the gardener here,” he told the currant bush. Hugh knew what he wanted that bush to become, and it wasn’t a shade tree.

That experience came to his mind as he battled anger over being passed up for promotion. “I heard a voice, and I recognized the tone of this voice. It was my own voice, and the voice said, ‘I am the gardener here. I know what I want you to do.’ The bitterness went out of my soul, and I fell on my knees by the cot to ask forgiveness for my ungratefulness. . . .



“I am the gardener here. I know what I want you to do.”

“. . . And now, almost 50 years later, I look up to [God] and say, ‘Thank you, Mr. Gardener, for cutting me down, for loving me enough to hurt me.’”⁴

Hugh never became a general. The Lord had other plans for President Brown. With the Lord as his architect, President Brown’s life became a masterful structure.

Building from Scratch

Being called a “child of hell” by a prophet of God probably doesn’t sound like your life’s headed in a good direction. But that’s exactly what happened to Zeezrom, a lawyer in the Book of Mormon. (See Alma 11:23.)

Alma and Amulek were preaching in the land where Zeezrom was trying to gain money as a lawyer by stirring up the people against Alma and Amulek. Zeezrom tried to trick Alma and Amulek with his questions, but they answered and rebuked him. Zeezrom’s thoughts were revealed to them by the Spirit. (See Alma 11–12.)

As the conversation continued, Zeezrom was stunned into silence. He began to recognize his faults and felt

serious guilt over his sins and what he'd done to lead the people away. He soon tried to undo some of the damage he'd caused, saying, "Behold, I am guilty, and these men are spotless before God" (Alma 14:7).

But it didn't work. The people cast Zeezrom out of their city. His guilt and despair over what he'd done—including a mistaken fear that his preaching against Alma and Amulek had led to their death—caused Zeezrom to fall sick with fever, "scorched with a burning heat" (Alma 15:3).

The structure he'd built for his life had crumbled to its foundation. But that's not where Zeezrom's story ends.

Once he learned that Alma and Amulek were still alive, Zeezrom took courage and asked for them to come to him. When they did, Zeezrom asked to be healed. Through his faith Zeezrom was healed fully. He was then baptized and began to preach from that time forth (see Alma 15:11–12).

Zeezrom's new life, this time with God as his architect, had just begun.

Beyond Hammer and Nail

The good news is we were never meant to go through life alone. God wants to help us every step of the way. And when we let Him help, there's no limit to what we can become. ■

NOTES

1. "His Grace" video series, mormonchannel.org.
2. "From Gang Member to 'Good Man'" (video), mormonchannel.org.
3. Hugh B. Brown, "The Currant Bush," *Liahona*, Mar. 2002, 24; *New Era*, Jan. 1973, 15.
4. Hugh B. Brown, "The Currant Bush," *Liahona*, 22, 24; *New Era*, 14, 15.
5. Neal A. Maxwell, "Response to a Call," *Ensign*, May 1974, 112.

TEMPORAL VS. ETERNAL

In this life we have many opportunities to use our agency. All social networks, popularity, and friends may seem pretty important in this life, but in the end it is the kingdom of God that will matter. There's a quote I love that Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said in general conference: "If you have not chosen the kingdom of God first, it will in the end make no difference what you have chosen instead."⁵

Sometimes we are so focused in this life, we forget what is most important. If we could take the veil away from us, our whole perspective would change. We would become more humble and give more importance to the Lord and not so much importance to man.

I am convinced I want to be righteous and follow God. I want to have an eternal perspective, so I can enter His mighty kingdom. This will be better than having all the money and power of the world. In this life we shall live for only a short period in comparison to the eternities. The glory we will receive will be the glory we will have forever.

Isabelle A., 19, Mexico

