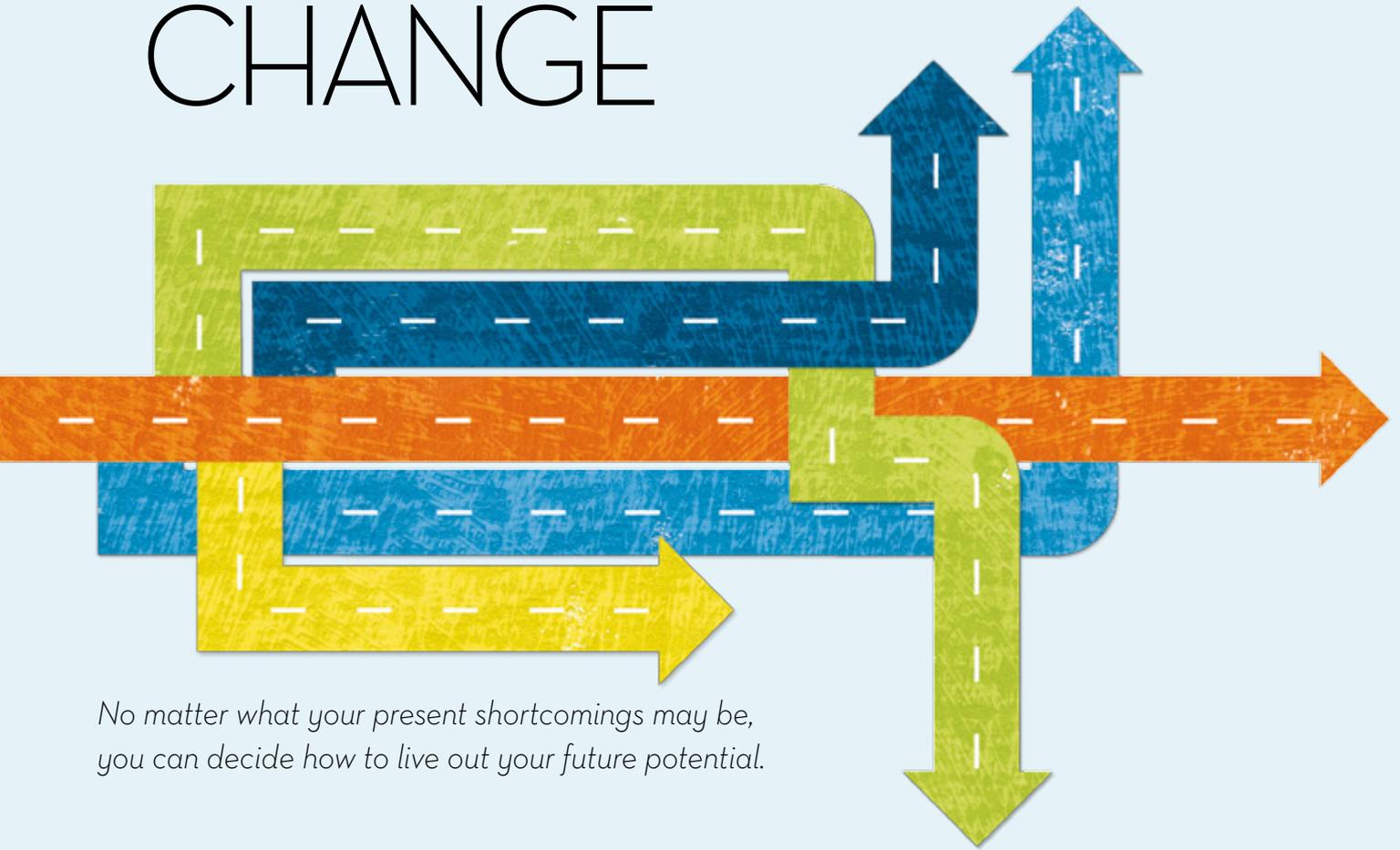


YOU CAN CHANGE



No matter what your present shortcomings may be, you can decide how to live out your future potential.

By David Dickson

Church Magazines

During high school graduation ceremony, all kinds of thoughts can zoom through your head. What happens next? Are you ready? Will you and your friends stay in touch?

Not me, though. I had only one question when it was my turn to walk up in front of everybody as they announced my name: was I *actually* going to graduate?

I wasn't exactly what you'd call a scholar. Studying pretty much never topped my ideal to-do list. And during my senior year I was doing

so poorly in one class I didn't even know if I had *passed* the class. The final exam earlier that week would seal my fate, but grades wouldn't post until a week later.

If I failed this class, I wouldn't graduate high school.

In the end, I squeaked by on the thinnest possible margin and did graduate. (Whew!) At that point I had 14 months until I turned 19, the missionary age at the time. I intended on working during that time to save money for my mission. I knew I wasn't much of a student, so

under no circumstances did I plan on attempting college.

THE TRAP OF DEFINING

Have you ever felt like that? Like your past performance in some part of your life has proven your abilities once and for all?

Don't fall for that line of thinking. It's one of Satan's biggest lies!

"Once any of us conclude—"That's just the way I am," we give up our ability to change," taught Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Presidency of the Seventy. "We might as well raise the

white flag, put down our weapons, concede the battle, and just surrender—any prospect of winning is lost.”¹

School can seem especially intimidating when you’re not doing well. With even a few bad grades on your record, it’s all too easy to decide that’s as good as you’ll ever get. But it’s not true.

“Who we are is not who we can become,” Elder Hallstrom said.²

A CLEAN SLATE

Despite what nagging whispers of doubt or failure might reach our ears, we can always choose to look ahead and stop beating ourselves up over the past.

“There is something incredibly hopeful about a fresh start,” taught President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.³

When deciding to make a fresh start, don’t forget to pray to God for help. Tell Him you want to succeed and then pay attention to promptings

and guidance from the Holy Ghost and from your leaders.

This might require a bit of priority shuffling. “Our daily conduct and choices should be consistent with our goals,” said Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Many choices are not inherently evil, but if they absorb all of our time and keep us from the best choices, then they become insidious.”⁴

FINDING THE NEW YOU

Fast-forward three and a half years from my high school graduation ceremony. I had worked for around a year and a half, served a two-year mission, and ultimately decided to try college after all.

I wish I could say I felt all grown-up and ready for school, but that’s laughable. I felt more intimidated than ever. If I was so bad at high school, how in the world could I handle college? This time I resolved to do my best and involve God along

the way. I prayed fervently to develop new and better study skills.

To my complete shock, I ended up doing so well that semester that I qualified for academic scholarships. Nobody was more surprised than me! Even so, I could also easily look back over the previous months and see the hand of God helping me along as I learned to become a good student.

What I believed about myself back in high school simply wasn’t true. From that point on and with God’s help, I was able to forge a completely new path that carried me through college graduation and beyond.

When we involve the Lord in our climb and decide to make a new start in any area of life, we can reach heights we never dreamed possible. ■

NOTES

1. Donald L. Hallstrom, “What Manner of Men?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 53.
2. Donald L. Hallstrom, “What Manner of Men?” 53.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Best Time to Plant a Tree,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Jan. 2014, 4.
4. Quentin L. Cook, “Choose Wisely,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 49, 48.

