

Becoming Better: Principles of Self-Improvement  
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Some people face bigger decisions than others, but every person has room left for growth and improvement.

There are many crossroads in life and points where going forward often means never going back. Life choices come along, and often those decisions, while worthwhile, can be difficult to make.

Young single adults, especially, face major decisions as they encounter many transition points in their lives, such as getting an education, finding work, serving missions, marrying, and starting families. These life decisions all work toward an ultimate goal: progression.

Perhaps you have no more “big” decisions to make and feel content. No matter which situation you find yourself in, there is always room for growth and improvement. Everyone—from the young woman looking forward to a life full of opportunity to the old man looking back fondly at his many accomplishments—can become something more.

John H. Vandenberg, then serving as Presiding Bishop of the Church, said in his October 1972 conference address, “It is highly doubtful that there is even one soul upon the earth, regardless of station or age, who does not have ample room for personal growth and improvement” (“Becoming a Somebody”).

President Hinckley said to the men of the priesthood: “There is not a man or boy in this vast congregation tonight who cannot improve his life. And that needs to happen” (“Rise Up, O Men of God,” Oct. 2006 general conference). This counsel can easily apply to the women of the Church as well.

Opportunities to progress almost always require stepping out of your comfort zone.

A young single adult may find herself hesitant to leave the comfort and familiarity of home to pursue an education or serve a mission. Another may feel pressure from his family and friends to find a job or get married. Someone established in a career may feel it is too late to begin school or feel unsure of a course of study. Perhaps you consider your current employment situation sufficient and you don’t look for ways you might move up. Each of these situations represents a missed opportunity to grow. Dismissing too many opportunities can lead to a stagnant lifestyle.

The scriptures say simply, “Cease to be idle” (D&C 88:124). Leaders have warned against idleness, as it inhibits growth. Rather, members are encouraged to “be anxiously engaged in a good cause” (D&C 58:27).

Set Goals



Education in any form will open doors. It is never too late for someone to pursue an education.

No matter where you are in life, look forward to what you can become and how you can become better. Set goals that will be attainable but also challenging. Have a destination in mind. Have faith that there are opportunities to grow, and seek them out. Don't be afraid to make big decisions. Elder Nelson said in a BYU-Idaho address: "Please be true to yourself. Honor—yes, even demand—the highest expectations from yourself" ("Education: A Religious Responsibility," Jan. 26, 2010).

As you set goals, consider the following suggestions:

- Examine your current situation to find areas for improvement.
- Determine what you want to ultimately achieve (such as a career or a degree).
- Plan smaller steps that will let you reach your end goal.
- Make sure that each step is achievable, but also challenging.
- Write the goals down so you don't forget.
- Commit to taking the first step, and do it.
- Refer back to your goals often to reflect and check your progress.
- See Pursuit of Excellence for additional helps.

The Church, in an effort to help members improve their lives, provides many resources. Following are just a few:

Obtain an Education



The blessing of self-reliance is found through honest work. Aspire to work hard and improve in whichever job you have.

Education is the seed of opportunity. Church leaders have time and time again invited members to obtain as much education as possible. Whether it be a vocational or trade school, college, or grad school, education opens doors.

Elder Russell M. Nelson recounted a story to students at the same BYU–Idaho devotional, telling of the many times he'd been asked how much school was required to be a doctor. He would explain that a doctor usually required four years at a university, another four in medical school, and if the student desired to specialize, they could expect another five. In response to the incredulous replies he would receive, Elder Nelson simply would say, "How old will you be 13 years from now if you don't pursue your education? Just as old, whether or not you become what you want to be!"

There are many options for those who wish to pursue additional schooling. One viable option is available to members of the Church through the Pathway program in partnership with BYU–Idaho. This program helps those who wouldn't have the opportunity to attend college in a traditional way. It caters to those who didn't do well in high school, waited too long to attend college, or simply got caught up in life and missed an opportunity to pursue an education. Learn more at [pathway.lds.org](http://pathway.lds.org). Another option for developing areas is the Perpetual Education Fund. Learn more about Church schools and programs at [education.lds.org](http://education.lds.org).

## Find Employment

The Lord has always required His people to work (see Genesis 3:19). Employment allows a person to be self-sufficient. Honest work will build character and teach life lessons. In whichever field of work you choose, give it your all and give it your best. This can prove to be a blessing to you and those around you.

For those who need help finding or improving their employment, LDS Employment Resource Services (ERS) provides assistance on its website at [ldsjobs.org](http://ldsjobs.org). These resources are designed to help those who are seeking jobs, those looking to move up in a job, and those who are starting or running their own business.

## Serve

Whether it is serving a mission or finding a service project, consider adding service to your life. The Church offers many opportunities for serving based on your availability, talents, and interests. Learn more [here](#) and [here](#).

As President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "He who lives only unto himself withers and dies, while he who forgets himself in the service of others grows and blossoms in this life and in eternity" (Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley (1997), 588).

So go forward. Find ways to improve. Obtain an education. Find work and always look for ways to progress. Learn and love to serve. Blessings await those who seek to better themselves.

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