
What It Takes to Be Happy and Successful

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Over the years, as a result of various assignments, my wife and I have had the opportunity to become acquainted with tens of thousands of young men and women. We have never known one who does not want to be happy and successful.

The Prophet Joseph Smith has said, "**Happiness** is the **object** and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938, pages 255–56). In fact, the scripture says that is why we exist—"Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (**2 Ne. 2:25**).

Joy is at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our Heavenly Father wants each of us to be happy and successful.

Unfortunately, there are some of you who are not happy. Things are not going well, whether socially, physically, academically, or spiritually. What do you have to do to be happy and successful? What do you have to do to turn things around? I'd like to make a few suggestions.

1. In the first place, *if you want to be happy and successful you must decide that hard work is a part of the answer*. I have not met many happy and successful people who were lazy. The scriptures tell us to "Cease to be idle; ... cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated" (**D&C 88:124**). In other words, you don't succeed by being lazy and staying in bed all day.

2. Next, *to be happy and successful, you must learn to be patient and to handle challenges*. You all face some obstacles in life that seem to stand between you and happiness and success. Maybe you feel that you are too tall, too short, too uncoordinated, too ignorant, your complexion doesn't please you, you have weight problems, you don't have enough money to do what you would like, there are not enough social opportunities in your life, or you think you love someone who is not interested in you.

Some of these conditions you can analyze and, with hard work, patience and persistence, you can change. There are some things you can't change. But either way, if you attack the problems you face, if you learn to look positively at the obstacles in your life, you can become happy and successful in spite of challenges.

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An example of this is Brad Hall. He was an outstanding missionary, happy and successful. One night he and companion heard a noise in their apartment complex. They got up and found an armed burglar. In the course of events, a shot was fired and Elder Hall was struck. In an instant, he became a paraplegic—paralyzed from the waist down, and has since been confined to a wheelchair. He returned home, and went to college. He had to make the difficult adjustment both to college life and to getting around in a wheelchair through winter snows.

In the spring, when college awards were presented, Elder Hall was among the top scholars. He proved that you can overcome many difficulties and learn to cope with those you can't change.

3. *If you want to be happy and successful, you will maintain strict chastity.* In terms of human physical development, you have come to the time in your life when the attraction toward members of the opposite sex is very strong. You need to learn to control those powerful feelings and attractions. Frankly, that will be one of your greatest challenges throughout your adult life. There are some who may seem to achieve a degree of worldly success who are grossly immoral; but in the end, they cannot achieve true happiness and joy.

A national newspaper columnist who offers counsel to readers with various problems, wrote: "Dear Friends, I've never received a letter from a girl who said she was sorry she saved herself for marriage, but I've received hundreds from those who didn't and were deeply regretting it."

To achieve happiness and success, you must maintain a moral and chaste life. Don't believe for a moment that there is any such thing as "harmless" sex outside of marriage. Illicit sexual relations are hazardous physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They can easily destroy you.

4. Another element that leads to success and happiness is to *discover early in life that those things of most importance in life you cannot buy for money.* They are priceless. To illustrate, let me tell you about an elder from Austria whom I met at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah.

I noticed that he seemed to be a little older than the average elder. He and his mother had joined the Church when he was sixteen. His father, who was a successful banker, was not interested in religion, but he did not care if his wife and son joined the Church.

This elder's problems began occurring, however, when he would be studying his seminary materials. He would have his scriptures and papers out on his desk, and his father would come in and say something like: "Don't waste your time studying those things. Get back into your regular school studies so that you can be admitted to the university." At times, his father would become so upset he would pick up his son's scriptures or papers and throw them across the room.

At age eighteen, this young man began thinking more about a mission. In fact, one night he even dreamed that he had been called on a mission to Japan. It was such a warm and good feeling; but when he talked to his parents about it, his father said, "Oh no. You are *not* going to waste two years of your life in the mission field. You must go to the university." The father wanted the son to become a banker and follow in his footsteps.

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Realizing that he had better do what his father wished at that point, he chose to go to the university. I am not sure he made his father totally happy because he chose to come to the United States and enroll at Brigham Young University. He went through his program in business, received his bachelor's degree, and then received a master of business administration degree. He was soon hired as a junior executive in an international banking firm in Munich, Germany.

By this time he was twenty-five years old, obviously old enough to make his own decisions. He still had a great desire to serve a mission. He went to his stake president and informed him of his desires. He even told him of his dream. The stake president laughed and said, "Well, I don't think you will be called to Japan. Nobody is called to Japan from here. They may be called to other countries in Europe, but not to Japan."

His father was very upset when he learned his son was thinking of leaving his position at the bank for two years. He came over from Vienna and did everything he could to convince his son not to go. His boss flew down from Frankfurt, Germany, and spent time with him, attempting to convince him that he should not leave his work for two years.

"My boy," he said, "do you realize what this will cost you professionally in terms of salary loss as well as opportunity loss? Sit down and calculate what these two years will cost you." The young elder did, and found that the mission would cost him a great sum of money.

But tears came to his eyes when he told me, "If it would have cost several times that amount, I would still be here, because I know this is where the Lord wants me to be."

Well, he *was* called to Japan. He served a very successful mission, and I suppose there are many international banking firms that would be pleased to hire a well-trained junior executive who speaks German, English, and Japanese—the three major languages of the economic free world. But even if he didn't earn any extra money as the result of this additional experience, it still would have been worth it. If you want to be happy and successful, you will come to a realization that there are some values in life you cannot purchase with money.

5. Finally, *to achieve happiness and success, you must live your life consistent with your ideals and standards even when you are all alone.* The real test of your commitment can be measured in great part by what you are when you are alone.

While I was serving my first mission to Mexico and Central America, my companion and I received a very interesting final assignment from our mission president. He asked us to leave the mission home and go down to a town in Southern Mexico, where some months before missionaries had been withdrawn due to religious and political persecution. Their lives had been threatened by mobs. A few converts had been baptized, but a real organization of the Church had not been established. As a result, these new members had been left alone, and for months the mission president heard little about how things were going.

We were given a list of names and asked by the mission president to go there, find the people, see how they were doing, and, if possible, locate a place where we could quietly conduct a

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sacrament meeting. For all those months, they had not had the privilege we take so much for granted of partaking of the sacrament each week.

We arrived early in the morning and immediately searched for the address of the first name on the list. We located her address and passed through a door in a high adobe wall that surrounded a crowded cluster of tiny huts around a central area.

It seemed that everyone there was watching us. Back in the corner was a little grass-thatched hut. The sister we were looking for came to the door, saw us, and easily recognized by our dress that we were missionaries. With tears in her eyes, she rushed to us and greeted us with a hug. We identified ourselves and told her why we were there.

After this brief greeting, she went back into her hut and brought out a clay jar into which she put her hand and withdrew some money she had been saving for months. Even though she had been alone without any Church organization, she had been saving her tithing with faith and hope that someday her tithing would be taken to the appropriate place.

She obviously had many unmet needs; yet, she was handing us money. My first impression was not to accept it and to encourage her to spend it wherever she might need it. Then I realized that it was not my right to do so because she was obeying a commandment. She had gained a testimony that tithing is a divine commandment and was willing to live that principle—even when she was alone.

We need the courage to live up to our standards, especially when there is no one around to check up on us. Then, regardless of where we are, away from home for the first time, in college, in a social setting where there are all kinds of temptations, or any place else—we can stand up for that which we know is true and live consistently with our ideals.

The Prophet Joseph Smith lived in a sectarian world filled with mistaken notions about God and man. Yet out of it all, like a shaft of brilliant light, he taught that “**Happiness** is the **object** and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, *if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God*” (*Teachings*, pages 255–56; emphasis added).

Gospel topics: joy, spirituality, success

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