

A FREE BOOK SAMPLE

BEFORE SUNSET

How to Be Anxiously Engaged
in a Good Cause

SAMPLE: CHAPTER TWO

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A practical guide to stewarding time with purpose, faith, and balance.

CHAPTER TWO: ANXIOUSLY ENGAGED

Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceeded that which is great¹."

Having an Engaging Attitude

The great men and women of the Latter-day church and in the scriptures did not achieve great things by slouching about; spending weekends moping around the house wondering what there was to do (or even watching cartoons). When a new opportunity to serve or to work or to participate in some worthwhile activity showed up, they didn't sit around wondering if it would fit their entertainment schedule.

Instead, they followed the Lord's counsel to be "anxiously engaged in a good cause" (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27) and through their concerted efforts, millions of lives have been blessed by being brought closer to Christ.

It all comes down to a question of attitudes. If the Lord had asked Laman and Lemuel to build the ship to take their family to the Promised Land, they might have spent another eight years in Bountiful complaining about it. They were the type that spent most of their time making excuses or laughing at Nephi for working hard. Nephi, on the other

1 D&C 64: 33

hand, got the command and set to work right away, asking the Lord where he could go to find ore to make tools.

Nephi's attitude allowed him to set the right priorities and work hard while Laman and Lemuel's attitude did not. We know from Nephi's account that there were many tasks to be done, such as hunting and gathering food and caring for the campsite and the young. When the Lord gave a commandment, Nephi set that as his top priority and set to building the ship.

Successful people follow Nephi's example and set priorities. You will notice the word "prior" in "priorities." Basically, which things should come prior to other things? You can't possibly fit in everything you need and want to do, so the only way to figure out how to get the most important things done is to prioritize.

The first question is, what is our first priority? The scriptures tell us to "seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you". (3 Nephi 13:33) When the scripture says "these things", it is talking about all of our physical needs and wants, such as food, shelter, clothing, and money. These scriptures provide us with a good starting point. We need to put the things on our list first that help us seek the kingdom of God. Here are some of the things you can focus on to help me towards that goal.

- * Studying the Scriptures and the words of the latter-day prophets.

- * Finding ways to serve my family and those around me

- * Discovering and developing talents. (Can easily be tied into service as well)

- * Building meaningful relationships with family, friends and the Lord

It can be easy to say that our list of things to do is just too full. Modern life seemed to demand business as the

rule and free time as the exception. Demands of school, work, extracurricular activities and friends can take center stage, crowding out other worthwhile things we have been instructed to do. Like Nephi, we need to make our first priorities the Lord's commandment.

The scriptures provide many examples of people who had too many things for them to do and still accomplished great things. I want to highlight some of these amazing people to show how they prioritized the things in their lives.

Alma the Younger

Here's an example of a person whose entire "To Do" list at one point in his life consisted of things that were trying to break down the Kingdom of God. He and his friends are a prime example of what not to do with your time. If you ever find yourself being compared to pre-conversion Alma the Younger, you probably need to repent right away. Luckily, after his conversion he started right away to make up for lost time and become one of the greatest missionaries in the Book of Mormon.

First, his story proves that it is never too late to start good habits in regards to how you spend your time. Though they started out as "the very vilest of sinners" (Mosiah 28:4), they were able to start their lives over again and become great missionaries and forces for good. Alma and his friends had to work hard to repair the evil they had done by misusing their time, but they did it. I bet they wished many times while they were trying to clean up the mess they had made that they had never made it in the first place.

After his conversion, there came a time in Alma's life when he was extremely busy. He was both the Chief Judge over the Nephites and the Chief Priest of the Church. That's like having the job of President of the United States and

Prophet at the same time. Both were very important jobs and needed to be done. There came a point, however, when he saw that he couldn't do both justice. I'm sure he took his question to the Lord and pondered long and hard about his priorities. Finally, he decided that it was more important for him to devote his time to helping people's spiritual needs than helping their temporal needs.

He gave up his post as Chief Judge and started devoting all of his time to his work in the Church. Through his efforts, many people were converted and strengthened in the Church, and we have some of the most powerful sermons and stories of the Book of Mormon such as the conversion of many of the people in Ammonihah and the Zoramites.

There may be a time in your life when you have to choose between two or more good things to do with your time. In that case, follow Alma's example, and take your question to the Lord. He will help you decide where He needs you most to help build up his Kingdom. We are not expected to do every good thing that can be done, just to do what is in our power.

I once found out how true that is. I am a teacher and I decided once that I'd like to try to train to be a seminary teacher. Becoming a full-time Seminary teacher is a long and competitive process. I went to classes for a year and taught in actual seminary classes, but in the end, I was not selected. On the last day of class, however, the teacher said something that stuck with me. He said, "If you aren't selected to serve the Lord in the Church Educational System, you will serve the Lord just as well somewhere else."

I've tried to keep that in mind when thinking about my priorities. If you don't succeed at one thing, perhaps the Lord wants you to do something else. Instead of letting discouragement sink in, be on the lookout for the next,

even-better opportunity the Lord could be preparing to put in your path. I eventually got a job in a German Dual Language Immersion program, where I helped young children grow up bilingual. Those who know more than one language can be powerful missionaries later in life. I feel like the Lord has used me in this capacity that still furthered the Lord's work.

Nephi (From Third Nephi)

During a session of prayer on his garden tower, Nephi suddenly found that he had an audience. After preaching to them for a time, he became embroiled in a murder plot in which the chief's judge brother had murdered the chief judge. It was a long and complicated affair in which Nephi exposed the guilty man and gained respect in the eyes of many of the people.

Afterwards, Nephi found himself alone, and was given an incredible promise from Heavenly Father: that He trusted Nephi so much that he gave him power to ask that anything be done and it would be done. Though Nephi was surely drained in body and spirit after these events, he turned from going home and went back right away to preach to the people.

"And behold, now it came to pass that when the Lord had spoken these words unto Nephi, he did stop and did not go unto his own house, but did return unto the multitudes who were scattered about upon the face of the land, and began to declare unto them the word of the Lord which had been spoken unto him, concerning their destruction if they did not repent²."

Sometimes, we have long days and are very tired. We get home at night, and want to do nothing more than to watch

2 Helaman 10:12

TV or play video games for hours, or even take a nap. There's nothing wrong with taking a little break, but sometimes, we need to make sure we get the important things done, even if we are tired and don't want to do anything. Even if you have to force yourself, get the most important stuff checked off of your list and you'll have the peace of mind to rest even better.

President Dalin H. Oaks

It is incredible to hear the general authorities describe their duties, and it stands to reason that only with divine help can they accomplish all that has been set before them. I hope that a glimpse into the lives of a few of these men and women may serve as an example of what it means to be "anxiously engaged" in the Lord's work. The following accounts show President Oaks took his stewardship of time seriously.

"Time is a stewardship," says President Oaks, "and my goal is simply not to waste any time." This involves using a telephone rather than calling a meeting. If a meeting is necessary, he makes it a short one. He always carries things to read with him. Since warm water "stimulates my mind," he saves projects to think about in the tub. Driving is another place for thinking and dictating notes. Watching television is also a time for reading the paper. On the principle that a horse runs faster on the way back home, he does his work first, knowing that there will always be energy to play.

He also groups activities. "It's faster for me to make all of my phone calls at once, to read through all of my correspondence and then dictate all of the answers, to save a stack of reading—with the most intensive material on top. It's hard for me to change mental gears. June's different.

She loves to have three or four jobs going all at once. That would drive me crazy. I make lists. She doesn't. And it's been good for our children to see two strong models of two different styles³."

He learned early to recognize his capacity for work. Throughout his undergraduate career at BYU, he worked thirty hours a week at the radio station. Toward the end of his time there, he also held a second job, as office manager for a moving company.

After he received a bachelor's degree in accounting, it was on to the University of Chicago Law School. (By now the Oaks family included daughters Sharmon and Cheri.) He borrowed money for school, and threw his energy into studying. He graduated with honors and edited the school's prestigious law review in his final year.

"When Dallin was in law school, he would be gone every day from seven in the morning till eleven at night," except Sunday, June Oaks says. She recalls hearing him say: "There are a lot of guys over there at the law school who are smarter than I, but none works any harder."

"Those were hard times," she reflects. And yet she managed to avoid the mistake of self-pity. She accepted the necessity of being self-sufficient and developing her own interests.

Dallin Oaks' industry and scholarship won him the opportunity to serve as law clerk for Chief Justice Earl Warren of the United States Supreme Court after graduation⁴

Elder Oaks always had a lot to do, but that didn't

3 Lavina Fielding Anderson, "Dallin H. Oaks: The Disciplined Edge," *Ensign*, Apr 1981, 32

4 Don L. Searle, "Elder Dallin H. Oaks: 'It Begins by Following the Other Apostles,'" *Ensign*, Jun 1984, 15

discourage him. He looked for ways to change his habits so that he could save as much time as possible, such as never calling a meeting when a phone call would do, or grouping all of the phone calls he needed to make together. Always having something on hand to read is another great habit, as you never know when you will have a spare minute while waiting for a bus, or standing in line at a store.

Are there any habits in your life that you could change to save time? Find out what style works for you. Even Elder Oaks and his wife June use different habits to keep things organized. It is simply important to take the time to find out what works for you.

Joseph Smith Jr.

Many people know and recognize Joseph Smith for his work as the first Prophet of the Latter-day church. However, beyond this incredible work Joseph Smith took on an incredible number of other tasks that make his short time on earth even more impressive. Also remarkable to note are the wide range of things which Joseph attempted in his life, with various degrees of success. His well-rounded character is an example for us all.

Though he was a proponent of seeking spiritual learning through scripture study and prayer, he also advocated obtaining as much secular learning as possible as well. The Lord advocates this in the pages of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the

earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—

“That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you⁵.”

He established the School of the Prophets in which he instructed many of the other saints in a variety of subjects, including world languages, including German, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.

He made himself a figure not only in church government, but in civil government as well. While living in Nauvoo, he acted as the mayor of the town, which was at the time the second largest in the state of Illinois. He even put himself up as a candidate for President of the United States and created media for a campaign so that the Latter-day Saints would have someone they could believe in to vote for.

One of his least successful ventures was starting a financial institution called the Kirtland Safety Society. This venture eventually failed, but surely taught the prophet much. He was not afraid to try other things and to learn from his mistakes.

Above all, he was still a husband and father. He had many children, and was sometimes even seen playing ball or stick pulling with young people. With all his responsibilities, he still took the time to have fun and to spend time with his family.

In Doctrine and Covenants 135:3, John Taylor who would become the third President of the Church, summed up the accomplishments of Joseph Smith’s relatively short life in a

5 Doctrine and Covenants 88: 78-80

tribute written after the martyrdom.

Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; has sent the fulness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain. He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated⁶!"

A barely-educated, simple young man who grew up in a farming family became the person who did all of these remarkable things, becoming only second to the Savior in moving forth the work of the Lord in only 38 years of life.

You do not need to be highly educated or extraordinarily talented to do incredible things for the Lord and his work. Joseph Smith was simply willing to give of his time and put the Lord first in his life and the Lord made him into what he needed to be. The Lord can and will do the same for you.

Jesus Christ

Finally, Christ provides the perfect example of a person not being weary in well-doing. Even when he was tired or

6 See Doctrine and Covenants 135

had been working a long time, he still made time for the people who were important to him.

A perfect example of this comes when a group of children approach Christ, and the disciples not wanting him to be bothered, attempt to take the children away. Christ, however, stops them and says, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven⁷."

Jesus' disciples probably thought that Christ had better or more important things to do than to spend time with the children. Christ changed their perspective, showing them that to seek the Kingdom of God first means to surround yourself with those who are like the Kingdom of Heaven.

We should then look at the ways that Christ spent His time and figure out how we can incorporate these types of activities as much as possible into our own lives.

He spent his time serving and uplifting others.

During his time in Jerusalem, Jesus took the time to heal others both physically and spiritually. Such accounts are varied, and He gave to all, regardless of whether they thanked him or not, such as in the case of the ten lepers. He fed the five thousand physically before feeding them spiritually. He healed Jarius's daughter, raised Lazarus from the dead, turned water into wine, calmed the raging sea, and many other wonderful miracles.

During His visit among the Nephites, Christ took the time to let every person take the time to approach Him personally, and then took the time to heal everyone that was sick. Though these activities must have taken a great deal of time, Christ obviously felt that they were worthwhile, and through his example He invites us to spend our time in lifting, healing and serving others. "...for the works which

7 Matt. 19: 14

ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do⁸.”

What we do, however, doesn’t have to be miraculous or earthshaking. Often, we only need to look to our own families or those with whom we associate at school or work to find people to serve. As the scriptures tell us, “If ye have desires to serve, ye are called to the work⁹.” If you have the attitude of wanting to help others, the Lord will help you find opportunities.

He spent his time teaching others.

The scriptures can hardly mention Christ without drawing attention to what He is teaching, either through direct lesson or through example. He took every opportunity to teach, even unexpected times. When a group of children had gathered around him and His disciples came to turn them away, Christ said, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven¹⁰.” It might have seemed like a simple encounter, but Christ took the time to show his disciples what kind of people they were going to have to be to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

He taught in worship services, he taught on the streets, he taught in the homes of those He visited. Sometimes, he taught in stories or parables that were clear to those who were in tune with the Spirit, such as the parable of the Prodigal Son or the Lost Sheep. Sometimes he taught by his actions, such as when he dispersed the crowd around the woman who had been taken in adultery by saying “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her¹¹.”

8 3 Nephi 27:21

9 Doctrine and Covenants 4:3

10 Matthew 19:14

11 John 8:7

He did not condemn her, but admonished her to “go, and sin no more¹².”

He spent time worshipping Heavenly Father.

When Mary and Joseph found Jesus again after losing track of him on a trip, they discovered Him in the temple discussing the scriptures. This shows that even from a young age, the Savior immersed Himself in the scriptures and discussed them with others. The scriptures also record His earnest prayers to our Father in Heaven in which He both expressed gratitude and asked humbly for the desires of His heart. As our perfect example, we ought to do as He did and make time for both prayer and scripture study in our lives.

The Savior’s mortal life was a relatively short one, but in that time, he did more meaningful things than anyone who has ever lived. He brought to pass the Atonement and gave us a perfect example of how to spend our time.

12 John 8:7



THE DAY IS STILL YOURS.

Keep Going Before the Sun Sets

You have just read Chapter Two, “Anxiously Engaged.” The full book continues with practical, scripture-centered ideas for using your time well, overcoming procrastination, setting priorities, planning wisely, and making room for what matters most.

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