

# For the Strength of Youth

## Friends

**Opening Song:** I'm Trying to be Like Jesus (p. 78 Children's Song Book)

**Opening Prayer:**

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:40 "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

**Thought:** Just think! With Jesus as your friend, you may receive increased strength and testimony that will uphold you against temptations when they arise. Choose your friends wisely. They will provide the foundation of spiritual strength that will enable you to make difficult, extremely important decisions correctly when they come in your life. Above all, be a friend of the Savior. - Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen, of the Seventy

**Lesson:** Read the section on Friends in the For the Strength of Youth pamphlet.

Ask the following questions: Why are friends so important? How do you choose your friends? What do you do if your friends are making wrong choices?

I have attached a couple of articles you may want to read and choose examples to share from. You may have examples from your own life that you can share as well. It can be powerful to share real stories that you witnessed or have heard from people you know. Talk about ideas on how to make the right choices in choosing friends. If you are living righteous you will attract righteous friends.

Here is the story I am asking my husband to share:

When he was a senior in high school, he had to make a choice. His friends were doing things that they were not supposed to. They were drinking, smoking and doing things that he knew were wrong. He usually asked to be dropped off at home before they went somewhere to do these things but sometimes he would get caught in a situation that he had to get out of. He had to make a choice. He could either keep these friends and keep fighting this battle or find new friends that had the same values as he did. He chose to make new friends. He doesn't regret his choice and he knows that he went on a mission, got married in the temple and has a great life because he chose to do what is right. It wasn't the easy thing to do. He spent some time trying to find new friends and a place to fit in, but in the long run he was much happier.

**Lesson from the Scriptures:** Share the story of Alma the Younger and his friends the sons of Mosiah. Talk about how they influenced others, how the others may have felt when they were being mocked, and what happened to Alma. You may also want to share his father's side of the story – how he prayed for him and asked the Lord to help, how he worried and wanted him to make the right decisions, and how he loved him and was happy when he finally made the right choice. Share your testimony with your children and talk about how important it is to have good friends that help you make good choices.

**Object Lesson:** Take two pieces of plain white paper, and smear one with a dark jam (e.g. grape). Explain that the 'clean' paper represents them (hopefully), and the 'dirty' paper a friend who does wrong things and gets into trouble.

Ask "What will happen when I rub the two pieces of paper together? The possibilities are:-

1. The clean paper will stay clean, and the dirty paper dirty.
2. The clean paper will make the dirty one clean. The dirty paper will make the clean one dirty."

Most will realize that the third possibility is the correct one. Demonstrate this by rubbing the papers together. Conclude by saying "This is usually what happens if you choose a friend that does wrong things – they'll rub off on you."

**Activity :** Make a list of what attributes a good friends would have as well as qualities that a bad friend may have. Talk about how they can use that list to make good friends. (see below for list)

**Closing Prayer:**

**Treat:** Chocolate covered pretzels.

You will need:

Large Pretzel Sticks (you can buy the long thick pretzels at the grocery store)

Chocolate Chips Melted

White Chocolate Chips Melted

Dip the large pretzels in milk chocolate and white chocolate. Let them sit for a few minutes and then enjoy! You may want to start this before the lesson so they are ready to eat when you are finished.

You can also dip strawberries, pineapple, shortbread cookies, and so much more! Yummy!

# MAKING GOOD FRIENDS

Make a list of good qualities and bad qualities in a friend.

Decide which you would rather have and why.

Qualities of a good friend:

Qualities of a bad friend:

# Who Is a True Friend?

Elder Malcolm S. Jeppsen  
Of the Seventy

A year ago when I was called as a Seventy, a nonmember patient of mine asked me an interesting question. She wanted to know if a Seventy was higher or lower in the Mormon church than a bishop. When I asked her why she would ask such a question, she replied that she was interested to know just what I'd be doing. She said she understood that in the Mormon church, every calling from a bishop on down was all work, and everyone from a bishop on up was all talk. This may be the reason for my wanting to *talk*, tonight, to you Aaronic Priesthood brethren.

Many of you during your lifetime have had a pet that may have come to a tragic end, with sad moments following. Some years ago while traveling on a family vacation, we acquired a rather unusual pet, which was a small, friendly, not-too-long, water snake from the beaches of Puget Sound. My children named him Sneaky, as short for Sneaky Snake.

Early one morning while the family was off walking near the motel, Sneaky somehow got out of his cardboard box. When the room attendant entered to tidy up the room in our absence, Sneaky, seeing the open door, headed for it. She slammed the door shut in absolute terror, and since Sneaky got caught in the door, we might say he came all apart.

It was the end of Sneaky, the beginning of a nervous breakdown for the girl attendant, and a time of weeping and disappointment on the part of our children.

Now, there is a lesson here. The attendant had erroneously perceived Sneaky as something less than the friend he was.

We've heard from Bishop Hales tonight about true friends. May I add a thought or two about them? All of us may have been at one time or other confused as to just who our true friends are. Let me give you an example of what I mean as it relates to the Word of Wisdom.

Some years ago in my medical office I had occasion to examine a young man who was approximately the same age as you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. I was puzzled by what seemed to be his medical problem.

After several tests and x-rays, I found *myself* amazed at the diagnosis. He was an alcoholic at his young age.

He told me that he had begun having alcoholic drinks at a very early age due to the encouragement of his so-called friends.

I wondered to myself, Are friends that encourage us to break the Word of Wisdom really our true friends?

Phrases like “just try it once” or “everybody does it” or “who is going to know” are all too commonly used. If they were true friends, would they pressure us that way?

Indeed, in life it may be difficult to tell at times just who our true friends are. Were my young patient’s friends the kind he should strive to keep? The room attendant perceived Sneaky as a potentially harmful enemy instead of a friend, and yet the reverse was true.

A true friend of yours and mine gave us the Word of Wisdom through his Prophet Joseph Smith.

Medical research tells us that by far the majority of young people who begin using alcohol or tobacco products do so with the urging of their friends.

The Lord has told us that neither strong drinks, meaning alcoholic drinks, nor tobacco are for the body and that they are not good for man.

Let me talk to you rather plainly, my young friends. As a physician, who for forty years has witnessed firsthand the truth of those statements in the Word of Wisdom, I testify that they are true.

The beautiful scenes in magazine advertisements are not what the end results of cigarette smoking prove to be. This advertising in these magazines and newspapers is very deceptive. The end results are not nearly so pretty. They are oxygen masks and intravenous medication and literally hours of pain, misery, and gasping for breath.

Remember that approximately 5,000 people a day quit smoking, and another 1,000—every single day—die from cigarette smoking, or one in every ninety seconds, in the United States alone. This means that each day 6,000 people either kick the habit or kick the bucket. No wonder the cigarette companies spend billions to keep their unwitting customers buying their lethal wares.

I had my own comment printed and pasted on all cigarette advertising in the magazines of my medical office waiting room. It states:

“Many of the ads in this magazine are misleading, deceptive, and are a rip-off. For example, smoking does not make one glamorous, macho, or athletic. It does make one sick, poor, and dead.”

How true this is.

Smoking is indeed becoming less and less popular as the heavy smokers one by one pass on. If an industrial accident killed everyone in the entire Salt Lake Valley, the nation would be horrified. That, however, is the scale of the annual tobacco disaster. One out of every six people that die in the United States dies as a result of smoking.

Almost inevitably, the user of hard drugs begins first with alcohol or tobacco, both of which are drugs of the highly addicting kind themselves.

In addition, the real damage from the use of these things is usually even more severe to our spiritual lives than it is to our physical bodies. Now, would a true friend be one to entice you to use them? I'm sure he wouldn't.

Look closely at your friends. Cultivate good friends. They're so valuable. Remember the Savior valued his friends so highly that he would lay down his life for them. He had this to say about friends:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." ([John 15:13](#).)

And then he went on to say:

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." ([John 15:14–15](#).)

Friendship is an extremely important part of your life. Someone has said a true friend is someone who makes it easier to live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many of you young men will be, at some time or another, approached by one or more of your "friends" who will entice you to do something you know you should not do—it might be something you know deep down inside will hurt your parents and your Father in Heaven. It may be violating the Word of Wisdom, for example, or committing moral transgression, which is so displeasing to the Lord.

"No one will ever know," the so-called "friends" will tell you. "Besides, what difference will it make?"

My young friends, you don't have to reject your friends who are on the wrong path; you don't even have to give them up necessarily. You can be their caring friend, ready to help them when they are ready to be helped. You can talk to them and lift them and bear your testimony to them. Lead them by example.

But don't ever be led into displeasing your Father in Heaven by your friends who might ask that as a condition of being your friend, you must choose between their way and the Lord's way.

If that happens, choose the Lord's way and look for new friends.

Especially important are our friends in times of need when we may have feelings of loneliness or despair. True friends will stand by you. When the Prophet Joseph Smith was incarcerated in that terrible Liberty Jail, he was told by the Lord:

"Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands.

"Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job." (D&C 121:9–10.)

Knowing his friends would stand by him was a great assurance to Joseph Smith during this trying experience.

Some of the most trusted and loving friends you will ever have on this earth are your parents and family. It may be that only when you have children of your own will you fully appreciate the bonds of love that exist between parents and children.

You'll find as you grow into manhood that advice from your parents as to who should or should not be your true friends will be very reliable and valuable to you.

Cultivate our Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ as your friend above all. Being his friend will without exception lift your vision and bring you comfort, guidance, peace, and, yes, even the companionship of other true friends.

I know something of his love, his compassion, his mercy, and the help one may receive from him and the Holy Spirit. He has promised that by obedience to his word, you "shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures." (D&C 89:19.)

Just think! With Jesus as your friend, you may receive increased strength and testimony that will uphold you against temptations when they arise.

Choose your friends wisely. They will provide the foundation of spiritual strength that will enable you to make difficult, extremely important decisions correctly when they come in your life.

Above all, be a friend of the Savior. You, my young men, are the honored holders of a royal priesthood. If you have not done so previously, now is the time to let him know you consider him your true friend and that you will be a true friend of his.

That we may all qualify to be his disciples, his friends, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Quest for Heaven

by Lara Mayo Bangerter

In Georgia they're keeping heaven on their minds. And that means keeping their eyes on standards.

"I'll give you ten bucks to taste a beer tonight," one boy coaxes.

"Yeah, I'll add 20 to that," another prods.

"Come on, you've got to at least try it once," a third boy encourages. "You don't even know what you're missing."

The offers are beginning to grow into a nice sum of money. Everyone is watching.

"I know you know I'm Mormon," responds Sara Traina, 14, of the Jonesboro Georgia Stake. "I won't do that." But the boys persist in a half-serious, half-teasing manner.

What would you do?

Last summer at a Young Women's conference, LDS girls from Georgia had the opportunity to spend five days discussing situations like this and learning how to handle them. The girls came up with a list of things they have found make their lives on earth happier and their quests for heaven a little easier.

*Make up your mind what to do in difficult situations before they arrive.* For Andrea Bennett, 17, of the Douglas Georgia Stake, turning down alcohol and R-rated movies at her junior/senior beach weekend wasn't hard at all. "A lot of people were drinking, but when they asked me if I wanted some I just said no. I didn't even have to think about it. I had made up my mind long before that happened I wouldn't do those things. So when the offer came there wasn't even a doubt in my mind what my answer would be. It would just happen. And it did."

*Hang Mormonads in your locker.* Ginny Pettyjohn, 16, of the Sugar Hill Georgia Stake, says, "They remind me to always be good; plus they are a good influence on others when they see them."

Last year Ginny's locker was next to the locker of a guy known to drink a lot. He also liked to keep up on the latest Mormonads in Ginny's locker. "One day a Mormonad about keeping the body and soul clean really seemed to intrigue him," she says. "He kept looking at it but didn't say anything." The very next day he told Ginny a couple of his friends had come over the night before and asked him to go out drinking with them. But he thought about the Mormonad and decided not to go.

*Make good friends.* Cathy Geigle, 15, also of the Sugar Hill Stake, has moved a lot and has had to make new friends many times—member and nonmember alike. "It is always so much fun to go out with Mormons," she says. But right now those occasions usually occur when there is a church activity, since there are not a lot of LDS students in her school. But that hasn't kept Cathy from making good friends. "If you have a good, clean spirit and are living righteously, you will be attracted to other good spirits, even if they aren't Mormon," she says.

On Cathy's first day of high school, she met Kelly. "We started talking, and I could just tell from the way she talked and acted we were a lot alike. Our spirits are alike. She's been a good friend ever since."

*Pick a role model for yourself.* "Joseph Smith is my hero," says Anh Nguyen, 14, of the Atlanta Georgia Stake. "He was looking for Christ. He worried about finding the true church."

And Anh can relate. It wasn't too long ago her family came from Vietnam to the United States, and the missionaries found them. Then she, too, had to find out for herself what the truth was. She says she prayed just like Joseph did, and she received an answer.

"Joseph makes me want to stand up for what I believe like he did," Anh says. "His example gives me strength."

*Read your scriptures.* "It's one of the best ways to come closer to Heavenly Father and to have your problems answered," says Doralee Solomon, 17, of the Douglas Georgia Stake. "You can always go to your scriptures for help and get answers." At one time Doralee had a friend who was smoking, and she didn't know what to do about it. She didn't know whether she should talk to the person, the bishop, or the parents. But after reading, praying, and listening to her Young Women lessons, she knew she needed to confront her friend. "I know reading my scriptures helped put me in tune for an answer," Doralee says.

*Pray.* Before the Young Women's conference, Allison Buytendorp, 17, of the Roswell Georgia Stake, didn't want to go. But her mother suggested she pray about it before she made up her mind. Allison prayed and felt she should go. Now she knows why. "I loved it. I felt spiritually renewed afterwards, and it made me want to go to seminary. Now I want to learn more about the scriptures. I know I was where I was supposed to be because I prayed. It just feels good to know Heavenly Father is always there for you to help you out."

Remember Sara from the beginning of this story? She was standing up for what she believes in. She never took the guys up on their offers. She politely refused and didn't go to the party where the alcohol was being served. All her response did was gain her more of their respect. "I stand up for what I know is right the best I can," Sara says, "and because I'm consistent I'm respected."

Tucked away deep in the Bible Belt, where most people are strongly religious, these girls communed in a peaceful 4-H camp halfway surrounded by a lake, an hour and a half outside of Atlanta away from the worries of the world. They were able to listen to talks and programs of their choice on missionary work, dating, sharing talents, trusting each other, and preparing for the Second Coming, to name a few. They stayed in cabins and enjoyed conversations easiest held with girls of their own religion—conversations about subjects like returning to live with their Heavenly Father someday. Now they know there are many LDS girls out there going through the same situations they are, and they know what others are doing to make their quest for heaven a little easier. They can take those ideas home with them and use them in their own lives.