

Dear Frieda

Young adults write letters of counsel to a young adult woman who is questioning whether to move in with her boyfriend.

In a world of shifting values, staying true to our standards is critical to spiritual survival. Sincerely committing ourselves to honoring our covenants can strengthen us against temptation.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of a decision that can help us stay true: “Joshua didn’t say choose you next year whom you will serve; he spoke of ‘this day,’ while there is still daylight and before the darkness becomes more and more normal. (See Josh. 24:15.) . . . Act now, so that a thousand years from now, when you look back at this moment, you can say this was a moment that mattered—this was a day of determination.”¹

Frieda,* a young adult member of the Church in Europe, faces just such a moment of decision. She says she wants to be married in the temple someday, but she is contemplating moving in with her nonmember boyfriend. She plans to repent and return to Church activity after a few years and marry someone else in the temple, but for now, she says, she just wants to have a good time.

Young adults in Scandinavia were invited to write letters to Frieda. They didn’t know her real name or where she lived, but they shared

testimonies and real-life experiences to help her make the correct choice. Following are excerpts from letters Frieda’s peers wrote and agreed to share.

Decide to Marry in the Temple

Before my friend Erika* moved in with her boyfriend, who is not a member of the Church, she assured her family that she’d stay close to the gospel. But since Erika got into the situation, it is hard for her to get out. She thinks it’s simply too painful and difficult to get back on the right track.

Unfortunately, I have many friends who, like Erika, have fallen away because they thought they could stay in control of themselves even while living outside Church standards. In reality, ignoring the guidelines makes it easier for Satan to gain control.

I learned from my friends’ experiences. When I was 17, I decided to gain a rock-solid testimony because I knew I’d need it if I wanted to survive spiritually. Gaining a strong testimony and coming to know that Heavenly Father has a plan for me are what saved me.

There is one thing I’m sure of: I’m determined to marry in the temple. The temple is the only way to true happiness and the only way we



If you and your boyfriend are so crazy about each other, take him to the temple grounds. Tell him about your dreams of an eternal marriage. Tell him about your faith. If he is not interested in learning why temple marriage is so important to you, he's not for you. Hold on to your dream of temple marriage.

Steen Hylander, Denmark

I know it can be almost irresistible to be with the one you love. I also understand that sometimes we just want to do the same things as everyone else. It is easy to think that there is time to repent later on, but there's not. As we continuously disregard what the Spirit tells us, we lose the ability to hear Him—as I did. If it continues, we will no longer feel that what we're doing is wrong and we will not feel the need for repentance.

Name withheld

My testimony to you is that our Shepherd can supply every need. My Shepherd has supplied my need when I have yielded to His ways.

You can be complete. You can be eternally happy beyond description because Jesus Christ atoned for you.

Anna Palm Gerrbo, Sweden

I've done things I'm ashamed of. I believed Heavenly Father would forgive me, and I feel He has. But I cannot forgive myself. I always thought that forgiving myself would be easy, but I have come to understand that it is not so.

Name withheld

I know how it feels to be in love with someone and not able to pursue the relationship because it would not lead to a temple marriage. It is hard—heart-breaking even—but this temporal heartache is nothing compared to the eternal sorrow you would have from breaking your covenants with your Father in Heaven. There is hope, and something better is waiting.

Marie Bertilson Olsson, Sweden

Today as I am looking for a wife, my sins from the past haunt me. I wish I could say to my future wife: "I loved you even before I met you. I saved myself for you." But I cannot. I would not wish for my worst enemy to go through the pain I have felt over the last three years as I have repented of my sins. I wish I'd had the strength to stay close to God and keep His commandments in the first place.

Name withheld

can live with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ someday. If I want to go to the temple, I *need* to follow the guidelines of the gospel. I've decided to live the gospel because I know it's the right thing to do, even though it might be hard.

Take some time to figure out where you're going, and think about where your choice today will take you tomorrow.

Amanda Bernskov, Denmark

Find What You Really Need

I think more than anything in the world we all want to be loved. But true love is so much more than mere attraction. It is trust and wanting what is best for the other person. It is unselfish and warm and sometimes sacrificial, meaning we are willing to give and suffer for it if we have to.

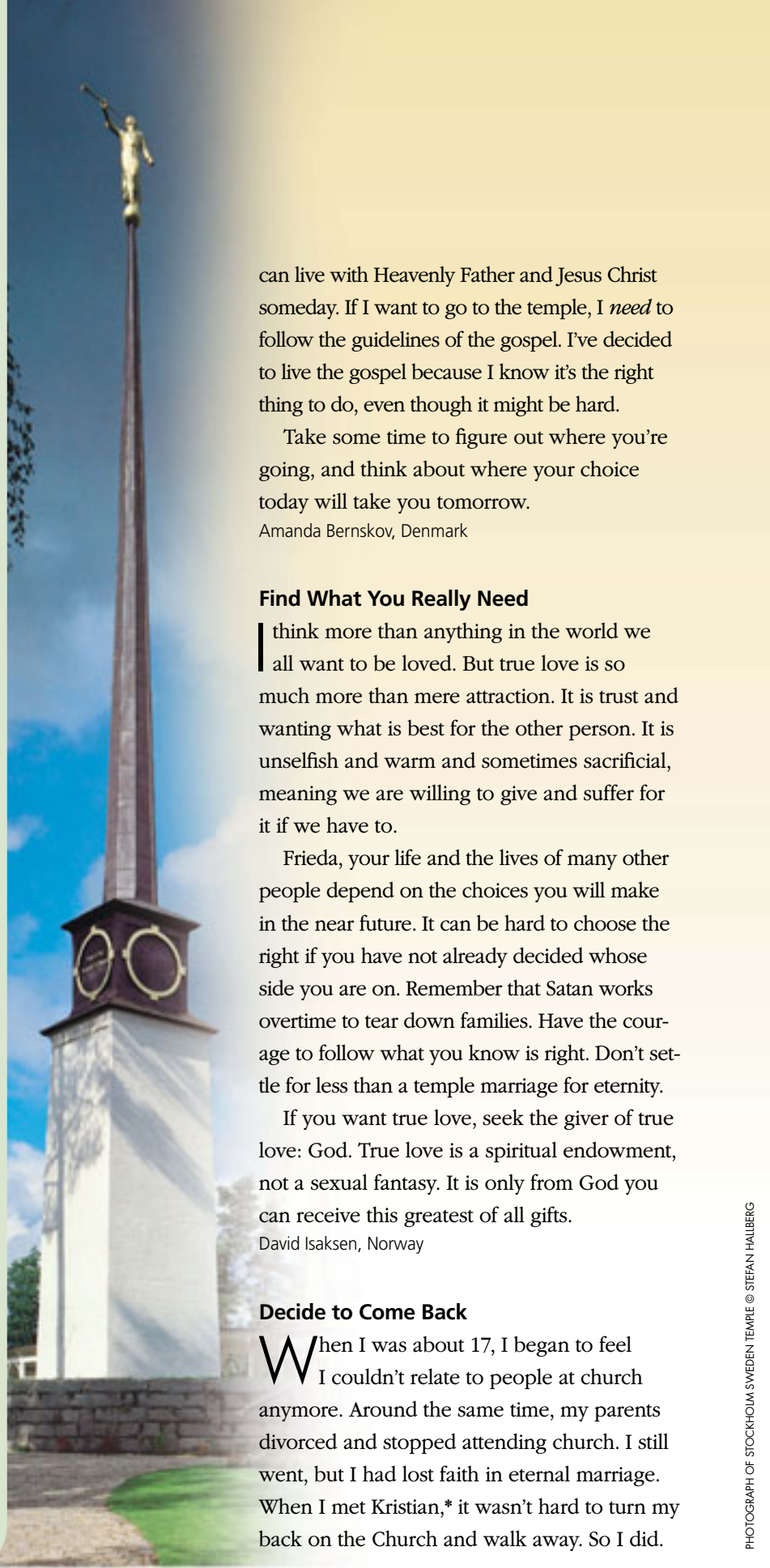
Frieda, your life and the lives of many other people depend on the choices you will make in the near future. It can be hard to choose the right if you have not already decided whose side you are on. Remember that Satan works overtime to tear down families. Have the courage to follow what you know is right. Don't settle for less than a temple marriage for eternity.

If you want true love, seek the giver of true love: God. True love is a spiritual endowment, not a sexual fantasy. It is only from God you can receive this greatest of all gifts.

David Isaksen, Norway

Decide to Come Back

When I was about 17, I began to feel I couldn't relate to people at church anymore. Around the same time, my parents divorced and stopped attending church. I still went, but I had lost faith in eternal marriage. When I met Kristian,* it wasn't hard to turn my back on the Church and walk away. So I did.



PHOTOGRAPH OF STOCKHOLM SWEDEN TEMPLE © STEFAN HALLBERG

We lived together for almost four years before we split up. I wanted to start going to church again, but I was afraid everybody would ask all sorts of questions. I went to visit my sister. In her ward no one knew me or how long I'd been away from the Church, and during my stay I started going to church again. I continued going in my own ward when I returned home. The first Sunday I was really scared, but people were just happy I was there.

I knew I had to choose a side; I couldn't keep walking with one foot on the Lord's side and one on the world's. I started meeting with my bishop. He has helped me understand the Atonement. It's been a long road of repentance—at times a very difficult one. I'm still in progress, and I still have a lot of things to learn, but I'm happier now. I know I chose the right when I decided to come back to the Church. It was about making up my mind about what I felt and what I knew was right and then just going for it.

Name withheld

Stand Firm in Your Righteous Decisions

Some time ago a friend of mine was facing the same decision you are. My friend Sarah* always had a strong testimony of the Church and its truths. Since we were young, both Sarah and I had a great desire to get married in the temple.

When she was 17 or 18, she met and started dating a young man. He had a great personality and was very easy to like. He wasn't a member, but in the beginning it didn't seem like that was a problem.

Eventually, she started to think about how life would be if she married him, even though it wouldn't be in the temple. She thought:



YOU ARE NEVER ALONE

"We do not set the standards, but we are commanded to teach them and maintain them. The standard remains abstinence before marriage and total fidelity in marriage. However out of step we may seem, however much the standards are belittled, however much others yield, we will not yield, we cannot yield. . . .

"If you, our youth, feel alone, remember there are millions of you in the Church now. . . . Wherever you are—in school, at work or play, in the military—you are never alone."

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Standard of Truth Has Been Erected," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 26.

"Maybe it can work; maybe we can compromise. Maybe he will change in time. Maybe I can bring him into the gospel."

She thought a lot about this, and she cried and she prayed. She knew deep inside that she had always wanted temple marriage, but her feelings for her boyfriend made it hard for her to decide. In the end she broke up with him. It was one of the hardest things she had ever done, but she put her trust in the Lord.

In the spring of 2007 she married a wonderful man. They are now sealed to each other for time and eternity. She's truly happy she decided to wait until she found someone she loved and could marry in the temple.

If you don't know what kind of decision to make, pray about it until you do know. Put your trust in the Lord. I know from watching Sarah—and from my own life—that when we do, He blesses us. ■

Anna Lindgren, Sweden

**Name has been changed.*

NOTE

1. Neal A. Maxwell, "Why Not Now?" *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 13.