

## “How can I convince my friends that our standards are really about freedom and not a burden?”

**T**here are so many choices in life; some are right, and some are wrong. Heavenly Father has given us standards to help us make good choices. When we live the standards, we are blessed and protected (see Romans 8:28; Mosiah 2:41; D&C 130:21). When we don't live the standards, we lose out on those blessings and can be hurt spiritually and sometimes physically.

Those who live gospel standards are not giving up their agency: they are *choosing* to do what will bring them blessings and inner peace. They know that disobedience will only bring problems into their lives—problems they *choose* to avoid.

Church standards, like those found in *For the Strength of Youth*, are based on doctrines, or eternal truths. For example, our bodies are the temples of our spirits (see 1 Corinthians 3:16). A standard based on that doctrine is the Word of Wisdom: take care of your body by eating good foods and avoiding addictive and harmful substances.

Therefore, as you live the standards, you are living in harmony with eternal truths that Heavenly Father has given us. “And the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). ■

### Obedience Brings Freedom



As I strive to hearken to the words of the prophets, I always receive physical and spiritual blessings from God. I then feel more confident in making choices, and my friends recognize that I paid the price of obedience to obtain this greater freedom.

Testify boldly of the blessings you enjoy as an obedient member of the Church. You will convince your friends by your word and example that living your standards does not restrict your agency, but making poor choices often does. The inspired standards point us in a direction to make good choices, allowing many doors of opportunity to remain wide open. My friends often desire that same freedom.

*Elder Madsen, 21, Indonesia Jakarta Mission*

### Explain That You Are Happy



I too was questioned by my friends, classmates, and even my teachers in school about our standards. They said that our Church standards are so strict. Instead of arguing with

them, I asked for their time to share with them all about our Church standards. I simply showed them that I am very happy and comfortable living with our standards. I also did not use our standards as an excuse to miss some school activities. Instead, I suggested some ideas for the school activities to follow our Church standards. I also shared with them the advantages of following those standards.

*Ailyn L., 19, Davao, Philippines*

### Invite Your Friends to an Activity



Heavenly Father granted agency to all of His children. Our standards differ from those of the world, and because of this, many times we think we cannot do certain things.

But we have the power to choose, and we should always choose what is best for us so that we do not injure our bodies and our spiritual growth.

Invite your friends to come to a Church activity, and show them how we can do various wholesome and entertaining things without leaving behind our standards. Try to always be in tune with the Holy Ghost, and it will be easier for you to make correct decisions and be a good example.

*Amanda V., 18, Curitiba, Brazil*

## Do What Is Right



Last year I had some friends who did not respect my standards. They told me that I was boring, that my standards didn't let me be free or have fun. I pondered, prayed, and read the scriptures so that the Holy Ghost would be with me and give me more strength. I then decided to tell my friends that I had fun in another way—not smoking, not drinking alcohol. These standards give me a lot of freedom, more than they have, since they are tied to alcohol and tobacco. After telling them this, they understood me. But even so, I decided to change friends. I was alone for some time, but later on I did find some friends with standards like mine, and now I feel good. Heavenly Father is going to bless you if you do what is right.

*Belén G., 15, Colonia, Uruguay*

## Standards Are for Our Welfare

I also have friends who have that kind of perception toward our Church standards. At first I felt somewhat hesitant to explain, but I realized that they won't understand if we don't tell them. Let them know that standards are given to us by the Lord for the welfare of our souls so that inappropriate influences will not injure us. Standards are like instructions during an examination. If you will not follow them, you will surely fail. And just like in an exam, you can choose to follow or not. In due time your friends will appreciate how immovable you are

in keeping your Church standards, and you will surely be blessed.

*Cleem L., 18, Tanjay, Philippines*

## Commandments Protect Us

Commandments that might be viewed as restrictions are actually protections. God has given guidelines to protect us in all aspects of our lives (physically, emotionally, and spiritually). We know a physical law of safety is not to touch a hot stove. Sure, you can touch the stove, but then you will have to live with the consequences of a burn. If you choose to watch bad movies or break the Word of Wisdom, you will have to live with "burns" that are painful. Temptation causes us to shift our focus from the Lord to temporary gratification, overlooking the consequences of our sin. When we make a choice, we choose the consequence, even if we didn't plan on it. As my mom always says, "When you look to break the commandments, you do have agency and can get your way, but

it won't be what you want." Keeping the commandments will bring me the true happiness I want.

*Joseph G., 13, Utah, USA*



## COMMANDMENTS ARE FOR OUR HAPPINESS

The commandments are not a burden or a restriction. Every commandment of the Lord is given for our development, progress, and growth. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: 'God has designed our happiness. . . . He never will institute an ordinance or give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed.' "

**Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "If Thou Wilt Enter into Life, Keep the Commandments," *Ensign*, May 1996, 35.**

## NEXT QUESTION

"I feel so alone at church. How can I learn to feel included?"

Send your answer by March 15, 2010, to:

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Responses may be edited for length or clarity.

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