



When GOOD FRIENDS *Falter*

“**S**he and I were good friends, and we always had the same standards. But then . . .”

Does that sound familiar? We’ve all experienced it or seen it happen—a good friend starts to do things that aren’t right and encourages others to join in. Some of the toughest questions you may face are “Should I talk to my friend about this behavior?” and “Should I stop spending time with my friend if this behavior keeps going on?”

There isn’t one answer that fits every situation, so finding a solution will take faith and courage to heed the counsel in *For the Strength of Youth*: “As you seek to be a friend to others, do not compromise your standards. If your friends urge you to do things that are wrong, be the one to stand for the right, even if you stand alone. You may need to find other friends who will support you in keeping the commandments. Seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost as you make these choices” ([2011], 16–17).

Here are just a couple of examples of youth who dealt with friends who started urging them down the wrong path.



If a friend who once had high standards slips ever lower, what should you do?

Letting Go

“I had a friend who began to encourage me to disregard my standards, and for a while I listened. I finally decided that enough was enough and I wasn’t going to let her influence me anymore. I prayed for strength and guidance, and because I was again living the way I know I should, I received the guidance I asked for. I eventually stopped hanging out with her, and in the months that have passed, my testimony has grown so much. Who you are friends with *definitely* makes a difference in your ability to live the way the gospel teaches.”

Margaret Denise K., 17, Utah, USA

Keeping Hope

“At the beginning of middle school, I met another member of the Church who was very spiritually strong. He was an Aaronic Priesthood holder and seemed like a good example of someone who lived the gospel. We became good friends and talked a lot about the Church. As we got older, his self-worth and ability to uphold his standards started to deteriorate. Though we were still somewhat friends, he associated with others who were not very good influences. I would hear him curse frequently and joke about immorality and other inappropriate things. Several of his friends

were atheists and would talk rudely about ‘Mormonism.’ Later, he became addicted to tea and, at age 13, got a girlfriend.

“I didn’t know what to do. I tried telling him in a friendly way of my concern for him several times, but he brushed me aside. Still I didn’t give up. I upheld my standards and tried to be an example for him. I didn’t want to stop being his friend, but as things got really bad, that path started looking better and better. Eventually, I got on my knees several times in prayer for his safety.

“Then his father got a job in another state. This upcoming move caused my



THE INFLUENCE OF FRIENDS

“Friends help to determine your future. You will tend to be like them and to be found where they choose to go. Remember, the path we follow in this life leads to the path we follow in the next. . . .

“The friends you choose will either help or hinder your success.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “In Harm’s Way,”
Ensign, May 1998, 47.

friend’s eyes to be opened to all he had done. All I had tried to tell him for three years, he suddenly understood. During the next few weeks, he worked hard to undo his past as much as he could. When I spoke to him, he thanked me for my example and willingness to not give up on him. He was the happiest he had been in years and truly understood what it means to be a Latter-day Saint.

“For any friend who falters, I think it’s best to alert him of his actions. But if, like my friend, he won’t listen, don’t give up. This is probably when he’ll need a real friend the most. Keep your standards, even if he tempts you to do otherwise. Pray for him. I know that you can gain strength through this, and that you won’t be alone in your efforts. It’s easy to feel weak and out

of place when we stand for good. But through the weak, the Lord will do a mighty work.”

Collin Z., 16, Wyoming, USA

Again, there’s no one answer to the question “Should I stop hanging out with my friend?” But one thing is certain: always pray for the Spirit’s guidance and be willing to heed it. Your basic attitude should be to care. Care about your spiritual well-being and that of your friend. Care about your example and influence on your friend. Care about your friend’s influence on you. And as you have faith in Heavenly Father’s loving care, you’ll get the answers you’re looking for. ■

