

By Stephen W. Owen hen I was 14, I made a decision that Young Men General President changed everything. I was walking

down the street with some friends on

For the past couple of years, my friends had

started experimenting with cigarettes and alcohol.

It was slow at first, just a once or twice sort of thing, but by the time this Friday Came, they regu larly smoked and drank when we were out alone. I thought that as long as I just kept myself clean, I could still have a good time with my

friends. Of course; my parents could tell some

a Friday night, and we were having a good time,

just as we usually did. But tonight there was a problem, and I knew I had to do something about

it. I just wasn't sure I could.

friends could tell that my parents didn't approve of them. That left me in the uncomfortable middle: I found myself repeatedly defending my friends to my patents and defending my patents

to my friends.

At a CROSSROADS

so there we were that Friday night, walking

down the street. My friends started drinking and

smoking, and I finally realized how uncomfortable

Surenues and a many reanson non encountered

I walked to the other side of the road. My friends laughed at me. They called me a "goody goody." And they said that if I stayed over

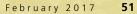
there, I wouldn't be their friend any more.

Well, We got to the end of the road. My friends

3 km) from home, and they were the longest

turned left, and I turned right. I was two miles

50 Liahona



marry and kept each other on the strait and narrow path all the way to the temple and after. All these years later, we're still good

friends. And it all statted with a simple

Phone call, right when I needed it.

At least, that's how I thought it had all started. Imagine my surprise when, years later,

I found out that it was my

mom, working behind the

scenes, who had orches-

trated our friendship!

Soon after I lost my

old friends, she

noticed something

was wrong with

me, so she

A Mother's Influence

two miles I'd ever walked. You might think I

devastating.

A New Friend

I found myself

repeatedly defending

my friends

to my parents

and defending

my parents

to my friends.

Would feel good about making such a courageous choice, but in that moment, I felt anyful.

Seven causes war as and any area any a realization that I had lost my friends and that I Was now alone. For a 14-year-old, that was

Not too many days later, I got a phone call

from a member of the Church I knew named

Dave. He asked if I wanted to come to his

house on Saturday night. He also invited me

getting better.

to join his family for dinner the next day. It

sounded like a lot more fun than I was cur-

rently having with no friends, so I agreed.

Dave and I had a good time together-

and, of course, there were no cigarettes or

and a course, were not no estancines of the alcohol. As I listened to Dave's dad say the

prayer at dinner, I felt so good. I began to

think that maybe-just maybe-things were

Dave and I became best friends. We played

football together, went to school together,

choices must be made personally, individually. Often our decisions make us feel isolated, even lonely. But our Heavenly Father did not The decisions I made at key moments blessed and guided my entire life. But those decisions were inspired and empowered by called Dave's mom to see if they could figure send us here alone. my mother's prayerful efforts and by Dave's out a Way to help. Dave's mom then coaxed Dave into contacting me and inviting me over. The test that we call earth life is different Sometimes promptings to help someone in from the tests we often take in school-where need come from the Holy Ghost; sometimes support and friendship. You have to keep your eyes on your own test they come from an angel-such as a mother and you aren't allowed to help your neighbor. who "speak(s) by the power of the Holy No, in this test, we can and must help each other, in fact, that's part of the test. So while Tve often wondered how life might have been different-for me and for Dave-if my your choices may at times take you to the nom hadn't perceived my struggle and taken lonely side of the road, please know that all Ghost" (2 Nephi 32.3). along that road are others who have made action. Doesn't that remind you of the Way their own difficult decision to be on the Lord's Heavenly Father blesses us? He knows about side. They will walk with you, and they need our every need, and He sends "blessings from above thru words and deeds of those who love" ("Each Life That Touches Ours for All along the road OTE 1. Thomas S. Monson, "Choices," Ensign of Liahona, 1. Thomas S. Monson, "Choices," Ensign of Liahona, May 2016, 86. you to walk with them. are others who have made their own diffi-Good," Hymns, no. 293). cult decision to be on Ultimately, we are all responsible for our own choices. As President Thomas S. Monson May 2016, 86. the Lord's side. They We Walk Together has said repeatedly, The choices we make will walk with you. determine our destiny,"1 and many of those 52 Liahona