



By Elder
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Of the Seventy

FINDING STRENGTH *in Good Friends*

I was born and raised in a small city in Chile. When I was 12 years old, I saw the missionaries for the first time, and I was curious. Then one day a classmate at school told me that he and his family had become members of the Church. He invited me, and I attended all Sunday meetings and Tuesday activities for several months.

Our branch was new, and because I attended practically from the beginning, everyone thought I was a member. After six months I told one of the missionaries I was not, because I thought the missionaries were interested only in families.

The missionaries tried to involve my family, but my parents and siblings were not interested. They invited me to be baptized, but since I was 12, I needed my parents' permission. I thought my father would say I needed to wait until I was 18, but he said, "I have seen my son wake up every Sunday morning while his brothers and sisters keep sleeping, dress up in his best clothes, and walk to the chapel. If my son will be responsible with this decision, you have my permission." I couldn't believe it. I was in heaven in that moment. So I was baptized the following day.

Being a member of the Church provided spiritual blessings, of course. But it also gave me some wonderful

The friends you choose can have a big impact in your life, as they have in mine.



friends. Around the time of my baptism, several young men my age began coming to church, and we formed a very close-knit group. We started attending every meeting and activity together.

When I was 17, I left my city to go to college. Three of my friends decided to go to college in the same city, and we lived together. This was a great blessing because we could support and protect each other. We encouraged each other to go to church. We also had home evening among the four of us, and sometimes we invited other students who were members of the Church. All of those years at the university, we strengthened each other. Forty-five years later, those young men are still my best friends. Although we live in different parts of the world, we are always in contact. All six of us served missions.

That's why I encourage you to have good Church friends in your youth. Trust in them and help them. A good friend will always be willing to help you, will deserve your trust, and will never want to hurt you. I'm not saying your friends need to be perfect, but they should respect your standards and values. Being a good friend is not always about having

fun. It includes being sincerely interested in the well-being of your friends and being brave enough to tell your friends when they are doing something that's not right.

I admire you youth of the Church. Times have changed a lot since I was a young man. This period of time on earth is fantastic, but at the same time it's dangerous. To make it through you must be "continually holding fast to the rod of iron" (1 Nephi 8:30) and following the counsel and advice of your parents and Church leaders. Developing good friendships will help you to do this.

Some of you may feel alone because you are the only member of the Church in your school or your class. But you are not alone. Our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father in Heaven consider each one of you a treasure, and They are eager to help you throughout your life. Your true friends will support you in drawing closer to Them.

The scriptures say that the "same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there [in heaven], only it will be coupled with eternal glory" (D&C 130:2). I can only imagine how it will be when we meet together in the next world, surrounded by glory, in total happiness with our friends and our families. That will be a wonderful time, and it will be forever. **NE**

