

The two guys in front of me were quietly comparing answers to the test we were taking when one of them turned to me and asked, “What did you get for number six?”

DID YOU

My heart sank to the very bottom of my shoes. The words didn't register at first, with my head pounding so hard. “What was that?” I stammered, all the while looking for an explanation.

“I said, did you cheat, Robbie?” The question came from one of my best friends, Darla. We'd grown up together and were now in our junior year of high school. Over the years we'd always talked about everything, but at this moment she was the last person in the world I wanted to talk to.

The day had started harmlessly enough. I got up, got dressed, went to school—all the usual things. Eventually it was time for French class to start. I'd forgotten it was a test day. I groaned inwardly as our teacher passed around the exams.

“Now class,” she said, “I have some things to do, but I expect you all to be finished when I get back.” With that, she left the classroom. Everyone in the class was silent as we struggled to pull knowledge from the dark recesses of our brains. It wasn't working for me.

After some time, two friends sitting next to me glanced up from their papers and looked around. Josh and Justin, two guys I had always admired and wanted

approval from, started comparing answers. They whispered back and forth, silently chuckling as they went through the questions.

Then it happened. Justin turned to me and asked, “What did you get for number six?” Almost without thinking, I started sharing my answers with them. An empty, guilty feeling lined my stomach, but I ignored it. I laughed along with them, pretending to be happy I had outsmarted the teacher and was going to get a good grade without studying.

After some time the teacher came back and collected the tests. She gave us some busy work and left the classroom again. Everyone started talking about the test they had just endured. Most of the class members weren't very happy with how they had done, but Justin and Josh wore big smiles.

“I think we did just fine, didn't we guys?” Josh said smugly. Justin laughed and nodded in agreement.

“What do you mean?” one of the other students asked.

“Oh, just that Justin, Rob, and I here pooled our resources. That test was a breeze with three doing it together!” The others didn't say much but gave us dark looks and went back to their work. That is, all but one



CHEAT?

went back to it.

There I was, Darla in front of me, her question aimed right at my heart. What could I tell her? I had cheated on a lousy French exam just to please my friends. I could see the look on her face, as if she didn't want to believe the possible answer. I respected Darla more than almost anyone. She wasn't a

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member of the Church but was active in her church and had strong values. She knew I was a member of the Church and respected that. We agreed on a lot of issues and found strength in each other's desire to do good. Usually.

"Yeah," was all I could say, lamely.

"Oh, Robbie," was all she said as she turned back to her work. I can't describe how much the disappointment in her voice and on her face hurt me. I had compromised my standards just to fit in with a couple of guys and ended up disappointing someone I really admired. Guilt washed over me. I kept thinking I had hurt the image of the Church in her eyes. I apologized to her for what I'd done and talked to the teacher afterwards. She wasn't pleased either, but we worked things out.

I'll never forget that day. I now know it isn't worth compromising your values just to please other people. Since then I've tried to be honest and am much happier with myself. Thankfully, I can say I haven't repeated that mistake again. I've felt the difference in doing what's popular and in doing what's right, and I know what makes me happy. **NE**



"The Lord . . . wants you to train your minds and hands to become an influence for good as you go forward with your lives. And as you do so and as you perform honorably and with excellence, you will bring honor to the Church, for you will be regarded as

a man or woman of integrity and ability and conscientious workmanship. Be smart. Don't be foolish. You cannot bluff or cheat others without bluffing or cheating yourselves."

President Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Prophet's Prayer and Counsel for Youth," *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 5.