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# FRIENDS & WHĀN

Learn more about friendship  
in the "Friends" section of  
*For the Strength of Youth*.





*Choose your friends wisely, and remember that you need never feel alone.*

I was born in the small rural town of Te Aroha, New Zealand, which sits beneath a beautiful, bush-covered mountain that became my playground. *Aroha* is a Maori word meaning “love,” and it reminds me of my feelings for my family and friends as I grew up. Apart from my brothers and sister, there were only four other LDS students in my school, so I made friends who were not of my faith but who had similar values and helped each other to be true to what is right.

As a young boy I learned that if you begin to wander down a forbidden path, a true friend puts up a stop sign and helps you do a “U-turn” to get back on the straight and narrow path (see 1 Nephi 8:28).

### FAMILY FRIENDS

Many New Zealanders use the Maori word *whānau* (pronounced *’fah-no*) to define family. The word not only embraces parents and children but extends to grandparents,

aunties and uncles, cousins, and even the cousins of cousins. “We’re all *whānau* here,” means, “We’re all family.” The feeling of *whānau* is one of love for one another, caring about each other, serving one another, and never feeling alone. You don’t have to live in New Zealand to have *whānau*; wherever you live, do all you can to build loving, caring family relationships.

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” reminds us that “successful . . . families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities” (familyproclamation.lds.org). Look at each of these attributes and determine what more you can do to strengthen your family.

Your parents should be counted as treasured friends in whom you can confide and look to for guidance. I encourage you to listen more attentively to them. Many



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GOOD FRIENDS ARE  
FOUND WHEN SERVING  
AND INTERACTING  
WITH OTHERS.

kneel at their bed asking for the Lord to protect you and help you make wise choices. I also encourage you to be a friend to your brothers and sisters. My twin brother, Ross, and I were best friends as we grew up, and that bond has remained strong all of our lives. When disagreements come, remember the words of Solomon, “Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul” (Proverbs 16:24).

## CHOOSING FRIENDS

Choosing good friends is a big responsibility, as friends can have an eternal influence on you and the decisions you make. When I think of that responsibility, I think of the words of Jacob, “O be wise; what can I say more?” (Jacob 6:12). You would be wise to realize that choosing friends should not be based just on physical appearance or popularity; these have little to do with the quality of a lasting friendship. As the word *make* implies, there is work involved in *making* friends. Try hard not to be the silent person in the corner of the room wondering why nobody is your friend. Good friends are not normally found in secluded corners; they are found while serving and interacting with others. Remember, you are not alone in your quest; others are looking for friends too, so with patience and careful thought,

like-minded young people find each other and lasting friendships are *made*.

## WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR IN A FRIEND?

Imagine you are at a restaurant and you are presented with a menu. You read with pleasure all that is being offered and then choose what you would like to have. You have a similar opportunity in choosing your friends. No, they are not literally on a menu, but you can observe potential friends and their attributes and decide whether you would enjoy their company and how they could lift you and how you could lift them. I hope those on your friend “menu” would include people developing Christlike attributes such as those found in chapter six of *Preach My Gospel*. You may ask yourself how closely they match the statements made in the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet. Choose friends with like values and you will find yourselves building one another rather than competing with each other.

Friendship is a two-way street. You will need to be a listener as well as a talker, a giver as well as a receiver, a friend who consoles as well as a friend being consoled. Good friends care about one another, serve one another, share uplifting experiences with one another, have



wholesome activities together, comfort one another, and encourage each other.

Beware of “virtual” or online friends, as they are no substitute for real friends. Secluding yourself in your bedroom on your computer, iPad, or phone in the world of Facebook or Snapchat or spending hours in an Internet café playing games robs you of the social skills needed to make real friendships.

## YOU NEED NEVER FEEL ALONE

No one should ever feel alone, and yet there are many who do. When you see someone alone, acknowledge them with a smile and an encouraging word. Be a true Latter-day Saint and include them in your social circle. Invite them to sit with you at lunch or in assembly. To reach out to the lonely is to reach up to God. Certainly the Savior’s invitation to “feed my sheep” (John 21:15–17) is an invitation to reach out to others, including those who struggle to make friends and to “feed” them with kindness. Be a positive class or quorum member who does not gossip, snicker, or ridicule, but one who lives to lift others.

Because you have a Heavenly Father and Savior who love you, you need never feel alone. In those challenging moments in life, remember that your Savior is your saving and redeeming Friend. He knows you by name, and He descended below all for you and can lift you above all that troubles you. When you truly understand He is your Savior, you’ll truly understand He is your Friend (see John 14:14–15).

As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you have received the Holy Ghost to bless your life. One of His roles is to be a comforter. As you keep the commandments, you are entitled to the comfort that comes from His still and small yet reassuring voice. When you have the Holy Ghost in your life, you need never feel alone.

Finally, remember that an Apostle of the Lord, Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, assured you that “as you keep the commandments and pray in faith to see the Lord’s hand in your life, . . . He will open your spiritual eyes even wider, and you will see more clearly that you are not alone” (Apr. 2015 general conference). **NE**



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## THE FIRST STEPS IN MAKING FRIENDS

1. **Know that you are of worth.** Someone would like you to be *their* friend. You have attributes of worth to offer to others.
2. **Choose wisely.** You actually get to choose your friends. Ask yourself, “Who out of all these people do I think I would be most comfortable with?”
3. **Ask the Lord to help you.** The missionaries ask Heavenly Father to prepare people so that they’ll accept them when they meet. You can do the same. Ask the Lord to prepare someone to be your friend and to prepare you to be their friend.
4. **Be patient in the process.** Making friends takes time. It’s a process, so be patient with others and with yourself.