



## IMPRESSING MY “BEST FRIENDS”

**W**hen I was about halfway through seventh grade, my mom told my siblings and me that she had felt prompted to remove us from public school and teach us at home. I didn't think much would change.

I gained new friends in the home-school group and strengthened friendships I had at church, but I still thought that my old school friends were my “best friends.” Toward the end of eighth grade, I started to contact my old friends more and more, and as I did, I realized just how

much we had all changed. Whenever I spoke to them or texted them, the feeling I got was not a positive one, and I constantly felt the pull of the adversary tempting me to ignore Church standards. I started trying to impress my old school friends so that I could be accepted back in their group.

Eventually, I realized that trying to impress others was not making me happy and that spending time with those who shared my standards *did* make me happy. I stopped trying to impress my old friends. Though

I soon lost touch with them, I no longer felt the adversary's pull on me. I felt free and happy that I had released myself from the spiritual prison I had created.

I believe in the importance of surrounding yourself with people who support you in living righteously. Now I am blessed with good friends who help me live the standards in the *For the Strength of Youth* and who encourage me to build my testimony.

**Allie V., Nebraska, USA**

## NO ONE IS PERFECT

Once I received a text from my Young Women leader that really changed my perspective. My brother had just gotten married and I had posted a few pictures on Instagram. My leader said:

“I’ve been thinking about you. I see comments that people make on your Instagram. They say things like ‘you’re gorgeous,’ and ‘you look so perfect.’ Jill, please remember, NO ONE is perfect, and you don’t have to be.”

Then she talked about the things that really matter and wrote:

“Being ‘gorgeous’ has nothing to do with how you look but with who you are. Look up 1 Samuel 16:7. Don’t pay too much attention to what people say about how you look. Listen to those who care about your heart.”

This was the best advice I have ever received. It made me think about how important it is to remember the things that really matter and to not get consumed with the things that don’t matter. And it also helped me to not let things like people’s comments about my looks affect how I view myself, but instead to listen to the people who care about my heart.

**Jill H., Utah, USA**

## I DIDN'T WANT TO SERVE A MISSION

I’ve always been a member of the Church. I was baptized, received the priesthood, and attended meetings regularly. But I started making choices that set me on a path away from the gospel.

When I neared the age for missionary service, I said I wasn’t going to go. I thought nothing could change my mind.

Except that I had so many positive influences in my life. My parents encouraged testimony-building activities. My Church friends loved me and never judged me. And my home teaching companion would often tell me he thought I would make a great missionary. Gradually, I started to believe him.

As time went on and positive influences in my life pushed out the negative, I began praying personally. I didn’t kneel at first, but the more I practiced, kneeling at my bedside became a special time for me. I began to feel nearer to the Lord than I ever had before. I felt a seed of testimony start to take root.

One Sunday in Gospel Doctrine class, I felt impressed to pray and ask for forgiveness for my past mistakes. I bowed my head right where I was and I prayed to Heavenly Father.

Then, I asked the question that I had been dreading: “Should I go on a mission?” The answer immediately came to my heart and mind: *Yes*.

It was so powerful that I was unable to hold back tears. I am so grateful for that experience. I learned that even when we push the Lord away, He will never give up on us.

**Hans K., Idaho, USA**

