

Holding to the Rod after High School



Young adulthood is full of transitions: leaving home for the first time, moving from the Young Men or Young Women organizations to elders quorum and Relief Society, serving missions, attending school, beginning full-time work, and learning to get along with roommates, to name just a few.

Here, young adults share experiences about the people, programs, places, and principles that have made a difference in their transitions.

Service—with or without a Calling

During my freshman year of college, I did not have a calling. I really wanted to serve and have an opportunity to meet people, so not having a formal calling was frustrating. But I decided I just had to find other ways to get involved in my student ward. I made a sincere effort to go to all ward activities and support the ward members who were organizing them. At these events I made a point of being social and reaching out to others. I went to the temple to do baptisms for the dead. I frequently offered to help my roommates with their callings and responsibilities. I got to know people through our family home evening group. I learned that I wasn't the only one looking for a friend, so I tried to extend myself and be that friend to everyone.

Later, during my sophomore year, I was called to be the Sunday School secretary and then a member of the compassionate service committee. These callings have helped me grow in my testimony as I have counseled with others, learned to rely on the Spirit for direction, and come to know the members of the ward.

My experiences during these two years taught me the importance of reaching out to other people, some of whom may feel as I did that first year. Putting others first has helped strengthen the love and unity I feel for people in the ward. I've also realized that showing love to people is something we can all do, regardless of our formal callings.

Jackie Spjut, Kentucky, USA

Simple but Consistent Patterns

I wish I could say I have experienced a miraculous Alma-the-Younger-like turning point in my life, something I could point to as *the* event that solidified my testimony, but I have had no such event. My experience of personal conversion has been more subtle yet miraculous in its own way. Simple things like reading the Book of Mormon daily, attending seminary, praying daily, and serving others in Aaronic Priesthood quorums solidified my testimony, little by little, and motivated me to stay true to what I knew. Growing up I had no idea how much of a difference these small things were making, but they have added up over time to make a big difference and serve as a foundation for my adult life, a foundation on which I can continue to build.

Michael Silva, New York, USA

Friendship

When I started attending Relief Society, I felt as though I didn't have anyone to sit with or talk to because my mom had a calling that required her to be elsewhere during that hour. But one day a woman in my ward, Sister Brown, thanked me for bearing my testimony. Then she asked if I would have dinner with her. Since that first act of kindness, we have become good friends. To befriend people and to be befriended has really helped me stay strong in my testimony.

Gennese Hawks, Utah, USA

Teaching and Learning the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Shortly after I graduated from high school, my bishop called me to be a Sunday School teacher for a class of young teenagers. I couldn't think of a calling that would be more intimidating, but I accepted it.

The calling turned out to be a great experience. Not only did my knowledge and testimony of the gospel increase (which was great preparation for a full-time mission), but I also got to know my ward better. I started associating with the young men and women I taught, as well as other adults who were involved in directing and teaching Sunday School. I came to know and appreciate people whose faces I'd seen in the ward for years but who I hadn't gotten to know because they were a different age.

I was also blessed with an increased understanding and appreciation of the organization of the Lord's Church. As I planned lessons and found myself truly interested in helping class members, my eyes were opened to how much service I had been receiving from ward members my entire life—some of which I had never really noticed. As a result I was motivated to serve diligently because I had been blessed by the service of others, and I grew to love my ward at a deeper level.

Brady Hogan, Utah, USA

A Second Home at Institute

After graduating from high school in Cairns, Australia, I moved approximately 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) to Brisbane to attend university. Moving so far from home at 18 years old was a huge step, but finding a second home at institute helped me in the next chapter of my life.

The “Institute Lounge” is in the city, close to several universities, particularly to the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Gardens Point campus, which I attended. When my parents helped me move to Brisbane, my mum and I attended a welcome day at the Institute Lounge, and I could tell right away that it was a place that was warm, inviting, and comforting. It was a place I could feel the Spirit.

The Institute Lounge played a critical role in my transition. There, I formed friendships with other young single adults, institute instructors, and the Church Educational System and welfare missionary couples whose offices were at the lounge. This was crucial because university can be a very daunting place for a young person, especially when, as a Latter-day Saint, you’re in the minority. And although my family showed me their love through many long-distance phone calls, I was grateful that when I just needed to see a friendly face, there was always someone at the Institute Lounge to offer one.

Moreover, having a place to go during breaks between classes was helpful. I found that in attending institute classes, I received an extra spiritual lift and guidance. Studying the gospel provided me with strength to stay firm in my testimony during my time at university.

I am thankful for the programs of the Church that support young adults. I felt the love of my Heavenly Father through them, which has helped me navigate the sometimes-overwhelming aspects of this stage of life.

Jessima Munro, Australia

A Balanced Life

Putting Heavenly Father first and staying busy have helped me to remain active in the Church.

College life and living away from home helped prepare me for a mission by giving me an independent experience. During this time I was able to meet new people and accept a calling in a new ward. I participated in ward activities and stuck to a schedule.

Now that I have served a mission, my testimony continues to grow as I live a balanced and busy life full of spiritual and secular learning. Serving as a Young Men’s leader in my ward has helped me to share the gospel and to strengthen the testimonies of others, which in turn strengthens my own. In serving, I feel I am part of a ward family, which includes many people with whom I have built lasting relationships.

Attending institute classes has also enriched my life in many ways. I have been blessed with numerous opportunities to reach out to friends I have made at the institute in their time of need, and they have always done the same for me. We learn and grow as we help each other.

Having a full school schedule and a good part-time job keep my mind occupied and always learning so I don’t get into trouble. Young adults face a challenging world full of opportunities and temptation that may seem like better options than what spiritual matters have to offer. By staying occupied with good things, I don’t leave room for temptation.

As long as I keep my life balanced and busy, as well as always putting God first in all I do, I know I will remain active and have a strong testimony.

Dallin Lewis, Utah, USA

Reaching Out to Others

I try to reach out to people in my ward by being friendly. I find it nice when someone knows me by name, so I try to extend the same courtesy to others. I appreciate it when someone calls to remind me about family home evening or to ask me to say a prayer in class on Sunday; it helps me feel like I am known. Because of this, I make a special effort to remember people’s names and the details of what they tell me. By doing this, we can all make each other feel wanted and welcome.

Evann Howlett, Oregon, USA



A Testimony to Rely On

I attend college in Ohio, but my family lives in another state. Although they still encourage me and help me make good choices, I cannot rely on them for spiritual strength. I am not around them—or other members of the Church—very often, but having a strong testimony has helped me stay active. I am grateful to my parents for providing a home where I could build a testimony that would help me in times to come.

My testimony includes knowing that no matter what circumstances surround me, I have a Heavenly Father who is watching over me and is willing to help me. I know that I am never alone.

I also find that sharing my testimony helps strengthen it. As part of my calling as a ward missionary, I go out with the elders and help teach the gospel. With this regular opportunity, I can strengthen my testimony and, I hope, help others as well.

Scott Butler, Ohio, USA

Good Influences

Not many members of the Church lived where I grew up. So I learned early in my life the importance of surrounding myself with good friends who would help me maintain my standards.

Now as a student at Brigham Young University, I am surrounded by members of the Church. And while I know I have to rely on my own testimony and not on others' light, surrounding myself with good friends has blessed my life and helped me maintain high standards.

For instance, the transition from Young Women to Relief Society might have been difficult had it not been for good friends who were enthusiastic about attending Relief Society. Their excitement has rubbed off on me and helped me enjoy my membership in this organization. I have been amazed by what one person's optimistic attitude can do for an entire group.

I am grateful for friends who are loyal to the gospel and to me, and for our opportunity to strengthen each other.

Melinda Williams Golden, Kansas, USA ■