

FINISHING THE COURSE

In high school I ran cross-country and distance track. I was never very good, but I enjoyed running and worked hard. One day my team was scheduled for a cross-country meet that took place on a particularly hilly course. I'd been practicing hard, so as we lined up in our starting positions, I said a silent prayer to Heavenly Father to ask if He would bless me with success in accordance to my hard work.

The gunshot sounded, and we were off. The first mile was flat and I was feeling pretty well, so I began to run even faster. Surely this was going to be my finest race! Then came the first hill. I ran up as fast as I could and came tearing down the other side. But then there was another hill. This one was even steeper, and I quickly lost my momentum. I started feeling like I might fall down the other side. I held it together, but when I came around the next corner, I saw multiple hills to come. Before long I became very tired. By mile two, other runners continually passed me. I became frustrated with myself for taking the first part of the race so fast, using all the energy that I needed now. I wanted to give up and walk off the course.

I decided to say another silent prayer. I asked my Father in Heaven



to bless me with the ability to finish the race. Then the thought came, “Sometimes life gets hard, and it’s all you can do to keep running, but in the end you’ll be glad you didn’t give up and walk.” I was able to finish the race, and while I didn’t run the amazing race I’d wanted to, I gained something that has helped me ever since—a sense for how it may feel to endure to the end.

Paul said to Timothy, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished

my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). I learned that at the end of my life I want to say, as Paul did, that I fought the good fight, that I finished my course, and that I kept the faith. I now know that things don’t always work out perfectly, but even in something as small as a high school cross-country meet, the gospel of Jesus Christ helps give us the strength to endure to the end.

Kyle C., Arizona, USA



BE NOT AFRAID

My mom and I went to my first day of high school. The parents had a meeting while the students went on a tour of the school building. I was walking alone in the back when some kids started asking me a lot of questions about the Church. I was silent and didn't say anything, and so they started to cuss and mock me. They said that Joseph Smith was a false prophet who had stolen the gold plates. I was so angry and sad that, even though I was new and didn't know any of them, I stood up and shared my testimony. I told them that the Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ.

When I finished, they all looked at me without speaking. One young woman was crying. After the tour she came to me and asked questions about the Church. I invited her to church, and we have been reading the Book of Mormon together. Since then, no one has mocked what I believe. That night I prayed and thanked my Heavenly Father for helping me to be strong and be able to have courage to share my testimony with my friends. In Joshua 1:9 it says, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

Teisa M., Tonga

VIDEO GAME DECISION

In my freshmen year of high school, I came across a popular new video game that was exceptionally violent. After a few times playing it, I began to enjoy it. I'd come home from school and plop down lazily on the couch to play, and I'd tell my younger siblings to go away because the game wasn't appropriate for them.

It didn't take long for the effects of my decisions to start happening. Slowly, I lost patience, love, peace, and the Spirit. My thoughts became violent and my temper became high. I was rude to people and pushed away kind acts. This happened for way too long.

One day I was reading the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet in the "Entertainment and Media" section

when I realized what I had been doing. I'd been ignoring the warnings and silently been suffering for it. That day I repented and promised never to play games like that again. It was not easy in any way. I hadn't realized my addiction to the awful game, and I have been nothing but blessed for quitting. I have become closer to my family and to my Father in Heaven.

I also learned a valuable lesson about keeping myself pure. The Lord wants us to become like little children (see Matthew 18:3), so if something is inappropriate for a little child to play, then it's inappropriate for me.

Sydney M., California, USA

THE POWER OF GOOD MUSIC

Has a song ever touched your heart and strengthened your testimony? It has mine—during one family home evening when we were singing a hymn. Normally I don't pay much attention to the words I'm singing, but that day I was listening. I heard the words "when Jesus shows His smiling face, there is sunshine in the soul" ("There

Is Sunshine in My Soul Today," *Hymns*, no. 227). When I heard these words, I felt a calming peace come over me. I realized that Jesus always loves us and is always willing to comfort us if we do what He wants us to do. I know that the power of good music can impact our lives for good and help us become better people.

Michael W., Georgia, USA