

FAKE Friends and Fool's GOLD

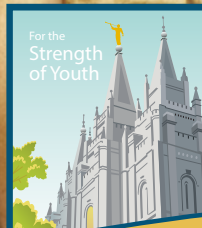
True friends are way more valuable than popularity.

Wouldn't it be awesome if you could walk into the school cafeteria and everybody cheered your name once they saw you? "Sit by us!" each table would clamor.

At first glance, that probably sounds like the ideal way school ought to be.

Now pretend there's a catch. Imagine that no matter which table you joined, you wouldn't find even one person whom you felt like you could open up to with a problem on your mind. Not one person who actually cared about you—just a roomful of people who want to be seen with you.

Still sound fun?



FRIENDS

THE VALUE OF TRUE FRIENDS

There's a big difference between real friends and phony or fair-weather friends. As explained in *For the Strength of Youth*, "Everyone needs good and true friends. They will be a great strength and blessing to you" ([2011], 16).

Notice that the counsel doesn't say, "Everyone needs LOTS of friends," just *good and true* friends.

Good friends, even a handful, make life sweeter. (Especially friends from your family!) When you need somebody to talk to, good friends are there. When you want to put a major dent in the food supply of an all-you-can-eat buffet, friends can help there too.

Developing meaningful friendships is always a two-way street.

As explained further in *For the Strength of Youth*,

"To have good friends, be a good friend. Show genuine interest in others; smile and let them know you care about them" (16).

Walking together, biking together, attending Mutual activities together, encouraging each other in hobbies and goals—all of these and much more are ways good friends can add spice to life and keep us strong in the gospel.

Even so, it can still be tempting to feel not "popular" enough (no matter how many friends we might have) and to try and change our social

standing. And that's almost always a waste of energy.

Kind of like gathering fake gold.

FOOLED YA!

Throughout history a common mineral known as iron pyrite (also referred to as "fool's gold") has dashed the hopes of those who spent precious time and energy trying to gather it.

Pyrite is similar in color to gold but has a vastly different worth. One ounce of gold is usually worth well over \$1,000, while you'd be lucky to get a buck or two out of that much pyrite.

In the California gold rush of 1849, many prospectors toiled all day in the sun loading their sacks with the stuff, believing they'd struck it rich.

Even Captain John Smith (of Pocahontas fame) shipped an entire boatload of pyrite from Virginia back to England, believing it to be gold.¹

Each of these would-be treasure seekers ultimately discovered that they'd spent their time foolishly.

THE REAL THING

Not all that glitters is gold. Often, what we think of as popularity ends up amounting to nothing more than big piles of shiny pyrite. Real friends, on the other hand, are priceless.

It isn't fair to compare friends with precious metals, but ask yourself which prospector was better off? The one with a sack of 20 or even 100 nuggets of pyrite, or the one who managed to find a single true gold nugget?

This is not to argue that fewer friends = better. Far from it. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, "Each day of your life, strive to enlarge your own circle of friendship."²

So we should always try to make more *good* friends. Which means we ought to be careful how we spend our friend-making efforts.

For example, if you have to choose between making one real friend or convincing 20 people that you're cool enough to talk with now and again, that choice ought to be a no-brainer. Real trumps fake any day of the week.

Real friends build us up and keep us on the Lord's path. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, "Living the gospel and being true to gospel principles is the key to true, lasting, triumphant friendship."³

Being a good friend to others means taking the time to really understand them and then spending the time to help them live a happier life.

Ultimately, not many of us will ever be greeted like celebrities when we enter a crowded room. And that's OK.

If there's even one person in that room who is truly glad to see you, who counts you as a real friend and whom you count as a real friend, then you've already struck gold. **NE**

NOTES

1. See legendsofamerica.com/we-mininghistory.html.
2. Russell M. Nelson, "Be Thou an Example of the Believers," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 48.
3. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Real Friendship," *New Era*, June 1998, 66.