

Better Friends, Better

I knew that if I wanted to change my life, I needed to change my friends.

I was a senior in high school when I knew I needed a change from my best friends. There were seven of us who had been best friends since middle school, and we did everything together. All of our fathers worked for the railroad, so we rode the train with them for free from southeastern Idaho to Salt Lake City and back many times to attend general conference and shop for school clothes. Sometimes when we were together we laughed so hard we would be bent over with side aches. We were really close.

The problems started in my junior year. The parties my friends and I attended changed. Things started happening that I didn't feel good about. Sometimes there were overnight parties when parents were out of town, and boys who had been drinking started coming.

One time a boy put a can of beer up on a bookshelf in the living room and started laughing about how my friend's father would react if he could see it there. But I didn't think it was funny. I liked my friend's parents a lot. Their home had been my home away from home for years—a home where I loved to kneel with them in family prayer.

By the time summer came I was more uncomfortable with what my friends were doing with their lives. I didn't want to follow them, but I didn't know what to do about it. Then a wonderful change came into my life. With school out, my parents let me take the train to California to visit my aunt and uncle for three weeks. My family didn't go to church, but in California, not only was my uncle active, but he was also the bishop of the ward. The teenagers in his ward included me in everything they did during my visit.

My new friends shined with the light of the gospel, and

I was impressed with how much fun they had while living gospel standards. My cousin took me on a short trip with some of her friends. They impressed me with their integrity and goodness while having a great time. At the end of the three weeks, I came home with a determination to change my life to be more like the Savior, even if it meant having to change my friends.

When I returned home, I turned down opportunities to hang out with my old friends. At the end of the summer I met a wonderful LDS guy with a great smile and big dimples who lived his religion and was planning on a mission. I hung out with him and his friends for the first half of my senior year. Then he left for his mission.

Up until then it had been easy to spend time with my old friends at school and with new friends on weekends. But I knew I had to make some major changes if I wanted to stick with my goals.

Our ward had a large Young Women program, and though they had not been my closest friends, I liked these girls. They loved and lived the gospel teachings, and they were so much fun to be around. They accepted me wholeheartedly into their circle, and my senior year ended up being a great year. Not only was it fun, but it also pointed me firmly in the direction I wanted my life to go—towards the gospel.

I will always be thankful for my California friends who inspired me to take my life in the right direction. I am also thankful for a great group of friends in my home ward who welcomed me when I needed to make a change of friends. And the guy with the big dimples—we were married in the Idaho Falls Temple a few months after he returned from his mission. **NE**

Me

By Vicki H. Budge

