

## DON'T LET YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES DEFINE YOU. YOU WERE SENT HERE TO DO GREAT THINGS.

**W**here you live, what do people expect you to achieve and to become? Sometimes the people around you form expectations of you based on your past, on what other people in your family have done, or on stereotypes for your community—not on who *you* really are.

Several youth in Tennessee, USA, have learned this personally. In the neighborhood where they live, many people drop out of school, become trapped in drug problems, struggle to keep a job, and sometimes even end up in jail. Because of that, people there often expect all youth to do the same.



# BREAKING EXP

Richard J., 17, says, “The world expects me to not graduate and to not go to church. They expect me to be a failure.” But Richard also says, “I know God wants me to live with Him one day.”

For Richard and the other youth in his ward, the gospel brings hope. It’s helping them rise above the low expectations of people around them and aim for something far greater—meeting the Lord’s expectations.

### Overcoming What the World Expects

For example, Jenna B., 16, recognizes the pressure of expectations from movies, the Internet, and even her peers. “The world expects me to try to be like the model on the front of a magazine. They want young women to be cookie cutters of each other, be exactly the same, do exactly the same thing,” she says. “It’s kind of disappointing, because we’re



By Hillary Olsen

# ECTATIONS



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unique people—and the Lord tells us all the time in the scriptures how amazing we are.”

Some youth face different but equally difficult challenges.

Exavier R., 15, has been raised by his mother. “I saw other people with fathers in their lives, but I never had one in my life.” While Exavier’s mother works to support their family, he helps take care of his two little sisters. He wakes up every morning and helps them get ready for the day. He takes them to school before heading to his own school. After school, he picks them up, takes them home, and helps with whatever



they need. That takes a lot of strength and maturity, but people around Exavier “think I’m weak. I’ve seen a lot of bad things and been through a lot of hard things in my life, and people don’t know the real me,” he says.

Exavier and his mother joined the Church when he was 14. When he was baptized, his Young Men leaders became like fathers to him. “They guide me in the right direction and help me make the right decision,” he says. Most importantly, Exavier learned that he has a Heavenly Father who believes in him and expects him to do his best every day.



## Understanding God’s Expectations

Because Heavenly Father knows you are amazing and can do amazing things, He has high expectations for you. In order to fulfill those expectations, you first have to understand what they are.

So what does He expect from you? Wilson M., 16, says, “God expects us to become more like Jesus Christ and live the gospel to the best of our ability.” Ariana G., 16, knows that “Heavenly Father wants us to be as good as we possibly can throughout our lives: compassionate, full of the Spirit, humble, loving—everything in the scriptures that He tells us to be.”

Those high expectations make Ariana feel special, but she admits that living up to them can be hard. “It’s difficult as you go throughout life and you make mistakes. It can make you feel inadequate. But the fact that He knows that we can do it and the fact that He expects it of us means it’s not impossible. It makes me feel stronger because He knows what I’m capable of even if I don’t.” Ariana’s sister, Natalia, 12, agrees, adding, “It makes me feel very grateful to know that God believes in me.”

Of course, there are things you can do to help you know what God has in store for you personally. Riley M., 16, says, “I find that the scriptures really help me to know what Heavenly Father expects of me. And having a patriarchal blessing helps, too. I also try to pray about it.”

## Receiving God’s Help

Heavenly Father does believe in you. He knows what you’re capable of, and He hasn’t left you unaided as you try to live up to His expectations. He’s called prophets to teach the gospel in every dispensation. Making the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, such as faith, repentance, and baptism and confirmation, a part

of your life will bring you closer to the Lord and help you meet His expectations. As Sister Jean A. Stevens, former first counselor in the Primary general presidency, said, “The gospel ‘is not weight; it is wings.’ It carries us” (“Fear Not; I Am with Thee,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 83). That’s definitely what it’s done for Daniel Z., 16, and Darrius T., 16.

Life changed dramatically for Daniel when he was baptized. “Before I joined the Church, I wasn’t doing good things in my life. But when I got baptized, I felt the Spirit and knew that this was the right Church. I kept going to church, and that helped me. I

by staying in a good social environment. “I try to be at home with my family or at church with my friends a lot. They help me do good things.”

### Choosing Your Path

Like Darrius, we can all choose to be strong every day. Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “All of us can meet God’s high expectations, however great or small our capacity and talent may be. . . . It is a diligent, devoted effort on our part that calls for [His] empowering and enabling grace”



stopped doing bad things. I started getting good grades in school. I started to feel more respect for others,” he says. For Daniel, the changes he’s made in his life since his baptism are helping him grow up to be the man he knows the Lord wants him to be.

Darrius chooses to be strong every day. “God expects me to be a good person, a wonderful person. He expects me to do good things and be a leader to others.” It’s not easy to do those things—especially when people around you don’t always make good choices. Darrius stays strong

(“As Many as I Love, I Rebuke and Chasten,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 100).

Living up to the Lord’s expectations does take “diligent, devoted effort,” but it’s worth it. No matter what the world tells you you’re expected to do or be, remember that you are a child of God and that He wants you to live with Him again.

You *can* meet God’s expectations for you, because you were sent to this earth to do great things—and because God will help you do them. **NE**

*Hillary Olsen lives in Utah, USA.*

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