



ADVICE FROM MY FUTURE SELF

By Jessie E. Hawkes

**DO YOU EVER
WISH YOU COULD
GO BACK IN TIME
TO FIX THE PAST?**

If I could travel through time, I'd go back to two months after I got my driver's license and tell myself to drive more carefully in the mall parking lot to avoid hitting that parked car. (That was a rough night.) I'd also tell myself to join more clubs in high school and to not watch that one movie at my friend's house our senior year.

In the moment, it's sometimes tricky to know which choices are trivial and which may affect you for years to come. For instance, which choices in high school actually make a difference when you're a college student or a missionary?

If I could go back to my middle-school or high-school self to help me know which choices would have the biggest impact on my life as a young adult, here's the advice I'd give:

1. MAKE A FEW TRUE FRIENDS

Even though I had a lot of good friends in high school, when we left to attend universities in different states we gradually made other friends and drifted apart. Of all the awesome people I knew as a teenager, I'm super close with only one or two of them now. They are the friends I can call anytime with stupid movie quotes or with a broken heart and that I would drive 10 hours to visit.

If I had to go back to my teenage self, I'd make sure to let myself know how important these friends would be. *Having one or two quality friends in high school is so much better than being popular with tons of people.* Good friends will influence your life for many, many years.

2. ATTEND SEMINARY AND LEARN THE SCRIPTURES

My mom was my seminary teacher throughout high school, so I didn't have much of a choice about going. Every morning for four years I hauled myself out of bed and into a cold car and zipped off to seminary.

Years later, while in the MTC, I was amazed at how much seminary was still helping me. One day while teaching a lesson, my companion turned to me and asked, "How do you know the scriptures so well?" I was taken aback—I didn't feel like I was a scriptorian at all. "Seminary, I guess?" I stammered.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that attending seminary and memorizing the scripture mastery verses *was* the reason I felt comfortable in the scriptures (see the scripture mastery verses at sm.lds.org). It was the best preparation I had for serving a mission! Even though I was still an awkward new missionary and I didn't know how to teach, I *did* know 100 scriptures that I could turn to when I didn't know what else to say. So many times, a scripture mastery verse came into my mind through the Spirit when I was teaching investigators.

If I'd read my scriptures just on my own, I wouldn't have had the same experience without going to seminary and learning the scriptures there too. My advice to my teenage self is to *go to seminary—no matter what—and fully participate!* The Lord will use the knowledge you gain for years to come.

3. DECIDE TO KEEP THE STANDARDS

You'll never regret obedience. I can't tell you how much I wish I hadn't seen some movies that had a few bad jokes and inappropriate scenes that still come to my mind today. In the same way, I'm so grateful for my decision to keep the Word of Wisdom and the law of chastity when I was a youth.

The choices you make in middle school and high school can make your "confidence wax strong" today (D&C 121:45). I would tell my teenage self to *be obedient, no matter what.* Regardless of the choices you've made in the past, you can work today to keep the standards. Your future self will thank you.

4. LEARN TO WORK HARD

Staying on top of your busy schedule can be tough, but learning how to push through will help you in college, on a mission, in the workforce, and as a spouse and parent. In fact, I would say that *learning how to work hard* in middle school and high school was much more helpful in college than the details I learned about calculus, rhetoric, and world history. If I could go back, I'd give my teenage self a hug and tell her to *keep pressing forward when it's hard!* The emotional strength you develop in your teenage years will help you for years to come.

5. LOOK FORWARD WITH FAITH

Sure, it doesn't do me any good to wish I could hop in a time machine to chat with my teenage self, but there are things to learn from looking back. Most of all, I'm grateful that no matter what my past looks like, I can have a clear and bright future because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. As Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, "God cares a lot more about who we are and who we are becoming than about who we once were. He cares that we keep on trying" ("Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying," *Ensign*, May 2015, 56). We can all look ahead with excitement, knowing that the good choices we make today will influence us for years. **NE**

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