





At the end of my eighth grade year, I was so excited to try out for my junior high's cheerleading squad. I remember watching the ninth-grade cheerleaders, hoping that I might be one of them the following year. I was excited when I realized a lot of my friends would be trying out too. After tryouts, I was thrilled to find out I had made the squad.

Throughout the summer, we learned chants, stunts, and a dance that we'd be performing throughout the year at games and assemblies. I asked my mother to download the song we were dancing to so I could practice at home. After she did, she was concerned that it was suggestive and inappropriate. I quickly explained that the music we were using at school had been edited and that the bad words were taken out. Then my mom explained that just removing the bad words from a song doesn't remove the meaning. She helped me understand what kind of



MAKE WISE MUSIC CHOICES

"Choose carefully the music you listen to. Pay attention to how you feel when you are listening. Some music can carry evil and destructive messages. Do not listen to music that encourages immorality or glorifies violence through its lyrics, beat, or intensity. Do not listen to music that uses vulgar or offensive language or promotes evil practices. Such music can dull your spiritual sensitivity."

For the Strength of Youth (2011), 22.

message I would be sending about myself if I were to dance to this kind of music.

The next day, I brought some wholesome music, hoping the coach would be open to changing the song because it was not appropriate for us. No one really liked my idea, and I chose to sit out while the rest of the squad continued to rehearse to the inappropriate song.

I was disappointed that I was the only one who seemed to be bothered by our squad's choice of song, and I knew that by choosing to sit out, I would most likely be sitting out the entire year. This was very hard for me because I really wanted to feel like a part of the cheer squad. I knew this was the only dance we would be performing and that I would not get to be a part of the halftime performances.

I realized I would need to rely on the Lord to get me through this trial. I had not made the popular decision. I was very discouraged



as young women I trusted as friends began gossiping about me, sharing unkind text messages with one another, and turning their backs on me. There were times I would show up and my teammates would ignore me and pretend I wasn't there, but even this was better than the times we would sit in a circle while everyone openly talked about me. I struggled with the idea of having to suffer through this for the entire year. I am proud to say I never second-guessed my choice. I did, however, wonder why the right thing didn't feel better. Why was I being punished for making the right choice?

In church when we talked about standing for truth and righteousness, I often pictured how glorious it would feel to make the right choice and have others happily follow. I thought of how wonderful it would feel to be a righteous leader. This experience helped me understand how difficult it truly is to stand up against your peers and those you respect—and how lonely it can be to stand alone.

As youth in the Church, we are going to have to make unpopular decisions. I know that by taking a stand for things that are virtuous and true, we will not only bless our own lives but the lives of those around us as well. In Joshua 1:9 we read, "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." The Lord loves us and is there to help us make the decisions that will define whom we will become.

I am grateful I was given the opportunity to stand up for what I believe in. I was grateful that I had the courage to stand alone among my peers. I was grateful to experience that the Lord does help us find the strength to do what is right. I could feel in my heart that He was proud of me. Deep down I knew I was a righteous leader, even if no one else followed. **NE**



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In the October 2011 general conference, President Thomas S. Monson gave two talks on having the courage to stand alone. Read or watch them at lds.org/go/92A and lds.org/go/92B. You can also see a *Mormon Messages for Youth* video on this topic at lds.org/go/92C.