

I am enthusiastic about their strength

Highlighting teens who are preparing to serve missions, attend the temple

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The stories of good youth making good decisions are everywhere.



On swing set from left, Latter-day Saint teens Taryn Geohagan, Dallin Ellingson, Mandy McDonald, Kelli Hathcock, Charlie Fish, and Krystal Adair of Mesa, Ariz., enjoy spending time together. Having good friends has helped the teens remain faithful to Church principles.

Photo by Scott P. Adair

There's the apprentice car mechanic from the United Kingdom who would not utter a profane word, even when others in the garage tried everything to make him "one of the lads." They dropped tools on his feet, bumped into him and even filled the pockets of his coveralls with oil, all without success. He never uttered a bad word.

And the young woman in the United States who called her parents rather than remain at a party where others were drinking alcohol. "I was proud of myself for not giving in and doing the things I knew were wrong," she later wrote.

And the young man from Australia who turned his life around. He removed his facial piercings, began attending Church regularly and became worthy to bless and pass the sacrament.

Other young people have given up major athletic opportunities to avoid Sunday competition, have thrown away inappropriate music CDs, or have chosen to wear modest clothing in beauty pageants even though they knew it meant receiving a lower score.

And the examples go on and on.

It seems Latter-day Saint youth worldwide are following the principles of The Church of Jesus Christ and choosing daily to live the Lord's commandments. This week, the *Church News* has examined the "strength of today's youth," highlighting those teens who are preparing today to serve missions and attend the Lord's temple tomorrow.

"As we look to the future, I see our young people in the Church," said President Gordon B. Hinckley. "I see a lot of them. I see them all over. And I am absolutely enthusiastic about the quality of their lives, their strength, their goodness, their faithfulness. I haven't the slightest concern about the future of this Church as I see our young people. They study the scriptures. They go to seminary and institute. They pray about their decisions. They socialize among themselves in a wonderful atmosphere of faithfulness. They are on their way to becoming strong, and faithful, and able Latter-day Saints, who will deliver when they are called upon to do so." (*Church News*, March 4, 2000, p. 13.)

The Church's pamphlet for youth, titled "For the Strength of Youth: Fulfilling our Duty to God," is helping youth today reach their goals. The pages of this issue are filled with anecdotes from the 18 points emphasized in the pamphlet: agency and accountability, gratitude, education, family, friends, dress and appearance, entertainment and the media, music and dancing, language, dating, sexual purity, repentance, honesty, Sabbath day observance, tithes and offerings, physical health, service to others and go forward with faith.

Each article includes experiences of valiant youth or advice from Church leaders. The stories, many of which were sent from Church Educational System employees around the world, also include the scriptures highlighted in the "For the Strength of Youth" pamphlet.

"I am preparing to serve a mission, and from the 'For the Strength of Youth' pamphlet I learned to walk with responsibility and love the things of the Lord even more," said Gilson Candido Nogueira Filho, an 18-year-old member of the Curitiba 3rd Ward, Curitiba Brazil Iguacu Stake. "Principally, to be more grateful and love the things that I have received from the Lord, recognizing them daily in my life, especially the smallest things, which before I never even perceived, and which I only felt after reading the booklet. Today I find them marvelous."

■ Go forward with faith

Be true to the Lord and to His Church in all circumstances. — "For the Strength of Youth" pamphlet, p. 40

Natalie Vaughan, a seminary student in the Bonita Springs Ward, Fort Myers Florida Stake, had to endure much teasing from others in her sophomore year drivers' education class.

On one occasion the young men overheard Natalie talking to her friend Becky, a member of another religion, about the Church.

"When the young men overheard us talking about religion, they began harassing me about polygamy and everything right in front of Becky," Natalie recalled. "I didn't respond to them and continued talking with my friend, even though they were getting on my nerves and I could sense that they were taking great joy over their making fun of me.

"This harassment continued during the entire semester of drivers' education class. I never talked back to the young men. Eventually, toward semester's end, the three joking young men gave up on teasing me.

"At the end of the year Becky signed my yearbook and wrote, 'Thank you so much for your example and how you stay true to your religion.' "

■ Agency and accountability

Wherefore, men . . . are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death. — 2 Nephi 2:27

Gong Thopjan lives with his parents in Thailand, where his father, Bramuan Thopjan, serves as president of the Udon Thailand District and his mother, Nawvarat Thopjan, is the Relief Society president of the Church branch in Udonthani.

Gong and his cousin, Nataphon, must choose on a daily basis to be true to their religion. The teens, 14, travel more than 50 minutes each way to attend seminary. They also travel huge distances to collect fast offerings throughout their branch.