

# True Friends?



Henry didn't want to be alone again.

By Alissa Holyoak  
(Based on a true story)

*This story happened in the USA.*

"Hey, come watch this," Darren said to Henry. "It's hilarious!"

Henry's stomach sank. *Not another video.*

He sat next to Darren and Drake on the couch. They laughed at the video, but Henry wanted to shrink into the cushions so he couldn't hear the bad words.

As soon as the video ended, Henry jumped up. "Let's go outside and ride bikes."

"Later," Drake said. Darren kept scrolling on his phone.

Henry sighed and sat back down as Darren pushed play.

When Henry biked home later, he thought about all the other times he felt uncomfortable with Darren

and Drake. Like when they told mean jokes at school. Or stole apples from Mr. Garcia's tree.

*Maybe I should talk to Mom,* Henry thought. But what if she said he couldn't hang out with Darren and Drake anymore? Then he'd be alone. Again.

Mom was setting the table when Henry walked inside. "Hey, how was your day?" she asked.

Henry shrugged. They sat down for dinner, and Mom said a prayer. Henry stirred his soup without eating a bite.

"Did something happen at Darren's house today?" Mom asked.

Henry felt sick to his stomach. He didn't want to tell her everything about Darren and Drake. But maybe he'd tell her a little. "All we do is watch videos. I want to ride bikes, but Darren and Drake always say no."

"Is anything wrong with the videos?" she asked. Henry's heart raced. Should he tell her? He couldn't say anything about the bad words He *couldn't* be alone again. "I don't feel like talking right now."

Mom took a deep breath. "I know that moving here has been hard. You were so happy when you became friends with Darren and Drake. But I hope they never pressure you to do or watch something bad. True friends help you do what's right."

Henry looked down. "Darren and Drake *are* my true friends."

"Well, if they are, they'll respect your decisions. Even when *you* say no."

At Darren's house the next day, the words "true friends" stuck in Henry's mind.

"Check out this new video," Darren said.

"No," Henry said.

Darren and Drake stared at him.

"I'm not watching anymore," he said, a little louder this time. "I don't like how they make me feel."

"Don't be a baby," Drake said.

Darren and Drake laughed. They started teasing Henry about how his face always got red when they showed him videos or when they told jokes at school.

*Is this what true friends would do?* Henry thought.

He stood up from the couch. "I'm riding my bike. You guys can come if you want."

"Nope," Darren said. "We're staying here."

Henry walked outside alone. As soon as the door shut behind him, he realized the sick feeling in his stomach was gone. He felt light and calm instead.

Then he realized something else. He *wasn't* alone. The Holy Ghost was with him. Henry was still sad about Darren and Drake. But the Holy Ghost was telling him he made the right choice. Smiling, he got on his bike and rode for home. ●



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