

Discipleship and Dating

Young adults can find greater happiness and success in dating when principles of discipleship guide their actions.

By Jared Whitley

As Latter-day Saint young adults participate in dating, what guidelines should they follow to help ensure a positive experience? Although there are many books, news articles, and websites that suggest rules for dating etiquette, many also suggest patterns of behavior that can be manipulative and selfish.

As I have dated, I have learned that the pattern to follow was outlined simply by the Savior Jesus Christ when He said, “Love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mark 12:31). As you date, consider the following rules of conduct based on principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Honesty

It may seem obvious that you shouldn't tell a lie, but omitting information or bending the truth are also forms of bearing false witness. For example, if a young man asks out a young woman, and she tells him,



“I’m busy,” when she means, “Thanks, but I’m not interested,” she is not being honest. Of course, honesty is certainly no excuse for verbal cruelty, but a sweetly worded rejection will typically not ruin any friendship or cause undue discomfort when you see the individual at church on Sunday. Honesty means that as you get to know the person you are dating and that person gets to know you, you avoid exaggeration, embellishment, and false behavior.

Humility

Often in dating, a person’s own ego can be his or her greatest liability. The Lord wisely counsels, “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it” (Luke 17:33). Avoid focusing on yourself. Instead of dominating the conversation, let the other person share his or her thoughts and feelings. By recognizing that relationships are about building and strengthening one another, you will be able to cultivate a successful and meaningful relationship.

Forgiveness

Opening yourself to love can leave you vulnerable to the possibility of heartache, unkindness, or infidelity. If you experience such negative side effects of love, it can be difficult to avoid unkind feelings toward

the other person—especially if the romance goes sour. Learning to forgive in dating may be difficult, but developing this Christlike attribute will help ensure greater happiness now and in marriage. Similarly, the ability to overcome the pain of rejection without becoming bitter toward the individual involved (or the opposite gender entirely) is a great sign of spiritual maturity.

Uplifting Speech

In the scriptures we read: “The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” (James 3:5). This certainly applies to dating.

Verbal abuse is usually easy to recognize, and we rightly condemn such behavior. But what might be termed a milder form of unkind speech, including put-downs or excessive teasing, can also be hurtful and should be avoided in any dating situation.

Remember what one of our hymns teaches: “Let us oft speak kind words to each other.”¹ We are to speak kind

words *oft*, not *infrequently*. In this regard, President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), First Counselor in the First Presidency, counseled, “Let us . . . resolve to control our tongues and by speaking kind words to each other emulate the loving kindness of our Lord.”²

Dating the Lord’s Way

I have found that the principles discussed above are essential for living a Christ-centered life. I have also learned that conducting myself according to these standards has brought me greater happiness. If we are ever tempted to be less than our best selves with those we date, let us remember that righteous behavior in dating forms the foundation for successful relationships and marriage, both in this world and in the eternities. ■

The author lives in Virginia, USA.

NOTES

1. “Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words,” *Hymns*, no. 232.
2. Marion G. Romney, “Speak Kind Words,” *Ensign*, August 1977, 3.



BE A TRUE DISCIPLE

“Do you want capability, safety, and security in dating and romance, in married life and eternity? Be a true disciple of Jesus. Be a genuine, committed, word-and-deed Latter-day Saint. Believe that your faith has everything to do with your romance, because it does. You separate dating from discipleship at your peril. Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is the only lamp by which you can successfully see the path of love and happiness. How should I love thee? As He does, for that way ‘never faileth’ [1 Corinthians 13:8; Moroni 7:46].”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “How Do I Love Thee?” *New Era*, Oct. 2003, 8.