

How many times can I go out with someone before it becomes “steady dating”?

Can I listen to a song or watch a movie with a bad part if it’s played in school and the teacher says, “It’s not really that bad”?

Is it OK to wear immodest clothes as part of a sports team?

IS IT OK TO...? CAN I...?

What can you do if you don’t know how to apply the standards in For the Strength of Youth to a certain situation?

By Heidi McConkie

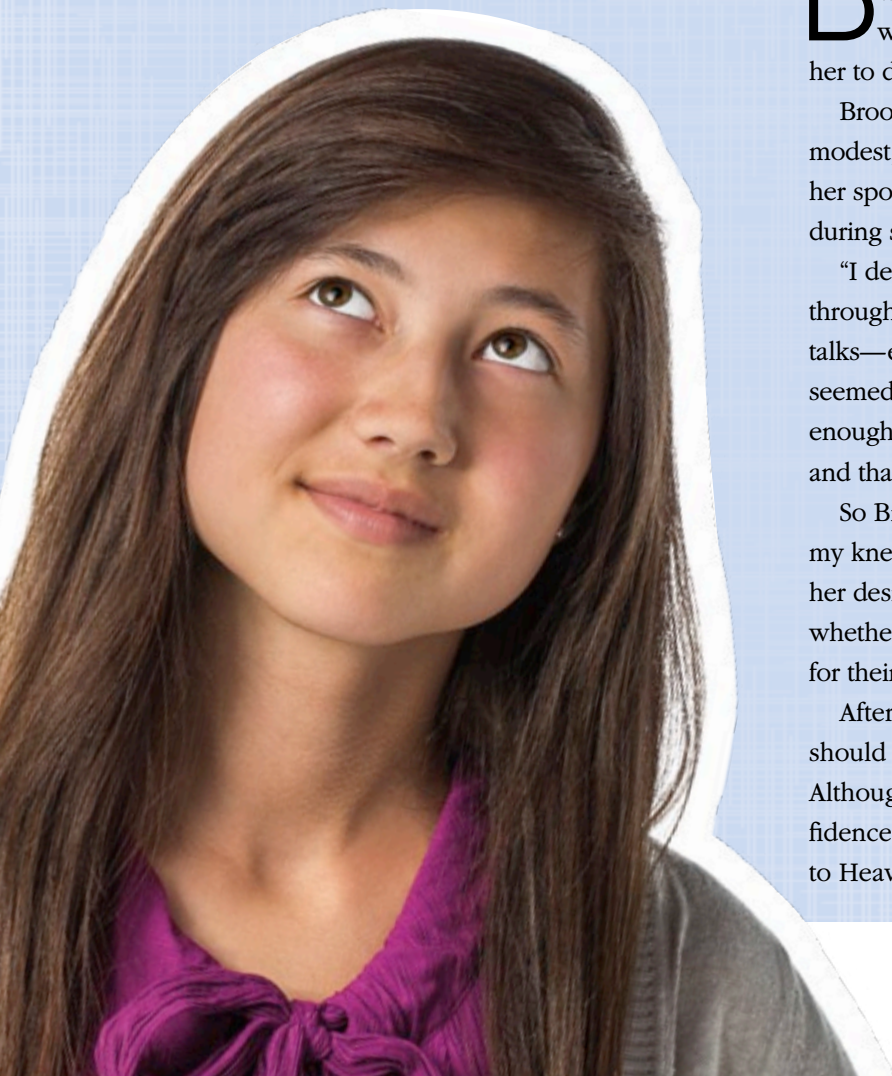
Brooke P. of California, USA, could feel her resolve wavering—it would be so much easier to blend in with her teammates. The other girls were pressuring her to dress like them for practices and games.

Brooke had already decided that she wanted to be modest, but she didn’t know what that meant for playing her sport. Would it be OK to dress like her teammates just during sporting events?

“I decided to do some research,” Brooke says. “I looked through *For the Strength of Youth*, the scriptures, Church talks—everything I could get my hands on. Nothing seemed to describe my exact situation and give me specific enough advice. But I knew that Heavenly Father knew me and that He knew what would be modest.”

So Brooke took action again. “I decided to get down on my knees and pray,” she says. As she prayed, she expressed her desire to obey the commandments and then asked whether it would be OK for her to dress like her teammates for their practices and games.

After her prayer, Brooke felt impressed that she should not alter her clothing choices to satisfy her peers. Although her decision was unpopular, Brooke found confidence and peace knowing that her choice was pleasing to Heavenly Father.



Your Story

Perhaps you've never found yourself in Brooke's specific dilemma, but you've probably faced a similar predicament. You're doing your best to live by a gospel standard—being modest, using uplifting language, watching wholesome entertainment, obeying the Word of Wisdom, . . .

Then BAM! Someone cranks up the heat, and suddenly “opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11) is more than just an oft-quoted phrase from the scriptures. Your friends—or maybe even your own family members—pressure you to dress or speak or act differently from what you feel is right. You want to make good gospel choices, but maybe you're starting to feel confused: *What does living by the standards mean in your life, anyway?* Just like Brooke, you can discover your own answer to this question through study, prayer, and personal revelation.

Your Questions

Your everyday life is full of questions: *What will I wear to school? What will I eat for lunch? Whom will I hang out with?* Some questions have pretty simple answers. *Should I chew this piece of gum I found on the sidewalk?* No. You probably don't have to think twice about that one. Some of your questions, particularly ones about standards, can be a lot trickier to answer, though: *What music is appropriate to listen to? How do I keep the Sabbath day holy?* Fortunately, you don't have to come up with all of the answers on your own. Our living prophets have outlined gospel standards, and you can study their teachings in *For the Strength of Youth*.

After you've studied the standards, you likely won't always know exactly how to apply them in every situation, and that's

normal. You're in good company if you have some unanswered questions about what a specific standard means for your situation.

Just think about the Book of Mormon story where the Lord commanded Nephi to build a ship. Nephi didn't know immediately how to obey the Lord's commandment, but he chose to try anyway. And he didn't hesitate to seek help; he asked, “Whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to construct the ship?” (1 Nephi 17:9). He started by figuring out what the first step would be—make tools—and then asking the Lord to help him know how to do that. The Lord answered Nephi's questions (and step-by-step he was able to complete the ship), and when you're trying to obey the commandments, He can answer your questions too.

Your Answers

When you have questions about how to live by a particular standard or obey a certain commandment, first go to the scriptures, *For the Strength of Youth, True to the Faith*, the prophets' counsel, and prayer. You can look up the relevant scriptures listed in the booklets or general conference talks—and even branch

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out to include additional scriptures in your search. As you seek knowledge through gospel study, the Holy Ghost will “enlighten [your] understanding” (Alma 32:28).

You can also turn to family members, friends, and Church leaders for support. They may be able to guide you to helpful resources, provide support and encouragement, and even share personal experiences about similar issues and how they overcame their challenges.

Sometimes even after praying, rereading *For the Strength of Youth*, studying the scriptures, and seeking advice, you may still feel like you’re wandering through a fog of uncertainty regarding particular standards. Although you’ve received great counsel, applying it to your circumstances can sometimes feel like trying to find a street by using a globe instead of a roadmap. At other times you may need to make a quick decision without the luxury of thoughtful study over a long period of time.

In either case, remember that prayer is a powerful resource. It’s not a last resort either; prayer is a great place to begin your quest for knowledge and a helpful tool all along the way. Heavenly Father knows you personally—your gifts, your challenges, your strengths, and your struggles. So if you don’t know how best to follow the Church’s standards in a particular situation, don’t panic. He knows! It’s easy to fall into the trap of trying to fit the gospel into your life; but instead, He can show you how to fit your life into the gospel. When you pray in faith, He will teach you, providing answers just for you “in the very moment” (D&C 100:6) that you need them. That opportunity for personal revelation is one of the great blessings we have because we were baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Your Example

As you live by God’s standards, you can be a light to others around you. You can encourage them to keep the commandments. And when they’re confused about *how* to obey, you can teach them this pattern for finding answers to their personal questions.

As you strive to set a good example, don’t be too surprised if sometimes others—even those who are also trying to live the gospel—don’t always make the same choices you do. If you feel frustrated, just remember that someone, perhaps Mom or Dad, once had to teach you the answers to even the most basic questions—like *Should I chew this piece of gum I found on the sidewalk?* So try to be patient with yourself and others as we all work to figure out the answers to trickier questions, the kind that don’t always come with a yes-or-no answer. *How do I live by this standard in my life?* Keep in mind that we’re all imperfect people learning day by day to live a perfect gospel and working toward becoming perfected ourselves. It’s an ongoing process.

And you can take an active role in that process! Actively seek out answers to your personal questions and encourage others to do the same. As you do so, always remember that regardless of others’ choices, you can choose to keep Heavenly Father’s commandments. ■

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