



TO DATE *or* NOT TO DATE

By Savannah M. Smithson

At my school a lot of people have boyfriends and girlfriends. On my first day of school as an eighth grader, I met someone named Paul. We got along well together. Paul was a great friend.

The next day after school he asked me out on a date. I told him I couldn't, and he asked why. I told him I was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that we're not supposed to date until age 16. Paul asked why, and I realized that I didn't actually know.

That night I went home and pondered Paul's question. I did research on LDS.org and read my scriptures. I found a quote by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008): "The Lord has made us attractive one to another for a great purpose. But this very attraction becomes as a powder keg unless it is kept under control. . . . It is for this reason that the Church counsels against early dating."¹

I also looked in *For the Strength of Youth*. It says dating "can help you learn and practice social skills, develop friendships, have wholesome

fun, and eventually find an eternal companion."²

The next day I showed Paul the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet. Other people saw Paul reading it, and my LDS friends helped me answer my classmates' questions. I was happy to have an answer to Paul's question.

For the Strength of Youth says that dating before age 16 and forming serious relationships in our youth can lead to immorality and limit the number of people we meet.³ My mother also tells me that we shouldn't date before 16 because it can distract us from studies and opportunities that can be vital to success in the future. I've seen friends of mine become depressed because of an emotional breakup at age 13.

I was glad I was able to find out for myself why we shouldn't date before age 16 and then give Paul an answer without hurting his feelings. I've made a great friend, and I hope we will be friends for a long time. I am thankful the Lord has given us friends and the opportunity to date at the appropriate age so that we may all one day find faithful eternal companions. **NE**

Savannah M. Smithson lives in Nevada, USA.

NOTES

1. "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 8.
2. *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 4.
3. See *For the Strength of Youth*, 4.