

“I was asked out on a date, but I’m not 16 yet. What is the best way to turn this person down without hurting their feelings?”

Dating and getting to know other people better is a fun time and something to look forward to. But the world is on a different timetable from that of Church members. Others think young dating is a harmless way for a boy and a girl to enjoy being together, but the Church advises that this type of relationship be postponed until age 16 or even later. As in *For the Strength of Youth*, it states: “Dating before [age 16] can lead to immorality, limit the number of other young people you meet, and deprive you of experiences that will help you choose an eternal partner” ([2001], 24).

Being asked on a date you cannot accept can be a difficult situation because sensitive feelings are involved. First, if someone asks for a date, they can easily have their feelings hurt if they feel rejected. However, you cannot modify your standards for someone else.

You will need to find kind words and actions to turn down the dating invitation. You can explain that your Church (and your family) have set a standard on dating. If you want to encourage a friendship, you might consider including the person in an upcoming Mutual activity. As it says in *For the Strength of Youth*, “Good friendships can and should be developed at every age” (24).

Waiting to date as the Church directs is always the best choice. **NE**



Stick to Your Standards

I was actually asked this question by my best friend. I told him that my church advised me not to date until I was 16, but that it was also a family guideline and my decision. He was impressed by this response and told me that it was my morals that had originally impressed him. He was glad that I stuck so strongly to my beliefs. He waited over 200 days until I turned 16 to take me on a date, and we are still best friends.

Kristen L., 16, North Carolina



Tell Them about the Church

If I were to get asked out on a date, I think I would tell them about the Church and that I am not allowed to date until the age 16. I would ask if it were OK to go with a group of friends or wait a few more years.

Quaid H., 14, Western Australia



Be Friends

I would say, “I wish I could, but my religion asked me not to date until I’m 16. I really would love to, but maybe we

can get to know each other and be friends.”

Jacob S., 15, California



Follow the Prophet

I had something similar happen to me when I was 15. The boy didn't actually ask me, but a group of my friends told me they bought a bunch of stuff to help me ask a boy to a dance. I already told them I didn't want to go. This was hard, but I told them that is what I felt was right because I know when a prophet tells us to do something, we should do it.”

Ashley M., 17, Utah



Tell Them What You Believe

Tell them what you believe, and why you shouldn't date before 16. Maybe suggest that you get a group of friends together and a fun evening instead of going on a one-on-one date.

Casey T., 16, Hawaii

Be Clear and Kind

What I did in that situation was act as genuine as possible whether I liked them or not and briefly explain my religion and clearly state that my mind was set on that choice. Make plans casually with that person and friends, so you have the opportunity to be kind to them.

Ashley L., 16, Alberta, Canada



Talk Sweetly and Softly

It is really hard to turn somebody down without hurting their feelings. Sometimes you just have to. I would talk to them sweetly and softly and tell them, “I'm really sorry! I've chosen not to date until I'm 16. It's a standard of my church.”

Sarah Katherine Y., 15, Louisiana



Explain

I would say that I do not believe in dating before I turn 16. I would explain if they had questions. I would kindly say I would like to go out after I turn 16 if they still wanted to.

Allyson W., 15, Louisiana



Tell Them to Wait

Just tell them, “You seem really nice, but because of my religion, I need to wait until I'm at least 16. So hold the gesture and when I'm old enough, I'd love to.”

Shaam K., 15, Western Australia

Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

NEXT QUESTION

“My Christian friends believe in the Bible, but they don't understand why we have the Book of Mormon. What can I tell them?”

Send your answer by January 15, 2008, to:

New Era, Q&A, 1/09

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WAIT TO DATE

Maturity may vary from individual to individual, but we are convinced that dating should not even begin until you are 16. And then, ideal dating is on a group basis. . . . Steady dating is courtship, and surely the beginning of courtship ought to be delayed until you have emerged from your teens.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “You're in the Driver's Seat,” New Era, June 2004, 5.