

What about Dating?



By Larry M. Gibson

First Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency

Spending face-to-face time with other people is necessary to build true friendships.

As I have had the privilege to talk with young men and young women throughout the Church, I have often heard that while a great many of you are interested in building better friendships with those of the opposite sex, you often struggle with knowing exactly how to make that happen.

It would seem that with all of the social media, we should easily be better connected than ever before. In ways, however, technology may be causing us to have relationships that are less meaningful. Merely tweeting, texting, e-mailing, and friending cannot genuinely create a well-rounded relationship. Spending real face-to-face time with other people is necessary to build true friendships.

It is time for you, our wonderful youth, to bring back the old definition for when young men and young women get together for a social experience. You may have heard the term; this experience was once referred to as a date.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Many of you have questions regarding dating and the counsel given in the new *For the*

Strength of Youth pamphlet. Here are some of the questions I have been asked, along with answers from this wonderful guidebook.

I'm not sure if I'm ready to date. Are there any special reasons why I should?

Dating is relevant for a number of reasons. *For the Strength of Youth* explains that a date “allows a young man and a young woman to get to know each other better. In cultures where dating is acceptable, it can help you learn and practice social skills, develop friendships, have wholesome fun, and eventually find an eternal companion.”¹

We hear that we should not date before we are 16 and never date anyone seriously while we are young. Why?

For the Strength of Youth says: “You should not date until you are at least 16 years old. When you begin dating, go with one or more additional couples. Avoid going on frequent dates with the same person. Developing serious relationships too early in life can limit the number of other people you meet and can perhaps lead to immorality.”²

A young man wants me to go on a date, but I don't really feel like he has my same standards. What should I do?

For the Strength of Youth teaches: “Choose to date only those who have high moral standards and in whose company you can maintain your standards. . . . Always be kind and respectful when you ask for a date or when you accept or decline one.”³

Sometimes I can't think of any ideas for dates besides watching a movie. What should I do?



For the Strength of Youth gives these helpful principles: “Plan dating activities that are safe, positive, and inexpensive and that will help you get to know each other. Go only to places where you can maintain your standards and remain close to the Spirit.”⁴

Those four simple criteria—dates that are safe, positive, inexpensive, and where the Spirit remains close—leave room for many great dates.

As I have reflected with my wife on our early dating experiences, those that stand out most were the times when there was little or no cost, when we were with at least one other couple, and we were able to have meaningful conversations and interaction.

Protecting Each Other’s Virtue

Let me conclude with another important quote from *For the Strength of Youth* and then one last point. First, “Remember that a young man and a young woman on a date are responsible to protect each other’s honor and virtue.”⁵ As you go on dates, make sure to do nothing of which you would ever be ashamed. As President Thomas S. Monson

taught, “In dating, treat your date with respect, and expect your date to show that same respect for you.”⁶

The Difference between Dating and Courting

Finally, although some have defined *dating* as “courting,” dating in the Church among youth does not imply that they are “going steady” or can date no others. By Church standards, dating is intended to be a chance for social relationships that can establish many friendships.

As you enter your adult years—after missions for young men—then the Lord says, “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). This is the time that dating becomes courting as stressed in *For the Strength of Youth*: “Make dating and marriage a high priority. Seek a companion who is worthy to go to the temple to be sealed to you for time and all eternity. Marrying in the temple and creating an eternal family are essential in God’s plan of happiness.”⁷ ■

SHARE YOUR STORY

Do you have an experience with applying counsel from these guidelines in *For the Strength of Youth*?

- Service
- Sexual purity
- Tithes and offerings
- Work and self-reliance

Please e-mail your experience to liahona@ldschurch.org with “For the Strength of Youth” in the subject line. Include your full name, birth date, ward and stake, and parent’s permission (by e-mail) to print your response.

NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), 4.
2. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4.
3. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4–5.
4. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4.
5. *For the Strength of Youth*, 4.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “Standards of Strength,” *New Era*, Oct. 2008, 5.
7. *For the Strength of Youth*, 5.