

A heart-shaped gravestone is the central focus, set against a bright blue sky with soft white clouds. The stone is dark grey and has a double-line border. The text "IS DATING DEAD?" is carved in a bold, serif font. Below the text is a detailed carving of a rose with several leaves and a stem. The gravestone sits on a dark brown, rectangular base, which is placed on a field of vibrant green grass.

IS
DATING
DEAD?

What would your response be to this question? We've asked young men and women all around the world, and while there hasn't been complete agreement, most of you have told us there's just not a lot of dating going on where you live—at least not a lot of dating in the traditional LDS sense.

For example, Felicity Lawrance says, "In England, the dating of my generation has become ridiculous. Here if someone asks 'Will you go out with me?' it really means 'Will you be my boy/girlfriend?' And if the answer is yes then you *are* boyfriend and girlfriend. It completely skips the period of getting to know each other!"

Some teens we talked to called this the "instacouple" phenomenon.

Kathryn Jones says that in Colorado traditional dating is "pretty much dead," particularly when it comes to dating a variety of people. She explains, "If an LDS guy went on a date with a non-LDS girl one week and then went out with another girl who was LDS the next week, the non-LDS girl wouldn't get it."

So, exclusivity seems to be implied right up front, making it awkward to follow the counsel to date a number of different people.

This trend away from dating seems to be pretty consistent, according to what LDS teens are telling us. So is that a problem? Probably not when you are 17, but what about when you are 21? Your best bet is to hold fast to the teachings of the gospel, always uphold your high standards, and follow the counsel of prophets and apostles.

One great source for gospel standards is *For the Strength of Youth*, where it says on the topic of dating, "Good friendships can and should be developed at every age" ([2001], 24). While you're a teenager, the point of dating is simply that—to make friends.

In that spirit, dating—or getting acquainted—will always be alive and well. **NE**

DATING: AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

What has made dating an endangered species? I am not sure, but I can see some contributing factors:

1. The cultural tides in our world run strongly against commitments in family relationships. For example, divorce has been made legally easy, and childbearing has become unpopular. These pressures against commitments obviously serve the devil's opposition to the Father's plan for His children. That plan relies on covenants or commitments kept. Whatever draws us away from commitments weakens our capacity to participate in the plan. Dating involves commitments, if only for a few hours. Hanging out requires no commitments, at least not for the men if the women provide the food and shelter.

2. The leveling effect of the women's movement has contributed to discourage dating. As women's options have increased and some women have become more aggressive, some men have become reluctant to take traditional male initiatives, such as asking for dates, lest they be thought to qualify for the dreaded label "male chauvinist."

3. Hanging out is glamorized on TV programs about singles.

4. The meaning and significance of a "date" has also changed in such a way as to price dating out of the market. I saw this trend beginning among our younger children. For whatever reason, high school boys felt they had to do something elaborate or bizarre to ask for a date, especially for an event like a prom, and girls felt they had to do likewise to accept. . . .

All of this made dating more difficult. And the more elaborate and expensive the date, the fewer the dates. As dates become fewer and more elaborate, this seems to create an expectation that a date implies seriousness or continuing commitment. That expectation discourages dating even more. Gone is the clumsy and inexpensive phone call your parents and grandparents and I used to make. That call went something like this: "What're ya doin' tonight? How about a movie?" Or, "How about taking a walk downtown?"

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Dating versus Hanging Out," *Ensign*, June 2006, 10.

NEmore

Is dating really dead? What can be done to counter worldly trends and attitudes about dating? Take a survey at newera.lds.org.