

CONFESSIONS
OF A
STEADY DATER





I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE COULDN'T BE BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND. WHAT WAS THE BIG DEAL, ANYWAY?

Name Withheld

I never considered myself someone who compromised her standards. I didn't wear immodest clothing or miss church on Sunday. I went to early-morning seminary every day, and being tempted to use bad language was never a problem for me. But dating was different.

Jonathan* and I first met at a summer youth camp. I was friendly, sure, but not really interested in him. Throughout the weeklong camp, we became little more than acquaintances and, at the end of the week, we got each other's contact information. The camp was outside the state I lived in, so when I learned that he lived not only in the same state but also in a neighboring state, I was kind of surprised. I was even more surprised when I received an email from him a few months later.

We began exchanging emails. I didn't see him very often because he lived an hour and a half away, but we maintained a steady friendship for months. Neither he nor I was 16 yet, so going on dates wasn't even on our minds.

IT'S OFFICIAL

Several months later, we saw each other again at the same summer youth camp. By that time, we were both 16. Our friendship progressed, and by the end of the camp, I was sad to see him leave. After we got home, we began talking even more frequently, and a few months later, we were officially dating.

At first, everything was fine. We would take turns driving to see each other twice a month. I became very close to his family, and he with mine. We spent hours talking on the phone or on the Internet every night.

I justified our dating: we were both 16, we lived an hour and a half apart so nothing bad would happen, and even though *For the Strength of Youth* says to "avoid going on frequent dates with the same person" ([2011], 4), it didn't seem like a big deal.

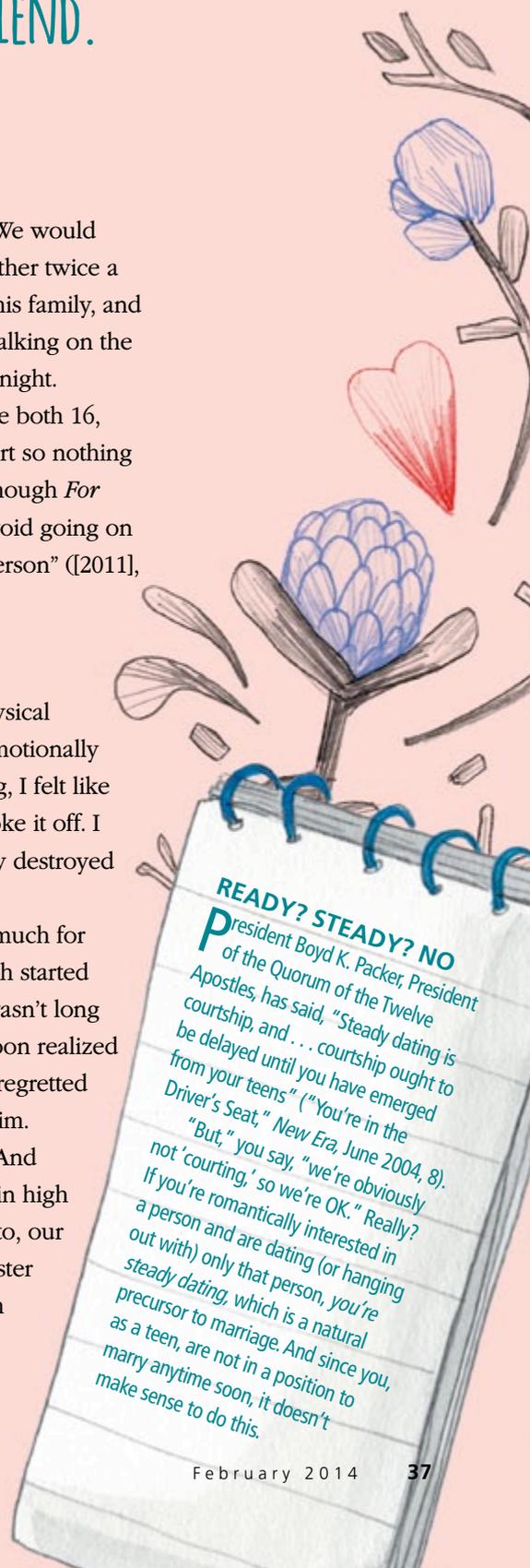
OFF AND ON AGAIN

Though we maintained a physical distance, we quickly became emotionally close. After over a year of dating, I felt like we'd grown too close, and I broke it off. I later learned that this had nearly destroyed him emotionally.

We didn't talk to each other much for almost a year. But when we both started attending the same college, it wasn't long until we were talking again. I soon realized how much I missed him, and I regretted my decision to break up with him.

Soon we were dating again. And because we had dated steadily in high school despite the counsel not to, our relationship progressed even faster than it had before. We saw each other every day, and I became

* Name has been changed.



READY? STEADY? NO
President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has said, "Steady dating is courtship, and . . . courtship ought to be delayed until you have emerged from your teens" ("You're in the Driver's Seat," *New Era*, June 2004, 8).
"But," you say, "we're obviously not 'courting,' so we're OK." Really? If you're romantically interested in a person and are dating (or hanging out with) only that person, you're steady dating, which is a natural precursor to marriage. And since you, as a teen, are not in a position to marry anytime soon, it doesn't make sense to do this.



HELP WITH CHOICES

“YOU ARE BELOVED SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD AND HE IS MINDFUL OF YOU. . . . THE STANDARDS IN THIS BOOKLET WILL HELP YOU WITH THE IMPORTANT CHOICES YOU ARE MAKING NOW AND WILL YET MAKE IN THE FUTURE.”

First Presidency, *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), ii.



emotionally captivated.

We talked seriously about marriage and a future life together.

After just a few months, I was certain that I would wait for him while he was on his mission and that we would get married after.

A NOT-SO-HAPPY ENDING

A few weeks before he received his mission call, I visited him in his hometown. I had just gone through one of the worst weekends of my life, and I looked forward to seeing him.

When I got to his house, I noticed he was acting a little strange, but I didn't think much of it. He wanted to go for a drive, which wasn't unusual, but I felt uneasy. After driving for a little bit, we stopped.

“I don't think we should date anymore,” he said.

I was stunned.

He went on. He told me he didn't love me anymore and that he didn't want to marry me when he got back from his mission—he didn't even want to date me.

I left feeling angry, upset, frustrated, but mostly just heartbroken. I cried the entire way home, angry with myself for investing two years in someone who ended up not loving me.

For months I didn't let go. I held onto the idea that he would change—that suddenly he would love me again, just as suddenly as he had decided that he didn't. I couldn't concentrate on classes. I wouldn't let myself have fun. I constantly felt hurt and depressed.

During that time, I studied the scriptures

more than I ever had before and prayed fervently every day asking for help through this trial. I desperately wanted the Lord to take away my pain. It didn't go away all at once, but my pain did start to lessen. I began to let the Savior heal my broken heart. And I began to see what I had done wrong.

STANDARDS: A SAFE GUIDE

When we first started dating in high school, I didn't immediately see the negative consequences of not following the guidelines in *For the Strength of Youth*. Life actually seemed pretty great. I was doing well in my classes, and Jonathan and I were having fun. But after we broke up, I realized what I had missed out on. I sacrificed better relationships with my family and friends because I was so focused on my relationship with Jonathan. I caused myself a lot of pain because I was too emotionally involved too young. And even though my decision to steady date as a youth hadn't led me to violate the law of chastity, I left the relationship emotionally hurt. Had I followed the standard instead of thinking I was an exception to the rule, I could have avoided these trials.

After this experience, I learned a very valuable lesson. The Lord gives us standards not to prevent us from progressing but to guide us safely through this difficult life. I know that when we follow the standards, even if we don't understand why they're there, we will be protected. **NE**

More Help

For more on why you're counseled not to steady date in your teens, see “Unsteady Dating” at lds.org/go/unsteadyNE2 and “But We Were in Love” at lds.org/go/inloveNE2.