

Take It from Me:

“LOVE”

CAN WAIT

“Romance” isn’t worth going against the prophet’s counsel.

Name Withheld

Ashley* sweetly said good-bye and walked inside. I still couldn’t believe my luck. Beautiful Ashley was *my* girl.

We were the perfect pair. Everybody said so. Late night walks, secret gifts . . . it was perfect. And nothing could *ever* tear us apart.

There was one *tiny* problem: I was 14 and she was 13.

But this was *love!* We were in love, so did age really matter?

Besides, it’s not like we were really “dating.” We were just two kids who happened to like each other and express it. It started with flirting and shy smiles, and then we held hands. But we were in control. And we were the cutest couple. Everyone said so.

I spent every waking moment with Ashley: at school, at Mutual, and at

church. She lived only a few blocks away, so I even sneaked over to her house to spend more time with her. Everything was fantastic—but really, it wasn’t.

Our leaders and parents warned us not to date before we were 16, but I just figured they didn’t really understand our situation. We were good kids, and we were keeping the law of chastity, so the whole “no dating” thing wasn’t *really* for us, right? We were meant to be!

Turns out, we weren’t. Before long, Ashley found someone else and left me

BACKGROUND TEXTURE BY ISTOCK/THINKSTOCK

shattered. She stopped talking to me and lied about me to my friends, and I was heartbroken. So heartbroken that it threw me into a deep depression.

My thoughts turned dark, and I cried almost every night. I started ditching church to avoid Ashley.

I refused to talk to my parents, ignored my friends, and drifted away from

Heavenly Father. I felt completely alone and hopeless. It took a year of struggling, but slowly I began to feel better

and happier, and I began to return to God as well.

No matter what I'd believed, I *wasn't* an exception to the rule. I'd ignored the prophet's counsel to not date before 16 or pair off exclusively or get physical too early, and there were consequences. I unlocked my heart and got too attached before it was time for me to love someone in

My life would have been much easier and happier if I had just lived the dating standards.

that way. I became too emotionally dependent before my emotions were fully developed. I missed out on a lot because I was so caught up in "love" and then too caught up in my sadness.

For the Strength of Youth teaches, "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" ([2011], 4).

My life would have been much easier and happier if I had just lived the dating standards. Maybe my leaders didn't know about my situation, but the Lord did. The Lord perfectly understands every situation

we are in. And He is the one giving us standards to live by. He is the one advising us to not date before we are 16 and to not steady date until we're ready to consider marriage.

Even after I turned 16, I was careful to get to know lots of people and to not steady date. And sometimes it was still tough! It's hard to resist the urge to jump into a relationship, especially

when you find out your crush likes you back! It's even harder to do the right thing when you're already in a relationship. But now is the time to lock your heart. I know that no matter how hard it is to end or stay out of romantic relationships, it is always worth it to keep the standards the Lord has given us.

I used to think of these standards as walls keeping me in a cage, but I learned that commandments are more like guardrails keeping us safely on the right path and away from the cliff. You never hear anyone say, "Wow. I wish this guardrail weren't here so that I could fall off this cliff!"

I try to remember that the Lord is in control. He has a plan for you and me, and if we choose to follow it, our lives will be so much better. **NE**

The author is currently serving a mission in Arizona, USA.

* Name has been changed.