



For the Strength of Parents

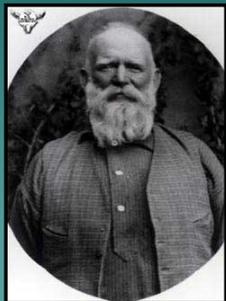
Helping Teens Follow Prophets: Dating and Modesty

Loss of the Holy Ghost

"Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote: "A lack of obedience to the leaders will, therefore, mean that we will not have the precious promptings of the Spirit, which we need personally— so much and so often. This potential loss would be reason enough for us to be obedient to the prophets, for apparently we cannot have one without the other. Vital as the words of the prophets are, these come to us only periodically. We need the directions of the Spirit daily, even hourly" (*All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, 104).



Willing to Follow at all Costs



Ephraim Hanks: Obedient to the Spirit and the Prophet



Doctrine & Covenants 1:14-16

14 And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people;

15 For they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant;

16 They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall.

Alma 35:15

15 Now Alma, being grieved for the iniquity of his people, yea for the wars, and the bloodsheds, and the contentions which were among them; and having been to declare the word, or sent to declare the word, among all the people in every city; and seeing that the hearts of the people began to wax hard, and that they began to be offended because of the strictness of the word, his heart was exceedingly sorrowful.

Warnings from Prophets

"There are those who criticize when we issue a statement of counsel or warning. Please know that our pleadings are not motivated by any selfish desire. Please know that our warnings are not without substance and reason. Please know that the decisions to speak out on various matters are not reached without deliberation, discussion, and prayer. Please know that our only ambition is to help each of you with your problems, your struggles, your families, your lives" (President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 59).

From Lorenzo Snow

"No man can be more happy than by obeying the living prophet's counsel. You may go from east to west, from north to south, and tread this footstool of the Lord all over, and you cannot find a man that can make himself happy in this Church, only by applying the counsel of the living prophet in this life; it is a matter of impossibility for a man to receive a fullness who is not susceptible of receiving and carrying out the living prophet's counsel. An individual that applies the counsel for this Church is bound to increase in all that is good, for there is a fountain of counsel which the Lord has established. He has made it, has deposited that counsel, that wisdom and those riches, and it will circumscribe all that pertains unto good, unto salvation; all things that pertain to glory and to the exaltation of the Saints in this world and in the world to come" (Lorenzo Snow, *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, 86-87).

Doctrinal Foundations

- ◆ 2 Nephi 26:3-9
- ◆ 3 Nephi 10:12-13
- ◆ Helaman 13:22-24, 33
- ◆ "There are some of our members who practice selective obedience. A prophet is not one who displays a smorgasbord of truth from which we are free to pick and choose. However, some members become critical and suggest the prophet should change the menu. A prophet doesn't take a poll to which way the wind of public opinion is blowing. He reveals the will of the Lord to us" (Glenn L. Pace, *Ensign*, May, 1989, 26).

Doctrinal Foundations

"If you will follow the admonitions of the Lord and heed the counsel of His chosen servants in their callings as prophets, seers, and revelators, I promise you that love at home and obedience to parents will increase; faith will be developed in the hearts of the youth of Israel and they will gain power and strength to combat the evil influences and temptations which beset them. Each of our homes may veritably become a little heaven on earth" (Ezra Taft Benson, *Children's Friend*, April 1957, 26).



A Parable to Consider

"As two men walked across an eastern university campus, they were attracted by a crowd of people surrounding a large maple tree. They approached and noticed that the crowd was being amused by the antics of a fox-tailed squirrel circling the tree, climbing it, and running back down again. An Irish setter crouched nearby, intently watching the squirrel. Each time the squirrel ran up the tree out of sight, the dog would slowly creep toward the tree. The squirrel paid little attention as the dog crept closer and closer, patiently biding its time.



"People watching this entertaining drama unfold knew what could happen, but they did nothing until in a flash the dog, catching the squirrel unaware, had it in the grip of his sharp teeth.

The Bushy-Tailed Squirrel

"The people then rushed forward in horror, forcing the dog's mouth open to rescue the squirrel. It was too late. The squirrel was dead. Anyone could have warned the squirrel or held back the dog. But they had been momentarily amused and watched silently while evil slowly crept up on good. When they rushed to the defense, it was too late.

"We see around us daily that which is portrayed in this parable. We sit idly by, watching as an insidious stream of profanity, vulgarity, demeaning behavior; a mocking of righteous ideals and principles invades our homes and lives through most types of media, teaching our children negative values and moral corruption. We then become upset when our children perform differently than we would wish, and social behavior continues to deteriorate" (David B. Haight, *A Light unto the World*, p. 134).



Concern #1: Dating

"Date only those who have high standards and in whose company you can maintain high standards. A young man and a young woman on a date are responsible to help each other maintain their standards and to protect each other's honor and virtue. You must honor the sanctity of the priesthood and of womanhood" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 24).



Dating Principles

"The Lord has made us attractive one to another for a great purpose. But this very attraction becomes as a powder keg unless it is kept under control... It is for this reason that the Church counsels against early dating" (President Gordon B. Hinckley, *For the Strength of Youth*, 24).

Principle #1

Date Only Those Who Have High Standards, and in whose company you can maintain your standards.



How Do They Measure Up?

"One of the best yard-sticks for knowing whether a certain person may be best for you is to ask yourself what kind of an influence this person has on you. In their presence do you wish you were better than you are? Do you think some of your noblest thoughts? Are you encouraged to goodly deeds? If this is so, that person could be worthy of greater consideration."

Measuring Up (Cont.)

"But if being in their company makes you tend in the opposite direction, you had best leave them.. Young women, you are not required to lower your standards to get a husband. Keep yourselves attractive, maintain high standards, place yourself in a position to meet worthy men, and be engaged in constructive work" (Ezra Taft Benson, *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, [Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1988], 532).

Dating Those of Our Own Faith

"You young men, fall in love with Latter-day Saint girls. And you young women, fall in love with Latter-day Saint boys. You will be happier if you do so. You will be happier because you will understand one another and appreciate one another's values, and you will be grateful all of your days if you will do that" (President Gordon B. Hinckley, fireside, Cebu City, Philippines, 31 May 1996; as cited in *Ensign*, July 1997, 73).

Dating Those of Your Own Faith

"Now, in saying this I am not suggesting that LDS boys date non-LDS girls, or vice versa. Your chances for a happy and lasting marriage will be far greater if you will date those who are active and faithful in the Church. Such dating is most likely to lead to marriage in the House of the Lord" (Gordon B. Hinckley, "Four B's for Boys," *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 41).

Principle #2

Do Not Date Until You Are At Least 16 Years Old.



Not before 16

"Dating before then 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" (*For the Strength of Youth*, 24).



When Are You Old Enough?

"When are you old enough? 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. Stay in group activities; don't pair off. **Avoid steady dating. Steady dating is courtship, and surely the beginning of courtship ought to be delayed until you have emerged from your teens.**

"Dating should not be premature or without supervision. You should appreciate your parents if they see to that" (Boyd K. Packer, "You're in the Driver's Seat," *New Era*, June 2004, 5).

Meet Many People

"My beloved young people, you should be serious-minded. Life is not wholly for fun and frolic. It is a most serious business. You will do well to grow up as children, associating with both girls and boys for those first years. When you get in the teenage years, your social associations should still be general acquaintance with both boys and girls. Any dating or pairing off in social contacts should be postponed until at least the age of 16 or older, and even then there should be much judgment used in selections and in the seriousness.

The Proper Way

"Young people should still limit the close contacts for several years, since the boy will be going on his mission when he is 19 years old. There should be limited contacts and certainly no approach to the intimate relationships involving sex. There must never be any sex of any kind prior to marriage" (Spencer W. Kimball, "Marriage—The Proper Way," *New Era*, Feb. 1976, 5).

What is a Date?

- ◆ A date is when you pair off with one person for the duration of an activity. It does not have to be a formal thing. It is when you pair up with one person, and stay with them for the length of the activity.
- ◆ So, when a guy comes over to my house, gets my daughter and wants to take her down the street to get a slurpee – guess what, that’s a date. Especially when they hold hands on the way.
- ◆ Guess what, if you go to a group activity, and then get a ride home from a guy– its just you and him in the car– you’ve just been on a date. Especially if he kisses you goodnight.
- ◆ Guess what, if you go to a park, and make out with a guy, you’ve just been on a date!! Hello!!

The Dating Test

Scenario One: A fourteen year-old young woman meets a fifteen-year-old young man at a stake dance. They are together all evening, not dancing with anyone else. Is this a date?



The Dating Test

Scenario Two: A thirteen-year-old boy asks a girl of the same age to meet him at a high school homecoming game. Since he cannot drive, his parents not only take him, but buy a nice corsage for him to give to the lucky lady. Her mom also bought this little tiger a boutonniere. They are together for the duration of the game, and are seen holding hands and feeding each other corn dogs. Both say they are not on a date. What do you think?

The Dating Test



Scenario Three: A group of teenagers goes to play putt-putt golf. One couple has decided to pair off and play the back nine on their own. They are seen behind the windmill at hole 13, holding hands, and trading colored balls. What do you think?

Here is Why?

In a study conducted by two LDS Professors, they discovered the following:

Of the Girls who had begun dating at age 12,

91% had sexual relations before graduating from High School.

- ◆ For those who waited until 13, 56%
- ◆ What about the 14 year olds? 53%
- ◆ For those who waited until 15? 40%
- ◆ And for those who waited until 16? 20%
- ◆ (Source: *Church News*, 10 September 1988, 16).

Hanging Out

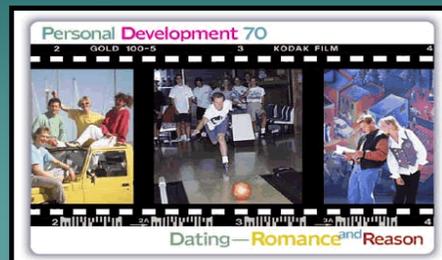
“Hanging out consists of numbers of young men and numbers of young women joining together in some group activity. It is very different from dating...Young women, resist too much hanging out, and encourage dates that are simple, inexpensive, and frequent. Don’t make it easy for young men to hang out in a setting where you women provide the food. Don’t subsidize freeloaders. An occasional group activity is okay, but when you see men who make hanging out their primary interaction with the opposite sex, I think you should lock the pantry and bolt the front door.

Hanging Out (Cont.)

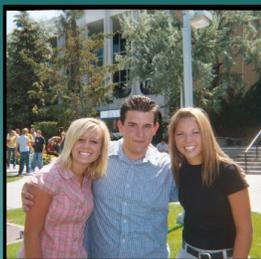
"If you do this, you should also hang out a sign, "Will open for individual dates," or something like that. And, young women, please make it easier for these shy males to ask for a simple, inexpensive date. Part of making it easier is to avoid implying that a date is something very serious. If we are to persuade young men to ask for dates more frequently, we must establish a mutual expectation that to go on a date is not to imply a continuing commitment. Finally, young women, if you turn down a date, be kind. Otherwise you may crush a nervous and shy questioner and destroy him as a potential dater, and that could hurt some other sister" (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "The Dedication of a Lifetime," CES Broadcast, 1 May 2005, Oakland, California).

Principle #3

When You Begin Dating, Go In Groups Or On Double Dates



This is Not a Group Date!



This is not what the First Presidency Had in Mind!

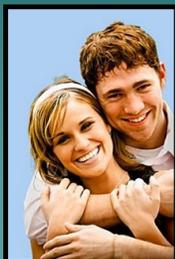
Safety in Numbers

- ◆ "Group social activities should be provided as alternatives to early dating or activities that encourage teenagers to pair off...Some youth who do pair off exclusively in their early teens are emotionally and socially immature. That is one reason why the church counsels youth to date only after age 16, and even then not to pair off exclusively with one partner" (*Young Women Handbook*, 1988, 20).
- ◆ "Physical and moral safety is increased in the multiplicity of friends" (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 290).

Principle #4

Avoid Going on Frequent Dates with the Same Person

That's called "steady dating" and our prophets have asked us not to do that. Too many parents encourage this in the name of "cuteness and popularity."



Straight Talk on Steady Dating

- ◆ President Kimball said that if members of the Church did not steady date, "our youth would immediately eliminate a majority of the sins of our young folks" (President Spencer W. Kimball, "Save the Youth of Zion," *Improvement Era*, September 1965, 806).
- ◆ "Steady dating presents a real problem to most young men and women...There is plenty of time after high school to go steady" (Howard W. Hunter, *Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 124).
- ◆ "When you are young, do not get involved in steady dating. When you reach an age where you think of marriage, then is the time to become so involved. But you boys who are in high school don't need this, and neither do the girls" (President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, November 1997, 51).

Steady Dating is the Source of Sin

"Steady dating is the source of much evil. The casual relationship grows rapidly into intimacies, develops heavy temptations, and stirs passions far beyond the ability of most young people to cope with. Nearly 40 percent of our unwed mothers are between fifteen and nineteen years of age. Even our finest young people will find difficulty in withstanding for a long period the temptations of the intimate, frequent association. And the best young men and women may be overwhelmed and led down the path of the sins of necking, petting, fornication, and other detestable and loathsome perversions and practices. (President Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 289)

Concern #2: Dress & Appearance

"Your body is God's sacred creation. Respect it as a gift from God, and do not defile it in any way. Through your dress and appearance, you can show the Lord that you know how precious your body is. You can show that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ.

"Prophets of God have always counseled His children to dress modestly. The way you dress is a reflection of what you are on the inside. Your dress and grooming send messages about you to others and influence the way you and others act. When you are well groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit and can exercise a good influence on those around you.

"Never lower your dress standards for any occasion. Doing so sends the message that you are using your body to get attention and approval and that modesty is important only when it is convenient (*For the Strength of Youth*, 14-15; emphasis added).

What Is Immodest?

"Immodest clothing includes short shorts and skirts, tight clothing, shirts that do not cover the stomach, and other revealing attire. Young women should wear clothing that covers the shoulder and avoid clothing that is low-cut in the front or the back or revealing in any other manner. Young men should also maintain modesty in their appearance. All should avoid extremes in clothing, appearance, and hairstyle. Always be neat and clean and avoid being sloppy or inappropriately casual in dress, grooming, and manners. Ask yourself, "Would I feel comfortable with my appearance if I were in the Lord's presence?"

"Someday you will receive your endowment in the temple. Your dress and behavior should help you prepare for that sacred time.

"Do not disfigure yourself with tattoos or body piercings. If girls or women desire to have their ears pierced, they are encouraged to wear only one pair of modest earrings. (*For the Strength of Youth*, 15-16; emphasis added).

You Can Judge a Book By It's Cover

"It doesn't take long in life to learn that you can tell a lot about almost any situation by the way people dress. If you drive by the meetinghouse on a weekday afternoon and see people there wearing shorts and T-shirts, you're not likely to assume it's a funeral or a wedding. If you drive by and see those same people dressed in their Sunday best, however, you'll probably consider both of those possibilities—but not a basketball game.

"Similarly, the way an individual dresses reveals a lot about attitudes and priorities. Okay, I know—we're not supposed to judge a book by its cover. But it's hard not to form an opinion of a woman who always wears plunging necklines and short skirts, or a man who goes out in public wearing nothing more than a pair of skintight biker shorts.

"That's why Church leaders counsel us to dress modestly. According to the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*, published by the First Presidency of the Church, modesty is one way we can show our respect for Heavenly Father—and for ourselves" (Joseph Walker, "More than Hemlines and Haircuts," *Ensign*, Feb 1992, 22).

Thank Goodness for Standards

"The problem for us, then, is how to determine what is modest and what isn't. Modesty is, after all, fairly subjective. One person may consider a sleeveless dress too immodest for a young Latter-day Saint woman to wear, while another could look at the same dress, note the modest length and design, and find nothing wrong with it.

"Our own confusion is sometimes fueled by the constantly shifting public standards of modesty, which can be hard to keep up with. There was a time in the not-so-distant past when it was considered indecent to expose an ankle or a knee—even on the beach. When I was in high school, the raging debate was the question of whether or not it was appropriate for girls to wear jeans to school. Today, my children have to contend with school standards so liberal that nearly anything goes except wearing your underwear outside your clothes. And these days, who can tell? (*For the Strength of Youth*, 8)" (Joseph Walker, "More than Hemlines and Haircuts," *Ensign*, Feb 1992, 22).

Not To Be Influenced By the World

"For you to fully claim Heavenly Father's blessings and protection, we ask you to stay true to the standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ and *not* slavishly follow the whims of fads and fashions. The Church will never deny your moral agency regarding what you should wear and exactly how you should look. But the Church will always declare standards and will always teach principles. As Sister Susan Tanner taught this morning, one of those principles is modesty. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, modesty in appearance is *always* in fashion. Our standards are *not* socially negotiable.

Not to Be Influence By the World

"The *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet is very clear in its call for young women to avoid clothing that is too tight, too short, or improperly revealing in any manner, including bare midriffs. Parents, please review this booklet with your children. Second only to your love, they need your limits. Young women, choose your clothing the way you would choose your friends—in both cases choose that which improves you and would give you confidence standing in the presence of God. Good friends would never embarrass you, demean you, or exploit you. Neither should your clothing.

Not to Be Influenced By the World

"I make a special appeal regarding how young women might dress for Church services and Sabbath worship. We used to speak of "best dress" or "Sunday dress," and maybe we should do so again. In any case, from ancient times to modern we have always been invited to present our best selves inside and out when entering the house of the Lord—and a dedicated LDS chapel is a "house of the Lord." Our clothing or footwear need never be expensive, indeed should *not* be expensive, but neither should it appear that we are on our way to the beach. When we come to worship the God and Father of us all and to partake of the sacrament symbolizing the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we should be as comely and respectful, as dignified and appropriate as we can be. We should be recognizable in appearance as well as in behavior that we truly are disciples of Christ, that in a spirit of worship we are meek and lowly of heart, that we truly desire the Savior's Spirit to be with us always" (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, "To Young Women, *General Conference*, October 2005, Internet Transcript, <http://lds.org/conference/talk/display/0,5232,23-1-559-9,00.html>).

Passing the Real Test

"Conformity to dress and grooming standards is one of the tests the Lord imposes upon us to see if we will take counsel and to see if we can stand up against the pressures of the world. There is, of course, an underlying reason for all the counsels and commands relayed from the Lord by the Brethren to the Saints.

Passing the Real Test (Cont.)

"Immodesty, for instance, leads to immorality. [Tight fitting clothing] and grubby grooming open the door to rebellion against the established order and to associations which lead away from the Church. Surely those who are so adorned are not living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. But even if we are not sufficiently in tune to recognize the valid reasons behind the dress and grooming standards, we are still expected to abide by them.

Passing the Real Test (Cont.)

"We might well hark back to the counsel given Adam to offer sacrifices. He, not knowing the underlying reasons, did so in order to conform to the counsel that the Lord gave. And in due course the angel from heaven explained what was involved" (Elder Bruce R. McConkie, *The Ten Commandments of a Peculiar People, Brigham Young University Speeches*, 28 January 1975, 4-5).

We All Need to Repent

How can we follow the Prophet if we do not know what he has said?

How can we follow the Prophet if we do not read what he has written?

How can we follow the prophet if we do not do what he does?

From Brigham Young

"The Lord through His prophet will keep us informed. The question is, Are we listening? The story is told that Brigham Young, after having urged the people in certain communities to clean up their properties, refused to go back to preach to them, saying something along these lines: 'You didn't listen to me last time when I urged you to fix up your premises. The same doors are off their hinges; the same barns are still unpainted; the same fences are partly fallen. I will return when you are ready for the next sermon but you haven't done anything about the first one yet' (See 1978 Devotional Speeches of the Year, 136)" (Sheri Dew, *No Doubt About It* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001], 174).