

## Myth-Conceptions about the FSY Guide

## Key Sources about the FSY Guide

*These are the best sources to fully convey what Church leaders want us to understand about the FSY Guide. Anyone who reads them will see several themes emphasized repeatedly. These sources should be shared and used widely.*

**Young Men** General Presidency, “Principles for Parents: *For the Strength of Youth* Guide,” BYU Women’s Conference, **May 2024**, Gospel Library (audio & transcript) [📄](#)

**Young Women** General Presidency, Church News podcast, ep. 121, “How Youth Are Proving They ‘Can Do All Things through Christ,’” **31 Jan 2023**, TheChurchNews.com (audio & transcript) [📄](#)

**Young Men** General Presidency, “The New *For the Strength of Youth* Guide,” BYU Women’s Conference, **May 2023**, Gospel Library (video & text) [📄](#)

**Young Men** General Presidency, Church News podcast, ep. 106, “How the New ‘*For the Strength of the Youth*’ Guide Helps Youth Choose Christ,” **18 Oct 2022** TheChurchNews.com (audio & transcript) [📄](#)



*All of the following misconceptions have been addressed and countered by Church leaders, in public addresses published by the Church, especially within the last few years since the new guide was introduced, by the same leaders who revised it.*

Answered  
in Section

|          |                          |                                                                                                                                                                                        |          |
|----------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>A</b> | <b>Loosening</b>         | “We <b>don’t have standards</b> anymore.”                                                                                                                                              | <b>1</b> |
|          |                          | “The rules have been <b>relaxed</b> .”                                                                                                                                                 | <b>2</b> |
|          |                          | “People were <b>trying too hard</b> to be good. That’s <b>Pharisaical</b> .”                                                                                                           | <b>6</b> |
|          |                          | “Principles are <b>more permissive</b> than rules, and less apt to <b>offend</b> others.”                                                                                              | <b>3</b> |
| <b>B</b> | <b>Just Feel and Act</b> | “The only standard now is ‘Just do what <b>seems right and feels good</b> to you.’”                                                                                                    | <b>4</b> |
|          |                          | “The standard now is ‘Just <b>read the FSY Guide and pray</b> , then do what seems good.’”                                                                                             | <b>4</b> |
| <b>C</b> | <b>Obsolescence</b>      | “All <b>previous</b> prophetic counsel, from before the new FSY Guide was published, is now <b>invalid</b> and can be ignored.”                                                        | <b>7</b> |
|          |                          | “It’s <b>now OK</b> to ____ [fill in the blank with any preferred behavior].”                                                                                                          | <b>2</b> |
| <b>D</b> | <b>No Shared Norms</b>   | “There are (or should be) <b>no institutional rules</b> now, only individual ones. It’s wrong to want shared norms. Rules are <b>unnecessary</b> , even spiritually <b>inferior</b> .” | <b>1</b> |
|          |                          | “Parents and Church leaders <b>shouldn’t set rules</b> anymore, like dress standards for Church activities or dances.”                                                                 | <b>1</b> |
|          |                          | “Parents’ role is merely to <b>affirm</b> their child’s choices.”                                                                                                                      | <b>5</b> |

# What Church Leaders Teach about the FSJ Guide

**What**  
Is the  
Way We Teach?

**Why**  
Do We  
Teach This Way?

**How**  
Can We Best  
Teach This Way?

1

## ***Both Principles and Rules***

The Standards Haven't Changed



Discovering the branches helps us appreciate the leaves more, not less.

2

## **Newly-Invented Sins**

**Expand** Guidance to Endless New Situations



Vector formulas help you draw *more* raster pixels with exactness, to make beautiful high-resolution art at any scale.

3

## **Meaningful Obedience**

Christ-Centered Discipleship Helps You **Become** Like God



Don't be so distracted by the dashboard that you overlook the destination and the scenery.

5

## **Sharing Persuasively**

**Explain** Your Beliefs and Practices to Others



The reasons behind the guidance can help *others* enjoy the blessings of choosing righteousness.

4

## **The Revelation Pattern**

First **Search**, Then Pray



Most of the water that rains from heaven is absorbed through the roots in the ground.

6

## **Valiance**

**Strive** to Live **Higher** Than the World around Us



Pack the parachute carefully and open it long before hitting the ground, to keep skydiving for a lifetime.

7

## **Continuity**

Presume **Relevance**, Not Obsolescence



There's no expiration date on timeless wisdom.

1

# Both Principles *and* Rules

## The Standards Haven't Changed

*Parents and leaders teach principles and set rules to form disciples.*



Bradley R. Wilcox

*Young Men General Presidency, Second Counselor*

"Principles for Parents: For the Strength of Youth Guide," BYU Women's Conference, 3 May 2024, Gospel Library [📖](#)

1.1

As we speak about rules, we have to remember that **there is nothing wrong with rules**, laws, commandments. They help families and societies function. ... So **parents in homes have every right to say, "In this home we have a curfew" and "In this family we dress modestly." The For the Strength of Youth guide does not mean that we don't have rules**. It is simply a shift to invite us to move from an only rule-based instruction to **principle-centered discussions**.

Church News podcast, ep. 106, "The Young Men General Presidency on New FSJ Guide," 18 Oct. 2022, TheChurchNews.com

1.2

**Rules are important**, but they need to be **set in homes**, where families can counsel together about what their needs are. Those **rules need to be set at a local level**, where **leaders** and youth can counsel together about what's best.

"Reasons for the Rules," *For the Strength of Youth* magazine, Oct 2023

1.3

**Teens and families still have rules** and commandments, but the miracle of the guide is that now they are **talking more about the reasons** for the rules.



John Bytheway

*Young Men Advisory Council*

"Focus on Doctrines, Principles Behind Rules," *Church News*, 24 Oct. 2022, Newsroom.ChurchOfJesusChrist.org [📖](#)

1.4



- Leaves – **Rules**
- Branches – **Principles**
- Trunk – **Doctrines**
- When we understand the **doctrines**, we will have no problem with the **rules**

Dieter F. Uchtdorf

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

1.5

"Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Youth," general conference, Oct. 2022

Is it wrong to have **rules**? Of course not. **We all need them** every day. But it is wrong to focus **only on rules** instead of focusing on the Savior. You need to know **the whys** and **the hows** and then consider the consequences of your choices.



Elder Ahmad S. Corbitt

*General Authority Seventy (YM First Counselor, 2020–2023)*

"Ahmad S. Corbitt: Listening to Prophetic and Apostolic Direction," *Church News*, 29 Apr. 2023, Newsroom.ChurchOfJesusChrist.org

1.6

People are **interpreting the absence of rules** [in parts of the FSJ Guide] as "there shouldn't be rules," rather than a healthy respect by prophets and apostles of our agency and our ability at the **local level** to **develop and apply our own rules**.

Young Men and Young Women general presidencies

"Changing How We Talk with Youth about Standards," *Church News*, 27 Oct 2022 [📖](#)

1.7

Is it wrong for **parents to say no**? Is it wrong for **parents to have and enforce rules**? Of course not. We are responsible for teaching children and youth as they learn and grow. ... [But] conversations [should stay] **focused on the reasons** for the rules and not the rules themselves.

# Newly-Invented Sins

## Expand Guidance to Endless New Situations



Brad Wilcox

*Young Men General Presidency, First counselor*

"The New For the Strength of Youth Guide," 2023 BYU Women's Conference, 5 May 2023, Gospel Library [📖](#)

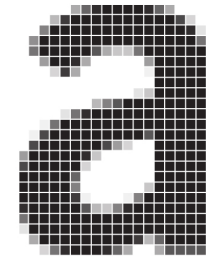
2.1

The revision of the guide started with vaping. The guide that we had previously didn't say anything about vaping, and so everybody was all panicked, and we kept getting letters saying we need to review the guide and we need to put "don't vape" in there. And so we went running to the Brethren and said, "**We need to add vaping** to the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet."

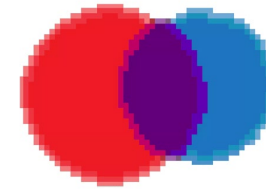
And it was Elder Uchtdorf who wisely reminded us of Mosiah 4:29–30. The ways to sin are numberless. So we put vaping in today. **What are we going to need to add tomorrow?** And what are we going to need to add the next day? Because people will just keep **inventing ways to sin**. And he told us and wisely counseled the Young Women [General] Presidency and the Young Men [General] Presidency that we needed to start **focusing more on principles** and not just on the lists of **dos and don'ts**.

Rules give us a rough pixelated version of the picture God wants to make of our lives, but principles provide the formulas we need to scale our choices into high-resolution discipleship.

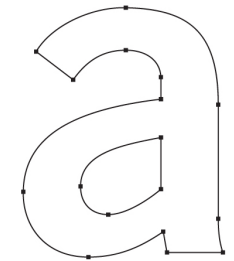
### Rules



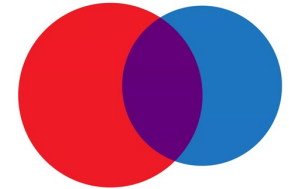
Raster



### Principles



Vector



Things AS THEY Really Are 2.0



Neal A. Maxwell

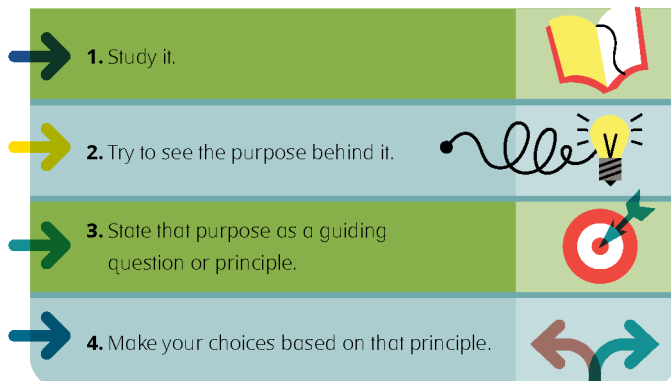
*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

*Mormon Musings* (1970); in Avram R. Shannon, "Torah in the Mouth," *Religious Educator* v19 n1 (2018), RSC.BYU.edu [📖](#)

The **spirit of the law** is superior because it **demand**s more of us than the **letter of the law**.

2.2

### A Pattern for Living a Commandment or Guideline



"General Principles, Specific Choices," *FSYouth* magazine, Mar 2023 [📖](#)



Steven J. Lund

*President, Young Men General Presidency*

"Principles for Parents: For the Strength of Youth Guide," BYU Women's Conference, 3 May 2024, Gospel Library [📖](#)

Our children are contending with a **near-whiteout blizzard of ideologies** and lifestyle choices and philosophies of men, only occasionally even mingled with scripture. It was into this world that the new *For the Strength of Youth ... Guide* was born.

In previous, simpler times, most of the deceptions of the day, those hurtful but nevertheless intriguing choices, could be dealt with individually in the way that a targeting antibiotic deals with a targeted germ. But today's handheld technology-driven culture brings forward a nearly infinite range of choices that are **germ-like** in that they are **ever-changing and morphing** and able to become **ever more intriguing and more appealing**. Today's youth need more than a checklist of **dos and don'ts**. They need a **broad spectrum Urim and Thummim for making choices**.

## 3

# Meaningful Obedience

Christ-Centered Discipleship Helps You **Become** Like God

Here's how the Young Women and Young Men general presidencies who revised the new FSY Guide in Oct. 2022 have explained the purposes.



Bradley R. Wilcox

Young Men General Presidency, Second Counselor  
Church News podcast, ep. 106, "The Young Men General Presidency on New FSY Guide," 18 Oct 2022, TheChurchNews.com

3.1

This guide is calling for young people to **not do less**, but to gain personal revelation, ... and to understand the "**whys**." This guide is **not announcing that the standards have changed**. What it's doing is helping parents and leaders teach those standards differently. ...

It's **not a matter of the standards have changed**. No, the commandments are the commandments. What's changed is that hopefully we can teach those in a way that will be more **meaningful and more motivating** for youth as they are empowered to make decisions based on their own personal revelation.



Becky Craven

Young Women General Presidency, Second Counselor  
Church News podcast, ep. 121, "The Young Women General Presidency," 31 Jan. 2023, TheChurchNews.com

3.2

**It doesn't take away from anything prophets have said**, or the Lord has said, or parents have said, or schools have said. There are some boundaries, and **there are rules that are already set**. And I think that's an important distinction. ... I think some of the youth are saying, "Oh, it's totally my decision."



Michelle D. Craig

Young Women General Presidency, First Counselor  
Church News podcast, ep. 121, "The Young Women General Presidency," 31 Jan. 2023, TheChurchNews.com

3.3

I think it's important to know that **it's not a relaxing of standards**, that it's not, "The rules are gone and do whatever you want." ... It's **not just license to do anything they want**.



Steven J. Lund

President of the Young Men General Presidency  
Church News podcast, ep. 106, "The Young Men General Presidency on New FSY Guide," 18 Oct 2022, TheChurchNews.com

3.4

Go back and listen to [Elder Uchtdorf's general conference talk] a few times before [you] **draw too many conclusions** about the booklet. ... The first impression people might have is, "Oh, the **rules have just been relaxed**." And yet, it's **never really been that way**, has it? When we speak of a higher and holier way, that calls for us to be **more vigilant** about ... complying to what Heavenly Father would have us do.

"The New For the Strength of Youth Guide," BYU Women's Conference, 5 May 2023, Gospel Library

3.5

There are those who **think that the new FSY guide represents a lowering of standards**. ... But President Nelson **preempted** that thought. ... He said, ... "Decide how you can live these standards, your standards, with **even more exactness**." Does that sound like the prophet has it in his mind that we need to **lower the bar**? That **doesn't sound that way, does it?**



Michael T. Nelson

Young Men General Presidency, Second Counselor  
"Principles for Parents: For the Strength of Youth Guide," BYU Women's Conference, 3 May 2024, Gospel Library

3.6

**Rules are necessary and beneficial**. Like ... the dashboard of a car, they **provide useful information** that helps us on our journey. However, they become a **distraction when they become the focus**. If we drive down the road with our eyes riveted on the speedometer, we may always stay within the speed limit, but we will miss the **stunning views** flashing past the windows. If all we see are rules, we will miss the **glorious, mind-expanding truths** our Heavenly Father is offering to reveal to us.

Perhaps we are modern pioneers, crossing the plains from a rule-based **obedience** to a **principle-based discipleship**. God is inviting all of us to learn the truths and laws He lives so we can move beyond merely obeying rules to **becoming like Him**.



## 4

# The Revelation Pattern

First **Search**, Then Pray

*FSY Guide, p. 33*

## Scriptures Prophets Parents Leaders Prayer

*Search, Ponder, and Pray*



Steven J. Lund

*President, Young Men General Presidency*

"Principles for Parents: For the Strength of Youth Guide," BYU Women's Conference, 3 May 2024, Gospel Library [📖](#)

4.1

*For the Strength of Youth* ... is an approach for making choices and life decisions that will keep us and them centered on the Lord's covenant path. The **pattern** is a simple one.

When facing a decision, rather than having the book list what they can and cannot do, the guide encourages them and us to **learn what the Lord has said about that choice** that is being considered—what He said through his **prophets, ancient** and **modern**. What do **parents** and **Church leaders** say about it?

With that **inspired background**, **then** we can follow Joseph Smith's example and go to the Lord and knock—and **ask His guidance**. By following the **promptings of the Spirit** that follow, good decisions will be made.

*In a recent survey, youth were asked how to figure out what to do in an uncertain situation. Most answered, "Read the FSY Guide and pray." Not a single person mentioned prophets.*



Michael T. Nelson

*Young Men General Presidency, Second Counselor*

"The New For the Strength of Youth Guide," 2023 BYU

Women's Conference, 5 May 2023, Gospel Library [📖](#)

4.2

While meeting a 14-year-old young man by the name of Mitchell, I asked **how he was interpreting *For the Strength of Youth***. He hadn't read it. He hadn't opened it. He came from a fairly normal quorum and ward. I started to ask him a question: "So, Mitchell, **what will you do** when this opportunity comes?" ... This wasn't a terribly vile infraction, but it was definitely in the **previous guidelines and rules** that we'd looked at.

He said, "Well, I haven't looked at the book." I said, "Well, how will you respond when this becomes a choice?" He thought for a few minutes and then said, "I don't know; probably **however I feel about it**."

**He was serious.** He had not contemplated, at 14, when the opportunity comes to make a choice that he would have a choice. It would simply be if he was having a good day or if he was having a bad day, one **influenced by friends or one that he would hold to truths** that he understood.



Becky Craven

*Young Women General Presidency, Second Counselor*

Church News podcast, ep. 121, "The Young Women General Presidency," 31 Jan. 2023, TheChurchNews.com

4.3

It really is about, **not just making choices**, but making the **right choice**. ...

This is about **continuing to make good choices**. And they will continue to be a choice generation as they continue ... to get on their knees and **not just feel good about something**, but to really, **to study**. ... Our youth need to be willing to listen for what Heavenly Father wants them to do. And that sometimes is a **little piece that they're missing**. "This is not about what I want to do. This is ... what the Lord wants me to do."

So therefore, it's going to **take a little bit of effort**, isn't it? It's not that simple.





Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Parents," gen conf, Apr 2023

Building faith in a child is somewhat like helping a flower grow. ... You cannot *neglect* the flower and expect it to grow or flourish spontaneously.

What you can and must do for the rising generation is provide **rich, nourishing soil** with access to flowing **heavenly water**. **Remove weeds** and anything that would block **heavenly sunlight**.

**L**iving Prophets  
*Modern Apostles*  
**D**ead Prophets  
*Scriptures*  
**S**pirit  
*Holy Ghost*

**Angels from heav'n** and **truth from earth**

Ps. 85:11; Moses 7:62; Rom. 10:14, 17

Most of the **water** that **rains from heaven** must still be **absorbed from the ground**.

Weeds block **sunlight** from the leaves and steal away **nutrients** from the roots.

When the FSJ Guide was introduced, the very next apostle who spoke explained how we should verify spiritual feelings by comparing them with words of prophets.



Dale G. Renlund

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"A Framework for Personal Revelation," gen conf, Oct 2022

Personal revelation will be **in harmony with the commandments of God and the covenants** we have made with Him. Consider a prayer that goes something like this: "Heavenly Father, Church services are boring. May I worship Thee on the Sabbath in the mountains or on the beach? May I be excused from going to church and partaking of the sacrament but still have the promised blessings of keeping the Sabbath day holy?" In response to such a prayer, we can anticipate God's response: "My child, I **have already revealed my will** regarding the Sabbath day."

When we ask for revelation about something for which **God has already given clear direction**, we open ourselves up to **misinterpreting our feelings and hearing what we want** to hear. A man once told me about his struggles to stabilize his family's financial situation. He had the idea to embezzle funds as a solution, prayed about it, and felt he had received affirmative revelation to do so. I knew he had been deceived because he **sought revelation contrary to a commandment** of God. The Prophet Joseph Smith warned, "Nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the **influence of a false spirit**, when they think they have **the Spirit of God**."

4.4

4.5

## Illumination Sunlight Prayer



Cultivation

**Nutrients**  
**Scriptures**  
**Prophets**  
**Parents**  
**Leaders**

October 2022 general conference

Dieter F. Uchtdorf

### Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Youth

Elder Uchtdorf teaches that Jesus Christ is the best guide for making choices. He also introduces the new For the Strength of Youth guide.

Tracy Y. Browning

### Seeing More of Jesus Christ in Our Lives

Sister Browning encourages us to see our lives from a gospel perspective in order to see more of the Savior in our lives.

Dale G. Renlund

### A Framework for Personal Revelation

Elder Renlund teaches how to receive personal revelation through the Holy Ghost and how to avoid deception.



# How Can I Find the Standards?



Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Youth," gen conf, Oct 2022

4.6

Jesus Christ has very high standards for His followers. And the invitation to earnestly seek **His will** and live by **His truths** is the highest standard possible! ...

The Lord, **through His prophets**, has always been guiding us in that direction. He is pleading with us to "increase [our] spiritual capacity to receive **revelation**."



Bonnie H. Cordon

President of the Young Women General Presidency

Church News podcast, ep. 121, 31 Jan. 2023, TheChurchNews.com

4.7

Usually, it's because we don't really **open and study** that it's not part of us. ... Help them realize that ... if you're **reading a conference talk**, and there's **counsel from one of the prophets about a standard, there's truth**, and that the Holy Ghost is bearing testimony of that truth. It doesn't have to be a big thing or a big feeling. It can be **something that we understand** or that presses on our mind. ...

But parents, we need to be all in. This is not something that you say, "Oh, so you **felt you wanted to do this. Alright**, go ahead." Some of these decisions will be lifelong decisions. So we need to be there, counsel together, help **study with them**, be on our **knees together**, notice **what the prophets have said**, and **have a standard in our homes**.



Michelle D. Craig

Young Women General Presidency, First Counselor

Church News podcast, ep. 121, 31 Jan 2023, TheChurchNews.com

4.8

We hope that youth **counsel with their parents and with their leaders** for some of these big decisions. ... They're **still under their parents' roof**, and there may be guidelines that parents feel strongly about. But in the process of going to the Lord and **studying it out for themselves** we hope ... that they internalize these decisions, that it doesn't become their parents' decision for them. ... **It's harder, and it requires more effort**, but in the process ... they gain a testimony of things that will last a lifetime.

If the *For the Strength of Youth* guide doesn't say not to do something, does that mean it's OK?

**THE PURPOSE OF** the *For the Strength of Youth* guide "is not to give you a 'yes' or 'no' about every possible choice you might face. Instead, the Lord is inviting you to live in a higher and holier way—His way" (*For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices* [2022], 4–5).

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said of the guide: "Jesus Christ has very high standards for His followers. ...

"... The Lord is **not** saying, 'Do whatever you want.'

"He is saying, 'Let God prevail.'"<sup>1</sup>

If the *For the Strength of Youth* guide doesn't come right out and say not to do something, that doesn't mean you should automatically assume it's OK to do. **Think differently.** On any question, think about the **truths the Lord has revealed** that relate to that question. As you learn about these eternal truths, seek to apply them in your choices and ask Heavenly Father's direction. Then He will bless you.

## NOTE

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Oct. 2022 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 11).

## 5

# Sharing Persuasively

Explain Your Beliefs and Practices to Others



Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Youth," gen conf, Oct 2022, note 13

5.1

As Latter-day Saints, we are often known for **what we do and don't do—our behaviors**. This can be good, but it's even better to be known for **what we know** (the truths that drive our behaviors) and for **who we know** (the Savior—and how our love for Him inspires our behaviors).



"LDS Youth Wears Young Women Pendant on National TV," *Church News*, 24 Aug 2016. +Face-2-Face with Musical Artists, 11 Oct 2017

[In Feb. 2016] Nicole, a [fourteen-year-old] Mia Maid from the Sobradinho 2nd Ward in the Brasília Brazil North Stake, drew attention after wearing her **Young Women pendant** during her performance. During her first audition, the costume designers asked her to remove her necklace because the rules of the show do not allow the use of any religious symbol. When she moved on to the second round, the young woman **asked permission to wear** the pendant.

She **explained its meaning and her dress standards** and **recited the Young Women theme and motto**. Deeply moved, the costume designer allowed Nicole to wear her necklace and choose her own clothes.

Nicole recalled, "She started crying and said, 'How beautiful! **I have never heard anything like that!** What you said was so beautiful that from now on you can wear whatever you want.' I wore my necklace in all of my performances on 'The Voice Kids.' That was my way to express: **I'm here, I'm a Mormon, I'm living my values**," said Nicole.

Why do you want to change your outfit?

OK

Better

Because the prophet said so.

Because I am a daughter of Heavenly Father, who loves me, and I love him. So I stand for **truth** and **righteousness**.

Dieter F. Uchtdorf

5.2

"For the Strength of Youth: The Savior's Message to You," *For the Strength of Youth* magazine, Mar 2024 Special Issue

Your friends might know that **you** ...

But do they know that you make these choices **because** ...

Try not to use **offensive or hurtful language**. They might see you **reach out** to that kid in school whom most people just ignore or even bully.

Because Jesus Christ taught that "all people are your **brothers and sisters**—including ... people who are different from you"?

Go to **church every Sunday**. They might notice when you **turn off** a certain **song** or **turn down an invitation** to watch a certain **movie**.

Because you have "a joyful **covenant relationship** with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ," and that as part of that commitment to follow the Savior, you are grateful "to have the **Holy Spirit** as your constant companion"?

Don't **drink** or **smoke** or use other harmful **drugs**.

Because Jesus Christ taught that "your **body is sacred**," "an amazing gift from your Heavenly Father," **made in His image**?

Won't **cheat or lie** and that you take **education** seriously.

Because Jesus Christ taught that "the **truth will make you free**"?

Make these sometimes unpopular choices to **stay true to Christ's standards**.

Because you know that "**Jesus Christ is your strength**"?



Bradley R. Wilcox

Young Men General Presidency, Second Counselor  
"Principles for Parents: For the Strength of Youth Guide," BYU Women's Conf., 3 May 2024, Gospel Library

5.3

The guide is not just a book of **rules**. It is a book of **reasons**. Consider the following questions and answers:

| Question                                                                                                                             | Rules | Answer                                                                       | Principles |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Your Latter-day Saint culture is so perfectionistic. There are so many <b>high expectations</b> . How do you deal with that?         |       | Because I know that " <b>Jesus Christ will help [me]</b> ."                  |            |
| Why do you go to <b>church every Sunday</b> ? Why do you pay <b>tithing and fast offerings</b> ? Why do you serve a <b>mission</b> ? |       | Because I " <b>love God</b> " and I " <b>love [my] neighbor</b> ."           |            |
| Everyone knows that <b>pornography</b> is just harmless adult entertainment. Why don't you view porn?                                |       | Because I want to " <b>walk in God's light</b> ."                            |            |
| Sex outside of marriage is OK if you love the person. Why are you <b>waiting until you are married</b> ?                             |       | Because " <b>[my] body is sacred</b> ."                                      |            |
| It's a self-evaluation. Why don't you just <b>lie</b> and say you read the book even though you didn't?                              |       | Because the " <b>truth will make [me] free</b> ."                            |            |
| Why shouldn't I have <b>three piercings</b> ?                                                                                        |       | Find the answers in the <i>For the Strength of Youth</i> <b>principles</b> . |            |

From Rule to Principle

Do you see how the principles are the answers? Do you see how these are the wonderful answers? Parents say, "What do I say when my kid says, 'Why shouldn't I have **three piercings**?' I used to say, 'Because the prophet said so.' But what do I say now?" Find the answers in the *For the Strength of Youth* **principles**.



Russell M. Nelson

President of the Church  
"Hope of Israel," worldwide youth devotional, 3 Jun 2018; printed in *Ensign*, Aug 2018

5.4

## Ideas for Standards Night

From Rule to Principle

If you are sometimes called "weird," wear that distinction as a badge of honor and be happy that **your light is shining brightly** in this ever-darkening world! **Set a standard for the rest of the world!** Embrace **being different!** ...

I plead with you to study this booklet again. Prayerfully read it like you've never read it before. Mark it up. Talk about it. **Discuss the standards with your friends**. Decide how you can live these standards, your standards, with even more exactness. ...

Please take a copy of *For the Strength of Youth* and **give [it] to a friend** who may not know your standards or who may not live them.

Pray about **who needs this booklet**. You will be guided. And it will be exciting.



\*FSYouth mag, Oct 2024, p19

FSYouth mag, Oct 2023, p11

# How Parents and Leaders Can Help

## Newly-Invented Sins

Expand Guidance to Endless New Situations

2

Set rules at home and church

## Meaningful Obedience

Christ-Centered Discipleship Helps You **Become** Like God

3

Illuminate patterns and principles behind the guidance

## The Revelation Pattern

First **Search**, Then Pray

4a

Help youth find and study the prophets' words

4b

Share how to recognize the Spirit

## Sharing Persuasively

Explain Your Beliefs and Practices to Others

5

Let youth observe you share the gospel with others

Young Men and Young Women general presidencies

“Changing how we talk with youth about standards,” *Church News*, 27 Oct 2022 [📄](#)

P&L 1

Parents **used questions to guide** the youth toward **values, principles and doctrines**. ... The conversations stayed **focused on the reasons** for the rules and not the rules themselves.



Bonnie H. Cordon

*President of the Young Women General Presidency*

*Church News* podcast, ep. 121, “The YW General Presidency,” 31 Jan 2023 [📄](#)

P&L 2

But parents, we need to be all in. This is not something that you say, “Oh, so you **felt you wanted to do this. Alright**, go ahead.” Some of these decisions will be lifelong decisions. So we need to be there, counsel together, help **study with them**, be on our **knees together**, notice **what the prophets have said**, and **have a standard in our homes**.



Bradley R. Wilcox

*Young Men General Presidency, Second Counselor*

*Church News* podcast, ep. 106, “The Young Men General Presidency on New FSY Guide,” 18 Oct. 2022, [TheChurchNews.com](#) [📄](#)

P&L 3

**Rules are important**, but they need to be **set in homes**, where families can counsel together about what their needs are. Those **rules need to be set at a local level**, where **leaders** and youth can counsel together about what’s best.



Elder Ahmad S. Corbitt

*General Authority Seventy (YM first counselor, 2020–23)*

“Ahmad S. Corbitt: Listening to prophetic and apostolic direction,” *Church News*, 29 Apr 2023 [📄](#) [Newsroom](#) [📄](#)

P&L 4

People are interpreting the absence of rules as “there shouldn’t be rules,” rather than a healthy respect by prophets and apostles of our agency and our ability at the **local level** to **develop and apply our own rules**.

*Church News* podcast, ep. 106, “The Young Men General Presidency on New FSY Guide,” 18 Oct. 2022, [TheChurchNews.com](#) [📄](#)

P&L 5

This is an opportunity to ... **not just leave them alone**, but help them govern themselves, to **counsel** and to **help them feel the Spirit**. ... The Holy Ghost cares about that and will **help you to convince**, will give you the **power of God unto the convincing of kids**.



Michelle D. Craig

*Young Women General Presidency, First Counselor*

*Church News* podcast, ep. 121, “The YW General Presidency,” 31 Jan 2023 [📄](#)

P&L 6

A young woman [said], “Leaders [can] help us learn what it’s like for you when you feel the Holy Ghost. Talk to us about that and tell us **specific stories** about it. It’s not that I don’t want to feel the Holy Ghost, I just don’t know how.” ... As parents and leaders, ... give the youth **practical, specific examples** of what it’s like and help them recognize **when they feel it**, and maybe **when they’re not feeling it**.

# Valiance

Strive to Live **Higher** Than the World around Us



Bradley R. Wilcox

*Young Men General Presidency, First Counselor*

"Principles for Parents: For the Strength of Youth Guide," BYU Women's Conf., 3 May 2024, Gospel Library [📖](#)

6.1

God's people have always had a hard time moving up to higher laws. The law of Moses said, "**Thou shalt not kill.**" Jesus taught to **not even be "angry"** with [your] brother." So do we say, "Well, I'm glad I can kill him now. It doesn't say I can't kill him. It just says I can't do it when I'm angry"? No! We don't say that.

The law of Moses said, "**Thou shalt not commit adultery.**" Jesus said to **not even let "lust"** ... enter into your heart." So do we say, "Oh good! Now I can commit adultery. I just can't do it lustfully"? No!

It's time for our youth to step up to the **higher law**. It's time for us to help them raise their sights and find the **reasons** for the **rules**.

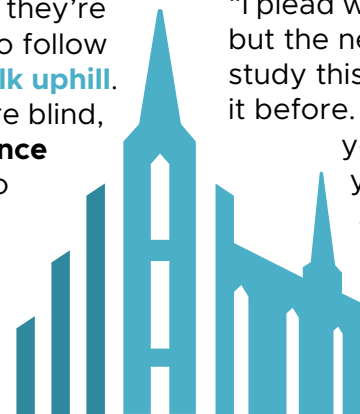
"The New *For the Strength of Youth Guide*," 2023 BYU Women's Conference, 5 May 2023, Gospel Library [📖](#)

6.2

This guide is not the first time that we have been invited to live in a **higher and holier way**. In the Sermon on the Mount in the Old World and at the sermon on the temple in the New World, Jesus said he has come not to destroy the law but to **fulfill the law**," ... to bring a **fulness of the law**. ...

**This Christianity stuff is not easy.** And as young people are making the **easy choice**, they have to understand that they're not making the **Christian choice**, because the choice to follow prophets and to follow Christ is always a **choice to walk uphill**.

Many people say, "Oh, you Latter-day Saints, you're blind, mindless sheep following your prophet shepherds." **Since when do mindless sheep go uphill?** Mindless sheep go **downhill after every fad and every fashion** and after every **influence of the world**. Those who go uphill are the ones who are faithfully and consciously, intentionally making a choice. To **lift themselves** and to live a **higher law**. It's always worth making that choice because as we choose to **live like Christ**, Christ Himself is willing to give us the grace, the enabling power, the divine assistance, the endowment of strength so that we can learn to live like Him.



strive to be



Steven J. Lund

*President of the Young Men General Presidency*

Church News podcast, ep. 106, "The New 'For the Strength of the Youth' Guide," 18 Oct 2022, [TheChurchNews.com](#) [📖](#)

6.3

There are those who think that the new FSJ guide represents a **lowering of standards, lowering of the bar**, because that new booklet doesn't contain all of the lines in the sand that we used to point to to try to keep them in line a little bit: "You're not 16." "No, you can't ..."

But President Nelson preempted that thought as the new guide was being written. Do you remember his seminal talk of 2018, where his first major address to the Church was to the youth of the Church, where he invited them into the Lord's battalions? ... Do you know how he ended that talk? He said, ... "I plead with you to study this booklet." This is the older booklet, but the new one was already in process. "I plead with you to study this booklet again. Prayerfully read it like you've never read it before. Mark it up. Talk about it. Discuss the standards with

your friends. Decide how you can live these standards, your standards, with **even more exactness**." Does that sound like the prophet has it in his mind that we need to **lower the bar**? That doesn't sound that way, does it? ...

"Get a new copy to a friend who may not know your standards or who may not live them." That is the attitude of President Nelson about the *For the Strength of Youth* guide. And that's the **attitude that we're trying to teach** among our youth. And

it's getting catchy. They are not asking the same questions of us that we were hearing a few months ago.

# A Disciple's Guide to Striving to Be Valiant



Steven J. Lund 6.4  
*Young Men Gen. Pres.*  
Church News podcast, ep.  
106, "The New 'For the  
Strength of the Youth'  
Guide," 18 Oct 2022,  
TheChurchNews.com



John Bytheway  
*Young Men General Advisory Council Member*  
"What's Your 'Attitude'?" *For the Strength of Youth*, Sep 2024

We would urge everybody to go back and listen to [Elder Uchtdorf's general conference talk] a few times before they draw too many conclusions about the booklet. It's sort of fun to note what goes on around us as the booklet contains less "**Thou shalt nots**" and more **consider this**, as the first impression people might have is, "Oh, **the rules have just been relaxed**." And yet, it's **never really been that way**, has it? When we speak of a **higher and holier way**, that calls for us to be **more vigilant** about making sure that we're complying to what Heavenly Father would have us do.

Steven D. Shumway  
*Seventy*  
Gen conf, Apr 2025   
Stop asking what  
God will **permit** and  
start asking what  
God would **prefer**.

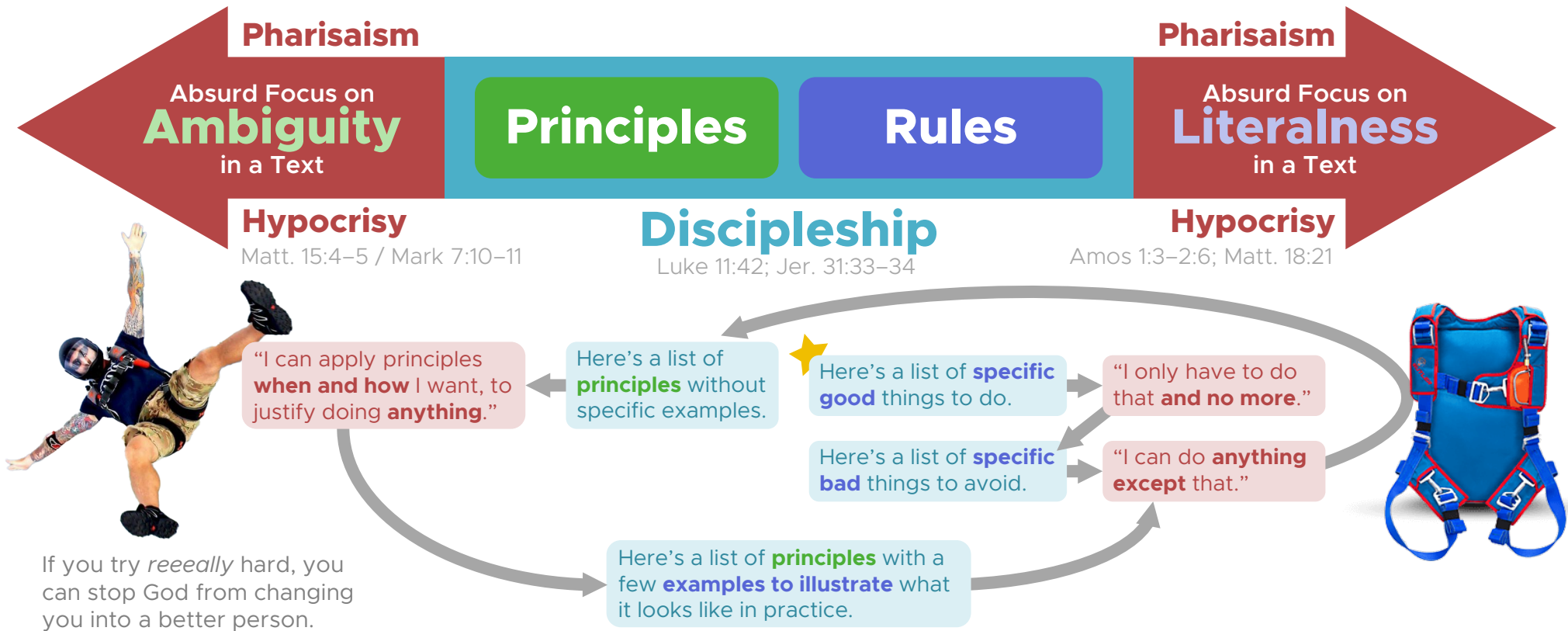
6.5

Here are three questions that express different attitudes we might have about the **principles** we've been given.

**Attitude 1: How Bad Can I Be?**

**Attitude 3: How Valiant Can I Be?**

**Attitude 2: How Good Do I Have to Be?**



If you try *reeeally* hard, you  
can stop God from changing  
you into a better person.

## A Pharisee's Guide to Dodging Discipleship

# Increased Trust to Do *More*



Bradley R. Wilcox

*Young Men General Presidency, Second Counselor*  
Church News podcast, ep. 106, “The New ‘For the Strength of the Youth’ Guide,” 18 Oct 2022, [TheChurchNews.com](https://www.thechurchnews.com)

6.6

When missionaries were first told that they didn’t have to memorize lessons, a lot of missionaries were like, “Yay, **that means we don’t have to do anything.**” But in reality, (“He needs to know *more*.”) it was **a call to do more**—*more* preparation, *more* efforts to make outlines that would meet real needs, *more* efforts to sense the Spirit, to follow the Spirit. This guide is calling for young people to **not do less**, but to gain personal revelation.



Dieter F. Uchtdorf

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

“Jesus Christ Is the Strength of Youth,” gen conf, Oct 2022, note 16

6.7

The **principle-based approach** of the new *For the Strength of Youth* guide is **consistent with other recent initiatives** introduced by the Savior’s Church, including *Preach My Gospel*, ministering, the home-centered *Come, Follow Me* curriculum, the Children and Youth program, *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, and the new *General Handbook*. Clearly, the Lord is **building our spiritual capacity**. He is demonstrating **increased trust** in His covenant people in the latter days.

See “150+ Announcements and Changes in the Church Since President Nelson Became Prophet,” [TheChurchNews.com](https://www.thechurchnews.com), 30 Dec 2020, updated as recently as 30 Sep 2025

| In ...    | ... when leaders modified...                                                   | ... did it mean ... ?                                                        | No, it meant ...                                                                                  |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Feb 2016  | <b>Doctrinal Mastery.</b> Focus on concepts taught.                            | “Now we don’t have to memorize!”                                             | We should take care to <i>understand</i> the doctrines behind what we’re memorizing.              |
| May 2018  | <b>Personal Development Guidebooks.</b> Not Boy Scouts / Personal Progress.    | “Now we don’t have to do hard things!”                                       | Now we have even more latitude to pursue <i>customized</i> growth and challenges.                 |
| Oct 2018  | <b>Home-Centered, Church-Supported.</b> 2-hour sabbath meetings, not 3.        | “Now we don’t have to prepare as many sabbath-oriented plans!”               | Now we need to plan a good use for that <i>extra hour</i> we’ve been given.                       |
| 2019–2023 | <b>Temple Ceremonies.</b> Simplified and shortened.                            | “It’s not important to spend time in the temple, or learn so much.”          | Now we can spend that time in the temple serving <i>more</i> ancestors.                           |
| Feb 2019  | <b>Missionary communication.</b> Contact family weekly, not just twice yearly. | “Now we don’t have to try so hard to stay focused on the mission!”           | Now we need to be even <i>more</i> circumspect about staying focused on the mission.              |
| Jan 2019  | <b>Come Follow Me</b> , replaced <b>Teachings of Presidents of the Church.</b> | “Now we don’t have to pay attention to modern prophets!”                     | Now we have a <i>resource</i> to insert prophets’ teachings into our Come Follow Me lessons.      |
| Mar 2019  | <b>Come Follow Me</b> , aligned with <b>Seminary.</b>                          | “Now we don’t have to study the scriptures so much!”                         | Now we can focus our scripture study <i>more thoroughly</i> !                                     |
| Jul 2019  | <b>FSY conferences.</b> Biennial, replace half of stake youth conferences.     | “Now we don’t have to plan stake youth conferences as much!”                 | Now we get <i>twice as long</i> to plan stake youth conferences.                                  |
| Oct 2019  | <b>Witnesses of baptisms.</b> Any baptized member, male or female.             | “Now women have the burden of even more things they have to do!”             | Now <i>more</i> people get to serve in <i>more</i> ways.                                          |
| Oct 2022  | <b>FSY Guide.</b> Fewer specific rules, more emphasis on principles.           | “Now we don’t have to behave so well!”                                       | We can apply principles to discern <i>more</i> ways we can do the right thing in more situations. |
| Aug 2023  | <b>Church Magazines.</b> Free.                                                 | “Church magazines are worth so little.”                                      | Church magazines are <i>worth so much</i> that we want them freely available.                     |
| Jan 2024  | <b>Easter and Christmas sabbath.</b> 1-hour church, then go home.              | “Now we don’t have to prepare as many Christmas- and Easter-oriented plans!” | “Now we need to prepare <i>more</i> Christmas- and Easter-traditions, with family and friends.”   |

# “Embrace Being Different!”



Becky Craven

Young Women General Presidency, Second Counselor

Church News podcast, ep. 121, “The Young Women General Presidency,” 31 Jan 2023, [TheChurchNews.com](https://www.thechurchnews.com)

6.8

This generation ... they're solution-seekers, but being part of this situation allows them to **own that decision**. And as they move away from home, then yes, the decisions are theirs.

But we hope even one step beyond that is that as they learned to make decisions and grow closer to Heavenly Father, that ... Jesus Christ's restored Church **becomes their church**, and not just their parents' church, because they have sought the answers that are promised in the Book of Mormon. If you seek, ... you will find. You can know that this is true. Your parents don't have to always be the one to tell you. Parents do need to share that, yes, but it's important they need to **know on their own** and then go out into the world and **live that message and share it**.



Brad Wilcox

Young Men General Presidency, First Counselor

“Children and Youth Program and FSJ Conferences,” 2023 BYU Women's Conference, 5 May 2023, [Gospel Library](https://www.gospellibrary.org)

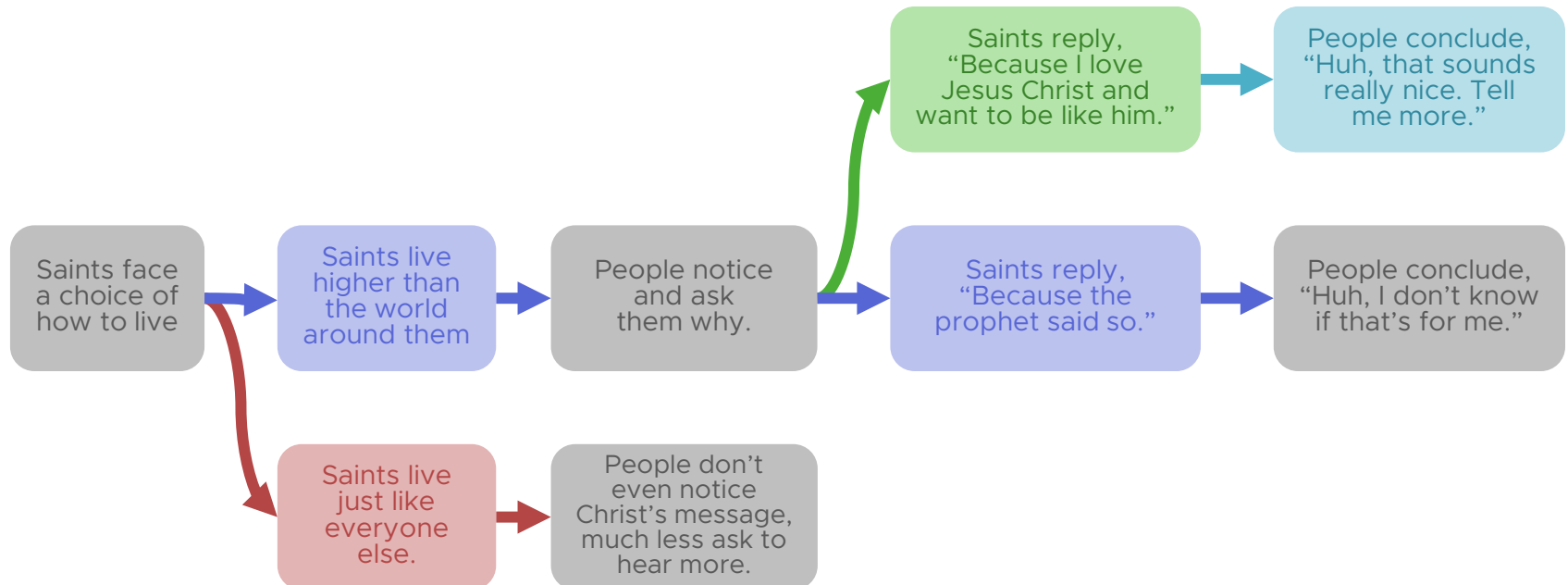
6.9

We want the young people to look at God and say, “What do You want me to do?” And if that young person will do that with **even an ounce of sincerity**, God's going to answer, and **God's going to tell them to do something hard**. **He's not going to tell them to do something easy**. And whenever they feel like they've got a hard goal in front of them, then they have to **turn to God and turn to Christ for their grace**, for their power. Because they'll realize, just like we've realized, that you can't do it alone.

## Better Pattern

## OK Pattern

## Wrong Pattern



Which of these patterns best fulfills Jesus Christ's Great Commission?

Go and **make disciples** of all nations.

Matt. 28:19 NIV; Morm. 9:22; D&C 84:62

# Continuity

## Presume **Relevance**, Not Obsolescence



Becky Craven

*Young Women General Presidency, Second Counselor*  
Church News podcast, ep. 121, "The Young Women  
Gen. Presidency," 31 Jan 2023, TheChurchNews.com

7.1

It **doesn't take away** from anything **prophets** have said, or the **Lord** has said, or **parents** have said, or schools have said. There are some boundaries, and there are **rules that are already set**. And I think that's an important distinction. ... I think some of the youth are saying, "Oh, it's **totally my decision**." ...

Some of those choices are already made, because of what they're choosing to do. If they're on an athletic team, there are **choices that are already made for them if they want to be there**, and they follow those rules as well.

For the Strength of Youth booklets have never been **the source** of inspired counsel, only **a survey** of prophetic teachings from a variety of other places.

| The earlier booklet ...                                                                  | The new FSJ Guide ...                             | But it doesn't mean ...                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "[Don't] work on <b>Sundays</b> . ... [or do] shopping, recreation, or athletic events." | Only says attend sacrament meeting.               | "It's now fine to spend the sabbath working, shopping, or waterskiing!" |
| " <b>Young men</b> should ... serve a full-time <b>mission</b> ."                        | Nothing about eligible men having a unique duty.  | "It's merely personal preference whether a guy serves a mission!"       |
| Didn't cover <b>abortion</b> or <b>cohabitation</b>                                      | Doesn't either.                                   | "It's now OK to live with your girlfriend!"                             |
| <b>Fasting</b> : Monthly, two meals, praying, offering                                   | Mentions fasting without saying we should or how. | "Skip a snack yearly and you're good!"                                  |
| " <b>Remove your ear-phones</b> when others are talking to you."                         | Nothing about this.                               | "Courtesy is obsolete!"                                                 |



Bradley R. Wilcox

*Young Men General Presidency, First Counselor*

"Principles for Parents: For the Strength of Youth Guide," BYU Women's Conf., 3 May 2024, Gospel Library

7.2

After the FSJ guide was first introduced by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf in October general conference of 2022, my friend's son came home from high school and said, "I'm going to get a tattoo!" Listen to the conversation that followed:

Father: "Why would you do that?"

Son: "Because Elder Uchtdorf said it is OK."

Father: "**Really? When did he say that?**"

Son: "In conference."

Father: "How do you know? You didn't even listen to conference."

Son: "Well, it's on social media. Everyone is posting about it."

Father (sarcastically): "Oh, that's a great idea. Let's listen to what people are **saying on social media instead of listening to prophets!**"

Son: [blank stare]

Father: "Don't you think you should **find out what Elder Uchtdorf really said?**"

The young man agreed, and they listened to the talk together. In it, Elder Uchtdorf said: "The Lord is not saying, 'Do whatever you want.' He is saying, 'Let God prevail.' He is saying, 'Come follow me.' He is saying, 'Live in a holier, higher, more mature way.'"

The son wisely and thankfully **decided not to get the tattoo**.





Steven J. Lund

President, Young Men General Presidency  
“The New For the Strength of Youth Guide,” 2023 BYU Women’s Conference, 5 May 2023, Gospel Library

7.3

There are those who think that the new FSY guide represents a lowering of standards, lowering of the bar, because that new booklet doesn’t contain all of the lines in the sand that we used to point to. ...

But Pres. Nelson **preempted** that thought **as the new guide was being written**. Do you remember his seminal talk of 2018, where his first major address to the Church was to the youth of the Church, where he invited them into the Lord’s battalions? Remember that great talk? Do you know how he ended that talk?

He said—here’s a quote: “I plead with you to study this booklet.” **This is the older booklet**, but **the new one was already in process**. “I plead with you to **study this booklet** again. Prayerfully read it like you’ve never read it before. Mark it up. Talk about it. Discuss the standards with your friends. Decide how you can **live these standards, your standards**, with even more exactness.” Does that sound like the prophet has it in his mind that we need to lower the bar? That doesn’t sound that way, does it?

“You have a copy of your own,” so get another one. Get a “new **copy to a friend who may not know your standards** or who may not live them.” That is the **attitude of President Nelson about the For the Strength of Youth guide**. And that’s the attitude that we’re trying to teach among our youth.



Bonnie H. Cordon

President of the Young Women General Presidency  
Church News podcast, ep. 121, 31 Jan. 2023, TheChurchNews.com

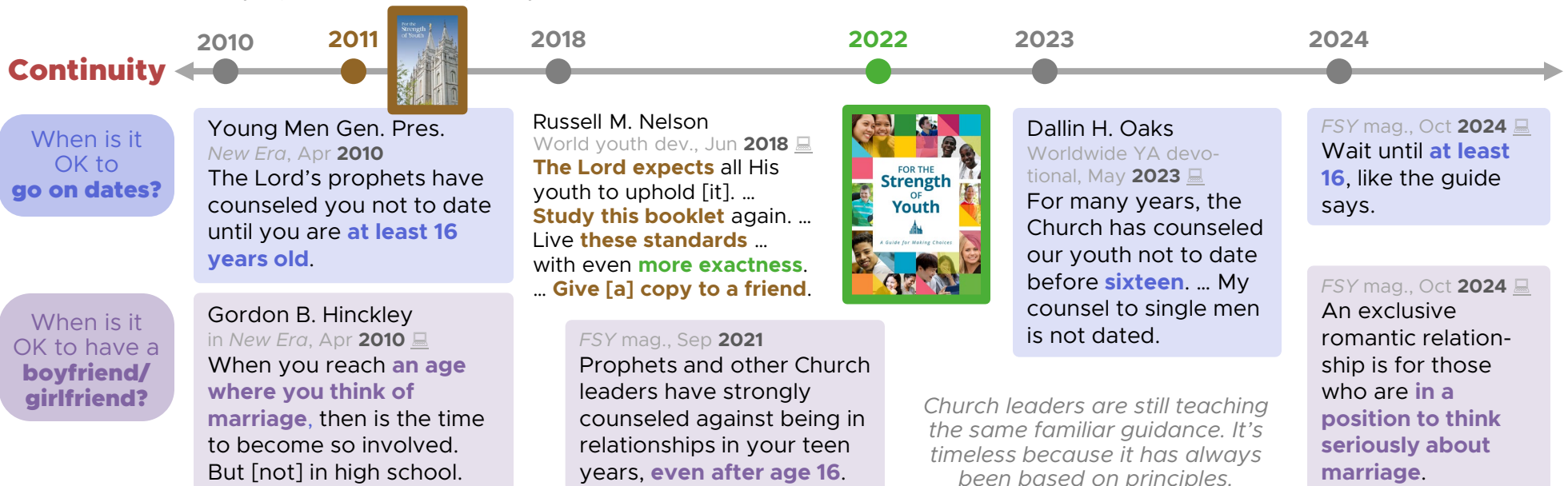
7.4

I’m always intrigued that **our Prophet knew this was coming up**.

When he gave that monumental address to the youth, the “Hope of Israel,” 2018, I love his piece on the **For Strength of Youth pamphlet**.

And he said, “Set a standard for the rest of the world.” You know, he always has this vision that’s grander than what we—we think of it as just our personal—but he always has us looking outward. And then he said, “Embrace being different. The **booklet entitled For the Strength of Youth** should be *your* standard.” And he says, “It is the standard that **the Lord expects all his youth to uphold**.” Now, he was **speaking of the past booklet**. But note this, he gives them counsel, “Prayerfully read it like you’ve never read it before.” Now, would that not be **fabulous counsel for this one**? And he says, “Mark it up. Talk about it. Discuss the standards with your friends. Decide how you can **live these standards**.” Now, do you notice how he puts the choice in there? And then he says something that I think is fabulous. So he says, “Decide how you will **live these standards, your standards**, with **even more exactness**.”

Now he is such a visionary. He probably **knew that we were going to have this booklet that talks about principles** and teaches us how to use the principles to make choices. And so, I love the confidence he gives in them to really **make this your standard** and **live it with exactness**.



# My friends gamble. I know it's wrong. How can I explain it to them?

We avoid gambling for a number of reasons. Not only is it a waste of time and money, but it can also ruin people's lives. It can become an obsession, even an addiction.

Also, gambling teaches that you can get something for nothing. That's a dangerous and false notion. Winning at gambling is unlikely and unreliable. Success you've worked for is far more satisfying, reliable, and long-lasting.

If you have friends who gamble, you can try to help them. You can tell them—and, more important, show them—that there are better ways to spend your time and money. You can show them that life is better when you don't risk your money and well-being on a habit that brings instability and misery to so many people.

For more, see President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "Gambling," Apr. 2005 general conference.

## Timeless Wisdom Has No Expiration Date

1 Rules

2 3 Principles

5 Share Persuasively

6 Strive Higher

4 Search

7 Continuity

The only two sources are from over twenty years ago—and they're just as **relevant** today.

The earlier booklet ...

"Gambling is wrong."

The new FSY Guide ...

No longer even mentions gambling.

But that doesn't mean ...

"It's OK to gamble now!"



Bonnie H. Cordon

President of the Young Women General Presidency  
Church News podcast, ep. 121, 31 Jan. 2023

7.5

Usually, it's because we don't really **open and study** that it's not part of us. ... Help them realize that ... if you're **reading a conference talk**, and there's **counsel from one of the prophets about a standard, there's truth**, and that the Holy Ghost is bearing testimony of that truth. It doesn't have to be a big thing or a big feeling. It can be **something that we understand** or that presses on our mind. ...

But parents, we need to be all in. This is not something that you say, "Oh, so you **felt you wanted to do this**. **Alright**, go ahead." Some of these decisions will be lifelong decisions. So we need to be there, counsel together, help **study with them**, be on our **knees together**, notice **what the prophets have said**, and **have a standard in our homes**.

Gospel Library / **Topics and Questions** /  
"Gambling" / Messages from Church Leaders

- General conference, Apr **2005**
- General conference, Oct **1985**



## many people

You don't need to have tons of friends, but you shouldn't limit yourself when considering whom you might be a friend to. President Russell M. Nelson has taught, "Each day of your life, strive to enlarge your own circle of friendship."<sup>41</sup> Again—it can be both boys and girls.

## wholesome group activities

In many places in the world, a group of boys and girls can get together to have fun doing things that everyone enjoys and that aren't physically or spiritually dangerous. This can be a great way to get to know many different people. Youth around the world have said that Church activities, both on Sunday and during the week, are some of the best ways to get started.

## exclusive relationships

No matter what you call it, an exclusive romantic relationship is for those who are in a position to think seriously about marriage. Before then, it doesn't make sense and just invites emotional and spiritual risk. Make your teen years fun, not filled with drama and temptation.

## those who help you keep your commitments to Jesus Christ

These are people who may or may not be Church members and who respect you and your beliefs and standards. These are people who do not entice or pressure you to do things that are wrong.

## genuine friendship

Genuine friendships (with both girls and boys) are healthy and rewarding. They are based on a real liking for someone, as well as honesty, trust, and respect. They also tend to not happen overnight. Genuine friendships are *built*—one step at a time.

## one-on-one activities

One boy and one girl arranging to be paired together for an activity requires a bit of maturity. Best to wait until at least 16, like the guide says.

## When and how should I get to know members of the opposite sex?

The best way to get to know others is through genuine friendship. While you are young, build good friendships with many people. In some cultures, youth get to know members of the opposite sex through wholesome group activities. For your emotional and spiritual development and safety, one-on-one activities should be postponed until you are mature—age 16 is a good guideline. Counsel with your parents and leaders. Save exclusive relationships for when you are older. Spend time with those who help you keep your commitments to Jesus Christ.

*For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices* (2022), 13.

## spend time

Being with people and interacting with them in person is valuable and healthy (see *For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices*, 19).

## WHAT DOES THE GUIDE SAY?

Lucky for you, the *For the Strength of Youth* guide contains this inspired counsel:



When is it OK to go on dates?

When is it OK to have a boyfriend/girlfriend?

# What Do Church Leaders Teach about Dating Standards?

## Rules

Guidance, Laws, Counsel, Actions, etc.

How?

### When is it OK to go on dates?



Dallin H. Oaks

President of the Church

"Stand for Truth," worldwide devotional for young adults, 21 May 2023, Gospel Library [📖](#)

For many years, the Church has counseled our youth not to date before **sixteen**. ... My counsel to single men is not dated either. Leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ are just as concerned about marriage as we were 20 years ago.

Young Men General Presidency

"To the Young Men on Dating," *New Era*, Apr 2010 (Special Issue) [📖](#)

The Lord's prophets have counseled you not to date until you are **at least 16 years old**.

### When is it OK to have a boyfriend or girlfriend?



Gordon B. Hinckley

President of the Church (1995–2008)

Quoted in "Unsteady Dating," *New Era* Special Issue: Dating for Beginners, Apr 2010 [📖](#)

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. ...

Do not get too serious too soon. You have missions ahead of you, and you cannot afford to compromise this great opportunity.

"Q&A: How Can I Keep the Standards for Relationships?"

*For the Strength of Youth* mag., Sep 2021

Prophets and other Church leaders have strongly counseled against being in relationships in your teen years, **even after age 16**.

What  
about

Hugs?  
Arm around them?  
Holding hands?  
Kissing?

## Principles

Reasons, Explanations, Purposes, etc.

Why?

### 1. Progress

*As a child of God, I am designed to **seek progress** and improvement—to advance to the next step.*

### 2. Pacing

*My body tends to leap forward in **readiness faster** than my spiritual, emotional, social, or other **developmental maturity**.*

Gordon B. Hinckley

*New Era* Special Issue: Dating for Beginners, Apr 2010 (quoted 3 times)

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 beautiful when handled in the right way. It is deadly if it gets out of hand.

It is for this reason that the Church counsels against early dating. This rule is not designed to hurt you in any way. It is designed **to help you**, and it will do so if you will observe it.

Steady dating at an early age leads so often to tragedy. **Studies have shown** that the longer a boy and girl date one another, the more likely they are to get into trouble.

It is better, my friends, to date a variety of companions until you are **ready to marry**. Have a wonderful time, but stay away from familiarity. Keep your hands to yourself. It may not be easy, but it is possible.

### 3. Integrity

*What I wordlessly **communicate with my physical body** should match the **level of commitment** I'm willing to make and able to keep.*

**Homework:** On the Relationship Stages chart (next page), fill in the column "Physical Affection" with your parents, using the items listed. Let the principle of **Integrity** guide you. Ask yourself, "What level of commitments does this action imply?"

### When and how should I get to know members of the opposite sex?

The best way to get to know others is through genuine friendship. While you are young, build good friendships with many people. In some cultures, youth get to know members of the opposite sex through wholesome group activities. For your emotional and spiritual development and safety, one-on-one activities should be postponed until you are mature—age 16 is a good guideline. Counsel with your parents and leaders. Save exclusive relationships for when you are older. Spend time with those who help you keep your commitments to Jesus Christ.

1. Acquaintance

2. Friendship

3. Casual Dating

4. Serious Dating

5. Engagement

6. Marriage

## THE FUNNEL THEORY

New Era Special Issue: Dating for Beginners, April 2010, p. 42, “Unsteady Dating”

## Homework

Principle: Integrity

Talk with your parents as you fill this in! Ask yourself, “What commitments does this action imply? Am I acting honestly?”

# Relationship Stages with P.O.T.O.S.\*

\*Person of the Opposite Sex

|                         | Other Terms                                                                                                        | Features and Commitments                                                                                                               | When and Who                                                                    | Ideal #Times, Duration                                             | Physical Affection                     | Discontinuing Requires                                                              |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Marriage</b>         | <b>Spouse</b><br>Wed<br>Hitched                                                                                    | A public ceremony<br>Generally don't spend recreational time alone with other POTOS<br><br>Public knowledge:<br>Legal records, rings   | Able to marry<br><i>Boys:</i><br>After mission                                  | 1<br><i>For life</i>                                               | Sexual intimacy                        | Formal legal proceedings<br><i>Someone did something wrong</i>                      |
| <b>Engagement</b>       | <b>Fiancée</b><br>Betrothed<br>Espoused                                                                            | Clear proposal<br>A calendar day is scheduled<br><br>Public knowledge:<br>Announcements, rings                                         | Able to marry<br><i>Boys:</i><br>After mission                                  | 1<br><i>For months</i>                                             | Kissing?                               | A kind, clear conversation<br>Break up<br>End                                       |
| <b>Exclusive Dating</b> | <b>Boyfriend/Girlfriend</b><br>Courtship<br>Dating<br>“seriously”<br>Going steady<br>A couple/<br>item             | Both decline dates with others<br>Guy stops asking other girls out. Girl stops accepting dates from other guys<br><br>Public knowledge | Able to marry<br><i>Boys:</i><br>After mission                                  | <i>Committed members of the Church</i><br>Few<br><i>For months</i> | Holding hands?<br>Arm around shoulder? | A kind, clear conversation<br>Break up                                              |
| <b>Casual Dating</b>    | <b>Friend</b><br>Going on dates<br>One-on-one activities<br>Dating around<br><i>Single, Double, or Group dates</i> | Paired off<br>Short-term commitment for one event<br>Ask out a different person the next day                                           | At least age 16                                                                 | Many<br><i>For years (As long as it takes)</i>                     | Hugs, high fives, etc.                 | Nothing<br>It's expected that either one go on a date with anyone else the next day |
| <b>Group Activities</b> | <b>Friend</b><br>Hanging out<br>Getting together<br>Socializing                                                    | Spending time together having fun<br>I can chat with any POTOS for a bit, then wander to a different conversation and never return     | You can tie your own shoes<br><br><i>Those who help you keep your standards</i> | Oodles<br><i>For life (Even after marriage)</i>                    | Hugs, high fives, etc.                 | Nothing                                                                             |

### Breakup Zone

No relationship should stay here. It's either progress to the next level or separate. Even when both guy and girl do nothing wrong.

Hugs? Arm around them?  
Holding hands? Kissing?

# Jerk or Gent?

## Dating Quiz

### Scenario A

A high-school senior boy (**Alex**) knows a high-school senior girl (**Ann**) and **asks her to go to dinner with him**. Likewise, his friend Zeke asks Zina to dinner. The two guys **pick up the girls**, go to an **expensive restaurant**, and **pay** for dinner. Afterward they go to an **expensive concert** which the **boys pay** for, then they **take the girls home**. On Ann's porch, she thanks Alex and gives him a **hug**, then goes inside. On Zina's doorstep, she thanks Zeke and **pats him on the arm**, then goes inside.

1. What is this evening event called?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Were Alex and Ann respectful to each other, or did either act rudely or dishonorably in any of their actions?  
☐ Respectful/Honorable  
☐ Rude/Dishonorable  
How? In what way? \_\_\_\_\_
- + Were Zeke and Zina respectful to each other, or did either act rudely or dishonorably in any of their actions?  
☐ Respectful/Honorable  
☐ Rude/Dishonorable  
How? In what way? \_\_\_\_\_

### Scenario B

A middle school boy (**Bobby**) tells a middle school girl (**Betty**) that **some friends are getting together** at Alex's house to eat snacks and play volleyball. Alex's parents will be present the whole time. Betty **bikes herself** to the party, cheerfully **chats with Bobby for a few minutes**, then talks to **other people for the rest** of the evening. Bobby and Betty **leave the party at different times without saying bye** to each other.

3. Is this a date?  
☐ Yes, it's a date  
☐ No, it's a \_\_\_\_\_  
If not, what is it called? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Were Bobby and Betty respectful to each other, or was either rude or dishonorable in any of their actions?  
☐ Respectful/Honorable  
☐ Rude/Dishonorable  
How? In what way? \_\_\_\_\_

### Scenario C

A college-age guy (**Carl**) has never had a girlfriend before. He meets a college-age girl (**Clara**) for the first time and **asks her to go to dinner** with him that evening. He **picks her up**, drives to an **expensive restaurant**, and **pays** for dinner. Afterward they go to an **expensive concert** which Carl **pays** for, then he **drives Clara home**. On Clara's porch, she thanks Carl and **gives him a hug**, then goes inside.

5. Is this a date?  
☐ Yes  
☐ No  
If not, what is it called? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Were Carl and Clara respectful to each other, or was either rude or dishonorable in any of their actions?  
☐ Respectful/Honorable  
☐ Rude/Dishonorable  
How? In what way? \_\_\_\_\_

### Scenario D

The next day, **Carl** meets another girl (**Dora**) and **asks her to go to dinner** with him that evening. **Clara knows nothing** about this. Carl **picks up** Dora, drives to an **expensive restaurant**, and **pays** for dinner. Afterward they go to an **expensive concert** which Carl **pays** for, then he **drives Dora home**. On Dora's porch, she thanks Carl and **gives him a hug**, then goes inside.

7. Were Carl and Dora respectful, or was either of them dishonorable?  
☐ Respectful/Honorable  
☐ Rude/Dishonorable  
How? In what way? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Does Carl have a girlfriend?  
☐ Yes, his girlfriend is named \_\_\_\_\_.  
☐ No, the girl named \_\_\_\_\_ is Carl's \_\_\_\_\_.