

THE ETERNAL FAMILY

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY-IDAHO

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# THE FAMILY

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## A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

### THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

**WE**, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

**ALL HUMAN BEINGS**—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

**IN THE PREMORTAL REALM**, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

**THE FIRST COMMANDMENT** that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

**WE DECLARE** the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

**HUSBAND AND WIFE** have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness,

to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

**THE FAMILY** is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

**WE WARN** that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

**WE CALL UPON** responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

*This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.*

# The Eternal Family - Unit 04 Reading Packet

## Unit 4: Chastity & Sanctity of Life (*Proclamation Paragraphs 4 & 5*)

*“The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.*

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## FDREL 200 – THE ETERNAL FAMILY

### Unit 4 Scriptures

#### **D&C 42:22-24**

22 Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.

23 And he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out.

24 Thou shalt not commit adultery; and he that committeth adultery, and repenteth not, shall be cast out.

#### **D&C 59:6**

6 Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.

#### **Gen. 39:1-12**

1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

7 ¶ And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

8 But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

10 And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

11 And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

#### **D&C 38:42**

42 And go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Even so. Amen.

#### **Souls**

##### **D&C 88:15**

15 And the spirit and the body are the soul of man.

##### **D&C 93:33-34**

33 For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;

34 And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy.

##### **1 Cor. 6:13-20**

13 ... Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

#### **Symbols**

##### **Gen. 2:24-25**

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

#### **Sacraments**

##### **D&C 132:19-20**

19 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no

murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

20 Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

#### See Also

Genesis 1:31 Sacrament

Genesis 1:27-28; Gen. 48:4 Be Fruitful, multiply, fill

Psalms 127:3 Children are an heritage

Genesis 38:9-10 Unfruitful

Exodus 21:22 – Sanctity of Life

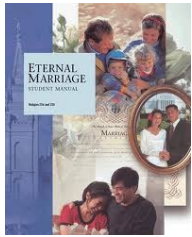
Proverbs 6:25-28, 32-33

1 Corinthians 7:1-5 – Due Benevolence

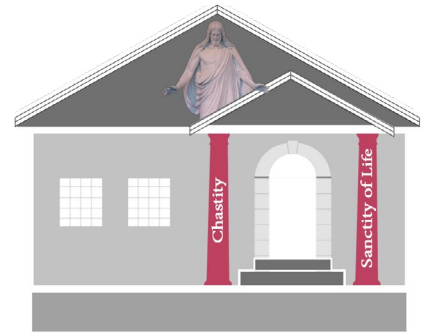
Hebrews 13:4

Alma 39:2-5

1 Thessalonians 4:1-4



## Statements on Intimacy in Marriage



### Selected Teachings

#### Related Scripture

##### 1 Corinthians 7:2–5

“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

“The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

“Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.”

#### Physical Intimacy Ordained of God

##### President John Taylor

“We have a great many principles innate in our natures that are correct, but they want sanctifying. God said to man, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.’ (Genesis 1:28.) Well, he has planted, in accordance with this, a natural desire in woman towards man, and in man towards woman and a feeling of affection, regard, and sympathy exists between the sexes. We bring it into the world with us, but that, like everything else, has to be sanctified. An unlawful gratification of these feelings and sympathies is wrong in the sight of God, and leads down to death, while a proper exercise of our functions leads to life, happiness, and exaltation in this world and the world to come. And so it is in regard to a thousand other things” (Gospel Kingdom, 61).

##### President Joseph F. Smith

“The lawful association of the sexes is ordained of God, not only as the sole means of race perpetuation, but for the development of the higher faculties and nobler traits of human nature, which the love-inspired companionship of man and woman alone can insure” (“Unchastity the Dominant Evil of the Age,” Improvement Era, June 1917)

##### President Spencer W. Kimball

“It is the destiny of men and women to join together to make eternal family units. In the context of lawful marriage, the intimacy of sexual relations is right and divinely approved. There is nothing unholy or degrading about sexuality in itself, for by that means men and women join in a process of creation and in an expression of love” (President Kimball Speaks Out, 2).

“The union of the sexes, husband and wife (and only husband and wife), was for the principal purpose of bringing children into the world. Sexual experiences were never intended by the Lord to be a mere plaything or merely to satisfy passions and lusts. We know of no directive from the Lord that proper sexual experience between husbands and wives need be limited totally to the procreation of children, but we find much evidence from Adam until now that no provision was ever made by the Lord for indiscriminate sex” (“The Lord’s Plan for Men and Women,” Ensign, Oct. 1975, 4).

##### Elder Parley P. Pratt

“Our natural affections are planted in us by the Spirit of God, for a wise purpose; and they are the very main-springs of life and happiness—they are the cement of all virtuous and heavenly society—they are the essence of charity, or love; . . .

“There is not a more pure and holy principle in existence than the affection which glows in the bosom of a virtuous man for his companion; . . .

“The fact is, God made man, male and female; he planted in their bosoms those affections which are calculated to promote their happiness and union” (Writings of Parley Parker Pratt, 52–53).

#### Physical Intimacy Only in Marriage

##### Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“The expression of our procreative powers is pleasing to God, but he has commanded that this be confined within the relationship of marriage” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 99; or Ensign, Nov. 1993, 74).

##### Elder Richard G. Scott

“Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage — I

mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another's body, with or without clothing — is a sin and is forbidden by God" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 51; or Ensign, Nov. 1994, 38).

### **Purposes of Intimacy**

#### **President Lorenzo Snow**

"This of the promises that are made to you in the beautiful and glorious ceremony that is used in the marriage covenant in the temple. When two Latter-day Saints are united together in marriage, promises are made to them concerning their offspring, that reach from eternity to eternity. They are promised that they shall have the power and the right to govern and control and administer salvation and exaltation and glory to their offspring worlds without end. And what offspring they do not have here, undoubtedly there will be opportunities to have them hereafter. What else could man wish? A man and a woman in the other life, having celestial bodies, free from sickness and disease, glorified and beautified beyond description, standing in the midst of their posterity, governing and controlling them, administering life, exaltation, and glory, worlds without end" (Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, 138).

#### **President Spencer W. Kimball**

"Your love, like a flower, must be nourished. There will come a great love and interdependence between you, for your love is a divine one. It is deep, inclusive, comprehensive. It is not like that association of the world which is misnamed love, but which is mostly physical attraction. When marriage is based on this only, the parties soon tire of each other. There is a break and a divorce, and a new, fresher physical attraction comes with another marriage which in turn may last only until it, too, becomes stale. The love of which the Lord speaks is not only physical attraction, but spiritual attraction as well. It is faith and confidence in, and understanding of, one another. It is a total partnership. It is companionship with common ideals and standards. It

is unselfishness toward and sacrifice for one another. It is cleanliness of thought and action and faith in God and his program. It is parenthood in mortality ever looking toward godhood and creationship, and parenthood of spirits. It is vast, all-inclusive, and limitless. This kind of love never tires or wanes. It lives on through sickness and sorrow, through prosperity and privation, through accomplishment and disappointment, through time and eternity" (Faith Precedes the Miracle, 130–31).

#### **Misused Physical Intimacy**

#### **President David O. McKay**

"Let us instruct young people who come to us, first, young men throughout the Church, to know that a woman should be queen of her own body. The marriage covenant does not give the man the right to enslave her, or to abuse her, or to use her merely for the gratification of his passion. Your marriage ceremony does not give you that right" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1952, 86).

#### **President Spencer W. Kimball**

"If it is unnatural, you just don't do it. That is all, and all the family life should be kept clean and worthy and on a very high plane. There are some people who have said that behind the bedroom doors anything goes. That is not true and the Lord would not condone it" (Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, 312).

"We urge, with Peter, ' . . . Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' (1 Pet. 2:11.) No indecent exposure or pornography or other aberrations to defile the mind and spirit. No fondling of bodies, one's own or that of others, and no sex between persons except in proper marriage relationships. This is positively prohibited by our Creator in all places, at all times, and we reaffirm it. Even in marriage there can be some excesses and distortions. No amount of rationalization to the contrary can satisfy a disappointed Father in heaven" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 8–9; or Ensign, May 1974, 7).

#### **President Howard W. Hunter**

"Keep yourselves above any domineering or unworthy behavior in the tender, intimate relationship between husband and wife. Because marriage is ordained of God, the intimate relationship between husbands and wives is good and honorable in the eyes of God. He has commanded that they be one flesh and that they multiply and replenish the earth (see Moses 2:28; 3:24). You are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it (see Ephesians 5:25–31).

"Tenderness and respect—never selfishness—must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Each partner must be considerate and sensitive to the other's needs and desires. Any domineering, indecent, or uncontrolled behavior in the intimate relationship between husband and wife is condemned by the Lord" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or Ensign, Nov. 1994, 51).

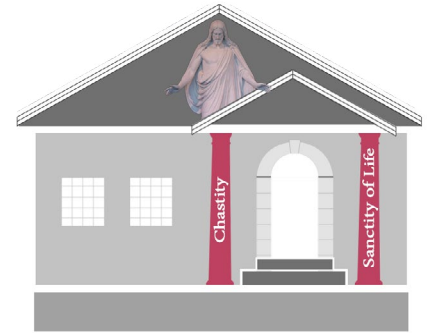
#### **Elder Spencer W. Kimball**

"Even though sex can be an important and satisfactory part of married life, we must remember that life is not designed just for sex. Even marriage does not make proper certain extremes in sexual indulgence. To the Ephesian saints Paul begged for propriety in marriage: 'So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.' (Eph. 5:28.) And perhaps the Lord's condemnation included secret sexual sins in marriage, when he said: ' . . . And those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God.' (D&C 132:52.)" (Miracle of Forgiveness, 73).



## Making The Right Choices

Elder Richard G. Scott  
General Conference, October 1994



1. Present tonight are many young men who hold the priesthood of God.<sup>1</sup> Some of you look forward to being a missionary when you are older. Others are planning to go soon; still others have completed missions and are seeking an eternal companion. I am sobered by the realization that some of you will not reach these worthy goals because of other choices you are making now.

2. I am grateful this is a private priesthood meeting, for I have felt impressed to treat sensitive yet important matters. While they apply to all present, I particularly want to talk with you young men. I will speak as though you and I were alone in a private interview and no one else can hear us. My purpose is to help you learn how to make the right choices. That will help you develop strong feelings of self-worth. You will have confidence to do right and overcome strong negative peer pressure and bad influences.

3. As a young boy, I felt that some things that I heard discussed by others at school about private parts of the body were wrong. Yet I wasn't really sure how wrong or why they were wrong. You may have similar feelings. Since in tonight's setting you cannot ask me anything, I will use some of the confidential questions most frequently asked by youth I have met across the world. I will answer them by what I have learned from the scriptures and the prophets. You then will have clear standards from which to make choices. I pray that as we talk the Holy Ghost will let you feel the truth of what is said. I know that as you listen and think of how our interview applies to you, there will come impressions regarding what to do about it in your own life.

Question: Could you give us some help about resisting peer pressure? Why do some people do things that are wrong, then brag about how much fun they are having? When I don't participate, they make me feel stupid because I won't do it.

4. Answer: You can't please God without upsetting Satan, so you will get pressure from those he tempts to do wrong. Individuals who do wrong want you to join them because they feel more comfortable in what they are doing when others do it also. They may also want to take advantage of you. It is natural to want to be accepted by peers, to be part of a group—some even join gangs because of that desire

to belong, but they lose their freedom, and some lose their lives. One of the hardest things for you to recognize is how truly strong you already are and how others silently respect you. We have great confidence in you. You don't need to compromise your standards to be accepted by good friends. The more obedient you are, the more you stand for true principles, the more the Lord can help you overcome temptation.<sup>2</sup> You can also help others because they will feel your strength. Let them know about your standards by consistently living them. Answer questions about your principles when you are asked, but avoid being preachy. I know from personal experience that works.

5. No one intends to make serious mistakes. They come when you compromise your standards to be more accepted by others. You be the strong one. You be the leader. Choose good friends and resist peer pressure together.

Question: How do we keep bad thoughts from entering our minds, and what do we do when they come?

6. Answer: Some bad thoughts come by themselves. Others come because we invite them by what we look at and listen to.<sup>3</sup> Talking about or looking at immodest pictures of a woman's body can stimulate powerful emotions. It will tempt you to watch improper videocassettes or movies. These things surround you, but you must not participate in them. Work at keeping your thoughts clean by thinking of something good.<sup>4</sup> The mind can think of only one thing at a time. Use that fact to crowd out ugly thoughts.<sup>5</sup> Above all, don't feed thoughts by reading or watching things that are wrong. If you don't control your thoughts, Satan will keep tempting you until you eventually act them out.<sup>6</sup>

Question: Why is the law of chastity so important? Why is sex before marriage wrong?

7. Answer: Fundamental to the great plan of happiness and central to the teachings of the Savior is the family. A new family begins when a man and woman make sacred marriage vows and are legally bound together to become husband and wife, father and mother. The perfect beginning is through sealing in the temple. With marriage they commit the best of themselves to be absolutely loyal to each other and to invite children to be nurtured and taught. The father assumes

his role as provider and protector, the mother her role as the heart of the home, with her tender, loving, nurturing influence.

8. Together they strive to instill in themselves and their children principles such as prayer, obedience, love, giving of oneself, and the quest for knowledge.

9. Within the enduring covenant of marriage, the Lord permits husband and wife the expression of the sacred procreative powers in all their loveliness and beauty within the bounds He has set.<sup>7</sup> One purpose of this private, sacred, intimate experience is to provide the physical bodies for the spirits Father in Heaven wants to experience mortality. Another reason for these powerful and beautiful feelings of love is to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration of each other, and common purpose.

10. However, those intimate acts are forbidden by the Lord outside the enduring commitment of marriage because they undermine His purposes.<sup>8</sup> Within the sacred covenant of marriage, such relationships are according to His plan. When experienced any other way, they are against His will. They cause serious emotional and spiritual harm. Even though participants do not realize that is happening now, they will later. Sexual immorality creates a barrier to the influence of the Holy Spirit with all its uplifting, enlightening, and empowering capabilities. It causes powerful physical and emotional stimulation. In time that creates an unquenchable appetite that drives the offender to ever more serious sin. It engenders selfishness and can produce aggressive acts such as brutality, abortion, sexual abuse, and violent crime. Such stimulation can lead to acts of homosexuality, and they are evil and absolutely wrong.<sup>9</sup>

11. Sexual transgression would defile the priesthood you now hold, sap your spiritual strength, undermine your faith in Jesus Christ, and frustrate your ability to serve Him. Consistent, willing obedience increases your confidence and ability. It produces character that allows you to face difficult challenges and overcome them. It qualifies you to receive inspiration and power from the Lord.<sup>10</sup>

Question: They always tell us we shouldn't become sexually involved, but they never tell us the limits. What are they?

12. Answer: Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another's body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God. It is also a transgression to intentionally stimulate these emotions within your own body.<sup>11</sup> Satan tempts one to believe that there are allowable levels of physical contact between consenting individuals who seek the powerful stimulation of emotions they produce, and if kept within bounds, no harm will result. As a witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that is absolutely false. Satan particularly seeks to tempt one who has lived a pure, clean life to experiment through magazines, videocassettes, or

movies with powerful images of a woman's body. He wants to stimulate appetite to cause experimentation that quickly results in intimacies and defilement. Powerful habits are formed which are difficult to break. Mental and emotional scars result.

13. When you are mature enough to plan seriously for marriage, keep your expressions of feelings to those that are comfortable in the presence of your parents.<sup>12</sup> To help you keep these sacred commandments, make a covenant with the Lord that you will obey them. Decide what you will do and will not do. When temptation comes, do not change your standards. Do not abandon them when circumstances seem to justify an exception. That is Satan's way to hurt you by making it seem that sometimes God's law does not apply. There are no exceptions.

Question: Before you are married, how far is too far to go if it is with your girlfriend?

14. Answer: Before marriage there can be no sexual contact with a girlfriend, fiancée, or anyone else, period.<sup>13</sup> While a commandment, that standard is for your happiness. That's why the Church counsels you to go in groups and not to date while you are young. Later, as you prepare for marriage, remember that true love elevates, protects, respects, and enriches another. It motivates you to make sacrifices for the girl you love. Satan would promote counterfeit love, which is really lust. That is driven by hunger to satisfy personal appetite. Protect the one you love by controlling your emotions to the limits set by the Lord. You know how to be clean. We trust you to do it.

Question: How do you go about repenting after a sexual sin is committed? What sins should you tell the bishop?

15. Answer: All of the sexual transgressions we have discussed require sincere repentance with the participation of the bishop. Should you have done any of this, repent now. It is wrong to violate these commandments of the Lord. It is worse to do nothing about it. Sin is like cancer in the body. It will never heal itself. It will become worse unless cured through repentance. Your parents can help strengthen you. Then you can become clean and pure by repentance under the guidance of the bishop. He may seem to be busy or unavailable. Tell him you are in trouble and need help. He will listen.

16. A youth in serious trouble said: "I have done things that I knew were bad. I have been taught they were ever since I can remember. I know repentance is a great gift; without it I would be lost. But I'm not ready to repent of my sins, yet I know when I am ready I can." How tragic. The thought of intentionally committing serious sin now and repenting later is perilously wrong. Never do that.<sup>14</sup> Many start that journey of intentional transgression and never make it back. Premeditated sin has greater penalties and is harder to

overcome. If there is sin, repent now—while you can.

17. I pray that as we have talked you have had feelings to do better.<sup>15</sup> You hold the priesthood of God. That is a sacred responsibility,<sup>16</sup> and also a singular privilege.<sup>17</sup> You will be fortified in your determination to live righteously as you study the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. Listen to your parents, leaders, and the prophet we have sustained today. Have faith in the Savior. He will help you.<sup>18</sup> Remember He said, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.”<sup>19</sup>

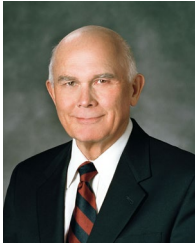
18. Please stay morally clean. The Lord will make that possible as you do your part with all your strength.<sup>20</sup> Jesus Christ lives, and He loves you. He will help you as you do your part. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Notes

1. See Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, sel. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), p. 64; see also Millennial Star, 51 (1889):657.
2. See 1 Cor. 10:13.
3. See H. Burke Peterson, Ensign, Nov. 1993, pp. 42–44.
4. See The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), pp. 278, 445–46.
5. See Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, Jan. 1974, pp. 27–28.
6. See Thomas S. Monson, Ensign, Nov. 1990, p. 47; see also Robert L. Simpson, Ensign, Jan. 1973, p. 112.
7. See Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, May 1974, p. 7.
8. See Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, July 1972, pp. 111–13.
9. See Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, Nov. 1980, pp. 97–98.
10. See D&C 43:9, 15–16.
11. See Spencer W. Kimball, Ensign, Nov. 1974, p. 8; Nov. 1977, p. 6; Nov. 1980, p. 97.
12. See The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, pp. 283–84.
13. See The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), p. 65, 176–77.
14. Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, pp. 70–72.
15. See D&C 64:33–34.
16. See D&C 84:35–39. See also Spencer W. Kimball, The Miracle of Forgiveness (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), p. 124–25.
17. See The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 494.
18. See Moro. 10:32.
19. D&C 82:10.
20. See 3 Ne. 18:20.

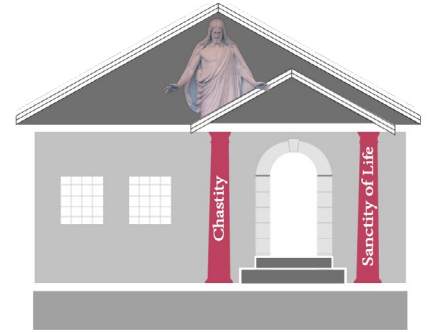
Making The Right Choices  
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## Pornography

Elder Dallin H. Oaks  
General Conference, April 2005



1. Last summer Sister Oaks and I returned from two years in the Philippines. We loved our service there, and we loved returning home. When we have been away, we see our surroundings in a new light, with increased appreciation and sometimes with new concerns.
2. We were concerned to see the inroads pornography had made in the United States while we were away. For many years our Church leaders have warned against the dangers of images and words intended to arouse sexual desires. Now the corrupting influence of pornography, produced and disseminated for commercial gain, is sweeping over our society like an avalanche of evil.
3. At our last conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley devoted an entire talk to this subject, warning in the plainest terms that “this is a very serious problem even among us” (“A Tragic Evil among Us,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 61). Most of the bishops we meet in stake conferences now report major concerns with this problem.
4. My fellow holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and also our young men, I wish to speak to you today about pornography. I know that many of you are exposed to this and that many of you are being stained by it.
5. In concentrating my talk on this subject I feel like the prophet Jacob, who told the men of his day that it grieved him to speak so boldly in front of their sensitive wives and children. But notwithstanding the difficulty of the task, he said he had to speak to the men about this subject because God had commanded him (see Jacob 2:7–11). I do so for the same reason.
6. In the second chapter of the book that bears his name, Jacob condemns men for their “whoredoms” (vv. 23, 28). He told them they had “broken the hearts of [their] tender wives, and lost the confidence of [their] children, because of [their] bad examples before them” (v. 35).
7. What were these grossly wicked “whoredoms”? No doubt some men were already guilty of evil acts. But the main focus of Jacob’s great sermon was not with evil acts completed, but with evil acts contemplated.
8. Jacob began his sermon by telling the men that “as yet, [they had] been obedient unto the word of the Lord” (Jacob 2:4). However, he then told them he knew their thoughts, that they were “beginning to labor in sin, which sin appeareth very abominable . . . unto God” (v. 5). “I must testify unto you concerning the wickedness of your hearts” (v. 6), he added. Jacob was speaking as Jesus spoke when He said, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28; see also 3 Nephi 12:28; D&C 59:6; 63:16).
9. More than 30 years ago, I urged BYU students to avoid the “promotional literature of illicit sexual relations” in what they read and viewed. I gave this analogy:
10. “Pornographic or erotic stories and pictures are worse than filthy or polluted food. The body has defenses to rid itself of unwholesome food. With a few fatal exceptions, bad food will only make you sick but do no permanent harm. In contrast, a person who feasts upon filthy stories or pornographic or erotic pictures and literature records them in this marvelous retrieval system we call a brain. The brain won’t vomit back filth. Once recorded, it will always remain subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind and drawing you away from the wholesome things in life.”<sup>1</sup>
11. Here, brethren, I must tell you that our bishops and our professional counselors are seeing an increasing number of men involved with pornography, and many of those are active members. Some involved in pornography apparently minimize its seriousness and continue to exercise the priesthood of God because they think no one will know of their involvement. But the user knows, brethren, and so does the Lord.
12. Some have suggested that pornography should be a separate question in the temple recommend interview. It is already. At least five different questions should elicit a confession and discussion on this subject if the person being interviewed has the spiritual sensitivity and honesty we expect of those who worship in the house of the Lord.

13. One of the Savior’s most memorable teachings applies to men who are secretly viewing pornography:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

“Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matthew 23:25–26; see also Alma 60:23).

The Savior continues His denunciation of those who treat what is visible but neglect to cleanse the inner man:

“Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.

“Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matthew 23:27–28).

14. The immediate spiritual consequences of such hypocrisy are devastating. Those who seek out and use pornography forfeit the power of their priesthood. The Lord declares: “When we undertake to cover our sins, . . . behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (D&C 121:37).
15. Patrons of pornography also lose the companionship of the Spirit. Pornography produces fantasies that destroy spirituality. “To be carnally minded is death”—spiritual death (Romans 8:6; see also 2 Nephi 9:39).
16. The scriptures repeatedly teach that the Spirit of the Lord will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. When we worthily partake of the sacrament, we are promised that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us].” To qualify for that promise we covenant that we will “always remember him” (D&C 20:77). Those who seek out and use pornography for sexual stimulation obviously violate that covenant. They also violate a sacred covenant to refrain from unholy and impure practices. They cannot have the Spirit of the Lord to be with them. All such need to heed the Apostle Peter’s plea: “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22).
17. Brethren, you have noticed that I am not discussing the effects of pornography on mental health or criminal behavior. I am discussing its effects on spirituality—on our ability to have the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord and our capacity to exercise the power of the priesthood.
18. Pornography also inflicts mortal wounds on our most

precious personal relationships. In his talk to men of the priesthood last October, President Hinckley quoted the letter of a woman who asked him to warn Church members that pornography “has the effect of damaging hearts and souls to their very depths, strangling the life out of relationships” (Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2004, 60).

19. At a recent stake conference a woman handed me a similar letter. Her husband had also served in important Church callings for many years while addicted to pornography. She told of great difficulty in getting priesthood leaders to take this problem of pornography seriously: “I got all kinds of responses—like I was overreacting or it was my fault. The bishop we have now has been great. And now after 15 years my husband is trying to deal with his addiction, but now it is 15 years harder to quit for him and the loss has been incalculable.”
20. Pornography impairs one’s ability to enjoy a normal emotional, romantic, and spiritual relationship with a person of the opposite sex. It erodes the moral barriers that stand against inappropriate, abnormal, or illegal behavior. As conscience is desensitized, patrons of pornography are led to act out what they have witnessed, regardless of its effects on their life and the lives of others.
21. Pornography is also addictive. It impairs decision-making capacities and it “hooks” its users, drawing them back obsessively for more and more. A man who had been addicted to pornography and to hard drugs wrote me this comparison: “In my eyes cocaine doesn’t hold a candle to this. I have done both. . . . Quitting even the hardest drugs was nothing compared to [trying to quit pornography]” (letter of Mar. 20, 2005).
22. Some seek to justify their indulgence by arguing that they are only viewing “soft” not “hard,” porn. A wise bishop called this refusing to see evil as evil. He quoted men seeking to justify their viewing choices by comparisons such as “not as bad as” or “only one bad scene.” But the test of what is evil is not its degree but its effect. When persons entertain evil thoughts long enough for the Spirit to withdraw, they lose their spiritual protection and they are subject to the power and direction of the evil one. When they use Internet or other pornography for what this bishop described as “arousal on demand” (letter of Mar. 13, 2005), they are deeply soiled by sin.
23. King Benjamin’s great sermon describes the terrible consequences. When we withdraw from the Spirit of the Lord, we become an enemy to righteousness, we have a lively sense of our guilt, and we “shrink from the presence of the Lord” (see Mosiah 2:36–38). “Mercy hath no claim on that man,” he concluded; “therefore his fi al

- doom is to endure a never-ending torment” (v. 39).
24. Consider the tragic example of King David. Though a spiritual giant in Israel, he allowed himself to look upon something he should not have viewed (see 2 Samuel 11). Tempted by what he saw, he violated two of the Ten Commandments, beginning with “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). In this way a prophet-king fell from his exaltation (see D&C 132:39).
  25. But the good news is that no one needs to follow the evil, downward descent to torment. Everyone caught on that terrible escalator has the key to reverse his course. He can escape. Through repentance he can be clean.
  26. Alma the Younger described it:
 

“Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell. . . .

“ . . . The very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. . . .

“And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

“Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

“And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!” (Alma 36:13–14, 17–20).
  27. My brethren who are caught in this addiction or troubled by this temptation, there is a way.
  28. *First*, acknowledge the evil. Don’t defend it or try to justify yourself. For at least a quarter century our leaders have pleaded with men, and also with women and children, to avoid this evil.<sup>2</sup> Our current Church magazines are full of warnings, information, and helps on this subject—with more than a score of articles published or to be published this year and last year alone.<sup>3</sup>
  29. *Second*, seek the help of the Lord and His servants. Hear and heed President Hinckley’s words:
    30. “Plead with the Lord out of the depths of your soul that He will remove from you the addiction which enslaves you. And may you have the courage to seek the loving guidance of your bishop and, if necessary, the counsel of caring professionals” (Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2004, 62).
    31. Third, do all that you can to avoid pornography. If you ever find yourself in its presence—which can happen to anyone in the world in which we live—follow the example of Joseph of Egypt. When temptation caught him in her grip, he left temptation and “got him out” (Genesis 39:12).
    32. Don’t accommodate any degree of temptation. Prevent sin and avoid having to deal with its inevitable destruction. So, turn it off! Look away! Avoid it at all costs. Direct your thoughts in wholesome paths. Remember your covenants and be faithful in temple attendance. The wise bishop I quoted earlier reported that “an endowed priesthood bearer’s fall into pornography never occurs during periods of regular worship in the temple; it happens when he has become casual in his temple worship” (letter of Mar. 13, 2005).
    33. We must also act to protect those we love. Parents install alarms to warn if their household is threatened by smoke or carbon monoxide. We should also install protections against spiritual threats, protections like filters on Internet connections and locating access so others can see what is being viewed. And we should build the spiritual strength of our families by loving relationships, family prayer, and scripture study.
    34. *Finally*, do not patronize pornography. Do not use your purchasing power to support moral degradation. And young women, please understand that if you dress immodestly, you are magnifying this problem by becoming pornography to some of the men who see you.
    35. Please heed these warnings. Let us all improve our personal behavior and redouble our efforts to protect our loved ones and our environment from the onslaught of pornography that threatens our spirituality, our marriages, and our children.
    36. I testify that this is what we should do to enjoy the blessings of Him whom we worship. I testify of Jesus Christ, the Light and Life of the World, whose Church this is, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. Challenges for the Year Ahead (pamphlet, 1974), 4–5; reprinted in “Things They’re Saying,” New Era, Feb. 1974, 18.

2. See, for example, Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Tragic Evil among Us,” Liahona and Ensign, Nov. 2004, 59–62; David E. Sorensen, “You Can’t Pet a Rattlesnake,” Liahona, July 2001, 48–50; Ensign, May 2001, 41–43; Thomas S. Monson, “Pornography—the Deadly Carrier,” Ensign, Nov. 1979, 66–67;

David B. Haight, "Personal Morality," *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 70–73.

3. See, for example, Rory C. Reid, "The Road Back: Abandoning Pornography," *Liahona*, Feb. 2005, 28–33; *Ensign*, Feb. 2005, 46–51; Arianne B. Cope, "Internet Café," *New Era*, Mar. 2005, 34–37; Nycole S. Larsen, "The Decision," *Friend*, Mar. 2004, 40–41.

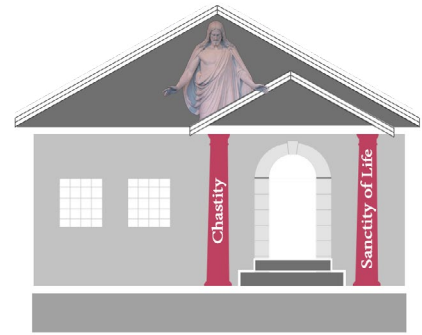
Pornography  
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## We Believe in Being Chaste

Elder David A. Bednar  
General Conference, April 2013



1. My message addresses a fundamental question of great spiritual consequence: Why is the law of chastity so important? I pray the Holy Ghost will confirm the truthfulness of the principles I emphasize.

2. The eternal importance of chastity can only be understood within the overarching context of our Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness for His children. “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and . . . has a divine nature and destiny” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2010, 129). All men and women lived with God as His spirit children before coming to the earth as mortal beings. The Father’s plan enables His spirit sons and daughters to obtain physical bodies, to gain mortal experience, and to progress toward exaltation..

3. Our physical bodies make possible a breadth, a depth, and an intensity of experience that simply could not be obtained in our premortal existence. Thus, our relationships with other people, our capacity to recognize and act in accordance with truth, and our ability to obey the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ are amplified through our physical bodies. In the school of mortality, we experience tenderness, love, kindness, happiness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, and even the challenges of physical limitations in ways that prepare us for eternity. Simply stated, there are lessons we must learn and experiences we must have, as the scriptures describe, “according to the flesh” (1 Nephi 19:6; Alma 7:12–13).

4. After the earth was created, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. Importantly, however, God said “it was not good that the man should be alone” (Moses 3:18; see also Genesis 2:18), and Eve became Adam’s wife and helpmeet. The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females was needed to enact the plan of happiness. “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). The man and the woman are intended to learn from, strengthen, bless, and complete each other.

5. The means by which mortal life is created is divinely appointed. “The first commandment . . . God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife” (Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2010, 129). The commandment to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force today. Thus, marriage between a man and a woman is the authorized channel through which premortal spirits enter mortality. Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred channel.

6. The power of procreation is spiritually significant. Misuse of this power subverts the purposes of the Father’s plan and of our mortal existence. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son are creators and have entrusted each of us with a portion of Their creative power. Specific guidelines for the proper use of the ability to create life are vital elements in the Father’s plan. How we feel about and use that supernal power will determine in large measure our happiness in mortality and our destiny in eternity

7. Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained: “The power to create mortal life is the most exalted power God has given his children. Its use was mandated in the first commandment, but another important commandment was given to forbid its misuse. The emphasis we place on the law of chastity is explained by our understanding of the purpose of our procreative powers in the accomplishment of God’s plan. . . .

8. “Outside the bonds of marriage, all uses of the procreative power are to one degree or another a sinful degrading and perversion of the most divine attribute of men and women” (“The Great Plan of Happiness,” Ensign, Nov. 1993, 74).

9. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a single, undeviating standard of sexual morality: intimate relations are proper only between a man and a woman in the marriage relationship prescribed in God’s plan. Such relations are not merely a curiosity to be explored, an appetite to be satisfied, or a type of recreation or entertainment to be pursued selfishly. They are not a conquest to be achieved or simply an act to be performed. Rather, they are in mortality one of the ultimate expressions of our divine nature and potential and a way

of strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife. We are agents blessed with moral agency and are defined by our divine heritage as children of God—and not by sexual behaviors, contemporary attitudes, or secular philosophies.

10. To some degree, the natural man described by King Benjamin is alive and well in each of us (see Mosiah 3:19). The natural man or woman is unrepentant, is carnal and sensual (see Mosiah 16:5; Alma 42:10; Moses 5:13), is indulgent and excessive, and is prideful and selfish. As President Spencer W. Kimball taught, “The ‘natural man’ is the ‘earthy man’ who has allowed rude animal passions to overshadow his spiritual inclinations” (“Ocean Currents and Family Influences,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 112).

11. In contrast, the “man [or woman] of Christ” (Helaman 3:29) is spiritual and bridles all passions (see Alma 38:12), is temperate and restrained, and is benevolent and selfless. Men and women of Christ lay hold upon the word of God, deny themselves and take up His cross (see Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; D&C 56:2), and press forward along a strait and narrow course of faithfulness, obedience, and devotion to the Savior and His gospel.

12. As sons and daughters of God, we have inherited divine capacities from Him. But we presently live in a fallen world. The very elements out of which our bodies were created are by nature fallen and ever subject to the pull of sin, corruption, and death. Consequently, the Fall of Adam and its spiritual and temporal consequences affect us most directly through our physical bodies. And yet we are dual beings, for our spirit that is the eternal part of us is tabernacled in a physical body that is subject to the Fall. As Jesus emphasized to the Apostle Peter, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

The precise nature of the test of mortality, then, can be summarized in the following question: Will I respond to the inclinations of the natural man, or will I yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and put off the natural man and become a saint through the Atonement of Christ the Lord (see Mosiah 3:19)? That is the test. Every appetite, desire, propensity, and impulse of the natural man may be overcome by and through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We are here on the earth to develop godlike qualities and to bridle all of the passions of the flesh.

13. The Father’s plan is designed to provide direction for His children, to help them become happy, and to bring them safely home to Him with resurrected, exalted bodies. Heavenly Father desires us to be together in the light and filled with hope. In contrast, Lucifer labors to make the sons and daughters of God confused and unhappy and to hinder their eternal progression. The overarching intent of the father of lies is that all of us would become “miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27). Lucifer wants us ultimately to

be alone in the dark and without hope.

14. Satan relentlessly works to distort the most important elements of the Father’s plan. He does not have a body, and his eternal progress has been halted. Just as water flowing in a riverbed is stopped by a dam, so the adversary’s eternal progress is thwarted because he does not have a physical body. Because of his rebellion, Lucifer has denied himself all of the mortal blessings and experiences made possible through a body of flesh and bones. He cannot learn the lessons that only an embodied spirit can learn. He resents the reality of a literal and universal resurrection of all mankind. One of the potent scriptural meanings of the word damned is illustrated in his inability to continue developing and becoming like our Heavenly Father.

15. Because a physical body is so central to the Father’s plan of happiness and our spiritual development, Lucifer seeks to frustrate our progression by tempting us to use our bodies improperly. One of the ultimate ironies of eternity is that the adversary, who is miserable precisely because he has no physical body, entices us to share in his misery through the improper use of our bodies. The very tool he does not have is thus the primary target of his attempts to lure us to spiritual destruction.

16. Violating the law of chastity is a grievous sin and a misuse of our physical tabernacles. To those who know and understand the plan of salvation, defiling the body is an act of rebellion (see Mosiah 2:36–37; D&C 64:34–35) and a denial of our true identity as sons and daughters of God. As we look beyond mortality and into eternity, it is easy to discern that the counterfeit companionship advocated by the adversary is temporary and empty.

17. Alma counseled his son Shiblon to “bridle all [of his] passions, that [he] may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12). Significantly, disciplining the natural man in each of us makes possible a richer, a deeper, and a more enduring love of God and of His children. Love increases through righteous restraint and decreases through impulsive indulgence.

18. President Marion G. Romney declared:

19. “I can think of no blessings to be more fervently desired than those promised to the pure and the virtuous. Jesus spoke of specific rewards for different virtues but reserved the greatest, so it seems to me, for the pure in heart, ‘for they,’ said he, ‘shall see God’ (Matt. 5:8). And not only shall they see the Lord, but they shall feel at home in his presence.

20. “Here is ... the Savior’s promise: ‘Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God’ (D&C 121:45)” (“Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 42).

21. We also are promised that, as we pursue the pathway of

virtue, “the Holy Ghost shall be [our] constant companion” (D&C 121:46). Thus, living the law of chastity invites some of the greatest blessings men and women can receive in mortality: appropriate spiritual confidence in the presence of family, friends, Church associates, and, ultimately, the Savior. Our innate longing to belong is fulfilled in righteousness as we walk in the light with hope.

22. Some of you who receive this message need to repent of sexual or other sins. The Savior is often referred to as the Great Physician, and this title has both symbolic and literal significance. All of us have experienced the pain associated with a physical injury or wound. When we are in pain, we typically seek relief and are grateful for the medication and treatments that help to alleviate our suffering. Consider sin as a spiritual wound that causes guilt or, as described by Alma to his son Corianton, “remorse of conscience” (Alma 42:18). Guilt is to our spirit what pain is to our body—a warning of danger and a protection from additional damage. From the Atonement of the Savior flows the soothing salve that can heal our spiritual wounds and remove guilt. However, this salve can only be applied through the principles of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and consistent obedience. The results of sincere repentance are peace of conscience, comfort, and spiritual healing and renewal.

23. Your bishop or branch president is the spiritual physician’s assistant who is authorized to help you repent and heal. Please remember, however, that the extent and intensity of your repentance must match the nature and severity of your sins—especially for Latter-day Saints who are under sacred covenant. Serious spiritual wounds require sustained treatment and time to heal completely and fully.

24. The doctrine I have described will seem to be archaic and outdated to many people in a world that increasingly mocks the sanctity of procreation and minimizes the worth of human life. But the Lord’s truth is not altered by fads, popularity, or public opinion polls. I promise that obedience to the law of chastity will increase our happiness in mortality and make possible our progress in eternity. Chastity and virtue are now, always have been, and always will be “most dear and precious above all things” (Moroni 9:9). I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

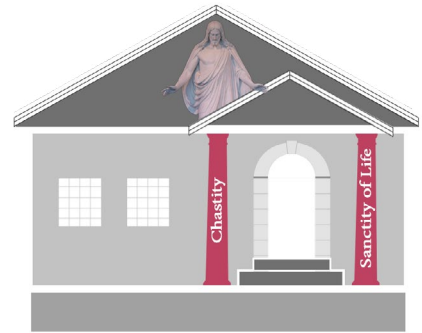
We Believe in Being Chaste  
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## Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland  
Deseret Book, Salt Lake City, 2001.



1. The topic of human intimacy is as sacred as any I know. In discussing it, the subject can quickly slide from the sacred into the merely sensational. It would be better not to address the topic at all than to damage it with casualness or carelessness.

2. Some may feel this is a topic we hear discussed too frequently, but given the world in which we live, we may not be hearing it enough. All of the prophets, past and present, have spoken on it. Most in the Church are doing wonderfully well in the matter of personal purity, but some are not doing so well, and much of the world around us is not doing well at all.

3. Unfortunately, the degree of unchaste behavior around us is likely to increase rather than decrease as the times become more secular, more sophisticated, and more self-indulgent. Edward Gibbon, the distinguished British historian of the eighteenth century, wrote, “Although the progress of civilisation has undoubtedly contributed to assuage the fiercer passions of human nature, it seems to have been less favourable to the virtue of chastity. . . . The refinements of life [seem to] corrupt, [even as] they polish, the [relationship] of the sexes.”<sup>1</sup>

4. But it is not our purpose here to document social problems or wring our hands over the dangers that such outside influences may hold for us. As serious as such contemporary realities are, I wish to discuss this topic in quite a different way, discuss it specifically for Latter-day Saints. So I conspicuously set aside statistics on such tragedies as AIDS, abortions, and illegitimate births and refer rather to a gospel-based view of personal purity.

5. Indeed, I wish to do something even a bit more difficult than listing the dos and don'ts of personal purity. I wish to examine, to the best of my ability, why we should be clean, why moral discipline is such a significant matter in God's eyes. I know that may sound presumptuous, but a philosopher once said, “Tell me succinctly why a thing should be done, and I will move heaven and earth to do it.” Hoping you will feel the same way as he, and with full recognition of my limitations, I wish to try to give at least a partial answer to “Why be morally clean?” I will need first to pose briefly what I see as the doctrinal seriousness of the

matter before then offering at least three reasons for such seriousness.

### The Significance of Sanctity

Why is the matter of sexual relationships so severe that fire is almost always the metaphor, with passion pictured vividly in flames?

6. May I begin with one-half of a nine-line poem by Robert Frost. (The other half is worth a sermon also, but it will have to wait for another day.) Here are the first four lines of Frost's “Fire and Ice”:

7. Some say the world will end in fire, Some say in ice. From what I've tasted of desire I hold with those who favor fire.<sup>2</sup>

8. A second, less poetic but more specific opinion is offered by the writer of Proverbs: “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? . . . But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.”<sup>3</sup>

9. In getting at the doctrinal seriousness of this subject, why is the matter of sexual relationships so severe that fire is almost always the metaphor, with passion pictured vividly in flames? What is there in the potentially hurtful heat of this that leaves one's soul—or perhaps the whole world, according to Frost—destroyed, if that flame is left unchecked and those passions unrestrained? What is there in all of this that prompts Alma to warn his son Corianton that sexual transgression is “an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost”?<sup>4</sup>

10. Setting aside sins against the Holy Ghost as a special category unto themselves, it is LDS doctrine that sexual transgression is second only to murder in the Lord's list of life's most serious sins. By assigning such rank to a physical appetite so conspicuously evident in all of us, what is God trying to tell us about its place in His plan for all men and women in mortality? I submit to you He is doing precisely that—commenting about the very plan of life itself. Clearly God's greatest concerns regarding mortality are how one

gets into this world and how one gets out of it. These two most important issues in our very personal and carefully supervised progress are the two issues that He as our Creator, Father, and Guide wishes most to reserve to Himself. These are the two matters that He has repeatedly told us He wants us never to take illegally, illicitly, unfaithfully, without sanction.

11. As for the taking of life, we are generally quite responsible. Most people, it seems to me, readily sense the sanctity of life and as a rule do not run up to friends, put a loaded revolver to their heads, and cavalierly pull the trigger. Furthermore, when there is a click of the hammer rather than an explosion of lead, and a possible tragedy seems to have been averted, no one in such a circumstance would be so stupid as to sigh, “Oh, good. I didn’t go all the way.”

12. No, “all the way” or not, the insanity of such action with fatal powder and steel is obvious on the face of it. Such a person running about with an arsenal of loaded handguns or military weaponry firing at young people would be apprehended, prosecuted, and institutionalized if in fact such a lunatic would not himself have been killed in all the pandemonium.

13. After such a moment of horror, we would undoubtedly sit in our homes or classrooms with terror on our minds for many months to come, wondering how such a thing could possibly happen—especially to members of the Church.

14. Fortunately, in the case of how life is taken, I think we seem to be quite responsible. The seriousness of that does not often have to be spelled out, and not many sermons need to be devoted to it. But in the significance and sanctity of giving life, some of us are not so responsible, and in the larger world swirling around us we find near-criminal irresponsibility. What would in the case of taking life bring absolute horror and demand grim justice, in the case of giving life brings dirty jokes, four-letter language, and wholesale voyeurism in movies, on television, over the internet, and almost everywhere else we turn.

15. Is all of this so wrong? That question has always been asked, usually by the guilty. “Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.”<sup>5</sup> No murder here. Well, maybe not. But sexual transgression? “He that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.”<sup>6</sup> Sounds near-fatal to me.

16. It is this doctrinal seriousness that should help us prevent such painful moments and avoid what Alma called the “inexpressible horror” of standing in the presence of God unworthily. Care and caution in this matter will permit the intimacy it is your right, privilege, and delight to enjoy in marriage to be untainted by such crushing remorse and guilt. May I now give those three reasons I mentioned earlier as to why this is an issue of such magnitude and consequence.

## The Doctrine of the Soul

When one toys with the God-given . . . body of another, he or she toys with the very soul of that individual, toys with the central purpose and product of life.

17. First, we simply must understand the revealed, restored Latter-day Saint doctrine of the soul, and the high and inextricable part the body plays in that doctrine.

18. One of the “plain and precious” truths restored to this dispensation is that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man,”<sup>7</sup> and that when the spirit and body are separated, men and women “cannot receive a fulness of joy.”<sup>8</sup> Certainly that suggests something of the reason why obtaining a body is so fundamentally important to the plan of salvation in the first place, why sin of any kind is such a serious matter (namely, because its automatic consequence is death, the separation of the spirit from the body and the separation of the spirit and the body from God), and why the resurrection of the body is so central to the great abiding and eternal triumph of Christ’s atonement. We do not have to be a herd of demonically possessed swine charging down Gadarene slopes toward the sea<sup>9</sup> to understand that a body is the great prize of mortal life, and that even a pig’s will do for those frenzied premortal spirits that rebelled and to this day remain dispossessed in their first, unembodied estate.

19. May I quote a 1913 sermon by Elder James E. Talmage on this doctrinal point:

20. “We have been taught . . . to look upon these bodies of ours as gifts from God. We Latter-day Saints do not regard the body as something to be condemned, something to be abhorred. . . . We regard [the body] as the sign of our royal birthright. . . . We recognize the fact that those who kept not their first estate . . . were denied that inestimable blessing. . . . We believe that these bodies . . . may be made, in very truth, the temple of the Holy Ghost. . . .

21. “It is peculiar to the theology of the Latter-day Saints that we regard the body as an essential part of the soul. Read your dictionaries, the lexicons, and encyclopedias, and you will find that nowhere, outside of the Church of Jesus Christ, is the solemn and eternal truth taught that the soul of man is the body and the spirit combined.”<sup>10</sup>

22. So partly in answer to why such seriousness, we answer that when one toys with the God-given—and satanically coveted—body of another, he or she toys with the very soul of that individual, toys with the central purpose and product of life, “the very key” to life, as Elder Boyd K. Packer once called it.<sup>11</sup> In trivializing the soul of another (please include the word body there) we trivialize the atonement, which saved that soul and guaranteed its continued existence. And when one toys with the Son of Righteousness, the Day Star Himself, one toys with white heat and a flame hotter and holier than the noonday sun. You cannot do so and not be

burned. You cannot with impunity “crucify . . . the Son of God afresh.”<sup>12</sup> Exploitation of the body (please include the word soul there) is, in the last analysis, an exploitation of Him who is the Light and the Life of the world. Perhaps here Paul’s warning to the Corinthians takes on newer, higher meaning:

23. “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. . . . Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. . . . Flee fornication. . . . He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”<sup>13</sup>

24. Our soul is what is at stake here—our spirit and our body. Paul understood that doctrine of the soul every bit as well as Elder James E. Talmage did, because it is gospel truth. The purchase price for our fullness of joy—body and spirit eternally united—is the pure and innocent blood of the Savior of the world. We cannot then say in ignorance or defiance, “Well, it’s my life” or worse yet, “It’s my body.” It is not your life or your body. “Ye are not your own,” Paul said. “Ye are bought with a price.” As a result of the excruciating suffering endured by Him in the atonement—the payment He made for our sins—we are eternally indebted to Jesus. That is one reason we call Him “Master,” in the holiest sense of the word. So in answer to the question, “Why does God care so much about sexual transgression?” it is partly because of the precious gift offered by and through His Only Begotten Son to redeem the souls—bodies and spirits—we too often share and abuse in such cheap and tawdry ways. Christ restored the very seeds of eternal lives,<sup>14</sup> and we desecrate them at our peril. The first key reason for personal purity? Our very souls are involved and at stake.

### **A Symbol of Total Unity**

You may come to that moment of real love, of total union, only to discover to your horror that what you should have saved has been spent.

25. Second, human intimacy, that sacred, physical union ordained of God for a married couple, deals with a symbol that demands special sanctity.

26. Such an act of love between a man and a woman is—or certainly was ordained to be—a symbol of total union: union of their hearts, their hopes, their lives, their love, their family, their future, their everything. It is a symbol that we try to suggest in the temple with a word like seal. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said we perhaps could render such a sacred bond as welding—that those united in matrimony and eternal families are welded together, inseparable if you

will, to withstand the temptations of the adversary and the afflictions of mortality.<sup>15</sup>

27. But such a total, virtually unbreakable union, such an unyielding commitment between a man and a woman, can come only with the proximity and permanence afforded in a marriage covenant, with the union of all that they possess—their very hearts and minds, all their days and all their dreams. They work together, they cry together, they enjoy Brahms and Beethoven and breakfast together, they sacrifice and save and live together for all the abundance that such a totally intimate life provides such a couple. And the external symbol of that union, the physical manifestation of what is a far deeper spiritual and metaphysical bonding, is the physical blending that is part of—indeed, a most beautiful and gratifying expression of—that larger, more complete union of eternal purpose and promise.

28. As delicate as it is to mention, I nevertheless trust the reader’s maturity to understand that physiologically we are created as men and women to form such a union. In this ultimate physical expression of one man and one woman, they are as nearly and as literally one as two separate physical bodies can ever be. It is in that act of ultimate physical intimacy that we most nearly fulfill the commandment of the Lord given to Adam and Eve, living symbols for all married couples, when He invited them to cleave unto one another only, and thus become “one flesh.”<sup>16</sup>

29. Obviously, such a commandment to these two, the first husband and wife of the human family, has unlimited implications—social, cultural, and religious as well as physical—but that is exactly my point. As all couples come to that moment of bonding in mortality, it is to be just such a complete union. That commandment cannot be fulfilled, and that symbolism of “one flesh” cannot be preserved, if we hastily, guiltily, and surreptitiously share intimacy in a darkened corner of a darkened hour, then just as hastily, guiltily, and surreptitiously retreat to our separate worlds—not to eat or live or cry or laugh together, not to do the laundry and the dishes and the homework, not to manage a budget and pay the bills and tend the children and plan together for the future. No, we cannot do that until we are truly one—united, bound, linked, tied, welded, sealed, married.

30. Can you see then the moral duplicity that comes from pretending we are one, sharing the physical symbols and physical intimacy of our union, but then fleeing, retreating, severing all such other aspects—and symbols—of what was meant to be a total obligation, only to unite again furtively some other night or, worse yet, furtively unite (and you can tell how cynically I use that word) with some other partner who is no more bound to us, no more one with us than the last was or than the one that will come next week or next month or next year or anytime before the binding commitments of marriage?

31. You must wait until you can give everything, and you cannot give everything until you are at least legally and, for Latter-day Saint purposes, eternally pronounced as one. To give illicitly that which is not yours to give (remember, “you are not your own”) and to give only part of that which cannot be followed with the gift of your whole heart and your whole life and your whole self is its own form of emotional Russian roulette. If you persist in sharing part without the whole, in pursuing satisfaction devoid of symbolism, in giving parts and pieces and inflamed fragments only, you run the terrible risk of such spiritual, psychic damage that you may undermine both your physical intimacy and your wholehearted devotion to a truer, later love. You may come to that moment of real love, of total union, only to discover to your horror that what you should have saved has been spent and that only God’s grace can recover that piecemeal dissipation of your virtue.

32. A good Latter-day Saint friend, Dr. Victor L. Brown Jr., has written of this issue:

33. “Fragmentation enables its users to counterfeit intimacy. . . . If we relate to each other in fragments, at best we miss full relationships. At worst, we manipulate and exploit others for our gratification. Sexual fragmentation can be particularly harmful because it gives powerful physiological rewards which, though illusory, can temporarily persuade us to overlook the serious deficits in the overall relationship. Two people may marry for physical gratification and then discover that the illusion of union collapses under the weight of intellectual, social, and spiritual incompatibilities. . . .

34. “Sexual fragmentation is particularly harmful because it is particularly deceptive. The intense human intimacy that should be enjoyed in and symbolized by sexual union is counterfeited by sensual episodes which suggest—but cannot deliver—acceptance, understanding, and love. Such encounters mistake the end for the means as lonely, desperate people seek a common denominator which will permit the easiest, quickest gratification.”<sup>17</sup>

35. Listen to a far more biting observation by a non-Latter-day Saint regarding such acts devoid of both the soul and the symbolism we have been discussing. He writes: “Our sexuality has been animalized, stripped of the intricacy of feeling with which human beings have endowed it, leaving us to contemplate only the act, and to fear our impotence in it. It is this animalization from which the sexual manuals cannot escape, even when they try to do so, because they are reflections of it. They might [as well] be textbooks for veterinarians.”<sup>18</sup>

36. In this matter of counterfeit intimacy and deceptive gratification, I express particular caution to the men who read this message. I have heard all my life that it is the young woman who has to assume the responsibility for controlling

the limits of intimacy in courtship because a young man cannot. Seldom have I heard any point made about this subject that makes me more disappointed than that. What kind of man is he, what priesthood or power or strength or self-control does this man have, that lets him develop in society, grow to the age of mature accountability, perhaps even pursue a university education and prepare to affect the future of colleagues and kingdoms and the course of the world, yet he does not have the mental capacity or the moral will to say, “I will not do that thing”? No, this sorry drugstore psychology would have us say, “I just can’t help myself. My glands have complete control over my life—my mind, my will, my entire future.”

37. To say that a young woman in such a relationship has to bear her responsibility and that of the young man too is one of the most inappropriate suggestions I can imagine. In most instances if there is sexual transgression, I lay the burden squarely on the shoulders of the young man—for our purposes probably a priesthood bearer—and that’s where I believe God intended responsibility to be. In saying that, I do not excuse young women who exercise no restraint and have not the character or conviction to demand intimacy only in its rightful role. Unfortunately, I have had enough experience in Church callings to know that women as well as men can be predatory, a phenomenon more and more evident (and more and more tragic) in modern times. But I also refuse to accept the feigned innocence of some young man who wants to sin and calls it psychology.

38. Indeed, most tragically, it is the young woman who is most often the victim; it is the young woman who most often suffers the greater pain; it is the young woman who most often feels used and abused and terribly unclean. And for that imposed uncleanliness the man as well as the woman will pay, as surely as the sun sets and rivers run to the sea.

39. Note the prophet Jacob’s straightforward language on this account in the Book of Mormon. After a bold confrontation on the subject of sexual transgression among the Nephites, he quotes Jehovah: “For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land. . . . And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people . . . shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts.

40. “For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction.”<sup>19</sup>

41. Don’t be deceived and don’t be destroyed. Unless such fire is controlled, your clothes and your future will be burned, and your world, short of painful and perfect repentance, can go up in flames. I give that to you on good word: I give it to you on God’s word.

## Sacramental Moments

Sexual union is . . . a sacrament of the highest order, a union not only of a man and a woman but very much the union of that man and that woman with God.

42. This, after soul and symbol comes the word sacrament, a term closely related to the other two.

43. Sexual intimacy is not only a symbolic union between a man and a woman—the uniting of their very souls—but it is also symbolic of a union between mortals and deity, between otherwise ordinary and fallible humans uniting for a rare and special moment with God Himself and all the powers by which He gives life in this wide universe of ours.

44. In this latter sense, human intimacy is a kind of sacrament, a very special symbol. For our purpose, a sacrament could be any one of a number of gestures or acts or ordinances that unite us with God and His limitless powers. We are imperfect and mortal; He is perfect and immortal. But from time to time—indeed, as often as is possible and appropriate—we find ways and go to places and create circumstances where we can unite symbolically with Him and, in so doing, gain access to His power. Those special moments of union with God are sacramental moments, such as kneeling at a marriage altar or blessing a newborn baby or partaking of the emblems of the Lord's Supper. This latter ordinance is the one we in the Church have come to associate most traditionally with the word sacrament, though it is technically only one of many such moments when we formally take the hand of God and feel His divine power.

45. These are moments when we quite literally unite our will with God's will, our spirit with His Spirit, where communion through the veil becomes very real. At such moments we not only acknowledge His divinity, but we also quite literally take something of that divinity to ourselves. Such are the holy sacraments.

46. Now, I know of no one who would rush into a sacramental service, grab the linen from the tables, throw the bread the full length of the room, tip the water trays onto the floor, and laughingly retreat from the building to await an opportunity to do the same thing at another worship service the next Sunday. No one would do that during one of the truly sacred moments of our religious worship. Nor would anyone violate any of the other sacramental moments in our lives, those times when we consciously claim God's power and by invitation stand with Him in privilege and principality.

47. But I wish to stress, as my third of three reasons to be clear, that sexual union is also, in its own profound way, a sacrament of the highest order, a union not only of a man and a woman but very much the union of that man and that woman with God. Indeed, if our definition of sacrament is that act of claiming, sharing, and exercising

God's own inestimable power, then I know of virtually no other divine privilege so routinely given to us all—women or men, ordained or unordained, Latter-day Saint or non-Latter-day Saint—than the miraculous and majestic power of transmitting life, the unspeakable, unfathomable, unbroken power of procreation. There are those special moments in our lives when the other, more formal ordinances of the gospel—the sacraments, if you will—allow us to feel the grace and grandeur of God's power. Many are one-time experiences (such as our own confirmation or our own marriage), and some are repeatable (such as administering to the sick or doing ordinance work for others in the temple). But I know of nothing so earth-shatteringly powerful and yet so universally and unstintingly given to us as the God-given power available in every one of us from our early teen years on to create a human body, that wonder of all wonders, a genetically and spiritually unique being never before seen in the history of the world and never to be duplicated again in all the ages of eternity: a child, our child—with eyes and ears and fingers and toes and a future of unspeakable grandeur.

48. Imagine that, if you will. Veritable teenagers—and all of us for many decades thereafter—carrying daily, hourly, minute-to-minute, virtually every waking and sleeping moment of our lives, the power and the chemistry and the eternally transmitted seeds of life to grant someone else her second estate, someone else his next level of development in the divine plan of salvation. I submit to you that no power, priesthood or otherwise, is given by God so universally to so many with virtually no control over its use except self-control. And I submit that we will never be more like God at any other time in this life than when we are expressing that particular power. Of all the titles He has chosen for Himself, Father is the one He declares, and creation is His watchword—especially human creation, creation in His image. His glory isn't a mountain, as stunning as mountains are. It isn't in sea or sky or snow or sunrise, as beautiful as they all are. It isn't in art or technology, be that a concerto or computer. No, His glory—and His grief—is in His children. We—you and I—are His prized possessions, and we are the earthly evidence, however inadequate, of what He truly is. Human life is the greatest of God's powers, the most mysterious and magnificent chemistry of it all, and you and I have been given it, but under the most serious and sacred of restrictions. You and I—who can make neither mountain nor moonlight, not one rain-drop or a single rose—have this greater gift in an absolutely unlimited way. And the only control placed on us is self-control—self-control born of respect for the divine sacramental power it is. Surely God's trust in us to respect this future-forming gift is an awesomely staggering one. We who may not be able to repair a bicycle or assemble an average jigsaw puzzle can yet, in all of our weaknesses and imperfections, carry this procreative power which makes us so very much like God in at least that one grand and majestic way.

## A Serious Matter

“Sex is a river of fire that must be banked and cooled by a hundred restraints if it is not to consume [us] in chaos.” – Will and Ariel Durant

49. Souls. Symbols. Sacraments. Do these words suggest why human intimacy is such a serious matter? Why it is so right and rewarding, so stunningly beautiful when it is within marriage and approved of God (not just “good” but “very good”),<sup>20</sup> and so blasphemously wrong—like unto murder—when it is outside such a covenant? It is my understanding that we park and pet and sleep over and sleep with at the peril of our very lives. Our penalty may not come on the precise day of our transgression, but it comes surely and certainly enough, and were it not for a merciful God and the treasured privilege of personal repentance, far too many would even now be feeling that hellish pain which, like the passion we have been discussing, is also always described in the metaphor of fire. Someday, somewhere, sometime the morally unclean will, until they repent, pray like the rich man, wishing Lazarus to “dip . . . his finger in the water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”<sup>21</sup>

50. In closing, consider this from two students of civilization’s long, instructive story:

51. “No one man [or woman], however brilliant or well-informed, can come in one lifetime to such fullness of understanding as to safely judge and dismiss the customs or institutions of his society, for these are the wisdom of generations after centuries of experiment in the laboratory of history. A youth boiling with hormones will wonder why he should not give full freedom to his sexual desires; and if he is unchecked by custom, morals, or laws, he may ruin his life [or hers] before he matures sufficiently to understand that sex is a river of fire that must be banked and cooled by a hundred restraints if it is not to consume in chaos both the individual and the group.”<sup>22</sup>

52. Or, in the more ecclesiastical words of Elder James E. Talmage:

53. “It has been declared in the solemn word of revelation, that the spirit and the body constitute the soul of man; and, therefore, we should look upon this body as something that shall endure in the resurrected state, beyond the grave, something to be kept pure and holy. Be not afraid of soiling its hands; be not afraid of scars that may come to it if won in earnest effort, or [won] in honest fight, but beware of scars that disfigure, that have come to you in places where you ought not have gone, that have befallen you in unworthy undertakings [pursued where you ought not have been]; beware of the wounds of battles in which you have been fighting on the wrong side.”<sup>23</sup>

54. If some are feeling the “scars . . . that have come to you in places where you ought not have gone,” to them is

extended the special peace and promise available through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. His love and the restored gospel principles and ordinances that make His love available to us with all their cleansing and healing power are freely given. The power of these principles and ordinances, including complete and redeeming repentance, are fully realized only in this, the true and living Church of the true and living God. We should all “come unto Christ”<sup>24</sup> and be morally clean in order to claim all the blessings of love—His love for us, our love for Him, and a couple’s truest love for each other.

### Notes

1. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 40 of *Great Books of the Western World*, 1952, 92.
  2. In *New Hampshire* (New York: Henry Holt, 1923), 80.
  3. Proverbs 6:27–28, 32–33.
  4. Alma 39:5; emphasis added.
  5. Proverbs 30:20.
  6. Proverbs 6:32.
  7. D&C 88:15; emphasis added.
  8. D&C 93:34.
  9. See Matthew 8:28–32.
  10. Conference Report, October 1913, 117.
  11. “The Very Key,” filmstrip based on a talk by Elder Boyd K. Packer (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987).
  12. Hebrews 6:6.
  13. 1 Corinthians 6:13–20; emphasis added.
  14. See D&C 132:19, 24.
  15. See D&C 128:18.
  16. Genesis 2:24.
  17. *Human Intimacy: Illusion & Reality* (Salt Lake City: Parliament Publishers, 1981), 5–6.
  18. Fairlie, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 182.
  19. Jacob 2:31–34; emphasis added.
  20. Genesis 1:31.
  21. Luke 16:24.
  22. Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 35–36.
  23. Conference Report, October 1913, 117.
  24. Moroni 10:30, 32.
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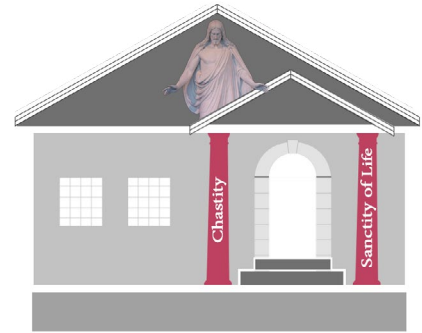
Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments  
(QR Code)





# “Things As They Really Are” (Excerpts)

Elder David A. Bednar  
CES Flreside, May 3 2009



1. As I have looked forward to and prepared for this opportunity to learn with you, I have come to better understand the strong feelings of Jacob, the brother of Nephi. He said, “I this day am weighed down with much ... desire and anxiety for the welfare of your souls” (Jacob 2:3). The message I want to share with you today has over time distilled upon my soul “as the dews from heaven” (D&C 121:45). I invite your earnest attention to a serious subject that has both immediate and eternal implications. I pray for the Holy Ghost to be with and teach each of us during our time together.
2. I long have been impressed with the simple and clear definition of truth set forth in the Book of Mormon: “The Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be; wherefore, these things are manifested unto us plainly, for the salvation of our souls” (Jacob 4:13; see also D&C 93:24).
3. Tonight we will focus upon the first major element of truth identified in this verse: “things as they really are.” We first will review several key elements of our Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness as the doctrinal foundation for knowing and understanding things as they really are. We then will consider methods of attack used by the adversary to distract us from or inhibit our capacity to discern things as they really are. And finally, we will discuss the responsibilities that rest upon you as the rising generation. You will need to be obedient, to honor sacred covenants, and to discern things consistently as they really are in today’s world that grows ever more confused and wicked.

## **Our Divine Destiny**

4. In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles declare that as spirit sons and daughters of God we “accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize [our] divine destiny as heirs of eternal life” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Ensign, Nov. 1995, 102; or Liahona, Oct. 2004, 49). Please note the primary importance of obtaining a

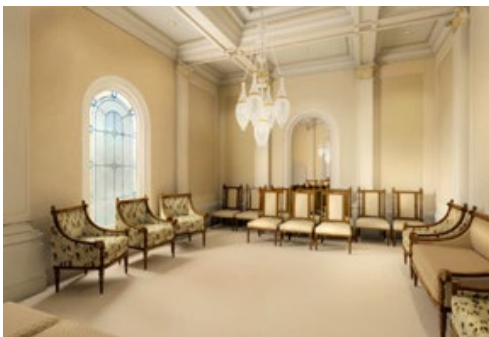
physical body in the process of progressing toward our divine destiny.

5. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught with clarity the importance of our physical bodies:
6. “We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man, and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine, showing that he would prefer a swine’s body to having none. All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. The devil has no power over us only as we permit him; the moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power.”<sup>1</sup>
7. Our physical bodies make possible a breadth, a depth, and an intensity of experience that simply could not be obtained in our premortal estate. President Boyd K. Packer has taught, “Our spirit and our body are combined in such a way that our body becomes an instrument of our mind and the foundation of our character.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, our relationships with other people, our capacity to recognize and act in accordance with truth, and our ability to obey the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ are amplified through our physical bodies.
8. In the classroom of mortality, we experience tenderness, love, kindness, happiness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, and even the challenges of physical limitations in ways that prepare us for eternity. Simply stated, there are lessons we must learn and experiences we must have, as the scriptures describe, “according to the flesh” (see 1 Nephi 19:6; Alma 7:12–13).
9. Apostles and prophets consistently have taught the mortal and eternal importance of our bodies. Paul declared:
10. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”
11. “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

12. And in this dispensation the Lord revealed that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15). A truth that really is and always will be is that the body and the spirit constitute our reality and identity. When body and spirit are inseparably connected, we can receive a fulness of joy; when they are separated, we cannot receive a fulness of joy (see D&C 93:33–34).
13. The Father’s plan is designed to provide direction for His children, to help them become happy, and to bring them safely home to Him with resurrected, exalted bodies. Lucifer labors to make the sons and daughters of God confused and unhappy and to hinder their eternal progression. The overarching intent of the father of lies is that all of us would become “miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27), and he works to distort the elements of the Father’s plan he hates the most.
14. Satan does not have a body, and his eternal progress has been halted. Just as water flowing in a riverbed is stopped by a dam, so the adversary’s eternal progress is thwarted because he does not have a physical body. Because of his rebellion, Lucifer has denied himself all of the mortal blessings and experiences made possible through a tabernacle of flesh and bones. He cannot learn the lessons that only an embodied spirit can learn. He cannot marry or enjoy the blessings of procreation and family life. He cannot abide the reality of a literal and universal resurrection of all mankind. One of the potent scriptural meanings of the word damned is illustrated in his inability to continue developing and becoming like our Heavenly Father.
15. Because a physical body is so central to the Father’s plan of happiness and our spiritual development, we should not be surprised that Lucifer seeks to frustrate our progression by tempting us to use our bodies improperly. One of the ultimate ironies of eternity is that the adversary, who is miserable precisely because he has no physical body, invites and entices us to share in his misery through the improper use of our bodies. The very tool he does not have and cannot use is thus the primary target of his attempts to lure us to physical and spiritual destruction.
16. The adversary attempts to influence us both to misuse our physical bodies and to minimize the importance of our bodies. These two methods of attack are important for us to recognize and to repel.
17. When any of Heavenly Father’s children misuse their physical tabernacles by violating the law of chastity, by using drugs and addictive substances, by disfiguring or defacing themselves, or by worshipping the false idol of body image, whether their own or that of others, Satan is delighted. To those of us who know and understand the plan of salvation, any defiling of the body is rebellion (see Mosiah 2:36–37; D&C 64:34–35) and a denial of our true identity as sons and daughters of God.
18. Now brothers and sisters, I cannot tell you all the ways whereby you may misuse your bodies, “for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them” (Mosiah 4:29). You know what is right and what is wrong, and you have the individual responsibility to learn for yourself “by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118) the things you should and should not do and the doctrinal reasons why you should and should not do those things. I testify that as you desire to so learn, as you “watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives” (Mosiah 4:30), you will be spiritually enlightened and protected. And according to your faithfulness and diligence, you will have the power to discern the deception and repel the attacks of the adversary as he tempts you to misuse your physical body.
19. Satan also strives to entice the sons and daughters of God to minimize the importance of their physical bodies. This particular type of attack is most subtle and diabolical. I want to provide several examples of how the adversary can pacify and lull us away into a sense of carnal security (see 2 Nephi 28:21) and encourage us to put at risk the earthly learning experiences that caused us to shout for joy (see Job 38:7) in the premortal existence.
20. For example, all of us can find enjoyment in a wide range of wholesome, entertaining, and engaging activities. But we diminish the importance of our bodies and jeopardize our physical well-being by going to unusual and dangerous extremes searching for an ever greater and more exhilarating adrenaline “rush.” We may rationalize that surely nothing is wrong with such seemingly innocent exploits and adventures. However, putting at risk the very instrument God has given us to receive the learning experiences of mortality—merely to pursue a thrill or some supposed fun, to bolster ego, or to gain acceptance—truly minimizes the importance of our physical bodies.
21. Sadly, some young men and women in the Church today ignore “things as they really are” and neglect eternal relationships for digital distractions, diversions, and detours that have no lasting value. My heart aches when a young couple—sealed together in the house of the Lord for time and for all eternity by the power of the holy priesthood—experiences marital difficulties because of the addicting effect of excessive video gaming or online socializing. A young man or woman may waste countless hours, postpone or forfeit vocational or academic achievement, and ultimately sacrifice cherished human relationships because of mind- and spirit-numbing video

and online games. As the Lord declared, “Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment . . . : Thou shalt not idle away thy time, neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known” (D&C 60:13).

22. You may now be asking yourself, “But Brother Bednar, you began today by talking about the importance of a physical body in our eternal progression. Are you suggesting that video gaming and various types of computer-mediated communication can play a role in minimizing the importance of our physical bodies?” That is precisely what I am declaring. Let me explain.
23. We live at a time when technology can be used to replicate reality, to augment reality, and to create virtual reality. For example, a medical doctor can use software simulation to gain valuable experience performing a complicated surgical operation without ever putting a human patient at risk. A pilot in a flight simulator repeatedly can practice emergency landing procedures that could save many lives. And architects and engineers can use innovative technologies to model sophisticated design and construction methods that decrease the loss of human life and damage to buildings caused by earthquakes and other natural disasters.
24. In each of these examples, a high degree of fidelity in the simulation or model contributes to the effectiveness of the experience. The term fidelity denotes the similarity between reality and a representation of reality. Such a simulation can be constructive if the fidelity is high and the purposes are good—for example, providing experience that saves lives or improves the quality of life.
25. The image shown below is a computer-generated rendering of a sealing room in the Newport Beach California Temple.



26. These and similar images are used as part of the planning and design process for each new temple that is constructed. The rendering portrays fabrics, furnishings, fixtures, lighting, scale, and proportion to show how each component will look and feel when finished. In essence, the entire temple and all of its elements are designed in detail before construction ever begins.

27. This picture is an actual photograph of the sealing room in the Newport Beach California Temple.



28. Please notice the fidelity between the representation of reality in the rendering (first image) and the reality of the completed room in this photograph.
29. This next image is a computer-generated rendering of a lobby area in the Copenhagen Denmark Temple.



30. The following photo shows the actual lobby in the Copenhagen Denmark Temple.



31. In each of these examples, high fidelity is employed to accomplish a most important purpose—the design and

construction of a sacred and beautiful temple. However, a simulation or model can lead to spiritual impairment and danger if the fidelity is high and the purposes are bad—such as experimenting with actions contrary to God’s commandments or enticing us to think or do things we would not otherwise think or do “because it is only a game.”

32. Today I raise an apostolic voice of warning about the potentially stifling, suffocating, suppressing, and constraining impact of some kinds of cyberspace interactions and experiences upon our souls. The concerns I raise are not new; they apply equally to other types of media, such as television, movies, and music. But in a cyber world, these challenges are more pervasive and intense. I plead with you to beware of the sense-dulling and spiritually destructive influence of cyberspace technologies that are used to produce high fidelity and that promote degrading and evil purposes.
33. If the adversary cannot entice us to misuse our physical bodies, then one of his most potent tactics is to beguile you and me as embodied spirits to disconnect gradually and physically from things as they really are. In essence, he encourages us to think and act as if we were in our premortal, unembodied state. And, if we let him, he can cunningly employ some aspects of modern technology to accomplish his purposes. Please be careful of becoming so immersed and engrossed in pixels, texting, ear buds, twittering, online social networking, and potentially addictive uses of media and the Internet that you fail to recognize the importance of your physical body and miss the richness of person-to-person communication. Beware of digital displays and data in many forms of computer-mediated interaction that can displace the full range of physical capacity and experience....
34. In contrast, we need to heed the admonition of Paul: “That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour” (1 Thessalonians 4:4).
35. Consider again the example I mentioned earlier of a young couple recently married in the house of the Lord. An immature or misguided spouse may devote an inordinate amount of time to playing video games, chatting online, or in other ways allowing the digital to dominate things as they really are. Initially the investment of time may seem relatively harmless, rationalized as a few minutes of needed relief from the demands of a hectic daily schedule. But important opportunities are missed for developing and improving interpersonal skills, for laughing and crying together, and for creating a rich and enduring bond of emotional intimacy. Progressively, seemingly innocent entertainment can become a form of pernicious enslavement.
36. To feel the warmth of a tender hug from an eternal companion or to see the sincerity in the eyes of another person as testimony is shared—all of these things experienced as they really are through the instrument of our physical body—could be sacrificed for a high fidelity fantasy that has no lasting value. If you and I are not vigilant, we can become “past feeling” (1 Nephi 17:45), as did Laman and Lemuel long ago.
37. Let me provide another example of disconnecting gradually and physically from things as they really are. Today a person can enter into a virtual world, such as Second Life, and assume a new identity. An individual can create an avatar, or a cyberspace persona, that conforms to his or her own appearance and behavior. Or a person can concoct a counterfeit identity that does not correlate in any way to things as they really are. However closely the assumed new identity approximates the individual, such behavior is the essence of things as they really are not. Earlier I defined the fidelity of a simulation or model.
38. I now emphasize the importance of personal fidelity...
39. Brothers and sisters, please understand. I am not suggesting all technology is inherently bad; it is not. Nor am I saying we should not use its many capabilities in appropriate ways to learn, to communicate, to lift and brighten lives, and to build and strengthen the Church; of course we should. But I am raising a warning voice that we should not squander and damage authentic relationships by obsessing over contrived ones. “Nearly 40% of men and 53% of women who play online games said their virtual friends were equal to or better than their real-life friends, according to a survey of 30,000 gamers conducted by ... a recent Ph.D. graduate from Stanford University. More than a quarter of gamers [who responded indicated that] the emotional highlight of the past week occurred in a computer world.”<sup>5</sup>
40. How important, how enduring, and how timely is the Lord’s definition of truth— “things as they really are.” The prophet Alma asked, “O then, is not this real?” (Alma 32:35). He was speaking of light and good so discernible they can be tasted. Indeed, “they who dwell in [the Father’s] presence ... see as they are seen, and know as they are known, having received of his fulness and of his grace” (D&C 76:94).
41. My beloved brothers and sisters, beware! To the extent personal fidelity decreases in computer-mediated communications and the purposes of such communications are distorted, perverted, and wicked, the potential for spiritual disaster is dangerously high. I implore you to turn away immediately and permanently

from such places and activities (see 2 Timothy 3:5).

42. Now I would like to address an additional characteristic of the adversary's attacks. Satan often offers an alluring illusion of anonymity. Lucifer always has sought to accomplish his work in secret (see Moses 5:30). Remember, however, that apostasy is not anonymous simply because it occurs in a blog or through a fabricated identity in a chat room or virtual world. Immoral thoughts, words, and deeds always are immoral, even in cyberspace. Deceitful acts supposedly veiled in secrecy, such as illegally downloading music from the Internet or copying CDs or DVDs for distribution to friends and families, are nonetheless deceitful. We are all accountable to God, and ultimately we will be judged of Him according to our deeds and the desires of our hearts (see Alma 41:3). "For as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).
43. The Lord knows who we really are, what we really think, what we really do, and who we really are becoming. He has warned us that "the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed" (D&C 1:3).
44. I have raised a voice of warning about only a few of the spiritual hazards in our technologically oriented and rapidly changing world. Let me say again: neither technology nor rapid change in or of itself is good or evil; the real challenge is to understand both within the context of the eternal plan of happiness. Lucifer will encourage you to misuse and to minimize the importance of your physical body. He will attempt to substitute the monotony of virtual repetition for the infinite variety of God's creations and convince us we are merely mortal things to be acted upon instead of eternal souls blessed with moral agency to act for ourselves. Deviously, he entices embodied spirits to forfeit the blessings and learning experiences "according to the flesh" that are made possible through the Father's plan of happiness and the Atonement of His Only Begotten Son.
45. For your happiness and protection, I invite you to study more diligently the doctrine of the plan of salvation—and to prayerfully ponder the truths we have reviewed. I offer two questions for consideration in your personal pondering and prayerful studying:
46. 1. Does the use of various technologies and media invite or impede the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost in your life?
47. 2. Does the time you spend using various technologies and media enlarge or restrict your capacity to live, to love, and to serve in meaningful ways?
48. You will receive answers, inspiration, and instruction

from the Holy Ghost suited to your individual circumstances and needs. I repeat and affirm the teaching of the Prophet Joseph: "All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. The devil has no power over us only as we permit him."<sup>6</sup>

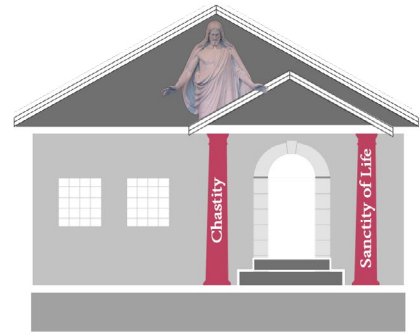
49. These eternal truths about the importance of our physical bodies will fortify you against the deception and the attacks of the adversary. One of my deepest desires for you is an ever-increasing testimony of and appreciation for the Resurrection—even your own resurrection with a celestial, exalted body "because of your faith in [the Lord Jesus Christ] according to the promise" (Moroni 7:41)....
50. As we heed that inspired counsel, we can and will be blessed to recognize and repel the attacks of the adversary—today and in the days that lie ahead. We can and will fulfill our foreordained responsibilities and contribute to the work of the Lord in all the world.
51. I testify that God lives and is our Heavenly Father. He is the Author of the plan of salvation. Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer, whose body was bruised, broken, and torn for us as He offered the atoning sacrifice. He is resurrected; He lives; and He stands at the head of His Church in these latter days. To be "encircled about eternally in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15) will be a real and not a virtual experience.
52. I testify we can and will be blessed with the courage and determination to face the world and all the powers of the evil one.
53. Righteousness will prevail. No unhallowed hand can stop this work from progressing. I bear witness and testify of these things as they really are and as they really will be in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. Quoted by William Clayton, reporting an undated discourse given by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois; in L. John Nuttall, "Extracts from William Clayton's Private Book," 7–8, Journals of L. John Nuttall, 1857–1904, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; copy in Church History Library; spelling and capitalization standardized; see also Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 211, 214.
  2. Boyd K. Packer, The Instrument of Your Mind and the Foundation of Your Character (Church Educational System file side for young adults, Feb. 2, 2003), 2.
  3. Meghan Daum, "Virtual Love," The New Yorker, Aug. 25 and Sept. 1, 1997, 82; or Meghan Daum, My Misspent Youth (2001), 19.
  4. Alexandra Alter, "Is This Man Cheating on His Wife?" Wall Street Journal, Aug. 10, 2007, W8, W1.
  5. Alexandra Alter, Wall Street Journal, Aug. 10, 2007, W8.
  6. Quoted by William Clayton; in L. John Nuttall, "Extracts from William Clayton's Private Book," 8.
  7. George Q. Cannon, in Journal of Discourses, 11:230
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Things As They Really Are  
(QR Code)





# Statements on Birth Control

Handbook 2 & True to the Faith, 26

## **Handbook 2: Administering the Church, Section 21.4.4 Birth Control**

It is the privilege of married couples who are able to bear children to provide mortal bodies for the spirit children of God, whom they are then responsible to nurture and rear. The decision as to how many children to have and when to have them is extremely intimate and private and should be left between the couple and the Lord. Church members should not judge one another in this matter.

Married couples should also understand that sexual relations within marriage are divinely approved not only for the purpose of procreation, but also as a way of expressing love and strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife.

### **“Birth Control,” True to the Faith, (2004), 26**

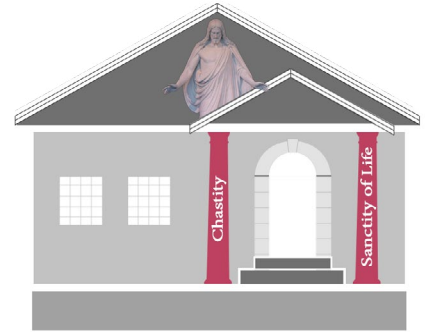
When married couples are physically able, they have the privilege of providing mortal bodies for Heavenly Father’s spirit children. They play a part in the great plan of happiness, which permits God’s children to receive physical bodies and experience mortality.

If you are married, you and your spouse should discuss your sacred responsibility to bring children into the world and nurture them in righteousness. As you do so, consider the sanctity and meaning of life. Ponder the joy that comes when children are in the home. Consider the eternal blessings that come from having a good posterity. With a testimony of these principles, you and your spouse will be prepared to prayerfully decide how many children to have and when to have them. Such decisions are between the two of you and the Lord.

As you discuss this sacred matter, remember that sexual relations within marriage are divinely approved. While one purpose of these relations is to provide physical bodies for God’s children, another purpose is to express love for one another—to bind husband and wife together in loyalty, fidelity, consideration, and common purpose.

# Unit 4 Additional Readings

Links and QR Codes



[Elder Boyd K. Packer, “The Fountain of Life”](#)



The Fountain of Life

[Sister Linda S. Reeves, “Protection from Pornography”](#)



Protection From Pornography

[Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “He Heals the Heavy Laden”](#)



He Heals the Heavy Laden