

YOUTH SPEAK OUT ON SEXUAL PURITY

In the light of what Heavenly Father has revealed to us about marriage and intimacy, young people from England talk about the challenges and rewards of keeping their commitment to stay sexually pure.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY COLIN LIGERTWOOD

TRUTHS FROM HEAVENLY FATHER ABOUT MARRIAGE AND INTIMACY



For God's Plan to Thrive

"A family built on the marriage of a man and woman supplies the best setting for God's plan to thrive. . . .

"... It is in the matrimonial union of male and female as one that we attain

perhaps the most complete meaning of our having been made in the image of God—male and female. . . .

"... [Lucifer] attacks everything that is sacred about human sexuality, tearing it from the context of marriage with a seemingly infinite array of immoral thoughts and acts."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Why Marriage, Why Family," *Ensign*, May 2015, 52.

Beautiful and Sacred

"Physical intimacy between husband and wife is beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife. God has commanded that sexual intimacy be reserved for marriage."

For the Strength of Youth (2011), 35.

We should avoid popular media that promote immorality and give a distorted and degrading view of sexuality.

ALMA R., 17, a priest: There's a lot of stuff about women having to be beautiful and men being muscled

to be accepted in society, which is, of course, wrong. The whole media is hyper-sexualized. It's everywhere—in magazines, on the Internet, tons of stuff. You just need to not look at it, because it'll bring you down.

SHAMYNE N., 18, a Laurel: Most sexual depictions are very dehumanizing, especially for women. Like music videos—the song could have really good lyrics, but it often has a man trying to have dominion over a woman or making the woman look like an object, trying to form us into something they think we should be. Usually they show people who are curvy and try to make us feel like we are not appealing.

JOSH P., 17, a priest: Things have changed in music and films from what they used to be. If you wanted to go looking for sexual material, it's easier to find, obviously. You're not necessarily frowned upon in society for going to find it, either. But we know it's harmful and we should avoid it.

We can be good examples and teach our peers that physical intimacy between a husband and wife is beautiful and sacred.

ALMA: Someone in school asked if in theory I would have sex, and I explained that I wouldn't unless we were married. She seemed to take it like it made sense to her.

JOSH: When you first meet people, it's like gossip—"Oh, this guy doesn't have sex before marriage." And as people mature through the years it's not as gossipy as that first time. They learn to get over it and just move on, really.

■ **ANA M., 17, a Laurel:** I've had times at school where a friend will say, "Oh, this happened over the weekend," and I'm like, "Oh, I would never do that." And I'll explain. Or if someone has found out that I'm a Mormon, they'll come and ask me questions about what I believe in, what my attitude is toward sexual purity. Most of them are like, "That's pretty cool, but I'd never be able to do it." They respect me for it. If I'm talking to someone who is "sexually active," they're like, "Whoa, how can you wait that long?" But then you have the other side of it where they're like, "Oh, cool. There aren't many people who do that anymore." Sometimes it's both—like, "That's a bit weird, but that's kind of cool."

■ **SHAMYNE:** I have to explain to my friends that as a member of the Church, I have standards, so we know not to go into a guy's bedroom or be left alone with him, for example. And some find such high morals quite difficult to understand. But there are some people who respect me for my standards, and I find that they actually think about marriage again, about family and what will happen in the future. Also, in school, my skirt and my tops are covering everything, so the way guys approach me and the way they approach other girls because of the way we're dressed is completely different. Most of the guys I meet don't disrespect me. And that is an even bigger push for me to stay modest.

While peers may have worldly attitudes about sex, we can stand strong in upholding the Lord's standard.

■ **ANA:** For most people in society, sex before marriage isn't a big deal. At my school, there is no rule whatsoever in their minds. Some people like the idea of abstinence before marriage, but they're not following through with it unless there's some religious background to it.

■ **JOSH:** Most of my friends are 17 or 18, so as they get older they tend to have more steady kinds of

relationships, including sexual relationships. For us, it's the same as with any situation that contradicts the social norms—it's having the decision made up in your mind before the situation arises. Having that kind of mind-set makes it so that when the situation arises, you can just bat it off as simple nonsense.

■ **SHAMYNE:** It's quite common to hear someone talking about having sex. There's not really much talk of people saying no or abstaining. It's normal in society for someone to walk out of the house wearing something revealing; it's normal to people for someone to be standing on a corner with some serious public displays of affection. It makes me feel a bit cringy. Nowadays a lot of people think you don't have to get married to move in with someone, which isn't right.

When others ridicule us for our standards, we can take a mature attitude and stand strong.

■ **SHAMYNE:** At school my friends talk about how they're looking forward to their first sexual experience, and I have to explain that my first sexual experience is not going to be until I'm married. They don't take it as well as they should; they're quite judgmental about it. And there are some people who think I'm all high-and-mighty. So you just have to say, "You know, that's your opinion. I'm not going to compromise my standards just so I can fit in with you or just so you can like me."

■ **JOSH:** If young people are getting ridiculed, I'd say to them that the people ridiculing them will mostly grow out of it. As people grow older, they'll mature and get over it. They'll know who you are, and they'll respect you for it.

■ **ANA:** I'm quite a confident person, and my standards are not going to change for someone else, so when it comes to ridiculing, I just explain to them, "Look, this is what I believe to be true, and you believe other things



to be true. I'm not forcing you to adopt my standards. That's my thing; you don't have to do it."

Many aspects of the gospel and the Church strengthen us in our commitment to be sexually pure.

ALMA: My patriarchal blessing actually helps quite a lot, because it helps me to know that I will find someone who has the same standards and who is good for me, whom I can trust. General conference usually helps a lot, because of all the positive messages. Reading the *New Era* helps as well. It's got a lot of relatable stories, which you can read and empathize with people in them. My parents have had a huge impact on me and my standards. A lot

of it comes from making a decision and sticking to it. I've made it a personal goal to save myself till marriage.

JOSH: There are also videos, like the one with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland called "Stay within the Lines" (see lds.org/go/linesNE416). That one's struck a chord with me.

ANA: At different times things hit you differently. There are some lessons at church where you're really just in tune with it and it hits you. Sometimes it's something a leader says. And there are other times where a general conference talk is really strengthening and motivating. Scriptures as well. You might read the same scripture over and over again, but there might be a time where you read it and it means something completely different or it hits you in a different way.

It's worth it to stay pure.

JOSH: If young people feel pressured into doing anything, it's definitely not worth going down that line just to fit in, to cave in to the peer pressure.

I know that even though people may be pressuring you, it's definitely worth it to stay strong, to resist the peer pressure, so you can be pure and worthy to serve a mission and get married in the temple.

ANA: It will be worth it. The main thing is to be worthy to go to the temple, because as a member of the Church, that's one of the big things that you always want to be is temple worthy. And to be worthy just makes you feel good about yourself.

SHAMYNE: I want to go on a mission soon, and I've been reading my scriptures a lot and going out teaching with the sister missionaries to prepare myself. I am still young; I have a lot to look forward to. I want to be married in the temple, and I want to be happy. NE



Speak Out

Share why you choose to be pure and read others' stories at lds.org/go/pureNE416. You can also watch a video to see what other youth say about staying sexually pure at lds.org/go/chooseNE416.