

# YES, YOU CAN: THE TRUE POWER OF SEXUAL PURITY

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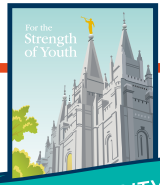
**T**he world is full of cans and can'ts. Think about it: Every day, you are bombarded with what you can do and what you can't do. When it comes to sexual purity, you might think that the world is full of cans and the gospel is full of can'ts. But it's just the opposite.

Today, many in the world may tell you that you *can't* control your sexual urges, that you're powerless

against them, that you *can't* help but give in to those sexual urges and desires. Much of what you'll find on the internet, on television, in movies, and in music celebrates giving up and giving in to temptation and to carnal desires.

How often do you hear things like "I can't resist" or "I lost control" or "I can't stop" in song lyrics?

How often do you see characters on TV give in to temptation with someone?



## SEXUAL PURITY

These kinds of messages might lead you to believe that sex is all about satisfying a carnal appetite and giving in to an animalistic drive for pleasure that you just *can't* control. Nothing could be further from the truth.

### It's about Selfless Love, Not Selfish Lust

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, human intimacy is “the ultimate symbol of total union, a totality and a union ordained and defined by God.” It's a literal union meant to be enjoyed only when a man and woman have also merged their “hearts, hopes, lives, love, family, future, everything” (Oct. 1998 general conference).

Simply put, physical intimacy is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife (see *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 35). It's a very unifying and selfless act. Sexual activity outside of marriage, whether it's engaged in with another person or to arouse sexual feelings in yourself, turns physical intimacy into something selfish and carnal.

By keeping yourself sexually pure, you are respecting the sacred unity of marriage and honoring Heavenly Father's plan of happiness for His children. No matter what choices you have made or what temptations you face, you *can* choose to be sexually pure. You *can* be filled with power to resist temptation, and you *can* keep the law of chastity and wait until you are willing to give your whole self in marriage.

### The Gospel Teaches: Yes, You Can Be Virtuous!

You are powerful. You are not controlled by your sexual urges. You are a child of God. You have the power to choose and the strength to overcome temptation. You *can* resist temptation, you *can* “listen to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,” and you *can* “put off the natural man” (see Mosiah 3:19). You *can* put aside sexual urges and save them for when you are married.

That's one important message of the gospel: You *can*. Paul writes exactly that in his epistle to the Philippians: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

The same is true for you. You have a Savior and He will strengthen you, and with His help, you *can* be virtuous.

### Choose Strength by Choosing Virtue

When we talk about sexual purity, we often talk about virtue, or “a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards” (*Preach My Gospel* [2004], 118). Virtue comes from the Latin root word *virtus* which means strength, power, or courage.

You can be filled with power to resist temptation, and you can keep the law of chastity and wait until you are willing to give your whole self in marriage.

Think about that when you read, “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). Garnishing your thoughts with virtue means garnishing them with power. We might not be able to control every thought that comes into our minds, but we can control which ones we keep. Remember, “virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light” (D&C 88:40). Every time you choose a virtuous thought over an impure one, it becomes easier the next time, and the next. You become more and more powerful.

President David O. McKay (1873–1970) taught, “Every action is preceded by a thought. If we want

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to control our actions, we must control our thinking” (quoted in Thomas S. Monson, “Preparation Brings Blessings,” Apr. 2010 general conference). In other words, when you have virtuous thoughts, you will have virtuous actions and a virtuous life. It’s a simple matter of cause and effect. By choosing a virtuous life, we are actually choosing strength. So what kind of strength do you have when you are pure and virtuous? It’s not the bodybuilder kind of strength. It’s better. It’s even better than the superhero kind. Living a sexually pure and virtuous life enables God to bless you with His power:

The power to stand confidently before Him (see D&C 121:45).

The power to withstand temptation (see Mosiah 3:19).

The power to avoid despair (see Moroni 10:22).

The power that comes with having the Holy Ghost for a constant companion (see D&C 121:46).

### True Freedom

Remember, Satan wants you to believe that you will find freedom by giving in to temptation and transgressing the laws of God. He wants you to believe that you

are powerless against temptation, that the carnal desires are too strong, and there’s no point in even trying to resist. Don’t fall for it.

In reality, true freedom is found in following Heavenly Father’s commandments. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). Heavenly Father gives us commandments to guide us to this true freedom and onward to true happiness.

And even if you’ve given in to temptation, you have a path back to freedom and happiness through repentance. Through the Savior and His Atonement, you can be made pure and holy again. Talk to your parents. Make an appointment with your bishop or branch president. If you do so, you can be made clean again. Satan will tell you that you can’t. But you can!

You are powerful, and that power increases the more you strive to live a pure and virtuous life. When the world tells you that you *can’t*, choose virtue and know that you *can*. **NE**

#### More Info

Check out the video “Chastity: What Are the Limits?” at [youth.lds.org](http://youth.lds.org).