



The Law of Chastity

Chapter 39

A Note to Parents

This chapter includes some parts that are beyond the maturity of young children. It is best to wait until children are old enough to understand sexual relations and procreation before teaching them these parts of the chapter. Our Church leaders have told us that parents are responsible to teach their children about procreation (the process of conceiving and bearing children). Parents must also teach them the law of chastity, which is explained in this chapter.

Parents can begin teaching children to have proper attitudes toward their bodies when children are very young. Talking to children frankly but reverently and using the correct names for the parts and functions of their bodies will help them grow up without unnecessary embarrassment about their bodies.

Children are naturally curious. They want to know how their bodies work. They want to know where babies come from. If parents answer all such questions immediately and clearly so children can understand, children will continue to take their questions to their parents. However, if parents answer questions so that children feel embarrassed, rejected, or dissatisfied, they will probably go to someone else with their questions and perhaps get incorrect ideas and improper attitudes.

It is not wise or necessary, however, to tell children everything at once. Parents need only give them the information they have asked for and can understand. While answering these questions, parents can teach children the importance of respecting their bodies and the bodies of others. Parents should teach children to dress modestly. They should correct the false ideas and vulgar language that children learn from others.

By the time children reach maturity, parents should have frankly discussed procreation with them. Children should understand that these powers are good and were given to us by the Lord. He expects us to use them within the bounds He has given us.

Little children come to earth pure and innocent from Heavenly Father. As parents pray for guidance, the Lord will inspire them to teach children at the right time and in the right way.

The Power of Procreation

- Why should parents teach their children about procreation and chastity? How can they appropriately do this?

God commanded each living thing to reproduce after its own kind (see Genesis 1:22). Reproduction was part of His plan so that all forms of life could continue to exist upon the earth.

Then He placed Adam and Eve on the earth. They were different from His other creations because they were His spirit children. In the Garden of Eden, He brought Adam and Eve together in marriage and commanded them to multiply and replenish the earth (see Genesis 1:28). However, their lives were to be governed by moral laws rather than by instinct.

God wanted His spirit children to be born into families so they could be properly cared for and taught. We, like Adam and Eve, are to provide physical bodies for these spirit children. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have stated, “We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). God has commanded us that only in marriage between a man and a woman are we to have sexual relations. This commandment is called the law of chastity.

The Law of Chastity

- What is the law of chastity?

We are to have sexual relations only with our spouse to whom we are legally married. No one, male or female, is to have sexual

relations before marriage. After marriage, sexual relations are permitted only with our spouse.

To the Israelites the Lord said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). Those Israelites who broke this commandment were subject to severe penalties. The Lord has repeated this commandment in the latter days (see D&C 42:24).

We have been taught that the law of chastity encompasses more than sexual intercourse. The First Presidency warned young people of other sexual sins:

“Before marriage, do not do anything to arouse the powerful emotions that must be expressed only in marriage. Do not participate in passionate kissing, lie on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person’s body, with or without clothing. Do not allow anyone to do that with you. Do not arouse those emotions in your own body” (*For the Strength of Youth* [pamphlet, 2001], 27).

Like other violations of the law of chastity, homosexual behavior is a serious sin. Latter-day prophets have spoken about the dangers of homosexual behavior and about the Church’s concern for people who may have such inclinations. President Gordon B. Hinckley said:

“In the first place, we believe that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God. We believe that marriage may be eternal through exercise of the power of the everlasting priesthood in the house of the Lord.

“People inquire about our position on those who consider themselves so-called gays and lesbians. My response is that we love them as sons and daughters of God. They may have certain inclinations which are powerful and which may be difficult to control. Most people have inclinations of one kind or another at various times. If they do not act upon these inclinations, then they can go forward as do all other members of the Church. If they violate the law of chastity and the moral standards of the Church, then they are subject to the discipline of the Church, just as others are.

“We want to help these people, to strengthen them, to assist them with their problems and to help them with their difficulties. But we cannot stand idle if they indulge in immoral activity, if they try to uphold and defend and live in a so-called same-sex marriage situation. To permit such would be to make light of the very serious and sacred foundation of God-sanctioned marriage and its very purpose, the rearing of families” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 71).

Satan Wants Us to Break the Law of Chastity

- What are some ways Satan tempts people to break the law of chastity?

Satan’s plan is to deceive as many of us as he can to prevent us from returning to live with our Heavenly Father. One of the most damaging things he can do is entice us to break the law of chastity. He is cunning and powerful. He would like us to believe it is no sin to break this law. Many people have been deceived. We must guard ourselves against evil influences.

Satan attacks the standards of modesty. He wants us to believe that because the human body is beautiful, it is something to flaunt and expose. Our Heavenly Father wants us to keep our bodies covered so that we do not encourage improper thoughts in the minds of others.

Satan not only encourages us to dress immodestly, but he also encourages us to think immoral or improper thoughts. He does this with pictures, movies, stories, jokes, music, and dances that suggest immoral acts. The law of chastity requires that our thoughts as well as our actions be pure. The prophet Alma taught that when we are judged by God, “our thoughts will also condemn us; and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God” (Alma 12:14).

Jesus taught, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27–28).

President Gordon B. Hinckley warned: “You live in a world of terrible temptations. Pornography, with its sleazy filth, sweeps over the earth like a horrible, engulfing tide. It is poison. Do not watch it or read it. It will destroy you if you do. It will take from you your self-respect. It will rob you of a sense of the beauties of life. It will tear you down and pull you into a slough of evil thoughts and possibly of evil actions. Stay away from it. Shun it as you would a foul disease, for it is just as deadly. Be virtuous in thought and in deed. God has planted in you, for a purpose, a divine urge which may be easily subverted to evil and destructive ends. When you are young, do not get involved in steady dating. When you reach an age where you think of marriage, then is the time to become so involved. But you boys who are in high school don’t need this, and neither do the girls” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 71–72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 51).

Satan sometimes tempts us through our emotions. He knows when we are lonely, confused, or depressed. He chooses this time of weakness to tempt us to break the law of chastity. Our Heavenly Father can give us the strength to pass through these trials unharmed.

The scriptures tell about a righteous young man named Joseph who was greatly trusted by his master, Potiphar. Potiphar had given Joseph command over everything he had. Potiphar’s wife lusted after Joseph and tempted him to commit adultery with her. But Joseph resisted her and fled from her. (See Genesis 39:1–18.)

Paul taught, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). Alma emphasized that we will “not be tempted above that which [we] can bear” as we “humble [ourselves] before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually” (Alma 13:28).

- How are modesty and chastity related? How can parents teach their children to be modest in dress, language, and behavior?

For teachers: For help with questions about modesty and chastity, you may want to refer to the pamphlet titled *For the Strength of Youth* (item number 36550), which is available at distribution centers and at LDS.org and which may be available at your meetinghouse library.

- How can we fight the spread and influence of pornography?
- What promises has the Lord given us to help us overcome Satan's temptations?

Breaking the Law of Chastity Is Extremely Serious

The prophet Alma grieved because one of his sons had broken the law of chastity. Alma said to his son Corianton, "Know ye not, my son, that these things are 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?" (Alma 39:5). Unchastity is next to murder in seriousness.

If a man and a woman break the law of chastity and conceive a child, they may be tempted to commit another abominable sin: abortion. There is seldom any justifiable reason for abortion. Church leaders have said that some exceptional circumstances may justify an abortion, such as when pregnancy is the result of incest or rape, when the life or health of the mother is judged by competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy, or when the fetus is known by competent medical authority to have severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth. But even these circumstances do not automatically justify an abortion. Those who face such circumstances should consider abortion only after consulting with their local Church leaders and receiving a confirmation through earnest prayer.

"When a man and woman conceive a child out of wedlock, every effort should be made to encourage them to marry. When the probability of a successful marriage is unlikely due to age or other circumstances, unwed parents should be counseled to place the child for adoption through LDS Family Services to ensure that the baby will be sealed to temple-worthy parents" (First Presidency letter, June 26, 2002, and July 19, 2002).

It is extremely important to our Heavenly Father that His children obey the law of chastity. Members of the Church who break this law or influence others to do so are subject to Church discipline.

Those Who Break the Law of Chastity Can Be Forgiven

Peace can come to those who have broken the law of chastity. The Lord tells us, “If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, . . . all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him” (Ezekiel 18:21–22). Peace comes only through forgiveness.

President Kimball said: “To every forgiveness there is a condition. . . . The fasting, the prayers, the humility must be equal to or greater than the sin. There must be a broken heart and a contrite spirit. . . . There must be tears and genuine change of heart. There must be conviction of the sin, abandonment of the evil, confession of the error to properly constituted authorities of the Lord” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 353).

For many people, confession is the most difficult part of repentance. We must confess not only to the Lord but also to the person we have offended, such as a husband or wife, and to the proper priesthood authority. The priesthood leader (bishop or stake president) will judge our standing in the Church. The Lord told Alma, “Whosoever transgresseth against me . . . if he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also” (Mosiah 26:29).

But President Kimball warned: “Even though forgiveness is so abundantly promised there is no promise nor indication of forgiveness to any soul who does not totally repent. . . . We can hardly be too forceful in reminding people that they cannot sin and be forgiven and then sin again and again and expect repeated forgiveness” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 353, 360). Those who receive forgiveness and then repeat the sin are held accountable for their former sins (see D&C 82:7; Ether 2:15).

Those Who Keep the Law of Chastity Are Greatly Blessed

- What blessings do we receive as we keep the law of chastity?

When we obey the law of chastity, we can live without guilt or shame. Our lives and our children’s lives are blessed when we keep

ourselves pure and spotless before the Lord. Children can look to our example and follow in our footsteps.

Additional Scriptures

- Matthew 19:5–9; Genesis 2:24 (marriage relationship is sacred)
- Titus 2:4–12 (instructions for chastity)
- 1 Corinthians 7:2–5; Ephesians 5:28 (loyalty to spouse)
- Revelation 14:4–5 (blessings for obedience to the law of chastity)
- Proverbs 31:10 (virtue praised)
- Alma 39:9 (do not go after the lusts of your eyes)
- D&C 121:45 (let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly)
- Alma 42:16 (repentance does not come without punishment)
- Alma 42:30 (do not excuse yourself for sinning)
- D&C 58:42–43 (the repentant confess and forsake their sins)