

# How I Learned to Understand God's View of Sexuality

Growing up, I didn't know how to handle sexual feelings, which led me down the wrong paths, but learning truths about sexuality and chastity changed my life for the better.

By Emma T.

I sank into my chair in shame as the teacher introduced the lesson on chastity. "Now, I know you girls don't have trouble with the law of chastity . . .," she started off. Little did she—or anyone else—know that it was something I had struggled with as a young woman.

Lessons in church made me feel that sexual feelings were only appropriate within marriage and that sexual feelings outside of marriage were bad. I felt ashamed, weak, and alone, which led me to resent the whole topic completely.

Growing up in the Church, I used to think that talking about sex—even in appropriate ways—or acknowledging sexual thoughts and feelings was taboo or wrong unless you were married. My thoughts were skewed to think that any curiosity or question about sexuality or even chastity should be repressed because it didn't follow God's plan. And because I thought my questions were too shameful to discuss with anyone, I looked for answers from sources that did not reflect sexuality the way Heavenly Father intends.

## Stuck in Shame

I struggled with my feelings and behaviors for years. I knew they were wrong, but I didn't know who I could turn to for help. I carried the weight of sins and shame with me every day, but I still tried to do everything else right. I seemed to be stuck in an "in-between zone"—with half of me in the world and the other half in the gospel.

I wanted more than anything to put my whole self in the gospel. So I studied my scriptures, I prayed, I participated in Church activities, and I fulfilled my callings. The gospel seemed to be the only thing that brought me relief.

As I gradually learned more and came closer to the Savior, my desire to fully live the law of chastity grew stronger. After a lot of pondering and praying, I finally decided to talk with my bishop about my struggles.

## Feeling the Savior's Healing Power

As I left my bishop's office, that weight I had carried on my shoulders for so many years seemed to disappear. I cried with relief. I already felt the Savior's healing power working in my life. Meetings with my bishop helped me, through the repentance process, to understand that my feelings were normal and that I wasn't alone in struggling with chastity. I learned there are others—like me—who have suffered in silence because of shame, fear, and misunderstanding.

My bishop helped me in the repentance process itself, but a friend of mine also made a big difference in how I felt about my challenge. He was a great example to me.



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One day he shared his past struggles with pornography. I was stunned—I never would have guessed we had similar struggles. I wrote him a letter about my experience in repenting for the same challenges and how helpful it was to know that I was not alone. At church on Sunday, he hugged me and told me he was proud of me for working with the bishop and that I would never be alone. He helped me feel the Savior's love more strongly.

Since then, I have been able to empathize with and encourage friends who've had similar struggles to help them understand the law of chastity more fully.

Ultimately, knowing that I wasn't alone, feeling love and understanding from my bishop and the Savior, and learning about the eternal importance of chastity helped me heal.

I know now that I had been so wrong. Both chastity *and* appropriate sexuality are part of God's plan of happiness. Sexual feelings are a normal part of mortality and can be wonderful when we learn to act on them appropriately.

Looking back, I feel sad that I had never felt safe enough to discuss the law of chastity with anybody before I talked to my bishop. I should have known that there's no shame in having questions about chastity or sexuality and that it's important to talk about them respectfully with the right people.

### **Eternal Truths Can Guide You**

Because of my experiences, I can assure anyone who may be struggling with the law of chastity that your heart can be changed. There is hope,

healing, and eternal truths that can guide you. I've learned that the way the world views sexuality compared to how Heavenly Father views it is drastically different.

I'm thankful for the lessons I've learned. I now have a stronger testimony of the Lord's law of chastity, the importance of sexuality in our lives, and most importantly, the Savior's love and healing power. ■

*Editors' note: This article is part of a series in the August 2020 Ensign about having a positive view of sexuality, sexual intimacy, and the law of chastity. The term sexuality means different things to different people, but in this context, we are talking specifically about our sexual feelings and identity.*