



Living the Law of Chastity  
in a Dating World Full of

# Gray Area



Living the law of chastity helps us recognize our shared divine potential and be more confident in our relationships.

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*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.*

When we young adults begin dating seriously, it might seem like there are some gray areas regarding the law of chastity—areas not clearly spelled out in the scriptures or in the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet. For example, what exactly constitutes “passionate kissing”?<sup>1</sup> Or, why should I set a curfew with the person I’m dating once I’m no longer a youth? There could be other quandaries about the law of chastity. And it can be confusing when the world encourages us to let our sexual feelings take priority over our commitment to treat those we date like a child of God.

When we find ourselves in these gray areas, we might be tempted to say, “The rules don’t say anything about this, so it’s fine.” Or, we could remember that Heavenly Father expects us to live His commandments by keeping them in our hearts and minds daily, including the law of chastity. Being chaste isn’t just about following a set of do’s and don’ts—it’s a way of living that can help us love and respect everyone, including those we date, more perfectly.

## A Higher Way of Thinking

Jesus cited the law regarding chastity that had already been taught when He said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Matthew 5:27). He also introduced a higher law: “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 5:28). Instead of listing do’s and don’ts regarding people’s actions about chastity, He asked them to shift their paradigm in how they approached personal responsibility for living the commandments. Jesus asked His followers to be chaste in their thoughts and intentions, not just their actions.

This higher law is meant to be lived because we trust the Savior and want to become like Him—not just because we want to avoid punishment but to be able to experience greater happiness (see Mosiah 2:41). Rather than view the law of chastity as a line not to cross, we are to both examine and take responsibility for the motives behind our actions when it comes to sexual purity. Being truly honest with ourselves in this way is an important step to experiencing true, lasting love. Perhaps that’s why Alma encouraged his son Shiblon to “bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12; emphasis added). When we follow gospel teachings about chastity, we are blessed with happiness as well as a greater capacity to love others.

## Recognizing Each Other as Children of God

Loving others starts with recognizing that we are all daughters and sons of God, and we all deserve to be treated as such. We’re divine (see Romans 8:16)—created in the very image of God! (see Moses 2:27). Simply put, we need to see “[people] as they really are” (Jacob 4:13)—and not just as a body—if we are to truly live the law of chastity.

Whether we’re single, dating, or married, we can’t disregard our shared divine nature as it relates to the law of chastity—intentionally or ignorantly. Subsequently, navigating any seemingly gray areas of the law of chastity requires making a conscious choice to respect and regard others as divine beings. Simply

believing we’re respectful in our relationships isn’t enough—what do “[our] works” show about who we are? (see Moroni 7:5).

Our behavior changes as we deepen our understanding of these principles. For example, when we intentionally see others as children of God and commit to live the law of chastity, **we do not:**

- Disrespect another person’s agency by assuming it’s OK to cross physical boundaries without consent, or even with consent if they are outside the bounds the Lord has set.
- Play games or manipulate others to serve our selfish interests or desires.
- Regard each other as dispensable objects in words or actions.

However, **we do:**

- Respect another person’s agency by always discussing what the boundaries of a relationship are—and *never* assuming them.
- Share intentions and motivations with honesty, even (and especially) if it’s awkward or difficult.
- Regard each other as children of God with feelings, hopes, and dreams.



When we view the law of chastity as a mandate to see each other in this authentic way, our actions better reflect our inner commitment to show our love and affection as God would have

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us show it in our dating relationships. After all, we all want to love and be loved. Elevating our understanding of chastity helps us avoid acting on selfish desires that ultimately lead us down a path of loneliness and regret. The world would have us use our bodies for self-gratification, deceitfully touting that selfishness

equals happiness. That couldn't be further from the truth.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that “[intimate relations] 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 a way of strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds* between husband and wife.”<sup>2</sup> Being chaste deepens love (and happiness) throughout

eternity. Keeping that eternal perspective while dating will help us stay diligent in reserving sexual relations for marriage. And if we live the law of chastity, we've been promised marvelous blessings in this life and the life to come.

## Blessings through the Savior's Atonement

Keeping the law of chastity is one of the things that qualifies us to receive eternal blessings in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. If we commit to live it and fully rely on His grace when we encounter any seemingly gray areas, then we can be more confident and more happy in our relationships, including our relationship with God (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:45). And we can have the constant influence of the Holy Ghost that guides, warns, comforts, and encourages us along the path back to our heavenly home.

Believing that these promised blessings are available to us will help us have “a perfect brightness of hope” (2 Nephi 31:20) that, with God's help, we will overcome the sexual temptations in our lives and be able to repent fully of any sexual transgressions we may have made. That hope will lead us to have “faith unto repentance” (Alma 34:15) to change our lifestyle or our way of thinking about chastity if necessary. And once we have repented, we can change the very desires of our hearts (see Alma 41:3) to become “new creature[s]” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Chastity helps us respect and love each other in the most pure, joyful, and godlike way possible. It helps us see each other as we really are—children of God. And ultimately, it illuminates a clear path that replaces any gray areas with clarity, any fear with faith, and any despair with determination to trust the Savior. In a dating world so full of gray areas, we really can't afford to live without the blessings of the law of chastity. ■

### NOTES

1. *For the Strength of Youth* (2011, booklet), 36.
2. David A. Bednar, “We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 42; emphasis added.

