

## *Abuse*

salvation and keeping the associated covenants. Nations of the earth will be blessed by your efforts and by the labors of your posterity.

*See also* Covenant; Eternal Life; Ordinances; Patriarchal Blessings; Priesthood

## **Abuse**

Abuse is the treatment of others or self in a way that causes injury or offense. It harms the mind and the spirit and often injures the body as well. It can cause confusion, doubt, mistrust, and fear. It is a violation of the laws of society and is in total opposition to the teachings of the Savior. The Lord condemns abusive behavior in any form—physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional. Abusive behavior may lead to Church discipline.

### Counsel for the Abuser

If you have been abusive in any relationship, you must repent of your sin. Plead with the Lord to forgive you. Ask for forgiveness from those you have harmed. Speak with your bishop or branch president so he can help you through the repentance process and, if necessary, help you receive additional counseling or other assistance.

If feelings of anger have fueled your abusive behavior, learn to master your temper. Go to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to help you. With an eternal perspective, you will see that your anger has almost always come in response to things that are not very important.

If you have been guilty of sexual abuse, seek to discipline your mind. Remember that your thoughts have a powerful impact on your life—"as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Stay away from pornography and anything else that could stimulate immoral sexual desire. Pray for the ability to "let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly" (D&C 121:45).

## Help for Victims of Abuse

If you are a victim of abuse, seek help immediately. Talk with your priesthood leader, normally your bishop or branch president but at times a member of the stake or district presidency. He can help you know what to do.

Be assured that you are not to blame for the harmful behavior of others. You do not need to feel guilt. If you have been a victim of rape or other sexual abuse, whether you have been abused by an acquaintance, a stranger, or even a family member, you are not guilty of sexual sin. Know that you are innocent and that your Heavenly Father loves you.

Pray for the peace that comes only through Jesus Christ and His Atonement (see John 14:27; 16:33). The Savior has experienced all your pains and afflictions, even those caused by others, and He knows how to help you (see Alma 7:11–12). Rather than seek revenge, focus on matters you can control, such as your own outlook on life. Pray for the strength to forgive those who have hurt you.

Continue to seek help from your priesthood leader so he can guide you through the process of emotional healing. Through the blessings of the gospel, you can stop the cycle of abuse and be freed from the suffering you have experienced.

Additional references: Matthew 18:1–6; D&C 121:34–46

*See also* Forgiveness; Repentance

**Addiction** (*See* Gambling; Pornography; Word of Wisdom)

## Adoption

Children are entitled to be raised by parents who honor marital vows and who provide love and support. Adoption can be a great blessing for many children who are born without this opportunity.

When a child is conceived out of wedlock, the best option is for the mother and father of the child to marry and work toward establishing an eternal family relationship. If a