

The Law of Chastity

President Ezra Taft Benson

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In this dispensation the Lord reiterated the commandment given at Sinai when He said, "Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery, . . . *nor do anything like unto it*" (D&C 59:6; emphasis added). From the beginning of time, the Lord has set a clear and unmistakable standard of sexual purity. It always has been, it is now, and it always will be the same. That standard is the law of chastity. It is the same for all—it is the same for men and women; it is the same for old and young; it is the same for rich and poor.

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Jacob tells us that the Lord delights in the chastity of His children (see Jacob 2:28). Do you hear that, my brothers and sisters? The Lord is not just pleased when we are chaste. He *delights* in chastity. Mormon taught the same thing to his son, Moroni, when he wrote that chastity and virtue are "most dear and precious above all things" (Moroni 9:9).

My dear brothers and sisters, the law of chastity is a principle of eternal significance. We must not be swayed by the many voices of the world. We must listen to the voice of the Lord and then determine that we will set our feet irrevocably upon the path He has marked.

Reaping the Consequences

The world is already beginning to reap the consequences of its abandonment of any standards of morality. As just one example, recently the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in the United States warned that if a cure for AIDS is not quickly found, it could become a worldwide epidemic that "will dwarf such earlier medical disasters as the Black Plague, smallpox and typhoid" ("HHS Chief Says AIDS Will Dwarf the Plague," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 30 January 1987, p. A-1).

As the world seeks solutions for this disease, which began primarily through widespread homosexuality, people look everywhere but to the law of the Lord. There are numerous agencies, both public and private, trying to combat AIDS. They seek increased funding for research. They sponsor programs of education and information. They write bills aimed at protecting the innocent from infection. They set up treatment programs for those who have already become infected. These are important and necessary programs, and we commend those efforts. But why is it we rarely hear anyone calling for a return to chastity, for a commitment to virtue and fidelity?

I recognize that most people fall into sexual sin in a misguided attempt to fulfill basic human needs. We all have a need to feel loved and worthwhile. We all seek to have joy and happiness in our lives. Knowing this, Satan often lures people into immorality by playing on their basic needs. He promises pleasure, happiness, and fulfillment.

But this is, of course, a deception. As the writer of Proverbs says: "Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul" (Proverbs 6:32). Samuel the Lamanite taught the same thing when he said, "Ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of . . . righteousness" (Helaman 13:38). Alma said it more simply: "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Do not be misled by Satan's lies. There is no lasting happiness in immorality. There is no joy to be found in breaking the law of chastity. Just the opposite is true. There may be momentary pleasure. For a time it may seem like everything is wonderful. But quickly the relationship will sour. Guilt and shame set in. We become fearful that our sins will be discovered. We must sneak and hide, lie and cheat. Love begins to die. Bitterness, jealousy, anger, and even hate begin to grow. All of these are the natural results of sin and transgression.

On the other hand, when we obey the law of chastity and keep ourselves morally clean, we will experience the blessings of increased love and peace, greater trust and respect for our marital partners, deeper commitment to each other, and, therefore, a deep and significant sense of joy and happiness.

We must not be misled into thinking these sins are minor, or that consequences are not that serious. One of the most sobering statements about being unchaste is that of Alma to his son Corianton: "Know ye not, my son," he said, "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; emphasis added). Very few of us will ever be guilty of murder or of the sin against the Holy Ghost. But the law of chastity is frequently broken, and yet it stands next to these other sins in seriousness in the eyes of the Lord.

My beloved brothers and sisters, are we living in accordance with these scriptures? Do we clearly understand the seriousness of sexual sins? Do we constantly stress the blessings that come from obedience to this law? I say again, as have all the prophets before me, there is one standard of virtue and chastity, and all are expected to adhere to it. What the Lord says unto one, He says unto all: "Ye must practise virtue and holiness before me continually" (D&C 46:33).

Six Steps to Prepare and Prevent

There is an old saying that states: It is better to prepare and prevent than it is to repair and repent. How true that is of the law of chastity. The first line of defense in keeping ourselves morally clean is to prepare ourselves to resist temptation and prevent ourselves from falling into sin.

For those who are pure and chaste, may I give six steps that are steps of preparation and prevention, steps that will insure that you never fall into this transgression:

1. **Decide now to be chaste.** The decision to be chaste and virtuous need only be made once. Make that decision now and let it be so firm and with such deep commitment that it can never be shaken. Don't wait until you are alone in a parked car or caught in a compromising situation to decide to be chaste. Decide now!
2. **Control your thoughts.** No one steps into immorality in an instant. The first seeds of immorality are always sown in the mind. When we allow our thoughts to linger on lewd or immoral things, the first step on the road to immorality has been taken. I especially warn you against the evils of pornography. Again and again we hear from those caught in deep sin that often the first step on their road to transgression began with pornographic materials. The Savior taught that even when a man looks upon a woman to lust after her, or in other words, when he lets his thoughts begin to get out of control, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart (see Matthew 5:28, D&C 63:16).
3. **Always pray for the power to resist temptation.** Temptation will come to all of us. It will take many forms and appear in many disguises, but the Lord has given us the key for resisting it. He said to the Prophet Joseph: "Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work" (D&C 10:5). It should be part of our daily prayers to ask the Lord for constant strength to resist temptations, especially temptations that involve the law of chastity.

4. **If you are married, avoid flirtations of any kind.** Sometimes we hear of a married man going to lunch with his secretary or other women in the office. Men and women who are married sometimes flirt with and tease members of the opposite sex. So-called harmless meetings are arranged or inordinate amounts of time are spent together. In all of these cases, people rationalize by saying that these are natural expressions of friendship. But what may appear to be harmless teasing or simply having a little fun with someone of the opposite sex can easily lead to more serious involvement and eventual infidelity. A good question to ask ourselves is this: Would my spouse be pleased if he or she knew I was doing this? Would a wife be pleased to know that her husband lunches alone with his secretary? Would a husband be pleased if he saw his wife flirting and being coy with another man? My beloved brothers and sisters, this is what Paul meant when he said: "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22).
5. **If you are married, avoid being alone with members of the opposite sex whenever possible.** Many of the tragedies of immorality begin when a man and woman are alone in the office or at church or driving in a car. At first there may be no intent or even thought of sin. But the circumstances provide a fertile seedbed for temptation. One thing leads to another, and very quickly tragedy may result. It is so much easier to avoid such circumstances from the start so that temptation gets no chance for nourishment.
6. **For those who are single and dating members of the opposite sex, carefully plan positive and constructive activities so that you are not left to yourselves with nothing to do but share physical affection.** Once again this is the principle of filling one's life with the positive so that the negative has no chance to thrive. When young people are left to themselves for long periods of time with no specific planned activities, often they turn to necking and petting to fill the empty hours.

Five Steps to Repair and Repent

But I realize that there may be some, even now within the sound of my voice, for whom the counsel to prepare and prevent is too late. You may already be deeply entangled in serious sin. If this is the case, there is no choice now but to repair your lives and repent of your sins. To you I would suggest five important things you can do to come back to a state of moral purity.

1. **Flee immediately from any situation you are in that is either causing you to sin or that may cause you to sin.** When Joseph of Egypt was entrapped by Potiphar's wife alone in the house, it would have been easy for Joseph to have rationalized. After all, he had not encouraged her. After all, he was her servant. After all, it would hurt her feelings if he refused. Had Joseph stood there and rationalized, he could easily have fallen. There is a great lesson in how he did respond. The scripture says, "And he left his garment in her hand, *and fled, and got him out*" (Genesis 39:12; emphasis added). He fled and got himself out. My beloved brothers and sisters, if you are currently in a situation where your moral purity is being or could be compromised, follow Joseph's example. Flee from it and get yourself out. You cannot linger in sin and expect to have success in repentance.
2. **Plead with the Lord for the power to overcome.** One of Satan's most effective strategies with those he has lured into sin is to whisper in their ears that they are not worthy to pray. He will tell you that Heavenly Father is so displeased with you that He will never hear your prayers. This is a lie, and he says it to deceive us. The power of sin is great. If we are to extricate ourselves from it, especially serious sin, we must have a power greater than ourselves. No one is more anxious to help you flee from sin than your Father in Heaven. Go to

Him. Acknowledge your sin, confess your shame and your guilt, and then plead with Him for help. He has the power to help you triumph.

3. **Let your priesthood leaders help you resolve the transgression and come back into full fellowship with the Lord.** Certain sins are of such gravity that they put our standing in the Church in jeopardy. Sexual sins are among those of such seriousness (see D&C 42:24). Full repentance of such sins requires that we not only confess our sins and resolve them with the Lord, but that we also do so with the Church. This is done through appropriate priesthood leaders. The bishops and stake presidents have been appointed by revelation to serve as watchmen over the Church and as judges in Israel. While only the Lord can forgive sins, the priesthood leaders play a critical role in the process of repentance. Even if we are disfellowshipped or excommunicated, it is a beginning step in the process of repentance, and the sooner one begins, the sooner one can find the sweet peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness.
4. **Drink from the divine fountain and fill your lives with positive sources of power.** It is not enough simply to try to resist evil or empty our lives of sin. We must also fill our lives with righteousness. We must engage in activities that bring spiritual power. I speak of such activities as immersing ourselves in the scriptures. There is a power that flows into our lives when we read and study the scriptures on a daily basis that cannot be found in any other way. Daily prayer is another source of great power. Fasting for specific strength or special blessings can strengthen us beyond our normal ability. Christian service, church attendance, service in the kingdom—all can add to our storehouse of strength and power. We must do more than simply remove the negative influences from our lives. We must replace them with righteous activities that fill us with the strength and determination to live as we should.
5. **Remember that through proper repentance you can become clean again.** Moroni taught that “despair cometh because of iniquity” (Moroni 10:22). Those who are caught in immorality may be experiencing the devastating effects of despair. But there is an alternative. For those who pay the price required by true repentance, the promise is sure. You can be clean again. The despair can be lifted. The sweet peace of forgiveness will flow into your lives.

Finding Joy

The words of the Lord through Isaiah are sure: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

And in this dispensation the Lord spoke with equal clarity when He said, “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42).

As I said earlier, when it comes to the law of chastity, it is better to prepare and prevent than it is to repair and repent.

My beloved brothers and sisters in the gospel, our Heavenly Father desires nothing for us but to be happy. He tells us only those things that will bring us joy. And one of the surest principles given by God to help us find that joy is the law of chastity.

I pray with all my heart that you will consider most solemnly the joyful consequences of keeping this law and the tragic consequences of violating it. And I do this in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.