



"Marriage is for time and eternity. . . . Marriage gives life."



The Law of Chastity

*The Lord has only one standard of morality—
total chastity for both men and women before marriage
and complete fidelity afterward.*

From the Life of Spencer W. Kimball

In counseling Church members about dating, courtship, and marriage, President Spencer W. Kimball emphasized the importance of living by the Lord’s law of chastity and fidelity. He also warned against Satan’s attempts to make the violation of this law seem justified or harmless. He told of a young couple who had fallen prey to this deception of the adversary:

“The boy said, ‘Yes, we yielded to each other, but we do not think it wrong because we love one another.’ I thought I had misunderstood him. Since the world began, there have been countless immoralities, but to hear them justified by Latter-day Saint youth shocked me. He repeated, ‘No, it is not wrong, because we love one another.’

“They had repeated this abominable heresy so often that they had convinced themselves, and a wall of resistance had been built, and behind this wall they stubbornly, almost defiantly, stood.”

To their rationalization, President Kimball responded, “No, my beloved young people, you did not love one another. Rather, you lusted for one another. . . . If one really loves another, one would rather die for that person than injure him. At the hour of indulgence, pure love is pushed out one door while lust sneaks in the other.”¹

President Kimball also testified that joy and peace come from obeying the law of chastity. He saw these blessings in the lives of faithful members, as in this experience he had in the temple:

“Here were peace and harmony and eager anticipation. A well-groomed young man and an exquisitely gowned young woman, lovely beyond description, knelt [at] the altar. Authoritatively, I pronounced the heavenly ceremony which married and sealed them for eternity on earth and in the celestial worlds. The pure in heart were there. Heaven was there.”²

Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball

The law of chastity prohibits all sexual relations outside marriage.

That the Church’s stand on morality may be understood, we declare firmly and unalterably it is not an outworn garment, faded, old-fashioned, and threadbare. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and his covenants and doctrines are immutable; and when the sun grows cold and the stars no longer shine, the law of chastity will still be basic in God’s world and in the Lord’s church. Old values are upheld by the Church not because they are old, but rather because they are right.³

Total chastity before marriage and total fidelity after are still the standard from which there can be no deviation without sin, misery, and unhappiness.⁴

Those who seem to flout the institution of marriage, and who regard chastity before marriage with fidelity after as old-fashioned, seem determined to establish a new fashion on their own and impose it upon others. Can they not see the gross selfishness that will lead finally to deep loneliness? Can they not see that, pushed by pleasure, they will become more and more distant from joy? Can they not see that their kind of fulfillment will produce a hollowness and an emptiness from which no fleeting pleasure can finally rescue them? The law of the harvest has not been repealed [see Galatians 6:7].⁵

The early apostles and prophets mention numerous sins that were reprehensible to them. Many of them were sexual sins—adultery, being without natural affection, lustfulness, infidelity, incontinence, filthy communications, impurity, inordinate affection, fornication. They included all sexual relations out-

side marriage—petting, sex perversion, masturbation, and pre-occupation with sex in one’s thoughts and talking. Included are every hidden and secret sin and all unholy and impure thoughts and practices. One of the worst of these is incest.⁶

If one has [homosexual] desires and tendencies, he overcomes them the same as if he had the urge toward petting or fornication or adultery. The Lord condemns and forbids this practice with a vigor equal to his condemnation of adultery and other such sex acts. . . . Again, contrary to the belief and statement of many people, this [practice], like fornication, is overcomable and forgivable, but again, only upon a deep and abiding repentance, which means total abandonment and complete transformation of thought and act. The fact that some governments and some churches and numerous corrupted individuals have tried to reduce such behavior from criminal offense to personal privilege does not change the nature nor the seriousness of the practice. Good men, wise men, God-fearing men everywhere still denounce the practice as being unworthy of sons and daughters of God; and Christ’s church denounces it and condemns it. . . . This heinous homosexual sin is of the ages. Many cities and civilizations have gone out of existence because of it.⁷

Pure sex life in proper marriage is approved. There is a time and an appropriateness for all things that have value. But sexual encounters outside of legalized marriage render the individual a thing to be used, a thing to be exploited, and make him or her exchangeable, exploitable, expendable. . . .

Illicit sex is a selfish act, a betrayal, and is dishonest. To be unwilling to accept responsibility is cowardly, disloyal. Marriage is for time and eternity. Fornication and all other deviations are for today, for the hour, for the “now.” Marriage gives life. Fornication leads to death.⁸

**Love is wholesome and selfless,
but lust is corrupt and selfish.**

The young man is untrue to his manhood who promises popularity, good times, security, fun, and even love, when all he can give is passion and its diabolical fruits—guilt complexes, disgust,

hatred, abhorrence, eventual loathing, and possible pregnancy without legitimacy and honor. He pleads his case in love and all he gives is lust. Likewise, the young lady sells herself cheap. The result is damage to life and canker to the soul. . . .

And still these young people talk of love. What a corruption of the most beautiful term! The fruit is bitter because the tree is corrupt. Their lips say, "I love you." Their bodies say, "I want you." Love is kind and wholesome. To love is to give, not to take. To love is to serve, not to exploit. . . .

What is love? Many people think of it as mere physical attraction and they casually speak of "falling in love" and "love at first sight." . . . One might become immediately attracted to another individual, but love is far more than physical attraction. It is deep, inclusive, and comprehensive. Physical attraction is only one of the many elements; there must be faith and confidence and understanding and partnership. There must be common ideals and standards. There must be great devotion and companionship. Love is cleanliness and progress and sacrifice and selflessness. This kind of love never tires or wanes, but lives through sickness and sorrow, poverty and privation, accomplishment and disappointment, time and eternity. For the love to continue, there must be an increase constantly of confidence and understanding, of frequent and sincere expression of appreciation and affection. There must be a forgetting of self and a constant concern for the other. Interests, hopes, objectives must be constantly focused into a single channel. . . .

The young man who protects his sweetheart against all use or abuse, against insult and infamy from himself or others, could be expressing true love. But the young man who uses his companion as a biological toy to give himself temporary satisfaction—that is lust.

A young woman who conducts herself to be attractive spiritually, mentally, and physically but will not by word or dress or act stir or stimulate to physical reactions the companion beside her could be expressing true love. That young woman who must touch and stir and fondle and tempt and use exhibits lust and exploitation. . . .

Beware of the devil's trick of making evil seem good by giving it a label that conceals its character. Just such a device is the rationalization that lust is love.⁹

Even though sex can be an important and satisfactory part of married life, we must remember that life is not designed just for sex.¹⁰

The union of the sexes, husband and wife (and *only* husband and wife), was for the principal purpose of bringing children into the world. Sexual experiences were never intended by the Lord to be a mere plaything or merely to satisfy passions and lusts. We know of no directive from the Lord that proper sexual experience between husbands and wives need be limited totally to the procreation of children, but we find much evidence from Adam until now that no provision was ever made by the Lord for indiscriminate sex.¹¹

**We must shun pornography and
other forms of immorality.**

We are the spiritual children of God, and . . . we are his supreme creation. In each of us there is the potentiality to become a God—pure, holy, true, influential, powerful, independent of earthly forces. We learn from the scriptures that we each have eternal existence, that we were in the beginning with God (see Abr. 3:22). That understanding gives to us a unique sense of man's dignity.

But there are false teachers everywhere, using speech and pornographic literature, magazines, radio, TV, street talk—spreading damnable heresies which break down moral standards, and this to gratify the lust of the flesh.¹²

We abhor pornography that seems to be flooding the land. Legislation makes an effort to curb it, but the best way to stop it is to have men and women, with their families, build barriers against it. We ask you, "Do you good people of your community want this ugly vice to corrupt your families and your neighbors?"¹³

When we see the depravity of numerous people of our own society in their determination to force upon people vulgar presentations, filthy communications, unnatural practices, we wonder, has Satan reached forth with his wicked, evil hand to pull into his forces the people of this earth? Do we not have enough good people left to stamp out the evil which threatens our world? Why do we continue to compromise with evil and why do we continue to tolerate sin?¹⁴

We hope that our parents and leaders will not tolerate pornography. It is really garbage, but today is peddled as normal and satisfactory food. . . . There is a link between pornography and the low, sexual drives and perversions.¹⁵

Sins spawned by pornography unfortunately perpetuate other serious transgressions, including abortion.¹⁶

It is ridiculous to imply that pornography has no effect. There is a definite relationship to crime. Murder, robbery, rape, prostitution, and commercialized vice are fed on this immorality. Sex crime statistics seem to reflect a relationship between crime and pornography.

It is utterly without redeeming social value. We urge our families to protect their children in every way possible. We live in a permissive world, but we must make certain we do not become a part of that permissive world, that degenerate world.¹⁷

Members of the Church everywhere are urged to not only resist the widespread plague of pornography, but as citizens to become actively and relentlessly engaged in the fight against this insidious enemy of humanity around the world. . . .

. . . Teach your children to avoid smut as the plague it is. As citizens, join in the fight against obscenity in your communities. Do not be lulled into inaction by the pornographic profiteers who say that to remove obscenity is to deny people the rights of free choice. Do not let them masquerade licentiousness as liberty.

Precious souls are at stake—souls that are near and dear to each of us.¹⁸



President Kimball gave clear guidelines for young people who date.

Parents and leaders should safeguard children and youth against immoral influences.

Your children will learn from you early in their lives that they must never involve themselves in immoral practices of any kind. This cannot be told to them just once. But before they are married they should be told hundreds of times, and they should know that not only their family and their parents expect this great service, but the Lord in heaven, Jesus Christ, expects them to keep clean and free from immorality.¹⁹

Unchastity is the great demon of the day. Like an octopus, it fastens its tentacles upon one. There are many paths that lead youth to these defilements. May I mention some approaches that break down moral structures.

Some become casual in their church activity and estrange themselves from the refining and protective influences of the Church. The gospel seems to take second place to their personal

interests. They miss their meetings, permitting school work, social life, or business or professions to crowd out the important church activities and the gospel until their feelings toward the Church and its standards are somewhat anesthetized.

Another of the many things that lead to unchastity is immodesty. Today many young women and young men are smug in their knowledge of the facts of life. They think they know all the answers. They talk about sex as freely as they talk about cars and shows and clothes. And a spirit of immodesty has developed until nothing seems to be sacred.²⁰

There is no reason why women need to wear a low-cut or otherwise revealing gown just because it is the worldly style. We can create a style of our own. . . .

Neither is there excuse for young men to bare and expose their bodies. The fellows could show courage and good judgment if they encouraged their young women friends to wear modest clothing. If a young man would not date a young woman who is improperly clothed, the style would change very soon. . . .

The Lord has promised to the valiant, "All that I have is thine." To reach these lofty heights and limitless blessings, you must take no chances. Keep your lives sweet and clean and pure, so that there will never be any forfeiture. To do this, you will do well to avoid "the very appearance of evil" and "the very approach toward evil."²¹

We cannot overemphasize immodesty as one of the pitfalls to be avoided if we would shun temptation and keep ourselves clean.²²

I suggest . . . the following standard. Any dating or pairing off in social contacts should be postponed until at least the age of 16 or older, and even then there should still be much judgment used in selections and in the seriousness. Young people should still limit the close contacts for several years, since the boy will be going on his mission when he is 19 years old.

Dating and especially steady dating in the early teens is most hazardous. It distorts the whole picture of life. It deprives you of worthwhile and rich experiences; it limits friendships; it reduces

the acquaintances which can be so valuable in selecting a partner for time and eternity.

There is definitely a time for the dance, for travel, for associations, for the date, and even for the steady date that will culminate in the romance which will take young people to the holy temple for eternal marriage. But it is the timing that is so vital. It is wrong to do even the right things at the wrong time in the wrong place under the wrong circumstances.²³

Keep your life clean and free from all unholy and impure thoughts and actions. Avoid all associations which degrade and lower the high, righteous standards set up for us. Then your life will sail smoothly and peace and joy will surround you.²⁴

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–ix.

- Compare the couple President Kimball describes on page 179 with the couple he refers to in the first paragraph on page 180. What could have led these Latter-day Saint couples to such different attitudes and actions?
- Read the second paragraph on page 180. What would you say to someone who claims that chastity is old-fashioned? (For some examples, see pages 180–81.) What are some of the consequences of disregarding the law of chastity? What are some of the blessings of obeying it?
- Think about how you would complete these sentences: To love is _____. To lust is _____. (For some examples, see pages 181–83.) How should our understanding of love influence our thoughts and actions?
- Why do you think President Kimball and many Church leaders since him have warned against pornography? (See pages 183–84.) In what ways can we fight the spread and influence of pornography? What can we do in our families to “build barriers against it”?
- Review the standards on pages 185–87. Why should parents and leaders begin teaching the law of chastity early in a child’s

life? What can parents and leaders do to help youth stay true to the Church and its standards? What resources does the Church provide to help youth understand and keep Church standards?

- How are modesty and chastity related?
- What does it mean to be modest in the way we dress? In what ways can we “create a style of our own”? (page 186). What does it mean to be modest in our language and behavior? How can we help youth understand the need for modesty in all aspects of their lives?

Related Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 6:9, 18–20; Jacob 2:7; Alma 39:3–5, 9; 3 Nephi 12:27–30; D&C 42:22–23, 40–41; 59:6

Notes

1. *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 151–52, 153, 154.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1971, 153; or *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 36.
3. *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 155.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 4.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 117; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 78.
6. “President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 95.
7. *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 97.
8. *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 155, 156–57.
9. *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 157–59.
10. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 73.
11. “The Lord’s Plan for Men and Women,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1975, 4.
12. *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 94.
13. In Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 8–9; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 7.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 162; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 109.
15. In Conference Report, Oct. 1974, 7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 7.
16. “A Report and a Challenge,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 6.
17. In Conference Report, Oct. 1974, 7; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 7.
18. *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 5, 6.
19. In Conference Report, La Paz Bolivia Area Conference 1977, 22–23.
20. *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 162–63.
21. *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 166, 167, 168.
22. *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 227.
23. *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 96.
24. *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 98.