

For the parents: Why is Chastity Important in God's Plan?

Youth ages 11-18 will be receiving this lesson in their meetings on June 26. Because this is a sensitive topic, we wish parents to be informed and have conversations with their youth beforehand. While these conversations are often awkward and uncomfortable, they are important and needed. The sexual education of our youth is primarily a parent responsibility. The Church and youth leaders are there to support you and what happens in your home.

An outline of topics that you can address with your youth is outlined below. If you need further help and support, please seek guidance from a qualified professional.

Recommendation: Address the awkwardness and discomfort at the beginning. "As your parents we understand that this topic is often awkward and uncomfortable. We love you and we feel that even though it's awkward and uncomfortable, it is important that you hear this information from us."

We were created in God's image

We were created by Heavenly Parents in their image. We were created like them as sexual beings. Our Heavenly Parents are sexual beings just like we are. Babies still in the womb are sexual beings. Infants, toddlers, children, youth, and adults are all sexual beings. We have been given body parts, hormones, thoughts, and feelings by our Heavenly Parents for a reason. This is something that they want for us. Your sexuality and your body are a gift.

What is sex? What is the Law of Chastity?

It is important to define sex for our youth. Youth today are more exposed to sex than they ever have been before. But don't assume that what they learned in health, maturation, or from their friends and the internet is sufficient. They need things clearly defined by you, their parent(s):

Sex in terms of The Law of Chastity is touching someone's breasts or genitals (which are for a woman her vulva, vagina, and anus and for a man, his penis, scrotum, or anus) with their fingers, mouth, an object, or their own genitals, for the purpose of pleasure.

What is the Law of Chastity?

- Do not have sexual relations with someone you are not legally and lawfully married to.
- Once you are married, have sex! But continue to have it only with your spouse and no one else.

Analogy:

I want you to think about what it would be like if you had never seen or eaten an orange. Someone can describe it for you: It's round. It's orange in color. When you eat it, it's really sweet and juicy and is so good.

But let's pretend that you can't eat an orange or really even see it until you get married. So a description of it is really all you know.

Does sometimes when people describe sex it kind of feels like that? Someone describing something to you that sounds like it might be good but you just won't know until you try it?

Well here it is...your wedding day. And you are married and you can finally eat the orange. So you get one, you look at it. It looks interesting and sounds like it will be so good, so you take a big bite into it.

Have you ever bitten into an orange? Not so good right? The rind is bitter. So you might get a little taste of the sweet and juicy part but it is mostly just bitter and gross.

That's how sex is for a lot of people because they don't understand it. In order to enjoy an orange you need to understand how it can be good for you. You have to peel it. In order for sex to be good, you have to understand it too. You need to learn about it in a healthy way. So how do we learn about it?

1. Understand our bodies - it's important that we each understand our bodies and what they were created to do.
 - Use proper names (breasts, vulva, labia, vagina, clitoris, penis, scrotum, etc.).
 - Understand our different body parts and their functions.
 - Some body parts were created by our Heavenly Parents strictly for pleasure. Touching them ourselves, or having someone else touch them feels good. This is NOT wrong. There is just a time and a place for it.
 - Some body parts were created for function as well as pleasure. Again, this is not wrong, but there is a proper time and place.

2. Understand our minds

- Our brains were created and developed to have 3 motivations
 - Seek pleasure
 - Avoid pain
 - Reduce Effort
- It has these three motivations because it's job is to keep us alive and keep the species alive. (Think about in caveman days - when a human's entire life was to make sure they ate, avoided danger, and keep the species going so they needed to conserve energy in case danger came).
- It is normal for our brains to think about sex. Heavenly Father made them this way on purpose. It is not WRONG to have sexual thoughts and feelings. But again, we have to manage it and we each need to decide what that looks like for us. What is appropriate for us and this time in our lives? What aligns with our values? What do you want to do with these sexual thoughts right now?

3. Understand our values

- What are your values around sex? Do you want to keep the Law of Chastity? Why?
- Defining that for yourselves (and not just doing it because you "should") will help make this clearer for you. Then it becomes a choice made from agency. You are choosing not to have sex before marriage not because it is bad, or it will destroy something in you but because you are using your agency and your choice is to wait. That is such an empowering decision!

Sex itself is not good or bad, it's what we do with it, how we use it, that determines if it is good or bad.

We can think about sex on a spectrum:

At one end we have indulgence. **What could indulging in our sexuality look like?**

- Breaking the Law of Chastity (sex before marriage, sex with someone who is not your spouse)
- Pornography

At the other end we have repression. What does repression mean? restrain, prevent, or inhibit (the expression or development of something). **What could repression look like?**

- Denying all sexual thoughts and feelings, even within marriage
- Thinking we are bad, wrong, or unworthy for having these thoughts and feelings (they are normal and not wrong)

What we actually want is in the middle. Neither indulgence or repression. **What might that look like when you are a youth or not married?**

- Not engaging in activities that arouse sexual thoughts and feelings with others on purpose
- If thoughts and feelings arise (as they often do in youth, even unprovoked) making decisions of how you want to handle them in a way that matches your value system and integrity.

We can pray to our Heavenly Father about our sexuality. Partner with our Heavenly Parents to learn what is appropriate for us as individuals and how we can personally manage the thoughts, feelings, desires, and physical appetites. Our Heavenly Parents care about us and They care about our sexuality and how we use it.

Why is sex good in a marriage?

As married couples there are three purposes for sex:

1. To procreate. This is our greatest power and the thing that makes us most like our Heavenly Parents. Just as they are creators of Heaven, Earth, and their Spirit Children, we too can be creators of earthly children. This is one of the main reasons why our Heavenly Father has asked us not to have sex outside of marriage. He loves His children so much and He wants to send spirits down to parents who are married and love each other. He wants His children to have the best opportunity to have a wonderful life with parents who are loving and committed to each other and take on the spiritual roles that He has instilled in us as well as asked us to perform.

2. To bond spouses together. Spouses are supposed to have sex as a way to bond to each other in a way they can't bond with anyone else. When we have sex, certain hormones and neurotransmitters are released by our brain that help us love and bond to that person. When we choose to have sex with someone who is not our spouse, we still release those hormones and it creates a bond. This is another reason why we have been commanded to wait until we are married to have sex. So that we can bond with our spouse in a way that we can't or haven't bonded with anyone else.
3. To experience fun & pleasure. Sex is good. Sex is fun! Sex is pleasurable. And in this life, we were meant to experience those things. "Men are that they might have joy" Eve partook of the fruit so that we would be able to experience a full life. Fun, joy, and pleasure are an important part of that. And sex is a great way to experience that with your partner as a way to help you have fun as a couple.

In Alma 38:12 we read about Alma counseling his son Shiblon and telling him to "bridle....your passions, that ye may be filled with love." This scripture is often used to caution teens (and adults) about their desires. We take "bridle your passions" to mean that we need to minimize and suppress them and lock them away.

Do you know what a bridle for a horse does? Why do we bridle a horse? It's not used to stop their energy. But a bridle on a horse is used to direct a horse's energy. To steer its natural power where you want it to go. When you want to deny a racehorse to exert its power, you lock it up. When you want to utilize its power for your benefit, you bridle it. Bridling our passions is all about being in control of them and channeling them in a positive and useful way.

Quote: "Bridling increases strength, increases power, increases love....Alma never said kill your passions. The implication is not that passions are evil, that we shouldn't have them. On the contrary, we bridle something we love, something whose power we respect." (Elder Paul H. Dunn, *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, p. 72.)

What is not breaking the Law of Chastity?

- If someone is touching you or having sex with you or having you touch them and you don't want to and haven't explicitly said "yes! I want to do this" that is sexual abuse or sexual assault and is not considered breaking the Law of Chastity because you did not use your agency to make that decision. Many times as teenagers we can be pressured or coerced into doing something that is against our values and that is not ok. If this is happening to you, please talk to a parent or another trusted adult. But this isn't breaking the Law of Chastity and something you don't need to go through the repentance process for.

As parents we also understand that sometimes things happen. If you break the Law of Chastity, please know that we still love you. We are here for you and to support you. But, please know that your choices always have consequences. And while the Atonement can make things right spiritually, it can't take back the physical and sometimes emotional consequences of breaking the Law of Chastity. With any type of sex: intercourse, oral sex, or anal sex you have the chance of getting a sexually transmitted infection. And with intercourse you also have the chance of getting pregnant. So while your Heavenly Parents and us, your parents, hope and pray that you will make the choice to keep the Law of Chastity, if you choose not to, please be safe. Please talk to us so that we can get you condoms and birth-control so that you don't have physical consequences. But there is always the Atonement to bring things right between you and God for the spiritual ones.

This lesson and parent guide was created by Amanda Louder. It meant to educate our youth in a way that promotes healthy sexuality, the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints without the use of fear tactics and promoting shame.

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