

Pre/Extra Marital Sex

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Today's American culture is dominated by blatantly sexual themes and displays. Half-dressed bodies on billboards and in public schools, steamy love scenes on family TV shows, suggestive lyrics in mainstream music, and the explosion of pornography in all media forms now clutter our society without age, race, geographic, or economic distinction. The message to the world is have as much sex as possible, regardless of your marital status, age, or condition.

Church Influence in Fighting Sexual Indiscretion

While most Christian religions discourage members from having sex outside of marriage—otherwise known as fornication in the scriptures—some Christian sects are more passionate about the subject and active in teaching its members than others.

The commandment of God to all living creatures to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:22) is a key part of His plan. Adam and Eve as spirit children of our Heavenly Father were told to replenish the earth (Genesis 1:28), no doubt under a moral code and not by the exercise of unfettered carnal desire. God's plan is that all of his spirit children be born into families and raised and cared for within the protective confines of families. These spirit children require physical bodies, which are provided as a result of sexual reproduction through the sacred powers of procreation.

Sexual Indiscretion is a Serious Sin

The powers of procreation are so sacred that the Lord gave his people the commandment to “not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). So serious was this commandment that those who violated it were put to death (Leviticus 20:10). Jesus affirmed this commandment and took it one step further when he taught, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 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 5:27-28).

The Law of Chastity

Procreation, or sexual relations, has been designated by God to be performed only within the bounds of marriage. This principle is called the law of chastity. The law of chastity states that “we are to have sexual relations only with our spouse to whom we are legally married. No one, male or female, is to have sexual relations before marriage. After marriage, sexual relations are permitted only with our spouse” (Gospel Principles, 248).

While the law of chastity specifically identifies sexual relations, Church leaders have taught that the law includes actions other than intercourse. The prophet Spencer W. Kimball wrote, “Among the most common sexual sins our young people commit are necking and petting. Not only do these improper relations often lead to fornication, [unwed] pregnancy, and abortions—all ugly sins—but in and of themselves they are pernicious evils, and it is often difficult for youth to distinguish where one ends and another begins. They awaken lust and stir evil thoughts and sex desires. They are but parts of the whole family of related sins and indiscretions” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, 65).

Satan's Influence Encourages Sexual Indiscretion

Satan's eternal objective is for man to fall into serious sin and be unable to return to our Heavenly Father. To accomplish this, Satan will use any and all means possible. With a keen understanding of man's weaknesses, Satan and his followers use sexual temptation to lure God's children into breaking the law of chastity. This is often done through the deception that breaking the law of

chastity is natural and of little to no consequence; which when acted upon leads to sin and misery.

Another way Satan accomplishes our violating the law of chastity is through immodesty. Individuals are tempted to reveal as much of their bodies as possible, often under the guise of the body being a creation of God, or more overtly in the pursuit of sexual promiscuity.

Satan can tempt us through our human emotions by leveraging those times when we are weak, lonely, depressed, or unsure of ourselves and life in general. When we are in such a state, our flesh can become weak (Mark 14:38) and we become more susceptible to breaking the law of chastity.

Fighting Satan's Sexual Temptations

To protect ourselves from Satan in using the law of chastity against us we must first realize the seriousness of breaking the law of chastity. Although the punishment is no longer death, the consequences can still be grave and rival that of murder in terms of spiritual gravity. In addressing his son who broke the law of chastity, the prophet Alma said: "Know ye not, my son, 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). It is not uncommon for those who break the law of chastity to be disfellowshipped or excommunicated (D&C 42:22–26, D&C 42:80–81). See the Sword Series™ essay on Church Discipline.

Education is another key to fending off Satan's temptations. Understanding the immense enticement of premarital sex to youth, one Christian church took education of youth extremely seriously and did something about it. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints publishes the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*. Among other things the pamphlet provides the following directions for the young reader: "Before marriage, do not do anything to arouse the powerful emotions that must be expressed only in marriage. Do not participate in passionate kissing, lie on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person's body, with or without clothing. Do not allow anyone to do that with you. Do not arouse those emotions in your own body" (For the

Strength of Youth, Fulfilling Our Duty to God, 2001; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints).

We are urged to keep our thoughts and actions pure, embracing the admonishment from Christ that the mere thought of adultery is a sin. Alma wrote, "Our thoughts will also condemn us; and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God" (Alma 12:14). Our thoughts can be affected by what we watch (pictures, books, movies, etc.), what we listen to (music, media, etc.), what we read (magazines, the internet, etc.), what we do (dancing, social events, etc.), and the social circles we choose to be a part of. We are urged to dress modestly so that we do not prompt impure thoughts in others.

Seek Divine Help to Fight Sexual Sin

Perhaps most importantly, we are encouraged to look to our Heavenly Father who will give us strength to overcome trials if we ask for it. We have been promised by God that "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

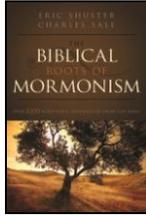
Should we fall into temptation and break the law of chastity we can be forgiven through the Atonement of Jesus Christ through repentance. Although one may find peace and forgiveness from transgressions against the law of chastity, there can be lasting effects such as unwanted pregnancies, guilt, shame, and difficulties in relationships.

Conclusion

Although difficult, by keeping the law of chastity we can be blessed in a number of ways. We can avoid the lasting effects of sexual transgression, we can stay clear of being a part of the pain and sorrow that flow from adultery and fornication to ourselves and other loved ones, and we can have the peace and joy of knowing we are living a life worthy to enter the temple and return to our Heavenly Father.

About The Sword Series™

The Sword Series™ is a collection of Christian theological essays that are freely distributed for the education and enjoyment of all. These essays later inspired the book *The Biblical Roots of Mormonism* by Eric Shuster (2010). The views expressed in the Sword Series™ are those of Eric Shuster based upon his study and understanding of the scriptures under the influence of the Holy Ghost. All formatted content in this paper is the property of Eric Shuster and may be distributed freely. Any modification of the content of this paper without the express written consent of Eric Shuster is prohibited. Copyright 2008 ©



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