of the universe and the unleashing of authentic love and compassion be achieved. Jesus described his own mission almost entirely in terms of healing: "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; . . . to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. 61:1–3; Luke 4:18–19).

Only in the life to come amid the glories of the New Jerusalem will the full effect of Christ’s mission “wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” (Rev. 21:4). Even so, for Latter-day Saints the embrace of his messiahship and the proclamation of his gospel were intended to relieve needless pain and suffering. They do so in many ways. First, they provide a foundation for hope that through the atonement of Jesus Christ one may find reunion with God. Second, they offer continuous access to the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and, through this, to an inner peace that “passeth all understanding” (Philip. 4:7). Third, they teach the law of the harvest, that many blessings follow naturally from obedience to the laws that govern them and that much unhappiness can be avoided, including sin and its accompanying pain, shame, and spiritual bruising. And finally, they establish a community built on kinship, a society of mutually supportive and protective fellow believers whose charge is to “bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

Latter-day Saints do not believe that pain is intrinsically good. In their teaching there is little of asceticism, mortification, or negative spirituality. But when suffering is unavoidable in the fulfillment of life’s missions, one’s challenge is to draw upon all the resources of one’s soul and endure faithfully and well. If benefit comes from pain, it is not because there is anything inherently cleansing in pain itself. Suffering can wound and embitter and darken a soul as surely as it can purify and refine and illumine. Everything depends on how one responds. At a time of terrible desolation and imprisonment, the Prophet Joseph Smith was told, “My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high. . . . Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he? Therefore, hold on thy way, . . . fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever” (D&C 121:7–8; 122:7–9).

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SUICIDE

From an LDS perspective, suicide is a moral issue and is to be handled with particular sensitivity and human caring. The General Handbook of Instructions (1989) says, “A person who takes his own life may not be responsible for his acts. Only God can judge such a matter. A person who has considered suicide seriously or has attempted suicide should be counseled by his bishop and may be encouraged to seek professional help” (11-5). Such contacts need to be personalized and enduring. The inclination to commit suicide represents a crisis in a person’s life and should not be taken lightly. Underlying causes should be identified and treated.

The body of a person who has committed suicide is not dishonored. If the person has been endowed and otherwise is in good standing with the Church, the body may be buried in temple clothes. Normal funeral procedures are followed (see burial).

Suicide and attempted suicide are painful and dramatic aspects of human behavior, but this does not mean that they should not be dealt with in terms of the same basic principles as those applicable in understanding and managing any other aspect of human behavior. Thus, principles associated with concepts of agency, accountability, atonement, eternal life, immortality, resurrection, and family establish the frame of reference Latter-day Saints use to guide their responses to such behaviors as they occur.
Despite traditions and beliefs that recognize and honor the ways in which value decisions led to the death and martyrdom of Jesus Christ and of Joseph Smith, there is no support in LDS doctrine for anyone intentionally seeking death.

The ancient commandment “Thou shalt not kill” is interpreted in most traditions to include a prohibition against killing oneself. In LDS doctrine, “Thou shalt not kill” has been extended to “nor do anything like unto it” (D&C 59:6). This extension is relevant in considering a variety of life-threatening behaviors that suicidologists identify as suicide equivalents (e.g., death as a result of deliberate reckless driving) or “slow suicide” (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse).

Suicide prevention sometimes is criticized by people who claim that individuals have an innate right to do whatever they want with their lives, including a right to kill themselves if they want to. Suicide, however, is never fully an individual matter. Even when difficult physical and biological factors are present, suicide is a social act, with interpersonal, family, and social systems ramifications.

A social milieu organized to help people find adequate housing and life goals of learning, loving, and working provides genuine choices between life and death. It is the position of the Church that when there are such choices, the majority of people, including those who are suicidal, will choose life. This is not to deny inequity, unfairness, conflict, instability, evil, aging, and illness of loved ones, but to provide a basis for behavior so that when crises occur, they will be seen as resolvable.

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SUNDAY

Whereas the seventh or SABBATH DAY was established as a day of rest and worship and a commemoration of the Creation (Ex. 20:10–11), the “first day of the week” Sunday, or the Lord’s Day, was consecrated to remember the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10). Moreover, a new ORDINANCE, the SACRAMENT, was introduced so that Christian worshipers on that day might venerate Jesus’ atoning sacrifice. For Latter-day Saints, modern revelation fixes the day of weekly worship and holy rest as “the Lord’s day,” which is Sunday, the first day of the week (see D&C 59:9–12).

Jesus’ fulfillment of the law of Moses brought several changes, including the practice of meeting on the first day of the week to commemorate Jesus’ resurrection. That the Lord intended a change in the day of worship is suggested by certain events of his postmortral ministry. For instance, it was on the first day of the week (Sunday) that he initially appeared to the apostles (John 20:19). It was also on the first day of the week that he reappeared to these same apostles, then in company with Thomas (John 20:26). After Jesus’ resurrection, it was on the day of Pentecost, a festival on the first day of the week observed by ancient Israel fifty days after Passover (cf. Lev. 23:15–16), that the assembled Saints and others received their most essential guide to eternal life, the HOLY GHOST (Acts 2:1–12). On that day of Pentecost the apostolic ministry began with the conversion of three thousand souls through the preaching of Peter (Acts 2:37–41).

The early Christians understood the significance of this change in the day of their worship, as can be seen by their continued practice of congregating on the first day of the week: “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them” (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; cf. Col. 2:16). Early Christian writers confirm the continued use of the first day of the week as the accepted new day of worship, only noting exceptions (e.g., Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.27.5). By A.D. 321, Constantine had officially designated the first day of the week as a day of rest. The word “Sunday” for the first day came from the weekly pagan worship of the sun god in Rome.

In a revelation received on August 7, 1831, a Sunday, the Lord confirmed his prescribed design in changing the day of public worship: “But remember that on this, the Lord’s day [Sunday], thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High” (D&C 59:12).

For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the day of the week on which they gather to pay devotion to God and his Son matters less than receiving the edification and enlightenment that may be gained from worship. This observation is confirmed, for example, by the