

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 wor-

shippers 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 postmortal 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

Church's custom of worshipping weekly in countries in the Middle East on a day other than Sunday.

As President Joseph F. SMITH explained, Latter-day Saints are to gather on a day to "mingle with the saints that their moral and spiritual influence may help to correct our false impressions and restore us to that life which the duties and obligations of our conscience and true religion impose upon us" (Smith, p. 243; see D&C 59:9–19).

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SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is held weekly in each local WARD or BRANCH. It lasts about an hour. Each Sunday, ward members assemble at the meeting-house chapel for prayer and hymn singing, following which those twelve years and older attend age-group classes for religious instruction while younger children attend PRIMARY. The Sunday School courses provide a forum for discussions, socialization, and the integration of gospel principles into everyday life. The adult curriculum includes a gospel doctrine course based on the STANDARD WORKS, a gospel essentials class, and elective alternative classes on family history, teacher development, and family relations. The courses of study between twelve and eighteen are coeducational and focus on gospel principles, teachings of the Savior, Church history, scripture study, and the lives and teachings of the modern prophets. Under the direction of a three-person Sunday School presidency in each ward or branch, members are called to serve as the course teachers, usually for a term of several years.

EARLIEST SUNDAY SCHOOLS. Following the organization of the Church in 1830, most Sunday gatherings were general meetings for all members and visitors. In good weather, large meetings were usually held outdoors. The Prophet Joseph SMITH notes, for example, on July 3, 1842, at Nauvoo,

Illinois, "This morning I preached at the grove to about 8,000 people" (*HC* 5:56). Smaller groups met in homes or other buildings. Those meetings typically included praying, singing, partaking of the SACRAMENT of the Lord's Supper, and preaching.

Before the exodus from Nauvoo that followed the MARTYRDOM OF JOSEPH AND HYRUM SMITH in 1844, a few small Sunday School groups met regularly in scattered communities, notably in Nauvoo, Kirtland, and various cities in England. Only after the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, however, did Sunday School begin to take on its present form.

In May 1849, Richard BALLANTYNE began plans to start a Sunday School to educate the young people in the principles of the gospel and the scriptures. Some years before, in his native Scotland, he had organized a Sunday School in the Relief Presbyterian Church of which he was then a member. Having no suitable place in his Salt Lake City neighborhood for such a gathering, Ballantyne built a structure to serve both as his home and a place to hold Sunday School. Today, a monument on the northeast corner of 100 West and 300 South streets in Salt Lake City commemorates the location of this first Sunday School. The original building was eighteen feet wide and twenty feet long, furnished with wooden benches, and warmed by a stone fireplace.

On Sunday, December 9, 1849, Ballantyne gathered a group of fifty children into his newly completed home for instruction from the scriptures. Of his purpose Ballantyne wrote, "There is growth in the young. The seed sown in their hearts is more likely to bring forth fruit than when sown in the hearts of those who are more advanced in years" (Sonne, p. 51). Disturbed by observing children at play on the Sabbath day and sensing that their spiritual growth was being neglected, he added, "I wanted to gather them into the school where they could learn not to read and write, but the goodness of God, and the true Gospel of salvation given by Jesus Christ" (Sonne, p. 51).

The following year the Fourteenth Ward, in which Richard Ballantyne was serving as second counselor to Bishop John Murdock, completed its meeting house, and the rapidly growing Sunday School was moved from the Ballantyne home to the new building. The expanding Sunday School class was also divided into a number of smaller classes with additional teachers being called into