dure God’s presence who has not been purified to become like him. For this reason, Latter-day Saints view life on this earth as a period of testing and training, a time to instruct, refine, and purify the individual, making the child of God more like the Father.

The Book of Mormon tells of God allowing natural disasters to chasten people because whole communities had forgotten him, broken his commandments, and desecrated holy things (Hel. 12:3). The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that many will be blessed if they willingly turn their hearts to God and accept the call to repent and put their lives in order (D&C 93:38–52; cf. Heb. 12:5–11).

The Prophet Joseph Smith stands as an example to Latter-day Saints as one loved, yet chastened by the Lord. To carry out his mission effectively, he had to learn many lessons. Sometimes the Lord merely reminded him to humble himself and become more submissive. Other times, as when he allowed Martin Harris to take the first 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon, which were subsequently lost, the Lord withdrew the power of translation and allowed Joseph to suffer the oppression of darkness. When Joseph was incarcerated in the Liberty Jail, the Lord counseled that all his experiences would be for his good (D&C 122:7). It was, indeed, during and after this difficult period that Joseph received some very significant revelations.

GLADYS CLARK FARMER

CHASTITY, LAW OF

In the law of chastity, the Lord commands restraint in exercising the body’s sexual and procreative powers. As revealed in scripture, this law forbids all sexual relationships outside of marriage. Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also condemn pernicious or coercive sexual acts within marriage.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery,” declares the Lord in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:14). Elsewhere in scripture, he prohibits fornication, homosexuality, incest, and bestiality (Ex. 22:16; Lev. 18:6–23). Teaching in both the eastern and western hemispheres, Jesus denounced unchastity in thought as well as deed (Matt. 5:27–28; 3 Ne. 12:27–28). The apostle Paul warned that if the Saints succumbed to sexual sin they would not “re-
tain God in their knowledge” (Rom. 1:26–29). The Lord affirmed in the Book of Mormon that he “de-light[s] in the chastity of women,” condemning infidelity of husbands as an offense against wives and children (Jacob 2:28, 31–35). The prophet Abinadi indicted the priests of King Noah for harlotry and for failure to live and teach the Mosaic law that prohibits adultery (Mosiah 12:29, 13:22). Corianton was taught by his father, Alma 2, that sexual sin is “most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost” (Alma 39:5). Mormon lamented the utter degeneracy of soldiers who raped female prisoners, “depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue” (Moro. 9:9).

In latter-day revelation, Church leaders are directed to excommunicate adulterers if they refuse to repent. The Doctrine and Covenants requires adulterous desires as a denial of the faith, disqualifying offenders from the companionship of the Spirit (D&C 42:23–26, 63:16). The Prophet Joseph Smith beheld in vision that unrepentant adulterers and whoremongers will be with liars and sorcerers in the celestial kingdom (D&C 76:103).

Church leaders have repeatedly stressed obedience to the law of chastity. In an official pronouncement in 1942, the first presidency promised “the exaltations of eternities” to those who remain chaste, deploring sexual immorality as a destroyer of individuals and nations. “The doctrine of this Church,” they stated, “is that sexual sin—the illicit sexual relations of men and women—stands, in its enormity, next to murder. The Lord has drawn no essential distinctions between fornication, adultery, and harlotry or prostitution. Each has fallen under His solemn and awful condemnation” (CR 112 [Oct. 1942]:10–12). Sexual violations desecrate much that is holy, including divinely given procreative powers, the sanctity of life, marriage, and family. President David O. McKay said chastity is “the most vital part of the foundation of a happy marriage and . . . the source of strength and perpetuity of the race” (CR 137 [Apr. 1967]:8). Church leaders recognize only one standard of chastity for both men and women. Speaking in 1980, President Spencer W. Kimball affirmed: “Total chastity before marriage and total fidelity after are still the standard from which there can be no deviation without sin, misery, and unhappiness” (CR 150 [Oct. 1980]:4).
The law of chastity applies not only to behavior but also to dress, speech, and thought. Latter-day Saints are counseled to dress modestly, to use dignified language in speaking of bodily functions, and to cultivate virtuous thoughts. Accordingly, they are to avoid anything pornographic in literature, movies, television, and conversation. Though many outside the Church regard masturbation as normal, LDS leaders teach that the practice is wrong, one that feeds base appetites and may lead to other sinful conduct. Similarly, unmarried couples who engage in petting or fondling are breaking the law of chastity, and stimulating impulses that may lead to other sin.

Chastity fosters personal peace and confidence (see D&C 121:45). Referring specifically to unchastity, Alma wrote that “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10). The Church teaches that those guilty of infidelity lose the Spirit of the Lord, and bring upon themselves and their families jealousy, grief, anger, and distrust.

Persons guilty of unchastity may receive forgiveness through full repentance. Because unchastity violates baptismal and explicit temple vows, penitent offenders must confess such sins to their bishop, branch president, or other appropriate Church leader. After prayerfully considering the transgression, the Church leader may—especially in cases of adultery, fornication, or homosexuality—convocate a disciplinary council to help the transgressor through repentance and to protect the integrity of the Church. Depending on the offense and the spiritual maturity of the offender, a disciplinary council may excommunicate, disfellowship, place on probation, or exonerate the person.

Disciplinary councils usually require transgressors to seek forgiveness from individuals whom they have drawn into sexual sin and from spouses betrayed through infidelity. Transgressors are also to seek forgiveness from God through prayerful reformation of their lives, forsaking unchaste actions and thoughts. God promises that he will not remember the sins of those who repent fully (Isa. 1:18; D&C 58:42–43). However, recurrence of the transgression can cause the weight of the former sin to return (D&C 82:7), and more serious consequences to follow (D&C 42:26).

Living the law of chastity does not mean asceticism. Rather, it means to “bridle all [our] passions, that [we] may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12). Within marriage, physical intimacy strengthens the divinely ordained bond between husband and wife. By protecting the soul against carnality, chastity safeguards the joys of marriage in this life and exaltation in the life to come. Only the morally clean may enter the temple, where Latter-day Saints solemnly covenant to keep themselves chaste so that they may receive God’s greatest blessing, eternal life (D&C 14:7). Through receiving temple ordinances and remaining worthy, a husband and wife may reach a perfect union sealed by the holy spirit of promise, thus achieving a marriage that endures beyond the grave, blessed with spirit offspring in the eternities (D&C 132:19; cf. 131:1–4).

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BRYCE J. CHRISTENSEN

CHILDREN

[This entry consists of three articles: Roles of Children, Blessing of Children, and Salvation of Children. The first article explores the roles of children from leaving their heavenly parents to their roles and activities within an earthly family. The second article relates to an ordinance within the Church usually performed a few weeks after the birth of children when they are given the names by which they shall be known on the records of the Church and normally a blessing is given at the same time. The last article discusses the innocence of children until they reach the age of accountability; that their salvation is assured until that time.]

ROLES OF CHILDREN
Latter-day Saints believe that children are spirit sons and daughters of God who have come to earth with their own divine inheritances and identities. Parents, with the support of the Church, are responsible for nurturing the divine and righteous attributes of their children and for helping them develop love for God and fellow beings. Through