



Personal Purity and Intimacy

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As women of the latter days, we believe firmly in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, and virtuous. As women who have made sacred covenants with the Lord, we seek only after those things that are virtuous, lovely, or of good report, or praiseworthy (see Article of Faith 13). We, as spirit daughters of heavenly parents and as women of Christ, know that it is only through such persistent seeking after virtue and purity that we will be able to endure the days ahead. And we, who are daughters of Eve, know that personal purity is the only way for us to bring life into this world—and to bring forth life and love in all our relationships.

I believe in the power of beliefs to focus our thoughts, to generate our feelings, and to influence our behaviors.¹ I believe that if the words of bedrock belief from the thirteenth Article of Faith were embroidered on sweatshirts, silk-screened on tote bags, cross-stitched on pillows, and most importantly, engraven upon our hearts—so that we were increasingly honest, true, chaste, benevolent, and virtuous—we would have enough and to spare of intimacy in our lives.

We need intimacy. Our souls are enlarged when we experience deep-core caring—interpersonal connections which are heart-, mind-, and strength-sustaining. All relationships—parent-child, husband-wife, grandparent-grandchild, sibling, friend—all have the potential to be intimate, in developing mutual feelings of trust, emotional closeness,

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and the sharing of thoughts and feelings. Exclusively, those in marriage relationships have the privilege of enjoying an additional kind of intimacy, that of physical intimacy. First, we will discuss the incredible intimacy that can be part of all friendships and family relationships. Then we will address physical intimacy, that unique and grand intimacy that is sanctioned only in marriage.

We, as women of faith, need true intimacy. No illusions of intimacy will do. I believe that true intimacy is impossible to achieve in the absence of personal purity. In fact, through my more than twenty-five years of working with individuals, couples, and families in counseling—many of whom have been affected by the devastations of impurity—I am more and more convinced that decreased personal purity leads to decreased intimacy. And conversely, I am more and more impressed that increased personal purity leads to increased intimacy.

What else have I come to believe?

That love is brought to us by the Spirit.

That lies about love are brought to us by Satan.

That love can be present only if the Spirit is present.

That love and the Spirit coexist. You cannot have one without the other.

I believe that personal purity increases intimacy. And it is clear that keeping the Lord's commandments with ever-increasing precision increases our personal purity. Thus it follows that keeping the Lord's commandments increases intimacy. What a marvelous and sure connection! We can increase the experiences of intimacy in our lives by doing what the Lord has asked us to do. It really is just that simple!

One major issue that affects relationships is the ability to show love to the other person in a way that means love to him or to her. The Savior has asked us to show love to him by keeping his commandments (see John 14:15). And as we are faithful and diligent in keeping his commandments, he promises to encircle us in the arms of his love (see D&C 6:20).

His showing his love to us in such an affectionate way—encircling us in the arms of his love—increases our desire to keep his commandments and increases our ability to show our love to him in the way that he has asked. And thus this virtuous cycle gyroscopically spins, drawing us,

lifting us upward in our thoughts and feelings and actions, increasing our personal purity, and bringing us closer to the Savior. Our closeness to the Savior fills us with love, increasing our ability to love others and to feel love from others. Truman Madsen, in his *Four Essays on Love*, said: "You cannot love until you are loved. You cannot be loved until you are Beloved, Beloved of God."²

Not long ago in my office, a woman of great faith closed her eyes and described to her husband her feelings as she pictured herself being held by the Savior. "Brilliance!" she said. "More love than I've ever experienced in my life!" She instantly knew the feelings. Perhaps her soul was remembering.

Those light-filled, love-expanded feelings stood in stark contrast to feelings experienced for so many years in her relationship with her husband. She found his touch to be lustful. She felt like a thing, not a companion. Those feelings had been planted in her heart and mind when earlier in their marriage her husband had not kept the Lord's commandments and had broken sacred covenants. They were now facing the daunting, though not impossible, task of trying to achieve intimacy after significant exposures to impurity. Despite obstacles, the wife's closeness to the Savior filled her with love and a great desire to join with her husband in overcoming their past.

If you want to be filled with the love of the Lord, keep his commandments.

If you want to feel loved, keep the Lord's commandments.

If you truly love someone, keep the Lord's commandments.

If you truly want to experience intimacy, increase your personal purity—by keeping the Lord's commandments.

I believe our ability to experience true intimacy of any kind in any relationship is directly related to how intimate our interactions are with the Lord. The First Presidency message commencing the year 1999 was a plea from President James E. Faust to "not just . . . know about the Master, but to strive . . . to be one with Him (see John 17:21)" and to seek to "have a daily, personal relationship with [Him]."³

I believe that a personal relationship with the Savior is the only way to achieve true intimacy in our relationships with others. Without close and very personal interactions with our Savior Jesus Christ, any and all

of our interactions with others will be found wanting. Without the Savior's influence, our relationships lack, and always will lack, the power to truly sustain our hearts and minds. Without the Savior's touch, there is no staying power to loving words and actions. Without the Savior's tutoring, there is no ability to see beyond the obvious, to look deeper into the soul of another, and to see the lovable, the redeemable, the possible.

Without the love of the Savior in our lives, no other love can fill the void of being out of his presence. We lived with him and with our heavenly parents before coming to this earth. What a gift it is to know that! What a heart-comforting thought it is to remember. No wonder we long for that feeling of deep-core love, of true intimacy.

We hunger to feel understood. We thirst for someone to really trust. We yearn to really commune. We long for an interweaving of our life with another's—mentally, emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually.

As women who continually strive to honor covenants we've made, we will never find intimacy in relationships that do not honor those covenants. When we find ourselves in relationships that neither remember nor honor our covenants, we are left bereft—and we wonder what is wrong with us. Why can't we communicate better? Why doesn't he understand what I'm trying to say? Why doesn't she really care? Why do all our best relationship efforts, even those the world would applaud, fail to provide us with the palpable feelings we long for—of really being known by another, of being connected with another, of really mattering, of really being loved, even adored? Why? Because true intimacy of any kind in any relationship must involve the Savior.

As faithful Latter-day Saint women we will never find intimacy—not the true intimacy that sustains a spirit daughter of heavenly parents—within marital, family, or friend relationships that don't involve the Savior. Without the Savior, we may have loving and kind feelings for others. We may have our hearts drawn out to them. We may find great joy in sharing activities with them. We may experience moments of happiness because of their kindness to us. Yet the yearnings will always be there for more—more emotional connection, more trust, deeper sharing of thoughts and feelings.

A deep and abiding relationship with the Savior is indeed the only way to achieve true intimacy in our relationships with others. Because intimacy requires the involvement of both partners, each person in a truly intimate relationship must have a connection with the Savior, a connection that is strong and vibrant and growing. True intimacy requires that both parties' offerings of love be embedded within an intimate relationship with Him. All else will feel like a sorry substitute.

If you find yourself slipping into dark blue feelings as you reflect upon the present state of your relationships, that could be a very good sign—a sign that you are a seeker. If you are a seeker of everything that is virtuous, lovely, and of good report and praiseworthy, it means that you will be able to seek for—and find—everything that may be praiseworthy, lovely, virtuous, and of good report in those with whom you want to build a more intimate relationship, a relationship in which the Spirit is present.

As you strive and work with each of your loved ones for an increasingly intimate relationship, one that is blessed by the presence of the Spirit, the distinction between the Lord's truth about intimacy and the adversary's lies will become increasingly clear. For truly, the adversary promotes anything impure, defiling, of an illicit nature, or obscene and seeks to convince us that these things are normal, good, and part of intimacy. They are not!

Scholarly literature and research conclude that intimacy requires three things: reciprocal feelings of trust, emotional closeness, and the ability to openly communicate thoughts and feelings with another.⁴ I believe that true intimacy also involves at least one more vital ingredient—vision. And when we approach the topic of physical intimacy, vision is even more crucial.

The following story is told of a famous ethologist, Konrad Lorenz: One day in his backyard he experimented with imprinting baby ducklings—that is, getting them to respond to him as though he were their mother. Crouching over, he walked in a figure-eight pattern, quacking steadily while he glanced repeatedly over his shoulder to signal that the ducklings were to follow. To his delight, the ducklings lined up and began waddling after him. Dr. Lorenz was congratulating himself on his spectacular feat of getting the baby ducklings to follow and attach

themselves to him, an elderly man with a long white beard. At this moment of self-congratulation, he looked up—right into the faces of a group of passing tourists. They looked horrified. And Konrad Lorenz realized that from where they stood, the tourists could not see the baby ducklings. They were hidden in the tall grass. Consequently, what the onlookers saw was a demented old man walking in circles and quacking. Without the fuller picture—that is, the ducklings as well as the intent behind Konrad's behavior—a brilliant ethologist's imprinting experiment looked only like craziness.⁵

Truly we can never really understand a thing until the frame within which we are looking at it is enlarged to include all the relevant elements.

When we are seeking increased understanding about physical intimacy, which is so sacred, so powerful, we need wide-angle eternal vision and Spirit-enhanced depth perception. If our understanding of physical intimacy is based on a picture that is taken, developed, and framed by none other than the father of all lies himself, our experiences with physical intimacy will be deadly. We must mediate our understanding by the death-defying power in the Savior's atonement.

Satan's portrayal of physical intimacy is cunning, counterfeit, and contorting. His skewed view of physical intimacy comes to us through movies, magazines, and music—actually, through any and all publications and productions known to humankind—from stage plays to Internet chat rooms. When our vision clears and our frame is enlarged, we see the adversary's ploys for what they really are: elaborate and extensive maneuverings to capture our very souls. Lucifer covets our bodies and our spirits and those of our loved ones, and he is relentless in his sinister pursuit.

If you wonder how really old the adversary's craftiness is, and therefore how really good he is at his craft, just read Romans 1:24–31 and 2 Timothy 3:1–6. What Paul describes there is available for you to see in living color in your own home, with the assistance of your television, VCR, and computer. Paul's account of what the people were involved in—people who once knew God and yet turned away—sounds just like one night's worth of prime-time sitcoms (better, “sick coms”).

Here is Paul's report: “[And they were] filled with all unrighteousness,

fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity . . . backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful" (Romans 1:29–31).

Next, here is how Paul, writing to Timothy, describes the last days—our days. Think about where you may have seen these things before: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:1–4).

And then the most chilling message of all. It's not bad enough that those horrible things are happening out there in the world. The worst part is that they come sneaking, creeping into our homes and influencing us.

Here is verse 6: "For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts" (2 Timothy 3:6). Could Paul possibly be talking about afternoon soap operas and talk shows—and how, through them, all these offenses creep into our homes? And could he be describing those who watch them? Are we silly when we watch them? And is watching them leading us away into divers lusts?

Could Isaiah possibly be speaking to us, the Lord's women of the latter days, when he says: "Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters" (Isaiah 32:9). Have we been careless? Have we drifted far too much in the direction of the world's view, which is so saturated with Lucifer's lies about physical intimacy?

It is indeed time for Zion's daughters to rise up and be not careless but careful! Careful about everything that comes into our hearts, minds, and homes which pertains to physical intimacy. Could the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith apply to how we may at times have carelessly thought about, and talked about, physical intimacy? Joseph Smith said: "How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations—too low,

too mean, too vulgar, too condescending.”⁶ We must be very careful with our language and our conversations about everything that relates to this sacred physical endowment.

On the other hand, we need to be bold in exposing Lucifer and his lies. We need to rise up and with ever-increasing clarity point out his counterfeits, his deceptions, his trickery. I believe that all satanically influenced presentations about physical intimacy should be stamped “More Lies!” To protect our minds and hearts, our homes and families from the intrusions of the devil’s devices, perhaps we need big, bold warning signs on every book, magazine, videotape, audiotape, TV sitcom, movie, or play which has been coproduced by the adversary himself—warning signs that would reveal his works for what they really are: angry protests against God and persistent, power-hungry efforts to obliterate the truth. When I think about all the individuals I have had the privilege to assist, whose lives in one way or another have been shattered and shackled as a result of moral transgressions, I want to post a warning on each and every satanically coproduced product about physical intimacy. The warning I would post is simple. It would read: “If you choose to open this, you will be giving the adversary more power over you.”

I would also display six other, more explicit, warnings on Lucifer’s contaminated and contaminating material. As you read, note which warnings, if heeded, might form a protective barrier, encircling our families and shutting the adversary out.

Warning 1. To be stamped on the cover of his magazines: “Contents highly addictive. Materials enclosed are extremely corrosive to the soul. Be prepared to have your mind twisted, your views of love ravaged, your spirit shrunk. Be aware that the Spirit of the Lord will not be with you during or after viewing. Be prepared to experience an initial rush and then prolonged feelings of depression, loneliness, despair, and guilt. With repeated exposures over time, however, you can numb those feelings and enter an almost total amnesia about who you really are and about truth itself.”

Warning 2. For the beginning of Satan’s coproduced movies: “The following scenes are brought to you in the hope that you will think of yourself as merely an animal. (Nevertheless, be advised that animal dung

is actually more pure and would harm you less when taken into your system.) Extreme caution required. This movie will make you believe that lust is really love and that all that love really is, or can be, is lust. This movie will have its greatest effect if viewed when you are feeling misunderstood, alone, blue, or just that you don't fit in. If you are not in any of these moods, viewing the movie will assist in getting you there. If you are in one of these moods, your spirit will be more vulnerable and thus your ability to distinguish good from evil will be even more quickly extinguished."

Warning 3. For the devil's Internet connections: "Share the following with someone whose soul you would like to destroy. Complete success is ensured if you can offer it in the spirit of friendship and under the guise of love. By thinking and talking together about the content, all sweet, pure feelings will be distorted into grand perversions. Pick a perversion, any perversion. That may be one of the very last choices you will get to make. In fact, if you are tired of making choices, just view the following several times—or keep immersing yourself in similar material—and your freedom will be progressively diminished with each successive viewing. The irony is that you will be provided with a personalized illusion that your freedom is actually increasing. We've taken this effect far beyond the old smoke-and-mirrors tricks, and the illusions that will influence your heart and mind will be stunning. Virtual reality is here to replace virtuous living."

Warning 4. To announce the adversary's influence on prime-time viewing: "How many lies can you find in the following sitcom? If you can't find any . . . Gotcha! In the following time slot, we will offer you ideas that you have never before entertained. They may at first repel, but with repetition and humor, we will slowly dilute the initial recoiling of your spirit, and you will begin to forget that a time ever existed when you didn't believe these lies to be true."

Warning 5. A lie-busting warning for rented videos: "Fantasy only allowed here. Only erotic illusions contained. No empathic love depicted. No consequences noted. No effects on your body, your spirit, or your relationships with God, family, and friends are addressed. Please note that interactions will appear far more splendid than they really are. This is not real life, but it is a really great lie. We have left out the gory

details that would only ruin the subtle appeal this movie will have for you.”

Warning 6. For videos purchased: “Congratulations! You bought the movie this time instead of just renting it. In fact, you are buying this whole scheme—hook, line, and sinker. Let’s just have this be our little secret. No one needs to know. No one will ever be able to tell. When people tell you that you are looking or talking differently, darker somehow, or that you are more difficult to get along with, just get angry at them and go buy another movie or magazine with similar content. Actually, you will soon be ready to advance to our total-destruction-of-the-senses line. You, too, will soon be past feeling.”

What is the effect if those six warnings are not heeded? That would bring us to an intermission. Here is the announcement: “We will soon be taking a commercial break. You viewers, on the other hand, now a bit more dull in your thinking, a little more under the spell of adversary-induced amnesia—you are now primed for a different kind of break. How about breaking your covenants? Breaking your husband’s heart? Breaking apart your marriage? Breaking your children’s and parents’ and siblings’ and friends’ hearts? All of these breaks that you never thought possible are now just a little more within your reach.”

One client told me that after watching a certain popular movie she first started thinking about having an affair with the man who was building her family’s new house. She had the affair. Her house was built. Her marriage was destroyed. Those involved now live in three separate houses: the builder (it seems strange to call him that) with his wife in one home, the woman with some of her children in another, and her former husband and the rest of the children in yet another. No one lives in the house the affair destroyed. Now, this was and is a good woman. She was not a woman without a sense of right or wrong. She understood gospel principles and had served as a Relief Society president before this very sad, destructive time in her life.

That’s the horror. Lucifer hates good women and is poised and ready to intrude his lies into good women’s lives. He’s swift. He’s very effective. He knows if he can take down a good woman, he can take down a whole family in one fell swoop. Talk about the economy of Lucifer. The devil’s domino effect in action!

It's time to make certain that Satan does not have a grip on our hearts, minds, homes, and families. If we find any evidence of his blatantly obvious or even his covertly subtle presence, we need to cast him out. We need to do more than just loosen his grip; we need to cast him out so that the Spirit can teach us the grand eternal truths about physical intimacy, which we are to teach to our families.

The Lord has not left us alone. He has provided his truth about intimacy through his scriptures and his prophets. As you prayerfully seek his guidance, you will come to know what you can do right now to determine if the adversary's impure influence is in your life—and if so, to know how to remove it. It may just be time for some very serious spring cleaning. Only when our hearts and homes are cleansed from the adversary's filthy falsehoods can the Lord's words about physical intimacy lodge deep in our hearts and bring the sweet peace that truth always brings.

The Proclamation on the Family addresses physical intimacy, declaring that "God has commanded that the[se] sacred powers . . . are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife."⁷ Could it be any clearer than that? This declaration means that any and all other physical intimacies are outside God's law. They're wrong. So, when I speak of physical intimacy, I am speaking about it only in the context sanctioned by God—within the marriage relationship. God intended physical intimacy for only husbands and wives to share. Doesn't that one truth speak volumes about its sacred importance?

Years ago at a BYU devotional, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland presented three eternal truths about physical intimacy in his landmark address "Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments."⁸ He reaffirmed those same truths as an apostle of the Lord in October 1998 general conference.⁹ Recognizing the truth about physical intimacy often invites a paradigm shift. I love to watch clients when they experience paradigm shifts about physical intimacy after reading Elder Holland's talk. Those with eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts and minds to understand almost immediately take several giant steps forward in co-creating love, often for the very first time.

Elder Holland clearly sets forth three grand truths about marital intimacy. First, physical intimacy is a soulful experience, involving the body

and the spirit. The body is indeed the “great prize of mortal life.”¹⁰ We, as members of the Lord’s Church, are doctrinally distinct from other religions in understanding that the body and the spirit are the soul of man.¹¹ Physical intimacy should involve your soul—your body and your spirit, not just your body. One righteous and articulate woman who is a wife, mother, and grandmother expressed it beautifully when she said: “I believe that physical union is a completion of the temple sealing. It is the completion of the temple covenants—truly consummating the love that brought you to the temple. Physical love is like a seal upon a seal.”

What would need to be different for you and your husband to experience physical intimacy as a more soulful experience?

The second grand truth offered by Elder Holland is that physical intimacy is a symbol of the total commitment and union a husband and wife should have for each other in all areas of their lives. If the only time a husband and wife unite is during physical union, they are probably experiencing “counterfeit intimacy,” as Victor L. Brown Jr. describes it. “Counterfeit intimacy” occurs when we relate to each other in fragments—a fragment of a wife here connecting with a fragment of her husband there.¹² So how do you and your husband unite in ways other than physical union? What needs to change in your life, in your relationship with your spouse, so that there is more uniting, more intertwining of your lives, more demonstration of commitment to each other in many ways—talking with each other, working on problems together, learning to enjoy small moments and the joy of just being together? And how about learning to laugh—together, not at one another. One woman said pure laughter unites her heart with her husband’s. In fact, she said, “I’ve learned that while anger kills my desire for physical intimacy, laughter gives life to it.”

How united are you in your daily activities, such as teaching and loving your children, paying your bills? How united are you in your thoughts and feelings? I remember one couple who rarely overlapped in their activities or shared their thoughts or feelings. They continually bickered and disagreed about everything. In fact, the only thing they expressed similar opinions about was how very disagreeable the other was.

Could your physical uniting be enhanced as you and your husband do

more things together? Your physical uniting is meant to be a symbol of your total union, not the total and only occurrence of union.

The third grand eternal truth is that physical intimacy is a kind of sacrament, a time to draw close to God, a time “when we quite literally unite our will with God’s will, our spirit with His spirit, where communion through the veil becomes very real.”¹³ That is a profound truth. Sadly, however, it is the exact opposite, the antithesis, of what far too many people believe. Blinded by the adversary’s lying lens, many suppose that they are never more distant from the Lord than when joining together in physical union. Nothing could be further from the truth. So now, consider the real truth: Physical intimacy is a sacramental moment.

Elder Holland states that at sacramental moments “we not only acknowledge [God’s] divinity but we quite literally take something of that divinity to ourselves.”¹⁴ The Lord counsels us not to partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper unworthily (3 Nephi 18:28–29) because his blessings will not be there (in fact, damnation will be there). I wonder if that counsel applies also to partaking unworthily of the sacred sharing of physical intimacy.

In my clinical practice, I have worked with couples who have broken covenants of marital fidelity and couples in which one spouse has approached this marital sacrament with unclean hands and an impure heart. The outcomes are tragic and sadly predictable. I salute the husband who, following disfellowshipment, chose on his own to wait for physical intimacy with his wife until he was more pure. Following this self-imposed period of abstinence, he read to his wife one evening from Doctrine and Covenants 46. Her heart was irresistibly drawn towards his. She experienced that moment as the most wonderfully effective prelude to physical intimacy they had ever shared in twenty-five years of marriage. Feeling spiritually more connected with her husband enhanced her desire to be connected with him physically.

In another instance, a woman spoke of times when her husband, ravaged by self-doubts and collisions with the brutal world, felt unworthy in almost every way. She then said tenderly, almost reverently, “In those moments, physical intimacy was the only way I could really help him feel loved—worthy of love, worthy *to* love.” Probably there are many

ways and many reasons why spouses can feel closer to the Lord as they unite in the marital sacrament.

When marital intimacy is embedded in personal purity, love is co-created—pure love, the kind of love Elder Parley P. Pratt describes. “I had loved before, but I knew not why. But now I loved—with a pureness—an intensity of elevated, exalted feeling, which would lift my soul from the transitory things of this grovelling sphere and expand it as the ocean. I felt that God was my heavenly Father indeed; that Jesus was my brother, and that the wife of my bosom was an immortal, eternal companion. . . . In short, I could now love with the spirit and with the understanding also.”¹⁵

I believe that the Lord blesses spouses who love each other purely. I believe he blesses spouses whose passions and appetites have been influenced by the Holy Ghost. We were given the gift of the Holy Ghost for exactly such a time as this. Is it difficult to believe that the Holy Ghost will help you express your love physically? He will. Pray for it.

Listen to what the Holy Ghost will do for you, as written by the hand of Elder Parley P. Pratt: “The gift of the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands, and purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use.”¹⁶ Isn’t that wonderful? The Holy Ghost will make us smarter! That’s a much-needed blessing for lots of us!

No matter what our IQ, when we embrace sin, even in the slightest way, the Holy Ghost departs, and our intellectual faculties are not as sharp. We are just not as bright as we could be. And we behave in increasingly stupid ways. We start acting as if we are the center of the universe, and we calculate everyone’s mistreatment and cruelty to us. I don’t know about you, but I believe sin makes me even more than selfish. I believe that sin makes me stupid! Conversely and happily, as we seek to become increasingly pure and therefore are increasingly open to the influence of the Holy Ghost, we can become brighter in every way and more benevolent, more empathic—all great advantages for spouses and spouses-to-be.

Now, back to Elder Pratt’s words: “The Holy Ghost . . . increases, enlarges, expands, and purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use.” So we need

not worry that increased purity might decrease our God-given passions. Our natural passions (the operative word is *natural*) will be increased, purified, and adapted to their lawful use. Spirit-magnified and spirit-purified passion will always be greater than lust. The ability to have our passions magnified, purified, and adapted seems to be something very worthy of prayer or even of fasting. Whether married or unmarried, we need our natural passions and affections to be purified, and we need the wisdom to use them lawfully. And just think of the healing that could come to so many who struggle with the effects of their own moral sins or those of others. Think of the healing that is available as they seek to receive this blessing, this gift from the Holy Ghost. As we seek the increased influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives, we need to do all we can do to overcome the temptations that so easily beset us. Elder Holland's address is filled with striking truths that change our thinking and thus our behavior. I have offered clients the opportunity to reflect on some of those truths:

A woman who was perpetually tempted to behave in an illicit manner rehearsed in her mind a question when she felt herself weakening. The question that helped her was, "If I were to remember that by acting on these illicit impulses I am actually toying with that person's very soul—the body and the spirit, both of which are sacred—how would I quickly manage this situation?"

A man struggling with serious financial problems who also sought to loosen the bands of pornography from his heart and mind was assisted by the following question: "If I were to believe that by sinning morally, trivializing my own body and that of another's, I was both trivializing the Savior's atonement and also setting myself up for financial ruin, how would I manage these illicit impulses?"

Life is filled with unexpected events. "But if [we] are prepared [we] shall not fear" (D&C 38:30). And if we are prepared, we also will not be caught off guard and will not succumb to temptation. How would you respond if someone you like and admire approached you to engage in something illicit? Be prepared with something to say, such as, "I am so sorry that you don't know that this is wrong. I am so sorry that you believe that this is a loving request. It is not. It will ruin both our souls, and it trivializes all that the Savior did for us through the Atonement."

And what if the person asking you to engage in something defiling is your husband, whom you love? President Boyd K. Packer anticipated this attack on personal purity from within marriage. He counseled: "A married couple may be tempted to introduce things into their relationship that are unworthy. Do not, as the scriptures warn, 'change the natural use into that which is against nature' (Romans 1:26). If you do, the tempter will drive a wedge between you."¹⁷ Anything that offends the Spirit or either spouse's spirit will allow the tempter to drive a wedge between husbands and wives.

"I was talked out of my feelings." Those haunting words are from a woman whose husband on their wedding night had convinced her to consummate their love in a manner that offended her spirit. For years afterwards they carried on the illusion of a marriage. That was the best they could do in a union where the woman felt numb and the man felt rejected.

One last word about Elder Holland's address. I believe our responses to truth reflect our present spiritual state. Thus, "Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments" can serve as a Rorschach test of our present spiritual growth and development. These truths, like the truths in the scriptures, speak to us differently at different times, depending on the light within us. Changes between how we respond to Elder Holland's apostolic offering today versus how we respond reading it a year later could measure changes in our personal purity. As we increase the light in our lives, more and more is illuminated about these three grand truths: physical intimacy is a soulful experience; physical intimacy is a symbol of total commitment and union; and physical intimacy is a sacrament. The more pure our hearts, minds, and hands, the clearer will be our understanding of these truths.

The Prophet Joseph Smith spoke of this process. He said, "We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin."¹⁸

We need to be women who increase in our understanding of these

three grand truths about physical intimacy. We need to live by them. These are lifesaving, eternal truths for each of us and our families.

As women of the latter days, we need to seek diligently to increase the purity in our lives by keeping the Lord's commandments with ever-increasing impeccability. As women who have made sacred covenants with the Lord, we need to draw closer to him and invite others to come unto him. We, as spirit daughters of heavenly parents, need to ensure that Satan is continually cast out of our hearts, minds, homes, and families. We, as women of Christ, need to forge intimate relationships with others that involve him. We, as daughters of Eve, need to distinguish good from evil and partake of physical intimacy only within the sacred ordinance of marriage. And as we do, we will co-create intimate relationships that are truly out of this world!

When our faith is tried, when we become weary and discouraged about our ability to do *all* we have been charged to do, perhaps remembering the sacred vision of Elder Melvin J. Ballard will help us never to waver: "I was taken into the most splendid room. . . . Seated on a raised platform was one of the most beautiful and exalted beings I had ever beheld, and I was informed that I might be introduced to him, and I came forward, and as I did so he arose and descended to meet me, and the smile he extended towards me I shall never forget through all the ages that are to come, and as he took me in his arms and kissed me and hugged me to his bosom and gave me a blessing that made the marrow in my bones to melt, and as I kissed his feet I saw the prints of the nails. The feeling that came to me then was one that I cannot describe other than to say that I felt unworthy of that privilege. I felt, oh, how little I have done to receive such distinguished privileges as these. If the day will ever come that I may have that privilege I would be willing to give all that I ever may and ever hope to be. If I can only obtain that which I have felt and know as the joy and the privilege of faithful Latter-day Saints. It is no myth. I know it as I live, and it is worth giving everything for. These days when your faith may be tried, waver not, be true and faithful towards the word of the Lord. I testify to you that it is true, and every promise and blessing that has been sealed upon your heads you will realize. When you do, it will be beyond anything you have contemplated in this life."¹⁹

“Wherefore, my beloved [sisters], pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the [daughters] of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:48).

NOTES

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5. Paul Watzlawick, Janet Helmick Beavin, and Don D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), 20.
6. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 137.
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9. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, November 1998, 75–78.
10. Holland and Holland, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven*, 187.
11. James E. Talmage, Conference Report, October 1913, 117.
12. Victor L. Brown Jr., *Human Intimacy: Illusion and Reality* (Salt Lake City: Parliament Publishers, 1981), 5–6.
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14. Holland, *Ensign*, November 1998, 77.
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16. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, Classics in Mormon Literature Series (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 61.
17. Boyd K. Packer, *The Things of the Soul* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 113.
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19. Melvin J. Ballard, Conference Report, October 1917, 111–12.