



And It Was Very Good
A Latter-day Saint's Guide

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E-signature: Earthly Parents

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Thousands of young people come to the marriage altar almost illiterate insofar as this basic and fundamental function is concerned.

—Hugh B. Brown

Parents have primary responsibility for the sex education of their children.

—Handbook 2: Administering in the Church

Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.

—Proverbs 8:10

Our Family's Sexual Articles of Faith

We have written this book for you, our beloved children. As your earthly parents, we have been charged with teaching you about sex. We have been counseled to instruct you “reverently but frankly and without embarrassment.”

We hope this book may help you have fulfilling sex lives and avoid misunderstandings that strain too many marriages. We suggest you read this book before your wedding night. You and your spouse may refer back to chapters in the privacy of your home, as you desire. You are past the age where we direct your actions. Instead, consider this book to be advice.

As Latter-day Saints, we raised you to think of sex as a “thou shalt not” before marriage. That was the Lord’s direction for you at that time in your life. You have a new commandment in marriage. In marriage, sex is not a barely tolerated necessity of the natural man. In marriage, sex is a “thou shalt.”

We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.... We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed.

—*The Family: A Proclamation to the World*

As an important part of the expression of their love, the Lord wants a husband and wife to partake of the wonders and joys of marital intimacy.

—*Wendy W. Nelson*

It's not a suggestion. Embrace what that implies. God wants you to do it. It's right there. Some of us need permission to enjoy something. If that's you, permission granted, from God himself.

Some transitions in life are harder than others. The transition from sexual repression to expression can be difficult. After being raised in a "thou shalt not" phase of life, turning on a dime in marriage can be jarring. Some Latter-day Saints report that sex, even in marriage, feels unclean. Some have their self-worth tied to a premarital denial of sexuality. Some regret a supposed loss of virtue on the wedding night.

As these unfortunate newlyweds move from "thou shalt not" to "thou shalt," they bring the guilty undertones of premarital sex to the marriage bed. They can't quite shake the idea that sex is sin. Some find it hard to let go of the premarital habit of repressing sexual feelings. Those members may struggle to give their spouses the gift of being desired. Some continue a habit of being sexually secretive instead of opening themselves to sexual sharing. Some couples decorate their bedrooms with more shame than pillows. Some couples feel they must choose between sexuality and spirituality.

This is tragic. It's not what God intends for you.

Other couples find married sex to be joyful. They recognize that sexuality may be a refuge from the world with the right person at the right time. They understand that both husband's and wife's sexualities are God-given gifts to share with the other. These couples recognize that in marriage we will be spiritual *and* sexual. Indeed, these couples realize sexuality may be a deeply spiritual act. We wish this for you.

Such an act of love between a man and a woman is—or certainly was ordained to be—a symbol of total union: union of their hearts, their hopes, their lives, their love, their family, their future, their everything.

—Jeffrey R. Holland

Destructive Sex

“Thou shalt not”

Sinful

Shameful

Selfish

Dirty

Denying

Suppressed

Harming

Don't drag
something
from here...

Married Sex

“Thou shalt”

Spiritual

Joyful

Shared

Pure

Desiring

Expressed

Healing

...to here!

It's worth laying out our fundamental beliefs about married sex. These beliefs seem good and right to us. These beliefs appear to us to have doctrinal support. We have received confirmation from the Spirit that we should pass our beliefs on to you. Don't rely on our faith, of course. We suggest you and your spouse consult with the Spirit and decide in your own hearts if you share our beliefs and if you wish to adopt them in your own family. Our family's "Sexual Articles of Faith" form the foundation upon which we have built our views of sexuality—in this book and in our lives.

We believe sexuality is a good gift from our heavenly parents.

We believe we are literal children of God. Our heavenly parents have gifted us with bodies like unto theirs. These bodies include sexuality in all its wonder. Indeed, if there is any religion on the earth today that may lay claim to a belief in the divinity of sex, it is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We believe married sex is for joy and bonding in addition to creating new mortal bodies for spirit children to inhabit.

We are that we might have joy—and not just for the life hereafter.

...sexual relations within marriage are divinely approved not only for the purpose of procreation, but also as a way of expressing love and strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife.

—Handbook 2: Administering in the Church

**We believe God has ordained sex for the married couple.
Nobody else should be involved.**

Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another's body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God.

—Richard G. Scott

**We believe sex is not a right
to be demanded but a gift to be
offered and received voluntarily.**

...a woman should be queen of her own body. The marriage covenant does not give the man the right to enslave her, or to abuse her, or to use her merely for the gratification of his passion. Your marriage ceremony does not give you that right.

—David O. McKay

**We believe husbands and wives are
individually responsible for expressing their
own sexual desires and for caring for each
other's sexual needs.**

Nobody else can do this for you.

Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other...

—The Family: A Proclamation to the World

Tenderness and respect—never selfishness—must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Each partner must be considerate and sensitive to the other's needs and desires.

—Howard W. Hunter

**We believe viewing
pornography is forbidden.**

Church leaders warn against viewing sexually explicit images of those outside the marriage. We're not going to recommend viewing pornography, and we won't discuss it except to point out some of its downsides.

We didn't cover all this in family home evening. Rather, we have consciously shielded you prior to now from detailed erotic knowledge. We asked you to wait to date until the age of sixteen. We discouraged exposure to media we believed might tempt you to commit sexual sin. We avoided discussing some intimate details so we would not heighten your sexual feelings when you weren't ready to make good use of them.

Parents ideally teach sexual facts and values. No other source is likely to give you both.

Church instructs on values but few sexual facts. The values taught on Sunday tend toward the “thou shalt not” part. Over the years we’ve been instructed at least one hundred times on the evils of pornography and exactly zero times on techniques of sexual pleasure. Church members are human and may pass on false traditions. It’s our observation that false teachings among fellow Latter-day Saints tend toward negative framing of God-given sexuality and normal sexual behavior that might bless a marriage. Well-meaning people sometimes pass on rules that don’t exist.

We don’t expect school to have taught you gospel values about sex. We don’t even expect school sex education to have given you the useful facts. Some sex-ed classes focus on menstrual cycles and puberty while skipping the how-to bits. How to find the clitoris in the dark probably wasn’t on the quiz.

The internet has the facts somewhere out there, of course. Unfortunately, keyword searches practically guarantee you will see porn. That’s just the reality. Plus, the internet is full of nonsense.

The magazines you see in the grocery checkout line are the worst. They just make stuff up. It’s easier to make up a quote than it is to interview an expert. It’s easier to make up statistics than it is to look up an actual study.

Sex manuals are better. However, far too many are thinly veiled pornography. Even if you do come across an accurate, non-salacious sex manual, the framing may be counter to gospel principles.

Here, we’ve chosen facts and advice from select manuals, expert-hosted podcasts, and academic journals. We have avoided the outright pornographic nature of some sources and have steered clear of that which is in direct conflict with unambiguous gospel teachings.

That’s not to say you or your spouse will read this and necessarily think we’ve drawn the line at the right place. Where God is silent on what exactly is fulfilling the law of chastity, we’re not filling in the blanks for you. We

can't. Married sex is actually one of the least rule-bound areas of the gospel. It's largely left to you and your spouse to work out how to use your sexuality to bless each other. Perhaps married sex is an area where God has decided it is not meet that we be commanded in all things.

Along those lines, there is no doctrine of which we are aware governing whose hand does what during married sexual activity. That's not an endorsement but an honest admission. This one is up to you, your spouse, and the Lord.

This gets us to our family's seventh and last Sexual Article of Faith.

We believe sex that unites a married couple in Christ is good and sex that divides a married couple is bad.

God intends the married couple to "become as one." Sex can be a glorious means to this end. A faithful Latter-day Saint couple may study in their own minds (and bodies!) if this or that sexual act is good or bad given their unique circumstances. A first test can be "does this act unite us or divide us?" Sex that unites a couple may accomplish the will of the Lord. Sex that divides a couple cannot.

Now is the right time. Here is what we feel you should know.

EARTHLY PARENTS

*A practical, forthright guide to marital sexuality. **And It Was Very Good** offers important sex education and relationship guidance that many Latter-day Saint couples need.*

—Jennifer Finlayson-Fife, PhD, LCPC
Host of the "Ask a Mormon Sex Therapist" podcast.

***And It Was Very Good** is a valuable resource of clinically accurate and comprehensive sexual education that fits within the value structure of Latter-day Saints. Many problems I see as a sex therapist could be avoided if couples had this type of information prior to or at the beginning of their marital relationship.*

—Natasha Helfer Parker, LCMFT, CST
Host of the "Mormon Sex Info" podcast.

A comprehensive resource for couples to help navigate the landscape of sexual intimacy within marriage. I'm glad there are more resources out there for couples (and for parents!). I would even refer this book to clients who are not of our faith.

—Barbara Murray, MSW, LCSW
Author of Taking Back Parenting

***And It Was Very Good** is by far the most helpful book I have read on how to have healthy sex and make love with your spouse. It gives couples a mature and responsible view of marital sex as well as paving the way to help couples avoid sexual neglect and dormant passion that thrives in too many marriages.*

—Elaine J. Davis, LPC, LMFT

I became a marriage and family therapist in part to share what I have learned from my own mistakes, and give others hope. Reading your book makes me wish I had had it before I got married!

—Kelley Molinari, LMFTA

*What a great guide for couples wanting to expand on their intimate relationship. Most religious based sexual education books gloss over intimacy, but **And It Was Very Good** goes in depth, which can help couples have the much needed conversations to improve their intimate relationship.*

—Dena LeTendre, LCMHC

I have read every LDS book on sex and nothing has come close to being this helpful.

—Matthew Bridgstock, LCSW, CST, CSA

*As a parent of young children and a marriage and family therapist, I find **And It Was Very Good** profoundly useful in both my personal and professional lives.*

—Caitlin Olsen, MS, LMFT

A practical, easy read guide in helping couples maneuver through delicate issues without feeling embarrassed or inadequate.

—Trevor Irish, LCMHC

And It Was Very Good provides practical information about sex for married heterosexual couples in a safe and tasteful framework that many Latter-day Saints will appreciate and find non-threatening. If you would like to know more about sexuality but would prefer to avoid internet searches and pornographic material, this book is for you.

—KELLY FURR, MS, LAMFT

Our Family's
SEXUAL ARTICLES
OF FAITH



*W*E BELIEVE SEXUALITY is a good gift from our heavenly parents.

2 We believe married sex is for joy and bonding in addition to creating new mortal bodies for spirit children to inhabit.

3 We believe God ordained sex for the married couple. Nobody else should be involved.

4 We believe sex is not a right to be demanded but a gift to be offered and received voluntarily.

5 We believe husbands and wives are individually responsible for expressing their own sexual desires and for caring for each other's sexual needs.

6 We believe viewing pornography is forbidden.

7 We believe sex that unites a married couple in Christ is good and sex that divides a married couple is bad.

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