

# Preparing for Intimacy

Chapter 12

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1. The Lord's counsel in the 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants is a wonderful guide for spouses: "Cease from all your light speeches . . . from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and light-mindedness, and from all your wicked doings. . . . See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another. . . . Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated. And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity." (D&C 88:121, 123–25.) This advice could form the foundation of an entire marriage manual!

2. In fact, many problems that plague marriages would be eliminated if these words of the Lord were obeyed. The following table suggests a few ways they might be applied:

| MARITAL PROBLEM                      | THE LORD'S SOLUTION                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Criticism and emotional abuse        | Cease to find fault; cease from all pride                                               |
| Hygiene/housekeeping problems        | Cease to be unclean                                                                     |
| Pornography                          | Cease your lustful desires and wicked doings; cease to be unclean                       |
| Adultery                             | Cease to be covetous; cease your lustful desires and wicked doings; cease to be unclean |
| Trivializing marital intimacy itself | Cease from all your light speeches and lightmindedness                                  |
| Selfishness                          | Learn to impart one to another                                                          |
| Pride                                | Cease from all your pride                                                               |

|                                                                |                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Financial problems                                             | Cease to be idle; cease to be covetous; cease from all your pride                                                                          |
| Communication problems                                         | Cease to find fault; cease from your pride; learn to impart one to another; cease from all your light speeches                             |
| Laziness; "underinvolvement" in caring for the home and family | Cease to be idle; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to bed early and arise early that your bodies and minds may be invigorated |

3. Now, consider what would happen if the Lord's instructions of *what to do* in the midst of all that "ceasing" were followed: "See that ye love one another. . . . And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity." Imagine how well prepared for marital intimacy husbands and wives would be if just that one injunction were really followed!

## 4. Let the Holy Spirit Guide

5. As men and women of Christ and of covenant, we can never expect to find a fulness of joy by following the world's prescription for sexual intimacy. We can't participate in "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" and still do "the will of God." ([1 John 2:16–17](#).) Paul's words provide a great guideline for spouses seeking to prepare for co-creating love. He counsels, "Refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness." ([1 Timothy 4:7](#).) Looking beyond the world's "profane and old wives' fables" can help Latter-day Saint couples prepare for God-ordained sexual intimacy.

6. One bewildered husband said, "Okay, now I know what I'm *not* supposed to do. But I don't have a clue about what I *should* do. I want to be able to offer my wife the kind of marital intimacy we're talking about, but if I can't take my lead from what I see on TV and in movies, what do I do? I'm not good at thinking of these things myself."

7. Fortunately, this husband doesn't have to figure out by himself how to prepare for marital intimacy, and neither do you. Consider some of the spiritual truths we have discussed. We start with the foundational understanding that intimacy of any kind involves reciprocal feelings of trust and emotional closeness and an open communication of thoughts and feelings. Hence, the more a husband and wife experience open

communication, trust, and emotional closeness with each other, the greater their prospects for enjoying true marital intimacy. The more unified spouses are in all areas of their lives, the more intimate their relationship will be. Physical intimacy then becomes a symbol of their overall unity. True marital intimacy becomes a time for them to draw closer to each other by uniting their whole souls—bodies and spirits. And it becomes a time when spouses can draw closer to the Lord. With these ideas in mind, it follows naturally then that any activity that (1) draws spouses' hearts out to one another and (2) invites the Spirit will help prepare a couple for marital intimacy.

8. The more you prepare yourself spiritually, bringing yourself more in tune with your spouse's spirit and with the Spirit, the more fulfilling your sexual experiences will become over time. In the words of one wife, "I never feel closer to my husband than when he is under the influence of the Spirit." Another wife said, "The greatest elixir of love for me is when my husband says, 'I want to spend time with you,' 'I want to know what's really on your mind,' 'How are you really doing?'" As spouses seek the Lord's help about how to prepare for marital intimacy, the Holy Ghost will whisper truth-filled directives especially for them.

#### 9. Thirty Activities That Can Increase Feelings of Intimacy

10. Following are thirty activities that various couples have found draw their hearts out to one another and invite the Spirit, setting the stage for greater intimacy in their relationship.

- 1) Think and ask about how your spouse is really doing and feeling.
- 2) Do things to lift your spouse's burdens and to let your spouse know that he or she is not alone. In other words, shore up your spouse's feeble knees and strengthen his or her hands that hang down.
- 3) Think about what would help strengthen your spouse's spirit and help him or her feel better about himself or herself.
- 4) Do things together—walk, work, play, dream, spend, and save *together*.
- 5) Talk and express your thoughts and feelings before, during, and after physically intimate moments.
- 6) Be involved in each other's lives and in the lives of your children. (As one woman said, "When I see my husband involved with our children, my heart is irresistibly drawn out to him.")

- 7) Draw a boundary around your marital intimacy. Keep the in-laws and your children and friends out. This is your sacred space and private experience. Keep it as yours alone.
- 8) Create a private sanctuary for the two of you—and include a lock on the door.
- 9) Take responsibility for what you do to contribute to the problems in your marriage. Apologize sincerely. Ask for forgiveness and willingly offer forgiveness.
- 10) Pray together and individually to hear the voice of the Lord.
- 11) Look for subtle—and not-so-subtle—ways that the adversary is holding your marriage hostage. Talk with each other about it.
- 12) Cast Satan out of your lives and your relationship.
- 13) Seek ideas for strengthening your marriage in the scriptures, together and individually.
- 14) Use "we," "us," and "our" language in public and in private.
- 15) Designate one time a week that is just for the two of you to talk and be together.
- 16) Go to the temple together, remember your covenants, and talk about how you felt there, what came to your mind, what you learned.
- 17) Fast together for your marriage.
- 18) Look into your spouse's eyes—really look.
- 19) Smile and laugh together.
- 20) Comment on your spouse's strengths, both privately and publicly.
- 21) Turn to each other first when there are challenges. Cry together when the occasion warrants it.
- 22) Thank your spouse.
- 23) Thank the Lord for your spouse.
- 24) Express love for your spouse in word and deed—more than he or she would ever expect—in private and in public.
- 25) Express love for the Lord privately and publicly—frequently.
- 26) Remember that you are a child of God with divine characteristics and potential.
- 27) Remember that you've made sacred covenants with your spouse and with the Lord.

28) Remember that true marital intimacy involves the uniting of your souls—your body and spirit joining with the body and spirit of your spouse.

29) Remember that co-creating love is to be symbolic of the total unity that can exist between you and your spouse.

30) Remember that marital intimacy can be a kind of sacrament. It can be a time to draw closer to the Lord together and receive of His power.

11. This list is neither prescriptive nor all-inclusive. Not all of these activities that have helped other couples prepare for marital intimacy may fit for you. Co-creating love is unique for each couple. As you and your spouse seek and ask, you will find the appropriate activities that will help you lay claim to, or perhaps reclaim, the marital intimacy that is yours to enjoy.

12. With the understanding that each couple needs to be led by the Spirit to discover how to feel closer to each other, perhaps the following general guidelines can provide some initial assistance for your adventure.

### 13. Bury Your Weapons of War

14. In the days of Ammon in the Book of Mormon, the converted Lamanites were worried about staining their swords with the blood of their enemies. They wanted war to end. So, “they buried their weapons of war, for peace.” ([Alma 24:19](#).) What a dramatic gesture to signify just how determined they were to have peace!

15. Most husbands and wives can identify the weapons of war that fight against their marital intimacy. These weapons of war are thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that keep spouses feeling separate and single within their marriages. These weapons wound, maim, destroy, defile, or kill marital intimacy. As long as spouses continue to wield these weapons of war, the possibility of achieving true marital intimacy is out of the question.

16. One couple took the above scripture in Alma to heart. They made lists of words, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that killed their desire for marital intimacy. For example, the husband said, “I never want to say to you again: ‘You control me when you disapprove of what I’m watching on TV.’ I want to bury that weapon. The truth is that what you think about me really matters to me and helps me. Stubborn pride has prevented me from listening to your fears. From now on I won’t fight you anymore about TV viewing that makes you feel uncomfortable. I also want to bury the belief that ‘I will never be good enough for you.’ You’ve shown me and told me otherwise over and over

again. I want to lay down that weapon of war and bury it.”

17. He kept adding to his list of things he used as “weapons of war” against his wife, himself, and their relationship. He also listed words, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that he felt were “weapons of war” used by his wife. His wife did the same. As they reviewed their lists, they found some weapons that they needed each other’s help to overcome. They talked about those things and what still needed to change before they would be able to bury those weapons. For example, one weapon could not be buried until an apology was offered and accepted.

18. The process took several weeks of intensively detecting old weapons, talking, and writing. Once the lists were made, they then wrote each “weapon of war” on a separate piece of paper. Ceremonially placing each piece of paper in a box, they vowed to each other to never again use that weapon. So committed were they to ridding their relationship of these destructive words, thoughts, and practices that they then selected a safe and private place to bury the box, declaring that if they ever were tempted to use any of those weapons again, they would need to go to the burial site together, dig up the box, and exhume the remains to find the weapon they wanted to use. And thus they “buried their weapons of war deep in the earth, because of their love towards their [spouse].” ([Alma 26:32](#).)

### 19. Bring Broken Hearts and Contrite Spirits

20. In D&C 59:8 we read about how to prepare ourselves to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper: We are each to bring a broken (or open) heart and a contrite spirit. What a great guideline for spouses as they prepare for sacred marital intimacy!

21. One couple’s preparation included a heart-to-heart conversation where they laid their pride aside, expressed sorrow for past offenses, and resolved to be more loving and more pure. They also determined to live by the “48-hour rule” to manage future disappointments. If one of them was upset about something the other did or didn’t do, he or she had 48 hours following the “offense” to talk with the offender about it. If they didn’t bring up what was troubling them within 48 hours, it was not fair to bring it up after that time period. This rule helped them stop their destructive former practice of reciting each other’s past sins, mistakes, and omissions whenever one of them did anything wrong. This couple’s pattern of flogging each other with the past decreased, and they started building a future together—one that began to include moments of true marital intimacy.

22. As the couple continued to uncover the effects of pride in their marriage the wife said, “I think I’ve missed many opportunities to help you learn to love. I was given lots of love growing up and saw a great example in my parents of a husband and wife who really enjoyed each other and supported each other in every way. I thought the other day that if you had a bandage over your heart with a sign on it that said, ‘In need of learning about love,’ I would be much more gentle and giving and forgiving of you. I’m sorry that I’ve punished you for not knowing how to love me.”

### 23. Focus on Love-Generating Images

24. One couple earnestly sought to put behind them the world’s approach to “making love.” They longed to gain access to the binding power that could come from worthily co-creating love. One day in prayer the wife was blessed with powerful, positive images of her husband. These images came into her mind and stayed in her heart. In her prayerful, seeking state, she was given to understand that these were sacred images of her husband’s premortal self. As she mentally embraced these images, her heart was irresistibly drawn out to her husband in a manner unlike anything she had previously experienced. And each time the wife brought these images to her mind, she experienced a heightened appreciation for her husband and a desire to unite her life with his in every way.

### 25. Remember Your Convenants

26. Christian writer C. S. Lewis offers us an important truth in the form of advice from Screwtape, a senior devil, writing to his apprenticing nephew, Wormwood: “It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out.” (*Screwtape Letters*, 25.)

27. What have you forgotten lately about the Savior, yourself, your spouse, your relationship, or about love and marriage that may be adversely affecting your marital intimacy?

28. How would remembering your temple wedding ceremony help you enjoy physical intimacy even more? Temple weddings involve symbols, not the least of which is the symbol of leaving the world in order to enter the temple. Through keeping the Lord’s commandments, you came out of the world, both literally and symbolically, to participate in your temple wedding. You shut the world out so that you and your beloved could be joined together in an endless contract—sealed together.

29. Elder John A. Widtsoe spoke of the elegant orchestration of a temple wedding and the benefits of really concentrating on the true meaning of the

ceremony: “[Temple weddings] are performed in an attractive sealing room, especially dedicated for the purpose. The ceremony itself is simple, beautiful, and profound. Relatively few witnesses are present. Quiet and order prevail. There are no external trappings to confuse the mind. Full attention may be given to the sacred covenants to be made, and the blessings to follow cover the vast period of eternal existence.” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 232.)

30. Are you keeping the door to the world closed behind you as a couple, as you are in the process of building upon your temple wedding ceremony to fashion your temple marriage? If you consider the temple wedding ceremony to be a pattern for happiness within your marital intimacy:

- Do you give your full attention to your spouse from time to time?
- Do quiet and order prevail during moments of marital intimacy?
- Is your marriage free from excessive external trappings?
- Do you regularly review your sacred covenants and the associated blessings?

### 31. Pray for Gifts of the Spirit

32. Tad R. Callister has written, “President George Q. Cannon . . . eloquently and fervently pleaded with the saints to overcome each manifested weakness through the acquisition of a countermanding gift of strength, known as a gift of the Spirit.” (*The Infinite Atonement*, 273.) What gifts of the Spirit would strengthen you and your spouse? Talk about this with your spouse. Determine to seek and pray for those gifts of the Spirit that would increase the feelings of intimacy in your marriage. (See D&C 46 and [Moroni 10](#) for a beginning listing of possible gifts of the Spirit.)

33. For one couple, the seemingly simple act of reading about gifts of the Spirit was a major turning point in their marriage. Following a difficult time, the husband resolved not to approach his wife sexually until he felt “more worthy.” In the midst of this self-imposed restraint, he read to his wife one evening from section 46 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Her heart was irresistibly drawn toward his. She later described that experience as the most wonderful time—in twenty-five years of marriage—of uniting their spirits, an important prerequisite to uniting their whole souls in marital intimacy.

### 34. Listen to Music that Brings Your Spirit to Life

35. Listening to music can lift us and rescue us from the darkness of the world. One couple loved music. Playing “their song” and listening to “mood music” was a favorite part of their preparation for physical intimacy. The melodies, words, rhythms, and volumes varied from selection to selection, but the outcome was always the same: Each piece of music brought their spirits to life.

36. Speak Words of Love and Commitment

37. As stated earlier, the “first four minutes of contact” between a couple are important in drawing their hearts together. Can you imagine how Paul’s greeting to the Philippians would warm your heart and pave the way for marvelous moments of sharing love? Imagine hearing your spouse say to you, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” ([Philippians 1:3](#)), or, “I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers” ([Philemon 1:4](#)).

38. The greeting of the brethren at the School of the Prophets is similarly instructive and inspiring: “I salute you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in token or remembrance of the everlasting covenant, to fellowship, in a determination that is fixed, immovable, and unchangeable, to be your friend and brother through the grace of God in the bonds of love, to walk in all the commandments of God blameless, in thanksgiving, forever and ever.” (D&C 88:133.)

39. While such patterns of language may seem stilted or overdone, the pattern of commendation and expressing appreciation and love remains the same. Just image the power of such loving words.

40. Conclusion

41. What is appropriate preparation for marital intimacy? The Spirit has directed many couples as they have sought the answer to that question for themselves.

42. What an adventure lies ahead for you and your spouse as you seek to discover activities that bring your spirits to life and invite the Spirit! As you prepare in this way, your ability to experience true marital intimacy will increase.