

September, 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

We know from studies across ethnicities, cultures, religions and nationalities that about 5% of all humans are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or asexual, etc. That is about 1 in every 20 people. If you have more than 20 relatives, one of them may be LGBT. Every congregation has families dealing with this issue even if they don't discuss it. It can feel like a whirlwind of tremendous velocity.

The four individuals listed below (along with others) produced this document to help local LDS leaders understand some of the most recent statements and materials presented by senior leaders about LGBT topics. The best resource for LDS ward and stake leaders is the Church website, MormonandGay.lds.org. As additional help, this document consists of 13 statements or questions followed by answers and quotes. Many of the Church sources are cited in the endnotes. Without reading all of the actual quotes, you will be missing out on the essential depth and meaning from our Church leaders.

Recent studies show that LGBT youth can be at greater risk for suicide and other risky behaviors when families and others reject them when they come out as LGBT. We hope leaders will read and study this material and other information so they can respond with love and kindness when LGBT individuals and families members discuss their reality.

We alone are responsible for the contents of this document. We want it to reflect an accurate picture of LDS teachings on how we should respond when people need help in navigating an unfamiliar process. Richard and Curtis both served as YSA bishops. Don and Debra have a married gay son. You may contact us individually if you would like to discuss the contents of this further.

Sincerely,

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Helping LDS Leaders Understand Recent Perspectives on LGB Issues

“What is changing – and what needs to change – is to help church members respond sensitively and thoughtfully when they encounter same-sex attraction in their own families, among other church members or elsewhere.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks¹

* * *

“As a church nobody should be more loving and compassionate. No family who has anybody who has same-gender [attraction] should exclude them from the family circle. They need to be part of the family circle . . . let us be at the forefront in terms of expressing love, compassion, and outreach to those and let’s not have families exclude or be disrespectful of those who choose a different lifestyle as a result of their feelings about their own gender . . . I feel very strongly about this . . . It’s a very important principle.”

Elder Quentin L. Cook²

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1. Terms

There are no universally accepted terms when it comes to lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people.³ Many simply use the term “gay.” You will hear the terms “homosexuality” or “same-sex attraction” or “same-gender attraction” used frequently by LDS members. When speaking with an LGB person, it is best to ask them what terms they prefer and try to use those terms with them. Do not be surprised if different people prefer different terms. In this document, we will not get hung up on terms and will be giving many original quotes. You will see all these terms used throughout this document. We will generally use “gay” or “gays and lesbians” to encompass the spectrum of gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals. (See endnote 3)

When a person identifies as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, they are not indicating that they are sexually active, but rather that they are attracted to people of the same sex (lesbian or gay) or both sexes (bisexual). This is known as sexual orientation. When a person identifies as transgender they are not saying they are sexually active, but rather that they identify with a different gender than the one indicated on their birth certificate. The LDS Church teaches against actions, not attractions, orientations or identity. (See question 3)

2. What is the LDS Church’s position on people who are lesbian and gay?

The Church teaches that homosexuality is a complex topic and that there are still many unanswered questions. Leaders are still seeking further understanding.⁴

The Church does not teach that being lesbian or gay is a choice or the exercise of agency.⁵

Leaders have specifically taught members to love our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters as sons and daughters of God, and that they are fully and equally welcome in the Church.⁶

3. **What about gender dysphoria and people who are transgender?**

From <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/frequently-asked-questions>: “Many of the general principles shared on this website (for example, the importance of inclusion and kindness) apply to Latter-day Saints who experience gender dysphoria or identify as transgender. However, same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria are very different. For example, those who experience gender dysphoria may or may not also experience same-sex attraction, and the majority of those who experience same-sex attraction do not desire to change their gender. From a psychological and ministerial perspective, the two are different.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated that, “This question concerns transgender, and I think we need to acknowledge that while we have been acquainted with lesbians and homosexuals for some time, being acquainted with the unique problems of a transgender situation is something we have not had so much experience with, and we have some unfinished business in teaching on that.” ⁷

As there are very limited counsel and statements by Church leaders on transgender issues, this document will not directly address transgender or other gender identity questions.

4. **Do we know why some people are lesbian, gay or bisexual?**

No, we recognize the complexity of the question but we do not claim to know the causes of variations in sexual identity or attraction. ⁸ Church leaders have taught that parents should love all their children equally, and never feel blame, shame, or guilt if they have a child that is gay or lesbian. ⁹

5. **Can a person be openly lesbian or gay and be an active and worthy member of the Church?**

Yes, many people are openly LGB and active, worthy members of the Church. ¹⁰

“The Church distinguishes between same-sex attraction and homosexual behavior. People who experience same-sex attraction or identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual can make and keep covenants with God and fully and worthily participate in the Church. Identifying as gay, lesbian, or bisexual or experiencing same-sex attraction is not a sin and does not prohibit one from participating in the Church, holding callings, or attending the temple.” See <https://www.lds.org/topics/same-sex-attraction>

“Attraction is not identity. People can make their own choices about how to identify. There are active, temple recommend–holding Church members who comply with the law of chastity and identify themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. There are active Church members who experience same-sex attraction and never choose to identify themselves using a label. Our primary identity will always be as a child of God.” See <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/about-sexual-orientation>

“Identifying as gay, lesbian, or bisexual or experiencing same-sex attraction is not a sin and does not prohibit one from participating in the Church, holding callings, or attending the temple” See <https://www.lds.org/topics/same-sex-attraction>

6. **Can a person change their sexual orientation?**

The Church does not teach that someone who has same-sex attraction can change or eliminate that attraction. The Church stated that “a change in attraction should not be expected or demanded as an outcome by parents or leaders. The intensity of [a person’s] attractions may not be in [their] control.”¹¹

7. **Does the Church encourage a person who is lesbian or gay to enter into heterosexual marriage?**

The Church does not encourage this as a solution. Elder Dallin H. Oaks: “We definitely do not recommend [heterosexual] marriage as a solution to same gender feelings... In times past, decades ago, there were some practices to that effect. We have eradicated them in the Church now.”¹²

8. **Can I keep my temple recommend and support gay marriage?**

Question: “What about Mormons who support same-sex marriage privately among family and friends or publicly by posting entries on Facebook, marching in pride parades or belonging to gay-friendly organizations such as Affirmation or Mormons Building Bridges? Can they do so without the threat of losing their Church membership or temple privileges?”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson: “We have individual members in the Church with a variety of different opinions, beliefs, and positions on these issues and other issues... In our view, it doesn’t really become a problem unless someone is out attacking the Church and its leaders — if that’s a deliberate and persistent effort and trying to get others to follow them, trying to draw others away, trying to pull people, if you will, out of the Church or away from its teachings and doctrines.”¹³

9. **Can I be friends with my brothers and sisters who are gay and lesbian even if they are not living consistently with Mormon teachings?**

Of course, we are commanded to love and support all our brothers and sisters. Such love and support should never be contingent on a person’s apparent “righteousness.”

“Some of you wrote of the conflict that you’ve felt in showing #Fairness4All, especially with individuals who see life differently from you. You expressed worry that such friendships might betray your beliefs. I want to reiterate that the Savior is the perfect example of reaching out in love and support. His interest in others was always motivated by a pure love for them. Sometimes we approach relationships with the intent to change the other person. We follow our Savior best when we base our relationships on principles of love.”¹⁴

Elder Ronald A. Rasband, Facebook post on September 29, 2015 as a follow-up to his BYU devotional talk on Sept. 15 2015.

10. **How should I respond to a family member who is gay or lesbian?**

Respond to and treat them same way you would any other family member. ¹⁵ The Church placed a video on its original mormonsandgays.org website, with advice from a Stake President in San Francisco who said the following:

“The best case scenarios that I have dealt with are where families have been unequivocal about their love and compassion for a family member who is gay and who has decided that they are not going to live the standards of the Church. Our counsel to these families is to preserve the family unit, to look at it eternally, and that we love and accept the members of our family, we cherish and value the members of our family, and that keeping the family together is the most important criteria.” (see also Endnote 16)

11. **What are some of the major concerns parents have?**

The most common answer provided by parents of children who are gay and lesbian is concern for their child’s safety -- not just their physical safety, but also their spiritual and mental safety. Depression, anxiety, and risk of suicide are primary concerns of parents and very common issues gay and lesbian people have to deal with. A major concern is ensuring the person who is LGB is included at Church and that Church leaders and members help them feel like a son or daughter of God, consistent with Christ’s teachings.

12. **Do parents of children who are gay or lesbian need to choose between their child and the Church in order to remain faithful to the Church?**

Absolutely not. Recent statements by leaders clearly teach that even creating the distinction between being faithful to the Church and to our children in these circumstances is not consistent with the Gospel.

Elder Ronald A. Rasband said, “We need not create false dichotomies. The question ‘Do I love and support my Church?’ or ‘Do I love and support my child who has a same-sex partner?’ represents a false dichotomy. We can do both.” ¹⁶

13. **How can we create a welcoming environment for people who are LGB, especially for our youth?**

The Church website, mormonandgay.lds.org states, “The parent of a child who experiences same-sex attraction or identifies as gay should choose to love and embrace that child. As a community of Church members, we should choose to create a welcoming community.” ¹⁷

Elder Dallin H. Oaks said our LGB youth are particularly vulnerable and need love and understanding. Making them feel worthless, unloved or unwanted can “inflict serious and long-lasting injury” on their emotional well-being. He said that, “with the help of the Lord, we can repent and change and be more loving.” ¹⁸

What can we all do?

- Be encouraging and uplifting.
- Understand that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is not a disease or an illness. ¹⁹
- Be aware of the words you use and focus on the positive. Words such as problem, burden, struggle, issue, and trial all indicate a person is “broken,” in need of being “fixed,” or a “mistake” that God made.
- Recognize that we do not know or understand the meaning of all things. “As mortals, our understanding is limited. We can declare with Nephi that we ‘know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, [we] do not know the meaning of all things.’” (1Nephi 11:17) ²⁰
- Walk with all those that identify as LGB as we all learn together and as science and understanding continue to progress and make new discoveries. ²¹

It is imperative to empathize through listening and trying to put yourself in the shoes of someone that is LGB. Make sure they always feel loved and included by their leaders, peers, and family. They need to know they have friends at Church and are always welcome. ²²

Feeling excluded and shamed is the real burden faced by members of the church that identify as LGB. Several of the personal stories on mormonandgay.lds.org talk about the importance of empathy. (See [Becky’s story](#), [Kevin’s Story](#), and [Jessyca’s Story](#)) ²³

Different people prefer different terminology and some are quite uncomfortable with certain terminology. When a person comes out, leaders and parents should ask what terms and language the person is most comfortable with and then use only those terms. For example, many prefer the term “gay” instead of “same-sex attraction.” (See Terms on page 1)

When speaking with people that identify as LGB, especially members, remember that the Church does not teach that being lesbian or gay is a choice or the exercise of agency. (See Endnote 5) Be careful not to indicate that the person is making a choice in this. For example, a helpful phrase would be “I know you didn’t choose this, and I am here with you for your whole journey.”

Form good relationships and find the many wonderful qualities each person has to offer. We are told to focus on the one.

Sister Jean B. Bingham, General Relief Society President, said, “Until you have seen people that are different from you in lots of different ways, I think it is easy to get focused on a very narrow segment and feel like that is the only way to be. . . . One of the best ways to form a good relationship is to not come in with assumptions or preconceived notions, keeping an open mind, an open heart. Sometimes we tend to pigeon-hole people or we assume that they are a certain way because of a certain situation in their life or their family. It is always surprising if you keep your mind open and your heart open. You find out lots of wonderful things about people that you might not have ever expected. But when you’ve experienced, when you’ve seen, when you’ve opened your heart to other people you see that we all belong.” ²⁴

Additional Guidance for Church Leaders and Parents

When a child comes out as gay, lesbian, or bi-sexual . . .

When a child comes out as gay or lesbian initial reactions must be consistent with the teachings of the Savior. Elder D. Todd Christofferson offered the following counsel:

“Initial reactions are critical. And the inclination, the temptation that people have often is anger or rejection. Sometimes it’s simply denial, on both sides of the question, whatever it may be. And it’s important to have enough self-control to lay all that aside and to have a little patience, and to begin to talk and begin to listen and begin to try to understand better. We lose nothing by spending time together, by trying to understand, even where there’s not agreement on a course to follow at the moment or how to respond or how to react. We don’t have to do everything today. We don’t have to resolve everything in a month or a week or a year. These things are questions of resolution over time and accommodation over time and seeking the will of the Lord over time and guided by Him over time. So, I hope we will give ourselves the time and have the patience to listen and understand and not insist on everything being resolved within a certain framework of time.”²⁵

As Elder Christofferson counsels:

- Initial reactions are critical. We all need to be prepared for our initial reactions. The best initial reaction is that you have always loved them and admired their many good qualities; learning they are gay or lesbian does not change anything.
- Lay aside the questions and differences, have patience, and just listen and try to understand. Nothing is lost by spending time together, not everything needs to be decided or resolved within a certain framework of time. This gives the Lord time to guide us rather than being led by our fears or initial emotions.
- Leaders have recently emphasized that we need these brothers and sisters within our circle of friendship, within the Church, and within our families. Indeed, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated that we “fail the Lord” when we exclude these brothers and sisters.²⁶

Of paramount importance is to protect children and teenagers, and provide love and safety within the Church and our families.

- Coming out is an extremely difficult and vulnerable process, regardless of how it happens. We are told to view these brothers and sisters the same way we viewed them before they disclosed their sexual attraction.
- None of us can “fix” a person’s sexual orientation or identity and we don’t need to. We just need to be true friends and help shoulder the burdens they carry. Elder D. Todd Christofferson said that Church leadership is looking for better ways to do this.²⁷
- Church leaders have taught that our children are particularly vulnerable; therefore love and compassion are especially important when leaders and parents react to these circumstances.²⁸
- As stated on the Church’s website regarding our brothers and sisters who come out as gay or lesbian, “As Church members, we all have a responsibility to create a supportive and loving environment for all our brothers and sisters. Such a support network makes it

much easier to live the gospel and to seek the Spirit while navigating any aspect of mortality.” <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/frequently-asked-questions>

Other Counsel to Church Leaders and Parents:

- “As a church, nobody should be more loving and compassionate. Let us be at the forefront in terms of expressing love, compassion, and outreach. Let’s not have families exclude or be disrespectful of those who choose a different lifestyle as a result of their feelings about their own gender.” Elder Quentin L. Cook on <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/videos?id=15209571875228076146#d>
- In addition to the other resources referenced in this document, leaders and parents should read the [Ministering Resources](#) counsel provided at www.lds.org.
- Leaders should teach congregations how to treat our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. An excellent resource is [Navigating Family Differences With Love and Trust](#) found on www.lds.org.

Endnotes follow.

¹ Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Church News, “Church Updates Resources Addressing Same-Sex Attraction” Contributed by Camille West, October 25, 2016. See also www/mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/love-one-another-a-discussion-on-same-sex-attraction

² Elder Quentin L. Cook, Church News, “Church Updates Resources Addressing Same-Sex Attraction” Contributed by Camille West, October 25, 2016. See also at <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/videos?id=15209571875228076146#d>.

³ Some Church leaders do not use the terms “homosexual” or “homosexuality.” They use the term “same-sex attraction” or a similar term in order to encompass identity, sexual attraction and emotional attraction. On <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/about-sexual-orientation>, the Church states: “Same-sex attraction (SSA) refers to emotional, physical, romantic, or sexual attraction to a person of the same gender. If you experience same-sex attraction, **you may or may not choose to use a sexual orientation label to describe yourself**. Either way, same-sex attraction is a technical term describing the experience without imposing a label. This website uses this term to be inclusive of people who are not comfortable using a label, not to deny the existence of a gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity.”

Some members of the LGB community do not like or do not use the term “same-sex attraction.” They may feel more comfortable with the terms “gay” or “lesbian.” Likewise, the term “sexual preference” is not appropriate. The appropriate term would be “sexual orientation.”

⁴ “The Church does not have a position on the causes of any of these susceptibilities or inclinations, including those related to same-gender attraction. Those are scientific questions — whether nature or nurture — those are things the Church doesn’t have a position on.” *Interview with Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Elder Lance B. Wickman: “Same-Gender Attraction.”*

Question: “Do you think it’s fair to say that Church leaders over these decades have gained greater understanding toward the LGBT community and that’s contributed to a change in what’s being said?”

Answer: “. . . there are the science issues, you know, the social science and the physical science and all the other pieces, if you can say, to the puzzle that are coming into focus. There’s still a lot of questions. There is still a lot that nobody can claim to fully understand. So we’re seeking added understanding. We’re still learning, we think, and I hope everybody feels that way. That that we can walk together and grow in understanding, but with mutual respect. So it’s been happening and I hope it continues.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson KUTV interview March 2015. See minute 9:49 – 10:57
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XybDk3CEoHg>

⁵ “The Church does not have a position on the causes of any of these susceptibilities or inclinations, including those related to same-gender attraction.” (*Interview with Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Elder Lance B. Wickman: “Same-Gender Attraction,”* 2006).

“Let us be clear: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believes that “the experience of same-sex attraction is a complex reality for many people. The attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is. Even though individuals do not choose to have such attractions, they do choose how to respond to them. With love and understanding, the Church reaches out to all God’s children, including [those with same-sex attraction]”
 Elder Russell M. Ballard, “*The Lord Needs You Now!*” *Ensign*, September 2015, 29

⁶ “People who experience same-sex attraction or identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual can make and keep covenants with God and fully and worthily participate in the Church. Identifying as gay, lesbian, or bisexual or experiencing same-sex attraction is not a sin and does not prohibit one from participating in the Church, holding callings, or attending the temple.” [Lds.org/topics/same-sex attraction](https://www.lds.org/topics/same-sex-attraction)

“The experience of same-sex attraction is a complex reality for many people. The attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is. Even though individuals do not choose to have such attractions, they do choose how to respond to them. With love and understanding, the Church reaches out to all God’s children, including our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters.” <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/church-teachings>

“People inquire about our position on those who consider themselves so-called gays and lesbians. My response is that we love them as sons and daughters of God.” He also promised that those with same-gender attraction who do not express these inclinations may “go forward as do all other members of the Church.” *President Gordon B. Hinckley, “What Are People Asking about Us?” Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 71.

⁷ Tribtalk interview with Jennifer Napier-Pearce, January 29, 2015.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIJ6gL_xc-M

⁸ Elder Jeffrey R. Holland Clearly stated that “We do not make a judgment about someone's attraction, we do not know why that attraction came that way and the person does not —the one struggling with it— does not. We do not make any attempt to say why that happened or how it happened . . . We've published that in every way we know how to publish it and we've put it in our handbooks. It's in the governing handbooks that give direction to the priesthood leaders of the Church. Now if some members fall short in that then shame on them, and if I have not done well enough to teach it shame on me — that we are not passing judgment, we're not issuing an indictment to somebody who has a feeling, to somebody who has an attraction, to somebody who has some complexities in their makeup that I guess neither they nor we fully understand.”
[Face2Face with Elder Jeffery R. Holland March 8, 2016](https://www.lds.org/face2face/with-elder-jeffrey-r-holland-march-8-2016) 1:13:25 into the video and finishes about 1:21:20. (see also endnote 5).

⁹ “If you are a parent of one with same-gender attraction, don’t assume you are the reason for those feelings. No one, including the one struggling, should try to shoulder blame. Nor should anyone place blame on another—including God. Walk by faith, and help your loved one deal the best he or she can with this challenge.” *Elder Jeffrey R. Holland October 2007 General Conference*.

See *Ten Tips for Parents* at <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/ten-tips-for-parents> “Don’t blame yourself for your child’s same-sex attraction. This is no one’s fault. Blame is neither necessary nor helpful.”

“We surely encourage parents not to blame themselves and we encourage Church members not to blame parents in this circumstance. We should remember that none of us is perfect and none of us has children whose behavior is entirely in accord with exactly what we would have them do in all circumstances.” *Elder Dallin H. Oaks Interview with Elder Oaks and Elder Wickman on same gender attraction*

“As you all are well aware, those who experience same-gender attraction . . . feel alone in the Church. They feel scared and they're not sure how they fit into the Lord's Kingdom, so if you could meet with them, face-to-face, what message would you share with them? . . . We do not make a judgment about someone's attraction, we do not know why that attraction came that way and the person does not—the one struggling with it—does not. We do not make any attempt to say why that happened or how it happened We've published that in every way we know how to publish it and we've put it in our handbooks. It's in the governing handbooks that give direction to the priesthood leaders of the Church. Now if some members fall short in that then shame on them, and if I have not done well enough to teach it shame on me — that we are not passing judgment, we're not issuing an indictment to somebody who has a feeling, to somebody who has an attraction, to somebody who has some complexities in their makeup that I guess neither they nor we fully understand. But we're not making them second-class citizens any more than we were talking earlier about sisters who do not go on missions. . . . But we would be the first, by we, I mean the general authorities and general officers of the Church, we would be the first, we would be on the front line, to say that every person is welcome at the Church and in our circles and in our association and in our friendship. . . . On the basis of everybody trying to keep the commandments. Everybody trying to be chaste, everybody trying to pay their tithing, and keep the word of wisdom and do the things that we do in faithfulness in the Church. And so I think a lot of steam can come out of the kettle and I hope some of the pain can come out of the conversation if we could talk more fundamentally just about the divine standards of chastity and stop talking quite so much about whether that's a heterosexual application or homosexual application. We're just talking about chastity, and we'll issue all of our love and all of our help and everything we know to do to help people meet that standard whomever they are and wherever they are. I hope that can help anybody out there who is struggling.”

Face2Face with Elder Jeffery R. Holland March 8, 2016 1:13:25 into the video and finishes about 1:21:20.

¹⁰ “Someone who is adhering to the norm of chastity, someone who is following the covenants and the standards - teachings of the gospel of Christ though they may be dealing with same-sex attraction - really there is no reason they cannot be fully participative [that] they can't be a full fledged member of the church and hold callings, and speak, and enter the temple, and serve there. All the other opportunities and blessing that can come from church membership will be available to them.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson, “People Who Live God's Laws Can Fully Participate in the Church”

<https://mormonandgay.lds.org/videos?id=8476007148069176400#d>

¹¹ “The intensity of same-sex attraction is not a measure of your faithfulness. Many people pray for years and do all they can to be obedient in an effort to reduce same-sex attraction, yet find they are still attracted to the same sex. Same-sex attraction is experienced along a spectrum of intensity and is not the same for everyone. Some are attracted to both genders, and others are attracted exclusively to the same gender. For some, feelings of same-sex attraction, or at least the intensity of those feelings, may diminish over time. In any case, a change in attraction should not be expected or demanded as an outcome by parents or leaders. The intensity of your attractions may not be in your control; however, you can choose how to respond. Asking the Lord what you can learn from this experience can focus your faith on an outcome you can control. Turning your life over to God is an important act of faith that brings great blessings now and even greater blessings in the world to come.” <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/frequently-asked-questions>

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland recently related the story of a family with a gay son in General Conference. In the story, he said that even after of years of hard work and struggle for this gay son. “This son's sexual orientation did not somehow miraculously change – no one assumed it would.”

Elder Jeffery R. Holland, “Behold Thy Mother,” October 2015 General Conference. Also found at

<https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/jesus-christ-can-change-our-hearts>

¹² From an interview on Tribtalk with Jennifer Napier Pearce on January 29, 2015

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIJ6gL_xc-M at about 17:39 in the video):

Elder Oaks: We definitely do not recommend marriage as a solution to same gender feelings. In times past...

Elder Christofferson: That's not a therapy.

Elder Oaks: No. That's not a therapy. In times past, uhm, decades ago, there were some practices to that effect. We have eradicated them in the Church now.

“Recognize that marriage is not an all-purpose solution. Same-gender attractions run deep, and trying to force a heterosexual relationship is not likely to change them. We are all thrilled when some who struggle with these feelings are able to marry, raise children, and achieve family happiness. But other attempts have resulted in broken hearts and broken homes.” *Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, October 2007 General Conference.*

¹³ Quote from the January 27, 2015 press conference of Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Elder D. Todd Christofferson, <http://www.sltrib.com/news/2112602-155/tomorrow-at-115-pm-lds-apostles>, at 8:00 in the video.

See also March 2015 KUTV interview with Elder D. Todd Christofferson where he addresses the same basic questions beginning at minute 6:01 – 7:12 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XybDk3CEoHg>

Reporter: “I know that in one of the temple recommend interview questions it asks do you agree with elements that are against the church and I guess, I mean, could it be interpreted that if people supported gay marriage that would be agreeing with something that was against the church?”

Christofferson: “Well it's not do you agree with a person's position or an organization's position – it is are you supporting organizations that promote opposition or positions in opposition to the church.”

Reporter: “So would supporting gay marriage threaten somebody's membership in the church if they went out say on Facebook or Twitter and actively advocated for it?”

Christofferson: “That's not an organized effort to attack our effort or attack our functioning as a church if you will.”

Reporter: “So members can hold those beliefs even though they're different from what you teach at the pulpit?”

Christofferson: “Yes. And we. . . you know, our approach in all of this, as Joseph Smith said, is persuasion. You can't, he said, you can't use the Priesthood and the authority of the church to dictate. You can't compel, you can't coerce. It has to be gentleness, persuasion, love unfeigned as the words are in the scripture. “

¹⁴ Leaders have recently emphasized our need to not judge our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and treat all with love. For example:

“Some of you wrote of the conflict that you've felt in showing #Fairness4All, especially with individuals who see life differently from you. You expressed worry that such friendships might betray your beliefs. I want to reiterate that the Savior is the perfect example of reaching out in love and support. His interest in others was always motivated by a pure love for them. Sometimes we approach relationships with the intent to change the other person. We follow our Savior best when we base our relationships on principles of love. Others posted comments about the struggle they experience in trying to understand and love family members who are gay. I commend you for seeking to follow the Savior's example and pray for His love and understanding. You will be blessed in your efforts to treat your family members with fairness and kindness.”

Elder Ronald A. Rasband Facebook post on September 29, 2015 as a follow-up to his BYU devotional talk on Sept. 15 2015.

“We can stand firm in our beliefs and have a loving relationship with those who hold differing opinions. For example, I believe drinking alcohol is a violation of God's law. So what do I do when I am hosting friends who do not believe as I do? My wife and I arrange to go to a restaurant with them where they can order as they choose to. And when they order wine with their meal, I do not get in

their faces and call them out as sinners. Similarly, can I be friends with individuals who are living together without the benefit of marriage? Absolutely. And when I am with them, do I stand up in great indignation and call them to repentance, even though they are presently engaged in behavior I do not agree with? No, of course not. We can stand firm in our beliefs and have a loving relationship with those who hold differing opinions. Let us not forget that the plan of salvation offers the love and mercy of our Savior Jesus Christ to all.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund, Facebook Post on March 28, 2016.

“Of special concern to us should be those who struggle with same-sex attraction. It is a whirlwind of enormous velocity. I want to express my love and admiration for those who courageously confront this trial of faith and stay true to the commandments of God! But everyone, independent of his or her decisions and beliefs, deserves our kindness and consideration. The Savior taught us to love not only our friends but also those who disagree with us—and even those who repudiate us. He said: ‘For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? ...And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?’ The Prophet Joseph Smith warned us to ‘beware of self-righteousness’ and to enlarge our hearts toward all men and women until we feel ‘to take them upon our shoulders.’ In the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is no place for ridicule, bullying, or bigotry.”

Elder Neil L. Andersen, “Spiritual Whirlwinds,” General Conference, April 2014.

¹⁵ “I can give another example of which is more personal. I’m aware of correspondence because I was involved in it where an LDS parent wrote and said, ‘I found out that my son is gay or he’s come out of the closet or whatever and I’ve forbid him to come to our home and I cut him off and said he’s not my son anymore.’ And I wrote a rather stern reply to that. That’s just not acceptable behavior on the part of a parent and in the loving relationship and even in the public square. And so I, encouraged the parent to repent and reestablish a loving relationship with a child.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Tribtalk with Jennifer Napier Pearce January 29, 2015,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIJ6gL_xc-M at 27:20.

¹⁶ “We may on occasion find ourselves in uncomfortable situations where we differ in doctrine with our acquaintances, friends, and family members, but the doctrine can never be used to justify treating others with anything less than respect and dignity. We can stand firm in our beliefs and have a loving relationship with those who hold different opinions. It is never an either/or choice. We love and live our doctrine and we love those who do not live it. We need not create false dichotomies. The question ‘Do I love and support my Church?’ or ‘Do I love and support my child who has a same-sex partner?’ (or any other child who is engaging in ‘plan-stopping’ behavior) represents a false dichotomy. We can do both. The late Elder Marvin J. Ashton shared this insight from an inspired leader: ‘The best and most clear indicator that we are progressing spiritually and coming unto Christ is the way we treat other people.’ If we do not treat others well, we’re engaging in ‘plan-stopping’ behavior for ourselves.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund, Western Regional Conference, February 14, 2016. Also posted on Elder Renlund’s Facebook page on February 17, 2016.

“No family who has anybody who has a same-gender issue should exclude them from the family circle. They need to be part of the family circle. Do we teach the Proclamation on the Family, do we teach Heavenly Father’s plan, do we teach the first chapter in the second handbook, yes we do. We have a plan of salvation. And having children come into our lives is part of Heavenly Father’s plan.”

See Elder Quentin L. Cook’s video on <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/love-one-another-a-discussion-on-same-sex-attraction>

Finally, statements by Roger Carter (a stake president in San Francisco at the time), which were included on the original Church website, mormonsandgays.org see <https://web.archive.org/web/20161025015242/http://mormonsandgays.org/>

“We find in the Church as many congregations in the community where there is a tremendous focus on families and in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints where the focus is eternal families, there’s an

enormous conflict that is created when a member of the family come out and communicates to his parents that they are gay. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, our doctrine, our temples, much of the work that we do has a central focus on families being eternal, that a husband, wife and children can be sealed together for beyond this life and that clearly becomes conflicted when a member of the family finds themselves in a position where they just don't feel comfortable in a heterosexual relationship. It's a tremendous conflict. Those who have dedicated many years of their lives to seeing the Church grow and do well throughout the world to have one of their own children be conflicted and come to them and say, 'I am gay', and not able to practice the principles of our faith after they have been raised in this environment. It's some of the most heartbreaking experiences families face. It takes a lot of soul search. It takes a lot of prayer."

¹⁷ <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/church-teachings> accessed August 30, 2017

¹⁸ Parents or caregivers or teachers or peers who demean, bully, or humiliate children or youth can inflict harm more permanent than physical injury. Making a child or youth feel worthless, unloved, or unwanted can inflict serious and long-lasting injury on his or her emotional well-being and development. Young people struggling with any exceptional condition, including same-gender attraction, are particularly vulnerable and need loving understanding – not bullying or ostracism. With the help of the Lord, we can **repent and change** and be more loving and helpful to children, our own and those around us.
Elder Dallin H. Oaks, October 2012 General Conference "Protect the Children"

¹⁹ No one fully knows the root causes of same-sex attraction. Each experience is different. Latter-day Saints recognize the enormous complexity of this matter. We simply don't have all the answers. Attraction to those of the same sex, however, should not be viewed as a disease or illness.
(Being True to Religious Beliefs found on the original mormonsandgays.org accessed October 4, 2015)
Also <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/andys-story?pa=437591207341709756>

²⁰ <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/church-teachings> accessed Sept 1, 2017

²¹ ". . . there are the science issues, you know, the social science and the physical science and all the other pieces, if you can say, to the puzzle that are coming into focus. There's still a lot of questions. There is still a lot that nobody can claim to fully understand. So we're seeking added understanding. We're still learning, we think, and I hope everybody feels that way. That we can walk together and grow in understanding, but with mutual respect."
Quote from the January 27, 2015 press conference of Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Elder D. Todd Christofferson,
<http://www.sltrib.com/news/2112602-155/tomorrow-at-115-pm-lds-apostles>, at 8:00 in the video.

²² "I know people who come to church every Sunday so that they can be inspired and uplifted and who just simply walk away feeling judged and unloved—unneded, like there is no place for them at church . We need to do this differently. We need to be deeply aware of what the purpose of coming to church on Sunday is and make sure that everyone who comes feels loved, needed, accepted, and lifted. Everybody has struggles we don't even know about and it's so important that we be aware that everyone around us is loved of God. We need to see them through Christ like eyes. We cannot allow judgment to dictate the way we interact with people. It is just simply not right. . . . It is not only about our own progression but about helping others progress. . . . we are placed where we are so we can love and lift others. . . . We cannot call ourselves a disciple of Christ if we are not helping others along that path. The gospel of Jesus Christ does not marginalize people. People marginalize people and we have to fix that. We need to be sensitive. . . . If we are going to build the kingdom of God on earth, we need everyone to come. . . . When anyone's shadow darkens the door of a chapel they ought to feel immediately embraced and loved and lifted and inspired - when they walk out that door to go and be better because they know the Lord loves them and because they have friends in their faith."
Sister Carol F. McConkie, first counselor in the Young Women general presidency. "Lifting Others"
<https://mormonandgay.lds.org/videos?id=9655787446538818627#d> accessed August 30, 2017

²³ <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/beckys-story> & <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/kevins-story> & <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/jessycas-story>

²⁴ When you focus on the one, you can really lift and strengthen. . . . Until you have seen people that are different from you in lots of different ways, I think it is easy to get focused on a very narrow segment and feel like that is the only way to be. When we get outside of ourselves when we consider others it helps us realize that we are all a family, our family of Heavenly Father. When we don't get outside ourselves when stay with our only little unit we miss out on the richness of life that other people bring. We miss out on the strengthen experiences for our testimonies. . . . One of things we can do is focus on the one. . . . Can you look for the person sitting on the outside sitting on the fringe. . . . One of the best ways to form a good relationship is not come in with assumptions or preconceived notions, keeping an open mind, an open heart. Sometimes we tend to pigeon-hole people or we assume that they are a certain way because of a certain situation in their life or their family. It is always surprising if you keep your mind open and your heart open. You find out lots of wonderful things about people that you might not have ever expected. But when you've experienced, when you've seen when you've opened your heart to other people you see that we all belong. *"Focus on the One," Sister Jean B. Bingham, General Relief Society President, <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/church-teachings> accessed August 30.2017*

²⁵ See Video of Elder D. Todd Christofferson at <https://mormonandgay.lds.org/articles/love-one-another-a-discussion-on-same-sex-attraction> begins at minute 10:50

²⁶ The following statements provide clear counsel of how leaders and parents should discuss these topics with gay and lesbian brother and sisters:

"Some members exclude from their circle of fellowship those who are different. When our actions or words discourage someone from taking full advantage of Church membership, we fail them—and the Lord. The Church is made stronger as we include every member and strengthen one another in service and love."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, October 2007 General Conference.

". . . as a Church nobody should be more loving and compassionate. No family who has anybody who has a same-gender issue should exclude them from the family circle. They need to be part of the family circle. . . . We have a plan of salvation. And having children come into our lives is part of Heavenly Father's plan. But let us be at the forefront in terms of expressing love, compassion, and outreach to those and lets not have families exclude or be disrespectful of those who choose a different lifestyle as a result of their feelings about their own gender. . . . I feel very strongly about this. . . . It's a very important principle."

Elder Quentin L. Cook, interview on

<https://mormonandgay.lds.org/videos?id=15209571875228076146#d>

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints maintains that 'God's universal fatherhood and love charges each of us with an innate and reverent acknowledgment of our shared human dignity. We are to love one another. We are to treat each other with respect as brothers and sisters and fellow children of God, no matter how much we may differ from one another.'" *Elder Quentin L. Cook, statement in the Church's "Same-Sex Attraction Pamphlet"*

"Hope is very important to everyone involved, but especially to LGBT individual. Love is the minister of Hope." *Elder Dallin H. Oaks, statement on the original Church website mormonsandgays.org*

"Our doctrines obviously condemn those who engage in so called 'gay-bashing' -- physical or verbal attacks on persons thought to be involved in homosexual or lesbian behavior. All should understand that persons (and their family members) struggling with the burden of same-sex attraction are in special need of the love and encouragement that is a clear responsibility of Church members, who have signified by covenant their willingness 'to bear one another's burdens' (Mosiah 18:8) 'and so fulfill the law of Christ.'" (Gal. 6:2). *Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "Same-Gender Attraction" Ensign, October, 1995, p. 10.*

²⁷ “We are committed to expanding, I guess you could say, both the instruction and the orientation that we give to members and we give to leaders. And you mentioned one thing, or the questioner did, about families specifically and we do see this as something that’s not just an individual thing it’s a family matter. And it’s important in our view, we need to do more in helping family relationships and helping the family as well as the individuals deal with issues and how to help them stay close to the Church and in the Church, and find some solace and help and opportunity there for spiritual development - all the other things we would hope for anyone of course. But it is it is much more than just focused on an individual it does have to be the family and the ward family. And these things and more things that can be done and we are looking that way.”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson, in an interview on Tribtalk with Jennifer Napier Pearce, January 29, 2015

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIJ6gL_xc-M at 16:10 in the interview).

²⁸ “Parents or caregivers or teachers or peers who demean, bully, or humiliate children or youth can inflict harm more permanent than physical injury. Making a child or youth feel worthless, unloved, or unwanted can inflict serious and long-lasting injury on his or her emotional well-being and development. Young people struggling with any exceptional condition, including same-gender attraction, are particularly vulnerable and need loving understanding – not bullying or ostracism.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “Protect the Children,” October 2012 General Conference.