



# PRINCIPLES *for* RECONCILIATION



*A general guide for Latter-day Saints  
seeking to reconcile their faith in the  
restored gospel of Jesus Christ with  
their experience of same-sex attraction.*

Tember Harward, Jeff Bennion, & Jim Mock

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English Edition

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## PERSONAL NOTES FROM THE AUTHORS

**A**s a newly baptized convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I had committed to surrender my life and will to the Lord Jesus Christ; however, I still faced the immense challenge of reconciling my faith in the Lord and His gospel with my ongoing experience of same-sex attraction.

Even though I loved the Lord and sincerely wanted to follow Him, I still struggled to find my place in the Kingdom of God, and to see where I fit into His plan. For support, I tried attending the Addiction Recovery Program—the Church’s adaptation of the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous—which did a great job of teaching me the steps of repentance, but it never addressed how I could manage or deal with my same-sex attraction. As we know from the Church’s official stance, merely experiencing the “attraction itself is not a sin;” only acting on the attraction is sinful, when we do so outside the bounds which the Lord has set. So, the 12 Steps of the Addiction Recovery Program fell short in addressing my struggles and concerns with facing my attractions and faith.

I yearned for an official Church resource that could help me in specifically addressing *how* to reconcile my faith with my sexual attractions, but at the time there were not, and still are no such resources available. “If only there were some program formatted like the Addiction Recovery Program, but focusing specifically on same-sex attraction, from a Latter-day Saint perspective,” I wished. It was this dream that sparked the inspiration to create this manual, coupled with my desperation for more adequate help and support for myself personally. I wanted Latter-day Saints, especially those in developing countries, to be able to have the resources that I never had when I joined the Church, so that

they wouldn’t need to search in desperation for help. I wanted them to be able to have an inspiring, gospel-centered guide to help them in their journey of reconciliation.

This manual is an attempt to help same-sex-attracted members globally to have the resources they need to have hope, to feel that they have a crucial role to play in Lord’s Plan, and that they can live a joyful life serving in the Kingdom. I hope that each member can use this guide to help themselves to live a more fulfilled, consecrated life, and that their faith in and discipleship of the Lord Jesus Christ may be strengthened and enriched.

— Tember Harward



My own story has already been chronicled in other places, so I will not repeat that here. All that needs saying here is that my own journey of faith and discipleship has been blessed by dear mentors and resources that have helped me see what was possible in my own life, and assisted me in making those changes.

We live in an era where the Church is more open about this topic. We now have many inspiring talks and resources teaching why we should live the law of chastity. What has been lacking is a “how.” I humbly and earnestly pray that this document will help fill that void.

— Jeff Bennion



As an individual with same-sex attraction and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I've certainly experienced times when I felt like giving up. I've grown up with the sense of feeling different and outside the group that even today can be hard to shake. I've also had moments where this burden felt too big to carry and I questioned why God would allow me go through this. For many of us, we have felt like we were between a rock and a hard place; either a lifetime of guilt for leaving the Church behind or a lifetime of loneliness and inauthenticity. Many of the messages we receive from the world tend to add fuel to the fire.

Despite all of these challenges, I have come to know that God has given me the strength to do this, and He will strengthen you too. He has blessed me with the tools I need to accomplish what He has asked of me. Many of these wonderful tools include the scriptures, messages from Church leadership, and the camaraderie of those striving to uphold their covenants. The latter of which has proven to be vital. This is not a challenge to be faced on our own. I personally have been blessed by the strength of others in similar circumstances, and I know that as you gather together for this common purpose, you will be blessed with the strength you need too.

It is as Christ tells us, “where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.”<sup>1</sup>

— Jim Mock

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 18:20

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*We express our most sincere and heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed in any way with their time, talents, and efforts in helping with this work and ministry. We are deeply grateful for all that you have sacrificed. Thank you for answering the Master's call to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."*

*We love you.*

# INTRODUCTION

The scriptures tell us that “men are that they might have joy.” It is the whole purpose of God’s plan of happiness for our lives. This is achieved through following Jesus Christ and in living gospel principles. There are, however, some experiences or struggles in mortality which seem to disrupt or even contradict this plan. One of the most poignant and confusing experiences is that of same-sex attraction.

Although same-sex attraction was experienced by ancient Israelites during the time of Moses, by Saints in Christ’s ancient Church, and by Latter-day Saints in this dispensation as well, the scriptures are devoid of clear examples on how to navigate the sometimes tumultuous waters of these attractions and activity within the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Many members of the Church who experience same-sex attraction struggle how to reconcile their experience of same-sex attraction with their faith in and testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel. To many of these members, these experiences can seem almost incompatible, if not wholly contradictory. This seeming lack of clear direction drives many same-sex-attracted Saints to feel marginalized and isolated, leading to their eventual disavowal of the Church.

President M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles remarked, “We need to listen to and understand what our LGBT brothers and sisters are feeling and experiencing. Certainly, we must do better than we have done in the past so that [they] feel they have a spiritual home where their brothers and sisters love them and where they have a place to worship and serve the Lord.”<sup>2</sup> The principles presented in this manual are an

attempt to provide each Latter-day Saint who experiences same-sex attraction with the tools and perspective they need to aid them in their journey of discipleship.

This manual is a general guide for Latter-day Saints seeking to reconcile their faith in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ with their experience of same-sex attraction. This guidance has been compiled from the collective experience of numerous same-sex-attracted Saints and the counsel from various licensed counselors and therapists who specialize in this field. It is in no way an attempt to address the many nuances associated with experiencing same-sex attraction, because there are many subtleties that warrant the help of more serious attention through prayer, fasting, and counsel from competent mental health professionals. Rather, these principles provide general guidance on what every same-sex-attracted member can do to find reconciliation.

What constitutes as “reconciliation” can obviously differ from individual to individual. The Oxford Dictionary defines reconciliation as, “the process of making two opposite beliefs, ideas, or situations agree.”

The experience of same-sex attraction can seem at times nearly irreconcilable with faith in Jesus Christ, as it seems to counteract the scriptures and God’s plan for man. But, reconciliation is not only possible, but achievable to any individual who places his or her faith and hope in Jesus Christ. Christ’s atonement is what reconciles us. In fact, the word “atonement” is translated from the ancient Greek word *katallasso*, which means “reconciliation.” True reconciliation is achieved as our experience with same-sex attraction is appreciated for the role it can play

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<sup>2</sup> M. Russell Ballard; *Questions and Answers* (2017)

in our eternal progression, and as our wills are swallowed up in the will of the Father.

We pray that you will find the joy, peace, and direction in your life that you are seeking as you strive to navigate your journey ahead. May the application of these principles aid you in that journey. “Regardless of your circumstances, your personal history, or the strength of your testimony, there is room for you in this Church. Come, join with us!”<sup>3</sup> You belong in the Church, and you have a significant part to play in the Plan and work of salvation. The Savior Jesus Christ will be your constant companion on this journey as you rely on Him and receive His grace.

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<sup>3</sup> Dieter F. Uchtdorf; *Come Join With Us* (2013)

## A GUIDE FOR APPLICATION

**T**he *Principles for Reconciliation* manual is a general guide for Latter-day Saints seeking to reconcile their faith in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ with their experience of same-sex attraction. It provides a compilation of principles acquired from the collective experience of same-sex-attracted members throughout the world. When applied with the influence of the Holy Spirit, these principles have been shown to help many of these members in their individual journeys to reconcile their faith in the Lord and their experience of same-sex attraction.

These principles are intended to be applied in any order the participant sees fit—if in any order at all. They are not meant to be applied in direct succession. Although each principle may offer the opportunity for crucial development, what principles the participant applies is completely up to his or her discretion and inspiration. Some principles may be more impactful than others, but lasting reconciliation comes as all principles are applied to some degree. Ultimately, as the participant seeks revelation from the Holy Spirit, the Spirit will guide the participant as to which principles he or she needs most for their growth and development.

While these principles have helped many in their personal journeys for reconciliation, they are not intended to heal participants from unwanted feelings of homosexual attraction. Most individuals who apply these principles will continue to experience same-sex attraction throughout their life, but this will in no way limit their ability to fully enjoy the blessings of the Lord and the fellowship of their fellow Saints.

Some sought-after blessings are granted quickly; some after great prayer and fasting;

some after sacrifice and patience; still other blessings will not be received until the next life. However, what these principles will bring you is greater peace, harmony, and a deeper relationship with our Savior Jesus Christ. The ultimate goal is to become more like Him. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>John 17:3

## DISCLAIMER

The *Principles for Reconciliation* manual in no way espouses, promotes, or endorses practices or methods related to or employed in what is commonly referred to as “conversion therapy.” We condemn any forms of “therapy” or “counseling” that may inflict individuals with physical or emotional harm in an effort to coerce them into changing their sexual orientation or identity. These principles are not intended to heal anyone from unwanted feelings or same-sex attraction, or to change anyone from being homosexual to being heterosexual. This manual is not intended to replace or provide therapy or counseling that can only be provided by a competent, licensed mental health professional.

We believe all men and women have been given moral agency from loving Heavenly Parents, to be able to choose for themselves how they desire to live (see Helaman 14:30-31). In accordance with this teaching, we support each individual’s autonomy to choose for his or herself how they desire to live their lives. This manual is meant to provide general guidance for individuals who have chosen, of their own free will and choice, to follow Jesus Christ and His gospel plan for their lives. We do not coerce anyone to live in accordance with Christ’s teachings, if they have chosen not to do so.

Additionally; Although we have strived to stay aligned with orthodox gospel doctrines and teachings from the prophets, this manual is not a publication of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints nor any subsidiary organization, such as Family Services; nor does it constitute as an official stance on doctrine or teaching from the Church or its leaders.

# THE PRINCIPLES FOR RECONCILIATION

## 1. HOPE

*Acknowledge your attractions, & have hope in the future God has for you.*

## 2. COMMIT

*Commit to be faithful to the Lord & your covenants.*

## 3. IDENTITY

*Develop a correct understanding of your identity & relationship with your Heavenly Parents.*

## 4. ACCEPT

*Accept your experience, & abandon any shame or guilt.*

## 5. WAIT

*Wait upon the Lord in receiving promised blessings & trust in His timing.*

## 6. REACH

*Reach out to others for help, love, & support.*

## 7. CHASTITY

*Live a chaste, intimate life.*

## 8. FORGIVE

*Forgive others who may have wronged you.*

## 9. SERVE

*Lose your life in the service of God.*

## 10. CONSECRATE

*Consecrate everything—your appetites & desires—on the altar of the Lord.*

## PRINCIPLE 1

# HOPE

**Key principle:** *Acknowledge your attractions, & have hope in the future God has for you.*

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“I’m gay”. That realization, and the implications surrounding that acknowledgment, struck many of us with confusion, fear, or distress. Unable to consider the full ramifications immediately, we mulled over the realization of our homosexual attractions and, for many of us, our futures seemed filled with uncertainty.

After years of running from the feelings, lying to ourselves that the attractions weren’t what they are, we were no longer able to hide from the reality. From a young age, we knew we were different from our same-gender peers. Many of us felt intense discomfort with these feelings, even to the point of revulsion, and hid them from others and even from ourselves. Eventually, when we could no longer run, hide, nor remain in ignorance of these attractions, we acknowledged them for what they were: *homosexuality*. Although the terminology with which we initially identified the attractions may have differed, we finally admitted to ourselves, in one way or another, that we experienced same-sex attraction.

The more we thought about this new reality, the more questions and concerns seemed to flood our minds and feed our fears. Many of us questioned how this could affect our futures. Our hopes for marriage, children, and activity in the Church seemed to shatter before our eyes. Some of us may have wondered, “Did something I do make me this way? How can I be gay in the Church? Will my family hate me if I tell them? Will I be excommunicated if my leaders find out?”

All this confusion, doubt, and fear led some of us to lose hope in our future. One sister remarked, “It was as if my whole world; my dreams of dating, marrying in the temple, and children; it all fell apart. Would I ever be able to find happiness?”

The adversary magnified these feelings—telling us we could never be happy or accepted—leaving some of us with a sense of hopelessness. A brother facing this situation said, “I felt like the only options I had were to ‘come out’ and leave the Church to find happiness in the world—and face being ostracised or estranged by my family and Church community—or I would need to live a lonely, celibate life in the Church. I felt cornered into a bleak situation I had no control over.”

Satan can, and will, use our uncertainty and fears to make us believe there is no hope. He tells us we are out of options; that we need to yield to our unwanted situations and simply give up. Consequently, the emotional burden may prove too heavy for some to bear, and he whispers that it would be better for us to end our lives. But none of this is even remotely true. *Satan is a liar*.<sup>1</sup> There is always hope, and there is always opportunity for joy and happiness.

While cautiously walking on the water toward Jesus, Peter turned his attention to the stormy wind. He was instantly caught with fear at the sight of the tumultuous waves all around him, and immediately he began to sink. We don’t know what Peter’s thoughts were in that

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<sup>1</sup> Moses 4:4

moment as he sank, but he likely felt a sudden overwhelming hopelessness at the prospect of drowning—as may have happened to many other fishermen before him on that sea. Yet rather than succumb to that terrible fate—instead of giving in to a situation he was unable to control—he cried out in desperation to Jesus to save him from almost certain death. The Savior immediately reached out and pulled Peter from his descent, bringing him back to the safety of the boat.

Peter experienced a miracle. For a moment, while his eyes focused on reaching Jesus, he walked on water. But when his view strayed from the Savior and focused on the boisterous waves, doubt overtook his faith, and the sustaining power of God withdrew from him. Like Peter beginning to sink, the realization of our same-sex attraction seemed like stormy waves threatening our hopes and future happiness. It filled our minds with doubts, fears, and uncertainty—and the faith and confidence we once felt seemed to flee—leaving us alone to face a perceived dismal future. Yet, like Peter, we can have hope in Jesus and His power to save!

Jesus will never abandon us. As we fix our eyes on Him, we will always have His grace to sturdy us over the tumultuous waves of life’s uncertainties and pitfalls. At times, inevitably, we will fall. We will occasionally sink into the waves; maybe even deep into the depths of the proverbial sea; but hope is never lost! If we call out to our Savior, Jesus Christ, He will immediately extend His hand to save us. We can rely on His eternal love for us. Because of that love, as we exercise faith and hope in Him, He will always make things right on our behalf.

It’s crucial to remember that having hope in Christ is not just an obscure, blind wish in something that *could* happen. No, we

hope in what *will* happen. Hope is trusting that God our Father loves us—and that he keeps His word—that if we remain faithful to Him, and “whosoever shall put their trust in [him] shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day.”<sup>2</sup> We have hope in Him because His grace is sufficient and His promises are sure.

We cannot know everything that the future holds in store. There is much uncertainty, and there will be painful trials for us to endure. But, like Peter, let us have hope in Christ and in His matchless power. And while we exercise that hope in Him unto faith and action, He will bring joy into our lives and open up to us opportunities that we never thought possible. There is always hope when we rely on the Savior. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

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- *Share with a friend or family member how your challenges have blessed you and strengthened your life.*
- *Take time to remember and reflect on spiritual witnesses you have received regarding the truthfulness of the gospel. Remember how you felt and what you experienced when you received those witnesses. Reflect on the connection between “remembering” and having “hope.” Reflect on how remembering those witnesses can bring you hope in challenging times.*
- *Reach out to support and give hope to someone struggling under a different trial. Even as you recognize the unique aspects of your respective*

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<sup>2</sup> Alma 36:3

<sup>3</sup> Romans 15:3

challenges, consider how each of these challenges might be a blessing to each of you.

- Ask an admired friend or mentor to share with you how they nurture and maintain their hope, in the face of discouragement and despair.
- Write in your journal about your journey to accept your experience with same-sex attraction. How can received hope in this acceptance?
- Talk to someone who has “come out” and is still living within the gospel. How have they accepted living within the gospel while experiencing same-sex attraction? Write what you learn from that conversation.

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## STUDY SUGGESTIONS

- Ponder and write in a journal how Jesus Christ and His gospel has given you hope. You can write about any experience you had in the past whether about your same-sex attraction or not. Followed by sharing with a friend, reaching out, then asking a mentor.

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- Study how Hope is defined in the gospel. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/hope?lang=eng>. How might you be using the word incorrectly? How can knowing the correct meaning of hope change the way we hope?

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- Study President Boyd K. Packer’s October 2014 Conference talk “The Reason for Our Hope.” Why is it crucial to centre our hope in Jesus Christ?

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- Carefully read Neal A. Maxwell’s October 1994 General Conference talk “Brightness of Hope.” Ponder the distinction between proximate and ultimate hope. Write some examples of (short term) proximate hopes versus where you wish to place your ultimate (eternal) hopes.

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## PRINCIPLE 2

# COMMIT

**Key principle:** *Commit to be faithful to the Lord & your covenants.*

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As we acknowledged and understood that we had same-sex attraction, our views on the rest of our lives changed dramatically. Many of us have felt fear, anxiety and confusion about what this meant for our future relationships, potential to marry, and ultimately our faith in the Savior Jesus Christ and His gospel. Many of us doubted our beliefs and what role, if any, we could have in the Church. Many of us wondered how we could be faithful to the gospel and in the Church, when our attractions seemed to negate God’s Plan for our lives.

The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians anciently, that, “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”<sup>1</sup> Some things in our lives will remain unclear and unresolved until we reach heaven. While we can only see partially now, our limited understanding will eventually turn to knowledge if we remain faithful and diligent. We will come to clearly see our role in the Plan and how we fit perfectly into it.

We may at times feel hopelessly lost or that we can barely see ahead where our pathway leads, but let us take courage from Nephi’s declaration: “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.”<sup>2</sup>

With that conviction, Nephi entered Jerusalem, “not knowing beforehand the things

which [he] should do.” Yet having a desire to keep the commandments and being led by the Spirit, Nephi was able to miraculously accomplish what had seemed to him to be an impossible task.

Just as Nephi gained his conviction to accomplish impossible feats, we too have been given control over our circumstances. We have had powerful spiritual experiences and witnesses of the truth of the Gospel. On many occasions, the Spirit has borne witness to us of God’s love, His nature, the purpose of the Plan, and our crucial role to play. We felt these witnesses at our baptisms, in sacrament meetings, in prayer, at our endowments, on our missions, or any number of other moments. Let us never disregard what we know to be true, for something we don’t completely understand. The testimonies we have built over the years are true and valid. Our attractions do not contradict what we know; rather, they can become a means to enrich our future discipleship.

Let us be firm in our resolve to be faithful to our sacred covenants, regardless of what we are unable to completely understand at the moment. This often means that we must take the next relatively small step we feel prompted to make, even if that step seems insignificant, or although we cannot see how that step will get us to our ultimate destination. It is rarely given to us to see the end from the beginning, but as we walk in faith, “line upon line, precept upon precept,” the Lord will

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:12

<sup>2</sup> 1 Nephi 3:7

ensure that we achieve the goal He intends for us to reach.<sup>3</sup>

As we strive to remain faithful to the Lord, He will lend us understanding and ensure that wherever our pathways lead us, the Lord will be our constant guide. He alone is the way to peace and fulfillment.

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### SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- *What does it mean to be committed to the Lord for you? How do you do that? Write some daily goals and/or routines to help strengthen your will to commit.*
- *Make a list of Spiritual experiences you have had in the past. List as many as you can in detail. Keep them safe in a journal or diary. Ponder on them and refer back to them as often as needed, and especially in times of trial. How have these experiences helped you to see Heavenly Father’s hand in your life and His love for you?*
- *Maintain a constant habit of prayer and scripture study.*
- *Faith in Jesus Christ and repentance are the first two principles of the gospel. Make a list of goals of how you can regularly repent and show faith in Jesus Christ so that you can more worthily partake of the sacrament each week.*
- *Attend the temple as often as possible. Bring the name of an ancestor. If you are married, take your spouse.*
- *Seek ways to be more engaged in your calling and ministering efforts.*

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### STUDY SUGGESTIONS

- *Study Nephi’s words in 1 Nephi 3:7. Record your thoughts about how you can exercise courage in accomplishing difficult tasks.*

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- *Study the account of Nephi and his brothers in attempting to get the brass plates in 1 Nephi 4. How was Nephi’s approach different from his brothers? How do you think you can build faith to accomplish seemingly impossible goals?*

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- *Study Elder L. Whitney Clayton’s talk “Choose to Believe” from April 2015. What can you learn about Sailor’s committing to be faithful to the Lord, even amid uncertainty?*

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- *Read Dallin H. Oaks talk from October 1989 General Conference, “Modern Pioneers.” Do you sometimes feel you’re in the “last wagon,” where your view of eternity is obscured? Consider the small ways that you have been faithful that, added up, over time, have made a large difference in your life? Also, write about the examples of other*

<sup>3</sup> 2 Nephi 28:30

*humble, ordinary people who have blessed and strengthened you.*

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## PRINCIPLE 3 IDENTITY

**Key principle:** *Develop a correct understanding of your identity & relationship with your Heavenly Parents.*

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Upon acknowledging our attractions, we began a quest to discover and understand what this meant for our lives. We had many questions. We wanted to understand why we had these attractions. Was it “nurture” or “nature” that caused this? Was there any way to make the feelings go away? Some of us may have asked ourselves, “Did God make me this way? I was raised in a gospel-centered home, so how could I be like this? Wasn’t being gay something only sinners experienced?” We prayed and read scripture like never before to find answers to our concerns. As we sought out doctrine, we learned eternal truths about ourselves and our relationship with God.

We gained understanding that our life did not begin at birth, nor will it end at death. Before our mortal experience, we lived with our Heavenly Father and Mother—we are Their literal spirit children. They taught us about the Plan of Happiness, and we yearned to have the joy They experience and the potential to become like Them. We learned in our premortal life that this possibility could become a reality if we would follow the teachings of Christ in mortality.

Paul taught the Romans, “The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also

glorified together.”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the Lord expounded through the Prophet Joseph Smith in this dispensation, speaking of those who are faithful in keeping His law; “... Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power ...”<sup>2</sup>

Very simply put: If we do our best to keep the commandments, we can become gods and goddesses like our Heavenly Parents. This is what They intend for us; to enjoy the lives They themselves enjoy.

When God created us, He called His creation “very good.”<sup>3</sup> We are born good and sinless, although not yet perfect. Perfection comes through Christ and becoming like our Heavenly Parents. So, They gave us the opportunity to gain physical bodies in mortality and to learn good from evil. They blessed us with certain gifts and talents to help us develop the Christlike attributes we would need for godhood. They have also allowed us to experience certain challenges and tests, through which we can develop gifts, talents, and attributes.

Although officially “the Church does not take a position on the cause of same-sex attraction”<sup>4</sup>—whether it is caused by nature or nurture, we may not know—it is one of the

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:16-17

<sup>2</sup> D&C 132:20

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:31

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay?lang=eng>

experiences that God allows us to have in this fallen world. It is just one facet of our mortal experience, but through this experience, we can develop the traits and attributes we need to be able to aid the work of salvation, and that are intended to prepare us for our return to our Celestial Home.

“No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God . . . and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven.”<sup>5</sup>

At times, some of us may give an inordinate, and often disproportionate emphasis on one experience or characteristic over all others. Whether it is sports, music, supposed body flaws or beauty, ethnicity, and yes, same-sex attraction, we may unconsciously single out one experience as a major emphasis in our overall identity. It becomes a label by and through which we perceive our identity. President Dallin H. Oaks taught what is most important, is that “... each of us is a child of God with a potential destiny of eternal life. Every other label, even including occupation, race, physical characteristics, or honors, is temporary or trivial in eternal terms. Don’t choose to label yourselves or think of yourselves in terms that put a limit on a goal for which you might strive.”<sup>6</sup>

We all have infinite potential. A loving Father in Heaven knows best what we need to

develop into the exalted beings we are meant to become. He knew that we would develop best through experiencing same-sex attraction. And although it plays an important role in our experience, it is just one sound in a much greater orchestra of other equally important arrays of sounds within our greater experience. As we remain focused on our eternal identity, and fixed on the goal of exaltation, our experiences will work together for our good to help us to become the celestial beings we are meant to be.

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

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- *Take a piece of paper and fold it in half. On the outside, write a list of labels and/or identities that the world or others might give you. On the inside write your core identity as a child of God. How have outside labels impacted your core identity as a child of God? Have these labels helped you grow closer or further from your core identity? Prayerfully set goals of how you can be more mindful of staying true to your core identity as a child of God.*
- *Make a list of all your gifts, talents and positive character traits. Have someone else write down what gifts and talents they see that you have. Compare your list and the list someone has made for you to your patriarchal blessing, and identify themes that you see about who are really are.*
- *Identify areas in your life that you may consider weaknesses. Do not dwell on these weaknesses or obsess on them, but find little ways in which you can improve them one at a time. Ask Heavenly Father to help make these weak things strong (Ether 12:27)*
- *List the lessons you have learned with experiencing same-sex attraction. Consider the talents the Lord has helped you to develop through those lessons and*

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<sup>5</sup> Orson F. Whitney

<sup>6</sup> Dallin H. Oaks; *Where Will This Lead?* (2019)

*how they have blessed other areas of your life, as well as other people in your life.*

- *Seek inspiration regarding the potential God intends for you. What sacrifices are you willing to make to achieve this potential?*

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## STUDY SUGGESTIONS

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- *Read Acts 17:29. What does this teach about our relationship with God?*

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- *Romans 8:16-17. What does this passage teach about our potential?*

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- *List the requirements the Lord outlines in D&C 132 regarding marriage and godhood. Was it needed for us to become like Him?*

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- *Read Moses 1: 12-13. How does Satan try to distort Moses' true identity? How does Moses' knowledge about his identity empower him against Satan?*



## PRINCIPLE 4

### ACCEPT

**Key principle:** *Accept your experience, & abandon any shame or guilt.*

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For some of us it was shame; for others embarrassment; and still others it was guilt. Whatever the feelings were, they were usually negative when we acknowledged our same-sex attraction. We associated our attractions with the negative stereotypes and remarks we often heard from society about “a gay lifestyle” and homosexuality. Some of us thought that if we were having these feelings, it must be the result of sinfulness or a weakness on our part. Consequently, some of us felt frustrated or angry with ourselves for having these thoughts and feelings, which were sometimes manifested as self-hatred or anger towards God for apparently giving us this burden. We loathed ourselves and didn’t see our purpose in the Church or in God’s Plan.

Many of us tried our best to make the feelings go away. We thought, “If Jesus healed people according to their faith—if he could heal lepers and the blind—couldn’t he take away the gay feelings I have, if I show enough faith or if I’m righteous enough?” Many of us felt like the Apostle Paul, as if we had a thorn in our side; who “[begged] the Lord thrice, that it might depart from [him].”<sup>1</sup> Consequently, some of us started on a diligent pursuit to attempt to “pray the gay away,” in the hope that eventually a healing, or cure, would come, and we would finally be perceived as “normal” like our heterosexual peers. We did our best to keep the commandments. We prayed more; studied the scriptures better; served obedient missions; and some of us even married in the temple; always “making a deal” with God that He would take away our same-

sex attraction because of our acts of faith. Sometimes, these feelings would diminish in importance, so it may have seemed for a time that God was keeping His end of this unspoken “deal”. But then, despite our best efforts, the feelings, or the sense of failure, come roaring back, and we feel betrayed because God didn’t take them away as we expected. Just like with Paul, no matter how many times we begged the Lord to make the homosexual attractions to depart from us, it didn’t happen. The attractions were still there, and maybe even more upsetting than ever before.

Understandably, many of us experienced crushing disappointment and discouragement when our hopes of “healing” were not fulfilled. In one way or another, we came to the realisation that the attraction might never leave us in mortality.

In response to Paul’s repetitive petitions to take his infirmity from him, God gave this powerful, loving reply; “My grace is sufficient for thee: for *my strength is made perfect in weakness.*” Although same-sex attraction could be considered to some of us as a “weakness” —in that it can hinder many of us from being able to marry and procreate in mortality—contrary to common belief, a weakness is not something bad nor evil. Having a weakness does not make us broken or unworthy. Weakness is simply a necessary aspect of our mortal experience. The Lord declared to Moses on Mt. Sinai; “Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, ... or the

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

blind? *have not I the Lord?*” (emphasis added).<sup>2</sup> Speaking of the man born blind, Jesus likewise taught that it wasn’t due to the man’s sin, nor to any supposed sin of his parents that caused this.

God in His loving kindness, and in His infinite wisdom, has allowed us to be able to experience our weaknesses, “that the works of God should be made manifest in [us].”<sup>3</sup> He has allowed these things, not as a curse, but that God’s strength can be manifested in and through us. Thus ultimately, if we allow Him, He can transform an unideal situation into an immense blessing. For, the Lord said, “[I] show forth my wisdom through the weak things of the earth,”<sup>4</sup> and “by the weak things of the earth the Lord shall thresh the nations by the power of his Spirit.”<sup>5</sup>

As the Lord taught the prophet Ether; “I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, *then will I make weak things become strong unto them*” (emphasis added).<sup>6</sup> Weakness is a state of being which engenders humility, through which the Lord can work to lift us into a higher state of being, and perform His miracles through us.

With this knowledge, Paul joyfully exclaimed, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmity, in reproaches, in [hardships], in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong!” He no longer sought to rid himself of

what he formerly deemed a problem, but he accepted it as a glorious opportunity to receive God’s power in his life and become stronger from it.

As challenging, frustrating, or confusing our experience with same-sex attraction may be, we can take comfort in knowing that our Lord is able to make us strong and show His great power through us. Same-sex attraction does not need to be a burden nor a source of shame, for no wrong has been committed. We might feel weak, or confused by this challenge, but then we can remember that God loves to use the “weak and simple” to proclaim His gospel<sup>7</sup> and “delights to honor” those who serve Him.<sup>8</sup> God can use this experience to be a great source of growth, so that he can help us become the celestial beings we are meant to be. As we come to accept and embrace our same-sex attraction as a blessing, and rely on God’s infinite grace, He will work miracles in our lives. What an honor it is, that God has allowed us to have this challenge as part of our mortal journey! We can find joy in this journey, and like Paul, glory in our experience, that Christ’s power may rest upon us.

Every part of our journey can contain pitfalls. Once we have successfully accepted that same-sex attraction is an indelible part of our mortal experience, we might go to the opposite extreme, replacing our shame with pride. Both are limiting, and both separate us from God. Shame says we are unworthy of forgiveness; pride says we don’t need it. Both can place us outside of Christ’s ability to transform and heal our hearts. Both are

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<sup>2</sup> Exodus 4:11

<sup>3</sup> John 9:3

<sup>4</sup> D&C 124:1

<sup>5</sup> D&C 133:59

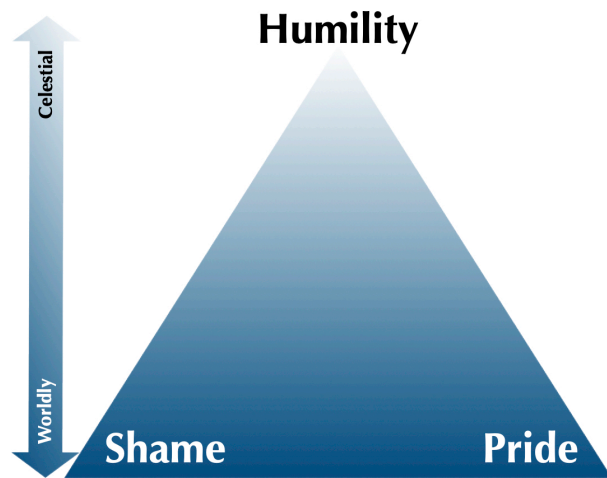
<sup>6</sup> Ether 12:27

<sup>7</sup> D&C 1:23

<sup>8</sup> D&C 76:5

unstable and we might fluctuate back and forth between these unhealthy extremes.

Instead, what we should aim for is “godly humility.” This humility allows us to be grateful in all our circumstances. It helps us realize that while we may not understand all of the reasons why we have been given this challenge, its purpose is greater than ourselves. From this place of humble gratitude, we are able to see that our experience of same-sex attraction is neither a curse nor something that makes us better than others. In gratitude, and with humility, we realize that our experience with same-sex attraction is not only for our salvation, but for the blessings we are able to bring to others, so that “the works of God should be made manifest in [us].”<sup>9</sup>



With this kind of humility, we move from “Why me?” or “Look at me!”; to “How may I be an instrument in God’s hands to bring glory to the Kingdom?” We find that as we do so, all our afflictions are consecrated to our good and the good of others. Developing Godly humility, helps us not to let our acceptance go too far, where we over-identify with our attractions, giving them greater prominence over our other experiences and characteristics. For most of us, it will be an enduring part of our lives, but it is not the

entirety of who we are. For some, their identification with their attractions can define the entirety of their artistic tastes, political beliefs, and social circle. Everyone is unique in their own way. Your experience of same-sex attraction is part of what makes your moral experience unique, but you should never allow this one facet of your experience to dominate the most important aspects of your identity and experience, as a talented child of God and disciple of Christ. Ultimately, we humbly accept our experience as a way to glorify God and serve others.

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- *A crucial aspect of acceptance is ridding ourselves of pride and humbly accepting God’s will for our lives, over our own will, desires, or understanding. When we think we know better than God as to what is best for our lives, instead of allowing god to direct our path, we are allowing our pride to dictate our life. Seeking to continually, humbly submit to His will is an attribute called “meekness.” This is the antithesis of pride. As we seek to live meekly, we recognise that God has a greater plan for our lives, rather than what we may currently understand, and we make a conscious, diligent effort to surrender ourselves to His will. Since many of us may desire a romantic or sexual relationship with someone of our same gender, our pride may try to convince us that this is the correct path for us. Consider how you can meekly choose to accept God’s will for your life. How can you live meekly with experiencing same-sex attraction?*

<sup>9</sup> John 9:3

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## STUDY SUGGESTIONS

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- *Read the article “It Isn’t a Sin to be Weak,” by Wendy Ulrich in the April 2015 Ensign. Are there weaknesses that you have been ashamed of and believed were sin? Note how the response to weakness (humility) is different than that to sin (repentance). Write below the difference between destructive shame about your attractions versus “meekness in weakness” about something that isn’t a result of sin on your part and that you didn’t choose.*

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- *Read Ether 12:27. What does God teach us about weakness? How can our weaknesses become strengths?*

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- *Read 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10. What can we learn from Paul’s experience with his “thorn in the flesh” and how we can change our perspective about our same-sex attraction?*

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## PRINCIPLE 5

### WAIT

**Key principle:** *Wait upon the Lord in receiving promised blessings & trust in His timing.*

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**T**he Prophet Joseph Smith suffered an unjust imprisonment in Liberty Jail for nearly five months. In deplorable conditions, he not only fought for his own survival, but shouldered despair over the tribulations the Saints were enduring at the hands of wicked men. How could the Lord allow this to happen to his choice prophet? Why would he allow His Church members to suffer unjustly? Hadn't they been doing their best to keep His commandments and serve Him? Where were the blessings they had been promised of joy and prosperity in the land?

In our journeys with same-sex attraction, we may have wondered when our promised blessings will be realized. We have seen dear friends and family enter into loving relationships, enjoy dating, experience the excitement of their temple sealings, and the joy of having children. Many of us longed deeply to experience the same joys of marriage and childrearing ourselves. We yearned to start a family, but did not see how those blessings could ever be a reality for us; considering the majority of us felt absolutely nothing romantic toward our opposite-gendered peers, let alone any sexual attraction. Consequently, many of us felt the daunting realisation set in that we will likely remain single and celibate for the duration of mortality.

The prospect of celibacy for mortal life seems plausible for a while—we are happy in Church service; we love our callings and enjoy being anxiously engaged in the work of

salvation—but loneliness overtakes many of us at times. We feel starved for companionship. We just want someone that we can express our deepest love and emotions with, and yes, frankly, to be able to enjoy the expression of sexual intimacy with. Many of us wonder how we can live the duration of our lives without fulfilling one of the most fundamental human needs; companionship. Some of us may have thought, “God said, ‘It isn’t good for man to be alone,’<sup>1</sup> so how can I endure life without an eternal companion?” Considering we never chose our same-sex attraction, this prospect seems extremely unfair.

Some of us have had the opportunity to enter into heterosexual marriages, but have felt unfulfilled in those relationships. We love our spouses—we experience a degree of spiritual and emotional bonding with them—but experience little to no sexual fulfilment with them. We have thoughts of doubt, wondering if we would be happier in a same-sex relationship, or if we’re cheating ourselves out of a more fulfilling life by not entering into that type of relationship. At times, the resulting pain and sadness can be unbearable.

In these moments of pain, we, like Joseph, may cry out, “O God, where art thou? ... How long shall thy hand be stayed, ... Yea, O Lord, how long [will I] suffer these [things], before ... thy bowels be moved with compassion toward [me]?”<sup>2</sup> We can draw comfort and hope from God’s response to Joseph; “My son [or daughter], peace be unto

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 2:18

<sup>2</sup> D&C 121:1-3, 7

thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high.” God later counselled Joseph: “... know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.”<sup>3</sup> As Elder Robert D. Hales taught, “‘Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.’ Then, in the dawn of our increased faith and understanding, we arise and choose to wait upon the Lord, saying, ‘Thy will be done’”.<sup>4</sup>

Elder Hales further expounded; “What, then, does it mean to wait upon the Lord? In the scriptures, the word wait means to hope, to anticipate, and to trust. To hope and trust in the Lord requires faith, patience, humility, meekness, long-suffering, keeping the commandments, and enduring to the end. To wait upon the Lord means planting the seed of faith and nourishing it ‘with great diligence, and ... patience’; Praying as the Savior did ... ‘Thy will be done’; It is a prayer we offer with our whole souls ... [to] Jesus Christ; ... Pondering in our hearts and ‘receiv[ing] the Holy Ghost’ so that we can know ‘all things what [we] should do’; To ‘stand fast’ and ‘press forward’ in faith, ‘having a perfect brightness of hope’; [and] ‘Relying alone upon the merits of Christ’ and ‘with [His] grace assisting [us, saying]: Thy will be done, O Lord, and not ours.’

“As we wait upon the Lord, we are ‘immovable in keeping the commandments,’ knowing that we will ‘one day rest from all [our] afflictions.’ And ... that ‘all things wherewith [we] have been afflicted shall work together for [our] good.’”

Same-sex attraction may present certain obstacles to receiving specific promised blessings in mortality, but we can still have joy

in the journey. We can trust in our Heavenly Father, in His infinite love for us, and in what He has promised the faithful. He has promised through the prophets, that no blessing will be denied the righteous. Our hopes of having a loving and fulfilling marriage and having children will one day be realized.

Let us look to the example of Job, who after losing everything, gained it back with even greater increase. As we wait upon the Lord, we will receive the blessings to which we are entitled by covenant.

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- *We often worry about blessings we’re missing out on in mortality—a romantic relationship with someone we love, marriage, and children. The Lord has promised us that if we remain faithful, any blessings we were denied in mortality will be realized. Seek to develop an eternal perspective. This mortal experience is but a minute in the scheme of eternity. Plan for eternity, not for mortal joy.*
- *Our perspective has an immense affect upon how we endure our waiting. Continuing to focus on what we’re lacking can be frustrating, depressing, and debilitating. Consider focusing on the blessings that you do have and how you can use your gifts and talents to do the most good while you wait.*

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<sup>3</sup> D&C 122:7

<sup>4</sup> Robert D. Hales; *Waiting Upon the Lord: Thy Will be Done* (2011)

## STUDY SUGGESTIONS

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- Study “*Waiting upon the Lord: Thy Will Be Done*” by Elder Hales. What does it mean to wait upon the Lord?

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- Read James 5:11. What is the blessing of enduring?

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- Study the Book of Job. What can we learn about waiting on the Lord from Job’s example?

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- Read Elder Wirthlin’s October 2008 General Conference Talk, “Come What May and Love it.” Study the section called “The Principle of Compensation.” What blessings and opportunities have you been given even as your life has not gone the way you may have planned or hoped? Elder Wirthlin promised that “the Lord compensates the faithful for every loss. That which is taken away from those who love the Lord will be added unto them in His own way.” Where have you seen this in your life?

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## PRINCIPLE 6

### REACH

**Key principle:** *Reach out to others for help, love & support.*

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For years we hid our attractions from others out of fear; fear of change; fear of supposed Church discipline; but, mostly out of fear of rejection. This fear led many of us to resort to two things: We bottled up our emotions and feelings—only expressing them to ourselves—and we strived to manage or fix the situation on our own. We tried to hide this issue deep within ourselves, where no one would ever see—we could just keep this between ourselves and God—hoping it would some day either resolve itself or we would find a solution without anyone ever needing to know.

The issue didn't go away, and it didn't resolve itself either. Although we did at times feel comfort and direction from the Spirit, we still felt a sense of isolation in our experience not having someone to speak to face-to-face. Instead of things working themselves out, the situation only seemed to become progressively worse. The isolation led to growing tension within ourselves manifesting itself as stress, anxiety and/or depression. For some of us, the pain became so unbearable that we could see no other way out than to end our lives. Reaching a level of desperation, we could no longer remain silent and needed to tell someone; a trusted individual who would understand and support us.

We are not meant to shoulder burdens alone. God does not intend us to. Yes, we have our Savior Jesus Christ who carries our yoke with and for us. He gives us grace to endure

trials, but often, that grace—His support and comfort—is imparted through earthly angels; our family members and friends. President Spencer W. Kimball remarked, “God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs.”<sup>1</sup> We have made covenants to “bear one another’s burdens that they may be light ... and comfort those that stand in need of comfort”.<sup>2</sup> God also asks us to “... succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees”.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, he often uses our family and friends as the answers to our petitions and desires for help.

“Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety,”<sup>4</sup> counseled King Solomon. No matter who the individual may be, we must find a trusted person to whom we can divulge our struggles. Each of us should consider one or more of the following individuals to reach out to:

- *A family member or friend without same-sex attraction*
- *A family member or friend with same-sex attraction*
- *An ecclesiastical leader*
- *A competent therapist or counselor*

Although it isn't necessary, or always appropriate, to disclose our attractions to every one of these individuals, having at least one person who understands, and can

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<sup>1</sup> Spencer W. Kimball; *Small Acts of Service* (1974)

<sup>2</sup> Mosiah 18:8-9

<sup>3</sup> D&C 81:5

<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 11:14

sympathise with us, gives us someone who can be our earthly support on our individual journeys. An important thing to remember is that each individual offers a unique perspective or counsel we can apply to our lives. The people we confide in can help us find solutions and healing, while we navigate the turbulent waters of reconciling faith and sexual orientation.

Taking that step to reach out to someone may at first feel intimidating due to the uncertainty surrounding how an individual may react to our news, more often than not, we will find that our message will be received far better than we had assumed. For many of us, the anxiety we felt was quickly overcome by a rush of relief. After years of hiding and bottling up fear and stress, we finally feel liberation from a great burden. The lifting of that proverbial burden is often a crucial catalyst in our healing process.

Let us look to our Savior, Jesus Christ, who, when in the depth of agony, received strengthening from an angel.<sup>5</sup> If even God himself received support in his hour of need, how much more then do we need support in our journeys? We, like Him, do not need to endure our journeys alone. God has blessed us with many angels in our lives to minister to and comfort us. Let us accept and seek out those angels, that we can carry our yokes together.

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

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- *Consider a trusted individual who you can disclose your experience of same-sex attraction to. Plan an appropriate time and place to talk to them.*

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 24:43

- *Make a plan to regularly check up with your trusted individual to discuss your feelings and concerns.*
- *If you live in a place and culture that that can be hostile or violent towards homosexuality, ask God to provide you with an appropriate support person who will not put you in danger.*

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## STUDY SUGGESTIONS

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- *Read 3 Nephi 4. What does this chapter teach us about reaching out?*

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- *Read the account of Jethro giving counsel to Moses in Exodus 18: 13-27. What is the wisdom in having a counselors to guide us?*

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## PRINCIPLE 7

# CHASTITY

**Key principle:** *Live a chaste, intimate life.*

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What thoughts and feelings come to mind when you think of the law of chastity? We all know the Lord's teachings on chastity; that we need to be sexually pure before marriage and remain faithful to our spouses after marriage. But, what feelings come up when you contemplate these principles? Have they changed over time? One man described how his relationship to this law has changed over time:

“When I first would be asked by my bishop if I was keeping the law of chastity, I felt embarrassment and fear. It wasn't a topic I felt comfortable with. Then, when I first went to the temple, I felt guilt because I felt like I couldn't ever live up to that principle. Later, I became bitter because I felt I was being denied something everybody else got to enjoy, that God just wanted me to be miserable.

“Lately, however, as I have realized that repentance is a process to welcome, and that the law of chastity is meant to be a blessing and protection to ourselves, spouses, and children, I welcome it. When I am asked in the temple to obey the law of chastity, I do so with humility and gratitude—knowing that I am not living this principle perfectly, but one that I love and seek to live more fully in order to enjoy its blessings. I welcome the opportunities presented to me to repent and turn my mind to more eternal and edifying thoughts.”

Those reactions and expectations around chastity and sexual expression can show up at different times of our lives, and in different circumstances. Before marriage, we did our best to save ourselves for our future

spouses. We wanted to share the experience of sexual pleasure and gratification with them only; but, as we increasingly accepted that our sexual attraction was not directed at the opposite gender, many of us lost hope in ever being able to enjoy sexual intimacy with someone we love in mortality. That disappointment could turn into resentment and bitterness for some of us.

All of us yearn for the opportunity to enjoy sexual intimacy with a companion whom we deeply love. This God-given urge to procreate is programmed into all men and women. God created us as sexual beings and gave us the commandment to “multiply and replenish the earth.” “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”<sup>1</sup> This sacred sexual union between a man and woman is ordained of God to fulfill the plan of happiness. All other expressions of sexual activity outside that bond between a married man and woman is a sin and negates the Father's plan for families. Considering this, some of us wonder, “What about the rest of us that do not, or cannot, marry in mortality? I'm committed to be chaste, but I don't know if I can endure mortality alone and without sexual intimacy in my life.”

Considering that many of us feel little to no sexual desire for opposite-gender individuals, many of us choose to remain single and chaste to keep God's commandments. Of all the challenges we will face from experiencing same-sex attraction, one of the

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 2:24

most daunting is this prospect of lifelong celibacy.

This seems for many of us like a dismal future, devoid of the physical or emotional intimacy and affection we craved. One brother remarked, “I wanted so badly to remain chaste, because I loved God and wanted to be faithful to Him, but I was starving for affection from other men and seriously doubted if I could go the rest of my life without having that sexual urge fulfilled.” Many of us felt similarly, that living a life of chaste celibacy would be a lonely and unfulfilling venture. But living a chaste, celibate life does not need to be lonely. In fact, we can lead fulfilling lives full of intimate relationships and affectionate connections.

Jesus taught that some men remain unmarried and childless “for the kingdom of God’s sake;” meaning that some people may choose to remain single and celibate to be aligned with God’s will. This experience does not need to be void of loving, affectionate or intimate companionships. We can do our best to live as closely by the commandments, and God will eventually fulfill all blessings promised to us.

As we wait on the Lord, we also come to realize that celibate singleness is not a curse, but a holy calling. Jesus taught; “There are those who choose to live [as a celibate, unmarried person] for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. *The one who can accept this should accept it*” (emphasis added).<sup>2</sup>

While being unmarried and celibate certainly has sacrifices, there are also blessings with this calling. Being single gives us opportunities to serve and bless people in ways that married people cannot. It is easy to feel deprived of something we feel we “deserve” when we’re in this situation. We can gain

comfort and solace from the words the Lord spoke through the Prophet Isaiah<sup>3</sup> (this text has been slightly modernized to be more understandable):

“Neither let [those who don’t fit in] that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the [celibate single person] say, Behold, I am a dry tree [i.e. ‘I have no offspring’]. For thus saith the Lord unto the [celibate, unmarried people] that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;

“Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name *better than of sons and of daughters*: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

“Also [those who don't fit in] that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and *make them joyful in my house* of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord God ... gathereth the outcasts of Israel” (emphasis added).

Did you notice what the Lord said? He will not forget your sacrifices! He is not preparing you for some “second-place” spot in the Kingdom of God. If you love the Lord and take hold of His covenant, He promises you an inheritance *better* than having children. He claims you as His—giving you a name and identity—and promises you an everlasting place in His house. Perhaps most importantly, He promises that we will be joyful as we come to rest in His house.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 19:12

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 56:3-8

These are beautiful and powerful promises that are not just some runner-up prize. For those who are able to have faith in holding to the Lord's covenants and promises, some of which may not be fulfilled in mortality,<sup>4</sup> but the Lord promises that your sacrifices will be remembered and rewarded.

For those of us who choose the unmarried celibacy, our lives need not be void of intimate relationships. No, we can develop deep, platonic bonds of brotherhood or sisterhood, like that between King David and Jonathan, whose bond was so deep, "... that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself."<sup>5</sup> Their brotherhood is an example of the type of relationships we can develop to sustain us through our waiting.

Another example is the beautiful sisterhood displayed between Ruth and Naomi. Unrelated by blood, Ruth nevertheless follows Naomi back to Bethlehem, proclaiming, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."<sup>6</sup>

This principle also has profound application for those of us in heterosexual marriages. We realize that joy and fulfillment is much deeper than sexual satisfaction. Although we may not experience the intensity of sexual attraction that many heterosexual couples feel when they are initially married, we can still develop and enjoy an intimate, emotionally and spiritually-enriching connection with our spouse. We also may realize that our sexual fulfillment can be improved through education or possibly therapy. Our marriage and platonic relationships will bring

lasting fulfillment, as we develop these connections and rely on God's grace to work out promised blessings, trusting that in time, "God shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain".<sup>7</sup>

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- *Bridling your desires, appetites and passions is a crucial step in gaining dominance over the natural man, and in submitting our will to God's. Your desires, appetites and passions can be used to do much good in this life for God's glory. Consider how you can bridle, or reroute your passions to do the most good.*
- *Instead of thinking about yourself in terms of what you lack, or by what you cannot do, make a list of all the opportunities that your unique life circumstances offer. How does your situation make you uniquely suited for certain blessings and opportunities to share your gifts in ways that others may not have?*
- *Are there ways to express gratitude for your God-given sexual desire?*
- *Explore ways you might honor your procreative potential within the bounds of the law of chastity. Two ways that many people have found bring them joy and meaning is through (a) finding mentoring opportunities where you can help others, perhaps less experienced than you, receive growth and nurturing, and (b) find a creative outlet, such as through painting, poetry, or music.*
- *Do you feel like you don't fit in at your local ward or branch? Take Isaiah's promise to heart by seeking out someone else in your ward or branch who might*

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 11:13

<sup>5</sup> 1 Samuel 18:1

<sup>6</sup> Ruth 1:16

<sup>7</sup> Revelations 21:4

*fit in even less than you. They may have the same issue as you, or it may be a totally different issue than yours. As you seek to help them fit in and feel a sense of belonging in your local unit, you may find your own relationship to your fellow members improves, and that you feel like you are feeling an increased sense of belonging.*

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## STUDY SUGGESTIONS

- *Watch this inspirational message from President Uchtdorf: <https://bit.ly/2FK2o7C> and consider ways you could fulfill your urge to create.*

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- *Consider how much of the temple endowment is taken up by creation. Could this be a clue as to how applicable the act of creation is in our personal lives? Examine your life and consider if there are areas where you have been more a passive spectator in certain events. Is there a way you could play a more active and creative role in creating events in your life, rather than simply responding or reacting to things? Can you find ways that you might act, rather than be acted upon? (2 Nephi 2:26)*

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- *Read the article by Rebecca M. Taylor, “A Different Path,” In the January 2005 Ensign. What suggestions that she makes might apply to your situation? Are there others that come to your mind as you read this article?*

- *The Lord says he “delights” in our chastity. How can striving to live the law of chastity be a delight?*

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- *Listen to Elder Ulysses Soares’ October 2020 General Conference Talk about controlling thoughts and lusts.*

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## PRINCIPLE 8

# FORGIVE

**Key principle:** *Seek to forgive yourself or others who may have harmed you.*

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Nearly all of us have been deeply hurt by others in relation to us having same-sex attraction. Some of us have been called slurs or teased for being different, because of our physique, mannerisms, or for having interests that may not fit cultural norms in our areas. Church leaders may have said or done things out of ignorance, resulting from outdated and incorrect cultural understandings. Still, others of us may have been cast out from our families or communities when we revealed to them our sexual orientations. Regardless of the offence, many of us have been left with deep-seated feelings of hurt, pain, resentment, or anger towards our offenders.

One sister recounted, “One Sunday, I learned that my bishop told sisters to be careful when ministering to me, and other ward leaders wanted to restrict ministers from being assigned to me because I of my same-sex attraction. I was hurt, angry, but mostly felt lonely. I felt that I wasn’t worth it. I was giving it my all to be active in the Church, but I felt like nobody cared.

“As much as their actions hurt me, I decided to forgive them. Often, we get clouded by the feelings we have, and don’t realize that others might be acting out of ignorance or their own blindness, and not necessarily out of bad intentions. Forgiving them helped me heal. The trial that that pain put me through had a purpose and gave me meaning.”

Elder Dale G. Renlund taught, “The Savior’s infinite Atonement can heal even—and perhaps especially—those who have innocently suffered. He understands perfectly what it is like to suffer innocently as a consequence of another’s transgression. As prophesied, the Savior will ‘bind up the brokenhearted, ... give ... beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, [and] the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.’”<sup>1</sup> This healing process begins with forgiving those who have harmed us.

We may have problems forgiving others for many reasons. For some, the hurt feels too deep. We may think another does not deserve our forgiveness. We may want to mete out justice, to punish, or even the score. Would this not make us like our abusers? Or we may think that forgiving those who have hurt us makes what they did okay, letting them off the hook. Actually, forgiving lets us off the hook. We are no longer victims tied to the abuser and can be free from the pain. Those who have hurt us still need to make it right with God and repent of their own misdeeds. It is good to remember that forgiving benefits primarily the forgiver, not the other person.

Expounding on this principle, Elder Kevin R. Duncan said, “Gratefully, God, in His love and mercy for His children, has prepared a way to help us navigate these sometimes turbulent experiences of life. He has provided an escape for all who fall victim to the misdeeds of others. He has taught us that we can forgive! Even though we may be a

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<sup>1</sup> Dale G. Renlund; *Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying* (2015)

victim once, we need not be a victim twice by carrying the burden of hate, bitterness, pain, resentment, or even revenge. We can forgive, and we can be free!”<sup>2</sup> As we forgive others, not only do we receive God’s forgiveness, but we receive the balm of His grace to heal our emotional and spiritual wounds.

It is comforting to know that the Savior’s atonement can heal us of the hurt we feel, but just as importantly, His grace can help us to repent and heal from the mistakes we have made as well. But, if forgiving others of their trespasses against us seems difficult, for many of us, forgiving ourselves of sins or mistakes we have made can be harder still. Often we can be our own worst accusers and grudge-holders. Most of us are harder on ourselves than we are on anyone else. We know we have made many mistakes, done many things wrong. We may judge ourselves harshly and wonder why on earth we should forgive ourselves.

Upon careful introspection, many of us can look back on our early years and recognize experiences that caused us to feel different and apart, estranged from those we looked up to and wanted to be like. For many there was a precocious introduction to same-gender sexuality. Naïve misuse of our young bodies required secrecy and caused us to feel shame and to doubt ourselves. We may recall things we did that added to our feeling inferior and unworthy. We did not realize at the time how we were harming ourselves, as we sought to be sexual with ourselves or others of our gender. Gradually we withdrew and felt more remote and alone, as though we were imprisoned in a box labeled “Do not open.”

Many of us need to heal not only from what we have thought and desired, but also from what we have naively and not so naively

done. We cannot become new creatures in Christ unless we forgive both ourselves and others. We need to move beyond patterns of the past. As we do so, our Savior’s tender counsel can be deeply reassuring: “Neither do I condemn thee. Go thy way and sin no more.”<sup>3</sup> Press forward. Life is about growth and improvement and we do not need to be forever tied to errors of the past, neither our own nor others’.

Weakness of the flesh and the need to be spiritually led and liberated from some form of bondage is a challenge most face during mortality. Christ, lovingly welcomes and draws us to himself. Father Lehi clarified that opposition exists in all things, and that the Holy Spirit affirms the better way. Our opportunity to move from wrong to right love of ourselves and others of our gender requires forgiveness. Hence, failure to forgive burns the very bridge we ourselves must cross over. We are strongly cautioned to refrain from judgement. It is not for us to condemn either ourselves or others. When we forgive ourselves and others, we remove ourselves from being helpless victims. Consequently, we are enabled to act rather than be acted upon. We gain power to change as we desire. When we refuse to be chained to or by our past, we can be proactive and fully free to chart our new course with ourselves and others.

The Lord admonished that forgiving others is a commandment. He said, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”<sup>4</sup> Forgiving “all men” includes forgiving ourselves. Remember, “Even if we’ve been a conscious, deliberate sinner or have repeatedly faced failure and disappointment, the moment we decide to try again, the Atonement of Christ can help us.” As the Lord comfortingly

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<sup>2</sup> Kevin R. Duncan; *The Healing Ointment of Forgiveness* (2016)

<sup>3</sup> John 8:11

<sup>4</sup> D&C 64:10

said, “Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me.”<sup>5</sup> No failure, nor hurt, nor mistake ever needs to be final.

As we forgive others and ourselves, we will receive great blessings. We will find ourselves closer to God, closer to our Savior, and closer to friends and family. We will receive emotional and spiritual healing. Our self-confidence, self-esteem, creativity, and ability to progress may be greatly enhanced. Ultimately, we will have peace.

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### SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- *Insofar as making restitution for misdeeds, who do you need to approach to ask forgiveness? Including yourself, who do you need to forgive and how will you make it happen and know it has genuinely occurred?*
- *As we benefit from forgiving, we can be the first to pursue a peaceful resolution. And remember that the measure we give to others comes back to us. Note specific ways you can gain courage to trust and humbly approach others as you strive either to forgive or be forgiven?*
- *Define specific strategies that will help you pursue desired relationships more healthfully than in the past?*

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### STUDY SUGGESTIONS

- *Read and ponder Nephi’s lament over his struggles with temptation despite all the spiritual blessings he had received (2 Nephi 4: 17-35). What did he*

<sup>5</sup> Mosiah 26:30

*plead for to help him strengthen his spirit rather than give in to temptations of the flesh?*

- *Study Elder Packer’s Conference address published in the November 1986 Ensign entitled “Little Children,” wherein he discusses the importance and proper use of our procreative powers. In it he cites a major resource to help change behavior.*



## PRINCIPLE 9

### SERVE

**Key principle:** *Lose your life in the service of God.*

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**W**e are bound to have trials in our journeys with same-sex attraction. Some of us find ourselves feeling the heartache of being single and alone. Others of us struggle to overcome sexual sins that seem to have ingrained themselves in our nature. Yet, others of us are caught in a cycle of worry for what our future holds—if we ever will be truly happy in the Church.

At times, we have dwelled on our challenges, mulling over them again and again, hindering our progress and happiness. They can cast a shadow over us, dimming our happiness and joy. They can burden us down in stress, depression, or discouragement, leaving us miserable. Challenges, trials and doubts are inevitable in mortality, but they need not rob us of our joy nor halt our progression. We can find solutions to our problems, and maintain our joy in the process.

“I noticed something remarkable on my mission,” one brother noted. “My concerns regarding my same-sex attraction seemed almost a non-issue. I was so engaged in the work of salvation, in serving others’ needs, that my own challenges seemed minimal, if not nonexistent.

“My concerns with my attractions came back much more prevelantly after I returned home from my mission; so, I decided to throw myself fully into God’s service as much as possible. I was active in my ward calling and served in the temple as an ordinance worker. This didn’t make all my worries regarding same-sex attraction im-

mediately go away, but I felt that as I lost myself in God’s work, I received greater peace in my heart and solutions to my concerns.”

Ammon set an amazing example for us. He faced the almost insurmountable challenge of converting the Lamanites to the gospel—a people who had a centuries-long hatred toward the Nephites and their religion. How did he solve this immense challenge? He submitted himself to a life of servitude. By so doing, the Spirit was able to touch the Lamanite King’s heart unto his conversion. Ammon in turn was filled with joy and the love of God.<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly, Ammon learned what the Savior taught His disciples anciently; “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”<sup>2</sup>

Some of us try to “save our lives” by seeking to satisfy, and find fulfilment in, our carnal desires, appetites and passions. We seek out what we feel will make us most happy in this life. Often though, this “seeking to save our lives” is a more subtle transition.

We have committed to serve the Lord, because we know that has been what makes us the most happy in our lives. But, many of us reach a point in our spiritual health where we feel whole and happy, and, for some of us, it’s at this point where we begin to shift our focus from our religious observance to the many other lesser-good or necessary responsibilities of mortality. Usually this is done innocently, as we unwittingly, subconsciously get caught up in our worldly cares and concerns. We begin to

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<sup>1</sup> Alma 18-19

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 16:25

rely on our own strengths and wisdom concerning what's best for our lives, rather than relying on God. Consequently, the joy we found in the gospel diminishes and begins to feel unsustainable. The solutions we once received can seem unattainable. These things diminish in our lives as we become unaligned with God's will and start allowing the cares and concerns of the world to take precedent in our lives.

So what is the answer to find sustainable joy, and to find solutions to the challenges we face in life? President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, "I believe that for most of us the best medicine for [life's challenges] is work and service in behalf of others. I do not minimize your problems, but I do not hesitate to say that there are many others whose problems are more serious than yours. Reach out to serve them, to help them, to encourage them . . . A small kindness can bring a great blessing to someone in distress and a sweet feeling to the one who befriends him."<sup>3</sup>

This principle was further expounded by Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson. She taught; "[Many] of you are struggling with issues of self-worth, anxiety, high levels of stress, and perhaps even depression. Turning your thoughts outward, instead of dwelling on your own problems, may not resolve all of these issues, but service can often lighten your burdens and make your challenges seem less hard."<sup>4</sup>

Losing our lives in the service of others happens as we surrender our will to the Lord, and seek to have our eye single to His glory. This means looking outward to serve others, rather than worrying about our own worries and struggles. As we focus less on ourselves, and focus more on helping others, we have the

influence of the Holy Spirit more in our lives. He will bring us peace, revelation, and direction through our personal challenges. He will fill our hearts with charity, enriching our lives, and deepening our capacity to love others.

Of course, it is also prudent that we take care of our personal spiritual, emotional and physical health before we can have the capacity to help others. As the analogy goes; we must apply oxygen to ourselves in a depressurised airplane, before we can start applying them to others.

Some of us may feel unworthy to serve others because of sins we may be currently struggling to overcome; whether sexual in nature or otherwise. We don't see how we can be of any help to others, if we're ensnared in sin ourselves. But we do not need to be sinless to serve. The Lord said, "If ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work."<sup>5</sup> He does not say that we need to be perfect. All of us are imperfect servants. We all continue to sin and make mistakes, but we are capable of doing a great work, no matter what sins we may be struggling to overcome.

Some of us reading this may feel that our faith and hope are being overcome by our troubles. And we may yearn to feel love. "Brothers and sisters, the Lord has opportunities near you to feel and to share His love. You can pray with confidence for the Lord to lead you to love someone for Him. He answers the prayers of meek volunteers like you. You will feel the love of God for you and for the person you serve for Him. As you help children of God in their troubles, your own troubles will seem lighter. Your faith and your hope will be strengthened."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley; Chapter 14

<sup>4</sup> Bonnie L. Oscarson; *Young Women in the Work* (2018)

<sup>5</sup> D&C 4:3

<sup>6</sup> Henry B. Eyring; *Try, try, try* (2018)

As we surrender our lives, our gifts and talents, to God and His will, and as we lose our lives in His service, we will become tools in His hands to do a mighty work. Wherever we may be in our faith journeys, we can forget ourselves and go to work. In return, we may not find immediate solutions to all the complexities that we may face from our same-sex attraction, but through this process we will find ourselves and eventually find everlasting life and joy.

*Conference. What blessing can we receive through selfless service?*

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### SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

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- *Consider the many different ways that you can serve. Set goals to try different acts of service.*
- *Serve in the temple frequently. If you are unworthy to serve in the temple at the moment, find ways that you can still be involved in temple work outside the temple; for instance genealogical work and submitting ancestors' names to the temple.*

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### STUDY SUGGESTIONS

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- *Corianton was admonished by Alma for committing sexual sin, but was later referenced as a righteous son of God (read Alma 48:18). If you may not be “temple worthy”, how do you think the Lord can use you to serve now?*

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- *Read Bishop H. David Burton’s talk “The Sanctifying Work of Welfare” from April 2011*



## PRINCIPLE 10 CONSECRATE

**Key principle:** *Consecrate everything—your appetites & desires—on the altar of the Lord.*

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At times we may have feelings of being unfulfilled in life, as if we're at a lull in our spiritual progress. The "song of redeeming love"<sup>1</sup> that once resounded in our lives can seem muffled, if not hopelessly silent. At these times, doubts, insecurities, and fears regarding our same-sex attraction can creep into our lives. We may slip back into old habits or regressive ways of thinking; ultimately getting us stuck into a spiritual mire. The victory, or self-mastery, we expected to have over our same-sex attraction may seem fleeting or unachievable.

More times than not, we discover that what has contributed to this spiritual stagnation—or even regression—has been our lack of control over desires, appetites, or passions. The things we choose to watch, listen to, engage in, and the desires of our heart, have an immense impact in our lives. Whether we consciously choose to keep them or not, if we continue engaging in these things, it can weaken our ability to exercise faith, hope, and charity, and can act as a constant hindrance to the joy we could obtain in mortality and our progression toward our victory over the carnal man. "If one 'mind[s] the things of the flesh,' he cannot 'have the mind of Christ.'"<sup>2</sup>

Ultimately, what we have lacked is that instead of sacrificing our whole selves on the altar of the Lord, we have only given what we wanted to give. Unlike King Lamoni's father,<sup>3</sup> we have only been willing to give away *some* of

our sins to know God. We must be willing to surrender *all* that we are, consecrating our desires, appetites and passions to Lord and His will for us.

One brother remarked: "After pursuing gay relationships for many years before finding the restored gospel, I had developed many tastes and appetites that were not consistent with the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. Some of them were more blatantly wrong than others; others seemed innocuous. When I joined the Church I decided to turn my life over to Christ. I strove to surrender my will to His, and consecrate my life to Him. I gave up my old habits, desires, and appetites and replaced them as best I could with godly habits, desires and appetites.

"I found that this consecration isn't a one-time event; it's a process. I would see myself falling back into old ways at times, or I would realize that there are certain interests or desires I had that were not aligned with God's will. At these times, I would then need to either weed out those incorrect desires, or make a course correction back to the Lord."

"To the extent that we are not willing to be led by the Lord, we will be driven by our appetites, or we will be greatly preoccupied with the lesser things of the day." Many times, the things we need to consecrate aren't bad things at all—they are often the innocent and mundane interests or habits that can tend to

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<sup>1</sup> Alma 5:26

<sup>2</sup> Neal A. Maxwell; *Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father* (1995)

<sup>3</sup> Alma 22:15

clutter our lives.<sup>4</sup> It takes real humility to even be able to hear the Spirit's promptings to be able to sacrifice these things.

Another brother observed, "Sometimes I resented the things I was asked to give up. It seemed unfair or unrealistic what the Lord was asking of me. But then, I thought about our pioneer ancestors, who gave up comfortable professions, houses, property, and even family associations in order to gather to Zion. Did I really think that I could look them in the eye some day and say without shame, 'Yes, you gave up everything for the gospel, but what was asked of me was just too hard?' I realized that Saints in all dispensations have been asked to make gut-wrenching sacrifices—why then should I be exempt?"

"I think often of a quote attributed to Joseph Smith: 'it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God ... God will feel after you, and he will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God.'<sup>5</sup> I realized when I resented some of these sacrifices, and hardened my heart against making them, I was effectively saying to the Lord, 'Oh no, you can't wrench those heart strings, pick some different ones.' I was, in my pride, trying to dictate how the Lord should work out my salvation, and presuming *I* knew better than *Him* how I should progress."

There is a real paradox in consecration. We can testify that as we willingly consecrate our will and our desires to Heavenly Father, we will be richly compensated far beyond what we originally sacrificed: "Good measure, pressed down,

shaken together, and running over."<sup>6</sup> But, if the reason we are consecrating is to get some specific thing in return, like a spouse, or to no longer desire a same-sex relationship, then we have not truly consecrated our will; because, we are only sacrificing something because we want God to give us something as compensation for our sacrifice..

The paradox is resolved when we realize that God is a Person—our literal Father—not just an ATM machine or Santa Claus. God yearns for a relationship with us. King Benjamin asks, "how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?"<sup>7</sup> So, this relationship develops as we love God, humbly serve Him, and seek to have our thoughts and intents—our wills—aligned with His. It is a "cosmic fact: [that] by aligning our wills with God's is full happiness to be found."

We consecrate our wills because we understand that God knows better than we do. Not only what we need in order to return to Him, but when we need it. We pair our faith with consecration when we realize that our desires will either be granted in the Lord's due time, or something even better will be provided for us.

It isn't bad to want things, especially good things. Many times, those righteous desires are eventually granted. But other times, the Lord shifts our desires so that we want what He wants, helping us to declare like the Savior did to the Father, "Yet not as I will, but as you will."<sup>8</sup>

Alma warns us that the Lord *will* eventually give us what we want, whether that

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<sup>4</sup> Dallin H. Oaks; *Good, Better, Best* (2007)

<sup>5</sup> John Taylor, *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, Aug. 21, 1883, p. 1

<sup>6</sup> Luke 6:38

<sup>7</sup> Mosiah 5:15

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 26:39

be “unto salvation or unto destruction.” This means that we must learn to “bridle all [our] passions, that [we] may be filled with love”<sup>9</sup>—loving God and wanting to please Him over the fulfilling our own pleasures. Consecrating even our passions and desires to God will ensure that we remain on the path to salvation and exaltation.

So, how can we consecrate our will to God? Listed are a few suggestions:

### **1. Recommit**

First, as the brother mentioned in his story above, consecration is a process, one that we need to recommit to daily. This recommitment doesn’t mean you’re bad or a sinner—when the full weight of the atonement fell upon Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had to recommit to doing God’s will, when he “would that [He] might not drink the bitter cup,”<sup>10</sup> and shrank from the breathtaking toll the collective weight of our sins placed upon Him. Simply recognize that each time you might be tempted to pull back, or feel unwilling, remember that your Savior has been there before you. Rely on the strength of angels to help you stay strong.

### **2. Visualize**

You may find it helpful to visualize yourself consecrating. Imagine yourself kneeling before an altar, with intention and humility, handing what you need to surrender over into the loving hands of Jesus. As above, you will probably need to do this repeatedly, sometimes with the same thing.

### **3. Pray for what to desire**

Paul says that we don’t always know what we should pray for or desire, but “the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us”<sup>11</sup> so that we are

even guided towards what we should want. This will ensure that we do not “sin in our wish” as Alma feared he was doing.

Everything begins with our desire. We must be willing to ask ourselves if our desires align with the Lord’s will for us. President Russell M. Nelson asked, “Are you willing to let God be the most important influence in your life? Will you allow His words, His commandments, and His covenants to influence what you do each day? Will you allow His voice to take priority over any other? Are you willing to let whatever He needs you to do take precedence over every other ambition? Are you willing to have your will swallowed up in His?”<sup>12</sup>

As we consecrate our wills and desires on the altar of the Lord, He promises in return to “fight [our] battles!” He will give us the grace we need to help us master the desires, appetites, and passions of the natural man. “Consecration thus constitutes the only unconditional surrender which is also a total victory!”

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## **SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

- *Ponder on what desires, appetites, or passions you may have that may be hindering you from fully surrendering to God’s will for your life. Next time you take the emblems of the Sacrament, consider sacrificing these things on the Sacrament altar, and ask God to replace them with a desire to want what He wants for your life.*
- *Alma wrote in chapter 29 that he knew that his seemingly righteous desire to shake the earth and cry*

<sup>9</sup> Alma 38:12

<sup>10</sup> D&C 19:18

<sup>11</sup> Romans 8:26-27

<sup>12</sup> Russell M. Nelson; *Let God Prevail* (2020)

*repentance unto every people is a “sin.” Alma knew that was not the work to which he had been called, and that he “ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto” him and not “harrow up in [his] desires the firm decree of a just God.” Ask God in your prayers to help you to accept his calling for your life.*

- *Pray often for grace to change the desires of your heart to be more fully aligned with what Heavenly Father desires for you.*

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## STUDY SUGGESTIONS

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- *Ponder Luke 22:41-44. If you find yourself resenting the sacrifices you feel asked to make, ask yourself if you feel greater than the Savior, who had to descend “below them all”? Could the sacrifice be one you might gladly make out of gratitude for the much greater sacrifice the Redeemer made for you?*

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- *Study “Let God Prevail” by President Russell M Nelson from the October 2020 General Conference. How can we invite God to prevail in our lives?*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**T**ember Harward grew up in Southern California, and now resides in Rexburg, Idaho with his wife and two young children. He converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 2012 at the age of 22. Tember serves in various ministries to support Latter-day Saints who experience same-sex attraction.



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**J**im Mock is an Assistant Professor in Family Life and Human Development at Southern Utah University, as well as a marriage and family therapist in private practice. In addition to providing therapy, Jim has run a small group for church members who experience same-sex attraction. He is married and has four kids.

*“And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness.  
I give unto men weakness that they may be humble;  
and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me;  
for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me,  
then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”*

ETHER 12:27