

June 19, 2010

Dear President Monson, President Eyring and President Uchtdorf,

Thank you sincerely for this opportunity to appeal my excommunication. My membership in the Lord's Church is important to me. I apologize for the length but much of what I have written is a plea and effort to promote understanding for the salvation of countless thousands of other Gay Latter-day Saints seeking a Christ-centered solution to current suffering and division. I pray you will read this for their welfare as well as mine.

I believe I was unjustly excommunicated for apostasy because of an article, "Believing the Words of Jesus Christ", which I wrote and published on a website (www.GaysAndTheGospel.org) I and the Gay son of a General Authority developed during the Prop 8 campaign. As the title substantiates the purpose of the article and site are to encourage Latter-day Saints to consider, believe and live according to the teachings of Jesus Christ above all else, regarding our Gay and Lesbian neighbors and all Prop 8 type legislation. At the time of publication I gave a copy of the article and the web site link to my Bishop. He told me he read through what I gave him, saw no problem with it and wanted me to continue serving in the ward.

Regrettably, nearly two years later my Stake President chose to take offense at the article, declaring it apostasy and me apostate.

The greatest joy I found in the Church was teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ from our scriptures. I love the Lord and His teachings deeply. In a previous stake I was richly blessed to serve as an openly Gay Latter-day Saint for 9 years as Gospel Doctrine teacher and home teacher. In all of my teaching and writing I have prayerfully and diligently followed Church instruction: "As you teach, help others see how gospel principles apply to daily living. Encourage discussions on how these principles can affect our feelings about God, ourselves, our families, and our neighbors. Encourage participants to live according to the principles" ("Gospel Principles", p. 2-3); and "Jesus Christ, the Master Teacher, often asked questions to encourage people to ponder and apply the principles He taught... His questions prompted thought, soul-searching, and commitment" ("Teaching, No Greater Call" (1999), 68; Ensign, Mar. 2010, 6). I feel it is unjust to be excommunicated because I closely followed these Church instructions and sincerely "asked questions to encourage people to ponder and apply the principles [the Savior] taught" in all my teaching, writing and Church participation.

In complete compliance with those teachings during this year's wonderful priesthood lesson, "Freedom to Choose", I sincerely asked a question that requires "thought, soul-searching and commitment" regarding how the gospel principle of agency "applies to daily living", particularly how current application of that principle affects "our feelings about [and treatment of]... our neighbors" and their families, specifically those who are Gay and Lesbian. I asked, "Since agency is such a fundamental principle of the gospel, and since it is a gift God has given all His children, why do we support efforts which take away the agency of millions of citizens?"

A visiting Stake High Councilman who knows I am Gay took considerable offense at the question saying it was inappropriate for me to bring up a political issue in a gospel discussion. Our Stake includes a high percentage of Gays and Lesbians. I tried to explain that discussing how the gospel applies to me, dozens of our Gay neighbors and their

families in our ward and hundreds in our stake is not a political discussion. It is deeply personal and sacred for them, just as your agency, marriage and family are to you.

After class I hoped differences could be quickly resolved. As he approached me, I tried to calmly explain that taking away the agency of a group of people, teaching they are not good enough to have the same rights and freedoms we claim for ourselves, is profoundly demoralizing and substantially contributes to the steady stream of Gay LDS suicides. Startling the other Elders leaving the room, the High Councilman yelled at me, “Now you’re accusing me of killing people?” I will be forever grateful that the two Elders Quorum councilors with whom I served as secretary and quorum instructor, stood by me and in their very meek and humble ways did their best to defend me and my question to the High Councilman. They were both quickly shot down. The quorum instructor who taught that lesson and several other Elders also expressed their genuine concern and support for me later that day.

After a series of unsuccessful efforts to resolve the incident with my Bishop, I was released from all my callings, weeks later met with the Stake Presidency who informed me that because of the article I wrote during Prop 8 I would face a Church court on charges of apostasy.

President Monson, I and thousands of other Gay and Lesbian Latter-day Saints seek just what you taught we all need: “a sense of belonging, an assurance of being wanted, and the kindly ministrations of loving hearts and hands – not merely dutiful formality, not merely a room in a building, but room in someone’s heart and life”¹ Sadly, with current beliefs, teachings, attitudes and actions regarding “same gender attraction”, very few of us Gay Latter-day Saints find these desperately needed blessings in the Church or even in our LDS families. I earnestly hoped the truths in the article could help resolve that reality.

Despite a lifetime of devoted service to the Church, as a Gay Latter-day Saint I was deeply suicidal for several years. God literally saved my life and faith largely through the scriptural truths the article contains. I wrote and published the article praying those same teachings of Jesus Christ would also help literally save the lives and faith of thousands of other Gay and Lesbian Latter-day Saints from the deep despair, misery and depression born of current Church beliefs, attitudes and actions regarding “same-gender attraction”.

President Uchtdorf your words well describe the despair I and thousands of Gay Latter-day Saints have suffered: “The adversary uses despair to bind hearts and minds in suffocating darkness. Despair drains from us all that is vibrant and joyful and leaves behind the empty remnants of what life was meant to be. Despair kills ambition, advances sickness, pollutes the soul, and deadens the heart. Despair can seem like a staircase that leads only and forever downward.”² This despair is the fruit that is consistently born in our souls when we believe and live past and current Church teachings, policies, attitudes and actions regarding homosexuality or those with “same-gender attraction”. This is the despair that causes so much self-destructive behavior within parts of the Gay community.

I am humbled and grateful that the article has provided desperately needed healing balm to the battered souls of at least some of my Gay LDS brothers, sisters and families. I sincerely regret that some Church members have chosen to take offense at some of my clumsy wording, written out of my joyous conviction of their truthfulness. I hope to temper some of that wording so unintended offense does not distract from scriptural truth.

I readily confess that the words of Jesus Christ quoted in the article speak in direct opposition to Church support of all Proposition 8 type legislation, but they are our Savior's words.

President Eyring, I came to the conclusions in the article because I fully agree with and practice your words, "I believe what Nephi meant by 'liken all scriptures unto us' was that they could be directly applied."³ Nephi also taught "you may liken them unto you and unto all men" (2 Ne. 11:8). I humbly plead with you, the First Presidency of the Lord's Church to prayerfully liken or apply these verses, all the Lord's teachings and even your own wonderful teachings of gospel principles to God's Gay and Lesbian children just as they are applied to everyone else. I testify this is the simple yet powerful solution to the growing challenge, schism or opportunity in the Church over the Gay issue.

President Uchtdorf, it is exactly as you have repeatedly testified: "I testify as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ that He lives, that the gospel is true, and that it offers the answers to all personal and collective challenges the children of God have on this earth today"⁴ "God has spoken to Joseph Smith for the purpose of blessing all of God's children with His mercy and love.... The Savior said, "Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive" (3 Nephi 9:14)⁵ "God is speaking to us in a consistent voice. God will deal with all the human family equally. We might be [in a variety of circumstances]. But the universal power and blessings of the restored gospel are available to all..."⁶ I hope and pray that the Church will follow God's example and "deal with all the human family equally", including us, His Gay and Lesbian children. The growing schism exists because sometimes in word and usually in practice God's Gay and Lesbian children are viewed and treated as the exception to these and many other gospel principles.

President Uchtdorf, the powerful gospel principles you taught in your First Presidency message the month preceding the Prop 8 vote offer vital keys to understanding:

1) "the Savior Himself teaches us here a lesson about core doctrine and priorities in life. Individually, we need to first "follow Him,"⁷. Putting the Savior and His teachings first and foremost in our lives is the overarching message of all I have written and taught. I sincerely apologize if the article failed to make that abundantly clear. I never intended it to be a judgment of the Church or anyone, but to encourage us all to consider honestly if we believe and follow Jesus Christ in word and deed.

2) "... a fundamental doctrine of the Church: God has granted us agency. I believe that moral agency is one of the greatest gifts of God unto His children, next to life itself."⁸ I agree with you fully. I have failed to understand why we seek to deprive God's Gay and Lesbian children of one of the most precious, personal and sacred exercises of that moral agency – marriage.

3) "The test comes in practicing what we proclaim,"⁹ and later: "... that is the power of the gospel – practicing what we preach."¹⁰ These truths you taught, which I fully support and believe, confirmed to me my efforts and intent with the article and web site which discuss many scriptures which seem to be believed in the Church but not practiced when it comes to God's Gay and Lesbian children.

I humbly yet gratefully remain committed to the many truths we proclaim in our own scriptures quoted in the article because I have failed completely to see any way to first follow the Savior and live His teachings, to pass the test of practicing what we proclaim,

and preserve that precious gift of moral agency while following you, the first presidency, in support of any Prop 8 or Federal Marriage Amendment type legislation.

For me this profound dilemma is best exemplified by just a few verses: The Savior proclaimed in our own LDS scriptures, that the constitution “should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh... that every man may act... according to the moral agency which I have given unto him...” (D&C 101:77,78). You, the Lord’s servants, have collectively and repeatedly taught that the constitution should be changed through amendment specifically in ways which deny and take away marital, familial, civil and religious “rights and protection” from millions of God’s children - our Gay and Lesbian neighbors and the growing numbers of churches who support them. If we Latter-day Saints believe marriage is one of the most personal, important and sacred exercises of moral agency, doesn’t Prop 8 deny that exercise of moral agency and undermine the Lord’s “principle of freedom”? (D&C 98:5).

Jesus taught: “Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.” (3 Nephi 14:12). I ask sincerely, do we Latter-day Saints want a coalition majority to vote away our right to marry according to our beliefs and conscience? Do we want our marriages and families stripped of state and federal protections, rights and benefits like tax benefits, social security, inheritance, insurance, hospital visitation or parental rights? Prop 8 type legislation does that to millions of our Gay neighbors.

Similarly, Church support of Prop 8 seems to be in profound opposition to what we proclaim in D&C 134 and many other LDS scriptures.

I ask humbly and sincerely do our traditional beliefs regarding homosexuality, “traditional marriage” and “traditional families” prevent us from believing and accepting these words of the Savior, effectively “making the word of God of none effect through [our] tradition...” (Mark 7:13 see also vs. 6-12) as the Savior taught?

President Eyring, you taught, “once we know a spiritual truth, we must choose whether we will conform our lives to it.”¹¹ I hold these and all the scriptures as sacred spiritual truth. I had to make a choice. Do I follow the Savior by doing all I can to “maintain” the constitution, moral agency, rights, protections and privileges for “all flesh” and “all mankind” or do I follow the prophet by donating my time and means to change the constitution and deprive and take away marital, familial, religious and civil rights, privileges and protections from millions of our fellow citizens and their families and churches?

I have had to ask myself: “Do the teachings of the Lord’s living servants supersede and override the teachings of Jesus Christ?” I shared the above scriptures with a young returned missionary and Institute student at a U of U rally in support of the Church’s stance on Utah’s Marriage Amendment. He boldly declared, “I don’t care what God or the Savior said in scripture! I only care what the prophet says today!” I was stunned and saddened and yet I have found many Latter-day Saints share his view. As for me, the Savior’s words provide the answer: “The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.” (John 13:16; also John 15:20; Matt. 10:24; 3 Ne. 21:11)

I hope you will be blessed to see that most of us who actively oppose Prop 8 do not do so to attack the Church in anyway. We do so to defend and preserve, just like Moroni, our precious God-given gift of moral agency, our freedoms, rights, privileges, families and liberties. President Eyring I pray you will be blessed to see us among those of whom you

spoke: "... the power to choose is a gift from God to bring them happiness in this life and in the life to come with Him... They could well have been one of the faithful warriors from the premortal existence, committed still to the defense of moral agency and aware of its great value to bring them happiness... If we can see them as faithful warriors from the premortal existence, we may also see their claims of independence as a sign of their potential, a sign that they are testing the power of agency which will bring them happiness."¹²

I testify for most of us who are Gay, choosing to marry an opposite gender spouse or choosing a life of lonely, life-shortening and draining celibacy does not bear the fruits of lasting peace, love, joy or happiness. Those good fruits of the Spirit are found among growing numbers of truly loving, committed married Gay couples and their families.

The Savior's teaching "By their fruits ye shall know them" (3 Nephi 14:20) has provided me another vital key to understanding. President Eyring I am deeply grateful for your¹³ and President Hinckley's testimony¹⁴ of the power and clarity of Mormon's words in Moroni 7:13-20 which help us know by specific fruits what is good and of God and what is of the devil. Once I turned fully to my Father in Heaven to find out what He wants me to know and do regarding my "same gender attraction", it was through those exact verses the Lord has repeatedly given me to know that the love and natural affection in my soul, just like the love and natural affection in your soul, is good and a precious gift from God.

With humility and profound gratitude I bear solemn witness that with clarity "as the daylight is from the dark night" (vs. 15), this peculiar love in my soul which the world calls "homosexuality" and its monogamous expression "is inspired of God" (vs. 13), "is good and of God"(vs. 14) and "is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ;" (vs. 16) because it leads me to believe in Him, love Him and serve Him and my fellow man continually. According to this scripture, in this thing I have been blessed to "know with a perfect knowledge" (vs. 15) that these things are good. I testify that love is a gift of God. Whether men label it heterosexuality or homosexuality it is still God's gift of love and natural affection just differently administered (see Moroni 10:8; e.g. vs. 9-10). As my patriarchal blessing substantiates, it is this love in my soul that gives me my desire and ability to reach out in service to others. Only when I accept and live according to this peculiar love in my soul am I at peace in my heart and with my conscience and I more fully enjoy other fruits of the Spirit - "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" etc. (Gal. 5:22). When I accept and live the fact that I am Gay I feel whole, the literal light of life burns brightly within me and flows steadily and my life is often rich and abundant.

The Lord has given me to understand when these gifts of love are shared between a heterosexual couple or a homosexual couple in accordance with gospel principles of love, fidelity, devotion and devoid of lust, they bear the same spiritual fruits of greater love, unity, edification, peace, growth, strength, happiness and joy.

I pray Mormon's warning will be heeded, "Wherefore, take heed my beloved brethren, the ye do not judge that which is... good and of God to be of the devil" (Moroni 7: 14). I plead with you that the Church and the Brethren will no longer judge our love or us to be evil; that our loving, monogamous, faithful relationships and families will no longer be judge as evil when by the Lord's definition and the good fruits they bear in our lives they are so clearly good.

President Eyring you taught of other fruits which continue to provided me valuable guidance: "The Spirit of God never generates contention (see 3 Ne. 11:29). It never generates

the feelings of distinctions between people which lead to strife.¹⁵ It leads to personal peace and a feeling of union with others. It unifies souls. A unified family, a unified Church, and a world at peace depend on unified souls”.¹⁶ From my very limited view, based on my own experience and what many other Gay Latter-day Saints have experienced, I humbly testify that Church support of prop 8 has consistently born the opposite of these fruits in the Church, our wards, our LDS families and our communities. This being our reality, I sincerely do not understand how supporting Prop 8 can be in accordance with the Spirit of God.

President Uchtdorf, I have done and experienced just as you said: “Have questions; study them out; search in the scriptures for answers. . . . if you will not resist with unbelief. . . this good seed will “enlarge [your] soul” and “enlighten [your] understanding (Alma 32:28).””¹⁷ My vital question, “What does God want me to know and do about my homosexuality?” began to be answered. Once I finally believed and accepted the truth of Moroni 7, the Lord began to open the scriptures and gospel to me in marvelous ways. The Spirit helped me liken all scripture unto me and all of God’s Gay children. Through the scriptures the Lord taught me according to His pattern: “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” (2 Ne. 28:30). The article for which I have been excommunicated contains many of those life-saving scriptural truths.

I was astonished to discover how all-inclusive the Lord, His gospel and the scriptures are. The Spirit helped me see that God created some to be Jew, some Gentile, some male, some female, some Gay, some Straight, some Black, some White and diverse combinations of those; He gave some to heal, some to be healed, some to know, some to believe on their words, some to be heads, some to be feet, (see Moroni 10:8-18; D&C 46:9-26; 1 Cor. 12); to some is given to bear children with their chosen help meet. Millions of others, Straight and Gay, are not given that gift but are given to raise or help teach children born of others through adoption, foster or surrogate parenting or the “law of Sarah” (D&C 132:65). And to some is given to fill the measure of their creation in other ways.

The Lord helped me see that what we are, what gifts we have is not important in His eyes because “all are alike unto God”, “all men are privileged the one like unto the other”, “he inviteth them all to come unto him” (see 2 Nephi 26:28, 33). All these God given diversities have no bearing on our ability to be righteous, saved or exalted because “God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35).

I rejoiced to discover that even I, a Gay Latter-day Saint, or a Gay couple or a family led by a Gay couple and all God’s Gay children could be “accepted with him” as long as we appropriately fear him and work righteousness! I was astonished to discover that the gospel and its blessings are for ALL who live the requirements and that there is not one requirement for exaltation that any of us Gay, Straight, Black, White, male, female, Jew or Gentile are inherently incapable of if men will allow us the freedom to live the gospel fully and if those who hold essential gospel keys allow us to receive the saving ordinances.

The Lord has helped me understand we are all hear for the same purpose – “to see if [we] will do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command [us]” (Abr. 3:25). His beautifully designed diversity provides us a special test to see if we will keep His greatest commandment to love Him and our neighbors as ourselves regardless of those many human differences. He helped me understand regardless of our creation Gay or Straight, male or female, Black or White, God grants us agency to choose to do good or evil, to love or lust,

to choose fidelity or promiscuity, family or celibacy, happiness and life or loneliness, misery and death.

I cannot repent of being a Gay Latter-day Saint because I, like you, am one of His creations, created according to His will, for “God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him” (1 Cor. 12:18). I cannot repent of doing my best to live faithfully according to my “poorly understood” creation as a lowly “foot” even if the majority of “hands” or “heads” judge me as “less honourable,” “feeble,” abominable or repulsive. I testify the Lord has helped many of us understand that being a “foot”, being Gay, is not a deficiency, a sickness, perversion, mental problem, a challenge to overcome, a handicap, abomination, addiction, a passing phase or choice, a genetic flaw, a lack of emotional development, the result of imperfect parenting or abuse or the lack of athletic prowess. Being a foot, being Gay is not a threat to marriage and family. It is not a crime against nature or the sin next to murder. Being a foot, being Gay is a fundamental part of who we are, just as being a hand or head, being Straight, is a fundamental part of who you are. Being a “foot” is not my “cross to bear”, it is a wonderful blessing. Our cross to bear is the consistent condemnation and prejudice we suffer in a world that fears and misunderstands our creation. Being Gay does not mean we are inherently damaged, deficient, unclean, or evil.

I testify no amount of therapy, conditioning, fasting, prayer, Church service, temple attendance, self-denial, serving faithful missions or marriage to an opposite gender spouse will change me from a “foot” to a “hand”, from Gay to Straight. Therapy may help some pretend to be a “hand” for a time, but there is only limited peace, happiness or growth in this. It eventually leads to emptiness, dysfunction and too often to other very bad fruits. It is just as you taught, President Monson: “... we need to be square with God, fair with others, and honest with ourselves. One cannot be one person and pretend to be another.”¹⁸

I believe understanding this one gospel principle - that the parts of the body of God’s family are different and those differences are necessary in God’s plan and kingdom as Paul taught and the Savior confirmed (1 Cor. 12; D&C 89:109-110), is a vital key which can unlock the door to greater understanding on all issues regarding those with “same gender attraction.”

For me, traditional marriage is like uniting a “glove” with a “hand”. This “marriage” provides comfort, support and protection to better face the storms of life together. Both glove and hand are happier, feel more complete and both are better able to fulfill the measure of their creation. The majority of hands and gloves find so much fulfillment and protection they come to believe that all members of the body should enjoy this same “marriage”. It is “ideal”. But put that same ideal “glove” on a “foot” and things fall apart. Instead of comfort, support and strength increasing for both, they decrease with time and damage results to both. But unite a “shoe” with the foot instead of the perceived ideal glove and both the foot and the shoe find the same necessary and joyous fruits of increased protection, comfort, support, happiness, fulfillment and functionality. Many “hands” condemn the “feet” for marrying a rough and bulky “shoe” instead of choosing a fine, beautiful, soft glove. Some hands, with good intentions but poor understanding, insist that feet must behave like hands and dictate that a foot can only be married with a glove or else they must remain with nothing and go through life alone, unprotected and unsupported. This eventually leads to damage and weakness to the foot which adversely affects the whole body. Hopefully the day will come when the hands and gloves will rejoice in their ideal

marriage and allow the feet and shoes to rejoice in their ideal marriage because both marriages, even though they look different outwardly, increase the fruits of love, joy, peace, support, stability, strength, function, health and longevity to the individual members and to the whole body.

President Monson I plead with you to apply your compassionate questions before making decisions that have such devastating impact on the lives and families of us “feet” - God’s Gay and Lesbian children: “Do you understand their problems and their perplexities, their yearnings, ambitions, and hopes? Do you know how far they have traveled, the troubles they have experienced, the burdens they have carried, the sorrows they have borne?”¹⁹

I did not choose to be Gay but I am deeply grateful to be one of God’s Gay sons despite the condemnation, denigration and rejection we frequently face. Yes, we uncomely “feet” are different from you “heads” and “hands”, but I pray President Eyring your words will be likened unto us, God’s Gay children:

“The children of God have more in common than they have differences. And even the differences can be seen as an opportunity. God will help us see a difference in someone else not as a source of irritation but as a contribution. The Lord can help you see and value what another person brings which you lack.”²⁰ You also taught we can better become one by “using [our] similarities to understand each other and [our] differences to complement each other in serving one another and those around [us].”²¹

Our similarities with the rest of the Saints are abundant. Many of us Gay Latter-day Saints love God and His Son Jesus Christ deeply. We have faith in Them and desire to serve Them. We have testimonies born of the Spirit of the truthfulness of Their gospel. We have served faithful missions and many callings in the Church. We have done our best to help build, strengthen and beautify the Lord’s Church and Kingdom and desire to do so. We long to love, be loved and commit to that love in marriage and have families just as you do; to share our lives, joys, sorrows, triumphs and trials with one chosen companion of our heart. Many of us pray, fast, study our scriptures and your words. We strive to take the Holy Spirit for our guide. We long to become one with the Lord and His followers. We strive to follow Jesus Christ and live His teachings.

Regardless of your decision about my membership, for the physical and spiritual salvation of millions of my Gay brothers and sisters, I plead with you and pray that the Lord will bless you to liken or apply all scriptures, gospel principles and your own wonderful teachings unto God’s Gay and Lesbian children. I pray you who have the keys of revelation will earnestly ask the Lord “What wouldst Thou have us know and understand about Thy Gay and Lesbian children? What blessings wouldst Thou have us bestow on our Gay and Lesbian brothers and sisters and their families, all members of Thy family? Help us see the good in them and their families. Help us know how to bless, lift and strengthen them and their families. Are they and their families of any worth to Thee and Thy Church and kingdom? How can the gospel and kingdom roll forth according to the Thy will, to the people and kindred, the millions of Gay and Lesbian souls who could benefit so greatly from it and could contribute so much to it?”

With humility yet boldness, I seek the full blessing of the gospel for me and countless other Gay and Lesbian Latter-day Saints who will continue to suffer and perish spiritually and physically without them. My sincere intent with the article and web site is to

bring souls to Christ, to work for the salvation of the souls of millions of my Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersexed brothers and sisters as well as the souls of all who oppose us by doing the adversary's work as they have "sought to destroy the agency of man" (Moses 4:3) through legislation and discrimination (see D&C 78:6).

I truly believe that "marriage is ordained of God unto man" (D&C 49:15). I understand why as I have experienced and seen the physical and spiritual devastation that occurs to an entire people and kindred when they are forbidden the stabilizing and enriching anchor of truly loving marriage.

President Eyring, in our last general conference you spoke of the "bonds of love that are the very nature of a family"²². It is those same bonds of love that are the very nature of thousands of Gay couples and their families all over the world. I and the vast majority of my Gay LDS friends long to establish one genuinely and mutually loving, committed relationship, marriage and family on those "bonds of love" shared with a same gender spouse. Most Gays and Lesbians do not live or want the self-destructive stereotypical "gay lifestyle" of rampant promiscuity and drug abuse. Your wonderful words are equally true for us, God's Gay children: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."²³ You also taught, "The family unit is fundamental... to our hope for eternal life. We begin to practice in the family, the smaller unit, what will spread to the Church and to the society in which we live in this world..."²⁴ I testify this also applies to Gay couples and families.

President Uchtdorf, because I believe you and the Savior who "spoke of love as the great commandment upon which "hang all the law and the prophets"²⁵, I believe our marriage law should also hang on love, not tradition, gender, race, varying religious beliefs, socio-economic status or even the ability to procreate.

As the article explains, I believe the Lord has already opened the door for His Gay children to receive that precious gospel blessing.

I love the Lord. Because of an experience on my mission and others since, I absolutely know that God lives and that He is a God of miracles and that this is a day of miracles and revelation. I know that He answers prayers. I believe with all my heart that Jesus Christ is His Son and our Savior. It is His will and blessings that I seek in all of this.

I am sincerely grateful I was miraculously blessed for so many years with truly loving Bishops and Stake Presidents who focused on the God-given good in me even though I have been "out", open and honest about the fact that I am Gay. Some even supported and defended me as a Gay Latter-day Saint. Instead of just speaking words of love, they showed that love by allowing me to serve; by sincerely discussing my concerns genuinely seeking to understand instead of seeking to condemn and take offense; by defending, comforting and reassuring me of my worth to God and the ward when members made false, stereotypical assumptions about my "lifestyle", or took offense at my presence or because I was honest about being Gay. Sadly, most my Gay LDS friends have not been so blessed and were excommunicated or driven out of the Church years ago.

I firmly believe that this is the Lord's Church and that you are His called, ordained and authorized servants. I am grateful for all the service and sacrifice you and the Brethren make for us and the Lord. I have defended the Church, its leaders and its rights and freedoms many times under pretty hostile fire. Regardless of my membership status I will

continue to do so. But I do not know how I can defend Church actions and teachings which to me are contrary to the Savior's teachings found in our own scriptures.

I have sincerely done my best to serve faithfully even though it has often been extremely difficult and painful because of the attitudes, words and actions of the Church and its members regarding Gays. Whether you decide I am in the Church or out I will gratefully continue to do all I can to serve the Lord, teach His words and encourage all to follow Him, especially among my own people, my own kindred, today's outcasts of Israel, my Gay and Lesbian brothers and sisters whom I love.

As my articles substantiate, in all my interaction with Gay Latter-day Saints around the world I have sought diligently to encourage them to maintain their faith in God, stay close to Him, to prayerfully study the scriptures and find out personally how He wants them to live their life. I have encouraged them to stay involved with the Church if they can do so without it pushing them closer to suicide. I have given them hope that there can be safe and healthy places for us in His Church but admittedly my excommunication dims that hope.

Because of my own experience and what I have seen in hundreds of other Gay Latter-day Saints I sorrowfully testify that Church teachings regarding "same gender attraction" and "homosexuality" consistently bear powerfully destructive fruits of misery, depression, despair, self-hatred, hopelessness and too often suicide. Those teachings too often divide families, destroy love and engender fear, hate and the destruction of agency. Simply believing and equally applying the words of Jesus Christ can reverse all that.

In closing I plead with you the First Presidency who have been entrusted by God with the power to bless and curse. You have the power to literally save lives from suicide, and despair. You have the power to preserve God's gift of moral agency and strengthen His principle of freedom for all His children. You have the power to increase love in the world and decrease hatred and fear. You have the power to increase unity and decrease divisions of families, wards and communities over this issue. I hope, I pray, I plead with you all to consider using your God-given power and influence to bring about such desperately needed changes in the way the Church views, deals with and treats God's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersexed children and our families. Please liken the scriptures unto us just as you do to God's Straight children. Please accept us equally despite our God-given diversity.

I pray for the day when we, our lives, our rights, privileges and protections, our self-worth, our families, and the destruction of our faith and Church membership will no longer be viewed as acceptable losses or justifiable collateral damage in the campaign to protect the ninety and nine in "traditional families." I pray God will bless you and all His servants to see us as equal members of Heavenly Father's family and the body of Christ who cherish truly loving marriage and family just as you do. I pray for the day when you, the Lord's anointed servants will "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes" (3 Ne. 22:2) by extending the full blessings of the gospel to "every nation, kindred, tongue and people" including the widely dispersed nation, kindred and people of which I am deeply grateful to be a part, God's Gay and Lesbian children.

Please seek blessings for us and help end the cursings.

Gay and Lesbian members who have managed to stay in the Church would no longer be debilitated and stunted by loneliness, suppression of love, and denial of self by Church imposed silence or hiding in fear, feigning to be something they are not. This

would allow us to blossom and flourish in natural growth. If allowed the privilege, we could do much to build, beautify and strengthen the Church with our diverse God-given sensibilities, sensitivity, compassion and talents; but only if we are allowed to be and live according to our creation.

President Uchtdorf, your most recent General Conference address summed up the desire of my heart far better than I could: “I hope that we welcome and love all of God’s children, including those who might dress, look, speak, or just do things differently. It is not good to make others feel as though they are deficient. Let us lift those around us. Let us extend a welcoming hand. Let us bestow upon our brothers and sisters in the Church a special measure of humanity, compassion and charity so that they feel, at long last, they have finally found home.”

“It seems only right and proper that we extend to others that which we so earnestly desire for ourselves.”

I hope you will understand that all Prop 8 type legislation denies us the rich blessings of loving marriage and loving families that you earnestly desire for yourselves. Church support of Prop 8 and most teachings and actions regarding those with “same gender attraction” give evidence that you believe we and our families are morally and spiritually deficient. Sadly that leads many of us to feel deficient regardless of our effort, faith, devotion or lives of service. That leads to hopelessness and despair.

You continue: “... Every person we meet is a VIP to our Heavenly Father. Once we understand that, we can begin to understand how we should treat our fellowmen....

“...for every one is walking his or her own difficult path. As disciples of Jesus Christ, our Master, we are called to support and heal rather than condemn.”

“This is the spirit of compassion: that we love others as ourselves, seek their happiness, and do unto them as we hope they would do unto us.”

“True love requires action. We can speak of love all day long... but until we manifest that love in action, our words are nothing but “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”²⁶

I am sincerely grateful for words of love spoken regarding us, and recent support of some housing and employment protections. But it saddens me that Church supported actions and campaigns regarding marriage, Gays in the Boy Scouts, etc. which have contributed to inequality, fear, hate, oppression, division, persecution of Gays and Latter-day Saints, and untold misery and death drown out words of love, respect or tolerance spoken by some of our Church leaders.

As you continued: “... He spoke of love as the great commandment upon which “hang all the law and the prophets. We can spend our days obsessing about... the law and long lists of things to do; but should we neglect the great commandments, we are missing the point and we are clouds without water, drifting in the winds, and trees without fruit.

“Without this love for God the Father and our fellowmen we are only the form of His Church –without the substance. What good is our teaching without love?”

“...Love is the grand motive of the plan of salvation; it is the source of happiness, the ever renewing spring of healing, the precious fountain of hope”²⁷

I pray for the day when we, God’s Gay and Lesbian children, will no longer be viewed and treated as the exception to all these glorious gospel truths. Please allow us, even encourage us to love and live honestly and openly with integrity, enjoying the same blessings, protections and rights you so earnestly desire for yourselves.

Thank you sincerely for your service to the Church and your words of hope! I pray earnestly for their fulfillment so then the sheepfold can provide a safe, healthy and equal place for the gathering of God's Gay and Lesbian children.

Despite my many imperfections, I do not believe anything I have written, said, asked or done is apostate to our Father in Heaven, our Savior Jesus Christ or Their gospel and words. I feel it is unjust for me to be excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ for believing and doing my best to live His teachings and for encouraging others to believe and live His teachings even though I believe some of His teachings conflict with current Church policy, belief and action regarding Prop 8 and current treatment of our Gay and Lesbian brothers and sisters. I fully acknowledge your God-given authority in all of this. My membership and the agency, happiness and welfare of millions of our Gay and Lesbian brothers and sisters are in your hands. I plead for your understanding and mercy. I humbly testify these things are true, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen,

Sincerely your brother in the gospel,

Clay Essig

¹ President Thomas S. Monson, "Treasured Gifts", *Ensign*, Dec. 2006, 9

² President Dieter F. Uchtdorf "The Infinite Power of Hope", *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 22

³ Elder Henry B. Eyring, "The Book of Mormon Will Change Your Life", *Ensign*, Feb. 2004, 9

⁴ Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Christlike Attributes—the Wind beneath Our Wings," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 100, 101; see also "Understand and Live the Gospel of Christ," *Ensign*, Sep 2009, 61

⁵ President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Precious Fruits of the First Vision", *Ensign*, Feb. 2009, 7

⁶ Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Global Church Blessed by the Voice of the Prophets", *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 11-12

⁷ President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Developing Christlike Attributes", *Ensign*, Oct. 2008, 5

⁸ President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Developing Christlike Attributes", *Ensign*, Oct. 2008, 6

⁹ President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Developing Christlike Attributes" *Ensign*, Oct. 2008, 5

¹⁰ President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Leaders Visit, Inspire European Saints," *Ensign*, Sept. 2009, 76

¹¹ President Henry B. Eyring, "Let Us Raise Our Voice of Warning", *Ensign*, Jan. 2009, 8

¹² Elder Henry B. Eyring, "A Life Founded in Light and Truth", *Ensign*, July 2001, 10-11

¹³ President Henry B. Eyring, "Walk in the Light", *Ensign*, May 2008, 124

¹⁴ President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Latter-day Saints in Very Deed," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 85

¹⁵ see Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 13th ed. [1963], 131

¹⁶ Elder Henry B. Eyring, "That We May Be One", *Ensign*, May 1998, 66-68; also see Sept. 2008, 6-7

¹⁷ Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Power of a Personal Testimony", *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 38

¹⁸ President Thomas S. Monson, "Building Your Eternal Home", *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, 2

¹⁹ President Thomas S. Monson, "Sugar Beets and the Worth of a Soul," *Ensign*, Jul 2009, 4-5

²⁰ President Henry B. Eyring, "Our Hearts Knit as One", *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 70-71

²¹ President Henry B. Eyring, "Be One," *Ensign*, Sept. 2008, 9

²² President Henry B. Eyring, "Help Them On Their Way Home", *Ensign*, May, 2010, 23

²³ President Henry B. Eyring, "'Man Down!'," *Ensign*, May 2009, 64

²⁴ Elder Henry B. Eyring, "The Family", *Ensign*, Feb. 1998, 18; "The Family Is Central to the Creator's Plan", *Ensign*, Feb. 2008, 69

²⁵ President Uchtdorf, "You Are My Hands", *Ensign*, May 2010, 68-69

²⁶ President Uchtdorf, "You Are My Hands", *Ensign*, May 2010, 68-69

²⁷ President Uchtdorf, "You Are My Hands", *Ensign*, May 2010, 68-69