

**A Plea to
Seek Revelation and Blessings Regarding God's Gay & Lesbian Children
and to Let Our Light Shine**
by Clay Essig

My purpose here is to plead for a united effort to help bring about revelation and blessings for the spiritual welfare of those, who in this world are referred to as “struggling with Same Sex attraction”, Homosexual, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgendered. My hope is that the darkness of confusion and destructive speculation and experimentation end in revealed truth from God. As best I can tell, we as a Church or society, simply do not have all the information.

I can make no authoritative declaration that this peculiar love in our hearts, which the world calls homosexuality, is a gift of love from God to be received and fulfilled in ways not yet fully understood or whether homosexuality is our cross to bear in life, something to overcome, our Gethsemane. What I do know is that I am a Gay Latter-day Saint who strongly believes in modern revelation, both personal and through Prophets. I believe that we - the Gay people, the Church and the world desperately need more revelation, light, truth, divine knowledge and understanding concerning homosexuality. I believe that so many of us who are Gay and Lesbian were born into the Church in these latter-days for a reason. I maintain a hope and belief that it is not just to prove our love to God by suffering a life of celibacy and thereby the loss of some of the greatest opportunities for joy, happiness and growth found in genuinely loving marriage and families; nor were we born into the Church to bring about our greater condemnation than if we were born outside the Church. I believe that the Lord does have some great truths to reveal regarding homosexuality because so many of His children, especially members of His Church, suffer so greatly and perhaps needlessly because of the darkness of confusion that currently exists on this subject.

We need truth about homosexuality so we Gays and Lesbians can prepare for eternity. That is difficult when we have no idea what our existence will be there - Gay, Straight, neither, gods, ministering angels, single, married, glorified, condemned... I personally have had a desperate need for revelation on this subject for my own spiritual, physical, mental and emotional well-being. I long for the destructive speculation of men to be replaced with truth from God; truth which can bless the lives of wonderful, good friends who are driven from the Church; truth for the sake of faithful families who are torn apart over this issue; truth for the saving of testimonies and tender hearts, for the end of the cursing of greater confusion, torment and damage which comes to our hearts, minds and bodies when we put our “trust in the arm of flesh” (2 Nephi 4:34) of science, psychology and psychiatry and their damaging vagaries to which we are subjected however well intentioned. We need truth to stop cruelty, abuse, persecution, violence and especially death from suicide and gay bashing in God's name. I also seek to know the Lord's truth about homosexuality because I love deeply this great people of which I am a part - my Gay brothers and Lesbian sisters. I have seen so much good in us and have been blessed by the good that comes from us and I want us to enjoy eternal life with all of God's children regardless of our diversity.

As I have prayerfully studied the scriptures for years on this subject, striving to keep my heart open to all the teachings, both for and against us, I have been blessed abundantly with much hope that gives me cause to rejoice and whispers peace to my soul that we are not despised of the Lord, and that we may receive the same blessings which are accessible to all His other children. We still, however, need more revelation to bring these things about. But God dispenses truth in His own due time, according to His wisdom, according to our desires to truly know truth and according to man's need, preparation and worthiness to receive it. I firmly believe that the Lord does have some great truths to reveal on the subject of homosexuality. This could be an extension of the blessings of the Gospel, priesthood, temple ordinances and marriage to the Gay people just as they were extended to the Black people. This of course is my greatest hope. But in

my search for the Lord's truth, I had to keep my heart and mind open to the possibility that the truth He might give is that homosexuality is indeed a mortal "handicap", our cross to bear, our ultimate test of faith and obedience, as some suggest and that it will be completely "cured" or eliminated in the resurrection. Maybe He would reveal that it is a sickness and will let us know the cure so His sons and daughters will no longer be experimented upon by trusting in those "arms of flesh" and "precepts of men" (see 2 Ne. 28:31) as has been our lot for years. It could be anything. I only know He is a God of miracles, revelation and love and that His wisdom is infinitely greater than mine.

In my continuing search for truth, my heart lifted as I studied President Gordon B. Hinckley's remarks in Priesthood session of the October 1996 General Conference. "One of the purposes of a prophet is to seek the wisdom and the will of the Lord and to teach his people accordingly..."; [to lead people out of bondage,] "when people were faced with oppression and trouble and difficulty. That is the purpose of a prophet, to give answers to people for the dilemmas in which they find themselves" (Ensign, Nov. 96; p51). I believe this statement with all my heart. We Gays and Lesbians in the Church are clearly a people who are in a spiritually critical dilemma, who are in bondage of a lack of truth and understanding, and are therefore faced with oppression, trouble and difficulty. How grateful I am that we have a living Prophet who understands his purpose so well. Let us do all we can to encourage and support him in seeking the knowledge, wisdom and will of the Lord for us, that through revelation, we can be set free from our oppression and trouble and difficulty.

The Process

Revelation comes when (1) it is asked for by individuals and/or the Prophet. (2) It is the Lord's will to give it. (3) A need for revelation exists. [For example: If there were no righteous or active Black members in the Church, I doubt the revelation extending blessings to them would have come. Equally with us, if there are few righteous or active Gays and Lesbians who could receive those same blessings, there would be little need to extend those blessings]. (4) The hearts of the people are ready to receive revelation. I believe this last point includes the Brethren who hold the keys of revelation, the members of the Church, and the beneficiaries of the blessing, and sometimes the general population who may otherwise seek to destroy the Church over such a revelation.

There is much each of us can do to help bring each of these about. Let us unite humbly and patiently to seek revelation in these and other ways:

1. Regularly pray and fast for revelation to the Prophet to obtain the Lord's will, truth and blessings for His homosexual children. Let our collective and individual cries ascend up unto the Lord (Mosiah 21:14-16; ; Alma 43:49-50; Ex. 3:7, 9). Pray that the hearts of the Brethren and government leaders will be softened toward us and our situation (D&C 101:81-95; 105:27). Hope, belief and faith, with an open heart to whatever the Lord's will is, are essential in this (study Ether 4:6-19). I propose that the first Sunday of every even month (i.e. Feb. Ap. etc.) be dedicated to collectively fasting and praying regarding this issue.

2. Serve and do good in whatever way we can and are allowed by Church guidelines. Let our light shine. Bear good fruit in the Church and community. With wisdom and sensitivity come out to family, friends and Church leaders so they can see that we are good, caring, loving, kind, talented, people who are seeking and deserving of happiness, growth, improvement and righteousness, even though we are different in some ways.

3. Encourage our families and friends to pray and fast for more revelation.

4. Both we and those who care for us can encourage our Church leaders to seek more truth

through revelation via the Lord's established lines of authority, until the urgency of our plea reaches the Prophet. This can be done through interviews, letters, and humble pleading and sharing of our struggles when appropriate.

5. Be sensitive and use wisdom. This must not be a battle, political or otherwise, but rather a plea for help, truth and blessings from the Lord. Let this be a spiritual quest and mission toward the salvation of thousands and millions of souls. Trust in the Lord and accept that some of those elements of our struggle which may be a battle against misunderstanding, prejudice, intolerance, tradition or unbelief must be waged by the Lord (D&C 105:14; 2 Chron. 20:15). A spirit of contention only furthers the adversary's cause to harden hearts (Hel. 16:22; 3 Ne. 11:29-30).

6. Do not harden your heart ever, even when the road gets rough and hardened hearts within or without the Church condemn us and persecute us. Be humble, be patient continuously. This is not easy but it is essential (see the Book of Mormon)

7. Prepare our hearts to truly accept and obey the Lord's will as and when it is revealed. This may be the most difficult one of all. That means if the Lord revealed a "cure" and said change is the only right way, then are we committed to following that truth? However, if He extends us the full blessings of the temple, marriage and family are we prepared to receive those blessings?

More on How to Proceed

The Brethren have been entrusted to care for and build the Kingdom, to protect it and nurture it. I think most would agree that if the Church extended the sealing blessings of marriage to same sex couples right now, the damage from within and from without the Church, could be substantial. Why? Because the hearts of the members and of the world have not been prepared to accept such a possibility. Some members were not prepared to accept the extension of the priesthood and temple blessings including eternal marriage, to the Blacks and so they fell away. The world was not prepared to accept revelation about polygamy and great disruption to the Church ensued. Therefore, that part of the Lord's truth or blessing is currently withheld (see Official Declarations 1 and Excerpts in the D&C). This seems to parallel closely our situation today. So what can we do in such circumstances?

A scriptural study of other peoples who have been oppressed or afflicted, reveals that at times in our existence it is not so important what our personal circumstances are but what we do with those circumstances. For me, our faithful Black Latter-day Saint brothers and sisters, before they were granted the blessings of the gospel, are a perfect example of this principle. They could have taken the position, "Since we are denied some of the blessings of the gospel, we will reject all of the gospel!" But gratefully they did not. They chose in ever increasing numbers to embrace the truth that was within their grasp. They perfected themselves in the areas they were allowed. What incredible humility and faith and what amazing and miraculous blessings resulted.

Official Declaration -2 reveals vital keys to the bestowing of these blessings: They came after the Brethren "*witnessed* the expansion of the work of the Lord" (italics added for emphasis throughout this article) among a people who "responded to the message of the restored gospel...in ever increasing numbers". It was the Brethren's "*witnessing the faithfulness* of those from whom [blessings had] been withheld", that "*inspired [them] with a desire to extend...* the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords", such as eternal marriage, and lead them to "[plead] long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance." I believe it was because of our Black brothers and sisters' humility and faithfulness through the limited service they were allowed to exercise, and their growing presence in the Church, that the hearts of the members and the Brethren began to soften toward them and become receptive to revelation in their behalf. This

receptivity came despite thousands of years of teaching and tradition from the days of Adam, forbidding Blacks these essential blessings based on a diverse element of their existence.

Elder Boyd K. Packer taught that the Prophet and President of the Church "alone has the right to receive revelations for the Church, either new or amendatory, or to give authoritative interpretations of scriptures that shall be binding on the Church, or change in any way the existing doctrines of the Church" (Ensign, Nov. '96; p6). But I also understand that the Lord usually only grants such blessings to build His kingdom "a piece at a time **as the Brethren were ready and as they inquired of God...** Each move...has come about in response to a need and in answer to prayer. And that process continues in our day" (Boyd K. Packer, Ensign, Nov. '96; p6).

The Lord generally gives truth when we are ready to receive it. While it is one of my most joyous hopes (based on D&C 132:48), I cannot authoritatively proclaim that the same blessings will be extended to us as were extended to the Blacks; but I truly believe that our humble faithfulness and righteous efforts will bring us blessings and not cursings, that revelation will come and will lead to our happiness and not our sorrow or destruction. I believe the Lord could not help but notice the humble faithfulness of our Black brothers and sisters and longed to be able to free these faithful children to the fuller blessings of the gospel. I hope and believe He feels the same way toward us.

But I ask, "How can we expect more truth unless we are trying to live to the best of our own individual ability the truth we know?" Just because we don't know about one aspect of our lives, albeit a vital one, does that keep us from helping the poor, the needy, the sick, the afflicted? Does this lack of knowledge and blessings prevent us from serving our neighbors, members and those not of our faith, or helping and supporting each other? Does it keep us from paying a full tithing, giving a generous fast offering, supporting the missionary fund, writing uplifting letters to missionaries? Does it keep us from doing our genealogy and, for those who observe celibacy, from doing temple work? Admittedly, many of us have had limitations put on our Church service, be it temple work, speaking in Church or even paying tithing. But no one can limit our ability to serve our fellowman, to love, to grow, to prayerfully study the scriptures daily, to pray mightily and frequently, to live the Word of Wisdom, to overcome our weaknesses, our anger, hard-heartedness, or bitterness. No one can prevent us from coming unto Christ. We can still share the gospel with our Straight friends who can benefit fully from it. Only we can stop ourselves from doing as much good as we are able in our circumstances.

Why do these things? Because we can! Because this peculiar love in our hearts does not prevent us from loving God and all people. Hopefully by our hardships we are learning much about accepting and loving all people. By the things we suffer many of us are learning obedience to God's greatest law of love (see Heb. 5:8 & Matt. 22:36-40). I try to do these things because I have learned that just because I am Gay that does not make me inherently evil, in the same way that just because someone is Straight that does not make them inherently good. We are capable of doing much good. The Lord declared and promised: "Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward" (D&C 58:27-28).

No matter how we choose to deal with our homosexuality there is still much good we can do in the Church and in the world. However, let us always remember to perform our service "unto the Lord" (see 2 Ne. 32:9) praying that He will bless our efforts and consecrate them for the welfare of our souls. Equally important we must do it to His glory, not our own (compare Matt. 5:16, 3 Ne. 18:24 with Matt. 6:1). And let us remember also that no matter how great or diligent our efforts, it is God that grants the increase (see 1 Cor. 3:6-7).

The Power of Faithful Service

Doing good can bless us individually and as a people in significant ways. First, it will

prove to ourselves (and others) that we are not evil or abominations because we know that “a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit...Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them” (3 Nephi 14: 18-21). We homosexuals, as well as our heterosexual brothers and sisters, need to “remember the word of God which saith by their works ye shall know them: for if their works be good, then they are good also. For behold, God hath said a man being evil cannot do that which is good” (Moro. 7:5-6). This realization in my own life has eased my burden as the Lord has empowered me, even through this love in my soul, to do good works and blessed me to see some of the good fruits they have been blessed to bear.

Secondly, I believe serving in whatever way we are able, may also, in time, help others see that homosexuals are no more inherently good or evil than heterosexuals. By our fruits they can get to know us if we “let [our] light so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). Most the people that I have "come out" to, before they knew I am Gay, truly believed that the only fruits of homosexuality and homosexuals are the dangerous and destructive fruits of promiscuity, pornography, child abuse, substance abuse, leaving the Church and apostasy. In this plea for revelation on homosexuality I in no way seek to defend, condone or support these evils which destroy and exist in both the Straight and Gay community, which are not inherent to either nor do they justly represent either community. I seek for truth regarding the homosexual love in my soul and how the Lord would have me deal with it. However, when most members only see or hear that homosexuality leads to inactivity and apostasy, too often to promiscuity, substance abuse and death - that is pretty solid evidence to further their traditional beliefs and condemnation of us. Moreover, when we drop out of the Church and out of sight, others cannot see the positive side of us and our community which I have learned by my own experience is strong and good and wonderful. I know there are many good, kind, loving, compassionate, incredibly giving, honorable homosexual men and women. Most people have no idea that many of us homosexuals long to have one same-sex companion with whom we can share our lives and eternity, in a fully committed, monogamous relationship in marriage and then raise children in those homes founded on that genuine love and affection, just as the majority is blessed to enjoy.

President Hinckley gave another ray of hope which, for me, was an answer to prayer. In his closing remarks, during the April 1997 General Conference, I perceived a tiny step toward a realization of my heart's desire - that the Lord's Church and its members and leaders would accept us, that we be considered “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19), that thereby we can receive the fuller blessings of the gospel. The Prophet said, "Let us acknowledge the diversity in our society, recognizing the good in *all* people" (Ensign, May 1997, p83). Let us support the Prophet in bringing this about. If we are indeed part of the diversity of our society, we have sometimes done far too little to help others recognize the good in us.

We must ask ourselves: What is each of us doing, what faith are we exercising to bring about our hopes? What are we doing to prepare the hearts of Church members and the world to be more understanding of us and our differences? Are we bearing righteous fruit in service and love, showing through incontrovertible examples of good by our works, that we are of value to the Church and Kingdom of God? The Lord knows we can be of great worth but many of the members do not.

Let us unite to show a better example than what the media portrays of us. Let us make a renewed commitment to serve and build the Church and society in whatever way we can. If you are not keeping the big commandments then keep the smaller ones or whichever ones you can and focus on and take heart in the biggest commandment of all - Love. Then serve as much as possible in the mean time striving to be better a day at a time, just as the Lord asks of all His children. Your presence and goodness are greatly needed within the Church as much and as soon as possible. However, if the wounds in your heart do not at present allow you to serve within the Church, then serve and do good wherever you can, until healing and strength allow you to be

more involved in the Lord's Kingdom. If it is too painful or destructive to attend Church every week then as a show of your love for the Lord attend when you are able. However, in this quest to do more or be better, I plead with us to not whip and beat ourselves further because of imperfection or failure to obey every commandment right now. Let us follow the Lord's loving counsel, "Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided" (DC 10:4). Let us grow as the Savior did, "from grace to grace" (DC 93:13). Let us follow the comforting counsel of an apostle, Marvin J. Ashton:

"Worthiness is a process and perfection is an *eternal trek*. We can be worthy to enjoy certain privileges without being perfect... We need to come to terms with our desire to reach perfection and our frustration when our accomplishments or our behaviors are less than perfect. I feel that one of the great myths we would do well to dispel is that we've come to earth to perfect ourselves, and nothing short of that will do. If I understand the teachings of the prophets of this dispensation correctly, we will not become perfect in this life, though we can make significant strides toward that goal... I am also convinced of the fact that *the speed with which we head along the straight and narrow path isn't as important as the direction* in which we are traveling. That direction, if it is leading toward eternal goals, is the all-important factor..." (Ensign, Conference Report, May 1989, 20-22).

Many of us have unique talents, gifts, sensibilities, views and strengths that can enrich others as others can enrich us. Let us use them for good. If we are the despised Samaritans of our day, let us rise to the good Samaritan's level of compassion, love, service, and example, in spite of other's condemnation of us, that we might "inherit eternal life" (see Luke 10:25-37).

The Importance of Diversity Within God's Kingdom

1 Corinthians 12 teaches us that God created many different parts or members of the body or of the Church, and that each member has its own purpose. Maybe we Gays and Lesbians in the Church are the foot or seemingly some "less honorable" (vs. 23) part of the body. Let us not say, "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body" (vs. 15). Let us Gays and Lesbians, instead, seek through revelation from the Lord the purpose of our unique creation, which may or may not be different from "the hand", lest we waste and wear out our lives trying to change, destroy or deny God's "setting" for us; for "God set the members *every one of them* in the body, *as it hath pleased him*" (vs. 18).

So many of us have been born into His Church for some reason. We need more revelation to learn how we fit and how the Lord would have us function in the body and contribute to the whole body of the Church, for "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (vs. 24-26). If we serve and contribute as we are able, I believe there will be less schism between us and the rest of the body of the Church. We may then hear less from the head or hands or other members of the Church, "I have no need of thee" (vs. 21). Perhaps it can be through our good fruits that the Lord can show the rest of His Church, that we homosexuals, the seemingly "uncomely parts" or "those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, *are necessary*" (vs. 22-23) and that we function best and are blessed with peace when we accept and function according to the measure of *our* creation, but herein lies the debate and hence the necessity for more revelation.

Let us inquire of the Lord personally and through His servants to know what is the purpose and measure of *our* creation if it is indeed different for us. If however, the measure of our creation is indeed the same as for others, to multiply and replenish the earth, let us learn through revelation what path the Lord would have us follow to accomplish that in light of our peculiar "setting" or creation.

If we are in good standing in the Church let us serve mightily and as opportunity arises and with wisdom and the guidance of the Spirit, "come out" to leaders, friends, and family so

they can learn to love us and those like us, for who we really are instead of who they think we are. If our membership or service has been limited or revoked, then we can still be the first to volunteer for service projects or help a neighbor in need. Even if we aren't allowed to speak in Church we can still be amongst the first to follow President Hinckley's plea to all members to extend a caring hand of fellowship to newcomers or others who are equally ostracized or ignored by the general membership. But our service must be motivated by the love that is in our souls. Blessings for us can come about as our influence through service is maintained "only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness and pure knowledge which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile" (DC 121:41-42). Let us be humble in all things; and if our service is rejected or denied in one area, and it will be by some, find other ways to build the Kingdom and serve God and others (see Mosiah 2:17).

To Know the Mysteries of God

How this love in our hearts, our homosexuality, fits into the Lord's plan of happiness for us, is at present a mystery. Alma taught, "It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men [usually granted only through the teachings of His authorized prophets], according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. [How much heed and diligence are we giving to the Lord and the things He has granted us to know: prayer, scripture study, fasting, tithing, service, Church attendance, word of wisdom, genealogy etc.] "And therefore, he that will harden his heart, [as so many of us Gays and Lesbians in the Church at times have done for protection or even survival. Our hearts, and those of some of our families and loved ones have at times hardened toward the leaders, the Church, the doctrine and maybe even the Lord.] the same receive the lesser portion of the word; [I feel we Gays and Lesbians have clearly received the lesser portion of the word, but consider the promise if we do not harden our heart:] and he that will not harden his heart to him is given the greater portion of the word until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full" (Alma 12:9-10).

We are a people burdened and oppressed by a mystery. Here the Lord gives us a vital key to finding the truth that can set us free. I believe this with all my heart. It is a promise of God. Oh so gratefully, by my own experience I know that this promise is true! Let us obey what we now know and soften our hearts so we can receive the knowledge of the mysteries of God on this vital subject which we so desperately need for our salvation .

Being humble, submissive and not hardening our heart, in the face of rejection, persecution, condemnation or even excommunication is exceedingly difficult but it is essential. We desperately need the Lord's grace and mercy in our dilemma of where we fit in His plan of happiness, His Church, and in His Kingdom in the eternities. No matter what has been our lot, what cruel things have been said or done, we must take it humbly, submissively, with patience and long-suffering; we must not harden our hearts in anyway toward the Church or anyone in it. No matter what we have suffered it is no where near what the Savior suffered innocently for us. Let us respond to persecution and false judgment as He did, with patience, long-suffering, love and turning to God. We are pioneers and as the early pioneers, we need to be "willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us]" (Mosiah 3:19). Let us bear abundantly these fruits of charity for the promised blessings are great (see Moroni 7: 45, 47-48)!

Humility Through Weakness

The Lord has said, "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).

Some say homosexuality is our weakness our cross to bear; but for me, as I have been working my way along this sojourn as an actively Gay Latter-day Saint, by doing the best I can with limited knowledge, my homosexuality has become one of the greatest gifts of love through which the Lord has enticed and empowered me to serve and love Him and others (see Moroni 7:13-16) and through which He has swiftly and miraculously wrought a mighty change of heart in me toward charity.

Perhaps this peculiar love in our souls, our homosexuality, isn't our weakness. Instead, maybe our weakness is the vice of pride, as we say in our hearts, "If the Church won't accept me fully as I am then I want nothing to do with them." Study and consider the similarities between us, and those who were rejected by their church in Alma's time (Alma 32-34).

Maybe our weakness is a lack of diligence and enduring, in that if we can't have all the blessings of serving in the Church right now, we reject all of them and stop serving entirely.

Maybe, ironically, our weakness is intolerance of others and their opinions and beliefs. We want the Brethren to be understanding and have charity toward us, yet how much charity and understanding do we show toward them? They have a weighty responsibility and have made mighty sacrifices of time, career, family, personal dreams and goals, even their whole lives, to serve, to do the best they can. I firmly believe they are doing the best they know how based on the knowledge and life experience they have been blessed with. Are we? They do not claim to be perfect or infallible so why are we so quick to condemn or dismiss them when they make an unkind statement or misjudge us or even execute the letter of the law against us in required fulfillment of their un-asked-for stewardship?

Maybe our weakness is that we harden our hearts. That is such a serious mistake and yet so easy to do. While a hardened heart may protect against pain it also prevents revelation. The Book of Mormon tells us countless times of the blessings we will receive if we don't harden our hearts. We must keep our hearts soft so we can soften the hearts of others in Church to prepare them and ourselves to receive the blessings we need.

Maybe our weakness is that we are not prayerfully searching the scriptures to find answers that the Lord can give us personally through His Spirit as it guides us in "liken[ing] all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" and "that [we] may have hope" (1 Nephi 19:23-24). Study what was required of other peoples before the Lord blessed and freed them from oppression, bondage and denial of blessings.

Maybe our weakness is a lack of belief in the scriptures, the word of the Lord and the literality of His promises. As I have prayerfully searched the scriptures as a Gay Latter-day Saint, trying to "work out [my] own salvation with fear and trembling before [the Lord]" (Morm. 9:27), I have had scriptures opened to my heart and mind that speak to me with perfect clarity, and give me great hope regarding this love in my soul. These witnesses and understandings have distilled upon my mind and heart "as the dew from heaven" (DC 121:45; 128:19). They have been given "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; giving [me] consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming [my] hope" (DC 128:21; 2 Ne. 28:30).

While such wonderful hope and guidance is scattered throughout the scriptures, one of the most powerful was wondrously reconfirmed in President Hinckley's unprepared closing remarks in October 1997 General Conference. Here the Lord's mouthpiece reconfirmed in these latter-days a vital key of knowledge to us and all people, which gives me as a Gay Latter-day Saint, a perfect knowledge and guide, even regarding my homosexuality and its expression. This knowledge comes with a most glorious promise. President Hinckley said:

"In closing I would like to read a word or two from Mormon - great words:

"But behold, *that which is of God* inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, *every thing* which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him is inspired of God...

"For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil;

wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for *every thing* which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge *it is of God*" (Moro. 7:13,16).

"And then these great words, which become the *summum bonum* of it all: "*Whatsoever thing* ye shall ask the Father in my name, *which is good*, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you" (Moro. 7:26). I believe those words" (Ensign, November 1997, p85).

I too believe these words with all my heart. I strongly invite all to prayerfully study his words and all of that wondrous chapter of Moroni 7, while examining the truest, most tender feelings of your heart regarding this love in our soul and its expression. Moroni 7:17 gives an equally clear standard to know what is evil and of the devil. This test too must be applied with the guidance of the Holy Ghost to the various options in expressing or denying our homosexuality. In my search for the Lord's truth amidst "this war of words and tumult of opinions"(JS-H 1:10) regarding homosexuality, whether it is good or evil, which if any, of all the ways to deal with it is good or evil; the Lord restores quiet, clear truth as I turn to those verses President Hinckley quoted, the Lord's standard of what is good and what is evil. It is a sure guide and directs me in the rest of my study of the scriptures. Ether 4 gives added witness and insight to this wonderful truth which applies equally to us as well as all people. If only all people, Gay and Straight, would truly believe the literality of these words of the Lord, then the Lord could reveal needed "knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief" (Ether 4:13). When I truly believe these scriptures I am filled with love for God and others, joy, peace and hope.

The hope I have found in these verses and many others has given me the strength to carry on in doing all else I can. I have not found this hope from Church members or friends and certainly not from my family; nor does my hope come from science, psychology, psychiatry, politics or the philosophies of men. All my true hope has come from the Lord through deep, earnest and sincere prayer to our Father in Heaven in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, in whom I fully believe. My hope has been given through diligently and prayerfully, with an open heart and mind, searching His word in the scriptures and His promises therein. My hope has come through the gloriously confirming words of the Lord's living Prophet. My hope has come most wonderfully through the blessed fruits of the Lord's Spirit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23) which come each time I truly believe the Lord's word and listen to and follow my heart regarding this love in my soul. I testify gratefully, humbly yet boldly that all these blessed fruits of the Spirit are some of the natural fruits of this peculiar love in my heart and soul which the world calls homosexuality. I have learned of my own experience that they only flow freely when I accept or receive this precious gift of love. The Lord has said, "For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift" (D&C 88:33).

Let Us Be One in the Lord

Sadly as I have mentioned to others the great need we have for more light, knowledge, wisdom, truth - revelation - on the subject of homosexuality, I have encountered opposition amongst Straights and even Gays. They profess that the Lord has made it perfectly clear that homosexuality is an abomination, no more need be said! This attitude saddens me because it makes our task so much more difficult. It dims my hope because the Lord will not give more to unbelievers (see Ether 4:11-15). To those individuals and organizations who believe God has spoken on this issue and we need no more from Him, I refer to the Lord's admonition: "Yea, wo be unto him that saith we have received and we need no more!...Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have

enough!...for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have" (2 Nephi 28:27-30).

As long as there is suffering, as long as there is loss of testimonies and hope, as long as families are being divided and destroyed over this issue, as long as there is emotional, spiritual and physical death and suicide because of the lack of truth regarding homosexuality, we must diligently seek divine guidance, revelation and blessings to end these destructions.

I believe it is tragic for any of our Father in Heaven's children to have to expend their lives trying to justify their existence on the planet to any other part of humanity. However, at present, this is our lot, as it has been with many other misunderstood minorities. On us rests the burden of proof. We must show society, the world, the Church, our families and friends, that we as individuals and as a people are far better than they believe we are. We are not what they expect us to be.

I have observed that much of the destruction that is seen in "the Gay lifestyle" comes from hardened scabs and scars and bleeding open wounds of exceptionally tender hearts that have been ripped and torn by prejudice, intolerance, rejection, hopelessness, misunderstanding, misjudgment, condemnation and confusion from well intentioned speculation and experimentation. I realize painfully well that the wounds many of us have received run deep, to our very soul, that our pains are profound and sometimes debilitating, and that our struggles and torments have for many, lasted for years and decades. But I plead for each of us to remember back to the tender love and feelings of our heart before it was wounded, damaged and eventually hardened for protection. Dig deep and find that tenderness, caring, sensitivity, compassion and love that we frequently are blessed with as Gays and Lesbians. Let us get back to our natural desire to love and serve and care for others, to our natural compassion.

What does it take to do all this, besides raw courage and strength from the Lord? It takes faith which God grants through prayer and doing good. It takes hope which can come through prayerful scripture study and the Spirit. And finally it takes charity, which is a gift of God, for charity is love" (2 Ne. 26:30) and it "*suffereth long, and is kind and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*" (Moro. 7:45).

Our circumstances will not change until enough good people with courage and faith seek change through the Lord's blessings. This united courage, faith and effort is required by each of us who have this peculiar love in our souls and all of those family and friends who love us and seek happiness and blessings for us. Let our individual and collective cries ascend up unto the Lord continually until, in His mercy and according to His will, He sets us free through truth and blessings. We depend completely on Him in all our efforts.

As a final yet foremost consideration I refer to Mosiah 14. I know that all I am asking of us is difficult because of the path that has befallen us. If in our sojourn as a Gay or Lesbian Latter-day Saint, we have learned something about affliction, being despised, rejected and persecuted, even condemned and driven out, let this shared experience lead us to the Savior who has suffered all this and more. Consider that we as individuals and a people can also cry out, "Who hath believed our report" that we did not choose this or that many of us only find true inner peace when we accept ourselves and this love inside us? Many of us have grown up as an especially "tender plant" and "a root out of dry ground" - there was no nourishment for the roots of our love, there has been no water for plants like us. When most look upon us they can see no "beauty" or "comeliness" in our souls or anything about us that in their eyes is "desir[able]"; and so we are "despised and rejected of men". Without the blessings of expressing our love and affection in genuinely loving marriage, companionship and family we become men and women "of sorrows and acquainted with grief". Many, even family, friends and leaders, "hid[e] as it were [their] faces from [us]" as if we did not exist. We are "despised" and "esteemed... not". Except for the help of the Lord, we have frequently had to "bear our griefs and carr[y] our

sorrows" alone. Many in and out of the Church "esteem [us] stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." We have been "wounded", "bruised", "chastis[ed]", "oppressed", "afflicted", and misjudged. Some have been led seemingly "as a lamb to the slaughter" of electroshock and endless other forms of ever changing reparative therapies. Regardless of how we deal with our homosexuality we have been "numbered with the transgressors" and I believe many of us have "poured out [our] soul [nigh] unto death." The key in all of this is not self-pity, anger or hardened hearts at our lot. The key is to recognize that our Savior Jesus Christ suffered all these things and far more. In all of them He submitted and never turned His back on the Father even though He too cried out, as have many of us in our most desperate hours, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46).

Why did our Savior suffer these things? Because of the love in His soul for us. Perhaps we too suffer greatly because of the love in our soul and because it is misunderstood by others. We Gays and Lesbians have been blessed to have shared in some small part, this common experience of suffering many things which the Savior suffered. He suffered all these things completely innocently. I hope we can ponder this and through it forge a strong and loving bond, born of shared experience, with the Savior. May it lead us to Him, to know and understand Him better, to be healed by Him from our wounds or hard-heartedness, to appreciate far more deeply what He did for us, that we will follow Him by also submitting humbly and patiently, by going about doing good as He did, and by seeking strength and blessings from Him and our Father in Heaven for us, our people and all our Father in Heavens children regardless of our diversity. If you know anything of these sufferings, look to Jesus Christ who endured them all and far worse. Look to Him for His example of how to endure them. Look to Him for strength in enduring them. Look to Him for He is the only one who can grant us the blessings and miracles we seek and need for our salvation, happiness, peace, love, joy and abundant life.

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