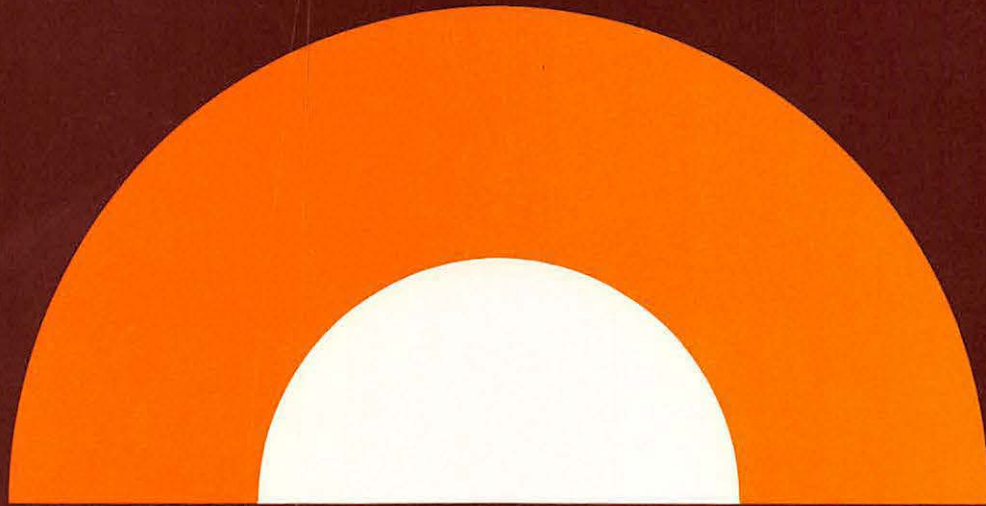


Homosexuality



Homosexuality

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Foreword

This booklet contains information to help Church leaders understand and treat the problem of homosexuality. It is provided for stake presidents, bishops, mission presidents, branch presidents, quorum leaders, and others assigned to help individuals with this problem. The information on the causes of homosexuality was derived primarily from work with males. Although the causes of female homosexuality (lesbianism) may differ somewhat, the suggestions given for the treatment and prevention of homosexuality almost always apply to both males and females.

Homosexuality is of grave concern to the Church because—

1. It violates the Lord's eternal plan for man's progress by perverting the proper use of procreative powers and loving relationships.
2. It deprives God's children of the happiness and fulfillment possible only in family life.
3. It debases and demeans those involved.
4. It is as sinful as heterosexual adultery and fornication.
5. It may involve violent or criminal behavior.

Members of the Church who engage in homosexual behavior need the help of an inspired priesthood leader. They must accept responsibility for their sinful behavior and develop the determination to change their lives. Priesthood leaders should use all possible energy, compassion, and wisdom to help members involved in homosexual activities change their behavior and achieve forgiveness and joy in the Lord's Kingdom.

I. An Overview of Homosexuality

Homosexuality is erotic physical contact or attractions between members of the same sex, including erotic same-sex fantasy. It may include thoughts or emotional attractions without outward sexual behavior, or it may include complete emotional, sexual, and genital involvement with a member of the same sex. Homosexual activities may range from childhood experimentation to adult obsession. Some participants are unwilling victims of sexual assault or incest and bear emotional scars. Others who have willfully rejected the gospel and morality are trapped by habits of sexual indulgence. Sexual misbehavior, however, is almost always a symptom of serious social or emotional problems.

A. The Position of the Church on Homosexuality

The First Presidency has issued the following statement to priesthood leaders:

As we have previously stated, homosexuality is a sin in the same degree as adultery and fornication. Powerful forces are seeking to establish this sinful practice as an acceptable way of life. Homosexuality in men and women runs counter to divine objectives and the intended destiny of mankind. The Lord has declared, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). Some claim homosexuality is incurable, therefore they seek to be considered a legitimate minority group protected by law. We should not be deceived by these false rationalizations. We must never lose our perspective amidst the world's clamor to justify and normalize immorality. According to the Lord's revealed word, the only acceptable sexual relationship occurs within the family between a husband and a wife.

B. The Causes of Homosexual Behavior

Professionals do not agree on the causes of homosexual behavior. However, most professional research

supports the view that homosexual behavior is learned, and is influenced by unhealthy emotional development in early childhood. This explanation is most consistent with what the Lord has revealed concerning the eternal nature of man as the offspring of divine parents.

Although there are probably many factors affecting the development of homosexuality, the following elements appear quite consistently:

1. Disturbed Family Background

- a) A key factor in the development of both male and female homosexuality seems to be the lack of a warm, supportive, affectionate relationship between the individual and his father. Many times the father is either physically or emotionally uninvolved in his child's life or is punishing and authoritarian.
- b) The mother usually attempts to fill the physical and emotional void left by the father. Some mothers are overprotective and dominant.
- c) Because of inadequate parental examples in the home, the child does not learn proper masculine and feminine behavior.
- d) The relationship between mother and father is often strained, hostile, and competitive.

2. Poor Relationship with Peers

- a) The individual sees himself as being different from peers; therefore, he tends to become isolated and lonely.
- b) His peers often see him as different, and they label and reject him.
- c) The individual often uses homosexual behavior as a way to gain acceptance. Because he needs warmth and love, he is attracted by the apparent acceptance of others who engage in homosexual activities.
- d) Because he is isolated from others, he does not develop fundamental social skills and attitudes.

3. Unhealthy Sexual Attitudes

- a) The individual's parents may view sexual expression as something

which is improper or even "dirty." They may pass this attitude on to their children.

- b) The mother may place too much importance on a strong emotional attachment between herself and her son as a result of her efforts to fill the emotional void left by the father.
- c) The mother may discourage her son's interest in girls.
- d) The father's passive or negative relationship with the mother can create a negative attitude in the child about the proper relationships between a husband and wife.
- e) Some young people may misinterpret Church emphasis on premarital chastity, completely avoiding heterosexual interests or relationships.

4. Early homosexual experience

- a) Early homosexual experiences increase the possibility of future homosexual encounters.
- b) Early masturbation experiences introduce the individual to sexual thoughts which may become habit-forming and reinforcing to homosexual interests.
- c) The first homosexual experience often occurs in early childhood for males, and in late teens or in the twenties for females.
- d) The individual is usually introduced to homosexual behavior by someone his own age or a few years older, almost always by someone he knows.

C. Rationalization

Many persons involved in homosexual activities during recent years have publicly requested special exemption from social, legal, and religious prohibitions. They claim the authority of scientific research, and have taken the position that—

1. They are not responsible for their homosexual behavior because it is caused by conditions beyond their own control (such as biological or environmental factors).
2. The course of homosexuality, once entered, is irreversible and incurable.
3. Homosexuality is a harmless alterna-

tive lifestyle, and any legal or religious prohibition is a fundamental denial of human rights.

Such rationalization is evident even among some members of the Church who indulge in and justify homosexual practices. For example, some claim the Lord must approve of their homosexuality because their prayers are answered and Church callings are extended to them. Until such individuals accept the eternal, unchanging truths about their sexual misconduct, they will remain in error and sin. The error described by Mormon is common among such members: "Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil" (Moroni 7:14).

D. Counteracting Rationalization

The Church's unequivocal position is that any rationalization of homosexuality is wrong. To help those who are misinformed, you as a priesthood leader may wish to discuss the following with those who have questions:

Homosexuality is a sin. Inspired prophets have taught throughout the ages that homosexuality is a sin. As such it can be forsaken and, following repentance, can be completely forgiven.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts; to dishonour their own bodies between themselves; . . .

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature;

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. . . .

And some who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, are inexcusable, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them

that do them. (JST, Romans 1:24, 26, 27, 32.)

Homosexual behavior is learned.

Homosexual behavior is learned and can be overcome. To believe that immoral behavior is inborn or hereditary is to deny that men have agency to choose between sin and righteousness. The Lord has given man the freedom to make moral choices, and this agency is the cornerstone of his plan for exaltation. He has revealed that the ultimate goal for man is eternal life. It is inconceivable that—as some involved in homosexual behavior claim—he would permit some of his children to be born with desires and inclinations which would require behavior contrary to the eternal plan.

II. Assessing the Member's Needs

The amount of help that you as a priesthood leader can give depends upon the person's willingness and desire to change. The person must repent of his homosexual behavior and control it by learning other ways of life that are healthy and righteous. Change is seldom easy or rapid, and it usually requires support from others. Many individuals, however, have successfully overcome this problem, and the following suggestions will help you counsel those who are working to overcome it. Should the individual resist change, Church court action should be used as circumstances warrant. (See *General Handbook of Instructions*.)

A. Categories of Homosexual Behavior

It will be helpful to first decide what type of homosexual problem the person has, how serious it is, and how much help he needs. You can use the following three broad and often overlapping categories of homosexual behavior as a guide. These categories do not represent all possible types and explanations of the problem, but are general descriptions of characteristics common to members seen by priesthood leaders. Each category of individuals may require different amounts of help. Individuals in each category can overcome the problem, however.

Category I: Early memory homosexuality. An individual in this category reports having had persistent homosexual feelings or behaviors since his earliest memories. Typically he comes from a family which has had serious social-emotional problems. Usually his relationship with his father is poor or nonexistent. He generally has limited social skills and may be confused about proper male and female behavior. He usually fears the opposite sex and is afraid of close emotional ties with anyone. He may be active in the Church, but often doubts whether gospel principles and promises apply personally to him.

Individuals in this category require regular visits with a priesthood leader, and often need professional assistance as well. Full rehabilitation is

sometimes a long, slow process with perhaps one to three years of regular counseling required.

Category II: Situational homosexuality. Individuals in this category include those who experience occasional, temporary homosexual feelings or behaviors through curiosity, experimentation, pornographic stimulation, peer pressures, drug or alcohol abuse, or living in close proximity to a member of the same sex. Their family background is often quite normal, with no unusual family problems. They may be active in the Church but often lack deep spiritual understanding and conviction.

Such an individual can benefit greatly from your inspired counsel. He can change significantly if you and he hold frequent interviews in which together you work out a detailed, monitored program of repentance. Professional assistance may be helpful but is not always necessary.

Category III: Rebellious homosexuality. This category represents primarily an attitude and lifestyle. These individuals may be either early memory or situational types who, for various reasons, have chosen to fully accept a homosexual lifestyle. They have little, if any, motivation to change their behavior and are openly active, even promiscuous in their homosexual behavior. They may promote the concerns of the homosexual community and may belong to various homosexual organizations. They commonly manipulate others to meet their own sexual needs. Generally they are not active in the Church. They tend to rationalize and interpret doctrines or scriptures for their own purpose, and try to refute the position of the Church on homosexuality.

Because these individuals have a rebellious attitude, you may need to reprove them with sharpness (as the Spirit directs) and teach gospel principles in plainness. They need to understand the seriousness of their sins and the hope of forgiveness. Professional or ecclesiastical counseling

will help only when the individual begins to develop a desire to change.

B. The Member's Attitude

Probably the most crucial single factor in the rehabilitation of a member with homosexual problems is his attitude. When he is willing to solve the problem in the Lord's way, with a priesthood leader's counsel and direction, he can change. A rebellious attitude is almost always a clear indication of the need to be sternly disciplined. The Lord speaks clearly against those who are angry with his words or the words of his spokesmen: "And it [Nephi's account] speaketh harshly against sin, according to the plainness of the truth; wherefore, no man will be angry at the words which I have written save he shall be of the spirit of the devil" (2 Nephi 33:5).

C. Providing Professional Assistance

When the individual has serious mental or emotional problems, you may also wish to involve professional help. When adequate professional help is not available through local ward and stake resources, you may call upon LDS Social Services. At your request, LDS Social Services may (1) offer treatment suggestions, (2) interview the member and make treatment recommendations, or (3) provide therapy for the member as a supplement to your own counseling. Where this agency is unavailable, you may obtain additional information by writing to LDS Social Services, Church Office Building, Seventh Floor, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150. When you consider involving non-LDS professionals, you should be careful to make sure they understand and support gospel principles relating to homosexual behavior.

III. Counseling by Priesthood Leaders

A. Guidelines for Counseling

Your greatest asset in helping members with homosexual problems is the inspiration of the Spirit. In addition, the following suggested guidelines and principles may help increase your effectiveness:

1. Establish a warm, positive relationship.

This is especially important because the individual is usually very sensitive to any indication that you do not accept him. It is essential that you offer a cordial handshake and be friendly and positive. Your acceptance of the person does not mean you agree with his incorrect behavior.

Modern day prophets have clearly promised that homosexuality can be changed. You should convey this positive attitude because it encourages change.

2. Hold an effective initial interview.

The first interview is particularly important because it is there that you can reduce the individual's fears and build his confidence in you. Listen carefully to what the problem is, and do not show shock at anything he says.

3. Keep information confidential.

When others have knowledge of the person's homosexual behavior, their usual reactions are negative, making repentance and change even more difficult. The individual should know that you will keep everything he says confidential. Never discuss his problems with anyone without his permission.

4. Avoid labeling.

In many cases the person is guilty of homosexual thoughts or acts but is not deeply involved in the society of those steeped in homosexual activities. Be careful not to label people "homosexual." This both discourages them and tends to make them feel that they cannot solve their problems. It is better to refer to their "homosexual behavior" than to call them a "homosexual."

5. Hold regular interviews.

After the initial interview, it is essential that you hold regular interviews with the individual, even though others such as quorum leaders or special home teachers may provide much of the support and help. In the early stages of repentance, it is difficult for the individual to make it on his own.

6. Prepare the member against homosexual temptation.

A person who has repented of homosexual problems must continue to maintain vigilance and self-control. Overcoming homosexual sin does not always mean that he will no longer have negative thoughts or temptations. It does mean, however, that he has developed sufficient spirituality and self-control to resist temptation and avoid incorrect behavior.

The following scripture may give the member strength in his efforts to resist temptation: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12).

It may be important to remind the individual that those with homosexual temptations are not the only members of the Church who are being asked to control and properly channel their sexual desires. All members are expected to obey the Lord's law of chastity. "And ye must practise virtue and holiness before me continually. Even so. Amen." (D&C 46:33.)

7. Discourage homosexual associations.

Successful change requires that a person remove himself from temptation. Many times individuals in the process of overcoming homosexuality cling to past homosexual friends in a sympathetic effort to help them. The individuals will gain nothing and lose much by such continued association.

8. Provide hope for the despairing.

Members with homosexual problems often feel trapped and alone and believe that change is impossible. You should give them hope. The Lord loves them and will give them power to con-

quer the problem if they follow the steps leading to repentance and change. There are many who have overcome the problem through repentance, prayer, a diligent program of self-mastery, and the concern of others. Reach out to those struggling with this problem. They need your inspired guidance and counsel.

Despair prompts feelings of hopelessness, and hopelessness, combined with the burden of unresolved sin and guilt, may lead an individual to contemplate or attempt suicide. Repentance and the Lord's spirit can lift him from the thoughts of suicide to peace of mind.

Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more (D&C 58:42).

But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. (Ezekiel 18:21-22.)

B. Questions to Use in Counseling

Listed below are questions which you may want to explore with the member. The answers will help you determine the seriousness of the problem and how much help the member needs. You may want to explore questions similar to these over several interviews, during which you can develop a trusting, helping relationship with the member. Too many questions in the first interview may overwhelm him. The Spirit will help you determine what is appropriate. (Each group of questions will help you learn about one aspect of the member's life.)

1. Motivation to change

The person's success in overcoming his homosexual behavior is directly related to how much he wants to change. Learning about the gospel, positive relationships, and the promise of forgiveness can help a person want

to change.

- a) Why has the member come to see you at this particular time?
- b) Why does he want your help?
- c) Does he believe the problem can be solved?
- d) Is this change one of the most important things in his life?
- e) Is the member following your suggestions and contributing his own helpful suggestions?
- f) Have some specific changes taken place already?
- g) Is he being consistent in his efforts?
- h) Are there any special problems which are blocking his progress?

2. Extent of homosexual involvement

Those who are young or have had little actual homosexual involvement are able to overcome the problem much more easily than those who have been involved in such practices for many years.

- a) How many years has he been involved in homosexual behavior?
- b) How often does he have homosexual contacts? When does he seek them? Why? How does he feel afterwards?
- c) To what extent is masturbation a problem? How frequently does he indulge in it? What feelings or attitudes make him more vulnerable in this area?
- d) Is he using pornographic literature? How does it contribute to the problem?

3. Family background

Those with homosexual problems who are from disturbed family backgrounds and have had poor relationships with parents (especially their father), usually have serious social-emotional problems as well. (See early memory category.)

- a) As a young child, how did the member get along with his father? How is their relationship now?
- b) As a young child, how did he get along with his mother? How is their relationship now?
- c) How did he relate to brothers and sisters in early childhood? At present?

- d) How did his parents get along with each other when he was young? At present?
- e) What sexual attitudes did he learn in the home?
- f) Is there a history of serious social or emotional problems in his family?

4. Social skills

Those who feel inadequate, have few if any friends, have dated little or not at all, and are generally lacking in social skills (communication, manners, etc.) will find it difficult to overcome homosexual behavior until their social skills and behaviors are developed more fully.

- a) Has he had, or is he now having any regular appropriate social contact with members of the opposite sex? Does he enjoy this association?
- b) Does he feel comfortable when associating with the opposite sex?
- c) How well does he communicate with the opposite sex? Participate in appropriate activities with them? With the same sex?
- d) Does he prefer to be alone or with others?

5. Knowledge of gospel truths

It is essential to determine how much the individual knows about the gospel. Those who do not understand the teachings of the Lord on the subject of homosexuality and basic gospel principles, including forgiveness, cannot have sufficient faith to seek a spiritual solution to their problem.

- a) Does he understand the steps of repentance?
- b) Does he believe in the personal atonement of the Savior?
- c) Does he believe change is possible?
- d) Does he understand that homosexual acts are sin in the same degree as fornication and adultery?
- e) Does he understand the importance of spiritual help in conquering his problem?
- f) Does he understand that he was not "born that way"?
- g) Does he realize that the power of procreation is good?
- h) Does he realize that overcoming his problem may require significant

time and effort on his part?

- i) Does he pray? How often? How long? How does he feel about it?

C. Helping the Member Set Effective Goals

President Spencer W. Kimball has stated that homosexuality can be cured "if the battle is well organized and pursued vigorously and continuously" (*A Letter to a Friend* [pamphlet], 1978). The individual needs to set well-organized, specific goals and develop a plan to accomplish them. The overall importance of goal-setting cannot be overemphasized. Below are several goals that individuals with this problem have used successfully. These are suggestions only, as the goals will vary with each individual. You can suggest these goals or similar ones and help the member work out a plan to achieve them.

1. Spiritual goals

- a) Have him meet with his priesthood leader weekly to report progress and receive guidance.
- b) Assign him to read the scriptures and pray daily. (An example would be reading the Book of Mormon for fifteen minutes each day, then praying in depth about the reading.)
- c) Encourage him to be conscientious about attending his Church meetings, noting how the topics discussed may apply to him.
- d) Ask him to read President Kimball's book, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. (Chapter 6 deals specifically with homosexuality, but the entire book should be read.)
- e) Encourage him to fast and pray, as appropriate, for strength and guidance to overcome his problem.
- f) Have him write a positive statement about himself based on his strengths and the positive statements in his patriarchal blessing and other blessings. Have him memorize this statement and repeat it to himself a specified number of times each day.
- g) Have him read I Corinthians 12, D&C 46, and Moroni 10. Suggest that he pray regularly and fervently for those specific spiritual gifts which

will give him added strength in overcoming his problem.

h) Encourage him to get involved in a service project.

i) Encourage him to pay a full tithing and a generous fast offering.

j) Have him read the Church pamphlets *To the One* (PBCT0769), *A Letter to a Friend* (PBCT0758), and *To Young Men Only* (PBAP0210).

2. Social goals

The individual can more easily eliminate all overt homosexual behavior, friends, and places by replacing them with more appropriate friends and activities. Without violating the person's confidence, you could assign a mature member of the ward or stake to tutor him in social skills improvement.

a) Encourage the member to be in appropriate situations with members of the opposite sex, even if he has to force himself. If he is single, he might attend activities for singles with increasing frequency, and in other ways surround himself with good LDS people.

b) Encourage him (if single) to begin dating and gradually increase its frequency. He might discuss dating practices, expectations and fears with a member of the opposite sex or with those assisting him.

c) Encourage him to discuss with his bishop or his assigned resource person(s) those appropriate masculine or feminine roles and practices which he should exemplify. Have him observe those of the same sex whom he admires and respects, and suggest that he try to emulate their behavior and characteristics.

d) Help him recognize and retain those social skills, attitudes, feelings, and characteristics that are appropriate and uniquely his.

e) Encourage him to evaluate his vocational or professional interests, making improvements or adjustments if necessary to discourage possible homosexual temptations.

f) Encourage the development and use of his talents, interests, and skills to bless others.

3. Physical goals

A physical fitness program will help the individual build self-control and improve his psychological outlook. It also shows that he is motivated to change. (However, you should consider getting proper clearance from the person's physician before suggesting strenuous physical activity for him.) You could assign a mature ward or stake resource person to help him in this area.

a) Have him begin a daily physical fitness program such as jogging, bicycling, or some other regular exercise that can be measured as fitness increases. Have him record his progress and review it with you or someone you assign.

b) Encourage him to strictly obey the Word of Wisdom and other scriptures which relate to proper care of the body.

c) Encourage him to study the principles of proper nutrition and diet and follow these principles in his life.

d) Encourage him to dress appropriately, keeping himself well-groomed and clean.

e) Help him to eliminate masturbation. (See section entitled "Overcoming Masturbation" for specific suggestions.)

4. Self-discipline goals

a) Teach him how to gain control over negative thoughts about himself and sexual thoughts about others of the same sex. One method is to replace the negative or inappropriate thoughts with a prechosen scripture, positive statement, or the words of a hymn. (See pamphlet *To Young Men Only* by Elder Boyd K. Packer.)

b) The use of pornography and erotic fantasy must be discontinued. (See Thomas S. Monson, "Pornography—The Deadly Carrier," *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, pp. 66-67.)

c) Encourage him to read books and listen to tapes which will be uplifting, wholesome, and mentally stimulating.

5. Emotional goals

a) Provide activities and experiences in which he can succeed and thereby begin to improve his self-

esteem. For example, have him read a worthwhile book and discuss it, provide service to a shut-in, repeat a positive statement about himself several times a day, beautify his yard, or take a self-improvement course, etc.

b) Encourage him to interview relatives and learn of their backgrounds, struggles, successes, and personality traits in order to gain strength and perspective regarding his own personal challenges.

D. Overcoming Masturbation

Masturbation is a sin, but is not homosexuality when practiced alone. When individuals of the same sex masturbate each other, it is a homosexual act. Self-masturbation is almost universal among those who engage in homosexual behavior, and is a very difficult habit for most to overcome. The fantasies that attend this behavior are often the most powerful aspects of the act.

You can use the assessment, counseling, and goal-setting materials in this booklet to help a member eliminate the problem of masturbation. In addition, you may consider the following suggestions:

1. When a member has a long standing, unsuccessfully controlled problem of masturbation, you can assume that the habit has a purpose and meaning beyond that of sexual release. The problem often becomes a self-defeating way of coping with problems of life such as poor self-esteem, loneliness, stress, illness, boredom, marital strife, etc. You should help the person develop more appropriate ways to solve problems and find wholesome ways to reduce stress and anxiety. (See the goal-setting suggestions in this booklet.)

2. A person gains control over this problem as he understands that he is using it to cope with some other problem (loneliness, stress, etc.). You can help him see his patterns of weakness and explore possible alternatives to masturbation as a way of coping.

3. An individual can eliminate a masturbation problem more effectively

IV. Preventing the Development of Homosexual Behavior

when you take the focus of your discussion with him off the act itself. Help him set personal improvement goals according to his social, emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual needs.

4. Recommend physical fitness as a means of gaining self-mastery and subsequent control over a masturbation habit.

5. Suggest that he read and discuss with you the pamphlet *To Young Men Only* by Elder Boyd K. Packer.

Assessment of a masturbation problem. You may use the following questions as a guide to help you understand and assess the extent of the member's masturbation problem:

1. How old was he when he began the habit? (Generally the earlier it began, the more difficult it will be to overcome.)

2. How often does he engage in the act? (Individuals who participate several times a day or week often have serious social or emotional problems.)

3. Where and when does the practice usually occur? (Look for patterns that can be broken once they are understood.)

4. What events or circumstances seem to contribute to the problem? (You can help him identify certain situations, thoughts, or relationships which are temptations. He can then learn to recognize when he is susceptible to this temptation and avoid those circumstances.)

Helping steps.

The following steps can help an individual seeking to overcome a problem of masturbation. You may counsel the member to—

1. Avoid being alone when he is tempted. He should seek out strong members of the Church and associate with them until the temptation passes.

2. Never associate with others having the same weakness. If his associates have this same problem and cannot overcome it, he should break off their friendship.

3. Fill his mind with wholesome thoughts; read good books, scriptures, Church books, and other edifying materials. He should not dwell on his problem.

4. Pray for faith, for gifts of the Spirit, for the desire to love and serve others. He should fast as appropriate to his needs.

5. Seek ways to serve others as a means of taking his mind off himself when temptations are strong. For example, if he is tempted late at night, he could write letters of appreciation and friendship.

6. Never read pornography, attend entertainments, or listen to music that creates unwholesome thoughts and desires.

7. Follow a daily physical fitness program designed to bring his body into obedience to his mind and spirit.

8. Maintain contact with his bishop during this period of repentance for strength and encouragement.

9. Seek a blessing from his bishop when he desires special help.

Case histories of persons with homosexual problems often indicate the presence of common environmental and social problems in childhood. You should be sensitive to factors which may lead to homosexual behavior (disturbed family background, poor relationships with peers, and early homosexual experiences). Through ward, stake, or LDS Social Services resources, you may teach parents steps that they can take to avert such problems.

It is particularly important that parents promote loving relationships in the home and help their children develop the internal strength necessary to guard against homosexual and other temptations. These qualities in the home will help reduce the chances that homosexual behavior will develop, as well as help prevent other social and emotional problems.

It is suggested that each parent, especially the father—

1. Express love for each child every day through appropriate physical contacts, such as a pat on the back, a hug, or good night kiss. Children need parental affection.

2. Schedule time to be alone with each child at least once a week. Within reasonable limits, engage in activities that the child wants to do, such as play a game, read a book, visit, listen to music, go for a bicycle ride, etc. Make this one-to-one time together personal and meaningful.

3. Express genuine affection and appreciation for the spouse each day in the child's presence (such as a wink, a hug or kiss, a verbal expression of love or praise, or helping with tasks).

4. Encourage children to develop appropriate social skills. For example, parents should be interested in their children's friends, allow their children to invite friends into the home, and encourage social activities appropriate for their child's age.

5. Teach children true facts and principles concerning the human body, procreation, and the purpose of wholesome family life. Teach the principle of chastity by precept and example.

V. Church Policies Concerning Homosexuality

A. Activity in the Church

Service in the Church is both a responsibility and a privilege. The member who has repented of homosexual problems can receive strength from serving in "safe" callings. Assignments should never place him in a position of temptation. A man previously involved with young boys, or a woman with young girls, should not be used in youth programs. Common sense and wisdom will help you determine appropriate assignments. The length of time from the last incident of misbehavior is an important factor. A return too soon to full activity in the Church mocks the process of repentance. Too long a delay can deprive a person of healing blessings. This is a matter for inspired judgment. Elder Spencer W. Kimball explained further:

Church penalties for sin involve deprivations—the withholding of temple privileges, priesthood advancements, Church positions and other opportunities for service and growth. Such deprivations result from errors which are not always punishable by serious measures but which render the perpetrator unworthy to give leadership and receive high honors and blessings in God's kingdom. These are all retardations in our eternal progress which a person brings on himself. Even without any official Church action, for example, a person breaking the Word of Wisdom excludes himself from Church office and often—by staying away from church—from Church fellowship. (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], p. 326.)

B. Temple Recommends

Bishops and stake presidents, when prompted by the Spirit, should ask specific questions concerning homosexual behavior in interviews for temple recommends.

C. Priesthood Leader Interviews

Bishops and stake presidents are expected to clearly inquire into sexual behavior when they are considering youth for missions. Rather than using the term homosexuality, they might refer to "sexual contact with women or

men." The stake president should conduct his final interview as close to the youth's departure for the mission field as possible. His initial interview, before submitting the person's name to the Missionary Committee, needs to be as thorough and searching as the final one. In interviews throughout the member's life, leaders should be directed by the Spirit in giving the member the opportunity to confess immoral behavior. They should be careful not to arouse undue curiosity in the young, but many tragedies will be averted if immoral behavior is dealt with sooner rather than later.

Interviews for attendance at Church schools may also include questions about homosexual behavior. Applicants are not to be approved if they are involved in these practices. All with homosexual problems, including those who apply to Church schools, should be dealt with as would those who have committed fornication or adultery.

The bishop or branch president may need to make special confidential evaluations and inquiries of members who have been identified as homosexual contacts by other members or by priesthood referral. He should interview these individuals carefully, and if they are involved, invite them to confess and offer them a program of repentance and change. Church judicial system procedures should be followed as the situation warrants.

D. Church Educational System

Persons who have engaged in homosexual activities and who have not totally repented and forsaken these evil practices will not be admitted to study at or be employed by any Church university, college, school, or program. Students or staff who engage in such behavior while involved with the Church Educational System will be dismissed. When such an expulsion occurs, the Church school concerned should contact the person's bishop or branch president.

E. Missionaries

Practices which cause physical intimacy should be strictly avoided. Missionaries should always find hous-

ing accommodations that provide separate beds. All bathing and dressing should be done with propriety and privacy. Brotherhood and sisterhood in the mission field need not extend beyond the respect and affection that is conveyed with the true Spirit of the Lord. Procedures for dealing with missionaries who are involved in active homosexual practices in the mission field are the same as for those who commit adultery or fornication.

F. Church Courts

A court may need to be convened in behalf of a member guilty of homosexual behavior. The bishop or stake president determines the extent of repentance and Church discipline needed to provide redemption in keeping with instructions in the *General Handbook of Instructions*.

G. Involvement of Others

Since homosexual behavior is possible only with others, the individual should disclose his sexual partners as an essential part of repentance. The purpose is to help save others. The leader to whom the names are disclosed should refer the names to the individuals' priesthood leaders for follow-up action. Priesthood leaders must be careful not to reveal their sources as they make contact with those whose names they are given.

H. Sexual Molestation

When a member of the Church molests a child homosexually, or commits incest, he is subject to Church courts held according to instructions in the *General Handbook of Instructions*.

VI. Conclusion and Testimonies from Those Who Have Changed

When you counsel with members involved in homosexual behavior you need to be wise, firm, merciful, and just. Your aim should be to help these children of the Lord repent and forsake evil. Those striving to overcome homosexual problems need support and love throughout the process of change. The work of redemption and forgiveness must be handled strictly and unequivocally on the Lord's terms. Elder Spencer W. Kimball has said:

To every forgiveness there is a condition. The plaster must be as wide as the sore. The fasting, the prayers, the humility must be equal to or greater than the sin. There must be a broken heart and a contrite spirit. There must be "sackcloth and ashes." There must be tears and genuine change of heart. There must be conviction of the sin, abandonment of the evil, confession of the error to properly constituted authorities of the Lord. There must be restitution and a confirmed, determined change of pace, direction and destination. Conditions must be controlled and companionship corrected or changed. (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], p. 353.)

For those who wish to repent and present themselves humbly before the Lord and his common judges, there is great hope. Those committed to an intensive program of change have found success.

Many written testimonies have been gathered from individuals who have overcome homosexual problems and found peace and success in dating, marriage, and Church activity. In these testimonies, members speak without exception of their deep sense of having sinned. One individual said, "Finally I became aware very strongly (and I'm sure it was the Holy Ghost bearing witness to me) that what was being done in my life was abhorred in the sight of the Lord."

Dependence upon the Lord's love and mercy are also common themes, the testimonies echoing Alma both in his initial despair and subsequent joy (Alma 36:17-20): "Finally, I feel that the

Lord has answered my prayers now that I have fully repented of my sins—the happiness now is really beyond description. I never knew anyone could be so happy. It is just like a light in the dark that continues to increase in brilliance."

A wife, describing her efforts to assist her husband, said, "We have gained much courage and strength from President Kimball's book, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, and from the beautiful talks that he gives." Many people refer to President Kimball's counsel and writings as the turning point in their lives.

The testimonies often describe the helping power of kind, supportive bishops, branch presidents, family, and friends. One individual, in describing his bishop, said, "The bishop told me that he loved me and that if it were at all possible for him to pick me up in his arms and carry me through this, he would—but, that now I must do my part. His unfeigned love gave me the needed strength to continue on."

These people often speak of long, difficult, uphill struggles which sometimes take years, and of the infinite patience of relatives, friends, and Church leaders. They do not say that the old thoughts never return. But they testify of growing strength as their thoughts and behaviors become righteous. Like all people, they must always be on guard against temptation. "I became deeply involved but I have been totally cured. Over a long period with some success and occasional slips, I have finally become the master. My so-called friends tried to convince me it could not be done, but I know now it can."

A special challenge comes when a wife discovers her husband has been involved in homosexual activities. One wife said, "My first reaction was disbelief. My mind did not comprehend it. The full impact of it came gradually over the next few days and weeks." Many wives experience serious doubts about the future success of their marriage. One said, "I thought maybe I would be better off if I just left, but I couldn't do this, and I found that if I

would search the scriptures, if I would turn to my Heavenly Father, that I could find peace."

Husbands frequently comment on the support of their wives as a key factor in their struggles to repent. One said, "The strongest and best thing of all was my wife, her understanding, her helpfulness, her love for me. It was a hard thing for her, but she stayed there with me and supported me." A wife, in concluding her testimony, gave this counsel, "Support your husband. His soul is of great worth to our Heavenly Father. It can be your attitude that might make the difference between success and failure. It can be done."

The testimonies speak of the ultimate joy in successful, complete repentance. A new spirit comes into the member's life. The Spirit heals wounds and gives new strength. One individual summed up his feelings in this way: "There was no easy way. But through the help of a compassionate and loving bishop, a gifted and deeply spiritual therapist, a dear wife and family, and the Lord's spirit, I have known greater joy than I had ever known before, and gained a victory I once thought impossible for me. Perhaps most importantly I have gained an understanding, at the deepest level, of the importance of the plan of salvation and the redeeming power of the Savior."

Repentant members and those who counsel with them succeed only to the extent that they have the Spirit of the Lord. Those who truly overcome homosexual activity do not seek mild adaptation or limited change. They seek complete change, total repentance and acceptance before God. Even though these high objectives are not easy to attain, they will always be goals of those who follow the Lord's way.

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