



# Why I Turned In My Temple Recommend

by James Patterson | Jan 8, 2016 | decisions, Featured, Homosexuality, Worthiness | 56 comments

## TEMPLE RECOMMEND

THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



First name (print)

Initial

Last name

[Redacted form area]

I turned in my temple recommend this week. Folded it between a white sheet of paper, placed it into a white envelope and sent it to my Stake President.

After months of prayer and consideration and after re-examining the temple recommend questions, I have determined that — according my interpretation of the Church's standards — I am no longer worthy to hold my temple recommend. Not by any sins or misdeeds on my part, but because of my support for same-sex marriage, which the Church openly opposes, and my fervent opposition to recent enacted policies.

The Church has been more explicit as of late in its position toward same-sex marriage and same-sex married couples, going so far as to *de facto* label those who have entered into legal same-sex marriages as apostates. The Church has further mandated that children of same-sex married couples cannot be blessed or baptized into the Church unless they are 18 years old and disavow their parents' marriage.

As has been noted by many around the blogosphere and on social media, the same standard is not applied for people who commit similar sexual "sins" such as cohabitation (in fact, as that article suggests, in some areas co-habiting spouses not only aren't labeled apostates, they can be

baptized as well). The Church also makes same-sex marriage an automatic apostate offense, while crimes like rape and incest are put into the "maybe" column for automatic apostasy.

It is clear that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has made defending so-called "traditional marriage" one of its modern-day cornerstones.

### **The Church has drawn a definitive line in the sand.**

In light of this and the recent policies enacted by the First Presidency, I can no longer in good conscience say that I fully sustain the leaders of the Church, insomuch that I refuse to sustain these recent policies and the reasoning behind them.

I firmly believe that members of the Church can reasonably differ from Church leaders. Indeed, I felt that way when, after experiencing a faith transition that left me with a very different outlook on the Church, I renewed my expired recommend last fall. I felt that my personal differences with how the Brethren interpret Church doctrine and enact Church policy was not to a point that it made me unable to sustain them.

### **That changed in November.**

When the leaders of the Church draw such a hard line in the sand, as they did with these new policies, I feel disingenuous saying outwardly and inwardly that I sustain those same leaders, as that would be tantamount to saying I sustain the line being drawn, which I most certainly do not.

In a recent interview, Elder D. Todd Christofferson explained the reasoning behind the policy toward children of same-sex couples:

"We don't want the child to have to deal with issues that might arise where the parents feel one way and the expectations of the Church are very different."

In our house, we teach that everyone is entitled to the same blessings from our Heavenly Parents, whether they be straight, gay, black, white, man or woman. We teach that our Mother and Father in Heaven will not hold us accountable or treat us differently because we were created in a certain way, and that they are happy when we embrace and celebrate our difference. We teach that they are sad when we feel (or are made to feel) ashamed of our differences. We teach that all of God's children deserve his love and approbation. This includes the opportunity to be united in a loving, committed marriage to a partner of their choosing.

**And so I say to Elder Christofferson and the other leaders: Our family is actively dealing with the issues that are arising where we as parents feel one way and the expectations of our Church are very different. But we're not gay, so our soon-to-be 8-year old is good to go?**

This is shameful and disappointing to me. I cannot and will not support this type of discrimination in my church (cue Edwin Woolley). I feel compelled to speak openly about it.

Sustaining is one thing. Then there's tithing. I came to the conclusion that I personally cannot in good conscience continue to donate money in the form of tithing to an institution that implements policies of blatant discrimination against the LGBTQ community.

Upon further examination of the requirements of holding a temple recommend, it would also be

inaccurate for me to say that I do not affiliate with, agree with or support individuals or groups whose teachings or practices are contrary to those accepted by the Church. With the line in the sand now drawn, and the renewed emphasis on "defending the family," it feel disingenuous to *not* interpret this question as relating to support for same-sex marriage and same-sex married couples.

In fact, I do fully, openly and proudly support many individuals who are gay and married. I also support groups and organizations — such as PFLAG — that not only support, but openly advocate for marriage equality, which is in direct opposition to the Church's teachings.

It is vital for me to note that this decision was not made lightly. It is based on years of personal prayer, praying together as a couple, and personal revelation we have received on this specific matter. I believe, based on the same pattern of revelation received throughout my life and including on my mission that the Lord has revealed to us what He would have us teach to our children in our home. We believe firmly, just as surely as we believe in the Gospel, that the Lord has sanctioned this course for our family.

It has been a difficult spiritual and intellectual journey for me the past several years to get to a point where I felt not only able to, but excited about holding a current temple recommend. To be back at a point where, in order to be honest with myself, I have to give up my temple recommend (and all the social trappings that come with it) is personally devastating to me.

**But in reality, this is not about me.**

My pain and discomfort absolutely pales in comparison to how devastating it has been for many of my brothers and sisters who are gay to see the actions the Church has taken in the last few years, especially the recent policy changes. It pales in relation to the pain this has caused the families of same-sex married couples and their children. It does not compare to the heartache it has caused for gay LDS teenagers and their parents, who wonder what the future now holds for them.

If the Church is drawing a more clear line in the sand – which I believe it is through these changes – this is me simply finding a tangible way to stand on the side of love, support and inclusion toward my LGBTQ brothers and sisters.

1.64k 4 4



You may also like:

49: Sex, History, and Self Delusion: "New" Podcast Themes

The King James Bible in the Book of Moses, Part 3

18: tro övergångar del 1

Uomini e donne come amici

Toivon, että ne Älä kysy minun tehtäväni

"The Greatest Mormon Feminist Love Affair That Ever Existed

Joseph Smith, Richard Dawkins e la lingua della traduzione

Äpfel und Orangen und Ligers ..... OH-MEINE!!!

Share This Post! Because Sharing Really is Caring!



### James Patterson

James Patterson lives with his wife and two children in North Carolina. He makes no apologies for being an avid fan of both Duke basketball and Taylor Swift.

All posts by James Patterson

21 Comments

Sort by Top



Add a comment...



**Loren Evans** · Idaho State University

Seven years ago I took this a step further by resigning from the church. After Prop 8 and seeing the millions of dollars and 1000's of hours spent by the church and members against those not even members of the church, I realized the church had lost it's way. The basic tenets/beliefs of the church no longer seemed to be true and hold value such as the Articles of Faith, canonized scripture from Joseph Smith. Are these points no longer true...

11. We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them w... See More

Like · Reply · 8 · Jan 8, 2016 1:22pm



**Marni Zollinger**

I took this path too, but mostly because I needed to provide a positive role model for our Mormon-raised kids that it is OK to refuse to participate in something that harms people, and the temple rites harm women. I think someone has to break the cycle of abuse and in our family that happened to be me. I have all the same objections the author of the OP does, though, of course.

Like · Reply · 6 · Jan 8, 2016 2:36pm



**Susan Burks West**

If that's the way you feel then you made the right decision. I love the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There have always been lines drawn in the sand I don't believe in free for all but do believe in loving all. I have never felt the church frown on me for loving my gay son and it is my faith in the Gospel that brings me joy to know we will be a eternal family. I feel so much more good comes from holding a Temple recommend than