

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

OFFICE OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84150

January 5, 1982

To: All Stake, Mission, and District Presidents; Bishops; and Branch Presidents

Dear Brethren:

As leaders it is our main purpose to save souls. We must love the people with whom we labor and let them know that we love them and are ready, willing, and anxious to help them wherever possible.

Priesthood leaders responsible for interviewing members as to worthiness to accept positions of responsibility should first discuss with the member what the position entails and what is required of the person accepting the position. The interviewer should then satisfy himself that the person is prepared to meet the following requirements:

Keep the Word of Wisdom strictly; pay a full tithing; attend the appropriate meetings such as sacrament, priesthood meetings, etc.; is honest, honorable, and upright in his dealings; is morally clean, which should include refraining from homosexual or lesbian activities or other unnatural, impure, or unholy practices; is not guilty of spouse or child abuse; and supports the general and local priesthood authorities of the Church.

When interviewing one being considered as a missionary, the interviewer should first make it clear that he is representing the Lord in the interview, and that the answers are to be considered the same as if given to the Lord. The individual should then be asked what he thinks the Lord would require of one to be qualified and worthy to fill a mission as His ambassador. Some of the answers would be:

Keep the Word of Wisdom strictly; pay a full tithe; be honest, true, and upright in all dealings; be morally clean; keep the commandments; and fill the mission the way the Lord would like him to do it.

If he fails to mention any of these things, he might be asked what he thinks the Lord would expect regarding them, as, for example, moral cleanliness. He should understand what being morally clean means, which would include refraining from homosexual or other unnatural, impure, or unholy practices. He should be reminded again that he is being interviewed by a representative of the Lord, and the Lord knows what he is doing and how he is living. He should be asked if he is worthy in every way. It should be explained to him that if he is not, he should qualify himself or he should not go on a mission at this time, but wait until he has repented and is in every way worthy. The Lord cannot accept or bless one who lies to get into the mission field because he is under some pressure by his parents or others, or feels he must go because of the emphasis we place on every young man's filling a mission. Regardless of the situation, let him know that you love him and stand ready to help him in every way possible.

In interviewing one for a temple recommend, the individual being interviewed should be reminded that the Lord has said that no unclean thing should enter His house. The procedure should be the same as for the other interviews.

When interviewing married persons, the one doing the interviewing should scrupulously avoid indelicate inquiries which may be offensive to the sensibilities of those being interviewed.

Married persons should understand that if in their marital relations they are guilty of unnatural, impure, or unholy practices, they should not enter the temple unless and until they repent and discontinue any such practices. Husbands and wives who are aware of these requirements can determine by themselves their standing before the Lord. All of this should be conveyed without having priesthood leaders focus upon intimate matters which are a part of husband and wife relationships. Skillful interviewing and counseling can occur without discussion of clinical details by placing firm responsibility on individual members of the Church to put their lives in order before exercising the privilege of entering a house of the Lord. The First Presidency has interpreted oral sex as constituting an unnatural, impure, or unholy practice. If a person is engaged in a practice which troubles him enough to ask about it, he should discontinue it.

Anyone guilty of verbal or physical child or spouse abuse should not enter the temple.

All should be reminded that the Lord is the judge, and He knows what they are doing. They should be asked if they are worthy and qualified for a temple recommend. If not, advise them to repent and bring their lives in harmony with the teachings of the gospel.

We urge you to review your interviewing practices critically and to conform them where necessary to the suggested procedures outlined above.

At the same time, we should let our people know that we love them and should endeavor to teach and lead them in such a way as to avoid the evils and pitfalls which surround them.

Sincerely yours,

Spencer Kimball

Walter Dillenger

Harold B. Lee

Donald A. Hanks

The First Presidency