

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you have ever been hurt by the way your son or daughter has been treated by other church members or even a pastor, if you have ever been disappointed because our church seems to have no interest in trying to understand the special heartaches and challenges our children face, if you have ever been discouraged by the stereotypes and ignorance sometimes displayed in print or in the pulpit, if you have ever wondered what you could do to bring about change, here are some suggestions.

When someone makes gays or lesbians the butt of jokes or disparaging remarks, you can politely tell them that you will not listen to such unkind words. When someone's comments reveal ignorance about homosexuality (e.g., people choose to be homosexual), you can politely correct them. You can publicly befriend gays and lesbians and their families. You can carefully select books on this topic and give them to your church library. You can write letters - of commendation or concern - to church publications when they mention this topic. When you observe an instance of injustice or unkindness to a gay or lesbian in your church, you can try to talk to those involved and encourage them to reconsider their actions; if they ignore your efforts, you can write to your conference president and express your concern.

Most important of all, you can simply be open about your experience as a parent or friend. The sooner people can "put a face" on the issue of homosexuality, the sooner their prejudice will be overcome and we will see change. Above all, we must always show a spirit of humility and Christian love and tact, remembering that change did not happen overnight for us, and we can't expect others to change instantly either.

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