

**GAY LATTER-DAY SAINT CROSSROADS:  
My Journey, Your Journey, and a  
Scripture-based Path Forward**

By Evan Smith

Edited by Marci McPhee

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~~(This book is available as a free PDF download at [www.gayldscrossroads.org](http://www.gayldscrossroads.org). That site also allows readers to navigate the various chapters and sections of this book online. Readers are invited to freely share this book and that website with others.)~~

[A version published in paperback in June 2021 is available for purchase at \[www.gayldscrossroads.org\]\(http://www.gayldscrossroads.org\) as well \(with all proceeds received by the author being donated to LGBTQ charities\).](#)

“*Crossroads* offers the reader poignant personal stories, asks engaging questions, and shines a much-needed light to help us - as LGBTQ individuals, as families, and as a church - see our way on this pioneer journey toward a better future.”

-- **Carol Lynn Pearson**, author of *Goodbye, I Love You* and *No More Goodbyes: Circling the Wagons Around Our Gay Loved Ones*, as well as *I'll Walk With You* (picture book based on her Primary song by the same name)

“*Crossroads* is a wonderful book from my friend, Evan Smith, an active Latter-day Saint and the father of a gay son, who shares valuable insights into how we can better meet the needs of LGBTQ Latter-day Saints. I encourage parents, local leaders, and our LGBTQ members to read this insightful and thoughtful book to better become the Body of Christ.”

-- **Richard Ostler**, host of the podcast Listen, Learn and Love, founder of listenlearnandlove.org, and author of the book *Listen, Learn and Love: Embracing LGBTQ Latter-day Saints*

“Evan Smith’s book is honest, clear, broad in its reach, and extremely useful. It is very accessible, organized so that the reader can hop around and examine different aspects of the situation depending on the reader’s particular interests. As an active church member, a former bishop, and the father of a gay son, Evan is acutely aware of the enormous hurt of LGBTQ church members and their families. He offers very thoughtful paths forward for changes in church policy and culture that are consistent with the foundational doctrines of the gospel and that would, in fact, expand the church’s good influence. Very good stuff.”

-- **Judy Dushku**, co-founder of the magazine *Exponent II*, former Boston Stake Relief Society President, founder of THRIVE Gulu in Uganda, former professor of government at Suffolk University, and mother of a gay son

“This book is a critically important study of how homosexuality is currently thought of in the LDS Church and how we might see it in a different light so as not to leave our LGBT members without a place in our theology. As the loving father of a gay son, Evan Smith has clearly given this topic significant thought over the years and clearly expresses his experience and thinking in a way that invites us to consider how we might do better as a church.”

-- **Bryce Cook**, author of an influential essay available at [www.mormonlgbtquestions.com](http://www.mormonlgbtquestions.com), founding member of ALL (Arizona LDS LGBT) Friends & Family, and co-director of the annual “ALL Are Alike Unto God” Conference held every April in Mesa, Arizona

“*Gay Latter-day Saint Crossroads* is both highly insightful and inspiring. The book provides excellent clarity of analysis and original insights not previously shared in the relevant literature. Its combination of personal experiences, scriptural analysis, and reference to other works provides a deeply moving and intellectually rigorous picture of LGBTQ and Latter-day Saint experiences and the underlying principles that have, now do, and may yet shape Latter-day Saint approaches to LGBTQ issues. The book will open minds and hearts.”

-- **Truman Whitney**, gay Harvard law student and returned missionary

**[“I really appreciated Evan’s thorough “no stones left unturned” approach to his examination of the past and current relationship between the church and the LGBTQ community. I loved his suggestions for changes, both big and small, and how many could be justified here and now without new revelation. Read \[this book\]. Recommend it to your friends and family...It may change your life. It might help you save someone's life... or even your own.”](#)**

**[-- Valerie Nicole Green \(she/her\), is a co-founder & co-chair of Emmaus LGBTQ Ministry. She is a transgender woman who is active in her church ward in Missouri. Before transitioning, she was married for 34 years and is now widowed. She is the father to five children and grandfather to six grandchildren. Read her full thoughts on \*Crossroads\* at the Emmaus LGBTQ blog: <https://www.emmauslgbtq.org/post/a-journey-leading-to-hope>.](#)**

“*Crossroads* provides valuable insight into the tough challenges our LGBTQ siblings face as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is my hope that many members will read this book so they can better understand the LGBTQ experience and learn to minister to them effectively. I pray that readers will have an open heart and will ponder on ways to help our church be more inclusive. Our LGBTQ members are needed for us to learn how to love as the Savior loves.”

-- **Christina Dee**, moderator of the Mormons Building Bridges Facebook group, and volunteer at the Utah Pride Center, Encircle, and Affirmation

conversion/aversion/reparative therapy meant to repress gay sexual desires, including a program at BYU where gay men, as part of their repentance efforts, were shown same-gender erotic materials while having their genitals shocked to try to teach their bodies to not respond with arousal. In the 2017 McMurrin Lecture at the University of Utah, titled “Science vs. Dogma: Biology Challenges the LDS Paradigm,” historian and scholar Dr. Gregory A. Prince spoke about these treatments. He wryly notes, “Pornographic pictures of nudes—which he was asked to provide— were... I presume not available in the BYU Bookstore.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gssnz1WZ3dU> (this statement is said at the 31:45 minute mark); See also <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/mormon-gay-cures-reparative-therapies-shock-today/story?id=13240700>; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigham\\_Young\\_University\\_LGBT\\_history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigham_Young_University_LGBT_history)).

*[Side note: President Dallin H. Oaks, the apostle who is currently next in line to become the prophet and President of the church, was BYU President from 1971 until 1980. The aforementioned electroshock conversion therapy at BYU started in 1959 and lasted until 1983: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline\\_of\\_LGBT\\_Mormon\\_history\\_in\\_the\\_20th\\_century](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_LGBT_Mormon_history_in_the_20th_century).]*

*Despite many public reports in news articles and books about President Oaks being BYU President at the height of the electroshock therapy program that took place at BYU, President Oaks publicly stated on November 12, 2021, in response to a question by a student at the University of Virginia law school about the BYU electroshock program, that:*

*“Let me say about electric shock treatments at BYU [that] when I became President at BYU, that had been discontinued earlier and never went on under my administration.” (President Dallin H. Oaks, <https://twitter.com/uvalambda/status/1459256897958260741?s=21>, 2021)*

*It is a verifiable fact that the electroshock therapy program took place under President Oaks’ BYU administration. I cannot believe President Oaks was unaware of it, as many public reports show him being very involved in adopting anti-LGBTQ policies at the beginning of his time as university President (<https://www.usgabyu.com/single-post/byuhistory>). And, in any event, his above statement does not leave room for him being unaware: he affirmatively asserts knowledge of the program having been discontinued before his term as President. When reporters asked the church for a reaction to the false statement made by President Oaks, the church refused to admit the statement was incorrect or say anything about whether President Oaks would admit he was wrong. All the church said was that it does not condone conversion therapy (<https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2021/11/16/dallin-oaks-says-shock/>). It is truly disappointing that, when given the opportunity to clarify, President Oaks failed to correct his obviously false statement.]*

Our church wasn’t the only church teaching these harmful ideas or engaging in similar abusive practices. Many other conservative churches were doing likewise. But it is still troubling to me to recognize that the highest leaders in our church (including some who are still alive and leading the church today), whom I consider prophets and apostles, were in charge when such practices occurred.

After getting to know some gay people in San Francisco on my mission, I began to research more about our church’s doctrine on gay sexual orientation – mostly just out of curiosity though. Because of what I perceived as unwanted sexual advances that a gay church member made toward me while I was on my mission, and a few confrontational interactions I had with gay and transgender people as I was proselytizing on the street, I did not have kind feelings toward LGBTQ people generally while I was on my mission. The church resources I was able to find on my mission still described gay sexual orientation (not just behavior) as a sinful choice. So it wasn’t until years later when I moved to Boston in 2003 that my negative thoughts about people being gay began to slowly soften.

treat their gay child the same as their other kids. I have heard many stories where that has happened: parents have lost their temple recommends because they paid for a kid's gay wedding or paid for a trans kid's hormone treatments, etc. Without clarification from the top leadership of the church, different local church leaders will interpret things in vastly different ways, with some pointing to past statements by President Oaks and others as justification for being harsh. We shouldn't leave parents questioning how much they can show their love based on a game of local church leadership roulette (i.e., where it all depends on what your local bishop or stake president thinks).

*[Side note: In December 2019, a very painful story came to light about a mission president revoking the temple recommend of a young full-time missionary, just because he privately disagreed with the church's stance opposing marriage equality, even though he was willing to sustain the church's leaders notwithstanding his personal disagreement with the position. Fortunately, that mission president's decision was reversed (presumably by higher up authorities in the church). But at that point, the young missionary felt so discouraged he decided to go home early from his mission anyway (<https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2019/12/15/can-latter-day-saints/>).]*

### **How did my experiences as a bishop prepare me for my son coming out to me?**

All that being said, overall, I am happy the church has tried to correct many of the harmful teachings of the past. And I will forever be grateful to the individuals in our congregation who came to talk to me about their gay sexual attractions. They helped me change my views and led me to further research in science and in church policy. I am also glad I spent so much time talking about love and acceptance of gay people in that special meeting our congregation held – because it was only a few months later that Wes finally came out to Cheryl and me. I had no idea my own son was among the members of my congregation toward whom I was trying to be especially (and discreetly) sensitive during that meeting. I'm glad Wes ~~heard me talk~~ knew I had talked about love and acceptance of LGBTQ people in a public setting like that - because I know I had said (and know Wes heard me say) unkind things about gay people in the privacy of our own home over the years.

I believe God was preparing me to appropriately and lovingly respond to Wes when he came out privately to Cheryl and me in the fall of 2015. ~~Without hesitation I told him~~ While I regret that I first responded by asking some probing questions to try to “confirm” that Wes was actually gay, I am glad that I also told him without hesitation that I loved him and would support him in any path he chose for his life. In hindsight, I can admit now that I always knew Wes was gay. But I was in involuntary denial. I used to ask Cheryl about once a year or so when he was growing up if she thought Wes was gay. I would see him act a certain way or hear him talk about girls in a way that seemed different to me. Back then, knowing how worried I would have been if I knew Wes was gay, Cheryl would just kindly respond by telling me “No, he's not gay – don't worry about it” (while privately thinking to herself: “I think he actually might be gay”). So I accepted her reassurance and just kept on being oblivious.

Because he is close to his siblings, Wes told them he was gay around the same time he told Cheryl and me. It was good for us all to recognize that his fears about being gay contributed to the depression Wes had been suffering for about 18 months. Cheryl and I tried to help him with his depression to no avail, because he would only partially open up to us, as he was just coming to terms with being gay himself. It finally felt really good for our whole family to be open and honest about everything. And Wes was a bit happier. He was no longer depressed or as scared about being

students. It is clear to me that this opposition to same-sex dating on campus did not come from BYU administration or staff. I think it was directed by the school's governing body, the Church Educational System, whose board is comprised of our church's prophets and apostles.

To help any LGBTQ students who came out as a result of the confusion, and who now feel threatened being on the BYU campus or have now been disowned by their families, a fund was set up to help pay for transfer-related fees. That fund raised over \$24,000 from 624 people within hours after being posted online:

<https://charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/transfer-fund-for-lgbtq-byu-students>.

Several months after that BYU Honor Code debacle, in the aftermath of national and worldwide protests about racial injustice sparked by the killing of George Floyd, an additional update to the church's general handbook was released in December 2020. This update included a new instruction for all church members to reject prejudice "of any kind. This includes prejudice based on race, ethnicity, nationality, tribe, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, religious belief or nonbelief, and sexual orientation" (<https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2020/12/18/lds-handbook-adds-warning/>). The reaction to this handbook update that I observed on social media and online generally, among both prominent church supporters and critics alike, was mostly positive. And I think that's appropriate. This update should rightfully be praised. However, I also think it is important to acknowledge the irony that exists in having the church decry prejudice based on sexual orientation. Because when it comes to marriage, current church teachings are, in fact, prejudicial in that regard: they encourage straight church members to marry in a manner that is consistent with their sexual orientation while simultaneously prohibiting gay church members from doing likewise.

*How do I feel about Elder Holland's 2021 talk at BYU?*

BYU then made headlines again with respect to LGBTQ issues in August 2021 due to a controversial talk given by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland to staff at the university. While it is important to remember his audience was not all church members, his talk was still broadcast worldwide and made available to everyone online. The video and full transcript of his talk can be accessed here:

<https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/elder-jeffrey-r-holland-2021-byu-university-conference>. I want to take some space here to write about Elder Holland's talk because I know thousands of LGBTQ church members and their loved ones felt like his talk represented the greatest betrayal of hope for change in the church since the Exclusion Policy. That is in large part due to a widespread perception, prior to this talk anyway, that Elder Holland was more compassionate than many other apostles. People had hope that if he lives to become the prophet and preside over the church, that positive change might occur on LGBTQ issues.

Following his talk, many opinions were shared across all forms of media to both criticize and defend Elder Holland. The homogeneousness and insensitivity of his talk, contrasted with prior remarks from him praising diversity and compassion, is aptly described in this article by Jana Reiss: <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2021/08/26/jana-riess-lds-apostle/>. As Dr. Reiss states, this talk did "not seem to have been [Elder Holland's] finest hour."

I've read and watched Elder Holland's talk many times. I do not believe he had the intent to cause harm to anyone. I think his aim was to ask BYU staff to not do anything in their roles as employees of BYU that could be construed as supporting concepts that are contrary to church teachings. But his intent is not as important as the effect of his words (ironically, a 2019 article in the magazine *LDS Living* highlighted a prior talk by Elder Holland to show that the effect of our words is more important than our intent: <https://www.ldsliving.com/How-to-Respond-When-We-Offend-the-People-We-Care-About/s/90284>). The indisputable effect of Elder Holland's talk was additional harm caused to LGBTQ church members. I saw thousands of heart-felt comments from them on social media to that effect after he gave his talk. I know therapists in Utah County saw a drastic surge in the number of LGBTQ patients asking to prepare suicide prevention plans. I know of at least one youth suicide attempt that parents report was made in response to Elder Holland's talk. I think those negative effects stem from some elements of Elder Holland's talk that were incredibly insensitive and uncaring, which were ironically exacerbated by his insistence that he and the other apostles are so thoughtful and compassionate toward LGBTQ church members that they have shed many tears over them - and that the apostles have "scar tissue" of their own stemming from criticisms they have received regarding the church's positions on LGBTQ issues.

I believe the most significant negative element of the talk was Elder Holland's use of the violent metaphor of musket fire (which he noted was used before by some of his fellow apostles) in relation to how BYU staff should engage with supporters of LGBTQ equality in the church. Calling for intellectual musket fire against LGBTQ equality seemed to show indifference to the fact that LGBTQ people and their allies have long been the victims of violence (for example, a lesbian couple in Utah was killed by gunfire just days before his talk: <https://www.metroweekly.com/2021/08/lesbian-couple-shot-dead-in-utah-after-alerting-friend-s-to-creepy-guy-near-their-campsite/>). I believe Elder Holland's choice to re-use the musket metaphor was irresponsible. Many religious universities are struggling to know how to lovingly include LGBTQ students. A more responsible way for him to instruct BYU staff, that hopefully wouldn't feel like heresy to him (or like "friendly fire", to use Elder Holland's words) might have been to encourage an increased focus on student well-being instead, as this Christian educator and ethicist encourages other religious universities to do in this article: <https://baptistnews.com/article/for-universities-when-it-comes-to-lgbtq-issues-focus-on-student-well-being/?fbclid=IwAR1YPeEW0YC7L-yIkQzUBmL5NnBb5s4FoT7WbYMcyI8Sdq8oh5rxhBwtkxo#.YWspAqQpDDt>. In short, it would have been wonderful to see Elder Holland prioritize the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ BYU students over the defense of dogma. That would have been more in line with Jesus' example of prioritizing people over rules.

Another harmful element of Elder Holland's talk was his condemnation of the valedictorian speech by Matt Easton at the 2019 BYU graduation ceremony, for the simple fact that Matt mentioned he was gay in his speech. Elder Holland would never say another student was wrong for mentioning their opposite sex spouse or girl/boyfriend in a speech. And he himself has mentioned his own wife in talks at BYU repeatedly. So he has "come out" as straight many times in a context and to an audience that is no different really. If the church truly

believes it's okay to be gay, then gay members should be allowed to talk about being gay just as freely as straight members talk about being straight. Plus, Matt had every word of his valedictorian speech approved beforehand by BYU administration. I believe it was un-Christlike, hypocritical and tactless for Elder Holland to condemn the simple reference to being gay in a valedictorian speech.

All that being said, I want to extend some grace to Elder Holland. He has previously admitted that he and his fellow apostles and prophets are fallible. They can make mistakes. I believe Elder Holland made some horrible mistakes in his talk. When our church leaders make mistakes that hurt other people, one way of sustaining them is for us to help them see how they caused hurt – by speaking up about it. Many of those pointing out where Elder Holland caused pain are also those who love him and want to sustain him in his calling. I hope Elder Holland understands that – and I hope he eventually apologizes for the harmful effects of his talk.

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If you believe all these changes to the church handbook ~~and~~, updates to the BYU Honor Code and delivery of controversial speeches described above ~~sound~~ seem to create a confusing, ~~that's~~ ~~because they are~~ situation for LGBTQ church members, I agree with you. I hope that all this messiness of policy changes and reversals, hypocritical handbook pronouncements, and incredibly insensitive and harmful rhetoric from church leaders are labor pains, meaning that full equality for all God's children is struggling to be born.

While the changes to doctrine that have already occurred to acknowledge that just being gay is not a sin have been helpful for the mental health of many gay church members, those changes do not go far enough. The current message of “It’s okay to be gay, just don’t act on it” is still one that causes tremendous psychological harm for the vast majority of church members. And that message also contradicts Jesus’ teaching that we should avoid not only sinful acts, but also the desires for those acts (i.e., we should avoid lust in addition to adultery and unhealthy anger in addition to murder – see Matthew 5:21-30). Saying there is nothing wrong with being gay as long as you aren’t in a gay relationship makes no more sense than saying “it’s okay to feel greedy as long as you don’t steal” (<https://wheatandtares.org/2021/02/14/it-is-ok-to-be-gay-just-dont/> ). And that’s just one example where scripture contradicts church policy. Another one is God’s observation in the garden of Eden, at the very beginning of earth’s history: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). Yet modern-day church policy teaches that it \*is\* good to be alone if you’re queer. So further doctrinal change needs to happen in the church not only because the harmful fruit of psychological trauma should not be attributed to Christ, but also because current church doctrine actually contradicts Christ’s teachings and other scriptures.

However, many church members just don’t see how it’s even possible for church doctrine to change. So I would like to discuss in this chapter some common-sense ideas about how our doctrine could naturally evolve to reflect a more logical and, more importantly, a more kind, inclusive, and loving theology. I can’t ignore the call to hope that these ideas scream out to me.

*[Side note: Bryce Cook and Dr. Taylor Petrey are among many Latter-day Saint thinkers who have written excellent (and faithful) notions about the conceptual possibilities for doctrinal evolution. Some of my thoughts in multiple chapters of this book come from their articles:*

*Mormon LGBT Questions: <https://mormonlgbtquestions.com/>*

*Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology:*

*[https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V44N04\\_420.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V44N04_420.pdf) ]*

### **Do the scriptures prohibit doctrinal marriage equality?**

The first place to start for the “change-is-impossible” camp is the scriptures that seem to prohibit gay sexual behavior. But all such scriptures can very easily be interpreted as just prohibiting selfishness, rape, pederasty/pedophilia, sex slavery, fornication, and/or prostitution, not marriage to someone of the same gender.

*[Side note: Dr. Robert K. Gnuse has explained that there are seven specific passages often cited to condemn gay sexual behavior: Noah and Ham (Genesis 9:20–27), Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1–11), Levitical laws condemning same-sex relationships (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13), two words in two New Testament vice lists (1 Corinthians 6:9–10; 1 Timothy 1:10), and Paul’s letter to the Romans (Romans 1:26–27). But, when the original language of those passages and the historical context in which they were written are examined, it can clearly be seen that those passages do not refer to gay relationships between two free, adult, and loving individuals. Rather, they describe rape or attempted rape (Genesis 9:20–27, 19:1–11), cultic prostitution (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13), male prostitution and pederasty (1 Corinthians 6:9–10; 1 Timothy 1:10), and the Isis cult in Rome (Romans 1:26–27) (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0146107915577097>). Dr. Gnuse’s biography of professional credentials and training is impressive: <http://cas.loyno.edu/religious-studies/bios/robert-k-gnuse-phd.>]*

How could ancient writers of the scriptures even be thinking about monogamous gay marriage



considered sinful, local leaders have more discretion about whether or not a member in a gay marriage should lose their membership in the church (see Section 32.6.2 here: [https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/32-repentance-and-membership-councils?lang=eng#title\\_number14](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/32-repentance-and-membership-councils?lang=eng#title_number14)).

While I concede it is possible that some local church leaders may now feel more enabled to NOT to take action to revoke the church membership of someone who has entered into a gay marriage, I am doubtful many local leaders will actually follow that path. I think we may occasionally see such a lack of action to withdraw church membership in cases where the gay person simply stops coming to church anyway. In fact, many inactive straight members of the church engage in conduct (such as living with lovers outside of marriage) that can technically put their church membership in jeopardy. But local leaders do not always seek them out to take action against them (i.e., revoke their church membership) if such church members have simply stopped attending church. So I can see something similar happening (or, better said, NOT happening) with inactive church members who have entered into gay marriages as well. Since the February 2020 handbook update, local leaders may feel like they have permission to leave such people alone, rather than seeking them out to commence withdrawing their church membership.

That being said, until doctrinal change occurs, I **do not** think it **likely that any will remain exceptionally rare for a** local leader **will to** allow a person who is attending church and who enters into a gay marriage, to continue to attend church without having their membership withdrawn or restricted in some way – because even under the updated General Handbook, gay marriage is still defined as sexual immorality for which a membership council may be “necessary” (see Section 38.6.5 here:

[https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/38-church-policies-and-guidelines?lang=eng#title\\_number102](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/38-church-policies-and-guidelines?lang=eng#title_number102)). As evidence of that approach by local leaders sadly being a common reality, I know of many married gay couples who were attending church and had their church memberships involuntarily withdrawn in 2021.

Another level of compromise is this: in addition to allowing married gay couples to simply retain church membership as discussed above, perhaps gay couples could marry in the temple for “time only” (i.e., just for this life), rather than for “time and all eternity.” Temple marriage for “time only” **is currently was** allowed **in a until May 2021 in the** situation where a man and a woman **are were** each already sealed to a spouse who **is deceased** ([https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/27-temple-ordinances-for-the-living?lang=eng#title\\_number32](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/27-temple-ordinances-for-the-living?lang=eng#title_number32) **was deceased** (<https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/first-presidency-discontinues-time-only-marriages-in-the-temple>). In that context, a church-approved marriage that **will could** never lead to a temple sealing **is was** allowed – and **can could** be entered into within the walls of a sacred temple. I would weep with joy to see a change like that in the context of gay marriage. Even if gay couples couldn’t be married for eternity under current doctrine, it would still be a wonderful progression to see the church formally condone such marriages as healthy relationships for gay people in this life – and to allow those marriages be performed in the temple.

Until our highest church leaders similarly apologize on behalf of the institutional church for the non-scriptural teachings that treat gay church members differently than straight church members, the church will always be condoning a form of conversion therapy – because its teachings will continue to encourage perpetual suppression of innate gay sexual desires. Important research has shown that simple informal counseling by religious leaders (like bishops) that encourages never-ending suppression of in-born gay sexual desires (i.e., not even allowing them to be expressed in marriage), can have similar traumatic effects to those seen from more formal conversion therapy programs:

“Conversion practices can include formal programs or therapies in both religious and healthcare environments. However, they more often involve informal processes, including pastoral care, interactions with religious or community leaders, and spiritual or cultural rituals.”

(<https://theconversation.com/new-research-documents-the-severity-of-lgbtqa-conversion-practices-and-why-faith-matters-in-recovery-154740?fbclid=IwAR0mgnAZbobJJEZTFkIvXDrnLKbGviRRrx4ueP0ERL7oIyi268SbQrDg44>).

Recovering from the trauma caused by conversion therapy is incredibly hard, regardless of whether it is experienced through a formal abusive program or through informal religious counseling with messages that gay sexual desires should always be suppressed (like the message the church encourages bishops and stake presidents to convey to gay church members). But that same research cited above shows that recovery is most effective when conversion therapy victims are not required to ignore their religious faith in order to stop stifling their sexuality. So the only way the church can stop practicing conversion therapy, and help its gay members recover from it, is to change its teachings to allow gay couples to be married and remain in full fellowship in the church.

### *Are church teachings contributing to more suicides?*

Is there a need for doctrinal change in the church to prevent parents and therapists from contributing, intentionally or unintentionally, to kids feeling depressed about their sexuality? That seems like an effective solution to me, but I leave that up to God and the prophets and apostles to answer. However, in the meantime, I think there is a pressing need to do something now to change how lonely and unwanted most LGBTQ youth in the church feel.

Because Utah has a higher suicide rate than the national average, with suicide being the leading cause of death among Utah youth, and with LGBTQ individuals having a higher suicide rate in general, a debate has been ongoing in recent years about the causality between suicide and church teachings regarding gay sexual orientation

(<https://www.kuer.org/post/can-lds-church-be-blamed-utah-s-lgbt-suicides#stream/0>;

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide\\_among\\_LGBT\\_youth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_among_LGBT_youth)). Some strongly believe that church teachings play a role in high suicide rates in states with high Latter-day Saint populations

(<https://www.mrm.org/suicide-and-mormonism>).

What the Heck is Traditional Marriage? (July 2013)  
–<http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/what-the-heck-is-traditional-marriage/>  
Defending Marriage (May 2013) –  
<http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/defending-marriage/>  
Why Does the Lord Allow His Covenant People to Err? (April 2013)  
–<http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/why-does-the-lord-allow-his-covenant-people-to-err/>  
The Catalyst (January 2013) – <http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/the-catalyst/>  
The Victoria Theater (June 2013) –  
<http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/the-victoria-theater/>  
Of Pain and the Journey (September 2013) –  
<http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/of-pain-and-the-journey/>  
I See the Image of Christ in My Gay Son, Lord (August 2012)  
–<http://mitchmayne.blogspot.com/2012/08/a-fathers-poem-to-his-gay-son-from.html>

It is odd that the author of the Meridian article cites his own study, but doesn't source his study. The LDS Church's theology and culture harm LGBTQ youth and members. It may not harm every LDS/LGBTQ member, but it harms enough of them to be demonstrable. I think I have provided ample sources.”

(<https://www.facebook.com/thomas.p.montgomery/posts/10218664665300613>)

On the topic of LGBTQ Latter-day Saint suicide, I also want to highlight the peer-reviewed August 2020 study conducted by James McGraw at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) and his colleagues. They found that lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) Utahns are over 4.5 times more likely to have recently thought about suicide/self-harm and nearly 10 times as likely to have attempted suicide in their lifetimes, when compared to heterosexual Utahns. What's even more alarming is that the rates of suicidal thinking and suicide attempts among LGB Utahns was around three times higher than the rates among LGB non-Utahns living in the U.S., Canada and Europe. The rates of suicidal thinking and suicide attempts among heterosexuals in and out of Utah was not found to be nearly as divergent

([https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zNs8K5nNPw4SQxPch0uc\\_PFH0f0Q3kIq/view?usp=drivesdk](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zNs8K5nNPw4SQxPch0uc_PFH0f0Q3kIq/view?usp=drivesdk);  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13811118.2020.1806159> ).

Some people have postulated that Utah's high altitude is a contributing factor to the high suicide rate among LGBTQ people. But I think the fact that the rates for straight folks in and out of Utah were not as different as the rates for LGB folks in and out of Utah suggests that Utah's high altitude is not the primary reason LGB Utahns are so much more prone to suicide. It's important to note that the BGSU study does not propose a reason for its findings or address the influence of religious beliefs at all. But I think when its findings are read in conjunction with those of the previously referenced study by Brian Simmons at the University of Georgia regarding the traumatic effects of some church teachings on LGBTQ Latter-day Saints, it's not difficult to identify a distinguishing factor about Utah that could be making it harder for LGB people who live there to avoid suicidal thoughts.

**[In May 2021, James McGraw, Tyler Lefevor and Samuel Skidmore published a research article that actually identified four things that were strongly related to suicide ideation among sexual minority current and former Latter-day Saints:](#)**

- 1) interpersonal struggles and conflict around their faith;
- 2) internalized negative beliefs about experiencing same-sex attraction;
- 3) hiding experiences of same-sex attraction; and
- 4) using faith to cope with difficult emotions.

They also found three things that protected against suicide ideation among both current and former sexual minority Latter-day Saints:

- 1) resolving conflict between religious and sexual identities;
- 2) support from family; and
- 3) support from friends.

(<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jcop.22591?fbclid=IwAR0DFVKAaBeZoVDDruuSg77KQC1loT3pJTEg2AG9BnaZA2LvKluigQuryFU>).

Those researchers and other researchers at BYU also published in 2021 two separate studies that each found that LGBTQ Latter-day Saints had lower suicide risk than those of other faiths or no faith

([https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2021/10/13/22672169/are-latter-day-saint-lgbtq-youths-less-suicidal-a-new-study-asks-the-question-mormon?fbclid=IwAR0\\_dXeYnHL0ad5SS7mcApB2buN7PdTkEcNwZJAjgIk\\_buu9mYV4hs4Xomk](https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2021/10/13/22672169/are-latter-day-saint-lgbtq-youths-less-suicidal-a-new-study-asks-the-question-mormon?fbclid=IwAR0_dXeYnHL0ad5SS7mcApB2buN7PdTkEcNwZJAjgIk_buu9mYV4hs4Xomk)). While that finding may at first seem to contradict the many studies that show the harmful effects of church teachings on LGBTQ mental health, it is possible to reconcile that finding by noting that: (i) LGBTQ Latter-day Saints may be less likely, because of the church's dietary/health code called the Word of Wisdom, to turn to harmful (sometimes fatal) substances to try to cope with the traumatic effects of church teachings about marriage, gender and sexuality; and (ii) more significantly, survivorship bias is likely a factor in the reported outcomes of those two studies – namely, it is possible a significant portion of people who were Latter-day Saints, but who leave the church because they are suicidal/depressed, were not included among those LGBTQ Latter-day Saints who reported feeling positive effects relating to their involvement with the church. If only the small percentage of LGBTQ church members who stay in the church and don't experience as much harm from it are counted as LGBTQ Latter-day Saints, then of course a finding that shows a positive correlation with the church will result.

*[Side note: In August 2020, James McGraw and his colleagues also released a compilation of all the published and non-published empirical research on Latter-day Saint LGBTQ psychological and interpersonal functioning and synthesized the results together. This is a useful reference to see all the research that has been conducted on the topic (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1550428X.2020.1800545?journalCode=wgfs20>; <https://drive.google.com/file/d/18nKkeahLsuNXA56lYoy95rfLPtzVG0aB/view?usp=drivesdk> ).<sup>P</sup>*

Also, mental health researcher, Kate Toronto, has found that simply ignoring the possible choices that face LGBTQ Latter-day Saints is a better coping mechanism than trying to deal with the dissonance of their sexual and spiritual identities by going to therapy, talking to family and friends, getting information, making plans for the future, and praying. In particular, individuals who employed disengagement coping strategies like drugs, alcohol, and pretending the dissonance didn't exist, had better life outcomes. In other words, thinking about the lack of options is worse than just ignoring the seriousness of the conflict and trying to escape it somehow. Ms. Toronto concludes that if engagement coping mechanisms are negatively correlated with life outcomes, something is broken – and not with the individuals themselves, but with the environment and community context

[https://katetoronto.blogspot.com/2019/05/surprising-results-from-lgbtq-research.html?m=1&fbclid=IwAR3F0B\\_BkQHlw\\_XP8LOoiMCjzyn4GmVnK7Mp8W6b3pJQXfdXfK1F63nAOY.](https://katetoronto.blogspot.com/2019/05/surprising-results-from-lgbtq-research.html?m=1&fbclid=IwAR3F0B_BkQHlw_XP8LOoiMCjzyn4GmVnK7Mp8W6b3pJQXfdXfK1F63nAOY.)

Notwithstanding the debate over the degree of causality in LGBTQ suicides, research has at the very least shown that church teachings that gay sexual orientation will be “cured” in the afterlife have led many gay Latter-day Saints to engage in suicidal ideation or attempt or die by suicide ([https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT\\_Mormon\\_suicides](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_Mormon_suicides)). Many LGBTQ individuals have said that statements like the following ones made by General Authorities contribute to such thoughts:

“The good news for somebody who is struggling with same-gender attraction is this: 1) It is that **‘I’m not stuck with it forever.’ It’s just now.** Admittedly, for each one of us, it’s hard to look beyond the ‘now’ sometimes. But nonetheless, if you see mortality as now, it’s only during this season. 2) If I can keep myself worthy here, if I can be true to gospel commandments, if I can keep covenants that I have made, the blessings of exaltation and eternal life that Heavenly Father holds out to all of His children apply to me.” (Lance B. Wickman, Seventy, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/interview-oaks-wickman-same-gender-attraction,2006>)

**“If you are faithful, on resurrection morning—and maybe even before then—you will rise with normal attractions for the opposite sex.** Some of you may wonder if that doctrine is too good to be true. But Elder Dallin H. Oaks has said it **MUST** be true, because ‘there is no fullness of joy in the next life without a family unit, including a husband and wife, and posterity.’ And ‘men (and women) are that they might have joy.’” (Bruce C. Hafen, General Authority Seventy, 2009, [https://religion.wikia.org/wiki/Bruce\\_C.\\_Hafen](https://religion.wikia.org/wiki/Bruce_C._Hafen); <https://www.mormondialogue.org/topic/59228-church-making-further-movements-toward-respect-for-gay-members/page/2/?tab=comments>)

Cheryl and I have personally communicated with gay church members who have said they felt like Latter-day Saint therapists were not able to sufficiently invalidate their thoughts that it would be easier for them if they committed suicide (so God could switch their sexuality) than it would be to live a celibate life. There are thousands of stories of individuals who have felt harmed from a mental health perspective because of the church’s teachings about gay sexual orientation (<https://www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2019/11/02/justin-utley-darkness-is/>).

Notwithstanding the documented harm that can be caused to a gay person’s mental health by church teachings and their continued church activity, I regrettably don’t think concerns over such hurt will ever be the primary cause for any change in church doctrine – because church leaders instinctively place more emphasis on future eternal blessings than they do on relieving mortal suffering. If not essentially compelled to change by outside forces, I suspect the church will always take the view that any suffering experienced by LGBTQ individuals who try to live according to church standards here in mortality will be worth the pain they endure, from an eternal perspective.

### ***Will outside forces again influence doctrinal change?***

That pattern of only making a change to relieve mortal suffering if forced to do so is what some people argue occurred in the contexts of both the church’s abandonment of polygamy and the

occurred in certain areas of study at BYU:

<https://www.sltrib.com/news/education/2019/11/11/two-science-societies/>). As BYU continues to prohibit gay dating on campus, academic professionals predict that the university and its students will become more and more alienated from the associations that they have traditionally relied upon for success in many areas. (An excellent discussion of this possibility is included in a podcast interview given by Michael Austin, BYU alumnus and executive vice president for academic affairs at the University of Evansville, which is a Methodist school in Indiana: <https://soundcloud.com/mormonland/college-administrator-examines-byus-honor-code-reversal-on-lgbtq-issues-episode-129>).

*[Side note: In January 2020, news outlets reported that BYU gave in to external pressure to allow same-sex couples to participate in a championship ballroom dancing competition. “To host the coveted showcase, which it has every year since at least 1997, BYU was required to lift its ban keeping same-sex couples from competing.”*  
<https://www.sltrib.com/news/education/2020/01/21/first-time-ever-byu-will/>.]

**[Outside legal pressure on BYU increased in 2021 when a group of 33 LGBTQ college students from 25 religious universities \(including BYU\) filed a class-action lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education, asserting that the religious exemption their schools rely on to treat LGBTQ students differently than non-LGBTQ students is unconstitutional and that it allows the Department of Education to breach its duty to LGBTQ students at religious colleges and universities “where discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is codified in campus policies and openly practiced”](https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/lgbtq-students-file-class-action-lawsuit-against-department-education-n1262526)**

**[\(https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/lgbtq-students-file-class-action-lawsuit-against-department-education-n1262526\)](https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/lgbtq-students-file-class-action-lawsuit-against-department-education-n1262526)**. Each of the named schools receives grants and other subsidies from the federal government to operate various academic and tuition assistance programs. The lawsuit asserts that the federal government should not be allowed to give taxpayer monies to those religious universities due to the discriminatory policies in place at the schools. While I think this case is a longshot to win, I sincerely hope this case at least helps increase awareness of how the government funds religious universities whose policies are harming LGBTQ students.

**And** **In any event**, if BYU ever truly does permit gay dating among its students, many believe it is only a matter of time before the injustice of seeing happy gay couples at BYU not be allowed to get married results in the church modifying its prohibition on gay marriage.

In saying all that, I feel it important to reiterate that I don’t mean to imply that divine revelation would not be involved in such a process as well. In fact, I believe divine revelation was involved in the changes that occurred with respect to both polygamy and Black people. Just because a prophet is compelled by outside forces to pray harder or be more open-minded about a particular issue than he ever has before, doesn’t mean the resulting revelation is not genuinely from God.

I think most, if not all, of the revelations prophets receive come as a result of petitioning God about a mortal situation that is causing angst. Joseph Smith received the church’s revelation about health practices because he felt compelled to pray after his wife, Emma, complained about cleaning up spitting tobacco following church meetings

(<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-stories/chapter-31-the-word-of-wisdom-february-1833>). Moses was compelled to pray because of a political hardship (slavery)

## FAVORITE CHURCH-RELATED LGBTQ AND ALLY RESOURCES

### Essays and Books:

- Mormon LGBT Questions – Essay by Bryce Cook – <https://mormonlgbtquestions.com/>
- Faith, Hope, Charity and My Son’s Marriage — Essay by Jack Hadley — <https://www.jackhadley.com/faith-hope-charity-and-my-sons-marriage/>
- [Queer Mormon Theology: An Introduction - Book by Blaire Ostler - https://www.amazon.com/Queer-Mormon-Theology-Blaire-Ostler/dp/1948218410](https://www.amazon.com/Queer-Mormon-Theology-Blaire-Ostler/dp/1948218410)
- *Listen, Learn and Love – Embracing LGBTQ Latter-day Saints* – Book by Richard Ostler – <https://www.amazon.com/Listen-Learn-Love-Embracing-Latter-day/dp/1462135773>
- *Goodbye I Love You* – Book by Carol Lynn Pearson - <https://www.amazon.com/Goodbye-Love-Carol-Lynn-Pearson/dp/1555179843>
- *No More Goodbyes: Circling the Wagons around our Gay Loved Ones* – Book by Carol Lynn Pearson - <https://www.amazon.com/No-More-Goodbyes-Circling-Wagons/dp/0963885243>
- *Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology* – Essay by Taylor Petrey – [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V44N04\\_420.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V44N04_420.pdf)
- *Tabernacles of Clay – Sexuality and Gender in Modern Mormonism* – Book by Taylor Petrey - <https://www.amazon.com/Tabernacles-Clay-Sexuality-Gender-Mormonism/dp/1469656213>
- *Gay Rights and the Mormon Church* – Book by Gregory A. Prince – <https://uofupress.lib.utah.edu/gay-rights-and-the-mormon-church/>

### Websites, Podcasts and Blogs:

- <https://affirmation.org> – **Affirmation** - A non-profit organization working to connect, uplift, and empower lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Mormons and their allies around the world from all along the spectrums of sexual orientation, gender identity, faith, and involvement with the church.
- <https://beyondtheblockpodcast.com> – **Beyond the Block** – Weekly podcast where James C. Jones and Derek Knox, a Black life-long member and queer convert, respectively, discuss the scriptures as staunch advocates for the theology and harsh critics of the culture of the church, maintaining that the inner thrust for justice, love, and salvation for all people, regardless of color, sex, orientation, and other identities is not only consistent with the message of Christ, but it *\*is\** the message of Christ.
- <http://www.blaireostler.com/> – **Blaire Ostler** is a philosopher who is specialized in queer studies, and is a leading voice at the intersection of queer, Mormon, and transhumanist thought.
- <https://encircletogether.org> – **Encircle** seeks to deepen and enrich the conversation among communities of faith and LGBTQ+ people. By teaching individuals to love themselves and empowering families, Encircle helps cultivate an environment where LGBTQ+ individuals can thrive.
- <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/human-stories-with-jill-hazard-rowe/id1468623842> – **Human Stories Podcast** where Jill Hazard Rowe goes in depth with some of today's most inspiring and touching LGBTQ stories.
- <https://www.navigatingdiscipleship.com/resources/lgbtq-understanding-doctrine-and-science/> - **Caleb Jones maintains a website with content about navigating discipleship. The page titled “LGBTQ Understanding: Doctrine and Science” provides excellent presentations that walk through the progress that has been made in societal, scientific and doctrinal understandings of LGBTQ issues.**

- <https://lattergaystories.org> – **Latter Gay Stories** - A podcast and resource center with a simple and organized approach to understanding the intersection of sexuality and reality. An amazing collection of all quotes on LGBTQ matters from church General Authorities since the time of Joseph Smith was compiled by Kyle Ashworth, who manages Latter-Gay Stories. It can be a triggering history to read, but it is crucial to understanding church history and efforts to avoid the mistakes of the past: <https://lattergaystories.org/record/>.
- <https://listenlearnandlove.org> – **Listen, Learn & Love** - Resource site and podcast hosted by Richard Ostler. Fully committed to the success of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Not proposing or advocating for changes in the church’s policies or doctrines. But committed to facilitating meaningful, loving, and productive dialogue. LGBTQ guests are frequently interviewed on the podcast.
- <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/love-is-spoken-queer/id1491809605> - **Love is Spoken Queer Podcast** - Join Dustin Larsen (an active gay church member), Hayden Davis, René Hernandez and their guests each week as they discuss a new gospel topic through a queer perspective.
- <https://mormonsbuildingbridges.org> – **Mormons Building Bridges** - The MBB ministry is about making every congregation welcoming to LGBTQIA+ people. The MBB community does not center itself around a single leader or organizational body; instead MBB is a movement centered around a sense of ministry and mission. It is not a formal organization and there are no formal members. The MBB ministry embraces and amplifies all thoughtful innovation and collaboration that helps LGBTQIA+ people to thrive.
- <https://thepeculiar.org> – **Peculiar** - Resource and networking to inspire and empower parents and families to unconditionally love and embrace their LGBTQ+ children.
- <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/questions-from-the-closet/id1504990147> - **Questions from the Closet** – Podcast where two gay, active Latter-day Saints, Charlie Bird and Ben Schilaty, are joined each week by a guest to discuss common questions from LGBTQ/SSA members of the church. Also check out Ben’s **personal blog for some great thoughts: <http://benschilaty.blogspot.com/>; and also Charlie’s book: <https://www.amazon.com/Without-Mask-Coming-Into-Light/dp/1629727849> **book** ([https://deseretbook.com/p/walk-in-my-shoes-questions-im-often-asked-as-a-gay-latterday-saint?variant\\_id=190022-paperback](https://deseretbook.com/p/walk-in-my-shoes-questions-im-often-asked-as-a-gay-latterday-saint?variant_id=190022-paperback)) and Charlie’s book ([https://deseretbook.com/p/without-the-mask-coming-out-and-coming-into-gods-light-ppr?variant\\_id=186572-paperback](https://deseretbook.com/p/without-the-mask-coming-out-and-coming-into-gods-light-ppr?variant_id=186572-paperback)).**



## Anti-LGBTQ church teachings/practices

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/mormon-gay-cures-reparative-therapies-shock-today/story?id=13240700">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/mormon-gay-cures-reparative-therapies-shock-today/story?id=13240700</a> <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigham_Young_University_LGBT_history">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigham_Young_University_LGBT_history</a>	Church-sanctioned genital electroshock conversion therapy took place at BYU	Chapter 3
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_LGBT_Mormon_history_in_the_20th_century">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_LGBT_Mormon_history_in_the_20th_century</a>	Timeline that shows electroshock conversion therapy was going on during the entire duration of President Dallin H. Oaks serving as president of BYU.	Chapter 3
<a href="https://twitter.com/uvalambda/status/1459256897958260741?s=21">https://twitter.com/uvalambda/status/1459256897958260741?s=21</a>	<b><u>Video of President Dallin H. Oaks incorrectly asserting, on November 12, 2021, that “electric shock treatments at BYU had been discontinued [before he became BYU President] and never went on under [his administration].”</u></b>	<b><u>Chapter 3</u></b>
<a href="https://www.usgabyu.com/single-post/byuhistory">https://www.usgabyu.com/single-post/byuhistory</a>	<b><u>History of LGBTQ issues at BYU that shows President Dallin H. Oaks, at the start of his time as President of BYU, instituted a policy to purge gay students from the university and oversaw the electroshock conversion therapy research at the school.</u></b>	<b><u>Chapter 3</u></b>
<a href="https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2021/11/16/dallin-oaks-says-shock/">https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2021/11/16/dallin-oaks-says-shock/</a>	<b><u>News article that reports President Oaks, when given the opportunity to clarify, failed to correct his obviously false statement about electroshock therapy not occurring under his administration as BYU President.</u></b>	<b><u>Chapter 3</u></b>
<a href="https://web.archive.org/web/20120724194315/http://www.evergreeninternational.org/morrison.htm">https://web.archive.org/web/20120724194315/http://www.evergreeninternational.org/morrison.htm</a>	Elder Alexander B. Morrison said church members should avoid gay people and their allies like the plague.	Chapter 3
<a href="https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/interview-oaks-wickman-same-gender-attraction">https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/interview-oaks-wickman-same-gender-attraction</a>	Elder Dallin H. Oaks said parents might be justified in not letting their adult gay children meet their friends or participate in family events in the same way as their other children.	Chapter 3
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/10/truth-and-the-plan">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/10/truth-and-the-plan</a>	Elder Dallin H. Oaks said Satan “seeks to confuse gender [and] distort marriage.”	Chapter 3
<a href="https://devotional.byuh.edu/node/1788">https://devotional.byuh.edu/node/1788;</a> <a href="https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2019/06/20/this-week-mormon-land/">https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2019/06/20/this-week-mormon-land/</a>	Elder Dallin H. Oaks said in 2019 that LGBTQ “lifestyles and values” are part of “a culture of evil and personal wickedness.”	Chapter 3
<a href="http://www.blaireostler.com/journal/2019/9/19/celestial-genocide">http://www.blaireostler.com/journal/2019/9/19/celestial-genocide.</a>	The idea that LGBTQ identity will be completely wiped out in heaven has been powerfully described as genocide by writer Blaire Ostler.	Chapter 4
<a href="https://blakeclan.org/jon/to-the-one/">https://blakeclan.org/jon/to-the-one/</a>	Church pamphlet <i>To The One</i> in which Elder Boyd K. Packer says, “some forms of these treatments [reparative therapy] are of substantial help in about 25 percent of the cases” without offering any authority for this statistic.	Chapter 10

## Black African race-based priesthood/temple ban

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
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<a href="https://charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/transfer-fund-for-lgbtq-byu-students">https://charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/transfer-fund-for-lgbtq-byu-students</a>	GoFundMe campaign to help gay BYU students pay to transfer to different schools.	Chapter 3
<a href="https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2019/12/15/can-latter-day-saints/">https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2019/12/15/can-latter-day-saints/</a>	News article about a young missionary (who has a lesbian mom) who got his temple recommend taken away for privately supporting marriage equality.	Chapter 3
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/38-church-policies-and-guidelines?lang=eng#title_number3">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/38-church-policies-and-guidelines?lang=eng#title_number3</a>	Church handbook section (released in December 2019) that says sexual orientation should not be discussed in church “in a way” that detracts from a focus on the Savior.	Chapter 3
<a href="https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2020/12/18/lds-handbook-adds-warning/">https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2020/12/18/lds-handbook-adds-warning/</a>	<u>News article about a December 2020 update to the church’s General Handbook of instructions that asks all church members to reject prejudice “of any kind”, including (ironically) prejudice based on sexual orientation.</u>	<u>Chapter 3</u>
<a href="https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/elder-jeffrey-r-holland-2021-byu-university-conference">https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/elder-jeffrey-r-holland-2021-byu-university-conference</a>	<u>Video and full transcript of a controversial talk given by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland at BYU in August 2021.</u>	<u>Chapter 3</u>
<a href="https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2021/08/26/jana-riess-lds-apostle/">https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2021/08/26/jana-riess-lds-apostle/</a>	<u>Article discussing the homogeneousness and insensitivity of the August 2021 talk given by Elder Holland at BYU, contrasted with prior remarks from him praising diversity and compassion, is aptly described in this article.</u>	<u>Chapter 3</u>
<a href="https://www.ldsiving.com/How-to-Respond-When-We-Offend-the-People-We-Care-About/s/90284">https://www.ldsiving.com/How-to-Respond-When-We-Offend-the-People-We-Care-About/s/90284</a>	<u>2019 article in the magazine <i>LDS Living</i> that highlighted a prior talk by Elder Holland to (ironically now) show that the effect of our words is more important than our intent.</u>	<u>Chapter 3</u>
<a href="https://baptistnews.com/article/for-universities-when-it-comes-to-lgbtq-issues-focus-on-student-well-being/?fbclid=IwAR1YPeEW0YC7L-yIkQzUBmL5NnBb5s4FoT7WbYMcYI8Sdq8oh5rxhBwtkxo#.YWspAqQpDDt">https://baptistnews.com/article/for-universities-when-it-comes-to-lgbtq-issues-focus-on-student-well-being/?fbclid=IwAR1YPeEW0YC7L-yIkQzUBmL5NnBb5s4FoT7WbYMcYI8Sdq8oh5rxhBwtkxo#.YWspAqQpDDt</a>	<u>Article where a Christian educator and ethicist encourages religious universities to focus on student well-being instead of religious dogma that is harmful to LGBTQ students.</u>	<u>Chapter 3</u>
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/38-church-policies-and-guidelines?lang=eng#title_number102">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/38-church-policies-and-guidelines?lang=eng#title_number102</a> (see Section 38.6.5)	Church updated General Handbook of instructions says gay marriage is sexual immorality for which a membership council may be “necessary.”	Chapter 6
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/27-temple-ordinances-for-the-living?lang=eng#title_number32">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/27-temple-ordinances-for-the-living?lang=eng#title_number32</a> <a href="https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/first-presidency-discontinues-time-only-marriages-in-the-temple">https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/first-presidency-discontinues-time-only-marriages-in-the-temple</a>	Temple marriage for “time only” <del>is currently</del> <u>was</u> allowed <del>in a</del> <u>until May 2021 in the</u> situation where a man and a woman <del>are</del> <u>were</u> each already sealed to a spouse who <del>is</del> <u>was</u> deceased.	Chapter 6
<a href="https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=2301174&amp;itype=CMSID">https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=2301174&amp;itype=CMSID</a>	Elder D. Todd Christofferson said church members can support gay marriage publicly, march in pride parades, and belong to gay-friendly organizations without losing their temple recommends.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2019/10/22/jana-riess-new-lds-temple/">https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2019/10/22/jana-riess-new-lds-temple/</a>	Article about how LGBTQ-friendly church members are worried about how local and regional church leaders will apply the new wording of temple recommend questions.	Chapter 8

019/12/6/20995260/mormon-utah-chris-stewart-latter-day-saint-leaders-lgbtq-lds-civil-rights-gay-religious-freedom	continue to be allowed to not employ people in gay marriages.	
<a href="https://bycommonconsent.com/2016/07/11/stop-skipping-the-establishment-clause/">https://bycommonconsent.com/2016/07/11/stop-skipping-the-establishment-clause/</a>	Elder Charles W. Penrose said “Anything that persons profess to do under the name of religion, which interferes with the rights of others is wrong.”	Chapter 8
<a href="https://gregkofford.com/blogs/news/five-times-mormons-changed-their-position-on-slavery">https://gregkofford.com/blogs/news/five-times-mormons-changed-their-position-on-slavery</a>	The church changed its political position five times in respect of slavery.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interracial_marriage_and_The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interracial_marriage_and_The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints</a>	The church supported laws making interracial marriage illegal and taught that it was a sin.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints_and_politics_in_the_United_States">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints_and_politics_in_the_United_States</a>	Most church members in Utah voted to repeal Prohibition even though President Heber J. Grant didn’t want them to.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://www.facebook.com/ProgressiveMormonTeachings/posts/2138582373112536">https://www.facebook.com/ProgressiveMormonTeachings/posts/2138582373112536</a>	Collection of statements from church leaders on immigration and refugees (including that “there’s nothing wrong” with undocumented status).	Chapter 8
<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/lgbtq-students-file-class-action-lawsuit-against-department-education-n1262526">https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/lgbtq-students-file-class-action-lawsuit-against-department-education-n1262526</a>	<a href="#"><u>News article about a 2021 lawsuit filed by 33 LGBTQ college students from 25 religious universities (including BYU) against the U.S. Department of Education, asserting that the religious exemption their schools rely on to treat LGBTQ students differently is unconstitutional.</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Chapter 8</u></a>

Conversion therapy; church’s past (and limited present) endorsement of

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evergreen_International">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evergreen_International</a>	Church leaders historically taught that gay sexual orientation could be “treated” or “cured.”	Chapter 8
<a href="https://religion.wikia.org/wiki/Bruce_C._Hafen">https://religion.wikia.org/wiki/Bruce_C._Hafen</a>  <a href="https://www.mormonwiki.com/Bruce_C._Hafen#2009_Talk_on_Gay_Rights_and_Same_Gender_Attraction">https://www.mormonwiki.com/Bruce_C._Hafen#2009_Talk_on_Gay_Rights_and_Same_Gender_Attraction</a>	Elder Bruce C. Hafen taught that same-sex attractions can be replaced with opposite-sex attractions in this life (and after it) if gay people are faithful enough.  He also taught we are judged on the degree of difficulty of lives’ challenges, not just our thoughts and actions.	Chapter 8 Chapter 10
<a href="https://psychnews.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/pn.47.12.psychnews_47_12_1-b">https://psychnews.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/pn.47.12.psychnews_47_12_1-b</a>	Dr. Robert Spitzer (who was quoted by Elder Bruce C. Hafen as a professional who said conversion therapy could work to make someone no longer be gay) apologizes for his “unproven claims of the efficacy of reparative therapy.”	Chapter 8
<a href="https://lattergaystories.org/bergin/">https://lattergaystories.org/bergin/</a>  <a href="https://religionnews.com/2020/08/07/a-prominent-mormon-therapist-apologized-for-anti-lgbt-activism-whats-the-next-step/">https://religionnews.com/2020/08/07/a-prominent-mormon-therapist-apologized-for-anti-lgbt-activism-whats-the-next-step/</a>	Allen Bergin, a former BYU professor, bishop, stake president, and member of the General Sunday School Presidency, who was a psychotherapist often quoted by church leaders in the late 20 <sup>th</sup> century as an authority on gay sexual orientation, apologized in July 2020 for his past endorsement of conversion therapy, among other things.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://web.archive.org/web/20120724194231/http://www.evergreeni">https://web.archive.org/web/20120724194231/http://www.evergreeni</a>	Elder James O. Mason taught that same-gender attraction could be cured.	Chapter 8

international.org/2005%20Mason.pdf		
<a href="https://www.deseret.com/2018/2/7/20639656/the-weeds-story-is-one-of-many-stories-of-lgbt-latter-day-saints-that-continue-to-be-written">https://www.deseret.com/2018/2/7/20639656/the-weeds-story-is-one-of-many-stories-of-lgbt-latter-day-saints-that-continue-to-be-written</a>	Church therapists still provide a form of conversion therapy for patients who “self-determine” that they want to stop experiencing gay sexual attraction.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay/leaders?lang=eng">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay/leaders?lang=eng</a>	Similar statements about self-determination being respected in therapy can be found on the church’s “Same-Sex Attraction” website as well.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2019/out-darkness-conversion-therapist-quits-ex-gay-movement">https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2019/out-darkness-conversion-therapist-quits-ex-gay-movement</a>	Article describing many former conversion therapists who have abandoned their teachings to lead lives of openly gay men, including Latter-day Saint David Matheson, who was formally associated with Evergreen International and who was a founder of ex-gay program Journey into Manhood.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://blakeclan.org/jon/to-the-one/">https://blakeclan.org/jon/to-the-one/</a>	Church pamphlet <i>To The One</i> in which Elder Boyd K. Packer says, “some forms of these treatments [reparative therapy] are of substantial help in about 25 percent of the cases” without offering any authority for this statistic.	Chapter 10

Conversion therapy; Utah’s ban on (church’s view of)

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.deseret.com/platform/amp/utah/2019/10/23/20929351/lds-mormon-church-conversion-therapy-opposition-jesus-christ-latter-day-saints">https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.deseret.com/platform/amp/utah/2019/10/23/20929351/lds-mormon-church-conversion-therapy-opposition-jesus-christ-latter-day-saints</a>	News article wherein the church explains why it opposed a ban on conversion therapy for minors in Utah.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2019/11/27/gov-herbert-announces/">https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2019/11/27/gov-herbert-announces/</a>	The church was able to get changes made to a proposed ban on conversion therapy for minors in Utah.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://www.kuer.org/post/how-bill-became-rule-journey-utahs-conversion-therapy-ban#stream/0">https://www.kuer.org/post/how-bill-became-rule-journey-utahs-conversion-therapy-ban#stream/0</a>	History of the full legislative and rule-making process for the ban on conversion therapy for minors in Utah.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://societyforpsychotherapy.org/integrating-spirituality-religion-psychotherapy-practice/">https://societyforpsychotherapy.org/integrating-spirituality-religion-psychotherapy-practice/</a>	Professional guidelines require a therapist to discuss with a patient their religious values when providing counseling.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://theconversation.com/new-research-documents-the-severity-of-lgbtqa-conversion-practices-and-why-faith-matters-in-recovery-154740?fbclid=IwAR0mgnAZbobJJEZTFkIvXDnLKbGviRRrx4ueP0ERL7oIyi268SbQrDg44">https://theconversation.com/new-research-documents-the-severity-of-lgbtqa-conversion-practices-and-why-faith-matters-in-recovery-154740?fbclid=IwAR0mgnAZbobJJEZTFkIvXDnLKbGviRRrx4ueP0ERL7oIyi268SbQrDg44</a>	<b><u>Study that shows how harmful conversion practices are not just formal programs or therapies; but rather, they more often involve informal processes, including pastoral care, interactions with religious or community leaders, and spiritual or cultural rituals. And that recovery from conversion practices is most effective when victims are not required to ignore their religious faith in order to stop stifling their sexuality.</u></b>	<b><u>Chapter 8</u></b>

Demographics

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_sexual_orientation#Denmark">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_sexual_orientation#Denmark</a>	Around 2-10% of the human population is LGBTQ, depending on the study/location.	Chapter 3
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints</a>	All living members of the church represent less than ¼	Chapter 10

<p><a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/What_is_Mormon_Doctrine.pdf">https://www.fairmormon.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/What_is_Mormon_Doctrine.pdf</a></p>	<p>be of God or not if we feel God’s spirit testify of their truthfulness.</p> <p>“It is likely that the Lord has allowed (and will continue to allow) his servants to make mistakes.”</p>	
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Psychological harm; from non-LGBTQ affirming positions

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<p><a href="https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/simmons_brian_w_201712_phd.pdf">https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/simmons_brian_w_201712_phd.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="http://mormonsbuildingbridges.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/20190928-U-of-U-MBB-Presentation-SIMMONS-FINAL.pptx">http://mormonsbuildingbridges.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/20190928-U-of-U-MBB-Presentation-SIMMONS-FINAL.pptx</a> - <a href="https://oatd.org/oatd/record?record=handle%5C%3A10724%5C%2F38227">https://oatd.org/oatd/record?record=handle%5C%3A10724%5C%2F38227</a></p>	<p>Peer-reviewed, 2017 academic study showing that church teachings on marriage, family, gender, and sexuality cause PTSD symptoms for nearly 90% of LGBTQ Latter-day Saints.</p>	<p>Preface Chapter 2 Chapter 8 Chapter 10</p>
<p><a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13811118.2020.1806159">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13811118.2020.1806159</a></p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zNs8K5nNPw4SQxPch0uc_PFH0f0Q3kIq/view?usp=drivesdk">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zNs8K5nNPw4SQxPch0uc_PFH0f0Q3kIq/view?usp=drivesdk</a></p>	<p>Peer-reviewed 2020 academic study showing that (i) lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) Utahns are over 4.5 times more likely to have recently thought about suicide and nearly 10 times as likely to have attempted suicide than heterosexual Utahns, and (ii) rates of suicidal thinking and suicide attempts among LGB Utahns was around three times higher than the rates among LGB non-Utahns living in the U.S., Canada and Europe</p>	<p>Preface Chapter 2 Chapter 8</p>
<p><a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1550428X.2020.1800545?journalCode=wgfs20">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1550428X.2020.1800545?journalCode=wgfs20</a></p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/18nKkeahLsuNXA56lYoy95rfLPtzVG0aB/view?usp=drivesdk">https://drive.google.com/file/d/18nKkeahLsuNXA56lYoy95rfLPtzVG0aB/view?usp=drivesdk</a></p>	<p>Synthesized compilation of all published and non-published empirical research on Latter-day Saint LGBTQ psychological and interpersonal functioning.</p>	<p>Chapter 8</p>
<p><a href="https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jcop.22591?fbclid=IwAR0DFVKAAaBeZoVDDruuSg77KQC1loT3pJTEg2AG9BnaZA2LvKIuigQuryFU">https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jcop.22591?fbclid=IwAR0DFVKAAaBeZoVDDruuSg77KQC1loT3pJTEg2AG9BnaZA2LvKIuigQuryFU</a></p>	<p><u>Peer-reviewed study published in May 2021 that identifies four things that were strongly related to suicide ideation among sexual minority current and former Latter-day Saints:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>1) interpersonal struggles and conflict around their faith;</u></li> <li><u>2) internalized negative beliefs about experiencing same-sex attraction;</u></li> <li><u>3) hiding experiences of same-sex attraction; and</u></li> <li><u>4) using faith to cope with difficult emotions.</u></li> </ol>	<p><u>Chapter 8</u></p>
<p><a href="https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2021/10/13/22672169/are-latter-day-saint-lgbtq-youths-less-suicidal-a-new-study-asks-the-question-mormon?fbclid=IwAR0dXeYnHL0ad5SS7mcApB2buN7PdTkEcNwZJAjgIk_buu9mYV4hs4Xomk">https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2021/10/13/22672169/are-latter-day-saint-lgbtq-youths-less-suicidal-a-new-study-asks-the-question-mormon?fbclid=IwAR0dXeYnHL0ad5SS7mcApB2buN7PdTkEcNwZJAjgIk_buu9mYV4hs4Xomk</a></p>	<p><u>Two 2021 studies that each found that LGBTQ-Latter-day Saints had lower suicide risk than those of other faiths or no faith. Survivorship bias likely explains this finding – because only the small percentage of LGBTQ church members who stay in the church and don’t experience as much harm from it seem to be counted as LGBTQ Latter-day Saints.</u></p>	<p><u>Chapter 8</u></p>
<p><a href="https://katetoronto.blogspot.com/">https://katetoronto.blogspot.com/</a></p>	<p><u>Research finding that simply ignoring the possible</u></p>	<p><u>Chapter 8</u></p>

<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/mormonsbuildingbridges/permalink/2517990774968435/">2019/05/surprising-results-from-lgbtq-research.html?m=1&amp;fbclid=IwAR3F0B_Bk_QHlw_XP8LOoiMCjzyn4GmVnK7Mp8W6b3pJQXfdXfK1F63nAQY</a>	<a href="#"><u>choices that face LGBTQ Latter-day Saints is a better coping mechanism than going to therapy, talking to family and friends, getting information, making plans for the future, and praying.</u></a>	
<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/mormonsbuildingbridges/permalink/2517990774968435/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/mormonsbuildingbridges/permalink/2517990774968435/</a>	Peer-reviewed study showing that religious teachings that define gay sexual behavior as sinful result in psychological damage and depression.	Chapter 10
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_among_LGBT_youth">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_among_LGBT_youth</a>	LGBTQ youth have a higher rate of suicide than other youth.	Preface
<a href="https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3721024/">https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3721024/</a>	It has been clinically proven that lack of hope causes depression.	Chapter 2
<a href="http://www.withoutend.org/reactions-the-policy-november-2015/">http://www.withoutend.org/reactions-the-policy-november-2015/</a>	Collection of stories compiled by historian and scholar, Clair Barrus, of families negatively affected by the church's November 2015 policy excluding kids with gay parents from being baptized.	Chapter 3
<a href="https://www.kuer.org/post/can-lds-church-be-blamed-utah-s-lgbt-suicides#stream/0">https://www.kuer.org/post/can-lds-church-be-blamed-utah-s-lgbt-suicides#stream/0</a>  <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_among_LGBT_youth">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_among_LGBT_youth</a>	Debate about the causality between church teachings regarding gay sexual orientation and suicide	Chapter 8
<a href="https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_Mormon_suicides">https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_Mormon_suicides</a>	Research has shown that church teachings that gay sexual orientation will be "cured" in the afterlife have led many gay Latter-day Saints to engage in suicidal ideation or to attempt or die by suicide.	Chapter 2 Chapter 8
<a href="https://www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2019/11/02/justin-utley-darkness-is/">https://www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2019/11/02/justin-utley-darkness-is/</a>	Personal story of mental health harm because of the church's teachings about gay sexual orientation.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/12/19/anti-lgbt-discrimination-has-huge-human-toll-research-proves-it/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/12/19/anti-lgbt-discrimination-has-huge-human-toll-research-proves-it/</a>	Studies showing not granting LGBTQ individuals equal rights in all areas of life effects real and significant harm.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/14/suicide-rates-fall-after-gay-marriage-laws-in-sweden-and-denmark">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/14/suicide-rates-fall-after-gay-marriage-laws-in-sweden-and-denmark</a>  <a href="https://www.upworthy.com/legalizing-gay-marriage-has-caused-a-dramatic-drop-in-lgbt-suicide-rates">https://www.upworthy.com/legalizing-gay-marriage-has-caused-a-dramatic-drop-in-lgbt-suicide-rates</a>	Studies showing legalizing gay marriage may result in a decrease in suicide rates.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://bostonchildstudycenter.com/ptsd/?fbclid=IwAR1W7K83a0UWkPUzRkm7ftAJx6mIcWzyZdRarwcwm51jXlroq7FwxZKZJ9a0">https://bostonchildstudycenter.com/ptsd/?fbclid=IwAR1W7K83a0UWkPUzRkm7ftAJx6mIcWzyZdRarwcwm51jXlroq7FwxZKZJ9a0</a>	Besides PTSD, another psychological category of harm that studies are showing LGBTQ individuals exposed to non-affirming ideologies experience is "traumatic invalidation."	Chapter 10

Scriptures; lack of prohibition of gay marriage (Bible's "clobber" passages)

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/christian-pastor-reframes-scripture-used-against-lgbtq-commu">https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/christian-pastor-reframes-scripture-used-against-lgbtq-commu</a>	Book written by Christian pastor, Colby Martin, that explains why the Bible verses often used to condemn gay marriage are interpreted incorrectly.	Chapter 5

nity-n673471		
<a href="https://www.facebook.com/stan.mit.chell.58/posts/3135281313206974">https://www.facebook.com/stan.mit.chell.58/posts/3135281313206974</a> <a href="https://www.forgeonline.org/blog/2019/3/8/what-about-romans-124-27">https://www.forgeonline.org/blog/2019/3/8/what-about-romans-124-27</a>	Firsthand account of research revealing that modern translations of the Bible that use the word “homosexual” incorrectly do so and that the translators knew of their error but failed to correct it.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://www.gaychurch.org/homosexuality-and-the-bible/the-bible-christianity-and-homosexuality/">https://www.gaychurch.org/homosexuality-and-the-bible/the-bible-christianity-and-homosexuality/</a> <a href="https://medium.com/@adamnicholasphillips/the-bible-does-not-condemn-homosexuality-seriously-it-doesn-t-13ae949d6619">https://medium.com/@adamnicholasphillips/the-bible-does-not-condemn-homosexuality-seriously-it-doesn-t-13ae949d6619</a> <a href="http://www.wouldjesusdiscriminate.org/biblical_evidence.html">http://www.wouldjesusdiscriminate.org/biblical_evidence.html</a> <a href="https://www.rmnetwork.org/newrmn/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Booklet-about-Homosexuality-and-the-Bible-Sept.-2016.pdf">https://www.rmnetwork.org/newrmn/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Booklet-about-Homosexuality-and-the-Bible-Sept.-2016.pdf</a>	Sites where Christian pastors and commentators explain how the scriptures that many people say prohibit gay sexual behavior of any kind can more accurately be interpreted to allow for gay marriage.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://beyondtheblockpodcast.com/episodes/the-longest-clobber-passage-s1!0cdef">https://beyondtheblockpodcast.com/episodes/the-longest-clobber-passage-s1!0cdef</a>	Great podcast episode where a gay convert to the church (who is a Bible scholar and theologian by training) explains how Bible scriptures don’t condemn gay marriage.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://www.reddit.com/r/latterdaysaints/comments/1zdsbd/the_old_testament_doesnt_prohibit_homosexuality/">https://www.reddit.com/r/latterdaysaints/comments/1zdsbd/the_old_testament_doesnt_prohibit_homosexuality/</a>	Scholar, Dr. Hugh Nibley, said the primary sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was actually greed and that they lacked compassion and hospitality (it wasn’t gay sexual behavior).	Chapter 5
<a href="https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0146107915577097">https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0146107915577097</a>	<b><u>Resource showing how none of the Bible verses that people believe prohibit gay marriage actually do so.</u></b>	<b><u>Chapter 5</u></b>
<a href="https://wheatandtares.org/2021/02/14/it-is-ok-to-be-gay-just-dont/">https://wheatandtares.org/2021/02/14/it-is-ok-to-be-gay-just-dont/</a>	<b><u>Article that powerfully shows how Christ’s teachings about avoiding even looking at someone with lust contradict church teachings about feeling attraction to someone of the same gender being okay – because saying there is nothing wrong with being gay as long as you aren’t in a gay relationship makes no more sense than saying “it’s okay to feel greedy as long as you don’t steal”.</u></b>	<b><u>Chapter 5</u></b>

Scriptures promoting equality (just some favorites, not a comprehensive list)

Referenced verse/site	Summary	Location used
2 Nephi 26:33	All are alike unto God.	Chapter 4 Chapter 6
<a href="https://www.amazon.com/Book-Mormon-Least-These/dp/1948218232/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&amp;qid=&amp;sr=">https://www.amazon.com/Book-Mormon-Least-These/dp/1948218232/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&amp;qid=&amp;sr=</a>	Rev. Dr. Fatimah Salleh and Margaret Olsen Hemming comment on the use of merism in 2 Nephi 26:33 “as a rhetorical device in which two ends of the spectrum are named as a way to encompass the entire spectrum in between.”	Chapter 4

## AFTERWORD

January 2, 2022

### *Why am I writing an Afterword to an already lengthy book?*

While *Crossroads* is already a lengthy work, I have decided to write this Afterword because, given the nature of the book and what I say about my faith throughout it, I feel like I owe an update to anyone who has read it regarding where I am now on my personal journey. I hope that anyone reading this Afterword will afford me the grace of being an imperfect person who can feel strongly about something at one point and then feel very differently later because of ongoing learning and experience.

*[Side note: Because I made the decision to write this update after the paperback copy of *Crossroads* became available to purchase in June 2021, this Afterword will unfortunately not appear in any paperback copies that are purchased going forward.]*

The short version of the update I want to provide here is as follows: After writing *Crossroads* in 2020, my ongoing studies concerning the origins of ancient (and purportedly ancient) scriptures that are accepted by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as canon, have resulted in me no longer being able to believe in the church's teachings about God. I have therefore decided to join Cheryl and each of our children in their respective desires to resign our formal memberships in the institutional church. However, I still have every intention to maintain a meaningful relationship with any church member who wants to stay my friend. And I do not want to abandon any lessons I learned in church about the importance of love for my fellow human beings.

So even though I am no longer a member of the institutional church, I still plan to remain involved with efforts to promote greater love and understanding for LGBTQ people within the Latter-day Saint community. To be clear, I did not decide to resign my formal church membership because I have met any sort of breaking point with respect to LGBTQ advocacy efforts within the church. Rather, I remain committed to such advocacy and simply desire to stay honest and authentic regarding what I believe in general as I persist in those efforts.

Specifically, I plan to continue to assist Marci McPhee, the amazing editor of my book, with the weekly blog we have on our *Crossroads* website: <https://www.gayldscrossroads.org/blog>. She remains a believing member of the church – one who is not just active, but in her words, she is “hyper-active”, in church service and related endeavors. I am hopeful our collective perspectives might help the weekly blog posts continue to speak to Latter-day Saints across the full spectrums of belief, church activity, membership, or lack thereof. I also plan to continue to support LGBTQ-focused charities and Facebook groups like: Affirmation; Beyond the Block; Dragon Dads; Encircle; Emmaus; Human Stories; Listen, Learn & Love; Latter Gay Stories; Mama Dragons; Mormons Building Bridges; Peculiar and others. And I will also continue as one of the administrators of the Facebook group “I’ll Walk With You”, which is a unique community of Latter-day Saint parents who espouse a wide range of beliefs, church activity and membership statuses and who are all focused on simply helping one



another find the best ways to show love to their LGBTQ children. One of the rules of that group prohibits attacks on the church or its leaders by attributing harmful or evil intent to them. I am glad that group tries to offer a safe space for believing parents to process their feelings and learn how to support their children. I hope to model that sort of approach in my interactions with church member friends going forward – because I do not want to feel threatening to them even though we may see things differently now.

Somewhat ironically, I think my continuing commitment to help advocate for LGBTQ equality within church-related circles and my ongoing love for church members, actually result in me remaining a member of the “scriptural” church. That’s because, rather than being a legal entity like the institutional church is today, in scripture, the word “church” is frequently used metaphorically or simply as a group of people with a certain level of shared belief (See 1 Nephi 13-14, Matthew 18, Acts 2, Acts 8, 1 Corinthians 14, Romans 16, Ephesians 5, etc.). So even if the only shared belief I have with certain progressive institutional church members now is the importance of trying to love other people as ourselves, I am happy to consider myself a member with them of a metaphorical “church” founded on unconditional love. In any event, I feel that no matter what path I take in my life going forward, I will always be a Latter-day Saint to some extent due to my ancestry, upbringing and the decades of my adult life that I have devoted to the church.

However, I will admit there have been moments in my journey after writing *Crossroads*, particularly when I’ve learned something new about the origins of the church’s scriptures, teachings or practices, where I have felt angry at the institutional church for teaching as divine truths many things that I now know millions of fully-informed people can confidently describe as falsehoods. And I still feel that way at times due to the pain the church can cause to many current and former Latter-day Saints through its propagation of such falsehoods, even if done without malicious intent. But rather than focus on anger, I want to instead choose to remain positively engaged in the cause of lifting and loving others. I feel like I can do that best by being open about the shift in my beliefs – so that any love I attempt to share with others will hopefully continue to be seen as genuine. So it is that desire – to remain true to myself and others – that has ultimately motivated my decision to resign my church membership – not any sense of anger at the church. In fact, the love and affection I have for many members of the church, including those in my family and in my local ward and stake, leads me to plan to still attend church periodically as a non-member. I hope to do so whenever I can to support major events in the lives of my loved ones and, if my family commitments allow for it on any given Sunday otherwise, to simply stay connected to friends in the church.

*Will anyone care to read an explanation of where I'm at now?*

Now, I know it may seem presumptuous to some people that I have assumed there is sufficient public interest in my personal journey that I feel it necessary to post about my beliefs online again. But I feel there have been enough people who have taken an interest in *Crossroads* that, to remain authentic to them and to anyone else who reads my book going forward, this Afterword is necessary.

As of the date of this writing, almost 11,000 people have downloaded or browsed *Crossroads* for free online and over 2,200 copies of the e-book or paperback version of *Crossroads* have been purchased. Tens of thousands more people have listened to the podcast episode that Cheryl and I recorded with Richard Ostler on *Listen, Learn & Love* (see Episode 291 here: <https://www.listenlearnandlove.org/top-introduction-podcasts-for-local-leaders-and-parents>).

While all that is above and beyond the number of people I ever expected would take an interest in our family's story, those numbers are not what has touched me the most about the reception that *Crossroads* has received. The personal communications that I receive from readers about the book are what fill my heart with gratitude the most. I have received hundreds of messages from readers saying they really resonate with the approach I describe in the book of staying in the church while simultaneously speaking up about how doctrinal change is possible. And I have received even more messages from LGBTQ church members expressing gratitude that I was being a "voice from the inside" to encourage a softening of hearts among other active members of the church.

So I do worry that some readers will be disappointed to learn that my faith journey has now taken me to a place where I no longer feel that I can authentically remain a member of the institutional church. But I hope, as I stated above, that such readers will be kind and understand that, like everyone's personal journey, I am continually learning more and adjusting my perspectives accordingly. I hope readers will understand that I am NOT giving up on the fight for LGBTQ equality in the church. Rather, I am simply choosing to continue that effort while following a path that I feel compelled to walk in my pursuit of truth as well.

*What exactly did I learn that changed my mind?*

I don't know if it would be helpful here, as explanation for my change in beliefs, to get too specific about what I learned regarding the origins and authorship of the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, the Bible, and Joseph Smith's "translation" of the Bible, that led me to no longer be able to consider most of the stories and teachings contained in those works to be historically accurate, authentically authored, and/or of divine origin. There are already great resources online and in print that both summarize and delve deep into the historicity and authorship problems of such scriptures. None of what I learned is new to the world; it was just new to me – so I won't try to recreate here the work that other people have already done. And rather than try to summarize what I've learned over literally thousands of hours of study, I will instead just provide a brief overview of how I viewed scripture before vs. how I see it now.

For many years before I wrote *Crossroads*, I had known there were human fingerprints all over the scriptures – because I accepted that the prophets/apostles who actually penned the words that appear on the pages of our scriptures were, like all of us, incapable of telling a story without doing so using their own human perspective and understanding. I was comfortable with the idea that even if a lot of the content in our scriptures reflected the imperfect human perspective of prophets/apostles, most of the stories that the scriptures related were at least largely accurate historically-speaking. I was aware of many criticisms regarding the purported origins and authorship of the Book of Mormon and other books of scripture, but my study of church-friendly scholarly works about such criticisms led me to keep my belief that most of the stories in our scriptures actually happened in real life.

For many years, I was even comfortable with the idea that some books of scripture, like the Book of Abraham, could reflect historical truths even if the source from which the church originally claimed the text of such scripture originated was proven to be something completely unrelated to the canonized text. For example, I was okay with the idea I had read from some scholars that, even though the content of the Book of Abraham was not contained on the Egyptian papyri/scrolls that Joseph Smith purchased from the antiquities dealer and entrepreneur, Michael Chandler, in 1835, it was still possible for the presence of the scrolls to have acted as a catalyst for the revelation of ancient scripture to come through Joseph’s mind. So I was happy to see the church accept, in its 2014 online essay titled *Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham* (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/translation-and-historicity-of-the-book-of-abraham?lang=eng>), that such “catalyst theory” is now a view the church accepts as a legitimate way for faithful believers in the church to approach the Book of Abraham. Likewise, I was okay with the idea that Joseph Smith didn’t actually look at the golden plates to dictate the text of the Book of Mormon. I was comfortable thinking that the plates (which I now do not believe ever existed) similarly just served as a catalyst for the revelation of that book of scripture.

But after I wrote *Crossroads*, I decided to expand my study of scriptural authorship to include sources that didn’t mention the church *per se* (i.e., I studied books about the origins and authorship of the Bible written by non-Latter-day Saint scholars like Bart Ehrman and Richard Friedman). I also began to study sources that were actually critical of the church’s truth claims as well. As I did so, I continued to try to be balanced in my studies by also reading more from church-friendly sources too. Specifically, I explored church-friendly scholarship that allows for believers to take a largely metaphorical (rather than historical) approach to the scriptures if desired (like the book *Understanding the Book of Mormon* whose author, Grant Hardy, has said: “Can faith in the Book of Mormon as inspired fiction be a saving faith? I think the answer is, absolutely.” ([https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2016/more-effective-apologetics\\_2016](https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2016/more-effective-apologetics_2016))).

Eventually, I came to realize that the church-friendly scholars and apologists’ arguments are not nearly as strong as other arguments and the impartial evidence. I also came to accept that my feelings could not be a reliable measure of objective truth – because many other peoples’ feelings tell them conflicting things to what my feelings did. As my knowledge increased and

my beliefs shifted, I found I needed to embrace a metaphorical approach to the scriptures. I now see the scriptures as powerful allegorical stories that contain many inspiring and uplifting messages. But I do not believe anymore that they are, for the most part anyway, written by the ancient prophets/apostles whom the church claims authored them; and I can no longer believe, again for the most part, that they relate ancient historical events that actually occurred.

I thought for a time that I could stay in the institutional church while maintaining that metaphorical view. But, after a while, I started to feel uncomfortable knowing that many readers of *Crossroads* and other church members I interacted with in person and online thought my beliefs in the truth claims of the institutional church remained literal. Even after I posted in some private Facebook groups about my belief now being mostly metaphorical, I was still having interactions with other people where they seemed to assume things about my beliefs that were not accurate.

So, I came to realize that, because of what I wrote in *Crossroads* about my faith (which was genuine at the time I was writing), and because of what some people will always assume about my beliefs as long as I remain a member of the institutional church, the best way for me to feel like I'm being honest with anyone who may be curious about my current position, was to resign my church membership. But more importantly, I feel that resigning from the institutional church was the only way I could be true to myself too, given my newfound perspective and learnings. I didn't feel like I could authentically remain a formal member of the church if I did not believe that even its basic teachings about scripture, and therefore what it teaches about God, were true.

#### *What do I believe now?*

While slowly abandoning my prior beliefs, I also did some significant searching to find a new way of viewing the meaning of life. Thus far in my searching, Humanism is what has resonated the most with me. That said, I plan to always remain open to change as I continue learning. But for now, the ideals and tenets of Humanism help me feel excited for every day of life, explain human existence in a plausible and non-supernatural way, and guide me to feel more connected with, and to strive to do more good for, other people. If you are interested in learning more about Humanism, I would encourage you to read the book *Good Without God – What a Billion Non-Religious People Do Believe* by Greg Epstein, the Humanist chaplain at Harvard University (<https://www.amazon.com/Good-Without-God-Billion-Nonreligious/dp/006167012X>).

Because I assume I will always consider myself to be a Latter-day Saint, by culture and background even if no longer by belief or formal church membership, I think the best way to label myself (for now anyway) is as a Latter-day Saint Humanist. But that might change in the future as I continue to live and learn. So I don't want to actually embrace any label too zealously right now (or ever again, I suspect). I just want to love other people more fully, embrace each moment of life as precious and meaningful, and help ease the pain of those who are suffering as best I can. Trying to do all of that without any belief in God to motivate me recently, has surprisingly helped me feel more joy, peace and unity with people in general

than I have ever experienced before. I am grateful for where I am now on my journey and look forward to continuing to evolve in my views going forward.

Most importantly, as my beliefs have shifted, I have felt closer than ever to Cheryl and our kids. We are supportive of each other in our various respective approaches to life, spirituality and belief – without any judgment. We love each other unconditionally and have never felt more grateful for one another. I suspect a large reason for all that is because we have learned to emphasize mental health, personal well-being, and the precious “now” more than we ever could as members of a church that often prioritizes the institution over individuals and that is so focused on the end of the world and peoples’ standings in an afterlife.

In any event, while I will always be grateful for the role the church played in bringing Cheryl and our kids into my life, I remain at peace with my decision to leave the institutional church. And I am excited to experience this next phase of my life. I hope anyone reading this will feel excited, not sad, for me too. I hope you will share my joy for life and for being kind and loving to others simply because it feels good to do so as a human, not because God is watching.

Finally, thank you for your interest in *Crossroads* and in our family’s story. I hope whatever feelings of kinship and shared purpose I have felt with those of you who have reached out to me about my book will continue to exist mutually among us as I move forward with this next step on my path. And I hope anyone who reads *Crossroads* going forward will understand that, when I wrote it, I was a true-believing church member who was trying to describe a faithful way to maintain hope for change. I still feel strongly that, based on the church’s own current teachings and scriptures, doctrinal change that results in full LGBTQ equality in the church is not only possible – it is required to avoid hypocrisy. And from the perspective of my new beliefs, based on the goodness of humanity, I still maintain hope for the situation of LGBTQ people in the church. I love the LGBTQ church members I have come to know as a result of writing *Crossroads* and will always have faith that goodness will prevail and doctrinal change will occur in the end (even if still decades away). I hope to continue to be a part of the effort that might help such positive change occur.

Sincerely,  
Evan

### ***About the Author:***

Evan Smith ~~is an active Latter-day Saint. He~~ was born in the church and grew up in Murray, Utah. He served a full-time mission in California from 1994-1996 and then married his wife, Cheryl, a year later. They received their undergraduate degrees together from Brigham Young University in 2000, and Evan later received his law degree from the University of Toronto in 2003. He has been a practicing corporate attorney in Boston ever since. He and Cheryl have four children and call a small town 35 miles south of Boston home. Evan ~~has~~ served in the church as a stake institute teacher, high councilor, branch president, bishop, early-morning seminary teacher, and counselor in a stake presidency. He loves backcountry snow skiing and can still (sometimes) land a backflip behind a boat on a wakeboard. He is a first-time writer.

### ***About the Editor:***

Marci McPhee grew up in Texas, where she joined the church at age 16. After graduating from Brigham Young University and spending twelve years as a fulltime mom, she began her career in higher education. In 2009-10, Marci took a year-long leave from Brandeis University in the Boston area to volunteer as an English teacher in the Marshall Islands in the Pacific. Marci has served as stake and ward Primary president, stake Relief Society board member, ward Relief Society president, early-morning seminary teacher and institute teacher. She's a founding writer of [PrimaryinZion.wordpress.com](http://PrimaryinZion.wordpress.com), editor of *Sunday Lessons and Activities for Kids* (Walnut Springs Press, 2015), co-editor of *Girls' Camp: Ideas for Today's Leaders* (Walnut Springs Press, 2016), and editor of *Fifty Five Days of Faith* (Mulberry Books, October 2018). After 43 years in the Boston area, Marci now lives in San Antonio, Texas. [marcimcphewriter.com](http://marcimcphewriter.com)