

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

By Evan Smith

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Future ~~updated versions~~updates will be posted at [www.gayldscrossroads.org](http://www.gayldscrossroads.org) as pertinent events occur.

*(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.)*

“*Crossroads* offers the reader poignant personal stories, asks engaging questions, and shines a much-needed light to help us - as LGTBQ 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 Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (to be released in September 2020)

“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](#)

“*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

day Saint singles to always maintain hope for marriage, not proactively abandon it. That distinction is important from a mental health perspective because it can mean that straight singles feel like they just have to wait for a spouse. But gay singles in the church tend to feel that a core part of them was created as a mistake that will need to be fixed after this life. I have personally observed that severe mental health damage can be caused by the church's teaching that the only "righteous" paths available for LGBTQ people are marrying someone of the opposite sex or intentional lifelong celibacy.

*[Side note: This is consistent with a peer-reviewed 2017 study [conducted by Brian Simmons](https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/simmons_brian_w_201712_phd.pdf) at the University of Georgia on LGBTQ Latter-day Saints, which showed that over 73% of the participants reported trauma and multiple PTSD symptoms (89% reported at least one PTSD symptom) from repeated exposure to basic teachings of the church concerning sexuality, gender, marriage, and family. This stands in contrast to a baseline of 8% experiencing trauma / PTSD from those teachings. Trauma / PTSD was not self-diagnosed but shown through clinical methods derived from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder. The majority of respondents identified as active members with 31% holding current temple recommends. ([https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/simmons\\_brian\\_w\\_201712\\_phd.pdf](https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/simmons_brian_w_201712_phd.pdf); <http://mormonsbuildingbridges.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/20190928-U-of-U-MBB-Presentation-SIMMONS-FINAL.pptx>).*

*[Also, a peer-reviewed 2020 study conducted by James McGraw at Bowling Green State University \(BGSU\) and his colleagues 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://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 above-referenced study from 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.](#)*

The following statistics also underscore how important it is for families and friends of LGBTQ youth to see their role as being supportive and accepting, not prescriptive and condemning:

- a) LGBTQ youth have a much higher suicide rate than the general population ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide\\_among\\_LGBT\\_youth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_among_LGBT_youth)).
- b) LGB youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide as LGB peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection, 5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression, 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs, and 3.4 times more likely to report having engaged in unprotected sex. (Pediatrics January 2009, ~~VOLUME~~[Volume](#) 123 / ~~ISSUE~~[Issue](#) 1).

Until all such changes happen, the juncture between church doctrine and personal well-being will remain one that is fraught with tension that can cause intense pain for anyone in the church who is LGBTQ or who has a loved one who is LGBTQ. It forces difficult decisions to be made. So I think we all should take time to explore whether the crosses we see many of our LGBTQ siblings bearing on their roads in life are foisted upon them by the church, not by God.

**Is it bad to recognize there is human error in the church?**

I hope no fellow church members feel like I am attacking the church or its leaders by asking whether our doctrine opposing marriage equality comes from God. To the contrary, I love the church and am grateful for our leaders' efforts to do what they feel is best for the church as a whole. But also I don't think we should view anyone as an enemy to the church simply because they recognize that it's possible for human frailty to be reflected in church teachings. Multiple prophets in the Book of Mormon acknowledged that their writings could contain both the word of God and their own human mistakes:

Book of Mormon Title Page (by Moroni) – “And now, **if there are faults they are the mistakes of men**; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.”

1 Nephi 19:6 (by Nephi) – “Nevertheless, I do not write anything upon plates save it be that I think it be sacred. And now, **if I do err, even did they err of old; not that I would excuse myself because of other men**, but because of the weakness which is in me, according to the flesh, I would excuse myself.”

Mormon 8:12, 17 (by Moroni) – “And whoso receiveth this record, and **shall not condemn it because of the imperfections which are in it... And if there be faults they be the faults of a man.**”

Ether 12:23-25 (by Moroni) – “And I said unto him: Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing... **wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words.**”

Those scriptures teach us that it is okay to believe that even canonized scripture can contain human error. If we are willing to believe that, I wonder why so many church members bristle when someone asks whether our modern-day non-canonical church teachings might also contain some human error. **The hesitancy to admit that our church leaders can make mistakes in teaching doctrine is especially confusing to me because some of our own apostles living today have taught exactly that. They have admitted that mistakes have been made and that nothing God reveals through humans (including through prophets) is perfect:**

**“And, to be perfectly frank, there have been times when members or leaders in the Church have simply made mistakes. There may have been things said or done that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine. I suppose the Church would be perfect only if it were run by perfect beings. God is perfect, and His doctrine**

is pure. But He works through us—His imperfect children—and imperfect people make mistakes.” (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Apostle, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2013/10/come-join-with-us?lang=eng>, 2013)

“So be kind regarding human frailty—your own as well as that of those who serve with you in a Church led by volunteer, mortal men and women. Except in the case of His only perfect Begotten Son, imperfect people are all God has ever had to work with. That must be terribly frustrating to Him, but He deals with it. So should we. And when you see imperfection, remember that the limitation is not in the divinity of the work. As one gifted writer has suggested, when the infinite fulness is poured forth, it is not the oil’s fault if there is some loss because finite vessels can’t quite contain it all. Those finite vessels include you and me, so be patient and kind and forgiving.” (Jeffrey R. Holland, Apostle, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2013/04/lord-i-believe?lang=eng>, 2013)

I don’t condemn the Book of Mormon writers for their mistakes and, similarly, I don’t condemn our modern-day church leaders for any mistakes they have made or might make in the future. I generally like to focus on the vast amount of divine truth that I believe comes from our prophets and apostles, not on their mistakes. But, as the father of a gay son, I wonder whether the pain that’s being caused to our LGBTQ siblings by church teachings on gender, sexuality, marriage, and family is truly necessary. And I think it’s okay for faithful church members to ask if pain-inflicting teachings come from God or man.

*[Side note: The Book of Mormon teaches that the church as an institution can go astray, even while under the leadership of a prophet. In Alma 4:11 the church, under the leadership of the prophet Alma, is described as wicked. We know that is a description of the church organization itself because just two verses later, in Alma 4:13, the people who were actually following Christ are described as “others.” I think that scriptural example is useful in interpreting the following passage of modern-day canon:*

*“The Lord will never permit...any...President of [the] Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty.” (Official Declaration 1, Wilford Woodruff, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/od/1?lang=eng>, 1890)*

*I do not believe that statement means God will prevent any prophet from making mistakes that negatively affect other people. We do not believe the prophet is infallible. Rather, I think it simply means God will not allow the prophet to do anything that will bring about another general apostasy again. He will not be permitted to do anything that is so egregious that God will deem it necessary to remove priesthood authority from the earth again. ~~But~~ and start His church all over from scratch once more. Basically, God will not allow the church to go so far astray that it cannot be corrected before it is too late. But that leaves a lot of room for error by the church before that point is reached. For example, it is possible for the “example of the church” to lead people to personal iniquity:*

*“Alma saw the wickedness of the church, and he saw also that the **example of the church** began to lead those who were unbelievers on from one piece of iniquity to another.” (Alma 4:11)*

***There**So in our own canon, there appears to be a distinction between leading the church “astray” (which I think means leading the church into a situation where it will cease to have authority) vs. leading individuals to personal failings in righteousness. **So we shouldn’t think that**In any event, it seems clear to me that the concept of the Lord not allowing the prophet to “lead [us] astray” means that no change to the doctrinal status quo is ever allowed.*

*That should not be interpreted to suggest there is a prohibition on future doctrinal changes. Unfortunately though, I have seen many church members today use the above statement ~~was made~~ by Wilford Woodruff to suggest that a change from current prophetic teachings is not possible. I find that position to be ironic given that President Woodruff made his statement in the context of changing ~~the~~ doctrinal status quo ~~from the church allowing~~ (the importance of polygamy ~~to only allowing monogamy. So~~) that had been stridently taught by multiple prior church presidents as eternal truth.*

*I recognize that some church leaders have built upon the notion that the prophet will never lead us astray to further teach dogmatic ideas such as “When the prophet speaks, the debate is over” (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1979/08/the-debate-is-over?lang=eng> ). But most church members are not aware that such line of thought originated with an unauthorized statement that President George Albert Smith privately renounced after it was first published in a church magazine in 1945 (<https://www.fairmormon.org/archive/publications/when-the-prophet-speaks-is-the-thinking-done> ).*

*Similarly, most church members are not aware that Elder Ezra Taft Benson actually got in trouble for giving his talk titled “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet” in 1980 in which he essentially says the living prophet is more important than scripture and should be followed even in political matters because he cannot lead us astray. President Spencer W. Kimball was so bothered by Elder Benson’s talk that he asked Elder Benson to “apologize to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, but they ‘were dissatisfied with his response.’ Kimball required him to explain himself to a combined meeting of all general authorities” as well (<http://www.mormonpress.com/ezra-taft-benson-and-politics> ; [https://archive.satrib.com/story.php?ref=/lds/ci\\_14287116](https://archive.satrib.com/story.php?ref=/lds/ci_14287116) ).*

*In any event, I hope church members will again find comfort in ~~that statement~~ again the idea that the prophet cannot lead the church astray when the status quo about what form of marriage is allowed by the church hopefully changes again once more in the future to permit marriage between same-gender spouses.]*

Many faithful church members have asked a similar question about the church’s priesthood/temple ban based on race that ended in 1978. See Chapter 5 for a fuller explanation, but a brief mention here may be useful. In 2013, the church published an essay that denounced certain racist historical teachings from prophets, apostles, and other General Authorities that were spread to justify the ban as being of God. The church’s essay now says:

“Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects unrighteous actions in a pre-mortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else. Church leaders today unequivocally condemn all racism, past and present, in any form” (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/race-and-the-priesthood>).

Brigham Young, Bruce R. McConkie, Mark E. Peterson, and many other General Authority church leaders had taught as truth those very ideas that the church now disavows. So it’s clear that among the many good, inspired things those leaders taught, there were some mistaken, false teachings as well. That leads me to conclude that it’s not a sign of unfaithfulness for church members to ask whether our current church teachings might also include a mix of both inspired truth and human error.

For example, where did the church’s ban against marriage between two people of the same gender first come from? Is it possible our church inherited a position against marriage equality from uninspired religious teachings of the other faith traditions from which early Latter-day Saints came? Did we get it from Protestant traditions which church leaders have reinforced with non-canonical


So in an attempt to create more awareness and sensitivity, I would like to describe some hurtful and helpful things Cheryl and I have heard from fellow church members we know from all over the various places we've lived. I share the hurtful messages here with no sense of anger. But they did cause my heart to ache because I knew people just didn't understand.

*[Side note: For a more complete set of ideas about what is harmful vs. helpful to say to LGBTQ church members and their loved ones, please see this amazing list compiled by Emily Nelson: <https://www.facebook.com/emily.e.nelson.92/posts/10219726331658849>. Emily is the mother of a gay son and a moderator of the Facebook group called "I'll Walk With You (Supporting Latter-day Saint Parents with LGBTQ+ Children)."]*

Based on personal and observed experience, here are some suggestions of things people might want to avoid:

1. *Don't send "scientific" articles about how people "choose" to have gay sexual desires.* As I'll discuss further in Chapter 3 : (i) the current scientific consensus is that having a gay sexual orientation is not a choice; and (ii) the church no longer teaches that having such attractions has to be a choice, or that it comes about because of the acts or omissions of anyone else. Please assume that folks have done a lot of research on the "causes" of sexual orientation. If you still decide to share something, please fact-check and bias-check your source before sending it. There is a bunch of pseudo-science being published by outlets with anti-LGBTQ agendas.
2. *Don't send resources that paint mixed-orientation marriages (i.e., marriages where a gay person marries a straight person) as a solution.* Those might work for some bisexuals or for a tiny percentage of gay people, but, as I will discuss further in Chapter 3, the church no longer recommends that gay people marry straight people. Please assume that folks have done the necessary research to discover that mixed-orientation marriages are 2 to 3 times more likely to end in divorce than uniform-orientation marriages ([https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gay-mormon-men-marriage\\_n\\_6464848](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gay-mormon-men-marriage_n_6464848)). This may be due to a correlation with higher rates of depression and a lower quality of life in mixed-orientation marriages (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19359705.2014.912970>).
3. *Don't compare sexual orientation to anything else.* As I'll describe further in Chapter 7, comparisons to addictions, disabilities, or even language acquisition are harmful and inaccurate. As I'll mention in Chapter 3, sexual orientation develops in a similar way to handedness (i.e., being right or left-handed). That may be an appropriate analogy but only for purposes of discussing similarities in developmental processes of different physical characteristics. Beyond that, it too is an inappropriate analogy because handedness is not as central to human intimacy, life purpose, companionship, mating, belonging, and identity as sexuality is. Being straight is the only appropriate analogy for being gay.
4. *Don't compare the church's expectation that gay people be lifelong celibates to straight singles remaining chaste.* The causes, effects and resolution for straight celibacy and gay celibacy are completely different. Straight singles always have hope, whether in this life or

doctrine ([for now anyway](#)) that for LGBTQ church members to experience the same joy as cisgender straight people in heaven, they will need to be in a heterosexual marriage after this life (i.e., they will need to repress or have altered for eternity the way they were born to love).

- Black people throughout history have been more widely subject to violence, murder and enslavement. While violence and murder are also risks for LGBTQ people (think about Harvey Milk [1978], Matthew Shepard [1998], Nazis killing gays along with Jews in the Holocaust [1941-45], and many other atrocities against LGBTQ people in the past or even committed today, including in many foreign countries that have anti-LGBTQ laws), suicide appears to be a greater mortal risk than murder presently for LGBTQ church members in the U.S. Statistics show LGBTQ people are more likely to die by suicide than people in other demographic groups in the U.S. In fact, as to LGBTQ church members specifically, studies have shown that church teachings on gender, marriage, sexuality, and family cause suicidal ideation or at least one PTSD symptom in nearly 90% of LGBTQ church members (<http://mormonsbuildingbridges.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/20190928-U-of-U-MBB-Presentation-SIMMONS-FINAL.pptx>; [https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/simmons\\_brian\\_w\\_201712\\_phd.pdf](https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/simmons_brian_w_201712_phd.pdf); [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT\\_Mormon\\_suicides](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_Mormon_suicides); <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13811118.2020.1806159>; [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zNs8K5nNPw4SQxPch0uc\\_PFH0f0Q3kIq/view?usp=drivesdk](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zNs8K5nNPw4SQxPch0uc_PFH0f0Q3kIq/view?usp=drivesdk)). This is often because of lack of hope (it has been clinically proven that a simple lack of hope can cause depression  <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3721024/>).
- More gay people are born into the church than Black people were born into the church before 1978. That is, more gay people are born into a traumatic situation in the church.
- Black children are usually born to at least one Black parent, who can help them learn to navigate Black culture and being Black in the world. Gay people are born into all kinds of families, often to straight parents. That means that many gay people are born to parents that are not like them and may struggle to accept them, or not know how to support their gay children to navigate their lives.
- The racial priesthood/temple ban did not normally create tension within Black families, whereas families with LGBTQ individuals are often torn apart as family members choose different ways to try to reconcile LGBTQ realities with church teachings.

By making the above comparisons, I do not intend to comment on the degree of suffering that different marginalized groups have experienced at large. I just find the differences potentially instructive and empathy-building. I try to remember that if not done with a focus on empathy, comparison can be the thief of compassion.

6. *Don't compare a straight person who decides to leave the church to a gay person who chooses to leave.* The straight person might be choosing to leave the church for reasons they can revisit or repent of later. But a gay person leaving the church often does so as a desperate and difficult way to maintain their mental health. And their sexual orientation will



not change, so that conflict (church vs. mental health) will always exist for them. They often do not desire to sin when they leave – rather they just want to avoid trauma from constant exposure to church teachings that the way they were born is inconsistent with the plan of salvation and will need to be fixed in the next life.

*[Side note: In trying to explain this point to a friend, I once asked them to consider how they would feel if the church said receiving mental health treatment was a sin. This friend has a straight child who struggles with severe depression, so I knew that hypothetical scenario would be meaningful for them. But in drawing that analogy, I also made clear that I was **not** suggesting that gay sexual orientation is a mental illness (I debunk that myth in Chapter 7). Rather, I said I was just trying to help my friend understand better why the church's position against marriage equality in our doctrine causes a dilemma for me as the father of a gay son – because in both the hypothetical situation I drew for them and in my real-life situation, we, as parents, must come to realize that the only way for our children to be mentally healthy is for them to disobey church teachings of today.]*

7. *Don't suggest that a hope for change in church doctrine is a bad thing.* Few church messages have been more consistent than that “the Restoration of the Lord’s gospel [is] an unfolding Restoration that continues today.” (Russell M. Nelson, Prophet, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/president-nelson-invites-sharing-gospel-restoration>, 2020). Never try to take away the hope for change in the church, because that hope is what allows them to both truly love themselves or their LGBTQ loved one and still believe in the church. As the parent of an LGBTQ child, as I’ll describe further in Chapter 5, I think it is impossible for me to be both a loving parent and a believer in the church without hoping for change.

*[Side note: For people who are tempted to condemn the prayers and personal revelations of fellow church members that conflict with current church practices, remember that in Acts chapter 10, the Gentile Cornelius ~~knew of God's will that~~ received revelation related to the gospel ~~should be being~~ preached to the Gentiles before the lead apostle Peter did. And remember that Peter had to be told three times by the Lord before believing that the change should happen. For a clever enactment of this concept, see James C. Jones' 1-minute video, "Acts 10:10-15 - Jesus Checks Peter's Bigotry" at: <https://www.facebook.com/beyondtheblockpodcast/videos/758569211567124> ]*

8. *Don't suggest that a parent of a gay child should always wish their child was still in the church.* Parents of a gay kid need to be allowed to be happy that their child isn't in the church while still being seen as “righteous” church members. That's because if parents are expected to remain sad about their kid leaving the church (again, leaving is often necessary for their kid's mental health), then they end up loving their gay kid in a discriminatory way as compared to how they love their straight kids. All of my children desire to have stable, fulfilling family lives. But one was born with a biological trait that makes it impossible to do so without violating church rules. Parents in the church need to be allowed to publicly say they're proud of their gay children who are pursuing or are in healthy marriages with same-gender partners without being judged. They shouldn't be made to feel bad just for unconditionally loving their child. They shouldn't be made to feel like they need to communicate to church members that they love their LGBTQ child “even though” they are no longer in the church.

*[Side note: Consider how silly it would be for a parent to tell their left-handed child that they love them “even though” they write with their left hand, not their right hand. That's how I feel about being asked to consider*

*Wes' potential future gay marriage any differently than how I consider my other kids' potential future straight marriages.]*

9. *Don't say that they should just trust in God to work everything out after this life.* That line of thought has been shown to contribute greatly to suicidal ideation among LGBTQ church members (see Chapter 8). And, as I describe in Chapter 4, a trust-in-the-Lord approach doesn't work for gay church members under current doctrinal constructs anyway. There is no room in our present doctrine for the Lord to work things out for gay church members without heaven seeming like a special kind of hell to most of them.
10. *Don't judge someone just because they publicly disagree with the church's political positions on LGBTQ issues such as conversion therapy and religious liberty.* I'll discuss my views on those matters in Chapter 8. Please remember that the church allows us all to disagree when it comes to politics without losing any church privileges. And many folks view outside pressures as the only thing that might make most church members ready (or make church leaders pray as sincerely as is needed) for change in the church to come about. When you get upset over others' political support for full LGBTQ rights and protections, they may feel that you are indirectly criticizing them or their love for their child.

Here are some positive suggestions that, based on our experience, might be helpful:

1. *Acknowledge that the relevant doctrine causes harm.* You don't have to start disbelieving in the church to simply acknowledge and openly state a proven fact: that core church teachings on gender, marriage, sexuality, and family cause psychological damage to the vast majority of LGBTQ church members. (See the links to studies about PTSD, suicide and depression in point #5 of the above list of things to avoid.)
2. *Tell the families of gay kids in the church that you admire their unconditional love.* Tell them you are happy to see how they are keeping their family circle intact.
3. *Say you wish things were different in the church for LGBTQ people.* Again, you don't have to start disbelieving in the church to make such a statement. The Savior asked if the cup could pass from Him when he was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39), so suffering could be avoided – if it was His Father's will. So I think it's okay for us to similarly ask God if a change in the church can happen, so suffering can be avoided if possible.
4. *Support others' choices, even if they involve leaving (or supporting someone else in leaving) the church.* You are not best suited to know what is best for another's mental health and well-being. Please be supportive of their choices and of the decisions of their loved ones to support those choices. Failing to be supportive of others' choices is especially damaging when you try to counteract parents of gay children when the parents are not around and you have time with the child. Doing that will only cause friction between you and the child's parents and confusion for the child. So just support them in what they say is the best way for them to parent. **And for anyone who has the sacred honor of being a person to whom an LGBTQ individual comes out, remember this counsel:**

[“When a person comes out as LGBTQ, especially a young person to a parent, they are not looking for you to agree. They are asking if they are still loved. Assure them that they are.” \(Debra Oaks Coe, member of the executive committee of the Utah Commission for LGBT Suicide Awareness and Prevention, https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=5117754&itype=CMSID,2017\)](https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=5117754&itype=CMSID,2017)

5. ~~4.~~ *Acknowledge that someone’s choice to leave the church could be one that God actually wants for them.* There are many examples in the scriptures of God making exceptions to commandments given the uniqueness of certain circumstances. None of us, not even our highest church leaders, can know for sure that someone’s personal revelation is false. It doesn’t hurt church members to acknowledge that an LGBTQ person walking “alongside” the church’s prescribed covenant path (as opposed to walking on top of that path, if doing so is hurtful for them) might be what God actually wants for that person. It also doesn’t hurt to acknowledge that an LGBTQ person might be walking on their *own* covenant path. Actually, we all are, given the personal nature of our covenants with God. Remember, God doesn’t require anyone to run faster than they have strength (Mosiah 4:27).
6. ~~5.~~ *Say you’ll be there as a friend no matter what – even if they leave the church and get angry at it.* Tell LGBTQ people and their loved ones that there is nothing they could do to make you not be their friend. They need that kind of unconditional love to be expressed. Some people they love in the church might feel like they need to distance themselves from them, out of a misplaced sense of needing to avoid condoning sinful behavior. You can be an unconditional friend.
7. ~~6.~~ *Put that expression of friendship into action by continuing to socialize with them as normal.* LGBTQ people and their families can feel isolated because of their choices. Don’t make that worse by not socializing with them anymore.
8. ~~7.~~ *Let them vent to you about their frustrations with church doctrine and the harshness in attitude of many church members.* You don’t need to agree with everything they say, but it will help them feel less alone if you are committed to listening and truly trying to understand how they feel.
9. ~~8.~~ *Call people out in church meetings when they make any statements that are hurtful to LGBTQ people or their families.* I know that finding productive ways to help people understand how their statements cause harm can be tricky. And I know from personal experience that doing so is especially difficult while serving in a leadership position in the church, because there’s a desire to avoid looking like you endorse something that is not authorized by the church. But finding ways to publicly honor the pain that LGBTQ church members and their families are feeling – and asking people to accordingly be more loving – is extremely comforting. That is a crucial way that you can “comfort those who stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8-9). And don’t wait for parents or outspoken allies of LGBTQ people to speak up first. They can sometimes feel tired or fragile from their efforts and might need the added boost of seeing someone unexpected step in to defend their loved

### *Does the church say that experiencing gay sexual desire is a choice?*

I found in my research that the church had published a website just ~~athe~~ year ~~or so~~ before (~~near the end of 2011, I think~~ in December 2012) called [www.mormonsandgays.org](http://www.mormonsandgays.org) (now [www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay/](http://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay/)).

*[Side note: Some people believe this site was published as a way to counter the intense and extensive negative media attention the church received after marriage equality was defeated in California in 2008. Others think it was created to help high profile Latter-day Saint political candidates (~~like Mitt Romney~~) defend against accusations (like some made during Mitt Romney's presidential run) that their church was anti-LGBTQ.]*

I learned on the church's website that the church didn't consider being attracted to people of the same gender to be a choice anymore. While the initial version of the site used to have the statement that "same-sex attraction" was not a choice on the lead page (if I remember correctly anyway), you now have to click through a couple pages to find that idea. But the current site still says:

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believes that the experience of same-sex attraction is a complex reality for many people. The attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is. Even though **individuals do not choose to have such attractions**, they do choose how to respond to them." (M. Russell Ballard, Apostle, "Church Leaders," <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay/>, 2015)

I wish the church would have publicized its original [mormonsandgays.org](http://mormonsandgays.org) site more when it first came out around 2011. Not many church members knew about it and so held onto false beliefs for many years thereafter, that being attracted to people of one's same gender is a choice. Those beliefs were based on statements made over prior decades by past church leaders – that God would never allow an individual to be born gay because it would contradict the plan of salvation – or that bad parenting could result in a child being gay - both of which are concepts the church no longer teaches are true: <https://mormonlgbtquestions.com/>. All of those past teachings have now been disavowed by the church. The official teaching of the church now is that gay sexual attraction is not a choice (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay/>).

### *What does science say about gay sexual orientation? How common is it in nature?*

That new position of the church (that "same-sex attraction" is not a choice) is consistent with what I had just begun to find out about scientific perspectives on the cause of gay sexual orientation as well. Through some reading, I had learned that genetics and developmental environment could both be at play – and neither meant that a person chose to have gay sexual desires. While different studies are continuing to provide more and more details, many have now emerged that suggest that a key to understanding the cause of varying sexual orientations is "epigenetics" (which means "over" or "around" genetics). That is a field of science that studies how environmental factors can actually change how DNA works (i.e., how genes are expressed): [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epigenetic\\_theories\\_of\\_homosexuality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epigenetic_theories_of_homosexuality).

Specifically, I have learned that researchers have found there are thousands of genes influencing sexual orientation, not a single "gay gene." Scientists also found environmental factors that can

*For a discussion about how the church's doctrine has always been moving in response to various circumstances and is never static, this podcast episode is great. It features Latter-day Faith host Dan Wotherspoon and Charles R. Harrell, author of the book "This is My Doctrine": The Development of Mormon Theology. <http://podcast.latterdayfaith.org/031-what-is-doctrine.>]*

### **Have recent prophetic statements further entrenched anti-LGBTQ doctrine?**

The first instance of this new doctrinal doubling down against marriage equality in the church happened on September 17, 2019 when our current prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, gave an address at BYU (<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/russell-m-nelson/love-laws-god/>). In his remarks, he explained why the Exclusion Policy was modified several months earlier – basically because of compassion and at God's direction. I liked that part of his address. But then he also said prophets and apostles could not change the church's standard that gay sexual behavior is sinful because "truth is truth" and the law of chastity (meaning that sexual relations should only happen between one man and one woman who are legally married) was a divine law. He explained that divine laws are "incontrovertible" and can be compared to unchanging laws of nature, like gravity. While prior church leaders had said before that gay marriage would never be allowed, it was the first time I had heard anyone currently serving as the prophet during the LGBTQ rights era be so blunt. And he went further than any other prophet had before on the topic by comparing the law of chastity to the unvarying laws of nature. He added, "God has not changed *His* definition of marriage."

Now, it was significant to me to hear him say all those things because prior prophets taught repeatedly that God's ideal definition of marriage was polygamy (see Chapter 6). But then subsequent prophets after 1890 taught that polygamy is a sin so severe it is deserving of loss of church membership, which is still the doctrine of the church today.

**"If any of our members are found to be practicing plural marriage, they are excommunicated, the most serious penalty the Church can impose. ... More than a century ago God clearly revealed unto His prophet Wilford Woodruff that the practice of plural marriage should be discontinued, which means that it is now against the law of God. Even in countries where civil or religious law allows polygamy, the Church teaches that marriage must be monogamous and does not accept into its membership those practicing plural marriage" ("What Are People Asking about Us?" Ensign, Nov. 1998, 71–72; <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1998/10/what-are-people-asking-about-us?lang=eng>).**

So God's definition of marriage has *in fact* clearly changed at least once already (I'll explain in Chapter 6 how it has actually changed a *few times*). The church has changed other doctrines (stated to have been revealed by, or even spoken in the very voice of, God) many times before. The scriptures teach us that God reveals truth to us "precept upon precept; line upon line... here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10). I think God gives us further light and knowledge when we are ready for it, but not before. Every doctrine of the church has come to us in that manner:

"If [church members] take the time to read their own history, they will understand that **not a single, significant LDS doctrine has gone unchanged throughout the entire history of the church.**" (Gregory A. Prince, 2017: <https://affirmation.org/science-vs-dogma-biology-challenges-the-lds-paradigm/>).

and variety in heaven for everyone's sake there. Otherwise, I will mourn the lack of love for others who are different from me (assuming I make it there).

*[Side note: It should be noted that our belief in spousal love continuing in heaven arguably makes our doctrine more traumatizing for gay people than the doctrines of many conservative Protestant sects and Catholicism. While same-gender relationships are prohibited in many of those denominations, there are also several honorable paths to celibacy for men and women available. Also, their versions of the afterlife are affirmatively non-sexual and do not contemplate anyone in sealed, eternal marriages. So the despair is worse under our doctrine because, for example, a gay Catholic only has to make it through this life, and then they will be equal with everyone else in the next life – but a gay Latter-day Saint has to make it through this life and somehow also try to find joy in the prospect of continuing to remain unequal with other people after this life as well.]*

### **What can our feelings tell us about doctrine?**

When I think of the psychological harm caused to LGBTQ church members by our doctrines on marriage, gender, and family, and when I think of church teachings that exclude loving couples from heaven just because they're loving each other in a way that's consistent with how God created them, I feel sadness, darkness, and hopelessness. In our religion, we place a ton of emphasis on trusting the feelings of God's spirit to tell us what is true (Moroni 10:4-5). We know that God's spirit is one of truth (John 15:26). We also know that the fruit of that spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, and goodness (Galatians 5:22).

**I have found that God's spirit fills my heart the most when I am focused on loving others. Perhaps that is because simply loving others helps us become less sinful and more like God: "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). It feels right to me to think of the wide range/multitude of sin as simply anything we do that hurts someone else, because that places us in disharmony with Christ's principal commandment to love one another (John 15:12):**

**"The experience of sin is not an unalterable state we inhabit; it is a felt disharmony. The unhappiness of sin is nothing more than our spirit rebelling against a condition alien to its true nature. We have fallen out of alignment with God. The separation from God is not punishment inflicted by God, but the consequence of an existential reality of our own making." (Fiona Givens, *The God Who Weeps*, <https://ldsquotations.com/author/terryl-and-fiona-givens/>, 2012)**

**The essence of God is love (1 John 4:8). So as His offspring, we go against our divine nature when we fail to love. That is sin. And it's why, if we're humble enough to be aware of being unloving, we usually feel bad about it. I regret how I viewed gay marriage before my heart was softened and my perspective on the issue changed – in other words: before I repented of my hurtful thinking. Now, when I imagine Wes finding the love of his life and being in a fulfilling marital relationship with a man he loves, like how I love his mother, I have joyful feelings that seem in harmony with God's love. But when I think of a loving spousal relationship like that not being allowed to continue in heaven, the feelings of the Spirit are absent. It feels wrong to think I might enjoy the continuation of my marital bliss with Cheryl after this life, but that same joy is not possible for any gay couples.**

**A**nd so, a simple trust-in-the-Lord approach to solving everything for LGBTQ people without also hoping for a change to our current doctrine produces feelings for me that are the *opposite* of God’s spirit. I cannot believe that God wants me to have faith in the status quo. To truly believe Christ will work things out, I have to believe that His true doctrine has yet to be revealed – and that when it is shown, it will provide a way for a gay person to have the same degree of happiness in heaven as a straight person without switching the natural “sociality” they have had their whole mortal lives. Otherwise, our concept of heaven is downright scary for around 2-10% of the earth’s population (which is the estimated number of LGBTQ people, depending on the study – see Chapter 1). And it would mean God treats us all differently just based on our biological makeups – which contradicts many scriptures, such as:

“Of a truth I perceive that **God is no respecter of persons**: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35).

“[God] inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and **all are alike unto God**.” (2 Nephi 26:33).

So, because I don’t see any other way to believe that Christ will be fair and loving, I still held onto my hope for change, even after I heard President Nelson’s BYU address. I guess I’m a determined optimist and really take God at His word when he says that faith, hope, and love are enduring attributes and that love is paramount (1 Corinthians 13:13). I was so persistent in my optimism that I was emotionally still ready to go back to church without missing a week, even following our family’s in-person ordeal with the General Authority that happened the week after President Nelson gave his talk at BYU (see Chapter 9).

*[Side note: Despite a family decision to take a “church break” for 9 weeks at the end of 2019 (to try to help one another heal from our experience with the General Authority), I still went to church alone a few times during that period, including when I saw that our ward elders quorum planned to discuss President Oaks’ General Conference talk “Two Great Commandments” in class one week (my thoughts on that talk are found in the next section). Our entire family also attended church together again for the Christmas 2019 services at our ward. I expect I will be the only member of my family who attends church with any sort of regularity going forward.]*

Since that negative experience, my optimism increases as I study more in depth about what the scriptures teach on the subject of equality. I love how my heart feels when I read the following commentary on the above Book of Mormon verse that states “all are alike unto God:”

“There is no social category of life circumstance that prevents a person from being worthy to sit down at God’s table. God invites all. There is no price. No one is excluded...with no strings attached. Biblical scholars point to the use of merism in the story of the creation. **Merism is a rhetorical device in which two ends of the spectrum are named as a way to encompass the entire spectrum in between.** In Genesis, this means that God created the light and the dark, but also every point of dawn and dusk in between. God created the earth and the firmament, but also every place between the seas and the stars. **God created males and females, but also every person who identifies as bi, trans, non-binary, or queer. The two points encompass the spectrum, they don’t exclude it. Merism seems to be employed here [2 Nephi 26:33].** God welcomes not just black and white people, but also every shade of pink and brown skin in between. Every social division of Jacob’s society is

Even though change is possible doctrinally, some likely reasons that change hasn't occurred yet might be:

- A change like that may be viewed as a negative reflection on the credibility of our church leaders as prophets and apostles. Our leaders don't want to risk hurting people's faith in them.
- Some of our leaders might have grown accustomed to using the rallying cry against LGBTQ equality as a convenient way to energize church members – inadvertently feeding off of our collective homophobia to unite us in a “just” cause. It may be that the zealotry of such rallying efforts ~~are~~ is making it harder for those leaders to reverse course now.
- Some of our leaders may be hesitant to lose the support of other conservative churches. Our church is part of a conservative political movement against many LGBTQ rights, and some of our leaders may not want to lose the benefits that come from being part of a large coalition.

For those reasons, I would be incredibly surprised to see such a change happen any time before it is either essentially imposed on the church by outside forces (see Chapter 8), or until the teenagers of today grow up to become the prophets and apostles leading the church in the future.

That doesn't mean I don't suspect some of the apostles who are currently alive might wish gay marriage were allowed in the church (although I would never expect them to say so publicly because church leaders always like to maintain an image of unanimity in public). I actually think it likely there are robust discussions happening about marriage equality among the apostles and the First Presidency. When my parents were called to preside over a couple hundred young missionaries in Tennessee in 1999, our entire family had the opportunity to meet with an apostle when my parents were set apart (a ritual to formally bless a person to carry out a specific calling or responsibility). Our meeting with the apostle occurred in a room in a church office building in Salt Lake City that, upon entering, he described as the “war room” because it was where the apostles and/or First Presidency met regularly when they are not otherwise meeting in the temple together. He explained that there are often intense and vigorous (but respectful) discussions where differences of opinion are debated on many topics in those meetings. He also explained that a decision to take action on any topic wasn't made unless there was unanimity among the First Presidency and all the other apostles.

**[https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-12-03-me-923-story.html%3f\\_amp=true](https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-12-03-me-923-story.html%3f_amp=true)**. And when apostles are called, they are charged to support whatever the majority of the apostles desire and to publicly portray complete unanimity:

**“Later, the president gave me what is known as the “charge to the apostles.” That charge included a commitment to give all that one has, both as to time and means, to the building of the Kingdom of God; to keep himself pure and unspotted from the sins of the world; to be obedient to the authorities of the church; and to exercise the**



freedom to speak his mind but always be willing to subjugate his own thoughts and accept the majority opinion—not only to vote for it but to act as though it were his own original opinion after it has been approved by the majority of the Council of the Twelve and the First Presidency.” (Hugh B. Brown, Apostle, *Hugh B. Brown and Edwin B. Firmage (ed.), An Abundant Life, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, pages 126-127;*  
<https://www.google.com/amp/s/prophetsseersandrevealers.wordpress.com/2015/06/01/the-calling-of-an-apostle/amp/>, 1965)

It may be the case that no change in doctrine about it will occur for many, many years, until several of the current apostles – maybe even all of them – pass away. But I could be wrong – because the reversal of the racial priesthood/temple ban happened even though an apostle who had published incredibly racist teachings to justify the ban was still alive at the time. To his credit, he immediately minimized all his prior teachings on the subject:

**“Forget everything I have said, or what...Brigham Young...or whomsoever has said...that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.”** (Bruce R. McConkie, Apostle,  
[https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Criticism\\_of\\_Mormonism/Websites/MormonThink/Blacks\\_and\\_the\\_Priesthood](https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Criticism_of_Mormonism/Websites/MormonThink/Blacks_and_the_Priesthood), 1978)

~~I suspect~~ **Based on several accounts, it seems clear** that the prophet at the time, Spencer W. Kimball, really wanted to make the change (perhaps encouraged by the desires of most church members, outside social pressures or worries over government retribution against the church, as I’ll discuss further in Chapter 8). Often, official “unanimity” among church leaders (including at the local levels) is expected (and therefore given) whenever the presiding leader states that his strongly held view is the result of divine revelation. So when President Kimball spoke in those terms, ~~I suspect~~ the rest of the apostles quickly fell in line and supported him, even though that meant some of them might face some personal public embarrassment over their past teachings.

However, even if a current apostle who is perhaps LGBTQ-friendly becomes prophet someday, I am not sure whether that alone will be enough for doctrinal change to occur – because I believe the prophet may only have the “real intent” (Moroni 10:4) necessary to receive new revelation on a topic when he is personally confident that the majority of church members are ready to embrace the change. This is different from how Jesus implemented change during His mortal ministry. He did not wait for the majority of the Sadducees and Pharisees to be ready for change when He taught them His radical message of love. And it is different from the way Joseph Smith revealed new doctrines and principles as well. He was constantly revealing adjustments and new, radical thoughts. But ever since Joseph’s death, many subsequent prophets in the church have seemed to take on, as their primary responsibility, the role of a reliable steward; someone who protects and encourages deeper living of what has already been revealed, rather than someone who helps facilitate new, radical changes in doctrine. When it comes to the idea of allowing marriage equality in the church, I personally think the general population of the church isn’t sufficiently open-minded enough to prevent such a change from “shaking their faith.” That may not happen for another generation or two yet, at least. And so until that time comes, whomever is serving as the prophet

What Words Can't Define (August 2014) – <http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/what-words-cant-define/>  
 A Difference of Opinion (June 2014) – <http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/a-difference-of-opinion/>  
 Shame and Affirmation (June 2014) – <http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/shame-and-affirmation/>  
 Cool Tolerance (March 2013) – <http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/cool-tolerance/>  
 It's Complex (August 2013) – <http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/its-complex/>  
 Christmas Cards (January 2014) – <http://nomorestranger.wpengine.com/christmas-cards/>  
 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>)

**[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.

*[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/18nKkeahLsuNXA56lYoy95rjLPtzVG0aB/view?usp=drivesdk> ).]*

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

<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-8-april-1843-as-reported-by-william-clayton-b/3>, 1843, spelling and capitalization modernized)

“The first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that **we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without...being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds...of men...when that truth is clearly demonstrated to our minds**, and we have the highest degree of evidence of the same.” (The Prophet Joseph Smith, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-joseph-smith/chapter-22?lang=eng>, 1839)

“...if a man rejects a message that I may give to him but is still moral and believes in the main principles of the gospel and desires to continue in his membership in the Church, he is permitted to remain...so long as a man believe in God and has a little faith in the Church organization, we nurture and aid that person to continue faithfully as a member of the Church **though he may not believe all that is revealed.**” (President Joseph F. Smith, *Reed Smoot Hearings, US Congress, 1903-1907*, pg 97) (<https://bit.ly/2TksPK9>)

I think selectively choosing which church doctrines I will have hope and faith in is a good thing for me as I start what feels like a new spiritual journey. To that end, I really like this quote from Brigham Young:

“**I do not even believe that there is a single revelation**, among the many God has given to the Church, **that is perfect in its fullness**. The revelations of God contain correct doctrine and principles so far as they go; but it is impossible for the poor, weak, low, groveling, sinful inhabitants of the earth to receive a revelation from the Almighty in all its perfections” (Discourses of Brigham Young, Deseret Book, 1977, p. 40) ([https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Doctrine\\_and\\_Covenants/Textual\\_changes/Why\\_did\\_Joseph\\_Smith\\_edit\\_revelations#Brigham\\_Young\\_.281855.29:\\_22I\\_do\\_not\\_even\\_believe\\_that\\_there\\_is\\_a\\_single\\_revelation.2C\\_among\\_the\\_many\\_God\\_has\\_given\\_to\\_the\\_Church.2C\\_that\\_is\\_perfect\\_in\\_its\\_fulness.22](https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Doctrine_and_Covenants/Textual_changes/Why_did_Joseph_Smith_edit_revelations#Brigham_Young_.281855.29:_22I_do_not_even_believe_that_there_is_a_single_revelation.2C_among_the_many_God_has_given_to_the_Church.2C_that_is_perfect_in_its_fulness.22))

**[The importance of taking a selective approach to accepting church teachings is powerfully described as follows:](#)**

**[It seems to me we must not accept any interpretation or scripture, or any statement by a Church leader or teaching in a Church meeting or Church school class that denies or diminishes the clear, central doctrine that all are alike unto God, black and white, male and female. It is more reasonable, as well as ethical, to give up racist and sexist and \(homophobic\) theology than to cling to every statement by every Church leader as authoritative. \(Jody England Hansen, Author and Mama Dragon, https://affirmation.org/lgbtqia-mormons-families-friends-reactions-general-conference/, 2017\)](#)**

I will try to promote growth and healing in the church by worshipping God in the way I see most worthwhile: through creating love wherever I can. So ironically, the current doctrine of the church provides me a great opportunity to worship more meaningfully than I perhaps could anywhere else:

C_that_is_perfect_in_its_fulness.2 2		
<a href="https://affirmation.org/lgbtqiia-mormons-families-friends-reactions-general-conference/">https://affirmation.org/lgbtqiia-mormons-families-friends-reactions-general-conference/</a>	<b>Author Jody England Hansen teaches “It is more reasonable, as well as ethical, to give up racist and sexist and (homophobic) theology than to cling to every statement by every Church leader as authoritative.”</b>	<b>Chapter 10</b>
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-joseph-smith/chapter-45?lang=eng">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-joseph-smith/chapter-45?lang=eng</a>	Joseph Smith taught that the “minds of the Saints...frequently...fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions.”	Chapter 2

Doctrine; definitions/exploration of

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/J._Reuben_Clark">https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/J._Reuben_Clark</a>	President J. Reuben Clark said real truth cannot be harmed by investigation.	Chapter 1
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/si/questions/what-is-doctrine">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/si/questions/what-is-doctrine</a>	Church website response to the question: What is doctrine?	Chapter 4
<a href="https://www.newspapers.com/clip/21138508/partial_transcript_of_ap_interview_with/">https://www.newspapers.com/clip/21138508/partial_transcript_of_ap_interview_with/</a>	Elder Dallin H. Oaks said he doesn't think “it's possible to distinguish between policy and doctrine.”	Chapter 4
<a href="http://podcast.latterdayfaith.org/031-what-is-doctrine">http://podcast.latterdayfaith.org/031-what-is-doctrine</a>	Podcast that discusses how all church doctrines have evolved and changed over time.	Chapter 4
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/si/questions/what-is-doctrine">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/si/questions/what-is-doctrine</a>	The church says that any teaching that has not been voted on by the whole church to be canonized can be known to be of God or not if we feel God's spirit testify of their truthfulness.	Chapter 7
<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>	“It is likely that the Lord has allowed (and will continue to allow) his servants to make mistakes.”	

Doctrine; changes in that coincide with external forces

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-stories/chapter-31-the-word-of-wisdom-february-1833">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-stories/chapter-31-the-word-of-wisdom-february-1833</a>	Joseph Smith got the Word of Wisdom revelation after feeling compelled to pray because his wife, Emma, asked him to.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1890_Manifesto">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1890_Manifesto</a>	The church stopped polygamy at time the U.S. government forced it to.	Chapter 8
<a href="http://www.lds-mormon.com/taxes_priesthood.shtml">http://www.lds-mormon.com/taxes_priesthood.shtml</a>	Worry over the church potentially losing its tax-exempt status and end of the racial priesthood/temple ban in 1978.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_rights_and_Mormonism#NAACP_involvement">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_rights_and_Mormonism#NAACP_involvement</a>	The threat of losing revenue from BYU sports programs and end of the racial priesthood/temple ban in 1978.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://www.sltrib.com/news/education/2019/11/11/two-science-societies/">https://www.sltrib.com/news/education/2019/11/11/two-science-societies/</a>	In 2019, two science societies removed BYU job postings over the school's Honor Code ban on 'homosexual behavior'.	Chapter 8
<a href="https://soundcloud.com/mormonland/college-administrator-examines-byus-honor-code-">https://soundcloud.com/mormonland/college-administrator-examines-byus-honor-code-</a>	Podcast discussion with Michael Austin, a BYU alumnus and executive vice president for academic affairs at the University of Evansville, a Methodist school in Indiana,	Chapter 8

<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/38-church-policies-and-guidelines?lang=eng#title_number_118">g/study/manual/general-handbook/38-church-policies-and-guidelines?lang=eng#title_number_118</a>	that the church views someone’s eternal gender to be their biological sex at birth, instructs church members to love and be sensitive toward transgender individuals, and contemplates church membership restrictions for transgender individuals for any social, medical, or surgical gender transition steps they take.	
<a href="https://isna.org/faq/frequency/">https://isna.org/faq/frequency/</a>	1 in every 1,500 babies are born “so noticeably atypical in terms of genitalia that a specialist in sex differentiation is called in.”	Chapter 4
<a href="https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/%28SICI%291520-6300%28200003/04%2912%3A2%3C151%3A%3AAID-AJHB1%3E3.0.CO%3B2-F">https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/%28SICI%291520-6300%28200003/04%2912%3A2%3C151%3A%3AAID-AJHB1%3E3.0.CO%3B2-F</a>	1 in 60 babies are born with less visible, but still significant, biological characteristics of both sexes.	Chapter 4
<a href="https://archive.org/stream/Doctrines-of-Salvation-volume-2-joseph-fielding-smith/JFSDoctrinesofSalvationv2_djvu.txt">https://archive.org/stream/Doctrines-of-Salvation-volume-2-joseph-fielding-smith/JFSDoctrinesofSalvationv2_djvu.txt</a>	President Joseph Fielding Smith said people will exist without any gender at all in the lower degrees of heaven.	Chapter 4

## Hope

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="http://www.ldsliving.com/-This-Is-the-Church-of-Happy-Endings-Elder-Holland-Gives-Powerful-Message-to-Graduates/s/88339">http://www.ldsliving.com/-This-Is-the-Church-of-Happy-Endings-Elder-Holland-Gives-Powerful-Message-to-Graduates/s/88339</a>	Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said the church should be “the church of the happy endings.”	Chapter 10
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/the-pearl-of-great-price-student-manual-2018/the-articles-of-faith/articles-of-faith-1-5-13">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/the-pearl-of-great-price-student-manual-2018/the-articles-of-faith/articles-of-faith-1-5-13</a>	Elder James E. Talmage said in 1899 that canon is still open and that “revelation, surpassing in importance and glorious fulness any that has been recorded, is yet to be given to the Church.”	Chapter 4
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/doctrines-of-the-gospel-student-manual/23-restoration">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/doctrines-of-the-gospel-student-manual/23-restoration</a>	Elder Bruce R. McConkie said the “last word has not been spoken on any subject” and that “There are more things we do not know about the doctrines of salvation than there are things we do know.”	Chapter 4

## Love; importance of

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://www.amazon.com/III-Walk-Carol-Lynn-Pearson/dp/1423653955">https://www.amazon.com/III-Walk-Carol-Lynn-Pearson/dp/1423653955</a>	Verse from picture book by author, poet and scholar, Carol Lynn Pearson:  “If you don’t love as most people do, Some people say your love’s not true. But I won’t, I won’t!”	Dedication page
<a href="http://bitly.ws/8E33">http://bitly.ws/8E33</a>	Lowell Bennion, founder of the first food bank and homeless shelters in Utah describes the difficulty of walking by faith in darkness when called upon to do something that goes against the spirit and the heart and soul of the gospel.	Dedication page
<a href="https://www.facebook.com/emily">https://www.facebook.com/emily</a>	<b>Excellent list of what is harmful vs. helpful to say to</b>	<b>Chapter 2</b>

<a href="http://e.nelson.92/posts/10219726331658849">.e.nelson.92/posts/10219726331658849</a>	<a href="#">LGBTQ church members and their loved ones, compiled by Emily Nelson, a mother of a gay son and moderator of an online Latter-day Saint parents support group.</a>	
<a href="https://archive.slttrib.com/article.php?id=5117754&amp;itype=CMSID">https://archive.slttrib.com/article.php?id=5117754&amp;itype=CMSID</a>	<a href="#">Debra Oaks Coe of the executive committee of the Utah Commission for LGBT Suicide Awareness and Prevention teaches that when an LGBTQ comes out, “especially a young person to a parent, they are not looking for you to agree. They are asking if they are still loved.”</a>	<a href="#">Chapter 2</a>
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/elder-ballard-tackles-tough-topics-and-gives-timely-advice-to-young-adults">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/elder-ballard-tackles-tough-topics-and-gives-timely-advice-to-young-adults</a>	Elder M. Russell Ballard said church members need to do a better job at listening <a href="#">to</a> and loving LGBT church members.	Chapter 3
<a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/blog/category/homosexuality#_ednref7">https://www.fairmormon.org/blog/category/homosexuality#_ednref7</a>	Elder Quentin L. Cook said the church should be at the forefront of loving and that families should not “exclude or be disrespectful of those who choose a different lifestyle as a result of their feelings about their own gender.”	Chapter 3
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2012/10/protect-the-children">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2012/10/protect-the-children</a>	Elder Dallin H. Oaks said young LGBTQ people are vulnerable and need loving understanding, not bullying or ostracism.	Chapter 3
<a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=1skIAZfBlrG8SnB7B89Cf57gg17XPQ_Z">https://drive.google.com/open?id=1skIAZfBlrG8SnB7B89Cf57gg17XPQ_Z</a>	Compilation by Richard Ostler, an influential LGBTQ ally and active/faithful Latter-day Saint, of positive and loving quotes from church leaders on LGBTQ matters.	Chapter 3
<a href="https://ldsquotations.com/author/terryl-and-fiona-givens/">https://ldsquotations.com/author/terryl-and-fiona-givens/</a>	<a href="#">Author and scholar, Fiona Givens, teaches that “sin is not an unalterable state we inhabit; it is a felt disharmony.”</a>	<a href="#">Chapter 4</a>
<a href="https://religionnews.com/2016/07/20/mormon-women-fear-eternal-polygamy-study-shows/">https://religionnews.com/2016/07/20/mormon-women-fear-eternal-polygamy-study-shows/</a>	Author, poet and scholar, Carol Lynn Pearson, teaches that we need to stop expecting people to wait to be happy in heaven when doctrine causes them harm now: “We here on earth to make things better.”	Chapter 4
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/the-pearl-of-great-price-student-manual-2018/the-articles-of-faith/articles-of-faith-1-5-13?lang=eng">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/the-pearl-of-great-price-student-manual-2018/the-articles-of-faith/articles-of-faith-1-5-13?lang=eng</a>	Elder James E. Talmage taught that professions of godliness without love are worthless.	Chapter 10

Marriage; God’s approval of many different forms of

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://www.patheos.com/blogs/unreasonablefaith/2009/04/the-varieties-of-biblical-marriage/">https://www.patheos.com/blogs/unreasonablefaith/2009/04/the-varieties-of-biblical-marriage/</a>	There have been several forms of marriage endorsed by God in the Bible.	Chapter 6

Marriage (straight); as a commandment

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-</a>	The church teaches that heterosexual marriage is necessary to enter the highest degree of heaven.	Chapter 7

<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1998/10/what-are-people-asking-about-us?lang=eng">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1998/10/what-are-people-asking-about-us?lang=eng</a>	<b><u>President Gordon B. Hinckley taught that after 1890, polygamy goes against the law of God (and so is a sin), with excommunication being the consequence of anyone in a polygamous marriage.</u></b>	<b><u>Chapter 4</u></b>
<a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_polygamy/1835_Doctrine_and_Covenants_denies_polygamy">https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_polygamy/1835_Doctrine_and_Covenants_denies_polygamy</a>	The church actually changed its scripture/canon to redefine marriage: to allow for polygamy.	Chapter 6
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual/section-132-marriage-an-eternal-covenant">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual/section-132-marriage-an-eternal-covenant</a>	Joseph Smith knew polygamy was going to be instituted as early as 1831 – even though that contradicted existing scripture that said only monogamy was allowed in the church.	Chapter 6
<a href="https://www.templestudies.org/briughurst-newell-g-section-132-of-the-lds-doctrine-and-covenants-its-complex-contents-and-controversial-legacy/">https://www.templestudies.org/briughurst-newell-g-section-132-of-the-lds-doctrine-and-covenants-its-complex-contents-and-controversial-legacy/</a>	Current interpretation of Section 132 of Doctrine & Covenants, to address eternal marriage generally, is not consistent with the textual emphasis on, and historical context of, polygamy.	Chapter 6
See multiple references where cited in Chapter 6.	19 <sup>th</sup> century prophetic/apostolic statements that polygamy is required for the highest degree of heaven and/or is better than monogamy.	Chapter 6
<a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_polygamy/Brigham_Young_said_that_the_only_men_who_become_gods_are_those_that_practice_polygamy#cite_note-10">https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_polygamy/Brigham_Young_said_that_the_only_men_who_become_gods_are_those_that_practice_polygamy#cite_note-10</a>	Brigham Young discussed polygamy being required for the highest heaven.	Chapter 6
<a href="http://bitly.ws/8HXJ">http://bitly.ws/8HXJ</a>	The First Presidency and apostles stated in an 1891 petition to the President of the United States that the church previously taught that polygamy was a necessity for exaltation.	Chapter 6
<a href="https://archive.org/stream/MormonDoctrine1966/MormonDoctrine1966_djvu.txt">https://archive.org/stream/MormonDoctrine1966/MormonDoctrine1966_djvu.txt</a>  <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormonism_and_polygamy">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormonism_and_polygamy</a>	Elder Bruce R. McConkie said “Obviously the holy practice [of plural marriage] will commence again after the Second Coming of the Son of Man and the ushering in of the millennium.”	Chapter 6
<a href="https://www.amazon.com/Ghost-Eternal-Polygamy-Haunting-Hearts/dp/0997458208">https://www.amazon.com/Ghost-Eternal-Polygamy-Haunting-Hearts/dp/0997458208</a>	Book by author, poet and scholar, Carol Lynn Pearson. She writes about the idea that because church leaders haven’t actually denounced the idea of polygamy in heaven, current church doctrine is essentially just putting a pause on polygamy.	Chapter 6
<a href="https://religionnews.com/2016/07/20/mormon-women-fear-eternal-polygamy-study-shows/">https://religionnews.com/2016/07/20/mormon-women-fear-eternal-polygamy-study-shows/</a>	The vast majority of women in the church dread the idea that they will be a plural wife for eternity.	Chapter 4
<a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_polygamy/Brigham_Young_said_that_the_only_men_who_become_gods_are_those_that_practice_polygamy#Question:_Is_plural_marriage_required_in_order_to_achieve_exaltation.3F">https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_polygamy/Brigham_Young_said_that_the_only_men_who_become_gods_are_those_that_practice_polygamy#Question:_Is_plural_marriage_required_in_order_to_achieve_exaltation.3F</a>	Several quotes from past apostles and prophets, and statements in manuals published by the church, indicate that polygamy is not required for exaltation.	Chapter 4
<a href="https://www.gregtrimble.com/what-every-mormon-really-needs-to-know-about-polygamy/">https://www.gregtrimble.com/what-every-mormon-really-needs-to-know-about-polygamy/</a>	Essay arguing that church teachings are clear that no one will be forced to practice polygamy in heaven.	Chapter 4



## Proclamation on the Family

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world</a>	The church’s proclamation that describes doctrinal understandings on gender roles, marriage, and family.	Chapter 4 Chapter 5
<a href="https://rationalfaiths.com/from-amici-to-ohana/">https://rationalfaiths.com/from-amici-to-ohana/</a>	Timeline of events around when the church’s family proclamation was issued and the church’s involvement as an amicus curiae party in an early court case in Hawaii dealing with legalizing gay marriage.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1995/10/stand-strong-against-the-wives-of-the-world?lang=eng">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1995/10/stand-strong-against-the-wives-of-the-world?lang=eng</a>	President Gordon B. Hinckley did not describe the family proclamation as a new revelation when he introduced it to the church in 1995. Rather, he said it was “a declaration and reaffirmation of standards, doctrines, and practices relative to the family which...have repeatedly [been] stated throughout [the church’s] history.”	Chapter 5
<a href="https://archive.satrib.com/article.php?id=50440474&amp;itype=CMSID">https://archive.satrib.com/article.php?id=50440474&amp;itype=CMSID</a>	President Boyd K. Packer’s use of the term “revelation” to describe the family proclamation in a General Conference talk was corrected.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://www.deseret.com/faith/2020/4/5/21208843/church-proclamations-history-mormons-latter-day-saints-gordon-b-hinckley-russell-m-nelson">https://www.deseret.com/faith/2020/4/5/21208843/church-proclamations-history-mormons-latter-day-saints-gordon-b-hinckley-russell-m-nelson</a>  <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Family:_A_Proclamation_to_the_World#cite_note-16">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Family:_A_Proclamation_to_the_World#cite_note-16</a>	The church has issued five other “proclamations” over the course of its history.	N/A

## Prophets; inspiration and fallibility of

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2001/07/words-of-the-prophet-the-spirit-of-optimism?lang=eng">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2001/07/words-of-the-prophet-the-spirit-of-optimism?lang=eng</a>	President Gordon B. Hinckley said “I am not asking that all criticism be silenced. Growth comes of correction.”	Preface
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2013/10/come-join-with-us?lang=eng">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2013/10/come-join-with-us?lang=eng</a>	<u>Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf said church leaders have made mistakes that are not in harmony with doctrine.</u>	<u>Preface</u>
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2013/04/lord-i-believe?lang=eng">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2013/04/lord-i-believe?lang=eng</a>	<u>Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said the Lord has only ever had imperfect people through whom to do His work, including apostles.</u>	<u>Preface</u>
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1979/08/the-debate-is-over?lang=eng">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1979/08/the-debate-is-over?lang=eng</a>  <a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/arc">https://www.fairmormon.org/arc</a>	<u>“When the prophet speaks, the debate is over” is an extension of the original phrase “When the prophet speaks, the thinking has been done,” which was an unauthorized statement that President George Albert Smith privately renounced after it was first published</u>	<u>Preface</u>

<a href="#">hive/publications/when-the-prophet-speaks-is-the-thinking-done</a>	<a href="#">in a church magazine in 1945.</a>	
<a href="http://www.mormonpress.com/elder-ezra-taft-benson-and-politics">http://www.mormonpress.com/elder-ezra-taft-benson-and-politics</a> <a href="https://archive.slttrib.com/story.php?ref=/lds/ci_14287116">https://archive.slttrib.com/story.php?ref=/lds/ci_14287116</a>	<a href="#">Elder Ezra Taft Benson was reprimanded and asked to apologize by President Spencer W. Kimball for giving his 1980 talk titled “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet” in which he essentially says the living prophet is more important than scripture and should be followed even in political matters because he cannot lead us astray.</a>	<a href="#">Preface</a>
<a href="http://www.eugeneengland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/BRM-to-EE-Feb-80-Combined.pdf">http://www.eugeneengland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/BRM-to-EE-Feb-80-Combined.pdf</a>	Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote that “Prophets are men and they make mistakes. Sometimes they err in doctrine.”	Chapter 2
<a href="https://archive.org/stream/MormonDoctrine1966/MormonDoctrine1966_djvu.txt">https://archive.org/stream/MormonDoctrine1966/MormonDoctrine1966_djvu.txt</a>	Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that General Authorities may or may not be authorities in doctrinal knowledge or the receipt of the promptings of the Spirit.	Chapter 2
<a href="https://www.facebook.com/beyondtheblockpodcast/videos/758569211567124">https://www.facebook.com/beyondtheblockpodcast/videos/758569211567124</a>	<a href="#">Clever, one-minute video by scriptorian, podcaster, entertainer and social justice advocate, James C. Jones, enacting how Peter had to be told three times by the Lord before believing the gentiles could receive the gospel (see Acts 10:10-15).</a>	<a href="#">Chapter 2</a>
<a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/blog/2014/11/25/living-fallibility">https://www.fairmormon.org/blog/2014/11/25/living-fallibility</a>	The church believes that prophets can make mistakes.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_doctrine/Prophets_are_not_infallible#Question:_Were_Biblical_prophets_infallible.3F">https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_doctrine/Prophets_are_not_infallible#Question:_Were_Biblical_prophets_infallible.3F</a>	Comparison of the mistakes/fallibility of Biblical prophets to those of modern prophets.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/171150-if-i-do-not-know-the-will-of-my-father">https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/171150-if-i-do-not-know-the-will-of-my-father</a>	Brigham Young said he sometimes taught, even in his official capacity as the presiding authority over the church, according to his own discretion, not divine revelation.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_doctrine/Prophets_are_not_infallible#cite_note-13">https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_doctrine/Prophets_are_not_infallible#cite_note-13</a>	Elder Charles W. Penrose said the President of the Church, when speaking to the Church in his official capacity, is NOT infallible.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_116_pages">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_116_pages</a>	God can have a back-up plan already in place to make up for the mistakes that prophets make.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_doctrine/Prophets_are_not_infallible#cite_note-16">https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_doctrine/Prophets_are_not_infallible#cite_note-16</a>	Elder Boyd K. Packer said “Even with the best of intentions, [Church government] does not always work the way it should. Human nature may express itself on occasion, but not to the permanent injury of the work.”	Chapter 5
<a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_doctrine/Prophets_are_not_infallible#cite_note-15">https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Mormonism_and_doctrine/Prophets_are_not_infallible#cite_note-15</a>	Elder Dallin H. Oaks said “We are often left to work out problems without the dictation or specific direction of the Spirit. That is part of the experience we must have in mortality.”	Chapter 5
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lKQrYUE3yc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lKQrYUE3yc</a>	Prophets and apostles can contradict each other, even within short periods of time. This video shows that in the context of whether we should be okay with the nickname “the Mormon Church.”	Chapter 5
<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 banned white church members who married Black individuals from entering a temple into at least the 1960s and recommended against any interracial marriages in official publications into the 2000s.	Chapter 5

<a href="https://www.sixteensmallstones.org/debunking-that-quote-about-brigham-youngs-greatest-fear/">https://www.sixteensmallstones.org/debunking-that-quote-about-brigham-youngs-greatest-fear/</a>	Brigham Young said he worried about people not asking for themselves whether their leaders are led by God.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/russell-m-nelson/love-laws-god/">https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/russell-m-nelson/love-laws-god/</a>	President Russell M. Nelson says people can learn for themselves whether the church’s leaders are truly prophets and apostles.	Chapter 5
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/04/revelation-for-the-church-revelation-for-our-lives">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/04/revelation-for-the-church-revelation-for-our-lives</a>	President Russell M. Nelson said “good inspiration is based upon good information” (so can new scientific discoveries about gay sexual orientation result in better inspiration?)	Chapter 6
<a href="https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Criticism_of_Mormonism/Web_sites/MormonThink/Blacks_and_the_Priesthood">https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Criticism_of_Mormonism/Web_sites/MormonThink/Blacks_and_the_Priesthood</a>	Elder Bruce R. McConkie said new revelation makes prior prophetic statements worthy of forgetting.	Chapter 6 Chapter 10
<a href="https://www.google.com/amp/s/prophetsseersandrevelators.wordpress.com/2015/06/01/the-calling-of-an-apostle/amp/">https://www.google.com/amp/s/prophetsseersandrevelators.wordpress.com/2015/06/01/the-calling-of-an-apostle/amp/</a>	<b>President Hugh B. Brown describes a “charge to the apostles” that every newly called apostle receives from the President of the church pursuant to which each new apostle agrees to speak his mind freely in private but to portray as his own opinion in public whatever position the majority of the apostles maintain.</b>	<b>Chapter 6</b>
<a href="https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/si/questions/what-is-doctrine">https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/si/questions/what-is-doctrine</a>  <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>	The church says that any teaching that has not been voted on by the whole church to become canon can be known to be of God or not if we feel God’s spirit testify of their truthfulness.  “It is likely that the Lord has allowed (and will continue to allow) his servants to make mistakes.”	Chapter 7

Psychological harm; from non-LGBTQ affirming positions

Referenced site	Summary	Location used
<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>  <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>	Peer-reviewed, <a href="#">2017</a> academic study showing that church teachings on marriage, family, gender, and sexuality cause PTSD symptoms for nearly 90% of LGBTQ Latter-day Saints.	Preface Chapter 2 Chapter 8 Chapter 10
<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>  <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>	<b>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</b>	<b>Preface Chapter 2 Chapter 8</b>
<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi</a>	<b>Synthesized compilation of all published and non-</b>	<b>Chapter 8</b>

<a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2020.1800545?journalCode=wgfs20">/abs/10.1080/1550428X.2020.1800545?journalCode=wgfs20</a>  <a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/18nKkeahLsuNXA56lYoy95rflPtzVG0aB/view?usp=drivesdk">https://drive.google.com/file/d/18nKkeahLsuNXA56lYoy95rflPtzVG0aB/view?usp=drivesdk</a>	<p><b><u>published empirical research on Latter-day Saint LGBTQ psychological and interpersonal functioning.</u></b></p>	
<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/mormonsbuildingbridges/permalink/2517990774968435/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/mormonsbuildingbridges/permalink/2517990774968435/</a>	<p>Peer-reviewed study showing that religious teachings that define gay sexual behavior as sinful result in psychological damage and depression.</p>	<p>Chapter 10</p>
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_among_LGBT_youth">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_among_LGBT_youth</a>	<p>LGBTQ youth have a higher rate of suicide than other youth.</p>	<p>Preface</p>
<a href="https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3721024/">https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3721024/</a>	<p>It has been clinically proven that lack of hope causes depression.</p>	<p>Chapter 2</p>
<a href="http://www.withoutend.org/reactions-the-policy-november-2015/">http://www.withoutend.org/reactions-the-policy-november-2015/</a>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Chapter 3</p>
<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>	<p>Debate about the causality between church teachings regarding gay sexual orientation and suicide</p>	<p>Chapter 8</p>
<a href="https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_Mormon_suicides">https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_Mormon_suicides</a>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Chapter 2 Chapter 8</p>
<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>	<p>Personal story of mental health harm because of the church's teachings about gay sexual orientation.</p>	<p>Chapter 8</p>
<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>	<p>Studies showing not granting LGBTQ individuals equal rights in all areas of life effects real and significant harm.</p>	<p>Chapter 8</p>
<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>	<p>Studies showing legalizing gay marriage may result in a decrease in suicide rates.</p>	<p>Chapter 8</p>
<a href="https://bostonchildstudycenter.com/ptsd/?fbclid=IwAR1W7K83a0UWkPUzRkm7ftAJx6mIcWzyZdRavcw51jXlroq7FwxZKZJ9a0">https://bostonchildstudycenter.com/ptsd/?fbclid=IwAR1W7K83a0UWkPUzRkm7ftAJx6mIcWzyZdRavcw51jXlroq7FwxZKZJ9a0</a>	<p>Besides PTSD, another psychological category of harm that studies are showing LGBTQ individuals exposed to non-affirming ideologies experience is “traumatic invalidation.”</p>	<p>Chapter 10</p>

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-">https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/christian-pastor-reframes-</a>	<p>Book written by Christian pastor, Colby Martin, that explains why the Bible verses often used to condemn gay</p>	<p>Chapter 5</p>

*I wish more women were quoted in this book. However, because this book analyzes church doctrine, which has only ever been officially declared by men (prophets and apostles) in our church, almost all quotes/citations included in this index come from men. I have added this list of women here to highlight their contributions and to create a space for me to express my hope that women’s voices will someday become allowed to declare doctrine as well.*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Location used</b>
<a href="#"><u>Debra Oaks Coe</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>When an LGBTQ person comes out, they are not asking for agreement, they’re asking if they’re still loved.</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Chapter 2</u></a>
Christina Dee	Book endorsement	Cover pages
Judy Dushku	Book endorsement	Cover pages
Rachel Held Evans	“Faith is about following the quiet voice of God without having everything figured out ahead of time.”	Chapter 10
<a href="#"><u>Fiona Givens</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Sin is disharmony with God’s love.</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Chapter 4</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Jody England Hansen</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>It is more reasonable and ethical to not believe in harmful theology than to cling to every word of church leaders.</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Chapter 10</u></a>
Margaret Olsen Hemming	Commentary on 2 Nephi 26:33	Chapter 4
Marci McPhee	Book editor; <i>Jesus’ First and Last Message</i>	Editor’s Foreword
<a href="#"><u>Emily Nelson</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Excellent list of harmful vs. helpful things to say to LGBTQ people and their loved ones</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Chapter 2</u></a>
Chieko Okasaki	We should have the spiritual independence to be the best church members we can--in our own ways.	Chapter 10
Blaire Ostler	Describes as genocide <a href="#"><u>the</u></a> idea that LGBTQ identity will be completely wiped out in heaven.	Chapter 4 <a href="#"><u>Favorite Resources</u></a>
Carol Lynn Pearson	Book endorsement. Numerous quotes from various articles and books she has authored (see above references in this index).	Dedication page Chapter 4 Chapter 6 Chapter 10 Favorite Resources Path Forward
Sarah Quincy	Book endorsement	Cover pages
Jana Riess	Cited articles on President Oaks’ talk and on temple recommend questions.	Chapter 4 Chapter 8
Sandra Rogers	“When we are fully obedient to the first commandment, we cannot help but obey the second.”	Chapter 4
Fatimah Salleh	Commentary on 2 Nephi 26:33	Chapter 4
Cheryl Smith	Facebook post that prompted this entire book.	Chapter 1

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