

**Excerpts - GAY LATTER-DAY SAINT CROSSROADS:  
My Journey, Your Journey, and a Scripture-based Path Forward**  
By Evan Smith, edited by Marci McPhee

*(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* is by a former stake presidency member whose son is gay. With the mind of a lawyer, he examines scriptures and church teachings to look for a more hopeful doctrine.

“What would it mean to you to find out that you were unjustifiably hurting someone, robbing them of opportunities to maintain well-being and to experience healthy love and joy – and you didn’t even know it?”

An LGBT youth who has **just one accepting adult** in their life reduces suicide rates by 40% for that youth (The Trevor Project National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2019).

1) The church now teaches that people do not choose to be attracted to someone of their same sex:

“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.,., **Individuals do not choose to have such attractions.**” (M. Russell Ballard, Apostle, “Church Leaders,” <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay/>, 2015)

2) Sexual orientation cannot be changed. “I must say, this son’s sexual orientation did not somehow miraculously change—no one assumed it would (Jeffrey R. Holland, Apostle, 2015: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2015/10/ behold-thy-mother>). When someone who previously identified as gay says they are now straight, I think that’s most often just indicative of their true orientation really being bisexual.

Sexual orientation develops in a similar way to handedness (i.e., being right or left-handed). BYU microbiology professor and former mission president Dr. William Bradshaw states plainly: “**It isn’t nurture. It’s nature.**” <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8IHw9DVI3hE>

3) The church’s teachings, policies and doctrines are fluid and often **do** change.

“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/>).

[Speaking about the end of the race-based priesthood/temple ban, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said this:] “**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)

“‘We believe all that God has revealed’— that’s often the easy part. It takes a special kind of faith to: ‘believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom,’ and then to be ready to accept them, whatever they are. **If we are willing, God will lead us to places we’ve never dreamed we could go—as lofty as our dreams might already be. His thoughts and His ways are certainly much higher than ours.** In a sense, I suppose we’re not unlike those in Kirtland to whom the Prophet Joseph Smith said, ‘You know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother’s lap.’” (Jeffrey R. Holland, Apostle, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2018/12/making-your-life-a-soul-stirring-journey-of-personal-growth>, 2018)

4) 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 LGBTQs are marrying someone of the opposite sex or intentional lifelong celibacy. But “it is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). So we are currently in a situation where **church leaders’ advice about what gay people *should do*** (pursue lifelong celibacy) is **exactly what they tell straight people *not to do***.

5) Is mixed-orientation marriage encouraged by the church?

“**[M]arriage *should not be viewed as a therapeutic step*** to solve problems such as homosexual inclinations or practices ....” (Gordon B. Hinckley, Apostle, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1987/05/reverence-and-morality>, 1987)

“Marriage should not be viewed as a way to resolve homosexual problems. **The lives of others should not be damaged by entering a marriage where such concerns exist.** Encouraging members to cultivate heterosexual feelings as a way to resolve homosexual problems generally leads them to frustration and discouragement.” *Understanding and Helping Those Who Have Homosexual Problems. Suggestions for Ecclesiastical Leaders*, 1992, p. 4.  
(<http://www.qrd.org/qrd/religion/judeochristian/protestantism/mormon/mormon-homosexuality>)

6) [One of the reasons] I’m writing this book: *I want to explore whether the church’s current position on gay sexual behavior is more reflective of human prejudice than it is divine truth.* In doing so, I want to acknowledge that only our topmost church leaders, our prophets and apostles, can determine what the church’s teachings and practices should be. I don’t have that authority. And who knows? Maybe, consistent with the agency God has given us, the church’s current position against marriage equality in our doctrine simply reflects God’s willingness to let us figure out for ourselves how to love and accept our LGBTQ siblings without prejudice. I think it’s likely the

prophet might always have those kind of thoughts in the back of his mind, preventing him from praying with “real intent” (Moroni 10:4) to know God’s will, until more church members’ hearts are softened toward their LGBTQ siblings. Which is why, even with my hurt, all my prayers for change include the phrase “if it be Thy will.” I think it’s good for all of us to be open-minded to whatever sort of revelation might be received in the future.

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

“Catholic doctrine is that the Pope is infallible, but they don’t believe it; Latter-day Saint doctrine is that the Prophet is fallible, but they don’t believe it.” (<https://www.fairmormon.org/blog/2014/11/25/living-fallibility>).

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.”

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.**”

Alma 4:11 (by Alma the Younger) “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.”

“Though purified and ennobled by the influence of His Holy Spirit; men each with his own peculiarities of manner and disposition—each with his own education or want of education - each with his own way of looking at things - each influenced differently from another by the different experiences and disciplines of his life. **Their inspiration did not involve a suspension of their natural faculties**; it did not even make them free from earthly passion; **it did not make them into machines—it left them men. Therefore we find their knowledge sometimes no higher than that of their contemporaries.**” (James R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible: Complete in One Volume, with General Articles and Maps* (New York: Macmillan, 1984 [1904]), p. cxxxv.)

8) I presume God wants change now because **I don’t believe He views protecting the comfort of one group of His children** (cisgender, straight church members) as **being more important than relieving the suffering of another group** (LGBTQ church members).

“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).

9) Am I trying to attack the church or “steady the ark”?

This phrase comes from 2 Samuel, chapter 6. It refers to a time when the Ark of the Covenant was being moved over a rough spot and started to topple. A man named Uzzah reached out to try to steady the ark and was struck dead. In commenting on the use of that phrase in Doctrine & Covenants 85:8, a Church Educational System student manual stated: “However well-meaning his intentions, Uzzah approached casually what could only be approached under the strictest conditions. He had no faith in God’s power. He assumed that the ark was in danger, forgetting that it was the symbol of the God who has all power. What man can presume to save God and His kingdom through his own efforts?” (<https://www.thechurchnews.com/archives/1993-06-12/warning-against-steadying-ark-142325>).

I am writing this book to try to help our LGBTQ siblings, not to try to save God or the institutional church. I am not casually trying to correct God or His kingdom, like Uzzah did. Rather than reaching out to steady or correct, I believe I am just crying out to facilitate awareness. I feel compelled to talk about the pain I see being caused by the words of those charged with carrying the ark. But I am not trying to steady it because I acknowledge that only the prophet and apostles are authorized to finally determine what is best for the institutional church. I am not forming protests to try to force them to change the church’s doctrine. I am just asking questions and sharing my feelings, trying to help everyone understand better the pain that certain of their teachings cause. And I trust that God has everything under control, including for all LGBTQ people who leave the church and any back-up plans for healing. I am confident God will find ways for His work to be done, with or without me. So **I am just focused on trying to keep the promise I made to God when I was baptized to “comfort those who stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8-9).** I am not focused on giving orders to God or to church leaders.

10) Why can’t I just put my concerns on a shelf and go on with my life?

I don’t usually like the idea of placing concerns aside, because I think we grow more personally by continuing to study through and struggle with our doubts (“wrestling with God” as in Genesis 32:24, Enos 1:2 and Alma 8:10). At the same time, I *do* acknowledge the wisdom in being patient while waiting for answers. And I would be patient just quietly waiting if it were solely *my* well-being that was involved.

But it’s not just me I’m worried about. I think the parable of the Good Samaritan applies here (Luke 10:25-37). **I don’t want to be like the priest or the Levite and simply look away and continue on my way when I see someone in pain.** I want to be like the Samaritan and use whatever good fortune I may have to try to help relieve that suffering. If I just put my concerns on a shelf and kept going along quietly with my own worship, I fear I would be like the priest and the Levite.

I don’t want to condemn anyone who needs to simply place their concerns aside to maintain their faith. I understand that having a shelf available on which to store our concerns when we’re too tired to productively wrestle with them can be important. That being said, **for some of us, there simply is no shelf – there’s only a bleeding LGBTQ loved one on the road to Jericho.**

11) 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 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. Remember, God doesn't require anyone to run faster than they have strength (Mosiah 4:27).

Lifelong celibacy, mixed-orientation marriage, and so on—all of these Church-backed choices appear to be associated with significant mental health detriment, leading to increased levels of anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide. Whereas in so many other respects following the Church's counsel is seen to lead to greater health and happiness, for queer members following Church guidance, it appears to lead to an overall deterioration of health. Who, then, can blame a queer person who starts to feel that **for them** in the Church, **righteousness never was happiness?**

...[A] parent's decision to joyfully embrace their gay child leaving the church [may be compared] to the decision that was made in the story of Solomon and the baby, found in 1 Kings 3:16-28. Just like the true mother was willing to let her baby be raised by a woman in a different home so the baby wouldn't be cut in half, parents of gay kids in the church may be willing to let them find different spiritual homes so they avoid experiencing trauma and the real risk of suicide.

12) Is it fair for us to expect LGBTQ church members to just trust in the Lord to work things out?

**"God wants us to be happy in the afterlife, but surely God also wants us to be happy here. If we see something terrible going on here, it's not our task to say 'Well, that's too bad, but it's going to be all for the best in the afterlife.' We are here on earth to make things better."**

Carol Lynn Pearson (<https://religionnews.com/2016/07/20/mormon-women-fear-eternal-polygamy-study-shows/>)

**"But there are many we love, including some who have the restored gospel, who do not believe in or choose not to follow God's commandments about marriage and the law of chastity. What about them? Because of God's great love for all of His children, those lesser kingdoms are still more wonderful than mortals can comprehend."**

(<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2019/10/35oaks>)

But one of the lesser kingdoms of happiness will be populated by "honorable men of the earth" (Doctrine & Covenants 76:76). Why the church's extensive missionary effort if not to try to make ALL God's blessings available to ALL God's children? Why not just assume that all those honorable people will likewise be just fine inheriting a lesser kingdom, without our missionary-minded interference?

[For LGBTQs] current doctrines result in ... "sad heaven" outlooks. Their vision of that afterlife ..., requires that gay church members find a way to believe that they will nevertheless be happy in that traumatic vision of heaven. It implies many gay people will be satisfactorily happy in heaven even though they won't remain married to their same-sex spouses and even though they will have less

joy than people in the highest degree of heaven – all simply because they chose to follow a path that would provide them sound mental health in this life.

13) Does the Proclamation on the Family prohibit marriage equality?

“[T]he sacred **powers of procreation** are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.” Since two people of the same sex cannot procreate, this statement actually only condemns straight sexual activity outside marriage, not gay sexual activity at all.

The proclamation helps us remember to refrain from judging by saying, after discussing gender roles of husband and wife: “other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation.” That simple and direct statement can be a precedent for exceptions to other statements made throughout the proclamation. So we should not use the family proclamation to condemn anyone for their chosen family or gender.

Elsewhere in the family proclamation, other concepts are presented to support that heterosexual marriage and parenthood are essential to God’s plan for His children. But, just like our scriptures, nowhere does it say that gay marriage can’t be something “extra” or also “essential” for different reasons. To me, it’s like saying trees are essential for a forest - but that doesn’t mean other plants and animals can’t be important or essential parts of it also, to provide variety and make the whole forest healthier and more beautiful, right? Could God have inspired the wording of the proclamation to still be flexible for a future, more open-minded interpretation?

14) What about children born to same gender parents?

Rarely is there as much consensus in any area of social science as in the case of gay parenting. This is why the American Academy of Pediatrics and all of the major professional organizations with expertise in child welfare have issued reports and resolutions in support of LGBTQ parental rights ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT\\_parenting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_parenting)). Similarly, a scholarly consensus seems to be forming that kids raised by gay couples are not more likely to self-identify as LGBTQ (although they are more open-minded about sexuality, and, if LGBTQ, such kids may be more likely to come out of the closet sooner). Most of them identify as heterosexual, and they do not have any differences in their gender role behaviors in comparison to those observed in heterosexual family structures ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT\\_parenting#cite\\_note-Stacey\\_Biblarz-33](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_parenting#cite_note-Stacey_Biblarz-33)).

15) How can embracing the diversity of LGBTQ people help us become better disciples?

“Sometimes we confuse differences in personality with sin. **We can even make the mistake of thinking that because someone is different from us, it must mean they are not pleasing to God.** This line of thinking leads some to believe that the Church wants to create every member from a single mold—that each one should look, feel, think, and behave like every other. This would contradict the genius of God, who created every man different from his brother, every son different from his father. Even identical twins are not identical in their personalities and spiritual identities. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are united in our testimony of the restored gospel and our commitment to keep God’s commandments. But

we are diverse in our cultural, social, and political preferences. **The Church thrives when we take advantage of this diversity and encourage each other to develop and use our talents to lift and strengthen our fellow disciples.**”

(Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Apostle, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2013/04/four-titles>, 2013)

16) How should we behave towards our LGBTQ siblings?

**“Young people struggling with any exceptional condition, including same-gender attraction, are particularly vulnerable and need loving understanding – not bullying or ostracism.** With the help of the Lord, we can repent and change and be more loving and helpful to children, our own and those around us.” (Dallin H. Oaks, Apostle, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2012/10/protect-the-children>, 2012)

**“We need to listen to and understand what our LGBT brothers and sisters are feeling and experiencing. Certainly we must do better than we have done in the past** so that all members feel they have a spiritual home where their brothers and sisters **love them and where they have a place to worship and serve the Lord.**” (M. Russell Ballard, Apostle, BYU address, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/elder-ballard-tackles-tough-topics-and-gives-timely-advice-to-young-adults>, 2017).

**“...as a Church nobody should be more loving and compassionate. No family who has anybody who has a same-gender issue should exclude them from the family circle.** They need to be part of the family circle...We have a plan of salvation. And having children come into our lives is part of Heavenly Father’s plan. But let us be at the forefront in terms of expressing love, compassion, and outreach to those and **let’s not have families exclude or be disrespectful of those who choose a different lifestyle as a result of their feelings about their own gender...**I feel very strongly about this. . .It’s a very important principle.” (Quentin L. Cook, Apostle, [https://www.fairmormon.org/blog/category/homosexuality#\\_ednref7](https://www.fairmormon.org/blog/category/homosexuality#_ednref7)).

**“Be spiritually independent enough that your relationship with the Savior doesn't depend on your circumstances or on what other people say and do. Have the spiritual independence to be a Mormon--the best Mormon you can--in your own way. Not the bishop's way. Not the Relief Society president's way. Your way.”** — Chieko N. Okazaki, Former Counselor in the General Relief Society Presidency; from her book *Lighten Up* (<https://mormonquotes.wordpress.com/2014/10/02/be-spiritually-independent/>)

“Comfort those who stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:8-9).

An LGBT youth who has **just one accepting adult** in their life reduces suicide rates by 40% for that youth (The Trevor Project National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2019).

*“And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.”*  
*1 Corinthians 13:13, New English Translation*

## A PATH FORWARD

*From Gay Latter-day Saint Crossroads: My Journey, Your Journey, and a Scripture-based Path Forward* by Evan G. Smith

Same-sex attraction occurs in 2-10% of all humans across culture and time. It is also widespread at around the same rate in the animal kingdom, occurring in every major animal group (see Chapter 3). LGBTQs are part of God’s creation and part of His plan.

Same-sex attraction is not a choice but is inborn (agreed by science and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - see Chapter 3).

### Current choices for LGBTQ\* Latter-day Saints

1) Remain celibate and stay in the church	2) Enter a mixed-orientation marriage and stay in the church	3) Leave the church, with or without a gay legal marriage
This is a joyful choice for some. For nearly 90%, teachings about this choice result in increased depression, trauma and suicidality (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 10).	This is a joyful choice for some but generally correlates with a higher rate of depression and lower reported quality of life. For nearly 70%, this results in divorce (see Chapter 3).	Some find a joyful spiritual home outside the church. Others keenly feel the loss of church blessings for self, parents, children and ancestors
“Every Sunday for <i>one whole year</i> , every Sunday I went into my bishop’s office and he gave me a blessing. All that happened during that year was that I pretty much succeeded in feeling nothing for anyone. My emotions were dead. At the end of the year, I thought, I am never going to change. I’m destined to go to the lowest place in God’s kingdom, and I’d just as well go now.” **	“I have a friend who will commit suicide very soon. He has a beautiful wife and six wonderful children. They were married in the temple and are active in the Church. He has served as a bishop and has never acted on his same sex attraction. He is empty inside. He has sought professional counseling. He does not draw strength and hope and the will to go on from his relationships.” **	“Jo had to decide to give up the Church or to end her own life, so she gave up the Church. But there is still a ‘huge ache’ there for all the things she loves so much and still believes.” **  “The Mormons have got to stop being so rejecting. To be rejected by something so wonderful as the Mormon Church is nearly more than a person can bear.” **

### Institutional church choices regarding LGBTQ\* Latter-day Saints

1) Insist on celibacy or mixed-orientation marriage for church worthiness	2) Same worthiness standards but (i) formally acknowledge doctrinal ambiguity about gay couples in heaven and/or (ii) formally allow LGBTQ* members to leave the church without guilt if needed to protect mental health.	3) Accept gay civil marriage for church worthiness but not temple worthiness (i.e., the individuals can be members of the church but not hold temple recommends)	4) Accept gay civil marriage in the temple for time only. This would make the individuals temple worthy but would not change the status of their marriage after death	5) Full equality for LGBTQ* church members, including gay temple sealing and full church and temple participation
Status quo	These changes could be done simply through a General Conference talk by the prophet or an apostle. They would allow LGBTQ* church members to better trust in God and avoid needing to believe in a traumatic or sad heaven (see Chapter 4).	For this change to be universally applied in all congregations where gay civil marriage is legal, it would likely require a policy change to the Handbook (see Chapters 6 and 7).	This change would require a policy change to the Handbook and likely a re-interpretation of the 1995 family proclamation as only addressing the heterosexual family (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7).	This change would require a doctrinal clarification through revelation from God (Official Declaration 3?) (see Chapter 6).

\* Lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning/queer. Absent from this acronym is T for transgender. Issues for our transgender siblings may be different from these in this chart.

\*\* from *No More Goodbyes: Circling the Wagons around Our Gay Loved Ones*, by Carol Lynn Pearson. Page numbers are 43, 36, 38, 44-45.



EDITOR'S ~~FOREWORD~~ AFTERWORD (this appears as the foreword for the book, but appears here as an afterword)

### *Jesus' First and Last Message*

Come with me to Nazareth. Jesus has just spent forty days alone in the desert, communing with God and preparing for His ministry.<sup>1</sup> He is returning to His hometown, ready to declare to His neighbors that He is the promised Messiah.

This particular Sabbath day, we enter the synagogue along with the rest of the villagers “where he had been brought up.”<sup>2</sup> You and I find a place on the stone benches along the walls of the synagogue. Jesus stands, takes the papyrus scroll, and begins to read from Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus then makes this astonishing statement that infuriates His hometown neighbors, enough to make them want to “cast him down headlong” over the “hill whereon their city was built.”<sup>4</sup> What is the declaration that is a capital offense in His neighbors' eyes? “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”<sup>5</sup>

From the start, Jesus' ministry is to heal the brokenhearted, deliver the captives, and free them that are bruised. And from the start, the opposition is quick and vicious.

Three years later, come with me to Jerusalem to hear Jesus' last public sermon. We are just outside the city, seated on the hillside on the Mount of Olives, surrounded by a well-tended olive grove with a spectacular view of Jerusalem. It is likely Wednesday, two days before His crucifixion.<sup>6</sup>

What is the message of Jesus' last public discourse? “For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”<sup>7</sup>

Towards the end of His mortal ministry, Jesus' last message echoes His first: feed the poor, care for the stranger, the sick, and the captive. How is His final public sermon received? Within days, His followers will take Jesus' lifeless body down from the cross and lay it in a borrowed tomb.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 4:1, Joseph Smith Translation

<sup>2</sup> Luke 4:16

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 61:1-2

<sup>4</sup> Luke 4:29

<sup>5</sup> Luke 4:21

<sup>6</sup> “The Greatest Week in History” by Daniel H. Ludlow

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1972/04/the-greatest-week-in-history?lang=eng>

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 25:35-36

From His first to His final public sermon, Jesus cares a lot about the last, the least, the lost, and the lonely.<sup>8</sup> And Jesus has called us to carry on His work. For some, it may not be much easier for us than it was for Him.

After His resurrection, Jesus appears at the coast of the sea of Galilee. Listen while He calls the apostles to shore from their fishing boats and gives them their final instructions. Did they get it? Did they grasp what His whole ministry was about? Do they understand their charge to leave their nets once again and continue Jesus' work? Here is the lesson in three words, repeated three times for emphasis: "Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep. Feed my sheep."<sup>9</sup> (Notice that Jesus asks us to start with the most vulnerable.)

There can be no room in the life of a follower of Christ for un-Christ-like treatment of anyone. Here's Jesus' invitation list: "he 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."<sup>10</sup> And what percentage does the word All indicate? One hundred percent. All means All.

Come with me to my family dinner. As we walk around the table, I introduce you to my own close family, including a gay man, a lesbian woman, a transgender person, a pansexual individual, and a sparkling gender-bending sprite of a child who defies all labels and is exuberantly living into their best self, whoever that turns out to be. And a bunch of straight folks, in and out of church, scratching their heads and trying to make sense of us all. This is my family, and I love each one exactly as they are, exactly how God made them. And I'm positive that God loves them too, without exception.

What draws me to this work? Admiration for the strength of character, the creativity and flair that my LGBTQ family, friends and colleagues add to the world.

Like the author\*, I am a church-going, temple-attending "active member" (some call me a "hyper-active member") of the church. I have long known there must be a way to connect my love for these vibrant people that I love and the teachings of my beloved Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My deep appreciation goes to Evan Smith and his family for this remarkable work, solidly grounded in the scriptures and the teachings of living prophets, as well as their own courageous journey as a family.

Keep reading.

*Marcí McPhee*, editor

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\*This Foreword was written when the *Crossroads* book was first released in July 2020. For an update regarding Evan's current relationship with the church, see the Afterword he wrote in January 2022 here: <https://www.gayldscrossroads.org/afterword>.

<sup>8</sup> Mark 2:13-17

<sup>9</sup> John 21:15-17

<sup>10</sup> 2 Nephi 26:33