

26 Same Sex Attraction

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This topic is one that invokes high anxiety from many members of the church whose opinions are more often based on emotion rather than understanding the standard of scripture. The ideas discussed in this chapter no doubt will offend many good Latter-day Saints on both sides of this precarious fence. As the author I would ask that you force your way through the whole chapter to better understand the scriptures and the doctrines contained in them concerning this topic. To begin any gospel discussion, there are some basic doctrines and a scriptural picture that must be reviewed to appreciate any answer that could be given or provided for a better understanding of the issue. To that end, please read the first chapter in Part II of this book, “A Standard of Doctrine.”

All good parents love their children. They not only hope and pray for their wellbeing, but also want to help them find happiness in this life. In a family, every child should be able to find love, acceptance, help and support no matter what problems or issues may arise. The old cliché that “a mother can be no happier than the worst pain of her children” is not so much an antidote as it is a truth. Parents should support their children and love them in all their weaknesses. All have heard of ‘tough love’ where a punishment may be used against the will of a child to help change the child's actions. Parents who allow their children to misbehave sometimes become enablers of a destructive course.

The great call of scripture and every prophet since Adam has been the gospel call of: faith, repentance, baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The first two principles are the responsibility of the individual and the church and priesthood administer the first two 'ordinances' for those who have “exercised their faith unto repentance” (Alma 34:15-17). Faith, as used and defined in scripture can only be faith if it is in something that cannot fail, i.e. Jesus Christ and his Atonement. According to Amulek in the Book of Mormon, the way to exercise faith in Christ and the Atonement is to repent.

Repentance

Repentance is a word that has been misinterpreted and misunderstood. It often conjures a mental image of suffering and sorrow. The repentance process can also invoke the pain and embarrassment of confessing a sin to a priesthood leader. Some view repentance as saying 'sorry' without any real determination to change. In fact, repentance is a word that means ‘*the process of changing character*,’ i.e. being better than one was before. Repentance is the process upon which exaltation is founded.

The word ‘repent’ in both Hebrew and Greek is an archery term that means to ‘take aim again’ having ‘missed the target’ which is the definition of the word 'sin'. To ‘take aim again’ is practice, trying to improve by recognition and habit, allowing for the change of character as our ability changes. Recognizing the need to ‘take aim again’ is an integral part of repentance. If the need for change is unrecognized, there will be no “will” or reason for the change of character.

Satan's Powers of Control

Scripture explains that Satan has two sure methods to entice mankind to "sin." The first is by the temporal environment in which all live and the flesh of which all are made. This 'flesh' or mortal body is hardwired with desires, appetites, and passions that are contrary to a character that may dwell with God. King Benjamin uses the term "*natural man*, he describes as an "enemy to God and always will be unless he puts off the natural man" (Mosiah 3:19; see also D&C 67:12). Lehi also speaks of the temporal flesh or 'natural man' and the power of Satan.

28 And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;

29 And not choose eternal death, according to the ***will of the flesh and the evil which is therein***, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom. (2 Nephi 22: 28-29)

It is this fight that rages between the flesh and the spirit that Paul speaks of throughout his letters in the New Testament (See Galatians 5:16-26; Galatians 6:8; Romans 8:1-23, etc.). Between the teachings of a corrupt and immoral society and the collusion of hormones, ego and pride, the desires of the flesh are often the catalyst that will lead an individual down a path of spiritual peril. This might include immorality, drugs, alcoholism or other excesses of the flesh that will separate man from God.

The Second dictum that gives Satan power over humanity is ignorance – not knowing the laws of God and why He commands the way He does. The individual without a knowledge of truth will have no other place than their own ignorance in which to base their opinion.

29 —because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—*because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.* (1 Nephi 13:29)

11 And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word *until they know nothing* concerning his mysteries; and *then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction.* Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (Alma 12:11)

When one doesn't know or understand the doctrines of the church, popular opinion will often fill the void, becoming the standard of doctrine. As explained in 1 Nephi above, when truths are absent, Satan rules. For this reason, the attitudes and morals assimilated from a godless culture and point of view, pervasively promoted as right or true from kindergarten through college, should always be suspect when not founded on a standard of truth.

The greatest threat to a culture is the culture itself. When there is no accepted standard of truth, no standard exists, and opinions, traditions, and interpretations will rule the day. When an opinion becomes one's standard, the argument ends, and truth is lost. These *opinions are most often*

embraced because of the flesh and the weaknesses described in scripture as ‘desires, appetites, and passions,’ when coupled with a lack of knowledge about the purpose of life.

To begin a discussion of same sex relationships, be it genetic or by choice, a scriptural definition of sin should be addressed and discussed first. This definition, as found in scripture, may come as a surprise to many in the church when compared to the traditional view of sin. Following this discussion, a few pages will be used to review the doctrines in scripture about the plan of salvation and the purpose of creation and our life on this earth. As this discussion of sin and the purpose of creation is expanded, keep in mind that Satan gains control of mankind **first** by the desires, appetites, and passions of the flesh, which one usually embraces willingly because of the instant gratification. The **second** weakness that gives the Devil influence and power over humanity is associated with the individual’s ignorance of God’s law, purpose, and plan of salvation. Since most people don’t know what they don’t know, they can only trust in their own emotions, experience, and knowledge if they do not have a standard of truth to rely on.

The Definition of Sin

Many members of the church have mentally categorized sins into lists from the least to the worst. For example, is it worse to smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol? Is viewing pornography a worse sin than taking drugs? Is cheating in business worse than cheating on your spouse? In everyone’s mind there are sins that top the list and are considered more grievous than others, and some sins that don’t seem to matter that much. Not surprisingly, the sins or weaknesses that an individual is most tolerant of are those of which he or she is most familiar or guilty. The weaknesses of a loved one are also often accepted because of that familiarity and love.

Joseph Smith stated that for an individual 'to dwell with God one must have developed the character of God' (*TPJS* P. 216). This teaching implies that it is the character and nature of the individual that is most important in achieving the goal of being with our loved ones in the presence of God, for “no unclean thing can dwell in the presence of God” (1 Nephi 10:21). The change of character is a product of agency and choice, not miracle or ordinance. The improvement and development of character is the power of exaltation, as one will choose to put off the natural man and become a saint. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to rationalize sin and guilt into an accepted lifestyle because of a belief that God is 'loving and merciful.' Again, the Prophet Joseph taught:

...he that has made no improvement will be cast out as an unprofitable servant, while the faithful will enjoy everlasting honors. Therefore, we earnestly implore the grace of our Father to rest upon you, through Jesus Christ His Son, that you may not faint in the hour of temptation, nor be overcome in the time of persecution. (*TPJS*, p. 68).

Christ gave us important insights into sin when confronted by the Pharisees who sought to convict Him by the Law of Moses. They tempted Him by asking which commandment was the most important to keep, seeking to get Christ to categorize the commandments as many Latter-day Saints do. The response of the Savior not only explains the purpose of the commandments, but also defines sin

36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

37 Jesus said unto him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

40 *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* (Matthew 22:36-40)

Christ explains that *all commandments* have only two purposes: to develop the character that will (1) ‘love God’ and (2) ‘love’ mankind. These two commandments—loving God and loving mankind—are so fundamental that Christ declares that *upon these two* “hang ***all*** *the law and the prophets.*” That means that all the commandments that could be broken (therefore all sin also) hang upon these two *laws*. Thus everything the *prophets teach* or have taught must also be connected to the same two laws. Putting it simply: all the commandments and the teachings of every prophet are structured to develop, through obedience to the commandments, the individual character and nature that will love God and love mankind. This love of God is much more than declaration; it is a love with “all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind”—the complete and whole person, in nature and character. The second is similar, as a person should by nature love others as they love themselves.

This, then, is the purpose of commandments, prophets, religion, and life: to develop the character that loves God and our fellow man. Christ expands upon this as he gives His last commandment before His death:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:34-35)

Notice: the Christian responsibility to love others shifts from ‘loving your neighbor as yourself’ to loving others as “Christ loved,” with a willingness to give one’s life for others. Christ emphasizes in verse 35 that those who don’t love others with this pure love of God are not disciples of Christ and therefore not Christian.

The apostle John stresses the connection between loving God and loving other in his letters by stating:

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (1 John 3:14)

Based on the words of Christ and the “Law and the Prophets,” the definition of sin would be: ***That which distracts one from developing the character that loves God and loves all mankind.***

Moroni taught about the character of those who love others in his description of charity, the pure love of Christ:

And charity *suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things* (Moroni 7:45).

Christ explains better than anyone what it means to Love God. In His last sermon to the apostles, He states that “*if ye love me keep my commandments*” (John 14:15). The overt way of expressing our love of God is to keep the commandments and love all others around us as He loved us. If the work and glory of God is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man (Moses 1:39), then the individual’s necessary contribution to the Atonement is to develop the love and character that Christ had for all of mankind. ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever might believe on Him *and keep his commandments* shall have eternal life’ (John 3:16).

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught about the purpose of commandments that originate from God.

We believe that God condescended to speak from the heavens and declare His will concerning the human family, *to give them just and holy laws, to regulate their conduct,* and guide them in a direct way, that in due time He might take them to Himself, and make them joint heirs with His Son. But when this fact is admitted, that the immediate will of heaven is contained in the scriptures, are we not bound as rational creatures to live in accordance to all its precepts? *Will the mere admission that this is the will of heaven ever benefit us if we do not comply with all its teachings?* Do we not offer violence to the Supreme Intelligence of heaven, when we admit the truth of its teachings, and do not obey them? Do we not descend below our own knowledge, and the better wisdom which heaven has endowed us with, by such a course of conduct? For these reasons, if we have direct revelations given us from heaven, surely those revelations were never given to be trifled with, without the trifler’s incurring displeasure and vengeance upon his own head if there is any justice in heaven. This must be admitted by every individual who confesses the truth and force of God’s teachings, blessings, and cursings as contained in the sacred volume.

Here, then, we have this part of our subject immediately before us for consideration: God has in reserve a time, or period appointed in His own bosom, when *He will bring all His subjects, who have obeyed His voice and kept His commandments, into His celestial rest.* This rest is of such perfection and glory, that *man has need of a preparation before he can, according to the laws of that kingdom, enter it and enjoy its blessings.* This being the fact, *God has given certain laws to the human family, which, if observed, are sufficient to prepare them to inherit this rest.* This, then, we conclude, was the purpose of God in giving His laws to us: If not, why, or for what were they given? ... It would be nonsense to suppose that He would condescend to talk in vain: for it would be in vain, and to no purpose whatever (if the law of God were of no benefit to man): because, *all the commandments contained in the law of the Lord, have the sure promise annexed of a reward to all who obey,* predicated upon the fact that they are really the promises of a *Being who cannot lie,* One who is abundantly able to fulfill every tittle of His word: and if man were as well prepared, or could be as well prepared, to meet God without their ever having been given in the first instance, why were they ever given? for certainly, in that case they can now do him no good. (TPJS. pp. 54, 55).

So how do we love God? This is accomplished by learning His word and keeping His commandments while participating in the necessary ordinances. As he said in John 14:15, “if ye love me keep my commandments.” It doesn't get any plainer than that. This obedience, motivated by love, is required to develop the character necessary to dwell with God.

The Pre-Earth

The Lord declared to Moses, “this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). This statement establishes a fundamental purpose for the creation of the universe as well as the heavens and the earth, thus forming a connection between the creation and the salvation of man. It is here and now, in this created environment, that mankind will need to learn to work out their own salvation in ‘fear and trembling’ (Mormon 9:27). Creation accounts are for relationships, not science. They establish that God is the creator of our life, lifestyle, and livelihood, with an understanding that without God, nothing is possible. God’s goal, His work and His glory, is the eternal happiness and joy of each individual spirit.

Latter-day Saint doctrine teaches that all spirits were given an opportunity to hear and accept the plan of salvation and happiness before we ever came to this dreary world. All the spirits that were to come to this earth were gathered and were taught about this earth and how bad mortality could be. All the problems of the flesh and an earthly existence were explained before any came to earth. All were taught about the spiritual fall that would take place on earth because of the flesh and about the ignorance that would plague all mankind.

Every spirit in that heavenly council would need to know how bad this life could be: the suffering and pain, both emotional and physical. All had to understand perfectly that there would be diseases and sicknesses that would plague the bodies all would have. All knew perfectly that there would be *weaknesses of the flesh*, some of which were the consequence of imperfections developed over generations in the genetic code. Every spirit understood perfectly, without any misunderstanding or misconception, how bad this life could be and what those weaknesses might be that could cause some to rebel against God because of the flesh. All spirits understood with the same perfection how it would feel to suffer physically and emotionally through sickness, cancer, and diseases of all kinds. Everyone had to know how it would feel to lose a child or spouse in death, both physically and spiritually. If the spirits of mankind did *not understand all things about mortality with a perfect understanding and comprehension* before accepting or rejecting the opportunity to participate in this world, *agency would have been compromised* and God would cease to be God.

Once all knew and understood what this life had to offer, with all its physical, mental and emotional imperfections, a choice was made. Every spirit that has come or that will come to this earth chose the plan of joy and exaltation that was offered, and the immortality and eternal life promised (Abraham 3:25). It was a choice made with a full knowledge of the conditions one might grapple with in this mortal sphere. Understanding this, one may come to realize that there are no trials and tribulations here, only a life—a life that every individual spirit has actively chosen, with the goal to return to that God that gave them life. Agency reigns supreme, even in the heavens, as all those who chose not to participate in this plan of salvation were not forced to submit. Fully aware of the consequences, they rebelled against the plans of God in the pre-earth environment, led by Lucifer, and were cast out to seek their own kind of misery.

In this temporary mortal life, replete with the weaknesses of mind and body, all have the agency to turn those weaknesses into strengths with the help of a loving God and Father. Moroni outlines a plan and pattern to do just that.

27 And if men
(1) come unto me
I will show unto them their weakness.
I give unto men weakness (because of life and the flesh)
that they may be humble; and
my grace is sufficient for all men
(2) that humble themselves before me; for
if they humble themselves before me, and
(3) have faith in me,
then will I make
weak things become strong unto them. (Ether 12:27)

The important instruction is that weaknesses are given to help humble the individual enough to turn to God for help. It is the recognition of one's weakness and need for God that leads to humility. When this humble recognition is coupled with faith and a desire to come unto God, the grace of Christ will provide the power to overcome *any and all* weaknesses of the flesh. *Pride* is seeking one's own will using a weakness as a reason or rationale. *Humility* is seeking to keep God's will within their weaknesses. Having a weakness or genetic tendency does not make one a victim of circumstance by God or man. The gospel and the Atonement provide the power to overcome the weaknesses that one might have. A loving God will not and cannot place us in a position where our agency ceases to exist becoming a spiritual victim or casualty. God had promised a way out for every temptation:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you whom I love, and whom I love I also chasten that their sins may be forgiven, for with the chastisement I prepare a way for their deliverance in all things out of temptation, and I have loved you— (D&C 95:1)

According to the passages above, no one is a victim of their physical body (except for the physically or mentally handicapped). Agency is the freedom to choose and act—not to be acted upon because of their weaknesses. If this were not the case there could be no judgment according to works. Those who demand the *freedom* to satisfy the desires, appetites, and passions of the body will in time lose their freedom of choice and be acted upon, becoming enslaved to the demands of the body.

27 Wherefore, *men are free according to the flesh;* and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And *they are free to choose liberty and eternal life,* through the great Mediator of all men, ***or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil;*** for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

28 And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and *choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;*

29 And ***not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate,*** to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom. (2 Nephi 2:27-29)

Righteousness is choosing good in the presence of evil. It is having the spiritual strength to do that which is right while at the same time the opportunity to choose and do evil as an option. Without opposition there can be no righteousness or wickedness. Everyone has been given the strength and opportunity to make the choice that will separate temptation from sin.

Satan realizes that the person who claims to be a 'victim' will never progress spiritually. The rationalization to break the commandments will often lie in the 'victim mentality:' "It's not my fault, I can't help it, the devil made me do it, God made me this way." As long as the finger is pointed at someone else there can be no responsibility, and in the mind of the victim, there should be no condemnation. Nephi warned that a sign of apostasy among members of the Church in the Last Days would be a trust in the love of God rather than the Redemption of God.

8 And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; *there is no harm in this*; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, *God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved* in the kingdom of God. (2 Nephi 28:8)

Purpose of Creation

Scriptural accounts of the 'council in heaven' inform us that all spirits must come to a physical world with a physical body. There are spirits waiting their turn to come to this earth to begin the process that leads to eternal joy and exaltation. In the creation of man and woman, a loving Father has provided a way that these spirits may come to this earth and receive a physical body.

The scriptures enlighten our understanding about the purpose of the creation of the earth. Addressing marriage and the potential for children, the Lord establishes the true purpose of creation and links it to a pre-earth awareness of that purpose.

16 Wherefore, it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation;
17 And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made. (D&C 49:16-17)

The Doctrine and Covenants explains that a man should have one wife 'that the earth might answer the end of its creation' this that the earth would be 'filled with the measure of man' i.e. those who were spirits in that grand council 'before the world was made.'

The Prophet Isaiah teaches the same concept in the Old Testament as he explains why creation accounts exist and why they were given to the children of Israel through Moses. This same account is found in our Book of Moses and recounted in the Pearl of Great Price for the same reason that Isaiah infers.

18 For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, *he formed it to be inhabited*: I am the Lord; and there is none else. (Isaiah 45:18)

Likewise, Nephi, the son of Lehi, teaches that there is a connection between the creation and the salvation of mankind. He states: “Behold, the Lord hath *created the earth that it should be inhabited*; and he hath created his children that they should possess it” (1 Nephi 17:36).

The habitation of the earth is designed to take place as described in D&C 49 above. One man is to have one wife, cleaving to one another (sealed) in order to have physical children that will house the spirits that were prepared and waiting to come to this earth. This is the plan of God, according to scripture, which will enable all spirits to progress and develop the godlike qualities worthy for exaltation.

These few scriptures confirm that the creation accounts that are rehearsed and explained in history and in ordinance exist to establish a purpose of creation and a relationship between God, mankind, and the environment in which salvation is secured. All the spirits that come to this earth were in the pre-earth council and knew and understood this plan of salvation. These chose to participate in mortality with all the physical weaknesses that might hinder that salvation. This choice could only be made with a promise that they would eventually understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ and learn to be obedient to the commandments that would allow them to return to a loving Father and God.

Same Sex Attraction

To begin a discussion of same sex attraction and same sex relationships, a few points need clarification. Historically the main argument for same sex attraction has been based on genetics. The phrase, ‘God made me this way,’ historically was meant to justify and rationalize same sex attraction as a function of genetic mandate. Without doubt, there are individuals with visible and/or invisible genetic variations or differences that may lend support for this argument in both women and men. If same sex attraction is due to genetic makeup then clearly this attraction is no fault of the individual. However, the decision to act on the attraction is always a function of choice. One must remember that in the next life there will be no physical handicaps or genetic defects. As Alma says, “this corruption will put on incorruption” (Alma 5:15).

During the last two decades, same sex relationships have been defended and advanced in public schools and the western culture as a “*lifestyle choice*” without regard or connection to a genetic compulsion. These lifestyle choices, now rebranded as ‘*alternate lifestyles*,’ reinforce the idea that *some* same sex relationships are a function of choice and free will rather than a genetic burden from nature or God. In any case, whether the attraction is a function of genetic 'wiring' or not, the choice to engage in a same sex relationship *is always a choice*.

The secular education everyone is exposed to has an overwhelming power over the acceptance or rejection of the mores of any given time or culture. History and scripture have shown that this notion is true, as the divergent and abnormal tendencies of a culture always increase over time. This entropic motif is attributed to a disconnect from religion and faith in God, and an intellectual separation from the faith and traditions of the family values of preceding generations.

1 Now it came to pass that there were *many of the rising generation that could not understand* the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and *they did not believe the tradition of their fathers*.

2 They did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, *neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ.*

3 And now *because of their unbelief they could not understand the word of God;* and their hearts were hardened. (Mosiah 26:1-3)

This movement away from what was once considered a moral 'mainstream' to a new mainstream with the absence of sexual morality is a product of a cultural downshift that uses all forms of education including schools and textbooks, media and music, among other things, to coarsen the public landscape. Behaviors and attitudes that are scripturally aberrant are shrouded in words like *rights, choice, alternate lifestyles and toleration*. Language is important because recasting an immorality as a 'right' lends the behavior a legitimacy that fosters acceptance over time. Once immoral behaviors are cast as rights and given legal protection, schools are forced to fall into line, spouting the party line and promoting acceptance of the behavior. The cultural and social impact on our children can be significant. The education system is a powerful tool of change, powerful enough to transform sins into a civil right within a single generation. Given the time between kindergarten and a university degree, teachers wield the power to mold and shape the morals of a rising generation that will one day become the political leaders that craft the laws for future generations, and religious leaders that will accept politically correct tolerances.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, *which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done* for Israel.

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim:

12 And *they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them,* and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. (Judges 2:10-12)

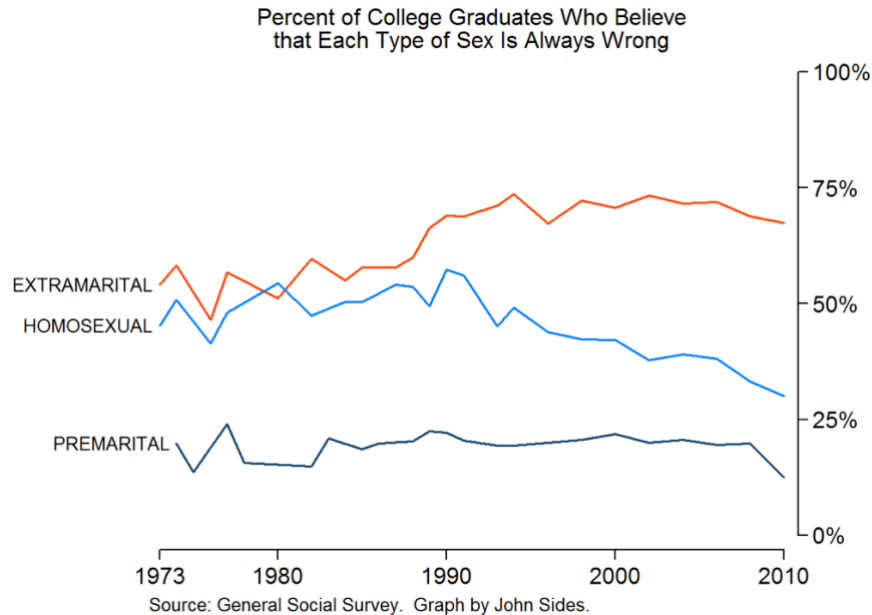
Children are taught in the public-school system from the age of six until they finish high school. Given this long-term accessibility, teachers could advance the idea that cannibalism is an accepted way of life and nothing more than a menu choice. This is true with any other philosophy or lifestyle choice, be it moral, religious, or political. Remember, Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden because they were convinced to expand their menu choice.



“Mugulu, how often have I told you not to play with your food?”

For decades now, the schools have been teaching children about alternative lifestyles from first grade through high school graduation and beyond. For thirty to forty years, prime time television and theatrical movies have overtly and covertly taught that any alternate lifestyle is okay and a choice that anyone may make without repercussions. In the media (all forms) people living alternative lifestyles or behaving immorally are presented sympathetically, as nice people who are no different than the rest of us, thus normalizing the behavior. This is “so well done” that children who have ostensibly been raised to know the difference argue with parents about the acceptability of these lifestyle choices.

The chart below depicts of percentage of college graduates sampled over nearly 4 decades who believe that extramarital, homosexual, and premarital sex is "always wrong." Of the three main 'alternate' lifestyle choices offered, notice which one has become most acceptable over time. LGBT and Pre-marital sexual activity is now taught in schools and presented in the media as a recreational activity and choice rather than a religious or moral obligation. The accepted alternate lifestyle has become more acceptable at an increasing rate compared to the other two statistics.



No doubt there may be some genetic reasons for same sex attraction, but there is now clearly something else in play. Whether for shock value or attention, it has become fashionable and trendy on high school and college campuses today to be ‘bi-sexual’ (disproportionately among young women), which means that the alleged attraction AND its practice *is a chosen lifestyle*. Girls are basically "trying on" sexual lifestyles like the latest fashions, with obvious disregard for traditional sexual morality. This fluid attitude can be traced directly to the activism and advocacy of the homosexual movement within our schools and the media, which promotes the normalization of same sex attraction. It is more than a fad—"it is symptomatic of a confusion that reaches the core of human identity."¹ The natural attraction between boys and girls has been so 'confused by public celebration of homosexuality and other sexual acting out that young people are now confused about something as simple and basic as heterosexual identity.'² By law in some states a person can change their sexual identity—whether they identify as a male or a female—simply by saying so, depending on how they feel from one day to the next. Were someone to challenge a person's right to determine their chosen sexual identity on whatever basis they choose, that person would be labeled ‘intolerant’ and would be in violation of state law.

There is much more to this trend than can be explored here, except to point out that over time, these choices will become more acceptable to an ever-increasing age group. The young are the most pliable and accepting due to the incessant social indoctrination they receive. In twenty years time, one could expect the bulk of society to be infected with a tolerance for every sexual behavior. Moreover, as shown repeatedly in the Book of Mormon, the decline in obedience and righteousness in the rising generation has a negative and contaminating effect on the attitudes and practices of an *ever-increasing age group*. The acceptability moves from the teachers to the youth and from the youth to the parents and future parents (see 3 Nephi 1:30).

¹ <http://www.albertmohler.com/2004/01/27>

² *Ibid.*

The bottom line is, man cannot pick and choose what God will accept. Despite our wants and desires, God tells man what is expected of him in order to qualify for an eternal lifestyle of happiness. That someone adopts a lifestyle that is contrary to the will of God does not nullify the doctrines or scriptures that have explained God's will concerning such a lifestyle. Thus, sexual expression must be kept within the bounds the Lord has set (within marriage between a man and a woman), no matter how we are 'wired' here in mortality. In that regard, the attraction or desire for someone of the same sex is fundamentally no different than a man's attraction for his neighbor's wife, or the babysitter. One might not choose the biological or physical attraction, but one certainly has a choice whether or not to act on it.

Keeping the commandments is how an individual manifest his or her love of God, the first of the two great commandments. Many view God as someone who will love all mankind in their sins, which he does. But hoping that the 'unchangeable God' will make an exception for one's special flavor of indiscretions because of His perfect love is a vain hope. There are laws that even God must obey, and His mercy is connected directly to the change of character (being penitent).

23 But God ceaseth not to be God, and *mercy claimeth the penitent*, and mercy cometh because of the Atonement; and the Atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice.

24 For behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, *none but the truly penitent are saved*.

25 What, *do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God.* (Alma 42:23-25)

Of course, laws or commandments that personally effect individuals and families will often seem antiquated, unfair, or unjust. Some will want the church to change the doctrines of God and accept lifestyles that are not condoned in scripture. Because of justice, as Alma declares above, *God cannot save anyone in their sins*. Because God loves all humanity, God seeks to help all turn from their sins.

37 And I say unto you again that he cannot save them in their sins; for I cannot deny his word, and he hath said that no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore, how can ye be saved, except ye inherit the kingdom of heaven? Therefore, ye cannot be saved in your sins. (Alma 11)

The War in Heaven was fought to preserve the agency of the individual. Satan sought to take away the agency to sin. In contrast, God's plan was to make sure everyone could sin if they chose. A thoughtful question connected to that war: Could or would God hold someone accountable, or punish someone, for using the agency that the heavens fought to preserve? Standing before the judgment bar of God, those who have decided not to change their character and not to keep the commandments are not cast out of His presence; they themselves will "shrink from the presence of God." All become the judges of their own selves, not God. For this reason, the judgment is just.

Commandments are not given as restrictions or restraints, but recipes for happiness in this world and the next. Commandments exist because a loving God knows what will make His children

happy, and what will bring joy in this life and the next. God loves all, but at the same time He wants all to repent (change their character) and sin no more so that they will be able to participate in that eternal happiness, which is His work and His glory. A parent's love for their children cannot be greater than the love God has for them, and by virtue of being God, He cannot command (whether one agrees or disagrees) anything that will not be for their eternal benefit and glory. Many believe that the church and consequently God should change for the 'better.' God cannot change for the better because He is already perfect and He will not change the perfect to make life and eternity worse.

In John Chapter Eight the woman taken in adultery was left without accusers. Christ showed His earthly love by saying "Neither do I condemn thee." The Savior did not judge or condemn her for using the agency He insured, protected and for which He fought. Christ displayed His Godly redemptive love and desire by stating, "Go, and sin no more" (John 8:1-11). This passage is often quoted but seldom understood. Christ does not condemn the adulteress for her use of agency; He just asks her to change her lifestyle. He knows how true happiness and joy is achieved. Based on the knowledge of truth that one might have, each individual will have joy or sorrow, happiness or misery, condemn or exalt themselves because of their agency, choice, and chosen nature and character.

There are sins or weaknesses that exist because of the flesh. They are perpetuated because of pride and a desire to use our God given agency to do according to our own will. But no one is a victim of God. Those who have neither a standard of truth nor an understanding of eternal truths or the plan of salvation are vulnerable to being carried about on every wind of doctrine, fashion and fad. But the choice to act on our impulses still belongs to the individual and not God. He will not control the agency of man, but neither is His mercy able to rob justice of her due.

There are those who have chosen an alternate lifestyle contrary to the scriptures upon which the church must rely as a standard. Many who struggle with same sex attraction, or are sympathetic to it, hope the church will change its position on the acceptability of this practice. Others actively seek to change the church's perception and acceptance of this practice by protest and vigil. This the church cannot do.

Some will condemn the policies of the church and label the church and its members 'intolerant' and 'bigoted' for not sanctioning their chosen lifestyle. God himself has guaranteed agency and personal choice and action and the church cannot take that away from the individual. Nevertheless, the doctrines founded in scripture become the standards of the Church of Jesus Christ, which are NOT based on sexuality, but on the moralities of eternal happiness

A religion must be founded on an unchangeable God and a standard of truth from which to build the faith of its members.

9 For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

10 And now, if ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary, and in whom there is shadow of changing, then have ye imagined up unto yourselves a god who is not a God of miracles. (Mormon 9:9-10)

If God or His Church could change doctrines and beliefs based on the wish or whim of its members, or change its truths by vigil, petition or vote, it would cease to be a religion and would become a club. If one does not like the position of the Latter-day Saint beliefs, there are many organizations and even religions that accept the alternate lifestyle in their membership and leadership. The standards of the church are the scriptures, which must be a final word on the doctrines and beliefs of the organization. Again, the commandments found in the scriptures are not restrictive, but are the path to eternal happiness and joy. Of what value is a religion or church that would not have as its goal the *eternal happiness* of its individual members? All are free to act for themselves, free to create the character that they will want and have for eternity. This everyone can do without the condemnation from a loving God, who will allow each spirit to be what he or she may want to be and where they want to be for eternity. Our loving God has provided a path and road map to happiness and joy, but none are forced to walk that path or obey the warning signs along the way. The Standard Works are the standards for happiness, in and out of this world. If a church did not maintain the *rules of eternal joy* (commandments) there would be no purpose of faith or religion, for that church would have no power to save. Without a standard there is no set of unchangeable rules. How could faith be built or maintained on something that could be changed by vote based on special interests or weaknesses? There are other options and organizations for those who do not want to live by the standards that are set in Latter-day scripture.

When one seeks to change the doctrines and scriptural standards of the church, they are subtly expressing specific beliefs about the church which they hope to change. Implied but rarely articulated in their forceful desire for change are these core beliefs:

- This is not a religion.
- This organization is not founded on scripture and doctrine from God.
- The church organization is not directed by Christ.
- This church organization is only a culture, social organization or club that can be changed, manipulated and pressured.
- The priesthood leadership is not inspired and cannot be considered prophets, seers, and revelators.
- God needs to conform to personal opinion, desires and whims.
- This is not the true church or priesthood.

Below are a few of the scriptures in the standard works that address same sex relationships along with other unacceptable activities and character traits that would lead one away from eternal happiness.

Genesis 19:5; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17; Isaiah 3:9; Romans 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 3:3; Jude 1:7; 2 Nephi 13:9.

In Scripture, same sex relationships are listed together in the context of other sins such as adultery, fornication, family incest and other weaknesses of the flesh and character that are considered unacceptable behavior (Leviticus 20:10-16). When reviewing the list of scriptural passages above, as well as the few verses below, the question must arise: Which is the greatest offence? For example:

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

When reviewing the passage above, which is the worst sin? Which sin will keep the individual out of the kingdom of God? Often the acts that people are most forgiving and accepting of are the ones with which they are most familiar, including personal weaknesses or the weaknesses of loved ones. It follows then that the greatest sin, the worst sin, is the one that restricts each individual person from the presence of God and from the full potential of happiness and joy, *whatever that weakness may be*. One does not trip over the mountain, but a neck can be broken from a crack in the sidewalk.

Perhaps a look at what should be acceptable or what God should be blamed for (*with tongue in cheek*) might help make a point. The mother that is upset with the church for not accepting her alternate lifestyle child and wanting the church to change its policies should ask themselves a few questions logically connected to these verses above (as well as many others). If one wants the church to accept the gay and lesbian lifestyle, why not also demand that the church accept the adulterous lifestyles of husbands and priesthood leaders? Perhaps a petition could be passed or a vote taken to repeal the Word of Wisdom as a commandment, thus removing it as a requirement for Temple attendance. By vote we could make the cultural hall the smoking section for Sacrament Meeting. And with the economic difficulties of today, perhaps a petition for 5% tithing would be prudent.

The point is, if pressure and petition can force any doctrinal or moral change, then any change is possible. There could be "NO TRUE CHURCH" if personal opinion, society or cultural norms determine the accepted doctrines and moral laws of a religion rather than a standard of scripture and unchangeable doctrine.

Those who believe that an alternate lifestyle should be accepted because "God made them that way" must also accept individual entitlements of those who may claim genetic reasons for acting on other personal weaknesses. For example, a person may claim to have an overactive libido that makes them unable to control or limit themselves to a monogamous physical relationship with a spouse. If one accepts that God made them that way, these adulterous actions could not be wrong or called sins, since they cannot help but cheat on their spouses. If they have no control, they have no agency, and therefore no responsibility to be obedient to any. Another individual, because of genetic makeup, might be susceptible to alcoholism and therefore not responsible for his or her drinking or the drunken stupor and irresponsibility that follows. One may be over weight through no fault of their own. Can pornography be wrong if God created mankind with two eyes and overwhelming sexual desires? Where might the rationalization ever end?

Thus, to accept one justification or 'entitlement' to sin, one must be prepared to accept them all. There is a standard, and that standard is found in the scriptures and the declarations of the prophets of God. Again, commandments are not restrictive in nature, but recipes for happiness.

Life is nothing more than the battle or fight that exists between two forces, the flesh and the spirit. Eternal happiness and reward is determined by which force is allowed—*by personal choice*—to win that war.

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

(Galatians 5:16-23)

God Lives! His commands and His will has not changed. There is a life after death! Therefore, there exists a purpose to this life! Whether we see or understand that purpose does not negate the existence of God, life after death, or its purpose!

All spirits were perfect when they came to earth through a physical birth, having no desire for sin or wickedness. Every spirit was pure and whole when they entered mortality.

54 ...the children, for they are whole from the foundation of the world.

55 And the Lord spake unto Adam, saying: Inasmuch as thy children are conceived in sin, (in a sinful world) even so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good. (Moses 6:54-55)

8 Wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them;

12 But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism! (Moroni 8:8, 12)

The dichotomy of mortality lies in the fact that every individual begins with a perfect and pure spirit without any spiritual handicap. Through birth into a temporal world, that pure spirit must inhabit an imperfect physical body. Because of the fall of Adam, the spirit had no other option than to receive and endure this fallen body. Therefore, a loving Father in Heaven promised, through the power of the resurrection—initiated by the grace, sacrifice and resurrection of Christ—a perfect and immortal physical body. Thus, the time will come that every spirit, good or bad, will receive a perfected and incorruptible body for eternity. The spirit that inhabits and animates that perfect

body will be the same spirit that began in perfection, but now it will possess the nature and character that was molded and cast through the exercise of agency in mortality.

Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world. (Alma 34:34)

Therefore, during this life the spirit will use the agency it has been given to either become more like God (character matters!), or it will choose to succumb to the imperfections and worldly desires of the flesh. Mortality is the probationary period where the spirit will either learn to control the imperfect body or allow the body to control, create and cast the nature of the spirit. The eternal spirit that either submitted its will to God or the flesh will be inseparably connected to that perfect body. It is the spirit's quality of character and nature that will determine and choose its most comfortable habitation and happiness in the eternities, not the quality of the immortal body.

God has provided everyone with the rulebook for eternal happiness. Every individual spirit may choose that happiness by keeping the commandments God has instituted, or they may gamble on the hope that they will be satisfied in eternity without family and without relationships. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that outside of the Celestial kingdom, there will be no recognition of any previous earthly relationships. Moreover, every relationship based on a physical relationship or attraction will be absent in all but the Celestial kingdom.

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former *shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.* (Isaiah 65:17)

There is only one kingdom and glory set aside for a continuation of relationships, a place reserved for those whose worthiness is created by the personal desire (through the use of agency) to exercise faith in Christ and repent (change one's character), thus developing the character and love that has made God who He is. The judgment of a character developed by choice and works in mortality can be nothing but perfect and righteous. All judgment is "just" because any condemnation or punishment is not issued from God but from the individuals themselves.

These are they that are redeemed of the Lord; yea, these are they that are taken out, that are delivered from that endless night of darkness; and thus *they stand or fall*; for behold, they are their own judges, whether to do good or do evil. (Alma 41:7)

29 And this to the intent that whosoever will believe might be saved, and that whosoever will not believe, *a righteous judgment might come upon them; and also if they are condemned they bring upon themselves their own condemnation.*

30 And now remember, remember, my brethren, that *whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself*; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free. (Helaman 14:29-30)

For one to become 'their own judge', they must comprehend the magnitude of what their full potential was. Each will understand not only the character and nature they have chosen, but also the nature and glory of God. When the time comes that all will 'see as they are seen, and know as

they are known' (D&C 76:94) either their 'confidence will wax strong in the presence of God' (D&C 121:45) or they will shrink from His presence, by choice and with a perfect knowledge:

For behold, when ***ye shall be brought to see your nakedness*** before God, ***and also the glory of God***, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you. (Mormon 9:5)

Therefore, if that man repenteth not... *the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever.* (Mosiah 2:38)

And if they be evil *they are consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord...* (Mosiah 3:25)

Each individual will become their own arbiter and judge, *placing themselves* in the eternal environment that they have selected by their preparation and agency. Hell is where one does not belong and that could be in the celestial kingdom and the presence of God:

3 Can ye behold the Lamb of God? *Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that Holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws?*

4 Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell. (Mormon 9:3-4)

In summary, the War in Heaven was fought to preserve the agency of the individual. Contrary to common perception, those who decline to change their character (repent) and keep the commandments are not cast out of the presence of God. In fact, they "shrink from the presence of God." All become judges of their own selves, not God. Thus, the Judgment of God is just. With a perfect recollection of one's works and choices, possessed of the eternal nature and character they have developed, each person will choose the presence or absence of Deity. All will choose to be where they are comfortable for eternity. Agency is supreme, and the exercise of that agency, ensured by God himself, will determine one's glory or condemnation. It is only in the Celestial environment that any earthly relationships will continue with loved ones, and they too must be worthy of the same celestial glory.

Whether our dispositions toward sin are genetic or the result of choice, it must be remembered that the moral codes and commandments found in scripture are not meant to be restrictions of one's agency. Like all weaknesses of the flesh, from sexual desire to overeating, the goal in mortality is to create—by agency, choice, and actions—a spirit that someday will inhabit a perfect body and worthy to be in the presence of God. The weaknesses of mortality can become strengths through repentance (character change) and the gospel of Jesus Christ; ensuring that every spirit is free from becoming a victim of their body, mind or circumstance.