



Ministering

TO OUR LGBTQ+ MEMBERS AND FAMILIES

This ministering guide is provided as an additional resource to help you better understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ people, their friends, and families.

The information provided within this resource was compiled by Rebecca Simpson Craft, M.Ed.S., LEP, Newport Beach Stake, California, from her perspective navigating her journey within this space.

This document is not an official publication of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or specifically endorsed by the Church.

The quotes used in the comments below are taken directly from approved sources of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To assist your further study, and where applicable, these quotes are hyper-linked to the original talk, video, or source.



“As a church, nobody should be more loving and compassionate. Let us be at the forefront in terms of expressing love, compassion and outreach. 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.”

Elder Quentin L. Cook | MormonAndGay.ChurchOfJesusChrist.org

Recent Quotes

"I want anyone who is a member of the Church who is gay or lesbian to know I believe you have a place in the kingdom and recognize that sometimes it may be difficult for you to see where you fit in the Lord's Church, but you do.

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."

President M. Russell Ballard | [BYU Devotional Address](#)



"What is changing – and what needs to change – is to help church members respond sensitively and thoughtfully when they encounter same-sex attraction in their own families, among other church members, or elsewhere."

President Dallin H. Oaks | ["Love One Another: A Discussion on Same-Sex Attraction"](#)

LABELS:

The church uses the terms same sex attraction (SSA), and the term "gay" to describe people who are attracted to the same gender. Use of the term "gay" typically does not refer to behavior. There is no need to correct someone if they label themselves as SSA, gay, lesbian, bi, trans, queer, or LGBTQ+. We should let individuals decide on the label they are most comfortable with.

ACCEPTANCE:

"...a change in attraction should not be expected or demanded as an outcome by parents or leaders." [MormonAndGay.org | Frequently Asked Questions Section](#)

"I must say, this son's sexual orientation did not somehow miraculously change—no one assumed it would." ["Behold Thy Mother": Jeffrey R. Holland, October 2015 General Conference](#)

Helpful Tips

IN MINISTERING TO HIS LGBTQ+ CHILDREN

Listen. Seek to understand and love without judgement. Bishops must help LGBTQ individuals best navigate the boundaries of the church. The rest of us aren't called to be judges, so we can just love people.

Let them know you love them. Keep in mind, the Savior loves all of us with a perfect love. All are welcome to worship and feel loved by their ward family.

Be aware of resources at MormonAndGay.org, so you know what we believe, and how we should treat LGBTQ members. It is better to know current resources, than to remember decades old statements that may no longer reflect the church's position.

If someone comes out to you, or tells you about their LGBTQ family member, thank them for trusting you with something so personal. Keep confidences and be kind. Listen.

When someone comes out, don't assume you know their intentions. They are sharing an essential part of themselves. This may be about self-acceptance, or not seeing themselves as fractured or broken.

Always assume you have at least one LGBTQ teen or family member listening to your talk or lesson.

Stand up. If a comment is insensitive, bring kindness back into the conversation. Never say things that would make it impossible for an LGBTQ child or ward member to tell you about their experience. Validating pain is part of carrying one another's burdens. Mourn with those that mourn.

Almost without exception, parents of LGBTQ children express positive feelings, and tremendous love for their kids, and feel that they have been blessed with a greater sense of compassion for everyone, through the experience of having an LGBTQ child in the family. Ask about their LGBTQ child and celebrate their successes with them.

Remember, the LGBTQ young adult has likely studied every scripture and talk ever given on this topic, and can likely quote them from memory, because the topic is very personal to them. Ward members should assume that LGBTQ adults know where the church stands on this topic.

Key Take Away: Respect the LGBTQ adult's ability to seek inspiration for their own life.

Simple

THINGS MEMBERS SHOULD AVOID

Avoid making anyone feel that your love or friendship is conditional on their personal relationships, gender identity, or their activity in the church.

Someone can be chaste and describe themselves as “gay,” just as straight teens who are living the law of chastity, may tell you they are “straight.” When someone says they are “gay,” we don't assume that they are sexually active, any more than we assume people who describe themselves as “straight” are sexually active.

Avoid simple analogies, such as, “being LGBTQ is like...an addiction, a disability, or something trivial like preferring a different flavor of ice cream.” We don't know exactly what being LGBTQ is like for that individual, so it's better to ask and listen to what the person experiences.

Avoid using trite, or overused sayings and phrases such as “love the sinner, hate the sin.” It's better to, **“love everyone and hate our own sins.”** Saying, “it's just another trial” to gay or transgender members can sound dismissive, since we cannot know exactly what that individual thinks and feels. We are all unique children of God.

Reminding the LGBTQ person “they will be cured in the next life” can cause them to wish to die so they can hurry up and be “cured.” Quotes about how sexual immorality is... “next to murder” often cause undue harm and shame, particularly in young people who may be attracted to the same gender, but have never had any kind of sexual relationship. **Teens and young adults should not be made to feel as if they are unacceptable to God for having same sex feelings.**

Much of our teaching about sex before marriage applies to **all** of our youth, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. **All** of our youth should be encouraged to avoid pornography and inappropriate physical relationships. There is no need to make LGBTQ youth feel that they are somehow **worse** than other youth of the church who may struggle with these issues. All of our kids need encouragement and understanding.

Refrain from asking parents personal questions about their child's worthiness, or speculating about what might have caused someone to be LGBTQ. We don't do that to parents of straight kids, and we shouldn't do it to parents of LGBTQ kids. We would never ask someone if their college-aged child is “living the straight lifestyle,” or ask if someone's young adult child is “staying celibate,” or “plans to stay celibate.” These are not topics for casual conversation, but rather are discussions for loving parents and bishops who are ministering in their unique stewardship with confidentiality, love, and inspiration from the spirit.



Gender Identity

Intersex people are born with variations in sex characteristics including chromosomes, reproductive anatomy, or sex hormones that do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies. Some people have outward male or female physical characteristics, yet their internal organs (including chromosomes) are exactly the opposite of the male or female features they outwardly display. This is a result of no choice or decision on their part. Approximately 1 in 1000 births is considered intersex.

Sometimes a ward member will have a deep internal awareness that they are a different gender than the one assigned to them at birth. This is known as being **transgender**. As a church, we know very little about why some of our members have these experiences.

Ward members should avoid asking personal questions about bodies or gender history. Feeling welcome in classes divided by gender can be very difficult, so offer your friendship. Act with love and patience as youth sort out issues of gender identity with loving parents and leaders. Support them. Respect transgender people by using the names and pronouns they ask you to use.

Many transgender members feel a deep love for the teaching that “gender is eternal.” As we look at the human family, God obviously finds great beauty in the diversity of His children.

The Savior always extended love to those who were different.



Helpful Resources

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

MormonAndGay.org – The official website regarding same-sex attraction and LGBTQ+ information from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

[Listen Learn and Love](#) – Podcast resource by Richard Ostler featuring the experiences of LGBTQ+ people, their families, and friends.

[Ben There, Done That](#) – Blog resource from Ben Schilaty, an active Latter-day Saint who identifies as gay. www.benschilaty.blogspot.com

[Encircle](#) – LGBTQ+ Resource Center designed to bring the family and community together to enable LGBTQ+ youth to thrive.

[Family Acceptance Project](#) – This booklet offers basic information to help Latter-day Saint parents and caregivers support their LGBT children; to reduce their children's health risks, including depression, suicide, substance abuse and HIV infection; and to promote their well-being.

[Latter Gay Stories](#) – Podcast and website resources featuring candid video and audio podcast episodes highlighting LGBTQ+ stories from personal experiences. Printable downloads, helpful articles, and additional Church leader resources are available to families and leaders.



Final Thoughts

There is much we do not know about God's LGBTQ children. We must do better.



“We do not make a judgment about someone's attraction; we do not know why that attraction came that way and the person does not—the one struggling with it— does not. We do not make any attempt to say why that happened or how it happened . . . We've published that in every way we know how to publish it and we've put it in our handbooks. It's in the governing handbooks that give direction to the priesthood leaders of the Church. Now if some members fall short in that then shame on them, and if I have not done well enough to teach it shame on me—that we are not passing judgment, we're not issuing an indictment to somebody who has a feeling, to somebody has an attraction, to somebody who has some complexities in their makeup that I guess neither they nor we fully understand.”

Elder Jeffery R. Holland | VIDEO: [March 8, 2016. Face2Face interview](#)
(1:13:25 into the video and finishes about 1:21:20)

We teach love. “When asked if having a gay son had affected Elder Gong's views on LGBTQ issues, he replied, 'We love each member of our family. We feel the need to be compassionate to all. Even though there are many things we don't understand, we know in God's plan there's a place for every person in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.'”

Elder Gerrit W. Gong | [The Salt Lake Tribune, June 2018](#)

