

Same-Gender Attraction
Dallin H. Oaks CR October 1995

1. God created us male and female. What we call gender was an essential characteristic of our existence prior to our birth.
2. Every Latter-day Saint knows that God has forbidden all sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage. Most are also aware of the Savior's teaching that it is sinful for a man to look upon and lust after a woman (see [Matt. 5:28](#); [D&C 42:23](#); [D&C 63:16](#)).
3. Attraction between man and woman was instilled by the Creator to ensure the perpetuation of mortal life and to draw husband and wife together in the family setting he prescribed for the accomplishment of his purposes, including the raising of children. In contrast, deviations from God's commandments in the use of procreative powers are grave sins. President Joseph F. Smith taught:
4. "Sexual union is lawful in wedlock, and if participated in with right intent is honorable and sanctifying. But without the bonds of marriage, sexual indulgence is a debasing sin, abominable in the sight of Deity."¹
5. Some Latter-day Saints face the confusion and pain that result when a man or a woman engages in sexual behavior with a person of the same sex, or even when a person has erotic feelings that could lead toward such behavior. How should Church leaders, parents, and other members of the Church react when faced with the religious, emotional, and family challenges that accompany such behavior or feelings? What do we say to a young person who reports that he or she is attracted toward or has erotic thoughts or feelings about persons of the same sex? How should we respond when a person announces that he is a homosexual or she is a lesbian and that scientific evidence "proves" he or she was "born that way"? How do we react when persons who do not share our beliefs accuse us of being intolerant or unmerciful when we insist that erotic feelings toward a person of the same sex are irregular and that any sexual behavior of that nature is sinful?
6. **Gospel Doctrines**
7. Our attitudes toward these questions are dictated by gospel doctrines we know to be true.
8. God created us "male and female" ([D&C 20:18](#); [Moses 2:27](#); [Gen. 1:27](#)). What we call gender was an essential characteristic of our existence prior to our birth.²
9. The purpose of mortal life and the mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to prepare the sons and daughters of God for their destiny—to become like our heavenly parents.
10. Our eternal destiny—exaltation in the celestial kingdom—is made possible only through the atonement of Jesus Christ (through which we became and can remain "innocent before God" [[D&C 93:38](#)]) and is only available to a man and a woman who have entered into and been faithful to the covenants of an eternal marriage in a temple of God (see [D&C 131:1–4](#); [D&C 132](#)).
11. Through the merciful plan of our Father in Heaven, persons who desire to do what is right but through no fault of their own are unable to have an eternal marriage in mortal life will have an opportunity to qualify for eternal life in a period following mortality, if they keep the commandments of God and are true to their baptismal and other covenants.³
12. In addition to the cleansing effect of the Atonement, God has given us agency—the power to choose between good (the path of life) and evil (the path of spiritual death and destruction [see [2 Ne. 2:27](#); [Moses 4:3](#)]). Although the conditions of mortality can limit our freedom (such as by restricting our mobility or our power to act on certain options), when we have reached the age or condition of accountability (see [Moro. 8:5–12](#); [D&C 68:27](#); [D&C 101:78](#)) no mortal or spiritual power can deprive us of our agency.
13. To accomplish one of the purposes of mortal life, it is essential that we be tested against opposition to see if we will keep the commandments of God (see [2 Ne. 2:11](#); [Abr. 3:25–26](#)). To provide that opposition, Satan and his followers are permitted to tempt us to use our agency and our freedom to choose evil and to commit sin.
14. Because Satan desires that "all men might be miserable like unto himself" ([2 Ne. 2:27](#)), his most strenuous efforts are directed at encouraging those choices and actions that will thwart God's plan for his children. He seeks to undermine the principle of individual accountability, to persuade us to misuse our sacred powers of procreation, to discourage marriage and childbearing by worthy men and women, and to confuse what it means to be male or female.
15. In all of this, the devil, who has no body, seeks to persuade mortals to corrupt their bodies by "choos[ing] eternal death, according to the will of the flesh . . . , which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring [them] down to hell, that he may reign over [them] in his own kingdom" ([2 Ne. 2:29](#)).
16. The First Presidency has declared that "there is a distinction between [1] immoral thoughts and feelings and [2] participating in either immoral heterosexual or any homosexual behavior."⁴ Although immoral thoughts are less serious than immoral behavior, such thoughts also need to be resisted and repented of because we know that "our thoughts will also condemn us" ([Alma 12:14](#)). Immoral thoughts (and the less serious feelings that lead to them) can bring about behavior that is sinful.
17. Applying the First Presidency's distinction to the question of same-sex relationships, we should distinguish between (1) homosexual (or lesbian) "thoughts and feelings" (which should be resisted and redirected), and (2) "homosexual behavior" (which is a serious sin).
18. We should note that the words *homosexual*, *lesbian*, and *gay* are adjectives to describe particular thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. We should refrain from using these words as nouns to identify particular conditions or specific persons. Our religious doctrine dictates this usage. It is wrong to use these words to denote a *condition*, because this implies that a person is consigned by birth to a circumstance in which he or she has no choice in respect to the critically important matter of sexual *behavior*.
19. Feelings are another matter. Some kinds of feelings seem to be inborn. Others are traceable to mortal experiences. Still other feelings seem to be acquired from a complex

- interaction of “nature and nurture.” All of us have some feelings we did not choose, but the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us that we still have the power to resist and reform our feelings (as needed) and to assure that they do not lead us to entertain inappropriate thoughts or to engage in sinful behavior.
20. Different persons have different physical characteristics and different susceptibilities to the various physical and emotional pressures we may encounter in our childhood and adult environments. We did not choose these personal susceptibilities either, but we do choose and will be accountable for the attitudes, priorities, behavior, and “lifestyle” we engraft upon them.
 21. Essential to our doctrinal position on these matters is the difference between our freedom and our agency. Our freedom can be limited by various conditions of mortality, but God’s gift of agency cannot be limited by outside forces, because it is the basis for our accountability to him. The contrast between freedom and agency can be illustrated in the context of a hypothetical progression from feelings to thoughts to behavior to addiction. This progression can be seen on a variety of matters, such as gambling and the use of tobacco and alcohol.
 22. Just as some people have different feelings than others, some people seem to be unusually susceptible to particular actions, reactions, or addictions. Perhaps such susceptibilities are inborn or acquired without personal choice or fault, like the unnamed ailment the Apostle Paul called “a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Cor. 12:7). One person may have feelings that draw him toward gambling, but unlike those who only dabble, he becomes a compulsive gambler. Another person may have a taste for tobacco and a susceptibility to its addiction. Still another may have an unusual attraction to alcohol and the vulnerability to be readily propelled into alcoholism. Other examples may include a hot temper, a contentious manner, a covetous attitude, and so on.
 23. In each case (and in other examples that could be given) the feelings or other characteristics that increase susceptibility to certain behavior may have some relationship to inheritance. But the relationship is probably very complex. The inherited element may be nothing more than an increased likelihood that an individual will acquire certain feelings if he or she encounters particular influences during the developmental years. But regardless of our different susceptibilities or vulnerabilities, which represent only variations on our mortal freedom (in mortality we are only “free according to the flesh” [2 Ne. 2:27]), we remain responsible for the exercise of our agency in the thoughts we entertain and the behavior we choose. I discussed this contrast in a talk I gave at Brigham Young University several years ago:
 24. “Most of us are born with [or develop] thorns in the flesh, some more visible, some more serious than others. We all seem to have susceptibilities to one disorder or another, but whatever our susceptibilities, we have the will and the power to control our thoughts and our actions. This must be so. God has said that he holds us accountable for what we do and what we think, so our thoughts and actions must be controllable by our agency. Once we have reached the age or condition of accountability, the claim ‘I was born that way’ does not excuse actions or thoughts that fail to conform to the commandments of God. We need to learn how to live so that a weakness that is mortal will not prevent us from achieving the goal that is eternal.
 25. “God has promised that he will consecrate our afflictions for our gain (see 2 Ne. 2:2). The efforts we expend in overcoming any inherited [or developed] weakness build a spiritual strength that will serve us throughout eternity.
 26. “Whatever our susceptibilities or tendencies [feelings], they cannot subject us to eternal consequences unless we exercise our free agency to do or think the things forbidden by the commandments of God. For example, a susceptibility to alcoholism impairs its victim’s freedom to partake without addiction, but his free agency allows him to abstain and thus escape the physical debilitation of alcohol and the spiritual deterioration of addiction.
 27. “... Beware the argument that because a person has strong drives toward a particular act, he has no power of choice and therefore no responsibility for his actions. This contention runs counter to the most fundamental premises of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 28. “Satan would like us to believe that we are not responsible in this life. That is the result he tried to achieve by his contest in the pre-existence. A person who insists that he is not responsible for the exercise of his free agency because he was ‘born that way’ is trying to ignore the outcome of the War in Heaven. We *are* responsible, and if we argue otherwise, our efforts become part of the propaganda effort of the Adversary.
 29. “Individual responsibility is a law of life. It applies in the law of man and the law of God. Society holds people responsible to control their impulses so we can live in a civilized society. God holds his children responsible to control their impulses in order that they can keep his commandments and realize their eternal destiny. The law does not excuse the short-tempered man who surrenders to his impulse to pull a trigger on his tormentor, or the greedy man who surrenders to his impulse to steal, or the pedophile who surrenders to his impulse to satisfy his sexual urges with children. ...
 30. “There is much we do not know about the extent of freedom we have in view of the various thorns in the flesh that afflict us in mortality. But this much we do know; we *all* have our free agency and God holds us accountable for the way we use it in thought and deed. That is fundamental.”

The Lord’s Standard of Morality
Elder Tad R. Callister devotional address given at
Brigham Young University—Idaho on January 22, 2013.

31. What, then, is the Lord’s standard for use of the sacred power of procreation—His standard of morality? In truth, the Lord’s standard of morality is not so much a list of do’s and don’ts as it is a principle, which can be expressed as follows: The procreative power is to be exercised in the marriage relationship for two key

reasons: (1) to bind and strengthen ties between spouses and (2) to bring souls into the world. These uses have the blessing and endorsement of the Lord.

32. On the other hand, the procreative power is not to be exercised outside the husband-wife relationship. Accordingly, any conscious thoughts or voluntary actions that stimulate or result in the expression of the procreative power outside the marriage relationship are disapproved by the Lord.

33. I now cite some of the Lord's standards of morality so as to minimize any misunderstanding or ambiguity.

34. Fornication and Adultery

35. The Lord forbids fornication and adultery despite how the world feels toward these behaviors. These acts constitute the ultimate use of the procreative power with someone of the opposite sex with whom we are not legally married. It is fornication if neither party is married; it is adultery if either or both parties are married.

36. The Apostle Paul said, "*For this is the will of God, ... that ye should abstain from fornication*" ([1 Thessalonians 4:3](#); emphasis added). He also said, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: *neither fornicators ... nor adulterers ... shall inherit the kingdom of God*" ([1 Corinthians 6:9–10](#); emphasis added).

37. Sometimes people do not realize the seriousness of these transgressions or, in some cases, rationalize it away. Corianton did not seem to realize the seriousness of what he had done when he sinned with the harlot Isabel. Alma, his father, put it in perspective: "Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord?" ([Alma 39:5](#)). Joseph also spoke of this great evil when he was tempted by Potiphar's wife: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" ([Genesis 39:9](#)).

38. Inappropriate Touching

39. Inappropriate touching arouses the procreative powers. Accordingly, in the premarital setting it is contrary to God's moral standard to touch the private or sacred parts of another's body, whether or not the person is clothed.

40. Self-Abuse

41. The Lord condemns self-abuse. Self-abuse is the act of stimulating the procreative power of one's own body. President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said:

42. "Do not be guilty of tampering or playing with this sacred power of creation. ...

43. "... It is not pleasing to the Lord, nor is it pleasing to you. It does not make you feel worthy or clean."

44. Same-Gender Relationships

45. Some would have us believe that the Church's stand against same-gender physical relationships is a temporary policy and not an eternal doctrine. Such a belief would be at odds with the scriptures, with the words of modern prophets, and with the plan of salvation, all of which teach the necessity of eternal marriage between a man and a woman as a condition to exaltation. A same-gender relationship is inconsistent with God's eternal pattern that husbands and wives not only have children in mortality but also have eternal increase in their exalted condition.

46. We recognize that everyone is a son or daughter of God and deserves to be treated as such. We all struggle with imperfections, some not of our choosing. But we also believe in an infinite Atonement that has the capacity in this life or the life to come to endow us with every power necessary to convert our weaknesses and imperfections into strengths. The Lord promised us, "For if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" ([Ether 12:27](#)).

47. Those with same-gender tendencies have a duty to (1) abstain from immoral relationships and (2) do all within their power to avail themselves of the refining, perfecting powers of the Atonement. In the interim, however, those who have same-gender tendencies but do not act on them are worthy to hold Church positions and receive a temple recommend.

Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction.

Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, Oct. 2007

48. "You serve yourself poorly when you identify yourself primarily by your sexual feelings. That isn't your only characteristic, so don't give it disproportionate attention. You are first and foremost a son of God, and He loves you.

49. "What's more, I love you. My Brethren among the General Authorities love you. I'm reminded of a comment President Boyd K. Packer made in speaking to those with same-gender attraction. 'We *do not* reject you,' he said. '... We *cannot* reject you, for you are the sons and daughters of God. We *will not* reject you, because we love you.'"

50. We talked for another 30 minutes or so. Knowing I could not be a personal counselor to him, I directed him to his local priesthood leaders. Then we parted. I thought I detected a look of hope in his eyes that had not been there before. Although he yet faced challenges to work through—or simply endure—I had a feeling he would handle them well.

51. Although I believe members are eager to extend compassion to those different from themselves, it is human nature that when confronted with a situation we don't understand, we tend to withdraw. This is particularly true of same-gender attraction. We have so little reliable information about it that those wanting to help are left feeling a bit unsteady. Admitting my own inadequacy in this regard but wanting to assist, let me offer some suggestions to help those who have loved ones or friends who are attracted to the same gender.

52. At the heart of this plan is the begetting of children, one of the crucial reasons Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden (see 2 Nephi 2:19–25; Moses 5:10–12). They were commanded to "be fruitful, and multiply" (Moses 2:28), and they chose to keep that commandment. We are to follow them in marrying and providing physical bodies for Heavenly Father's spirit children. Obviously, a same-gender relationship is inconsistent with this plan.

53. For various reasons, marriage and children are not immediately available to all. Perhaps no offer of marriage

- is forthcoming. Perhaps even after marriage there is an inability to have children. Or perhaps there is no present attraction to the opposite gender. Whatever the reason, God's richest blessings will eventually be available to all of His children if they are clean and faithful.
54. Through the exercise of faith, individual effort, and reliance upon the power of the Atonement, some may overcome same-gender attraction in mortality and marry. Others, however, may never be free of same-gender attraction in this life.
 55. As fellow Church members, families, and friends, we need to recognize that those attracted to the same gender face some unique restrictions regarding expression of their feelings. While same-gender attraction is real, there must be no physical expression of this attraction. The desire for physical gratification does not authorize immorality by anyone. Such feelings can be powerful, but they are never so strong as to deprive anyone of the freedom to choose worthy conduct.
 56. In saying this, let me make it clear that attractions alone, troublesome as they may be, do not make one unworthy. The First Presidency has stated, "There is a distinction between immoral thoughts and feelings and participating in either immoral heterosexual or any homosexual behavior."² If you do not act on temptations, you have not transgressed.
 57. The failure to see that distinction sometimes leads to despair. I ache for those who do not understand that every blessing offered by God is available to anyone who obeys the laws upon which those blessings are predicated (see D&C 130:20–21). No one who lives the gospel should despair. Hope and peace come from the Comforter, and the answer to despair is to invite the Holy Ghost into our lives.
 58. In doing so, recognize that marriage is not an all-purpose solution. Same-gender attractions run deep, and trying to force a heterosexual relationship is not likely to change them. We are all thrilled when some who struggle with these feelings are able to marry, raise children, and achieve family happiness. But other attempts have resulted in broken hearts and broken homes.
 59. Above all, keep your lines of communication open. Open communication between parents and children is a clear expression of love, and pure love, generously expressed, can transform family ties. But love for a family member does not extend to condoning unrighteous behavior. Your children are welcome to stay in your home, of course, but you have every right to exclude from your dwelling any behavior that offends the Spirit of the Lord.
 60. Next, consider a principle learned in gardening. Someone said that if we plant a garden with good seed, there will not be so much need of the hoe. Likewise, if we fill our lives with spiritual nourishment, we can more easily gain control over inclinations. This means creating a positive environment in our homes in which the Spirit is abundantly evident. A positive environment includes consistent private and public worship, prayer, fasting, scripture reading, service, and exposure to uplifting conversation, music, literature, and other media.
 61. This same environment extends to experiences at church. Some with same-gender attractions have unresolved fears

and are offended at church when no offense is intended. On the other hand, some members exclude from their circle of fellowship those who are different. When our actions or words discourage someone from taking full advantage of Church membership, we fail them—and the Lord. The Church is made stronger as we include every member and strengthen one another in service and love (see D&C 84:110).

The Plan of Salvation: A Sacred Treasure of Knowledge to Guide Us

Elder Robert D. Hales, CR April 2015

62. Each of us comes to this fallen world with weakness or challenge inherent in the human condition.⁶¹ Understanding God's plan enables us to see all human frailties—including attractions and desires inconsistent with His plan—as temporary.⁶² Knowing we lived before this life as beloved sons and daughters of heavenly parents enables us to take our personal identity from our divine origin. It is our status as a son or daughter of God—not our frailties or tendencies—that is the true source of our identity.⁶³
 63. With this perspective, we are better able to wait humbly and patiently upon the Lord,⁶⁴ trusting that through our faith, obedience, and endurance to the end, our dispositions and desires will be purified, our bodies will be sanctified, and we will truly become the sons and daughters of Christ, perfected through His Atonement.
 64. The eternal perspective of the plan brings the assurance that for the faithful, the day will surely come that "God shall wipe away all tears; ... neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."⁶⁵ This "perfect brightness of hope"⁶⁶ will steady our minds and hearts and enable us to patiently, faithfully wait upon the Lord.
- 65. Promises for Those Who Faithfully Endure**
66. Those who wonder if their current circumstance or condition cuts them off from eternal life should remember that "no one is predestined to receive less than all that the Father has for His children."⁶⁷
 67. No blessing will be denied the faithful. President Lorenzo Snow declared: "There is no Latter-day Saint who dies after having lived a faithful life who will lose anything because of having failed to do certain things when opportunities were not furnished him or her. In other words, if a young man or a young woman has no opportunity of getting married, and they live faithful lives up to the time of their death, they will have all the blessings, exaltation and glory that any man or woman will have who had this opportunity and improved it. That is sure and positive."