

Same-Gender Attraction

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What do we believe, how do we feel and how do we respond?

- Where we live same-gender (same-sex) attraction behavior and the promotion of such behavior is increasingly public in both its practice and acceptance
 - It is very prevalent in our schools
 - It is in the news, TV shows, and on the lips of those with whom we associate
 - We and our children are increasingly faced with situations where we need to act, speak, respond, explain or deal with this topic
 - 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?

- We cannot ignore this issue – even if it is not a "comfortable" subject for many of us
- Some of us 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
- We must clearly understand what it is we believe, why we believe it, so we may know how to properly behave and respond when confronted with this issue
- We have a responsibility to teach:
 - Dallin H Oaks
"Church leaders and members cannot avoid their responsibility to teach correct principles and righteous behavior (on all subjects), even if this causes discomfort to some." ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)
 - We must clearly teach our children
 - They *will* be bombarded with the teachings and behaviors of the world in this matter

True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior

- Boyd K Packer
"The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior. Preoccupation with unworthy behavior can lead to unworthy behavior. That is why we stress so forcefully the study of the doctrines of the gospel." ("Little Children," Ensign, Nov. 1986, 16)

Doctrines & Principles

God created us Male & Female

- The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles
"All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. *Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.*" (The Family: A Proclamation to the World (2nd paragraph))

Observations

- We had the same gender we have today in the pre-existence and we will have the same gender forever
- God does not make mistakes and "put" anyone in the wrong gender body

Sacred Powers only between man and woman

- The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles
"God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be *employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.*" (The Family: A Proclamation to the World (4th paragraph))

Observations

- Spencer W Kimball
"All such deviations from normal, proper heterosexual relationships are not merely unnatural but wrong in the sight of God" (The Miracle of Forgiveness, 79)

Sacred Powers only within bonds of Marriage

- The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles
"God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, *lawfully wedded as husband and wife.*" (The Family: A Proclamation to the World (4th paragraph))
- Joseph F Smith
"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." (Gospel Doctrine, 309)
- David Bednar
"Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage

protect the sanctity of this sacred channel " ("Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan", World Wide Training Feb 2006, (Ensign June 2006))

Marriage between man and women only

- The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles
"Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children." (The Family: A Proclamation to the World(1st paragraph))
- 1 Cor 11:11
neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord

Children to be reared by a Father and a Mother

- The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles
"Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity" (The Family: A Proclamation to the World (7th paragraph))

Difference between thoughts, feelings and participation in immoral behavior

- Dallin H Oaks
"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 (Letter of the First Presidency, 14 Nov. 1991)." 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." ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)

Definitions & Differences

Adjectives not conditions

- Dallin H Oaks
"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*." ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)

Distinguish between behavior and thoughts and feelings

- Homosexual *thoughts & feelings*
 - Redirect and resist
- Homosexual *behavior*
 - Serious sin
- Dallin H Oaks
"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)." ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)

Temptations

- Having temptations in of itself is not a sin – we are all tempted
 - Independent of our agency
- It is what we do with the temptations that matters
 - Depends on our use of agency

Feelings

(See: "Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)

- Some feelings seem to be inborn
- Some feelings are traceable to mortal experiences
- Some feelings seem to be acquired from a complex interaction of "nature and nurture"
- Feelings should be resisted and redirected
- Dallin H Oaks
"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." ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)

Immoral thoughts

- Dallin H Oaks
"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." ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)

Immoral behavior

- Serious sin
 - Requires confession to bishop

Susceptibilities

- We all have different susceptibilities
 - Dallin H Oaks
" 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." ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)
- Some of may be unusually susceptible to certain things
 - Dallin H Oaks
"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 " ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)

- Regardless we are accountable because of our agency
 - Dallin H Oaks
"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." ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)

Application of Doctrines (Behaviors)

(in no particular order)

Church Officers

- Church officers are responsible to call transgressors to repentance
 - Persons cannot continue to engage in serious sin and remain members of the Church
 - If a person does not respond to calls to repentance then disciplinary action must be taken
 - Not just same-gender attraction but all serious sin
 - Discipline can be given for encouraging sin by others
 - Not just same-gender attraction but all serious sin
 - There is no Church discipline for improper thoughts or feelings (though there is encouragement to improve them), but there are consequences for *behavior*

Need to distinguish between sinful acts & inappropriate feelings

- We need to distinguish between sinful acts and inappropriate feelings
 - The former to be repented of and the latter to be resisted and redirected

Reach out to those who are struggling to resist temptation

- We should *lovingly* reach out to those who are struggling to resist temptation
 - Dallin H Oaks
"Each member of Christ's church has a clear-cut doctrinal responsibility to show forth love and to extend help and understanding. Sinners, as well as those who are struggling to resist inappropriate feelings, are not people to be cast out but people to be loved and helped (see 3 Ne. 18:22–23, 30, 32)." ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)

We do not condone or support same-gender attraction behavior

- We do not condone same-gender behaviors (gay, lesbian etc.)
- We should not support activities or programs that promote such behavior

Condemn the sin, not the sinner

- John 8:10-11
When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?
She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.
- Gordon B Hinckley
"I desire now to say with emphasis that our concern for the bitter fruit of sin is coupled with Christlike sympathy for its victims, innocent or culpable. We advocate the example of the Lord, who condemned the sin, yet loved the sinner. We should reach out with kindness and comfort to the afflicted, ministering to their needs and assisting them with their problems." ("Reverence and Morality," Ensign, May 1987, p. 47)

We do condemn physical or verbal attacks

- As a disciple of Christ we do not condone nor engage in physical or verbal attacks upon those who participate in behaviors contrary to our beliefs
 - Dallin H Oaks
"Our doctrines obviously condemn those who engage in so-called "gay bashing"—physical or verbal attacks on persons thought to be involved in homosexual or lesbian behavior." ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)
 - First Presidency
"Individuals and their families desiring help with these matters should seek counsel from their bishop, branch president, stake or district president. We encourage Church leaders and members to reach out with love and understanding to those struggling with these issues. Many will respond to Christlike love and inspired counsel as they receive an invitation to come back and apply the atoning and healing power of the Savior." (Letter of the First Presidency, 14 Nov. 1991)

We do have compassion

- Dallin H Oaks
"We should extend compassion to persons who suffer from ill health, including those who are infected with HIV or who are ill with AIDS (who may or may not have acquired their condition from sexual relations). We should encourage such persons to participate in the activities of the Church." ("Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7)

References

- The Family: A Proclamation to the World, The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- Dallin H. Oaks, "Same-Gender Attraction," Ensign, Oct. 1995, 7
- "Compassion for Those Who Struggle," Ensign, Sept. 2004, 58
- "My Battle with Same-Sex Attraction," Ensign, Aug. 2002, 49
- Elder David A. Bednar, "Marriage Is Essential to His Eternal Plan", World Wide Training Feb 2006, (Ensign June 2006)