A Guide for Latter-day Saint Military Chaplains Working with the LGBT+ Community

By
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This is dedicated to my wife (Audra) and my children who supported and loved me. This guide would not have been possible without their encourgement.

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Purpose

The purpose of this Guide is to provide resources to Military Latter-day Saint Chaplains concerning Same-Sex Attraction (SSA). It will briefly address the history, policies, and doctrines from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints[1] about this practice. It will also review the policies and regulations in the armed forces concerning LGBT+.

Guidelines from the Church have been delineated concerning this issue for chaplains in their pastoral care and counseling for those seeking spiritual guidance from the chaplain. Nevertheless, for many, this has caused questions that will be addressed in this guide. For example, what are appropriate types of pastoral counseling intervention, therapeutic and pastoral ministry? What kind of scenarios will chaplains face in their pastoral roles, and how can they address different situations in keeping with their doctrines and faith practices?

This resource also briefly explores four key components where the LGBT+ community has affected chaplains. These components include: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the military, the servicemembers who are part of the LGBT+ community or have same-sex attractions, and the Latter-day Saint chaplain. The objective is to help the chaplain navigate the waters of the military, the Church, and the Latter-day Saint servicemembers they serve.

The chaplain represents the Church and its teachings and supports the Church's doctrines. However, the chaplain is also an officer of the United States military and must obey the military regulations and not discriminate against sexual orientation or gender. Therefore, the Church and the military organizations will not always be aligned, and the chaplain will have to balance these two responsibilities. The chaplain will also need knowledge, resources, and guidance on how to best support Latter-day service members who are either a part of the LGBT+ community or have same-sex attraction and want to remain on the covenant path.

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1. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this paper will be referred to as the Church.

The ability to work with the LGBT+ community or those with same-sex attraction is imperative at this time for Latter-day Saint military chaplains. We need to address the challenges it presents head-on. The better we are equipped as Latter-day Saint chaplains to address the issues and concerns within the LGBT+ community, the better we can stand resolute in supporting the mission of the Church and the military. Finally, chaplains can provide valuable assistance to Latter-day Saint service members who struggle with same-sex attraction and want to remain faithful to their covenants and religious beliefs.

The information provided in this guide takes these issues into account and has been developed to give Latter-day Saint chaplains resources and information that can help them to better perform and understand their ministry to the LGBT+ community.

Introduction

There appears to be a challenging tension between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the LGBT+ community. As a result, some church members who have identified as LGBT+ have struggled to find a place in the Church.[2] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints itself has tried to balance the relationship with its members concerning its doctrinal teachings.[3] Nevertheless, the Church wants those who are part of the LGBT+ community to be an active part of the Church.[4]

However, the Church's statements and doctrinal tenets about sexual

2. "We Want You Here," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed February 22, 2022, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay/individuals?lang=eng.

3. "Same-Sex Attraction – Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints," – Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed February 22, 2022, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay?lang=eng.

4. "Individuals," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed February 22, 2022, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/gay/individuals?lang=eng.

relationships remain the same.[5] To the LGBT+ community, this may feel as though the Church wants to accept them to a degree, allowing tolerance for same-sex attractions but not same-sex relationships.[6] At the same time, the Church does not want to go against what they believe God has revealed regarding sexual relationships. Considering these two aspects, it cannot be easy to find a middle ground between both parties. Nevertheless, both groups must continue to move forward in a positive and supportive direction. Just as two people enter a marriage relationship to eventually become one flesh (Matthew 19:5), the Church and its members work together to become more unified while accepting individual differences.

The balancing of the relationship between the Church and its members will be one of the roles chaplains will play in the military. Chaplains follow the teachings found in the scriptures and from modern-day Prophets to show support for the Church. Additionally, chaplains provide pastoral care and support for those part of the LGBT+ community in a loving, compassionate, and non-judgmental way. Lastly, chaplains should be aware of possible dilemmas regarding the LGBT+ that could be considered discriminatory and seek to avoid any conflict that would compromise the tenets of their faith.

Scripture

There are four passages written in the New Testament which address homosexual behaviors and relationships. Three passages are written by Paul the Apostle; one was addressed to the believers in Rome (Romans 1:26–27)[7] and the other to those in Corinth (1 Corinthians 6:9). The third writing comes from the Apostle Jude (Jude 1:7), brother of James and possibly the brother of Jesus. The final passage is located in 1 Timothy 8:10, also written by Paul. Paul likely wrote this passage while in Macedonia

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5. The Church statements regarding sexual relationships remain the same regarding sexual relationships between and a woman in the bonds of marriage. However, the LGBT+ encapsulates a much broader description of sexual orientation. Therefore, this is not a simple issue but brings about many complexities.

6. This pertains to behavior and living the commandments.

7. All Holy Bible references will be from the NRSV version of the Bible.

between AD 64/65.[8] 1 Corinthians and Romans likely would've been written by Paul between AD 53 to AD 57, from Corinth or nearby Cenchrea.[9] The Book of Jude came later, likely between AD 70 to AD 90, but nothing can be definite about the author or date of the Epistle of Jude.[10]

The Old Testament scriptures addressing sexual codes of conduct are also essential to note. Jude references Old Testament activities such as those in Sodom and Gomorrah, "and the cities about them in like manner" (Jude 1:7). The story of Sodom and Gomorrah and same-sex activity can be found in Genesis 19:1–11, where Lot tries to protect two angels desired sexually by the people (i.e., men of the cities). The Old Testament declares, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination" (Leviticus 18:22). Additionally, in the book of Leviticus, it is written, "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Leviticus 20:13). These teachings become part of Jewish laws and can be seen by readers as transferable into Christian rules (Romans 1:26–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 8:10; Jude 1:7).

Romans 1:26–27

The theme found in Romans 1:18–32 is focused on God's righteousness and how idolatry and dehumanizing behavior can result in God's wrath. Additionally, Paul addresses how humans seek to swap God's truth for a lie that they justify (Rom. 1:25). Finally, in verses 26 and 27, Paul addresses homosexual practice, acknowledging male and female homosexual acts, adding that those who wander off the course of truth receive the reward of their error. Paul highlights one of the many things practiced in the pagan world, same-sex erotic behaviors. Jews saw homosexual behav-

8. "Introduction to 1 Timothy," Introduction to 1 Timothy, accessed December 2, 2021, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/new-testament-study-guide-for-home-study-seminary-students/introduction-to-1-timothy?lang=eng.

9. N. T Wright, *The New Interpreter's Bible. Volume 10: The Acts of the Apostles, Introduction to Epistolary Literature, the Letter to the Romans, the First Letter to the Corinthians*, vol. 10 (Nashville, TN, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 396.

10. Duane F. Watson, *The New Interpreter's Bible. the Letter to the Hebrews, the Letter of James, the First and Second Letters of Peter, the First, Second, and Third Letters of John, the Letter of Jude, The Book of Revelation*, vol. 12 (Nashvville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 473.

ior as an example of pagan acts because, in Paul's view, it corresponds to what humans have done in exchanging God's truth for a lie.[11]

Paul's logic seems to be that those who worship God are renewed according to the divine image (Col. 3:10). When the worship of the true God is exchanged for pagan gods, the result is that humanness is consequently perverted. Paul's point is that homosexual behavior distorts God's design of sexual relationships and leads to the consequences of physical ailments, and society should not indulge in behaviors contrary to God's plan for his children.[12]

Paul's comments are highly controversial today, and there are those who suggest a different point of view concerning same-sex marriage and other relationships. Some proponents would argue that Paul is only referring to those who go from a heterosexual to a same-sex relationship or that he was only troubled with practices related to acts of idolatry. Instead, Paul argues that homosexual practice in a society is a sign of that society wandering off from the course of God, diminishing their image, and the God-given male and female order (Gen. 1:27–28) is being ruptured.[13]

Paul's statements of gay and lesbian behavior as exchanging "the natural use for the unnatural" and "likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman" appear to be addressing homosexuality directly (Rom. 1:26–27). There are two items of evidence indicating points that the created order is developed in Romans 1:26–27. First, Paul chose words such as (*thelys*, female) and (*arsen*, male) rather than using (*gyne*, woman) and (*aner*, man). By doing this, Paul draws upon the first creation account found in Genesis 1:27, which uses the exact words. The wording illustrates the distinction between male and female, emphasizing that sexual relationships with the same sex oppose God's intentions to create man and woman.[14]

11. N.T. Wright, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 433.

12. Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 173–180.

13. N.T. Wright, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 435.

14. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 103.

Second, the phrase "contrary to nature" (*para physin*) is borne out by verse 27, which specifies what constitutes the unnatural activity for men in three unique ways: (1) By rejecting sexual relationships with women; (2) By increasing desire for other men; and (3) Doing what is shameful with other men.[15] Just as idolatry is a transgression and defiance of God's design, same-sex relations also conflict with what God predetermined when He created woman and man.[16]

Nonetheless, some scholars contend that Paul is not condemning same-sex relations but merely refers to homosexual acts performed by those who are "naturally" heterosexual. This suggests that if you are "naturally" homosexual, then homosexual acts are seen as appropriate.[17] However, there is no evidence that Paul would understand the "nature" of human beings in the psychological way we do today. Unfortunately, scholars who seek to support this interpretation view this scripture through the 20th and 21st-century lens.

Other scholars try to minimize Paul's remarks on same-sex relationships in Rom. 1:26–27 by contending that he only addresses pederasty, that is, Romans have sexual relations between adult males and young boys as being condemned.[18] However, the description in Rom. 1:26–27 does not restrict a specific kind of homosexual act but is a general prohibition of all homosexual practices. In fact, there is no mention made of homosexual relations between boys and men but of "males with males" (*arsenes en arsesin* v. 27).[19] Additionally, the theory that pederasty is the focus is counter to the reference of homosexual acts by women in verse 26, since pederasty, by definition, means men and boys, and evidence is inadequate

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15.Schreiner, *Romans*, 103.

16. Schreiner, *Romans*, 102.

17. John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 109–112.

18. Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Background for Contemporary Debate* (Philadelphia, Pa: Fortress, 1983), 109–118.

19. Schreiner, *Romans*, 105.

that women regularly participated in sexual activity with girls.[20] Since there is evidence of pederasty in Roman and Greek societies during Paul's time, some scholars would make that the focus of concern by Paul, likely because all in our day could agree that such actions are detestable. Nevertheless, this focus wanders off the message of Paul's teaching against all homosexual practices.

Other scholars argue that verses 26–27 targets idolatry, and the sexual divergence relates to the sexual activities of goddess cults. So, in essence, what Paul is rejecting isn't same-sex practices but the worship of false gods.[21] However, cult prostitution does not make idolatry its focal point, nor is it credible to swallow up what is taught by Paul about same-sex practices into idolatry.[22] Paul's writings argue that idol worship leads to a myriad of sins, including same-sex relationships.

1 Corinthians 6:9

Paul often wrote course corrections for the early Christians of his day. In 1 Corinthians 6:1–11, Paul primarily addresses the legal complaints and actions believers were taking against one another while at the same time tolerating incestual acts by members of the congregation.[23] These actions reflected that the believers were still living a previous lifestyle and had not fully turned away from previous practices. Verse 9 addresses some of the earlier manners performed by believers before their conversion. Paul appears to address how such actions are not consistent with the kingdom of God and those that will inherit such. In verses 9–11, Paul gives an implicit warning of specific sins that believers should not commit lest they lose their inheritance.

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20. Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 7.

21. Jeramy Townsley, "Paul, the Goddess Religions, and Queer Sects: Romans 1:23−28," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 4 (2011): 707−709.

22. "Paul, Homosexuality and Christian Ethics" In *Focusing on Paul: Persuasion and Theological Design in Romans and Galatians* edited by Cilliers Breytenbach and David S. du Toit, 281-296, (2012), 290−291.

23. David E. Garland, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 193.

Paul's command "Do not be deceived" (1 Cor. 6:9) to the Corinthians, which appears to acknowledge that human behavior is prone to deceive oneself. Just as the Jews thought highly of themselves because they were of the seed of Abraham justifying their evil actions (John 8:39), Paul is calling out the believers in Corinth for thinking their religious knowledge saved them from their conduct. Paul then lists the ten sins that reflect the actions of those outside of the Church. In the list, Paul includes "males who are penetrated sexually by males" (male prostitutes) and "males who sexually penetrate males" (sodomites).[24]

The significance and meaning of the words (*malakoi)* and (*arsenokoitai)* have been reviewed by those who want to remove condemnation in the Bible for same-sex acts. Professor John Boswell argued that no connections exist between the terms *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* and do not pertain to homosexual practices.[25] Boswell translates *malakoi* as "masturbators" and *arsenokoitai* as a crude expression for "male prostitutes."[26] It looks very likely *aresenokoitai* originated in Hellenistic Judaism, or possibly by Paul, from the Levitical prohibition found in Lev. 18:22 and Lev. 20:13.[27]

Finally, Boswell contends that Christians would not implore the Old Testament to justify what is moral in the New Testament, that the Levitical rules had no power on Christianity.[28] The immediate context of the passage can easily dispute such an argument. Paul has already expressed his dismay over the Corinthians' allowance of incest, and the restriction against incest appears in Lev. 18:7–8 and 20:11 in a similar context in which homoerotic behaviors are condemned.[29] It seems that Boswell is attempting to separate the meaning of the words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* to fit a modern narrative. It also seems like Boswell is trying to disregard Paul's attempt to connect the past with the present regarding ongoing truths regardless of the timeframe and context. To say the past does not apply

24. Garland, *Baker,* 211.

25. Boswell, *Christianity*, 338–353.

26. Boswell, *Christianity*, 363–364.

27. Garland, *Baker*, 212.

28. Boswell, *Christianity*, 105.

29. Garland, *Baker*, 213.

to the present is deceptive. We still adhere to the ten commandments and other Levitical prohibitions such as incest. It appears those older writings that fit our modern narrative are still supported, while those that do not must be changed. Just as the Corinthian Christians were puffed up in their pride and self-deception of spirituality, Latter-day Saints must be aware that we do not err. If Jesus gave us the list of what to do to enter the kingdom of God (Mark 10:14), Paul's vice list announces who will not (Eph. 5:5), this one begins and ends with that warning (1 Cor. 6:9–10).[30]

1 Timothy 1:10

In this passage, Paul writes to one of his most trusted representatives, Timothy. Also, Paul signifies his role as Apostle to demonstrate this letter signals apostolic authority. Paul would often write letters to representatives that were helping to guide the local congregation. The focus of Paul's letter to Timothy was on false teachers and the danger which follows (1 Tim. 1:3–7). Paul was genuinely concerned that some of their congregations were repeating false teachings and becoming distracted from the faith.[31] Paul clarifies in verse 10 that the standard for what is right and what is wrong is in "sound teaching" (doctrine). Additionally, Paul states that "sodomites" (homoerotic behaviors) are contrary to "sound teaching."

The teachings in 1 Timothy 1:10 about the prohibition of homosexual practice are consistent with Paul's views in Romans 1:26–27; 1 Cor. 6:9–10. Also, just as Paul wrote a vice-list in Romans and 1 Corinthians, he does so again in 1 Timothy 1:9–10. The difference between Romans and 1 Timothy is that Paul identifies the people known for the vices. Using "sound teaching" develops the individual's attributes to become more like Christ and take His appearance upon us (2 Timothy 4:8).

There is a sense of a set gospel and teachings plainly defined, at least for Paul, providing sound doctrines. Paul appears to attack or fear teachings that do not align with the "sound teachings" or that which goes

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30. Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 55.

31. James D. G. Dunn, *The New Interpreter's Bible: Volume: The First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus.* vol. 11 (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 790.

beyond it needlessly.[32] The practice of same-sex attraction has become a focus of debate. Christian leaders today must determine whether it is still considered unacceptable as "sound teaching" to practice same-sex activity according to Paul's Biblical teachings or change due to cultural sensitivities due to the complexity of human sexuality.[33]

Jude 1:7

The Epistle of Jude is the shortest book of the New Testament. It has only one chapter and 25 verses. Additionally, it is unclear exactly who the author Jude is. Although, it is most likely Jude is one of the siblings of Jesus, along with James (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3).[34] Jude's letter does not indicate his readers or their physical location. A likely place for Jude is within Alexandrian Christianity since his letter was well known in that area, and Clement of Alexandria wrote a commentary on the epistle. Origen, also from the site of Alexandria, accepted the book of Jude.[35]

Verses 5–7 of Jude comprises three Old Testament (OT) examples of the ungodly, their sins, and their judgments. The first example is the Israelites in the wilderness (v. 5), the fallen angels or watchers (v. 6)[36], and Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7). These three examples are often used in Christian and Jewish writings to show that ungodly behavior brings' about God's judgments.[37] The example of Sodom and Gomorrah implies the sin of inhospitality, homosexual practice, and rape.

Some would argue that a third sin is connected in this verse which is

32. Dunn, *New Interpreter's Bible*, 792.

33. Dunn, *New Interpreter's Bible*, 793.

34. Gene L. Green, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Jude and 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 2.

35. Green, *Jude*, 11.

36. Or as we understand in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the devil and the spirits that followed him in the preexistence which caused them to lose the opportunity for a body in this life.

37. Duane Frederick Watson, *The New Interpreter's Bible. the Letter to the Hebrews, the Letter of James, the First and Second Letters of Peter, the First, Second, and Third Letters of John, the Letter of Jude, The Book of Revelation*, vol. 12 (Nashvville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 488.

sexual intercourse with angels. They would say that the "pursued unnatural flesh" indicates humans trying to have sex with angels, a different creation.[38] Although, the "unnatural flesh" would more likely correlate with Paul's writing in Romans 1:26 describing the words "natural" and "nature." Therefore, when the men of Sodom desired sexual activities with men, they abandoned the created order of natural sexual relationships.

The men of Sodom did not want females (Gen. 19:18–19); instead, the men desired same-sex relationships with the men whom Lot was housing. Therefore, the activity of the Sodomites is a perversion. This is how translators of the NIV render the phrase *went after other flesh.*[39] It appears that Paul and Jude tapped into the OT writings and examples to teach against homosexual practices to the early converts who were coming from a world of acceptance to a degree in such practices. Paul and Jude wanted the believers to remain faithful to the created order of sexual relationships and turn away from idolatry and towards their one true God.

Modern-day scholars have made efforts to show discrepancies in Paul's writings and Jude regarding the initial meanings of homosexual practices. In addition, they have attempted to shine new light and create possibilities of Paul's actual teachings. These have included arguments that Paul merely addressed idol worship and not same-sex relationships. Or that Paul was referring to masturbation, not same-sex activity, or that it was only wrong if someone was naturally heterosexual and practiced homoerotic behaviors.[40]

It appears that Paul was very elaborate in his teachings. Not only was Paul teaching against certain practices but tying them to additional principles believers must live. For example, Paul tied in homosexual practices to the worship of idols which was guiding God's children away from

38. Watson, *New Interpreter*, 489. We are not quite sure if they were angels in Genesis 19 or if they were messengers (prophets). In verse 5, the people who desire them refer them to as men. Verse 12 also refers to the messengers as men and in JST 19:18, Joseph writes, "these holy men."

39. Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 382.

40. Boswell, *Christianity*, 12.

worshipping God's true image. In addition, Paul warned of trading truth for self-deception. Paul directed his audience to focus on "sound teachings" that do not contradict the creation order between males and females. Lastly, God's order follows the laws of nature, and sexual relationships must follow the natural connections between male and female. Following this course of action leads the believers in Christ to the kingdom of God.

As chaplains, it is crucial to understand the scriptural teachings regarding God's design for sexual relationships between man and woman. Additionally, we must be aware of arguments seeking to wrest the scriptures from the truth as academic scholars and others perceive. Chaplains cannot trade truths for an interpretation by others according to a modern/cultural lens and cannot encourage any deceptions of doctrine, as argued by Paul. Furthermore, chaplains must be "sound" in their doctrinal teachings as representatives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but compassionate in their pastoral ministry. Lastly, "sound doctrine" points all of God's children back to Christ and His teachings.

Additionally, our doctrine teaches us to treat all with compassion and kindness and turn the other cheek. While the doctrine previously examined seems exclusive to LGBT+, we have a responsibility to meet them where they are spiritually and not exclude others from the grace and mercy of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The scriptures previously examined should never be used to tear anyone down or shame them. The scriptures reviewed are merely a doctrinal reference point for teachings regarding God's design for the creation of male and female, following sound doctrines, and protecting ourselves against self-deception from the world.

Modern Prophets Teachings

It is interesting to note that there are zero scriptures referencing same-sex activity outside of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. For example, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price have no teachings for or against same-sex relationships. At the same time, there are no teachings about bestiality or incest either, yet those behaviors are still condemned in religious circles and even in public opinion. However, many Latter-day Saint scriptures teach against sexual immorality such as lust, fornication, adultery, and lasciviousness (Jacob

3:12; D&C 42:23-24; Alma 16:18; D&C 66:10). Additionally, many scriptures support marriage between a man and a woman (Jacob 2:27, 31; Jacob 3:5-7; D&C 25:9; D&C 25:14; D&C 42:22; D&C 82:3).

The question then begs to be asked, why are there scriptures condemning the practice of homosexuality in the Old Testament and the New Testament but not in Latter-day Saint scripture? The likely reason is tied to the context and culture of the authors. Since we do not know where the Book of Mormon took place or its surrounding culture, we are limited in our understanding. Comparatively, the history, culture, and historical information are well documented during the Old and New Testament times and places. Additionally, so is the Doctrine and Covenants, which took place in the mid to late 19th century.[41]

It is evident that there were cities such as Sodom and Gomorrah during the Old Testament time allowing homosexual practices (Gen. 19). The children of Israel were also suspicious of pagans and idol worshippers who performed such acts.[42] We also know homosexual practices were quite common among the Roman and Greek cultures during the time of Paul the Apostle.[43] Therefore, it would make sense that early Christian leaders would address these actions. However, homosexual behaviors were not expected nor accepted during the life, time, and location of Joseph Smith in America. Laws prohibiting same-gender sexual behaviors were commonly called "sodomy laws."[44] In 1791, the original 13 states ratified the *Bill of Rights,* treating sodomy as a criminal offense.[45] The criminality of sodomy continued in some states until the Supreme Court struck it down

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41. Robert J. Woodford, "The Story of the Doctrine and Covenants," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed December 27, 2021, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1984/12/the-story-of-the-doctrine-and-covenants?lang=eng.

42. David Scasta, "Historical Perspectives on Homosexuality," *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy* 2, no. 4 (1998): 3–17, https://doi.org/10.1300/j236v02n04_02, 4.

43. Scasta, *Historical Perspectives*, 5.

44. "U.S. Laws That Once Criminalized Same- Gender Sexual Behavior: The 'Sodomy Laws,'" U.S. Laws criminalizing homosexual behavior, accessed December 27, 2021, http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_laws.htm.

45. "U.S. Laws That Once Criminilaized"

as government oppression of private sexual engagement in 2003.[46] For Joseph Smith and many of the early modern-day Prophets, homosexuality would not have been an issue as the public, and the government rejected it in their day and up until the mid to late 20th century.

It is not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that same-sex activity becomes a topic addressed in General Conference by the leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.[47] Homosexual acts were added to the *General Handbook of Instructions* in 1968 as an act that church courts should handle and was probable cause for excommunication.[48] The 1970s is where one sees an increase in talks that address homosexuality. General authorities gave 17 talks which included statements about homosexuality at General Conference in the 1970s. No other decade has as many references about any topic related to homosexuality or the LGBT+ community.[49]

There seem to be three critical time frames corresponding with three relevant leadership figures regarding homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and same-sex attraction in the Church's history. The three-time frames include the 1970s through the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2010s.[50] Though every member of the First Presidency or Quorum of Twelve that have addressed these issues has taught the self-same things, this section will focus on three who have spoken frequently regarding the issue in their respective time frames. This section will address two items, including the type of language used by the church leaders, its evolution, and the con-

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46. "U.S. Laws That Once Criminalized"

47. J. Reuben Clark Jr. is the first to address homosexuality in a Conference report, in April 1957, 86-89. He was addressing all sexual sins found in Leviticus 18.

48. Lester E. Bush, "Excommunication and Church Courts: A Note From The 'General Handbook of Instructions," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14, no. 2 (1981): 74–98, 84.

49. "Corpus of Latter-day Saint General Conference Talks, 1851-2020," Corpus of Latter-day Saint General Conference Talks, 1851-2020, accessed December 27, 2021, https://www.Latter-day Saint-general-conference.org/.

50. Interestingly the 2000s have by far the fewest talks about the LGBT+ community. I was only able to find one talk, which was given by then Elder Dallin H. Oaks.

text of those three timeframes. Lastly, we will review statements given by President Kimball, Hinckley, and Oaks, along with other church leaders, regarding same-sex activity, same-sex marriage, and same-sex attraction.

President Spencer W. Kimball

President Spencer W. Kimball gave eight talks addressing homosexuality and wrote, *The Miracle of Forgiveness,* which in chapter 6 addresses topics around homosexuality.[51] Additionally, President Kimball writes a pamphlet called, *New Horizons for Homosexuals,* in which he addresses that homosexuality is a sin and that there is hope for those that are homosexual.[52] In that pamphlet, he also teaches that homosexuality or the acts of homosexuality is curable.[53] The language and rhetoric used by President Kimball in the ’70s and 80s regarding homosexuality or the LGBT+ community would likely never be present in our day. However, language used in the 70s and 80s would not be used today. Additionally, words such as “curable” would probably not be addressed by a General Authority in our era. However, President Kimball’s understanding of same-sex attraction being curable reflected the best science of his day.

While reading the quotes provided by President Kimball, the reader will see there are standard teachings of truth against the acts of same-sex attraction. However, the reader will also notice descriptions or phrases that would be considered insensitive to those who identify as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or same-sex attracted. It is important to remember presentism and that the 70s are not the same as today in rhetoric or understanding. Additionally, an important note to remember is that President Kimball was unbiased when describing any sin. For him, it just was not the sin of adultery; it was the “insidious” sin of adultery. Or the sin is “deep and dark.” In addition, his language is constantly filled with adjectives when describing a violation of God’s commandment. Lastly, President Kimball speaks in an era where same-sex relationships were still outlawed, and there was truly little understanding of same-sex attractions.

51. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Co., 1999), 61.

52. Spencer W. Kimball, *New Horizons for Homosexuals* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1971), 4–5.

53. Kimball, *Horizons*, 10–11.

One last item to keep in mind when reviewing President Kimball's statements regarding the LGBT+ community (21st century term) is that he put forth tremendous work to help members of the church who struggled with SSA. President Kimball and Elder Peterson reported to then President David O. McKay that between 1961 and 1969 they had counseled over one-thousand individuals.[54] Additionally, Taylor Petrey, who often advocates looking at these issues has a different perspective from the Church's handling of SSA acknowledged that "Kimball's sincerity matched his severity. He advocated "a soft approach of helpfulness, not condemnation" of the homosexual," and Petrey continued saying, "He (President Kimball) spent hours counseling people in their homes and in his, recovering people from bars and casinos, and exchanging countless letters with people from around the country."[55] It was evident that while President Kimball hated the sin, he deeply loved the sinner, and worked hard to bring them back to Christ.

We will review a few of President Kimball's quotes.

> Every form of homosexuality is sin. Pornography is one of the approaches to that transgression. There is no halfway. Some people are ignorant or vicious and apparently attempting to destroy the concept of masculinity and femininity. More and more girls dress, groom, and act like men. More and more men dress, groom, and act like women. The high purposes of life are damaged and destroyed by the growing unisex theory. God made man in his own image, male and female made he them. With relatively few accidents of nature, we are born male or female. The Lord knew best. Certainly, men and women who would change their sex status will answer to their Maker.[56]

In this quote, President Kimball addresses multiple topics regarding the LGBT+ community, including pornography. First, he addresses homosexuality as a sin and describes pornography as one pathway that leads

54. Edward K. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*: *The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 86.

55. Taylor G. Petrey, *Tabernacles of Clay: Sexuality and Gender in Modern Mormonism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 69.

56. Spencer W. Kimball, "God Will Not Be Mocked," *Ensign*, November 1974, 8.

to such an outcome. While it is logical that viewing gay pornography can reinforce those attractions, the statement appears to be general as not all who view pornography are led into homosexual behaviors. President Kimball then addresses the movement to destroy masculinity and femininity and refers to the unisex theory as a culprit.

Kimball appears to worry that removing distinctions of dress or behaviors could change male and female identity, referencing the teachings in Genesis 1:27. For some in the Church, this statement may be considered prophetic considering what is occurring in our society today with identities such as non-binary and seeking to avoid gender markers. Although for others, they could see Kimball's statements as social constructs of his time and are not always a person's authentic identity.[57] Additionally, President Kimball addresses transgenderism, although he doesn't use that term when addressing those seeking to change their sex and gives an ominous warning to those seeking to change their sex. Finally, Kimball's statement aligns with the teachings in Genesis 1 and the Apostle Paul that homosexuality is a sin, they also employ rhetoric of an era fifty years earlier which are not conducive in our day.

In the *Miracle of Forgiveness,* President Kimball taught, "Social acceptance does not change the status of an act, making wrong into right. If all the people in the world were to accept homosexuality...the practice would still be a deep, dark sin."[58] Again, Kimball addresses homosexuality as a sin and adds that the Lord nor his Church will change this doctrine based on social acceptance. However, Kimball also adds language to the act of homosexuality as "deep and dark." This type of language would likely never be used by Church leaders today and shouldn't be used by Church members. Church leaders and members can still acknowledge certain acts as sin or against God's designed purpose without placing additional expressions that can increase feelings of shame.

In an April 1979 address, President Kimball stated, "As we have said

57. Michael Mascolo, "Time to Move beyond 'Gender Is Socially Constructed,'" Psychology Today (Sussex Publishers), accessed February 23, 2022, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/old-school-parenting-modern-day-families/201907/time-move-beyond-gender-is-socially-constructed.

58. Kimball, *Forgiveness,* 79.

on previous occasions, certainly our Heavenly Father is distressed with the increasing inroads among his children of such insidious sins as adultery and fornication and homosexuality, lesbianism, abortion, alcoholism, dishonesty, and crime generally, which threaten the total breakdown of the family and the home."[59] While the teachings of President Kimball against sexual acts outside of marriage are still valid today, it is unlikely President Kimball would speak with such tones and verbiage if he had lived in our day.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Another key leader of the Church who addresses the topic of same-sex activity is President Gordon B. Hinckley. President Hinckley not only addresses same-sex activity or same-sex marriage in conference talks but is also the President of the Church when the Family Proclamation is written and presented to the General Relief Society of the Church in 1995.[60] At the time, the Family Proclamation was a commonly agreed-upon declaration for Church members and most of the world. However, today the Family Proclamation by some is seen as problematic regarding marriage, gender, same-sex attraction, and various other topics.[61] Additionally, President Hinckley gave an interview with "Larry King Live" and addressed the issue of homosexuality in 2001.[62]

There is a noticeable change in tone and rhetoric used by President Hinckley compared to President Kimball of the 70s and early 80s. For example, during a Priesthood Session of General Conference in 1987, President Hinckley states, "marriage should not be viewed as a therapeutic

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59. Spencer W Kimball, "Fortify Your Homes Against Evil," *Ensign*, May 1979, 6.

60. The Family Proclamation, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/36035_000_24_family.pdf.

61. David M Huston, "The Theological Trajectory of 'The Family: A Proclamation to the World,'" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 54, no. 1 (2021): 17–28, https://doi.org/10.5406/dialjmormthou.54.1.0017, 18.

62. "Text of CNN Larry King Live Interview with President Gordon B. Hinckley: Meridian Magazine," Latter, September 17, 2001, https://latterdaysaintmag.com/article-1-3560/.

step to solve problems such as homosexual inclinations or practices….”[63] Although, President Hinckley remains resolute that God does not authorize same-sex activity or same-sex marriage. At the same time, President Hinckley adds compassion to those who struggle with same-sex attraction. While laws prohibiting homosexual behaviors had softened or been eliminated, same-sex marriage was still illegal in the United States when President Hinckley was President of the Church.[64] From President Kimball to President Hinckley, one sees a change in tone, rhetoric, and compassion, yet will still notice united teaching against homosexual activity and same-sex marriage.

Below are several quotes and teachings from President Hinckley concerning same-sex attraction and same-sex marriage. The first is the interview with Larry King, and the rest are statements he made in General Conference addresses.”

> Question 2: What is your churches stance toward homosexuality? Larry King interview.
>
> In the first place, we believe that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God. We believe that marriage may be eternal through exercise of the power of the everlasting priesthood in the house of the Lord.
>
> People inquire about our position on those who consider themselves so-called gays and lesbians. My response is that we love them as sons and daughters of God. They may have certain inclinations which are powerful, and which may be difficult to control. Most people have inclinations of one kind or another at various times. If they do not act upon these inclinations, then they can go forward as do all other members of the Church. If they violate the law of chastity and the moral standards of the Church, then they are subject to the discipline of the Church, just as others are.

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63. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Reverence and Morality,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 47.

64. Andrew Koppelman, “Dumb and DOMA: Why the Defense of Marriage Act Is Unconstitutional,” *Iowa Law Review* 83, no. 1 (October 1997): 1–34.

> We want to help these people, to strengthen them, to assist them with their problems and to help them with their difficulties. But we cannot stand idle if they indulge in immoral activity, if they try to uphold and defend and live in a so-called same-sex marriage situation. To permit such would be to make light of the very serious and sacred foundation of God-sanctioned marriage and its very purpose, the rearing of families.[65]

When asked by Larry King about the Church's position on homosexuality, President Hinckley focuses on the doctrines of the Church. Also, he states the principles of the Church without disparaging those in the LGBT+ community. Additionally, when he acknowledges those that are gay and lesbian, he speaks of them with love and compassion, addressing them as "sons and daughters of God." Finally, President Hinckley acknowledges the realities those with same-sex attraction feel and how difficult they can be to control. Making statements of acknowledgment, support, and compassion such as those made by President Hinckley was a stark change to what those in the LGBT+ community had heard from President Kimball.

In an October 1995 conference session, President Hinckley states,

> There are those who would have us believe in the validity of what they choose to call same-sex marriage. Our hearts reach out to those who struggle with feelings of affinity for the same gender. We remember you before the Lord, we sympathize with you, we regard you as our brothers and our sisters. However, we cannot condone immoral practices on your part any more than we can condone immoral practices on the part of others.[66]

Again, President Hinckley demonstrates care and compassion for those with "same-gender" attractions by stating points of sympathy and regarding them as brothers and sister. However, he remains resolute that sexual acts outside of the bonds of marriage between a man and woman cannot be condoned. On another occasion, he stated:

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65. Gordon B Hinckley, "What Are People Asking about Us?" *Ensign*, November 1998, 71.

66. Gordon B Hinckley, "Stand Strong Against the Wiles of the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 99.

> There is no justification to redefine what marriage is. Such is not our right, and those who try will find themselves answerable to God. Some portray legalization of so-called same-sex marriage as a civil right. This is not a matter of civil rights; it is a matter of morality. Others question our constitutional right as a church to raise our voice on an issue that is of critical importance to the future of the family. We believe that defending this sacred institution by working to preserve traditional marriage lies clearly within our religious and constitutional prerogatives. Indeed, we are compelled by our doctrine to speak out. Nevertheless, and I emphasize this, I wish to say that our opposition to attempts to legalize same-sex marriage should never be interpreted as justification for hatred, intolerance, or abuse of those who profess homosexual tendencies, either individually or as a group. As I said from this pulpit one year ago, our hearts reach out to those who refer to themselves as gays and lesbians. We love and honor them as sons and daughters of God. They are welcome in the Church. It is expected, however, that they follow the same God-given rules of conduct that apply to everyone else, whether single or married.[67]

Again, President Hinckley demonstrates compassion towards the LGBT+ community by acknowledging the "powerful inclinations" experienced by same-gender attractions. He constantly refers to them as "our brothers and sisters" and that they are "children of God." Additionally, President Hinckley expresses a desire to help and strengthen those who have same-gender attractions. However, President Hinckley never bends on following the laws of God nor condones the practice of same-sex activity.

While it was the common thought of most members during that time, there is growing support for same-sex marriage as a right, especially among the younger generation of members.[68] Additionally, since same-

67. Gordon B Hinckley, "Why We Do Some of the Things We Do," *Ensign*, November 1999, 54.

68. Jana Riess, "Mormons Are Changing Their Tune on Same-Sex Marriage," Religion News Service, June 28, 2017, https://religionnews.com/2017/06/27/mormons-are-changing-their-tune-on-same-sex-marriage/.

sex marriage became the law of the land in 2015, the Church has never attempted or promoted the overturning of the law.[69] Many members have begun to take a more libertarian approach regarding the legality of same-sex marriage (SSM) even if they believe that morally it is problematic.

President Dallin H. Oaks

Interestingly, only one General Conference talk from 2000-2009 referenced LGBT+ issues. That talk was given by then Elder Dallin H. Oaks, and in that talk, he was only referencing a member's letter who was using the Atonement to help him with his same-gender attractions. So, it was not a topic of focus but the only talk referencing LGBT+ issues that decade. The lack of addresses is also interesting because the Church focused on supporting laws against same-sex marriage within this decade, called ProtectMarriage or Prop. 8 in California.[70] However, President Oaks became more vocal in addressing LGBT+ concerns in the following decade.

Nevertheless, President Oaks' comments remain faithful to the same teachings of previous Prophets such as President Kimball, President Hinckley, and other Prophets like Presidents Ezra Taft Benson and Howard W. Hunter. Likewise, President Oaks continues the trend found in President Hinckley's tone, which includes words of compassion and support toward LGBT+ members. President Oaks' talks are also given before and after legalized same-sex marriage in the United States. Below are a few quotes from President Oaks for review.

> But man's laws cannot make moral what God has declared immoral. Commitment to our highest priority—to love and serve God—requires that we look to His law for our standard of behavior. For example, we remain under divine command not to commit adultery or fornication even when those acts are no longer crimes under the laws of the states or countries where we reside. Similarly, laws legalizing so-called

69. "Same-Sex Marriage Is Made Legal Nationwide with Obergefell v. Hodges Decision," History.com (A&E Television Networks, June 23, 2020), https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/obergefell-v-hodges-ruling-same-sex-marriage-legalized-nationwide.

70. "Same-Sex Marriage and Proposition 8," newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org, October 16, 2008, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/Latter-day Saintnewsroom/eng/commentary/same-sex-marriage-and-proposition-8.

> "same-sex marriage" do not change God's law of marriage or His commandments and our standards concerning it.[71]

President Oaks echoes similar teachings as President Kimball when he acknowledges just because man's laws change does not mean God's laws do too, or that just because it has become socially acceptable does not change God's view of the principle. Along with such calls for compassion, President Oaks is very direct when speaking of the commandments and the doctrines of the Church.

In a 2017 October conference session, President Oaks states, "Those who do not believe in or aspire to exaltation and are most persuaded by the ways of the world consider this Family Proclamation as just a statement of policy that should be changed. In contrast, Latter-day Saints affirm that the Family Proclamation defines the kind of family relationships where the most important part of our eternal development can occur."[72] Nevertheless, there are those who feel conflicted with some parts of the Family Proclamation, especially those who have friends or family members with same-sex attractions. Like a loving parent who seeks to find an easier way for a struggling child to return home safely and eventually realize there is no easier way. Such a feeling of struggle and difficulty can feel desperate and hopeless.

President Oaks, in another statement in October Conference of 2019 talked about same-sex marriage as a legal issue. He stated,

> Thus, when same-sex marriage was declared legal in the United States, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve declared: "The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us to love and treat all people with kindness and civility? —even when we disagree. We affirm that those who avail themselves of laws or court rulings authorizing same-sex marriage should not be treated disrespectfully. "Further, we must never persecute those who do not share our beliefs and commitments. Regretfully, some persons facing these issues continue to feel marginalized and rejected by some members and leaders in our families, wards, and

71. Dallin H Oaks, "No Other Gods," *Ensign*, November 2013, 75.

72. Dallin H Oaks, "The Plan and the Proclamation," *Ensign*, November 2017, 29.

stakes. We must all strive to be kinder and more civil.[73]

This last statement given by President Oaks at an October conference session in 2019 regarding the LGBT+ community shows a sense of compassion concerning this topic. He encourages respect and discourages any form of persecution. Additionally, President Oaks acknowledges the poor treatment of the LGBT+ community by some Church members and its leaders. To hold Church members and its leaders accountable publicly for their poor treatment of the LGBT+ community is a significant validation to a marginalized group.

Modern Prophets have declared that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained by God. Additionally, they have stated that same-sex acts are against the will of God and that Church members should not encourage such behaviors. At a BYU Speech in 2019, President Nelson stated, "In recent years, many countries, including the United States, have legalized same-sex marriage. As members of the Church, we respect the laws of the land and abide by them, including civil marriage. The truth is, however, that in the beginning—*in the beginning*—God ordained marriage! And to this day it is defined by Him as being between a man and a woman. God has not changed *His* definition of marriage."[74] Therefore, the prophet of God has to submit to the plan and design of God; no one, not even the leader of the Church, can be above such things.

There has been an evolution in tone, rhetoric, and compassion from the time of President Kimball regarding the LGBT+ community until today. The Church leaders have moved farther away from the shameful messaging and problem solving of the LGBT+ community to a place of more significant support, love, and compassion for those who identify as LGBT+. However, the teachings have remained the same regardless of social pressures and legal acceptance. Therefore, this was evident in an address given recently by Elder Holland to BYU faculty regarding the teachings of the family and marriage. In this address Elder Holland stated, "For example, we have to be careful that love and empathy do not get interpreted as condoning and advocacy, or that orthodoxy and loyalty to principle not be

73. Dallin H Oaks, "Two Great Commandments," *Ensign*, November 2019, 75.

74. The Love and Laws of God | Russell M. Nelson | BYU Speeches.

interpreted as unkindness or disloyalty to people."[75] Furthermore, it will be important as chaplains to support the teachings of God's prophets while holding our brothers and sisters in the LGBT+ community with more excellent love and compassion.

Ethical Dilemma's

The repeal of "Don't Ask Don't Tell" creates a confrontation between the military chaplains and the military's interest in eliminating intolerance against the LGBT+ community. In addition, the dissolution of DADT raises two free speech challenges that chaplaincy might face. First, there is a controversy of censorship if chaplains continue counseling or preaching against LGBT+ and are forbidden to do so. Second, there might be a compelled speech claim if chaplains are mandated to counsel LGBT+ soldiers in a way that clashes with their religious beliefs.[76] Chaplains preaching against same-sex activity is against the military's desire to stop discrimination against LGBT+, possibly leading to a First Amendment conflict[77] where the resolution could end up at the Supreme Court.[78]

Chaplain's Role

An essential facet of the military chaplaincy is the chaplain's dual role as a staff advisor and religious leader.[79] Chaplains' responsibilities as staff advisors are basically to advise their commander on topics of morals, religion, the morale of the soldiers, ethical issues, and programs connected

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75. "Elder Holland Urges BYU to Be Distinct, Stay True to Christ," newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org, August 23, 2021, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/elder-jeffrey-r-holland-2021-byu-university-conference.

76. Elyse Stiner, "*The Diminishing Free Speech Rights of Military Chaplains in the Aftermath of Repealing Don't Ask Don't Tell*," National Security and Armed Conflict Law Review 1 (2010-2011): 229.

77. Stiner, *Diminishing Free Speech*, 229.

78. To date, there have been no significant issues that have caused such an action to reach the Supreme Court. So far, chaplains and the military have worked well together in supporting DADT.

79. See U.S. Department of the Army, Reg. 165-1, Status, Roles, and Responsibilities of Chaplains para. 3-1(2015). [hereafter 2015 AR 165-1].

with moral leadership.[80] While the staff advisor's responsibilities are separate from the chaplain's role as a religious leader, they are still religious in essence.[81] The chaplain has a commitment to the commander and the soldiers within the unit.

The overall mission for the chaplain's religious responsibilities is to "provide for the nurture and practice of religious beliefs, traditions, and customs in a pluralistic environment to strengthen the religious lives of soldiers and their families."[82] Therefore, one of the most important regulations for a chaplain is to counsel all servicemembers and their families who seek their advice. Additionally, chaplains "will minister to the personnel of their unit and/or facilitate the free exercise rights of all personnel, regardless of the religious affiliation of either the chaplain or the unit member.[83] Suppose a chaplain cannot perform the religious service needed by a service or family member. In that case, the chaplain will seek to provide an accommodation or find those that can provide requested religious or family services.[84]

For the chaplain to effectively execute the roles as a staff advisor and religious leader, they must remember their commitment to the overall Corp's mission. Chaplains work with religious affairs specialists in a unit ministry team (UMT). The UMT needs to "remember that they represent their nation, the Army and the Chaplain Corps. They are therefore charged to uphold the highest professional, moral, and ethical standards at all times as they model the Army Profession and Ethic."[85] The professional expectation should be at the forefront of each chaplain regardless of whether they agree or disagree with homosexuality or the LGBTQ+ community.

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80. AR 165-1, para. 3-3.

81. It is important to note that while the chaplain is the religious expert in the military it is still the commanders program. Chaplain's must follow the direction of their commander and how they want to support the soldiers under their command in the free exercise of religion.

82. 2015 AR 165-1, para. 3-2.

83. 2015 AR 165-1, para. 3-2 (b.3).

84. 2015 AR 165-1, para. 2-3 (b.1).

85. 2015 AR 165-1, para. 2-2 (f).

Chaplain's Rights

Even though the chaplain directives protect the free exercise of religion and safeguard against denominational preference, some regulations also shelter chaplains.[86] For example, it is made clear in the professional military leader regulations that chaplains are not "required to perform a religious role (such as offering a prayer, reading, dedication, or blessing) in worship services, command ceremonies, or other events if doing so would be in variance with the tenets or practices of their religion."[87] However, if the chaplain cannot perform a religious rite or ceremony for a soldier or family member, they will coordinate to provide requested services.

Chaplains as religious ministry professionals are also responsible to another governing body, the religious organization (RO) that endorses them. Therefore, chaplains are protected and expected to act within the tenets of the RO responsible for their endorsement.[88] A chaplain has a dual obligation to their RO and the military branch their serve. If a chaplains RO removes their endorsement, they can no longer serve in the military as a chaplain unless another RO endorsement is received. Every chaplain will have a sponsored RO endorser that the chaplain can contact to ensure they are within the tenets of the faith or obtain approval for questionable actions. Having an RO endorser helps increase national security and professionalism among chaplains entering military service and was mandated by Congress in 2003.[89]

Possible Dilemma's

While most religious denominations do not support same-sex relationships or marriages, most Americans do. A recent 2021 Gallup Poll found that 70% of Americans now support same-sex marriage, a 30% increase

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86. Stiner, *Diminishing Free Speech*, 231.

87. 2015 AR 165-1, para. 3-2 (b.5).

88. "DOD Directive 1304.19, June 11, 2004; Certified Current as ...," accessed December 10, 2021, https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/130419p.pdf.

89. Ed Waggoner, "Taking Religion Seriously in the U.S. Military: The Chaplaincy as a National Strategic Asset," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82, no. 3 (May 13, 2014): 702–735, https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfu028, 708.

since 2009.[90] However, according to a recent census on religion, roughly 70% of Americans identify with the Protestant and Catholic faiths.[91] While some Protestant denominations, such as the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), and the United Church of Christ, have accepted same-sex marriage, many churches have not.[92]

These numbers would indicate a disconnect between the churches and parishioners' theology. Therefore, a chaplain meeting with a Protestant or Catholic soldier does not mean that the soldier or family member views same-sex activity the same way as their faith group. Does the chaplain preach and counsel according to the soldiers' religious denomination or towards the soldiers' personal theology? It would appear that a chaplain favoring one over the other could betray one or the other. For example, would it be inappropriate for an Episcopalian chaplain (who supports same-sex marriage) to meet with a Latter-day Saint soldier to encourage support for same-sex relationships when it's against the soldiers' faith group theology? It appears the ethical decision would be to encourage an individual to meet with a representative of their faith regarding the incongruent issue. Doing so does not betray the individual's theology or religious faith denomination.

One of the many responsibilities as a religious advisor for a chaplain is to "plan programs for advancing Army values and Soldier or Family resiliency."[93] Currently, Strong Bonds is a typical program used and run by chaplains in the U.S. Army, but all service branches have a marriage

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90. Justin McCarthy, "Record-High 70% in U.S. Support Same-Sex Marriage," Gallup.com (Gallup, November 20, 2021), https://news.gallup.com/poll/350486/record-high-support-same-sex-marriage.aspx.

91. "The 2020 Census of American Religion," PRRI, November 5, 2021, https://www.prri.org/research/2020-census-of-american-religion/.

92. David Masci and Michael Lipka, "Where Christian Churches, Other Religions Stand on Gay Marriage," Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, July 27, 2020), https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/21/where-christian-churches-stand-on-gay-marriage/.

93. 2015 AR 165-1, para. 3-3 (b.4).

and family enrichment program.[94] Strong Bonds is a program that serves individuals, couples, and families. Additionally, the "core mission of the Strong Bonds program is to increase individual Soldier and Family member readiness through relationship education and skills training.[95]

While Strong Bonds is chaplain-led, it is non-faith specific.[96] This program means Soldiers and their families will come from all different types of faith or no particular faith at all. It is an inclusive program. The audience can and will likely include individuals, couples, and families with same-sex attractions, relationships, or marriages. At the same time, the program will be led by a chaplain who can and likely will come from a faith denomination that does not support same-sex behaviors and relationships. A scenario such as this can lead to an ethical dilemma for a chaplain.

Strong Bonds training for couples focuses on "communication skills, intimacy, and conflict management to help increase marital satisfaction and reduce rates of family violence."[97] So what does a chaplain do if same-sex couples are in attendance? Do they cancel the event or only instruct on heterosexual relationships? These actions would be considered discriminatory towards a sexual orientation and do not fulfill the mission readiness of soldiers and their families. Does the chaplain instead instruct and teach same-sex relationships even if their personal belief and RO discourage it? Again, this action would be incongruent with the chaplain's personal beliefs and jeopardize their RO endorsement.

The chaplain should prepare ahead of time, anticipating same-sex couples in attendance. If the chaplain feels like they cannot present any material with same-sex couples in the audience, they need to find a chaplain who can. If they can teach some of the material but not all, then they

94. "Marriage Enrichment Programs by Branch of Service • Military Onesource," Military OneSource, October 19, 2021, https://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-relationships/relationships/keeping-your-relationship-strong/marriage-enrichment-programs/.

95. "Strong Bonds," Strong Bonds, accessed December 11, 2021, https://strongbonds.army.mil/.

96. Military OneSource, *Marriage Enrichment Programs*.

97. Chaplain (LTC) Birch Carleton, "What Is Strong Bonds?" Strong Bonds, accessed December 11, 2021, https://strongbonds.army.mil/Resources/Articles/Strong-Bonds/Story-3/.

should have a chaplain or other person who can cover the topics they cannot. If they are unsure what they can and cannot teach, the chaplain should contact their RO endorser to confirm.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has provided direct guidance for chaplains on what they can and cannot do at a Strong Bonds event. A letter from the RO's endorser Frank Clawson states:

> Our chaplains may assist in Strong Bonds Retreats where same-sex couples are in attendance. Many of the topics discussed during a Strong Bond event universally apply to all married couples. Presentations on how to improve communication skills, establishing budgets, managing finances and expenditures, sharing domestic responsibilities, and balancing work and family responsibilities can all be shared freely with all couples. Our chaplains do not have the expertise to address such topics as same-sex physical intimacy and expressions of love, so if those topics are to be discussed in the strong bond event, we have instructed our chaplains to refer same-sex couples to someone else who specializes in these issues. We believe these topics are more appropriately discussed in separate settings, but if a separate setting is not an option, then our chaplains should request that someone else conduct the portion of the training that has to do with physical intimacy and expressions of love.[98]

This letter gives clear direction for chaplains to be a part of the Strong Bonds events but limits them in teaching or instructing same-sex physical intimacy and expressions of love. This guidance allows the chaplain to help in the mission readiness of soldiers and family members while remaining congruent with their beliefs and RO's standards.

To this point, the military, military chaplains, and the LGBT+ community have been able to work together without significant conflict since Congress removed DADT as a requirement. Chaplains will need to continue to balance their roles as staff advisors and religious leaders. Doing so will entail the highest level of professionalism in public and private settings. Chaplains need to ensure the rights of soldiers that are part of the LGBT+

98. Frank Clawson, *Letter September 2021* (Salt Lake City, Utah, n.d.).

community and be congruent with their own beliefs.

Chaplains need to be aware of their rights and respect their religious organization and their standards. At the same time, be conscious of the need of all soldiers and their family members in public and private settings. It is okay to say no to religious events or activities that do not align with a chaplain's personal beliefs. However, it is also crucial that chaplains respect and serve the LGBT+ soldiers and their family members without any form of discrimination. As long as there is mutual respect and understanding, all groups can continue to work well together and help the military execute their overall mission.

Pastoral Counseling and Care

Providing Hope

This section aims to provide chaplains with a direction they can follow when soldiers with same-sex attractions seek to remain faithful to their faith tradition. While most of this guide is geared towards a Latter-day Saint audience, chaplains can use most of this section to support anyone with religious practices that discourage same-sex acts. This section is not about changing someone from a gay person to straight person or removing their same-sex attractions. Instead, this section is about how to demonstrate compassion for an individual who is and has experienced same-sex attractions and possibly relationships of the same accord. Additionally, this section will help the chaplain demonstrate empathetic listening, reduce shame, and provide tools and resources that empower the individual to accomplish their personal goals.

A question often asked is what causes same-sex attractions. However, the reality is that same-sex attractions or straight attractions can both be healthy for us (more to discuss later in this section). Today, many researchers agree that complex interaction between the biological, cognitive, and environmental factors contributes to sexual orientation.[99]

99. "Answers to Your Questions for a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality," American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 2008), https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq/orientation.

Whether or not sexual attraction is immutable is another critical question. For example, is it possible to go from heterosexual to a gay person or vice versa? The better question would be, is there fluidity in sexual attractions? Dr. Lisa Diamond herself a member of the LGBT+ community and professor of developmental and health psychology at the University of Utah, focuses her research on sexual orientation development, sexual identity and bonding.[100] In her book, *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women's Love and Desire,* she states, "…love and [sexual] desire, despite being separate processes, nonetheless have strong cultural, psychological, and neurobiological links between them. One experience can facilitate the other…sexual desire can develop into romantic love, but the opposite can also occur: romantic love can lead to sexual desire."[101] In other words, she contends that an infatuation between two same-sex friends can turn into a romantic relationship based on physical closeness and contact.

Furthermore, Diamond goes on to say, "…attachment-related increases in oxytocin levels, experienced in the context of an intense emotional bond, [which] might trigger associations to oxytocin-related sexual arousability."[102] In this statement, Diamond describes the plausibility of how romantic love can influence sexual fluidity. Lastly, Diamond declares, "…everyone is capable of some sexual fluidity…"[103] It is important to note that people can change but the author argues that it doesn't happen at will. Diamond identifies many factors that can influence sexual attractions such as ongoing relationships and changing environments. For this purpose, it is important to be aware of possible sexual fluidity within members of the LGBT+ community and that certain factors can influence their sexual behaviors.

Listen Well–Validate

For a soldier or individual to share anything regarding their sexual orientation or sexual life, whether straight or homosexual, can be a very

100. Lisa Diamond, "curriculum Vita" (PDF). Retrieved March 19th 2022.

101. Lisa Diamond, *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women's Love and Desire* (Cambridge, (MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 203.

102. Diamond, *Sexual,* 232.

103. Diamond, *Sexual*, 141.

vulnerable experience.[104] Additionally, it shows a level of trust they place in the chaplain as the hearer. Therefore, receiving such vulnerabilities requires the first action to be that of an attuned listener. The better the listening, the greater the trust increases and the safer the individual feels.[105]

An attuned listener not only hears the words the individual is saying, but they also hear the emotions they are feeling. To be attuned requires the chaplain to place themselves in the individual's shoes.[106] Therefore, for chaplains to put themselves in the individual's shoes, they cannot focus on the individual's situation but the emotional experience they are having with the concern. For example, the chaplain likely does not relate to the individual's sexual attractions (situation). Still, they can relate to the emotional stress that the individual feels (fear of rejection, overwhelmed, uncertainty, etc.). When chaplains step into the same emotional state as the individual, they create attunement with the other person. The chaplain would likely respond with a statement, "Wow, I can only imagine how emotionally heavy this has been for you."[107]

Once the chaplain has attuned emotionally with the individual, he/she can begin to ask open-ended questions to show active listening and genuine interest in the individual and their experience.[108] A great question to start with is, asking them to share their story, to start from the beginning, including childhood, family relationships, and teenage experiences. Then, as they share, ask clarifying questions to understand the bigger picture better. For example, if the individual shares that their relationship with their father was strained, ask them to describe what that means. The individual will feel like you understand the "ins and outs" of their life and will be

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104. This can also include heterosexual couples opening up about sexual relationships.

105. Clara Hill, *Helping Skills: Facilitating Exploration, Insight and Action* 4th ed. (Baltimore, MD: United Book Press, 2014), 180–183.

106. William R. Miller, *Listening Well: The Art of Empathic Understanding* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 12.

107. The statement could be emotionally heavy, or stressful, or scary or overwhelming. You will likely know how to describe it as you listen to the individual share. If it's not exact or they correct and say, it's not overwhelming.

108. Miller, *Listening Well*, 22.

more trusting of the chaplain when the time comes to offer feedback or suggestions.

Another line of questioning that would be beneficial is data collection questions. Asking questions such as, "what have you already tried to do?" "What has worked and what hasn't?" These questions provide insight and help avoid assumptions and redundancy. We all know what it is like to receive suggestions of things that we have already tried or do not work. It is not delightful. When the time comes to offer advice or feedback to the individual, the chaplain will have greater insight into how to best address the individual's concern.

An excellent model to follow to help chaplains become attuned with those they speak with is found in motivational interviewing called OARS. It stands for asking Open questions, Affirming the individual, using Reflections, and Summarize what you've heard.[109] This model supports the chaplain in avoiding attempts to fix the situation or avoid making unhealthy statements that might be misconstrued.[110]

Reduce Shame

As one can imagine, a religious individual who struggles with SSA often deal with an extraordinary amount of personal shame. Tied to the guilt, irrational thoughts will probably reinforce a negative view of self, mixed with emotions of anxiety and hopelessness. Additionally, whatever number of negative opinions of self the individual shares with the chaplain, it is essential to remember that there is an avalanche more waiting to come down the mountain. For this reason, the chaplain must help the individual reduce the possible impact of any mental and emotional pain so that they can find hope in avoiding the avalanche while climbing the mountain.

The next step to help reduce the emotional and mental stress that the individual is feeling is to validate[111] the challenging experience they

109. William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2013), 62.

110. I'd highly recommend reading the entire book or even take training in Motivational Interviewing as a way to improve counseling skills for a variety of situations.

111. Or as Motivational Interviewing calls it, "Affirming."

are going through and acknowledge the conflict of sexual urges that go against their religious beliefs. For example, one could say, "on the one hand, you have this deep religious conviction and love of your faith, while on the other hand, you have these sexual attractions to the same gender." Or another example could be, "I can see the weight you carry, and I can't imagine how difficult this has been for you."[112] Sometimes people fear validating the emotional and mental pain because they fear they are validating a behavior, but this is not true. Instead, validating the individual allows them to feel heard and seen. Additionally, the validation removes feelings of judgment and instills compassion—feelings of acceptance helps to bring about self-compassion.[113] Self-compassion is an essential building block for individuals to build hope and personal determination in their desired outcomes.

Another step-in shame reduction is to "normalize" and "reframe" their experience. Sexual attractions are typical for almost every person born on this earth. Furthermore, it is incredibly natural to desire companionship and relationships with another human being. And while same-sex attractions are not the majority of the population, it is not entirely uncommon, with about 7.1% of the population experiencing same-sex attractions.[114] Additionally, it is important to note that younger generations are declaring at a far higher rate of being LGBT+, and it is not the lesbians and gays that are increasing, but it is the bi-sexual and questioning.[115]

Often people think the reason we have sexual urges is simply to have sex, and for those of religious backgrounds, they may think it is just for procreation. However, sexual urges are a message for a connection.[116] There is a need to develop secure attachments with others, with sexual

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112. It is important to remember that when one is validating another, they are using a sensitive and genuine tone with the invidual.

113. Miller, *Listening Well*, 43.

114. Jeffrey M. Jones, "What Percentage of Americans Are LGBT?" Gallup.com (Gallup, February 17, 2022), https://news.gallup.com/poll/332522/percentage-americans-lgbt.aspx.

115. Questioning is an individual that questions their sexual orientation or attraction.

116. Jeffry A. Simpson and W. Steven Rholes, *Attachment Theory and Research: New Directions and Emerging Themes* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2015), 171.

interactions resulting from the developed emotional and physical relationship.[117] Additionally, a need for attachment is not always sexual, but it can be for friendship and support.

As a chaplain, helping the individual become aware of and reframe their sexual attractions can help him/her better understand their sexual urges. The objective is not to get rid of sexual urges necessarily, but to help them learn to approach them in healthy ways. By reducing the power of sexual urges, behaviors do not become compulsive but can become connecting. A sexual desire towards the same gender can also be a message for a need for connection and friendship. Helping individuals normalize and reframe sexual urges can give them a better sense of purpose and intention with their actions. Additionally, if their needs are met through healthy attachments, their sexual desires or sexual compulsions can be reduced regardless of whether it is opposite-sex attraction or same-sex attraction.

Resources

The more resources one has, the more likely their hope for a better future increases. Some of the resources for those with SSA include books, seminars, counselors, mentors, etc. Many Christians, including Latter-day Saint Christians, have experienced and still experience SSA and have either returned, not returned, or remained on their covenant path. Some have chosen to enter a mix-orientation marriage with children of their own, and others have chosen to remain celibate. As they can likely attest, either path is a difficult one but can be accomplished with strong support groups, additional resources, and spiritual strength from the Lord and his teachings.

North Star is an influential group that has emerged for the LGBT+ community for Latter-day Saints. It is an organization that is faith-affirming for Latter-day Saints who deal with the complicated issues of SSA and gender identity. One of its purposes is to help support individuals, families, and church leaders to make a difference for those in the LGBT+ community of the Church.[118] North Star holds a Latter-day Saint a three-day

117. Simpson and Rholes, *Attachment*, 172.

118. "Introduction," North Star, accessed February 2, 2022, https://www.northstarLatter-day Saint.org/introduction.

conference every year with guest speakers, and they also have regular fireside discussions on complex topics. Additionally, North Star has a podcast called, Voices of Hope, which shares personal stories of faithful members and how they sought to reconcile their sexual orientation or identity with their faith.[119] North Star organization is a wonderful way to build connections and support with others who are SSA or part of the LGBT+ community while maintaining their covenants.

The last and greatest of all resources to acknowledge is the Lord Jesus Christ. His relationship is paramount in any work we do to receive strength, guidance, and support. He alone can provide the miracles, He alone can give us light and truth, and He alone redeems us with His love from our fallen state. Although we all fall short of the kingdom, it is by His grace that we are sanctified (Moroni 10:32-33).

Conclusion

For those part of the LGBT+ community, the task at hand is complex. Doctrine and scripture from the Church can seem non-inclusive. Academics from different faith or no faith traditions also may argue different interpretations of scripture. However, chaplains can support the individuals seeking to remain on the covenant path. As chaplains work to listen well with attuned empathy, help reduce shame, and provide tools and resources, those they serve may find hope and empowerment to achieve their goals.

Additionally, chaplains must be aware of the ethical dilemmas and possible situations to avoid discrimination towards the LGBT+ community while honoring the tenets of their faith and the directives of their religious organization. Lastly, chaplains play a critical role in bringing the Lord and His gospel into the lives of those who seek His help and do so with love, compassion, and care."

119. "Voices of Hope Home," North Star, accessed February 2, 2022, https://www.northstarLatter-day Saint.org/voices-of-hope.

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