

Reflections On Love vs. Stewardship of the Doctrine

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If you posit that the bridges that need to be built are between the LGBTQ community and the LDS Church, it assumes that there's no space in which you can be LGBTQ and LDS. And yet, against the prevailing logic, we LGBTQ Saints exist. For us the challenge is internal. It's about facing cognitive dissonance caused by doctrines about sexuality that don't allow for our existence or that condemn us to a half-existence. It's about finding a way to be and to be whole.

There's a tendency to look at this as external. The pain, the trauma, the hurt we have experienced is seen as something the Church has done to us. But I very much look at this from an internal rather than external perspective. If the Church "did this to us" it's because none of us has answers. And if we LGBTQ Saints want to find answers, we need to engage in a quest. Nobody else can do that for us. The Church can't do that for us. Our families can't do it for us. We have to find God and wrestle with him and demand the blessings. It would be nice if the Church would or could join us in that quest, but we can't hold our breath waiting for that to happen.

Another, different, really good metaphor for how we do this is found in Alma chapter 32. We plant seeds in our heart and then if we experience growth, if those seeds grow and produce fruit that is delightful, we can accept both the burdens and the joy that come from nurturing those seeds and cultivating that fruit. Really, this is the only way we can discover truth. Not to take others' word for what is and isn't true, but to test it. That is our very first obligation. It is what we owe to ourselves. It is a form of self love without which love of others and love of God will not be possible.

In relation to the "perhaps" vs. the "no" as to whether the "doctrine" can be changed in Phil's talk, I personally am aware of hundreds of LGBTQ Saints — and I am one of them — who have had profound spiritual experiences affirming us in our identity as LGBTQ, and affirming decisions to enter into and commit to same-sex relationships or to transition. Some of us have a very clear sense that our sexual orientation or gender identity is not something that evaporates when we are freed from our physical bodies, but that it is a core part of who we are as children of God now and forever.

In my personal experience, God spoke to me and affirmed that my gayness was part of who I was in my "inmost being" which in the 33 years since I received that personal revelation I have come to understand to mean that part of me which is eternal and unchanging and will always be a part of me. Later, there was a process of seeking personal revelation in regards to personal relationships, and what became clear is that God was not calling me to celibacy, and God was not calling me to a relationship with a woman, and ultimately God blessed my decision to join my life to the life of my husband Göran, and we are now in the 29th year of a walk together into eternity.

These experiences are among the most sacred in our personal histories, and are among the most defining spiritual moments in our lives, along with our testimonies of the reality of God, of Christ and the Atonement and of the truthfulness of the Restoration. And this begs the question, and this is a question I put back to Phil, of What does the Church make of this? Does our witness of God's work in our lives matter? Does it deserve to be heard and to be weighed as the Church wrestles with the question of Can the doctrine change?

Phil talked about Peter's vision, in Acts chapter 10, of the great canvas filled with all of the diversity of his creation, which God commanded the church to partake, along with the corollary commandment: "What I have made holy, do not you call common or unclean." And I think in a very real way, that canvas is being presented to the Church right now in its LGBTQ members. And the question is, will the Church partake, or will it deny us and continue to call us common and unclean? And another question, I think, is can you heterosexual, cisgender members be saved without us, any more than we can be saved without you?

While the Church collectively wrestles with these issues (much as the Church wrestled in Acts chapter 15), what can individual church members do to express love in spite of policies that exclude?

Speaking for myself, I am on that quest with God I've already described, seeking, as Abraham did, the blessings of the fathers and mothers. I feel most loved when people are willing to join me in that quest. They do that by believing me. They do that by knowing my story and becoming my advocate. They do that by joining me in prayer for the Church to find greater light and knowledge in relation to these issues. They do that by knowing and being a friend to my husband. They do that by hoping and praying for there to be a place of full inclusion for our family in the Church. They do that by, in the meantime, supporting my path of discipleship as I seek to perfect myself.

Nothing has given me greater joy than to be there in that way for my LGBTQ siblings as well as for my heterosexual, cisgender brothers and sisters in their search for those same blessings and in their path of discipleship and self-perfection. And I pray for that kind of transformative, perfecting love to fill us all in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen