

# Frequently Asked Questions

October 25, 2016

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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*From mormonandgay.lds.org.*

## **Why Use the Term “Same-Sex Attraction”? Why Not Just Say “Gay”?**

Same-sex attraction (SSA) refers to emotional, physical, romantic, or sexual attraction to a person of the same gender. If you experience same-sex attraction, you may or may not choose to use a sexual orientation label to describe yourself. Either way, same-sex attraction is a technical term describing the experience without imposing a label. This website uses this term to be inclusive of people who are not comfortable using a label, not to deny the existence of a gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity.

## **Why Does the Website Not Discuss Gender Dysphoria or Transgender Issues?**

Many of the general principles shared on this website (for example, the importance of inclusion and kindness) apply to Latter-day Saints who experience gender dysphoria or identify as transgender. However, same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria are very different. For example, those who experience gender dysphoria may or may not also experience same-sex attraction and the majority of those who experience same-sex attraction do not desire to change their gender. From a psychological and ministerial perspective, the two are different.

## **Are You Asking Yourself If You Are Gay?**

If you're asking yourself whether you're gay, you've probably experienced same-sex attraction and are wondering how to interpret these feelings. Sexual desires are complex and shaped by many factors. While a romantic, emotional, or sexual attraction can signal a sexual orientation, you should not automatically assume that it does. Sexual desire can be fluid and changeable. If you are questioning, you should not feel pressured or rushed to reach conclusions about your sexuality.

Words mean different things to different people, and the definition of a word can change throughout our lives. What does the word *gay* mean to you? Is it a feeling? an identity? a lifestyle? The usage of the word *gay* has been changing as society and culture change. Identifying as gay may mean you experience same-sex attraction but choose not to act on these feelings. Or maybe this label describes how you express yourself emotionally, physically, sexually, or politically. If you're wondering what someone means when they say, "I'm gay," just ask them.

## **Should I Come Out?**

For some people, keeping feelings of same-sex attraction private can result in shame or a negative internal dialogue. Sharing those feelings with a trusted confidant can be liberating and healing. Some, however, wish they had waited longer or at least limited the number of people to whom they disclosed their feelings, so this decision shouldn't be based on yielding to pressure to "come out" publicly or openly identify as gay. If you decide to disclose feelings of same-sex attraction, prayerfully consider whom you would like to tell about it and how to share this aspect of your mortal experience.

If you decide to share your experiences of feeling same-sex attraction or to openly identify as gay, you should be supported and treated with kindness and respect, both at home and in church. We all need to be patient with each other as we figure things out.

As Church members, we all have a responsibility to create a supportive and loving environment for all our brothers and sisters. Such a support network makes it much easier to live the gospel and to seek the Spirit while navigating any aspect of mortality.

### **How Can I Talk to My Parents or Bishop about Same-Sex Attraction?**

If you feel comfortable talking with a parent, another family member, or a Church leader, consider sharing your feelings with them. Help them understand what you're going through so they can show love and support. If they don't understand what this experience is like, ask them to read through the articles on this website. This may not be an easy conversation to start, but it's important to get a dialogue going. Be patient with the people around you, and remember you are all learning together. If those you love have difficulty understanding or being supportive, they may need your help. Treat your parents and leaders with the same kindness and respect you hope they will show to you. This website is designed to help everyone better understand same-sex attraction from a gospel perspective.

### **If I'm Faithful Enough, Will My Attractions Go Away?**

The intensity of same-sex attraction is not a measure of your faithfulness. Many people pray for years and do all they can to be obedient, yet find they are still attracted to the same sex. Same-sex attraction is experienced along a spectrum of intensity and is not the same for everyone. Some are attracted to both genders, and others are attracted exclusively to the same gender. For some, feelings of same-sex attraction, or at least the intensity of those feelings, may diminish over time. In any case, a change in attraction should not be expected or demanded as an outcome by parents or leaders.

The intensity of your attractions may not be in your control; however, you can choose how to respond. Asking the Lord what you can learn from this experience and how this can become a strength to you can focus your faith on an outcome you can control. Turning your life over to God is an important act of faith that brings great blessings now and even greater blessings in the world to come.

### **Will the Church Ever Change Its Doctrine and Sanction Same-Sex Marriages?**

Central to God's plan, the doctrine of marriage between a man and woman is an integral teaching of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and will not change:

“As a doctrinal principle, based on the scriptures, the Church affirms that marriage between a man and a woman is essential to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

“Sexual relations are proper only between a man and a woman who are legally and lawfully wedded as husband and wife. Any other sexual relations, including those between persons of the same gender, are sinful and undermine the divinely created institution of the family. The Church accordingly affirms defining marriage as the legal and lawful union between a man and a woman” (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, 21.4.10).