

IS THE PEARL TOO GREAT A PRICE?

by Ian Murphy | Mar 24, 2016 | exclusion-policy, Featured, Homosexuality, LGBTQ | 3 comments



When Justin* was 14 he played Pokemon. I never understood the game but I played another geeky game in the same store. It was a friendly store and I chatted with all the regulars inbetween games. He was quiet and a bit withdrawn but over the coming weeks began to welcome the brief conversations. We became Facebook friends and occasionally discussed game schedules and movies. Justin stopped playing games at the store after a few months. I would run into him occasionally and we would comment on each others posts online but we didn't interact much for the next couple of years. Justin was actively LDS and held the Aaronic Priesthood. He was looking forward to serving a Mission like his older brothers and his elder sister had before him. He wanted to serve his Mission "somewhere exotic, like Brazil". He played sports and loved football.

After Justin turned 16 he saw that I was a member of Mormons Building Bridges and

some photos of my wife and I at SLC Pride. He asked about them and I told him that we were active faithful Mormons with a number of gay friends whom we loved dearly and that their being gay didn't change how we felt about them and that they were equally loved by our Heavenly Father as any other of His sons and daughters. He said he didn't know anyone who was gay.

A few weeks later Justin messaged me again and asked if he could tell me something. He made me promise not to tell anyone. He told me that he thought he might be gay and that he hated himself. I thanked him for trusting me and told him it did not make him a bad person and that it made him no different to millions of other people, most of whom are amazing, warm, friendly and loving people. I asked him if he had told anyone else and he said no. He was afraid his family would hate him and he would have no friends. I told him that people sometimes surprise us and reassured him that I would keep his secret but he might want to tell them or someone else at some point, when he felt comfortable.

We chatted a few more times over the coming weeks and I directed him to various resources for support and suggested other people he might want to open up to so he had other options for support. I don't know if he followed any of them. I knew his family in passing. I know he never told them. I don't think they would have reacted as badly as he feared. Perhaps after the initial surprise they would have been okay. They loved him very much. They never had the chance to show Justin if they could accept his authentic self. I'm writing in the past tense because a few days ago I learned that Justin killed himself.

We lost another fine young man. Another son, another brother, another friend. We lost another beautiful soul. And it's unnecessary. We have to remove the shame and the fear of the things and the feelings that are out of our control. We have to embrace all of those around us, especially those who are different to us, and tell them that we love them, and embrace their differences, until all feel welcome and cherished, until all can thrive in our circle — especially those who feel lost, lonely and excluded. Especially those who feel different. Especially those who feel unwanted, outcast, alienated and invisible. Especially those who feel like they do not exist or like others would prefer they do not exist. Especially those who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Trans*.

As a fellow Mormon — how will I be held accountable before God if I do not stand up before my fellow brothers and sisters and stand up for the vulnerable, alienated and outcast around me? And Justin. And the many who, like him, feel that their authentic selves are a thing to be hated, rejected and turned away. It is time to stand up for love. It is time to show our love — not when it is convenient. Not when it is socially

convenient. Not when it is easy. It is long past time to show our love for all, and it is long past time to show love, unfeigned for our LGBT brothers and sisters with sincere friendship, hugs and by sharing and supporting them in their struggles, tears, laughter and joy.

Rest in Peace, Justin. I know I won't feel peace while ever I know I'm in the company of the people you fear wouldn't have welcomed you - and the people I know wouldn't have welcomed you.

*Names and some details have been changed to protect confidentiality

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Ian Murphy

Ian Murphy was born in England and moved to the US in 2008. He gained dual citizenship in 2014. He is married to a High School Teacher and currently serves as a Ward Missionary and as an instructor in Elders Quorum. He collects Cher head dresses, is an accomplished fromager and loves all things Eurovision. It's inevitable that the latter are sometimes enjoyed together.

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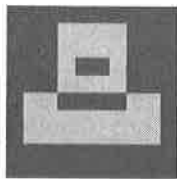
Win Marsh · Staff Anesthetist at Pulse Anesthesia

One single suicide death due to a policy is too much.

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A Happy Hubby on March 24, 2016 at 5:26 am

Ian – Thanks so much for sharing this. My one word response is, “DAMMIT” and I say that with tears in my eyes.

In the middle of all of the “exactly how many suicides can be attributed to the policy change” I fear we can’t even count such a number. I can’t tell if “Jason” ever told anyone other than you. If he didn’t even tell his parents he is one among an unknown number of suicides over this issue.

Regardless of what any leaders are doing or not doing, we individually have to reach out too those that are vulnerable to feeling

they don't belong. It is the Christian thing to do. I feel you reaching out to him was more important than your Ward missionary stats for the last few months or if your last elders quorum lesson was great enough to keep everyone awake.

DAMMIT! I wish I had the chance to know Jason. Ian - Thank you for trying to help him. I appreciate your example.

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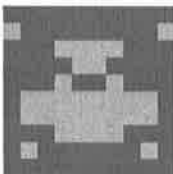


Win Marsh on March 24, 2016 at 12:43 pm

One single suicide death due to a policy is too much.

(Quote) (Reply)

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KJC on March 24, 2016 at 7:28 am

That is a real tragedy. I feel so sad that he didn't feel he could talk with anyone else, especially his family. Our lives are such a blessing. This is where I get nervous about the sharing of my opinion. What I think is difficult to do many times, is to show our love to someone that does not live according to our understanding of sin. We've been taught and we teach our children that homosexuality is a sin. And I believe it to be so. But we need to work past that to love the person regardless. Same-sex attraction, in my opinion, is not the sin. I don't think we have any control over that kind of thing. I do think that we have responsibility and control over our responses and actions upon those feelings or any inclinations towards sin. Would it be difficult and tremendously challenging? Yes! Do I understand why all of us are afflicted by the desire to sin? Absolutely not. Hopefully we will become more highly evolved and love each other in spite of our sins. After all, who are we to judge? That "walking a mile in someone else's shoes" sure is a truism. I have several friends that are openly gay. I love them and appreciate them for their talents and their contributions to my life and others. Conversely, I hope that they can feel my love & that I add something to their lives as well. Do I condone the homosexuality? No. But we can love our brothers and sisters in spite of their sins just as I would hope they would love me in spite of mine. Ain't no one walking on water out there!