

Why Should I Trust the Church?

by Simon Zelotes | Nov 13, 2015 | Featured, General authorities, Homosexuality, LDS Church History, Obedience | 8 comments



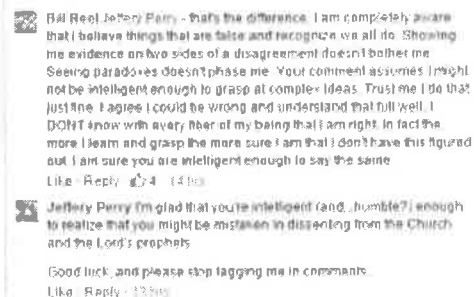
So, how about this new policy? Haha. So today Facebook's newsfeed algorithm drew my attention to a heated argument battle of words that was being waged over all this. I'm sure we're all witnessing the same spectacle. The following comments in particular caught my attention:

Bill Reed **Barney Peterson** - Would it not be fair to say we would have, in their day, defended the brethren of the 40's the same way in their doctrinal statements on race? We would have asked dissenters to recognize these are older men, full of experience who understand well the issues of race and are not bigots. The view of presentism will always have us defending our beliefs at all costs and only with hindsight saying . you know we might have been wrong when we did that. I dissent and hope you will allow my comment to stand.
Unlike Reply 3 · 15 hrs

Jeffery Perry I hope that you are intelligent enough to recognize that your argument could actually be used quite effectively against your stance. Presentism is what makes people such as yourself believe that homosexuality is acceptable, and took down on the outdated traditions of your fathers. LGBT advocates are the ones fighting for their beliefs at all costs. And eventually they will realize . they were dead wrong. I hope they don't realize it too late.
Like Reply 2 · 14 hrs

There is a lot to unpack here. I notice that many tend to conflate disagreement with this monstrous policy as support for homosexuality or same sex marriage, which I would caution against. But the aspect of the comment that really concerns me is the statement, "And eventually they will realize... they were dead wrong." I have seen a lot of doomsday comments along these lines coming from those defending the policy. Many seem to relish in this idea of people supportive of gay marriage or otherwise treating gays with decency being proven wrong. What is the basis for this attitude?

The comments continued along these lines, invoking the classic call to follow the prophet:



This is the classic circular argument. You're wrong. Why? Because follow the prophets. They can do no wrong it seems, except, as Bill Reel points out, all those times they got it wrong. If we were in the 1940's would all the people who are defending this policy also be saying the same things to defend the racist priesthood ban that the church now disavows? Or would they have the courage to stand up and oppose the leaders, like Lowry Nelson?

Here's my basic question: Why should I trust the leaders on this issue? Why should I trust their judgement when it comes to anything that has to do with homosexuality or LGBT issues?

Thus far the church has been proven wrong on every single position it has taken with respect to homosexuality and gay marriage. What has it gotten right? Seriously, can somebody name something for me? I started out trusting the church on this issue until time after time, after I started meeting and knowing gay people both in and out of the church, I began seeing how wrong it was. They are not these satanic monsters running around performing blood sacrifice rituals on children. I say this sarcastically of course, but the point is that from beginning to end the church doesn't seem to have any clue what it is talking about on this subject. Where is the inspiration? Or revelation for that matter?

Please prove me wrong. What has the church gotten right? Why should I trust what it has to say about any of this?

For how long did the church teach idiotic things like masturbation leading to homosexuality? For how long did the church say it was a choice and demonize gays because of this? For how long did it argue there was a link between homosexuality and pedophilia and child abuse, that gay men are more likely to abuse children than straight ones? All have been proven wrong. I was taught all of these things as a youth in the church and even by high-ranking leaders in the MTC and during my mission as recently as 2004. Not because these leaders had any particular expertise, knowledge, or special insight, but just because that's what they had heard from some other leader. It was the attitude and policy of the day. More than one of the leaders that taught me these sorts of things is now an apostle. Time after time the church has been proven wrong in its understanding of homosexuality, nature vs. nurture, and all that. Church leaders don't know what causes it or why. It would seem that the Lord has seen fit to make some people gay and the church has no answer for this. It is dumbfounded.

For how long did the church perform electroshock therapy to try and "cure" gay people through electrocution and what amounted to lobotomization? "Here, watch porn videos while we electrocute you, it will totally cure you." Other methods were tried, counseling and therapy, encouraging gay men to marry women, etc. How'd that work out? All failed.

More times than I can count I've personally witnessed priesthood leaders encourage both gay and straight men to get married (to women) as a solution to sexual appetite or so-called "addiction." Struggling with pornography, masturbation, or sex out of wedlock? No worries, just get married. Pick the first girl that will take you, it will solve everything.

Ironically, the church CAUSED this problem that it's now trying to deal with. By and large the children of gay parents who want membership in the church are split-custody situations after a divorce happened. So now the church is punishing kids for a situation it arguably placed them in by setting at least one of their parents up for failure. Amazing. And also ironically, this policy will serve to accomplish more of the same. Gay men will be pressured by this policy to pretend to be straight and get married, have kids, etc. And then when those marriages implode the kids will be punished and used as a tool against the parents.

Let's also consider same sex marriage. You can thank, in large part, the LDS church for gay marriage becoming law. Back in the 70s/80s did the LGBT community care about marriage? No, they didn't. Not really. Marriage rights simply became a means to an end. Crazy states like UT passed all sorts of discriminatory laws designed to mess with gays and attempt to control them. If gays had been afforded equal rights with respect to common things like employment, taxation, housing, death benefits, etc., they likely never would have cared about marriage. The accelerated push to legalize gay marriage was in direct response to the abysmal Proposition 8 fiasco, among other embarrassing state initiatives to marginalize same gender relationships. Awesome job there. Don't start a war unless you're prepared to accept the consequences of losing it. There was no war to begin with until the church went out of its way to start one!

How would you feel if a bunch of people went around telling you your relationship was "fake" and "counterfeit" and rubbing your face in how you'll never be as good. If my memory serves me right didn't the church in fact endure a period of persecution pretty similar? It's funny to me that the church has argued precisely two cases before the Supreme Court and they are the direct opposite of each other. Take a look: Case 1, in defense of polygamy and Case 2, in opposition to gay marriage. In case 2, the church made literally the same arguments that were made against it over polygamy. So was the church wrong with its arguments in 1878 when it defended polygamy? By the church's own arguments against gay marriage it seems to think so. Or perhaps it was right back then and is wrong now? The Supreme Court seems to think so.

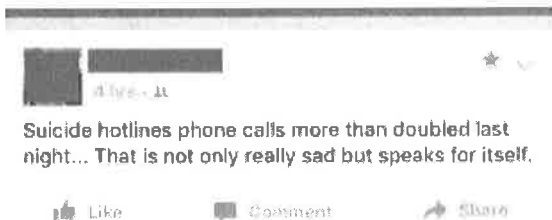
Of course the LGBT community wanted marriage rights in an environment like that where they are being psychologically abused and constantly reminded how miserable they are. Especially if homosexuality is something people have no control over. And also especially if it is a "less happy" or "miserable" lifestyle, as the church and its leaders continuously argue with statements like "wickedness never was happiness." Demonize any person who has to cope with a condition they have no control over, and that they don't really like either, and how do you expect them to respond? They will do whatever they can to fight back and level the playing field, to be as normal and happy as they possibly can be. What else can they do but make the best of the situation they find themselves in, ideal or not? You see the same behavioral responses in every other aspect of daily life. Tell your daughter she's a slut and she'll start dressing like one just to prove you right.

I listened to a podcast yesterday that featured a guest that said something I had never heard before. Paraphrasing, he stated that LDS people breed gay people at a statistically significant higher rate, with a significance factor between 6-9 points depending on the study. I was unable to

locate the specific studies referred to, although in my attempt found quite a lot of anecdotal evidence confirming that this is a widely observed phenomenon, including some research that may explain it. So, ask yourself, what the heck is going on? Let's consider the possibilities, depending on the side of the debate one may fall on:

1. You say homosexuality is a choice? Ok, why are so many of our kids choosing it compared to the average?
2. It's not a choice, but a product of nurture, childhood development? Ok, what are we doing to our kids in their youth that causes them to become gay?
3. Or perhaps it's entirely genetic, in which case, it's laugh out loud hilarious that the Lord has seen fit to bless the LDS church with such a high percentage of the gay gene... what's up with that?

Again, I ask: what has the church gotten right so far on this issue? From my perspective it seems that the church has gotten all the facts wrong and acted in a manner that has done nothing but serve to add fuel to the fire. Either wholly or in part, it is responsible for the problems that it's now trying to fix with this policy of segregation. Why should I trust the leaders that this is the right thing to do? What have they said to explain themselves or justify this? I cannot see where they point to a scriptural justification, claim to have received revelation, or even bothered to pray about it. There is nothing.



Facebook post from volunteer at suicide hotline in Utah

The whole manner in which this has come about raises even more questions about credibility, that it should take a media onslaught involving the NYT, Washington Post, People, LA Times, Huffington Post and Fox News, among others, to agitate even an embarrassingly hollow deer-in-headlights kind of explanation from leadership. They could have easily preempted all this drama and prepared members for what was coming. They could have at least tried to approach things in a gentle and loving manner, instead, they just sneak this thing into a policy manual with zero explanation. What really saddens me is the reports coming from those volunteering at suicide hotlines in Utah. Are the leaders so incompetent that they don't realize how profoundly their actions affect others, or do they just not care?

This is the sort of stuff that would get someone fired in the business world or impeached from political office. Why should I continue to trust my leaders and place faith in them? Why should I not proudly stand up in general conference and vote opposed?

Update: I originally authored this article on Tuesday November 10th, despite it being published just today. In light of the statement released by the First Presidency this morning, I wanted to post an

update.

I'm very disappointed in this statement. I'm very happy to see some kind of statement, anything, but disappointed by how hollow this is. It really doesn't answer any questions of substance or serve to address people's concerns in any kind of meaningful way. It seems designed to mitigate the blowback without appearing weak by backing off a little. And as such, it raises even more concerns frankly.

For example, the language of the policy reads:

A mission president or a stake president may request approval from the Office of the First Presidency to baptize and confirm, ordain, or recommend missionary service for a child of a parent **who has lived or is living** in a same-gender relationship when he is satisfied by personal interviews that both of the following requirements are met:

1. The child accepts and is committed to live the teachings and doctrine of the Church, and specifically disavows the practice of same-gender cohabitation and marriage.
2. The child is of legal age and does not live with a parent who has lived or currently lives in a same-gender cohabitation relationship or marriage.

In contrast the letter from the first presidency reads, "The provisions of Handbook 1, Section 16.13, that restrict priesthood ordinances for minors, apply only to those **children whose primary residence is** with a couple living in a same-gender marriage or similar relationship."

To me this seems at odds with the plain reading of the language which reads, "*who has lived or is living.*" Did the First Presidency just walk things back a little? And then my next question is, define "*primary residence.*" What does that mean? This new language seems even worse, setting people up for vicious custody battles. In split custody situations it will pit the heterosexual spouse against the "apostate" homosexual to be awarded "primary" custody. Even if their breakup is completely amicable it now sets them up for a fight. What I'm understanding from all this is that the church is ultimately kicking out all the gays. They are being kicked out, and consequently, their kids need to go with them. Am I understanding this wrong?

The statement reads, "*Our concern with respect to children is their current and future well-being and the harmony of their home environment,*" but then offers no reasoning as to how this policy will support these children or help promote harmony in their homes. If it's about the children why does it seem plainly designed to create division? The church already has an outstanding rule requiring parental consent for minors. What problem is this policy solving that the existing one doesn't already solve? And if, in fact, the concern here is harmony at home, what about the children of heterosexual parents where divisions about the church may exist at home? Inactive parents, exmormon parents, excommunicated parents, nevermo split-faith parents, and so on...? Surely the First Presidency is not making the argument that it cares **more** about harmony at home for the child of a gay parent than all the other children?

My question still stands: Why should I trust the church?

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Simon Zelotes

Simon the Zealot, born Andrew D., would be the result of a "mild drink" fueled love bender between Mother Smith and General Sam Houston. Born and raised in Texas, served a mission in Japan, a disciple of Jesus via Mormonism and a disciple of Engineering via both Texas A&M and the University of Texas at Austin. He's a hard believer in the restored church as a generalist tool to

keep men and women on the right path, but an ardent opponent of thought terminating cliches, blind obedience, and droning talks in place of God Worship. He believes church leaders of most any age are inspired, flawed, prophetic whackadoodles who inevitably leave their followers with a lot of 'splainin to do. Although gainfully married in the temple and with children, he does not live in abstract terror of teh Gay or their kids. In fact, were it up to him, no marriage would have legal sanction.

All posts by Simon Zelotes