

No Shocker: the LDS Church Supports the “Respect for Marriage” Act

By Pastor Dave Mallinak ~ Published December 1, 2022

On October 21, 2013, **Al Mohler told an audience of faculty and students at Brigham Young**, “I do not believe that we are going to heaven together, but I do believe we may go to jail together.” I say this was bold: the faculty and students at BYU can’t conceive of an eternity where they would be anywhere *but* heaven. But mainly bold because Mohler suggested that our shared opposition to homosexuality could land us all in jail.

At the time, Mohler saw the situation correctly. A few years before this speech, the LDS church provoked the wrath of homosexuals everywhere by supporting **California’s 2008 Prop 8** ban on same-sex mirage. California passed the gay mirage ban, which the courts later overturned. And all of this happened several years before the **2015 Obergefell Ruling** came from the Supreme Court, making gay mirage a sanctioned event in the U.S.

When the extent of the LDS church’s involvement in the fight for Prop 8 was made known, **the rage and fury of radical homosexuals** came in like a storm. And ever since, the LDS church has been doing penance in surprising (and disappointing) ways. The collapse has been disheartening, to say the least, and **the tension among rank-and-file Mormons is palpable**.

So, when the LDS church announced their support for the so-called “Respect for Marriage” Act, the shock many felt was entirely uninformed. It should surprise nobody. It fits with the trend in the LDS church ever since the Prop 8 battle. Perhaps it has been a long time in the making – I don’t think so, but I can understand why some, both in the LDS church and outside of it, might have been blindsided. But the support for this “Disrespect for Marriage” Act fits with their general personality, political posture, doctrinal commitments, and overall culture. Allow me to explain.

Personal Reasons

The LDS church puts a very high value on “nice.” It is the one virtue that every member holds dear. LDS church members are legitimately some of the kindest people you will ever meet. But it would help if you understood this not so much as a product of natural disposition but as a religious commitment. Of all the sins one might commit in Utah, being mean ranks among the highest. In Utah culture especially, we encounter a superficial niceness that cloaks (sometimes very thinly) an inward passive-aggressiveness. According to a recent study, **Utah tops the charts** for the most confrontational drivers in the nation.

This cult of niceness explains why you will see more rainbow flags and trans flags and “hate has no home here” and “Black Lives Matter” signs in Utah than in almost any other place. I could step out my front door in my Ogden neighborhood and see a half dozen rainbow flags. And this is not unusual.



This religious commitment to “nice” explains why Donald Trump is so unpopular in our state – even though Donald Trump won Utah quite handily. It explains why Utah Conservatism is so frustratingly moderate. It explains why pro-life conservatives in our state legislature routinely vote down pro-life legislation. The LDS believe they are better “Christians” because they support LGBTQ rights.

This past spring, **James Lindsey** spoke at an event near me, and I had the privilege of meeting him courtesy of **Andrew Badger**, then-candidate for U.S. Congress. Though an outsider and somewhat unfamiliar with Utah, Lindsey pegged one crucial fact. The reason that rank-and-file Mormons are embracing Wokeness, the reason our Governor announced his preferred pronouns, has nothing to do with political agenda and everything to do with the general demeanor of the LDS church. The LDS church doesn’t want to be divisive or combative. On the contrary, they want to accommodate people of all faiths and all lifestyles.

So, their support of the Defense of Marriage Act shouldn’t surprise anyone.

Political Reasons

The LDS church sees compromise as the path to protecting religious liberty. When our Utah politicians debate the thorny cultural issues of our time, they will inevitably speak of finding a “Utah solution.” They pride themselves in finding compromises that satisfy both parties in the culture wars.

Thus, in 2015, our Legislature produced the famed “**Utah Compromise**,” which granted equal protection to the LGBTQ+ while at the same time protecting religious liberty. It was a ground-breaking compromise and became the template for similar non-discrimination laws in other conservative states. The Utah Compromise was brokered and endorsed by the LDS church itself, which is why the LDS church has, for at least the past seven years, actively lobbied for similar legislation at the federal level.

The LDS church’s efforts got little traction until the Supreme Court overturned Roe. Then, **Clarence Thomas suggested that gay marriage should also be subject to review**, and suddenly the left felt inspired to protect gay marriage legislatively. The LDS church saw this as the opportunity they had been waiting for to protect religious liberty. And the LDS church has clarified that they haven’t changed their stance on gay marriage. Kudos to them on that. They support the Respect for Marriage Act strictly based on the Utah Compromise and its potential to protect religious liberty.

When the LDS church brokered the Utah Compromise, I and several other conservatives in our state fought hard against it. But we were like a lone sandbag in a record-setting flood. The church rammed the bill through, and a very compliant Legislature jumped on board, enthusiastically. When it came time to testify before the Legislature, public comment was limited to 1 minute per person. Supporters of the bill were applauded by Legislators, while people like me were scorned and asked ridiculous questions.

Utah Congressman Chris Stewart has been promoting the “**Fairness For All**” Act, a bill modeled even more closely after the Utah Compromise. I have argued with the Congressman that it is foolhardy to think that, once we establish gay rights, the religious exemptions will continue. We all know that once a law is on the books, it is much easier to strip away the parts necessary for the compromise. We can expect to see religious liberty discarded once the gay agenda is entrenched.

The LDS church believes that compromise is the path forward in the face of inevitable persecution against those who oppose gay mirage. And that is why it shouldn’t surprise us that the LDS church supports the Respect for Marriage Act.

Doctrinal Reasons

LDS doctrine doesn’t provide a solid foundation for cultural conservatism. For example, the LDS church issued its “**Proclamation on the Family**” back during the early rumblings of the culture wars. It was a bold statement in support of the traditional family. And in those early days of the culture wars, the LDS church was a staunch ally (thus Mohler’s speech). But when Prop 8 failed in California and the gay rights radicals turned

with a vengeance on the LDS church, there began to be a significant erosion within the LDS church of their position against homosexuality.

This erosion should not surprise anyone because LDS doctrine can go either way on this question – as will be demonstrated, I believe, in the coming years. As just one illustration of the weakness of LDS doctrine, Mormons reject any Biblical version of Hell that includes fire and brimstone, eternal wrath, and eternal judgment for sin. For them, Hell is “outer darkness” – a version of our present world, only with no light. “Outer darkness” is reserved for the tiniest fraction of people, limited to those who left the LDS church and aggressively sought to convert people away from the church.

So, while active homosexuals *within the church* cannot expect to advance to the highest level of heaven (the Celestial Kingdom), they will never face God’s wrath for their sins. They will likely face excommunication (though I doubt this will continue long much longer), but they will not face hell-fire in eternity. According to LDS doctrine, no sin will warrant the lake of fire and brimstone.

With no eternal consequences for sin, the church cannot authoritatively declare that homosexuality is a sin that God will judge on the last day. If the *excommunicated* can still expect to reach some degree of heaven, the church has no reason to oppose homosexuality. By LDS standards, there is no sin that God will judge on the last day, apart from actively proselytizing against the church *as a former member*. For the LDS, sin itself is no danger to the soul but rather a hindrance to the higher levels of progression.

Thus, it is impossible to pin down a core belief that members of the LDS church must maintain. Orthodox Christianity has identified fundamental doctrines as “non-negotiable” – to deny them is to embrace heresy. But within the LDS church, the only doctrinal commitment that must be maintained is membership in the LDS church. Alma Alred, director of the Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, has declared that Mormonism is about behavior, not belief. No doubt, some have been excommunicated for embracing contrary views. More than a few have been excommunicated for visions or revelations deemed “out of bounds” by the church. I’ll confess that it seems strange to me that “unapproved” revelations can get a person removed from the church when personal revelation plays such a significant role in the lives of the LDS and is strongly encouraged by the church.

But most other doctrines are entirely negotiable. Certainly, Mormons do not face a threat of excommunication if they *support* gay marriage or if they believe that the church should change its position on it – ask Steve Young and other prominent Mormons who are outspoken in their support of homosexuality. Likewise, they do not face excommunication if they support abortion on demand – ask Harry Reid.

The fact that “sin” has no real consequence within the LDS church contributes to the growing support for homosexuality within the church. But the most significant factor in this cultural shift is that the LDS church believes in a progressive God. Though both the Bible and the Book of Mormon proclaim that Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,” the LDS do not interpret this to mean that God is immutable – at least, not in the classic sense of orthodox Christianity. Having had thousands of discussions with members of the LDS church about this particular idea, I can tell you that there is no consistent understanding of what exactly this statement about Jesus requires us to believe. As with most teachings in the LDS church, this idea is subject to private interpretation, with meaning mediated through a person’s “agency.”

Here is what I do know: a foundational belief among the LDS is that God Himself progresses. “As man is, God once was; as God is, man shall become.” So goes Lorenzo Snow’s famous couplet, which captures the idea of a progressing God. If God grows and progresses, he could easily “grow” to accept homosexuality. And believe me, most rank-and-file LDS church members are waiting for God to grow this way.

Nor would such a change be out of the ordinary for the LDS church. Once upon a time, polygamy played a vital role in the LDS church, and blacks were banned from the priesthood. Many in the LDS church explain each of these shifts as examples of how God progresses. It will not be seen as a major sea change when the LDS church embraces homosexuality.

Furthermore, I believe many in the church hope that “God” will soon announce via revelation that homosexuality is now acceptable. As an outsider, it is not hard for me to see how this will happen. In my opinion, it is not a question of whether but when it will happen.

Cultural Reasons

When it does happen, you can be sure that the membership of the LDS church will embrace homosexuality enthusiastically. A very safe estimate would be that more than half of rank-and-file Mormons support homosexuality now and believe the church should embrace gay marriage. I don’t think it is a stretch to say that the actual number is between 60% and 70%.

These numbers are more anecdotal than scientific. After I wrote the above paragraph, I googled to see if I could find actual numbers. I came across [this 2018 article from the Salt Lake Tribune](#), which puts the numbers closer to 50%. So, my numbers might be inflated. But I don’t think I am way, way off.

I have lived in Utah for twenty-five years now. I have watched the evolution. Twenty-five years ago, you would not have seen a rainbow flag in a neighborhood, especially not hanging from a Mormon’s front porch. Today, you see them everywhere. Fifteen years ago, gay rights legislation in our state received rigorous pushback from LDS Legislators. Today, our state’s most prominent legislators are the strongest advocates for the homosexual agenda.

But the most significant cultural reason the rank-and-file of the LDS church embraces homosexuality is that homosexuality is rampant in LDS homes. It is increasingly rare to encounter an LDS family that does not have a homosexual family member. A high percentage – I do not know actual numbers on this – of return missionaries become homosexual, and more than a few turned homosexual *while on their mission*.

Why does the LDS church seem to be “slouching towards Gomorrah?” Because they have embraced a religion that blocks up the way of life to them, that insulates them against the redeeming work of God in Christ. The LDS church denies the Biblical doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone, leaving their members to fend for themselves against the lusts of their flesh and of their minds. While grace is given lip service in LDS doctrine, the “[plan of salvation](#)” taught by the church emphasizes faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost, good works, the law of chastity, and the Word of Wisdom as the necessary path to the Celestial Kingdom. Grace is treated like a daily vitamin that gives a person strength to achieve. But existence in this world is seen as a “test,” and exaltation depends on a person’s performance.

For many members, the performance pressure cooker is overwhelming. I am out on the streets of Ogden, meeting people at their doors nearly every week. I have had thousands of conversations over twenty-five years. Over the past decade, the number of bitter, disenfranchised Mormons has increased 100-fold. These members have no power against their lusts, no help from the church, no hope for exaltation, and no desire to be part of the church.

Our only hope for redemption lies in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Jesus carried our sins in His own body on the cross (I Peter 2:24). He suffered and bled and died in the sinner’s place (Isaiah 53:5).

When we humble ourselves and lay our sins on Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21), trusting Him to bear God’s wrath as our substitute, God “justifies” us (Romans 3:24-25). That is, God declares the guilty sinner “not guilty.” God doesn’t create a legal fiction by declaring us “not guilty.” Rather, God lays our sins and guilt on Jesus Christ and then pours out His wrath against our sins. The death of Jesus in our place satisfies God’s demands for justice. Thus, God can be just in punishing sin and can justify sinners by pardoning them (Romans 3:26).

Only when we have been declared “not guilty” and justified do we have the power to overcome sin in our lives. When God justifies the sinner, the sinner is born again. Immediately, God begins the work of “sanctification” – fitting us for heaven, making us holy, and freeing the sinner from the presence of sin in his life (Romans 8:29-30). This process will take the rest of our lives, and we will have many occasions to repent of present sins

due to our inward corruption. But we can be confident that God will do a transforming work in our lives (Hebrews 13:20-21).

Those who have not been reconciled to God through Christ have no hope of overcoming the corruptions of their old nature. Sin has dominion over you, and that dominion shows itself, especially in the pursuit of sexual immorality (Romans 1:18-32 and Ephesians 2:1-3). For this reason, I cannot and will not have any confidence in the LDS church as an ally in the culture wars. Contrary to Al Mohler, I do not believe that the LDS church will ever go to jail with me. At least, not because we stand together against homosexuality. LDS culture and LDS doctrine do not provide a firm foundation for a principled stand against homosexuality.