

and behaviorally. He presents a cogent argument for his choice. He claims his right to do something hard. If his story is honest on all counts, he has internally worked through the obstacles he has faced so far through spiritual seeking and contemplation and externally by talking with Jessie and keeping the conversation open. He employs an important coping strategy by learning to pay less attention to his urges. Just taking a stand and claiming a right often helps to change one's sense of self (though not one's impulses or orientation) and can create increased motivation. Would that most people had this much foresight and planning!

However, I think it is possible that there are difficult struggles that Ben didn't name. Even if his list is complete, others would have more to add or may not be able to do what he is doing. Additionally, he is just starting out. The years can wear on us unless we renew ourselves with episodic or continual growth. Ben hasn't included much information about Jessie. I wish her well over the years and hope that her voice also finds a place in writing for a larger audience.

Those of you reading this article who are homosexual and married and who have not disclosed your orientation to a spouse, please review your situation and name the ways in which you were doing the best that you could at the time of your engagement and marriage. Then, find someone to talk to so you can, as wisely as possible, remedy the situation, or come to some deep peacefulness about your choices in the future.

To all who are challenged by this issue, and perhaps are engaged in a troubled or problematic relationship, please remember that, given your circumstances, you are undoubtedly doing the best you can and should treat each other with great patience and understanding.

## *Staying In*

*Ben Christensen*

I WROTE "GETTING OUT" as a somewhat naive twenty-four-year-old. Now I return, in theory a wise and mature twenty-five-year-old. Inevitably, I'll find whatever I write here equally naive a year from now. I don't know

whether this is a function of being young, human, or simply me. Whatever the case, I appreciate life's opportunities to be constantly learning, including the opportunity that well-written essays such as those by Ron Schow and Marybeth Raynes give me to reflect on myself and question my assumptions.

Perhaps the greatest shift in my perspective on homosexuality in the last year is echoed in comments made by Ron and Marybeth. Ron refers to my implication that my only options were marrying a woman or running off to San Francisco to embrace "rampant queerness." He points out: "There are many choices between these two extremes." I think I found myself in this "either/or" mentality because of a shallow understanding of love and sex. In "Getting Out," I say, "My attraction to Jessie . . . came entirely from my heart. On the other hand, [my attraction to men] was purely a libido thing."

Critiquing my essay, a friend asked, "Can you really separate love and sex so easily? I can't." I discarded his concern, believing I had a deeper understanding of love and sex. After all, he writes novels about missionaries who fornicate and teenaged boys who make out with cow udders. For me, the distinction between love and sex was clear. As I've become more honest with myself, though, I see that Marybeth states my dilemma more accurately when she says that people in my situation choose "between a deep love and erotic attraction plus love." This choice is a good deal more difficult than the over-simplified choice I thought I was making. By choosing heterosexual marriage, I've denied myself the experience of loving someone I am naturally attracted to and my wife the experience of loving someone who is naturally attracted to her.

Homosexuality is not just about sex. I desperately crave emotional intimacy with a man. Can I work on having that kind of intimacy with my wife? Yes. Can I attain some level of intimacy in platonic friendships with men? Possibly. Will this be satisfying? Will it fill the hole in my heart I've lived with for years? I don't know.

I'm uncomfortable, however, with Ron's conclusions regarding bisexuality and homosexuality. He admits that "the HH scale is an overly simplified approach to what is in reality a much more complex matter," yet he uses it as the basis for many of his arguments. If I were to guess where I fall on the HH scale (assuming that I believe anyone can reduce

his or her sexual orientation to a number), I would place myself at a 5: "Predominantly homosexual, but incidentally heterosexual."<sup>1</sup> According to Ron, "Those at 5 or 6 on the HH scale, therefore, are at much higher risk of marriage failure than those at 3 or 4." If my marriage fails, then, can I blame it on my fiveness? On the other hand, if it succeeds, am I therefore a 3 or a 4? Arguments like Ron's require one to "speculate" that homosexuals who don't support the desired conclusions "were likely bisexual." My goodness, Ron, I've just barely come to terms with being gay, and now you're asking me to deal with the possibility that I might be, "in reality," bisexual? I'm not sure my self-image can withstand this much turbulence.

As a general statement, I am aroused by the male body and not the female. Nonetheless, there have been occasions, mostly with my wife, where I have felt such an emotional closeness to a woman that I've experienced some sense of sexual attraction. Similarly, I've often found myself attracted to men I wouldn't have otherwise found attractive, due to shared emotional intimacy. Love and sex aren't easily separated, and neither the HH scale nor terms like "heterosexual," "homosexual," and "bisexual" account for this complexity.

Overall, Ron and Marybeth make convincing arguments for the difficulty of "mixed orientation" marriages. I wholeheartedly agree. If "Getting Out" leads any gay Mormon to jump into marriage without considering the consequences, then I should have my writing license revoked. The problem is, no one offers any better solutions within the bounds of LDS doctrine. Apparently, the current alternative offered by the First Presidency is "great loneliness." What kind of alternative is that? Am I to accept that a Church which proclaims "that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children"<sup>2</sup> would say that marriage and family simply aren't options for me? Yes, many people don't have the opportunity to marry in this life. That, in my opinion, is a tragedy. Why then

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1. Alfred Kinsey, quoted in Ron Schow, "Kinsey and Beyond," in *Peculiar People: Mormons and Same-Sex Orientation*, edited by Ron Schow, Wayne Schow, and Marybeth Raynes (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 160.

2. First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (Salt Lake: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995).

should I *choose* loneliness? But if heterosexual marriage is “doomed to fail” and homosexual marriage is a sin, that’s exactly what I’m expected to do.

If it seems I have conflicting feelings on this subject, I do. Lately when I listen to Lauryn Hill sing “I Get Out,” I wonder whether my “psychological locks” are the boxes a gay-rights-driven society would put me in, or the boxes a narrow-minded view of God has me in. Maybe God *isn’t* so opposed to people of the same gender having a loving sexual relationship. I don’t know. To be honest, at this point it doesn’t matter. This much I do know: God told me to marry Jessie. I married her. I love my wife, and I love my daughter. Doing anything to hurt them couldn’t possibly make me happy. Yes, the issue is infinitely more complicated than I’ve painted it; and yes, at times the thought of never feeling a man’s body next to mine makes me literally tremble. At these times I find courage in the bold words of Ms. Hill: “And if I have to die, O Lord, / That’s how I choose to live.”