

# Blake-Smith

Thu, 3/10 7:07PM 1:09:24

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

aversion therapy, people, church, marriage, craving, attractions, gave, day, married, deal, wife, ssa, therapy, bishop, byu, divorced, experience, problem, friends, evergreen

## SPEAKERS

Interviewer, Blake Smith, Steve Densley

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**S** Steve Densley 00:00

This is FAIR Examination on the Mormon forecast. FAIR Examination takes a close look at interesting and sometimes difficult issues facing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and its members. Blake Smith is a member of the church who has a history with same sex attraction. In this interview, he shares how He reconciled his sexual attractions to men with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and how the law of chastity is brought him peace. He begins talking about his unsuccessful attempts at aversion therapy and subsequent failed marriage. He then shares why he decided to stay in the church and what helped him. He talks about the love and encouragement he received from his ecclesiastical leaders and from a support group called Northstar. He tells his story of finding true love to the woman of his dreams, and of finally overcoming same sex attraction.

**I** Interviewer 00:53

Welcome to FAIR Examination, it's nice to have you on the show with us.

**B** Blake Smith 00:58

It's good to be here.

**I** Interviewer 01:01

Let's just tell us a little bit about your background.

**B** Blake Smith 01:05

Okay, my name is Blake Smith. I've been around a long time, I've got a lot of life experience. And I'm, I honor this experience. One of things that I faced in my life was a very powerful

attraction, maybe even a craving to other men that the cravings has, is completely gone, completely gone from my life. And the attraction has diminished significantly. And I would say that my attractions are an insignificant part of my life at the current time. But they are also the fact that I've experienced this, I consider it to be a great blessing in my life.

I Interviewer 01:52

So you make a distinction between 'craving' and 'attraction'. Can you explain that a bit better?

B Blake Smith 01:58

Yes, the craving: every inch of my body craved male contact, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. And I could control it all day. And I'd dream about it all night. And this went on for years. So an attraction to me is -- "well, okay, that guy looks nice. That maybe looks nice." Okay. So, you know, and sometimes I have attractions, you know, I have had attractions that I thought were pretty powerful. I haven't had any of those for a while, where I've, I thought, wow, that was that guy was really good. Maybe I'd like to do something about that. But I haven't had any of those types of attractions either for quite a while. So but I mean, the craving is just, it was just every inch of my body ached almost like you're craving for food in our 23 of your 24 hour fast. That's the only thing I can compare it to was just all the time, every day.

I Interviewer 03:03

Wow. So we're going to talk a little bit today about some of the things that worked and some of the things that didn't work on helping to change that craving and also diminish the attraction. So the first thing that you did was aversion therapy, correct?

B Blake Smith 03:28

That was first thing that I did,

I Interviewer 03:31

Leading up to aversion therapy, what were some of the things that made you want to undertake diversion therapy?

B Blake Smith 03:39

Well, I was having the cravings. I knew I didn't want to live that way. Probably I'd go back to about the age of 13, when I realized what it was that I was facing. And when I could put a name to it. And the name I gave it wasn't a very nice name. At that, you know, at that moment, I vowed that I would never act on it. I might have been successful in that. But it was just

something that like I said, I had this craving all the time every day. And I was getting really tired of it. And it was I was getting very, very weary. And I was at Rick's college is what they call it in those days. And

I Interviewer 04:17  
What's it called now?

B Blake Smith 04:19  
BYU Idaho -- Brigham Young University, Idaho, is what it's called now. So I was there and I had some friends and I had some friends that I knew were gay. And so I but I just didn't want to be like that. I didn't want to live like that. It was very important to me to be able to have a wife and children. And that was what was important to me. And I was getting frustrated and discouraged about my ability to have that. And so, one day I walked into the Counseling Center and asked to see a therapist, and they gave me a therapist. And that was what happened.

I Interviewer 04:58  
Did the therapist immediately go integration therapy, or did they try other alternatives?

B Blake Smith 05:04  
He set me up, he began setting me up on aversion therapy during my first visit, when I told him what I was dealing with, I told him that this is what I felt. He brought one of his, he brought one of his colleagues in, they gave me a priesthood blessing. And then at the next appointment, they began the process of setting up the aversion therapy.

I Interviewer 05:33  
Before meeting with this therapist, had you talk to anyone else about your attractions, about your craving?

B Blake Smith 05:41  
I briefly mentioned them to a bishop in a letter that was completely watered down, and it was mostly a lie, so...

I Interviewer 05:50  
I know how that goes.

B

Blake Smith 05:54

So I had completely minimized them, I just kind of I told him that I had been sexually abused as a child, and that was having an impact on my ability to deal with life right at, right at that time, which was -- it was that was an accurate factor. But that was an accurate statement. But I never, you know, I didn't intimate to him the level of difficulty that I was having at that time.

I

Interviewer 06:20

And you keep all of these things, to... So you'd pretty much kept all of these feelings to yourself up to this point.

B

Blake Smith 06:26

Correct.

I

Interviewer 06:27

How did that make you feel? Were you very confident about yourself, and how did it make you feel?

B

Blake Smith 06:34

Oh, I was I lived a life consumed in shame and self loathing, self loathing. I just hated myself and everything about myself. So I was not a healthy person.

I

Interviewer 06:46

When you were able to actually talk to the therapists, which was the first time you talked to someone face to face, how, how did that process go? How did he treat you? How did you react?

B

Blake Smith 06:58

He was the most warm, and loving and accepting person I had ever met. And I didn't, I just was surprised that he -- you know, I expected anybody that I told was just going to get up and throw up all over me before they beat up on me. I mean, that was just kind of the attitude that I walked in there with. But he was so warm, and so loving, and he would, he would walk by, and he wasn't afraid to touch me in a comfortable, healthy way. And nothing -- definitely not sexual, but like, like a father would touch a 10 year old son who, you know, doesn't want to be cuddled, but they still need the affection. It was like, that type of it was that type of appropriate affection that he that he was willing to give me. And I felt loved by him, I felt accepted by him. And when he brought his colleague in, to give me a blessing, I don't remember what they said. But I remember that I had the most beautiful feeling while they were doing it.

I Interviewer 07:56  
What do you think the effects of the blessing were?

B Blake Smith 07:59  
You know, I've never really thought about that. Because, you know, I, I dealt with the craving for another, what, 15-20 years before, you know, before, I could say that the craving had gone away. So I really hadn't thought about that. I don't know. It wasn't an immediate, I did not get an immediate solution.

I Interviewer 08:20  
Right, to the craving, but there's other things that were going on.

B Blake Smith 08:25  
No, I just felt I felt a lot of peace. When they gave me that blessing. And I just was -- I felt, like I said, I felt so much acceptance by them: by the therapist, by -- by the two therapists. And I don't know, if therapist one told therapist two what the issue was. I don't know. But they, they were just -- I just felt really good at that moment. And I felt like I had a brighter future, at that moment.

I Interviewer 08:58  
Going into the aversion therapy, where they licensed people?

B Blake Smith 09:04  
Yeah, he has a PhD in Counseling Psychology.

I Interviewer 09:07  
Did he explained to you the risks involved in aversion therapy?

B Blake Smith 09:13  
I don't recall any discussion on risks. The big thing he told me that -- he told me how the process would be: that he would, I would essentially be taping a/their electrical wire to the back of my calf. And, and he told me that he would be very careful in how much he administered and

the goal was that he wanted me to feel it. And he wanted it to feel uncomfortable, but not painful. That was the goal.

I Interviewer 09:42  
Okay, did it succeed, or was it painful?

B Blake Smith 09:45  
No, I think he was. He was always... I don't recall it ever being painful. Another thing that he had me do though, was I had -- I put a rubber band around my wrist. And every time I had a thought I was supposed to pop myself with the rubber band. And there were a few days where I got red and that was, and that hurt. But I was following his instructions, but I was self administering. So I couldn't say that he was overly administering, it was me that was overly administering -- under his instructions, of course, so...

I Interviewer 10:18  
So you were hurt more from the rubber band than from the --

B Blake Smith 10:22  
Yeah, yeah,

I Interviewer 10:23  
cuz when you hear of, you know, a bare wire attached to your calf, it sounds very extreme.

B Blake Smith 10:31  
Well, my wife uses what they call a TENS unit, where they use electrical stimulation to take, to get rid of pain in muscles. And I am currently dealing with a shoulder injury. And she put the - so I decided to use her TENS unit and she put it on me. And and then she got messing with it, trying to get it right. And I can tell you that the shock administered by that TENS unit far exceeded anything that I ever experienced as a result of the aversion therapy. I was like, hurting -- "turn that off!" So that hurt. Like that was a, "Turn that off. What are you trying to do, kill me?" No, I did not remember experiencing anything that was painful as a part of the electrical shock in the, in the aversion therapy. But it was uncomfortable. Like he said it would be, and that was the purpose of it.

I Interviewer 11:32  
Right, not to torture you. But...

B

Blake Smith 11:35

It wasn't torture, but it was, um... And he and he would ask me, you know, "How does that feel?" And, "Is that okay?" and I'd go, "Yeah, that's okay." So he never shocked me more than I allowed him to shock me, certainly.

I

Interviewer 11:50

Uh-huh.

B

Blake Smith 11:51

And, and I'm not into pain. So you know, I, I took the approach that, you know, it was meant to be uncomfortable, but I wasn't going to you know, I wasn't going to allow myself to be tortured. I wouldn't say anything about it was torture.

I

Interviewer 12:09

So, besides the bare wire to your calf, can you explain more how the process went?

B

Blake Smith 12:17

Well, the first part of the process is, I wish, I was -- he gave me a series of he gave me some slides, that were porno pictures. So there was a stack of slides that were naked man, there was a stack of slides that were naked women. And so then I had to pick the eight that I, the eight men that I found the most attractive, and the eight women that I found the most attractive. And then I was supposed to rank order them from the most attractive to the least attractive. And so the goal was, they would start with -- and so what they would do is, what he was going to do was he was going to start with showing me pictures of the most attractive man and the least attractive woman, back and forth. And I suppose to fantasize about this, about the woman and being with her and all that. And then when he showed me the picture of the least attractive of the men, it was, then at that was that time that the shock was administered, to create the aversion: and it's based upon Pavlov -- Pavlovian conditioning, is what it was, was based upon. So they, that was how it went. And then I would, he would show me, so then as I was, as as the, that experience went on, they moved me down the line of, to, from, to the least attractive, or to the most attractive of the men and the least attractive of the women. So that I, so that I would get to the point where I was finding the men, less and less attractive, or this very attractive man that I saw at the beginning would be, would have taken on much less attraction as part of the process.

I

Interviewer 14:15

So did that work? Or?

**B** Blake Smith 14:18  
No.

**I** Interviewer 14:20  
Had you seen pornographic pictures before this?

**B** Blake Smith 14:24  
There were -- I saw female porn as part of the sexual abuse when I was a child, the sexual abuser used female porn -- Playboy magazines, you know, to get everybody, to get everybody in the mood. So -- so I had seen female porn, but I had never seen male porn. I've seen -- I'd actually seen couples' porn. Some people I worked with, thought that I was pure as the driven snow and it was bothering them. So one day they brought some porn magazines that had both men and women. And so I, I had seen couples porn with men and women and I had seen naked women, but I had never just had the naked men in a gay situation, as in the pron, prior to this experience.

**I** Interviewer 15:22  
What was the effect of the aversion therapy?

**B** Blake Smith 15:27  
Any positive effect was temporary, very temporary. The long term effect is that I have I have porno pictures permanently embedded in my mind that I can think about when I go to the temple, and when I'm ready to take the sacrament and that kind of thing. It's amazing that these pictures I saw -- and this would have been 1973, I can still remember them. So. And another effect was that when I went through a difficult period, and I didn't feel that I had anywhere to turn, I decided to use the rubber band, and go to the to go to a porn shop, and look at the gay porn and pop myself with a rubber band. Well, that created having it not even going on in a controlled situation. I ended up having a brief period where I had, was having difficulty with pornography. It didn't last very long. And pornography was never a major issue for me. But I think that it was, so I think that's one of the effects is the permanent, permanently embedded in my mind pornographic images, and at a point of desperation, and it was desperation, returning to that and putting myself at serious risk of big problems -- thankfully, it didn't happen -- in an effort to self treat. So --

**I** Interviewer 17:01  
During this time that he's monitoring you, he -- I'm sure he wanted to check up to see the effects of diversion therapy, right?



B Blake Smith 17:11  
Uh-huh.

I Interviewer 17:12  
So one of the accusations is that they say that people administering aversion therapy would pressure their clients to give positive results, just as a way to get out of aversion therapy, and intimidated they would force them to be in aversion therapy until they said that things were... did you feel pressure from the therapist to make up results that weren't there?

B Blake Smith 17:40  
No, not that I recall.

I Interviewer 17:42  
OK.

B Blake Smith 17:43  
But I think that he was so kind to me, and he was so gentle, and he was so, so accepting, there was no pressure: but I just kind of wanted to be successful. Because he was, it was genuine, he was -- there was no pressure that I recall. And I'm pretty good at telling when I'm being pressured. Even then, it was just, he just genuinely wanted me to be successful. So that's how I feel.

I Interviewer 18:17  
So how did the therapy end? What caused it to end?

B Blake Smith 18:21  
Well, the semester ended.

I Interviewer 18:23  
Oh so it was just the end of the semester, moved on, type thing.

B Blake Smith 18:26

**B** Blake Smith 18:26

And I was it was I was it was winding down and I'd gone through all of the...you know, and I was feeling comfortable with myself, more so than when I walked through the door, probably more so than I ever had in my life. Just comfortable with myself as a person, you know, it really didn't do anything to diminish the craving or the desires or the attractions. So...

**I** Interviewer 18:52

Feeling good with yourself as a person is definitely a major change. What do you attribute that to?

**B** Blake Smith 18:59

The acceptance that he showed me. I didn't -- prior to walking through that door, I believe that no human being would ever be able to accept me for who I was, what I was -- and somebody did.

**I** Interviewer 19:10

Awesome. Another issue that's frequently brought up when discussing aversion therapy, is they -- many people say that the Church is the one that institutes it and and pushed it on people. And you said he did, he gave you a priesthood blessing. So I'm assuming he was LDS?

**B** Blake Smith 19:33

Yes.

**I** Interviewer 19:34

What part do you think that the fact that he was Mormon played in it?

**B** Blake Smith 19:42

I don't know how much. I know that, that they know that Latter-day Saint people want to help people with this issue so that they don't go start acting out. And that kind of thing. So I'm not sure that was a factor. But it was something that was done all over the United States. This is not something that was only done by the Church. It's not something that was was, you know, the brethren were pushing -- other than they probably knew about it. They were probably listening. But really, I'm speculating here so I'm gonna back off. The reality is, this was something that was done in universities and treatment centers all over the United States during that time, and it was a common practice in the day, and blaming the Church for it is -- I just think that's ludicrous. I'm sorry. It makes for a ludicrous discussion.

I Interviewer 20:40

During an interview on Ilds.org, Elder Oaks was asked about the therapies related to SSA. And in his response, he said that, "The aversive therapies that have been used in connection with same sex attraction have contained some serious abuses that have been recognized over time within the professions. While we have no position about what the medical doctors do (except in very rare cases -- abortion would be such an example), we are conscious that there are abuses and we don't accept responsibility for those abuses. Even though they are addressed at helping people we would like to see helped, we can't endorse every kind of technique that's been used." Now, many critics of the church look at Elder Oak's statement and think that the church should take responsibility for the damage caused by aversion therapy. How would you respond to those critics?

B Blake Smith 21:36

Well, I wonder what what actual damage has been done? Okay. When I hear people complaining about aversion therapy, or about and aversion therapy, as soon as somebody talks about, about therapy to help someone change, they always fall back to aversion therapy. And then they go on and on about, you know, all the side effects and how destructive it is. And, and, and the potential for suicide. And, you know, quite frankly, from my perspective, they're talking about my experience with antidepressants. I've never had a positive effect from antidepressants. I have never, ever, ever had a, a anything but a side effect. I've experienced some of the side effects I've gotten from antidepressants were so unbelievably, like, I went, one antidepressant I was on have so many I had, I had migraines every day that I took one, migraines that were so bad that I couldn't function or think, or anything. And I took, I took them for four days, I had four unbelievably bad migraines. So I had far more negative effects, from my experience with antidepressants than I did with with my aversion therapy. So I think that I was able to deal with my, with my depression, by using cognitive behavioral therapy. And so I'm a big advocate of cognitive behavioral therapy, because it works very well for me, but antidepressants work for other people. So -- so, I don't think that I have any business saying we should ban antidepressants or that somebody -- you know, the doctors that gave me antidepressants -- should somehow be accountable for my side effects. It makes no sense to me. And the church leaders didn't dream up the aversion therapy, all they did was -- people at BYU used therapy that was used all over the United States. And, I mean, now let's talk about some real serious things that the field of psychiatry has done. All the people that got lobotomies back in the 30s, and the 40s. And maybe even the 50s still. You know, so my experience with aversion therapy was not positive. But I don't think that any, I don't feel like I was abused. I don't feel like I was attacked. I don't feel like I was pressured. And I don't think anybody is accountable or responsible for that. I think somebody did, they tried something and it didn't work. Doctors do that all the time. They did it with my antidepressants. I must have tried six or seven different, different types. None of them ever did any good for me. So, so who should I make accountable for my antidepressant bad experience? At some point, we get on with our lives and find something that works and get on with it.

I Interviewer 24:45

Which is what you did.

B

Blake Smith 24:47

That's exactly what I did.

I

Interviewer 24:49

So I guess we're ready to move on to the next section. What were some of these other things that worked? What were some other things you've tried, and then we'll talk about what worked and what didn't.

B

Blake Smith 25:01

Well, I had a therapist that used systematic desensitization. And that didn't work. Actually, I had a female therapist at BYU in 1980. Probably starting in about 1979. Most wonderful lady, Dr. Maxine Murdock, she just was, she just was a funny lady. And she was fun to be around. And essentially what she did was she had me read books like, *The Sensuous Man*, and she had me read sex, essentially, sex manuals; and my roommates just didn't understand why I was reading sex manuals, when I was at BYU -- they were giving me a hard time. But so I read the sex manuals about how to have good sex with women. And we talked about them, so I was essentially taught about sex with women, by a female clinical psychologist, she had a PhD in Clinical Psychology. Absolutely delightful lady. And, you know, at some point, I kind of thought, Well, I can do this! And so, you know, it was along that time that I met my first wife and, and the feelings kind of went down for a while and, and I was feeling pretty good about myself and so then I met my, my first wife, and, and the first time I kissed her, my thought was, wow, I can do this. And so, you know, wasn't long til we were engaged, and wasn't long after that that we were married. And, you know, the rest is history: about about five years, and I almost didn't have, I almost had no homosexual feelings for about the first three years of our marriage. It was a they were almost gone. And I think, well, I don't know why, other than maybe I was so busy having having sex with my wife that, that, you know, like newlyweds do that I really didn't have time and the energy to think about anything else. So then, after our first child was born, her libido dropped way off. And so we saw our sexual activity dropped way down. And so the homosexual feelings came back very strong and very powerfully. At which point, at about five years of marriage, I told her, how -- about about my, my attractions and then I went through a very difficult period, a couple of -- a near suicide. Then another period where I was just mostly numb, I didn't feel anything. I stayed with my wife, you know, we weren't happy and she wasn't happy, and I wasn't happy. And I was lonely, and I was just craving male contact, I was dreaming about it. It was it was a very difficult period in my life. And it took a few years, I was about ready to give up. When I -- the spirit started working on me and I open the Scriptures for the first time in years because pretty disgusted with the church and I was disgusted with myself. And I was, I was angry at God because He gave me this and I hadn't really done any scripture reading or anything. And so I opened my scriptures one day, the first time in a couple years, they just fell open to Alma: "Men and brethren of the church have you had this, have you had this mighty change in your heart, and you had his image placed upon your countenance." I knew that I hadn't. So I asked for it. I said a prayer and I asked for it. And from that moment on, I was different. I still had the cravings. I still had the dreams, but I just had a different view of them. It was like, it was like, the Lord was telling me "Okay, well, this is okay. You're okay. You're doing fine. You're good. That's all right." And I began a process of learning and sanctifying and, and it was a few years later that I kind of went through a period again, where I

got really tired because, yes, I was being faithful and yes, I was doing my part, but the cravings were just there and they wouldn't go away. And I was about ready to give up again. And then I got a new bishop. And like his third week, my bishop he walked up to me and he said, "You know, I need to talk -- tonight." And I said, okay. And so I walked into his office and he said, nothing. He just sat there and looked at me, and stared right through me. And so I looked at him, and I said, "You know, if you can't handle this conversation, there's no law says we have to finish it." He just kind of looked at me, like, what? And then said, Okay. And I just began telling him about my experience with the attractions and the cravings and everything I'd been through, I told him about my aversion therapy. And he said, "They did that at a church school, they were showing you pornography at a church school?" And I said, "Well, back then it was standard operating procedure in those days." And then he laughed. And then for the next two years, he gave me two to three hours a week. We just talked sometimes, sometimes we played racquetball. So he just became my friend. And he gave me love, just pure, unconditional love of Christ. And there were times when he just would take a minute and hold me just like you would a 10 year old that was not doing well. And, and over that period of time, the cravings went away, the feelings diminished. And, and I've been, it's been amazing. It's an amazing experience for me.

I

Interviewer 31:26

So, just to go back a little bit in the story, you talked about having not read in your scriptures for a long time, and you being depressed. And then you opened up and started reading and you prayed. And you said, you felt different. But I guess I'm not exactly clear how you felt different. Like, were you still depressed? How did it affect your depression?

B

Blake Smith 31:26

I was still depressed. I was less depressed. I still experienced depression. I still experienced significant ups and downs. But the way I've put it, as I went from being a mess to being the Lord's mess. I was still a mess. I still had all these problems. I still had all these challenges. But he was there. And he was with me. And I felt him. And there were times when I stumble again and he'd say, and I'd pray, and I could just feel the spirit saying, You're forgiven. I remember saying, having a prayer, saying, Heavenly Father, how many times are you going to forgive me? And it's a thought coming to me. Well, I expect you to do 70 times seven. You think I'm going to do less? And I mean, it was just he just took care of me. I can't describe it. It's one of those things that I just have to invite people to experience for themselves. But yes, I was still a mess, and I was still having a difficult time. And when I asked him why I have to go through this, sometimes I just felt peace temporarily. Sometimes I knew he was taking care of me so I couldn't walk away from what I was experiencing. I could no longer deny his love for me. I could no longer deny what he wanted me to overcome this and that he had a plan. And whatever that plan was, I didn't know what it was, but it was like I was just kind of every step I took in the dark seemed to give me a little more light, so it was just hard to describe it's great. I had similar experiences as well. It is an amazing thing, and I hope our listeners will be able to have experiences like that for themselves if they haven't already. I did want to talk to you a bit about your interactions with the Bishop. There's a lot of people who view because of the church's stance on the loft chastity. I think that because the churches against same sex relationships that has a very negative, condescending viewpoint for people who have desires. But that doesn't seem to be how you were describing your Bishop. Not that one. How was your Bishop

able to balance the teachings of the law of chastity with loving you and being your friend? Well, I wasn't acting on it, so I hadn't really violated the law of chastity, so there was nothing to balance. I had these cravings. I had resisted in them, and he was just there. And there were no resources at that time. There was no evergreen, there was no North Star. I think there may have been an exodus, but I didn't know about it. He bought these books that the Church put out for bishops on how to counsel with people. And it's volumes absolute volumes. It's like six, seven volumes and how to deal with financial problems and divorce. Imagine a problem a family can have. It was in that book, except for one. They didn't even mention the same sex attractions. There was nothing about it. And his description of it was it is conspicuously missing. And I had experiences with a few other bishops and a stake President that were very negative. That were I knew that they were disgusted by my very existence. I could tell. But that wasn't the case with this Bishop. He was so loving, so kind, so supportive. And he gave me all this. And eventually my elder Corn President became involved. And so he kind of took me under his wing a little bit. And there was another prominent man in our ward that we started doing things with. And so I was getting these male niecemet and this other man, I was sitting with some couples. My wife was there. We were sitting together in an ice cream shop, and this man starts running. He was a funny guy, and he could run his mouth better than anybody I know. So he starts running his mouth about if he was the Bishop and somebody came to him and they committed adultery, he'd say, oh, well, let's talk about it. But if somebody came to me and they were homosexual, I'd probably break a chair over their head. And I remember almost standing up and handing in the chair. But my wife grabbed my leg and looked at me like just to be saying, Shut up, don't say a word. And so I didn't. But about a few weeks later, I've been called to the Elders Corn presidency, and I was getting his home teaching report from him. And I invited him to my house. And he was a young man's President. And he had three young men in his young men's group. I knew for a fact we're dealing with this. So I shared my experience with him, and he became once again a very close friend. I haven't seen him for a while because he moved away. But if I were to run into him, we could still argue politics to this day and do it with just passion and love for each other. At the same time. In 1995, Elder Oaks gave a talk about same gender attraction. And one of the things that he said is all should understand that person and their family members struggling with the burden, same sex attraction or in special need of the love and encouragement. That is a clear responsibility of Church members who have signified by Covenant their willingness to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. How did you feel that the Bishop and the Elders Corn President did that with you by just through their love and acceptance and just helping me coming out. And I have such a deep appreciation for these people. They were kind. They were loving. They accepted me where I was. They listened to my crying and my whining. The Elders crime President was one of those people that could fix anything, and I can't fix anything he just helped me with. He showed me a lot of things on things that my father never showed me. He just was there. They were there and they loved me. I knew they did. And I think what they learned, I think what I learned from this experience, and I really believe this. And I've said this repeatedly, but I believe that the priesthood quorums of the Church are literally designed to help people with this challenge and to help them to overcome. And I believe that because that's my experience. And I've also had the experience where they're just hateful and ugly. And that makes the problem worse. And when Church leaders show contempt when they show contempt and hatred towards me. It made the problem worse. These people that showed me love the pure love of Christ and lifted me up. They're the reason that I am where I am today. Awesome. So you said that through your bishops working after some time that you're craving for men who went away. Yes. What do you attribute that? Well, I'm a big fan of Elizabeth Moberly, her book Homosexuality and New Christian Ethic, where she says that this challenge is a result of a defensive detachment from our own sex. And it's an unmet need. And then if you meet the need, it'll solve the problem. And that is my experience. I had my same sex, my same sex love needs meth, and it created

my positive outcome. Were you under therapy at this time? No. I had therapy because my marriage was struggling all the time. So there would be marriage and family therapy. But I wasn't getting therapy for my attractions. And the therapist I was going to didn't know anything about it. In fact, I had two of the therapists during that time come to me as a resource because they ended up having other clients that dealt with it, and they wanted I have a therapist coming to me for my help during that time. Wow. It shows you where you are at the coming to you. So let's go on talking about your first marriage. So you said that things were going bad. So what eventually happened? Well, we eventually divorced now. A lot of people have said that these types of marriages just don't have a hope of success. There's the statistics that of marriages where the partner does not know about the attractions before getting married, that 85% of them get divorced within five years after the marriage. In response to that, we are sometimes asked about whether marriage is a remedy for these Sellings that we have been talking about presenting face with the back. Apparently, some had believed to it be a remedy and that perhaps some Church leaders had even for the selling views or practices. To me, that means that we are not going to stone could not interview by Church leaders that marriage would fix everything. I was told that by one. Okay. One Bishop told me that if I got married, it would go away. But when I married her, I really had a temporary diminishing of the feelings and then such a powerful response to my first wife. And so at the time, I didn't tell her about it at the time, it was like, Well, what is there to tell? Because I was confident that it was gone, it would never come back. That was wrong. And I never acted on it. So I was there to tell. I mean, it'd be one thing if I had been out sleeping around, but I wasn't. But I also have considered that to be the biggest single mistake I ever made in my life was not telling her some of that is. And that's a selfish thing, because those of us who deal with this when we decide to get married, we need to have someone who loves us enough to help us with this and to accept this and to honor this as a part of who we are and those of us who are successful in living the gospel, doing what we're supposed to do, deserve to be respected for what we're accomplishing. So when we reach the point where we're comfortable with marriage for ourselves, we need to tell them not for the other person, for ourselves, to make sure that we're going to have someone who's going to love who we are and honor us for what we have accomplished. Amen I really enjoy that? My wife helps me out a lot. So Elder Oaks continued and said, on the other hand, first into half clients themselves in any transgression and their ability to deal with these feelings and put them in the background and feel a great attraction for dollar out or God and therefore desire marriage and have children enjoy the blessings and charity that's the situation where marriage would be appropriate. How do you know the difference?

I

Interviewer 31:26

So just to go back a little bit, in a story, you talked about having not read your scriptures for a long time, and you being depressed. And then you opened up and started reading. And you prayed, and and you said, you felt different. But I guess I'm not exactly clear how you felt different. Like, were you still depressed? Were you how, how was how did it affect your depression,

B

Blake Smith 31:55

I was still depressed. I went through... I was less depressed. I still experienced depression, I still experienced significant ups and downs. But the way I put it: I went from being a mess to being the Lord's mess. I still a mess. I still had all these problems, or at all these challenges, but he

was there, and he was with me, and I felt him. And there were times when I, you know, when I stumble again, and he'd say, I pray and I could just feel the spirits say, You're forgiven. And I remember saying, having a prayer saying, Heavenly Father, how many times he's going to forgive me. And that the thought coming to me, Well, I expect you to do 70 times seven, you think I'm gonna do less? And I mean, it was just -- he just took care of me. I just can't I can't describe it. I just -- it's one of those things that I just have to invite people to experience for themselves. But yes, I was still a mess. And I was still having a difficult time. Then, when I asked him why I have to go through this, sometimes I just felt peace temporarily. Sometimes. And just, it just felt I knew he was taking care of me. So I couldn't walk away from what I was experiencing, I could no longer deny His love for me, I could no longer deny that he wanted me to overcome this, and that he had a plan. And whatever that plan was, I didn't know what it was. But it was like, I was just kind of every step I took in the dark seemed to give me a little more light. So it was just -- that's hard to describe.

I Interviewer 33:40

It's great. I've had similar experiences as well, it is an amazing thing. And I hope our listeners will be able to have experiences like that for themselves, if they haven't already. I did want to talk to you a bit about your interactions with the bishop. There's a lot of people who view because of the Church's stance on the Law of Chastity, think that because the church's against same sex relationships, that has a very negative condescending viewpoint for people who have these types of desires. But that didn't seem to be what that didn't seem to be how you were describing your bishop.

B Blake Smith 34:29

Not that one.

I Interviewer 34:31

So do you what how did how was your bishop able to balance the teachings of the law of chastity with loving you and being your friend?

B Blake Smith 34:44

I don't know. I wasn't acting on it. So I hadn't, I hadn't really violated the law of chastity. So there was no there was nothing to balance. There was just, you know, I had these cravings, I had resisted them. And he was just he was just there. And there were there were no resources at the time. At that time. There was no Evergreen, there was no Northstar. There was no, I don't I think there may have been an Exodus that I didn't even know, I didn't know about it. And, and he, he bought these books that the church put out that, you know, for bishops on how to counsel with people. And it's volumes, absolutely volumes, it's like six, seven volumes, and how to how to deal with some financial problems and divorce. And every I think - I imagine a problem a family can have, it was in that book, except for one: they didn't even mention same sex attractions. It was there was nothing about it. It was -- and his description of that was, it is conspicuously missing. And I had had experiences with a few other bishops and stake



presidents that were very negative that were, I knew that they were disgusted by my very existence, I could tell. And it was, but that wasn't the case with this bishop, he was so loving, and so kind, so supporting. And he gave all he gave me all this and eventually, my Elders Quorum President became involved. And so he kind of kind of took me under his wing a little bit. I was -- there was another prominent man in our wards that, that we started doing things with and so I was getting these male needs met. And this, this other man, I was sitting sitting with some couples, my wife was there. And we were sitting together in an ice cream shop and this man starts running. And he was he was a funny guy, he could run his mouth better than anybody I know. So he starts running his mouth about, you know, if he was the bishop, and somebody came to him, and they committed adultery, he said, "Well, let's talk about it. But if somebody came to me, and they were homosexual, I'd probably break a chair over their head." And I remember almost standing up and handing him the chair. But my wife grabbed my leg and looked at me, like, you know, to be saying, "shut up, don't say a word." And so I didn't. But about a few weeks later, I was I'd been called to the elders quorum presidency, and I was getting his home teaching report from him. And I invited him to my house. And I said, and he was also he was the young men's president. And he had three young men, in the young men's group that I knew for a fact were dealing with this. So I shared my experience with him. And he became, once again a very close friend. And we know, we can speak it's I haven't seen him for a while because he moved away. But if I were to run into him, we could still argue politics to this day and do it with just passion and love for each other, the same time.

I

Interviewer 38:06

In 1995, Elder Oaks gave a talk about same gender attraction. And one of the things that he said, is "All should understand that person's and their family members struggling with the burden of same sex attraction, are in special need of the love and encouragement that is a clear responsibility of church members who have signified by covenant, their willingness to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." How do you feel that the bishop and the elders quorum President did that with you?

B

Blake Smith 38:45

Just by -- just in love and acceptance, and just helping me coming out and, you know, just it was... I have such a deep appreciation for these people. They were, they were kind, they were loving, they accepted me where I was, they listened to my crying and my whining. You know, they, the Elder's Quorum president was one of those people that could fix anything. And I can't fix anything. He's, he just helped me with. He showed me a lot of things, you know, things that my father never showed me. He just was there. They were there. And, and they, and they loved me. I knew they did. So and, and I think what they learned, what I, Excuse me, I think what I learned from this experience, and I really believe this, and I've said this repeatedly. But I believe that the quorums the priesthood quorums of the church are literally designed to help people with this challenge, and to help them to, to overcome and to... And, and I believe that because that's my experience. And I've also had the experience where, you know, they're just hateful and ugly, and that makes the problem worse. And when when church leaders show contempt and, and hatred towards -- when they show contempt and hatred towards me, it made the problem worse. These people that showed me love, the pure love of Christ, and lifted me up there, they're the reason that I am where I am today.

I Interviewer 40:38

So you said that to your bishop's working after some time, that your craving for men went away?

B Blake Smith 40:48

Yes.

I Interviewer 40:49

To what do you attribute that?

B Blake Smith 40:51

Well, I'm a big fan of Elizabeth Moberly. Her her book, Homosexuality, a new Christian Ethic, where she says that this challenge is a result of a defensive detachment from our own sex. And that it's an unmet need. And that if you meet the need, it'll solve the problem. And that is my experience. I had my same sex, my same sex love needs met. And it helped -- it created my positive outcome.

I Interviewer 41:27

Were you under therapy at this time?

B Blake Smith 41:31

No, I had I had therapy like, cuz my marriage was struggling all the time. So there would be there would be Marriage and Family Therapy. But I wasn't getting therapy for my interactions. And the therapists I was going to didn't know anything about it. In fact, I had two of the therapists during that time come to me as a resource. Because they ended up having other clients that dealt with it and they wanted... I had a therapist coming to me for my help. During that time.

I Interviewer 42:03

Oh. It shows you where you're at. The therapists were coming to you. So let's go on talking about your first marriage. So you said that things were going bad. So what eventually happened?

B Blake Smith 42:22

Well, we eventually divorced.

I

Interviewer 42:24

Right. Now, a lot of people have said that these types of marriages just don't have a hope of success. There's the statistics that of marriages where the partner does not know about the attractions before getting married, that 85% of them get divorced within five years after the marriage. In response to that, Elder Oaks said, "We are sometimes asked about whether marriage is a remedy for these feelings that we've been talking about. President Hinckley faced with the fact that apparently some had believed it to be a remedy and that perhaps some church leaders that even counseled marriage, as the remedy for these feelings made this statement: 'marriage should not be viewed as a therapeutic step to solve problems such as homosexual inclinations, or practices.' To me, that means that we are not going to stand still to put at risk daughters of God who would enter into such marriage, under false pretenses or under a cloud unknown to them. Persons who have this kind of challenge that they cannot control could not enter marriage in good faith." Were you encouraged by-- were you told that, by church leaders that marriage would fix everything?

B

Blake Smith 43:41

I was told that by one.

I

Interviewer 43:42

Okay.

B

Blake Smith 43:43

I was I was told by, one bishop told me that if I got married, it would go away. And that, you know, when I married her, I really had had a temporary diminishing of the feelings. And so I, and then I'm in such a powerful response to my first wife. And so at the time, I didn't tell her about it. At the time, it was like, Well, what is there to tell? Because I was confident that it was done, it would never come back. That was wrong. And I'd never acted on it. So it was there to tell. I mean, it'd be one thing if I had been, you know, slipping around, but I wasn't so. So that was, but I also have considered that to be the biggest single mistake I ever made in my life was not telling her. And some of that is, you know, and that's a selfish thing. Because those of us who deal with this when we decide to get married, we need to have someone who loves us enough to help us with this and to accept this and to honor this as a part of who we are. And, and those of us who are successful and living the gospel, doing what we're supposed to do deserve to be respected for what we're accomplishing. So when we reach the point where we're comfortable with marriage, for ourselves, we need to tell them --not, not for the other person, for ourselves to make sure that we're going to have someone who's going to love who we are, and honor us for what we have accomplished.

I

Interviewer 45:20

Amen. I really enjoyed that, my wife helps me out a lot. So Elder Oaks continued and said, "On the other hand person to have cleansed themselves of any transgression, and have shown their ability to deal with these feelings or inclinations, and put them in the background and feel a great attraction for a daughter of God and therefore, desire to enter a marriage and have children, and enjoy the blessings of eternity, that's a situation where marriage would be appropriate." How do you know the difference?

B

Blake Smith 45:54

Well, I think that I was there: as I said, my feelings had gone way down. And I met a woman that just flat turned my head. Okay. So I think I was there, with that criteria. My problem, my biggest problem was at the time, neither of us were really committed to living the gospel. So I kind of drifted away from -- when I got home from my mission, and was studying psychology and believing what I heard. And so religion was becoming less and less important to me. And, and I was critical of the Brethren, and I was critical of the church during that time. And so when I married her, she was, to some degree the same way. And so when I began my transformation, it was -- that changed the rules of the marriage. And that was an issue. And once I told her, I also told her about being sexually abused at the same time. And the issue became a scapegoat for every problem. And, and there were probably some problems that created but it didn't create every problem. And I was not a perfect husband, and she was not a perfect wife. And eventually, she decided she wanted to move on. And that was difficult for me at first. But that not anymore. It's not, I don't, I don't feel... I've moved on, she wanted to move on. And she did. And it took me a while, but, so did I.

I

Interviewer 47:47

Well, good for you. Um, so one of the things I thought was interesting, is a lot of critics do say that. People with SSA get married just because the church pressures them, and they wanted to please the church. But you said you weren't even active at all, at that point. To what degree did that pressure play into your decision to get married?

B

Blake Smith 48:13

Well, I was at BYU, and I was 24 and a half. We all know what Brigham Young said. Or is supposed to have said. My mother was sending me letters, telling me that her friend Joyce had all these grandchildren and I wasn't producing and she wanted me to start producing. And so you know, when you're at Brigham Young University, there's a tremendous amount of pressure to get married. And so I think there was some, I think, there was some pressure, that was a factor. And I wasn't completely inactive. I was just, I would say, I was less active. And I was cynical, and I was bitter. And there were issues that I was critical of the church on, but I mean, I would go to sacrament meeting once a month, or maybe twice if I got out of bed in time. I wasn't completely gone. But I was still at BYU. And there was still all the pressure.

I

Interviewer 49:08

So when you had come out to your wife the first time, how much did she understand about the issues surrounding same sex attraction?

B Blake Smith 49:19  
Probably nothing.

I Interviewer 49:20  
Did that play a factor?

B Blake Smith 49:23  
Probably.

I Interviewer 49:25  
Okay.

B Blake Smith 49:25  
And her family was pretty homophobic, too -- some of her family members were pretty homophobic. So that was a factor too.

I Interviewer 49:35  
When you say 'homophobic' that that means a lot of things to different people. How do you define homophobic?

B Blake Smith 49:43  
Gay bashing a family dinners.

I Interviewer 49:46  
That would be homophobic.

B Blake Smith 49:50  
And I don't want to portray it as all of them. Certainly it wasn't all of them, but there were some that were. Many of the family members were military.

I Interviewer 50:02

And at that time, you couldn't be openly gay in the military. So you had this spiritual awakening. You got back into church, but then you went through this divorce. How did that affect where you're at?

B Blake Smith 50:19

Well, the interesting thing is that I mean, it's, it ripped me apart. It ripped me from one side of my body to the other, it was the most painful thing I have ever experienced. I, I can't imagine. But the interesting thing is that I didn't experience a significant increase in the attractions during that time, which I was I was afraid I would. My temptations didn't increase -- maybe a tiny bit. And I may have had one or two bad days. I was just, I was ripped apart during that time. So I learned and I, I lost my job. And then I lost this. I mean, I lost my home. I mean, it was just, I pretty much learned during that time that the only thing I had that no one could take from me was my faith in Jesus Christ. And it was therefore the thing that deserves the most energy on my part. And I gave it that. And it was, it was just, it was such a difficult time. But I felt the spirit with me so much during that time, and, you know, scriptures jumping out at me. So... and of course, you know, that word was spread that I was that I'm gay, and all over pretty much all over the state from all over town. And I was on the receiving end of a lot of mistreatment during that time. But, you know, the Lord just took care of me probably more during that time than ever before or since. And I just look back on it with, with Yeah, I wouldn't, I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy. But it's, I was blessed so much during that time, that I would be willing to do that again, if necessary. Okay, there I put it out there, Lord, you could just ignore that. Can I bring it back now? Yeah, it was -- it was a very difficult time, but I was very blessed.

I Interviewer 52:38

So you, you said that there's, you received some negative reactions from people who, when they found out that you had same sex attraction, and you were divorced? There that brings up a lot of stereotypes about that. How can members be more sensitive to people who are divorced with SSA?

B Blake Smith 53:07

They need to love more and judge less. That isn't their place to judge me any more than it's my turn to judge them for their weaknesses. So, I have a weakness, that's just the same as theirs - it's is a weakness. And so and they have theirs too. So, who are they to judge me? And who am I to judge them? And it's my job to love them, and it's their job to love me.

I Interviewer 53:35

And you're no longer a single divorced man. Um, can you explain some of the things that led up to your second marriage and how it differed from your first marriage?

**B****Blake Smith 53:47**

Well, I wasn't looking at all. I didn't think I would ever get married again. I was perfectly content being single. In fact, I was much happier being single than I'd been married. And I could go home at night and I can read my scriptures and peace and quiet and listen to music. I was getting really selfish too, just by the way, but I had I had a very active social life. I had lots of friends and I was active in the community and I met this woman through work who... she was so impressive. I just I enjoyed watching the way she did things I enjoyed her way of dealing with employees and her ...she was she just handled things really well. And I didn't so I kind of liked watching how she operated and to some degree wanted to emulate her, and she was really kind to me and and worked hard at working with me and I was going through a divorce and I was I probably wasn't easy to work with during those times, as easy maybe as I am now. And so we were work colleagues, and then we kind of became friends and, and she started -- she one day shared something about her husband who was essentially abusing the children. And I told her that she should get a divorce because she shouldn't have him around abusing her children. So we had those kinds of conversations. And then she left and went to work somewhere else. And then one day, she came back to come through our office because she had work reasons for being there. And she told me that her husband had filed for divorce. And I essentially told her that he was an idiot. And you know that she could do better than him anyway. And she didn't need to even think, think twice about about the fact that he had done that and purge yourself of him. And of course, I had no interest in her because I wasn't going to get married again. And I certainly was only interested in marrying a member of the church. And she wasn't. So she was going through a divorce, we just kind of started hanging out as friends. And we'd go to the movies together or go out to dinner, and we'd just kind of talk and hang out. And it was it was comfortable and easy and she was, you know... And one day I gave her my list of things that I had to have in a wife if I were to get married again. I told her, you know you're the epitome of number two. But number one is that you have to be a faithful, Christ loving temple attending member of the church. And since she wasn't a member of the church, I said, you know, that you're the epitome of number two, you're not number one. And number one is number one, for a reason. And it wasn't long after that, that she had some spiritual experiences that changed her life. And we started dating, and after a couple years of dating, and people were pressuring me to get married to her and I did not succumb to the pressure. The Spirit let me know that I was to marry her. And I loved her. And I think very highly, and I always thought very highly of her. So she started with a work colleague and became a friend. And then we started dating, and now we're married. And I have a marriage that is so easy, so comfortable, that when people talk about how difficult marriage is, they'll say, Well, marriage is really difficult. And I just say only if you choose to make it that way. So you can have one like my first marriage, that was difficult, because we made it that way. Or we can have one, like my second marriage that is not difficult at all because we choose to make it that way.

**I****Interviewer 58:00**

How long have you been married?

**B****Blake Smith 58:02**

Seven, seven and a half years.

I Interviewer 58:05

Right? And how much has SSA played into the marriage?

B Blake Smith 58:11

Almost none, I told her about it. We argue-- that's one of the things we argue about, when I told her I say that I told her before we even started dating, while we were still friends. And she says that I waited until after we started dating so -- but it was early on in the dating, she knew what she was getting herself into with me close to right off the bat. And she's very supportive. She's always been supportive of me and I've been supportive of her and there's never been an issue with it.

I Interviewer 58:46

There are many spouses who have just learned about their spouses' SSA, and they would like to be probably more in second group than the first group. What are some things that you think that they could do to be that support for their husband or wife who has same sex attraction?

B Blake Smith 59:12

Well, first of all, a big problem in your marriage isn't the results of your spouse's SSA. Okay, ladies, your husband is not controlling the remote because he has SSA. He's not moody because he has SSA: straight men are moody. You know, so just acknowledge that every marriage is going to have some challenges so you can choose to minimize them. But it takes both parties to minimize them. I think that's first and foremost I think that you need to, to live the Gospel together and be committed to living the gospel together. And I think that that's important, and following the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ and read the scriptures together and pray together and do all the things the scriptures say. Honor your temple covenants, and forgive and be patient. But now those are things that every marriage has to have. So there may be some unique challenges that we have in our lives. But I don't have I don't know that they're as big a deal, I think they're only as big a deal as we make them. I think that if you're if a spouse is dealing with the attractions, they probably have some unique needs that other men don't have, they probably need a little more guy time. So that they can meet their same sex love needs -- get their same sex love needs met, so they need that time. And the spouse is going to be a little patient with that. I don't know, some of the other guys that don't deal with this play basketball at the church every Tuesday night. With the other with the other basketball types. So even that's not unusual.

I Interviewer 1:00:58

Okay, moving on to about the different support groups. What support groups have you been involved in?



**B****Blake Smith 1:01:05**

Well, because of where I live there almost none. I started by going to a, there was a when I, when I first wanted to come back to the church, when I talked about that period where I just, it was after I got married, and I've gone through the suicidal time. And I found a homosexual anonymous chapter that was held as Angelical church and I went there for a couple months. But then when I found that I was Mormon, they essentially told me that if I was going to be there that they weren't, and it was their church. So I left and didn't go back. But I found, you know, they, they took the 12 step program, and they modified it to 13 steps to deal with, with people that have homosexual feelings and tendencies or whatever. And I took their literature and I worked the steps. And I think that was helpful. It gave me strength and it grounded me. And that was one that was a good thing that happened during that time. But as far as them, they didn't really offer much support. It was there literature, that offered me the support. And then there weren't any, so I didn't have any support groups until after I got divorced. Somebody -- I knew that Evergreen existed that it was in Utah, and I was in California. And so there was no reason to really discuss it. And I knew there was never an Evergreen group anywhere close to me, where I lived in the middle of the Central Valley. So um, you know, just wasn't there. So I started attending Evergreen conferences about 10 years ago. And when, after I got married to my current wife, she attends with me and she likes him. And I continue going back because I love the people. And then when Northstar came along, it was an -- it's an online support group. So I can do that. Because I can talk to people from all over the United States. And I've actually because of things I've written on, or gotten telephone calls from people on the East Coast, or even as far away as Portugal, you know, because people that needed support. So there's some real advantages to to the internet and to the online support that we can give each other for people like me, who live 10 hours away from an Evergreen meeting. There is a there's a meeting that I attend in Los Angeles, that is an nondenominational/interdenominational thing. There's Catholics, and there's evangelicals, and there's Seventh Day Adventists and assume some Jewish people show up there. And some Latter-day Saints go to this meeting. And it's about 25 people on a busy day, that go to this support group. And then they do some good things. And so it's about two and a half hours away, and get down there about five times. I don't make it six times a year, but four or five times a year, I get down there and it's good to be around them when I go, I like the people. People who live closer can seem to be able to get more support out of it. I find that I get more support from the friends that I have here. In my community here I have a very helpful and supportive State President and I have -- my bishop learned about -- I wasn't going to talk to my current Bishop about it just because I didn't want to talk about it anymore. And then Prop 8 came around and elders quorum deteriorated in the gay bashing. So I went and told my bishop what I was facing and told him that I didn't want to have to sit in priesthood meeting and listen to gay bashing. So he learned that I have about what I deal with and he's very supportive. He doesn't understand it. It's outside of his comfort zone, but I just really honor him for trying, he tries really hard. And I really love him for that. So ...

**I****Interviewer 1:05:09**

Was anything results with the gay bashing in the priesthood quorum?

**B****Blake Smith 1:05:13**

Yeah. not me in primarv.

...really put me in primary.

I Interviewer 1:05:19  
That works.

B Blake Smith 1:05:20  
So I don't have to deal with it. I, you know, I just enjoyed their children. So it was awesome.

I Interviewer 1:05:28  
I'm sure they would have loved to know that you were teaching their children.

B Blake Smith 1:05:33  
Two and a half years. And I was after the first year, the primary President moved me from a different class to the one that her son was in. And then they changed primary presidents, for the next year. And she moved me back so that I would be in the class that her son was in. So I think they liked my teaching.

I Interviewer 1:05:54  
Good.

B Blake Smith 1:05:57  
Oh, and the I'm pretty confident, although I've never discussed it with her. I'm pretty confident that the the second Relief Society President knew about my attractions in my history, and didn't care.

I Interviewer 1:06:11  
That's really awesome. So there are there are people who who have talked about Evergreen and have worried that it makes a detrimental effect on people and on their mental health. Um, how would you respond to that?

B Blake Smith 1:06:31  
I would ask them what it is that Evergreen does that causes that? I love Evergreen. I love the people that are there. I love being around them. It's it's a positive place to be. It's an uplifting place to be. It's a pretty non judgmental place to be. There's politics there, that irritates me.

But there's politics everywhere. No, it's just I would probably want to talk to them and get their perspective on exactly what it is that Evergreen is doing that creates that because I'm not seeing, I'm not seeing it. So I know that there are people that have gone to Evergreen for a while and then have, you know, gone and gone into the lifestyle and, you know, everything doesn't work for everybody. Antidepressants didn't work for me. Let's go back to that. Okay. I needed cognitive behavioral therapy did wonders for me. I don't think I've been depressed since I went through the book on that, and all I did was go through a book, a feel good Handbook by Dr. By David Burns, MD. That's what I did. I haven't had a serious depression since. So that's all I needed. So everything doesn't work for everybody.

I Interviewer 1:07:58

Right? You just got to find what you did. Because the church doesn't officially sponsor Evergreen it's just a resource out there for people.

B Blake Smith 1:08:11

And they and the church definitely doesn't officially sponsor Northstar. But I like my involvement in it and we're on our own and we're doing the best we can and sometimes it's good and sometimes we stumble, but you know, we're just gonna keep plugging along.

I Interviewer 1:08:29

Is there anything else you'd like to talk about? Or say?

B Blake Smith 1:08:33

I think I've said everything.

I Interviewer 1:08:36

But I wanted to thank you for being on our segment and wishing you the best of luck.

B Blake Smith 1:08:43

Well, thank you.

S Steve Densley 1:08:44

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