

JESUS WINS: FAITH IN AMBIGUITY

An Introduction

Ever since I was a small child, I have had a strong aversion to mirrors. Every time I look in a mirror the person looking back seems like a stranger. That can't be me, can it? The person in the mirror feels wrong—a deep, jarring, painful kind of wrong, as if the mirror were a window into some alternate world. Every morning as I'm getting ready for the day I try so hard to avoid looking in the mirror, but inevitably I look anyway. I've been trying to avoid looking in the mirror for years now. As a young child I remember staring into the mirror and hoping somehow I would see something different. I just wanted the image in the mirror to match what I felt like in my head.

Who am I? That's not a question I can answer very easily. I can give simple answers: my name is Kyle Merkley, I am twenty-eight years old, I'm a graduate student at BYU in Classics, I'm a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and I am transgender—for some reason the gender of my brain and of my body don't seem to match. But that doesn't really tell you much about me. Who am I? If I'm being honest I would answer that sometimes I don't know... I'm still trying to figure out what it means to be a transgender Mormon. I don't always know how to deal with the pain of having gender dysphoria, and I constantly wonder how my identity as transgender fits with my identity as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I wish it were easy to explain what it was like to experience gender dysphoria. I've tried to explain gender dysphoria dozens of times, but it's not something that can really be explained—just lived. It's a feeling of wrongness that occurs when the gender of your mind and the gender of your body don't seem to match. But how do you explain feeling “wrong”? To me, gender dysphoria feels like having a hole in my heart: it feels like being incomplete. It feels like always being lost in the dark. If I were to write a dictionary, the word “wrong” would be defined as feelings of gender dysphoria. It's a feeling that is hard to externalize, but it incessantly gnaws at you internally. Gender dysphoria *is* pain.

This is my journey. I wish I could say it was a journey entirely of redemption and faith, and my story does have a lot of each. But my journey is also filled with forays into dark, sad, and desolate places. It's filled with mistakes I'm not proud of, and it's filled with feelings of confusion. This journey is also full of hope; hope I can find a way to reconcile the gospel of Jesus Christ with gender identity incongruence. I'm still traveling on this journey, and that hope is a powerful motivator to keep moving forward. While I still don't have all the answers, I hope they are there, and that hope keeps me searching.

Childhood

I first realized something about me was different when I was ten or eleven. Suddenly the feeling struck me that I should have been born a girl. The mere thought of being a girl just felt so right, like not being a girl was the one thing preventing my life from being complete. I didn't understand these feelings, didn't know where they came from, and certainly couldn't explain them to my parents.

My favorite part of the day soon became falling asleep. As I fell asleep I would imagine I were a girl, and when I imagined everything felt better. At the same time, I started really noticing all the gendered differences between men and women. I wondered why women always got the pretty clothes and was often envious. I just wanted to be pretty too. I wanted to be just like all the other girls at school and around my neighborhood, but I wasn't like them and couldn't be for some reason I didn't understand.

This led to me sneaking into my mother's room and finding clothes that would help me be pretty. Soon I was waking up in the middle of the night and changing into whatever I could "borrow" from my mother's room. I would change and quietly prance around the house. I loved the way the skirts swirled around my legs as I danced. All I did was imagine life were different and that I had been born a girl.

Of course it didn't take long for my mother to catch me. At the time I could barely vocalize my feelings. How could I explain I felt like I should be a girl? All I wanted to do was feel pretty for just a moment. I could tell my mother was upset and confused, and I didn't ever want her to feel like that. Clearly imagining I was a girl was something wrong, so I must be wrong. I must be broken. I didn't want to feel this way, so I started to try and hide it. I just wanted to be normal. But imagining I was a girl felt so right; it was the only time I was happy. So I started to live in my own little world, an imaginary place where I could be whatever I wanted. At the same time, I was so ashamed of myself. I hated wanting to pretend; hate turned to depression, and the only answer was to pretend more or to find activities that would successfully distract me from reality. I spent most of my teenage years using a variety of activities to self-medicate so I could stop thinking about who I was. Some of these activities weren't too harmful; for example, I became an avid reader consuming tens of thousands of pages of literature, I filled every moment of my time with extra-curricular activities, and music became a huge part of my life because when I played gender didn't matter—I was finally free to be myself through music. On the other hand, some of my coping mechanisms were pretty self-destructive.

Naturally, as much as I tried to hide my depression and my desire to be a girl, my parents knew something was going on. Unfortunately, I was too ashamed to ever really communicate or open up to them. Since I wasn't good at communicating, my parents really had no idea what to do. During this time I talked to several bishops, but I couldn't make anyone understand what I felt like. It was almost always assumed my interest in femininity and women's clothes stemmed from inappropriate sexual thoughts, but that explanation never felt right to me. I just felt like I should be a girl; it wasn't arousing to me, just natural, almost like breathing. Inevitably these conversations left me feeling entirely alone and misunderstood.

This loneliness and shame coupled with the desire to do the right thing led me to try and repress my feelings even further. I would determinedly resolve to not act or think about my desires to be a girl, and then inevitably after a couple days I would collapse in an emotionally exhausted heap just allowing the desires and fantasies to completely take over. Of course, this only increased the shame I was feeling. I knew Heavenly Father wouldn't give me a temptation above what I was able, so clearly I was just not strong enough. In seminary as a teenager we often talked about "Abrahamic" trials, and I thought these feelings were my trial to bear. I just wished I were actually strong enough to bear it.

In the midst of my suffering I found a great deal of hope in the atonement of Jesus Christ. I remember latching onto the words of Moroni 10:32 as I completed reading the Book of Mormon. “Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ...” I understood this scripture to mean that if I followed Christ well enough, he could make me perfect. Christ could take away this feeling of wrongness. I remember striving towards that goal with all my heart, just trying to follow Him well enough that he could make me whole. I spent countless hours on my knees praying, begging my Heavenly Father to take away these feelings and heal me. However, the feelings never went away, and for a long time I blamed myself for not being righteous enough.

These feelings of failure and shame culminated in me believing that not only were these feelings wrong, but because I was so powerless to prevent them, I myself must be wrong maybe even evil. I contemplated suicide many times. I remember one night standing in an empty basement holding a knife to my wrists trying to gather the courage to go through with it. But I never could. I was too afraid of the pain, afraid of what would happen to me if I woke up on the other side to an angry God, and afraid of the unknown. Afterwards I would feel like a coward for not being able to even kill myself properly.

The only place I could consistently feel joy was when I played my trumpet. Music was a place where gender didn't matter, my sorrows didn't matter, and I was free to express my feelings. When I played, I knew what my place in the world was and understood exactly what I was supposed to do. All I'd ever wanted was to understand my place in the world and have the freedom to act accordingly. Music was freedom.

Music became such a large part of my life that when I started college all I wanted to do was play. Music had provided me some degree of hope and purpose and kept me afloat in a world where I didn't even understand who I was. I was elated when I was accepted into the music program at BYU. I spent a couple years at BYU and then decided to go on a mission. When I made that decision, I was still struggling; I still felt like I was wrong. I was still ashamed of myself. I still hated myself. But I really wanted to do the right thing, and I had been told my entire life that the right thing was to go on a mission.

In 2006, I was called to serve in the California Anaheim mission. While serving a mission was really hard in some ways (I had to deal with constant depression, and living with all guys triggered my gender dysphoria), I found serving a mission also clearly defined a role for me. I didn't have to struggle with the question of who I was. I was told exactly who I was and how I was supposed to act every day. It was that sense of purpose which kept me going. I also saw how much good I was able to do while trying to be a good missionary. On my mission, I was truly converted to the gospel of Christ: I saw the power of the Book of Mormon, gained a testimony of Joseph Smith, and saw people change as gospel truths entered their lives. While I saw the transformative power of the gospel in others, I constantly wondered why I couldn't see that same power in my life. Why couldn't I be changed? Why couldn't these feelings of wrongness be taken away? Why did I feel like I should be a girl?

On my mission, I encountered another transgender individual for the first time. I remember my shock when I realized that the woman whom I was talking to hadn't been born a woman. All at once it struck me that there were other people in this world like me. I wasn't alone. There was a name for what I was: transgender. While talking to that same woman I also saw the deep chasm many transgender people feel separates them from God. She told me God couldn't love her anymore. I don't think I'll ever forget that; this woman's doubt still haunts me, because it echoes what I felt much of my life.

I wondered about that experience for the rest of my mission. What did it mean to be transgender? Was there a way I could get rid of these feelings of wrongness? What did it mean to be transgender and Mormon? I couldn't answer any of these questions while serving a mission, so I waited patiently until my mission was over.

Falling into Despair

As soon as I got home from my mission I was completely consumed with finding the answers to these questions. I spent hundreds of hours reading everything I could about being transgender. I read about transitioning gender and presenting as the gender you felt like you were. I read about surgeries and other options that would help people "pass" as their preferred gender. I read the conclusions of multiple medical studies about the relative success transitioning had at removing the dysphoria. Everywhere I turned it seemed like transition was the only viable answer. It was the only option there was any information on—it was presented as if I could either choose to transition, or I could expect to die lonely and miserable, probably of suicide. At the same time I was trying to figure out what it meant to be LDS and to be transgender. It was really hard to find anything on the topic at all. I found several threads on the forums at lds.net. But the general conclusion of those threads seemed to be that if you were transgender, you weren't welcome in the Church. I ran across several tragic stories of individuals who had transitioned who felt forced out of the Church, but I couldn't find a single positive experience. It seemed impossible to be a member of the Church and acknowledge and deal with gender dysphoria.

All of these stories just reinforced the fact that I was evil for having these feelings. I believed in the Church, I believed in my testimony, and my hope in the atonement of Christ was the only thing that had kept me going during some of my more difficult teenage years. But it seemed like I needed to choose one path or the other. Accept myself, transition and abandon the Church, or become strong enough to reject the feelings of dysphoria. So I tried to turn myself into iron. I tried harder than I ever had to push the feelings away. But no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't succeed. There's a problem with iron though, it snaps when put under too much pressure.

I snapped hard. I was a complete failure. I couldn't live with these feelings. I couldn't control these feelings. Why had God given me a challenge that was breaking me completely? Was there really even a God? I just couldn't do it. I lost all hope. For a while, I forgot how it felt to truly feel happy. I was miserable and I couldn't care about anything. I started skipping school. I spent hours each day dreaming about how to kill myself. I started cross dressing whenever I was alone using those brief moments and the feeling of rightness they gave me to give me enough hope to carry on one more day. I embraced anything that could help me ignore my self-loathing

and the pain. Pornography became a coping mechanism of choice. I could just ignore myself, focus on something else, and feel better.

Pornography creates an alternate world where only one thing matters. There are no complications and no problems. In this world, you can imagine or be almost anything you want. I used porn to imagine I was female. It allowed me to run away from who I was, imagine something different, and momentarily feel good afterwards. It was the perfect drug for me. Of course, I also felt worse afterwards and hated myself a little more each time. Every day I felt a little more bitter and felt my desire to live slip away a little further.

It seemed impossible to be LDS and transgender. I couldn't reject the feelings and I was tearing myself apart trying. Since I couldn't get rid of these feelings—I had been praying for that for years—and I couldn't ignore them, I wondered if the only thing left to do was embrace them. Maybe if I left the Church, left BYU, and transitioned, my life would become bearable. I couldn't imagine telling my parents about any of these feelings, so I wondered if it would be better if I just ran away; disappeared one day and began a totally new life. I began to research and put together a plan on how I was going to accomplish this goal. For several months the only thing that kept me from committing suicide was the thought that maybe I could find something that would make me feel better. Maybe, just maybe, transition was the answer.

I was too ashamed to talk to anyone I knew about my plans. I couldn't stand the thought of hurting anyone else by divulging my feelings, so I discussed details of the plan with strangers I met in forums online. Often these people didn't have my best interests at heart, and caused me further pain. Every day I dug myself a little deeper into despair. The changes necessary for transition were overwhelming; the costs (financial and emotional) were enormous. I wondered if I really could abandon my family, but at the same time, I wondered if it was better to abandon them since I felt like I was giving in to something evil. Everywhere I turned there was more darkness. Just like I didn't have the courage to commit suicide, I couldn't find the courage to commit myself to my plan. So I floundered. Every day felt like I was treading in quicksand. I remember pleading with my Heavenly Father asking him to throw me some life-line, asking him to show me which way he wanted me to go, asking for the smallest shred of hope.

A Glimpse of Hope

That's when Amy came into my life. She asked me out when I didn't have the self-confidence to ask anyone out. She liked me when I couldn't find the strength to like myself. And eventually, she loved me when all I felt inside was self-loathing. When we started dating she brought happiness back into my life. Every time I was around her, I felt so right—a rightness I'd been searching for my whole life. She made the pain of gender dysphoria recede into the background. She brought light and color back into a world which was colorless and bleak. She gave me hope. She loves life so much and finds joy in so many little things. Every time I was with her I found little joyful reasons to love life as well. As we dated, she began the process of healing my broken spirit.

I also needed the opportunity to care about someone outside of myself. I was so wrapped up in my own problems that I couldn't possibly begin to untangle myself. But I could help her with the little stresses and trials she faced—keep her smiling and happy. I could love her and show her that she deserved my love and attention. I could help her see her beauty and in doing so

stop worrying about my own problems for a while. I seized the opportunity to feel loved and to share my love in return as quickly and eagerly as possible. For once, I wasn't alone, and it was such a relief.

As we were dating things quickly turned fairly serious. I began to wonder if someone like me should get married. What was I? I was a man who felt like a woman who wanted to marry a woman. Would that kind of relationship be fair to Amy? Eternally speaking, was I male or female? Is it possible my body was mismatched with my eternal gender as some kind of a birth defect? If so, how would our relationship look in the next life? Did my Heavenly Father really want me to do this? Being with Amy had helped dampen the dysphoria and when I was around her I did feel better, but I was so afraid it wouldn't last. In the end, what I held onto most was that dating Amy felt like an answer to prayers. I'd been praying for a life-line and here she was, literally making me feel valuable again and giving me hope.

But I couldn't possibly marry her without first telling her about some of the difficulties I'd been through. I decided the easiest thing to do was to write a letter. It was the hardest letter I ever had to write—I was risking my happiness almost entirely. I had to do it though. I wrote about some of the difficulties I'd had, I admitted some of my faults and sins, and admitted I had struggled with pornography. Finally, in the center of the letter I admitted I'd struggled with "transsexual feelings" for most of my life. I didn't know what else to say. I didn't want to scare her away, but I wanted to be honest. I'm sure receiving that letter was completely overwhelming for her—I was admitting some pretty serious flaws and faults.

After receiving my letter, Amy went up to the Provo temple, sat on the grounds, and asked Heavenly Father if she should marry me. Later she told me the answer she received was that life with me wouldn't be the easiest path, but if she freely chose it, she would find joy commensurate to the difficulties she would have. It was the happiest day of my life when she agreed to marry me.

Among the many revelations contained in the letter I sent her, the brief section about struggling with transsexual feelings got lost among other concerns. We talked briefly but didn't really discuss how much it had affected my life. And at the time I was doing pretty well, and I hoped I would ever after. The dysphoria was a distant buzz and I hoped I would finally be able to control those feelings and just live the nice normal life I wanted. I became more determined than ever to keep those feelings at bay. Now I wasn't just doing this for myself, I was doing this for Amy. Maybe with that motivation and the desire not to hurt her, I could finally overcome the dysphoria. I became more determined than ever to handle this on my own, to take care of my own problems, and to be independent.

A Relapse into Darkness

I lasted five months. Three months into my marriage with Amy, the gender dysphoria came back with a vengeance. I had already determined this was a problem I would be a noble martyr for. I was determined to finally handle this myself. All my energy was dedicated to trying to fight off the feelings of dysphoria, trying to push them away and just be normal, trying to be a good husband for my new wife. That fight took a massive emotional toll. I couldn't handle it and it didn't take long for me to fall back into the same patterns of self-destructive behavior. I coped with the dysphoria the only way I knew how. Emotionally I ran away, I used any excuse

to disappear into an alternate world: books, computer games, school work. I started wearing my wife's clothes when she wasn't around and when those weren't enough I started to look for pornography.

I was starting to fall back into old bad habits. I had convinced myself that what my wife didn't know couldn't hurt her, and that it was better to handle this on my own than to burden her. I saw the vicious cycle of my youth starting again and didn't see any way I could stop it. I was going to get sucked in, and there was nothing I could do about it. The only thing that mattered was trying to keep gender dysphoria from ruining my marriage, and keeping Amy safe from the pain.

Luckily my wife was inspired. She's always been very sensitive to how I'm doing and she knew something was wrong almost immediately. It didn't take long before she decided she should check the browsing history on my computer and I was caught. As soon as she confronted me I realized what a horrible mistake I had made. I was ruining my marriage, my relationship with the greatest person who had ever entered my life, and worse I had hurt her deeply. She asked me what was going on and for the first time in my life I really started to open up.

Finding Hope Again

In many ways this process of opening up marked the first positive step on my journey with gender dysphoria. Before I had always denied it, fought against it, pushed it away, felt evil, and crippled by a fear of rejection. It wasn't until I was confronted by the harsh reality—I could either destroy my marriage or open up—that I finally had the strength to be honest with myself. I admitted to my wife that the transsexual feelings I had mentioned before we got married had come back with a vengeance, and that I didn't have any idea how to deal with it. Amy was crushed; she watched the white picket fence she had desired her whole life come down under the harsh realities of gender dysphoria. She wondered if our marriage could possibly last. She wondered if she was supposed to leave. Most of all, she worried that someday I would run away, transition, and start living a totally different life without her.

My admission of gender dysphoria and the mistakes I had made tore a massive hole in our relationship. One day Amy and I were happily married and the next it was almost like we were strangers. We had to start on this new relationship from the very beginning. Both of us were desperately scared the other would decide the relationship wasn't worth the pain and just leave. We both looked online for advice and based on all the statistics and stories we could find, it seemed like our marriage and our life together were doomed to fail. We rapidly realized that if we were going to make this work we would need to pave our own path. We certainly weren't able to do this overnight. We both had to work very, very hard to keep our relationship together.

One of the very first things I realized was that if I wanted to stay married to Amy, I needed to learn how to be truly honest and open. This was a really difficult thing for me; I didn't just need to learn how to be honest with Amy, I first needed to learn how to be honest with myself. For years I had tried to hide from my gender issues; I'd run away at every opportunity or ignored them. Hiding it from others, including Amy, was a chronic reflex I had to constantly work through. Learning to be honest caused a lot of tearful nights. I remember telling Amy that it felt like I had a whole closet packed with secrets I had carefully hidden away, and being honest

required taking each and every box out of the closet, and unpacking all those memories and experiences. Reliving all those experiences was painful, and it took scores of hours of painful contemplation and discussion to deal with each facet of my challenges. However, it was even more painful trying to figure out how all those thoughts and experiences fit into our relationship.

As part of my desire to be more honest and open I started meeting with several different therapists. The first non-LDS therapist I met with was convinced that most of my concerns stemmed from the fact that I was LDS. She repeatedly asked me why I was a member of the Church since it seemed to make everything harder. Try as I might, I couldn't figure out how to convince her that being LDS was just as important to my identity as being transgender. I needed to find a way to live with both of these identities in harmony. I had no idea if this was actually possible, but that was what I desired more than anything else.

Eventually I found a fantastic LDS therapist. After meeting with him for a couple months I remember him looking at me and asking, "Did you choose to have gender dysphoria?" Of course I didn't choose this. Who in their right mind would wish to have this kind of suffering? This was followed by another question, "If you didn't choose this, is it your fault you feel this way?" Once again, the answer was obvious: of course these feelings weren't my fault. If these feelings weren't my fault, if I didn't choose to have them, why should I be so ashamed? I wasn't an evil person because I had these feelings. This conversation was a turning point and I began to push away the shame which I had so deeply and carefully internalized. Heavenly Father must have given me these feelings for some reason. He still loved me, and I would always be His child.

As soon as I accepted myself and pushed away the shame I had so many new questions. If being transgender wasn't inherently evil, which activities and thoughts were morally acceptable and which were wrong? The Church had always defined exactly what was right and what was wrong. I liked the fact that the Church drew lines everywhere. So I started looking for where the Church drew the lines concerning transgender issues. I wanted a handbook that told me exactly what was appropriate and what was not. Instead, I found that the Church has almost no teaching on the subject. The Church Handbook of Instruction mentions that elective transsexual operation *may* be a cause for a disciplinary council. But that line was drawn at one extreme end of the spectrum of possible actions, what about actions in the middle?

Was it appropriate to admit that I felt like I was female? If so, to what degree could I accept my identity? Was it appropriate to wear women's clothes? What about little things like brightly colored socks or watches? How about attempting to be androgynous? If wearing women's clothes was wrong, at what point does an androgynous piece of clothing pass from being acceptable to being too feminine? There were numerous other questions, but in the end, all of these questions boiled down to the single question: what is right and what is wrong?

I tried looking in the scriptures for answers, but nowhere in the scriptures does it talk about gender dysphoria. I looked through modern Church teachings and found that there was a dearth of advice or guidelines there as well. I rapidly realized that no one was going to define right and wrong for me. Those answers were between me, my wife, and our Heavenly Father.

Before this point I don't think I really understood what agency was. My whole life I'd tried to do what I was told and I let others define what was right and wrong. For the first time, I had to come to a series of decisions based solely upon my faith and personal revelation. My wife and I would talk about boundaries and appropriateness, come to a decision, and then ask Heavenly Father if our answer was acceptable. Each decision was deeply personal and required a lot of trust—both in our own decision-making and in the Lord.

We certainly didn't get answers to every question that we prayed about. For a while, one question in particular preyed upon my mind. I knew that the Church taught that gender was eternal. But was it possible that Heavenly Father would place a spirit in a body that was the opposite gender as a test or trial in this fallen world? There are plenty of people who are born into imperfect bodies where their sex is ambiguous. Could gender dysphoria be similar? I prayed and fasted for weeks trying to find an answer to this question. After weeks of tears and searching I received one of the clearest answers I have ever received. The answer was, "You really don't need to know that in this life."

I'm still trying to figure out how to live with that ambiguity. I don't know who I am. I feel female but I live in a male body. What does that mean for me? In the end, all I can do is pray and try to follow what the Spirit prompts me to do.

After going through all of this I am starting to understand what it truly means to live by faith. Amy and I don't have many answers. We don't know where this experience will lead us. We are still trying to figure out what being a transgender Mormon even means. The eternities sometimes seem blurry. If my eternal spirit is female what would that mean for our marriage? If my eternal spirit is male would I even be the same person? How would this change in gender change me as a person?

Since we don't have all the answers, Amy and I often feel like we are struggling forward together in the dark. Our only hope lies in the atonement of Christ; because of this, our family motto has become "Jesus wins." It's a constant reminder to have faith that in the end everything is going to be alright; a reminder to remember to trust in the Savior and be patient. Oftentimes "Jesus wins" is the only answer that can give us any assurance. That hope is what keeps me moving—sometimes stumbling—forward.

Finding the Right Path

That brings us up to today. Amy and I have been married for nearly five years. While gender dysphoria is still really hard, I've accomplished two really big things. First, I've accepted my past; all the pain, confusion, questions, and mistakes are part of what made me the person I am today. I've prayerfully sought repentance for my mistakes and I'm at peace with my past experiences. Second, I know what direction I am supposed to be walking. For so much of my life I had no idea where I was going, I felt completely lost. It took years but I finally think I've found a path that I can walk balancing both my gender dysphoria and my belief. Having hope that I can do this is such a relief. I've remembered what it's like to be happy, and some days when I am looking back on darker times it seems like I used to see the world in black and white and now I see the world in color. Life's not perfect but at least I can approach my challenges with a smile.

As for Amy and I, gender dysphoria has been a crucible that has forged our relationship into something stronger. We share everything, we are completely honest, and we both would do anything for the other. I know that Amy loves me and would support any decision that we prayerfully arrived at together. Amy knows that if I was given the choice in the eternities to either be female or to stay with her as a male that I would always choose to stay with her. She is my everything. She saved me from the darkest times of my life and has loved and supported me through some of my most difficult trials. She accepted me when I thought everyone would reject me, and she loved me even when I didn't always deserve her love. The only way to deal with gender dysphoria is for both of us to trust each other and for both of us to want what is best for the other.

Even with all the progress that I have made—learning to be honest, keeping my marriage together, accepting myself for who I am, learning to live with ambiguity, living through revelation and faith, and learning to rely on the atonement of Jesus Christ—gender dysphoria is still really hard. Amy and I discuss how I am doing almost every day. Looking in a mirror still hurts. The person in the mirror still doesn't look like me. I still don't know who I am. I constantly wonder which actions or choices would be appropriate and which are not. In order to be a functional human being, I need to accept my gender dysphoria and find outlets and activities that are appropriate. The only way to determine what is appropriate or not is to ask Amy and then ask my Heavenly Father.

I've chosen to wear unobtrusively androgynous clothing, often a mix of male and female labels. It helps me, doesn't offend others, and doesn't bother Amy at all. I'm currently on medication that eases the pain of the dysphoria and allows me to function. I have no plans to transition. I've made promises to my wife in this life and I am going to do my very best to be a faithful husband and priesthood holder. From here I am going to constantly be trying to keep walking on this path, figuring out how to be transgender and Mormon. I'm still seeking answers and I still wonder what decisions are right for me. I'm trying to listen to the Holy Ghost and I'll be relying on my Savior's atonement to help me deal with the pain. Who am I? In many ways I don't know. But I do know that I am a child of God and that my Heavenly Father loves me. I also know how I am going to live my life. I trust in my Savior's atonement, I strive to walk forward with faith, and I will always remember that Jesus wins.