

New Book
Offers Help For Struggling Lesbians

Restoring Sexual Identity: Hope for Women Who Struggle with Same-Sex Attraction
Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon (2003)

Reviewed by Frank York

In her recently published book, *Restoring Sexual Identity: Hope for Women Who Struggle with Same-Sex Attraction*, former lesbian Anne Paulk has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the root causes of female same-sex attractions, and offers the reader hope for genuine change.

Paulk's book is a compassionate and thoughtful description of her own lesbian struggles, and she carefully describes similar patterns of family dysfunction and woundedness in the lives of many women who have dealt with their same-sex feelings.

In her work with women struggling with lesbianism, Mrs. Paulk has discovered that childhood trauma, poor self-image, anger at men, poor relationships with either or both parents, and pro-homosexual media propaganda are several key elements in women developing an attraction to other women.

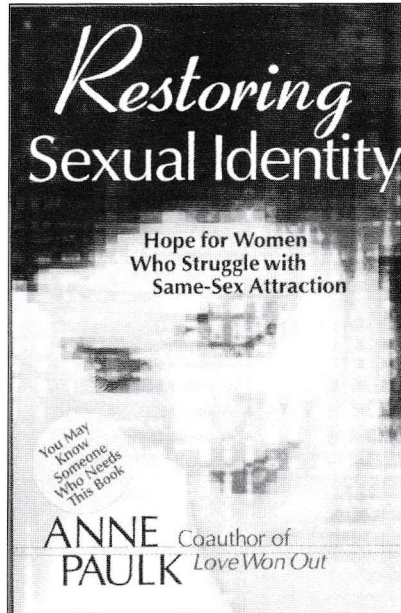
As Paulk notes throughout her book, same-sex attraction is seldom really driven by sexual needs; it is driven by an unconscious desire to be loved and to trust another person. It is also frequently driven by a desire to reconnect with the feminine but in the wrong way.

Debunking Pro-Homosexual Research

For those who have learned what they know about homosexuality from the popular media, Paulk's chapter, "Where Does Same-Sex Attraction Come From?" provides the reader with a wealth of information. She forcefully critiques many of the well-known claims by homosexual activists that homosexuality is genetic and unchangeable.

She relays a critique of the chromosome study by Dr. Dean Hamer, which was published in 1993; she reports the problems with the inner-ear study by Professor Dennis McFadden; and also details the problems with the "finger length" study that attempted to correlate the differences in finger length between gay women and non-gay women.

Despite the best efforts of pro-homosexual researchers for more than two decades, no one has yet successfully proven that homosexual attractions are genetically based. And even if someone eventually discovers proof that there is a genetic component, other critics besides Mrs. Paulk have



noted, this doesn't mean that the behavior is good or healthful for the individual. There may be genetic predispositions to obesity, alcoholism, and other harmful behaviors. This does not mean we must consider these as positive conditions, or should affirm self-destructive behaviors as normal.

The Survey Of Women's Attitudes And Home Life

The core of Paulk's book is based upon the results of a survey she conducted of ex-gay women who described their family relationships, sexual abuse, youthful experimentation, and emotions.

Paulk's survey was sent to more than 1,900 women and she received completed responses from 265 women for a return rate of 14%.

Her survey results are described in great detail in Appendix B of her book, but the results are also described throughout the book as she deals with the various aspects of same-sex attraction and how these women eventually broke free of persistent gay feelings.

High Rates Of Sexual Abuse

Some of the most disturbing discoveries from her survey were the high rates of sexual molestation experienced by these women as pre-teenagers. Not only were they victimized by sex abusers, but they also witnessed various forms of abuse against other family members.

Paulk notes, "An astounding 90 percent experienced some form of abuse themselves." This abuse was not just sexual but included emotional abuse (70 percent), sexual (more than 60 percent), and verbal abuse (more than half of those surveyed.)

She notes that the sexual predator was a non-family male in 58 percent of the cases; followed by "family friend," in 24 percent of the cases, "other family member," at 23 percent and "brother" at 23 percent. Females were molesters of these women in 17 percent of the cases.

Family Dysfunction

Women who had started lesbian experimentation at an early age also felt that their lives had been disrupted by

bad relationships with either a father or a mother. In what she describes as the "classic development of lesbian attraction," Paulk discovered through her survey—and personal interviews—that these women had grown up in homes with a domineering, critical, detached, or weak mother; and/or a home with a father who was detached or critical.

In many of these homes, the mother was viewed as weak or was cruelly dominated by her husband. In 75 percent of the women, they viewed the male as a more favorable role model for their lives—with a rejection of their own gender and pursuit of male characteristics.

Developing A Healthy Female Identity

As noted earlier, this is a hopeful book for women struggling with same-sex attractions. Paulk lays out the problems involved with lesbianism but then turns a corner to provide the reader with a description of what factors within a family can help a girl avoid developing unhealthy sexual attractions.

She notes that first and foremost is the importance of having a "mother who enjoys being a woman and cherishes her role as a wife and mother." A second factor is to be in a family where the mother loves her husband and supports his role as the head of the family. The third factor is a father who cherishes his wife and does not degrade her.

When these three elements are in place in a family, writes Paulk, "The natural result of his environment is that a little girl grows up realizing that her mother is strong and capable and that being a woman is good. She will naturally desire to be like her mother. As she imitates her mother and her mother or father praises or acknowledges these attempts, she will most likely conclude that she can succeed in the role of female."

Finding Healthy Friendships With Males And Females

Paulk has observed in her own life and in the lives of other women struggling with lesbianism, that many of them isolate themselves from straight women in order to avoid being tempted. The consequence of this, according to Paulk, is to create a "well of need that may eventually draw us back into lesbian intimacy."

This isolation from straight women has been labeled "defensive detachment." Such isolation is dangerous to the healing process. As Paulk observes, "To picture what defensive attachment is like, think of a dam. Our relational needs are the flowing water, and defensive detachment is the dam that holds back our needs. Because of our inability, fears, or previous rejection in relationships, we may stop up the flow of true intimacy in our lives."

Paulk urges the struggler to seek out friendships but to be cautious. It takes time to find individuals who can be trusted to maintain a person's confidence and not to create an emotional dependency.

Paulk also encourages the woman with homosexual attractions to seek out friendships with heterosexual males, but again to be cautious in how these friendships evolve. She believes that a woman moving away from lesbianism must be careful how she relates to either single or married men. The struggler must not give a single man the idea that a romance is possible—until there is a substantial transformation in orientation.

She also provides a commonsense answer to one of the most frequently asked questions by women dealing with homosexual feelings: "Do I have to get married?" Paulk answers clearly: "Absolutely not. In fact, if you do not want to get married, you most certainly should not marry."

Getting Help And Establishing A Support System

Coming from a Christian perspective, Paulk recommends that the Christian struggling with same-sex attractions seek help from wise counselors within the church. But she cautions that not all church leaders are well-informed on the causes of homosexuality and others may actually promote homosexuality as inborn and unchangeable. She also warns against trying to find help in a church that discourages counseling.

She notes sadly, however, that "... outside of these references, many counselors, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists now believe that change from homosexuality is not possible. They believe this not because of facts ... but because of the persuasiveness of the gay lobby, false media declarations, and the threat of being labeled homophobic or bigoted within their professional associations."

An Important Book

Anne Paulk has done her research and provides the reader with a great deal of useful information on the causes of homosexuality and how a woman can break free of unwanted homosexual feelings and attractions.

The survey results she provides in Appendix B of her book are both shocking and helpful in seeing patterns in the



Anne Paulk

lives of women who developed lesbian feelings either during pre-teen or the teen years. Sadly, the high incidence of emotional or sexual abuse among the women surveyed merely confirms what NARTH therapists have observed for years about the roots of homosexual attractions.

Paulk's overriding message, however, is one of hope for women who are struggling to become free of lesbianism. Her message is clear and unambiguous: Change is possible. ■