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## When Women's Friendships Turn Sexual Finding Your True Home in Jesus

by Ellen Dykas

*"Ellen, we never saw ourselves as gay, but rather as 'Anna-sexual' and 'Beth-sexual'... this is how we felt about each other. We have never been in love with another woman or man in this way."*

This was the explanation one woman gave about her secret homosexual affair of two years. Beth, in her forties and married to a man, met Anna, a grad student who visited her church. Beth's marriage to a ministry leader was, in her words, living under the same roof but being physically and emotionally divorced. With Anna, however, she experienced the deeply satisfying emotional oneness she had always craved. Since she had a significant church leadership role, no one seemed to question the intensity of her relationship with Anna. "Everyone just thought we were the best of friends and even envied our 'connection.'"

Beth's story contains a thread woven into the experience of many women who struggle somewhere on the spectrum of female homosexuality.<sup>1</sup> This thread is the experience of longing for and securing what feels like an "emotional home" by connecting intensely and intimately with another woman.

I have heard Beth and Anna's description of their relationship as "her-sexual" (to a specific woman rather than to women in



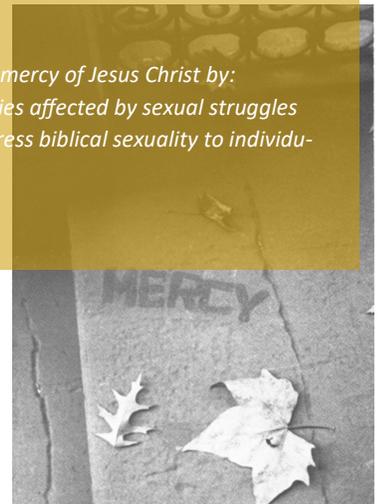
general) from many other same-sex attracted women, and especially from young adult women who've experienced their first romantic awakening—and

perhaps sexual relationship—with a woman. Many would not have previously self-identified as gay, nor would they express a sexual attraction to women in general. Rather, they are attracted to this particular woman. This romanticized, often sexualized, attachment grows as seeds of emotional intimacy are sown and watered, sometimes over a relatively short period of time. The result is a harvest of feeling a deep emotional connection that seems like home for a heart that is hungry and searching for a satisfying, comforting experience of being known, loved, nurtured, safe, and anchored. What feels like home emotionally leads to a sexual relationship in which many are shocked to find themselves. The sexual component that develops looks like a natural expression of the emotional haven and mutual "at-homeness" that has come to characterize the relationship. For many women, the next step of self-identifying as a gay or lesbian woman is a logical fit.

A recent segment on National Public Radio recounted experiences of older women who pursued their first lesbian relationship after many years of heterosexuality, which even included marriage for some. Reflecting on the idea of the fluidity of female sexuality,

Professor Lisa Diamond of the University of Utah commented, "It does appear that women's erotic desires are pretty tightly linked to their *emotional feelings* (author's emphasis). And so for some of these women, they authentically did not really feel attracted to women before they met one particular woman they completely fell in love with."<sup>2</sup>

At a young age, many women will experience significant "emotional crushes" for other girls and/or older women in their lives—educators, mentors, Sunday school teachers, and youth ministry leaders. These emotional feelings can morph into romantic desires and even sexual fantasies, and usually exist alongside strong emotional cravings for verbal affection



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and affirmation, maternal-like nurture, and nonsexual-touch. As one woman said, “I didn’t have a close relationship with my mother. When, as a young woman, I connected emotionally and then physically with another woman, that sense of intimacy was overwhelming and I didn’t want to lose it. I didn’t understand what was so powerful in the relationship, but I knew the physicality of being held and of holding another brought me to life—and I wanted more of it.”

### **In God’s design for sexuality, we are not meant to be sexually fluid**

However, in God’s good and loving design for sexuality, we are not meant to be sexually fluid—heterosexual one day, homosexual the next, bi or pansexual on the weekends...or next year. We are not meant to be ruled by our desires or find our truest home in another human being. He created us to live lives growing in devoted love for Jesus, unselfishly loving others, and pursuing his purposes in the world. Our sexuality and how we express it is meant to be one part of who we are and how we express our “at-homeness” in Jesus Christ.

Unholy attachments, both emotional and sexual, between women are attempts to mimic what we can only find in a dynamic, living relationship with Christ. The closest human expression of that is to be experienced in the oneness of union between a husband and a wife, even in its perfectness. In fact, it is in the imperfection and brokenness of all human relationships that many women will move toward other women to find what no other human being, female or male, can fully and completely give.

### **Signs of unholy attachment**

Here are some relational dynamics that are indicators of unhealthy attachment between women.

- Fused lives, schedules and relational spheres. The relationship begins to feel like a marriage.
- Exclusive possessiveness and a closed circle of two. Other people feel like intruders, as threats to your harmony.
- The relationship needs constant clarification of each person’s role in it. Generally, one woman will play the needy/weak/take-care-of-me role and the other will be the needing-to-be-needed/strong/caregiver role. Fear, insecurity, and jealousy are triggered when one steps out of her role.
- Maintaining consistent emotional connection is vital. Texts, emails, calls, and time spent together grow and intensify to typically become life-dominating.
- Romanticized affection through words and physical

touch. Sexual involvement.

These idolatrous ‘emotional homes’ happen between women in Christian mentoring relationships, too! When that happens, the spiritual component in the relationship adds tremendous confusion.

### **God’s Word brings clarity and a new direction**

God’s Word speaks hope and clarity to women who find themselves in relational lifestyles of emotionally-enmeshed, sexually-unholy same-sex attachments. John 15 reorients our hearts as we long for a safe place to call home. Our true home is a person: Jesus Christ. Jesus describes himself as the true vine, and we are intimately connected to him as branches; he is the only one in whom we are to dwell in such intimacy and closeness. Female-to-female emotional and sexual entanglements are a distortion of John 15, as two “female branches” seek to make their partner the vine from which they draw their life.

### **He created us to live lives growing in devoted love for Jesus, unselfishly loving others, and pursuing his purposes in the world**

Consider some biblical realities from John 15 about what deep connection with Christ looks like and apply it to the woman who is living somewhere along the spectrum of female homosexuality. The key to

understanding the metaphor of vine/branches is first found in John 14:23 when Jesus says, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and *make our home with him.*” In the next chapter, Jesus explains this new “home”: it is a home that gives hope to women who long for deeper relationships. Women can be wonderful friends, Christian sisters, and spiritual companions to each other. They are meant to be branches living closely alongside each other. But branches are meant to be branches, not vines! Branches make lousy and destructive vine replacements! Only Jesus Christ is true life, security, Savior, and a home in whom we live and move and have our being.

### **I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing (v.5)**

Jesus explains that he is the vine and source of true life and what a life in God is meant to be. In him, we are branches and are created to remain, abide, and dwell in Christ. This language speaks of our deep connection with Jesus and the promise of John 14:23 being true in a person’s life.

Women who are tempted



towards same-sex attraction are in one way or another seeking from another woman the kind of deep connection that should be reserved for God alone. This applies to heterosexual relationships as well. Branches are not meant to abide in one another or in isolation from one another. God's healthy boundaries for relationships affirm intimacy and closeness, but when two women shrink their relational world to an entangled twosome, the relationship becomes an idolatrous, life-dominating focus.

**Thoughts to ponder if you are a struggler**

What initial steps can I take to disentangle myself from this woman? With whom can I talk to pray and think this through? How do I need to grow in my understanding of remaining (abiding, dwelling) in Jesus Christ? How do I need to let women off the hook from being a replacement for Jesus in my life? (See Psalms 16 and 146, Colossians 3:1-17, James 5:16)

**If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. It is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit showing yourselves to be disciples (v. 7-8).**

Jesus gives a promise that comes from obedience to a command: as his words and truth make a home in us, our desires will increasingly be conformed to his will and purposes. Our thought lives become free of obsession over a person as we learn to be focused on him. Our affections grow in being outward-focused rather than on comforting ourselves through one intense relational connection. Our lives grow in being increasingly uncluttered from the emotional prison of an enmeshed and dependent (idolatrous) relationship with another woman.



**Thoughts to ponder**

What fills my thoughts and to what degree am I enslaved by fantasy or fear related to this friend or lover? What steps do I need to take in learning how to find a home in God's Word? Who can I ask for help to learn how to have my mind transformed and my thoughts cleansed from so many sexual memories? You may find 1 John 1:9, Romans 12:1-2, Phil. 4:4-8, and Psalm 86:11 helpful.

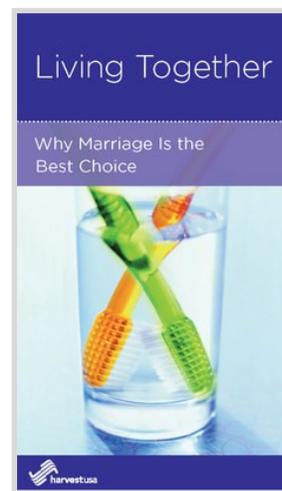
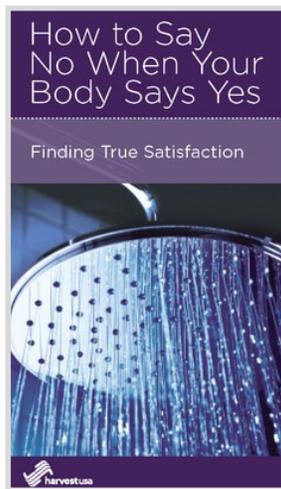
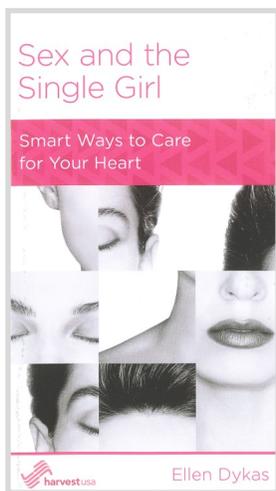
**Who can I ask for help to learn how to have my mind transformed and my thoughts cleansed from so many sexual memories?**

**I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch that does not bear fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love by obeying my commands (v. 1, 9-10).**

These verses offer promises of those who are in Christ; the branches that are cut off refer to those who reject salvation in Jesus. Our loving Father is committed to shaping our lives so that we increasingly reflect the character of Christ. His pruning

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process is painful, and it will generally lead through valleys of loss, grief, and emotional pain. The road away from homosexuality is one that is painful and full of loss. Anguish and grief are real as a woman surrenders to the merciful pruning of Father God, turns from the Jesus-replacement in her life, and takes steps of loving obedience as an act of worship and trust.

#### Thoughts to ponder

Pray for courage and strength to walk in obedience! If God is calling you to let go of an unholy relationship with a woman, is there a mature Christian you can go to for help, encouragement, prayer, and accountability? In John 15, Jesus speaks of loving obedience and obedient love. Ask him to give you a desire to obey him and to grow in trusting his love for you. Jesus said one of the reasons he came is to heal the brokenhearted (see Isaiah 61 and Luke 4:18-20). It is through relationship with him that your hurting heart and the places of pain in your life that have influenced you towards homosexuality can be healed.

*Although this article focused on one aspect of the female homosexual experience—the pull of emotional idolatry between women—there are many other facets that are left to be explored. If you are interested in learning more, visit the HARVEST USA website ([www.harvestusa.org](http://www.harvestusa.org)) or send me an email ([ellen@harvestusa.org](mailto:ellen@harvestusa.org)).*

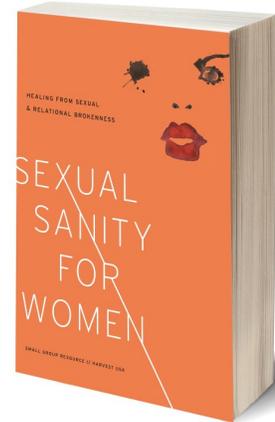
<sup>1</sup>*By spectrum of female homosexuality, I'm referring to a continuum on one end of which you find emotionally enmeshed (idolatrous) relationships that have a romantic or sensual feel to them, and on the other end where you would find a homosexual lifestyle. Female homosexuality is often an experience that 'launched' relationally when an emotionally dependent attachment to someone becomes sexualized.*

<sup>2</sup>*Diamond, Lisa. "Late-Life Lesbians Reveal Fluidity of Sexuality," NPR, All Things Considered, August 7, 2010.  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129050832&sc=emaf>.*

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## Sexual Sanity for Women: Healing from Sexual & Relational Brokenness —Edited by Ellen Dykas

Sexual Sanity for Women guides participants through the process of understanding why they struggle with destructive relational and sexual patterns and how the gospel brings change and a new way of living. Twenty lessons guide participants to understand God's good design for sexuality, the underlying reasons they struggle with sexual brokenness, and how the grace and truth of Jesus Christ can be applied to their struggles. Change begins as deeper heart issues are uncovered, and women learn that they are well-loved daughters of God who will find healing and wholeness as they live out God's Word in their relationships. This workbook is ideal for a one-on-one mentoring, college-age student groups, and women's groups.



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