

# **Is There An Alternative?**

Looking for the Truth About Lesbianism

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I met Kae\* when she was about 10 years old. She was outgoing and bright, the oldest of four children, loved sports, and was very masculine in her dress, hairstyle, and mannerisms. Her parents are strong believers and have taught their children to know and love God; her mother is very feminine, outgoing and fun-loving, and home schooled all four children; her dad is a firefighter/EMT and a very capable and involved, loving father. I remember thinking at the time I met them that Kae could be a target for homosexual women when she was older because of her tomboyish tendencies and that's exactly what happened in her teenage years. She struggled with her sexual identity and still has issues today in her twenties.

Jade\* is also a young girl I know who has problems with sexual preferences, but her background is very different. She grew up in a very confusing and abusive family with divorce, constantly moving between two households, and a definite lack of security and love. She is very feminine, always very conscientious about her clothes, hair, and makeup, but decided late in high school to go into law enforcement when she graduated. Before finishing the training she was living with another woman and has decided she is gay.

Why did both these young girls, and thousands of others like them, choose this "alternative lifestyle"? Did they choose it or were they born that way with no control over who they are? The Bible says homosexuality is wrong, so did God create these people this way and then say they are condemned to hell for being what He made them to be? How do we reconcile all this in a culture and time that strongly and constantly tells us homosexuality is a normal and acceptable alternative to being heterosexual and we should not be prejudiced against people who can't

\* not real names

help the way they were made any more than any of us can help being born a certain race or with physical or mental handicaps? As a church, we are being strongly influenced by this media bombardment and many pastors no longer preach that homosexuality is wrong, but rather that we should be accepting and loving to all people and not be seen as homophobic or narrow-minded. How can I minister to a woman who struggles with her sexual preference and should I be helping her to change or just accept the way she's born to be?

## **Defining Lesbianism**

A quick perusal of the internet will reveal many sites ready to define lesbianism and encourage you to take a test to see if you are gay or not. The dictionary defines it as, "a homosexual woman."<sup>1</sup> The word "lesbian" originated in reference to the inhabitants of the Isle of Lesbos, particularly Sappho, a lesbian love poet who lived there during the seventh century BC and is often credited as being the first Western romantic poet. She wrote about women and girls who attended her school and her work was later destroyed by the Catholic church which deemed it obscene.<sup>2</sup>

We should distinguish that lesbianism is an issue of sexual preference and not gender identity. Lesbians know they are female, but are emotionally and sexually attracted to women, not men. Those with gender identity problems feel they are in the wrong body and should be the opposite sex (e.g. transvestites). It is interesting to note that since 1973 the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) has not listed homosexuality as a sexual deviation. Under pressure from many professionals and from gay activist groups, the Nomenclature Committee of the American Psychiatric Association recommended the elimination of the category "homosexuality" and the substitution of "sexual orientation disturbance," which refers to "gay

men and women who are disturbed by, in conflict with, or wish to change their sexual orientation.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, they are only abnormal if they want to change! It is amazing to see how the gay rights movement has influenced even the medical community and with growing control of the media ,(Is there a sitcom or TV show that does not have some homosexual content or references?), and the political arena, it’s no wonder we can feel confused about whether homosexuality has an underlying cause or if it really is just another alternative way to live.

And so the debate continues, with opinions falling on both sides of the spectrum. According to the website , *The Wonderful World of Lesbianism*, “It has been estimated that lesbians account for approximately 10—12% of the female population...they range in size, shape and appearance with just as much diversity as the heterosexual population....lesbianism is not equal to hatred of men....it’s not true that lesbians just have not found a good man. Many women just prefer the emotional and sexual bonds that are formed with other women. It’s that simple....three quarters are involved in committed relationships with the break-up rate being about the same as the rate for heterosexual partners....it is more than just sexual orientation.... it is a way of life.”<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Anna Bissi, a psychologist with the Family Advisory Bureau of Vercelli, Italy, has a interesting article online called *Christian Anthropology and Homosexuality*. In it, she suggests that lesbianism has a psychological cause related to a child’s failure to see herself as separate from her mother, accept her own sexual identity as a positive thing, and to “trust men, not to perceive them as aggressors, as violent, dominant, superior, or as someone to be feared.”<sup>5</sup> She doubts the possibility of change for most lesbians, but says therapy has to focus on the deeper issues of emotional maturity and the “fear of difference”, rather than just on outward appearances and behaviors.

Jody Mayhew, who has worked with many lesbian women as part of a ministry proclaiming freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ in Portland, Oregon, would agree on some points with this assessment. Certainly the fact that lesbianism does have a cause and is not just a lifestyle choice, and that changes can not be made by beginning with the outward behavior we see. But she would have to add that there is real hope for healing of the past hurts that have lead to this behavior and there is freedom to choose a new life in Jesus Christ. Judy explains that when unmet love needs caused by insecurity, neglect, abuse, or a lack of affirmation become erotized in the mind of a child, affection becomes sexualized and confusion results as she makes emotional and sexual connections on the wrong way. A lack of bonding with the same sex parent and/or conflict with the opposite sex parent can lead to fear based relating patterns, making it hard for her to accept affection from men because she can not trust them.

### **Leaving Lesbianism**

Jody says leaving lesbianism begins with a personal relationship with God. When His Spirit dwells in the inner most part of a woman's being, the healing can begin from the inside out, through the layers of rejection, abuse, and abandonment pain and on into the layers of inappropriate behavior that we see.<sup>5</sup> This calls for a transformation from within, not a conformation of behavior from without. When good nurturing is missing in the life of a child, she will begin to self-nurture, leading to coping skills like being a perfectionist, overachiever or class clown. As God's love is poured into her, her focus should shift from a search for her own healing and personal recovery to a search for Him, and in her relationship with Him she will find the true acceptance, freedom, and love she missed out on as a child.

Of course, this process takes a long time and a concerted effort on the part of the woman involved. There will no doubt be times of relapse and she may find it necessary to avoid certain places and relationships as she moves towards wholeness, but she is not alone in this growth process. The Spirit of God is there to empower and guide her, and, hopefully, she has friends and counselors who can support her through each stage.

Why should we want to help someone leave lesbianism if it is a natural state and an alternative lifestyle? First, from what I have observed most gay people struggle with their sexual preferences at first. They know to be attracted to someone of the same sex is not right. Whether this is something God has placed in each of us genetically or is just common sense when we look at human bodies that it takes a male and a female body for sexual relationships and procreation to work properly, I'm not sure. But in all gay couples we can observe that one takes the "male" role and one the "female" role, so even in their confusion there is a role playing of normalcy.

Secondly, because our society is so accepting of homosexuality most people struggling with this area of temptation have permission to give in and be "accepted" for who they think they are. Because their problem began so early in life they feel they were born this way and have no choice. Some fight it for many years and then give up, finally confessing who they "are" and giving into the internal pressures. They need friends who know God's truth about who they really are and can lovingly help them heal and move into wholeness.

It is clear in God's word that homosexuality is not an alternative God intended when He created man (Genesis 1: 27—28, "God created man in his own image...male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply.") Levitical law included, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." (Leviticus 18:22) And in Romans 1: 26—27 Paul is clear that the homosexuality that was so pervasive in

the Roman culture was not right.<sup>6</sup>

Homosexuality is an emotional, psychological, relational, and spiritual condition, caused by deep early childhood wounding by abuse, abandonment or rejection, maybe not even consciously remembered by the person. While all childhood hurt results in inappropriate coping mechanisms, sadly, this wounding leads to sinful behavior that affects others and defiles God's most precious relationship of marriage and family. It can NOT be accepted as an "alternative" lifestyle. There is NO alternative to God's design and He can not tolerate the sin this includes. As a friend of someone struggling with this condition, we can not just accept them for who they "are" and let them continue. If they come to us for help, we must remember **James 4:20**, **"Whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."** We are doing more than just helping an unhappy person find peace; we are part of God's plan for salvation for this person, for freedom from the deception Satan has held them in, and to bring true healing from deep and serious wounds. This will be a long process and will require patience, wisdom, and God's strength for the everyone involved.

### **How Can We Help?**

1. Remember you are not God! It is not your place to convict of sin or pass judgment. While this woman's sins may be obvious and uncomfortable to you, remember we are ALL sinners and her outward behavior is revealing a deeper pain that needs to be healed.
2. Your purpose is to help her to know God personally so HE can do the work of healing and restoration that is necessary in her heart, mind, and soul. Help her to see Him through your actions and words, sharing what you know of Him, His love, His forgiveness, and mercy.
3. Hold up a clear standard from God's word that homosexuality is a sinful lifestyle, while

always maintaining an attitude of love for her. In her pain, confusion, and deception, she can not always see clearly and will need to know that you will stand firm and help her to learn to do the same.

4. Our friend's needs are often beyond our ability to help. It is important that we stay connected to God ourselves:<sup>7</sup>

- a. Recognize your complete dependence on God.
- b. Don't try to manage a situation and control the outcome in your own strength.
- c. Direct yourself in developing a closer union with Jesus and trusting in his love and care.
- d. Admit and accept things that are impossible for you to change directly. Ask God's direction regarding what you can change and ask God to take care of what you can not.
- e. Approach God in prayer, praying for what you know is God's will, such as patience and strength.
- f. Bring your everyday needs and cares to God. Don't deny your anxiety; pass along all that makes you anxious on to God.
- g. Wait and watch for God to fulfill his promises in his own way and his own time.

5 You need to be comfortable with your own sexuality and not come into this with ambivalence. Be prepared to set good boundaries, remembering that she is vulnerable to making inappropriate emotional relationships with women.

6. Where you begin will depend where she is at in recognizing her situation. If she is a friend who does not yet recognize her lifestyle is wrong, be friendly and caring, but make sure she knows you are a believer and that you do not accept her lifestyle as OK, though you care for her as a person.

If she is not ready to seek help, you could still be praying for her and begin to collect information about where she can get help, books she could read, internet sites that are helpful etc.

7. If she comes to you confused about whether or not her lifestyle is OK in the sight of God or if she knows it isn't and is ready to make changes:
  - a. Pray with her and support her decision to make changes.
  - b. Let her know you will be there through the long haul, but set clear boundaries about how much time, when, and where you can meet, talk on the phone etc.
  - c. Give her scriptures to read—if she is not a believer, make your first focus introducing her to who God is and the Gospel message. You could read through the book of John together and discuss it. Pray with her and for her.
  - d. Suggest good websites she can go to. These include:

[www.loveinaction.org](http://www.loveinaction.org)  
[www.regenerationministries.org](http://www.regenerationministries.org)  
[www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)  
[www.exodus-international.org](http://www.exodus-international.org)

All these have excellent information and resources such as books and CDs.

8. Help her to seek professional help. This will be a long process and she will need more than just you to help and support her through it.
9. Keep all conversations confidential unless she gives you permission to share her needs with others who can pray or provide practical help. Remember she will suffer other losses as this process unfolds; she may lose the support of friends and family, could have to leave her job or home. If so, it will take a team of people to help her through this. Don't think you can do it all. Not only do you not have the time or strength, but you are not gifted in every thing!

10. Remember the healing process from the illustration from Jody Mayhew: as she grows in her relationship with God, He is able to heal the abandonment, abuse, or rejection wounds she is dealing with deep inside. This will result in changes in her outward behavior and you will see a transformation. Don't try to start on the outside by just changing outward behaviors; it won't deal with the deeper issues inside. But we also have to hold up God's standard about sinful sexual behavior and encourage her to stay away from that. Just because she has certain feelings or urges does not mean she has to act on them.
11. Above all, maintain your own walk with Jesus, so you can be there for the long journey that this will be. There will be ups and downs, days she hates you, days she clings to you. Trust God in the process and help her to do the same. At times your faith will have to hold her up when she is weak. At other times, her strength and progress will amaze and encourage you! Remember you are walking this path together; certainly God has things to do in her life, but He also is using this path to teach you and to refine issues in your own life, too.
12. Remember John 13:12—17 ; we are blessed to doing the right thing, not just knowing it.

Scriptures to share could include:

Proverbs 3:5 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

2 Cor. 12:9 "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

1 Cor. 10: 13 "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

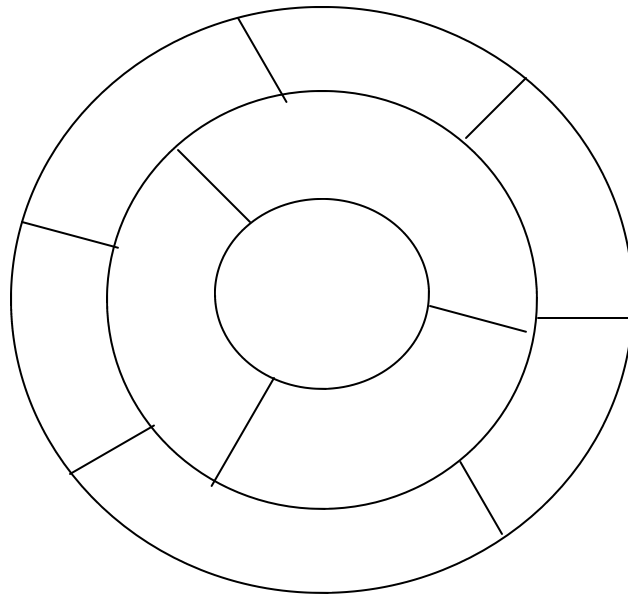
Romans 12: 2 "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."

1 John 4:7 "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. "

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## NOTES

1. Webster's New World Dictionary, Simon & Schuster, Inc. 1989
2. See <http://goddess.astrology.com/vesta/lesbian.html>
3. Notes taken from *Abnormal Psychology*, G. Davidson and J. Neale. John Wiley, New York 1994 9th ed. Focus on Discovery 14.3, Chapter 14, page 404.
4. See <http://members.tripod.com/-gingerly/les.html>
5. Visual model, designed by Jody Mayhew, to show how God heals our deepest wounds from the inside pain towards the outward behavior. It applies to any childhood wounding and resulting destructive behavior.



6. Romans 1: 26—27  
“For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.”
7. This very helpful list comes from *Holding on to Heaven While Your Friend Goes Through Hell*, by Connie Neal. (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1999) pg 16—17 ; a great book for anyone walking through a healing process with a friend.

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*The Wonderful World of Lesbianism* at <http://members.tripod.com/gingerly/les.html>

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*Christian Anthropology and Homosexuality - 8 Lesbianism*, by Anna Bissi  
at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/HUMANITY/homo8.htm>

## **Class notes:**

*Relational Healing in the Church Environment*, by Jody Mayhew. Taken in the  
Women in Pain 1 class at Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon, March 2007