

The fruit of years of training, research and counseling experience, Janelle Hallman has drawn together a comprehensive resource for those who are interested in understanding and counseling women in conflict with same-sex attraction. In this groundbreaking work, Hallman sets forth the unique dimensions of struggle that women experience through the presentation of research, interviews and clinical experience.

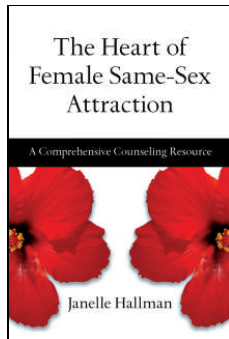
The Heart of Female Same-Sex Attraction, 312 pages, paper, \$17, 978-0-8308-3429-7, April 2008

Why did you decide to write *The Heart of Female Same-Sex Attraction*?

Janelle Hallman: I had been involved with Exodus ministries for several years prior to starting seminary to work on my master's in counseling. In the late eighties and early nineties I had devoured just about every book out there on homosexuality or God's perspective on gender. Almost everything I could find was for and about men. I could see that much of the material didn't apply to women. Neither was there a clinical book that was understandable for the average counselor who hadn't been trained in psychoanalytic literature. I knew that when I started my counseling practice, I would basically have to "wing it" or learn as I went. There simply was no published framework from which to practice. Even back then I thought that it might be a possibility that I would be the one to write a book. I knew I loved research and certainly teaching and was therefore able to condense complicated material and organize it in a way that people could understand. But I set this thought aside so that I could focus on simply learning how to counsel women with same-sex attraction. However, about five years into my practice, I began to get involved with NARTH. I was anxious to learn from the experts about female homosexuality. Much to my chagrin, the conference and printed material sponsored by NARTH were, again, primarily about men and for men. I suspected then that I was going to have to seriously consider at least organizing an effort to publish material for and about the women.

After contacting all of the other female therapists and a few male therapists specializing in this field, it was determined that no one else wanted to undertake the ultimate task of developing a manuscript, but many said they would support my efforts. So six years ago, I began the process by interviewing over fifty women and their mothers and all of these somewhat seasoned professionals. I then started mapping out an outline for the book.

The Heart of Female Same-Sex Attraction is especially important not only because nothing else exists for clinicians or for pastoral counselors in helping women with SSA, but also because these women are not the easiest clients with whom to work. Many have therefore been wounded and retraumatized by their insensitive counselors and pastors. I have a great passion to protect these women by educating their helpers. Hopefully, the misunderstandings and presumptions on the part of the therapists will begin to be eliminated due to this publication.



“Much has been written about male homosexuality, very little about female homosexuality. Janelle Hallman has been a pioneer in this underexplored field. Her wisdom and keen insight flow from an obvious and deep love for the women she has had the honor of serving over many years.

The Heart of Female Same-Sex Attraction will help all who read it to understand and love the precious women who experience same-sex attraction. I highly recommend it.”

—Christopher West, MTS,
LHD Fellow, Theology of
the Body Institute

What are two or three key points you want readers to understand about female same-sex attraction?

Hallman:

1. The overarching emphasis of this book is that women with SSA deserve our utmost respect, compassion and support in their confused and painful journey in life. We do not have a right to tell them how to live or what to do or not do any more than we have a right to tell a person who is overweight to stop eating so much or else they will be disfellowshipped and destined for God’s wrath. Overeaters are in the process of experiencing and living out God’s grace for their besetting confusions and weaknesses just like women struggling with SSA.

2. Behind every woman’s struggle with homosexuality are God-given longings for love, closeness, companionship, and a stable sense of self and femininity. It is these longings that often become confused within an eroticized or sexualized same-sex struggle. These longings must be affirmed and called forth—not condemned and thrown out simply because they have become confused with a woman’s sexuality.

3. Another main point for the therapist or pastoral caregiver is that a woman’s defensive behaviors and attitudes are also reflective of her deep longing for safety and acceptance. As therapists, we should again identify, affirm and call forth her deepest longings and not simply correct, fight or condemn her confused efforts to provide herself a sense of safety.

Why do most women first come to you for counseling?

Hallman: Few women enter therapy with the single request to “change” their sexual orientation. Typically, a woman will initially want to address difficulties related to

- the crisis of a recently terminated same-sex relationship
- generalized depression, anxiety or mistrust
- chronic emptiness, toxic shame or a lack of a basic sense of self
- loneliness and isolation
- a pattern of emotional dependency or enmeshment with female friends
- dealing with men

At the beginning of treatment, most of my clients are unclear as to what is realistic in terms of changing their SSA. They may be unsure of how much of their life they *can* or *want* to change. Therapy, as reflected in this book, is rarely, if ever, focused on the *direct* eradication of a woman’s same-sex feelings or orientation. A woman’s SSA is not a neatly

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Q&A

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

compartmentalized aspect within her life that can be easily isolated and simply extricated. A woman's same-sex attraction is rarely a behaviorally based phenomenon that can be objectively observed, quantified or controlled, although it certainly has behavioral components. Female SSA is an extremely complex multidimensional biological, cognitive, emotional, behavioral and relational *dynamic* that may or may not reach into a woman's core identity.

Janelle Hallman is a licensed professional counselor in Denver, Colorado, specializing in female homosexuality and emotional dependencies. She also speaks, consults, supervises and writes extensively on the subject. She is an ordained minister and conducts conferences on sexuality, gender, redemption and healing. She is executive director of Desert Hope Ministries and an adjunct professor at Denver Seminary. Visit janellehallman.com for more information.

You have written this book for a number of people. What do you hope they take away from *The Heart of Female Same-Sex Attraction*?

Hallman: I hope that mental-health professionals, educators and counselors will experience a deep sense of relief as the mystery of female homosexuality is somewhat reduced to an understandable framework of why a woman might struggle and why many women with SSA often present with deep defensiveness and an inability to trust. I also hope that many professionals will now feel comfortable welcoming these women into their practices with a spirit of mercy and compassion. I hope that educators will no longer sidestep this important topic but begin to boldly teach their students the complexities of the human soul, especially those that reside in the realm of sexual identity.

I hope that friends and family of women experiencing same-sex feelings can gain an appreciation of all of the influences in their loved one's life that went in to shaping and forming her, including her core sense of self and gender identity. I hope that this group will be able to recommit to love and journey with their loved one, regardless of her decisions, struggles and confusions met along the way. I hope that this group will grow and learn and thereby be able to teach us all about unconditional love and radical acceptance.

I hope that the women who struggle with same-sex feelings will gain a new picture of their lives, no longer clouded by shame and a sense of condemnation, but within the light of truth, compassion and love. I hope that they will be filled with hope rather than despair, as they take the next step forward in becoming more whole as a woman and more whole as a relational being, designed in God's image. I hope that they will commit to life as a journey and will begin to practice self-acceptance and kindness toward themselves.