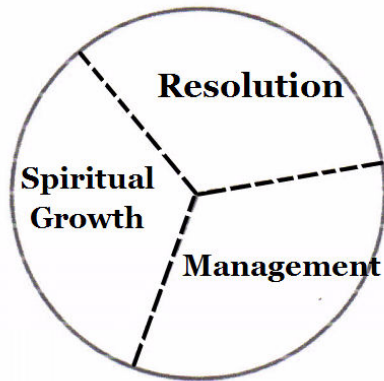


Resolving Same-Sex Attraction!

Three areas of change and growth!



It's most important that you understand some things as you begin your reading of this book. There are certain emphases used in this book which I want to bring to your attention.

This book is organized around three basic areas which SSA Christians must come to grips with: **Resolution, Management, and Spiritual Growth**. SSA Christians must do Resolution work, Management work and Spiritual Growth work. These are the three main sections of the book, and in my work

as a Sexual Orientation Resolution Therapist (SORT), these three areas are the focus of counseling. They are very important in order for you to gain a meaningful overview and perspective for change and healing, so allow me to explain them to you.

These three areas are most important because **Resolution, Management and Spiritual Growth** are the three fundamental areas in which the SSA Christian needs to gain understanding, receive education, experience healing, and be purposefully coached or trained. While we separate them in order to organize them logically and individually for learning purposes, in reality, all three overlap, intertwine and are developing at the same time.

Resolution is the inside work, the work of self-understanding, family of origin work, education about his personality dynamics and emotional life, and the experience of psycho-emotional healing.

Management is the outside work, the work of learning strategies, techniques and methods to gain sexual self-control and diminish or eliminate inappropriate, compulsive or addictive sexual behavior and improve psycho-sexual functioning.

Spiritual Growth is the deep work of the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Lord Jesus in his life. It is the work which is facilitated by such things as prayer, Bible study and church fellowship, to name a few.

In terms of Resolution work I will act as your counselor and therapist.

In terms of Management work I will act as your coach, educator and trainer.

In terms of Spiritual Growth I will act as your spiritual director and mentor.

Throughout this book you may experience me speaking to you as a father-figure or a good Christian friend. This is intentional. I hope this benefits you.

Another emphasis I'd like you to understand in this book is the concept of "**substitution**"; substituting whatever is positive and healthy for what is negative and unhealthy. Spiritually, there is the need to replace or substitute our old life of sin with its tendency to sexual sin, with a new life in Christ. This is the exchange which every Christian makes. Spiritually speaking, God's answer to the presence and power of obsessive sin in a person's life is an exchange for the life of Christ which brings the power of the Holy Spirit to gain victory over sin (Gal 5:16) .

Substitution must take place in those primary rewarding relationships of life; namely his relationship to God, his relationship to his Self, his relationships to others, his work life, and his relationship to nature as we'll see in more detail later.

SSA Christians!

"When I finally faced how out-of-control my sexual life was, I became depressed, sullen, withdrawn and intensely self-critical. I was filled with self-loathing and disgust. Do you know what it's like when you can't stand yourself? I didn't want to live anymore.

Being around Christians was like having daggers stuck in me. On the outside I acted like a good person, and others saw me as a good Christian. On the inside I raged with sexual feelings and began an obsession with masturbation and pornography. When I tried to suppress my homosexual desires and behavior, I felt good for awhile. But then I'd slip into sexual sin again, and feel rotten once again.

I lived such a phony life! Living with such a secret and such a lie is like cutting yourself in two! Remember the old magician trick of cutting the woman in half? I could never feel whole, real and authentic. When someone showed interest in me and liked something I did, I had to remind myself that the person didn't know the real me, and so whatever it was I received praise for could not be really accepted as my own. I'd say to myself, "if only they knew the real me, all their praise would be taken back".

Finally the internal division and the emotional conflict tormented me so much that I left church altogether. I stopped praying or reading my Bible. Not even God could help me!"

These were the words of Mark, a 26 year old bachelor who held a good job in the tech industry. A conscientious and saved Christian!

It's estimated that 1% to 5% of the Christians in the congregations of every US church are dealing with some degree of sexual addiction and homosexuality. These are for the most part, saved, born-again committed Christians. They live in pain and shame. They keep their sexual difficulties a secret, often feeling lonely, self-critical and hypocritical. They are perhaps the most hidden and wounded children in the Body of Christ. They are often desperately hoping to find a trustworthy person with whom they can share the pain they are experiencing. They long to find a good Christian friend, pastor or counselor who might give them some help. They feel stuck and wonder if the devil has possessed them by their sexual passions.

They fear they will not be understood, or worse, judged! They assume that they are worse than anyone else, that their sexual thoughts, passions, desires and behavior are so foul, so ugly, so reprehensible and unacceptable that they will only receive condemnation, rejection and alienation.

Perhaps what is saddest of all, the devil has convinced them that there is no hope or forgiveness for them, and that they are Christian phonies, fakes and rotten to the core. As a result many suffer from deep depression, despair and live under a cloud of pervasive self-contempt, humiliation and low self-esteem. Some give up going to church altogether, and others eventually give up their faith. They come to believe that there is no place for them in the Christian community.

Two opposing realities!

You can see from Mark's words that when homosexuality is present in a person's life, and he or she is a biblically faithful Christian, all of life is a challenge and a preoccupation shaped by these two powerful realities. For many it is a torment!

If you're reading this book, then perhaps these two things may be true for you. You're a committed Christian who is also homosexually inclined or same-sex attracted (SSA). Or maybe you are someone who is concerned about a person who is homosexually oriented or gay.

If you yourself are same-sex attracted, you probably are a born-again disciple of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Who brought you to faith in Christ as your Savior and Lord. And you are also Same-Sex Attracted! These are the two compelling forces and conflicting themes of your life.

The Lord God, Your Father, knows that you have only one life to live, and that is the life right now with all its unique gifts, disabilities, weaknesses, sensitivities and circumstances which make it uniquely your life. For you this includes the dominating issue of homosexuality. But what does this mean for you? What are you supposed to do? What are your options?

A Crossroad!

Jeff was hiking on a path through an unfamiliar and rugged forest. Dusk was descending fast and it would soon be very dark. The path he was following was simply marked with a large "A" on a signpost at the beginning, and he soon discovered that it was shaded in an unpleasant and dull dimness. It was also lined with overhanging vines of thorns which snagged at him with sharp needles and cuts. The path under his feet was irregular with raised tree roots and stones, and he often stumbled and fell.

After some time of contending with this terrain he became exhausted, and as darkness was now immanent, he pitched his tent along the side of the path, crawled into his sleeping bag and fell fast asleep.

When he awoke it was daylight and he discovered that he had pitched his tent at a crossroad of two other paths. Again they were simply marked; one with an "F" and the other with a "W".

As he pondered which one to take, another hiker came into view and introduced himself as Jeremy. Jeremy took off his backpack, appearing tired and drained from his trip along the path marked "A". Still out of breath, he leaned against a tree as Jeff approached him.

"I can see that you too have been on the path marked "A", Jeff said, "I was also and that's why I'm glad I've come to this crossroad. But I'm uncertain if I should follow "F" or "W". Do you have any idea what these letters mean?"

"Not a clue" said Jeremy, "but as I look down the path marked "F", I can see that it looks a lot more pleasant and easy to follow than the one marked "W".

"I think you're right," Jeff said. "Perhaps we can take that path as fellow travelers!"

"Sounds good to me," Jeremy said. As they began gathering their gear to follow the path marked "F", they heard the approach of another hiker coming off the path marked "A". He too was weary and tired from his difficult journey. He was delighted to see two other hikers and introduced himself as John.

"I see we've all come to a crossroad after that arduous trip along the path marked "A", John said. "Which of the two paths have you each decided to follow?"

"Funny you should ask," said Jeremy, "we just decided to follow "F". From the looks of it from here it seems more comfortable and pleasant. Want to join us John?"

"Well, thanks for the invitation guys," John replied, "but I think I'm taking the path marked "W" even though it looks more difficult and challenging. You see, I discovered what the letters mean. The path we've all been on was the path marked "A" for "Against". We've all been journeying on a path contending against our problems. But now we're at a crossroad of two paths. The one marked "F" is an invitation to live "FOR"

your problem, and the one marked “W” invites you to live “WITH” your problem. I’m sure it’s going to be more difficult and challenging, but I believe living WITH my problems is the right path to follow. Will either of you join me as a fellow traveler?”

Three paths!

The nature of Same-Sex Attraction (SSA) or homosexuality is such, that it will eventually demand a decision about its presence in your life, especially as it affects your Christian life. It will not remain dormant and passive. Human sexuality is a pervasive reality in our lives. We are, in every respect, very sexual.

No, you didn't choose to be SSA. It arose from a weaving together of personality characteristics, early emotional and social experiences in and outside of your family, developmental tasks not sufficiently completed, and perhaps some pre-birth, bio-chemical, genetic pre-disposition factors. In addition, though we seldom acknowledge it, homosexuality may also be perpetrated and perpetuated by the work of evil spiritual forces, which are dedicated to diverting and distracting a person from God's design for fellowship with God.

No, you didn't choose those formative SSA feelings and thoughts, or even those later attractions and sexual preoccupations. But you probably reinforced your homosexuality with your thoughts, fantasies and behavior. Nevertheless, as a Christian, homosexuality is a psycho-social-bio-chemical and spiritual phenomenon in you which requires a decision, a thoughtful response and your careful attention. It will most likely not go away or disappear altogether, even though it may and often does diminish.

For, Against, With!

We all live in a broken world with broken human natures. Every one of us is subject to illness, pain, suffering and death. There are numerous forms of sexual brokenness. There is exhibitionism, voyeurism, prostitution, adultery, pedophilia, transexuality, transvestism, bestiality, sadomasochism, and many, many more. Homosexuality is one form of sexual brokenness.

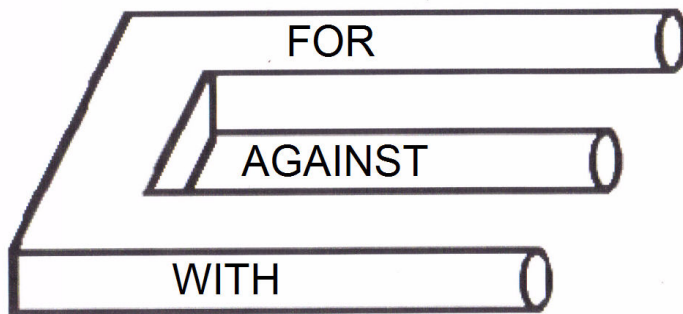
God didn't invent homosexuality; man's sinfulness and brokenness did! But it is there and it is real and it is powerful! It will exert such a powerful force upon a person's whole psycho-social life adjustment that it will eventually channel you into one of three life choices or states. It will force you to deal with your SSA as a major life accommodation in one of three ways! Living **for** it, living **against** it, or living **with** it!

(1) You can live **For** it as a committed gay person, as a homosexually active person in or outside of an on-going relationship. Call it **The Gay Lifestyle Option**.

(2) You can live **Against** it; that is, try to deny, repress, suppress, segregate it, or dissociate yourself from it as best you can. Call it **The Conflicted Option**, or

(3) You can find a way to live **With** it in some mature, emotionally healthy, responsible and redemptive way which is compatible with your Christian values and biblical faithfulness. Call it **The Resolution Option**.

For, Against, With! Those are the only options you have with regard to your homosexual issue.



Living For: Now if you are a biblically faithful and committed Christian who desires to grow and mature, the first option, living **For** homosexuality, is not morally acceptable to you.

Homosexual behavior and the Christian walk are opposed one to the other. They are biblically and theoretically polar opposites. Homosexuality represents both a psychological blockage in psychosexual development and a powerful inclination to sinful behavior. The second, your life in Christ, represents a powerful force toward wholeness, completeness, healing and holiness. The second is the natural **victor** and **healer** of the first.

It is clear that only one can become master of your life. Your life in Christ must dominate a life driven by your sexuality. This is true for any Christian with a sexual obsession or compulsion. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other." You cannot make both masters of your life. Christ will have no competing master. Sin cannot co-exist with holiness and wholeness. God wants to be your only Lord and Master!

Living Against: But the second option - living **Against** it - is not psychologically healthy for you either. It is filled with stumbling obstacles, as we saw in the parable of the Crossroad. Each of the three men came to the crossroad in his life after spending some difficult time living Against his problems.

To live **Against** your SSA means continuous contention, backsliding, conflict, feeling hypocritical and phony, spiritually compromised, going through cycles of falling sexually, repenting, asking forgiveness, and falling

again and again. Feeling drained, disgusted, frustrated by the battle against your flesh! Having no peace and integrity! It is a psycho-emotional nightmare! This is where many are now, or have been, or are from time to time!

The whole thing is a dilemma. What's the solution? You can't change your Christian beliefs to accommodate homosexuality! You can't seem to get rid of or eliminate homosexuality altogether! God hasn't removed it from your life!

Living With: Now here is another of God's great principles and methods: He seems to be saying to you what He said to Paul in 2 Cor 12:7-10. **"My grace is sufficient for you! For when I am weak, then I am strong."**

As with so many problems Christians must live with, God says to us that He will supply the grace and support we need to find a way to live with SSA as a Christian, even if it continues to be a present reality in your life. This is the resolution option in which a biblically faithful Christian responds to the on-going grace of God to resolve and manage SSA. Notice the two important elements! It includes both **Resolution and Management** of SSA. This book is all about helping people live **With** SSA.

What does Resolution look like?

How can we describe what it is like for an SSA Christian who is living With SSA in a psychologically and spiritually healthy way? Here are some major characteristics:

1. You are discovering and settling the underlying emotional, psychological and social issues from your past, now embedded in your thinking and functioning, which led to the development of homosexuality. A lot of this usually has to do with early and pre-adolescent experiences with family and peers.
2. You are becoming increasingly more self-integrated, self-accepting, at peace with yourself and emotionally mature.
3. You are becoming predominantly free from obsessive, impulsive or compulsive SSA interests, pursuits or behavior. Turning to forms of perverse sexuality are being eliminated or drastically reduced. In other words you are managing your SSA well.
4. You are growing as a mature, adult, Christian man or woman. You are forming healthy, wholesome same-gender and other gender relationships. Perhaps you are even moving on to marriage or greater marital stability and satisfying functioning as a heterosexual person. Or you may be choosing to live as a celibate person in purity and self-control. Any of these choices takes place even though there may be some vestiges of same-sex attraction (SSA) and temptation in your life. Christians no

longer live under the power of sin, but we will always live in its presence. We don't have to sin, but we can sin from time to time. There is a big difference between living a sinful lifestyle and occasionally falling into sin.

5. Your relationship to God the Father, Jesus His Son and the Holy Spirit are becoming more intensely real and intimate. This is to say you are becoming more Christ-like and holy as God is holy.
6. Your relationship to the work you do for a living, your avocations you do for enjoyment, and especially your vocational calling to serve the Body of Christ in some way is bringing you much satisfaction.

This is what we mean by living With SSA. I think that the ideal part of you believes that this is God's heart-desire for you. I believe that the Holy Spirit is urging you to work toward resolution and management. Your Father God's love-desire for you is that you seek the Resolved State. I said the "Resolved State"; I didn't say He necessarily insists on you living as a heterosexual or married person. You may choose to live as a celibate. But whether married or celibate, He desires you to live With SSA in a resolved way.

Resolving Same-Sex Attraction: Review, Reflect, Listen, Write and Pray!

As you arrive at the end of this chapter, I ask you to **Review, Reflect, Listen, Write and Pray**. As I believe that the Spirit of God was present in the writing of this book, I also believe that He is present in your reading of each chapter. He can use this book to effect actual healing if you are receptive to His still small voice.

If you approach the reading as some academic or intellectual exercise only, you will not receive the full benefit of this book. What's most important is hearing the Holy Spirit speaking to you in conscious or subtle ways? So, would you spend some time in reflection about what you have learned with your mind, but also how you heard the still small Spirit voice of Jesus speak to your heart about yourself and the issue of SSA. These words of Jesus' Spirit are the most important messages you can receive. They are the most healing words spoken through this chapter.

Don't be like the people about whom Jesus said, "I speak in parables when I speak to them because when they look, they cannot see, and when they listen, they cannot hear or understand" (Matthew 13:13). They thought they saw and heard. So he used stories to keep them from knowing the truth unless they would take the time to reflect and ponder and allow the Holy Spirit to convert their hearts and minds.

Don't assume you really heard and saw what God wanted you to personally see and understand in this chapter. You read the text, but did you see and understand the *subtext*, the underlying words spoken to your heart by God's Spirit. Don't assume you did by one casual reading of this chapter. Instead open your mind and heart to what is being spoken to you in Spirit and in truth. There are no shortcuts to emotional healing and spiritual maturity.

So first, I'd like you to **Review** this chapter. With a notebook at hand I'd like you to take each section of the chapter.... and review them by **underlining**, **highlighting**, or **circling** words, phrases or sentences which had special meaning for you. Here are some areas you might reflect on!

Reflect on any passages you have marked because you felt emotions or feelings arise in your heart during your reading. **Listen** with your spiritual ears! See with your spiritual eyes! How were you touched, loved, embraced, comforted, counseled, corrected, convicted or taught by the Spirit? Then please do some reflective **Writing** in your notebook as you are led by the Spirit.

1. SSA Christians – How did you identify with the SSA Christians and Mark?
2. Two opposing realities! – Reflections?
3. Three Choices - Where are you? How do you understand “live with”?
4. The Resolution Option! What does that feel like to you?

Finally, most importantly I would suggest you let yourself be led to **Pray**, a prayer that emerges from all you have learned and experienced from this chapter. Speak it to your Father God in the name of His Son Jesus as you are led by the Spirit. Turning the whole chapter into a sincere prayer means that God's Spirit is truly working in your heart and mind, and you will sense the healing power that such a prayer will affect in your life.

