

### Out of Egypt: Leaving Lesbianism Behind

Excerpts from the book by Jeanette Howard

(Regeneration Books and Monarch Publications, Crowborough, England 1991; reprinted in 1997)

*Out of Egypt is considered a classic in the literature, and it is now available after having been out-of-print for some time. The author describes her own struggle and the principles she discovered as she counseled others. The book was written for a Christian audience, but it should also be helpful to women of other faiths, or no faith. We quote from the book directly:*

#### Pseudo-Masculinity as Self-Protection

Many women...were brought up with poor masculine role models ...In reaction to a negligent or unresponsive father, and coupled with an ambivalence or disdain toward her mother, the daughter assumes masculine functions. She rejects the feminine role model based on her view of her mother, and embraces all that is masculine. The woman focuses on what she can *do*, rather than on who she can *be*, and she places emphasis on self-reliance, perfectionism and competition. The woman becomes performance-oriented, and has a tendency to spend her energies on causes or "rights" in which she believes. So often this is an unspoken cry for final recognition from her dad.

In my own past, the problem lay in the fact that I had been functioning in the "masculine mode." I had little problem with initiation. I was able to perform and accomplish many things. But I was woefully inept at receiving from anybody...

To walk in wholeness requires a more balanced approach to life than we have been experiencing. It requires a compatibility between our masculine and feminine sides, which will produce harmony rather than discord.

Similarly, the masculine/feminine equilibrium has often been disturbed in a woman who has suffered abuse. Her thoughts encourage [her to engage in] controlling and manipulative behavior. *No one will ever hurt me again!* Thus, she keeps everyone at bay, or controls them through seduction.

#### The World Applauds our Defense Mechanisms

For whatever reason, many women adopt pseudo-masculinity as a form of self-protection. They reject all that is inherently feminine, and strive to obtain "equality" with, or superiority over, men.

The destructiveness of this stance passes unnoticed, because the world applauds our defense mechanisms. But the cost of this applause is high. By attaining "equality" with men, we entomb our gentle, vulnerable and trusting qualities under a guise of toughness, independence and

suspicion. We trust no one but ourselves. Our hard, protective layers smother our heart-cries to be cared for, held and loved.

The other end of the spectrum of imbalance manifests itself in women who derive their sense of identity and security from other people. Assuming the role of a child, these women rely on others to define and determine their lives. In this instance, they mistake passivity for femininity. This stance is just as unbalanced as the woman who strives for recognition through her actions. Continual grasping from other people obscures the woman's understanding of self. Without a firm base to fall back on, her relationships with others are precarious.

Just as all families lie somewhere on the dysfunction spectrum, so all women lie somewhere on the spectrum between acceptance and rejection of their gender and feminine identity.

On the one hand you may have encountered those lesbians who personify all that is feminine, and have no problems seeing themselves as such. On the other hand, you may have come across women who have denied their gender identity and femininity so much that, except for the obvious physiological differences, they could be mistaken for a male. But the majority of those struggling with lesbianism fall in the murky middle ground.

Attitudes and beliefs about men vary, too, depending on our place on this curve. However, there is one predominant attitude I have encountered among nearly all lesbians: feeling superior to men.

#### Gender Superiority

Even though I detached emotionally from my mother at an early age, women ran my life. I did have a father and two brothers, but I remember having very little interaction with them... Attending an all-girls' school where personal discipline and academic excellence were the order of the day, my already shaky femininity was further squelched. I had crushes on various teachers who positively dripped with femininity. Now I realize that I was attracted to qualities in them that I felt lacking in myself...

#### Trust--The Key to Embracing Real Femininity

Extricating oneself from anywhere on the spectrum of broken femininity is not easy. Many reasons, usually deep wounds, predisposed us to operating the way we do...



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As a woman becomes secure in her gender, she automatically opens the door to femininity.

A good starting point in achieving gender security is to ask yourself pertinent questions. *What is my self-talk? Who do I say that I am?...* Consciously reject all thoughts that do not measure up with the truth...

Walking through the door to femininity can be awesome. It takes courage and determination to shed the old conception of oneself, and to embrace the emerging feminine self...

A startling revelation came when I discovered that heterosexual women did not float through life on gossamer wings. Although they did not share my particular gender confusion, many operated out of a greater sense of feminine brokenness than I did. This understanding enabled me to bring my homosexual struggles into perspective. I could discern what was inherently a lesbian problem, what was inherently a feminine problem, and what was intrinsically a "people" problem. ■