

One Woman's Struggle:

Interview with Jane Boyer

There are many early family factors that can lead a woman into a lesbian lifestyle. In this interview, Jane Boyer describes her alcoholic father's physical and emotional abuse of her mother and their family. This left Jane with such anger--even hatred--that she found it very difficult to trust any future men who came into her life. She fell into the role of taking care of her mother and younger siblings, while feeling contempt for her mother's weakness as the passive victim.

As early as the age of five, Jane found herself admiring the strong, masculine women she met--the exact opposite of the abused women in her family whom she had resolved she would never emulate.

Jane married and adopted a child, but continued to find herself romantically attracted to "butch-type" women with whom she was vulnerable to developing a strong emotional dependency. When a friend encouraged her to go to a gay bar, she found herself caught up in a lifestyle that broke up her marriage.

Jane went through a great deal of trauma before resolving her feelings and bringing her family back together, as she tells us in this interview with Joseph Nicolosi.

Dr. N. What I want to do, Jane, is focus on the significant events in your life that brought about change from lesbianism. But before we get into that, just give me a little bit of information about your family background.

J.B. I was the oldest of four children. My parents were both alcoholics. There was a lot of physical abuse, and my dad at times got the belt, and we got whacked around.

Dr. N. Was this from your dad or mom?

J.B. From my dad. We also saw my mother get beat up quite a bit from my dad. There was a lot of domestic violence. Because I was the oldest of four, I basically took on the role of taking care of my mother because she not only was alcoholic, but felt very helpless.

Dr. N. So you got into the role of protecting your mother against your father.

J.B. Yes, and she took a very passive role, and there were times that she would be drunk and crying with an icebag over her face. Her face would be all bloody with black eyes, and she'd be saying, "I don't know if I should

leave him," and on and on.

There were times that I just really hated what she was. She did the very best that she could, but I know that there were many, many times that I just hated what I saw in her. Even her sisters were a lot like that. They were kind of passive and weak, and didn't have a whole lot of backbone.



Jane Boyer and family

Dr. N. Right. So the message you received, or the interpretation or understanding you gained, was if *this is what it means to be a woman*, then I don't want to be a woman.

J.B. ...That I didn't want any part of it.

Dr. N. Exactly.

J.B. Women, to me, symbolized weakness. This is an odd thing, but as as I got older, when I did get involved with other women, these women were very butch, very dike and very tough.

Dr. N. You were attracted to the more masculine type of woman.

J.B. Yes. Which I know now was a way of being able to capture that part of my identity.

Dr. N. So here, we see the reparative drive in action—the effort to connect with the qualities of the feminine you admired, which were strength and control.

J.B. Which is why I think too that I always sided with my father, and blamed my mother for the difficulties in the marriage.

Dr. N. So basically you did what the heterosexual boy should do, which is disidentify with the mother and identify with the father.

J.B. That's exactly what I did. What I did was I disidentified with mom and I identified with the abuser.

Dr. N. Freud called that "identification with the aggressor." It's a primitive psychological survival mechanism. "If someone hurts me, I'll be like him so I won't get hurt. I'll be the one in control."

J.B. He was powerful, he was in control. She was

weak. She was powerless. I didn't want to have anything to do with that.

Dr. N. Was he good to you, or bad to you?

J.B. He was a bad figure to me. Looking back on it now, I can see he was so broken himself that he had no idea how to show any kind of love whatsoever.

Dr. N. What is your insight about why this sexual-orientation issue--this gender-identity issue--happened in your life?

J.B. I think because first of all, I had a deep hatred for men. I could not trust them, and even though I married a man and we've been married now over twenty years—and my husband is very gentle, and there is no reason to doubt his love—still, I always believed that he would hurt me, and so there was a lack of vulnerability on my part. I just really really hated men. As far as women were concerned, I came quite emotionally enmeshed and very dependent. I can remember getting very dependent with females when I was as young as five.

Dr. N. We commonly hear that in lesbian relationships, women become overly enmeshed and get into symbiotic relationships where they lose their identities to the female partner.

J.B. Exactly. And starting at the age of five, I would look at my female teachers, who were Catholic nuns, and get incredibly enmeshed with certain women who were very much in control, in positions of leadership. I very much wanted to be with them and to have their validation. I wanted affirmation from them so much that I began to feel very, very uncomfortable with those feelings, because I could see that no one else was going through that.

Dr. N. So here, we're not talking about sexual feelings, we're talking about attachment feelings.

J.B. Right. I don't think you can be sexually attracted to anyone at that age, unless you've been sexually abused and someone has introduced you to those feelings.

Dr. N. One of the things that we often hear from gay advocates is, "I knew I was gay when I was five, or six, or seven years old." But when you look closely at it, it wasn't about sex--it was about attachment, affection, and needing approval.

J.B. Right, that really is the most powerful need of all. Sex isn't nearly as powerful as that emotional connection.

Dr. N. Because that's a deeper need, that desire for identity and belonging.

J.B. And it's that hunger that really drives a person, but sex doesn't fix that. It doesn't reach the deepest needs.

Dr. N. Exactly.

J.B. So I was very much in touch with that need at a very young age.

Dr. N. What was the lesbian lifestyle for you? How did you get into it, and what were your experiences?

J.B. Well, first I got married. My husband and I were really, really good buddies. We met in San Francisco when I was in the Army and he was a hippie. We vagabonded all over the country, did a lot of drinking together—so much so that today, I am a recovering alcoholic, and so is he. But we had a great old time the first five years of our marriage, partying and hitchhiking all across country. Things went really well.

But during the first couple of years of my marriage I was in nursing school, and there was this female professor that I just fell madly in love with. I was a good Catholic girl and it never crossed my mind that this might be about lesbianism. But I would do anything she would ask me to do--whether it would be housesitting, or getting involved with certain clinical situations.

I'm embarrassed to think about this now. It was to the point that I would put notes on the windshield of her cars--roses, cards, that kind of thing.

Dr. N. A total overdependence.

J.B. Yes. Even then I did not make the connection that this would eventually lead to a full-blown lesbian relationship. So anyway, what happened is about two or three years after that, I was looking for a babysitter and someone had answered an ad that I had put in the paper. She admitted to me that she was gay, and after she had taken care of my daughter on several occasions, she invited me to go to a gay bar and I was very intrigued by this. This was about five years into my marriage.

Dr. N. So you had gotten married even though you were experiencing these strong, emotionally dependent relationships with women. But you didn't make the connection, and didn't admit to yourself that you might be dealing with lesbianism. You just thought you were this heterosexual woman who had these strong attachments to female authority figures.

J.B. It was mostly just a very intense emotional attachment. I had not yet put the sexual connotation to it.

Dr. N. Did you have a normal sexual relationship with your husband?

J.B. Well while I was drinking, it was great. There was no difficulty in our relationship until I got sober and then we would go for months and months without having a relationship, and even longer when I was involved with other women.

Dr. N. In other words, the alcoholism kind of took away your inhibitions and lowered your anxiety.

J.B. Yes it did. And at that time I wasn't in touch with all of those feelings--the anger from the physical abuse, the sexual abuse, and the emotional abuse I had endured. You know, my father used to say degrading things about women all the time. My father was a misogynist—that is, someone who hates women--and I really didn't know what that meant until I heard Leanne Payne talk about that at a conference.

My father truly hated women. They were sex objects. He used to call women the "c" word and the "b" word, all those kinds of terrible things.

Dr. N. So you met your husband, you were having a good time in the early years of your marriage, and you had a child.

J.B. We adopted a child from India.

Dr. N. ...Who is now how old?

J.B. Seventeen.

Dr. N. And then you met this babysitter.

J.B. She told me she was going out to a gay bar, she was having a fun time, and she invited me to come. And I was very interested in that. There wasn't anything that I wouldn't do, you know. I was a daredevil...I would do anything. So I thought, "A gay bar...I've never been to a gay bar. What are these people like?"

The first time I walked into that gay bar, I knew I was home. The people there were so friendly and welcoming. Really, I felt like I had come home. This woman behind the bar--she owned the bar and she was very macho, very boy-ish looking, and right off the bat she was attracted to me. She kept putting the make on me, saying that she wanted to go with me, and I kept telling her I wasn't gay. But at the same time, I found myself very attracted to her.

I kept going back to the gay bar, and soon I was practically living there. I was going there every day because I was working just around the corner, so I would go there before work, and then I would go there after work.

Dr. N. How did your husband deal with this?

J.B. Well, eventually I did tell him I was going to a gay bar, but I said it was really about evangelizing for my faith. I think I was justifying it not only to him, but also to myself, by saying I was evangelizing. I thought I was going to go over there to change these people.

But then there was the emotional attraction for this woman, and I got involved almost immediately. I was

drunk one night and we closed up the bar together--it was just she and I --and I thought this was the best thing that I had ever been through.

Even though this was wonderful, at the same time I was horrified. What had I done? I had had sex with another woman. But I kept going back because that's what I wanted.

That's when my drinking escalated to the point that I had to go through a 28-day residential program. Then after I got out and got sober, I went back to the bar and had my coffee. My relationship with the bar owner continued for quite some time.

Dr. N. So how many years were you involved with lesbian relationships?

J.B. About five.

Dr. N. How long did your relationship with the bar owner last?

J.B. For about a year and a half, off and on. Then after that relationship broke up, I was involved with another woman.

Dr. N. Were those relationships truly loving and very deep and powerful to you at that time?

J.B. Yes. Very intense.

Dr. N. And what about your husband?

J.B. He was getting drunk, and our relationship was falling apart. We had no sexual relationship whatsoever, and I wanted nothing to do with him. I was out late at night, but I tried to cover it up by saying I was working late.

After my first relationship was over I thought, "OK, this was just a once-in-a-lifetime thing, and this is not who I really am. I am not really gay." Women were telling me, maybe you're gay. "Oh no, no. I'm not really gay but I will keep going to the gay bar. I will not get involved again. That's it, I've had it, I'm done with it." Well, sure enough there comes along this other woman. Very butch.

Dr. N. You're attracted to the more masculine type.

J.B. Very much so. In fact when we were together, they would always look at us as a man and woman. That's how butch these women were. So this woman had become homeless and came to live with us. And then we got involved right here at my home.

Dr. N. Did your husband know what was going on?

J.B. No he didn't know then, but my husband's drinking had gotten to a point where I knew that there was no

hope. If he was going to keep drinking, then there was just no way that we could stay together. So I gave him an ultimatum that he needed to quit drinking or leave, and he chose to leave.

My husband I were apart for two to three months while this woman was living here. The kids had missed him a lot, and it was a very painful time for our family. Eventually he came back and was living in the area again, and one day he came into the house and saw a note she had left me on my kitchen table.

Dr. N. A love note.

J.B. Yes. It was obvious what was going on. He had been talking to a pastor and sharing the concern that I was going to a gay bar, and the fact that I seemed to have been very oddly connected with other women in the past. Still, he had always refused to believe that there could be anything going on.

But when he came home and saw the note, he fell to his knees and he broke down and cried. That's when he heard God say to him, "How can I heal your marriage if you don't put down the booze?" That was the last time he drank.

Then he called me at work. I didn't know he had been home. He called me and said, "I'm home." My heart sank. He said, "I found a note on the table and we need to talk." So I came home and to put it all in a nutshell, he said, "You can't have it both ways. You need to make up your mind. You can't go on living like this."

I was torn. I didn't know what to do. He said, "I will tell you one thing-- you won't have the kids." And I knew he was right. I couldn't bring them up in that kind of environment. It was at that point that I thought, well, I might as well just do myself in, because I couldn't bear being away from this woman, even though I knew my husband was right.

God always had an influence on my heart. I could never be involved with other women and at the same time, be free of guilt. It never happened. I was always tormented.

Dr. N. It never seemed right to you.

J.B. Never. What I wanted to know was, what is the truth about all this? What is the truth? I wanted to do the right thing. I did not want to look back years down the road and say, "Oh my God, I abandoned my family for something that was false." That is something that I could have never lived with. And when I went to the Exodus Conference, that's when I knew the truth for sure. God puts the truth in your heart.

Dr. N. That's one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. When we're baptized in the church, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is an eye for the truth. And once we see the truth, we may forget it for awhile, but we can never really banish it from our hearts. It will come back to speak to us.

J.B. That's right.

Dr. N. Tell me about the key points in your healing. What were the important milestones?

J.B. First that my husband said—very gently, not as a threat, but speaking the truth—that you can't raise kids that way. That was not something that I could argue with, because I knew he was right. We were in agreement about that. But at first, I told him that I could not make up my mind and that I needed time.

Then he got some counseling from his pastor friend in Idaho, who said to give me time, and so he did. I had to really seek my own heart. Also when you're co-dependent with someone, it's not easy to break up a relationship, and you don't want to hurt them.

But I wanted the truth, and then I found out about the Exodus Conference. I went down there not knowing what it was all about. When I got to the conference, I felt so free, it was like coming into a paradise. Here I was at a place where I could finally see the truth—first of all, that I was not born that way. Thank God, I wasn't born that way.

Dr. N. Did you actually think that you were born this way?

J.B. Yes. I had been told that I was, so I thought gosh, if I was born this way, then I have to leave my husband, and I have to hurt my kids, and I have to...

Dr. N. I have to be true to my identity.

J.B. Because people were telling me that if I went back to my husband, I would never find peace.

Dr. N. Did any professionals tell you that you were born this way, or just your gay or lesbian friends?

J.B. Well, there was a gay pastor who told me this, and then there was also a Christian lesbian who was a therapist. But that's an oxymoron, to call yourself a gay Christian. But I made an appointment with her, because I had to find out, how in the world can you live this way, calling yourself a Christian and being gay? How can you do it? How can you have peace? How?

"When you've had an encounter with the glory of God, you will never be the same. I realized that lesbian love was a counterfeit--and we are far too easily pleased with the counterfeit."

continued on next page

Dr. N. ...How can you reconcile such an inherent conflict?

J.B. Exactly. But when I finally left there, I was convinced that she was not at peace. She was talking about men, saying things like, "And just because they have a penis...!" She went on and on -- just a lot of unresolved issues with men.

Dr. N. So you saw a lot of anger towards men?

J.B. A lot of anger towards men and a lot of unresolved issues with her mom, too. A lot of hurt. Her mother had died, and that all came out. So I walked out of that appointment thinking, "She's not at peace. *She's living her brokenness, that's what she's doing.* She has not recognized anything."

Dr. N. She has just rationalized. And she was a therapist?

J.B. She was a therapist. And then I saw a pastor several times, a born-again believer. I would go to him and say, "Pastor, I fell again. I went to the gay bar again. I don't know what to do, I feel so bad. I just keep going back." He would give me Bible verses—"I don't know what else to do with you; just go home and read these Bible verses and that will do it." But no, it didn't do it. I kept going back to the gay bar.

So anyway I went back to him and I said, "My husband and I are not together, and I'm at a point where I need to make a decision about divorce or whatever." He spoke to me in love—not condemningly—saying to me, "Jane, God will always love you. You have lived a gay life, and God will still always love you. You can divorce your husband and live the gay life, but you will never be blessed."

That haunted me. What did he mean by that? "I will never be blessed."

Dr. N. In Catholic theology, one would say you were not living the right life. And in the philosophy of the Tao, one would say that when you put your life in accord with the forces of nature, that's the good life, and when you oppose those forces, you will inevitably suffer.

J.B. So the first thing I realized was that I was not born that way, that it made perfect sense that it was a result of the way I was raised.

Dr. N. You began to see it on your own.

J.B. I began to see that I was a classic example.

Dr. N. Did you ever go into any psychotherapy or counseling?

J.B. Exodus had nothing going on here in Maine. It was just a matter of me and God. But I did do some one-on-one counseling with a male therapist who proved to be

very affirming, and I was able to learn better how to relate with men.

But something very important happened to me at the Exodus Conference. I had a vision of myself as a little girl, and there was Jesus. I couldn't see his face very clearly but I knew it was Him because there was so much love radiating from Him, and he had these long arms, and he reached over, picked me up and held me...and it was then that His love came pouring into my heart like liquid in the deep places that no lesbian love could go.

When you've had an encounter with the glory of God, you will never be the same. And it was then that I realized that lesbian love was a counterfeit, and we are far too easily pleased with the counterfeit.

Then I made the decision to close the door once and for all to lesbianism, because I wanted Jesus more than I wanted my sin.

Corey ten Boom was in a concentration camp where the people were in great despair, and she says, "Your pit of despair does not go so deep that God does not go even deeper." No matter how deep our longings are, God can go deeper.

Dr. N. And where are you today? Give me a picture of where you are today in your life.

J.B. In terms of my attractions to other women, that is gone. I have healthy relationships with women now--very good friendships with women that I don't have to call every day and get enmeshed with. And I have healthy relationships with men. We're very good friends and sexually things are going pretty well in my marriage.

Of course, that doesn't mean that all of my issues are dealt with, because it's not just about lesbianism, but about sexual abuse and many other things.

Dr. N. It's also about trust.

J.B. Yes, it's about trust, and I still have a ways to go. There continues to be an unwillingness to be completely vulnerable, perhaps. Something like that takes a long time to heal.

Dr. N. And the kids, how old are they now?

J.B. They're 17 and 12, and they're doing great. We live on fourteen acres in the mountains in Maine. God is so good. He took something that was so broken and torn up and damaged, and he has transformed it. My husband and I have been married 22 years now. We've been through so much to get where we are at today, and we just grow.

Dr. N. Thank you very much, Jane, for telling us about your transformation, and for offering other women the same hope for change in their lives. ■