



How to Deal with Same-Sex Attractions

by Frank Worthen



One of the most difficult battles ex-gay men and women face is working through attractions they still have to members of the same sex. Often, the enemy takes full advantage of this situation and brings guilt and condemnation, with feelings of hopelessness and failure. These attractions can be divided into two types. The “split-second attractions” are those felt towards people we do not know, those chance encounters while walking down the street, doing shopping, or even during church. The second kind of attraction is directed towards someone we know, someone we work with or are required to interact with on a regular basis.

• **Lasting Freedom.** I was talking with a counselee one evening who said, “I can hardly live with the guilt I feel. Even today, I failed repeatedly. I cruised everything that came my way. I feel like a prostitute.” Like most people, he had a measure of victory during the winter months, but when the sun came out and the clothes came off, he had a full-blown problem. It does little good to simply say, “Stop it!” There may be an hour of victory before slipping back into old patterns again. Only when we come to understand ourselves and see what is behind the attractions can we find a measure of lasting freedom.

While some attractions are definitely sexual, many are not. We must sort through our feelings and discover the variety of needs that causes us to become attracted to others. This problem needs to be taken out of the realm of homosexuality because it is a problem all Christians face. The “normal” man or woman takes notice of the way people are dressed, how they carry themselves and their degree of sophistication. The attractions are a mixture of both sexual and non-sexual interests.

In interviewing straight males, I have found that they most often choose their friends to in some way complement themselves. A guy will latch onto a good-looking buddy so he can share in the attention received from girls. Another will make friends with someone on a sports team so he can share in the glory of winning and being an important figure.

• **What’s Behind Attractions?** Two things generally stand behind attractions: one, that skin *is* attracted to skin, and the other is some form of inadequacy. In regards to the first, perhaps men have a greater problem as we are told that men respond more to the visual. However, lust is common to all, heterosexual as well as homosexual. Scripture clearly spells out the temptation we will face with lust, so “think it not strange” (I Peter 4:12). All people must battle against the sensual. A little prevention goes a long way in avoiding the snares of Satan. God freely gives us the wisdom to help us avoid walking into the enemy’s traps. We must learn to stay clear of places and situations that we cannot handle. The wise hand over no tools to the enemy to use against them.

• **Inadequacies.** It is the second reason for attractions that we need to focus on: inadequacies probably dating back to early childhood. Our feelings of inadequacy caused us to admire those who were adequate, who seemed better than us in some way. It all began simply enough by us admiring those we wished to be like. Some of our inadequacies were not in the physical realm—the fearful admiring the courageous; the slow, the fast; the loner, the socially popular. But the physical always seems to play a major role. The thin or overweight admire the muscular. Those without strong muscles try to build up their bodies. In doing so, they become increasingly aware of those who are superior in this area. Even pictures of strong muscles in a magazine will begin to attract their attention. As envy of others and an obsession with this one area develops, it is possible that this focus will become sexualized during the years of puberty. This is the way a partialism begins, with an obsession with a particular part of the body.

• **Envy.** Many of our attractions are simply based on envy and must be brought to the Lord and confessed. God has made us as we are and we must not tell God that He has made a mistake in forming us. Certainly, if we have neglected the body God has given us, we are obligated to restore it, such as losing extra weight or overcoming substance abuse. Coming to grips with our attractions in this way will do much to bring victory in this area.

● **Other Attractions.** What about our attractions to those around us, particularly the Christians we fellowship with? How are we to respond? Do we stand or do we flee? We are clearly told to flee youthful lusts (II. Tim. 2:22), but does this

apply? Many feel an additional weight of guilt when the person they are attracted to is a Christian. They feel that in some way they have dishonored one of God's saints. They feel dirty and imagine that God despises them for their lust. Again, let's separate the sexual from the non-sexual. Satan loves to badger the ex-gay person with the message, "You've just blown it; you haven't changed. God is not working in your life." Often, we have not had a sexual element to our attraction, but because of Satanic suggestion, a sexual interest develops. Always go to the Lord for the truth. *God, what do I really feel? Is it sexual? It is just envy and a desire to possess what another has?* Let us not condemn ourselves without a trial. God just might give us an acquittal!

● **Sexual Temptations.** What if we feel a sexual desire, a strong urge for sexual interaction? Again, confess and receive the forgiveness that God freely extends to you. It is very helpful to also confess to another person and become accountable to that person. We all need supportive prayer partners. The tendency may be to flee, to suddenly cut off all contacts with the person we are attracted to. Is this the right thing to do? Here, you may encounter different answers, but I will share my views. If the person we are attracted to is a Christian, I do not believe that we can simply shut this person out of our life. I think we owe it to them and to the Body of Christ to work this relationship through. If there has been no seduction on the part of the other person and all the sexual temptation is in your own mind, then it is not right to walk away and reject another person for seemingly no reason. It is also not helpful to tell this person what you are feeling, as they would be at a loss to help you in this area. I think we should only flee when there is a sexual intent on the part of the other person.

● **Avoiding Escape.** I used the term "working it through," and you may wonder just what this term means. It is an expression we often hear, sometimes referring to a grief situation where there has been a loss: a loss of a person, a job, or some form of security. It implies avoiding escape and coming to grips with the situation in a realistic manner. If we don't face our attractions head on, we will have to deal with them again and again. One thing in our favor is that our attractions seldom are long-term but fade away and often are replaced by new attractions.

While we should not have to bring every friendship under the microscope, we may have to do a bit of soul-searching. Consuming attractions can be a form of idolatry, worshiping the creature more than our Creator. If we know this to be true, if someone is more important to us than God, then we must confess our idolatry and ask God to clean up this situation. It seems that most people, whether homosexual or not, are on a constant search for approval. We all have deep insecurities and need the input of others in our lives. Our approval, however, must first come from God or we will never be satisfied and will always be on an endless search.

● **Breaking Infatuation.** Are you right now caught up in a consuming infatuation and don't know what to do? As a temporary measure, if possible, cut down the number of times you are seeing the person. Using the phone rather than visiting the person helps to break the physical attraction. Even though you may not want to, you must encourage other relationships, both for yourself and for your friend. In seeking new friendships, we must give up and throw away any measurements from the old lifestyle. We will find that the physically unattractive can become attractive to us in other ways.

● **Our Needs.** Everyone needs warmth and acceptance. God has created the church, the Body of Christ, to affirm us, to supply our needs in this way. When the deep needs are filled, when we feel secure and have a sense of belonging, we do not want what others have, and the attractions lose their power. So don't just beat yourself on the head every time you feel attracted to another. Set about to fill the voids and deficits in your life in a healthy, wholesome way. Rebuke the enemy and do not fall for his lies. Separate the truth from the lies and confess what is true to God. Then walk in the forgiveness He intends for you to have

Reprinted With Permission