

## Masturbation

>< Paul & Lori <>

We get a lot of questions about masturbation, and several times a month we get an e-mail from someone upset about what we have said on the subject. Masturbation is possibly the most contentious issue in the church today; so much so that one denominational split can be largely attributed to a disagreement about masturbation! With very few exceptions, most people on "both sides" of the issue agree that the Bible neither directly nor explicitly mentions masturbation. This makes the debate all that more difficult. For those interested, we have created this sub-section on the topic.

Please note that much of what is said here is about masturbation by singles - please see the section on masturbation in marriage for that specific issue. And please do not write to tell us that we are "justifying our own sin." These articles are written by three married individuals who are far too in love with, and involved with, their spouses to have any reason or desire to masturbate.

[Why didn't God call masturbation sin?](#) Why doesn't the Bible say masturbation is wrong? Is it acceptable to call masturbation sin without explaining this omission? A short thought exercise.

[Masturbation Q&A](#) There are a variety of ideas offered as "proof" that masturbation is sin. In this section we address these, along with common questions about the rightness or wrongness of masturbation.

[Teens and Masturbation](#) An article by a youth pastor on the subject of masturbation and teens. In addition to being a great resource for parents, this article offers some good general insights and suggestions.

[Masturbation in Marriage](#) Masturbation by those who are married is a different, and much more complex, issue than masturbation for singles.

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## Why Didn't God Call Masturbation Sin?

>< Paul <>

We have heard a lot of explanations of why masturbation is sin, but we have yet to have anyone give us a good explanation for why the Bible does not say it is. Is there any other sexual sin which is not directly and clearly identified as sin in the Bible? There are passages which clearly label as sin such things as fornication, adultery, lust, incest, rape,

homosexuality, and even bestiality. Surely the urge to masturbate is more common than most of these, and much stronger than many of them, and yet the Bible says nothing about it. If God felt it necessary to tell us not to have sex with animals, why didn't He also find it necessary to tell us not to masturbate?

I can only come up with three reasons why "thou shalt not masturbate" is not found in the Bible:

1. It's an oversight.
2. One must have special knowledge or be spiritual to know this truth.
3. Masturbation is not an inherently sinful act.

Number one makes the Bible incomplete, while number two is the heresy of Gnosticism. By process of elimination I am left to conclude that number three must be true.

I know some will say, "it does not matter why God didn't say it," or "who are you to question God?" But it does matter; if you want to add to what God has called sin you **must first** give a good reason why God did not say it Himself. Since there is no doubt that masturbation was known of and practiced by those who originally read and heard the words of the scripture, the Bible's silence on the issue is extremely difficult to explain if you are convinced masturbation is sin.

Most of the arguments we see against masturbation seem to work because the person making them starts with the belief that masturbation is wrong. If someone starts with the question "is it sin" and studies the scripture to find the truth rather than to support what they have already decide the truth should be, the results are different. It is our prayer that asking "why didn't God say masturbation is sin" will help people to reexamine the issue and find a Biblically sound answer.

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Masturbation Discussion  
><> Paul & Lori <><

This began as answers to a number of arguments against masturbation that were submitted anonymously by one person. We have since added to and altered the article. We invite everyone to use the anonymous question form to continue this debate; we will modify this article from time to time based on the feed back. Anything in brown comes from Paul and/or Lori, while things in **blue** are from others.

Please note that this discussion is about masturbation in general, and about whether or not it is inherently sinful. For the most part we are thinking of a single person, not a married person. Certainly there are scriptures that apply to a married person that do not affect an unmarried one in this matter.

Let us start by saying that in the past we would have been quick to agree masturbation was wrong. We believed that ALL masturbation was sin, and we could string together Bible verses to "prove" that. However, as we continued to study, it became more and more clear to us that the Bible did not really address the issue. When we applied to masturbation the same standards of interpretation we used for everything else, we could find **no Biblical prohibition**.

And, since we are married and very happy sexually, this is pretty much an academic argument for us; being convinced masturbation is wrong would not affect our lives. On the other hand, there are many for whom this issue is far from academic, and we pray that we can help such people become convinced in their own minds. Certainly masturbation is wrong for anyone who feels it's sin, in accordance with Romans 14:23b "for whatever is not from faith is sin." The question we need to deal with is whether or not masturbation is, in and of itself, inherently sinful.

[I think the Word talks about this subject several times, just not directly.](#)

My question then would be "Why would God not be **very clear** about it?" We have a very hard time with the idea that knowing what is right and wrong requires great discernment or the ability to dig deeply into the scriptures. For more on this see [Why didn't God call masturbation sin?](#)

[When the Bible says, "if a man cannot control himself he should marry" I don't believe this is only talking about sexual immorality with another person, because a another scripture says, "exercise self control" I read that to say control YOURSELF.](#)

The apostle Paul makes it clear that there are those who can not continue to control themselves, and thus should marry. He says this not only to the young, but also to all widows under the age of 60! In 1 Tim. 5:11 Paul indicates that these women **will** "feel sensual desires" and **will** "want to get married." We would agree with that there is more to marriage than just avoiding sexual sin, and that the gift of celibacy must be much more than just the ability to say no to sex. This does not change the fact that Paul made it very clear that many do not have the ability to go a life time without sex.

[When people do masturbate and then "feel guilty", is it really guilty or conviction? When we sin against "the temple of the Holy Spirit" we always feel a sense of shame, that is because we just did something against our body that the Lord himself occupies.](#)

An excellent point: is it conviction, from the Holy Spirit, or condemnation from man or Satan? We know single men who feel convicted the moment they look too long or too closely at a woman, but feel no guilt when they masturbate. If their conscience was seared, would they be so easily convicted about lust? On the other hand we know

married men and women who feel great guilt when they have sex with their own spouse. Clearly sexual guilt can be inappropriate and not of God.

### Is masturbation denying our flesh, or "gratifying our flesh"?

When we eat dessert, do we deny the flesh? Does air conditioning or hot water for showers deny the flesh? "Denying the flesh" does not mean we should avoid anything which feels good, it means we should avoid fleshly sins. If masturbation were listed as a sin, then it would be included in denying the flesh, but since it's not called a sin, it's not included.

### Masturbating leads to other sexual sins, self control over masturbation helps us avoid other sexual sins.

The idea that avoiding masturbation will somehow make a person less likely to commit other sexual sins is not Biblically supported, and we think such an idea comes from what Paul calls "self-imposed religion" in Colossians:

"Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"...These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." (Col. 2:20, 21 & 23)

Paul says that "neglect of the body" seems wise to man's mind, but it is "**of no value**" in dealing with the flesh. We have heard some say that the single who does not masturbate is training him or herself to also deny the temptation to have premarital sex; this sounds good, but in practice it does not seem to work. On the contrary, those who "deny" themselves masturbation seem to be **more** prone to sexual sin with a boy or girlfriend. Some who have "tried it both ways" have said that masturbation makes it much easier for them to remain sexually pure on a date.

### Marriage is reserved for MAN AND WOMAN together to become one. Sex is made for marriage alone, masturbation is a sexual act ...

That would depend on how you define a sex act. Sex with one's spouse is physical, emotional, relational, spiritual, and possibly procreational. Masturbation is **only physical**. It seems to us that comparing masturbation to sex is like comparing an IV to a gourmet meal. Masturbation does temporarily remove our "sexual hunger," but it does nothing for the hunger we have for intimacy with another person.

### Masturbation increases our sex drive.

Actually it does not. When a man has sex with a woman it satisfies his sexual hunger, but raises his testosterone levels long term, which can result in an increased sex drive. However, when a man masturbates he **only** satisfies his hunger, his testosterone levels are not raised. We see this as evidence that a loving God designed masturbation as a "stop gap" measure for those who do not have a spouse.

Masturbating shows no sign of self control, or denying yourself to honor the Lord. As with fasting, not masturbating is denying your flesh and depending on the Lord.

This assumes that the Lord intends us to not masturbate, something He has not told us. 1 Cor. 10:13 reads:

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Is masturbation a temptation to be avoided, or is it actually the means of escape from sexual sin, provided by God for singles, and for married folks who are refused sex? If it's a temptation to be avoided, what is the way of escape that has been provided? Among those who feel it's a sin, the "failure rate" at avoiding masturbation is very, very high. I know of no other sin which has such a high failure rate, so where is God's way of escape? And if masturbation is a sin which is almost impossible to avoid, why is the Bible silent on it?

What is truly frightening is the people who feel so guilty (condemned, not convicted) at their failure to stop masturbating that they stop going to church, and fall away from the Lord. People say "I prayed for help, and He didn't help me." Perhaps the problem is that they are praying for Him to take away something He intended them to use to avoid sin? Maybe it's Satan who is whispering in single people's ears about masturbation being sin? Those who fail to stop feel condemned, and those who do stop are more easily tempted to fornicate; Satan wins either way.

I don't understand why you say masturbation is not a sin, but pornography is a sin. The arousal to masturbate and the masturbation itself are the result of fantasies.

This is not entirely correct. While fantasies and sexual images can cause or increase arousal, God created us with a sex drive which needs no physical, mental or visual stimulation to affect us. In men there is a need for release of built up semen every 24 to 72 hours, and in both men and women a period of time without sex causes a growing desire for sex.

I think masturbation is ok if done in moderation ... The sin starts when done in excess. Excess being it is interfering in your daily life by utilizing a lot of your time. That could be said about a lot things, such as TV, Internet, exercise, shopping, etc.

We agree with you on this. Of course defining "excessive" can be tricky. There is a lot of evidence that most teenage boys and 20 to 30 year old men will have an orgasm every other day if they can. This fits well with the time needed for the body to produce enough semen to feel a need for release. It seems likely that every other day is a sort of minimal need for the body and maybe for the mind in most men. For women the issue of how often is too much is a lot less clear because their bodies do not have a build in need for release.

Jesus said it was adultery to fantasize about having sex with a woman. So masturbation is sin because it is done while fantasizing.

The issue of fantasy is certainly part of the masturbation question. Fantasy about sex with someone you are not married to is sin with or without masturbation. It is possible to masturbate without any fantasy, which solves the problem.

It is impossible for someone to masturbate and not fantasize. Anyone who says they can do this is lying!!

We have heard this a number of times, but no one can tell us how they know it's true. There are reports of very young children self discovering masturbation (to orgasm) when they had no idea what sex was. These children obviously masturbated without sexual fantasies. If someone tells me they can do this, who am I to call them a liar? Isn't it easier to control one's thoughts for the time it takes to masturbate than to do it all day with the push of an unreleased sex drive?

I do not think masturbation will prevent premarital sex. Premarital sex has to do with the opportunity and temptation to have sex, masturbating or not. But it is kind of a safety switch for those who really want to follow Jesus' teachings.

Exactly. It certainly is not going to prevent anyone who is not morally inclined to follow God's Word. On the other hand, we have heard reports from individuals who **wanted** to avoid fornication who are convinced that masturbation helps remove some of the temptation. It's like going to the grocery store on an empty stomach vs. having just eaten.

Jesus remained pure throughout his natural life with the help of the Holy Spirit, and I just can't picture Him masturbating.

This "argument" is common, but what does it prove? Can you picture Jesus performing basic bodily functions that we know He must have? This always seems like a Red Herring to us.

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Is Masturbation a Sin?

><by a youth pastor. <>  
for teens and their parents

Guest Author

The following article was written by Dale Kaufman, a married father of two boys and youth pastor of over 20 years. This article was originally written in response to a question from a mother of teenage boys, who wished to help her sons with the issue of masturbation. The article was subsequently published in a professional journal, where it caused some controversy. We are very thankful to Dale for letting us add this outstanding article here.

In reality, it cannot be clearly said that the act of masturbation is in itself a sin...

#### IS MASTURBATION SIN?

Masturbation is perhaps one of the most debated--yet rarely solved--subjects in the church. The views and opinions about masturbation, its effects, and consequences (especially spiritual) have been swirling through the church probably since it first began. This paper is an effort to add another voice to the mass of opinion. In reality, it cannot be clearly said that the act of masturbation is in itself a sin, for the Bible never uses the word, nor does it imply or hint about the act of masturbation. Obviously, the Bible does deal in some depth with sexual immorality, perversions, and the like, but masturbation is never spelled out as belonging to any particular category. So, since Scripture is silent about it, should masturbation be classified as a sin? Or if not, are there ways in which masturbation may be used to the glory of God and the building of His Kingdom of souls?

The questions beg an in-depth answer. Throughout the history of the church, various voices have arisen, either decrying masturbation as self-abuse and onanism, or simply calling it something which may not be the best God has to offer, but is certainly not the worst either. Both viewpoints, I believe, are flawed. And it is in the wake of questions to which there seem to be no solid answers that teenagers, especially boys, have long been struggling. It is to the children who are struggling with this issue (and to the parents and other caring adults trying to help them) that this paper is addressed. If I can bring a fresh voice to the debate and cause serious believers to take an honest look at this issue and perhaps help a young person struggling with questions of their sexuality, then the effort will not have been in vain.

What Onan practiced as a form of birth control was not masturbation.

## ONANISM? THE BIBLE AND MASTURBATION

Scholars have debated for years whether the sin of Onan as recorded in Genesis 38:8-10 was masturbation. It becomes clear from a careful reading of the text that what Onan practiced as a form of birth control was not masturbation but rather withdrawing himself from Tamar before orgasm. The reason Onan was put to death was for not fulfilling a solemn duty of the brother-in-law to provide children for the woman. This would later be laid down as a part of the Mosaic law (see Deut. 25:5-6).

There are no Biblical passages which specifically address the issue of masturbation, and so, as with other issues (such as food, drink, entertainment choices, etc.), God has allowed a latitude within certain boundaries. Within those boundaries, masturbation could (and I believe, should) be seen as a healthy way of relieving sexual tensions which build up in those who do not have the option of marital relations as a way of easing the physical need. For purposes of this paper, we will be focusing our attention on the use of masturbation as a God-given way for teenage boys to release the buildup of sexual tensions within their bodies, and as a help to controlling their thought life and honoring God with their minds and bodies. But it should also be noted that the principles about masturbation which are discussed here would also be appropriate to be applied to females as well as males.

## TEENAGE BOYS: HORMONE FACTORIES

In a human male's lifespan, there are two times when the hormone testosterone is released by his body in large quantities. The first is prenatal, when a genetically determined testosterone release transforms the fetus into a boy. The other occurs roughly somewhere between the ages of 9 and 14. This testosterone release helps to transform the body of the boy into the body of a man. Because of the influence of the testosterone and other growth hormones, the boy experiences a growth spurt, broadening of the shoulders and other major muscular-skeletal changes, a deepening of the voice (which leads to the familiar teenage "cracking" of the voice), hair growth on the face and underarm areas, and maturing (in size and function) of the penis, testicles, and other sexual organs.

If boys are not adequately prepared puberty, the mind/body changes can be overwhelming and even frightening.

This testosterone "flood" is also largely responsible for the sudden interest in and discovery of a boy's sex drive. Not only is his body changing at a rapid pace, but also his mind is being drawn into areas that may have been previously unexplored or only hinted at in conversations with other boys. If they are not adequately prepared (which is a God-given responsibility of the parents and church to do-not the schools!), then the mind/body changes can be overwhelming and even frightening. For boys who have committed to follow Christ in their lives, this flood of emotions and thoughts and feelings can also

carry with it a load of guilt and shame that they may perceive as coming from God-yet at the same time, since the sex drive is so strong and the physical tensions so great, they find their thoughts straying into areas that they know to be wrong, but which they cannot seem to stop thinking of. And a double burden can then be imposed when this Christian boy discovers the pleasures of masturbation and then feels guilty and ashamed for doing what he believes is a sin (since nobody ever told him otherwise), and yet which is something that he finds himself basically powerless to overcome.

I believe it is the responsibility of parents and the church to offer to these young men (and young women as well, whose sex drive can be just as strong) a sane and workable alternative to the question of masturbation-something other than a "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, and also something other than "just say no." We must help them see that what is happening to their bodies is designed by God and that what they are thinking and feeling and doing are acceptable to God within the boundaries He has set, and indeed, should be encouraged as a means to regulate and control themselves so that they can glorify God with their bodies.

## THE BIBLICAL BOUNDARIES

What are the boundaries which the Word of God sets forth for something like masturbation? In what contexts is the act acceptable, and when does it "cross the line" into a sinful activity? These are important questions that need to be answered with straightforward honesty if we are to give freedom to our teens to explore the sexuality which God has gifted them with, while maintaining the standards of holiness which His Word commands.

The first "boundary" Scripture is found in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Speaking in the context of sexual immorality (although any practice which harms the body could be defined here), Paul says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

Since no Scripture condemns masturbation, it stands to reason that it is an act which has the potential to be honoring to God.

Since there is no Scripture condemning the act of masturbation as a sin, it stands to reason that it is an act which has the potential to be honoring to God and is in accord with the fact that the Holy Spirit lives in the believer. Solitary masturbation is not an act which harms the individual's body (and in fact, the release of sexual tension does promote the wellbeing of the body), nor does it involve the joining of one body and spirit to another as is the case with sexual intercourse. Through the releasing of sexual tensions (particularly in young men) it can act as a barrier to seeking release through immoral outlets such as pornography, prostitution, premarital sex, or homosexual activity. A part of honoring God with our bodies is doing whatever is necessary to keep our bodies under control-and

in the area of sexuality, masturbation can be an effective way of doing so.

The second "boundary" Scripture is Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things."

In this Scripture we have a boundary that deals with the mind and thought life. One of the difficulties with masturbation in the minds of many people is that it is automatically assumed that sexual fantasies must be used in order to gain the amount of stimulation needed for orgasm to take place. While it is true that sexual fantasies CAN be used, there is nothing which suggests that they MUST be used. The choice is up to the individual as to what they think about during masturbation. The body is designed by God to respond to sexual stimulation, but it was never designed to respond exclusively to impure thoughts. God has placed within us a wide capacity for response to various stimuli. It is no more necessary to fantasize about the cheerleader next door during masturbation than it is to fantasize about eating a steak while dining at McDonalds! Nor is it necessary to view pornography while masturbating. The viewing of pornography is actually detrimental to the experience, since the person looking at it knows there is no way of ever fulfilling the fantasies that he is locked into while using pornography. And since pornography is clearly a violation of the commandment not to lust after a person, such activity introduces the element of sin into an experience that should have been used for the glory of God.

So what can be thought about during masturbation? That brings us to our final "boundary" Scripture, found in Colossians 3:17: "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." And a companion Scripture is found in Colossians 3:1-2: "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

It is clear from Scripture that our thought life is to be one of purity and joy.

It is clear from Scripture that our thought life is to be one of purity and joy and one that is characterized by its focus on God. This is no pie-in-the-sky theology. Either the Bible is eminently practical in how its principles can be lived out or it is not. It is possible to do everything with a spirit and attitude of thanksgiving to God, regardless of the task at hand. A person can focus their heart on Jesus swinging a hammer at a construction site just as much as they can when entering the sanctuary of a church. There should be no difference between sacred and secular thought. Each thought should be given over to the control of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), and should be offered to God in a spirit of gratitude and joy. The only exception to this would be when the thought life has strayed out of its proper boundaries and has embraced sinful thoughts, such as the viewing of pornography or lusting after another person.

So, given the boundaries, is it possible to masturbate without straying into sinful thoughts? The answer is yes, for God, in designing the human body, has given it the

ability to respond to physical stimuli without the necessity of embracing sinful thought patterns. And it is all right to enjoy the pleasurable feelings which accompany the activity. For example, when someone eats their favorite food, they are enjoying the pleasure of the feel and the taste of the food. Is it sinful to enjoy eating a chocolate bar? No. It only becomes a sin if the activity and the pleasure of eating become something which crowds out God, becoming an end to itself rather than being seen as a blessing from a loving God. At that point, any activity, whether eating, playing golf, watching a sunset, or masturbating, has been abused and the person has fallen into the sin of idolatry. Therefore, when a person masturbates, their body will respond to the pleasurable physical stimulation that it is being given--especially teenage boys, whose testosterone and other hormone levels are at an all-time high and whose physical need for sexual release is very great (in fact, they are quite capable of achieving orgasm without ever once thinking of having sex with the latest monthly centerfold!). And if the thought life is kept under control, the act becomes an experience of blessing from the Lord, rather than a shameful one. The sin does not come in enjoying the experience, but rather in abusing a gift that a loving and gracious God has given to His children.

But we're looking for something even more here. We are looking for a way to "redeem the experience," giving honor and glory to God for the gifts He has given us. One of those gifts is sexuality and the pleasure which God has made possible in our bodies. It therefore follows that the best way to masturbate is to focus the mind on God, giving thanks to Him for the pleasure which the person is feeling and for the gift of sexuality that He has given, as well as gratitude for the ability to gain a needed sexual release without the possibility of illicit sexual contact.

Let's take an example of Johnny, a 14-year-old Christian boy whose body is undergoing the changes of puberty...

How would such a view of masturbation play out in real life? Let's take an example of Johnny, a 14-year-old boy whose body is undergoing the changes of puberty, and who is a Christian, trying to live his life right for God.

"Johnny is like most boys, intensely curious about his body and what is happening to it, and also about the thoughts he is beginning to have about girls he knows. He has heard all the guys' locker room talk, but everything is still pretty much a mystery to him. He's heard his youth pastor talk about staying pure until he is married, and he's committed to do that, even signing a purity pledge card a couple months before at a youth retreat. He's had sex ed in his public middle school, and at the time it seemed pretty gross and weird--not anything he'd want to get in to. But now, things are beginning to change. What once was unthinkable for him, he now finds himself dwelling on every day--many times during the day! A few months ago, he'd had his first wet dream, and while he'd heard about them, when it happened it was still pretty scary, especially because the dream he'd had was something he would be totally ashamed of admitting to anyone about! The dreams had come once a month or so ever since, but each time the dreams had gotten a little more bizarre, and it was getting hard to hide the soiled pajamas and bedding from his

mom.

It was while he was alone in his room one day dwelling on the latest dream that he discovered he could bring himself to a climax by rubbing his penis with his hand. It felt very good, but immediately afterward he wondered if this was something God would approve of. He had heard the other boys talking about "jacking off," but it had not crossed his mind before to try it himself.

As the days went by, Johnny found that the tension and need for another release would grow until it became almost intolerable. Although it felt so good, he just knew that what he was doing was dirty and he should hide it from his parents. This was something they could never know about-and if they did find out, he was sure they wouldn't ever understand! Johnny hadn't ever really seen any dirty books or magazines-his dad would never allow the stuff in the house-but nor had his parents ever taken the time to explain in a positive Biblical light what his sexuality was and what should be the best way to handle the thoughts, emotions, and desires for release.

It was at a youth group meeting that Johnny first began to realize there might be an answer to his problem. The topic was relationships and sex, and when the group split up into same-sex smaller groups, the topic of masturbation came up. Although there was a lot of snickering and laughing going on, the youth pastor was able to get the point across to the boys that masturbation was not something that was sinful in itself, it only became a sin when it was used in the wrong way.

Johnny was amazed at the thought of how he could thank God for the pleasure he was experiencing, and how such a focus of keeping his eyes on Jesus and keeping his thought life under control.

On his way home from school a couple days later, Johnny got up the courage to stop by his youth pastor's office and ask him for some advice. After hearing about the boundary Scriptures and realizing that God wasn't going to condemn him for what he had done, Johnny began to come to a new understanding of how God wanted him to use even the act of masturbation to bring glory to Him. Johnny was amazed at the thought of how he could thank God for the pleasure he was experiencing, and how such a focus of keeping his eyes on Jesus and keeping his thought life under control--while at the same time enjoying the sensations and giving God the praise--would be a tremendous help to him, and would alleviate the false guilt he had been experiencing."

Such a view is generally not found in existent Christian literature, which tends either to condemn masturbation or to ignore it. Nor are a majority of parents or pastors comfortable discussing it. But I believe it is vital that we address this issue with our sons and our daughters. How much false guilt could we alleviate, how many dangerous sexual encounters would be foregone, how much distress and questioning of their sexuality and spirituality could we avoid, if we were simply open and honest with our children about how best to handle their emerging sexuality, and give them straightforward options and

solutions to deal with their changing bodies and their changing minds? It is imperative that we let them know that masturbation can and should be used as a viable, God-honoring way to deal with the stresses of their newly acquired--yet unable to be fully explored--sexuality. With a sex-saturated society all around us, we as parents, youth pastors, and other caring adults, need to give our young men and women the ability to live Godly lives in the midst of a perverse generation. Masturbation, within the Biblical boundaries, helps give them that ability. It is time to stop standing on the sidelines, hoping that somehow our kids will get the right information and act on it in the right way. We must be proactive, getting over our own fears and uncomfortableness and initiating discussions with our sons and daughters, doing what is our God-given responsibility as parents and youth leaders to help teens navigate the stormy waters of their sexuality. May God help us all to do so, in the right way and in the right time!

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#### Masturbation in Marriage

><> Paul & Lori <><

In other parts of this section, we have stated that we do not see masturbation as inherently sinful for singles. But what about for those who are married? Before we dig in, let's define some terms. When we say masturbation, we mean self stimulation to orgasm. So neither manual stimulation of your spouse or self stimulation that does not result in orgasm is included in what we are discussing here. We will also define solo masturbation as something done apart from our spouse (with or without their knowledge) and mutual masturbation as both husband and wife masturbating together at the same time.

Since our bodies, and thus our sexuality, no longer belongs to us alone, but also to our spouse (1 Corinthians 7:4), masturbation by those who are married is not as simple a question as it is for singles. In general it is our spouse's "job" to deal with all of our sexual needs **and desires**. This does not mean masturbation is sin for a married man or woman, but it does somewhat limit its proper use. We will consider several situations: masturbation because of sexual refusal, masturbation because of dissimilar sex drives, masturbation because of illness, masturbation because of separation, and mutual masturbation.

#### Sexual Refusal:

The apostle Paul tells those who are married that they need to have sex so as not to be tempted by Satan (1 Corinthians 7:5b). When a man or woman regularly or always

refuses to have sex, it puts their spouse in a very bad place. In such a situation masturbation seems like an allowable, maybe even necessary, way for a man or woman to deal with the pressure of their sex drive and the temptation it can cause.

But since our spouse has a responsibility to us sexually, we need to be clear about the situation. The person who is being refused needs to make it very clear to their spouse that the lack of sex is a problem. Beyond that, if a married person is going to masturbate, their spouse has a right to know about it. Unless this information could result in violence or divorce, it seems unfair to take your sexuality into your own hands without letting the person who is supposed to be doing it know that you feel the need to masturbate.

#### Dissimilar Sex Drives:

A good many men, and some women, masturbate because they feel their strong sex drive is "unfair" to their spouse. Rather than "bothering them too much" they masturbate to deal with some or most of their sex drive. On the surface this may seem like a loving thing to do, but doesn't being responsible for our husband or wife's sexual wants and needs mean giving them what they desire even when we are not interested? Wouldn't it be better for a wife to manually stimulate her husband than for him to do it himself in the shower? Wouldn't it be better for a husband to use a vibrator on his wife than for her to do it herself when he is not home?

Often the "less interested" spouse either does not know the solo masturbation is occurring, or they have no idea how often it's being done. This means they have not even been given the opportunity to do anything about the sexual desire of their spouse. At the very least our spouse should get "first refusal" when we desire sex!

Putting aside the question of who should be meeting the need, what if the spouse knows about it, and neither husband nor wife has a problem with it? Regular solo masturbation seems like a bad idea, as it runs the risk of fantasies that may creep away from what is proper. Masturbating with your spouse in the room is a good way to reduce the chance of sinful fantasies, and it also keeps them aware of how much sex you desire. If one of you feels a need to masturbate, please thoroughly discuss this with your spouse.

#### Illness:

We're not talking about the 24 hour flu here - surely anyone can wait a day or two. But for longer illnesses masturbation is a good way for the healthy spouse to deal with the fact that their sex drive is still working. As suggested above, it is a good idea to discuss this with your spouse, and when possible do the masturbation with them in the room. It would be a good idea for a couple to discuss this when they are both well, so each knows what the other feels about it when the situation arises.

For long term or terminal illness the situation is more complex, but not really much different. In this situation it is very important for the couple to have an open and honest talk. The person who is ill may want to be a part of the masturbation, even if only by holding their spouse while it's done. Don't think you are doing your spouse a favor by secretly masturbating so they don't have to "deal with" your sex drive. There are stories of men and women who felt like less of a man or woman, or felt unloved, because their well spouse suddenly stopped approaching them for sex.

## Busyness:

Sometimes we are just so busy we don't have time for sex. On occasion this may be avoidable, but as an ongoing situation it's very bad for a marriage. The man or woman who masturbates to deal with a sex drive they or their spouse are too busy to deal with is not helping, because they are taking the pressure off of a situation which needs to be changed.

Some busy men are particularly bad about ignoring sex until they suddenly feel they need to do it **right now!** Since their wife is rarely around, much less available when they feel this sudden need, they masturbate and then "go on with their life." Some women do this too, and for women it may be a cyclical thing following the changing hormones of their menstrual cycles.

Studies of sexual frequency in marriage often have a very sad situation buried in the statistics. There are more than a few couples where both are masturbating, and both say they want more sex. In this case the masturbation is a destructive thing because it is bleeding off the sex drive that should cause them to come together more often.

## Separation:

When a couple must be separated for a few days or longer, masturbation is an excellent way of dealing with the sexual tension that can build up. This is something a couple needs to have a very open and honest talk about, so there are no secrets. Give your spouse permission to masturbate when you can't be there for them. Better yet, **encourage it:**

- Like the man who went to bed the first night of his wife's women's retreat to find on his pillow a hand towel, a tube of lubricant, and a note that said "Think of me."
- Or the woman who finds a gift wrapped sex toy from her traveling husband.
- Use the phone or computer to join them for phone or cyber sex.
- Send your spouse off with a sexy photo of yourself, an erotic story about the two of you, or a sexy pair of undies to remind them of you.

## Mutual Masturbation:

There are some couples who greatly enjoy masturbating together. This seems to be the kind of thing you are either really into, or just don't get. Watching each other masturbate to orgasm is a great way to learn about our partner's body, but is it okay as a regular sex act all by itself? There is nothing in scripture to indicate this would be wrong, but we feel it may be a matter of concern **if** it becomes too frequent a part of a couple's sex life. There is no scripture that says "thou shalt have intercourse", but both science and experience both show that intercourse is unlike any other sex act. Enjoy all that sex has to offer, but don't neglect having intercourse fairly often.

Since masturbation is not inherently sinful, there must be situations in marriage where it is allowed. There also seem to be some situations where it is the only wise choice for some individuals. But we can not ignore our spouse and just masturbate whenever we desire - it's their sexuality too, and they have a say in when and how it is used. If you engage in secret masturbation you have failed to be honest on several levels, and this could be harmful to your marriage and your sex life.

Also understand that when masturbation reduces your desire for your spouse, or your ability to be sexual when they want to be, then you have crossed the line and defrauded your spouse. We also need to understand that things change: changes in stress, busyness, relationship, can result in an increase in a persons sex drive. Also, women's sex drives often increases in their thirties and/or forties. What was right or necessary at one point in a marriage may no longer be either right or necessary Unless there is open communication about sexual wants and needs, and about any masturbation going on, you could be masturbating when your spouse would like to have more sex with you.

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