Dealing with masturbation

"What does the Bible say about masturbation?" is one of our most frequently asked questions[1]. Many Christians have found it difficult to answer this question according to the Bible, because the Bible never mentions masturbation specifically. To understand how God feels about this subject, we must examine other verses that deal with issues such as lust, self-control, and purity. Also, we must examine its fruit to see if it is from God. We have tried to address this issue by answering some of the most frequently asked questions. Our prayer is that God will use this page to bring freedom and deliverance.

"Does God care about what we do in the privacy of our bedrooms?"

Sex is God's Invention. He is the mastermind behind it – and His Creation is worth far more to Him than it is to us. This beautiful expression of love was created out of His Own Heart, as a gift to be experienced between a husband and wife. It is only in marriage that this manifestation of intimacy can be fully enjoyed in the depth for which it was created.

Hebrews 13:4 "4 Let marriage be held in honor (esteemed worthy, precious, of great price, and especially dear) in all things. And thus let the marriage bed be undefiled (kept undishonored); for God will judge and punish the unchaste [all guilty of sexual vice] and adulterous."

The more beautiful and unique something is (like sexual intercourse), the more power it holds over our lives, either for good or bad influence. That is why it is so easy for the devil to corrupt the most precious of God's Gifts. When we become more in love with the gifts than the One who endowed them, the things that were designed to bless us begin to destroy us instead. Yes, God cares about what we do with our bodies, in public or in private. He doesn't want us to abuse ourselves in any way.

In fact, an older definition of masturbation is "self-abuse." Although more modern dictionaries may no longer carry this definition, they are still linked together under self-abuse:

- Self-abuse noun:
- Abuse of oneself or one's abilities.
- Masturbation.

1 Corinthians 6:18 "18 Shun immorality and all sexual looseness [flee from impurity in thought, word, or deed]. Any other sin which a man commits is one outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body."

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[1] Taken from http://www.turnbacktogod.com/masturbation-is-it-ok/

"Isn't it still better to masturbate than to commit fornication?"

The easy answer to this question would be, "Yes, it is better to masturbate, because at best it corrupts only one person. It certainly is the lesser of two evils." However, why would a loving, holy, all-powerful God abandon you to a situation in which you have to choose any evil, whether it be "lesser" or "greater?" To really answer this question, we must again go back to God's original plan for sex.

First of all, masturbation will not truly relieve the sexual pressure that one may feel. It may for a short moment, but in the long run it only creates a deeper desire and capacity for sex, which will lead to more masturbation. If you let yourself become enslaved to a sexual high, you will find that you need to go to increasingly extreme acts to maintain the same degree of excitement. There are even un-Godly sex therapists who recommend masturbation as a way of increasing sexual desire, not lessening it. This creates a vicious circle, like the junkie who craves a "fix," but is only temporarily satisfied. The more he indulges in his dependency, the more ensnared by addiction he becomes. This is the nature of all sin. That is why Y'shua [Jesus] declared that all who sin become a slave to sin (John 8:34).

Furthermore, masturbation usually involves fantasy, visualization, and often pornography. The Bible is very clear as to what God expects of us in these areas of fantasy and lust. It teaches that we must not look lustfully at each other nor should we behave in such a manner as to entice others to lust after us.

*Job 31:1-3 "**I** DICTATED a covenant (an agreement) to my eyes; how then could I look [lustfully] upon a girl? 2 For what portion should I have from God above [if I were lewd], and what heritage from the Almighty on high? 3 Does not calamity [justly] befall the unrighteous, and disaster the workers of iniquity?"*

Matthew 5:28 "28 But I say to you that everyone who so much as looks at a woman with evil desire for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

While the above verses refer to men lusting after women, all women know that it can very easily be reversed to apply to themselves as well. Men may be more easily visually stimulated than women, but women can be just as vulnerable to sexual fantasy in the emotional realm. Both are sin in God's eyes, and both can be brought into subjection by controlling our thoughts through the Power of Messiah Y'shua [Jesus Christ].

All sexual immorality begins with a thought. A lustful thought not taken captive, will eventually lead to other perversions, because sin reproduces itself in increasingly greater measures. If we do not deal with our evil thoughts, they will take root in our hearts. It is for this reason that God is so concerned with our thought life. Y'shua [Jesus] came not only to deliver us from our "outward" sins, but also from wickedness that begins in the heart.

Since masturbation begins with sin in the mind, it might be called an "affair of the mind" because it brings about sexual sin inflicted against one's own body. Although it brings a short lived gratification, it makes one feel defiled when continued on a regular basis. In fact, it is a form of fornication because fornication is more that just sex with someone before marriage, it includes many other sexual sins such as pornography and the use of sexual toys for gratification. People who are not satisfied with God's plan for sex commit idolatry by using evil things to experience weird and unlawful forms of sexual intercourse. Some verses in Ezekiel actually describe this kind of fornication.

Ezekiel 16:15-17 "15 But you trusted in and relied on your own beauty and were unfaithful to God and played the harlot [in idolatry] because of your renown, and you poured out your fornications upon anyone who passed by [as you worshiped the idols of every nation which prevailed over you] and your beauty was his. 16 And you took some of your garments and made for yourself gaily decorated high places or shrines and played the harlot on them —things which should not come and that which should not take place. 17 You did also take your fair jewels and beautiful vessels of My gold and My silver which I had given you and made for yourself images of men, and you played the harlot with them;"

"Isn't God unreasonable to demand sexual purity after giving us sexual drives that seem to overwhelm us at times?"

Our loving God never demands from us what is impossible for us to do. We are so weak within ourselves that it may seem impossible, but He will equip us with His holy power to overcome any sin, if we ask in faith. Of course, sexual urges in and of themselves are not wicked.

They are natural. God created us that way. He desires that we get optimum pleasure out of them by using them the way they were created to be used. However, many desires for physical gratification (whether it be food, sex, drugs, and so forth) stem from a deeper need that is unfilled deep inside us. Gorging our flesh can never fill a hunger that grows out of our spirit. Only intimacy with God can fill the deepest needs inside of us. No other created thing has that power.

God is no more unreasonable than any caring parent who lovingly disciplines their child. It is only because He knows what is best for us. He sees a mighty potential in each one of us that far supersedes our wildest dreams, and He loves us enough to do all He can to bring it to pass.

"I agree with all the theory, but living it out on a day to day level is another story."

This is the place where we need the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in our everyday lives. The Holy Spirit is not a vague "force," but the very power of God to comfort you and strengthen you against the sins that used to rule you before you were born again. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we have the very ability that Y'shua [Jesus] had to resist temptation. He depended completely upon the Father and so must we.

Something you must know is that God is not the one who is tempting you in this area to "test" you. God is on your side and wants to set you free from these things, not lead you into them!

James 1:13-14 "13 Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted from God; for God is incapable of being tempted by [what is] evil and He Himself tempts no one. 14 But every person is tempted when he is drawn away, enticed and baited by his own evil desire (lust, passions)."

God wants us to overcome every sin and temptation in our lives. Please slowly read the following verses and let their message seep deep inside your spirit.

1 Corinthians 10:13 "13 For no temptation (no trial regarded as enticing to sin), [no matter how it comes or where it leads] has overtaken you and laid hold on you that is not common to man [that is, no temptation or trial has come to you that is beyond human resistance and that is not adjusted and adapted and belonging to human experience, and such as man can bear]. But God is faithful [to His Word and to His compassionate nature], and He [can be trusted] not to let you be tempted and tried and assayed beyond your ability and strength of resistance and power to endure, but with the temptation He will [always] also provide the way out (the means of escape to a landing place), that you may be capable and strong and powerful to bear up under it patiently."

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 "3 For though we walk (live) in the flesh, we are not carrying on our warfare according to the flesh and using mere human weapons. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, 5 [Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One),"

Romans 6:11-14 "11 Even so consider yourselves also dead to sin and your relation to it broken, but alive to God [living in unbroken fellowship with Him] in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore rule as king in your mortal (short-lived, perishable) bodies, to make you yield to its cravings and be subject to its lusts and evil passions. 13 Do not continue offering or yielding your bodily members [and faculties] to sin as instruments (tools) of wickedness. But offer and yield yourselves to God as though you have been raised from the dead to [perpetual] life, and your bodily members [and faculties] to God, presenting them as implements of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not [any longer] exert dominion over you, since now you are not under Law [as slaves], but under grace [as subjects of God's favor and mercy]."

Hebrews 4:15-16 "15 For we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to understand and sympathize and have a shared feeling with our weaknesses and infirmities and liability to the assaults of temptation, but One Who has been tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning. 16 Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God's unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it]."

*2 Corinthians 7:1 "**T**HEREFORE, SINCE these [great] promises are ours, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates and defiles body and spirit, and bring [our] consecration to completeness in the [reverential] fear of God."*

"CAN I REALLY BE SET FREE?"

*Galatians 5:1 "**I**N [this] freedom Christ has made us free [and completely liberated us]; stand fast then, and do not be hampered and held ensnared and submit again to a yoke of slavery [which you have once put off]."*

If you are in a real struggle with any form of sexual sin, we do not believe it was by accident that God led you to this teaching. He wants to set you free, starting right now! We would like to share several things that you can do to break loose from this stronghold:

☑ STEP 1:

Confess this sin first to God, then go to a committed Christian you trust, such as your pastor. Ask God to lead you to someone that you can be accountable with, who will be faithful to pray with you and for you. This will take humility on your part, but it will lead to life.

James 5:16 "16 Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed and restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart]. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working]."

You may not feel "righteous" but if you have admitted your sin to God and received His Forgiveness, you are! That means your prayers are powerful and effective!

☐ STEP 2:

Flee from and reject anything that aggravates this sin. For example, you may need to get off the Internet for a season or purchase software that blocks out pornography. This may sound too drastic, but it certainly is mild compared to Y'shua [Jesus] Who said:

Matthew 5:30 "30 And if your right hand serves as a trap to ensnare you or is an occasion for you to stumble and sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better that you lose one of your members than that your entire body should be cast into hell (Gehenna)."

His point was that we must be willing to part with anything that causes us to sin – even if it hurts temporarily.

☐ STEP 3:

You may need to seek healing and deliverance from qualified Christians who are anointed in this area of ministry. If you have been deeply involved in sexual sins, the devil probably has a stronghold in that area of your life. If you can, find some people who can help you stand against the devil, for he is the one who seeks to lead you into temptation, and whispers lies of hopelessness and shame into your ears. If he drops a filthy thought into your mind just when you are trying to pray (he has used this tactic on even the holiest saints of God), tell him to leave in the Name of Y'shua [Jesus]! Recognize his voice for what it is, and submit yourself to God. As you do this and resist the devil, he will flee from you! He is deathly afraid of those who are submitted to God in brokenness and humility.

☐STEP 4:

Don't give up! Deliverance might take time. Self-control takes effort. You may slip occasionally – or even a lot. But remember that God loves you and He will be faithful to perfect His Character in you as long you keep submitting to Him. Eventually you will win – and not because of your best efforts, but because of God's Mercy (Titus 3:5).

Just as salvation is received in faith, so deliverance must be received in faith. This has nothing to do with our character, strength, or failings. The only thing it is dependent upon is you receiving it in humility. If you should fail, recognize it quickly, ask God to forgive you – and then receive His Forgiveness! He is faithful to do that which He promised, not just in a select few mighty men and women of God, but in all who are willing to come humbly before Him. That includes you! We want to encourage you to hold on to this Scripture as your anchor:

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 "23 And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you through and through [separate you from profane things, make you pure and wholly consecrated to God]; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved sound and complete [and found] blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah). 24 Faithful is He Who is calling you [to Himself] and utterly trustworthy, and He will also do it [fulfill His call by hallowing and keeping you]."

Finding hope and healing through God's Word[2] ...

Most Christian leaders, including apostolic leaders, hold one of two views of masturbation:

- A rigid, legalistic, and uncompassionate traditional view of masturbation,
- A permissive, compromising view of masturbation.

The legalistic view of masturbation has the longest history in Christianity. The early church fathers were adamantly opposed to masturbation as they were to any kind of non-procreative sex. St. Augustine, one of the early church theologians, taught that all sex was sinful and encouraged people to live in celibacy. Christians had a hard time accepting St. Augustine's ideas about sex. God did not design us to live in celibacy – He created us to be sexual beings. God's Plan is for men and women to find sexual fulfillment in marriage. Sex is beautiful and wholesome, a precious gift from God to be used for His Glory and our enjoyment.

Masturbation became more morally accepted in the post-Freudian and "free love" era of the 1970's, thus creating the permissive view that we are still experiencing today. The worldly permissive view touts masturbation as a creative expression of one's sexuality, a way to enhance one's marriage and/ or sex life. The Christian permissive view makes masturbation okay as long as it is used to prevent sexual sin, it is not habit-forming, and it is used to satisfy a biological need, not lust. Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) did not believe in using masturbation to avoid sexual sin:

> *Is autosexuality [masturbation] the only way to avoid lust? Are there not other ways much more in harmony with Scripture with no danger of becoming habit forming as is true with masturbation?* (p. 149)

The Bible encourages us to exercise self-control in sexual matters.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 "3 For this is the will of God, that you should be consecrated (separated and set apart for pure and holy living): that you should abstain and shrink from all sexual vice, 4 That each one of you should know how to possess (control, manage) his own body in consecration (purity, separated from things profane) and honor, 5 Not [to be used] in the passion of lust like the heathen, who are ignorant of the true God and have no knowledge of His will,"

[2] Article by Leigh Connell, www.advanceministries.org/articles/articlepages/masturbation.htm

Masturbation is not a means of self-control – this does not seem compatible with Paul's teaching. It is often a lack of self-control, which frequently leads to compulsive masturbation.

Is it possible that sexual lust is masquerading itself as a biological need? Would we die or do our bodies harm by not giving in to its sexual desires? People have died by not having adequate food, water, or shelter, but no one has ever died from not having an orgasm.

We deceive ourselves when we say we can't live without masturbation. Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) states:

> *I take a firm stance against autosexuality [masturbation]. I do not accept it as "God's relief valve for built-up sexual drive", a common expression among Christian leaders with whom I have discussed this issue." (p. 150)*

The permissive view is more prevalent and is much more dangerous because the Biblical commands toward purity are undermined by this attitude towards masturbation.

The most popular argument in favor of masturbation is, "Well, the Bible is silent about it." In 1 Corinthians Chapter 6, the Apostle Paul was dealing with a law that made fornication legal in some countries:

1 Corinthians 10:23 "23 All things are legitimate [permissible—and we are free to do anything we please], but not all things are helpful (expedient, profitable, and wholesome). All things are legitimate, but not all things are constructive [to character] and edifying [to spiritual life]."

Just because masturbation is sanctioned in this world (or even by some Christian leaders) does not necessarily make it favorable in the Eyes of God, even if the Bible is silent about it. When people seek answers regarding masturbation from the legalistic-viewing Christian leaders, they may leave the counseling session feeling condemned or confused. They are often told that masturbation is wrong, without being given any Biblical explanations for why it is wrong … therefore, they continue to masturbate, with no real hope for healing.

When people inquire about masturbation from Christian leaders who hold the permissive view, they may leave the counseling session feeling indecisive. The people are counseled that masturbation is okay. They wonder, "If it's okay, then why do I feel guilty when I do it?" They feel the desire to stop masturbating, but they become immobilized with indecisiveness without Biblical answers.

I believe that people can fall into despair or progress deeper into sin over masturbation if unable to obtain Biblical solutions. Wendell Miller (as cited in Doty, Lynda Allison, 2000) offers the following advice to Biblical counselors:

> *Thus, after listening carefully and sympathetically to the counselee's problems, a Biblical counselor endeavors to give:*
>
> - *Hope that there is an answer to the problem;*
> - *Instructions on how to attack the problem Biblically;*
> - *Assurance that the Biblical Truths will be effective, if applied diligently;*
> - *Both courage and faithfulness to do diligently those things that will please God. It is during this time that the prayers of the Biblical counselor are needed the most. This is a crucial time in the counseling session." (p. 48)*

Effective help for masturbation comes as the person applies Biblical principles to the situation.

2 Timothy 3:16 "16 And great and important and weighty, we confess, is the hidden truth (the mystic secret) of godliness. He [God] was made visible in human flesh, justified and vindicated in the [Holy] Spirit, was seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, [and] taken up in glory."

Thus, it is important for all Christian leaders to understand the Scriptural principles concerning sexual practices such as masturbation, instead of having an apathetic attitude because the Bible is "silent" about it. May all Christian leaders offer hope and healing through God's Word for those hurting from masturbation.

God's Purpose for sex …

The Bible has plenty to say about sex – it did not shy away from sexual discussion. Nearly every book of the Bible mentions sex, either directly or indirectly. The Bible openly discusses the proper use of sex. God's Plan is for men and women to find sexual fulfillment in marriage. God created us as human beings with a strong innate desire for sex – psychologists call it "sex drive." Many Christians believe the sex drive is evil and they attempt to repress it or ignore it. Sex is not dirty or sinful if used as God intended—within the intimacy of marriage. Even though the desire for sex is good and God-given, it must be controlled – otherwise, it will create chaos and cause much shame, guilt, and confusion in our lives.

Many forbidden sexual practices, including adultery, fornication, incest, homosexuality, prostitution, sodomy, and bestiality are all addressed in the Bible. What does Scripture say about masturbation? The Bible says absolutely nothing about this practice. While the Bible is open about sex, it is silent on masturbation.

Some point to Genesis 38:8-10 where Onan's sin of spilling his seed on the ground during intercourse with his brother's widow, an act he was struck down for, as a prohibition against masturbation. Onan was not masturbating – he was practicing a form of birth-control. This passage of Scripture does not address masturbation, but rather Onan's disobedience in refusing to raise up children for his deceased brother, which he was bound by law and family loyalty to do.

Before we discuss masturbation in more detail, let's find out about God's original plan and purpose for sex. God mentions the proper use of sex all throughout the Scriptures. In fact, an entire Book, the Song of Solomon, explains the purpose and place of sex as God designed it.

God created sex for the purpose of marriage – any other usage perverts this purpose. Marriage is defined as a covenant between one man and one woman.

Genesis 1:27 "27 So God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Adam and Eve's marriage was the first institution created in the Bible.

Genesis 2:24 "24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall become united and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

One purpose of sex within a marriage is to bring children unto the world.

Genesis 1:28 "28 And God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it [using all its vast resources in the service of God and man]; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves upon the earth."

Human beings are partners with God in spiritual creation. Only in marriage do two people join with God to bring other human beings into this world – others with immortal souls.

A married couple should have sexual relations, not just to conceive children, but to show one another their complete love and devotion, and to bring each other pleasure. Sexual pleasure is an expression of love, not just pleasure for its own sake.

The world believes that pleasure is the only purpose of sex. Some Christians think that pleasure has nothing to do with sex. Both are wrong. The sexual relationship is a very pleasurable one, and it should bring a great deal of enjoyment to a marriage.

However, we need to get the pleasurable aspect of sex in proper perspective, according to God's Word. Marriage is an honorable way for anyone to enjoy sex – any other way to enjoy sex is condemned by God.

Hebrews 13:4 "4 Let marriage be held in honor (esteemed worthy, precious, of great price, and especially dear) in all things. And thus let the marriage bed be undefiled (kept undishonored); for God will judge and punish the unchaste [all guilty of sexual vice] and adulterous."

The marriage is not designed to honor the couple – it is designed to honor God. It should express the unselfish love that only God can give.
The sexual relationship in a marriage symbolizes God's relationship with His Bride.

Ephesians 5:23- 25 "23 For the husband is head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the church, Himself the Savior of [His] body. 24 As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her,"

A man and woman sharing the joys of sex portray the Love of Messiah and His Bride. They demonstrate how Messiah and the Bride give themselves completely to one another. Sexual love is a holy symbol. God did not create sex to be shameful or dirty. He created it to be beautiful and to represent His own love for humanity and His desire to have intimate fellowship with them.

Psalm 45:11 "11 So will the King desire your beauty; because He is your Lord, be submissive and reverence and honor Him."

Understanding body, soul, and spirit …

In order to be victorious in the war against masturbation, we must first understand ourselves as God created us. God designed all humans as sexual beings, whether or not we ever have sex. Our sexuality is not what we do, but who we are, and we are made with a body, soul, and spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 "23 And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you through and through [separate you from profane things, make you pure and wholly consecrated to God]; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved sound and complete [and found] blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah)."

Let's look at each part in more detail …

- Body.
    - The body includes the physical body and its five senses—sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch. The body is also referred to as the "outer man," the "carnal man" or the "flesh."
- Soul.
    - The soul consists of the emotions, the will, and the intellect of man. The emotions are your feelings. The will is your self-guidance system; it asserts what you want to do. The intellect is your thoughts and reasoning. The soul is also called the "mind."
- Spirit.
    - The spirit is the human spirit. It is also where the Spirit of God dwells within man. The spirit is also known as the "inner man," the "spiritual man" or the "spirit."

Lynda Allison Doty (2001) adequately describes the role of each part:

> *The body is this thing on the outside. The soul is the next thing on the inside. The spirit is the very innermost part of man. We might describe the soul as being like some sort of intermediary. The soul reaches out either to the spirit or the body. If it reaches to the body, we will lean towards the carnal. If it reaches to the spirit, we lean towards the spiritual. (p. 26-27)*

To us, all three parts seem to overlap and it can be difficult to distinguish between them, especially between the soul and the spirit. The Word of God is the separator.

Hebrews 4:12 "12 For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart."

That's why it is so important that we study and apply the Word of God to our lives on a consistent basis.

Galatians 5:17 "17 For the desires of the flesh are opposed to the [Holy] Spirit, and the [desires of the] Spirit are opposed to the flesh (godless human nature); for these are antagonistic to each other [continually withstanding and in conflict with each other], so that you are not free but are prevented from doing what you desire to do."

Each time we disobey the Word of God, we lean toward the flesh. Each time we apply the Word of God through obedience, we lean toward the spirit.

Romans 8:5-6 "5 For those who are according to the flesh and are controlled by its unholy desires set their minds on and pursue those things which gratify the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit and are controlled by the desires of the Spirit set their minds on and seek those things which gratify the [Holy] Spirit. 6 Now the mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death [death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter]. But the mind of the [Holy] Spirit is life and [soul] peace [both now and forever]."

Much of what we consider biological sexual needs is nothing more than the flesh warring against the spirit. The Apostle Paul encouraged us to present our bodies to God.

*Romans 12:1-2 "**I** APPEAL to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]."*

We present our bodies to God through our souls (minds, thoughts). As Christians, we come under attack not in the spirit, for Messiah resides there, but in the soul—in our minds, emotions, and wills. Satan can put thoughts in our minds and cause us to feel things that are not true. The mind (thoughts) is the gateway from the flesh to the spirit. Therefore, the battle for healing of masturbation is won or lost in the mind. Taking control of our thoughts helps us to become spiritually minded.

Galatians 5:16 "16 But I say, walk and live [habitually] in the [Holy] Spirit [responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit]; then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh (of human nature without God)."

How do we walk in the Spirit? We walk in the Spirit by controlling our thoughts. We are commanded several times in the Word of God to take control of our minds:

1 Peter 1:13 "13 So brace up your minds; be sober (circumspect, morally alert); set your hope wholly and unchangeably on the grace (divine favor) that is coming to you when Jesus Christ (the Messiah) is revealed."

Philippians 2:5 "5 Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:]"

Ephesians 4:22-24 "22 Strip yourselves of your former nature [put off and discard your old unrenewed self] which characterized your previous manner of life and becomes corrupt through lusts and desires that spring from delusion; 23 And be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh mental and spiritual attitude], 24 And put on the new nature (the regenerate self) created in God's image, [Godlike] in true righteousness and holiness."

When we were filled with the Holy Ghost, Y'shua [Jesus] gave us power to overcome sin.

Acts1:8 "8 But you shall receive power (ability, efficiency, and might) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends (the very bounds) of the earth."

Yet, we still have a tremendous responsibility to keep our flesh under subject to His Spirit by controlling our minds (thoughts).

Romans 6:12-13 "12 Let not sin therefore rule as king in your mortal (short-lived, perishable) bodies, to make you yield to its cravings and be subject to its lusts and evil passions. 13 Do not continue offering or yielding your bodily members [and faculties] to sin as instruments (tools) of wickedness. But offer and yield yourselves to God as though you have been raised from the dead to [perpetual] life, and your bodily members [and faculties] to God, presenting them as implements of righteousness."

Let's seek to glorify God with our bodies, souls and spirits.

Dealing with fantasies ...

What do you think about when you masturbate? Masturbation usually involves impure, sensual, lustful, and/or sexual fantasies. These kinds of fantasies are Biblically condemned.

Matthew 5:27-28 "27 You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. 28 But I say to you that everyone who so much as looks at a woman with evil desire for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

One of the Commandments in the Old Testament law is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). Y'shua [Jesus] said whoever thought about the act of adultery was breaking the law and committing sin, and that it was the same as the actual adultery. Matthew Henry (1991) calls it heart-adultery:

> *We are here taught, that there is such a thing as heart-adultery, adulterous thoughts and dispositions, which never proceed to the act of adultery or fornication … this command forbids not only the acts of fornication and adultery, but:*
>
> - *All appetites to them, all lusting after the forbidden object … it is a commission of sin, as far as the heart can do it; there wants nothing but convenient opportunity for the sin itself …*
> - *All approaches toward them; feeding the eye with the sight of the forbidden fruit; not only looking for that end, that I may lust; but looking till I do lust, or looking to gratify the lust, where further satisfaction cannot be obtained. (Vol. 5, p. 49)*

Again, the real battleground over masturbation and other sexual sins is the mind, the imagination, the fantasy realm. The Scriptures are clear that immorality is first committed in the mind, the imagination, the fantasy realm, before it is committed with the body.

Sex between a husband and wife ought to remain between a husband and wife; they are to cleave to each other, and that includes their thoughts. If not, then the fantasies become adulterous. A married person can fantasize about his or her spouse if the sexual fantasy is not prohibited in Scripture, if it is beneficial to their marital relationship, and if the fantasy does not involve anyone else. Shannon Ethridge (2003) says this about a married woman's fantasies:

> *While it is normal and healthy to have fantasies, they need to be restricted to your marriage partner. It's okay to fantasize that he brings you flowers or makes you a candlelight dinner or rubs lotion on your back. It's okay to fantasize about showering together or having wild sex on some tropical deserted island—as long as it is with your husband! (p. 37)*

Impure fantasies and thoughts are the gateway to women's sexual temptation. Shannon Ethridge (2003) says this:

> *Men and women struggle in different ways when it comes to sexual integrity. While a man's battle begins with what he takes in through his eyes, a woman's begins with her heart and her thoughts. (p. 13)*

Whereas men are driven by their physical needs, women are driven by their emotional needs. Men are aroused by what they see; women are aroused by what they hear. Men have a regular need for physical, sexual release; women long for attention and affection on a regular basis.

While men are tempted to look at pornography, women would much rather read romance novels. Women are guilty of having mental and/or emotional relationships with others. This is precisely why fantasies are so dangerous for women, according to Shannon Ethridge (2003):

> *Many [women] believe that just because they are not involved in a physical, sexual affair they don't have a problem with sexual and emotional integrity. As a result, they engage in thoughts and behaviors that compromise their integrity and rob them of true sexual and emotional fulfillment. (p. 7)*

For many people, fantasies and masturbation are interrelated. The majority of the people who sexually fantasize also masturbate and vice versa. If a person has his or her thought-life under control, he or she probably does not masturbate, because there is nothing in the thought realm to feed the sexual desire to masturbate. That's why it is so important to monitor our fantasies and cast down any and every thought that is un-Godly.

2 Corinthians 10:5 "5 [Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One),"

A never-married single person has never had a spouse, so even if he or she fantasized about having sex with a future spouse, it would be considered fornication. The same principles hold true for a divorced person. It would be considered fornication to sexually fantasize about a spouse. As a single or divorced person you are presently unmarried, therefore any fantasy of sex with another person is fornication. It would be the same as if you were to act out your fantasy in your present unmarried state. A widow or widower who fantasizes about actual past sexual experiences with his or her deceased spouse is not necessarily wrong. However, masturbation may increase unwanted sexual desires and produce further loneliness.

Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) tells the story of a missionary friend of his who was experiencing increased sexual loneliness during his frequent absences from his wife. Two other missionary friends suggested masturbation. He followed their suggestions and although, at first, it provided some relief, he felt insecure. He soon became disturbed by his lack of self-control. Thoughts of masturbation would cross his mind at the most inopportune times. His habit seemed to increase his sexual desires instead of decreasing them.

One day, he felt an evil presence in the room as he was about to masturbate. Instead, he prayed and resubmitted himself and his sexuality to God. He has not masturbated since (pg 151-152).

You may argue and say, "If fantasies is what makes masturbation wrong, then I can masturbate without fantasies."

Be very straightforward and honest with yourself: can you really masturbate without fantasies or some kind of sexual thoughts? You may be able to masturbate a few seconds without sexual thoughts, but you will quickly divert to sexual impure images of the mind to fuel your passion and desire to reach orgasm.

Lust is never satisfied. It has an appetite like nothing else. When you feed lust, it grows. Whatever sexual fantasy or method you used last time to masturbate usually will not work the next time. Something different or more erotic is needed to obtain an orgasm. This is the reason masturbation usually precedes or follows other sexual practices, such as pornography, homosexuality, adultery, and so forth. All sex addicts use masturbation, regardless of their sexual addiction.

Pornography defies the imagination; it feeds fantasies and it aids masturbation. Once the fantasy or thought is conceived, the person begins to seek ways to make the fantasy a reality.

James 1:15 "15 Then the evil desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully matured, brings forth death."

Monitor your fantasies and thoughts. Check to see if they are conceived in lust. If so, take control of your thought life. Reading and applying the Word of God to your life accomplishes this.

Colossians 3:2 "2 And set your minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth."

The Bible also encourages us to think pure and right thoughts.

Philippians 4:8 "8 For the rest, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them]."

A selfish, idolatrous act …

Ask yourself: during masturbation, whom are you seeking to please sexually? Are you seeking to please God? If married, are you seeking to bring pleasure to your spouse?

If you're honest, you will admit that masturbation is all about self-gratification, seeking to please oneself without regards to anyone else. Masturbation is a solitary, selfish act. With the increase of online pornography and sex, masturbation is becoming more rampant. Carnes, Delmonico, and Griffin (2001) describes the role of masturbation in online sex as a selfish one:

> *By definition, intercourse is the physical connection of two people. The closest approximation to intercourse online is mutual masturbation or phone sex—a pseudo-intercourse that doesn't even include the "exchange of body fluids. And since it lacks any of the components of healthy courtship, it can't possibly compare to the more broadly defined act of intercourse that requires complete trust in the other. Online intercourse requires neither commitment nor connection. It is nothing more than one individual satisfying himself or herself with the aid of an online partner. (p. 81)*

Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) prefers the term "sexual self-stimulation" to define masturbation. He further states:

> *This definition emphasizes self-gratification, a form of narcissism [bold added]. It is a totally self-centered sexual activity [bold added] through self-stimulation to the point of orgasm. (p. 148)*

Narcissism is defined as the worship of self, or a sexual desire for one's own body. It is derived from Narcissus, a beautiful youth of Greek mythology who fell in love with his own image. Masturbation is a worship of self; it is also a form of idolatry.

Colossians 3:5 "5 So kill (deaden, deprive of power) the evil desire lurking in your members [those animal impulses and all that is earthly in you that is employed in sin]: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry (the deifying of self and other created things instead of God)."

Self-indulgence is the most unrecognized form of idolatry, leading to fornication, whoredom, and so forth. Idolatry has long been associated with gross forms of sexual immorality and perversion. All throughout the Old Testament, the Israelites were attracted to idolatry. The greatest attraction of idol worship seems to be the licentious revelries and obscene orgies involved, appealing to the sensual passions of the flesh. The New Testament is filled with idolatry and its accompanying sexual immorality. The people often ate before idols then rose up to sexual play (fornication).

1 Corinthians 10:7 "7 Do not be worshipers of false gods as some of them were, as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink [the sacrifices offered to the golden calf at Horeb] and rose to sport (to dance and give way to jesting and hilarity)."

When you masturbate to fulfill your sexual needs rather than submit to God's Plan for sex, you have substituted your way for His way; you are rejecting God's Sovereignty and Authority.

In other words, you are telling God that you don't need Him or His purpose for sex to fulfill your sexual needs; that you can perform it yourself with masturbation; thereby setting yourself up to be your own god, worshiping yourself. God is a jealous God and will have no other gods before Him.

Exodus 34:14 "14 For you shall worship no other god; for the Lord, Whose name is Jealous, is a jealous (impassioned) God,"

In the Garden of Eden, Satan knew that through disobedience, Adam and Eve would become their own gods.

Genesis 3:5 "5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing the difference between good and evil and blessing and calamity."

A few verses later, God acknowledged that when Adam and Eve disobeyed His commandment by eating of the fruit, they became like Him.

Genesis 3:22 "22 And the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of Us [the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit], to know [how to distinguish between] good and evil and blessing and calamity; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever—"

When you disobey, you become your own god by asserting your own will before His will, and you are in rebellion against the One True God.

Isaiah 1:19-20 "19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20 But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

Masturbation is a selfish, idolatrous sexual act that does not bring pleasure to God because the focus is on self, and the desire to bring pleasure to oneself. In living for God, we have to deny ourselves.

Matthew 16:24 "24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself [disregard, lose sight of, and forget himself and his own interests] and take up his cross and follow Me [cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying, also]."

Even Y'shua [Jesus] denied Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion at Calvary.

Matthew 26:39 "39 And going a little farther, He threw Himself upon the ground on His face and prayed saying, My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will [not what I desire], but as You will and desire."

If masturbation is practiced within a marriage, is there a free flowing, unselfish, giving expression of love towards your spouse while doing it? Masturbation fixates on one's own sexual organs and desires, the opposite of a shared sexual relationship with one's mate. Some people believe masturbation is okay in marriage as long as both partners agree. Is masturbation a substitute husband or wife? Shannon Ethridge (2003) talks about the problems of masturbation in marriage:

> *Many married women continue in their addiction to masturbation even after they have the freedom of sexual expression with their mate. They can't see what this habit does to their marriage. But think about it. You train your body as well as your mind to what it finds pleasurable and how to orgasm, and masturbation trains a woman to "fly solo." This can cause problems because your husband may not know how to please you in the same way, which could make your marital sex life very frustrating and disappointing to the both of you. Most husbands find pleasure and satisfaction in bringing their wives to orgasm. (p. 41)*

What about marriage partners who are separated from each other for long periods? Is it okay for them to masturbate? Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) has this to say about abstaining from masturbation during his separation from his wife:

> *My ministry often has taken me away from my loving wife for months at a time. My intimate sexual relationship with my wife grows deeper, not shallower, with time … When I am away from her, even when I am alone and desire her love, I do not engage in autosexuality [masturbation]. I choose not to do so. With this God-given self-control has come wonderful freedom and peace. There is no freedom nor peace in bondage to masturbation. (p. 150-151)*

Masturbation also goes against God's Plan of marriage and serves no spiritual purpose according to Juanita Bynum (2000):

> *In my own experience, and in talking to other people, I have come to the conclusion that masturbating has no spiritual purpose. I believe that when a woman masturbates, she is saying within herself, "I can do without the Adam." When a man masturbates, he is saying, "I really don't need an Eve." When a male and female refuse to be joined together, they are erasing the natural institution of God. (p.171-172)*

Masturbation leaves you feeling empty and guilty. It produces further loneliness and does not bring peace. Only God can satisfy your most intimate needs; masturbation can never satisfy you.

Shannon Ethridge (2003) summarizes it beautifully this way:

He knows what will truly satisfy you—it's not orgasm, particularly orgasm achieved through masturbation and impure thoughts. It may feel good for the moment, but it doesn't bring lasting satisfaction. That can only be found in relationship. God wants a close, intimate relationship with you. Once you allow Him to prove Himself in this area, you will understand that self-gratification was really never any gratification at all. Striving for God-gratification instead of self-gratification will ensure that your body, mind, heart, and spirit remain pure. (p. 43)

God desires a level of relationship with you such that you are deeply in love with Him, that you delight to be in His presence, and that your focus and priorities become aligned with His will and desires.

Hosea 2:19-20 "19 And I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. 20 I will even betroth you to Me in stability and in faithfulness, and you shall know (recognize, be acquainted with, appreciate, give heed to, and cherish) the Lord."

Seek to know Him more intimately in a relationship. Pursue Him as passionately as He has pursued you. Fall in love with Him; delight yourself in Him. Be enchanted in His Presence; invite Him to be the Lover of your soul.

Masturbation and the spirit world …

What may begin as a work of the flesh can evolve to our being exposed to demonic influence. The downward spiral has no specific time frame; it can take days, weeks, months, or even years. What may have begun in ignorance or innocence can progress to complete dominion by the enemy, eventually causing us to lose out with God. King David shows us the progressive steps of sin in Psalm 19.

Psalms 19:12-13 "12 Who can discern his lapses and errors? Clear me from hidden [and unconscious] faults. 13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then shall I be blameless, and I shall be innocent and clear of great transgression."

1. Errors.
    a. The first occurrence of sin may have begun in ignorance or innocence. For example, you may have masturbated the first time as a child after discovering pornographic magazines in your parents' closet. David calls this first step of sin an "error."

2. Secret Faults.
    a. The second step of sin occurs when the sin becomes somewhat of a secret habit. In other words, you secretly and habitually return to the closet to view the pornography and masturbate again. The “error” has now progressed to a “secret fault.”
3. Presumptuous Sins.
    a. When you willfully participate in sin even though you know it is wrong, you have progressed to the third step called “presumptuous sin.” At this point, you have stolen the pornographic magazines from your parents’ closet and hidden them in your own room, so that you can masturbate at any time. You realize that you are losing control, but you continue to sin anyway, regardless of the consequences.
4. Domination.
    a. Before you realize it, you are totally out of control and you have progressed to the fourth step called “domination.” You are now obsessed with masturbation and doing it several times a day. You are also seeking new pornographic material to feed your lust. Masturbation has now enslaved you; you are in bondage to it. The innocent “error” now has complete “domination” over you.

The only sure way to avoid the possibility of habit and bondage to sin is never to begin. In Psalm 19, King David shows us how to pray in regards to sin. He was guilty of many sins that he was not aware of through his carelessness and partiality to himself. He took occasion to pray against sin. He prayed for cleansing and prevention of sin. He sought help from God to keep his life pure from sin. We would be wise to follow King David’s example.

Sex involves the body, soul, and spirit. There is a lot going on in the supernatural spirit realm that we cannot see. However, we should not assume that everything around us is a demonic spirit. Many things that we want to attribute to demonic spirits are nothing more than the works of the flesh that Paul spoke of in Galatians.

Galatians 5:19-21 “19 Now the doings (practices) of the flesh are clear (obvious): they are immorality, impurity, indecency, 20 Idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger (ill temper), selfishness, divisions (dissensions), party spirit (factions, sects with peculiar opinions, heresies),”

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness are sexually-rooted works of the flesh. Uncleanness and lasciviousness include the thoughts, acts, and actions of a sexual nature (whether alone or involving another). Is masturbation not rooted in sexual thoughts, acts, and actions?

Instead of manifesting the works of the flesh, we should be exhibiting the Fruits of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-24 "22 But the fruit of the [Holy] Spirit [the work which His presence within accomplishes] is love, joy (gladness), peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness, 23 Gentleness (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraint, continence). Against such things there is no law [that can bring a charge]. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus (the Messiah) have crucified the flesh (the godless human nature) with its passions and appetites and desires."

Do you exhibit the fruits of the Spirit after masturbation? Do you have peace and joy afterwards? Instead, do you experience guilt and shame after masturbation? We must crucify the flesh and its lusts in order exhibit Messiah Y'shua [Jesus Christ] and His Fruit. When a person begins practicing a work of the flesh (like masturbation), either of their own accord and will, or as influenced by a particular demon, and then after they begin practicing this work they open themselves up for demonic influence. Juanita Bynum (2000) elaborates on this:

> *Many times people feel that when they masturbate, it's just a physical exercise. That is a far cry from being the truth because when you indulge in this act, you actually have to go into the spirit of your mind. This is why the Bible says we must be renewed in the spirit of our mind. In the seat of the spirit of your mind—where the imagination of the Lord does not reside and where impure thoughts are—there is the evil working of the enemy in the thought realm. When you travel into that realm to such a depth that you cause a physical sensation, you have tampered with demons in a realm that you know not of. (p. 149)*
>
> *If in fact acts of lust and lustful imaginations exist because of the spirit of your mind, don't allow your mind to be open to the spirit of the past. While you are out there, you have left the reality of the now and transcended into the spiritual. If that spiritual realm is not in the realm of God, then you have just exposed your spirit to a satanic realm that has more to offer than just a sensation … If you went into the fantasy land of the future, the enemy expanded the corruption of your mind into an area that you have not even experienced yet. Now this is a strong, subconscious sexual drive. The enemy will not stop until that fantasy becomes a reality. That is why we must be renewed in the spirit of our mind. (p. 166)*
>
> *When you reach an orgasm from the realm of imagination and you have traveled into the spirit realm for that climax at that very moment, and you are out of control, your body is responding to that act, and you don't know what spirits from that realm have entered you. (p. 152-153)*

> *Masturbation has no purpose other than to allow the mental and spiritual seats of your conscience to explore unfamiliar territory. This is how we encounter other spirits that are not like God. (p. 172)*

Compulsive, uncontrolled masturbation can involve the demonic realm. Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) talks about this:

> There can be a definite demonic dimension to uncontrolled masturbation. I am not saying that demons are directly attached to the lives of all those in bondage to autosexual [masturbation] practices…I am saying that {demons} can become attached to the life of anyone in bondage to this unwise sexual practice. Such persons need counseling, but they also need deliverance. (p. 151)

Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) further states:

> *Bondage to masturbation is spiritual warfare. The desire may first come from within, warfare with the lusts of the flesh. It can also come directly from without, warfare with a sex-crazed world. Finally, it often comes from above, warfare with sexual demons who tempt us to unwise or illicit sexual activity. (p. 151)*

However, we must accept personal responsibility for our actions and our sin. While demons can entice and incite us to sin, they cannot make us do anything against our will.

1 Corinthians 10:13 "13 For no temptation (no trial regarded as enticing to sin), [no matter how it comes or where it leads] has overtaken you and laid hold on you that is not common to man [that is, no temptation or trial has come to you that is beyond human resistance and that is not adjusted and adapted and belonging to human experience, and such as man can bear]. But God is faithful [to His Word and to His compassionate nature], and He [can be trusted] not to let you be tempted and tried and assayed beyond your ability and strength of resistance and power to endure, but with the temptation He will [always] also provide the way out (the means of escape to a landing place), that you may be capable and strong and powerful to bear up under it patiently."

Ephesians 4:27 "27 Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil [give no opportunity to him]."

The Christian is the one who yields ground to Satan. Satan has no authority in a Christian's life except that which the Christian surrenders to him. Therefore, it is possible, even crucial, that the Christian, in the power of the Holy Ghost, to take back the ground he or she has yielded to the enemy.

You may ask, “God created my body to be sexually responsive, so surely He wouldn’t deny me this pleasure of masturbation? How can I be open to demonic influence if God formed me this way?” Although your body was created to be sexually responsive, it was first made to house the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 6:13 “13 Food [is intended] for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will finally end [the functions of] both and bring them to nothing. The body is not intended for sexual immorality, but [is intended] for the Lord, and the Lord [is intended] for the body [to save, sanctify, and raise it again].”

If the body is joined with another, those two bodies, and souls and spirits become one flesh.

1 Corinthians 6:15-18 “15 Do you not see and know that your bodies are members (bodily parts) of Christ (the Messiah)? Am I therefore to take the parts of Christ and make [them] parts of a prostitute? Never! Never! 16 Or do you not know and realize that when a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? The two, it is written, shall become one flesh. 17 But the person who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. 18 Shun immorality and all sexual looseness [flee from impurity in thought, word, or deed]. Any other sin which a man commits is one outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”

God is saying that His Spirit and fornication when joined together, become one, and in this case it becomes a harlot. Doing so desecrates His Name and His Spirit. If your body houses the Spirit of God, and, when you masturbate, you commit “heart-fornication,” you have just joined the Spirit of God with a harlot of masturbation.

You may say, “It’s just me. No one else is involved. So I’m not joined to another with my physical body.” When you masturbate, you are joined with a thought or imagination in the soul realm.

You are joined with an unclean or perverse spirit in the spiritual realm. During masturbation, you and that thought or imagination and spirit become one. Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost; not an idolatrous temple.

1 Corinthians 6:19 “19 Do you not know that your body is the temple (the very sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit Who lives within you, Whom you have received [as a Gift] from God? You are not your own,”

You turn your body into a temple of idolatrous self-worship when you masturbate.

Matthew Henry (1991) says:

> *We are to honor him with our bodies and spirits, which are his; and therefore, surely, must abstain from fornication; and not only from the outward act, but from the adultery of the heart, as our Lord calls it, Matthew 5:28. (Vol. 6, p. 432)*

Seek to be joined with Him as one in the Spirit. Seek to glorify God with your body and soul and spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:20 "20 You were bought with a price [purchased with a preciousness and paid for, made His own]. So then, honor God and bring glory to Him in your body."

Seek to love Him with all of your being. Seek to love Him with all of your body, soul and spirit.

Matthew 22:37 "37 And He replied to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (intellect)."

OBTAINING DELIVERANCE …

Why do you want deliverance from masturbation? You might say, "I'm a Christian and I'm not suppose to masturbate." Doing the right thing is one matter; why you're doing it is another. Proper motivation is essential to success.

Let your motivation be: "I desire deliverance because I am a Christian and I cannot allow any immoral actions, such as masturbation, to dominate my life. I desire deliverance because I love Him and I want to please Him." Make purity your goal, not abstinence. In other words, don't just strive to stop masturbating; strive also to have a pure heart before Him. Beth Moore (2003) talks about deliverance:

> *More than anything, the key to deliverance is not just being delivered from but being delivered to. The reason we keep going back to our old strongholds is that we have temporarily been delivered from the sin practice, but we did not follow through with deliverance straight to the healthy heart of God. (p. 284)*

There are several ways to avoid sexual temptation and maintain sexual integrity. Here is a partial list:

- Be careful with magazines and books. Men, avoid magazines with sexually graphic pictures, especially pornography. Women, avoid romance novels (the sexually graphic pictures are mental rather than visual, which is more alluring to women).

- Avoid television and movies. This is the greatest desensitization tool of satan. The majority of what is broadcast today, the subliminal messages as well as the visual graphics, is sexual in nature. Yet most people have become desensitized to what they see and hear … and most don't even realize it. I've heard people say in response to a comment about a nudity scene in a movie, "Oh that? That's nothing." Or after viewing a love-making scene, they say, "They're married! That's what married people do." Personally, I don't want to see nudity or watch another married couple make love; I consider it a form of pornography.
- Use the Internet in a public setting. If you have a computer at home, keep it in the living room or some other public area, not in some back room. Always let someone else know when you are using the computer, especially the Internet. If necessary, go to the public library to use the Internet.
- Have an accountability partner. This is VERY important. Find someone you can trust who will hold you accountable to God's Word for your actions. Find someone who will speak the truth to you in love (even if it hurts). Give them permission to ask you the hard, personal questions. Be brutally honest with this person. Let him or her know when you are sexually tempted or after you have given in to the temptation. These things are accountability measures; they are good and necessary. However, they alone will not deliver you. Only the Word of God will bring true everlasting deliverance.

Many people approach masturbation with the law. They often try every possible way to stop with no success. Then, apathy and indifference can set in. Grace is not indifference. Grace is total dependence upon God. We humans have a self-reliant, independent spirit, attempting to be strong. Dependence upon God is NOT a weakness; it is strength, HIS Strength. His Strength covers our weakness. Sin weakens us; His grace strengthens us.

Maybe you've tried replacing the habit of masturbation with a different behavior. Others perhaps you have tried to figure out your thoughts and feelings and "why" you masturbate. You have gone to the altar for prayer countless times. In essence, nothing worked.

☑ Step 1:

The first step towards deliverance is recognizing the lies you believe regarding masturbation: "I must have a physical sexual release … Masturbation is better than fornication or adultery … I only masturbate about once a month." Stop rationalizing and justifying the reason(s) you masturbate. Satan's strategy of temptation is deception. You cannot justify or reason your way to deliverance. Matthew Henry (1991) had this to say about rationalizing sin, particularly lust:

> *Such pretenses as these will scarcely be overcome by reason, and therefore must be argued against with the terrors of the Lord … (Vol. 5, p. 50)*

1 John 1:8 "8 If we say we have no sin [refusing to admit that we are sinners], we delude and lead ourselves astray, and the Truth [which the Gospel presents] is not in us [does not dwell in our hearts]."

By saying that you masturbated because of _____ (fill in the blank with any reason), you justified the sin and deceived yourself. Matthew Henry (1991) states:

> *We must beware of deceiving ourselves in denying or justifying our sins. (Vol. 6, p. 857)*

1 John 1:10 "10 If we say (claim) we have not sinned, we contradict His Word and make Him out to be false and a liar, and His Word is not in us [the divine message of the Gospel is not in our hearts]."

By denying your sin of masturbation, you are calling God a liar. You are saying that His Word is not true. You are saying that His Sacrifice on Calvary was in vain. You are also saying that you do not have the Holy Ghost (His Word) in you. This doesn't mean that by sinning, you are calling God a liar, because He knew we would continue to sin, and thereby made provision for sin. But by denying your sin through rationalization, you are calling Him a liar. Matthew Henry (1991) says:

> *The denial of our sin not only deceives ourselves, but it reflects dishonor upon God. It challenges His Veracity [truthfulness]. (Vol. 6, p. 857)*

☐Step 2:

The second step towards deliverance is confession and repentance.

1 John 1:9 "9 If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just (true to His own nature and promises) and will forgive our sins [dismiss our lawlessness] and [continuously] cleanse us from all unrighteousness [everything not in conformity to His will in purpose, thought, and action]."

The remedy for your sin is confession and repentance to God, whereby receiving cleansing and forgiveness for them. You must confess your sins each time, and every time, no matter how embarrassing or insignificant you think it may be.

God forgives as soon as we confess, but it takes time to get the flesh and mind in alignment with His Spirit and His Word. If you will confess your sins, God will forgive, thereby keeping deception at bay, and eventually receiving deliverance. Matthew Henry (1991) makes a powerful and true statement regarding our confession of sin and God's forgiveness:

> *He is clement and gracious also, and so will forgive, to the contrite confessor, all his sins, cleanse him from the guilt of all unrighteousness, and in due time deliver him from the power and practice of it. (Vol. 6, p. 857)*

❑Step 3:

The third step towards deliverance is applying the Word of God to your life.

James 1:22 "22 But be doers of the Word [obey the message], and not merely listeners to it, betraying yourselves [into deception by reasoning contrary to the Truth]."

This is a crucial and critical step in obtaining deliverance because it breaks the deception of sin by replacing the lies with the truth of God's Word. When sexual temptation comes, do not resist with your mind or you will fail every time. Instead, pray and apply the Word of God. Without applying the Word, you remain deceived as Elmer Towns (1996) states:

> *We deceive ourselves when we hear and then fail to apply the Word of God in our lives. (p. 36)*

Learning to apply the Word of God is very powerful because you are learning how to wield your God-given weapon, the Sword of the Spirit (see Ephesians 6:10-17). If you will make the effort, the Lord will strengthen you and direct you on how to effectively use it.

*Psalm 144:1 "**B**LESSED BE the Lord, my Rock and my keen and firm Strength, Who teaches my hands to war and my fingers to fight—"*

Start with just a few Scriptures. For example: Psalm 91, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, and Psalm 107:20. Whenever the thoughts of masturbation or any other similar thoughts enter your mind, get the Word of God, turn to these Scriptures and read them repeatedly out loud.

At first, it does not matter whether or not the Scriptures are directly related to the situation, in this case masturbation. You are simply learning to use God's Word to combat temptation and sin.

The next step in applying God's Word is distinguishing the lies from the truth. You may experience confusion from the enemy at this stage. You may want to get a notebook and write down a negative thought or feeling at the top of each page. Then, search the Word of God for two or three Scriptures to dispute each one.

For example, you may write at the top of one page, "I feel hopeless." Underneath it, write, "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. Psalm 71:14."

Then write, "Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word. Psalm 119:114."

When the swirling lies of the enemy attack you and you cannot recall a specific Scripture, pick up the notebook, flip to the appropriate page, and begin reading aloud the scriptures recorded there. The Word of God is powerful and it will liberate you from the many lies of satan!

Afterwards, when the temptation has subsided, you may feel drained or weak emotionally and physically. You simply want to break down and cry. Allow yourself to cry out to God in pain in prayer. It is not easy at first. Many times, there are no words, only tears and anguish. If you will allow the tears to fall, His warm touch will flow through you as He ministers healing and love to you. Open yourself up to God and allow Him to touch the different areas of pain, and you will experience healing.

Allowing God to fill that empty space in your life is very important. You need to let His Presence occupy the place where masturbation once dwelt.

Luke 11:25-26 "25 And when it arrives, it finds [the place] swept and put in order and furnished and decorated. 26 And it goes and brings other spirits, seven [of them], more evil than itself, and they enter in, settle down, and dwell there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first."

If a person removes the unclean spirits from their life, they must allow God to fill that empty place with His Spirit and His Word or matters will worsen. Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) states:

> *The expulsion of one group of evil spirits from a human life will usually lead to the entry of another group if the sin in the life to which the former demonic spirits had attached themselves is not removed. (p. 109)*

Too many people seek instantaneous deliverance from sin. Although it does happen, it is not always the case. You've heard of people who were instantaneously delivered from alcoholism and drugs, and so forth. Alcoholism and other such addictions are external; the desires to drink and smoke are not inborn like the sexual nature.

We have to maintain sexual integrity at all times and channel it in the right direction because of the sexual nature that God put in us. Therefore, deliverance often comes from applying the Word of God to our lives. Please note that deliverance does not eliminate temptation. Temptation will still occur, and you must continue to apply the Word of God during those times as well.

Spiritual warfare is not a hocus-pocus world of demons on every corner. Yes, the supernatural realm is real and demonic influences and spirits do exist. In reality, true spiritual warfare is what we term day-to-day living: daily walking with God and being led by His Spirit.

It is praying, reading the Word of God, and keeping His Commandments by living holy every day. No enemy is too strong for us. If we feel overwhelmed or weak, it is typically due to a lack of prayer and applying the Word.

My friend, it is my prayer that you will find hope and healing for masturbation through His powerful Word and become all that God has called you to be!

1 Peter 2:9 "9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, [God's] own purchased, special people, that you may set forth the wonderful deeds and display the virtues and perfections of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

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