

What's Wrong with Masturbation?

By Steve Gallagher

Some of the leading Christian psychologists in the nation have said that masturbation is a normal function and unless carried on into marriage, usually proves to be harmless. I believe the reason they have said this is to alleviate some of the guilt and condemnation associated with it. But you cannot condone something because it makes people feel guilty. God gave us guilt feelings for much the same reason He gave us the sense of pain: it lets us know when we are doing something wrong that is going to hurt us.

You also cannot condone masturbation because everybody does it. We are sinners by nature and it is natural for us to sin. But just because masturbation is normal for fallen man, that does not make it acceptable in the eyes of a holy God.

Although masturbation isn't specifically addressed in Scripture, the Bible gives us principles for leading a pure and holy life that clearly point to the wrongness of it.

Proper Sex

The first and most obvious reason that masturbation is wrong is because it goes against God's purpose for sex. Although our society has perverted sex to the extent that it has become a self-centered act, God created it to be a function of marriage. There is no room for sex outside of marriage.

Worldly minded teachers tell us though, that we have pent-up desires that must be "relieved." They say that God created us to need sex and wouldn't expect us to go without it. What they don't realize is that sex is a desire that God gave us; not a need. People who have learned to walk in the Spirit, have been overcoming these desires for thousands of years.

Also, Paul gave the answer to this problem when he said "if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion." It is clear by his words here that Scripture gives only two alternatives to this problem. The person must either exercise self control or they must marry. God doesn't allow sin as a third alternative.

Feeding the Flesh

Another reason we know that masturbation is wrong is because it is another form of self-gratification. Throughout Scripture self-gratification is denounced. Over and over again we are told how important it is that we don't allow the flesh to dominate our thinking or our actions. The following verses are but two that deal with this:

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of

God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:6-8)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry (Galatians 5:16-20)

Lustful Fantasy

It is virtually impossible to masturbate without fantasizing. What would a person think about who is trying to achieve orgasm if not sex with some person? Not meaning to be flippant -- but could you imagine thinking about fixing the refrigerator while masturbating? Of course not! People who masturbate must lust over another person to be able to achieve an orgasm. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Doorway to Other Sin

One of the consequences to a habit of masturbation is that it opens the door for the enemy to lead the person deeper into sin. Sin is never satisfied; it always demands more and more of the person. As God told Cain, "sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

The habit of masturbation sets in motion a mentality of giving in to the demands of the flesh that is often carried on into other sins. The person literally gets "in the habit" of caving in to every carnal temptation and desire. As the person fills his mind with fantasies of having sex with other people, he is deepening the carnal thought that the worth of women is to be found in their sexuality. This thinking process leads the person deeper and deeper into sin.

Being Controlled By Sin

Another biblical reason why masturbation is wrong is the way that it masters people. It is a habit that controls people. Christians should not be controlled by anything, except a love for Christ. Paul said that we should not be mastered by anything. Masturbation is a dominating habit that tends to control the person.

But more than just that, it is also a matter of aligning ourselves with the sinful domain of the enemy. Paul spoke of the choice we have about who we will serve:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; . . . Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? (Romans 6:12-13; 16)

Masturbation is nothing short of lust-filled self-gratification. It is the epitome of self-centeredness and is wrong for the Christian. If you are struggling with a habit of masturbation, please understand that even though it is wrong, that doesn't mean that God doesn't love you or won't help you change.

Those feeling intense condemnation should know that the Lord never condemns those He loves. Satan is the accuser of the brethren and the one who tries to make people feel condemned. Those who have done things like cutting off their hands or other body parts can attest to the harshness of Satan's condemnation.

The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is always a "Gentleman." He quietly and lovingly convicts us of our sin and nudges us toward heart-felt repentance.

The Adolescent

When a parent finds out that his child or teenager has become involved with masturbation, he should be careful as to how to deal with it.

Most children have a natural curiosity about their own sexuality. Exploring oneself is a normal

part of growing up. The best thing a parent can do about this is to patiently watch to see if it develops into a real problem. If it is just curiosity, it should run its course before long.

If a young person seems to be developing a habit of masturbation, it would be best to have a talk with them about it. It's important that you don't condemn them for their behavior. This is actually a great opportunity to show him your friendship. Have a friend-to-friend talk with him about it. Address it in as non-threatening a manner as possible. After your talk, spend time in prayer together -- seeking God for His strength and help to overcome this habit. You can't

expect a child to react to a problem with sin in the same way as a mature Christian adult.

An important thing to note at this point also is that you teach your children values in life through your own life. If your life revolves around pleasure-seeking activities -- even if they have nothing to do with sex -- your child is going to learn that this is what life is all about.

On the other hand, if your life revolves around the things of God, your child is going to see spiritual things as the important things to pursue in life. The best thing you can do to prepare your children for a godly life in a wicked world is to live a godly lifestyle yourself.