

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE ON MASTURBATION

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Masturbation is the act of stimulating one's genitals with one's hands, fingers, and sex toys for sexual pleasure and orgasm. Masturbation is a word you will never find in the Bible. It is interesting to note that the scripture did not speak directly on the subject of masturbation. The Bible does not specifically condemn masturbation, nor does the Bible specifically condone it. This tends to be one of those "taboo" subjects that people don't often talk about, but if it is a sin then it's important for us to know that.

God's laws cover every area of man's life. It covers the subject of sex – who to, and who not to have sex with, acceptable and unacceptable sexual acts. Yet, masturbation has no law on it. Does it mean that God permits masturbation, or does not care about masturbation? Is masturbation OK for a Christian? What does the Bible say about it? It says nothing directly, but Apostle Paul clearly has an opinion on the lack of self-control over the body (i.e. masturbation), Paul's solution is marriage.

1 Cor 7:8-9

8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

NIV

Masturbation is a thing that men and women do when they do not have a partner (a husband or wife), or their partner is not around. It is substitute for the real thing. Most people want the real thing, a man or woman who loves them and accepts them.

I agree with Paul, that God has only one solution to the problem of masturbation, a man needs to find a wife and a woman needs to find a husband. Paul says that if an unmarried person cannot exercise self-control they should marry.

1 Cor 7:36-37

36 If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. 37 But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin-this man also does the right thing.

NIV

Masturbation, means that a person cannot exercise self-control (over the body) therefore, they should marry (seek a wife or husband). The covenant of marriage also lasts for life; Paul is very clear on this matter.

Titus 3:3

3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

NIV

Masturbation is also being a slave to our passions and pleasures. The next verse contains a "but", one of the most wonderful words in the bible "But... God".

Titus 3:4-7

4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

NIV

The key word here is grace. God still loves us even though we do not deserve it. Jesus Christ died for real sinners, like you and me. Sin is falling short of the glory of God. (Rom 3:23). We can see this in the parable of the prodigal son, who devoured his father's wealth with wild living and prostitutes (Luke 15:11-32).

Masturbation for a man is a substitute for a wife, and for a woman, it's a substitute for a husband. Any man who masturbates knows that he needs/wants a woman and a wife, this is natural. Masturbation shows a man that he is alone and that he needs a partner. God says 'that it is not good for the man to dwell alone' (Gen 2:18), therefore he created a wife for Adam. Paul says to singles and widows "if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion." (1 Cor 7:9). The problem in our age is that it is so difficult for a man to find a wife, and for a woman it is so difficult to find a husband. Further there are other poor substitutes out there, pornography for men and sex toys for women, these are a lot easier to find than to find a partner. These give temporary relief to our 'aloneness', but are not the answer. However, Paul's advice to the Corinthian church, who also lived in an immoral society just like we do, was that people should marry rather than indulge in sexual immorality (1 Cor 7:2). It is better to marry than to be consumed by masturbation or other substitutes.

One issue with masturbation as well as sexual immorality is self-control.

(1 Cor 7:8-9

*8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. 9 But if they cannot **control** themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

NIV

1 Thess 4:3-6

*3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to **control** his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you.*

NIV

Titus 2:6

*6 Similarly, encourage the young men to be **self-controlled**.*

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Self-control is a fruit of the spirit (Gal 5:23), however fruit takes time to grow. Our sexual appetite is strong and for most people is difficult to tame. Celibacy is unnatural for most people, and therefore most people should marry. We should also remember that marriage was one of God's pre-fall ordinances (Gen 2:24). It is natural to marry even in a perfect world, but now in our immoral world marriage also serves to keep us from immorality (Paul's argument in 1Cor 7:2).

1 Cor 7:2

2 But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.

NIV

Marriage is not just a solution to sexual immorality, it is also God's plan to end loneliness, provide companionship, provide a helper, mutual support, children, joy etc, etc. Most men who have known a woman will say: "she is beautiful", "she sees things differently to me", "I need her", "she sees my weaknesses", "she supports me" (add your own experiences).

Prov 18:22

22 He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.

NIV

Paul also says that he will not be enslaved by anything:

1 Cor 6:12

12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

NKJV

Paul does not mention that masturbation can stop us burning with passion or as a substitute to burning with passion. If we cannot control ourselves, (which might include masturbation) his solution is marriage rather than masturbation. We should also note here that Paul is talking to men and women, he is talking about the unmarried and the widows (1 Cor 7:7). Here, he singles out widows who already know the joys of sex, to them he also says, as well as to the unmarried,

"better to marry than burn with passion". While Paul argues that it is good not to marry, he also recognizes that in an immoral society, it is better to marry, than to commit immorality. The teaching from Genesis also shows that it is natural to marry (Gen 2:23-24). Someone who burns with passion does not have the gift of singleness (1 Cor 7:7).

1 Cor 7:1-4

7:1 Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. 3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

NKJV

In most cases marriage should put an end to the practice of masturbation, although this does not always happen, such is the fallenness of man. In its favour masturbation is safe sex and does not cause pregnancy. If it is not accompanied by pornography and fantasies and used merely as a release mechanism then it is better than fornication and may prevent fornication, the issue then is one of purity of mind. While masturbation is not mentioned, impure thoughts are, and these need to be avoided. Therefore we need to take control over what we look at and avoid those things that give rise to or stimulate lust - papers, magazines, TV, films etc. We should take the responsibility to guard our minds so that we are not overtaken by temptation.

Prov 4:23

23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

NIV

Phil 4:8

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

NIV

Paul's advice to Titus is to urge the young men to be self-controlled, this is good advice. In 1 Th 4:4-5 Paul tells us that "each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God". Also in 2 Tim 2:22 Paul's advice to Timothy, is to flee the evil desires of youth, and a positive command is introduced, which is to pursue righteousness, faith love and peace. If the result is that a young man burns with sexual passion then the solution is marriage. The Vatican command for priests to remain celibate is clearly wrong (1 Tim 4:3 "men who forbid marriage"); it is the doctrine of demons. The current practice of late marriages, together with a world filled with both sexual immorality and sexual images, are not conducive to purity in both body and mind. For those addicted to pornography you need to get out of it quickly.

You can be free

For the young man or woman struggling with masturbation, you feel alone, you face your 'temptation' alone, but you are not the only one facing this 'temptation'. This is a temptation common to all men and women, but you have to make effort to overcome it. You must realize that the thoughts of the mind create the desire and strengthen it. Love, lust and sexual desires are the creations of the human mind. Every feeling a man or woman has is the byproduct of his or her thoughts, to get rid of masturbation, one need to keep his or her thoughts clean and pure. Masturbation is not the way out of sexual lust, but fuels it. As one enjoys the feeling, he will masturbate again and again until it becomes an addiction.

If you are already addicted to masturbation, marriage may not free you completely especially when your spouse is not around you or available for sex, you will continue to masturbate, until you take charge of your thoughts and make it clean and pure. To control your thoughts is to control your emotions. And when emotions are controlled, masturbation is overcome. Deal with your age long habit of thinking more about sex or lustful thoughts. Keep your mind from sex and immoral thoughts about the opposite sex and you will overcome masturbation. Occupy your mind with other things and sexual desires will be reduced or absent.

Keep away from pornography – magazines, DVDs, porn sites. Anything that pollutes your mind and fills it with lustful and sexual desires should be avoided. As long as you are not fuelling masturbation with sexual thoughts, you will be free from masturbation.

Call on the Lord to help you in prayer. Trust Him to deliver you as you on your own make up your mind to be free and keep away from thoughts that encourage masturbation.

Finally, you must remember that until you see masturbation as wrong, you cannot be free from it, for what you do not believe is evil, you will never take steps to overcome it.