

“What Does the Bible Say About Masturbation?”

Dr. Bohlin:

I have just read [your article on “Sexual Purity”](#) & found it to be an excellent resource. You have really hit this subject on the head.

Can you please address the following question?

I am a Christian male, age 36. My girlfriend, maybe soon to be fiance is also a Christian. We do not cohabit, nor do we have sexual relations, albeit we are not virgins.

The secular world would have us believe that masturbation is a healthy practice. Research has shown that men think about sex more often than women. Obviously men and women are wired differently.

I catch myself entertaining sexual thoughts and I feel a tremendous amount of guilt. What does the Bible say about masturbation & entertaining sexual thoughts? I know that we can commit fornication in our hearts by our lustful thoughts & desires.

You raise a difficult and even controversial topic. Christians have disagreed on the issue of masturbation. Some allow it and some do not. Here is my take. The Bible is clear that any sexual activity outside of marriage is sin. The biblical term “fornication” (sexual immorality) simply refers to any sexual activity outside of marriage. Jesus also clearly indicated, as you mentioned, that we can commit adultery in our hearts without any physical activity involved. Part of our sanctification process is to be transformed from being self-centered to being other-centered. With this background, consider these realities. Masturbation is sexual activity

outside of marriage. Most if not all masturbation is accompanied by sexual thoughts to accentuate the experience. Masturbation is essentially self-centered, seeking to fulfill one's own needs by oneself. There is no specific Biblical admonition to refrain from masturbation. However, based on the review above, it is difficult to find any justification for it either.

This is not to say, of course, that avoidance of masturbation in young men is easy. We praise God for His finished work on the cross that allows for forgiveness of past, present, and future sin, even besetting sins.

Respectfully,

Dr. Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is Masturbation OK When My Wife and I Are Apart?”

This is an embarrassing question but here goes.....

I am a soldier in the US Army and a born again Christian. Many times the army sends us away from home for long periods and we are separated from our families. I have read your responses to others concerning masturbation but my dilemma is this. I have done this but I do not use porn and I am thinking of my wife when I do it. My wife and I have a very healthy sexual relationship and when together we enjoy each other just as the Bible allows!!! Do you stand firm on your direction for those of us who are married and do this?? I have prayed and have not felt the same conviction as I have on other issues I have

taken to the Lord. I know this doesn't mean that okays it but that is usually the way he answers my issues.

Thanks for writing and your encouragement. You bring up a very important issue, masturbation within marriage.

Since you have read my other responses let me remind you of something I said within one of those responses.

"Masturbation is essentially self-centered, seeking to fulfill one's own needs by oneself. "

I'm afraid this still holds in your case. I fully recognize that the long separations are difficult. But by relieving your sexual tension on your own (even though you use your wife in your mental image) you are robbing your wife of her proper role and responsibility in your sexual relationship. For example, it is well recognized that the longer the time interval between sexual experiences, the greater the enjoyment and the more powerful the experience when finally consummated. By masturbating during separation you ultimately dampen the reunion for both you and your wife. Ask yourself, biblically, who should be the sole recipient of your sexual energies? I think you would answer that it should be your wife alone.

Masturbation also creates conflicting signals for your mind and body. A high frequency of masturbation creates a pattern in your mind and body on how it is best satisfied. And this will be apart from your wife. You may also fantasize situations with your wife that she may be unable to fulfill in person. This can also create a situation where your actual experiences together may not be able to measure up to what you have created in your mind. This can easily erect a barrier in your mind for when you are together.

Also this is still a sexual experience outside of marriage as God intended, which is fornication.

I challenge you to refrain from masturbation during your next

separation with a willing attitude of submission and purity and see if it doesn't make a significant and "very positive" difference in the intensity of your reunion.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Is Masturbation A Sin?"

This has plagued me for a long time. Is masturbation a sin, and if so how serious is it? I have been doing good for a while but I am starting to slip again. I need help. If you could get back to me I would be thankful and I am ashamed of this.

You raise an issue that affects more young men (and a growing number of women) than you probably realize. When young men are unmarried their sexual drive seeks satisfaction, so you are certainly not alone in this struggle. Most Christians will agree that masturbation is sin for two very important reasons.

First, God has defined sex for within marriage only. The numerous Old Testament prohibitions on fornication or sexual immorality refer to any sexual experience outside of marriage. This would included self-inflicted sexual pleasure.

Second, most masturbation takes place with pornography to look at either actually or in your mind through fantasy. Since Jesus condemned not only the act of adultery but lusting in our mind, this is clearly included.

You must also keep in mind the addictive nature of nearly all sexual sin including pornography. It eventually becomes a form

of idolatry. We worship our sensual pleasure over Jesus.

Jesus' response to Peter's question as to how many times he must forgive (70 x 7) is meant to assure us of God's infinite capacity to forgive even habitual sin. Masturbation can only be conquered in the power of the Holy Spirit. If you follow Philippians 4:8 when tempted, you will find that the thoughts vanish or they remain only at your desire. It must become a question of Lordship: Jesus or you. The masturbation becomes only a symptom of a deeper need for intimacy with Christ. Habitual sin does not lead to questions of salvation but of Lordship.

I encourage you to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and everything else will follow. This is not to say it will be easy or quick. True discipleship is costly and our personal secret kingdoms must be rooted out one by one. But Jesus said I will never leave you nor forsake you. He meant it.

Also, may I suggest two websites for help with sexual addiction and pornography addiction? The first is Setting Captives Free at www.settingcaptivesfree.com, and the second is Blazing Grace at www.blazinggrace.org.

Dr. Ray Bohlin
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