

# Confessions of a Missionary Addicted to Porn

*Paul Rutherford explains the lies he believed and to which he was in bondage about pornography, until Jesus helped him achieve sexual sobriety.*

## Introduction—But Really, a Prologue. A Really Important Prologue.

Internet pornography use is ubiquitous. The metric you use to support that statement doesn't seem to matter: percent of internet users who consume it, number of bits of data flowing through the Internet, or even cash currency. It is a huge business. And the internet distributes pornography at levels historically unprecedented. It quickly became easy to access, cheap to acquire, and anonymous to consume.

I am myself no stranger to the consumption of internet pornography. To be clear, consuming pornographic material is not appropriate for a believer in Jesus Christ. Our [website](#) has more information on this. But I don't think that principle needs repeating; my older brothers in the faith have been very clear about that.

In this article I want to share with you some insights the Lord has taught me through my struggle to be free of an addiction to internet pornography. I will be frank. And rather than condemning you for your sin (the enemy does a plenty good job at that), I will address a number of beliefs you may find you hold, even if unwittingly. Then you'll see how those beliefs do not reflect reality—they are all a lie.

# I Like Porn Because It's Easy



My name is Paul, and I am a missionary. In the late 2000's the Lord made plain to me that I was no longer dabbling with internet pornography, it had become my master. I was addicted, and I needed help.

By God's grace I found help through a group [recovery program](#) at a local church. I later placed membership there, and have found freedom from this life-sucking addiction. Still, I carry the wounds inflicted by my choices years ago. The balm of Christ has healed them. I'm walking today in the freedom only forgiveness from the Father can provide. By God's grace I have a beautiful wife, a blessed marriage, and three wonderful children.

Hindsight, though, is 20/20, and while I must be vigilant every day to guard against temptation, time and space have provided me perspective to gain clarity on the beliefs that got me into my addiction in the first place and kept me down for some time. I've since come to realize there were five lies in particular that I was believing. Let me share them with you, along with the truth that will set you free.

The first reason I love porn is because it is easy. It is easy to access, yes—as easy to access as turning on my smart phone. Years ago it was far more difficult to acquire. Now I carry temptation in my pocket! How dangerous! Only by God's grace am I sober from porn today.

When I say I love porn because it's easy, what I mean is it's easily to get what I want from sex without all the hard work. Pursuing my wife is hard work. Empathy is not easily mustered. Emotional intimacy with her is no easy task. Pornography on the other hand, is just a tap away. If all I'm looking for is that release, surely porn is a better choice because it's an

easier route. Same destination, right? No harm no foul. Right?

Wrong.

Nope. Not true. Pornography is in fact NOT easy because it circumvents God's good plan for sex.

Pornography only seems to be easy. That is just an appearance. Ultimately porn complicates my life. Confessing relapse to my wife? Not easy. Confessing lust to my small group and others? Difficult. The wound I inflicted on my wife by spiritually cheating on her? Not easy for her. The months of work required to earn back her trust? Not easy.

The ease of pornography is a lie. The truth is, it complicates my life and makes it harder. If you are tied up in it, please confess it to the Lord today, and confess it to another human being. The first step to getting better is simple. Admit you have a problem.

## **I Like Porn Because It's Fast**

I love pornography because it's fast. I get pleasure fast. I get satisfaction quickly. I get what I want, and I get it now. Sound familiar? It's not unlike that famous song lyric from the 70's, "Wham bam, thank you, ma'am."

What I love about pornography is that it gives me what I want, and it gives it to me fast. No waiting involved. No patience required. Faster is better. Isn't it? Why rent the "Eight Minute Abs" workout VHS from the local video store, when "Seven Minute Abs" is on the shelf right next to it? (As referenced from the 90s film *Tommy Boy* starring Chris Farley.)

What I love about pornography is how it satisfies quickly. Pornography only asks for a few minutes of my time and then gives me what I want.

Do you know how long it takes to pursue my wife? It took

months to get to know her when we were dating. It took months to plan, prepare, then execute our wedding. Now that we're married, do you know how long it takes to pursue her, so that she feels close to me, intimately and emotionally connected? That takes a LOT longer than the time required to log on to the internet.

The problem with loving pornography because it's fast, is that eventually it isn't. The truth is pornography has sapped years from my life.

There was a season I was a casual user of pornography, and on a fine spring afternoon, I finished up work early for the day and looked forward to what adventures I might pursue with the remainder of that evening. By the time I went to bed that night, I'd wasted hours of my life consuming internet pornography.

The problem with pornography is that it *is* fast, until it requires hours of your life you would rather have spent otherwise. Furthermore, this trend continued for months, even years!

Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." The fast pleasure of pornography seemed to me like the right way in the moment. Now I realize it is the way to death—death of my relationship with the Lord because sin separates me from Him; it is death to intimacy with my wife; death to time and energy that could have been better spend elsewhere doing things other than pornography itself.

The death I experienced led to so much loss because of the work required in my relationships to clean up the mess of my sin. It was a process over several years. I loved pornography initially because it was fast. it's not, and it's not worth it!

## **I Like Porn Because I'm in Charge**

The third reason I love pornography is because I am in charge. I get what I want and risk nothing in return. I remain in control. I give up nothing. I risk nothing. It's everything a man-fearing, people-pleaser could ask for. Except that's not the true identity for a believer in Jesus Christ. And if you identify with Christ, then this applies to you.

Pornography is great because I remain in charge. I have control. That whole fear of rejection thing is not a problem. Since I'm not entering into a real relationship with a real person, I'm not taking any of those risks. I don't have to reveal anything about myself. I don't even have to give my name. I don't have to share my anxieties, my fears, or my dreams. I don't have to share anything.

With porn, I don't have to admit that I'm human in any way. And this appeal is strong for those of us who are cowards. And I am one. Since I fear rejection—and porn never risks rejection—it gives the false illusion of security. It's a lie.

Sadly, this means what I love about pornography is how it enables my cowardice.

This has no place for the genuine Christ-follower.

If you have taken a wife, you are called to love that woman as Christ has loved His Church. Jesus Christ is the paragon of courage, bravery, and vulnerability. If you are a husband, then the standard by which to compare yourself as a husband is not to your neighbor but to Christ Himself. That is a high call, friend—much higher than you or I are accustomed to, I'm afraid.

I like pornography because I feel like I'm in charge. But that is a lie. Being strung out, addicted to pornography, shows that you definitely are not in charge. It's a farce. It's a lie.

The truth is I have far less control than I desire. When it come to my wife's opinion of me, I have no control. Zero. I have a lot of influence, but no control. That's the risk inherent to the job of husbanding a wife. That's the risk inherent in marriage.

Marital love is a self-giving love. As Jesus died to love His bride when she was in sin, so you too, husband, are called to love your bride even if you are in fact right, and she is in fact wrong. Love her anyway. Love her always. It will require you to take risks. But it's ok. Those risks are good—both for you, your wife, your family, and the family of God.

## **I Like Porn Because I Get What I Want**

The fourth reason I love porn is because I get what I want. That's what we all want, isn't it? We want what we want, and we want it now. That somehow seems like America's motto these days. Give me what I want but don't make me work for it. Capitalism does have some downsides.

In moments of temptation all I feel is my desire for gratification. I've learned from years now of recovery that I rationalize the pursuit of fulfilling this temptation by telling myself how good I've been, how many good things I've done, or perhaps with how much I've sacrificed to do the right thing.

If you can't tell already, the problem with this reason is that it is purely selfish. It's the definition of immaturity. You want what you want, and you don't care who you hurt to get it—be that your spouse, the Lord, your community, your children, or even yourself.

The Bible calls this "gratification of the flesh." In Ephesians 2:1-3 the author, Paul, admits that all believers in Jesus once lived this way, giving into the desires and inclinations of our sinful flesh. Insisting on getting what I

want is sin.

The worst part is that I wasn't actually getting what I wanted. That too was a lie. My flesh was merely chasing that fleeting feeling. The truth is, I have a God-given desire for the feeling, but also so much more: a desire for connection to another person, a desire to belong, a desire for intimacy—the thrill of knowing another and being known by another.

Porn never delivers any of these. Porn delivers emptiness, isolation, and disappointment. Marriage, on the other hand, delivers intimacy, satisfaction, and as a bonus, sanctification. This was God's intent from the beginning. You can also have this today if you are married. And it is God's will for you to find all your healthy sexual desire to be fulfilled by your spouse. It *can* happen. There *is* hope, and it is in Christ.

Don't believe the lie that porn will give you what you want. It's a bill of goods. Learn from my mistakes, please. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." (Proverbs 14:12)

## **I Like Porn Because It's Cheap**

The fifth and last reason I will share that I love pornography is because it's cheap. It doesn't cost me anything. There is so much free pornography on the internet I struggled in my addiction for years, consuming hundreds of hours of content, and never paid a dime.

At the time I told myself I wasn't paying for it. That made me feel better about myself. At least it made me feel better about my budget.

The problem with pornography being cheap is that it's a lie. Pornography is NOT cheap. It's exceedingly costly. My problem was that I was looking at it strictly from the material point

of view. I was looking only at dollar signs. How many dollars did I spend on my addiction? None? Ok, well no harm to the budget, no foul. The worldview problem with this is that I was behaving like a materialist, like a naturalist, as if the natural, physical, material world were what mattered most.

Don't get me wrong—the material world matters, but so does the spiritual. And that was what I was ignoring.

The truth is, pornography cost me SO much. It has cost me hours of my life wasted, given away to sin. It has cost me trust and intimacy with my wife, gone for whole seasons at a time due to relapse. It has cost me a job opportunity. It has cost me the intimacy of being known by my community of brothers who would love me, care for me, and shepherd me into a joy-filled, holy, pure, and blameless walk with the Lord. It has cost me time, intimacy, and joy from being with the Lord, knowing Him, and enjoying Him.

What costs more than your relationship with the Father?

I loved porn because it was cheap—well, free in terms of dollars. But in relational capital it has cost me something that can't be purchased with ALL the dollars in the world. It isn't enough.

I'm grateful to God that He paid the awful cost of my sin, when the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross and rise again. Jesus' death satisfied my sin's debt—the one I owed the Father.

Pornography is so expensive. It cost Jesus His life. Please, if you're addicted, turn to the Father today. Follow the counsel of James 5:16 today: "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed." I know you're scared. But trust me that this fear you feel for confessing and taking that first step out of addiction is from the enemy, not the Lord. Trust the Lord. He will make your path straight. He is good, and He loves you.

### **Why I Love Porn (The Lies)**

It's easy  
It's fast

I'm in charge  
I get what I want

It's cheap

### **How the Story Ends (The Truth)**

But it doesn't satisfy  
But it sapped my life for  
years.

Until I couldn't stop.  
Except I hate myself  
after.

But it nearly cost me my  
marriage.

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# **What God Says About Sex – A Christian Perspective on Human Sexuality**

*Sue Bohlin provides us a succinct Christian perspective on human sexuality. She points out that God created sex and has a purpose for it defined within the context of marriage. When we lose sight of God's perspective, sex can degrade into a pastime for pleasure that will ultimately hurt us physically, emotionally and spiritually.*

## **The Pickle Principle**

It's not surprising that in a time of growing biblical illiteracy, so few people have any idea what God thinks and says about the extremely important subject of sex. The world holds the Christian view of sex in contempt, considering it



prudish, naïve and repressive. But the Bible elevates sexuality as God's gift to us that is both sacred and mysterious. The world's perspective degrades it to just something that feels good—another form of recreation or socialization.

Counselor [Waylon Ward](#) offers an insightful way to understand the problem, which he calls “the Pickle Principle.” In order to make pickles, we put cucumbers in a brine solution of vinegar, spices, and water. After a cucumber soaks in the brine long enough, it is changed into a pickle. Most of us are like pickles. We sit in the brine of a sex-saturated culture, absorbing its values and beliefs, and it changes the way we think. Even most Christians are pickled today, believing and acting exactly like everyone else who has been sitting in the brine of a culture hostile to God and His Word.

The world's sex-saturated brine includes the belief that sex is the ultimate pleasure. The message of much TV, movies, and music is that there is no greater pleasure available, and that it is the right of every individual, even teenagers, to have this pleasure.[{1}](#) Another aspect of this pickling process is the belief that no one has the right to deprive anyone else of this greatest of all human pleasures, that no one has the right to tell anyone else what is right or wrong about the expression of his or her sexuality.[{2}](#)

If the purpose and goal of sex is primarily pleasure, then other people are just objects to be used for sensual gratification. Since people are infinitely valuable because God made us in His image, that is a slap in the face whether we realize it or not. The Christian perspective is that the purpose of sex is relational, with pleasure as the by-product. The Bible teaches that sex welds two souls together.[{3}](#) It is so powerful that it is only safe within a committed, covenant marriage relationship. It's like the difference between the wild energy of lightning compared to the harnessed power of electricity. God knew what He was doing when He limited sex to

within marriage!

God wants to get His “pickled people” out of the world’s brine and into an intimate relationship with Him. He wants to change our thinking and beliefs to be in alignment with His.

## **Sex is God’s Invention! The Purpose of Sex**

Sex is God’s idea. He made it not only efficient for making babies, but pleasurable and deeply satisfying. He designed men’s and women’s body parts to complement each other. He created hormones to make everything work right and make us want to be sexual. Unlike animals, whose mating behavior is purely instinctive for the purpose of reproducing, human sexuality has several wonderful purposes. God means for all of them to be contained within marriage.

In a lifelong covenant of faithfulness between husband and wife, we can express and enjoy God’s two major purposes to sex: fruitfulness and intimacy. His first command to Adam and Eve was to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28); one very foundational purpose of sex is to create new living beings. Fruitfulness is not limited to having children, though. A mutually loving and serving sexual relationship between husband and wife can produce emotional and personal fruitfulness as well. Both people are nurtured to grow, develop, and soar, becoming more of what God means them to be.

The other big purpose for sex, emotional and physical intimacy, is only possible within marriage. In his little gem of a book called [What God Says About Sex](#),<sup>{4}</sup> Eric Elder says that intimacy really means “into-me-see.” It is only safe to reveal the fullness of who we are, “warts and all,” to someone who loves us and has committed to be faithful and supportive “till death do us part.” The fullest experience and freedom of sex is found within the marriage bed, which God says to keep holy or set apart.<sup>{5}</sup> God says that we are to use self-control

to keep all expressions of sexuality limited to marriage.{6}

Sex also builds oneness, a mystical union of two lives and souls into one life together. The one-flesh union of sex is a picture of the way two souls are joined together into a shared life. In fact, we could say that sex is like solder that is used to fuse two pieces of metal together. Once they are joined, it is a strong bond that helps keep marriages and families intact, which is God's intention for our lives. Another purpose of sex is the pleasure that comes from being safe in another's love. The entire book of Song of Solomon is gorgeous poetry that glorifies married sexual relations.

God also says that an important purpose of sex is to serve as an earthbound illustration of the mystical but real unity of Christ and the church, where two very different, very *other* beings are joined together as one. This spiritual component to sex is what helps us see more clearly why any and all sex outside of marriage falls far short of God's intention for it to be holy and sacred—and protected.

## **So . . . What Does God Actually Say?**

A lot of people believe the Bible says, "Sex is fun and it feels good, so don't do it." Nothing could be farther from the truth! Sex was God's great idea in the first place! But God's view of sex as a sacred and private gift to married couples, as well as a gift each spouse gives to the other, is at great odds with the world's perspective of sex as simply a pleasure no one should deny him- or herself.

The overarching statement God makes is that sex is to be completely contained within marriage.{7} As I said above, sex is so powerful that it's like the difference between the wild, uncontrollable power of lightning compared to the safety of harnessed electricity in our buildings. God wants us to harness the power of sex within marriage. This means that all other expressions of sexuality are off-limits, not because God

is a cosmic killjoy, but because He loves us and knows what's best for us, namely, not playing with lightning! So God says not to engage in sex with anyone before marriage, with anyone else once we are married, with anyone of the same sex; or with prostitutes, or with family members, or with animals.

God says that sexual purity is a treasure to be guarded and valued. It is a reflection of God's own character, which is what makes it so valuable. In our culture, many people have been deceived into thinking that their virginity is worthless, something to get rid of. But God says it is special,[{8}](#) a gift that we can only bestow on one person, one time. God calls us to purity after marriage as well by remaining faithful to our spouse. Purity before and during marriage prevents "ghosts" in the marriage bed; comparisons are nowhere as deadly as in the intensely intimate realm of sex. We glorify God in our sexuality by using self-control to stay pure if single, and by loving our spouse sexually if married.

The good news is that purity can be restored if we confess our sin and put our trust in Jesus to forgive us and give us a new, holy quality of life. The Bible promises, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."[{9}](#) God stands ready to forgive and cleanse us, and restore our purity the moment we ask.

God says that sex is to be reserved for adults only. Three times in the Song of Solomon, a beautiful book extolling the glory of married sex, it says, "Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires," which means "until the time is right."[{10}](#) As I minister to sexually broken people,[{11}](#) most of them bear the still-painful scars of childhood sexual abuse from people who never should have opened a door to sexual experience. Their entire view of sex has been warped and skewed. God never meant for children to be introduced to sex. It's for adults. *Married* adults.

God wants us to actively fight sexual temptation. The battle is harder than it's ever been because of our sex-saturated culture. He says to flee immorality.[{12}](#) In fact, God says to offer not even a *hint* of sexual immorality.[{13}](#) That means that it is a violation of His intentions to engage in phone sex with strangers, or virtual sex in chat rooms and porn sites. The fact that you're not physically touching another person's body doesn't mean it's not sin, because Jesus said that sexual sin happens in the mind first.[{14}](#)

Eric Elder suggests asking a powerful question to help clarify the battle against sexual temptation: will this lead to greater intimacy and fruitfulness with the husband or wife God has created for me?[{15}](#) This filter is helpful for both married people and singles. If an action doesn't build intimacy or fruitfulness, it probably destroys them. Another question to ask is, Can I glorify God in what my flesh wants to do? Can I invite Jesus into what I'm about to do? If the answer is no, God invites us to meet the struggle with *His* supernatural energy instead of our own puny human strength.[{16}](#)

Outside of the safety of marriage, sex is wounding and hurtful, but God created it for our pleasure and delight. In the Song of Solomon, God enthusiastically invites the newlyweds to enjoy His good gift of sex, where He says, "Eat, friends, and drink, o lovers!"[{17}](#) In fact, God wants married couples to bless each other by enjoying sex often and regularly.[{18}](#)

Are you surprised by what God says about sex?

## **Why Sexual Sin Hurts So Much**

Pastors and counselors will tell you that there is a greater intensity of shame and pain in the people they counsel when the issues involve sexual sin.[{19}](#) Paul says that all other sins are outside our bodies,[{20}](#) but sexual sin touches you

deep in your heart and soul.

As mentioned above, it may be helpful to think of sex like solder. God created it to make a strong, powerful bond that creates healthy, stable families into which children are welcomed. But when people fuse their souls through sexual sin without the safety and commitment of marriage, it causes tremendous pain when the relationship rips apart. (Have you ever seen a broken weld? It's pretty ugly.) When sex is disconnected from love and commitment, it also disconnects the body from the soul. This inflicts deep wounds of shame and guilt on a heart that has been used for gratification instead of love.

Waylon Ward says that sex sins expose and exploit our deepest emotional and spiritual vulnerabilities. He writes, "In the counseling office, individuals rarely if ever weep scalding tears about any other sense of loss like they do for a sexual relationship when it ends. There are soul ties that bind two partners together in unseen ways and there is a sense that part of you has been stolen. There is a hole in your soul where the connection was ripped from you." [\[21\]](#)

The pickling brine of our culture's increased sensuality says, "If it feels good, do it. You're entitled." But while this belief about sex may *feel* good, it is most definitely not good for us. Note the runaway epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases, and the resulting increase in infertility. Note the number of broken hearts and broken families. Note the alarming amount of sexual abuse. Note the soaring rates of depression, especially in teens, much of which is related to sexual activity outside of marriage.

God invented sex for His glory and our benefit. His basic rule—keep sex inside marriage—isn't meant to be a killjoy, but to protect our hearts and bodies and relationships and families. He knows what He's doing, and we do well to follow.

## Notes

1. Waylon Ward, *Sex Matters: Men Winning the Battle* (McKinney, Texas: Allison O'Neil Publishing Company, 2004), 7.
2. Ibid., 8.
3. Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:15-16.
4. Eric Elder, *What God Says About Sex* (Inspiringbooks.com, an imprint of Eric Elder, 2006). Contact [theranch.org/2006/07/03/bookstore-what-god-says-about-sex/](http://theranch.org/2006/07/03/bookstore-what-god-says-about-sex/) for more information.
5. Hebrews 13:4.
6. 1 Corinthians 6:18.
7. There are 44 prohibitions of *porneia* (sexual expression outside of marriage, usually translated "sexual immorality"), just within the New Testament alone. This is where God draws the line between sex within marriage and sex outside of marriage, which determines what is sin and what is not.
8. Song of Solomon 4:12.
9. 1 John 1:9.
10. Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5, 8:4.
11. I have the privilege of serving with Living Hope Ministries ([www.livehope.org](http://www.livehope.org)), a support group for those dealing with unwanted same-sex attractions, and the families of those who struggle. (Or who don't struggle because they are just fully immersed in a gay identity.) I mainly minister to women, for whom a history of sexual abuse has long been a common denominator.
12. 1 Corinthians 6:18.
13. Ephesians 5:3.

14. Matthew 5:28.
15. Elder, *What God Says About Sex*, 37.
16. Colossians 1:29, Ephesians 6:10.
17. Song of Solomon 5:1.
18. 1 Corinthians 7:5.
19. Ward, *Sex Matters*, 16.
20. 1 Corinthians 6:18.
21. Ward, *Sex Matters*, 17.

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## Glee-tastic!

*May 4, 2010*

I love this show. I'm not afraid to admit it. The raw talent of the cast, the character development, the geekiness, the music (duh), and the wonderful caricature of the American high school experience. I come back week after week for the clever plot lines and dialogue, and the overall impeccable artistry. I know what some of you are thinking—*Glee is just a show about sex-crazed teenagers, pushing a liberal agenda! How can you watch that stuff and call yourself a Christian?* And you're right... on the surface. If you look deeper, you'll find more depth—just like with teenagers, come to think of it. They can be a mess on the outside, seemingly concerned with nothing but what's superficial, shiny, sexy; but if you take the time to look deeper, wow: what perspective, passion, potential. (Whereas we adults tend to keep our messiness better

concealed.)

Glee has such high appeal in part because almost everyone, both in and out of high school, feels like somewhat of a misfit; and *Glee* is a show which highlights that fact and how essential it is for us as unique and even flawed human beings to have a safe place to be unique and even flawed, giving us our common ground back and showcasing what the Church ought to: hospitality. The show also has lots of appeal because it's good art: it's well made and speaks to the human condition. If we don't want to forfeit our influence in our world, then we need to be more discerning about art: just because a show (or song or sculpture or painting or novel) depicts unChristian ethics or values doesn't mean it's bad art. Likewise, just because a piece of art depicts Christian values doesn't mean it's good art.

Sometimes the art we come in contact with will match up pretty solidly with the Creation-Fall-Redemption narrative of Scripture. Sometimes it represents the complete opposite ideas about what life is like and what it means to be human. But most of the time, as with the TV show *Glee*, we are presented with ideas that partly conform to Christian doctrine or ethics, or are but a shadow—"All truth is God's truth." Art comes out of the ideas in the heart and minds of the women and men who create the work, and Romans 2 tells us that God has written his truth on the hearts of all people. Certainly *Glee* is a shadow, and at times, in that shadow are moral messes and liberal agendas. So we have to watch *Glee* through the lenses of our biblical worldview. We have to watch *Glee* [with our brains turned on](#).

Watching *Glee* with our brains turned on, we can be aware of and reject what goes in opposition to a biblical framework, and affirm what is good, even if those good qualities and ideas about life fall short of what Christ gives as we pray his Goodness come; his Good be done (Mt 6:10). My favorite quality about *Glee* is the unexpected dives into full-bodied,

deeply human characters. And it's *Glee*'s knack for flipping expectations and busting through the stereotypes, stereotypes *Glee* has set up itself, that allows me to write the following as a way of merely observing while withholding judgment, because you never know when *Glee* will flip something.

So what are *Glee*'s flat places that I'm hoping will curve and plunge and flip? Well, I'm afraid they're pretty typical: a woman's choice; hypocritical, asinine Christians; "I knew you were gay when you were three"; and my personal favorite, feelings-driven love. That's where I'm going to camp out, but I will make a small note about a woman's choice. This problem goes deeper than abortion. Because regardless of whether or not we murder the child (and the good news is that more and more people [and movies and other social media] paint abortion in a negative light and [favor life](#)), when the choice is all Hers, we kill off the humanity of the father too. He becomes just a sperm donor. There's a very important episode of *Glee* admonishing young men to treat women like persons and work against objectifying them. There needs to be one about how women objectify men.

Which leads me to feelings-driven love and false romantic ideals. Have you ever stopped to think about what books and movies and TV shows and pop songs are all telling us about what love is and what ideal romance looks like? If you haven't noticed, love is a feeling. And romance is an intense, often tumultuous, chemistry-infused whirlwind affirmed by ~~good~~ sex great sex.

Already there are some elements of the romantic plot-lines in *Glee* that cause me to be hopeful that things will flip, but until they do, the following scenes perfectly expose the love = feelings definition that we know in our heads isn't right but aren't doing much to counter in our own lives.\*

Before I dive into the scenes, a little Will & Terri Schuester background:

*Once upon a time Will, the goody choir boy had a crush on an older girl named April. That didn't work out so he dated and subsequently fell in love with Terri. Together for many years, their marriage [sic] appeared to grow stagnant until Terri announced she was pregnant. Will was quick to step up to be the daddy despite his wandering eye for the ginger co-worker [Emma]. ([Glee Wiki](#))*

Okay. Scene: Will finds out Terri's been faking the pregnancy and freaks out (naturally). After ripping the pregnancy pad from Terri's waist, Will tearfully tries to make sense of his upside-down world:

*Why did you do this to us? I don't understand.*

*I thought you were leaving me. You're so different, Will. We both know it; I can feel you, you're pulling away from me.*

*Why, because I – I started standing up to you, trying to make this a relationship of equals?*

*No, because of the damn Glee club! Ever since you started it you just started walking around like you were better than me.*

*I should be allowed to feel good about myself!*

*Who are we kidding, Will? This marriage works because you don't feel good about yourself.*

*[...]*

*I loved you Terri, I really loved you.*

*I'm so sorry, Will. I'm so sorry. Do you remember at that appointment? Do you remember what we said? That at that moment, no matter what happened, we loved each other. We could get that feeling back again. You could love me back, Will. ("Mattress")*

Exit Will.

Next episode. The Glee Club kicks tail (and Lea Michele does the best [“Don’t Rain on My Parade”](#) I’ve ever heard) and take Sectionals, after which Will comes back home for the first time since he left to change clothes for Emma’s wedding.

Enter Terri:

*I want you to know I’ve been seeing a therapist. It’s just at the local community center, but still.*

*Good. I hope it works out for you.*

*I’m taking responsibility, Will. I mean, I’m weak, and I’m selfish, and I let my anxiety rule my life. But you know I wasn’t always that way. It’s just that I wanted so many things that I know we’re never gonna have. But that was okay as long as I still had you. Will... say something.*

*I’m looking at you, and I’m trying... I mean, I really want to feel that thing I always felt when I looked at you before, that feeling of family, of love. But that’s gone.*

*Forever?*

*I don’t know. (“Sectionals”)*

So there it is. Love = feelings and this distorted love defines our relationships and whether or not they’re worth fighting for. At least for episodes 12 and 13... The writers have very cleverly set things up so that we experience the relationship almost entirely from Will’s perspective; and we are set up to dislike and distrust Terri and root for Emma. We soothe ourselves for hoping Emma and Will get together even though Will is married to Terri because Terri is selfish, often mistreats Will (and others), and is antagonistic toward Glee, the one thing outside of family that makes Will come alive. While Emma is adorable and caring and seems to have

more in common with Will; she's entirely the lovable underdog we love to cheer for.

But... I kind of feel as though *Glee* is setting us up to see ourselves for what we really are: unsympathetic, quick to judge and slow to search for the whole story, quick to follow and go after what feels good rather than what is good. Because while Terri Schuester says and does a lot of things that make us question her right to take up space (without the comic relief of Sue Sylvester), there are these deftly placed moments—those *Glee* -moments—where Terri is human, vulnerable and hurting. And you begin to feel sympathy and find yourself thinking... *Is this a trick?*

So we'll see what happens. With each new episode I look forward to more plot twists, magical musical numbers, Sue Sylvester quotes, and busting of social myths and categories.

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\*[A 2008 survey](#) on the divorce rate in America: about one in three. (And Christians? Largely the same: about one in three.) Christian porn and masturbation and the connection to [fantasy-inflated expectations](#) of real life. ["Christian" novels](#) are just as bad, if not worse, at proliferating a false romantic ideal.

This blog post originally appeared at [reneamac.com/2010/05/04/glee-tastic/](http://reneamac.com/2010/05/04/glee-tastic/)

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# **“How Do I Fill the Void of**

# Loneliness to Fight Sexual Temptation?"

When I saw the question: ["My Wife is Seriously Ill: Does That Mean No More Sex Forever?"](#) and the answer, it touched me deeply and filled me with great resolve to be celibate as God commands. When I read "when God has made it off limits for some people," I knew that was speaking to me and it was a great blessing but it brought up a very important question.

I've lived a life of service and have come to accept that it is not in God's plan for me to be married. But I've only recently come to understand that it was my deep loneliness that was instrumental in bringing me to sins of a sexual nature. Sins of masturbation, homosexuality and cross-dressing.

My question is: How can those of us who have sinned by doing things of a sexual nature fill the void of loneliness so we may better break free from the acts of homosexuality, masturbation, and other sexual sins?

You know, men like you are my heroes for your willingness to face the dark corners of your soul and invite God to be the God of Light in those dark corners so that you can bring glory to Him in every place of your being!!

What I have learned from years of ministry to those dealing with unwanted homosexuality is that the aching void of loneliness is addressed by developing emotionally healthy relationships with other people (especially godly, non-erotic same-sex relationships) in the Body of Christ. God's plan is for us to experience connection with other believers, such as David and Jonathan, who experienced a deep, real, God-glorifying same-sex friendship (and of whom we are told, their hearts were "knitted together"—by God, presumably). If there

is a men's ministry in your church, or if you can find a place to make connection with other men especially, and with other believers in your church, that will help with the loneliness issue.

At the same time, it's important to have a plan for something ELSE to do when your flesh is raging (and you will experience greater temptation during times of stress). The key is to pre-decide on an activity that is incompatible with masturbation, cruising and cross-dressing—something like going for a run. It makes a huge difference to have a plan PLUS an accountability partner that you can call when you're struggling with temptation. I pray you will find one.

Are you familiar with Joe Dallas' excellent book *Desires in Conflict*? He can help you understand the dynamics of the homosexual struggle and how God brings healing.

Also, there is a free online support group at Living Hope Ministries You can find connection with other men who are learning to be overcomers in the same struggle. Most are not cross-dressers, but all struggle with homosexual attractions. It's a safe place to be real and find strong support.  
<http://forums.livehope.org>

The Lord bless you and keep you today!

Sue Bohlin

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**“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

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## **“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

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## **“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](http://www.settingcaptivesfree.com), and the second is Blazing Grace at [www.blazinggrace.org](http://www.blazinggrace.org).

Dr. Ray Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“Men Have Always Looked at Pornography—What’s the Big Deal?”**

**Men have always looked at pornography—what’s the big deal?**

I asked for insight on this question from my friend Emily Efurd, a licensed marriage and family counselor who has been

working with sex addicts for over a dozen years. She writes:

The one thing we know from the Bible is that men and women are different. Many people take a statement like that and do a lot of damage with it, but what I mean is that God created them to be different. One of the major differences is that men are sexually aroused by visual stimuli and women are sexually aroused by feeling special, cherished and loved. Many men believe that looking at pornography makes them better lovers for their wives. Unfortunately these men are hacking away at their marriage one piece at a time. Let me tell you a story about a man named Frank.

Frank was well into his twenties when he married. He and his wife had life all planned out. They would mature in the marriage for a few years, then have a family, which they did, with a boy and a girl. He was a professional, had a good job, was a great dad and even went to church occasionally. Frank's pornography habits were known by his wife, she even shared in watching some of his videos, but she soon grew bored with it. Frank did not get bored with it. His viewing pornography escalated beyond *Playboy* and videos to "peep shows" and trading or buying some "really great stuff" on line. Because his wife didn't look anymore she missed out on some great things he saw, so he began to ask her to do certain things and dress in certain garments when they made love. She began to wonder if she was not attractive to him anymore. Frank kept asking his wife to get breast implants, so that she would look like the women in the pictures. At this point she became very self-conscious about her looks, and did not like to even change clothes in front of Frank. He became irritated with her and enjoyed lovemaking with her less and less. She just wasn't as "sexy" as he wanted her to be. He found more pleasure in waiting until his wife had gone to bed (which became earlier and earlier) and sitting in front of the computer with these "beautiful babes" and letting his imagination take over. He

enjoyed pleasuring himself rather than taking pleasure in his wife. As the relationship deteriorated, they were barely speaking. As she confided in her friends about what a bum of a husband Frank was, one friend at work kept telling her how beautiful and wonderful she was, and that he'd know how to appreciate a woman like her. I don't need to tell you how that ended. Frank suspected she was having an affair so he turned to the 16-year-old babysitter, because she looked a lot like the porn pictures.

By the time I met Frank, there had been a bitter divorce, fighting each other for custody of the children, and felony charges for aggravated sexual assault of a child (the 16-year-old babysitter). Frank told me that looking at pornography had nothing to do with the problems he had.

How does a person come back from this kind of misery? Understanding how a man conditions his own arousal pattern is the first step. As Frank looked at porn and masturbated to those images, he was conditioning his arousal to more deviant sexual images. Soon *Playboy* just didn't do it for him anymore. He needed more graphic sexual images to masturbate to. As those images became boring he needed something like live images to look at. As this addiction grew it is no wonder that he lost interest in his wife. He became obsessed with finding more graphic images and lost his ability to draw boundaries around what is appropriate and not appropriate.

Frank's therapy started with getting a clear understanding of how he got where he was. Then he had to make the decision that he didn't want to be there anymore and be willing to make some changes in his behavior. Giving up masturbating was difficult because even without looking at the porn images he had a great collection in his imagination. As he progressed he began to recognize times that he was free of the urge to masturbate. He became more aware of how he objectified women in general. Objectifying women means that

you look at them as body parts, rather than as a person. "Wow, great breasts," "Look at that body," and undressing women in your mind is an indication you're objectifying women. I asked Frank to begin to consciously look at women in the face, noting the color of their eyes, and hair. He became more aware of how much he did see women as sexual parts. I'd known Frank about two years when he finally admitted to me that he was the one who destroyed his marriage and he took full responsibility for his other inappropriate behavior. He thanks God for the chance to change his way of thinking and living and often tells people how mighty and powerful the love of God is to forgive and restore him to dignity and integrity.

Psalm 51 tells Frank's story, because it was also King David's story.

Oh loving and kind God, have mercy.

Have pity upon me and take away the awful stain of my transgressions.

Oh wash me; cleanse me from this guilt. Let me be pure again.

For I admit my shameful deed; it haunts me day and night.

It is against you and you alone I sinned, and did this terrible thing.

You saw it all, and your sentence against me is just.

But I was born a sinner, yes from the moment my mother conceived me.

You deserve honesty from the heart; yes utter sincerity and truthfulness,

Oh give me wisdom.

Sprinkle me with the cleansing blood and I shall be clean again,

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

And after you have punished me, give me back my joy again.

Don't keep looking at my sins—erase them from your sight.

Create in me a new, clean heart, O God, filled with clean

thoughts and right desires.

Don't toss me aside, banished forever from your presence.

Don't take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

Then I will teach your ways to other sinners, and they—guilty like me—will repent and return to you.

Don't sentence me to death. Oh my God, you alone can rescue me.

Then I will sing of your forgiveness, for my lips will be unsealed—oh, how I will praise you.

Psalm 51: v. 1-15

I asked Emily for the bottom line steps to overcoming sex addiction:

1. Recognize how you got where you are by examining the small but important choices you have made over time. (Note: more in-depth information on this step is available [here](#) in the Probe Answer to E-mail "Help! I'm a Compulsive Masturbator!")
2. Confess it all as sin and choose to repent by changing your behavior. Slam the door on your former behaviors.
3. Stop masturbating, which is a type of substance abuse. (The brain chemicals activated by arousal and orgasm are a specific chemical substance that can become addictive. There is no recovery from substance without giving up "using.")
4. Stop objectifying women as sex objects or body parts and train yourself to see them as real people. For example, look them in the eye and note their eye color; note their hair color.

Hope you find this as helpful as I did.

Sue Bohlin

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# “What’s Wrong with Masturbation, Anyway?”

What’s all the fuss about masturbation? It seems to me that Christians have decided it’s wrong and then go looking for Bible verses to back up their prejudice. The Bible doesn’t even mention it! It’s a legitimate way to get sexual release. Besides, I can’t stop it for any length of time, so it must be okay.

I asked Mike Cleveland, a friend in ministry at [Setting Captives Free](#), for his insight on this issue. As an overcomer in pornography and masturbation, Mike has what I believe is an excellent perspective on a biblical answer to this question. With a background in theology and practical ministry, plus the testimonies of thousands of people he has helped gain freedom from bondage to these sins, Mike is well-equipped to answer the question of why masturbation is wrong.

Be sure to read the powerful testimonies at the end. They also answer the question, “What’s wrong with masturbation?”

Sue Bohlin

Friend,

There is an untruth floating around Christian circles that masturbation is not a sin and that it is acceptable under certain circumstances. Some believe that masturbation is acceptable:

- For single people
- For married people who have to endure prolonged absences

from their spouse

- As a preventative to the commitment of sexual crimes

One of the course members from the Pure Freedom Course [note: a free, Christ-centered online course to help people overcome an addiction to pornography and masturbation at [www.settingcaptivesfree.com](http://www.settingcaptivesfree.com)] recently sent us an article written by a pastor on the subject of masturbation. In his article, this pastor unhesitatingly recommended masturbation for people of all ages to “release stress for singles,” to “relieve pressure when away from a spouse,” and to “prevent sex crimes.” He also gave instructions on how to teach masturbation to young children and blatantly stated that God gave masturbation to us as a way “to enjoy sex before marriage.”

I wish this pastor could see some of the enrollments we receive from people who have become enslaved to gratifying their flesh by the act of masturbation—many without pornography! They are slaves to their own lusts; unable to break free from this debilitating habit that has crippled their walk with the Lord. Because they are unable to stop this behavior, they are guilty and some feel ashamed and frustrated. They have “low self-esteem” and have difficulty interacting in social situations because they know they have a secret—a dark secret that they are slaves to fondling themselves, caressing themselves, and to orgasm. Moreover, I wish this pastor could watch as God sets these captives free from masturbation and read their emails stating how depression, paranoia, stress...etc. disappeared when God set them free from masturbation and sexual impurity of all kinds.

Some Christians believe that because masturbation is not specifically mentioned in the Bible that God does not consider the presence or the absence of the activity important. But is this really accurate? Is God truly silent about masturbation? Is the absence of the word “masturbation” in Scripture God's way of giving His approval to men and women gratifying their

flesh in masturbation? Remember, the word “pornography” itself is not in the Bible (though the root word is), but there are biblical principles dealing with both pornography and masturbation.

Though it is true that the Bible does not use the word “masturbation,” I do not believe that Scripture has left us in the dark about whether masturbation is right or wrong. Masturbation is not a “gift of God” for single people and it is not a “preventative for sexual crimes.” It is indulging the flesh, which leads to sin-slavery (John 8:34). Masturbation makes us begin to live according to the dictates of the flesh and to become slaves to the “misdeeds of the body.” Scripture warns us about this kind of activity, “For if you live according to the flesh (by giving in to its desires), you will die” and tells us how to stop, “but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13).

In reality, masturbation is a high expression of loving self and of sexual self-idolatry. It is deceiving and enslaving. Let us see these truths from Scripture:

“Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness” (Romans 6:19-20).

This verse teaches that “offering leads to slavery.” When we “offer the parts of our body” to sin we become a slave to sin. Masturbation only “relieves the pressure” temporarily. The pressure will soon be back and masturbation will need to occur again and again, and again. But if we offer the parts of our body for righteousness, we will become slaves of righteousness. So, present your body a living sacrifice; offer the parts of your body to God and your slavery to Christ will produce complete freedom from masturbation.

Another argument that some make in favor of masturbation is to say that it is much like eating food: if we indulge ourselves we can become slaves, but what we need to do is learn to control our appetite, not stop eating. So, in the same way, we need to control masturbation and not become slaves to it, but it is not sin to masturbate anymore than it is sin to eat. But there is a major problem with this argument: eating is a biological necessity. If we don't eat, we die. Sex is a biological desire, not a necessity. Many people live their whole lives without ever having sex.

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:5).

Masturbation fixes the mind on the desires of the flesh, and burns the image of nudity and sex into the mind. With each occurrence of masturbation, that image becomes clearer and more intense, and can become a tool of the devil to set up a thought-stronghold (2 Corinthians 3:1-5).

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8)

Here is the real problem of masturbation, and let me say this clearly: If you are masturbating, you are pleasing only yourself. Your actions are displeasing to God because you are "in the flesh" and a slave to lust. You are offering the members of your body in slavery to impurity and your mind is set on what the flesh desires.

"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want"(Galatians 5:16-17).

Why is masturbation a sin? It is a sin because when we

masturbate we “gratify the desires of the flesh,” which we would not do if we were walking in and living by the Spirit. Let us make this point clear. If we are walking in the Spirit and living by faith, we will not masturbate.

“So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23).

Masturbation is a sin because it does not come from faith. I cannot believe the promises of God to supply my every need (Phil. 4:19), to make a way out of every temptation (Hebrews 10:13), to keep me from falling (Jude 24), and masturbate at the same time. Masturbation is not of faith therefore it is sin.

About Jesus Christ, God the Father says, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And why? Because He lived a life of obedience unto death, even death on a cross. And we are unworthy to be called His disciples unless we daily take up the cross and follow Him. Taking up our cross means crucifying our flesh, not gratifying it. It means dying to self, not living to please the flesh. Oh, how we need the teaching of the cross of Jesus Christ in these instances.

The cross shows us One Whose flesh was crucified, not controlled. The cross shows us that we are not to “relieve the pressure” but endure to the point of shedding blood. Stating that masturbation is acceptable “under certain circumstances” is a denial of the cross of Jesus Christ. And the truth of the matter is that it is so much easier to totally crucify than to attempt to control.

Right here let me quote from an excellent book from Pure Life Ministries on the subject of masturbation called *Tearing Down*

*The Walls Of Sexual Idolatry* by Steve Gallagher. This book is highly recommended for its commitment to the truth of Scripture, rather than to worldly principles. In fact, Pure Life Ministries considers their ministry to be “an alternative to psychology.” They say, “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 that 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. It may be normal for fallen man, but that does not make it acceptable in the eyes of a holy God. Although masturbation is not specifically addressed in Scripture, the Bible gives us principles for leading a pure and holy life that clearly tells us that it is wrong.

- **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 would not expect us to go without it. What they do not realize is that sex is a desire that God gave us; not a need. People that have learned to walk in the Spirit have been overcoming these desires for thousands of years.

- **Feeding The Flesh**—Another reason why masturbation is wrong is because it is another form of self-gratification. Throughout Scripture, self-gratification is denounced.

- **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? Paul admonishes us about our thinking when he says, ‘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’ (Philippians 4:8-9).

- **Doorway To Other Sin**—The last reason that masturbation is wrong is that it opens the door for the enemy to lead the person deeper into sin. . . .[S]in 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.’”

So, let us get practical on this subject. Many of us have children coming into puberty and we know they will masturbate. How do we converse with them on this topic? First, let us instruct them about the cross. I tell my son that Jesus Christ laid down His life for us, and He requires us to lay down our lives also. He presented His body as an offering to the Father and we can, by the power of the Holy Spirit, offer our bodies a living sacrifice. We talk about Jesus refusing to gratify His flesh when tempted by the devil, and that His flesh was nailed to a cross. In the same way we should count ourselves dead to sin. I talk plainly with him about the enslavement that masturbation will bring, if he were to offer the members of his body for sin. I tell him that the desires he has are given by God to experience pleasure in marriage, and to procreate, not for selfish reasons. He understands that to follow Christ masturbation is not an option. It makes it so much easier on him, when the temptation comes, to not even consider it as a possibility, rather than try to decide if this is a time it must be “controlled” or if can he give in to the desire.

Finally, let me finish with a testimony we received awhile back. It is from a gentleman in his last week of the Pure Freedom Course and he is now set free from slavery to masturbation. He writes this testimony:

“My problems began when our youth pastor told me that the

Bible does not mention masturbation, therefore God must not condemn it. He told us that as long as we were masturbating with thoughts of our future spouse then we were not sinning. My masturbation began slowly—only using it once a week or so. I felt guilty, like I was giving in to sin rather than denying the flesh, but my pastor said it was a helpful tool, and that it even prevented sex crimes when used correctly. Gullible as I was I believed him. I soon began discovering that offering the parts of my body to masturbation did not permanently decrease desire or relieve pressure—quite the opposite—the more I masturbated the more I enjoyed it and the more I engaged in it. I honestly do not know what happened—one day I had just finished masturbating along side a farm road, for the third time that day, when it dawned on me that I was a slave to masturbation. What started innocently, and with the full approval of a religious authority, trapped me into a vice that completely choked out all spiritual life in me. “Oh how I wish that pastor had preached the Word correctly, even if it would have made him less popular. I wish he had explained to me that unless I denied myself (not indulged myself) and took up my cross daily I would not be worthy to be His disciple. I wish he had told me about the principle of slavery—that we are slaves to whatever we offer ourselves to. I wish he had told me, plain and simple, that it is so much easier to totally and completely refuse masturbation—that it is not even an option for a Christian—than to attempt to “control it” and “only use it under certain circumstances.” If only he had not used that worn-out phrase “the Bible doesn’t mention it” and instead taught the principles of Scripture. I am not blaming him; my own deceptive heart loved hearing what he preached, and I am responsible for my own actions. I just wish I would have had a man of God who could have helped me learn to deny and crucify rather than rationalize and justify.”

Another enrollment in The Freedom Course came in right as we

were finishing this article. This 17-year-old young man writes:

“Every time I get the urge I can’t resist masturbation...I have tried to fight it for many years, and, although I have had a few temporary victories, I never completely defeated it. I desire to live all of my life for Christ, and this can’t be done until I defeat this fiend. I also want to remain pure for my future wife, and if I continue down this path I know that wish will not become true.”

Masturbation is a doorway to slavery! May God grant this young man freedom in Christ.

May God give us all grace to choose to please the Lord by offering our bodies a living sacrifice rather than pleasing ourselves through masturbation.

Grace,

Mike Cleveland

[www.settingcaptivesfree.com](http://www.settingcaptivesfree.com)

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## **“I’m a Compulsive Masturbator!”**

I hate it that I am overpowered by an addiction to porn and compulsive masturbation. I don’t understand why I just can’t stop it. I really loathe that part of myself. It disgusts me. Can you help?

You and millions of other people, millions MORE now that the internet has invaded our lives!

I serve on the board of [Living Hope Ministries](#), a Christ-centered outreach to those wanting to leave homosexuality. I asked Ricky Chelette, a pastor of First Baptist Church of Arlington (TX) and Executive Director of Living Hope, to share his highly understandable explanation of what happens in an addictive cycle, in a way that has also helped many people dealing with their various besetting sins. He graciously gave me permission to offer his material to answer your question. I hope it helps.

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

## Understanding The Cycle of Sin

This is the cycle of sin that I often share with folks that meet with me. Though I designed this visual image for overcomers with same gender attraction (SGA), I have used it with my single adult group as a whole, for I feel the concepts are universal though the vehicles we use to accomplish our end result might be somewhat different.

Take a look at this diagram.



Hunger or poor Health  
A ngry  
L onely  
T ired  
S tressed  
D epressed

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You begin the cycle of sin at the bottom of the page where you see the letters and blank lines.

Though many of you think that what triggers you is the sight of a good looking man/woman, I think something much deeper is taking place. Most of our triggers fall into one of these broad categories:

- **Health**

I am talking about bad health. When you are sick you are open to temptation.

- **Hunger**

When we are hungry we can feel temptation.

- **Angry**

- **Lonely**

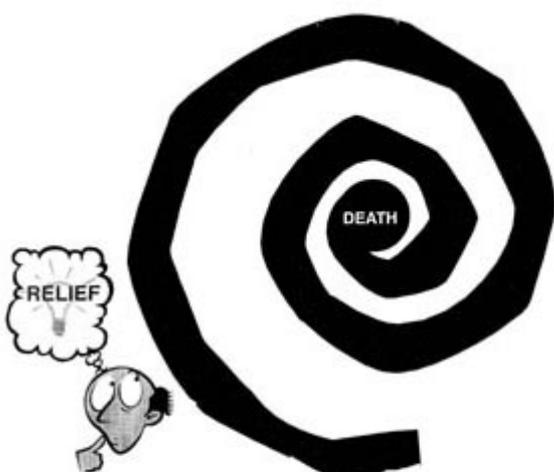
Need I say more...

- **Tired**

- **Stressed**

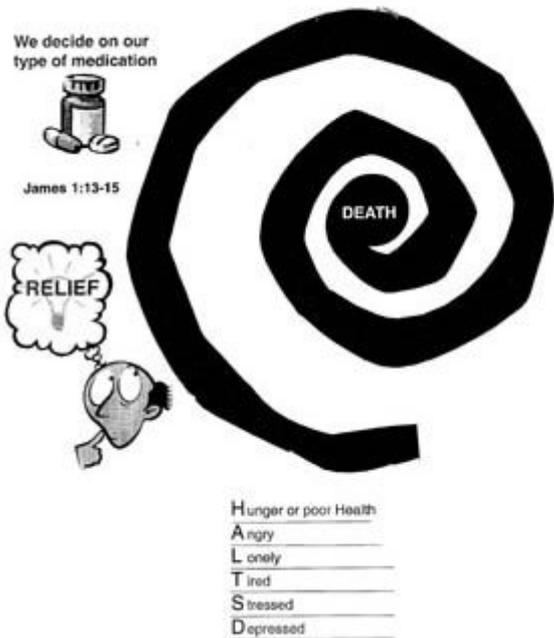
- **Depressed**

Whenever we feel one of these feelings or something closely related to one or more of them, we have the thought of RELIEF. We all want relief from the pain, hurt and stresses of our lives.



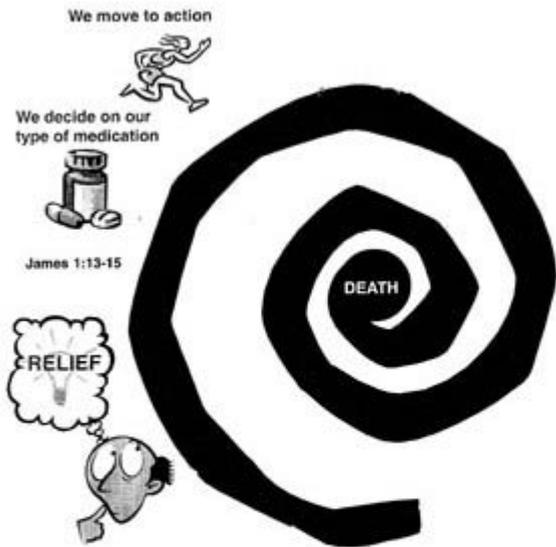
Hunger or poor Health  
A ngry  
L onely  
T ired  
S tressed  
D epressed

The way that we find relief is to seek some form of medication. This does not have to be actual medication, though it can be and this is how people get addicted to drugs, but it is medication all the same. It is something that causes us to experience pleasure and relief.



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So we move from the bottom of the diagram to the thought for relief (the man and the bubble) to the thought of what we will do to medicate our pain and find relief (bottle of pills). When we decide to medicate our pain we go through some action (the runner) before we actually get to the medication.

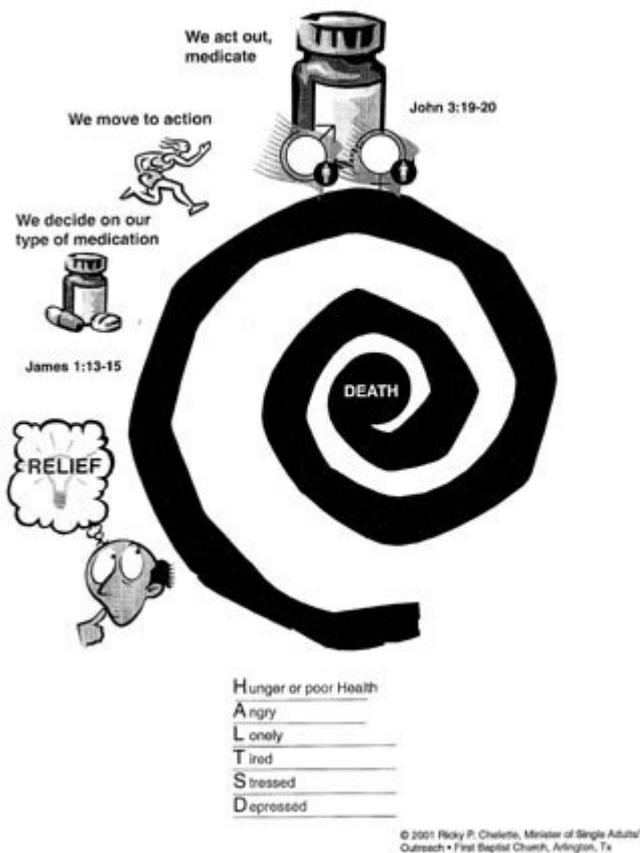


- Hunger or poor Health \_\_\_\_\_
- Angry \_\_\_\_\_
- Lonely \_\_\_\_\_
- Tired \_\_\_\_\_
- Stressed \_\_\_\_\_
- Depressed \_\_\_\_\_

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Oddly enough, even the action toward the intended medication, is somewhat medicinal itself. For example: If you are going to do the big M (masturbation) for your medication you might get undressed and lay in bed, or jump in a warm shower. If you are going to cruise P (internet Porn) on the internet you might get into something more comfortable and begin the search process. If you are going to act out with another or “cruise,” you might get cleaned up and put on some alluring clothing or other articles that would give clues to your intent. Basically, you go through some sort of ritual of preparation. It just doesn’t “happen.” However, we have done this ritual so many times that it feels quite automatic—we may not even realize that we are doing it. It is at this stage that most people tell me that they feel as though they really can’t help themselves—“it is like another person has taken over my body and I am just on autopilot.” In many ways, they really are. I am convinced that once you move from thought to action, it is very difficult if not nearly impossible to stop the ultimate medication/action from taking place. Yes, of course God could intervene, but He has created us with free will and He rarely interferes with our willful decisions. During this phase of the cycle you are also likely to be producing

adrenalin; a very strong chemical that makes a person's heart rate increase, increases their blood pressure, and gives them a sense of invincibility.

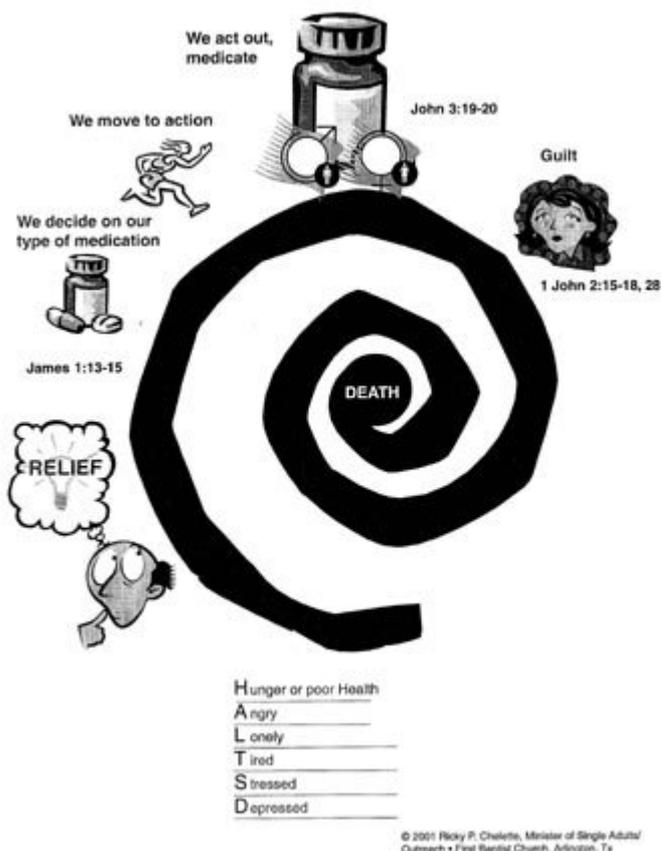


Finally, you carry out your medicative fix by doing the big M or having sex and achieving an orgasm in some way. When you do this, your brain produces a chemical called endorphin. This chemical is extremely strong, some say even ten times stronger than cocaine.

Every time you achieve an orgasm or act out in some way to achieve your medication, endorphins are produced and your body responds in a very predictable way. This is why you get that feeling of pleasure, euphoria, or peace when you orgasm (medicate). There are actually chemicals being produced in your brain that make you feel good. The preparation for the orgasm also can produce these chemicals (remember Pavlov's salivating dogs?!) but not in the same quantity or intensity as the orgasm itself. (Now you are at the top of our diagram—medicine bottle)

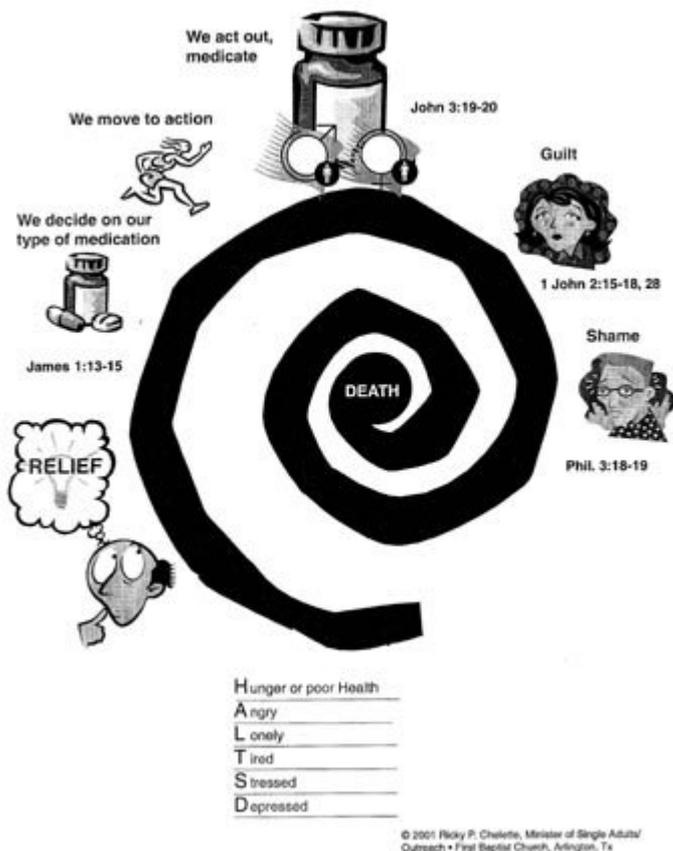
I want you to think of your brain as a CD. Each time endorphins are produced, you burn another track on that CD. If you keep playing the same tune (producing the same chemical) over a period of months/years, you burn a rut in your CD and it is very, VERY difficult to get out of that rut. It is a universal, psychologically proven fact. We establish pathways in our brain that demand that we do certain things and get our fix. Thus, we continue to the cycle of medicating our hurts. .

However, like every high, it is followed by an equally powerful low. The low begins as the chemicals in our brain are absorbed and assimilated into our bodies. We first begin to feel guilty (the lady that is crying on the diagram).

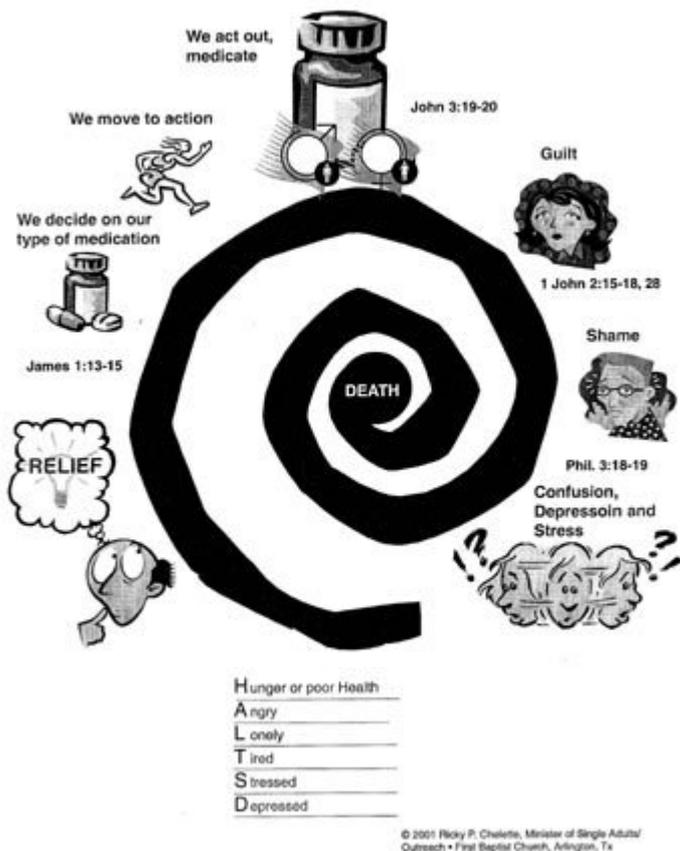


I believe that guilt and conviction are really good things. I see them as a way that the Spirit of God brings correction and discipline to our lives. However, many times we feel guilt, but we don't confess and repent. We simply feel guilty. We do this because we think that God will not hear our prayers. .

.again, for the thing that we seem to keep doing over and over. As a result, not too long after we feel guilt, Satan comes in and uses our sense of guilt to make us feel shame (the man that looks perplexed).



Shame, I believe, is of the devil. The difference between guilt and shame is that guilt is over our actions—things we do. Shame is feeling bad about who we are—our sense of self. Shame causes us to review the lies of Satan and our old tapes that tell us that, “I am worthless. God doesn’t really love me. I am a loser. No one will ever love me. I will never be rid of this sin. I am gay. Etc., etc.”



These self-loathing statements do nothing but drag us further down the cycle so that we become confused, stressed, angry, lonely, etc. (the confused triple-headed person). And where does that lead us?

Back at the beginning of the cycle to keep repeating our sin again and again..

You should also notice that this spiral makes an inward progression that ends at a black hole. You see, what happens with our desire to medicate is that each time we do it, it takes a bit more stimulation to get us to the place that we have the same medicative results. We constantly need more. That is why the spiral is a spiral and not just a circle. It draws us in, deeper and deeper, until we reach the black hole—DEATH. James 1 says when sin is complete it will bring forth death: spiritual death, emotional death, and even physical death. The process is gradual most of the time, but it is guaranteed.

Take for example the person who starts out just looking at a

“Men’s Health” magazine. Nothing wrong with that really. But there are some buff men that have their shirts off. They get excited about that, do a little lusting and masturbate and then they decide to find some porn on the internet. At first it is “mild porn” and then they have a need to find more explicitly sexual pornography, etc. Before you know it that is not enough for them and they search for chat rooms. They start chatting dirty and eventually they decide to call and talk with someone. They won’t meet. At least not this time.... But sooner or later chatting is not enough and they meet... and they have sex... and you know the rest of the story....



Our desire to medicate will take us further and further down this path of destruction. The results are guaranteed, but so is its destructive end.

# So how do we break the cycle of sin in our lives?

I really think that there is only one opportunity for us to break the cycle. I think that we have to learn how to cope effectively and Biblically with our triggers.

If, when we realize that we are experiencing a trigger, we want relief (which we all do naturally) this is OK. However, this is where the discipline comes in. When we want relief we have to move from seeking to medicate our pain with acting out, to taking that need to medicate to the One who is the Great Physician—God. We have to go to Him, at this early stage, and tell Him what we are experiencing; what is going on with us; and ask Him for help. We have to do what 2 Cor. 10:5b says, “Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” Every thought... not just some, but especially those that seek relief.

If we do this, we are able to kick ourselves out of the cycle of sin and find victory and freedom in Christ.

Is it that easy? Absolutely not. It is hard work. Many of you have not yet learned how to identify the triggers and that will be your first step. But with God’s help, it is doable.

Now, don’t think that this is just a struggler thing. It is not.

Here’s another example from my wife who does not struggle with SGA issues at all (thank God!). She is a nurse in ICU; a very stressful job. She is also a self-proclaimed chocoholic (any ladies relate to this?). Many times, when things are going bad at work (stress trigger), she says she can “hear” the candy machine calling her name (need for relief). She puts things in order with her patients (action/ritual) and sneaks out to the machine (more action) and eats a candy bar (medication). After she eats it she gets an insulin rush (sugar high) which makes

her feel all euphoric and wonderful only to be followed by a sugar low which makes her feel guilty and convicted because she knows that she shouldn't handle stress by eating. She then can easily slip into a shame cycle of self-loathing thinking that she is too fat (which she is not), out of control, etc. and the cycle begins again. [She told me I could share this as this diagram has helped her understand you and herself better.]

The same could be said of people who shop when they are triggered, spend money, drink coffee, become violent, use drugs or alcohol, etc. Same triggers, different courses of medication, different chemicals produced (sometimes), but all ending in the same results.

Well, I hope this makes some sense to you and is helpful to you in visualizing and getting a handle on what is taking place in your life. I would really encourage you to memorize the 2 Cor. 10:5b passage and the James 1:13-15 passage as these can help you in directing your thinking when you begin to think "RELIEF"—it will point you to Christ rather than to medication.