
BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES REGARDING MASTURBATION

Dear John,

Here's my answer to your first question. I know that it is long for a face book message but you asked an important question and it deserved a thorough response. There is much more that could be said, but I thought it best to give you the basics below and then you can ask questions, suggest counter arguments etc. that are important to you. I tried to base my responses solely on the Bible so if you think my argument at any point is weak feel free to point it out. I am willing to accept criticism where warranted. So here goes ...

As Christians we must ground all of our beliefs in God's word. We are not to ignore what he says nor are we to make up our own rules. As God warns us, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law." Deuteronomy 29:29

The reality is that the Bible says nothing about the subject of masturbation explicitly. Some people might wrongly conclude that this is because the Bible is prudish or bashful about the subject of sex. The reality is quite the opposite. God speaks clearly on the subject of sex. From the beautiful picture we have of erotic love in the context of the marriage bed in Song of Songs, to prohibitions against lust, bestiality, incest, necrophilia, and homosexual activity, to directions regarding a woman's period as well as a man's ejaculations. God did not pull any punches in being very clear about what he considers inside and outside the boundaries of godly sexuality. Sex is a good and satisfying thing when exercised lawfully. It is a source of pain, embarrassment, struggle, and dissatisfaction when used UNlawfully.

Because the Bible has not told us masturbation is sinful in and of itself, we cannot therefore be holier than God and call it sinful per se. HOWEVER, there are many things God did not specifically prohibit that can still be sinful in most circumstances and a wise man will therefore avoid them in order to avoid the sin that so often accompanies that activity. For instance, smoking weed is not explicitly prohibited in the Bible (there is no verse that says "though shalt not smoke marijuana"). But I can say with confidence that in most cases smoking weed is a sin. The reason for this is that weed produces inebriation almost immediately upon being used and the Bible IS very clear on the sinfulness of getting inebriated/drunk. Essentially Weed moves you straight into a state of "drunkenness" and therefore should not be used recreationally. We can talk more about this subject sometime if you'd like.

In a similar way, the Bible does not mention masturbation as sin explicitly BUT the other

things that almost always accompany masturbation ARE called sin by God and so we can still lay down some pretty specific guidelines regarding masturbation.

First, It is important to recognize that the "fuel" for masturbation is almost always lust. Lust is a form of sexual covetousness which is prohibited consistently through the Bible (Exodus 20:17). Adultery and fornication are sins explicitly prohibited by God (Exodus 20:14, 1 Cor. 6:9, Hebrews 13:4) and Jesus tells us clearly that we can commit adultery/fornication without even touching a woman when we "have sex with her in our mind." (Matt. 5:27-28). This is what lust is. Adultery in our hearts. If you are interested sometime we can discuss exactly what is and is not lust. But for the sake of brevity we can save that for another time.

You are not alone. Most guys utilize lustful mental pictures when they masturbate. They naturally imagine having sex while masturbating. Lust and Masturbation are like two sides of the same coin. Where you find masturbation you will almost undoubtedly find a messy thought life. You courageously and honestly admitted to me that you use sexual mental pictures while you masturbate. This means you are normal, but it also means you have some work to do with regards to lust and your thought life.

Secondly, one way to think of sin in general is taking something that God intended to be used in one way, and bending, breaking or making it ugly. Sin is a counterfeit. Take a look at Proverbs 5:1-14 which I just happened to run across in my devotions recently. This section is all about the deceitfulness of the adulteress. What she promises and what you get are two totally different things. Sexual sin is always like this. It promises satisfaction, fun and fulfillment. It results in dissatisfaction, guilt, and warped expectations. Just consider your own experience with masturbation. If you are like me it always felt great in the moment, but as soon as I climaxed I would feel like a guilty loser. This is because sex was created to be between a man and a woman in the bonds of a marriage covenant. Sex is the physical act symbolizing that two people have become one flesh. When we try to short circuit the design of sex by pleasuring ourselves, of course it will leave us dissatisfied. As followers of the creator we should always desire to use the things God created according to their design. Because masturbation is a sorry excuse for love making Christian men should in the least be very wary of it and make it a habit to avoid the practice.

Thirdly, Sex is supposed to be an act of giving. The husband gives himself over to his wife and vice versa. That is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:4 "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." This is in the context of their sexual life together. Neither one is supposed to deprive the other of sexual satisfaction. Masturbation is at its core self centered. It is a cheap means of satisfying our sexual appetite, and as such rather than the sexual "meal" being a full course celebration it ends up being a lame fast food experience. Masturbation still satisfies the hunger but not the way that sex should. Because its self centered nature is contrary both to our general attitude of Christians and to the giving nature of sex, masturbation should be avoided.

Fourth, Masturbation is lousy practice for the real thing. When we masturbate we know exactly what we like and we waste no time or effort in satisfying those desires. Sex with your wife is very different. When you make love to your wife she is not going to be as in

tune to your sexual whims and finicky anatomical proclivities as you are. You know exactly where the "sweet spots" are on your body and precisely what turns you on. She is not psychic and therefore will not know exactly how to satisfy you at first. Sex in the real world and with another person takes time and practice. Like playing a musical instrument. Once you get good at it the music can be truly beautiful but it does take effort. Masturbation makes us self centered lovers. It makes us wonder "what's wrong with her, why can't she seem to satisfy me the way that I could?" The patterns of thought and activity that you are developing now will follow you into marriage. Personally this was an important realization for me. Because I had spent so many years masturbating it was harder for me to be patient in the bedroom. It was an effort to exercise sexual self discipline while married because I had not practiced self discipline while single. The hangups we have while single don't go away when we marry, they are amplified. Because masturbation is lousy practice for marital relations and creates bad habits of thought and behavior I can say with confidence that Christians should avoid masturbating.

I am blessed with a wonderful and godly wife who loves to please me, not just sexually but in a hundred different ways. So God has been gracious to allow us to work through our mutual hangups. I can say, however, that excelling in the bedroom would have been a lot easier and come a lot sooner if I had not developed the sexually selfish habits that attend masturbation.

Lastly, Masturbation has a habit of enslaving us. A great many men and boys are in bondage to this activity. We want to stop but we can't seem to do so. Let's assume that masturbation is in itself fine. The reality that masturbation so easily ensnares us should be reason enough to avoid it altogether. Listen to Paul's admonition to us in 1 Corinthians 6:12 "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything." If you have been mastered by masturbation then it is something that you need to gain control and victory over even if there is no "thou shalt not masturbate" mentioned specifically in the Bible.

To summarize, Masturbation is:

- * Self centered
- * A poor excuse for what God intended sex to be
- * Lacks love
- * Bad practice for marriage
- * Habit forming

The conclusion I think we should draw from all this is that Masturbation should be avoided by wise Christian men. I know from my own experience, however, how difficult it can be to bring self discipline into this area. One big advantage you have is that you are humble enough to have admitted you masturbate and to actually ask questions. I was never willing to humble myself in that way when younger and so struggled on alone. In this way you stand head and shoulders above where I was at your age.

So what practical steps should a young man take in exercising this needed self control? And what do we do when we fail? We can leave this for a future discussion.