

# **MASTURBATION:**

## **Finding Hope And Healing Through God's Word**

by Leigh Connell

Is it wrong to masturbate? Is it okay to masturbate? Many people are struggling with it and they want answers. While the Bible is very open about sex, it says absolutely nothing about masturbation. When the Bible is silent, we must be guided by broad scriptural principles concerning sexual practices. God created sex for the purpose of marriage; any other usage perverts this purpose. People can fall into despair or progress deeper into sin over masturbation if unable to obtain biblical solutions. It is my goal to openly discuss masturbation in the light of God's Word and expose its many lies. Effective help for masturbation comes as the person applies biblical principles to the situation.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I owe a debt of love to Sister Lynda Allison Doty for her persistent, yet loving confrontation with me regarding masturbation. While so many people shied away from the subject, she openly discussed it with me through many emails, always pointing me toward the light and truth of God's Word. She refused to allow the enemy to deceive me regarding masturbation and constantly challenged me to search the Scriptures. The same day of my deliverance from masturbation, Sister Doty challenged me once again. This time, she asked me to "shine the light of truth" on masturbation by writing about it. She told me there were many other people who needed deliverance from it. At first, I shied away from the challenge, not wanting to expose myself. Then I recalled how Sister Doty's willingness to openly discuss masturbation in the light of God's Word helped me to obtain deliverance. Therefore, my dear friend, I have accepted your challenge.

I also want to thank Sister Brenda Story for her testimony regarding deliverance from pornography, found in Sis. Doty's book, "Apostolic Counseling." It was Brenda's testimony that prompted me to seek help for my own sexual bondages. I quickly discovered that Brenda's testimony was real! She, too, challenged me to seek deliverance through the Word of God. Sometimes I wonder where I would be if Brenda had not been willing to share her testimony. Thanks, Brenda, for speaking out against pornography. Your testimony is so powerful!

## **INTRODUCTION**

I obtained deliverance from masturbation after 40 years of bondage (20 of those years were spent as an Apostolic Christian). Each time I did it, I felt guilty and vowed to stop permanently; yet, I continued to masturbate. Over the years, I tried replacing masturbation with a different behavior. I tried to figure out my thoughts and feelings and "why" I masturbated. I cried many tears at the altar, crying out to God with the shame and guilt of it all. I tried secular and Christian counseling. In essence, nothing worked.

I went to Christian bookstores searching for answers—I found plenty of material in support of masturbation from the world's viewpoint in other bookstores, but I really wanted to know what the Bible had to say about it—only to leave feeling empty and hopeless. Few Christian writers have attempted the subject of masturbation and those that do often leave their readers more confused and indecisive. Everything I read merely mentioned masturbation as a secondary subject matter in accordance with other sexual issues. No Christian author had written

solely on masturbation; no one openly and thoroughly discussed it in the light of God's Word.

Then one day, I read a book called "Apostolic Counseling" by Sister Lynda Allison Doty. In that book, Sis. Brenda Story gave her testimony of how God delivered her from pornography through the Word of God. After reading Brenda's testimony, I felt there might be hope for me, too, and I contacted Sis. Doty regarding my own problems with masturbation and other sexual issues. She openly discussed them with me through many emails, always pointing me toward the light and truth of God's Word.

Shortly after contacting Sis. Doty, she put me in contact with Brenda (although she was unaware of my having read Brenda's story). Previously, I had met so many people who claimed to be free from sexual bondage, yet they still struggled with sexual issues to some degree. In my first phone conversation with Brenda, I knew she was truly delivered and that her testimony was real. That realization alone was so powerful to me. I also learned that Brenda's deliverance did not occur through psychological methods or self-achievement; she obtained it strictly by the Word of God and His Spirit. She also challenged me to seek deliverance through the Word of God.

At first, I fought against Sister Doty and Brenda. Their method (the Word of God) sounded too elementary. After all, I was not a new convert. I had been an Apostolic Christian for many years. I had a consistent prayer life and I read my Bible daily. I was a serious student of the Bible; I studied it constantly. They lovingly presented me with this simple yet profound truth: I was not applying the Word of God to my problem.

Sis. Doty and Brenda continually exposed and confronted all of my rationalizations and justifications regarding masturbation with the light of God's Word. They refused to let me remain deceived and bound by the enemy and his lies. They firmly believed masturbation was wrong; they held steadfast in their belief that only God and His Word would set me free from it.

Slowly, but surely, I began to apply the Word of God to my life. One by one, I gained freedom from the sexual bondages I was in...all through the Word of God. Masturbation was the last one to go; it was also the hardest. I don't believe it was because God was less powerful. I believe it was because masturbation is a silent issue in the Scriptures and I had to dig deeper into the Word of God to combat the inter-woven lies of the enemy regarding masturbation.

Today, I believe masturbation is wrong for many reasons. Drawing from the Word of God, I hope to provide you with hope, healing and answers regarding masturbation. It is my prayer that, by reading this, you will obtain deliverance from masturbation or other sexual

bondage...through the Word of God. *He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions (Psalm 107:20).*

## Chapter 1

### MASTURBATION: TWO VIEWPOINTS

Most Christian leaders, including Apostolic leaders, hold one of two views of masturbation: 1) a rigid, legalistic, and uncompassionate traditional view of masturbation, or 2) a permissive, compromising view of masturbation.

The legalistic view of masturbation has the longest history in Christianity. The early church fathers were adamantly opposed to masturbation as they were to any kind of non-procreative sex. St. Augustine, one of the early church theologians, taught that all sex was sinful and encouraged people to live in celibacy. Christians had a hard time accepting St. Augustine's ideas about sex.

God did not design us to live in celibacy; he created us to be sexual beings. God's plan is for men and women to find sexual fulfillment in marriage. Sex is beautiful and wholesome, a precious gift from God to be used for His glory and our enjoyment.

Masturbation became more morally accepted in the post-Freudian and "free love" era of the 1970's, thus creating the permissive view that we are still experiencing today. The worldly permissive view touts masturbation as a creative expression of one's sexuality, a way to enhance one's marriage and/or sex life. The Christian permissive view makes masturbation okay as long as it is used to prevent sexual sin, it is not habit-forming, and it is used to satisfy a biological need, not lust.

Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) did not believe in using masturbation to avoid sexual sin. "Is autosexuality [masturbation] the only way to avoid lust? Are there not other ways much more in harmony with Scripture with no danger of becoming habit forming as is true with masturbation?" (p. 149)

The Bible encourages us to exercise self-control in sexual matters. *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God (I Thessalonians 4:3-5).* Masturbation is not a means of self-control; this does not seem compatible with Paul's teaching. It is often a lack of

self-control, which frequently leads to compulsive masturbation.

Is it possible that sexual lust is masquerading itself as a biological need? Would we die or do our bodies harm by not giving in to its sexual desires? People have died by not having adequate food, water, or shelter, but no one has ever died from not having an orgasm. We deceive ourselves when we say we can't live without masturbation. Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) states, "I take a firm stance against autosexuality [masturbation]. I do not accept it as 'God's relief valve for built-up sexual drive,' a common expression among Christian leaders with whom I have discussed this issue." (p. 150)

The permissive view is more prevalent and is much more dangerous because the biblical commands toward purity are undermined by this attitude towards masturbation. The most popular argument in favor of masturbation is, "Well, the Bible is silent about it." In I Corinthians Chapter 6, the Apostle Paul was dealing with a law that made fornication legal in some countries. Paul said all things may be legal (lawful), but not everything that is permissible is beneficial or edifying. All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not (I Corinthians 10:23). Just because masturbation is sanctioned in this world (or even by some Christian leaders) does not necessarily make it favorable in the eyes of God, even if the Bible is silent about it.

When people seek answers regarding masturbation from the legalistic-viewing Christian leaders, they may leave the counseling session feeling condemned or confused. They are often told that masturbation is wrong, without being given any biblical explanations for why it is wrong; therefore, they continue to masturbate, with no real hope for healing.

When people inquire about masturbation from Christian leaders who hold the permissive view, they may leave the counseling session feeling indecisive. The people are counseled that masturbation is okay. They wonder, "If it's okay, then why do I feel guilty when I do it?" They feel the desire to stop masturbating, but they become immobilized with indecisiveness without biblical answers.

I believe that people can fall into despair or progress deeper into sin over masturbation if unable to obtain biblical solutions. Wendell Miller (as cited in Doty, Lynda Allison, 2000) offers the following advice to biblical counselors:

Thus, after listening carefully and sympathetically to the counselee's problems, a biblical counselor endeavors to give 1) hope that there is an answer to the problem; 2) instructions on how to attack the problem biblically; 3) assurance that the biblical truths will be effective, if applied diligently; and 4) both courage and

faithfulness to do diligently those things that will please God. It is during this time that the prayers of the biblical counselor are needed the most. This is a crucial time in the counseling session. (p. 48)

Effective help for masturbation comes as the person applies biblical principles to the situation. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16)*. Thus, it is important for all Christian leaders to understand the scriptural principles concerning sexual practices such as masturbation, instead of having an apathetic attitude because the Bible is “silent” about it. May all Christian leaders offer hope and healing through God’s Word for those hurting from masturbation.

## **Chapter 2**

### **GOD’S PURPOSE FOR SEX**

The Bible has plenty to say about sex; it did not shy away from sexual discussion. Nearly every book of the Bible mentions sex, either directly or indirectly. The Bible openly discusses the proper use of sex; God’s plan is for men and women to find sexual fulfillment in marriage.

God created us as human beings with a strong innate desire for sex—psychologists call it “sex drive.” Many Christians believe the sex drive is evil and they attempt to repress it or ignore it. Sex is not dirty or sinful if used as God intended—within the intimacy of marriage. Even though the desire for sex is good and God-given, it must be controlled; otherwise, it will create chaos and cause much shame, guilt and confusion in our lives.

Many forbidden sexual practices, including adultery, fornication, incest, homosexuality, prostitution, sodomy, and bestiality are all addressed in the Bible. What does Scripture say about masturbation? The Bible says absolutely nothing about this practice. While the Bible is open about sex, it is silent on masturbation.

Some point to Genesis 38:8-10 where Onan’s sin of spilling his seed on the ground during intercourse with his brother’s widow, an act he was struck down for, as a prohibition against masturbation. Onan was not masturbating; he was practicing a form of birth-control. This passage of scripture does not address masturbation, but rather Onan’s disobedience in refusing to raise up children for his deceased brother, which he was bound by law and family loyalty to do.

Before we discuss masturbation in more detail, let's find out about God's original plan and purpose for sex. God mentions the proper use of sex all throughout the Scriptures. In fact, an entire book, The Song of Solomon, explains the purpose and place of sex as God designed it.

God created sex for the purpose of marriage; any other usage perverts this purpose. Marriage is defined as a covenant between one man and one woman. *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Genesis 1:27)*. Adam and Eve's marriage was the first institution created in the Bible. *Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24)*.

One purpose of sex within a marriage is to bring children unto the world. *And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it (Genesis 1:28)*. Human beings are partners with God in spiritual creation. Only in marriage do two people join with God to bring other human beings into this world – others with immortal souls.

A married couple should have sexual relations, not just to conceive children, but to show one another their complete love and devotion, and to bring each other pleasure. Sexual pleasure is an expression of love, not just pleasure for its own sake.

The world believes that pleasure is the only purpose of sex. Some Christians think that pleasure has nothing to do with sex. Both are wrong. The sexual relationship is a very pleasurable one, and it should bring a great deal of enjoyment to a marriage. However, we need to get the pleasurable aspect of sex in proper perspective, according to God's Word.

Marriage is an honorable way for anyone to enjoy sex; any other way to enjoy sex is condemned by God. *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge (Hebrews 13:4)*. The marriage is not designed to honor the couple; it is designed to honor God. It should express the unselfish love that only God can give.

The sexual relationship in a marriage symbolizes God's relationship with His church. *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (Ephesians 5:23- 25)*. A man and woman sharing the joys of sex portray the love of Christ and His church. They demonstrate how Christ and the church give them-

selves completely to one another. Sexual love is a holy symbol.

God did not create sex to be shameful or dirty. He created it to be beautiful and to represent His own love for humanity and His desire to have intimate fellowship with them. *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him (Psalm 45:11).*

## Chapter 3

### UNDERSTANDING BODY, SOUL, SPIRIT

In order to be victorious in the war against masturbation, we must first understand ourselves as God created us. God designed all humans as sexual beings, whether or not we ever have sex. Our sexuality is not what we do, but who we are, and we are made with a body, soul, and spirit. *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Thessalonians 5:23).* Let's look at each part in more detail.

**Body.** The body includes the physical body and its five senses—sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch. The body is also referred to as the “outer man,” the “carnal man” or the “flesh.”

**Soul.** The soul consists of the emotions, the will, and the intellect of man. The emotions are your feelings. The will is your self-guidance system; it asserts what you want to do. The intellect is your thoughts and reasoning. The soul is also called the “mind.”

**Spirit.** The spirit is the human spirit. It is also where the Spirit of God dwells within man. The spirit is also known as the “inner man,” the “spiritual man” or the “spirit.”

Lynda Allison Doty (2001) adequately describes the role of each part:

The body is this thing on the outside. The soul is the next thing on the inside. The spirit is the very innermost part of man. We might describe the soul as being like some sort of intermediary. The soul reaches out either to the spirit or the body. If it reaches to the body, we will lean towards the carnal. If it reaches to the spirit, we lean towards the spiritual. (p. 26-27)

To us, all three parts seem to overlap and it can be difficult to distinguish between them,

especially between the soul and the spirit. The Word of God is the separator. *For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).* That's why it is so important that we study and apply the Word of God to our lives on a consistent basis.

The flesh and the spirit are constantly at war with each other. *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Galatians 5:17).* Each time we disobey the Word of God, we lean toward the flesh. Each time we apply the Word of God through obedience, we lean toward the spirit. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:5-6).*

Much of what we consider biological sexual needs is nothing more than the flesh warring against the spirit. The Apostle Paul encouraged us to present our bodies to God. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:1-2).* We present our bodies to God through our souls (minds, thoughts).

As Christians, we come under attack not in the spirit, for Christ resides there, but in the soul—in our minds, emotions, and wills. Satan can put thoughts in our minds and cause us to feel things that are not true. The mind (thoughts) is the gateway from the flesh to the spirit. Therefore, the battle for healing of masturbation is won or lost in the mind.

Taking control of our thoughts helps us to become spiritually minded. *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).* How do we walk in the Spirit? We walk in the Spirit by controlling our thoughts. We are commanded several times in the Word of God to take control of our minds:

*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).*

*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: (Philippians 2:5).*

*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt*

*according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24).*

When we were filled with the Holy Ghost, Jesus gave us power to overcome sin. *But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: (Acts 1:8).* Yet, we still have a tremendous responsibility to keep our flesh under subject to His Spirit by controlling our minds (thoughts). *Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God (Romans 6:12-13).* Let's seek to glorify God with our bodies, souls and spirits.

## **Chapter 4**

### **DEALING WITH FANTASIES**

What do you think about when you masturbate? Masturbation usually involves impure, sensual, lustful, and/or sexual fantasies. These kinds of fantasies are biblically condemned. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28).

One of the commandments in the Old Testament law is, Thou shalt not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14). Jesus (who in Matthew 5:17 stated that He came to fulfill the law) said whoever thought about the act of adultery was breaking the law and committing sin, and that it was the same as the actual adultery. Matthew Henry (1991) calls it heart-adultery:

We are here taught, that there is such a thing as heart-adultery, adulterous thoughts and dispositions, which never proceed to the act of adultery or fornication...this command forbids not only the acts of fornication and adultery, but, (1) All appetites to them, all lusting after the forbidden object...it is a commission of sin, as far as the heart can do it; there wants nothing but convenient opportunity for the sin itself...(2) All approaches toward them; feeding the eye with the sight of the forbidden fruit; not only looking for that end, that I may lust; but looking till I do lust, or looking to gratify the lust, where further satisfaction cannot be obtained. (Vol. 5, p. 49)

Again, the real battleground over masturbation and other sexual sins is the mind, the imagination, the fantasy realm. The Scriptures are clear that immorality is first committed in the mind, the imagination, the fantasy realm, before it is committed with the body.

Sex between a husband and wife ought to remain between a husband and wife; they are to cleave to each other, and that includes their thoughts. If not, then the fantasies become adulterous. A married person can fantasize about his or her spouse if the sexual fantasy is not prohibited in Scripture, if it is beneficial to their marital relationship, and if the fantasy does not involve anyone else. Shannon Ethridge (2003) says this about a married woman's fantasies:

While it is normal and healthy to have fantasies, they need to be restricted to your marriage partner. It's okay to fantasize that he brings you flowers or makes you a candlelight dinner or rubs lotion on your back. It's okay to fantasize about showering together or having wild sex on some tropical deserted island—as long as it is with your husband! (p. 37)

Impure fantasies and thoughts are the gateway to women's sexual temptation. Shannon Ethridge (2003) says this, "Men and women struggle in different ways when it comes to sexual integrity. While a man's battle begins with what he takes in through his eyes, a woman's begins with her heart and her thoughts." (p. 13)

Whereas men are driven by their physical needs, women are driven by their emotional needs. Men are aroused by what they see; women are aroused by what they hear. Men have a regular need for physical, sexual release; women long for attention and affection on a regular basis. While men are tempted to look at pornography, women would much rather read romance novels.

Women are guilty of having mental and/or emotional relationships with others. This is precisely why fantasies are so dangerous for women, according to Shannon Ethridge (2003):

Many [women] believe that just because they are not involved in a physical, sexual affair they don't have a problem with sexual and emotional integrity. As a result, they engage in thoughts and behaviors that compromise their integrity and rob them of true sexual and emotional fulfillment. (p. 7)

For many people, fantasies and masturbation are interrelated. The majority of the people who sexually fantasize also masturbate and vice versa. If a person has his or her thought-life under control, he or she probably does not masturbate, because there is nothing in the thought realm to feed the sexual desire to masturbate. That's why it is so important to monitor our fan-

tasies and cast down any and every thought that is ungodly. *Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).*

A never-married single person has never had a spouse, so even if he or she fantasized about having sex with a future spouse, it would be considered fornication. The same principles hold true for a divorced person. It would be considered fornication to sexually fantasize about a spouse. As a single or divorced person you are presently unmarried, therefore any fantasy of sex with another person is fornication. It would be the same as if you were to act out your fantasy in your present unmarried state.

A widow or widower who fantasizes about actual past sexual experiences with his or her deceased spouse is not necessarily wrong. However, masturbation may increase unwanted sexual desires and produce further loneliness.

Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) tells the story of a missionary friend of his who was experiencing increased sexual loneliness during his frequent absences from his wife. Two other missionary friends suggested masturbation. He followed their suggestions and although, at first, it provided some relief, he felt insecure. He soon became disturbed by his lack of self-control. Thoughts of masturbation would cross his mind at the most inopportune times. His habit seemed to increase his sexual desires instead of decreasing them. One day, he felt an evil presence in the room as he was about to masturbate. Instead, he prayed and resubmitted himself and his sexuality to God. He has not masturbated since. (p.151-152)

You may argue and say, "If fantasies is what makes masturbation wrong, then I can masturbate without fantasies." Be very straightforward and honest with yourself: can you really masturbate without fantasies or some kind of sexual thoughts? You may be able to masturbate a few seconds without sexual thoughts, but you will quickly divert to sexual impure images of the mind to fuel your passion and desire to reach orgasm.

Lust is never satisfied. It has an appetite like nothing else. When you feed lust, it grows. Whatever sexual fantasy or method you used last time to masturbate usually will not work the next time. Something different or more erotic is needed to obtain an orgasm. This is the reason masturbation usually precedes or follows other sexual practices, such as pornography, homosexuality, adultery, etc. All sex addicts use masturbation, regardless of their sexual addiction.

Pornography defies the imagination; it feeds fantasies and it aids masturbation. Once the fantasy or thought is conceived, the person begins to seek ways to make the fantasy a reality. *Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath*

*conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:15).*

Monitor your fantasies and thoughts. Check to see if they are conceived in lust. If so, take control of your thought life. Reading and applying the Word of God to your life accomplishes this. *Set your affection [mind] on things above, not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:2).* The Bible also encourages us to think pure and right thoughts. *Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Philippians 4:8).*

## Chapter 5

### A SELFISH, IDOLATROUS ACT

Ask yourself: during masturbation, whom are you seeking to please sexually? Are you seeking to please God? If married, are you seeking to bring pleasure to your spouse? If you're honest, you will admit that masturbation is all about self-gratification, seeking to please oneself without regards to anyone else. Masturbation is a solitary, selfish act.

With the increase of online pornography and sex, masturbation is becoming more rampant. Carnes, Delmonico, and Griffin (2001) describes the role of masturbation in online sex as a selfish one:

By definition, intercourse is the physical connection of two people. **The closest approximation to intercourse online is mutual masturbation** [bold added] or phone sex—a pseudo-intercourse that doesn't even include the “exchange of body fluids.” And since it lacks any of the components of healthy courtship, it can't possibly compare to the more broadly defined act of intercourse that requires complete trust in the other. Online intercourse requires neither commitment nor connection. **It is nothing more than one individual satisfying himself or herself with the aid of an online partner.** [bold added] (p. 81)

Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) prefers the term “sexual self-stimulation” to define masturbation. He further states, “This definition emphasizes self-gratification, **a form of narcissism** [bold added]. It is a **totally self-centered sexual activity** [bold added] through self-stimulation to the point of orgasm.” (p. 148)

Narcissism is defined as the worship of self, or a sexual desire for one's own body. It is derived from Narcissus, a beautiful youth of Greek mythology who fell in love with his own image. Masturbation is a worship of self; it is also a form of idolatry. *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affections, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: (Colossians 3:5).*

Self-indulgence is the most unrecognized form of idolatry, leading to fornication, whoredom, etc. Idolatry has long been associated with gross forms of sexual immorality and perversion. All throughout the Old Testament, the Israelites were attracted to idolatry. The greatest attraction of idol worship seems to be the licentious revelries and obscene orgies involved, appealing to the sensual passions of the flesh. The New Testament is filled with idolatry and its accompanying sexual immorality. The people often ate before idols then rose up to sexual play (fornication). *Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play (I Corinthians 10:7).*

When you masturbate to fulfill your sexual needs rather than submit to God's plan for sex, you have substituted your way for His way; you are rejecting God's sovereignty and authority. In other words, you are telling God that you don't need Him or His purpose for sex to fulfill your sexual needs; that you can perform it yourself with masturbation; thereby setting yourself up to be your own god, worshiping yourself. God is a jealous God and will have no other gods before Him. *For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Exodus 34:14).*

In the Garden of Eden, Satan knew that through disobedience, Adam and Eve would become their own gods. *For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5).* A few verses later, God acknowledged that when Adam and Eve disobeyed His commandment by eating of the fruit, they became like Him. *And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: (Genesis 3:22).* When you disobey, you become your own god by asserting your own will before His will, and you are in rebellion against the one true God. *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if you refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it (Isaiah 1:19,20).*

Masturbation is a selfish, idolatrous sexual act that does not bring pleasure to God because the focus is on self, and the desire to bring pleasure to oneself. In living for God, we have to deny ourselves. *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me (Matthew 16:24).* Even Jesus denied himself in the Garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion at Calvary. *And He went a little farther,*

*and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt (Matthew 26:39).*

If masturbation is practiced within a marriage, is there a free flowing, unselfish, giving expression of love towards your spouse while doing it? Masturbation fixates on one's own sexual organs and desires, the opposite of a shared sexual relationship with one's mate. Some people believe masturbation is okay in marriage as long as both partners agree. Is masturbation a substitute husband or wife? Shannon Ethridge (2003) talks about the problems of masturbation in marriage:

Many married women continue in their addiction to masturbation even after they have the freedom of sexual expression with their mate. They can't see what this habit does to their marriage. But think about it. You train your body as well as your mind to what it finds pleasurable and how to orgasm, and masturbation trains a woman to "fly solo." This can cause problems because your husband may not know how to please you in the same way, which could make your marital sex life very frustrating and disappointing to the both of you. Most husbands find pleasure and satisfaction in bringing their wives to orgasm. (p. 41)

What about marriage partners who are separated from each other for long periods? Is it okay for them to masturbate? Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) has this to say about abstaining from masturbation during his separation from his wife:

My ministry often has taken me away from my loving wife for months at a time. My intimate sexual relationship with my wife grows deeper, not shallower, with time...When I am away from her, even when I am alone and desire her love, I do not engage in autosexuality [masturbation]. I choose not to do so. With this God-given self-control has come wonderful freedom and peace. There is no freedom nor peace in bondage to masturbation. (p. 150-151)

Masturbation also goes against God's plan of marriage and serves no spiritual purpose according to Juanita Bynum (2000):

In my own experience, and in talking to other people, I have come to the conclusion that masturbating has no spiritual purpose. I believe that when a woman masturbates, she is saying within herself, "I can do without the Adam." When a man masturbates, he is saying, "I really don't need an Eve." When a male and female refuse to be joined together, they are erasing the natural institution of God. (p.171-172)

Masturbation leaves you feeling empty and guilty. It produces further loneliness and does not bring peace. Only God can satisfy your most intimate needs; masturbation can never satisfy you. Shannon Ethridge (2003) summarizes it beautifully this way:

He knows what will truly satisfy you—it's not orgasm, particularly orgasm achieved through masturbation and impure thoughts. It may feel good for the moment, but it doesn't bring lasting satisfaction. That can only be found in relationship. God wants a close, intimate relationship with you. Once you allow Him to prove Himself in this area, you will understand that self-gratification was really never any gratification at all. Striving for God-gratification instead of self-gratification will ensure that your body, mind, heart, and spirit remain pure. (p. 43)

God desires a level of relationship with you such that you are deeply in love with Him, that you delight to be in His presence, and that your focus and priorities become aligned with His will and desires. *And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord (Hosea 2:19,20)*. Seek to know Him more intimately in a relationship. Pursue Him as passionately as He has pursued you. Fall in love with Him; delight yourself in Him. Be enchanted in His Presence; invite Him to be the Lover of your soul.

## Chapter 6

### MASTURBATION AND THE SPIRIT WORLD

What may begin as a work of the flesh can evolve to our being exposed to demonic influence. The downward spiral has no specific time frame; it can take days, weeks, months, or even years. What may have begun in ignorance or innocence can progress to complete domination by the enemy, eventually causing us to lose out with God.

King David shows us the progressive steps of sin in Psalm 19. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from*

*the great transgression (Psalms 19:12,13).*

**Errors.** The first occurrence of sin may have begun in ignorance or innocence. For example, you may have masturbated the first time as a child after discovering pornographic magazines in your parents' closet. David calls this first step of sin an "error."

**Secret Faults.** The second step of sin occurs when the sin becomes somewhat of a secret habit. In other words, you secretly and habitually return to the closet to view the pornography and masturbate again. The "error" has now progressed to a "secret fault."

**Presumptuous Sins.** When you willfully participate in sin even though you know it is wrong, you have progressed to the third step called "presumptuous sin." At this point, you have stolen the pornographic magazines from your parents' closet and hidden them in your own room, so that you can masturbate at any time. You realize that you are losing control, but you continue to sin anyway, regardless of the consequences.

**Dominion.** Before you realize it, you are totally out of control and you have progressed to the fourth step called "dominion." You are now obsessed with masturbation and doing it several times a day. You are also seeking new pornographic material to feed your lust. Masturbation has now enslaved you; you are in bondage to it. The innocent "error" now has complete "dominion" over you.

The only sure way to avoid the possibility of habit and bondage to sin is never to begin. In Psalm 19, King David shows us how to pray in regards to sin. He was guilty of many sins that he was not aware of through his carelessness and partiality to himself. He took occasion to pray against sin. He prayed for cleansing and prevention of sin. He sought help from God to keep his life pure from sin. We would be wise to follow King David's example.

Sex involves the body, soul, and spirit. There is a lot going on in the supernatural spirit realm that we cannot see. However, we should not assume that everything around us is a demonic spirit. Many things that we want to attribute to demonic spirits are nothing more than the works of the flesh that Paul spoke of in Galatians. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).*

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness are sexually-rooted works of the flesh. Uncleanness and lasciviousness include the thoughts, acts, and actions of a sexual nature

(whether alone or involving another). Is masturbation not rooted in sexual thoughts, acts, and actions?

Instead of manifesting the works of the flesh, we should be exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (Galatians 5:22-24).* Do you exhibit the fruits of the Spirit after masturbation? Do you have peace and joy afterwards? Instead, do you experience guilt and shame after masturbation? We must crucify the flesh and its lusts in order exhibit Jesus Christ and His fruit.

When a person begins practicing a work of the flesh (like masturbation), either of their own accord and will, or as influenced by a particular demon, and then after they begin practicing this work they open themselves up for demonic influence. Juanita Bynum (2000) elaborates on this:

Many times people feel that when they masturbate, it's just a physical exercise. That is a far cry from being the truth because when you indulge in this act, you actually have to go into the spirit of your mind. This is why the Bible says we must be renewed in the spirit of our mind. (p. 149)

In the seat of the spirit of your mind—where the imagination of the Lord does not reside and where impure thoughts are—there is the evil working of the enemy in the thought realm. When you travel into that realm to such a depth that you cause a physical sensation, you have tampered with demons in a realm that you know not of. (p. 149)

If in fact acts of lust and lustful imaginations exist because of the spirit of your mind, don't allow your mind to be open to the spirit of the past. While you are out there, you have left the reality of the now and transcended into the spiritual. If that spiritual realm is not in the realm of God, then you have just exposed your spirit to a satanic realm that has more to offer than just a sensation...If you went into the fantasy land of the future, the enemy expanded the corruption of your mind into an area that you have not even experienced yet. Now this is a strong, subconscious sexual drive. The enemy will not stop until that fantasy becomes a reality. That is why we must be renewed in the spirit of our mind. (p. 166)

When you reach an orgasm from the realm of imagination and you have traveled into the spirit realm for that climax at that very moment, and you are out of con-

trol, your body is responding to that act, and you don't know what spirits from that realm have entered you. (p. 152-153)

Masturbation has no purpose other than to allow the mental and spiritual seats of your conscience to explore unfamiliar territory. This is how we encounter other spirits that are not like God. (p. 172)

Compulsive, uncontrolled masturbation can involve the demonic realm. Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) talks about this:

There can be a definite demonic dimension to uncontrolled masturbation. I am not saying that demons are directly attached to the lives of all those in bondage to autosexual [masturbation] practices...I am saying that {demons} can become attached to the life of anyone in bondage to this unwise sexual practice. Such persons need counseling, but they also need deliverance. (p. 151)

Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) further states:

Bondage to masturbation is spiritual warfare. The desire may first come from within, warfare with the lusts of the flesh. It can also come directly from without, warfare with a sex-crazed world. Finally, it often comes from above, warfare with sexual demons who tempt us to unwise or illicit sexual activity. (p. 151)

However, we must accept personal responsibility for our actions and our sin. While demons can entice and incite us to sin, they cannot make us do anything against our will. *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it (I Corinthians 10:13).*

*Neither give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27).* The Christian is the one who yields ground to Satan. Satan has no authority in a Christian's life except that which the Christian surrenders to him. Therefore, it is possible, even crucial, that the Christian, in the power of the Holy Ghost, to take back the ground he or she has yielded to the enemy.

You may ask, "God created my body to be sexually responsive, so surely He wouldn't deny me this pleasure of masturbation? How can I be open to demonic influence if God formed me this way?" Although your body was created to be sexually responsive, it was first made to house the Spirit of God. *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body (I*

*Corinthians 6:13).*

If the body is joined with another, those two bodies, and souls and spirits become one flesh. *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body (I Corinthians 6:15-18).* God is saying that His Spirit and fornication when joined together, become one, and in this case it becomes a harlot. Doing so desecrates His name and His Spirit. If your body houses the Spirit of God, and, when you masturbate, you commit “heart-fornication,” you have just joined the Spirit of God with a harlot of masturbation.

You may say, “It’s just me. No one else is involved. So I’m not joined to another with my physical body.” When you masturbate, you are joined with a thought or imagination in the soul realm. You are joined with an unclean or perverse spirit in the spiritual realm. During masturbation, you and that thought or imagination and spirit become one.

Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost; not an idolatrous temple. Shall harlots of masturbation enter into the temple of God? *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (I Corinthians 6:19).* You turn your body into a temple of idolatrous self-worship when you masturbate.

Matthew Henry (1991) says:

We are to honor him with our bodies and spirits, which are his; and therefore, surely, must abstain from fornication; and not only from the outward act, but from the adultery of the heart, as our Lord calls it, Matthew 5:28. (Vol. 6, p. 432)

Seek to be joined with Him as one in the Spirit. Seek to glorify God with your body and soul and spirit. *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (I Corinthians 6:20).* Seek to love Him with all of your being. Seek to love Him with all of your body, soul and spirit. *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all they soul, and with all thy mind (Matthew 22:37).*

## Chapter 7

### OBTAINING DELIVERANCE

Why do you want deliverance from masturbation? You might say, “I’m a Christian and I’m not suppose to masturbate.” Doing the right thing is one matter; why you’re doing it is another. Proper motivation is essential to success. Let your motivation be, “I desire deliverance because I am a Christian and I cannot allow any immoral actions, such as masturbation, to dominate my life. I desire deliverance because I love Him and I want to please Him.”

Make purity your goal, not abstinence. In other words, don’t just strive to stop masturbating; strive also to have a pure heart before Him. Beth Moore (2003) talks about deliverance:

More than anything, the key to deliverance is not just being delivered from but being delivered to. The reason we keep going back to our old strongholds is that we have temporarily been delivered from the sin practice, but we did not follow through with deliverance straight to the healthy heart of God. (p. 284)

There are several ways to avoid sexual temptation and maintain sexual integrity. Here is a partial list:

Be careful with magazines and books. Men, avoid magazines with sexually graphic pictures, especially pornography. Women, avoid romance novels. (The sexually graphic pictures are mental rather than visual, which is more alluring to women).

Avoid television and movies. This is the greatest desensitization tool of Satan. The majority of what is broadcast today, the subliminal messages as well as the visual graphics, is sexual in nature. Yet most people have become desensitized to what they see and hear; and most don’t even realize it. I’ve heard people say in response to a comment about a nudity scene in a movie, “Oh that? That’s nothing.” Or after viewing a love-making scene, they say, “They’re married! That’s what married people do.” Personally, I don’t want to see nudity or watch another married couple make love; I consider it a form of pornography.

Use the Internet in a public setting. If you have a computer at home, keep it in the living room or some other public area, not in some back room. Always let someone else know when you are using the computer, especially the Internet. If necessary, go to the public library to use the Internet.

Have an accountability partner. This is VERY important. Find someone you can trust who will hold you accountable to God's Word for your actions. Find someone who will speak the truth to you in love (even if it hurts). Give them permission to ask you the hard, personal questions. Be brutally honest with this person. Let him or her know when you are sexually tempted or after you have given in to the temptation.

These things are accountability measures; they are good and necessary. However, they alone will not deliver you. Only the Word of God will bring true everlasting deliverance.

Many people approach masturbation with the law. They often try every possible way to stop with no success. Then, apathy and indifference can set in. Grace is not indifference. Grace is total dependence upon God. We humans have a self-reliant, independent spirit, attempting to be strong. Dependence upon God is NOT a weakness; it is strength, HIS strength. His strength covers our weakness. Sin weakens us; His grace strengthens us.

Maybe you've tried replacing the habit of masturbation with a different behavior. Others perhaps you have tried to figure out your thoughts and feelings and "why" you masturbate. You gone to the altar for prayer countless times. In essence, nothing worked.

The first step towards deliverance is recognizing the lies you believe regarding masturbation: "I must have a physical sexual release...Masturbation is better than fornication or adultery...I only masturbate about once a month." Stop rationalizing and justifying the reason(s) you masturbate. Satan's strategy of temptation is deception. You cannot justify or reason your way to deliverance. Matthew Henry (1991) had this to say about rationalizing sin, particularly lust, "Such pretences as these will scarcely be overcome by reason, and therefore must be argued against with the terrors of the Lord..." (Vol. 5, p. 50)

*For if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (I John 1:8).* By saying that you masturbated because of \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with any reason), you justified the sin and deceived yourself. Matthew Henry (1991) states, "We must beware of deceiving ourselves in denying or justifying our sins." (Vol. 6, p. 857)

*If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (I John 1:10).* By denying your sin of masturbation, you are calling God a liar. You are saying that His Word is not true. You are saying that His sacrifice on Calvary was in vain. You are also saying that you do not have the Holy Ghost (His Word) in you. This doesn't mean that by sinning, you are calling God a liar, because He knew we would continue to sin, and thereby made provision for sin. But by denying your sin through rationalization, you are calling Him a liar. Matthew Henry (1991) says, "The denial of our sin not only deceives ourselves, but it reflects dishonor

upon God. It challenges His veracity [truthfulness].” (Vol. 6, p. 857)

The second step towards deliverance is confession and repentance. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). The remedy for your sin is confession and repentance to God, whereby receiving cleansing and forgiveness for them. You must confess your sins each time, and every time, no matter how embarrassing or insignificant you think it may be. God forgives as soon as we confess, but it takes time to get the flesh and mind in alignment with His Spirit and His Word.

If you will confess your sins, God will forgive, thereby keeping deception at bay, and eventually receiving deliverance. Matthew Henry (1991) makes a powerful and true statement regarding our confession of sin and God’s forgiveness, “He is clement and gracious also, and so will forgive, to the contrite confessor, all his sins, cleanse him from the guilt of all unrighteousness, and in due time deliver him from the power and practice of it.” (Vol. 6, p. 857)

The third step towards deliverance is applying the Word of God to your life. *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves (James 1:22)*. This is a crucial and critical step in obtaining deliverance because it breaks the deception of sin by replacing the lies with the truth of God’s Word. When sexual temptation comes, do not resist with your mind or you will fail every time. Instead, pray and apply the Word of God. Without applying the Word, you remain deceived as Elmer Towns (1996) states, “We deceive ourselves when we hear and then fail to apply the Word of God in our lives.” (p. 36)

Learning to apply the Word of God is very powerful because you are learning how to wield your God-given weapon, the sword of the Spirit (see Ephesians 6:10-17). If you will make the effort, the Lord will strengthen you and direct you on how to effectively use it. *Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight (Psalm 144:1)*.

Start with just a few Scriptures. For example: Psalm 91, II Corinthians 10:3-6, and Psalm 107:20. Whenever the thoughts of masturbation or any other similar thoughts enter your mind, get the Word of God, turn to these scriptures and read them repeatedly out loud. At first, it does not matter whether or not the scriptures are directly related to the situation, in this case masturbation. You are simply learning to use God’s Word to combat temptation and sin.

The next step in applying God’s Word is distinguishing the lies from the truth. You may experience confusion from the enemy at this stage. You may want to get a notebook and write down a negative thought or feeling at the top of each page. Then, search the Word of God for 2-3 scriptures to dispute each one. (For example, you may write at the top of one page, “I feel

hopeless.” Underneath it, write, “But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. Psalm 71:14.” Then write, “Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word. Psalm 119:114.”) When the swirling lies of the enemy attack you and you cannot recall a specific scripture, pick up the notebook, flip to the appropriate page, and begin reading aloud the scriptures recorded there. The Word of God is powerful and it will liberate you from the many lies of Satan!

Afterwards, when the temptation has subsided, you may feel drained or weak emotionally and physically. You simply want to break down and cry. Allow yourself to cry out to God in pain in prayer. It is not easy at first. Many times, there are no words, only tears and anguish. If you will allow the tears to fall, His warm touch will flow through you as He ministers healing and love to you. Open yourself up to God and allow Him to touch the different areas of pain, and you will experience healing.

Allowing God to fill that empty space in your life is very important. You need to let His Presence occupy the place where masturbation once dwelt. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house when I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first (Luke 11:25-26). If a person removes the unclean spirits from their life, they must allow God to fill that empty place with His Spirit and His Word or matters will worsen. Dr. Ed Murphy (1992) states:

The expulsion of one group of evil spirits from a human life will usually lead to the entry of another group if the sin in the life to which the former demonic spirits had attached themselves is not removed. (p. 109)

Too many people seek instantaneous deliverance from sin. Although it does happen, it is not always the case. (You’ve heard of people who were instantaneously delivered from alcoholism and drugs, etc. Alcoholism and other such addictions are external; the desires to drink and smoke are not inborn like the sexual nature). We have to maintain sexual integrity at all times and channel it in the right direction because of the sexual nature that God put in us. Therefore, deliverance often comes from applying the Word of God to our lives. Please note that deliverance does not eliminate temptation. Temptation will still occur, and you must continue to apply the Word of God during those times as well.

Spiritual warfare is not a hocus-pocus world of demons on every corner. Yes, the supernatural realm is real and demonic influences and spirits do exist. In reality, true spiritual warfare is what we term day-to-day living: daily walking with God and being led by His Spirit. It

is praying, reading the Word of God, and keeping His commandments by living holy every day. No enemy is too strong for us. If we feel overwhelmed or weak, it is typically due to a lack of prayer and applying the Word.

My friend, it is my prayer that you will find hope and healing for masturbation through His powerful Word and become all that God has called you to be. *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (I Peter 2:9).*

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