

# Masturbation and Sexual Desire

## Sexual Desires

Sexual desires are an important part of God's plan for men and women. But Satan always tries to derail God's plans and use them to destroy people rather than bless them. This is especially true in this area. In this article we want to understand what the Bible tells us about purity and how this should or should not be expressed in our lives especially as it relates to the subject of masturbation. Sexual desires usually begin in puberty. The age of puberty can vary substantially but normally takes place during a person's early teens. Girls can face this up to several years earlier than boys. In the best of all worlds, this doesn't need to create a serious problem. Children should be taught enough about themselves that they understand what is happening to them. Parents should teach them about the Biblical standard of purity so they have a reason to avoid experimentation. However, this world leaves a lot to be desired. Parents don't always do their part. Peers sometimes share knowledge that children could handle better once they are more mature. Occasionally they stumble into discoveries that lead to a regular practice of masturbation or other moral failures. Unfortunately, the more that sexual desires are gratified through masturbation and immorality, the stronger they grow. They can become almost uncontrollable, as many people can testify. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul speaks to this. The first sixteen verses of this chapter speak about marriage and sexual desire within marriage. However, Paul realized that there were cases where a man or woman was married, and then their partner died. He advised such people to remain unmarried. But he also knew that sexual desires could be very strong, especially for those who were accustomed to regularly experiencing this release. Because of this, he gave permission for remarriage. The way he worded this is interesting and tells us something about sexual desire. He said, in verse 9, that **"if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion."** (1 Corinthians 7:9) While he doesn't explicitly name masturbation in this passage, he seems to be referring to it when he speaks of having self-control. The term, *burn with passion*, is very descriptive of what many people

face. For instance, one girl called our phone team begging for help and prayer. She felt that she just couldn't give up her immoral relationship. Yet she realized that it was wrong, so she wondered about getting release from her desires by masturbation. When the advisor tried to help her see that this really wasn't an answer, she almost cried. "Why does God torture me like this?" she asked. In other words, why does God give her these strong desires, then tell her it is wrong to fulfill them. The problem is that a misused sexual desire grows exponentially in strength, and she was "burning with passion" because she had let her desires gain control of her. It was part of the reaping for the life she was living. The hippies in the 1960s and 70s had a story that explained this problem.

*One day a young man was walking through the jungle and found a baby monkey. It was cute and friendly, so he took it with him and taught it to ride on his shoulder. He would feed it bananas and they became good friends. The young man enjoyed the relationship and the monkey did too.*

*But the monkey kept growing as time went on. It became bigger and heavier. Finally, one day the young man decided that he would like to eat a banana himself. So, he peeled it and took a bite. But the monkey squealed angrily and reached down and took the banana from the young man. After that the monkey was in control and what had been a pleasure to the young man became bondage. Soon the monkey was demanding more and even more bananas as the young man stumbled miserably down the jungle trails.*

## **Lust and Passion**

Desire by itself is not sin. But James 1:15 tells us that **"when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin."** A desire can very easily lead to sin. Like other God-given desires, sexual desires can get out of control. We call such an out-of-control sexual desire *lust*. The Bible uses the word *lust* many times. In Matthew 5:28, Jesus said, **"whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."** At this point the natural desire has intensified to the point of becoming a sin. It controls your thoughts as you look at a woman walking past or sitting across the table. It has become a "burning passion." (This is also true of women lusting after men, and people lusting after someone of the same sex.) Lust can easily lead to masturbation and makes it

sinful. By then the person is burning with passion and there is no stopping them. Many innocent things beyond our control can stir up our natural desires. If it stops at that and we keep our desires under control, the desire can drain harmlessly away. But if we allow our thoughts to get out of control or start fantasizing about a picture or a person that we have seen, then we are letting lust control us. Watching porn or reading explicit literature will do the same. Unfortunately, lust and passion can get a terrible grip on us. Like the story of the monkey illustrates, what we once did for pleasure ends up becoming an uncontrollable bondage.

## **Sexual Desire and Marriage**

God has given us marriage as a legitimate outlet for sexual desire. But even within marriage, sexual desire can be misused. For instance, I Corinthians 7 makes it clear that each marriage partner is responsible to consider the desire of their partner, not just their own. The man who initiates marital intimacy primarily to please himself is selfish. But the man who is concerned about pleasing his wife fulfills the truth being taught in this passage. This passage also makes it clear that married people should not feel guilty about their intimate relationships. In fact, it clearly tells them not to defraud each other. If a husband and wife heed these verses, both of them will have little reason to struggle with the temptation of masturbation.

## **Sexual Desire and Being Single**

The last part of 1 Corinthians 7 speaks to unmarried people. Paul makes it clear that marriage is not wrong. He also states that a person who stays single will be able to serve God in a way that married people often can't. Service in the work of the Lord is possible within either reality. The Christian who stays single is married to God, in a sense. He can use all his energies to serve God. In fact, because he is not using his sex drive for its normal purpose, he will have more energy to devote to God's work. Masturbation, on the other hand, will deplete this strength. It will divert his thoughts from pleasing God to pleasing himself. Lust will fill his thoughts, and he will find himself in spiritual bondage, burning with passion, and

overwhelmed with lust and guilt. The Bible has no passage that says, “Thou shalt not masturbate.” But the Christian single needs to dedicate his (or her) life to God and not steal the “strength of their youth” from God for selfish gratification.

“Be an example of the believers... in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12)

## Freedom!

Today, people tend to look at sexual gratification as being a right rather than a privilege. The idea that self-gratification is a sin is resisted by much of society. This is the concept that leads to promoting the LGBT agenda, transgender practices, acceptance of divorce and remarriage, recreational sex, and masturbation. In reality, however, the need to allow God to control our desires is very important in the Christian life. Almost all God-given desires are wrong if they aren't controlled. Most of them are too much for us to handle on our own. The help of friends and family is necessary and very beneficial, but even more than that, we need God's help. When we give the control of our lives over to Him, we can enjoy freedom from sin and the peace of living in His will.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalms 51:10)