Masturbation

Masturbation is physically stimulating oneself for sexual excitement and/or orgasm.

Many people struggle with masturbation. The practice is not exclusive to one gender or age group. The root of this struggle is primarily spiritual and emotional rather than sexual.

Although Scripture does not specifically address masturbation, the Bible is clear God created sex for the purpose of procreation and mutual oneness with a spouse within the confines of marriage. Scripture is also clear that we are to guard our minds, putting to death sexual immorality, impurity, lust, passion and evil desire. Our lives and bodies belong to God. We are to be self-controlled, upright, and godly as we glorify Him with our bodies (Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:3-5, Titus 2:12, 2 Corinthians 6:18-20).

Common Misconceptions

- **No one else does it:** Masturbation is common among men and women, Christians and non-Christians.
- **I will quit once I get married:** The Bible establishes marriage as a celebrated sexual provision, but marriage does not resolve sin struggles. Sexual intimacy with a spouse requires effort, vulnerability, and selflessness. Masturbation requires none of these, and often remains a temptation and destructive force within marriage.
- **Masturbation is not harmful to me:** Masturbation is often an escape from reality that corrupts the imagination. Rather than a means to intimacy with a spouse, sex becomes inward-focused, delusional, and isolating. Dopamine released in the brain while masturbating can be addictive.
- **Masturbation is no big deal relative to other sins:** Any activity that is self-centered, corrupts the mind, and uses fantasy coupled with dopamine to escape reality is a problem.
- **Masturbation Is not harmful to my spouse:** Sexual desire is a gift from God meant to lead you to sexual intimacy and mutual pleasure with your spouse. Masturbation is self-centered, and often entertains harmful fantasies while denying your spouse the blessing of intimacy and oneness.
- **It is ok to masturbate if I don't lust:** Though masturbating without lusting or fantasizing is rare, it still does not mean that masturbation is glorifying to God or honoring to your spouse.
- **I have to masturbate or it will damage my body:** Your body will adjust accordingly to your level of sexual activity. Men have nocturnal emissions (wet dreams) after prolonged abstinence.
- **It is never ok to masturbate:** Because the Bible does not speak directly to this issue, there may be a few instances where masturbation does glorify God and honor a spouse. Seek biblical counsel from trusted Christians and discuss with your spouse instances where it may be permissible and beneficial.

Regardless of your frustrations, misunderstandings, and failures with masturbation, know that God loves you. There is healing and victory in Christ. God can give you self-control to glorify Him with your body.

Biblical Insights

Your body is not your own. If you have trusted Christ, your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and (if you are married) your body also belongs to your spouse.

- "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor." (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4)
- "For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." (1 Corinthians 7:4)

Sexual immorality is deadly. God designed sexual fulfillment to be experienced with a spouse within marriage.

Sexual practices outside of God's design are destructive.

- "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18)
- "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)
- "[Spouses,] Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." (1 Corinthians 7:5)

You are not alone. Victory is possible with God.

- "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16)

If you struggle with masturbation, don't live defeated, and don't dismiss recurring sin. Christ died for your sin. Because Christ's blood is cleansing of sin, no one (not even you) can condemn you. Yet, we are to repent of sin to follow Christ and fulfill God's purpose for our lives.

- "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus…Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." (Romans 8:1, 33-34)
- "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:1-2)

God does not want you to live in a fantasy world but to glorify God in mind, body, and spirit.

- "…put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:23-24)
- " For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age." (Titus 2:11-12)
- "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Here is a simple litmus test to determine if something not specified in scripture is ok for you to do:

Does _____ bring glory to God? Or, does the way that I use _____ glorify God? If Jesus returned while I am engaged in this activity would He be honored?

Next Steps

- Ask Christ to heal you (Romans 10:13). Identify and address the underlying issues that drive you to masturbate. The next time you feel the urge to masturbate, slow down, and pray. Ask God to reveal your motivation and for courage to let others know your temptation. (Proverbs 14:8, Proverbs 18:1)
- Confess to a trusted friend, and be accountable to him or her to pursue purity. Commit to 24 hours of abstinence each day. (2 Timothy 2:22)
- Identify times, places, and stressors that often lead you to masturbate. Prepare in advance how you will respond should temptation come. (1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Peter 5:8, Ephesians 6:13, Hebrews 2:18)
- Do not despair if you fall to temptation. God's grace and his love is unconditional. (Romans 8:1)

Additional Resources:

- Find testimonies, articles, and other helpful resources at **regenerationrecovery.org/masturbation**.