

**Breaking the Silence
on the "M" Word
(Freedom from Masturbation)**
by David Kyle Foster

After ten years of celibacy, Jim (not his real name) had concluded that masturbation was his consolation prize - door number three in a world where the big deal of the day was behind door number one. "It was God's provision for single people and for those in sexually unfulfilling marriages," he surmised, concluding that it would be unfair for God to have made things any other way. "Even more," he thought, "it was necessary to maintain healthy physiology. After all, the Bible was silent on the issue wasn't it?"

For some reason, the Church has never found it easy to talk about sex. I'll never forget the time I was talking to some colleagues at a large gathering of religious broadcasters and was asked what I was working on. "I've been writing a chapter on masturbation for my new book," I replied. You'd of thought I had exploded a stink bomb. The man who asked the question visibly blanched and stumbled backward, exclaiming, "Well, why don't you just say the word!" He then furtively looked around to see if anyone had overheard the "M" word being said in conversation with him.

The Bible has no problem talking about sex, but the people of God have somehow gotten the message that it is a subject best not mentioned - especially that "dirty little habit" called masturbation. Little do we realize that by keeping this issue in darkness, we are playing right into Satan's hand. Darkness is where he keeps people isolated, ignorant, afraid, shameful and hopeless.

Modern psychology and medicine would have us believe that masturbation is healthy and natural, persuading many Christian leaders to communicate the same message.

For others in bondage to performance and legalism, it is a horribly embarrassing behavior, something they are certain will send them straight to hell. Satan keeps them locked in a dungeon of shame and self-hatred. "If you were normal (healthy, attractive, etc.) you wouldn't be doing this", he whispers. He causes you to believe that you are the only one who does it, or that the sexual thoughts that you have are far more perverted than anyone else's. The pain of your ongoing failure fuels further flights into self-relief. Sex addiction expert Dr. Patrick Carnes has written that masturbation often becomes so obsessive that 45% of males and 33% of females will engage in the practice to the point of physical injury. Thus, Satan's masterful game of isolation and attack buries you deeper into anger, frustration and obsession.

So let's get this thing out into the open. Let's first take a look at what medicine really teaches. Dr. Reginald Cherry, a diagnostic internal medicine specialist from Houston, Texas says there is no physiological need for a person to practice masturbation. In both men and women, the body naturally adjusts itself through periodic emissions of fluid during sleep. Sometimes, even these become an unnecessary source of guilt for people who do not understand what is happening. Dr. Cherry says that the idea that someone who lives a celibate life must relieve sexual pressure through masturbation is medically unsound. "There is no reason to be concerned healthwise when there is no sexual activity", he states. "Furthermore," he says, "attempts by many medical professionals to certify masturbation as healthy is really just a clumsy effort to alleviate the guilt that many people feel from their participation in the behavior. They have no basis in science or medicine."

What Does the Bible Say?

One of the most prevalent rationalizations that people use is that the Bible never mentions masturbation and that it must therefore be alright. Is that logical? Is child molestation alright then? It's not specifically forbidden in the Bible. How about shooting heroin? Or how about torturing someone? Not mentioned! You see how illogical the argument quickly becomes.

How do we know that smoking dope is against the will of God, for example? We discover the answer by uncovering the principles found in scripture - most specifically those concerning the body being the temple of the Holy Spirit and those commanding us to obey governmental authority. We also know sin by the witness of the Holy Spirit within, provided we haven't quenched that witness through ongoing rebellion.

The most obvious biblical principle that is applicable to masturbation is found in Mt 5:28 where Jesus indicates that lusting after someone in the heart is the same as actually doing it. I am violating whomever I am picturing in my mind during the act of masturbation. It really doesn't matter whether it is a picture from a magazine, (Those are real people!), or someone I've met or a memory of some act committed in the past.

And if I can discipline my mind to think of no one, what of that? Attainment of such focus only serves to make obvious the desperation and obsession that drives us to such lengths. The principles found in 1 Cor 6:12; 2 Pet 2:19; and Rom 6:14 clearly emerge as foundational to our plight - that we are slaves to whatever masters us. When we get truly honest about the habit of masturbation, it is clear that it is a behavior that controls us - one that we use to medicate pain, to alleviate stress or to forget rejection. In that way, it is similar to a drug habit - just one more vehicle to avoid turning to God.

Why won't we turn to God? We may be ashamed. We may believe that He's going to judge and punish us. We may not trust Him. Or, it simply may never occur to us. We don't normally see God as being involved in the fulfillment of our sexual lives. He's a Spirit after all and we are physical creatures. And yet, He is in fact the answer to every problem. He can quench our unholy desire and He can teach us to respond to problems by working through them rather than from running from them.

Confessing the Right Things

It is important that I discover the root sin issues so that I can repent of them. If I am unaware of one or more of these strongholds, I will inevitably remain bound because my unrepented sin will continue to give Satan ground to hold me in bondage. Much of the transformation process involves discovering where Satan's ground is and removing it with the tools that God has provided. What then are some of the root sin issues that need to be confessed?

1. Unbelief - the doubt that God is really good. When I sin any sin, I am in that moment doubting that God is really there for me, that He cares, and therefore, that He is good. I am re-enacting the first sin committed in the Garden of Eden, when Eve became convinced that God was keeping from her something that was good.

The truth is, God has something better than the coping mechanism of masturbation - even for the single person. He has something higher, something that will bring completion and satisfaction to one's sexual self. It is this truth that is most effective in being persuaded to forsake the sin.

2. Idolatry - Ephesians 5:3-5 clearly teaches that sexual immorality is a form of idolatry. Often masturbation becomes a source of life and peace, especially for those who have lived through great pain. It becomes a substitute god. Should the Spirit come to offer freedom, many will recoil in terror at the realization that they are being asked to live without something that has been a primary source of peace in their lives - something that has kept them from falling apart. The behavior becomes so entrenched in their sense of being that life without it becomes unimaginable.

Like the worship of any god, masturbation has its own fetish objects and rituals - times, places, triggers, ritual objects, and ritual patterns that draw the person into an almost trance-like progression toward the peak experience and denouement. Confessing the ritual worship and removing or renouncing its various components is key to seeing its power broken.

3. Rebellion - Sometimes we simply refuse to listen to the Holy Spirit or pretend not to hear Him. The self-care of masturbation often cloaks anger and distrust of God, who never seemed to be there when we needed Him. Often in childhood, when God doesn't rescue us or change us upon demand, we judge Him in our hearts and develop a root of anger that must be removed through confession and repentance. That means we acknowledge our rebellion and make concerted choices to love Him and to believe that given the context of human free will, God operates with complete integrity and love.

4. Love of Sin - This one is often buried under mounds of rationalizations. We pretend that we need to practice the sin, we deserve to practice it, it's the least God can do to allow it considering what we've gone through, etc., etc., etc.

But the truth is, we love it more than we love God. In order to change this, we need to discover how to love God more. Greater love for God comes as a fruit of taking the time to know Him intimately. A lifestyle of worship is important. The demonic realm cannot stand that. Meditating on the Cross is also a major key. As we gain a deeper appreciation for our Lord's suffering, we become more willing to jettison the "things that have charmed us most" (as the old hymn says). When tempted, we only need ask ourselves, "Who do I love right now - the sin that is tempting me, or the One who loves me so deeply that He died on the Cross for me?" Put that way, the choice becomes far easier to make.

5. Self-deception - It is a humbling thing to realize that over the years we become masters at deceiving ourselves into believing we want freedom from something that we will not give up. Like an onion, we lay down layer upon layer of self-deception, saying the right religious words and thinking the right religious thoughts, while still refusing to forsake the desire for the sin that lingers in our hearts. We need to acknowledge before God the ongoing impurity in our motivation, the depravity in our heart, and our need for Him to give us the true heartfelt desire to be holy and pure.

6. Performance-Righteousness - Most of us, even those who know better, continually fall into this trap. Though we talk of "grace alone" and being able to do "nothing without Christ", our fallen nature continuously seduces our minds into believing that we must earn God's love and acceptance and that we must develop our own righteousness. Over and over again we try to make ourselves holy and pure rather than suffer the humiliation of the flesh and truly become dependent on God for the power to live the kingdom life that He won for us on the Cross.

The Long and Winding Road to Freedom

It would be nice if God would just zap us and make us permanently free from sin and bondage. But the process of sanctification is often arduous. Through it we learn to value the end result, depend on Him, love Him, trust Him, hate evil and give all glory, praise and honor to God and God alone.

The foundational principles by which our Lord sets us free from masturbation are no different than those for any other sin and bondage. Simply put, set your focus on Him (rather than your problem) and let His Spirit guide you the rest of the way. In moments of intimacy with Him, God will lead you through a complete shift in your priorities. He will transform your affections and belief systems. He will deepen your desire and determination to be liberated. He will expose and heal the hidden emotional and sin problems that have fed your bondage. And He will strengthen your willingness to believe and to act on His promises.

- 1.** Learn to give yourself grace. It took you a long time to develop the problem, so in moments of failure, turn and receive the love and grace of God. He is pleased with you because of Christ's sacrifice on your behalf and because deep in your heart, you loved Him enough to commit your life to His Son. God has grace to spare. In fact, it is His grace in the midst of our failure that ultimately yields the fruit of obedience (see Titus 2:11-14).
- 2.** Permanently set your heart and mind to turn to God at the first moment of temptation and with acknowledged weakness and dependency, cry out to Him for His power to quench the fiery darts of the enemy. Commit to being ruthless with temptation - giving it no place. Let Christ answer the door when it comes knocking!
- 3.** Remove every influence that leads you into desiring and repeating the behavior. Ask God to show you what these are. Break the ritual patterns and remove the ritual objects as God reveals them to you.
- 4.** Practice believing that God has something better - that He can indeed fulfill the needs that are temporarily being met through the illegitimate means of masturbation.
- 5.** Spend significant, quality time with God in praise, worship, prayer and scripture reading. Pour out your heart to Him. Develop the same intimate relational knowing of God that you would with a spouse. Ask Him to implant within your mind a healthy view of sex and the sexuality of others. Ask Him to give you a love of purity, seeking Him passionately in the beauty of His holiness (Ps 96:9). Listen to Him as He unlocks for you the unique keys to your transformation. Listen with a heart set on obeying His direction no matter what He may suggest.
- 6.** Refuse to submit to Satan's barrage of self-condemning thoughts when you fall. There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). Call any thought or feeling to the contrary the lie that it is and reject it. Repent and then run back into your Daddy's arms.
- 7.** Learn what God really thinks of you by meditating on the Cross. Reject the lies of self-hatred, loathing and shame that are in actuality, elaborate challenges to the Cross of Christ and the promises of God.

Know that God has the will and the power to set anyone free from anything. Go for the "free indeed" promise. Seek not the maintenance program of the world, but the transformation program of the kingdom of God!

Downsides to Masturbation That You May Not Have Considered

by David Kyle Foster

- adapted from *Sexual Healing: God's Plan for the Sanctification of Broken Lives* by David Kyle Foster

- 1.** Masturbation can be the vehicle whereby the inhibited person maintains their propensity to remain self-contained and in need of no one. It deepens the trenches of loneliness, self-pity and self-centeredness.
- 2.** Masturbation is a turning in on one's self - a narcissistic neurosis that feeds introspection and other dysfunctional directions. This kind of inwardly focused life robs people of the fullness of life that Christ came to give.
- 3.** Masturbation can become a gateway for demonic strongholds to develop. This becomes more and more likely as one delves deeper and deeper into pornography and perverse sexual fantasies.
- 4.** This behavior serves to program the mind to focus on fantasy as the source of pleasure rather than the biblical model of union with one's spouse. People come to be seen as objects rather than real people. It is an elaborate scheme of the enemy to keep us from learning how to be intimate with our spouse and our God.
- 5.** When someone takes up the practice of masturbation, they are programming themselves to turn to solutions that block or hide problems rather than solve them. This immature life-pattern for problem-solving is highly dysfunctional and is the foundation upon which is laid a lifetime of addictive behavior.
- 6.** Masturbation has a physically addictive side to it that serves to block pain. The chemicals that are released into the brain serve to medicate pain much like any addictive drug. God wants us to bring our pain to Him. He wants us to grow through it and receive the blessing of sharing in the sufferings of Christ.
- 7.** Masturbation is a task master that demands the continual plumbing of new and more perverse depths of lust. On that treadmill, the mind is programmed to more and more highly delineated sexual fantasies which the marriage bed can never match. Normal marital relations become a disappointment and the design for sex thwarted. The body also becomes programmed to achieve release quickly, which serves to frustrate the patterns of healthy sexual intercourse between spouses.
- 8.** A clutching at the genitals by infants is often a manifestation of separation anxiety, but that same behavior in childhood is often a sign of sexual abuse or some other cause for significant internal anxiety in the child. If the child uses a mirror during the act, that is a scenario that can result in homosexual confusion, as the child programs their mind to associate sexual pleasure with the sight of their own body. (In such cases, other factors that lead to homosexual neurosis are probably also present, such as molestation or failure to bond on an emotional level with the same-sex parent). Adolescent experimentation at puberty is normal and not a cause for alarm unless it becomes habitual.