

Integrating Good and Bad Views of Male Masturbation

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Abstract

In a world full of images, men constantly struggle with masturbation. Men at a young age as well as an old age are faced with the temptations of masturbation. Masturbation for males occurs in the single life as well as the relationship life. The idea of masturbation is used to stimulate one's penis (specifically males) to create sexual pleasure, usually reaching the climax. Culturally (Jewish and Christian views) masturbation is frowned upon when done but in the end can be used to explore one's self. Masturbation has a negative view when it comes to some people but for others it is just a sexual act with a partner or individually

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A man must learn to control his body and with his body comes surprises and new experiences. Masturbation is a constant struggle among the male population beginning usually around adolescence. This is one of the top struggles in a male's life which causes mixed feelings. Some men see masturbation as a simple sexual pleasing act that holds no shame. Others view it as a guilty pleasure that can consume one's life. Robert Crooks and Karla Baur and their book *Our Sexuality* (2008) really cover the topic of masturbation in a detailed way. Crooks and Baur said, "People masturbate for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the pleasure of arousal and orgasm. The most commonly reported reason is to relieve sexual tension (Michael et al., 1994)" (Crooks & Baur, 2008, p. 223). Masturbation is also a very good way to explore one's body and sexual attractions in this way. There are many means for masturbation in a male's life either good or bad giving different views that are shared throughout these sources.

In Earl D. Wilson's book *Sexual Sanity* (1984), he provides ways to break free from uncontrollable habits such as masturbation. From a Christian perspective, Wilson says, "My basic assumption is that no Christian is to be controlled by anyone or anything other than Jesus Christ. If a sexual behavior (or any behavior) leads one away from Christ, it is to be avoided" (Wilson, 1984, p. 59, 60). Wilson stands firm by what he says and wants to make the point that he doesn't support masturbation. Masturbation can be done to the point where a person feels guilty for what they have done and this is a strong point that supports the Christian view as well as Wilson's.

Overconcern about masturbation and inability to fully accept God's forgiveness may lead to depression. On the other hand, a person who feels insecure or depressed finds it easy to seek solace through masturbation. This may lead to a cycle of guilt-depression-masturbation-guilt, a cycle that is extremely harmful because it offers no hope. I believe that masturbation must be taken seriously, but

some people take it so seriously that it becomes an obsession (Wilson, 1984, p. 61).

Masturbation is obviously a personal concern that should be addressed in one's own way but it can become an obsession. Wilson wants to help the reader by giving them plenty of ideas through scriptures and personal opinions. Wilson says it best when he said, "People do not stop masturbating because of how hard they try. They stop because they focus on something more exciting, the Person of Christ" (Wilson, 1984, p. 64). By focusing on Christ and distracting the mind from the idea of masturbation, the temptation is released from the body. Although struggles will still occur, Wilson makes many great points about the area of masturbation and coping with the minds urges.

With a similar view to Wilson, Joshua Harris' book *Not Even a Hint* (2003), compares and contrasts the concerns of masturbation. Harris wants the reader to really understand that there are two views to masturbation. Harris says, "...I think Christians make too big a deal of masturbation in that we obsess over the act and neglect the more important issues of the heart" (Harris, 2003, p. 99). Harris thinks that Christians see masturbation as bad because everyone loses sight of what should be their main focus, God. Harris does make a great point about sin; "For some reason we're usually able to acknowledge these other sins, repent, and believe that Christ's sacrifice was enough to pay for them" (Harris, 2003, p. 100). When a man masturbates, he feels that he can just pray for forgiveness and the sacrifice will cover each time of masturbation. This point is raised with importance and with men struggling so much, everyone feels that this is a way to get out of trouble and still masturbate. On the other hand, Harris says, "So when I say that we shouldn't make too big a deal of masturbation, I mean we shouldn't make it the primary barometer of our spiritual lives. Lust is a serious sin. Masturbation is one expression of a lustful heart" (Harris, 2003, p. 100). Harris wants guys to understand that

masturbation is okay to do but shouldn't become an obsession to where the focus of Christ is lost. With lust filling a man's heart this idea of his can be difficult but the mind can be tamed. Men can go and masturbate for pleasure as long as it isn't done in a lustful manor that is truly displeasing to God. Something that might be displeasing to God, that is between God and a man's heart. Masturbation is like an itch that once it is scratched, the itching continues but when it is treated correctly, it goes away. Harris says, "...when we give into the urge to masturbate whenever we want, we're setting ourselves up to become slaves to our own desires" (Harris, 2003, p. 107).

Taking masturbation from a more narrow perspective, Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, and Kolata wrote *Sex in America* (1994). This book takes an overview only in America. It also conducts many research projects and studies that give numerous statistics relating to sexuality among individuals as well as couples. The authors said,

To curb masturbation, Kellogg suggested that parents bandage the child's genitals, cover them with a cage, or tie the hands. Another remedy was circumcision, 'without administering an anesthetic, as the brief pain attending the operation will have a salutary effect upon the mind, especially if it be connected with the idea of punishment' Kellogg suggested that older boys have their foreskin sutured shut, over the glands, to prevent an erection (Michael et al., 1994, p. 161).

This would defiantly not be used in most American homes but may be possible. Male masturbation was obviously frowned upon in this century and should be avoided. The idea of punishment or other various tactics were used to punish or scare the young men. If drastic measures were to be taken to control the male's urge, then ideas offered by Kellogg or others similar views were used. A polar argument to this would be Jerry Seinfeld. "Comedian Jerry has a pet phrase to describe those who refrain from masturbating: 'Master of You Domain.' He also asserts that all men do it anyway. 'We all *have* to do it. It's part of our lifestyle, like shaving,' he says" (Michael et al., 1994, p. 162). The book doesn't give a one-sided argument as do most of

the others sources, but with its variety of supporting details it provides great insight of polar views on male masturbation. The research conducted to obtain the credited statistics concluded that "...masturbation is not a substitute for those who are sexually deprived, but rather it is an activity that stimulates and is stimulated by other sexual behavior" (Michael et al., 1994, p. 165). American men conclusively struggle with masturbation and in the early years it was strongly frowned upon creating preventatives. In today's society it is viewed as neutral, both frowned upon and used for pleasure.

In their book *Questions You Can't Ask Your Mama about Sex*, Craig Gross and Mike Foster (2005) answer numerous questions about sexuality. Throughout the chapter of masturbation, many good questions were raised. Gross and Foster said, "Masturbation is all about pleasing you, instead of the Lord" (Gross & Foster, 2005, p. 63). This point is quite valid from the Christian viewpoint but there is a key question that is raised with this saying. If that's the case, then what is sex? It's not just pleasing yourself (from a non-educated 'family sexuality' perspective) but also your partner. It isn't serving or pleasing the Lord but rather the sexual tension. So how can this be a good thing and masturbation a bad thing? This is an emotional and effect for Christians but from a non-believers point of view, the question rebuttals the statement. A good argument that Gross and Foster raise is, "Jesus once said that a man who looks lustfully upon a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28). If you have a problem with masturbation, find forgiveness. Fight for freedom" (Gross & Foster, 2005, p.68). The Bible doesn't specifically say don't masturbate but this view presented shows, from a Christian perspective, that masturbation should be avoided. Men almost always think about sex and will be tempted constantly. There is a constant battle in a man's heart and to help gain control of masturbation, God must be the center of their lives.

Single men seem to face the troubles of masturbation more than others. In Joseph Knable's book *Sex and the Single Guy* (2005), he describes different scenarios where impure thoughts that tempt every man into masturbation occur. Knable describes a scene where his friend Adam was lifeguarding at a community pool and a pretty woman walks by. Adam is tempted to 'check her out' and gives into the temptation. This thought of her sticks with him for the rest of the day, even after he leaves work. Adam gets home and immediately heads to his room but surprisingly reaches for his Bible for aid. The lustful thoughts take over his mind as the act of masturbation sets in. Adam said, "I lie there in my bed confused and wondering what went wrong and one thought comes to mind: I am not satisfied and I am guilty" (Knable, 2005, p. 102). Guilt is a common theme it seems with Christians such as Adam. Knable used a great analogy about a pressure pump water gun, one that you must pump to squirt the water out. Knable said, "When you look at a woman with lust throughout the day, it's like you are pumping that Super Soaker 50 full of pressure. Your mind is ready to explode with thoughts" (Knable, 2005, p. 103). Obviously, Knable is trying to relay the message of how sinful he views masturbation. To cushion the sin, he explains the male anatomy and ways God has given us *nocturnal emission*. For every Christian looking for an idea of what masturbation is really like in a judgment call, this book answers many questions about why it should be avoided. One topic that really stood out was at the end of the book where Knable had a section just for women to read. Knable knew that there would be curious women wanting to know about male masturbation. Women that read this book can get an understanding about why men masturbate as well as what causes them to. With this understanding, Christian women can help ease the temptations for men by showing an appropriate attitude or even a simple act such as wearing modest clothing.

According to the article *Theologically-Informed Education About Masturbation: A Male Sexual Health Perspective* (2008) by Alex W. Kwee and David C. Hoover, “It is simply unprofitable to approach masturbation, a theologically grey issue, with a morally absolutistic mindset, and this expanded vocabulary makes it possible to consider masturbation in a more nuanced fashion that befits its moral ambiguity” (Kwee & Hoover, 2008, p. 266). Masturbation is a popular question that these psychologists face with makes typically around the college age. Kwee and Hoover go on to say that,

For the same reason, we eschew being prescriptive or authoritative and encourage every client to develop an informed personal stance on masturbation after considering the theological, biological, psychological, and sociological dimensions of this behavior. This process leads men to take different moral positions on masturbation: Some will decide based on their personal situation and convictions that this is a behavior they should avoid, whereas others will decide that God gives them the freedom to engage in it under limited circumstances (Kwee & Hoover, 2008, p. 266).

Both psychologists want to make it clear that they do not want to put words into the clients’ mouth when it comes to making a decision about masturbation. They encourage the clients’ to work their way through the thought process to better understand so there is no guilt. Guilt is very common when it comes to masturbation and men struggle with masturbation because it feels pleasurable but leads to shame and depression after. With this encouraged thought process presented by the psychologists, the clients’ can break through the barrier and come to a conclusion that corresponds with their personal beliefs.

Josie Lipsith, Damian McCann, and David Doldmeier in their article *Male Psychogenic Sexual Dysfunction: The Role of Masturbation* (2003) conduct a research project that gives detailed feedback for males to examine. The section on masturbation goes through a question and answer for clients’ providing detailed sources. One in particular was Kinsey (1948) saying, “... data suggest that the frequency of masturbation depends on the availability of alternative sexual

outlets. Data from this study suggest that, whilst this is so for some participants, men in relationships appear to include masturbation as part of their sexual repertoire” (Lipsith, 2003, p.460). Masturbation according to Kinsey usually occurs when there is a lack of another sexual outlet. This for men can become quite common for some, especially Christians who usually abstain from sexual activity until marriage. On the other hand, masturbation doesn’t leave even when there is a marriage. Masturbation does occur during marriage as well as on of the participants described in the research. As Bob said: “B: While I was married I would masturbate as well. It’s, it wasn’t as if I felt . . . it is just as good as the real thing” (Lipsith, 2003, p.460). Again masturbation is seen as not a bad thing but rather just as good as sex. There appears to be some delusions that some men face that masturbation is equivalent to sex. Sex is not all about orgasm but masturbation is all about obtaining the orgasmic stage. This self-induced pleasure can make a man think they he is experiencing a great time (orgasm), but is really another way to entertain the lack of sexual outlets. The same goes for a married man such as Bob, he might have sex with his wife on numerous occasions but masturbation seems to be another fulfilling sexual experience that he can enjoy.

After reading the numerous opinions of masturbating, one can’t help but let opinions guide a life choice. The choice to masturbate needs to be made by one’s self and establish a reason why to masturbate. Overall, masturbating should be avoided unless it is in the act of sex with one’s spouse if it be deemed acceptable. Masturbation is selfish if done alone and can be a sign of weakness in a man’s sexual and spiritual life. In conclusion, most if not all Christians view masturbation as a sin and non-Christians see it as a sense of sexual pleasing. Masturbation occurs not only in the single life but will also occur in marriage and those that wish to abstain from such act should take caution; it will always haunt a man’s heart and mind.

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