

From Idol to Blessing: How Grace Transforms our Sexuality

Jim Newheiser

I. Introduction: Sex as idol or sex as blessing?

II. God created sex to be a blessing. Gen. 2:24 1:27-28

A. Sex is part of God's perfect holy creation. Gen. 1:27-28,31 2:24-25 Eph. 5:32

B. Why did God create sex?

1. An expression and enhancement of oneness in the marriage covenant. Gen. 2:24 4:1
2. God's chosen means to enable mankind to fill the earth. Gen 1:27-28 Ps. 127
3. For the enjoyment of both husband and wife. Deut. 24:5 Pr. 5:18-19 Heb. 13:4
Song of Solomon 1:2,13-16 7:1-10 4:1-7 5:10-16 7:6-9 1 Co. 7:3

C. God's design for sex is violated by any sexual expression outside of the marriage covenant. Gen. 2:24 Ecc. 7:29 Rom. 1:18-32 Heb. 13:4

1. Adultery. Ex. 20:14 Mt. 19:9 I Cor. 6:16 Pr. 7:27 6:24-35 Heb. 13:4
 - a. Affairs of the heart can be adulterous, even if there is no touching. Gen. 2:24
 - b. The greatest harm caused by adultery is the destruction of trust. Eph. 4:25
2. Fornication. I Cor. 6:9 Heb. 13:4
 - a. You are taking the privileges of the marriage covenant without accepting the responsibilities
 - b. You are stealing from your future spouse and from the future spouse of your partner in sin. I Cor. 7:4
 - c. Sexual sin is not limited to going "all of the way".
 - d. Premarital promiscuity can adversely affect your marriage. Nu. 32:23 Ga. 6:7
3. Homosexuality. Lev. 18:22 20:13 I Cor. 6:9 Ro. 1:26-27 Gen. 19:5 Eze. 16:48-49
Jude 7 Dt. 22:5 I Tim. 1:10 II Pet. 2:6
4. Lust and self-gratification. Mt. 5:27-28 Job 31:1,9 Pr. 7:25 6:25 II Tim. 2:22
(Breakout session)
 - a. Pornography destroys sexual intimacy in marriage.
 - b. Lustful thoughts often lead to acts (adultery). Js. 1:14-15
 - c. If you are struggling, prepare to take radical action. Mt. 5:29-30 Ro. 13:15

**D. God brings many consequences to sexual sin (see below). Num. 32:23 Gal. 6:7
1 Co. 6:9-10 Pr. 5:11ff 7:22ff**

III. Mankind has ruined God's gift of sex by turning it into an idol.

A. Sexual sin is a theological problem. Rom. 1:26-32 I Th. 4:3-5 Ps. 51:4 Eph. 4:17-19

**B. Idolatry, more than adultery, is the key to understanding sexual sin. Ezek. 14:7,14
1 Cor. 10:7-8 Rom. 1:20ff Jonah 2:8**

1. An idol is anything we put in God's place.
2. Even something which is good can become sinfully idolatrous when we desire it more than we desire God, are willing to sin in order to get it, or react sinfully when we don't get what we want. Js. 4:1-2
3. Lust is the idolatry of sex.
4. Idolatrous lust in the heart leads to sinful sexual acts. James 1:13-15
5. Idolatry is enslaving and destructive. 2 Pet. 2:18-19 Pr. 5:22,3,9

C. Sexual idolatry can occur even within marriage.

1. I must have a thrilling sexual relationship with my spouse.
2. I must have sex a certain number of times per week.
3. I must be able to have sex whenever I want to have sex.
4. My spouse must stay in shape and look a certain way.
5. I must feel attractive in order to want to have sex.
6. My spouse must be as interested in sex as I am.
7. My spouse must do certain things for me sexually (and like it).
8. I must have a spouse who is romantic and communicates with me before I am expected to have sex with him/her.
9. I must be able to sleep when I want to sleep.

D. How can you know if you are a sexual idolater?

1. Are you obsessed with getting what you want?
2. Do you get angry when you don't get what you think that you must have? Js. 4:1ff

E. Sexual idolatry creates significant problems in the marriage relationship.

F. Sexual idolatry within marriage often leads to sexual sins outside of marriage.

G. If you seek ultimate satisfaction through sex (or any other idol – money, possessions, food, drugs), rather than in the Lord, you will remain unsatisfied. Isa. 55:1-2

H. Sex, like everything else in life, is to be done for the glory of God. 1 Cor. 6:16-20 10:31

IV. Sexual wisdom from Proverbs: One lady who can destroy you and two who can save you.

A. Madam Folly can ruin you. 7:6-23

1. The prey (the sexual idolater) – naive. 7:6-9
2. The huntress and her tactics – she knows how to lure the idolater v. 10-20 23:28
 - a. She besieges every sense -- sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. 7:10-17 6:25b,26b
 - b. She lures you with promises of the ultimate in sensual exhilaration. 7:16,18
 - c. She overcomes your doubts and fears. v. 19-20
3. The kill. 7:21-23,26 Ecc. 7:26

B. Your spouse *may* protect you from sexual immorality. Prov. 5:15-20

1. Find sexual happiness with your spouse.
 - a. The answer to sexual desire is not abstinence, but marital delight. 1 Co. 7:2-5
 - b. Sex in marriage is good and honorable: a gift from God. Heb. 13: 4 1 Ti. 4:3-4
 - c. Direct all of your sexual energy towards your spouse. Pr. 5:15-17 Song 4:12-15
 - d. Be content with the spouse God has given you. Heb. 13:4-5
 - e. Sex is private.
2. Marital sex should be exhilarating. Pr. 5:18-19 Deut. 24:5 Ecc. 9:9
 - a. Husband and wife enjoy delights which thrill all of their senses.
Song of Solomon 4:1-7,9,14 5:1,10-16 6:4f 2:14,6,3 1:2-3
 - b. Be intoxicated with romantic love. Let yourself go with your spouse!
 - c. All of this assumes a godly marriage.
 - d. If you aren't godly, a wife will not solve your problems!
3. If you are married tend your (sexual) garden. Song of Solomon 4:12,16 5:1
4. If you are single protect and preserve your garden.

C. Lady Wisdom will protect you from immorality.

1. Not everyone has a spouse who is helpful. Pr. 12:4 21:9 25:24
2. Your spouse can't meet your ultimate needs. Isa. 55:1-2 Jer. 17:5-8
3. Make Wisdom (the LORD) your first love (even above your spouse)! Pr. 4:5-9 7:4 9:5 12:4 Mark 12:30 1 Co. 1:30-31 Col. 2:3 II Tim. 3:4 Isa. 12:3 44:3 55
4. Lady Wisdom helps you to see the true nature of Madam Folly. Pr. 2:16-19
 - a. Madam Folly is cunning and deceitful. Pr. 7:10c 29:5
 - b. She is boisterous and hardened. Pr. 7:11a 2:17 Hos. 4:16
 - c. She is rebellious and unwilling to commit to a husband and a home – a home wrecker, not a home maker. Pr. 7:11b-12 2:17 27:15-16 Jer. 5:23 Hos. 4:17
 - d. She is a religious hypocrite. Pr. 7:14
 - e. She is a counterfeit wife offering counterfeit love. 7:18 1 Co. 6:16
5. Wisdom shows you why sexual immorality is wrong.
 - a. In relation to God. Ps. 51:5 Js. 4:4 Gen. 39:9
 - b. In relation to your neighbor. Pr. 6:29 Ex. 20:14 Lev. 19:16-18
 - c. In relation to yourself. Pr. 5:11-13,22-23
6. Wisdom warns you of the deadly consequences of sexual sin. Pr. 2:18-10 5:3-5,11-13,22-23 6:25ff 7:22-27 Ps. 73:17 37:30 Heb. 13:4
 - a. Physical: Your strength and health will fail. Pr. 5:9,11 6:34-35 31:3 Ps. 32:3-4
 - b. Financial: You will suffer loss. Pr. 5:10 6:26a, 30-31,35 29:3 Lu. 15:13 Job 31:12
 - c. Social: Your reputation will be ruined. 5:14 6:33-35,29
 - d. Domestic: You will do horrible damage to your own family. 5:16-17
 - e. Spiritual: God will judge you. Pr. 5:21 6:27-29 7:22-23,26-27 5:21 Dt. 22:22 Lev. 20:10 Ro. 6:23 Heb. 13:4 4:13 Job 31:4 I Co. 6:9-10
7. Lady wisdom trains you to stay far from sexual temptation.
 - a. Guard your heart. 4:23 7:3,25 6:25 Job 31:1f Mt. 5:28 Ex. 20:17 Gen. 3:6
 - b. Don't take the first step towards sexual sin. 5:8 Mt. 5:28-29 6:13 I Co. 15:33
 - c. Don't trust yourself. II Ti. 2:22 Gen. 39:9 1 Cor. 10:12
8. Lady Wisdom offers you much greater satisfaction than Madam Folly. Is. 55:1-2 Pr. 9:1-7 1:20ff John 4:13-14 7:38

V. How can you make your sexual relationship in marriage all that it should be?

The gospel of grace is the key to sexual intimacy in marriage.

A. First pursue intimacy in your relationship with God. I Th. 4:3-5 Prov. 4:5-9,23 7:4 Gen. 39:9 Pr. 4:23 Ps. 1

1. Find your greatest delight in Him. Isa. 55:1-2
2. Continually renew your mind through God's Word. Rom. 12:1-2 Phil. 4:8-9
3. Fill your heart with the gospel which should result in your reflecting God's grace to your spouse. Eph. 5:25ff 4:32
4. Don't look to your spouse to meet needs that only the Lord can meet.
5. God uses marriage, including sex, as an instrument in your spiritual growth.

B. Build the intimacy of your marriage relationship.

1. Almost all "sexual problems" in marriage are merely symptoms of other issues.
2. Marriage is a lifelong covenant of commitment. Gen. 2:18-25
3. The husband is the loving initiator in all areas, sacrificially giving himself to his wife. Eph. 5:25-33 I Pet. 3:7 1 Jo. 4:19 Prov. 31:28
4. The wife joyfully embraces her role as helper and submits to her husband's leadership. Eph. 5:22-24 I Pet. 3:1-7 Pr. 12:4

5. Strive for open communication: listening and speaking in love – *lovers must first be friends*. Eph. 4:29 Song 5:16 Pr. 17:17
6. Keep short accounts (confessing and forgiving sin), not letting the sun go down on your anger (lest you give the devil an opportunity). Eph. 4:26,31-32
7. Avoid temptations which could threaten your fidelity to one another.
 - a. God has given the marriage bed as a safeguard against temptation. I Cor. 7:5 Pr. 5:15-19 Song of Solomon 1:2
 - b. Maintain strict propriety in relationship with members of the opposite sex – agree on expectations. I Tim. 5:2
8. If you are having trouble, seek godly counsel from a wise mature couple.

C. Practice “grace sex”, rather than “law/works sex”.

1. Law/works sex gives your spouse what you judge that they have earned - punishments and rewards.
2. Grace sex gives to your spouse freely, just as God has given to you -- treating him/her better than he/she deserve.
3. In a great marriage each spouse is trying to outdo the other in grace, serving him/her so that he/she has the best deal going! Phil. 2:3-4 Mark 10:42-45
4. Deal graciously with the weaknesses of your spouse. Rom. 15:1-3,7
5. Apply 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 to your love life.

D. Think first of how to bring refreshment and satisfaction to your spouse, rather than seeking self gratification. I Cor. 7:3-5 Phil. 2:3-4 Pr. 5:18-19 Deut. 24:5 Ecc. 9:9 Song of Solomon 1:2,13-16 7:1-10 4:1-7 5:10-16 7:6-9

1. God has given your sexuality primarily for his/her enjoyment. I Cor. 7:3-5
2. Continue to kindle the romance in your marriage.
3. Watch out for the “little foxes” which can spoil your vineyard: busyness, exhaustion, laziness, sexual sabotage, a child-centered home. Song of Solomon 2:15
4. Plan time together. Prov. 21:5
5. Keep learning! I Pe. 3:7

E. Understand the differences between male and female perspectives on sex. I Pe. 3:7

1. Men tend to be more visual.
2. Women tend to focus more on the relationship.
3. God has made men to initiate love and women to respond.
4. One of the greatest need of a wife is to be a delight to her husband in every way.
5. Men tend to be very sensitive about feeling rejected.
6. *Men are like microwaves and women are like crockpots.*
7. Women are more complex sexually and are more easily put off.
8. Understand your spouse’s sensitivity to certain issues: privacy, noise, hygiene, sleep, words, body insecurity, etc. Eph. 5:3-4

VI. Questions:

A. How often should a couple come together sexually? I Cor. 7:3-5 Phil. 2:3-4

1. Sex should be regular (frequent). I Co. 7:3-5
2. Both husband and wife should ensure that the other is satisfied. Phil. 2:3-4

B. What should I do if my spouse isn't interested in sex?

1. Explore whether there are relationship issues which need to be resolved.
2. Treat him/her lovingly (whether he/she gives you sex or not).
3. Work on building better communication in your marriage.
4. Some have an unhealthy attitude about sex which needs to be overcome.
5. Some may have physical issues which may require the help of a doctor.

C. What should I do if I am not very interested in sex? 1 Cor. 7:3-5

D. What should I do if I sense that my spouse is a sexual idolater?

E. What should I do if I just don't respect my spouse or feel attracted to him/her? Mt. 7:1ff 1 Tim. 1:15ff Pr. 12:4

F. Is it wrong to use birth control?

1. God wants us to have children. Gen. 1:27-28 Ps. 127
2. I do not believe that we are required to have as many as possible.
3. What about Onan? Gen. 38:6-10
4. Certain methods of birth control are sinful because they are abortive.
5. What if a couple can't agree on how many children to have? Ex. 21:10 I Ti. 2:15
6. Is it ever appropriate for one partner to be sterilized?

G. Are there times when couples should abstain from sex? I Cor. 7:5 Lev. 18:19

1. When normal sexual relations are not possible a husband and wife can still find ways to serve and love each other by being physically intimate.
2. Is there anything a husband and wife can do when they are physically separated?

H. Are there restrictions on what a husband and wife may do together sexually?

1. There are some acts which are harmful or immodest and therefore forbidden.
2. Some sexual appetites have been fueled by pornography and sexual idolatry.
3. Love will never selfishly demand that your spouse do something she (or he) doesn't want to do. I Cor. 13:4-6
4. Whatever you cannot do in faith, with a clear conscience, is sin. Rom. 14:23

I. Are Christians allowed to use Viagra or other ED drugs?

J. Is it wrong to have surgery to enhance one's attractiveness?

K. How should children be taught about sex?

1. Sex education takes place in your home. 5:1-4 6:20-24 7:1-5
2. One of the best things you can do for them is to give them a (true) sense that their parents still find delight in each other because marriage is where it is at!
3. Teach them how (and why) to resist temptation. I Cor. 10:13 Prov. 5,6,7
4. Teach your children to "cry out" if someone acts inappropriately towards them. Deut. 22:23-27

VII. Concluding Applications.

- A. God's design for sex in marriage is beautiful.
- B. Sexual pleasure is not the ultimate human experience. John 17:3
- C. Sexual sin is not the Unforgivable Sin. John 8:1-11 I Cor. 6:9-11

VIII. Recommended resources.

- A. Intended for Pleasure, Wheat
- B. Intimate Issues, Dillow
- C. Intimacy Ignited, Dillow
- D. The Meaning of Marriage, Keller
- E. The Purity Principle, Alcorn
- F. Sex and the Supremacy of Christ, Piper, Taylor
- G. Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God, Mahaney
- H. Sex is not the problem (lust is), Harris
- I. The Complete Husband, Priolo
- J. When Sinners Say "I Do", Harvey

Business Travel Plan for Avoiding Sexual Temptation

- Begin praying for purity days before the trip.
- If possible do not ride in a car alone with someone of the opposite sex.
- Do not confide in someone of the opposite sex about any struggles in your marriage, nor listen to someone else tell you about their own struggles in their marriage.
- When traveling, avoid the newsstand; bring your own magazine or newspaper.
- Avoid staying in hotels with in room porn / adult movies.
- Make reservations in hotels with a workout room.
- As soon as you enter the room pray Psalm 101 and commit your stay to God; repeat every morning.
- Bring and set out a picture of your spouse and children.
- Exercise every day.
- Call your spouse every evening.
- Ask your spouse to pray for you before you leave and during your stay.
- Maintain a routine. Discipline yourself to get up early each morning. Don't just lie in bed.
- Have a time with the Lord (Bible reading and prayer) every day for at least 20 minutes.
- Go to bed by 11:30 p.m. at the latest.
- Bring at least one interesting book to read, both business related and personal related.
- If back at hotel prior to dinner, get a meal at a restaurant or take out. May watch TV **only** while eating, then work, read, or exercise till bedtime.
- If back at hotel after dinner do work till finished.
- Ask spouse to specifically ask you as to whether you followed your plan and avoided sin. Have them specifically ask you if you failed in any area, and have them ask if you lied.
- Meet only in public places if absolutely necessary to meet with someone of the opposite sex.

Personalized List of Anticipated Consequences of Immorality

- Grieving my Lord; displeasing the One whose opinion most matters. Dragging into the mud Christ's sacred reputation.
- Forcing God to discipline me in various ways.
- Following in the footsteps of men I know of whose immorality forfeited their ministry and caused me to shudder. List of these names:
- Suffering of innocent people around me who would get hit by my shrapnel (a la Achan).
- Untold hurt to Nanci, my best friend and loyal wife.
- Loss of Nanci's respect and trust.
- Hurt to and loss of credibility with my beloved daughters, Karina and Angela. ("Why listen to a man who betrayed Mom and us?")
- If my blindness should continue or my family be unable to forgive, I could lose my wife and my children forever.
- Shame to my family. (The cruel comments of others who would invariably find out.)
- Shame to my church family.
- Shame and hurt to my fellow pastors and elders. List of names:
- Shame and hurt to my friends, and especially those I've led to Christ and discipled. List of names:
- Guilt awfully hard to shake—even though God would forgive me, would I forgive myself?
- Plaguing memories and flashbacks that could taint future intimacy with my wife.
- Disqualifying myself after having preached to others.
- Surrender of the things I am called to and love to do—teach and preach and write and minister to others. Forfeiting forever certain opportunities to serve God. Years of training and experience in ministry wasted for a long period of time, maybe permanently.
- Being haunted by my sin as I look in the eyes of others, and having it all dredged up again wherever I go and whatever I do.
- Undermining the hard work and prayers of others by saying to our community "this is a hypocrite—who can take seriously anything he and his church have said and done?"
- Laughter, rejoicing and blasphemous smugness by those who disrespect God and the church (2 Samuel 12:14).
- Bringing great pleasure to Satan, the Enemy of God.
- Heaping judgment and endless problems on the person I would have committed adultery with.
- Possible diseases (pain, constant reminder to me and my wife, possible infection of Nanci, or in the case of AIDS, even causing her death, as well as mine.)
- Possible pregnancy, with its personal and financial implications.
- Loss of self-respect, discrediting my own name, and invoking shame and lifelong embarrassment upon myself.

Sexual Purity Covenant

- I will never open any program for sexual stimulation.

1 Corinthians 6:13b “Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body”

2 Timothy 2:22 "Flee youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

- I will never purchase or download anything pornographic.
- I will not sit and watch television programs that are sexually stimulating

Eph. 5:5 “For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

Ps. 101:3 “I will set no worthless thing before my eyes.”

- I will guard my eyes and abstain and avoid always any stimulating material of any type.
- I will not watch sexually stimulating videos of any kind... regardless of the rating (PG, PG-13, R or X)

Ps. 39:1a “I will guard my ways”

Matt. 6:22-23 “The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore, the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

Job 31:1 "I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?"

- I will not participate in computer chat rooms... developing relationships with other women through the internet.

Matt. 12:36-37a “And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified”

- I will not cultivate any emotionally intimate one-on-one relationship other than with my spouse.

Ex. 20:14 “You shall not commit adultery”; **Ex. 20:17b** “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.”

Prov. 5:15-20 "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well... rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love."

- I will not replace the risk of personal relationships with the impersonal safety of my computer. I will not retreat to it and out of life. I will limit my time to use the computer for recreational activities.

Matt. 22:37-39 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... and the you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Our first priorities are relationships! Not things. Working on our relationship with God and other people should take precedence over time on the computer.

- I will spend my constructive creative energy not with the television or in the unreality of virtual reality on the computer, but in the reality of the real world.
- I will never use the internet to satisfy my own selfish, self-centered desires wanting to stimulate my fleshly passions.

Romans 13:14 "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

- When doing research on the internet I will work only to find the information needed and get off, no idle surfing.
- I will strictly limit my experimental time on the computer and devote myself more to truth than to technique.

John 8:32 "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free."

I _____ on this day _____, 2_____

(sign your name)

pledge by God’s grace at work in me to fight to honor this vow

before God and men.

Is Masturbation a Sin?

Pastor Brad Bigney

Let me say first that there is no Bible verse that says masturbation is a SIN. Therefore we are left with the need to draw from biblical principles and think through whether or not that activity is best, and does it violate any biblical principles. The Roman Catholic Church tried to make a case for it being sin by using the story in the Old Testament where a man named Onan 'spilled his seed on the ground' instead of having sex with his brother's wife and God killed him (The O.T. law said if a man died and had no son his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for him to keep the family going). Clearly the man was killed for violating a clear command they had back then. This is a weak argument to use in reference to the question of whether or not masturbation is a sin.

I don't have a huge problem with Dobson and others who allow some license for this with the understanding that it is most certainly SIN to fantasize about other women (that is adultery! or for a single young man it is fornication) and it is sin to use pornography for the same reason. Sex in the mind outside the bounds of God's directives is still sin... and it leads to acting out sins in the flesh. It really does matter what we think. 2 Cor. 10:5 tells us "taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." Rom. 12:2 "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" Eph. 4:22-24 "That you put off the old man with its deceitful lusts and put on the new man created in righteousness by the renewing of your mind." So... where does that leave us?

Well, I think several principles can guide us in this area:

1. Sex and our sexuality was not created by God primarily for our own pleasure but as a wonderful gift that is to be given to our life partner... this gift bonds us together in a special and intimate way. It is something God meant for us to experience in relationship to another human being... not primarily as a wonderful rush to experience by yourself. When we use it that way we have twisted something wonderful and there are some dangers that then enter in. Here's some Scripture for using sex to give pleasure to your mate: **I Cor. 7:3** "Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his body, but the wife does." Our bodies and our sexuality are not our own to selfishly use for our own pleasure. They were given to be enjoyed in the context of a loving marriage relationship. In fact, God says regarding sexual relations between husband and wife, "Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time... then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you..." **I Cor. 7:5**. Masturbation deprives your spouse of something they are supposed to get from you, and you then leave them open to temptation from Satan. We are also supposed to find our sexual satisfaction in our spouse...not other people or things. **Prov. 5:18-20** "May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth... may her breasts satisfy you at all times, may you be captivated by her love..." Masturbation leads you to find satisfaction somewhere other than your spouse... and can often lead your affections away so that you're captivated by something or someone other than her.

2. Another principle that would bear on this issue is the **sin of selfishness**. We are all prone to selfishness by nature and this activity seems to fan that flame. It also tends to isolate us. We withdraw and focus on ourselves. How do I want it? What would be good for me? What really turns me on? All of this thinking breeds an attitude that is contrary to biblical love. Biblical love is giving for the needs of another expecting nothing in return. Love is giving not getting. The activity of autoeroticism by nature is a 'getting' activity rather than a giving activity. And it doesn't cause us to bond with others. We begin to think we don't need another human relationship in that area. Yet this gift was intended to be some of the 'glue' that would knit us to another person rather than ourselves. The activity in question runs counter to that and feeds selfish isolationism. **I Cor. 13:5** says "love does not seek its own". This activity most definitely seeks it's own. **I Cor. 10:24** "Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others." **Rom. 15:2-3** "Each of us should please his neighbor (your spouse is your closest neighbor) for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please Himself." **Phil. 2:3-4** "Let nothing be done from selfish ambition... let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

3. Another danger is that it can be used as **an escape or a refuge other than God**. Any of the good things that God has given us (food, drink, sex, work) can become sinful if used as a place of refuge instead of turning to God. I think masturbation often gets used in that way especially with young people. It's quick, easy and gives fast gratification. That in itself should send off some danger signals... because habits may be forming so they will want to run there when things don't go their way or they're feeling down or bored or whatever and just want a rush. The area of sexuality is very much like food, drink, and drugs. Something good that God gave, but can, like everything, be abused and lead us into bondage. God is to be our refuge... not sex or anything else. So there's the danger of allowing this to get rooted in your life as an idol... a false god. **Psa. 73:25** "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." **Psa. 32:7** "You are my hiding place" **Psa. 16:11** "In Your presence is fullness of joy" **Psa. 119:114** 'You are my hiding place and my shield. I hope in your word." **Psa. 91:2** "I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust." Masturbation can easily and insidiously become a substitute for a relationship with God and others.

4. Another concern is that it runs contrary to the **virtue of self-control** that we are commanded to be developing as Christians. This is such a strong area. Fighting in this area is an excellent opportunity to trust God and ask for His grace rather than feed the desires of the flesh. And I know it is hard. It can still be a struggle for a married person. Even when avoiding wrong (adulterous) thoughts while indulging, it still seems like you're not using self control and you're taking something away from your spouse just because you didn't say 'No' to the flesh and wait until you could be with your mate. In all honesty, sometimes you don't want the 'hassle' of having to 'perform' or make it good for someone else and you just want quick relief. And that's back to the issue of selfishness. When this area is allowed to run free in our life, even as a married person there is the danger then of comparison. In some ways, without working on it together and without communicating how can your spouse satisfy you as well as you do yourself? You know exactly where you want it and how you want it. So, if you allow this to be a

regular practice you may actually find sexual relations with your spouse less satisfying and more frustrating because you've grown accustomed to doing it yourself. It can turn the bedroom into a selfish spot where you are wishing and thinking about how and what you wish they would do...like you do for yourself. Once again your focus becomes, "What do I want?" and "What's best for me?", rather than, "How can I really please my spouse?"

There's plenty of Scripture that shows our need to exercise self-control:

Prov. 25:28 "Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control" Lack of self-control in the sexual area will certainly begin to bleed over into other areas, because it is a matter of saying "No" to the flesh... ruling the flesh. You are choosing not to be dominated and ruled by your passions.

I Thes. 4:3-6 "It is God's will that you be holy; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God..."

2 Tim. 1:7 "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

5. This whole area seems to be **a flame that just can't ever get enough**. If you open the door and allow free reign in this area it seems that you need more and more to get the same level of satisfaction you did before. You will feel the need to move on to other things (pornography, fantasy, kinkiness) in order to get the same level of rush and excitement you did when you first experimented in this area. Rather than satisfying... its seems to only stir a thirst for more... and leaves one feeling very empty, and if you are a Christian... guilty on top of that. Because in your heart of hearts you're not really sure it is biblically acceptable anyway. **Jer. 2:13** "But my people have committed two great sins; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living water and have dug for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." This whole area is often a broken cistern that cannot hold water. It leaks. To stay satisfied it demands more... more of the same and then variety... something new. You end up in a state of perpetual agitation and very little satisfaction.

6. Finally, it seems to bring **guilt and distraction** with it that **hinders our walk with God**.

I Peter 2:11 "I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires / lusts which war against your soul." Very often when this area of physical lust is stirred up it wars against the spiritual side... and is not usually a time when we are hungry for God and really growing. This activity tends to draws us away and hinder our walk. We feel dirty and think we can't draw near to God.

Rom. 13:14 "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." Often this activity causes us to spend an inordinate amount of time thinking about it... leading up to it... what we'll do next time, etc.

Rom. 8:8 "those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."

Conclusion: Based on Scriptural principles of biblical love and self-control, as well as the foundation of God's original design for sexual pleasure to be shared between husband and wife, it seems prudent to personally resist the temptation to masturbate, and it's seems important for us to teach our children the dangers of giving over to this temptation.

From Brad Bigney. See his posts <http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/blogs/2011/05/25/so-what-about-masturbation/> and <http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/blogs/2011/05/26/masturbation-so-what%E2%80%99s-the-way-out/>.