**EQUIPPED TO WIN**

# ***Experiencing Victory Over Lust & Masturbation***

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**4/9/03**

This topic has been avoided or not dealt with Biblically by many who teach youth and adults. One thing is for sure; God is not taken by surprise by this issue and is very aware of the confusion, guilt, and bondage that many are experiencing. It is God’s desire that His people enjoy the abundant life, and not get caught in the snares that the Devil sets up.--- *In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice. – Proverbs 29:6.* A snare is simply a trap. In order to get caught in a trap, bait (something appealing to our sin nature) is needed to get our attention. If you or someone you know is caught in this trap, *it is possible* to be set free by God’s enabling grace.

*“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.” (II Peter 1:3)*

Gary R. Collins defines Masturbation as “The stimulation of one’s genitals to the point of orgasm.” Masturbation leads to other selfish acts that ignore the best interest of others and the main focus is satisfying oneself.

A *New York Times* science writer surveyed over 3,000 Americans between the ages of eighteen and fifty-nine and discovered that 60 percent of men and 40 percent of women said they had masturbated within the past year. In 1967 a study was done that showed that 90 percent of males and 48 percent of females had masturbated during their high school years. Some may read this and think, oh it’s not uncommon after all. Well my response to that is what Jesus taught to the crowds*—“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it.”* (Matthew 7:13,14) What *many* practice could very well lead to destruction.

Two ways that males release sexual tensions is by nocturnal emissions (wet dreams) and by masturbation. Female’s strong desire of genital sensation comes with cuddling and heavy petting and especially with genital penetration. It doesn’t take too much to get a male to a point of sexual climax. Men can use this as an excuse. The enemy may whisper, “God understands that it doesn’t take much to excite you. He understands that if you fall you can just get up---after all He’s a forgiving God and He knows that some times the passion is just too hard to resist.” The female who desires affection and an *escape thrill* may fantasize about being touched by someone to a point of climax as well. She may give in to masturbation and rationalize in this area of sexual integrity. The Devil has deceived and defeated many. He has been on the job for thousands of years.

Parents should be careful to research this issue from a Biblical filter before discussing this with their youth. Being a good listener and empathizing with the struggle before giving immediate Biblical prescription will assist youth in feeling free to discuss this *hush hush topic.*

Some say masturbation is normal, it relieves stress, or it helps keep a man or woman from committing fornication or adultery. There are studies that show the opposite- there is guilt, a sense of hopelessness, sexual strongholds, self-involvement, low elf-esteem, intimacy with God decreases (broken fellowship), a lot of confusion, as well a objectification of others; By this I mean viewing others as objects for self-gratification instead of individuals who should be treated with dignity and respect.

As a teenager I was in bondage to masturbation for close to two years. That period of time seemed like ten years. I was afraid of living each day, fearful that I would fall into the lust trap. Everything was private and I asked for forgiveness but I felt so uncomfortable talking to God. I was exposed to some pornography which fueled my youthful lusts. The Greek word for lust is *epithumos*. The prefix *epi* means “to add to.” Therefore something is being added to a normal drive. My normal sex drive became lust as I allowed my mind to be polluted in various ways. I was informed about a phone sex number, which became another avenue to get some cheap thrills. Meanwhile as Satan’s grip tightened, my thrills became inward torture because of guilt, confusion and feeling out of control.

Then I received a call from a friend named John that changed my life. He didn’t know that I was in bondage, but God knew that I needed living water to fill my life and give me satisfaction that I *could not* find through lustful adventures. My friend said “Pete, it’s time for us to start taking Jesus more seriously. I know we grew up in church and we’ve made rededications over and over but I’m serious this time. I made a commitment to allow Jesus to take full control of my life and I think you should as well.” My friend was being positively influenced by another teen in Brooklyn Technical High School. I could tell that he was serious about this decision because he started reading and applying the Bible daily and witnessing to others. I saw knew *purpose* and *power* in his life. I craved what I saw in him.

The first good habit that I developed as I allowed Jesus to take control was reading the Bible every morning and memorizing a few verses a week. It excites me as I recall the transformation that took place and is still taking place. The truth set me free, only because I submitted to God’s way instead of my own. I actually was more satisfied and at peace by obeying God. The way of escape (I Corinthians 10:13) took place in the same area that the battle began; *In my mind*. Two verses that have remained with me for the past 19 years in Isaiah 26:3—*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind Is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee* and Philippians 4:8—*Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*.

These verses protected me during my mental attacks. The Devil had control of my mind but that is in the past. The Devil searches for a mind to inhabit. Now when he comes to my mind he sees a “No Vacancy” sign. Daily I seek to fill my mind with good stuff and I know that makes the Devil mad. By God’s grace I learned how to win. The Lord made it clear to me that I needed to be careful regarding what I watched including movies, television shows, magazine pictures, going in areas where girls were not dressed modestly etc… What I listen to, what I read and what I meditate on when I’m going to sleep all need to be guarded against. I now realize that:

***I can choose what my mind chews on.***

Have you ever made a New Year’s resolution not to commit a particular sin ever again? The problem with most resolutions is that although there’s a promise to stop a bad habit there’s nothing to replace it with. Repentance involves *replacing* the bad with good. Paul calls it putting off and putting on in Ephesians 4:22-24(NIV) ---*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Believers need to be alert for Satan’s mental tricks. The Apostle Paul wrote something out of his concern for believers who were not taking spiritual warfare seriously. He wrote—*I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may some how be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.* Notice what is being led astray—the mind. The world’s most popular magazines and comedy shows bombard the mind with the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (I John 2:15-17). To be honest, I really don’t care if I’m not aware of the latest episodes. I make an effort not to be.

Not long ago I suggested to a brother in Christ to turn off the commercials for the Super Bowl games and other things that may be shown during the game. He was watching it with other brothers that he had great influence over. He didn’t think it was necessary to turn off anything. That night Janet Jackson revealed herself indecently before millions. I wonder if my brother in Christ is taking the battle seriously yet.

If we don’t set standards then our minds will be led astray from our sincere and pure devotion to Christ. If people look at me as if I’m more heavenly minded than I should be, I take it as a compliment although they didn’t mean it as one. If I don’t know about the latest song that a popular rap artist came out with, it’s better for my thought life. Our Lord tells us that we ought to shine in the darkness. If we are not peculiar in our entertainment, our minds will be corrupted, and our sexual fantasies and habits will continue to grip our souls. I must add that just because a movie is not rated “R” doesn’t mean Satan can’t use it. “R” rated movies are labeled “PG” in many cases to get a larger audience. I found that as I set standards with what I allow in my mind, and replace those thoughts with Biblical fuel, then I experience consistent victory.

Studies show that child molesters and those who perform other sex crimes have practiced masturbation. Not realizing what it could lead to, this selfish act dominated their lives and lead to other levels of sexual cravings.

I believe that the person who masturbates ends up being a *Samson imitator* instead of a *Joseph imitator*. Samson allowed his sensual desires to get the best of him and Joseph didn’t allow sexual passion to suck him in like a vacuum. A study of these men’s strengths and weaknesses will show us how one thing can lead to another in a negative and positive way. Although Joseph had struggles, he didn’t try to escape or get relief from them by taking a lustful detour. For some masturbation is a way of escape; A *god* that gives pleasure to relieve emotional pain. It should not surprise us that the very chapter in I Corinthians that tells us about a way of escape when it comes to temptation also tells us about sexual immorality and idols. *Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them ; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand…..*

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I Corinthians 10:7, 8, 13, 14*

Some might say that we can’t compare masturbation to what Samson did. Others may conclude that since it doesn’t involve someone else it is not a sin. The truth is since it doesn’t involve someone else (Your marriage partner) it is sin. Our sexuality is to be enjoyed with a partner. II Corinthians 7:3,4 reads-- *Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

In Matthew 8:27,28 Jesus said—“*You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* Some may say it’s possible to masturbate without thinking of someone in particular. There is some self-deception with this view because there is some sort of fantasy even if it’s with a fictional image of someone. No matter what the case it is still a conscious attempt to have a solo-orgasm which is self-gratifying and fueling one’s lustful desires.

God’s plan for Adam and Eve and all married couples is to enjoy sexual intercourse. A solo-orgasm is not only unbiblical but it shows selfish ambition (Philippians 2:3). Unfortunately there are couples that get married who are full of selfish ambition sexually. If both have been in bondage to the self-centered practice of masturbation then they will find it difficult to *serve one another* instead of focusing on *being served. Considering others better than our selves* goes totally against the grain of the one who has been ensnared by the self-gratifying pleasure of masturbation. It is possible for us to actually be *lovers of our own selves* (II Timothy 3:2) instead of others. It also shows a lack of self-control which is one of the fruits of the Spirit as mentioned earlier.

As a believer in Christ one cannot say “I can do whatever I want. This is my body.” I Corinthians 6:19,20 says- *Haven’t you yet learned that your body is the home of the Holy Spirit God gave you, and that he lives within you? Your own body does not belong to you. For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it. (TLB)*

Romans 6:13 teaches us to *“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”*

***An Encouraging Word to Those Who Are Single:***

My friend-- You are EQUIPPED TO WIN. If you have placed your trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior you’re a WINNER, so live like one. Maybe you’re waiting for a mate. You may have heard about the crusade of many youth who have uttered the manifesto that “True Love Waits”. I believe that this applies to masturbation as well as sexual intercourse with one who is not your marriage partner. Wouldn’t it be great to let you’re marriage partner know that you have been preserving your body, mind, and attitude for him or her. You are preparing yourself to serve your mate not to be served. I’m a living witness that God is able to bless and keep you during your time of anticipation. I was 26 years old when I got married and experienced at least 5 years without giving into masturbation before marriage. I’ve been experiencing consistent victory during marriage as well. I never want to practice anything that fuels lustful, self-gratifying desires.

God may have given you a gift to be without a sexual partner. Don’t view yourself as weird. The Apostle Paul had this gift—(I Corinthians 7:7-9). God has a special work for you that you may not be able to focus on if you had these heated desires working in you. This gift doesn’t mean that you have no attraction to the opposite sex necessarily, but you may not burn like the average person. I read recently that the hands and the feet have the most sweat glands in the human body. You could be a part of Christ’s body that doesn’t “sweat this stuff” too much. Thank Him for how He made you and serve Him with your whole heart.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. **Be honest with God.** I would add to this that we need to *be honest* and *turn from sin* by not only stopping what we’re doing but replace it with something that pleases God. Proverbs 28:13; Ephesians 4: 19-24.
2. **Plug into the power**—Realize that you can’t win without God’s help. Spend time with God daily, which involves talking to God and allowing God to talk with you. As God talks with you from the Bible, memorize some verses. You can use the Bible verses as ammunition during spiritual battles.
3. **Renew your mind.** Guard against shows, books, magazines and songs that draw your mind away from your devotion to Jesus. If magazines come to the house like   
    “Victoria Secret” you need to inform the family member who orders it that this doesn’t help your thought life. Also remember that just because a show or a movie is not “R” rated doesn’t mean Satan cannot use it. When thoughts come to your minds door, shut the door and walk away. Make sure your mind is already occupied (Put up the NO VACANCY sign as I mentioned earlier).
4. **Control your body.** You can do it with God’s strength and wisdom. Make an effort to think about pure things and get active by exercising, serving others and presenting the parts of your body to God as instruments of righteousness.
5. **Confide in a friend who can hold you accountable.** Get honest with a spiritually strong brother who has experienced consistent victory in this area so that iron can sharpen iron; avoiding those who view this issue as hopeless. Pray for the weak and spur them on to victory but remember that aluminum foil cannot sharpen iron.
6. **Avoid tempting situations.**  Avoid second glances at sensually dressed people and avoid being alone with the opposite sex. Be in the open and certainly not in the dark. Remember, just because you are not very attracted to the person doesn’t mean it’s impossible for you to be distracted by them.
7. **Go for total victory.** It is possible to say good-bye to masturbation. Does this mean you won’t be tempted? No but when you are tempted remember—YOU ARE EQUIPPED TO WIN. Just pay attention to your Head Coach, and Owner. His name is Jesus and he knows how to win under any circumstance.

**Here’s a suggested prayer that comes from Neil Anderson’s book—The Bondage Breaker:**

*Lord, I ask You to bring to my mind every sexual use of my body as an instrument of unrighteousness so I can renounce these sins right now. In Jesus’ name.*

**As the Lord brings to your mind every wrong sexual use of your mind & body…remember to renounce the sin by replacing it with what pleases God. Continue by praying:**

*Lord, I renounce all use of my body as an instrument of unrighteousness, and I admit to any willful participation. I choose now to present my eyes, mouth, mind, heart, hands, feet, and sexual organs to You as instruments of righteousness. I present my whole body to You as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. I choose to reserve the sexual use of my body for marriage only. I reject the devil’s lie that my body is not clean or that it’s dirty or in any way unacceptable to You as result of my past sexual experiences. Lord, thank You that You have totally cleansed and forgiven me and that You love and accept me just the way I am. Therefore, I choose now to accept myself and my body as clean in Your eyes. Amen.*

*( See Hebrews 13:4)*

***Sources For Further Study:***

**Handbook on Counseling Youth by Josh McDowell**

**The Bondage Breaker by Neil T. Anderson**

**Sex: Desiring the Best by Barry St. Clair and Bill Jones**