

Project 401



God's Expression of Love

By David Batty
Second Edition



Personal Studies

PERSONAL STUDIES FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

13

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This lesson is part of the *Personal Studies for New Christians*, developed for use with new Christians and others interested in spiritual growth. These studies are currently being used in churches, schools, prison ministries, Teen Challenge centers and similar ministries working with new Christians. The *Personal Studies for New Christians* curriculum is designed for use in an individualized educational program. A teacher training course is available to those interested in being certified to use and teach the *Personal Studies for New Christians* curriculum.

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Introduction

Experiencing God's way of giving and receiving love is difficult for some Christians, especially new Christians. Many today have been negatively affected by the sinful distortions of love—pornography, sexual abuse, rape, and pre-marital sexual activity.

For many these experiences brought painful consequences, broken relationships, broken trust, loss of hope.

Turning to masturbation has been a “safe” alternative for some. Others started experimenting with masturbation as a young child, and now find it to be a continuing part of their lifestyle.

Is masturbation a sin?

Or is it a harmless expression of sexual love?

Is it God's way of expressing love?

Or does masturbation separate a person from the real experience of God's love?

The main purpose of this course on masturbation is to provide help for those who are looking for ways of overcoming this problem in their daily lives. We hope to present some clear guidelines which you can use in your own daily living.

Our main focus is not to determine whether masturbation is right or wrong. Some will argue it is a sin, others strongly disagree with that position.

What is clear is that many who masturbate do not feel at peace with this personal expression of sex. For some this has become a compulsive habit, and they want freedom. Others want to find a better understanding of God's view on this activity.

The main area we want to focus on in this course is how to overcome masturbation and move to a lifestyle free of this activity. We will first focus on why people masturbate—what needs it fills in their lives. Then we will focus on God's ways of meeting these needs.

Jesus said, “If you want to be my disciple, follow me.” This call to discipleship forces us to look carefully at more than our behavior on Sunday morning at church. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus in the area of sexual expression?

The focus of this course will be to approach this issue from the perspective of how can I be a better disciple for Jesus Christ?

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In approaching the problem of masturbation, we will look at it as a temptation. Much of the materials we use on temptation can easily be related to this problem. Those seeking to overcome the hold masturbation has on their life can approach this the same way they would approach a habit, attitude, or life-controlling problem which they wish to change.

Part 1: Why do I masturbate?

Key Biblical Truth:

Identifying the needs and desires that masturbation fills in my life is the first step to overcoming masturbation.

Key Verse: 1 Peter 3:15 New Life Bible

Your heart should be holy and set apart for the Lord God. Always be ready to tell everyone who asks you why you believe as you do. Be gentle as you speak and show respect.

Personal assessment

Take a few minutes and reflect on your past experiences. Then respond to the questions below. If a question does not apply to you, just skip over it and go to the next one.

1. Have you ever masturbated?

_____ Yes

_____ No (skip to question #6)

2. Is masturbation still a part of your current behavior?

_____ Yes

_____ No (skip to question #4)

3. How often do you masturbate?

- More than one time every day
- Daily
- More than once a week
- Less than once a week
- Less than once a month

4. How old were you the first time you masturbated? _____

5. How would you describe your attitude toward "Learning how to stop masturbating"?

- very big interest
- some interest
- no interest

Explain your choice _____

6. Have you ever talked to your parents about masturbation?

- Mother yes _____ no _____
- Father yes _____ no _____

Explain your answer _____

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“I need to masturbate,” states Joe, “it’s the only way I can release the stress I face. It feels good when I’m doing it. I’m single and I don’t believe in having sex with a woman outside of marriage.”

So what about this need? What is God’s part in all of this? If He created me with these needs then it must be OK. Or is it?

God has created each person with many needs that must be filled if life is to be full and satisfying. Here is a list of some general groups of needs that people have.

1. **Physical needs**—food, air, sleep, clothing, warmth.
2. **Security needs** (love and belonging needs)—belonging to a group, obeying a few rules, not afraid of being put down, to receive love, to give love.
3. **Social needs**—conversation, having friends of both sexes.
4. **Self-respect needs**—being accepted by others, being respected, receiving attention, giving attention.
5. **Achievement needs**—doing something meaningful, growing, making progress, using your abilities.
6. **Spiritual needs**—knowing God personally, having sins forgiven, learning how to be a successful Christian, doing the will of God, experiencing God’s love, having a personal relationship with God.

God has created us with these needs. There is nothing sinful about these needs. We can have the confidence that if God gave us these needs, there must be a way to meet them without sinning.

However, Satan will try to lead us into sin as we go about meeting these needs. He will tempt us to sin.

Masturbation relates to more than our need for sexual expression or intimacy. This activity can easily start in childhood through sexual experimentation. It can become an activity that is not so much “need” driven as it is pleasure centered. It becomes a fun thing to do.

The desire for that pleasurable sensation can become a powerful drive, leading one to believe they really *need* to masturbate. The temptation to masturbate can become a power that controls the person.

Here is a definition of temptation:

Temptation: Satan trying to get me to break God's laws to fill a need (or desire) in my life.

What need does masturbation fill in my life?

This is a question that you must answer for yourself. Listed below are some of the more common reasons why people masturbate.

- 1. Physical need**—for release of semen (sperm plus fluids) from gonads (male sex glands).

The male sex glands—gonads—continually produce sperm cells. These sperm must be released. Masturbation is one way of releasing the sperm.

- 2. Psychological need**—sex drive

The human sex drive is not just the physical pressure of releasing semen. It is the psychological desire to find sexual satisfaction. The sex drive involves the mind, emotions, and will. Masturbation is one way of finding temporary satisfaction for your psychological sex drive.

- 3. Need for love**

We are all created with a desire to receive and give love. Many times young people do not receive all the love they want. They also do not develop deep enough friendships to be able to give all the love they want. So one of the easiest ways to satisfy this need to give and receive love is to fantasize it. Many times these fantasies stir up one's sex drives, which leads to masturbation.

This desire for sexual intimacy can be risky. If you seek to develop a relationship with someone of the opposite sex, they can turn you down. Then you are left with the embarrassment of rejection, and your need for love is still unmet.

For some, the fear of failure is too great to pursue a friendship, so an easier path is chosen. Pornography is one of those easier pathways. A person can experience sexual arousal without the fear of being rejected by another person.

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Masturbation can also become that easier path for some to feel loved. But the tragedy is that both of these paths do not take one down the path to true love. They are simply a path to false intimacy. The momentary pleasure provided by masturbation does not satisfy the need for true love.

4. Need to relax and release tension

Masturbation often provides a release from tension, especially if this tension relates to the need for release of sexual drives. However, many times masturbation is used to release tension caused by many other stress situations in a person's daily living.

Stress may be caused by daily situations that have nothing to do with sex. But masturbation can be one way a person uses to find release from that tension.

5. Achievement need

Many young people have a problem with feeling inadequate or inferior. They may feel unloved. One way of proving to himself/herself that s/he is not a total failure is masturbation. This is one way of proving s/he is sexually potent. She/He can also look on this as an achievement—"I can succeed in something."

6. A desire to feel good

"I just want to feel good!" is all some need to justify masturbation. No one else is involved. No one else gets hurt. It's no big deal. Proving that s/he can do adult things may be another motivation to go down this path.

God created us with sexual drives. It is a healthy normal part of every person's growth and maturity. But the question surfaces, "Is masturbation God's plan for you to experience sexual fulfillment at this point in your life?" Or is this taking you down a path that will create problems and make it more difficult for you to experience God's love in your life?

Certainly there are many other needs that masturbation can fill in your daily life. However, the important thing is—can you see the reasons why you masturbate? What needs is it filling in your life? Identifying these needs is the first step to overcoming masturbation in your life.

Personal assessment

Take a few minutes and reflect on your past experiences. Then respond to the questions below. If a question does not apply to you, just skip over it and go to the next one.

7. Read through this checklist and mark the ones that describe you.

____ I rarely ever think about masturbation.

____ I find it easy to think about masturbation at night before I go to sleep.

____ I think a lot about masturbation during the day.

____ When I see a sexually attractive person or picture, I find it easy to think about masturbating.

____ Whenever I'm having a stress-filled day, I help myself make it through the day by telling myself I can solve this later by masturbating.

____ I have a hard time relating to the opposite sex.

____ I'm fearful of being rejected by others.

8. What need(s) or desires does masturbating fill in your life?

Or, how does masturbating help you?

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9. What kinds of things do you usually think about BEFORE you masturbate?

10. What kinds of things do you usually think about WHEN you are masturbating?

11. What kinds of things do you usually think about immediately AFTER you have masturbated?_____

STOP: Have your teacher sign here before doing any more work on this project.

Teacher's signature_____

Part 2: When is masturbation a sin?

Is masturbation ever a sin? Is it sometimes a sin? Is it always a sin?

Tough questions, but this is not a course to argue theological concepts. It is a practical course to help you become a stronger Christian, one who is able to consistently apply biblical principles of Christian discipleship.

The Bible talks about how an activity can be sin in one's life. As you read the following scriptures, look for how closely they describe what is going on in your life.

1. When it masters me.

Masturbation is a sin when I cannot stop myself from doing it. It is sin when it is the only way I can find release or fulfillment for that need. It is sin when it leads to more masturbation, and becomes a habit I cannot stop.

Romans 12:21 New Life Bible

Do not let sin have power over you. Let good have power over sin.

1 Corinthians 6:12 New American Standard

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

1 Corinthians 6:12 New Life Bible

I am allowed to do all things, but not everything is good for me to do! Even if I am free to do all things, I will not do them if I think it would be hard for me to stop when I know I should.

How do these Bible verses speak to your situation?

3. When I feel guilty after doing it.

The person who feels guilty after masturbating violates the principle given in Romans 14:23. Many times this feeling of guilt is the result of the Holy Spirit convicting the person.

Romans 14:23 The Living Bible

But anyone who believes that something he wants to do is wrong shouldn't do it. He sins if he does, for he thinks it is wrong, and so for him it is wrong. Anything that is done apart from what he feels is right is sin.

How does this Bible verse speak to your situation?

4. When I think it is a sin.

Here we are talking about your personal beliefs or opinions. If you believe that it is sinful for you to masturbate and you can back your beliefs with sound reason, then I believe you should follow your beliefs and other people should respect your beliefs.

Romans 14:14 New Life Bible

Christ has made me know that everything in itself is clean. But if a person thinks something is not clean, then to him it is not clean.

How does this Bible verse speak to your situation?

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The main purpose of looking at these scriptures is not to overwhelm you with guilt. But you must take an honest look at what God says about following Him. You must be willing to make some hard choices to experience the full measure of His love.

The biggest issue is not to solve the question “is masturbation sin?”. The biggest issue is— Does God want me to use this activity to experience love and fulfillment in my life today?

How can I experience love and sexual fulfillment today? For many, masturbation has been a path that leads to unfulfilled desires, false intimacy, and in some cases, a behavior that is out of control.

STOP: Have your teacher sign here before doing any more work on this project.

Teacher's signature _____

Part 3: How Can I Overcome Masturbation?

Key Biblical Truth: The best way to overcome masturbation is to cooperate with God in filling my needs His ways.

How can I fill the needs and desires in my daily life without masturbating? God has a plan for you which includes experiencing His love in a rich and full way. He created you with sexual drives and desires. His plan is not to frustrate you.

The Bible is filled with hope-filled promises that clearly communicate God's best plans for you.

Jeremiah 29:11-13 New International Version

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

2 Corinthians 9:8 New Life Bible

God can give you all you need. He will give you more than enough. You will have everything you need for yourselves. And you will have enough left over to give when there is a need.

Philippians 4:19 New Life Bible

And my God will give you everything you need because of His great riches in Christ Jesus.

In trying to come up with meaningful solutions to the problem of masturbation we need to be careful that we don't search for some magical solution. No such solutions exist. However, God can guide us to find meaningful solutions to this problem.

Here are some ideas which may help you overcome the problem of masturbation in your life.

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1. Make a decision to find sexual fulfillment God's way.

Masturbation usually is “my way” of finding sexual release. Masturbation tends to be a rather selfish “game”. This violates the greatest law in the Bible which says that we are to do things with love. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 says that love is not selfish.

1 Corinthians 7:3-4 clearly shows that our sexual abilities were created for the benefit of our lawful partner (husband or wife). Masturbation does not use our sexual abilities for this purpose.

My response _____

2. Develop Biblical attitudes toward sex.

What you think about sex will have a tremendous effect on what you do in the area of sexual activities. As a Christian, you have the responsibility to think as Christ thought. The Bible does not state the exact attitude Christ had toward masturbation, but it does clearly point out his attitude when we look at the general area of sex, sex sins, and marriage. See Matthew 5:27-28.

In developing these new attitudes toward sex, it is very important to memorize verses that relate the Biblical teachings about sex to your daily life today.

My response _____

3. Learn how to deal with temptation to lust.

Let God help you in this area of your daily life. For additional information on how to deal with temptation, see the course in the *Group Studies for New Christians* series entitled *Temptation*.

My response _____

4. Work on developing the positive inward quality of self-control.

In 2 Timothy 1:7 God promises to give us a spirit of power, love and self-control. Another translation describes the last promised gift from God as “a sound mind.” Truly that is the heart of self-control. It’s not gritting your teeth in anger because you are not allowed to do it. The Jesus style of self-control is a choice to refrain from certain activities for the present, realizing that now is not the time for this activity.

First Corinthians 7:9 shows that self-control is the alternative for the single person if he chooses not to get married at the present time. Sex outside of marriage is not an option for the person who wishes to follow Christ with his/her whole heart.

If sexual intimacy is to be saved for marriage, then one can make a case this includes refraining from sex with yourself—masturbation. Self-control in the area of sexual expressions needs to come out of a heart of love for God, not a legalistically imposed rule of “thou shalt not!”

Self-discipline is doing what you know you should do, whether you “feel” like it or not.

My response _____

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5. Stay away from pornography

Pornographic material has a powerful ability to pull one into sexual fantasies. Make a commitment to stay away from pornographic books, movies, and discussions about the sexual exploits of others.

My response _____

6. Discover ways to fill your needs God's ways.

Work on discovering and putting into action God's ways of filling needs that masturbation has been filling in your daily life. One helpful strategy for some has been to make themselves accountable to another Christian, one who is more spiritually mature than yourself, and ask for their help.

My response _____

7. Plan meaningful activities for times when you find it easiest to masturbate.

- a. If your desires to masturbate is in the evening when going to bed, spend time in Bible study, prayer and meditation. Then take time for some good hard exercising so you will be tired and go to sleep quickly.
- b. If it is in the morning when you wake up, set the alarm clock away from the bed so you have to get out of bed to turn it off. Immediately make your bed and get involved in the day's activities. Again, Bible study, prayer and meditation are very helpful here.
- c. If it is after a conversation about sex, stay away (walk away) from these conversations. Meditate on verses that state God's ways of meeting your sex needs.
- d. Memorize scriptures that deal with God's view of sex, and all the other needs you face in life. It may also help to memorize verses that talk about overcoming temptation, such as 1 Corinthians 10:13. Repeat these verses to yourself throughout the day, not just when the temptations are the strongest.

My response _____

8. Develop positive attitudes toward nocturnal emissions (wet dreams).

For men, nocturnal emissions can be viewed as one of God’s ways to release the semen from the body. Having a negative attitude toward nocturnal emissions may lead to your subconscious preventing your body from using this release in your sleep.

Don’t ask God to take your sex drives away. They are part of His creation, which He described as “good”. What we need to do is see His creation in my life as “good.”

My response (men only)_____

9. Develop a healthy social life with other Christians.

Those who are failing to develop healthy friendships make themselves vulnerable to more sexual temptations. Ask God for His help in choosing friends who will build you up and draw you closer to Him. Value friendships and treat others the way you want Jesus to treat you.

My response_____

God loves you and wants you to experience His love in a deep and genuine way. A close personal relationship with Jesus will bring a rich fullness to your life, far beyond what masturbation can bring.

God has a plan for you to experience sexual fulfillment. It may not be clear to you today how that can be accomplished. But if you are willing to follow Him—to be His disciple—He will direct you and help you grow.

Developing relationships with people can be risky and painful at times. God is able to help you grow so you can be a good friend to others. He can also bring good friends into your life. However, you must make a commitment to put Jesus first in your life, and seek to meet your needs in ways that are pleasing to Him.

STOP: Now that you have completed this project, have your teacher sign here.

Teacher's signature _____

***** **For Further Reading** *****

Two books by Walter and Ingrid Trobisch, My Beautiful Feeling deals exclusively with masturbation and the book, Living with Unfulfilled Desires deals with masturbation and other sex related issues. (Intervarsity Press). These are now available in the book entitled The Complete Works of Walter Trobisch.

Sexual Solitaire, a pamphlet published by Wayout, Box 2829, Hollywood, CA 90028. It is an excellent article on masturbation with a lot of good practical ideas.