

## Dealing with Failure

Two ways to see failure – Epic Fail or learning experience

- Rather than thinking about your progress in a straight line, think of it as a spiral.
- Think about the Seemingly Unimportant Decisions that led to your decision – other triggers.
- Take responsibility for your decision – don't blame outside factors, like stress, a particularly sexual charged situation, etc.
- Confess your sin - "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (James 5:16)
- Recommit yourself in hope!
  - First, pull out your favorite grace passages / reading.
  - Thank God for your current level of progress
  - Acknowledge His desire for your success

“Tried and true relapse traps”

- Entitlement – especially a trap for people in ministry
- Resentment
- Self-Reliance – I'm doing good; I can handle this!
- Deprivation – abstaining from all things sexual
- Stress – you need to be committed to handling stress in your life in a totally new way.

Remember that the best way to insure that you live a sexually healthy life is to have a healthy spiritual life.

## On Masturbation

Research summarized in a 2007 article in Sexual and Relationship Therapy found that masturbation might help men by:

- Improving his immune system's functioning.
- Building his resistance to prostate gland infection.
- may lower a man's risk (up to 1/3 less likely) of developing prostate cancer
- is a great form of stress relief
- is the safest kind of sex, keeping you free of sexually transmitted infections
- is a mood booster in releasing endorphins
- is a natural sleep sedative

Quoted in FoxNews.com, FOXSexpert: The Health Benefits of Masturbation, Monday, August 11, 2008, By Yvonne K. Fulbright

First question: is masturbation a sin? In most cases, the answer is yes.

Why does the Bible not mention it ever? God doesn't forbid it explicitly, but the Bible does teach on the topic of lust. So, we must examine the issue principally with the following questions:

Question #1 – Can you masturbate without lusting? "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl." (Job 31:1)

Question #2 – Can you masturbate in a way that builds oneness with your spouse, pulling you together more intimately through the act? "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)

Question #3 – Can you masturbate without experiencing shame? "But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." (Romans 6:21)

Question #4 – Can you masturbate with a clear conscience? "To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled." (Titus 1:15)

Question #5 – Can you masturbate without capitulating to the cravings of your sinful desires and thoughts? "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath." (Ephesians 2:3)

Question #6 – Can you masturbate without deepening your desire to get back in to pornography? "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." (James 1:15)

Since sex is given for such purposes as oneness (Gen. 2:24), intimate knowledge (Gen. 4:1), having sex with oneself seems to miss some of the significant biblical reasons for sexual intimacy.

1 Corinthians 7:4 says "For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."

"For me the real evil of masturbation would be that it takes an appetite which, in lawful use, leads the individual out of himself to complete (and correct) his own personality in that of another (and finally in children and even grandchildren) and turns it back; sends the man back into the prison of himself, there to keep a harem of imaginary brides. And this harem, once admitted, works against his ever getting out and really uniting with a real woman. For the harem is always accessible, always subservient, calls for no sacrifices or adjustments, and can be endowed with erotic and psychological attractions which no woman can rival. Among those shadowy brides he is always adored, always the perfect lover; no demand is made on his unselfishness, no mortification ever imposed on his vanity. In the end, they become merely the medium through which he increasingly adores himself. And it's not only the faculty of love which is thus

sterilized, forced back on itself, but also the faculty of imagination. The true exercise of imagination in my view, is (a) To help us understand other people, (b) To respond to, and, some of us, to produce art. But it has also a bad use: to provide for us, in shadowy form, a substitute for virtues, successes, distinctions, etc. which ought to be sought outside in the real world--e.g., picturing all I'd do if I were rich instead of earning and saving. Masturbation involves this abuse of imagination in erotic matters (which I think bad in itself) and thereby encourages a similar abuse of it in all spheres. After all, almost the main work of life is to come out of our selves, out of the little dark prison we are all born in. Masturbation is to be avoided, as all things are to be avoided which retard this process. The danger is that of coming to love the prison."

(From a letter to a Mr. Masson dated March 6, 1956 in the Wade Collection at Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL)