

# **Masturbation and Moral Neutrality: A Practical Theological Perspective**

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The subject of masturbation has long been a topic of discussion and contention within Christian communities. Traditional perspectives have deemed it immoral based on various interpretations of Scripture, yet an in-depth study reveals a more nuanced viewpoint. This essay will argue that masturbation is morally neutral, based on biblical evidence, and can be a valuable tool for stewarding one's sexual urges in a way that honors both God and marriage.

## **Biblical Silence on Masturbation**

It's noteworthy that the Bible does not directly address the act of masturbation. If it were an action of paramount concern for our spiritual well-being, it would likely be mentioned explicitly, as are other sexual actions and misdeeds. The absence of a direct condemnation or acknowledgment suggests that its moral status may not be as clear-cut as some argue.

## **Masturbation as a Tool for Sexual Stewardship**

Masturbation can be understood as a means of managing one's sexual urges, especially in a world teeming with sexual imagery and temptation. For individuals who are unmarried or abstaining for various reasons, masturbation can provide an avenue for sexual release that does not involve engaging in extramarital sexual activity which is explicitly mentioned in the Bible as sinful.

By this logic, masturbation can be viewed as a tool that helps individuals uphold the sanctity of marriage by reducing the potential for sexual transgressions that go against the biblical teachings on adultery.

### **Matthew 5:28 and the Misunderstanding of Imagination**

A common argument against masturbation is based on Jesus' words in Matthew 5:28: "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Some interpret this to mean that indulging in sexual fantasies, which often accompany masturbation, is tantamount to adultery.

However, this interpretation may be based on a misunderstanding. The Greek word "epithymēsai," which is translated as "lust" or "desire" in this context, is used throughout the New Testament, and its meaning is rooted in an intention to act, rather than mere imagination. For instance, in Titus 3:3, the same word is used to describe a person's earnest desire to serve as an elder. If we use the consistent interpretation of the term, Matthew 5:28 would condemn the intent to commit adultery rather than the mere act of fantasizing.

### **Concluding Thoughts: Embracing a Balanced Perspective**

In light of the evidence, it becomes apparent that the act of masturbation, divorced from any intent to commit sin, can be considered morally neutral. The Bible provides us with guidelines for living, and in doing so, it focuses on the heart's intention rather than on specific actions.

It's essential for Christians to approach the topic with compassion, understanding, and a genuine desire to discern God's will. When masturbation is used as a means to honor God by protecting the sanctity of marriage and preventing more severe sexual sins, it can be viewed not as an act of defiance but as a tool for responsible stewardship of one's body and desires.

As with all matters of personal conscience and morality, individuals should seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, meditate on the Scriptures, and seek counsel from trusted spiritual mentors when formulating their stance on this issue.