

FROM THE AUTHOR OF *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*

a biblical guide to
COUNSELING
the **SEXUAL ADDICT**



FOREWORD BY DR. ED BULKLEY

STEVE GALLAGHER

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A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict

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Note: This book has been written as a complement to
At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry. It is assumed that the reader is already familiar
with its concepts.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to the countless pastors, counselors and lay leaders who have committed themselves to providing biblical solutions, godly leadership and sacrificial service to those who struggle with habitual sexual sin.

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FOREWORD

When I first met Steve Gallagher at a Biblical counseling conference I sensed I had met a partner in the battle for truth. I had watched TV interviews of self-proclaimed experts on “sexual addictions” promote standard psychological dogma in the name of Christ. I had heard well-known Christian psychologists tell their radio listeners that obsession with pornography, perversion and adultery are results of unmet needs and childhood traumas. So when I heard of Pure Life Ministries, I wondered if they too would provide the same old excuses for immorality and offer one more failing variation of Christian psychotherapy to treat this growing scourge.

Steve and I talked for quite some time about the weakening of the Church by well-meaning, but misguided counselors who believe that the Bible is insufficient to heal the wounded hearts of damaged Christians. I was encouraged to hear Steve’s heart-felt commitment to genuine Biblical counseling and its application to sexual idolatry.

Pure Life Ministries eventually applied for affiliate membership with the International Association of Biblical Counselors and our vice president went on site at their Kentucky

campus to examine their doctrines and practice. To our delight, he found an organization that takes the Scriptures seriously and is committed to helping fallen Christians find their way back to a strong walk with the Lord.

That's why I am pleased to recommend *A Biblical Guide to Counseling the Sexual Addict*. In this book Steve Gallagher lays out a powerful model for counseling "sexual addicts" in a Biblical manner. He does not use the term "addiction" to indicate a disease or to lessen personal responsibility for one's behavior; rather, it is shorthand for life-dominating sexual sins that can be conquered through the Word of God and intense discipleship.

Steve writes with the authority of one who has experienced the pain and devastation of the downward spiral of sexual idolatry, and his subsequent victory and restoration through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit as he submitted to the Scriptures. This is not a book of theory, but of proven successful practice taking place continually at the Pure Life Ministries campus.

The Pure Life Live-In Program requires at least a six-month commitment where counselees are taught Scriptural principles of Christian lifestyle through ongoing instruction, Biblical homework, regular chores, intensive prayer, in-depth Bible study, supportive fellowship and one-on-one counseling. Worship services are held three times a week in the PLM chapel in order to help the men develop a spiritual hunger to know and please God. Through this powerful regimen, many have been set free and have seen their broken marriages restored.

But Pure Life Ministries is limited in how many applicants they can accept, due to the constraints of their facilities and finances. That's the reason for a book such as this – to provide a practical Biblical model for churches and coun-

selors who wish to replicate this sort of ministry in their own communities.

In the first section of this volume, Steve explains the fundamentals of Biblical counseling as they relate to sexual sin. Then he shares specific applications of the principles when dealing with the temptations facing young people, helping the devastated wife who discovers her husband's infidelity, ministering to the homosexual, and when confronting the pastor who struggles with pornography and other sexual sins. In the final section, Steve explains how to begin a ministry of support for those who have fallen into sexual idolatry. Imagine a Pure Life Ministry campus in every State where people can be set free!

We in the International Association of Biblical Counselors are thankful to partner with people like Steve and Kathy Gallagher and the committed Staff of Pure Life Ministries. May our Lord help us all to return to the Word of God to find lasting healing for sin-damaged lives and devastated marriages.

Dr. Ed Bulkley, President
International Association of
Biblical Counselors

INTRODUCTION

When I entered the ministry in 1986, I could have never guessed that my life's calling would be to minister to men in habitual sexual sin. Sexual addiction was a concept almost unheard of in those days. All these years later, I can honestly say that it has been my privilege to devote my life to helping these men.

Having since encountered thousands of men bound up in sexual sin, I have gotten a fairly good sense about what the typical sexual addict is like. The first place to begin one's preparation for providing help is to understand what the man in habitual sexual sin* is like. In that light, I will attempt to draw a composite picture of him.

The typical man who will come to you for help has been involved in illicit sexual activity for years. This immoral lifestyle has been done almost entirely in secret. Although sexual fantasy, pornography and illicit encounters make up a huge part of his life, he has managed to hide it from most, if not all, of his closest friends and

*I use the term man loosely, and again, for the sake of simplicity. There are more female sexual addicts today than ever before.

relatives. Most acquaintances would consider him to be morally upright and would never guess what he does when no one is looking.

At different times, you will undoubtedly find yourself helping men who frequent adult bookstores, strip clubs, massage parlors and prostitutes. You may also be forced to minister to men involved with peeking in windows, exposing themselves to women, making obscene telephone calls, sexually assaulting others, or even having sex with animals. You will most certainly deal with promiscuity among teenagers and adults. You will also probably minister to homosexuals—both male and female. However, the primary recipients of your attention will be men who are simply addicted to pornography.

At any rate, the average man you will encounter in your work has been faithfully attending church services for many years. He also reads inspirational books, listens to Christian radio, and possibly attends special men's events.

Unfortunately, the fact that he has been involved in so much religious activity has very possibly hurt him more than it has helped. Sitting in church on Sunday and viewing the filthy images of pornography during the week only tends to harden a man's heart and deepen his spiritual delusion. Sin always deceives. The more wickedness a person is involved in, the blinder he will become to his true spiritual condition. Because he senses God's presence in meetings, it is easy for him to imagine that he truly is walking closely with the Lord. This is compounded by the spiritual reality that the Lord is not quick to judge sin.

This double life of outward Christianity and hidden sin distorts reality and brings confusion. In my book, *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*, I wrote the following about this phenomenon:

Darkness of mind signifies the lack of light in a person's thinking. The more a person gives himself over to the power of sin, the harder he grows toward God. He may still attend church, sing all of the songs of worship, and even enjoy good preaching, but there is a thick callous around his heart that keeps him from feeling the Holy Spirit nudge him toward repentance. The more a person sins, the thicker that callous grows. Eventually he will find himself so hardened that he can no longer discern truth for himself. Although he is likely to still have some comprehension for doctrinal truth, *the* Truth has been effectively shut out of his heart.¹

Living in spiritual defeat over a prolonged period of time causes the man to waffle back and forth between an inflated sense of his own spirituality and a feeling of overwhelming hopelessness. Part of the problem is that for years he has run to books, seminars and support group meetings in the hopes that he can overcome his problems with a minimal amount of effort. His dilemma has been exacerbated because he has gotten his hopes up many times over the years by the exaggerated claims of people offering help: "Read this book, it's powerful!" "This seminar will change your life!" He dutifully reads those books and attends those seminars but finds that nothing has changed. Each promising situation that doesn't bring victory leaves him more cynical. After a while, he even becomes skeptical about the promises held out by Scripture.

This is the man who will one day come to you for answers. If you are going to offer him real help, you will have to understand the realm in which he lives.

MINISTERING IN A SEXUALIZED CULTURE

Men involved in pornography and sexual sin are simply by-products of the world in which they live. An immoral mindset has gripped America—indeed, the entire Western Civilization. We have slipped far away from the decency that once established acceptable standards for our nation. That morality is now openly scoffed as prudish and old-fashioned. Lewd conduct is now the norm: a president having illicit encounters with a young intern in the Oval Office, homosexuality flagrantly displayed on TV sitcoms, a famous entertainer being mobbed by his adoring fans hours after being indicted for child molestation, two female pop stars kissing on national television, etc. These incidents, and thousands like them, occur everyday in modern America.

According to researchers, pornography is now a \$10 billion annual industry—larger than the annual revenues from major league baseball, the NFL and the NBA combined! That constitutes an 1,800% increase in the past five years.² There are over two million websites with adult content³ and approximately “25 million Americans visit cyber-sex sites between 1-10 hours per week. Another 4.7 million in excess of 11 hours per week.”⁴

Over the years, a number of disturbing facts have emerged about the effects pornography has on its viewers. Obscene material promotes:

- Sexual addiction and promiscuity.
- Unhealthy attitudes about sexuality.
- The dehumanization of women as sex toys.
- The rape myth, that women actually want to be raped.
- Sexual relationships apart from love and commitment.

INTRODUCTION

- Selfish indulgence and isolation.
- Aberrant and bizarre sex.

The Church has not been immune from this moral disaster either. Surprisingly enough, studies and polls have shown that the percentage of Christian men regularly viewing pornography is the same as that of nonbelievers (about 20%). According to a poll conducted by Christianity Today in 2001, 44% of pastors acknowledged that they had visited a smut site.⁵ There is every reason to believe that these percentages have grown substantially since then.

A GREAT NEED

The need has never been greater for godly men and women to reach out to these struggling individuals and their devastated families. Indeed, many are doing so. However, there is a direct correlation between a counselor's* methods and the effectiveness of his efforts in helping these hurting people.

If you are increasingly confronted with those in sexual sin, I encourage you to become thoroughly prepared and then confidently enter the battle, fully assured that God will bless your efforts. You will embark on a thrilling journey that will certainly bring forth abundant fruit. Jesus Christ was called “a friend of sinners.” This is a badge of honor in the Kingdom of God that you will wear as well. Nothing could possibly be more pleasing to God than for a Christian to lay down his life on behalf of those devastated by sin.

*This book is written to pastors, ministers, counselors and lay leaders. However, for the sake of simplicity, I will simply use the term counselor throughout the book.

e l e v e n

ANSWERS TO FIVE MORAL QUESTIONS

Over the years, as I have spoken to various groups of ministers and counselors, certain questions regarding sexuality have frequently surfaced. My authority to tackle these subjects extends no further than the sure foundation of Scripture. However, since none of these topics are specifically addressed in the Bible (hence the questions), my answers must rest entirely upon a combination of established biblical concepts and a rudimentary understanding of the human conscience.

A GOOD CONSCIENCE

The apostle Paul once claimed that his instruction was "...from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." (I Timothy 1:5) It should be evident that his teaching must also be *received* in the same spirit in which it was given. However, people tend to believe what they want to believe, according to their own preconceived notions. A sincere Christian, however, makes allowances for this natural tendency and does his utmost to approach such moral questions honestly and objectively.

What is the human conscience? According to *Vine's Dictionary*, the Greek word for conscience (*suneidesis*) literally means to have “co-knowledge” of something resulting in one’s “sense of guiltiness before God.” Thus, humans were created with a unique and intrinsic faculty that gives them an almost “third-person” perspective on the rightness and wrongness of their actions. When a person does something sinful his conscience is pricked by a sense of guilt.

The conscience physiologically is comparable to the human nervous system. When a man is physically wounded, a sense of pain races through his nervous system. This is the body’s way of alerting him that something is wrong. Likewise, when a person sins, the human soul has a warning system that sounds an alarm alerting him to the fact that his actions have *wounded him spiritually*. The alarm of his conscience trumpets: “Mayday! Mayday! Something is wrong!” God has equipped every human being with this spiritual mechanism.

While the Bible clearly addresses the distinction between good and evil in relation to many behaviors, it was not written as a comprehensive treatment of every possible human action. Rather, the Scriptures lay down spiritual principles whereby a believer may properly govern his life. With the indwelling Spirit as a guide, the Christian perceives whether or not a certain type of behavior is morally acceptable to the Lord. Just as some people are more sensitive to pain than others, so too the saint who is “walking in the Spirit” tends to be much more aware of the Spirit’s promptings.

Unfortunately, people who recklessly indulge in sin lose their sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit. They could be compared to the unfortunate souls who have been struck down with leprosy—a disease that destroys a person’s ability to feel pain. In fact, many lepers have become completely

crippled simply because they lost sensitivity to bodily injury. This is a picture of the hardening that goes on inside a person who remains in unrepentant sin. His conscience becomes seared “as with a branding iron” (1 Timothy 4:2), burned so often that it can no longer feel the guilt of sin. As a tough callous forms over his heart, the spiritual system God constructed within him slowly loses its ability to detect the damage being done to it. No wonder Christian men in habitual sexual sin can sit in church week after week, singing songs of worship to a God they continually defy. “Hardened by the deceitfulness of sin,” (Hebrews 3:13) their entire beings are consumed by the leprosy of evil which they can no longer even detect!

Repentance, of course, breaks up the fallow ground and softens the hardened heart. (Hebrews 9:14) Over time, the penitent sinner will regain his ability to hear “the still small voice” of God. With years of sinful indulgence behind him, he must then approach moral questions about sexuality with humility and the fear of making provision for the flesh.

Bearing that in mind, let us broach some of the subjects that commonly arise in the minds of believers. The following questions typify these issues surrounding sexuality:

Question 1: *Is it wrong for a married couple to engage in oral sex?*

This is a controversial question that can provoke strong sentiments. Many who believe oral sex to be sinful point to Romans 1: “For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another...” (Romans 1:26-27) They contend that the apostle is describ-

ing oral sex in this passage thereby proving it is wrong and “unnatural.”

Personally, I’m not prepared to arrive at such a conclusive and comprehensive position. First of all, I believe Paul was condemning homosexuality in its entirety and that the specific activity engaged in was of secondary importance. If this were a legitimate line of reasoning, then sexual intercourse should be deemed wrong for the married couple because it is the practice of adulterers.

In regards to oral sex, there are two points I would make. First, God created sex to be a source of pleasure between a man and his wife. Dr. Ed Wheat makes this case in his excellent book, *Intended For Pleasure*:

As a Christian physician, it is my privilege to communicate an important message to unhappy couples with wrong attitudes and faulty approaches to sex. The message, in brief, is this: You have God’s permission to enjoy sex within your marriage. He invented sex; He thought it up to begin with. You can learn to enjoy it, and, husbands, you can develop a thrilling, happy marriage with “the wife of your youth.” If your marriage has been a civil-war battlefield or a dreary wasteland, instead of a lovers’ trysting place, all that can change. You see, God has a perfect plan for marriage, which we may step into at any time, and the mistakes of the past can be dealt with and left behind.”¹

Dr. Wheat is not here addressing any particular type of activity, but his statements express a very important truth, viz. sex was created so that a man and his wife may enjoy each other’s bodies.

My second point is that what is right or wrong for one couple is not necessarily the same for another. To illustrate this, let's examine the love lives of three different couples.

Bill and Karen have been married for seven years. Bill was once heavily involved in pornography and various types of sexual sin. He enjoys both giving and receiving oral sex because both acts remind him of scenes in adult movies. Moreover, when he is on the receiving end he is much more prone to become emotionally detached and to fantasize about others than when engaged in normal sexual intercourse. For these two, oral sex is definitely wrong because Bill associates it with “dirty sex” and also because it encourages him to fantasize.

Phil and Ginger have a slightly different situation. Phil does not struggle with the same issues as Bill and desires to include oral sex in his foreplay with his wife. However, Ginger is not comfortable with either form of it. She feels that it is unnatural and does not want it to be a part of their lovemaking. Even though Phil doesn't associate it with anything sinful, it would be selfish and inconsiderate for him to impose his desires upon Ginger. He must simply drop the matter. The Apostle Paul's words would be appropriate for him: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:3-4)

Our third couple to consider is Jim and Betty—who routinely engage in mutual oral sex. However, to them, it is merely a part of foreplay. Their motivation is that they love each other and are just trying to provide unselfish pleasure to the other. It is my belief that what is clearly wrong for the first two couples is not necessarily wrong for Jim and Betty.

These three situations show the importance of approaching a moral question with “a good conscience.” In his discussion about the rightness and wrongness of eating food offered to idols, Paul laid down the following important principle regarding such issues: “I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” (Romans 14:14) Clearly, it is wrong for the first two couples to engage in oral sex. In the case of the third couple, I’m honestly not sure. However, I do believe this is a moral question that they should determine for themselves. Accordingly, God has given them each a conscience. If they are both in agreement that there is nothing “unclean” about this practice, then they must be given the latitude to make that decision for themselves.

Question 2: My husband enjoys wearing women’s undergarments as part of our lovemaking, even though he knows I don’t like it. In response to my complaints, he maintains that his activity is acceptable since the marriage bed is undefiled. Is that true?

Before discussing transvestitism, let us first set the record straight regarding the referenced verse. The wording used in this question is the King James Version of Hebrews 13:4—an unfortunate choice of words that has served as justification for all kinds of evil. Every other translation with which I am familiar gives a completely different sense concerning the meaning of the original Greek. The NIV is fairly typical of the rest: “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.” (Hebrews 13:4) One can easily see that the author’s intent was not to sanction ungodly behavior but actually to promote purity in the marital bed.

In regards to transvestitism, it should be noted that the Bible directly forbids it: “A woman shall not wear man’s clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman’s clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.” (Deuteronomy 22:5) The fact of its prohibition could not possibly be more plainly expressed, and nothing exists in the New Testament that would annul this commandment.

However, even if transvestitism were not explicitly mentioned in Scripture, the very selfishness, coupled with the fact that the wife is uncomfortable with it, makes it morally wrong. Not only does it make this wife uncomfortable, but also it is selfish by its very nature. Transvestites (who are not typically homosexual) receive pleasure by wearing women’s undergarments. This fetish is, by nature, completely self-absorbing and would therefore neither offer love nor bring pleasure to a man’s wife.

Question 3: *My husband wants to purchase a video which teaches sexual techniques that is for sale in the newspaper. Is there anything wrong with a couple watching something like this in the privacy of their home?*

Do not be fooled by these slickly packaged videos for sale in the print media. Behind the protective facade of credibility and professionalism, they are actually nothing more than upscale pornography. Watching people having sex on a television set is very immoral—no matter how “clinical” the appearance. If the husband is sincerely interested in learning about how he and his wife can have a more fulfilling sexual relationship, I would encourage them to purchase a copy of *Intended For Pleasure*. It is a trustworthy book that provides forthright and helpful information without being prurient in content.

Allow me also to address the unconscionable notion of a Christian couple viewing pornography. Wives who assent to involvement in pornography usually do so to appease their husbands. The fallacy—all too often conveyed by the husband—is that, if he can watch it at home with his wife, their sex life will be enhanced and his sexual activity will be confined to the marriage. The problem with this faulty logic is that viewing erotica inflames a person's lust rather than satiating it. In fact, far from diminishing an existing problem, it actually accelerates it.

The effects of introducing pornography into the marriage bed are devastating, as I can personally attest. Early in our marriage, I convinced my wife Kathy to watch adult videos with me. Not only did it deepen my ravenous obsession with sex, but it also damaged her severely. In a letter to a wife considering this question, Kathy wrote about how pornography affected her and then asked the woman some direct questions:

Had I only known what it would cost me, I never would have gotten involved in the first place. In my great determination to win my husband's love, at any cost, I was willing to sacrifice my self-respect, the morals I was raised with, and most importantly, my walk with God. For a long time, I was riddled with guilt and shame over the things I saw and did.

But that wasn't all. It took years for those images to go away. For some time, I had to deal with unnatural desires I had never experienced before. Pornographic movies create the illusion that everybody is highly sexed and perverted. They warp a person's perspectives of other people. For a long time, I saw every woman as someone who wanted to seduce my husband, and every man as a pervert.

Having said all this, allow me to ask you some penetrating questions. Do you think it is right to be so given over to a man that you would consider degrading yourself with pornography just to keep the relationship together? What kind of a person will you have to become to keep him happy? Are you really willing to involve yourself with, and approve of, your husband's secret perversions? Do you realize, that becoming involved with pornography will only give your husband free license to openly lust over girls, in your presence? Are you sure you are willing to subject yourself to that?

Are you willing to involve yourself with something as evil and dark as pornography? Are you willing to walk away from God for the sake of appeasing your husband? Once you have hardened your heart against the Lord and filled your mind with perversion, what is going to stop you from taking the next step, and the one after that? These are questions you better carefully consider before taking that first step.²

Question 4: I was previously addicted to pornography but I have been free from it now for over four months. Even though I have never been unfaithful with another person, my wife says she no longer loves me and wants a divorce. She claims she has grounds for divorce because of my involvement in pornography. Is that true?

Before answering this question, I must state unequivocally that God hates divorce. (Malachi 2:16) Hates it! The Bible never uses this harsh term lightly regarding the Lord. When it says that He hates something, it means it is a great abomination to Him.

Unfortunately, Christians in our day and age often exalt their emotions above the Word of God. For a wife who “falls out of love” with her mate, the most viable option becomes divorce. If her pastor refuses to support her decision, she simply leaves his church for another. The fact that the divorce rate among Christians has actually climbed higher than that of unbelievers is a serious indictment upon the modern-day Church.

The Pharisees held this same flippant attitude toward marriage. If one of them became disenchanted with his wife for any reason, he would find a pretext to divorce her. Jesus told them, “Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” (Matthew 19:8-9) This teaching laid the groundwork for the only biblically plausible reason of divorce: unrepentant sexual sin. To say that a believer has grounds to end a marriage because of past wrongs when there is clear evidence of genuine repentance would go against the strong New Testament teaching regarding forgiveness.

In the aforementioned case, the man has repented and is making every effort to correct his past mistakes. Therefore, his wife’s Christian duty is to forgive him for what is now in the past and reaffirm her commitment to him.

Nevertheless, it would still be beneficial to examine the bare question, “Is viewing pornography sufficient biblical grounds for divorce?” In the scripture cited above, Jesus makes allowance for divorce in the case of immorality (Gk. *porneia*). Although this term primarily describes fornication, commentators roundly broaden it to entail various kinds of sexual activity, i.e. incest, homosexuality, bestiality, etc.

Whether or not pornography use and masturbation would fall under this definition is debatable.

In situations where a husband is involved in unrepentant habitual sin, direct the wife to utilize the steps that Jesus laid down in Matthew 18 (as discussed in Chapter Five). If he rejects the process of church discipline and continually refuses to forsake his sin, then she should earnestly pray about a possible separation. If she sincerely seeks the Lord's will, He will surely make it known to her.

Question 5: *Is it sinful for a single young person to masturbate?*

Throughout most of Church history, Christian leaders considered any form of extra-marital sexuality to be sinful. Masturbation was rarely discussed openly. When it was addressed, it was usually cloaked in terms like "self-abuse," or biblical words such as uncleanness (Gk. *akatharsia*) or lasciviousness (Gk. *aselgeia*). Only during the past 30 years, as psychology has gained ever-increasing credibility within the Church, has it been suggested that masturbation is morally acceptable for a single person.

Is the modern Church's progressively open-minded, liberal position regarding sexuality simply a relaxation of stodgy, unnecessary rules of conduct from the Victorian age? Or could it be that today's moral laxity is further proof of the Church's relatively backslidden condition? While occasions do exist wherein believers remain needlessly old-fashioned regarding particular issues, for the most part it seems that Christendom has become enormously contaminated by the sexualized culture in which we live, following one step behind an increasing wave of decadence. In my opinion, the acceptance of masturbation by certain church leaders is a vivid illustration of this.

Seemingly, most of these relaxed standards have entered Christianity through the psychological community. Please understand that psychotherapy, by its very nature, is based more upon human empathy than biblical mandate. A counselor can sympathize so much with a person's struggles that he loses sight of God's expectation for holy living among His people. This approach can solidify itself in the counselor's heart if the power of God isn't actively at work in his counseling. Lacking any hope that the person can really overcome these overwhelming temptations, his only answer is one of acquiescence: The Lord understands that the habit of masturbation is too powerful for a young person to conquer. Therefore, it cannot be wrong.

Those with this mindset apparently overlook or minimize the truth of what Paul stated: "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." (I Corinthians 10:13) A counselor who condones a habit simply because it seems too strong to overcome demonstrates a lack of understanding and experience of God's power to set the captive free.

Be that as it may, there are a number of reasons why I believe masturbation is wrong for the believer. First and foremost, God created sex as a means for a married couple to physically express their love to one another. It is a very special act, providing the closest possible intimacy two people can enjoy together. As has already been stated, marital sex affords the opportunity to a husband and wife to unselfishly provide mutual pleasure. And, of course, it is also the practical means for a couple to have children. Underlying all of this is the lifelong commitment and deep devotion that only a married couple can share. This is God's idea of sexuality.

Our modern, pleasure-driven culture holds an entirely different mindset toward sex. Those who purpose to fill their lives with the temporal gratifications of this world view sex as simply one room in the vast pleasure palace of life. Masturbation is considered a person's right—as are nearly all the various forms of pleasure available in our day and age. The difference between God's kingdom mentality and the pervasive world mindset can best be summarized by the words of Jesus: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself. . . For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." (Luke 9:23-24) This is a perspective that worldly Christians refuse to embrace.

Whatever else may be said about masturbation, it is by its very nature a completely self-centered act. On a routine basis, the person isolates himself and enters into total self-indulgence. This kind of activity represents the very antithesis of the disciplined life Jesus expects from His followers and its selfishness is foreign to the Kingdom of God.

Furthermore, masturbation is driven by lust and fantasy. Sex is not meant to be a mechanical, physical activity comparable to relieving oneself in the bathroom. Inherently, it must involve another person—if not physically then mentally. To generate the sexual excitement necessary to bring oneself to orgasm requires that a person focus his thoughts upon someone else—a pornographic picture, the mental image of someone he has seen, or some sexual fantasy.

There are those who advocate fantasizing about some vague future mate as the solution to the masturbation dilemma. Of course, even if this notion was acceptable to God it is pure folly to think it is something that can actually be done. A young man has a hard enough time controlling his thoughts in everyday life. When he enters the highly

sensuous mindset that materializes as he begins to touch himself sexually, it is next to impossible.

The best way to help a young single man is by imparting to him a godly mindset. If a son sees the primary focus of his parents' lives revolving around pleasure, entertainment and self-indulgence, then it is only natural that he will develop those same values in his own life. On the other hand, if he sees his parents living consecrated and unselfish lives, he is likely to follow this pattern. My experience has been that when a young man is taught to discipline himself, consecrate his life to God and live unselfishly, the temptation to masturbate will hold very little power over him. He may experience failures and setbacks but will consistently fight to maintain a pure heart before the Lord.

Rather than conceding victory to stubborn habits, the godly counselor must do his utmost to spur his counselees on toward holiness and teach them to trust God to provide the grace in times of temptation.