

## Bio:

### Andy Robinson

Andy is a full time Lead Elder of Kings Church Horsham where he is a regular speaker. Andy is passionate about seeing people come to know Jesus for themselves. He loves reading the bible and is committed to faithfully preaching the "whole council of God" even when it is unpopular in today's politically correct society.



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## *Is Masturbation a Sin?*

*Looking to see if the bible has anything to say about  
Masturbation*

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# Looking to see if the bible has anything to say about Masturbation

## Introduction

One cannot be a youth pastor for any length of time and not be asked the “Masturbation” question. This seems to be the preoccupation not just of teenage boys but most men if we are honest. That said it is becoming a question some girls may ask but it is not anywhere as prolific an issue as it is for the male of the species.

This paper is designed to look at the question of masturbation and what the bible might have to say about it. Before we begin there are a couple of things I want to say before we start.

## Mature Content

I have no desire to be crude or crass but I will need to speak in an adult way about things of a sexual nature that may be unsuitable for the very young.

## Fundamental Assumptions

There are some basic assumptions that I am making about you the reader and your beliefs.

### Assumption 1 – You love Jesus

My fundamental assumption is that you love Jesus with all your heart, mind, soul and strength<sup>1</sup> and that it is your greatest desire to live your life for Him, to please Him by living a life worthy of His name, to fulfil His commands to you – To love God<sup>2</sup> & love people<sup>3</sup> and to go and share Jesus with everyone<sup>4</sup> you can either in word or deed.

### Assumption 2 – You believe in the inerrancy of the bible

I assume too that you believe that the bible is the inspired word of God and that it is, in its entirety, for our good, for our instruction, to help us live great lives for God<sup>5</sup>.

These assumptions allow us to read the bible and form our decisions on the basis of scripture. We can then avoid offence as we are simply professing the teaching of the bible and thus the word of God however “unpopular” that may be. We can avoid including our own personal preferences where the bible has clear instruction on what we must do even when that seems contrary to what we, or society and our culture, want.

## What do I mean by Masturbation?

Whilst this may appear obvious I do want to speak of it in a particular way so as not to have any conclusions discounted simply because of some exception. The context in which I speak of masturbation is the manual self pleasuring of yourself in a sexual way by purposefully stimulating your senses and/or sexual organs. It is not limited simply when doing so to the point of climax, but all that is involved in arriving at that point.

I am not speaking of rare and infrequent occasions when a medical specimen is required for infertility investigations or when validating the success, or not, of a vasectomy but the sexual arousal of oneself for the purpose of personal pleasure.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:27

<sup>2</sup> Mark 12:30

<sup>3</sup> Mark 12:31

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16

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## Direct Biblical References

Masturbation is not directly referenced in the bible. There is no “Thou shalt not ...” for this, some look to Matthew 5:30 “*If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off*” as justification not to do it. Equally the scripture “*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might*” (Ecclesiastes 9:10) is not a scripture to support it either.

## Principles not Rules

Given that there are no direct references to masturbation we are therefore moving into an area of biblical study that begins to look for principles we can apply rather than laws we must follow. As we examine scripture we find the Holy Spirit guiding us through the law to principles. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew Chapters 5-7 is a great example of this. Jesus takes the law and applies not the letter but the principle. Jesus takes the law – “Do not Murder<sup>6</sup>” and says that if you are angry with someone you will be under the same judgement as the murderer (Matt 5:21-22). The Sermon on the Mount is primarily concerned with matters of the heart. Jesus is saying “Where is your heart in all of this?” because he sees your heart and it is your heart that he is concerned with.

It is really important that we understand this as we look at some of the principles throughout the bible. We must examine our heart and motives as we seek to look for ways to be holy and set apart rather than ways to get around or to do as little as we can and still get by.

## Two Main Arguments

For me there are two main arguments in this debate for me. The first revolves around **lust** and the second around **oneness**.

### Lusting – with your eyes or your imagination

I am not suggesting that because masturbation might cause us to lust and lust<sup>7</sup> is clearly sinful that this therefore leads us to conclude that masturbation is a sin. I am saying that when masturbation takes place it is rarely, and in my experience and from the many, many discussions I have had with men of all ages I would go so far as to say it is never remote from lustful thoughts, imaginary fantasies and more commonly these days with the internet - pornography too. Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount clearly and directly apply – If you look lustfully, either with your natural eyes or your mind’s eye, then you are committing adultery with her/him in your heart. If you tell me that you don’t have lustful thoughts and simply think about tractors or something then one might argue that you have bigger problems than those we are discussing here!

Jesus clearly explained that if we are lusting then we are committing adultery in our heart and Jesus clearly condemns this as sinful<sup>8</sup> thus, because I believe it is almost impossible to masturbate without lusting in some way or other, I believe that masturbation would therefore be wrong.

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<sup>6</sup> Exodus 20:13, Deut 5:17

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 5:27-30

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 5:27-28

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## Oeness

Let us remember that sex and all the amazing sensations associated with sexual intimacy were created by God and it was good. He created it for us to enjoy, allowing us to reproduce, for our pleasure and enjoyment and to produce **ONENESS**.

In Genesis 2:24 it says *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become **one flesh**”*

Sex and all its associated acts and pleasures were created by God to be enjoyed by a husband and his wife together. To take part in elements of this process by one’s self if you are single, or in a way that does not produce oneness when remote from your spouse, if married, is, I believe, a distortion of Gods plan.

Let me be clear ONENESS is not ONE (being on one’s own), but TWO becoming ONE. Any and all sexual experiences that produce ONENESS within the context of marriage between one man and one woman are legitimate. Thus any sexual experience outside that context is not legitimate because it is outside of the context within which God designed and planned it to occur.

## Conclusion

If you consider sin to be doing things that God has said not to (Lust), or doing things outside the context or environment that God intended and communicated to us (Oeness) – Then yes, I would consider masturbation not to be a legitimate act. Another term for masturbation is self gratification, and the clue is in the name. It is the gratifying one’s self and is not about producing oneness between a husband and a wife but personal sexual pleasure apart from one’s wife – assuming one is even married.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### Doesn't Onan in the Old Testament show that Masturbation is a sin?

This is a very old argument that looks to show that masturbation is a sin supported by scripture. THIS ARGUMENT IS RIDICULOUS! If you read the passage you will quickly see what it was that Onan did and it has nothing to do with supporting this argument. His act was a sinful act, but his action was not that of masturbation. His sin was that of using and cheating on Tamar in a way that was clearly wrong. He was supposed to produce an heir for his dead brother by sleeping with his dead brother's wife and producing a son. Instead Onan took advantage of Tamar by sleeping with her and enjoying the pleasures of sex with her, but rather than ejaculating inside Tamar in order to get her pregnant he pulled out at the last moment and "Spilled his semen on the ground"<sup>9</sup>

To use this argument as a prohibition on masturbation is simply ludicrous!

### There is a biological need to ejaculate semen from the body

This again is a very thinly veiled argument to support masturbation. First of all the body is well able to expel any fluids it no longer needs without our help. Most guys are familiar with the concept of "wet dreams" where the body will expel any semen or seminal fluid that it does not need.

Additionally there is evidence to suggest that when one masturbates the body produces more semen to replace that which was used and so increases the "need" to masturbate – if that is a legitimate reason to masturbate in the first place. So this too is a bogus reason as it increases the creation of the very thing the argument is looking to use to justify the act in the first place.

### What about people whose spouse is often away?

As I mentioned in the section on ONENESS above we need to ask the question is the process of masturbation producing oneness or is it a selfish act carried out for one's own personal pleasure. If a couple who are apart chose to take part together in "phone sex" together, or even in this modern age "video messaging" whilst apart then personally I do not think that would be prohibited. Again one might ask in this context about having and taking pictures, or videos of your spouse, to look at while you are away. Again, if this were in the context of marriage and oneness then again I would say that would be OK provided that it worked for you both. If one party is not comfortable then this will not produce oneness and should therefore be avoided. I would add a further precaution that whatever material you produce that it is VERY secure and that no one else can access it. Additionally if the husband particularly has had a previous addiction to pornography I would caution you about going down this path as it would, most likely, cause you to move into an area that would be wise to avoid.

### What about mutual masturbation or masturbation as foreplay?

This falls very clearly into the ONENESS argument. Any sexual act, be it mutual or otherwise, that produces oneness between a one man and one woman in the context of marriage is legitimate. If both parties enjoy mutual masturbation as foreplay and this is part of "the two becoming one flesh" then this is fine. Equally if one or other party enjoys masturbating as a "turn on" for their spouse and again this is enjoyed by both

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<sup>9</sup> Gen 38.9

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husband and wife as a prelude to the “two becoming one flesh” then again I would see this as perfectly legitimate.

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*The thoughts, opinions and conclusions expressed in this paper are my own. As an open handed issue other elders within Kings Church Horsham may not necessarily hold the same view.*

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I will add to this paper a Frequently Asked Questions section (FAQ) should I get asked the same question via my blog at <http://radicallife.org.uk/?s=masturbation>