

Calvary Chapel East Anaheim
3456 E. Orangethorpe Ave.
Anaheim CA 92806
(714) 993-5233

Lust: Is there Victory?

by Pastor Bob Kopeny

What is lust? The Greek word used in the Bible is "epi-thoomia" and means a controlling desire. It speaks of a craving or any desire which is outside the perfect will of God for your life. I want to focus on sexual lust as I feel this is one of the most formidable foes Christian men deal with. Here is why:.

1. It is a "secret sin"

It is a sin of the thoughts rather than something someone does in a specific act. This means you could sit in a worship service singing to God but lusting in your heart.

2. It is an unconfessed sin.

Too often because of the sensitive and embarrassing nature of lust, a person often tells no one they are having problems. Therefore, they do not receive the encouragement and prayer support they need for victory.

3. It is impossible to avoid all forms of temptation.

Due to the world we live in with its immodest dress styles, exploitation of sexuality in the media and loose moral values, it is practically impossible to go "un-tempted" in this area.

4. It is addictive.

Lust and accompanying masturbation is self-perpetuating. The more you do it, the more you want to do it and with lessening enjoyment. It becomes an addictive bondage much like drugs or alcohol. The human sex drive is a powerful force and when stimulated gives physical pleasure that is extremely difficult to say "No" to.

5. There are those in the world and even the church who teach that both lust and moderate masturbation are normal and healthy.

This adds to the confusion. The guilt is actually God given and not to be ignored or suppressed.

What does the Bible teach about lust and masturbation?

The Bible nowhere talks directly about masturbation but it does speak of several very relevant issues which are connected to it. Jesus spoke clearly about lust when he said: "Everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Mt. 5:28). In other words, your thoughts, which if acted out would be sin, are sin in themselves. When you lust in your heart toward another person, you are mentally allowing or causing yourself to be stimulated and are also considering thoughts out of God's will for you.

What about masturbation?

Some have said, because the Bible is silent on this issue, we should be too! That is baloney! I think it is past time to give strong Biblical counsel on this subject. Just because the Bible nowhere addresses "speeding" in its pages, we are not silent about driving 110 mph in a 55 mph zone. The Bible does teach subjection to existing authority (including speed laws) see Romans 13:1-4.

#1. Masturbation is wrong because it is selfish.

Masturbation takes an experience designed for an intimate expression between man and wife and uses it for self-gratification. Sex was designed for expressing unity, for procreation, and also for pleasure. However, it was not intended biologically or theologically to be done as a solo! This has implications for husbands who masturbate while lusting after their wives - even this is not a "sanctified" experience.

#2. Masturbation is addictive.

God doesn't want His children in bondage to anything (1 Cor. 6:12). Even if masturbation was not sin in itself, it would be wrong because it brings us into bondage. Many testify that they don't want to do it but they cannot stop it. Furthermore, masturbation is "self-feeding". It is an endless cycle.

#3. Masturbation is intimately tied to sexual fantasy, lust, and pornography.

Masturbation is practiced, in fact, facilitated by mental imaging NOT just by physical manipulation. Therefore, you cannot examine this issue apart from lust which is already identified as "sin".

#4. Masturbation is destructive to healthy sexual expression.

Masturbation is an artificial sexual experience. It can cause a person to develop a difficult time relating sexually to their mate. It is opposite to a healthy, loving sexual expression which requires patience and a desire to please your mate.

***A myth believed by many young people is that when they get married they will stop masturbating because they won't "need" to do it. This is a lie. Statistics prove that it doesn't stop because it is NOT the same as engaging in a sexual relationship with your mate and because people (even married people) can still be selfish.*

OK! OK! But How do I have victory?

If you are like most Christians you probably don't need to be told that lust and masturbation are "sinful". You need to know that they are "conquerable". So many have asked forgiveness so often that they have given up and resigned themselves to the fact that they won't have victory this side of heaven. This is not true if you will commit yourself to having God's resources and not your own. Here are some essential Biblical truths you must understand.

1. Apart from Christ, you can do nothing.

You're probably saying "I know, I know!". This is where you start. Victory over lust, like any other sin comes as a result of abiding in Christ. Satan's motto is "Divide and Conquer". A Christian's motto is "Abide and Conquer". The answer is not in trying to suppress your desires but in allowing God to fill you with His desires.

2. It's start is in the heart.

Jesus makes it clear that the place of lust's origin is our heart. He said "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications..." (Mt. 15:19). If you begin anywhere else, you haven't got a chance.

3. The eye is the gateway for much stimulation of thought.

You, therefore, must take great precautions in what you choose to look at. Job said "I have made a covenant with my eyes. How then could I gaze upon a virgin?"(Job 31:1).

4. God's forgiveness is complete and real every time we ask for it.

Isaiah says God promises to the truly repentant "I will remember their sins no more. When you say "God, I need your forgiveness, I did it again!" God says "What do you mean again?". He has chosen to put all your previous sins away from his dealing with you. Even when you can't forget the past, He does! Praise God!!

5. The Bible teaches "If you walk by the Spirit, you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). This is more than a beautiful promise, it is the key to victory over any sin you are ever in bondage to.

6. The scriptures say "Do not give the Devil an opportunity." (Eph.4:27) and again "Make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts..." (Rom. 13:14).

These are practical passages which require obedience and application.

7. When tempted, you either choose to enter into it or you resist it.

Jesus said, "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation". Temptation is something you feed as James said, "but each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lusts" (James 1:14). No temptation is beyond our ability to have victory (1Cor. 10:13).

With these truths, we can give a pattern for victory over lust:

1. Confess your bondage to the Lord.

Call it sin and ask and receive his forgiveness now and whenever you fail.

2. Ask God for His strength to overcome in this area. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit sayeth the Lord, this mountain will be removed!"

3. Ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit.

Jesus said if you ask for the Spirit's ministry, God will give it. It isn't based on feelings or phenomena but the promise of God. Receive it!

4. Walk by the Spirit.

This means a moment by moment "checking-in" with the Spirit's will and direction. It speaks of intimacy with the Holy Spirit and a desire not to grieve him by sinful thoughts or actions.

5. Guard your thoughts.

Don't entertain wrong thoughts. This is the key to victory. Perhaps 95% of the temptations you give in to are "self induced". You do it to yourself. Recognize the thought as wrong and discard it. Stand against it in Jesus' name by going to prayer immediately. If you watch and pray, you will not enter into it. God's word teaches us to "Bring every thought into captivity to Christ." So round 'em up! (2 Cor. 10:5).

6. Get your eyes on Jesus.

For most men and some women, this application will be very hard but essential to victory. Many men have an insatiable habit of searching continuously for someone to lust after. They sexually evaluate every woman they look at. If this is you, you must stop! You are in bondage to a habit which will destroy your mental chastity. Billy Graham says "It's not the first look that gets you, it's the second one." As Job put it, it is the choice to "gaze" that is sin.

If your mind is used to this pattern of looking at every woman to evaluate their "lustworthiness" then you need your mind renewed (Rom. 12:2). Just like with an alcoholic or heroin addict, you can't just cut down to fewer episodes. You must completely stop!

This will take vigilance. As you leave your home in the morning, driving or walking, don't let your eyes fix on anyone that you might begin lusting after. Guys, if you see a girl walking down the sidewalk, before you even focus your eyes to see if she's old or young, cute or unattractive, move your attention off her and force yourself from looking again at all.

You will be doing two Biblical things:

1. Not giving your mind any provision for thinking lustful thoughts.

2. *Renewing your mind by teaching it who is boss. Paul said "I buffet my body and make it my slave!" You need to start controlling your body, rather than your bodily appetites controlling you (1 Cor 9:27).*

7. *Get and stay Accountable!*

The Bible says "Confess your faults to one another, and pray for one another that you might be healed." (James 5:16) Get one or more friends to ask you specifically about this area on a weekly basis and commit to pray for victory for you. "Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you"
(Romans 6:12-14) NASB

Halleluia!