



TAMING THE TIGER

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This booklet was written for young men in their teens and early twenties. It is intended to be a discussion of sexuality as it affects young men.

The Christian church has been tragically silent on this subject and has not given guidance or encouragement to parents on how to speak with their children about sexuality. Nor has the church said much of help to young men about sexuality other than to say, "No, don't do it."

This leaves young men greatly confused and frustrated. They have this surging power within them but find little help on how to manage it or properly appreciate it. If they go by outward signs from their spiritual elders, sex is embarrassing, dirty and a subject to be avoided in "spiritual" conversations.

My hope is that the process of talking about sexuality will help young men be more comfortable with the terminology of sexuality and seek out trusted adults to talk with about this important subject.



I. WHY TALK ABOUT SEX?

"It's a boy!"

Most likely that is how you were greeted when you were born. Until that time you were an "it." But when your parents saw you, you had identity as a boy. You were male and would grow up to be a man.

When you were born, the first thing your parents looked for was movement or a cry. This was a signal that there was life. Then they looked at your genitals to see if you were a boy or a girl. Right from the beginning, your identity as a male marked you significantly.

You are now a young man. You are a sexual being.

That is something to celebrate. Your sexuality is an important part of who you are.

But after telling everybody, "It's a boy," maybe your parents didn't have much more to say to you about your sexuality. If you asked questions, they looked embarrassed and changed the subject. Now you're wondering, "Is there something wrong with me that people don't want to talk about?"

One man I know still feels deeply hurt that his father never discussed his sexuality with him. When he was twelve his mother self-consciously gave him a book on sexual development and suggested that he read it. That was the sum total of the direction his parents gave him on sex. He did learn the physical realities about sex through books, sex education classes and peers. But the emotional stigma that his parents left him—that sex is too difficult or too embarrassing to talk about—has stuck with him all his life.

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this booklet to give you a starting point for talking about your sexuality. What I hope will happen is that you will sit down with your father or another trusted man, read this book and discuss it together.

Here is what you will find in this booklet. First, you will find a brief history of how the Christian church has viewed sexuality down through the years. Then we will look at the Bible, especially Genesis, for God's design in making us sexual beings. We will discuss sexual anatomy and development, especially what happens during puberty. Then we will talk about some of the sexual temptations, especially masturbation, fantasy and pornography. We will discuss some of the deviant sexual behaviours that are common today, like voyeurism, pedophilia and exhibitionism. We will

discuss male-female relationships and explore some guidelines on honouring God in these relationships.

I hope these discussions will help you see what a terrific potential you have in your God-given sexuality. It is not something to be ashamed of, not something to keep hidden in a dark corner. Nor is it something to use as a dominating power over others. It can be a powerful source of blessing to yourself and others if used as God intended.

If your thoughts, worries and concerns about sex are kept hidden, they only serve to bind you.

Knowing the truth about your sexuality can give you power and freedom. Jesus said, *“If you abide in my word ... you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32).

The truth of this verse applies to sexuality as much as to any other area of life. The power of sex is bondage when kept in the dark.

But when it is brought out in the open and discussed freely with people who have proper care and concern, it can be freeing and empowering. The pain and shame of guilt can be lifted.

Knowing the truth about your sexuality can give you power and freedom.

I want to tell you about my youth. I grew up in a farm home where no one talked about sex. I wasn't even taught to call my penis by its proper name. All that I ever remember hearing was that I wasn't supposed to play with it.

When I was seven years old I was sexually abused by an older neighbour boy. There was touching of each other's genitals and mutual masturbation. I knew there was something wrong about it, yet it was pleasurable. It was something I did not want, yet I liked it. I had a lot of ambivalent feelings about the experience. The sexual abuse stopped after a year or so.

However, I was left with an awkward sexual desire that I did not know how to handle. Nor did I know how to talk about it with any of my family or any other adult that I knew. My adolescent and teen years were marked by compulsive masturbation, a strong sexual fantasy world and at times sex with animals.

As I look back now, I see a very lonely boy looking for that momentary buzz to relieve the lonely feelings. I was wishing for a relationship with others but continually short-circuiting that desire by turning to self-stimulation, thinking that it gave me all I needed. I kept going through the cycle of increasing desire until I finally gave in to masturbation. Then I felt very guilty and ashamed and promised myself that I would not do it again, only to go through the cycle of building pressure and finally giving in again.

Sadly, I never talked to anyone about sexuality, and no one made the effort to talk to me, to inquire

about what was happening to me as I was growing up. I lived in a world of shadows, guesses and half-truths regarding sex. I did not know if I was normal or not. How much better life might have been if I had just had a trusted adult that I could talk to about my sexuality.



II. WHY DON'T CHRISTIANS WANT TO TALK ABOUT SEX?

The history of the Christian church shows many twists and turns with regard to human sexuality.

The New Testament church affirmed sexuality within the context of morality. St. Paul and other church leaders of the time viewed the human body as created and approved by God. Jesus saw fit to take on human flesh. The body, not just the soul, is a part of the good original creation of God. Early church leaders saw marriage and procreation as divinely blessed because Jesus himself blessed the wedding at Cana with his presence. The Apostle Paul said that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and that the believer is to honour God with his body. In saying this, he tied together the body and soul. The book of Hebrews says that the marriage bed shall be honoured by all and kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral (Hebrews 13:4). Thus marriage was held in high regard, affirming sex and at the same time demanding high morality.

In the third century changes came into the church. Celibacy (remaining unmarried) became an ideal to follow. Many people began to view sex as connected only with the lower evil nature. A church father of the third century affirmed marriage to be of God, but he maintained that sexual intercourse ought to be practiced only for the purpose of procreation (making children).

Augustine was an influential church leader of the fifth century who took a dim view of sexuality. Sexual intercourse not only transmits life from one generation to the next, but it also transmits original sin, he taught. In addition, sexual intercourse is linked to passion. Therefore, every act of coitus (sexual intercourse) is touched by evil. The sex act, even within marriage, is linked to lust. Its only redeeming feature is that it has procreation as its goal.

The middle ages raised celibacy to its highest point with the increase in monasteries. Marriage was de-emphasized. But the Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries brought marriage back into the church. Marriage once again was a place not only for procreation but also for living out the relational aspect

of the husband-wife bond, even the sexual enjoyment of husband and wife for each other.

In our present age, sex has been secularized. Sex has become a private matter and is no longer viewed as having any bearing on life beyond the area of personal likes and dislikes. Sex is viewed now as private activity for the purpose of pleasure.

The evangelical church of our century has said little about sexuality other than to place prohibitions on it. Especially to the youth there has been little positive teaching. The young people have been left mostly on their own. Church leaders have not taught about sexuality. Parents have not been encouraged or helped to teach their children about sex. Thus the youth growing up have had to find what they could from secular sources, very often from peers and the poorly informed general knowledge of the street. Sex has been laced with much shame and guilt.

Some of you, I am sure, have many of the same questions about your sexuality that I did. When it feels safe, ask these questions.



III. FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

Our bodies are marvelously made. The reproductive systems of men and women are complex and wonderful. We will look at these systems. Then we will discuss how a baby develops into an adult. We will talk about puberty, the time of life when you become fertile and physically capable of producing children.

I hope this discussion will give us all a common vocabulary to use in talking more about our sexuality.

The male genitals

Testes: glands that produce sperm cells

Sperm: the tiny male cell that unites with the egg to start a new baby

Scrotum: the sack that contains the testes

Epididymus: tubules on top of the testes that collect and store sperm

Vas deferens: slender tube that carries sperm from the testes to the base of the urethra.

Prostate gland: gland at the base of the bladder that supplies much of the seminal fluid

Urethra: tube through the penis, through which urine and semen leave the body

Penis: male sex organ that becomes hard and erect when sexual stimulation causes it to fill with blood

Shaft: the body of the penis

Glans: the nerve-rich tip of the penis, sensitive during sexual arousal

Size of penis: average when "limp," about 9 cm long and 9.5 cm around; when erect, about 6 cm long and 12 cm around

The female genitals

Ovaries: the two small organs that produce eggs and hormones

Follicle: a pocket of estrogen-secreting cells in the ovary that produces an egg

Fallopian tube: the tube through which eggs are transported from the ovary to the uterus, about 10 cm long. Fertilization of the egg normally takes place in one of these tubes.

Uterus: (also called the womb) the sac-like organ in which the fertilized egg is implanted and the fetus develops during gestation

Cervix: the lower end of the uterus that opens into the vagina

Vagina: the "birth canal" that extends from the uterus to the vulva

Vulva: the external female genitals which include the mons pubis, the outer and inner labia (lips) and the clitoris

Clitoris: the small, highly sensitive erectile tissue located just below the point where the minor labia come together at the top of the vulva. Its only known function is to provide female sexual pleasure.

Hymen: a layer of tissue that partially covers the vaginal entrance of most females at birth

Conception of a baby

Conception of a child is a wonderful gift from God. When a man and woman have sexual intercourse, the man ejaculates semen containing many sperm cells into the woman's vagina. These sperm cells travel through the cervix into the uterus and then into the Fallopian tube. If this happens during the fertile time of the

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woman's menstrual cycle, there might be an egg in the Fallopian tube. If one of the sperm cells finds the egg and unites with it, fertilization takes place.

The fertilized egg, now called an embryo, begins dividing and making more cells as it continues down the Fallopian tube. After six or seven days it implants in the lining of the uterus, which by that time is at the peak of readiness to receive the egg. A sac forms around the embryo, connecting it to the mother's body. From this point on, the mother will supply the growing baby with nutrients and excrete the baby's waste products.

The growing baby is now called a *fetus*. At first it looks the same whether it is male or female. After about seven weeks it begins to take on male or female characteristics. If it received an X-chromosome from its father, it will be a female. If it received a Y-chromosome, it will be a male. At eight weeks the fetus has a pair of *gonads*, which may become either ovaries or testes, and the beginnings of external genitals.

Between weeks eight and twelve, the differentiation between male and female is completed. From this time on, the rest of the sex organs begin to develop, either male or female. By the time the baby is born, its reproductive system has the form that it will have for the next ten to fourteen years.

Puberty

This is the next major step in sexual development. It is the time when young people become sexually mature and physically capable of producing babies.

Female Maturation

Sometime between eight and fourteen years of age, a girl's ovaries begin to produce a hormone called *estrogen*. This hormone triggers a lot of physical changes. Her uterus enlarges and the Fallopian tubes increase in width and length. The vagina and clitoris grow in size, as do the labia. The breasts begin to grow and project out from her body. There is usually a growth spurt, and the hips begin to widen.

Several years after these signs, the girl will have her first menstrual period. This first period is called *menarche*. *Menstruation* is the process in which the uterus sheds the lining it built up for the fertilized egg. If no fertilized egg implants in it, the lining, along with the blood that is in it, comes loose and flows out through the vagina. This can be absorbed by a sanitary napkin or tampon and discarded. The average age of menarche is 12.5 years, but it ranges widely from nine to seventeen years.

The menstrual cycle can be very irregular for the first few years. Eventually it settles down to a cycle of 23 to 32 days. For some women the cycle is a regular number of days. For others it can be quite irregular.

Male Maturation

For males, the beginning of puberty usually arrives later than for females. Male puberty usually occurs somewhere between the ages of ten and fifteen. The pituitary gland and hypothalamus begin secreting hormones that stimulate the testes to begin producing *testosterone* (the male hormone) and sperm cells.

The penis and the testes begin to grow, and pubic hair begins to grow around the genitals. Body height and strength increase rapidly. Several years later hair grows under the arms and on the face.

Testosterone is also responsible for a substantial increase in oil-producing glands under the skin. This causes pimples and blackheads (acne). Testosterone also stimulates the larynx, which causes a boy's voice to break at around age thirteen or fourteen. By the time he is fifteen or sixteen, he has the deeper voice of an adult male.

Pubescent boys also begin to experience *nocturnal emissions*. While they are asleep they expel semen containing sperm. Boys are capable of erection and *orgasm* (sexual climax) from birth, but they do not ejaculate semen until the testes enlarge at puberty (Allgeier, 1995).

As a boy develops through puberty, he may be in for some surprises and even some frightening experiences if no one has instructed him about puberty. There is the story of one young boy who had a sudden confusing experience with puberty. It was his first year of high school. The teachers had decided that the students should learn to dance. They would be taught foxtrot, waltz and slow step. The students could choose their own partners. The boys were lined up on one side of the school hall and the girls on the other. When some one started the music, the boys ran across the hall and scrambled for the girl of their choice. This particular boy got the girl he wanted.

The couples took up their dance positions, hands in all the right places, and began dancing, slow, slow, quick, slow. This boy held his girl a little too close. The next thing he knew there was a growing wet patch on the front of his pants. He was very embarrassed and fled the scene. When the dance was over his friend went to look for him. He found him locked in the toilet, shivering. He didn't know what had hit him. Puberty had arrived with a bang (Hart, 1994).

Sexual desire that comes with sexual maturity is a physical law. It should not be treated as something shameful or as a dirty, dark secret. Reliable information about sexuality, and empathy and openness on the part of concerned adults (parents especially), are most helpful.

The sex drive is a part of nature, but what we do with it is learned. What excites the male, how it excites,

and what satisfies this excitement are primarily taught to the brain.

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IV. WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR MALE SEXUALITY

Your sexual desire is a powerful force within you.

God does not make junk. But where did it come from? Is it good or is it bad? Was it a mistake?

What should you do with it?

God does not make junk. The Creation account in the Bible gives insights into these questions. The aim of this session is to explore how God created man as a sexual being and how you as a man can use your sexuality as a blessing, not a curse.

You are a person with a body, not just a soul. You are flesh and blood. You are male. There is no other way for you to exist than as the particular male person that you are (Grenz, 1990).

The creation story in Genesis 1 tells how mankind was created in God's image, in the likeness of God. In Genesis 1:26-27, God is recorded as saying, "*Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*"

A number of points are important in this account. You are created in the likeness of God. God created human beings male and female. God gave male and female the position of ruling over the creation he had made, the animals, the fish and the plants.

You were created in the image of God. Your maleness, and that includes your physical sexual characteristics, is in some way a reflection of who God is. Your physical sexual being is not dirty and shameful. It is, rather, good and highly esteemed of God. Certainly your sexual parts are to be kept private and handled discreetly. But they are to be honoured with great dignity as the very workmanship of God's hand.

You are a sexual being by divine design. Similarly, a woman with all her sexual parts is highly valued by God. She displays to the world unique characteristics

of God that only she as a woman can show.

God has designed you as a male person. Your sexuality should not be denied, misplaced, or replaced. You are a sexual being by divine design.

When you read the creation account in Genesis 2, you see more detail on how man and woman fitted into God's creation scheme. After creating plants and animals, God created Adam and gave him the task of naming and ruling over the animals. Adam had the honour of participating with God, in a limited way, to put God's creation in order. Adam shared in God's creativity. Adam was called to be an *initiator* with creativity.

God saw that Adam was alone. He had no one to share human life with. God said that this was not good. So God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. He took a piece from Adam's side and from it created a *helper* for Adam. Adam saw her as a separate, unique person, full of mystery and intrigue, yet enough like him that he could call her "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." He named her Eve.

Genesis 2 ends with the statement that Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed. Their whole being, including their sexuality, was totally open to each other and there was no shame. But in Genesis 3 we read that Adam and Eve disobeyed God their Creator. When they committed this sin, a lot of things changed. This sin had a profound effect on their lives and on their sexuality.

After this sin of disobedience, God came looking for Adam. Adam and Eve were afraid and hid from God, who found them anyway. Adam explained that he hid because he was afraid, being naked. In his shame, he lost the courage and dignity that he had at first. He shifted the blame for his disobedience onto his companion Eve. He told God that it was the woman God had given him who led him to disobey. Adam did not take responsibility for his own actions. God put Adam and Eve out of the garden and prescribed gender-specific punishments for both of them.

For Adam, the ground, which up until then had borne only pleasant plants, began to bear briars and thistles. Adam's work, which had been a pleasure, now became painful. He had to work and sweat hard to be a provider for his family.

Adam, and the male descendants who followed him, began to use their superior physical strength to dominate their weaker wives and children, trying to prove that they had enough of the "right stuff" to secure their place in life. Women suffered because they were often the victims of men's dominance.

Ever since man was expelled from the garden, there has been the desire to restore the beauty and perfection that was lost. Men have always wanted to get back to where there is total pleasure and satisfaction. This has had far-reaching effects on men and their sexuality. They have used many perverted ways to reach for the ultimate high in sexual satisfaction. Many of the sexual hangups and disorders that men experience are rooted in this deep desire to find that sense of fulfillment that our ancestors had in the Garden of Eden and to find relief from the pains, the struggles, the anxieties and the disappointments of daily living.

The strong pull of pornography, of sexual fantasy, of masturbation, and of sexual deviations is the male way of trying to cope with this desire to regain the perfect fulfillment that has been denied since Adam was sent out of the Garden of Eden. As a man you want to

Ever since being put out of the garden, men have longed for the fulfillment which was lost there.

make a difference. You want to be connected, to relate to what is going on around you. But that takes work. There are “thorns, thistles and weeds” you must pull to keep relationships growing. When a man meets discouragements, when he is not able to make a difference in his world, when relationships are hard to keep going, he turns to the quick fix. Often that quick fix is in sex. He goes to a fantasy world, an unreal world where he has power to get that quick buzz that comes from sexual arousal. He has full control and does not have to work at relating to anyone else.

These twisted views of sex were not what man was created for. God created man in His image. He created man with the “right stuff” to relate to a woman, to use his sexuality properly and courageously.

You cannot run away from your manhood. It belongs to you and is a part of you.

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V. LUST, FANTASY AND MASTURBATION

Sex can be a confusing thing for a man. It was designed to be a good thing, but so often it is a seemingly unmanageable force that leads a man into great difficulty. The turning point is in the mind and

what you do with sexual desires.

In Christian circles lust is considered sin. Some Christian leaders teach that the way to control lust is to eliminate all thoughts of sex. This teaching denies that males are sexual beings, that boys go through puberty and become young men. It is foolish to identify every erotic (sexual) thought as sinful lust (Smedes, 1994). There is a difference between the sexual attraction for another person and being dominated by a desire for that person's body.

Jesus said that “...*anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has committed adultery with her in his heart*” (Matthew 5:28). What did he mean? Did he mean that if there was any sexual response or appreciation of a woman, that would be the sin of adultery?

In English, when we use the word lust we usually think of strong sexual fantasies. The Greek word *epithumeo* that was used for lust in Matthew 5:28 means something more than sexual desire. Sometimes this Greek word was used in the Bible for good desires. For example, Luke 16:21 uses this word to tell of the desire of a starving beggar to be fed with crumbs from a rich man's table. This same word is sometimes translated “covet” in the English Bible. This is closer to the meaning that Jesus was trying to get at regarding lust. We want things we do not have. We are not content with what we have and so we are driven by a desire for more.

This is what Jesus was talking about. In your heart of hearts you want someone else's sexual life. You are not grateful for what God has given you. A strong feeling almost like sickness overcomes you as you think about what you desire. For example, Amnon in 2 Samuel 13:2 desired his beautiful sister Tamar so much that “he became sick.”

Lust is more than just liking. It is the will to possess. Lust turns good things into objects of worship. In this way lust is closely linked to idolatry.

How can a young man put lust to death? Many ways have been suggested. Remove all stimuli from one's surroundings. Take cold showers. Exercise. Quote scripture verses. Stay busy.

All these methods can be helpful, but they do not work in the end. They may push lust back for a while, but they do not eliminate it. The human mind is so strong that it can use almost anything as an object of lust.

The only way to win the battle is to replace the lustful desire with a stronger desire. That desire is for the person and things of the Lord Jesus Christ. “*Since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on*

things above" (Colossians 3:1). Only then are you empowered to put to death lust and fleshly sins. What is happening is that you are replacing one desire with a greater desire, that of communion and intimate relationship with God.

In putting lust to death, a man must not kill his desire. Sexual desire is part of the longing that leads you to seek a marriage partner. The desire for sexual life with that marriage partner is a God-given desire (Stafford, 1995). "...*Rejoice with the wife of your youth... let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love,*" Solomon says in Proverbs 5:18-19.

Good fantasy, which dreams of graduating from high school, finding a mate and starting a family, can be motivational. We must not confuse this with destructive sexual fantasies which think obsessively about sexual adventures, "creating a sexualized, seductive atmosphere that you prefer to keep a secret fantasy" (Schaumberge, 1992).

Many men have highly developed sexual fantasies, creating in their minds explicit images and scenarios of females in sexually appealing situations. These fantasies may involve mind pictures of nude females or mentally undressing females. They may imagine elaborate scenarios of sexual exploits with females. These may be strangers or women known to the fantasizer.

Here is one man's story.

"At about age thirteen or fourteen I became fascinated with the female body and centre fold magazine pictures of nude females. I began masturbating a lot and I started fantasizing about women I actually knew. I'd look at pornographic pictures, then I would overlay those pictures with women I actually knew. After a while I constructed an entire 'tape library' of imaginary fantasy tapes about various women.

"As time went on, masturbation became less frequent. But I was constantly looking for images, looking at women and tucking away mental pictures. I was always hunting for a glimpse down a blouse or up a skirt, always looking for prospects around me. I never acted it out to the point of adultery or of making sexual advances toward someone. But there was this secret sexual fantasy life always looking for satisfaction, even though I knew that it couldn't and wouldn't satisfy.

"This fantasy gallery had a very negative effect on my wife after we were married. Often I hurt her by trying to improve her body, by trying to get her to look more like those playmate pictures. I was trying to feed those inner desires for the perfect body type. Even

more seriously, when we made love I'd use her body as a launching pad for mental sexual adventures, just as if she weren't even there. I was using her body to zoom me off into my own little world. I wasn't making love with her at all. I was really making love with myself" (Powlison, 1995).

This story shows the damage of twisted sexual fantasy. We all suffer to some degree the pain of loneliness and have a great capacity for intimacy. We want the unending bliss of total oneness. In a twisted way, sexual fantasy conjures up a perfect world of love and tenderness, except that it is a totally self-serving world, a worship of self. Fictional fantasy fuels unmet desires for intimate relationships and loses touch with reality.

Quite often fantasy and masturbation are closely tied together. In a recent study by Masters, Johnson and Kolodny, it was found that about half the teenaged boys in the study used fantasy with masturbation (reported in Hart, 1994).

Masturbation is a secretive activity. Most people don't want to talk about it openly. It is surrounded by a lot of shame and embarrassment. In the 18th and 19th centuries, masturbation was viewed as the cause of insanity, loss of memory and shortened life span. That view has changed dramatically among present day secular sex researchers and writers. Most now condone masturbation.

Contemporary research on masturbation finds that about 90% of males have experienced it (Allgeier, 1995). This compares very closely to a study among Christian men and adolescents conducted by Hart in 1994. He found that a little over 90% of his sample had experienced masturbation. He also found that masturbation usually began in the early to middle teens and carried on with decreasing frequency until well past mid-life (Hart, 1994).

The big question for Christian men and teenaged boys is, "Is masturbation right or wrong? Is it sin?"

In seeking an adequate answer to this question, conscientious Christians are left in a quandary. The Bible is absolutely silent on the subject of masturbation. It neither condemns nor condones it.

Most contemporary behavioural scientists and sex researchers give either passive approval or outright encouragement to masturbation. Among contemporary Christian writers and thinkers there is a whole range of positions. Some view it as normal and essentially enhancing to a person's sexual well-being. Others view it as acceptable if under control. Still others believe it is downright sinful.

Christians who favour masturbation argue that it has no physical ill effects. It is a safe way to explore and enhance one's own sexuality. Nocturnal emissions are

very common. Since there is such a high percentage of males who masturbate, it may be meeting a human biological need. Since the Bible has no condemnation for masturbation, why set up a case for guilt and shame where none exists?

Those who condemn masturbation usually take one of two viewpoints. One group claims that though masturbation is not itself sinful, it is a sin to be controlled or enslaved by masturbation. The other group sees masturbation as bad because it is a controlling force in a person's life and is connected with lust. The official Catholic church position condemns masturbation but makes exception if the act is truly irresistible, as when it occurs in the semi-conscious, near-sleep state.

Other Christians fall somewhere in the middle, allowing for masturbation as long as it is not compulsive. Although compulsive masturbation is hard to define, a generally accepted understanding would include a state of underlying personal problems such as conflict, guilt, loneliness or anxiety. When masturbation is so frequent that it interferes with normal activities of life such as

Sex in the context of right relationships is blessed by God.

development of friends, school attendance or completion of work, then it is cause for concern.

To sum up this section, an appropriate Christian stand should keep the focus on ways in which the behaviour influences relationships. When inability to control a behaviour interferes with a right relationship with God or with people, then it is sinful. The behaviour should uphold sex in the context of right relationships, self control to avoid that which hinders right relationships, and God's grace, love, compassion and hope for those who struggle in the pursuit of right relationships (Sanford, 1994).

My own experience illustrates this truth. As I said before, masturbation was a frequent experience for me as a teen and young adult. I kept going through the cycle of building pressure to masturbate, masturbating, self-condemning guilt and shame, vowing not to do it again, and then going through the whole cycle again.

At one point, however, about age twenty-five, before I was married, I had an episode with masturbation, going through that same cycle. But then it was as if God were speaking to me. It came clearly to me that I was trying to control my sex drive and my relationship with God in my own strength. It was my effort and my pride that I was both idolizing and holding in contempt. I was keeping God at a distance. God was more concerned about our relationship than about masturbation.

I had to repent of a proud, self-sufficient attitude and give these to God. After that, masturbation did occur sometimes, but the frequency diminished to

almost zero. The important thing was that it became basically a non-issue. It was the pink elephant that faded away when I stopped using it as an issue over which to struggle with God.

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VI. PORNOGRAPHY AND DEVIANT SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

In this chapter we will consider pornography and some of the deviant sexual behaviours. These are behaviours that show an unhealthy and God-dishonouring attitude toward sex. They all have negative consequences, personally, interpersonally and in a relationship with God.

Pornography is obscene or licentious writing or pictures. It appeals to the sexual desire in a distorted and unhealthy way. Its appeal is primarily to men, most likely because men are more stimulated visually than are women. A University of Chicago study on sex in America in 1994 reported that the use of pornography is common among men. Forty-one percent of the men surveyed had done one of the following (Reported in Leadership, 1995):

- watched an X-rated movie
- visited a club with semi-nude or nude dancers
- purchased sexually explicit books, magazines, erotic devices or sex toys
- called a sex phone number.

Pornographic material is so available in our society that almost everyone has had contact with it. Even men raised in Christian homes, the group surveyed by Hart, reported a 91% rate of exposure to pornographic material.

Pornography appeals to sexual desire in a distorted and unhealthy way.

Seventy-one percent of the men in this survey reported that pornography had a destructive influence in their lives (Hart, 1994).

A man I know told me how when he was young his father used to have pornographic magazines around.

He would let his son look at them and just laugh and say, "Well, that's nature." When the boy was in his teens, the father would sometimes invite him to watch pornographic movies with him.

Now in his late thirties, that son is struggling to overcome sexual disorders and a string of unhappy and broken relationships with various women. Other factors besides pornography have contributed to these disorders, but pornography was definitely destructive.

The American Psychological Association stated that men subjected to long-term exposure to pornography, or to the sexual violence so often linked to pornography in the popular media, became desensitized to violence and were less sympathetic to rape victims. They also became more accepting of rape myths and of violent attitudes toward women (*APA Monitor*, reported in Hart, 1994).

Pornography is often associated with sexual violence.

On a 20/20 program (ABC-TV, January 19, 1993), a special report on pornography focused on a number of male university students who, although not having any sexual disorders, all felt that pornography in their adolescence had had negative effects on their lives. Pornography had been a kind of sex education, but the wrong kind. Here are some of the things this group of men had learned from the magazines they had looked at, traded and fantasized over.

- Women are sex objects.
- Males must push for sex and take control.
- Some of the pornography had been violent and forceful. Pain and sex go together, and the more the pain the better the sex.
- Women in pictures do not have a will of their own. They do not resist or talk back. It is much easier to get sex from pictures than from real women.
- Pornography taught them that all women want sex and are easy. You just have to push the right button. When a woman says no she doesn't mean it.

The men in the TV interviews all agreed that pornography had been destructive. Problems were noted in relating to real women, separated from the world of pornography. Real sexual experiences were often hampered by images and experiences with pornography (Hart, 1994).

Pornography depersonalizes women and it dehumanizes sex and sexual relationships. It causes men to look at women as sexual objects to be used for self-gratification.

Pornography tends to be addictive. In most instances, to get the same buzz it takes more

Pornography dehumanizes sex and it damages male-female relationships.

and more hard-core stuff. Breaking the pornography habit can be difficult. If you are trying to break free of it, here are some suggestions.

- Get rid of all your pornographic material.
- Change your habits to avoid stores that sell pornography. Stay away from places that provoke you sexually.
- Work hard on stopping your fantasies that have been related to pornography. Try to catch yourself when you fantasize about pornography.
- Find someone to be accountable to. Be honest in reporting your successes and failures.
- Avoid the trap of denying or repressing all sexual feelings. Some men, in the effort to stay clear of pornography, run from every hint of sexual arousal. Thus their normal relationships are hampered. Repressing sex does not make you safe. It just puts sex in a dark corner where, if anything, it is more dangerous.

You need to confront your sexuality. Be honest and keep your sexual feelings as much in the open as possible. Find other responsible people with whom you can discuss your sexuality. This gives the best chance of keeping your sexuality in control and receiving the long-term satisfaction that it can offer.

Be honest about your sexual feelings and discuss them with responsible people whom you can trust.

Sexual Perversions

There are a number of sexual perversions that you should know about. Most people do not approve of these. You may know someone who is engaged in one of these activities, or you may be tempted yourself. We will group these into invasive activities, those that violate another person's sexual boundaries, and non-invasive, those that do not.

Non-Invasive Activities

Fetishes. People who use fetishes obtain sexual excitement from an inanimate object or a particular part of the body. Fetishism is mostly a male activity and mostly involves items of women's clothing like bras, panties and shoes.

Transvestism. A transvestite is one who cross-dresses to the opposite sex for sexual stimulation. This is almost always a male. A transvestite usually does not reject his own gender.

Transsexuality. A transsexual is a biologically normal male or female who feels that he or she is a member of the opposite sex. Their psychological and emotional makeup sees self as more akin to the opposite sex. Some have surgery done to attempt to change their sexual organs to those of the opposite sex.

Zoophilia. This is sexual activity with animals. It is also known as bestiality.

Invasive Activities

Voyeurism. Voyeurs are also known as “Peeping Toms.” They obtain sexual arousal by observing people without their consent when they are undressed or engaged in sexual activity. Voyeurs are mostly men.

Exhibitionism. This is the act of exposing one’s genitals to an unwilling observer for sexual gratification. It is the shock effect on the victim that seems to be the response desired by the perpetrator.

Sexual sadism and masochism. Sadism is intentional infliction of pain or humiliation on another person for sexual excitement. Masochism is gratification through experiencing pain and humiliation. Sadism/Masochism is the whips and leather and chains stuff. It is usually done consensually. (Definitions are adapted from Allgeier, 1995).

Pedophilia. This is sexual contact with children for sexual gratification of the perpetrator. Most pedophiles are male.

If you know anyone engaged in these perversions, try to get him or her to a counsellor for help.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

No doubt you also have some knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases (STD’s). In the last ten years, AIDS has become a very frightening disease. It has no known cure and it almost always results in death after the symptoms become evident.

We will talk briefly about the more common STD’s to give you basic knowledge about them and to encourage you to avoid them.

About thirty years ago, medical researchers thought that the use of powerful antibiotics had brought STD’s close to extinction. However, STD’s have come back with renewed strength, due to new antibiotic-resistant disease strains, new viruses and more promiscuous life styles.

Bacterial STD’s

Common STD’s transmitted by bacteria are gonorrhea, syphilis and chlamydia. These can be treated with antibiotics.

Gonorrhea. In males this results in painful urination and smelly, thick, yellow urethral discharge, appearing two to ten days after sex with an infected person. If untreated, it can cause long-term infection of internal sexual organs and sometimes sterility.

Syphilis produces a hard, round, painless sore, or chancre, with raised edges, that appears two weeks to a month after contact with an infected person. If untreated, the external symptoms will disappear but the disease will cause long-term damage to internal organs and may eventually cause deafness, brain damage, heart failure or blindness.

Chlamydia is the most common STD in America. In males it produces a thin, relatively clear, whitish discharge and mild discomfort during urination one to three weeks after contact with an infected person. If untreated, it can cause long term damage to internal sexual organs, disrupting fertility. Babies born to infected mothers are at high risk for eye diseases.

Viral STD’s

Unlike bacterial infections, viral infections do not respond to antibiotics.

Herpes II (Genital Herpes) is transmitted by physical contact with an infected person. It produces small blisters on the genitals or vulva, developing three to seven days after sexual contact. After tingling, itching and creating a burning sensation, they break open and spread. There is no known cure for the virus. Herpes II can cause complications for pregnant women and long term damage to babies born to infected mothers. (Definitions from Allgeier, 1995).

AIDS stands for Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome. It is caused by an HIV virus that suppresses the body’s immune system. It is transmitted by an exchange of body fluids, either sexually or by blood transfusions. Symptoms are swollen lymph nodes; unexplained weight loss; loss of appetite; persistent fevers; chronic fatigue; bloody stools; unexplained diarrhea; skin rashes; easy bruising; persistent, severe headaches; chronic, dry cough not caused by smoking; whitish coating on tongue or throat. There is no cure for the HIV virus. Symptoms may take a long time (five to ten years) to show up. Death usually results from opportunistic diseases that attack a severely weakened system.

If you have any infections in the genital area, get them checked by a medical doctor. It may be embarrassing, but it is important. Sometimes the infections are common skin bacteria that are easily treated. The important thing is not to go through long periods of uncertainty and fear when you should be finding out what is going on with your body. And always remember that promiscuous sex can have some nasty

physical consequences that may even cause death.

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VII. CONCLUSIONS

As we come to our final session, we want to draw our thoughts and discussion to a positive conclusion.

Sexuality seems full of all kinds of dangers, both emotionally and physically. At the same time, in healthy, satisfying sexuality are found some of the deepest and most exhilarating joys of life.

In your teen and early adult years you are at your peak physically, and your hormones are at the most powerful level that they will ever be. But at the same time, unless you marry very young—and people are postponing marriage longer and longer—you are expected to go through this time of life without indulging in physical sexual relations. If you are trying to live a morally pure life, your big question in a male-female relationship is, how do you keep it God-honouring?

The wisdom of Proverbs says, "Above all, guard your heart, for it is the well-spring of life" (Proverbs 4:23). How can a young man guard his heart and at the same time be a channel of the love of God that He wants to pass through you to others? You want to become God's man for this life, not the "soft male" that the poet Robert Bly writes about, calling him "the man with no spark...life-preserving but not life-giving" (quoted in Dalbey, 1988).

Many men treat sex as an idol, something they worship but which in reality is dead. It is a place where men refuse to live for God's glory. Sex is presented in

A young man's sexuality can be an avenue of worship to God.

the Bible as a major way a man can express his submission to God. It is also a key area where a young man can express

his rebellion to God. Thus sexuality for a young man can actually be an avenue of worship to God.

Within Christian circles, much effort is given to preventing premarital sex. Abstinence from sexual intercourse before marriage is highly valued, and so it should be. But while the sexual value upheld is high and proper, the reasoning behind it is often not well thought out. The "Just Say No" agenda is sometimes too shallow.

Physical abstinence is not the same as moral purity. Moral purity is a matter of the heart. Young people can keep their physical virginity while their hearts are far from God. Is it right to say that just because teens are physically abstinent, their relationship is good?

A young couple in a relationship may be physically abstinent yet be serving a number of idolatrous goals. A dating couple can be sexually abstinent yet be comfortable with a self-centred, manipulative relationship.

What we are dealing with here are issues of boundaries. In Matthew 5:27-30, Jesus spoke about some sexual boundaries. He referred to the old law forbidding adultery. But He went much further than forbidding adultery. He said that anyone who looks on a woman lustfully commits adultery in his heart. The scribes and Pharisees had been placing the boundary forbidding the act of adultery around the edge of the physical act. Jesus put the boundary within the heart where it was intended to be (Tripp, 1995).

Contrary to the assumption of many, scripture was not given to be obeyed. It was given so that **the Lord** might be obeyed. The error of the Pharisees was that in seeking to obey the scriptures to the letter they actually neglected the true love and service of God (Mason, 1985).

What is your heart attitude toward the other person in your relationship? Is the attitude of your heart to seek the greatest sexual good of the girl you are with, to listen to her concerns and deep feelings and not to force your own self-will on her?

One young woman told me that when a young man sees her only as a sexual object, something to be used

for his satisfaction, she feels less than human. But she said there is another side. When a young man ignores her and does not acknowledge her sexuality, she also feels less than human. This happens in Christian circles where young men, in their fear or uneasiness with women, keep to themselves, doing their male things and excluding girls.

Clearly there is a balance here. We must encourage good relationships that are aware of sexuality and gender issues but do not cross the line to take advantage of the other person.

Here are some considerations in living this balanced sexual life that is both person-affirming and God-honouring.

1. God does not single out teenagers for sacrifice and suffering. God does want teens to experience

Good male-female relationships encourage awareness of sexuality and gender issues but do not cross the line to take advantage of the other person.

the joys of serving Him in everyday situations, including male-female relationships.

2. God created our bodies and their sexuality. We will experience fully this part of our life only when we understand His plan and purpose.
3. God's desire is that within the boundaries He has established we enjoy sexuality without fear and shame.
4. Our sexuality is a part of us. It cannot be isolated from other parts of us. It is never meant to be just a physical act, as when animals mate. It is a matter of the heart. Whether a dating couple has had sex yet should not be the key question. We should also ask about the desires, motives, thoughts and treasures of the heart that shape the way they approach the relationship as a couple.
5. We should also examine the thoughts and motives of our hearts in the area of sex. "Have I accepted sexual lies and idols of the culture around me?"
6. A person's approach to sexuality should always be shaped by his love for God first and his love for his neighbour second. When you think of your love for that "significant other," is it a self-seeking love that feeds only your sensual gratification? Or is it a love that includes her well-being and the best for her as God would want it (Tripp, 1995)?

It is helpful to do long range thinking and much discussion with parents about your sexuality. This is sometimes hard to do. You likely feel some shame and embarrassment. But

A good male-female relationship includes spirit, soul and body. It lays a foundation in the spirit, grows in the soul, and finds completion in the body.

But after taking the plunge it gets easier.

If your parents are unable to talk to you about your sexuality, find another advisor older than yourself. Try to find someone who is

open and honest about his own sexuality and can talk about it without embarrassment.

Do not be afraid of honest talking about your feelings and relationships. With help and advice from others, make plans for friendships that are pleasing to God. You have a body, a soul and a spirit to bring into the relationship. The danger in sexually charged male-female relationships is to develop the body relationship first at the expense of the soul and spirit. Instead of concentrating on the body, spend a lot of time at first talking and doing activities in safe situations where you can get to know each other on an emotional and spiritual level. Talk about your likes and dislikes, your ways of coping with life. Talk about your views of God

and His work in your life.

Be willing to talk about your temptations. Temptation will always be an issue as long as you live on this earth. But it is easier to handle if you can share it with someone else.

Try to develop a long range view of your relationship. Rather than focusing only on the joys and struggles of the present, start thinking about a God-honouring marriage and work backward from there. What habits can you develop now, what things can you forsake, what steps can you take to prepare you for God's best in marriage (Tripp, 1995)?

Develop realism in your relationships, realism about your own desires and drives and realism about the temptations that are prevalent in the world in which you live. Along with that realism, remember that there is great power and hope in the Gospel. The power of the Gospel is to save you in your manhood, not out of your manhood. God extends to you his love and affection. In return He desires your affection and love.

When you run into temptations, it is good to intercept them before they become lust. Here is a sample prayer that you might pray when tempted:

I thank you God for this reminder that you created me a relational person. I recommit myself here and now to developing whole relationships that reflect your image. Therefore, I will not engage my mind with this picture (or fantasy or behaviour). Instead, God, I pray for those other wholesome relationships that I am now working on. First, I pray for my friendship with... (Stedman, 1993).

As you go, remember that you are a man made in the image of God. You have all the substance (the "right stuff") you need to be the man of God who can relate to women in general, and to a specific woman, in a way that honours and pleases God, encourages the woman and gives you reason to hold your head high, knowing that you've got what it takes.

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