

No 13
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TRAINING FOR GUYS

Our Father, I dunno what this is all about, but....

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us

Sin. What is it? In essence it's that which causes separation between us and God. It's not just the big things, it can even be failing to pray (1 Samuel 12:23).

When did God forgive you of your sin? 2000 years ago, on the Cross. *Before you ever sinned.*

So, why do we need to ask Him to forgive us?

In one sense, we don't; He's already done it. But we do need to *receive* that forgiveness in order to make it effective in our lives. The process of receiving it is to confess it ... to admit to it and then to repent of it - turn from it and face God, recognising what He has done for us.

But Jesus doesn't teach us just to pray 'forgive me my sins'. He says 'forgive us our sins' (it's a corporate, family prayer) 'as we forgive those who sin against us'.

How do you forgive other people? Do you wait for them to say sorry? Do you spend time letting everyone know what a horrible thing so-and-so has done to you first, before you forgive?

Is that how you want God to forgive you when you sin against Him?

Jesus is getting us to realise in this prayer that we are expected to forgive in the same way as we are forgiven. Elsewhere He tells the story of the servant who persuaded his master to forgive him millions of pounds of debt but then goes out and throws a fellow servant into debtors prison because he owes him a couple of quid. (*Matthew 18:21-35*)

If we are forgiven much, we should forgive much.

Like all Jesus' parables there are shocks involved. We *don't* have to beg God to forgive us. We don't realise the enormous divide between what we owe God and what anyone else might owe us.

God forgives us without our need to say sorry, before we even did the wrong thing. He just wants a relationship with us. That should be our attitude towards others.

Is it OK to Masturbate?

Helpfully this is a subject which Jesus avoided, and so did Paul. In other words, the Bible does not mention masturbation at all.

Different Christians have different views ranging from *it is the dirtiest sin which even to think about or mention makes you a filthy sinner* to *nothing wrong with it.*

One thing all seem to agree on though, don't do it in public



But let's see if we can unpack all this a bit. Because whilst the Bible does not mention the physical act it does give us lots of guidelines that help us to decide the right thing to do across a range of life issues.

- 1/ Is our thinking Godly?
- 2/ Are we addicted or controlled by this?
- 3/ How is our relationship with Jesus affected?



1/ Thinking

Ephesians 2:3 says *All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.*

Philippians 4:8 tells us to think about whatever is noble, pure and lovely.

Romans 8:6-8 says *The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.*

Our minds are a battleground that need to be fixed on Jesus.

If masturbation is a feast of lust and fantasy then, whilst the physical act is not mentioned in the Bible, we are

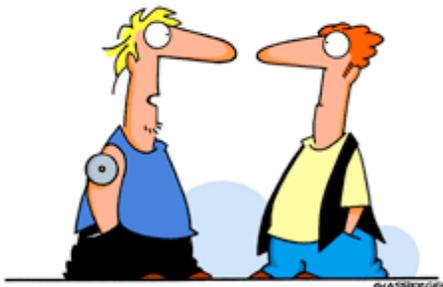
moving from having a mind governed by the Spirit to one governed by the flesh.

2/ Addiction

1 Corinthians 6:12,13 says *'I have the right to do anything,' you say – but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything' – but I will not be mastered by anything.*
13 *You say, 'Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.' The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*

As Christians we are called to be in control. Whenever you look at Jesus in the Gospels you will see Him in control of the situation around Him (even when He was being arrested and tried). You can't do that unless you are in control of yourself. If there is something in our life that we cannot control then we are a slave to it... and all slave masters are bad for us.

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"IT'S NOT A NICOTINE PATCH, IT'S A CD-ROM. I'M TRYING TO OVERCOME COMPUTER ADDICTION."

If masturbation is something that you cannot ever say 'no' to when the thought of it enters your head, then you should ask yourself if it is in control of you, or you of it.

3/ Relationship with Jesus

Jesus said you will know them by their fruits. He was talking of people, He was talking of spirits. It is a guiding principle about all sorts of things.

Does masturbation make it easier to enter His Presence, harder, or make no difference?

It may well be that there is no 'always true' answer to that question. If that is the



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illustrations this week sourced from the internet

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case you need to think through how the circumstances are different on different occasions.

Those are the guiding principles I think we can use to help us decide about what is right or wrong for us in a variety of issues.

It may well be that you will give different answers to someone else....and you may give different answers at different times of your life.

Some people will say that masturbating releases them from a pressure to have lustful thoughts, etc, that were certainly harmful to their relationship with Jesus.

Others will say that it causes them to have such thoughts.

We need to know ourselves and also we need to be men who want that relationship with Jesus to be improving more than anything else. If we get that as our central desire then it will be easier to work out the answers to questions such as this one for ourselves.

One last thing, however. Masturbation is certainly *not* the dirtiest sin going. If it causes us to feel guilty and dirty then we need to realise that guilt originates with Satan. He wants to rob us of fellowship with Jesus. As the feature on the Lord's Prayer reminds us...we're already forgiven and accepted. If masturbation has you gripped and you can't conquer it, know that there is that forgiveness - and with forgiveness comes the ability to be delivered and to conquer it. If necessary, get a Christian mate to pray with you for help to conquer it. But don't let it drag you down. On the other hand, if it's just something you do and you feel it has not become a sin or got you addicted then just double check that you can say

no to it occasionally. And feel free to let me know if you feel any of this was wrong...I'm here to learn too!