

Sexual Purity: Having Sex by Yourself

Ricardo Campos, Teaching Elder Grace Chapel, Orange, CA May 8, 2011

I. Introduction

Isn't having sex by yourself an issue for 12yr old boys? It's not a problem that adult Christian men and women struggle with, is it? You might think that this is an issue for teens. However, many Christian men and women also struggle with this. It's an issue concerning marriage because it deals with a key component of marriage: sex. Will we maintain our sexual purity before and after marriage or not? And in the end, the problem is not just one's behavior.

II. Is Having Sex by Yourself a Sin?

Our culture says that it's NOT. We live in a heavily eroticized culture. Sex is everywhere. Teens dress provocatively and young adults are 'hooking up'—the practice of having sex with no strings attached. And when it comes to having sex by yourself, the world tells you that it's normal, it's part of life, and something that will enhance your sex life.

Is there a command against it? Some use Genesis 38:9. But Onan's sin was not having sex by himself. It was refusing to fulfill his family duty of providing his brother an heir. Others use Matthew 5:27–30. But Christ's admonition is about policing our thought life. The problem is not our right hand or any other appendage; it's the mind that directs our eyes and hands to commit sin. There are some general commands that forbid it like Ephesians 5:3 and 1 Corinthians 6:20. But a more pertinent question is, "How did God design sex, is it meant to be practiced alone or is it an expression of marital love and intimacy?" Our sex belongs to our spouse, Genesis 2:24; Proverbs 5:17. Thus, it's a sin to engage in it alone.

What if you have sex by yourself while thinking of your spouse, is this OK? This is still a violation of God's design for sex; it's meant to be practiced in marriage not by yourself. Beyond this, it reveals a lack of love for your spouse and an utter concern for yourself. Eventually it will lead to doubt and frustration in your spouse and you will avoid the problems in your relationship, which will drive you further away from your spouse.

III. Sexual Purity is Not Simply a Behavioral Problem?

Sexual purity is not simply a matter of controlling our behavior, before we do something, we think about it. It's a desire that begins in the mind; we plant a seed and water it, James 1:13–15. Before we know it, we're knee-deep in sin. Thinking about adultery is the same as committing it, Matthew 5:28. And sin, when it's fully grown *brings forth death*, James 1:15.

The sin runs deeper than the sinful behavior, on the surface it seems that the problem is sexual lust and immediately it is. But there are deeper issues underneath. The individual may be single and lonely and his desire for a wife has become his #1 priority, his idol. He looks at his Christian life and thinks that God owes him a wife. Since he doesn't have one, he becomes bitter and envious of others who have a wife. The more he lives for and worships his idol, the more miserable he is. Now instead of a wife becoming a blessing from God (which God would provide him, 1 Corinthians 7:9, if pursued righteously), it's become his curse. Though he's been a Christian for many years, his actions reveal his unbelief. Not only does he not believe that God will provide him a wife, he now has a twisted view of God: God's become an ogre he must placate in order to get a wife.

It's not just you and a computer, it seems that it's just you and a computer, but sex is always relational, i.e., there is always someone else involved, if only in your mind. Those addicted to having sex by themselves via an internet connection think that no one else is involved. However, everyone around him is affected by his behavior. His wife now doubts her self-worth. And all those wicked relational habits he's learned in his fantasy world are spilling over into his real world. He's used to treating those made in God's image as mindless robots who serve him. He's become the god of his own universe and he's now behaving the same way in the real world. Why? Because that which we visualize always turns into actions, Mark 7:14–23. Eventually his fantasies may turn into a real-life affair. But even if they don't, he'll begin to treat people as he treats them in his virtual world. He will become impatient and irritated. Instead of working on his relational issues, he'll toss people aside who displease him. This will drive him deeper into his fantasy world and will leave him feeling even more cold and distant towards his family and friends. Thus, it's not just you and a computer.

IV. How Do We Escape This Madness?

Jesus came to set you free, Christ didn't just come to condemn our behavior; He came to release us from it, Luke 4:16–21. And He understands our struggle, Hebrews 2:18; 4:15.

Put on Christ, we must indeed lay aside the “works of darkness.” But it's not just about controlling certain behavior; we must also put on the armor of light, Christ Himself. This means living according to His righteousness instead of our lust, Romans 13:12–14.

Your fight against sin must be violent, Christ commands you to do violence against your sin. He wants you to take a scalpel and cut the sin out of your life, Matthew 5:27–30.

It may be a long battle, your progress may be slow and incremental. Though it may not seem like much, going from actual affairs or premarital sex to fantasies in your mind is progress. Turning to the Lord in prayer after sinning instead of depression and guilt is progress. Don't ever forget the progress you've made; don't minimize it. Keep remembering where you were and where you are now and see the Lord's hand in all of it. And remember, you're not fighting alone, 1 John 4:4.

You will feel like you're dying but you're actually being resurrected to new life, what may feel like death is actually life. We are dying to our old self and being resurrected to new life, John 12:24–25. God is turning us into what we were meant to be, creatures who thank and glorify Him instead of creatures who worship ourselves and our sin. And though our flesh will fight to keep us enslaved, Romans 8:7, God's Holy Spirit will free us, Romans 8:11. He will provide everything we need to overcome our struggle, 2 Peter 1:3.

Remember, His love and forgiveness are endless, no matter how bad you fail, God's love and forgiveness are bigger than your failure. Your cleansing is based on His faithfulness not yours, 1 John 1:9. Don't let guilt overcome God's forgiveness; He knows better than you whether or not you have repented, 1 John 3:20. And you have an Advocate who speaks to God on your behalf, 1 John 2:1.

Ask your brothers/sisters for help, God made you part of a community, the Body of Christ. We are interconnected and when one of us suffers, we all suffer, 1 Corinthians 12:26. Thus the Body of Christ is there for you. So reach out to them. Make yourself accountable to someone who will challenge you, who will remind you of who you are in Christ. You are a child of God being transformed into the image of His Son. So you want people around you that will help you see Christ in you and your struggles not just commiserate with you about your addiction.

Learn how to love others as God loves you, the center of your fantasy world has been you. Now the center of your world will be God and He will teach you how to love others the way He loves you. You will replace old habits of avoiding relational problems with learning how to love others the way God loves you, 1 John 4:10–12. Remember that it cost Him something to love you, it's going to cost you something to love others. This means showing mercy and grace instead of indifference and irritation.

Pray, tell God about your frustrations, tell Him about your needs, and ask Him for deliverance. And don't forget to thank Him. Man ends up a fool in utter darkness and enslaved to sin because he refuses to glorify God and thank Him, Rom 1:21–27. So remember His deliverance and thank Him.

Your life has been about using others for pleasure, now Christ calls you to serve others in love. It's been about immediate, temporary gratification, now Christ calls you to pursue lasting joy based on righteousness.

V. Conclusion

Christ knows the struggle you bear. He wants to and can deliver you from it. Will you trust Him?