

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: I discovered my 7-year-old son masturbating in his room the other day. I was so shocked, I just closed the door before he even knew I was there. How should his father and I handle this?

ANSWER: Your "shock" concerns me. Masturbation is a behavior that **you should have expected**. You and your husband should have already formulated how you will "handle" your son's developing sexuality. Parents cannot be naive when it comes to their children and the realm of sexuality. **Consider this event a wake up call and opportunity.** God is merciful!

As common as masturbation is (research indicates more than 90% of males masturbate at some time in their lives), the Bible does not say one word about it. The Bible has much to say about every other aspect of sex, but there is a conspicuous silence when it comes to masturbation. Certainly, Jesus speaks of lust and pornographic thoughts as sin (MT. 5:28), but it is doubtful that your 7-year-old son is masturbating to lustful, pornographic, sexual fantasies. At seven, masturbation is much like scratching an itch...it simply feels good and necessary...so, why wouldn't he do it?

Sometimes, at his age, masturbation can be used to soothe emotional hurts. This association is psychologically unhealthy. Since masturbating is easy and available, it can become habitual. Consider whether your son might be using masturbation for this purpose. If so, contact a mental health professional.

The psychological community views masturbation (if not connected with harmful paraphilias/sexual perversions) as normal, even healthy. Certainly, it is very common, but many Christians experience guilt. This guilt will need to be addressed (by father and son) as your son grows into adolescence and may use the mental "tool" of sexual fantasy to masturbate to orgasm.

Even though God's Word does not condemn the act of masturbation, no Christian I have ever spoken with is proud of this behavior. God did not design us for "solo" sex. He desires us to experience the full range of sexuality within the context of marriage, where our concern should be gratifying our spouse not ourselves.

If you are certain your son's masturbation is not connected to sexual abuse, then it is simply time for **DAD** to begin talking with him about Christian sexuality.... about "things we do and don't do in public".... about "private places" etc. This will be the first of **MANY** proactive talks. Your son needs to hear Christian values early and often.... especially from his **FATHER**. Otherwise, he will learn about sexuality from bathroom walls, music videos, movies and other kids. Again, **this is a God-given opportunity for you to pray hard and become involved in your son's sexual future.** We know the messages about sex he will hear from our secular world. Your job is to model for him and tell him God's plan for sexuality.

Masturbation usually diminishes and/or ceases in a healthy marriage. As Christians, our real concern is the possibility of addiction to pornography, the preoccupation with self-gratification, and the "lustful" thoughts of adultery (MT. 5:28) that chronic masturbation can fuel.

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