



A Measure of Grace

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Masturbation Part II

An Article By Roger Jones

In last month's article, I opened up the topic of masturbation. In that writing, I talked about how I found the issue confusing and why. I explored the Scripture and what the Bible says about masturbation and fantasy. I looked at some of the questions that come to mind concerning this topic, namely, "Is masturbation a sin?" and "Can a person masturbate without fantasy?" If you're joining the conversation now, I recommend that you go back and read the first article in this series, in the November 2014 newsletter. You can contact the WGA office for a copy or read it on the WGA website.

I ended last month's article with a statement about where I find myself now with the issue of masturbation. In a nutshell, I said that I

have found that masturbation is something that is really not good for me, and that it is

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too connected with fantasy and other addictive behaviors that I no longer want in my life. I went on to say that in my next article (the one you are reading now) I would go into more detail about why I think this is so.

I'd like to say a few words about biology. For the most part, what we hear from doctors is that, biologically speaking, there is nothing wrong with masturbation. Many say it is a normal and healthy. From the purely biological point of view, they may be correct. I've heard from several men that masturbation has been prescribed by their doctors in order to counter the possibility of infections. Rather than delving further into the biological aspects here, I'd like to look at some of the psychological impacts.

My experiences with masturbation fit into what I define as addiction. I do not believe that everyone who has masturbated has an addiction problem. But for many, masturbation has been used as a means of escape from stress, loneliness, or other problems in life. In my own case, I have used it primarily to avoid pain. In such instances, I have created more problems for myself than solutions!

Masturbation trains us to think about ourselves. We use it to meet our own

needs, rather than trusting that God may have another avenue to provide for us. When we feel responsible for meeting all of our own needs, including the sexual ones, we train ourselves to believe that we don't need anyone else in our lives. This independence is very American, but not necessarily Christian!

Through masturbation, we often cope with non-sexual problems in life in a sexual way. This is a stepping stone towards addiction. As we turn to self

gratification as a means of escape, when we feel lonely or tired or we are in conflict with someone, we begin to find that every time conflict or pain arises in our lives, we feel sexual. We then seek out the release that comes from orgasm, rather than trying to address the real needs that are driving us to masturbation in the first place.

When we feel responsible for meeting all of our own needs, including the sexual ones, we train ourselves to believe that we don't need anyone

Another problem is that masturbation often reinforces thoughts and behaviors that we are trying to eliminate from our lives. This is particularly true when sexual fantasy accompanies masturbation. Fantasy, by its very definition, is not reality. Whomever or whatever we choose to fantasize about separates us further from reality. This preference for fantasy over reality is a form of idolatry. As Christian men and women, we are

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Holidays are for Getting Together

By Mary Heathman

Q I was growing up in various parts of the country and the world, I remember one thing that remained constant—the rhythm of celebrations—gatherings of people sharing special days together. My parents made friends quickly wherever we went and it wasn't long before there were parties: birthdays, promotions, baby showers, anniversaries, rejoicing over winning ballgames and commiserating over lost ones. It seemed like one or another of the families who were our neighbors were often in our home or we were joining them in theirs.

I remember especially the holiday events. My mother loved the planning and anticipation of family gatherings for holidays. Once I came into the kitchen after a particularly large Thanksgiving gathering—many of us were still mostly comatose in the living room watching or pretending to watch a ballgame. I reached for the coffeepot and asked my mom what she was doing. She had notes spread all over the table and her favorite cook book open. She looked up and said, “I think I’ll have ham for Christmas.” For my mom, the point of all her planning, cooking, and scheming to get us all caught up in the event, was to get the family together. And she never quit

thinking about it—her highest goal it seemed.

We generally liked getting together, although we had some interesting not-so-fun times. I remember the time my mom thought it would be great to rent an A-Frame just off the ski slope in Steamboat Springs and we would all gather there for the weekend. Well, picture a typical A-Frame with four couples and a sundry children – none of us skiers, too cold to be out doing anything else. There was room to sleep everyone, but once out of our sleeping space, there was no where to stand or sit that someone else didn't have to move to make room for us. We gave it a good shot, but left there pretty much aggravated with everyone including ourselves—the longest weekend ever! My mom said in her next planning musings, “Well, we *won't* be going to a cabin again!”

I miss my mother a lot. She's been gone twelve years now, but when a memory floats forward, my throat closes up and tears come. The hole in my life where she used to be is still so raw, especially during holidays. I would give anything to be together for even a weekend too tightly packed in a mountain cabin. And I miss my brothers and sisters most intensely during the holidays – we don't get together – our

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Reflections: Thoughts from a WGA Leader

By Nancy Hicks

He was hanging off the face of a cliff 60 feet in the air, when he froze during a rock climbing exercise. Navy Seal, Matt Bissonette, was so overwhelmed with the possibility of plummeting to his death that he couldn't figure out what to do next. Within minutes, the steady voice of his climbing instructor was in his ear, "Matt, you don't have to worry about what might happen, all you need to do is live in your three foot world right now. What can you reach and where is the next handhold in your three foot world?" With this new focus, Bissonette was able to navigate his way with small, immediate decisions to the top.



This image from the *60 Minutes* interview I watched a few weeks ago has taken root in me. I have been frozen in my life for awhile now. My tendency is to be so hypervigilant with situations and relationships, so worried about all the possible outcomes that I feel paralyzed. "What if this comes back to haunt me? What if I don't say exactly the right thing and someone is hurt unnecessarily? What if I don't notice something that I should and miss a cue? What if the consequences of that decision are severe?"

It's really all about self-defense and self-preservation; how I can avoid pain and falling. The truth is, of course, that I can only do the best I can do. Much as I demand a perfected, God's-eye-view, assessment for myself, all I really have is the next little toe-hold and finger-grip within my reach. Jesus talks about our three foot world in his sermon on the mount (Matt 6): After telling us not to worry and be anxious about EVERYTHING, he says, "But seek first [God's] kingdom and his

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righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

There is great freedom and an invitation to enjoy rock-climbing in this simple admonition. It is a call to the present adventure of life, instead of sweating out your life in an all-consuming anxiety attack.

My three-foot world today involves a decision to go back to a church where I know a lot of people. It's a reachable community

for me at a time when I need community instead of starting from scratch. My three-foot world today means reading a theological book with my son instead of being paralyzed with anxiety about his eventual (and very personal) spiritual decisions. My three-foot world today means a decision to read one Psalm a day. And that is all: bite sized pieces of life. A toehold, a finger crimp, hopefully a bucket and a full chimney appear occasionally!

I'm trying not to look down. It takes a lot of focus and self-control. Holy Spirit remind me of the adventure and remind me that I'm not alone!

A Christmas Thought

By Mary Heathman



The day we celebrate Christ's birth is fast approaching. As we sort our way through the commercial trappings, (Christmas music was pouring into the mall corridors as early as Halloween this year!) if we pay close attention, we catch a glimpse of Him from time to time. If we slow ourselves down and search the faces of the children, if we pay attention to what matters to our family and friends, if we make room for Jesus in our holiday plans, then the joy of the season seeps over, under, around and past all that which is extraneous, and floods us with the wonder of who Jesus is and what He came to do—to offer nothing less than salvation and an abundant life for you and me!

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admonished through the Scripture to turn away from lust and idols. If that is our goal, obviously sexual fantasy is not a good idea. The more we practice the fantasies, the more the patterns become ingrained within us. We engage in the very behaviors we seek to leave behind, even if only in our minds.

Also with fantasy and the use of pornography, our expectations of sex are being shaped. Most of us, of either gender, do not possess the physical attributes of models, actors, or performers in the adult industry. Many of the sexual acts performed in pornography are degrading to either or both partners. A real life partner may be unwilling to participate in such acts. We bring a lot of baggage along with those expectations of sex!

For those who are married, masturbation can prove to be problematic in building a mature sexual relationship. After reading last month's article, a married woman told me some of her history with masturbation. She didn't have a problem with sexual fantasy while masturbating, but when she and her husband came together sexually, she often found her interest level decreased and the experience to be less than satisfying. When practicing masturbation, there was little reason for her to be sexual with her husband. When she stopped engaging in this behavior, her sexual relationship became more satisfying. I imagine this is true for men as well.

For most, orgasm can be achieved more quickly alone. If we are repeatedly pleasuring ourselves, what do we have to offer our spouse who may need more time to reach orgasm? Sex is a gift within marriage and can be an amazing way for spouses to connect with each other.

In closing, I would like to thank you for thinking through this topic with me. This is an uncomfortable issue, to say the least. While sitting in the privacy of my own office, I got embarrassed a number of times while writing! I am certain that there is much more to say about masturbation, but I will leave it here for now.

Lord, continue to teach me more about Your intent for my sexuality. Help me to submit my will to Yours. Help me to make good and healthy choices, motivated by my love for You, rather than my love of me.

(Article reprinted from *A Measure of Grace*, September 2009)



(Holidays continued from page 3)

own children have children and we have lots of family around – but in quiet moments when the food is cleared off the table and my grandchildren are becoming restive, the urge rises up in me to start a game, or gather a few friends for a movie, or . . . anything to keep us together for little while longer. My siblings and I have started to attend family reunions in Ohio and South Carolina. I look forward to those with increasing pleasure—but I am not planning the menu already!

The desire and need to connect is true for everyone—whether they have family to gather with or not. Another characteristic of my parents was the inviting of strangers to our holiday dinners. And they didn't remain strangers long, my mom's hospitality wouldn't allow it—southern to the core, she fed people till they couldn't take anymore. My dad was open-hearted as well. I remember one Thanksgiving that Daddy had too many guys from his company that he wanted to bring home, so our dinner was cancelled and the whole family went out to his company, at the Jungle Warfare Training Center, where he was the supply sergeant, and we all had dinner at the mess hall. We loved it – food piled high, monkeys swinging in through the open sides of the mess tent stealing bananas right off our plates. And I remember the room full of what

seemed like a hundred guys – all eyes on “Sarge’s” family. Daddy couldn't bring them all to us, so he brought his family to them.

Over the next few days, besides the family gatherings, I have a few plans with some folks who can't gather with their families. Can't bring my family to theirs, but I can bring a little of the spirit with me as we sit together and chat. That is what seems to be the holiday season for me—taking care to be with family, taking care to be family to someone else. It is my prayer that the blessing of this sort of rhythm finds its way into many hearts this season.

Holidays are for connecting. I hope that our WGA friends and supporters have plenty of time with their favorite people. I pray that the times will be rich and full of love – even the commiserating you do over

not-so-fun times, I hope will turn to honoring and blessing the people in your life. I have heard it said that “family is where you go when you have nowhere else to go and they have to let you in.”

I am glad that we are all part of the Family that always has room for more. May the spirit of the season, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and cause you to bless others!

(Article reprinted from *A Measure of Grace*, December 2012)

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November In Review

November 8th: Family and Friends Gathering.

November 15th: WGA presented at Tree of Life Church.

November 21st: WGA All Night Prayer Meeting

November 28th: Movie Marathon Day

December And Beyond

December 2nd & 4th: WGA will present at Front Range Christian School

December 6th: WGA Group Christmas party

December 18th: Monthly Orientation Meeting required for participation in WGA's Thursday Night Group—invite a friend!

December 25th—January 2nd: WGA offices will be closed

January 3rd: Intercessory Prayer meeting, 8:00 am at the WGA offices. Come join us as we pray for the needs of the ministry.

Don't forget to make your year-end donations by Tuesday, December 31st!

Thursday Night Group

November 6th: 24 people

November 13th: 27 people

November 20th: 26 people

November 27th: No Group

Orientation meeting: 1 new person

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Where Grace Abounds exists to guide and support men and women who seek to understand sexuality and relationship, and to inspire all people to know and personally appropriate God's plan for their sexuality and relationships.

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