

06 Porn & Masturbation

LEADER GUIDE

BIG IDEA:

Porn and masturbation need to be discussed in a manner that cultivates hearts of repentance, instead of crippling students with more shame. Porn and masturbation can be a destructive mix. However, helping students think biblically about both will equip them to navigate its influence throughout their lives.

Tips for Conversation:

Based on lots of research, statistics, and stories from our own students, we believe this lesson on pornography and masturbation will likely be the one that speaks most directly to our students' current experience of sexuality. Be prepared to make space in your schedule and your heart for the important conversations that might come this week!

In an ideal world, our students would learn about sex in age-appropriate, incremental stages based on what their parents, educators, and clinicians know about healthy adolescent development. Unfortunately, we don't live in an ideal world. Most parents don't ever engage in this conversation; if they do, their engagement is often very elliptical, never addressing the reality of the world teens live in. This is why we provide parents with an outline of our series each week: to help them enter into this conversation for themselves. Be sure the conversations you have with your students can also continue (or be established) in their homes. Be a link between parent and student.

Here are some notes to keep in front of you during your group time:

Engage with honesty.

Pornography is an awkward subject for us to talk about with our students, but it is also important. Pornography has skewed many of our students' sexual expectations, killed authentic love and intimacy, and created distance from God. You might hear things this week that are confusing or that you feel ill-equipped to handle. That is okay! Use this as an opportunity to learn together. Teens are desperate for clear answers.

Stay calm.

As you listen to what students share, be sure to not condemn or shame. If a student is opening up to you about a sin or struggle, they will feel safe if you are calm and collected. This will go a long way in continuing the conversation.

Speak God's truth and love.

Students need to know God's design for sex. The sooner they can engage this conversation in a healthy way, the better. Use this talk to help students understand God's VERY GOOD plan for sex and sexuality. Invite them to see both the radical truth of God's plan and his radical love for his creation!

Help protect what you can.

Students sometimes need help setting boundaries with their technology. You have the opportunity to teach them how best to protect themselves against the dangers that lurk on the internet. Review the parent handout for assistance with this conversation, if needed.

Prepare for a conversation on masturbation.

Okay, let's be honest. Rarely do we have talks about masturbation. Why? Because they are uncomfortable and awkward. But if we are going to talk about porn, we need to have a conversation about masturbation as well.



Here are some basic things to keep in mind as you dialogue with your students:

1. **Don't be shocked.** Students will feel more comfortable being honest with you if you're not tense and awkward.
2. **Masturbation is common among adolescents for a particular reason—** they have a plethora of changes occurring in their bodies all at once. Hormones like testosterone, estrogen, and progesterone are produced at rapid rates to cause these bodily changes. These hormones, which are doing their jobs to make students physiologically mature and sexually developed, are the same hormones that regulate sex drive and desire. These hormones essentially “turn on” sexual awareness in adolescent bodies!
3. **Be aware of the guilt/shame distinction,** and help your students do the same. Remember: Guilt is the feeling you get when you do something wrong. Feeling guilt is a good thing. It drives us to stop doing the wrong thing. But shame says WE are wrong and disgusting. Shame typically pushes us further from God (and others), rather than toward God's forgiveness and grace.
4. **Understand that this issue is not clear in Scripture.** Nowhere in Scripture does it say something like, “Thou shall not masturbate.” We need to be honest about this. Our conclusions about masturbation need to be both founded in Scripture and responsive to what our culture says. Past generations have relied on errors and lies to build a case against masturbation. They proclaimed that masturbation would cause mental illness, addiction, anxiety, and depression. As these myths have been exposed, the following generations have become more skeptical about what to believe. In some cases, they've just given up asking.
5. **Although the Bible does not directly identify masturbation as sin, it is okay to express concerns about masturbation—**especially if it's habitual or addictive. Concerns related to masturbation include sexual fantasy and lust, premature ejaculation, distance from God (mostly due to shame), escapism, and potential future obstacles to healthy marital intimacy. None of this is intended to scare anyone. These are simply some of the realities students may face if masturbation becomes a force they have no control over.



6. **Don't assume that all porn or masturbation is associated with the opposite sex.** One of the most important things the *Christian Sexuality* series has done is to include SSA students in our dialogue instead of acting like they don't exist. When you are talking to students and they say they struggle with porn, don't assume anything. LGBTQ+ students may not have come out yet, and this might be the first step they take in speaking about their sexuality.

Questions for Small Group:

Pose question to individuals without answering:

1. Ask yourself, is this a silent struggle for you?
2. If so, what have you done to address this? (Encourage students to share with a trusted adult if this is a struggle for them.)

For the group:

1. How has porn either affected you personally or impacted the culture around you?
2. What stood out to you in the conversation surrounding masturbation? Did you agree or disagree? How does it line up with what you've heard before?
3. How did it impact you when Monica said she had something positive to share about pornography? Did it surprise you?

Additional Resources:

VIDEO: Full-length interview with Stuart Boyd

TOOL: Weekly devotional

