



Issue Sheets



Understand what the Bible
says about specific struggles
and the steps to begin
healing in Christ.

Recovery In Christ When Life Is Broken

ISSUE SHEETS OVERVIEW

The issue sheets listed below are resources created by *re:generation* recovery to help people identify their struggles and understand what the Bible says about how to begin steps of healing. You can also find this information online at www.regenerationrecovery.org/struggles/ along with relevant testimonies and resources. We are continually adding new issue sheets and content to this section of our site. Each issue sheet can be printed on one 8.5" x 11" page front and back.

In this document, every struggle is bookmarked for easy access. Enable the Bookmarks view in the margin of Adobe Preview by selecting View/Bookmarks on your menu bar. You can also click on the links below to go to the bookmarked page of your choice. The struggles listed in this document include:

- [Body Image](#)
- [Codependency](#)
- [Depression](#)
- [Eating Disorders](#)
- [Masturbation](#)
- [Pornography](#)
- [Pride](#)
- [Same Sex Attraction](#)
- [Self-Injury](#)
- [Sexual Abuse](#)
- [Substance Abuse](#)

We pray that this resource will be a blessing to you and your church as you help people find healing in Christ.

Body image is defined as a person's perception of their physical appearance or sexual attractiveness of their own body.

Body image is greatly valued in our world today. Though a healthy body is good, for many people, physical health and beauty becomes an obsession. The quest to reach a physical standard created by the world can be devastating. Men and women alike struggle to find worth, acceptance, and approval in their own self-image rather than finding their worth in who God created them to be. God created humans to reflect His image and find value in His purpose for their lives.

Common Characteristics

Common areas of life that get out of balance when a person is obsessed with body image include:

- **Food-focused:** Do you regularly restrict food or have binge eating habits? Are you hyper-sensitive about what you can/cannot eat? Do you consistently count calories? Do you carry guilt and shame about your intake of "good" and "bad" foods? Are you sometimes ashamed to eat around others?
- **Prone to fads:** Are you continuously trying the newest diet or workout as a form of hope or security?
- **Constant comparison:** Do you feel negative or positive about yourself because of how your body compares to others or to a certain weight on a scale? Do you regularly want to look like someone else and find fault in your appearance? If possible, would you trade bodies with someone else?
- **Schedule dictated by appearance:** Is life scheduled around workouts, or do you get anxious when you miss a workout? Do you turn down social invitations because of your physical appearance?
- **How you feel is influenced by how you look to others:** If you don't look good to others, or go unnoticed, is it hard to feel good/right about yourself? Are you controlled by others' perceptions of you? Does your self-confidence (or lack thereof) depend on how you look?
- **Mirror obsession or avoidance:** Do you constantly look in the mirror, or avoid mirrors all together?
- **Self-worth is measured by your appearance:** Are you hyper-critical of yourself, often putting yourself down because your looks? Does improving yourself mean looking better tomorrow than you do today? Do you think that life would improve, that you would matter more, if you looked better? Do you feel most valuable when others notice you?

Self-sufficiency, managing others' perceptions, good health, and looking beautiful *cannot fix the underlying problems driving a preoccupation with body image*. At its core, this is a spiritual struggle. Trying to solve spiritual problems with physical solutions only leads to pain, isolation, loneliness, addiction, and defeat. To heal, you must turn your focus to God and let Him heal the spiritual problem.

Biblical Insights

You are marvelously created in God's image: Humans are unique and distinct from the rest of creation.

- "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27)
- "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well." (Psalm 139:13-14)

Your body belongs to God. You are its caretaker, not its owner. God wants you to exalt Him with your body, not exalt yourself.

- "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Spiritual health is more valuable than physical health. Imperishable beauty comes from the heart: Your physical body will fail you, God will not.

- "... Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (1 Timothy 4:7-8)
- "Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious." (1 Peter 3:3-4)

Physical beauty can be an idol. God shares his glory with none. You were made to worship God alone. Worshipping the created above the Creator or seeking self-glory will lead to destruction.

- "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man...Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator..." (Romans 1:22-25)
- "Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground..." (Ezekiel 28:17, describing the fall of Satan who was an angel)
- "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10)

Personal strength cannot overcome your fleshly desires. Only Christ can transform you. When you accept Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in you. By the power of the Spirit, you can live in freedom. You deeply matter to God. He has a plan for you.

- "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord." (Jeremiah 17:5)
- "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)
- "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16)
- "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)

Next Steps

- Ask Christ to heal you. Worship God by glorifying Him with your body (Romans 10:13, 12:1)
- The next time you feel controlled by how you look, stop, pray to God. Ask God to remind you that He created you for His glory. Identify/address any underlying causes with this struggle. (Isaiah 43:7)
- Find a place where you can talk without fear of judgment, like a re:generation recovery group. Confess, bring this sin to the light, be healed. (1 John 1:7-9, James 5:16)
- Prepare for vulnerable situations. Identify stressors that cause you to struggle and decide in advance how you will respond when temptation comes. (1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 Peter 4:1-2)
- Don't despair when you fail. Cry out to Jesus. God's grace and love are unconditional. (Romans 8:1)
- Body Image often goes hand in hand with insecurities, and depression. Read over the Depression Issue Sheet for more information.

God loves you. If you haven't experienced freedom in Christ, visit [regenerationrecovery.org/freedom](http://www.regenerationrecovery.org/freedom).

Additional Resources

- For stories of hope, go to www.watermark.org/dallas/ministries/regeneration-recovery: Jen-Bulimia, Ashley-Disordered Eating, Stephanie-Beauty and Perfection, Colton-Insecurity, John-Food.
- www.gotquestions.org/physical-appearance.html, Should I Care about my Appearance?
- www.desiringgod.org/articles/beware-the-mirror, Beware of the Mirror.
- www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-epidemic-of-male-body-hatred, The Epidemic of Male Body Hatred
- **Books:** Who Calls Me Beautiful: Finding Our True Image in the Mirror of God - Regina Franklin; Wanting to Be Her: Body Image Secrets Victoria Won't Tell You - Michelle Graham

Codependency describes unhealthy relationships in which individuals use one another to get their own emotional needs met in a manner that harms each other and the relationship.

Codependence develops in love-deficient relationships where internal brokenness exists. Someone struggling with codependence (often unknowingly) looks to another person to fill his or her need for love or significance, rather than looking to God.

Codependent relationships develop patterns where God is given a back seat while individuals use one another to meet their own emotional needs. These patterns often involve denial and enablement of sin, conditional love and affection, weak boundaries, and a sacrifice of personal identity to maintain the relationship. An “emotionally weak” person needs to be connected to someone “emotionally strong.” However, the caregiving “strong” person, is actually weak because of his or her need to be needed. God designed us to live in relationships and experience him through them. But, only God can satisfy our needs for love and significance. He calls us to give our hearts to him fully, worshiping him alone. When satisfied with his perfect love, then we can love one another like God loves us—selflessly and honestly.

Codependent Characteristics include:

- Loss of personal identity
- Feelings of low self-worth
- Difficulty setting boundaries and violations of conscience
- Fears of abandonment or of being trapped in the relationship

Codependency Assessment

If you wonder whether you struggle with codependency, honestly answer the following questions:

- 1) Is your attention focused on pleasing the other person?
- 2) Do you spend a lot of time trying to solve the other person's problems or trying to protect him/her?
- 3) Do you regularly set aside your own interests or hobbies for the other person's interests or hobbies?
- 4) Do you value the other person's opinion and way of doing things more than your own?
- 5) Are you more aware of how the other person feels than your own feelings?
- 6) Are your feelings about yourself tied to the love and approval you receive from the other person?
- 7) Do you feel better about yourself when you are able to relieve the other person's pain or problem?
- 8) Does fear of rejection or fear of another's response determine what you say or do with him/her?
- 9) Do you set aside your values in order to connect with that other person?
- 10) Is your quality of life and happiness in direct relation to another's quality of life and happiness?

Biblical Insights

You are significant to God. God designed you fearfully and wonderfully to bear his image. He made you for a purpose. You matter so much that Jesus suffered and died to pay for your sin to offer you eternal life. Your value was set by the price of Christ's blood on the cross. You are precious.

- *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27)*
- *“For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:13)*
- *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)*

Allowing a relationship or a person other than God to determine your significance is idolatry. What God thinks about you and about life is what matters most. Giving yourself away to someone to the point that you are no longer whole in Christ in order to earn or keep his/her love is idolizing that relationship.

- *"You shall have no other gods before me."* (Exodus 20:3)
- *"For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."* (Galatians 1:10)

You are not the Savior. If you are working harder at someone's recovery than that person is willing to work, your self-worth may be tied to your ability to help—a need to be needed. Christ changes hearts. He alone is sufficient to free people of struggles. Continually rescuing/excusing someone from pain caused by his sin, may be very thing preventing him from recognizing his desperate need for Christ.

- *"... you are to deliver this [unrepentant] man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."* (1 Corinthians 5:5)
- *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day."* (Jesus Christ, John 6:37, 39)

Healthy relationships are interdependent, not codependent. God designed us to live in relationships. Interdependent relationships form when people actively, selflessly, lovingly use their gifts for the mutual benefit of one another while guarding against unhealthy behavior. Codependent relationships are reactive, as people selfishly or dishonestly enable harmful behavior to meet their own needs.

- *"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them..."* (Romans 12:4-6)
- *"In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it... let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."* (Ephesians 5:28,33)

Next Steps

- If you answered yes to 3 or more of the questions in the Codependency Assessment, be honest with yourself about your need for healing from codependency. (Proverbs 28:13)
- Ask Christ to heal you (Romans 10:13). There is hope for healing in Christ. If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, learn more at www.regenerationrecovery.org/freedom.
- Stop focusing on what the other person is doing and start focusing on what you must do to be emotionally and spiritually healthy. Ask a friend to help you establish healthy boundaries that will direct both you and the other person in the relationship to Christ. Truly loving someone else means doing what is necessary to help him realize his desperate need for Christ. (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- Find a bible-teaching church and begin to establish interdependent relationships with Christians who can help you realize your worth and identity in a relationship with Jesus. (Romans 8:35-38)
- Find a safe place that is Christ-centered, like a re:generation group, where you can confront your codependency, examine your past love addictions, realize your worth and identity in Christ, and learn to establish healthy Christian relationships. (1 John 1:7)

Additional Resources:

- Go to www.regenerationrecovery.org for stories of hope: Ann, Katie, Kelsey, Brandon
- Watch/Listen Nate Graybill's teaching on codependency
- Read the re:generation blog: "How to Know if You Are Codependent (according to the Giving Tree)"
- Books: *When People Are Big and God is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man* – Edward T. Welch, *Love is a Choice: The Definitive Book on Letting Go of Unhealthy Relationships* – Robert Hemfelt, Frank Minirth, Paul Meier

Depression is defined as a persistent sad mood or loss of pleasure in normal activities. Depression is also described as an emotional heaviness that weighs the heart down.

Normal ups and downs are a common part of life. Feelings of sadness can be a normal reaction to difficult situations or struggles. For some, however, feelings of sadness and hopelessness can become crippling or prolonged, making normal day-to-day functioning a struggle.

Common Characteristics

If you are struggling with feeling depressed, answer the questions below. Invite a close friend to help you process these honestly.

1. Do you have intense sadness that lasts longer than a few days at a time?
2. Are you lacking energy or feeling fatigued for no reason?
3. Do you have persistent feelings of hopelessness or sadness?
4. Have your eating or sleeping patterns changed?
5. Have you lost interest in activities you used to enjoy?
6. Do you feel guilty or worthless?
7. Are you becoming more irritable or more apathetic?
8. Are you feeling indecisive or having problems focusing or concentrating?
9. Are you experiencing thoughts of suicide?

Depression can come from many sources. With the help of a close friend, consider the questions below.

Circumstantial:

- Have you experienced a recent loss, such as a death, a relationship, a dream, a job, etc.?
- Is there something in your life, that if it changed, would change your mood or outlook on life?

Emotional:

- Are there emotions (such as anger, sadness, fear) that you have ignored, rather than taking time to honestly work through them with God and others?
- Are there past events, hardship, or hurts that are weighing you down?

Physical:

- Have you recently experienced an extended period of stress?
- Have there been changes in how you care for your body, sleep, eat, or exercise?
- Have you recently experienced physical changes (like weight loss/gain, hair loss)?
- Are you taking any new medications or drugs? Make a doctor's appointment to discuss concerns and get a thorough medical exam.

Spiritual:

- Are you in a season of feeling distant from Jesus Christ? Are you regularly praying to God and listening to Him through the Bible?
- Do you know of any ongoing sin or unconfessed sin in your life? Do you feel trapped or helpless because of someone else's sin?
- If you are a Christian, do you fully accept that you are completely forgiven through Christ, and see yourself as a secure, significant, loved son or daughter of God?
- Are there things you think about yourself, God, or others that lead to a depressed mood?

Biblical Insights

God loves you even when you are depressed. You can approach Him for mercy and grace. If you struggle with depression, know that God loves you and understands. There is hope for you in Christ.

- *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near*

to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”
(Hebrews 4:15-16)

You are not alone. Many people in the Bible struggled with depression, yet found hope and care in God.

- Job experienced many losses and felt a darkness in his life (Job 3:1-5).
- King David felt despair from unconfessed sin (Psalm 31:9-10) and trying times (Psalm 43:5).
- Elijah lost hope after battling against evil (1 Kings 19:3-4).
- Paul experienced emotionally trying circumstance to the point of despair (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

Your feelings and thoughts are real, but they are not always a reliable source of truth and reality. When your thoughts do not align with God's word, the Bible, they can weigh you down. Renew your mind with Scripture (like John 3:16 below) that declares the truth about God and his love for you:

- *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3:16-1)*

God often works through struggles to change something in your life that is hurting your relationship with Him or your relationships with others. God knows you intimately. He cares about every detail of your life. Through life's ups and downs, sadness and losses, God offers a relationship with Himself—the only unchanging source of joy (John 10:10). Sometimes, depression reveals hurts from the past, or brokenness that Christ wants to heal so that you can experience God's best.

- *“... he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes...” (Isaiah 61:1-3)*

You are not meant to battle depression alone. It is easy to isolate when you are depressed, but you were made for relationships. You are meant to share life with others, being fully known and fully loved.

- *“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)*

Next Steps

- Bring your pain and heartache to Jesus. He wants to give you His peace.
- When feeling depressed, it's easy to want to withdraw. Be courageous to be honest with a friend about your struggle. There is no shame in admitting feeling depressed. Honestly admitting your need begins the journey of healing (1 John 1:7).
- Meditate on God's word to renew your mind and remind yourself about what is true, such as: Romans 8:31-39; Psalm 103:2-4; Lamentations 3:20-26; Zephaniah 3:17.
- From the sources of depression questions, consider areas that might be contributing to your feelings of sadness. What are 3 next steps you can take?
- If you are having suicidal thoughts and have a plan to take your life, please seek medical help immediately by calling 911. Your life is precious.

God loves you. There is hope in Christ. God can heal your depression. If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you can learn more at www.regenerationrecovery.org/freedom.

Additional Resources

- For stories of hope, go to www.regenerationrecovery.org: Andrew P, Ginni, Noah
- Books: *Depression: A Stubborn Darkness—Light for the Path* - Ed Welch, *When the Darkness Does Not Lift* – John Piper, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure* - David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Eating disorders are a group of conditions marked by an unhealthy relationship with food. These conditions grow beyond attempts to “eat healthy” or “lose weight” into an obsessive, controlling, preoccupation with food.

Eating disorders are complicated, dangerous (sometimes deadly) symptoms of underlying struggles. Individuals must relearn to eat in a healthy way, while addressing the underlying issues. Core issues may include: deep-rooted insecurity, low self-worth or self-hate, repressed guilt or shame, perfectionism, control, and people-pleasing. Often, the person with the disorder does not believe he or she is in real danger. Medical evaluations are often helpful ensure a safe recovery.

Eating Disorders include:

- **Anorexia:** the restriction of caloric intake, even to the point of starvation.
- **Bulimia:** the consumption of large amounts of food (binges), followed by purging behaviors such as self-induced vomiting, laxative abuse, and/or over-exercise to purge calories.
- **Binge eating:** the uncontrollable consumption of large amounts of food in one sitting, not accompanied by purging behaviors.

Eating Disorder Assessment

If you wonder whether you have an eating disorder, honestly answer the following questions:

- 1) Do you obsessively think about food, count calories, or weigh yourself multiple times daily?
- 2) If you eat “bad” food, do you have to make up for it by skipping a meal, exercising, or purging?
- 3) Is your mood determined by your scale or whether you exercise?
- 4) Do you hide how much you eat, exercise, vomit, or take laxatives/diuretics?
- 5) Do you eat food, avoid food, or purge food in order to feel better? After eating, do you feel shame, guilt, angry or depressed?
- 6) Do you have secret food habits or feel out of control with food?
- 7) Do you feel guilt over your past, shame about who you are, or worthless?
- 8) Do you wear baggy clothes in order to hide your body?
- 9) Do you avoid others because of how you look or avoid eating when others are present?
- 10) Do you feel that you have to look or perform perfectly to be happy, loved, or accepted?

Biblical Insights

God sees you, loves you as you are, and wants to help you. You are his wonderful creation. He has a plan for you. He has not forgotten or forsaken you. He wants to heal you.

- *“For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:13)*
- *“And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13)*
- *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)*

There's nothing you've done that God can't forgive and nothing done to you that God can't heal.

- *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.” (Romans 8:1, 33-34)*
- *“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18)*

Your body is precious. God created you to reflect his image. He has entrusted you with a physical body that will someday be gloriously transformed. You are its steward, not its owner.

- *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27)*
- *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own. (1 Corinthians 6:19)*
- *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:1-2)*

Willpower won't heal you. Anything short of complete spiritual transformation by the power of Christ is only behavior modification and is bound to fail.

- *"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you and uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)*
- *"I [Christ] am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)*

Only God's love is enough to fill you and satisfy you.

- *"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!" (Psalm 34:8)*
- *"Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things." (Psalm 107:8-9)*

God is in control and He is good. Any sense of control we experience is an illusion; control has always belonged to God, who works in all things with perfect knowledge and love.

- *"No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord. The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord." (Proverbs 21:30-31)*
- *"He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord." (Psalm 40:2-3)*

Next Steps

- Ask Christ to heal you (Romans 10:13). There is hope for healing in Christ. If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, learn more at www.regenerationrecovery.org/freedom.
- If you answered yes to two or more of the questions in the Eating Disorder Assessment in this document, consider visiting a medical doctor. *Be honest about your struggle with food.*
- When tempted to engage in disordered eating behaviors, do something different: pray and ask God for help, and inform someone you trust about your temptation. (Isaiah 41:10)
- Prepare for difficult situations in advance. Plan meals, pack snacks that feel safe, and get the support of trusted person to help. Support is important! (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Do not give up when you mess up. Be patient with yourself. Recovery can be a moment-by-moment surrender to God. His grace and love are unconditional. Recovery is hard, but possible. (2 Cor 12:9)
- Find a safe place that is Christ-centered, like a re:generation group, to address your eating disorder, and identify the underlying issues causing your struggle. (1 John 1:7)

Additional Resources:

- Go to www.regenerationrecovery.org for stories of hope: Jen, Lauren, Natalie
- Books: *Hope, Help & Healing for Eating Disorders* - Gregory Jantz; *Overcoming Binge Eating, Second Edition* - Christopher G. Fairburn; *Intuitive Eating* - Evelyn Tribole & Elyse Resch; *Table in the Darkness: A Healing Journey Through an Eating Disorder* - Lee Wolfe Blum

Masturbation is physically stimulating oneself for sexual excitement and/or orgasm.

Many people struggle with masturbation. The practice is not exclusive to one gender or age group. The root of this struggle is primarily spiritual and emotional rather than sexual.

Although Scripture does not specifically address masturbation, the Bible is clear God created sex for the purpose of procreation and mutual oneness with a spouse within the confines of marriage. Scripture is also clear that we are to guard our minds, putting to death sexual immorality, impurity, lust, passion and evil desire. Our lives and bodies belong to God. We are to be self-controlled, upright, and godly as we glorify Him with our bodies (Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:3-5, Titus 2:12, 2 Corinthians 6:18-20).

Common Misconceptions

- **No one else does it:** Masturbation is common among men and women, Christians and non-Christians.
- **I will quit once I get married:** The Bible establishes marriage as a celebrated sexual provision, but marriage does not resolve sin struggles. Sexual intimacy with a spouse requires effort, vulnerability, and selflessness. Masturbation requires none of these, and often remains a temptation and destructive force within marriage.
- **Masturbation is not harmful to me:** Masturbation is often an escape from reality that corrupts the imagination. Rather than a means to intimacy with a spouse, sex becomes inward-focused, delusional, and isolating. Dopamine released in the brain while masturbating can be addictive.
- **Masturbation is no big deal relative to other sins:** Any activity that is self-centered, corrupts the mind, and uses fantasy coupled with dopamine to escape reality is a problem.
- **Masturbation is not harmful to my spouse:** Sexual desire is a gift from God meant to lead you to sexual intimacy and mutual pleasure with your spouse. Masturbation is self-centered, and often entertains harmful fantasies while denying your spouse the blessing of intimacy and oneness.
- **It is ok to masturbate if I don't lust:** Though masturbating without lusting or fantasizing is rare, it still does not mean that masturbation is glorifying to God or honoring to your spouse.
- **I have to masturbate or it will damage my body:** Your body will adjust accordingly to your level of sexual activity. Men have nocturnal emissions (wet dreams) after prolonged abstinence.
- **It is never ok to masturbate:** Because the Bible does not speak directly to this issue, there may be a few instances where masturbation does glorify God and honor a spouse. Seek biblical counsel from trusted Christians and discuss with your spouse instances where it may be permissible and beneficial.

Regardless of your frustrations, misunderstandings, and failures with masturbation, know that God loves you. There is healing and victory in Christ. God can give you self-control to glorify Him with your body.

Biblical Insights

Your body is not your own. If you have trusted Christ, your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and (if you are married) your body also belongs to your spouse.

- *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body"* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- *"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor."* (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4)
- *"For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."* (1 Corinthians 7:4)

Sexual immorality is deadly. God designed sexual fulfillment to be experienced with a spouse within marriage. Sexual practices outside of God's design are destructive.

- *"Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18)*
- *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)*
- *"[Spouses,] Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." (1 Corinthians 7:5)*

You are not alone. Victory is possible with God.

- *"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)*
- *"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16)*

If you struggle with masturbation, don't live defeated, and don't dismiss recurring sin. Christ died for your sin. Because Christ's blood is cleansing of sin, no one (not even you) can condemn you. Yet, we are to repent of sin to follow Christ and fulfill God's purpose for our lives.

- *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." (Romans 8:1, 33-34)*
- *"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:1-2)*

God does not want you to live in a fantasy world but to glorify God in mind, body, and spirit.

- *"...put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:23-24)*
- *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age." (Titus 2:11-12)*
- *"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)*

Here is a simple litmus test to determine if something not specified in scripture is ok for you to do:

Does _____ bring glory to God? Or, does the way that I use _____ glorify God? If Jesus returned while I am engaged in this activity would He be honored?

Next Steps

- Ask Christ to heal you (Romans 10:13). Identify and address the underlying issues that drive you to masturbate. The next time you feel the urge to masturbate, slow down, and pray. Ask God to reveal your motivation and for courage to let others know your temptation. (Proverbs 14:8, Proverbs 18:1)
- Confess to a trusted friend, and be accountable to him or her to pursue purity. Commit to 24 hours of abstinence each day. (2 Timothy 2:22)
- Identify times, places, and stressors that often lead you to masturbate. Prepare in advance how you will respond should temptation come. (1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Peter 5:8, Ephesians 6:13, Hebrews 2:18)
- Do not despair if you fall to temptation. God's grace and his love is unconditional. (Romans 8:1)

Additional Resources

- Read this re:generation blog...["Is It Ok to Masturbate if I'm Not Lusting?"](#)
- C.S. Lewis speaks out on masturbation <https://redeeminggod.com/c-s-lewis-on-masturbation/>
- Christianity Today, ["What Could Possibly Be Wrong With Christian Masturbation?"](#)
- If you have not yet experienced God's salvation, learn more at regenrecovery.org/freedom.

Pornography is any material used in order to elicit sexual arousal.

Pornography can include images, videos, magazines, literature, television, movies, social media, and any other source that stimulates erotic behavior or feelings for a person. Pornography use is not exclusive to gender or age groups. The root of this sin is primarily spiritual and emotional rather than sexual. Pornography is often used in conjunction with masturbation, or by couples seeking sexual arousal and/or sexual experimentation.

Common Characteristics

Common reasons people use pornography include:

- **To get a natural “high”:** The chemical rush that occurs with pornography and orgasm can be addictive.
- **To take control:** Pornography provides an opportunity to find selfish pleasure in an endless number of ways without considering others' needs or desires.
- **To escape reality:** Pornography can be used to fantasize about a different life or experience when real life is not satisfying (For example: to feel desirable when you feel neglected or unwanted).
- **To numb internal pain:** Sexual pleasure can be used to medicate pain.
- **To feel something:** Emotionally numb people can become desperate to experience any sensation.
- **To fill a void:** Pornography can be used to fill the void of something “missing” in a person's life.

Regardless of why someone pursues sexual arousal apart from God's design for healthy sex (monogamy in marriage), pornography *cannot fix the underlying problem*. Porn, like most addictions, masks the true spiritual problem and can become a source of pain itself. It can lead to isolation, an inability to live in reality, impotence, loneliness, perversion, broken relationships, and separation from God.

Biblical Insights

God loves you. If you are trapped by the shame of pornography, know that God sees you and is pursuing you. Nothing you've done will cause Him to reject you. He wants you to turn to Him so that you can be free. He wants to heal you and give you an abundant life.

- *“But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” (Psalm 86:15)*
- *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (Jesus Christ, John 10:10)*

The sin of pornography enslaves you. Sin is deadly. Pornography is a sinful corruption of the heart.

- *“But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Jesus Christ, Matthew 5:28)*
- *“They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.” (2 Peter 2:19)*

Christ understands your temptation and is able to help you.

- *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)*
- *“For because he himself has suffered when tempted, [Christ] is able to help those who are being tempted.” (Hebrews 2:18)*

Jesus already paid for your sin. Christ died for all of your sin and offers forgiveness for every sin to anyone who accepts His blood as payment for sin. Those who accept Christ will never be condemned.

- *"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."* (Isaiah 53:5)
- *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..."* (Romans 8:1)

Your body is precious. God wants you to care for your body and to honor Him with it.

- *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

You are powerless to change on your own, but God can transform you. Anything short of a spiritual transformation by the power of God is only behavior modification and is bound to fail. But God's Spirit working through His Word and through His people can free you from addiction.

- *"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out."* (Romans 7:18)
- *"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."* (Galatians 5:16)

You are not alone. Frequent porn use is a common struggle for men and women. Fortunately, many people who once struggled are now experiencing freedom in Christ and are willing to help you.

- *"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."* (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."* (Galatians 6:2)

Next Steps

- Ask Christ to heal you. (Romans 10:13)
- Identify and address the underlying need behind your porn habit. The next time you feel the urge to look at porn, slow down, pray and consider your motivation. Ask God for courage to address your habit and let others know your temptation. (Proverbs 14:8)
- Confess and ask someone for accountability. Commit to 24 hours of sobriety. (Matthew 6:11)
- Repent. Get rid of access to pornography. (Matthew 5:29-30)
- Practice communicating. Find a place like a *re:generation* recovery group where you can talk without fear of judgment and work through your struggles. Step out of secrecy. (1 John 1:7)
- Identify your stressors that often tempt you to look at pornography and decide how you will respond to them should temptation come. Prepare for vulnerable situations well in advance. (1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Peter 5:8, Ephesians 6:13)
- Do not despair when you fall to temptation. God's grace and his love is unconditional. (Romans 8:1)
- Masturbation is often a common struggle linked with pornography. Read over the Masturbation Issue Sheet for more information.

God loves you, and there is hope and healing in Christ. If you have not yet experienced God's salvation, you can learn more at www.regenerationrecovery.org/freedom.

Additional Resources

- For stories of hope, go to www.regenerationrecovery.org: Noah, Nate
- Books for Men: *Pure Desire* - Ted Roberts, *Every Man's Battle: Winning the War on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time* - Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker, *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry* - Steve Gallagher.
- Books for Women: *Dirty Girls Come Clean* - Crystal Renaud, *Create in Me A Pure Heart: Answers for Struggling Women* - Steve & Kathy Gallagher.
- Books for Wives: *Your Sexually Addicted Spouse: How Partners Can Cope and Heal* - Barbara Steffens & Marsha Means, *Every Heart Restored: A Wife's Guide to Healing in the Wake of a Husband's Sexual Sin* - Fred & Brenda Stoeker, Stephen Arterburn

**This Information Sheet is also available online at <http://www.regenerationrecovery.org/struggles/pornography>*

Pride is a high opinion of one's own dignity, importance, merit, or superiority. Pride is also a dignified sense of what is due to oneself, or one's position, or character.

Pride has infected all humans in varying degrees. Through pride, Satan, originally the guardian angel of God, fell and became the devil (Isaiah 14:12-14). Satan then used an appeal of pride to entice Adam and Eve to rebel against God so that they could become "like God" (Genesis 3:4-5). Pride entices a person to exalt himself or to bring others low for the sake of comparative advantage or superiority. It is essentially competitive and wickedly deceptive. Prideful people have difficulty recognizing their own pride, while being keenly aware of pride in others. The opposite of pride is humility.

"According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere flea bites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind."
(C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)

Common Characteristics

Here are some dangerous results of pride:

- **Distorted views of self and God:** We all fall short when compared to a holy God, so a man's pride works to minimize his own depravity and/or deny God's holy nature or even His existence. God must be moved to the periphery or dismissed, His character distorted, His authority discounted, or His word discredited to provide room for self-importance and self-authority.
- **Idolatry:** Mankind was made to worship/serve God only. Pride shifts a man's focus from God to pursue that which exalts himself, serves his own will, and affirms his own importance.
- **Depravity resulting in destruction:** When personal desires/glory are predominant, a man becomes dependent on what affirms his self-importance or comforts him when his idols fail him. Addictions and destructive patterns are formed when pursuing significance or coping with failure apart from Christ.
- **Stunted spiritual, relational, professional growth:** A man's pride closes his mind to feedback and makes him unteachable. A prideful man is self-absorbed, won't admit mistakes, shifts blame, and places his desires above others' welfare. He denies his need for growth, correction, and repentance.
- **Shame:** A prideful man finds it very hard to accept his desperate need for grace, perceiving himself to be above sin or holding himself to a higher standard than God. "How did I stoop so low? I'm above that sin. I know God forgives me, but I can't forgive myself."
- **False humility:** When caught in sin, a prideful man may confess, but continue to sin when he thinks no notices. He may serve others, but congratulate himself for his humility, or want recognition for his act.
- **Self-disparagement:** When a prideful man falls short of his own standards, he may tell himself, "I'm worthless, unlovable, a failure, too broken, unforgiveable..." because he values himself based upon meeting his own standards. What he thinks about himself and performing to his own expectations matters more to him than what God thinks and allowing the grace of Christ to define him.

Biblical Insights

Pride will lead to your downfall.

- *"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." - Proverbs 16:18*
- *"One's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor." - Proverbs 29:23*

God is holy. You are a great sinner in need of His grace and mercy. Only Christ's righteousness can justify you before God.

- *"[Jesus] told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated*

**This Information Sheet is also available online at <http://www.regenerationrecovery.org/struggles/pride>*

others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." – Luke 18:9-14

We were made to serve and exalt God alone. Your life is not your own.

- "Then Jesus said to [Satan], 'Be gone, Satan! For it is written,' You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" – Matthew 4:10
- "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." – 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Abiding with Christ to love and humbly serve God above all others leads to life.

- "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" – Micah 6:8
- "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." – Philippians 2:3-8

You are significant because you are significant to God—the One whose opinion matters most.

- "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me." – 1 Corinthians 4:3-4

Next Steps

- **Shift your focus to God.** Spend time reading His Word. Ask him to reveal His nature and your nature. Understanding God's holiness and His love for you (a great sinner) brings humility. (Philippians 3:7-11)
- **Recognize symptoms of pride:** Are you critical of others? Are you defensive when someone points out sin (shift blame, present a resume)? Do you quickly notice pride in others? Do you look for others' approval more than God's? Are you insecure? Do you take advantage of God's grace? Do you think that your sin and brokenness are greater than God's grace? Do you believe that you are worthless or unforgiven? Does a particular sin define you more than God's claims on your life?
- **Ask people who know you well if they see pride in you.** Pride is deceptive. Just because you don't see pride, doesn't mean it is not there. (Proverbs 27:6, Proverbs 18:1)
- **Confess and repent quickly when you recognize pride or its symptoms.** (James 5:16, Proverbs 29:23)
- **Ask God to humble you.** (Psalm 51:17, Matthew 5:3-9)
- **Follow Christ's example as a servant.** (Philippians 2:3-8, Mark 10:45)
- **Fulfill your purpose in Christ.** (Ephesians 2:10, Galatians 2:20, John 17:3-4)
- **Praise God in all things—even weaknesses that humble you and cause you to depend on Him.** (2 Corinthians 12:7-9, Romans 5:2-5)

Learn more at a personal relationship with Jesus Christ at www.regenerationrecovery.org/freedom

Additional Resources

- Stories of victory over pride: www.regenerationrecovery.org: Blair O., Rob B., Nate G. teaching
- Books: Mere Christianity: Book 3, Chapter 8, The Great Sin – C.S. Lewis; Humility: The Journey Toward Holiness – Andrew Murray; Landmines in the Path of the Believer: Avoiding the Hidden Dangers – Charles Stanley; The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness – Timothy Keller
- DesiringGod.org: Seven Subtle Symptoms of Pride; Biblestudytools.com: Bible Verses About Pride

**This Information Sheet is also available online at <http://www.regenerationrecovery.org/struggles/pride>*

SAME-SEX ATTRACTION (HOMOSEXUALITY)

Same-Sex Attraction (SSA), or Homosexuality, is romantic attraction, sexual attraction or sexual activity between members of the same sex.

God deeply loves people with same-sex attraction. Sadly, many churches have ostracized gay-identified people. God doesn't see people with same-sex attraction as greater sinners than others. Every time the New Testament references homosexual practice as a sexual sin, it is within the context of other sins. He offers the same redemptive plan to *all* people. He discourages any sexual sin (regardless of gender attraction) outside of His plan for sexual expression because He loves us and sin is destructive.

Homosexual practice has been present throughout history. Thankfully, God's Word transcends time and culture to direct us towards life. To experience God's best with our sexuality, we must live by God's plan for sexuality, regardless of cultural acceptance or personal desires. *The Bible clearly defines homosexual practice as a sexual sin throughout both Old and New Testaments.* The only relationship where a sexual union is celebrated is within the confines of a monogamous heterosexual marriage between one man and one woman. All people are called to flee any sexual activity outside of this boundary.

Setting the Record Straight

- **God loves gay people:** God so loves the LGBTQ community and anyone with same-sex attraction, that He gave His only son to be crucified so that any may be redeemed and restored to an intimate relationship with Him (John 3:16). Christ gives new life to all who trust in him (1 Cor 6:9-11).
- **Christians can struggle with same-sex attraction:** Many Christians with SSA faithfully and joyfully surrender their sexuality to God's design along with other areas of life. (1 Cor 10:13, John 10:10)
- **If people are born with same-sex desires, it doesn't mean that same-sex love is God's design.** Because of Adam and Eve's sin, we've all inherited a rebellious nature with sinful desires leading to death (Romans 7:14-18). Intrinsic desires don't determine whether a longing is good or bad. God's word alone defines truth. Sexuality is determined by our Designer, not our desires. (Psalm 19:7-11)
- **The Bible doesn't affirm monogamous same-sex love.** Homosexual practice is designated as sin in both Old and New Testaments (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:21-32, 1 Tim 1:9-10). Jesus affirmed that God created man and woman in His image with distinct but complementary roles, and that marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman in monogamy. (Matthew 19:4-6)
- **Love can be wrong.** Just because there is love in a relationship, it doesn't mean that God approves of the relationship. Hearts can be deceptive (Jeremiah 17:9). In fact, no earthly love can fulfill our need for love. Only God's perfect love can fully satisfy our love needs. (Ecc 3:11, Psalm 90:14)
- **Desires do not determine identity.** We are not a sum of our attractions and desires. God created each of us for a purpose. He gives us a choice to live in his intended design for life or to go our own way. God gives those who turn to Christ, a new identity as children of God—forgiven, righteous and clean. Christ's blood preeminently determines the value and identity of a Christian. (1 Cor 6:9-11)
- **You are not denying your true identity if you follow God's plan instead of your same-sex desires.** Jesus' invitation to all is to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him (Luke 9:23-25). Following Christ often demands sacrifice in all areas of life (including sexuality), but also promises great eternal rewards. To answer Jesus' call is to accept an identity defined by God and to follow Christ fully.
- **God can change sexual desires, but He doesn't always change sexual desires.** God gives Christians the Holy Spirit to change them from the inside out (John 16:7-8). Sometimes, the Spirit takes away a person's desire for specific sins, other times, He does not. God calls us to follow Him regardless of sinful desires, or what culture says, in order to glorify Him and to enjoy His blessings.

More Biblical Insights

God loves you, and has your best interests in mind. You matter to God. He created you for purpose and set eternity in your heart. No marriage, no earthly relationship, no fulfilled sexual desire, will satisfy you—only God's perfect and true love satisfies. His instructions lead to life.

- *"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."* (Psalm 16:11)

Homosexual practice is condemned in Old and New Testaments. It is always listed amongst other sins. Sexual sins are some of the first to emerge when we turn from God. (Lev 20:13, 1 Cor 6:9-11, 1 Tim 1:9-10)

- *"You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination." (Leviticus 18:22)*
- *"... they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error." (Romans 1:25-27)*

Without Christ you're powerless to change, but Christ redefines and changes all who trust Him. Willpower won't overcome sin. Those who accept Christ receive a new Spirit and new identity defined by Christ's work on the cross. God may or may not remove a Christian's same-sex attraction, but the Holy Spirit will give him or her a supernatural ability to resist temptation and live joyfully in God's will.

- *"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out." (Romans 7:18)*
- *"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)*

Self-denial of sexual desire is counter-cultural, but Christ says we must deny ourselves and follow Him in order to live. Culture tells us to transform our bodies and conform our minds to our sexual desires. Jesus calls us to follow Him, and let God transform our hearts/minds to conform every area of life to His will.

- *"...If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?" (Jesus Christ, Luke 9:23-25)*
- *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Jesus Christ, Matthew 11:28-29)*

It is loving, not hateful, to refrain from supporting sin and to kindly tell someone the truth about sin.

- *"[Love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth." (1 Corinthians 13:6)*

Next Steps

- God loves you and made you in His image. Ask Christ to heal you spiritually (Romans 10:13). If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus, learn more at regenrecovery.org/freedom.
- Begin renewing your mind (Romans 12:1-2). Take a 30-day challenge: pray and read God's word daily (start with John), ask God to reveal His love for you, meditate on and memorize scripture (try Romans 13:14), change media intake (TV, radio, social media, websites, etc.) to that which honors Christ, limit time in relationships that pull you from God, attend a Bible-teaching church that doesn't fear people with SSA to receive sound teaching and to find healthy Christian community.
- Find a Christian group, like *re:generation*, where you are safe to be known, work through struggles, and discover who God designed you to be. (Titus 3:3-7)
- Begin to study God's design for sexuality and gender using the resources below.

Additional Resources

- For stories of hope, go to regenerationrecovery.org: Marisa, Michael, Wes
- Read Leonard's *re:generation* blog, *As a Gay Man, I Never Thought I Would Be Free to Marry*
- livingout.org, livehope.org, Real Truth Real Quick podcast: *Has the Church Failed the LGBTQ Community?*, *Should Christians Support Gay Conversion Therapy?*
- *Is God Anti-Gay?* - Sam Allberry, *Speaking of Homosexuality: Discussing the Issues with Kindness and Clarity* - Joe Dallas, *Dwelling in the Land: Bringing Same-Sex Attraction Under the Lordship of Christ* - Jeanette Howard, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* - Rosaria Butterfield

Self-injury is the practice of deliberately harming the body without suicidal intent.

People self-injure in many ways to varying degrees of severity. The practice is not exclusive to one gender or age group. The root of this struggle is primarily spiritual and emotional rather than physical.

Common Characteristics

Self-injury can include cutting, intense scratching, burning, hitting, piercing, or pulling out hair for the purpose of harming the body. Reasons people self-injure include:

- **To Take Control:** When life is out of control, it can be comforting to exert control over something.
- **To Express Pain:** Self-injury can be used as a way to make emotional pain visible to others. People often hide injuries, yet hope that someone discovers them.
- **To Escape Reality:** Physical pain can be used as a distraction when real life is overwhelming.
- **To Feel Something:** Emotionally numb people can become desperate to experience any sensation, even if it's painful.
- **To Get a Natural "High":** The endorphin rush that occurs with self-harm can be addictive.
- **To Punish Oneself:** Self-harm may be an attempt to atone for things that cause guilt or shame—either things you have done or things that have been done to you.
- **To Protect Oneself:** Abuse victims may attempt to make their bodies less attractive as a defense against becoming a future target.

Regardless of why a person harms his or her body, *self-injury cannot fix the underlying problem*. And, like most addictions, unhealthy methods of coping with pain often become a source of pain. Secret habits lead to isolation and loneliness, perpetuating the cycle of hurt.

Biblical Insights

God loves you. If you are trapped in pain or feel alone, know that God sees you. He has not forgotten or forsaken you. He is pursuing you, calling out for you to turn to him so that he can heal you.

- "...a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory..." (Matthew 12:20)
- "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

God understands and cares about your pain. Christ suffered for sin to offer you eternal life now.

- "You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?" (Psalm 56:8)
- "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

Only God is in control and He is good. Any sense of control we experience is an illusion; control has always belonged to God, who works in all things with perfect knowledge and love.

- "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand." (Proverbs 19:21)
- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Self-injury enslaves you. Your habit is not working for you; you are working for it.

- *"Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16)*
- *"They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved." (2 Peter 2:19)*

Christ has already paid for your sin. Thanks to the blood of Jesus—the only blood that saves—no one, not even you yourself, can condemn you. We are healed by Christ's wounds.

- *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus... Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." (Romans 8:1, 33-34)*
- *"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)*

Your body is precious. God has entrusted you with a physical body that will someday be gloriously transformed. You are its steward, not its owner.

- *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)*
- *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1)*

Willpower won't heal you. Anything short of complete spiritual transformation by the power of God in you is only behavior modification and is bound to fail.

- *"Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord." (Jeremiah 17:5)*
- *"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16)*

Next Steps

- Ask Christ to heal you. (Romans 10:13)
- Identify and address the underlying need behind your self-injury. The next time you feel the urge to hurt yourself, slow down, pray and consider your motivation. Ask God for courage to address your pain and let others know your temptation. (Proverbs 14:8)
- Practice communicating. Find a place where you can talk without fear of judgment, like a re:generation recovery group. Commit to stepping out of secrecy. (1 John 1:7)
- Prepare for vulnerable situations well in advance. Identify your stressors that often lead you to harm yourself and decide how you will respond to them should temptation come. (1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Peter 5:8, Ephesians 6:13)
- Do not despair when you mess up. God's grace and his love is unconditional. (Romans 8:1)
- Self-injury often goes hand in hand with depression. Read over the Depression Issue Sheet for more information.

God loves you, and there is hope and healing in Christ. If you have not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you can learn more at www.regenerationrecovery.org/freedom.

Additional Resources

- For stories of hope, go to www.regenerationrecovery.org; Ginni
- Books: *Self-Injury: When Pain Feels Good* – Edward T. Welch, *Cutting: A Healing Response* – Jeremy Lelek, *Inside a Cutter's Mind: Understanding and Helping Those Who Self-Injure* - Jerusha Clark with Dr. Earl Henslin, *Scars That Wound: Scars That Heal* - Jan Kern

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity (verbal, visual, emotional, physical) engaged in without consent* (agreement), which uses one person in order to meet another person's sexual or emotional needs. This activity may be accomplished through force, intimidation, coercion, deception or influence of authority.

*Note: A person does not "consent" if he or she cannot reasonably accept or refuse sexual advances. A victim's age, circumstances, understanding and dependency/relationship to the offender may limit ability to consent.

A person who has suffered abuse has experienced a profound breach of trust. Intimate parts of his or her life has been taken (not surrendered) by another through control, manipulation, or power—sometimes, by a loved one, a confidant, or a person of authority. This violation can create emotional turmoil, distort a person's understanding of love and relationships, and generate significant questions about God. The abused person may wonder if he or she is lovable at all. Thankfully, God loves people who have suffered due to the sins of others—Christ understands suffering and abuse. God offers true love (sacrificial, unconditional love), and hope for healing to those wounded deeply by sin.

"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." (Psalm 34:18)

Common Characteristics

- **Abuse can be ongoing or a single event, and can happen to anyone.** It can come at the hands of a stranger, authority figure, friend, or a trusted family member.
- **Sometimes memories of abuse are detailed and intact, but other times they can be vague and distant.** It is common for victims to minimize or dismiss memories of abuse. Sufferers of abuse can even convince themselves that the abuse didn't really affect them.
- **Abuse can lead to isolation and secrecy.** Sharing about abuse can be frightening and feel impossible. Sometimes victims lie to themselves to protect the secret. Lies such as: "It was a long time ago and it wasn't that bad;" "It doesn't really affect me now." Disregarding or minimizing abuse, however, makes it hard to see connections between the abuse and your own struggles.
- **People who have suffered abuse often carry feelings of false guilt and shame.** Abusers often try to convince victims, that they were willing participants or that the abuse is their fault. No matter what your abuser said and no matter how you may have responded, ***the abuse was not your fault.***
- **Sometimes people fault God for their abuse and blame God for not preventing the harm.** After abuse, people wonder if God really exists or cares. Some doubt that God could still love them because they feel so damaged. God did not cause your abuse. Abuse is the result of your abuser's choice to exercise his or her free will. God hates abuse and grieves the pain and loss it has caused.
- **Coping with the pain of abuse can lead to many harmful lifestyle choices and sinful patterns over time.** Abuse damages a person's body, mind, and spirit. Its effects can show up in any area of life. Physical, emotional, psychological, relational, and spiritual problems are often rooted in the pain of abuse.

Biblical Insights

God is real. He knows about the evil done to you and He hates it. Abuse may have left you feeling deserted by God. But God did not abandon you. He was always present and pursuing; he saw it all. He knows your suffering. Though you may not understand why God allowed your abuse, you can know that he hates and grieves over your pain. He will bring justice for what was done to you.

- *"You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?" (Psalm 56:8)*
- *"I called on your name, O Lord, from the depths of the pit; you heard my plea, 'Do not close your ear to my cry for help!' You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!' "You have taken up my cause, O Lord; you have redeemed my life. You have seen the wrong done to me, O Lord; judge my cause." (Lamentations 3:55-59)*

God can heal your shame and restore your life and true identity. It is easy to accept the lies of “dirty,” “broken,” “worthless,” and “unlovable” when you’ve been abused. But you matter to God. Jesus came to rescue you from sin’s lies and destruction. Through Christ’s blood, God offers you a new identity as His Child—clean, righteous, valuable, pure, and loved. Regardless of what you have suffered and any sinful choices you have made, God has a wonderful plan for your life that is not defined by sin.

- *“If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”* (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”* (Ephesians 1:3-4)
- *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”* (Jeremiah 29:11)

Isolation and secrecy are traps that lock us into a cycle of unhealthy beliefs, thoughts, and behaviors.

But, honesty about harms to us and harms by us moves us out of hiding into the “light” where we can experience healing and true fellowship with God and others—we can be fully known and loved.

- *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”* (Galatians 6:2)
- *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:17)

You are not responsible for abuse against you. You are responsible for the unhealthy ways that you coped with the pain of abuse. Distinguishing between your abuser’s sin against you and your own sinful responses to the abuse will clarify your steps of healing. Thankfully, Christ left us an example to follow.

- *“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”* (1 Peter 2:21-23)

Forgiveness frees you to work through your own pain and sin honestly. Forgiveness is not forgetting, excusing, denying, or freeing abuser(s) from consequences of sin. Forgiveness is entrusting justice for the abuse to Christ. It may feel impossible, but forgiveness ultimately frees you to experience God’s peace.

- *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”* (1 Peter 2:24)

Next Steps

- The task before you may be hard to face. But God will be with you on this journey of healing, guiding you along the way. With each step, you will come to realize that God is trustworthy, that He created you for a purpose, and that he can make all things new. God loves you. There is hope and healing in Christ. If you have not yet experienced God’s salvation, learn more at regenrecovery.org/freedom.
- If you have not yet done so, take the courageous step to admit to yourself that you were abused, and that the abuse was not your fault.
- Start building a support system. Take a risk to trust others with the truth of your past with safe people who will support, love, and encourage you. You can be fully known and fully loved.
- Pray and journal through your thoughts. Begin to renew your mind with the truth about God and about you through His word (Romans 12:1-2). Be honest with God about your doubts, fears, and anger; He understands them. Ask God to show you how past abuse is affecting life today.

Additional Resources

- Go to www.regenerationrecovery.org for stories of hope: Testimonies by Wes and Garret, Katie’s Video, Liana’s Step 5 Story
- Blog Post: Shelley’s story: <http://www.watermark.org/blog/protected>
- Books: *Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault* - Justin and Lindsey Holcomb, *Healing the Wounded Heart: The Heartache of Sexual Abuse and the Hope of Transformation* - Dan Allender, *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection* - Edward Welch
- Consider Watermark’s MENd (men) or Shelter From The Storm (women) ministries.

**This Information Sheet is also available online at <http://www.regenerationrecovery.org/struggles/sexual-abuse>*

Substance Abuse or Addiction (of alcohol, drugs, pills) is the repeated misuse and unhealthy, compulsive desire and dependency of a legal or illegal substance, which is continued by the user with disregard to negative impact.

Addicts and alcoholics often want to quit, but find they can't. They go back to the addiction despite the harm it causes because they don't have a way to live life without it. Though some people may even be born with propensities towards alcoholism/addiction, it is patterned abuse that forms chemical dependency.

Common Characteristics

Often addicts and alcoholics can go days, weeks, even months without using; the addiction is more easily defined by repetitive bingeing (a "once I start, I don't/can't stop" mentality). When chemical abuse is extensive, in addition to a Christ-centered recovery program, medical detox and rehab may be necessary due to the chemical dependency formed within the body.

Addiction Assessment

If you are struggling with alcohol and drug/pill abuse, honestly answer the following questions in this addiction assessment below*. Invite a close friend to help you process these honestly and accurately:

1. Have you ever decided to stop drinking/using for a season, but only lasted for a couple of days?
2. Do people talk to you about your drinking/using?
3. Have you tried drinking/using different types of alcohol/drugs, only certain days, only certain times?
4. Have you drank/used in the morning in the past year to help get through a hangover?
5. Have you had remorse, guilt or regret due to your drinking/using or actions/words while drinking/using?
6. In the last year, has your drinking/using caused relational, work, legal, financial, health problems?
7. Do you often have six or more drinks in one night?
8. Do you ever drink/use before a party, date, event so that you'll get a head start?
9. Do you find that, most often, when you drink you get drunk?
10. Have you missed, called in sick, given excuses for missing events, parties, holidays, work after drinking/using – for being drunk/high or too hungover?
11. When you drink/use do you ever have difficulty remembering past details or the night before?
12. Have you ever tried to quit and after a season of sobriety gone back to drinking/using at the same if not worse level?

From the experience of others, answering YES to four or more questions indicates a substance abuse issue and the need for help.

Biblical Insights

God loves you and you can approach Him for mercy and grace. If you struggle with addiction, know that you are not alone. God loves you and there is hope for you because of Christ.

- *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*
- Hebrews 4:15-16

*Questions adapted from AA 12 Questions and AUDIT Test

*This Information Sheet is also available online at <http://www.regenerationrecovery.org/struggles/substance-abuse>

The Bible does not say “don’t drink,” but it does say “don’t be drunk.” If you can’t drink without getting drunk, you should strongly consider abstinence altogether. There are certain things in life that lead us into sin. Jesus says when you realize what things are access points to sin in your life, to radically do away with them in order to preserve life (we often call these your playground, playmates and pastimes).

- “If your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.” - Matthew 5:30

We think: “But other people drink!” “My doctor prescribed these pills.” “Marijuana/K2 is legal now.” God’s word informs us better than our logic.

- “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated (mastered) by anything.” - 1 Corinthians 6:12

The Bible actually says we should be under the influence – but it’s command is to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, not alcohol or drugs. If you’re struggling with an addiction, also read Proverbs 23:29-35.

- “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery*, but be filled with the Spirit.” - Ephesians 5:18

**Note: Debauchery is an abandoned, depraved life ruled by sensual pleasures.*

There is a simple litmus test in the Bible for whether something is ok for you to do: Does _____ bring glory to God? Or, does the way that I use _____ glorify God?

- “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” - 1 Corinthians 10:31

Next Steps

- Acknowledge your addiction to yourself; until you believe you have a problem nothing will change (1 John 1:8).
- Acknowledge your addiction to God, He cares for you and He alone can set you free from the bondage of addiction (1 John 1:9)
- Reach out to a friend and take the courageous step of being honest about your struggle. There is no shame in admitting addiction. The only shame would be if you continued in the spiral of addiction and didn’t seek help. (1 John 1:7, James 5:16, Proverbs 28:13)
- Write down some Scriptures from this issue sheet to remind yourself, meditate on, and memorize what is true about God, you and your struggle. Consider starting with these passages: Romans 6 (especially verse 21 and 23), Galatians 5 and 1 Peter 4:1-4
- Answer the **Addiction Assessment** questions to consider whether you have an addiction. What is one next step you will take today? This week?
- Get a re:generation Groundwork book and read the “Sober 24 Hours” lesson. Will you commit to 24-hour sobriety?

God loves you, and there is hope and healing in Christ. If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you can learn more at www.regenerationrecovery.org/freedom.

Additional Resources

- For stories of hope, go to www.regenerationrecovery.org: Alonso, Amanda, Jeremy, John, Joy, Shoni
- Books: Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave – Ed Welch, Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters - Timothy Keller, How to Defeat Harmful Habits: Freedom from Six Addictive Behaviors – June Hunt