

## Bondage, Domination, and Sadomasochism (BDSM) – a Christian Perspective

I hope that as you read through this page, you will arrive at the same conclusion as I have concerning bondage, sadomasochism and their associated subcultures. God created us and gave us the wonderful gift of sex to be enjoyed in the intimate bond of marriage. God intended sex to be a loving, giving experience, as opposed to a selfish, lustful, or domineering experience. This page has been written primarily to Christians, but I encourage everyone to consider the points made.

### Definitions:

- **Bondage:** "sadomasochistic sexual practices involving the physical restraint of one partner " (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)
- **Domination:** "supremacy or preeminence over another; exercise of mastery or preponderant influence" (*Webster's Dictionary*)
- **Masochism:** "A sexual perversion characterized by pleasure in being subjected to pain or humiliation esp. by a love object; pleasure in being abused or dominated" (*Webster's Dictionary*)
- **Sadism:** "A sexual perversion in which gratification is obtained by the infliction of physical or mental pain on others; delight in cruelty" (*Webster's Dictionary*)

Additionally, *Encyclopedia Britannica* says this: "The sadist, however, often seeks a victim who is not a masochist, as some of the sexual excitement derives from the victim's unwillingness. The level and extent of sadistic violence may vary considerably, from infliction of mild pain in otherwise harmless love play to extreme brutality, sometimes leading to serious injury or death. The satisfaction of the sadist may result not from inflicting actual physical pain but rather from the mental suffering of the victim. Sexual urges may limit the level of violence, but in some cases the aggressive impulse becomes predominant and the sadist progresses to more extreme expressions of his violent tendencies. Sadism may be a factor in some violent crimes, particularly rape and murder."

- **Sadomasochism:** "The derivation of pleasure from the infliction of physical or mental pain either on others or on oneself" (*Webster's Dictionary*)
- **Submission:** "An act of submitting to the authority or control of another" (*Webster's Dictionary*)

There are many ways in which people mix the above acts with sexuality. The term "BDSM" is a broad reaching term that vaguely covers all of the above activities, and there are many subcultures associated with BDSM. Rather than attempt to analyze each group in this discussion, I will present some principle-driven questions that can be asked of the particular activity with the goal of determining whether the activity is pleasing to God or not.

### Questions that can be asked concerning a BDSM activity:

**1. Does the act degrade and dishonor God's temple?** Our bodies are made in God's image and are intended to be vessels of worship (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20). When we mistreat someone's body, or allow our bodies to be mistreated, we degrade them and dishonor God. This is basically mocking the dignity of God's image. This dovetails with Satan's objectives of marring, abusing or destroying our bodies such that they cease to glorify God.

**2. Does the act pervert sexual pleasure by mixing it with pain?** Pleasure and pain are opposites, but BDSM attempts to bring them together for sexual gratification. Pain is a byproduct of sin (Genesis 3:16-17; Genesis 6:6) and was not intended to be part of creation. It will be eventually removed from creation by Jesus at the end of the age (Revelation 21:4).

God designed us to enjoy many different pleasures, including sex, food, work, art, music and sports. Our fallen nature tends to combine sinful acts with our outlets of pleasure. God does not take pleasure in evil - nor should we as his followers. David wrote, "You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell." (Psalm 5:4 [NIV](#)) Consider what Solomon wrote: "A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom" (Proverbs 10:23 [NIV](#))

**3. Does the act stifle the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?** When you consider the definitions of the words involved with BDSM and its associated acts, it's apparent that they are not based on love. Rather, they are based on malice, hate, cruelty, lust, selfishness, control, and domination. These attitudes are part of our sinful nature ([Mark 7:21-23](#)) and are directly opposed to the attitudes or "fruits" of the Holy Spirit. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV](#)).

There are many scriptures that warn us not to have the attitudes featured in BDSM. For example, Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:31-32 NASB, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." (note: the definition of malice: "desire to see another suffer" (*Webster's Dictionary*)). For more examples see the [scriptures](#) at the bottom of this page.

God commands us to walk in obedience to the Holy Spirit and not to gratify our fleshly cravings ([Romans 13:12-13](#)). Paul wrote: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24 [NIV](#)). When we ignore God's commands and pursue our sinful cravings, we stifle or "quench" the activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Ephesians 4:30).

**4. Does the act corrupt God's perfect plan for love and sex in marriage?** Let's first look at the below scripture to best understand God's intent for marriage relations:

<sup>22</sup>Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup>to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup>and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup>In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- Ephesians 5:22-29 [NIV](#)

Key ideas from the above scripture:

- Wives are to submit to their husbands as they do to God. Our submission to God does not involve punishment, wrath or abuse, because Jesus Christ bore all the punishment due to us on the cross (1 Peter 2:24; Romans 5:1). We have peace with God and submit to him in reverence and appreciation for the great sacrifice he made for us. A wife's submission carries no hint of sexual slavery, abuse, suffering or pain.
- The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. Jesus did not treat the church harshly, nor did he inflict pain for pleasure or seek to dominate them. Jesus loved the church so much that he sacrificed his own body to pay for our sins. His sacrifice was once and for all, eliminating any need for further pain and suffering on account of our sin (Hebrews 9:26; Hebrews 10:10). Following Christ's example, a husband has no business treating his wife harshly, inflicting pain for pleasure, dominating her, etc.. Also, the reverse is

true as well - he has no business allowing his wife to do those acts to him. It simply would not be within the character of Christ.

- A wife should not mistreat her husband because this would be a perversion of the submission and respect that should characterize the wife's role. Paul likened the husband's role to that of Christ and the wife's role to that of the church. In Ephesians 5:22-24 he wrote, "<sup>22</sup>Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." The question we can ask ourselves is, "Did God intend the church to abuse Jesus through pain and domination?" No! The church's attitude toward Jesus is to be one of reverence, respect and love. Likewise, wives should treat their husbands with reverence, respect and love.
- We are to nurture our body and our spouse's body. We worship God in many ways, but especially in how we treat our body ([Romans 12:1-2](#); [1 Corinthians 6:12-20](#)), which is made in God's image and is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). It would be dishonoring to God for the wife to abuse her husband's body, and a husband is specifically commanded to cherish and nurture his wife's body, as he would his own body ([Ephesians 5:29-30](#)). Nurturing, caring and feeding do not carry any connotation of bondage, pain or abuse.

**5. Does the act bring you under the rule of a defeated enemy?** Satan hates the fact that through our faith in Jesus Christ, we become co-heirs of God's kingdom (Romans 8:17). As adopted sons of God, we inherit authority and dominion over sin, Satan and his forces (see [authority](#)). Consequently, Satan seeks creative ways like BDSM to bring us back under his rule (through sin) and strip us of our "divine inheritance" rights.

God commands us clearly to not allow sin (or anything other than God) to be our master (Genesis 4:7). Also, Paul wrote: <sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup>Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. <sup>14</sup>For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. " <sup>16</sup>Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?" Romans 6:12-14,16 [NIV](#)

We must remember that Jesus surrendered his own body to be punished once and for all for our sin. His sacrifice purchased our freedom from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-2). To willingly place ourselves back into some form of bondage would be to make a mockery of the freedom Christ purchased for us. Paul wrote:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Galatians 5:1 [NKJV](#)

If we allow ourselves to come under Satan's rule, we will be subjected to his "tools of domination," which he uses to keep people in slavery. Being subject to these tools is no fantasy! Here are some examples:

- Torture: Matthew 18:32-35
- Sickness: Luke 13:11, Acts 10:38
- Affliction: Job 2:7,
- Murder & death: John 8:44, John 10:10, Hebrews 2:14
- Bondage/Slavery: Hebrews 2:14-15, Romans 6:19, 2 Timothy 2:26

6. **Is the act based on violence or graphic fantasies (e.g. sex, death, rape, torture, mutilation, etc.)?** In [an exclusive interview](#) in the 1990's, the late serial killer Ted Bundy shared with Dr. James Dobson how pornography progressively helped him accelerate down the road to sadistic killing. Interestingly enough, BDSM was involved.

7. **Is the act a 'perversion' of normal heterosexual relations?** People turn to perversions when they are not satisfied with the "normal" pathway of stimulation. In essence they are saying to God "your plan for my sexuality is not good enough...I want more gratification." By doing this we open ourselves up to some very serious consequences. The apostle Paul captures some of those consequences in his letter to the church in Rome:

<sup>24</sup>Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. <sup>25</sup>They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. <sup>26</sup>Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. <sup>27</sup>In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. <sup>28</sup>Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup>They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; <sup>31</sup>they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. " Romans 1:24-31 [NIV](#)

Here are the key aspects of the peoples' behavior:

- They degraded their bodies with one another
- They worship created things instead of God (sexual fantasy is a form of worshipping the body)
- They explored additional areas of perversion (homosexuality)

The consequences of such actions included:

- They were given over to shameful lust and a depraved mind
- They received a "due penalty" for their perversion
- They were filled with every kind of wickedness, including malice and murder
- They became heartless and ruthless

Pursuing BDSM-related activities may produce similar results, because they often involve degrading the body, worshipping something other than God (sex, body, pain, control, punishment, power, etc.), and exploration of other forms of perversion. Once we open ourselves up to the associated consequences, it becomes very difficult to regain a clear and right mind. However, recovery is possible with God's help.

If the answer to any of the above questions was "Yes", then I would encourage you to refrain from practicing the activity.

### Consider these additional verses:

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" I Corinthians 5:8 [NKJV](#)

"But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth." Colossians 3:8 [NKJV](#)

"<sup>3</sup>For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. <sup>4</sup>But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, <sup>5</sup>not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" Titus 3:3-5 [NKJV](#)

"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind." I Peter 2:1 [NIV](#)

"Do not drag me away with the wicked, with those who do evil, who speak cordially with their neighbors but harbor malice in their hearts." Psalm 28:3 [NIV](#)

"<sup>21</sup>For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, <sup>22</sup>greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. <sup>23</sup>All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.' " Mark 7:21-23 [NIV](#)

"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people." Ephesians 5:3 [NIV](#)

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Colossians 3:12 [NIV](#)

"Do everything in love." I Corinthians 16:14 [NIV](#)

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