

The Gnostic Disconnect and Evangelical Immorality (Part Two)

By Jay Wegter

How do we solve the *disconnect*—how do we get faith and life ‘reconnected’ again?

Sexual sin is actually a dysfunction in worship. Sexual idolatry is the activity of seeking fulfillment and integration(wholeness) by means of a substitute god. Greg Johnson, author of *The World According to God*, states that “sexual healing requires that we be trained again in the proper worship of God. A heart trained in delight in God finds the promises of sin unimpressive.”¹

God has a glorious “greater vision” for sexual relations. “When we give sexual oneness the greater vision God has for it, its sinful imitation [pornography] loses its luster” (John Piper). This is foundational to the healing of sexual brokenness and sexual addiction. There is healing in Christ for sexually shattered lives, and that healing involves praise and affirmation for God’s design of male and female in a marriage covenant of spiritual oneness.

Believers trapped in patterns of sexual lust need a biblical strategy that is holistic (ministering to the whole person). This proactive strategy for victory must include: ***retraining*** in worship, ***rebuilding*** the biblical view of sexuality, and ***reclaiming*** the truth that our body is a chief spiritual resource. In his book, *The God of Sex*, Peter Jones has established clearly that pornography deconstructs, or fractures God’s design for sexuality. Therefore, any ministry dedicated to freeing believers from sexual brokenness must *reconstruct* sexuality biblically.²

A weak grasp of God’s vision for male and female is symptomatic of the fact that contemporary Christianity is starving for cosmology—for the wonder of God’s glorious ‘blueprint’ for marital oneness. As evidence of the absence of cosmology, too many professing believers have attempted to “add God to their lives.” In a narcissistic fashion they have asked, “Where does God fit into my life?” They should be asking the cosmological questions, “Where does my life fit into this great story of God’s mission?” And, “What is man’s ultimate purpose and place in the cosmos?” The Bible is “the real story of reality to which we are called to conform ourselves.”³ That biblical vision for life has the power to blast us out of our false dichotomies (disconnects). Christians need to hear the full biblical truth concerning what a spiritual resource their bodies are.

Is the Human Body a fleshly ‘Beast of Burden’ or Spiritual Resource?

When we use our bodies for the spiritual ends for which we were saved, we are cooperating with the Holy Spirit’s goal or conformity to Christ. When I consecrate myself to God, I must be aware that surrender of self is inseparable from giving up my body to Him in such a way that it can serve both Him and me as a common abode, as John 14:23, 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, and Ephesians 2:22 testify.”⁴

Because it is so common for believers to contemplate salvation apart from creation (biblical cosmology), it is also common for believers to buy into an ‘other worldly’ brand of spirituality that is inward, private, and compartmentalized. This is one of the key factors in producing the *disconnect* between body and spirit in the mind of a believer. When the doctrine of salvation is NOT anchored in biblical cosmology, it opens the door to esoteric spirituality with its mind-body dichotomy. Central to

the “cure” for the *disconnect* (with its faulty view of spirituality and the body) is a hearty willingness to embrace God’s great blueprint and comprehensive plan for our whole existence.⁵

Scripture calls believers to regard their bodies as a great spiritual resource. The divine purpose of the human body is central to biblical worldview. Scripture tells us that “the body is for the Lord,” and that through the reality of organic living union with Christ, we are “members of Christ” (1 Cor. 6:13, 15). By living according to this perspective, we guard against the notion that the “spiritual is something wholly inward, or just kept between the individual and God.”⁶

To view the body as a spiritual resource is to live the Christian life holistically. That mindset is in touch with the reality that true spirituality involves a huge corporate, social dimension in which one’s body is used in Christian fellowship. The body is made available to Christ as we exercise our spiritual gifts while others are edified and served in the process.⁷

This is of course the outcome of offering one’s body back to God as a “living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1-2). The context of Romans 12 is the building up of the corporate body of Christ and doing so *through* the sacrificial service of the individual members of the body. The result is not acceleration in private piety, but a lifestyle of consecration to God characterized by interrelatedness with other believers. It is the dedication of our bodies so that we enjoy fulfilling our part in the life of the body of Christ. When we employ that mentality, we are cognizant that our gifts function in a complementary manner. We collectively make up the body of Christ, and we live to edify the members of the body of Christ in all of our relationships (Rom 12:4-6ff.).

Our rising generation has been so indoctrinated with disconnect ideology that we need constant reminders that the body is the battlefield of worldview. The Apostle Paul uses language to evoke powerful imagery in Romans 6:13—he calls the members of our bodies “weapons” to be used for righteousness. So paramount is the concept of the body as an instrument of righteousness that the principle of presentation (to righteousness or to unrighteousness) is cast as an “either-or” proposition. Believers are to yield, or present, the members of their bodies to God and not to unrighteousness.

If Christians do not regard their bodies to be a resource of spiritual life as God intends, then they will tend to despise or disregard the spiritual significance of their bodies.⁸ A “de-sacralization” of the body will be a natural consequence (dismissing the fact that it is sacred—the temple of the Holy Spirit –1Corinthians 6:19).

By “desacralize” we mean to discount or downplay the role of the body in our “spiritual service of worship” (Rom 12:1). *Desacralization* of the body often means that the believer regards his or her body to be a hindrance to true spirituality, rather than a pivotal resource to true spirituality.

The spirit-body dichotomy inherent in the “Gnostic impulse” stands in stark contrast to Paul’s reasoning. Paul regarded his personal holiness to be joined to the exertion of effort to bring his body in subjection to God’s will (1 Cor 9:23-27). The Apostle made it his ambition to be pleasing to the Lord that he might stand before Christ and have a favorable judgment (2 Cor. 5:9-10ff.). Paul constantly affirmed that the body was ***for the Lord***, and the Lord is for the body (1 Cor. 6:13). In our consecration to God, we are to be conscious of the fact that the members of our physical body are to be considered instruments, or ‘weapons’ of righteousness (Rom. 6:13). Though the Apostle’s desire was

to receive his glorified body at the coming of Christ (2 Cor. 5:4-8), he regarded the believer's earthly existence to be bound up in presenting one's body to God as a living sacrifice. For Paul this was not exceptional, but essential to "our reasonable service of worship" (Rom. 12:1-2).

We need to recapture the necessity and priority of transformation by God's truth. Many, if not all of us, have received salvation truths 'devotionally'—that is, disconnected from biblical cosmology, disconnected from God's plan for the creation, and disconnected from divine transcendence. As a consequence of marginalizing these truths, they do not exercise the necessary force and influence to order, animate, and constrain their lives.⁹ Is it any wonder that those within our Christian sphere so often greet Christian precepts with apathy?

Without the doctrine of God's transcendence, salvation truths are thrust into an upper story subjective category, divorced from the divine blueprint found in biblical cosmology. A disconnect follows which is characterized by distancing spiritual truth from the everyday decisions of life. An open gash develops between faith and life. One of the most common ways Christian people respond to this disconnect is by seeking an identity based upon the development of self through consumption and personal preferences, rather than upon the Creator's story. What also suffers due to this disconnect is the proper perception of our bodies—we tend NOT to regard our bodies as a spiritual resource. Thus, we reiterate, that it is precisely at this juncture that pornography may find an unguarded entry point into the believer's life.

Reuniting Reality—by worshipping the Lord of Reality

Christ does what Plato and the Greek philosophers could not do, He unifies all reality. He links visible and invisible reality and He reconciles singularity and plurality. He gives harmony, unity, and order to the cosmos. The Son connects all of the realms of *being* (permanence) and *becoming* (change)." This is intensely significant that Christ unifies all reality in Himself—temporal and eternal, physical and non-physical. According to Colossians 1:15-20, Christ has "first place" in every realm; visible and invisible. There is no dichotomy, no disconnect in the divine order of things. As Christians, we locate truth in the Person of Jesus Christ—"all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Him" (Col 2:3).

The great implication drawn from His lordship over all knowledge is that what He promises and threatens are immutable.¹⁰ He will make good on His promises and His threats. Therefore, "for the Christian, truth has the character and element of trust [in the Lord, the 'truth-Giver']".¹¹ This is highly important in our postmodern culture of distrust which tends to throw reliance back upon self. By contrast, the true believer rejoices in his dependence upon Christ. For our Lord is preeminent; He has first place in all things (Col 1:18). He fills all in all (Eph 1:23; 4:10).

Our wholeness and completeness is built around the Person of Christ. In light of the vastness and dignity of Christ's Person, it is immensely significant that the Scriptures promise us as believers that we are made whole and complete in Him (Col 2:10). By means of the infinite value of His substitutionary death, He has 'purchased us' to be His possession—we no longer belong to ourselves (1 Cor 6:19-20; Titus 2:14). Therefore, our devotion to our sovereign Lord Jesus is inseparable from

the fact that our body is to be at His disposal, consecrated to Him for worship and service as the very ‘temple of His Spirit’ (1 Cor 6:18-20). Do you see how this eliminated the *disconnect* in our lives?

Right thinking is the key. As new creatures, believers are to jettison the old perspective of fragmented worldview and carnal thinking. Paul commands the Corinthians to regard no one from the perspective of the old worldview anymore (2 Cor. 5:16). “The goal of Christian worldview is not private [piety], but as Christ promised, the goal is toward a peaceful and just society.”¹² T. Austin Sparks notes “that God is never satisfied with anything less than the fullness of His Son as represented by His Church.”¹³

It is all too common for believers to see obedience as a narrow bandwidth and not whole life affections. The assumptions of popular culture only deepen this misconception that life may be successfully divided up by means of a sacred-secular split. God’s claims upon us in Christ blast into our false sacred-secular dichotomy and tell us that the Lord claims every square foot of our life experience for Himself. Biblical worldview blasts us out of dualistic thinking. Christian integration is provided by Christ and His incarnation.

“The incarnation [of Jesus Christ] does not let us partition reality into spiritual and non-spiritual spheres—but shows us that all reality flows from one integrative source.” Christians are to develop a holistic worldview by “critical reflection on life in light of the incarnation of Christ.”¹⁴ Without God’s view of the world, the popular culture will assume the default role of setting our worldview agenda. The answer is to study and proclaim the full-orbed gospel of Christ—who is both Creator and Redeemer. Believers are to live so as to bring every area of life under the Lordship of Christ. Only then will they be able to abandon all disconnects and enjoy a unified Christian experience. John Piper’s exhortation which joins Christ’s supremacy to our unified worldview is also very valuable:

Christ is like the sun in our solar system. In this analogy, planets represent the goals, desires, and responsibilities of the believer. Christ’s majesty is like the blazing glory and gravitational pull of the sun—the orbits of the planets are held and guided by His preeminence. When Christ is central in our lives; the ‘planets’ of our desires and goals and labors are ordered by Christ and put into their proper orbits.

When we are captivated by the supremacy of Christ and ravished by all that God is toward us in Christ and all that He has promised to be toward us in Christ, then our hearts are enlarged to take in more of our Lord. The more that happens, the more the soul is broadened to take in the majesty of our God. As we grow in that direction, God is big; and lusts are small—sexuality, with its ‘little’ thrill, assumes its proper size and orbit in our life; sexual lust loses its power over us.

The solution to this pervasive problem [of the ‘small soul’] is drawn from our created purpose; the human soul was created to find unending satisfaction in Christ, for in Christ God gives us Himself. Only the supremacy of Christ is big enough to enlarge the soul

[majestic landscapes such as the Grand Canyon, the Himalayas, the Milky Way Galaxy can inspire, but not expand the soul.]

Our problem today is that churches are full of folks with little souls. The evil one knows this; he is opportunistic; he is using the world to send tsunami waves through the back door of the church—we're awash in lust and sexual addiction. There is a clear reason for this. If we were created for soul-staggering grandeur; and our hearts and minds are disconnected from that majesty that is the supremacy of Christ; then it is not surprising that hearts have settled onto trivial things. The human heart was made to be lost in wonder, love, awe, and praise—if the heart is not staggered by the supremacy of Christ, then it will tend to reach for the greatest natural high it can get—sex.

The deepest cure for sexual lust is to be emotionally staggered by the supremacy of Christ. The sheer weight of Christ and eternity constitutes the gravity of what life is all about. So heavy is that weight, that to have felt the tiniest portion of it makes it almost emotionally impossible to go to the internet to view porn.¹⁵

Biblical cosmology is our 'big picture' lens for viewing ultimate reality. When we analyze life by means of the authoritative perspective of biblical cosmology, there is an intensely satisfying intellectual worshipful fulfillment in seeing the unity of all knowledge and the wisdom of divine purposes. The use of pornography involves a kind of alienation and disconnect from the unifying power of biblical cosmology. This is because porn stresses an anatomical ideal of the human body that is completely divorced from *transcendentals* (transcendentals are defined as God's truth, beauty, categories, relationships, moral order, glory, righteousness, goodness, and justice). Transcendentals are inseparable from a blueprint for our lives that is joined to God's glory. Thus, they provide the moral context for all of God's good gifts to us, His creatures. That means that when God's good gifts are ripped and torn from their moral context of divine transcendentals, the result is idolatry. The beautiful gift of sexual oneness in marriage, if allowed to run in the gutter like waste water, becomes smut. God is dishonored when we tear His good gifts from their moral context. As Christian men, we need to instruct ourselves and our brothers in the truth that a divided life is a life of hypocrisy. Porn is a worldview of *disconnect* (between soul and body)—and viewing it only deepens the Gnostic disconnect.

In order to reconstruct God's vision for marital oneness, we need to expose the lies that seek to entice us. As men we are very vulnerable to the desire to seek sexual erotic intimacy outside of the marriage covenant. It is a driving force within our natures which is why pornography is such a temptation. The use of porn involves the isolation of erotic pleasure from its divinely ordained context of transcendentals.

This is of course why porn is ultimately unsatisfying—like a thirsty man who attempts to slake his parched throat with seawater, destruction of his life and health are the result. Delving into illicit images is like reaching out to touch a mirage. What appears to be there in the shimmering desert image is but an illusion. The mirage's promises of cool water are deceptive.

Porn promises but can't deliver because it unravels the parts of God's gift that are designed to remain joined (sexuality, love, covenant, and spirituality). Therefore to bring the yearning of our natures to porn is like attempting to drink from a sand dune. This ripping apart of sexual pleasure from the marriage bond may deliver moments of excitement, but those moments are immediately followed by a descent into shame and self disgust. The ongoing fallout of shame just keeps dragging a man deeper into cynicism and uncaring attitudes. The porn user ends up lower than when he started because he has thrown away divine cosmology and related to God's creation in an idolatrous fashion. It is no exaggeration to say that the porn user is buying into someone else's cosmology (i.e. Lucifer's).

One of the lies hidden in porn use is, "I accept the devil's cosmology." The devil's initial temptation was a solicitation to believe that beauty can safely and happily exist when removed from its divine moral context. Porn deconstructs creational structures. And biblical theism is eroded in the process. Cosmology and biblical theism belong together—you can't have one completely intact without the other. Porn wages war on biblical cosmology (which is ultimately fighting against God Himself who ordained and ordered this moral universe and its creation structures).

Closely associated with our view of the human body is our philosophy of beauty. Biblical cosmology states that beauty has no existence independent from the Creator. Beauty has always been joined to divinely ordained transcendentals. Beauty in its divinely ordained moral context of truth gives glory to God. Aesthetics therefore (in their cosmological context of creation structure) are pointers to the glory of God. We love this beauty for the sake of God's glory, and not for the sake of our own desires alone, or for the sake of the excellence of the created thing itself.

We need to affirm the truth that beauty is the battleground for the souls of men and women. As it was in the beginning with the lie in Eden, beauty was the battlefield. Satan traps, enslaves, dupes, and leads into idolatry by removing beauty from the very transcendentals necessary for beauty to point to the glory of God. The deceiver infers that beauty can stand alone and be indulged in by itself. The gospel delivers from this lie by placing us in Christ and causing us to discern all things from the perspective of the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:12-16). Therefore, the very depth of what we love as maturing believers must hinge upon finding excellence in created things for Christ's sake.

Biblical cosmology is a unifying principle—it lets us view everything in the creation from the perspective of God's plan. When properly understood it eliminates the compartments we have constructed in our lives. Biblical cosmology imbues upon us that every square inch of our experience belongs to God—there are no compartments, no partitions. As this truth pervades our lives it will allow body and soul to operate as the unity God intends.

Pornography is sexual idolatry because it gives the honor due to God to created things. Postmodern culture with its pervasive relativism has exacerbated the problem by blinding us to the immensity and eternity of God's moral government. As denizens of postmodern culture we are often insulated from the immovable ineffable strictness of moral cause and effect. We are frequently oblivious to the inescapable principle of sowing and reaping (Rom. 2:5-9). But God is 'not mocked'—harvest day is coming—men will reap what they have sown (Gal. 6:7).

Modern sinners enmeshed in the lie downplay the seriousness of their sin by affirming that their infractions do not hurt others. They even say that sexual immorality doesn't harm their body or anyone else's. It seems they have forgotten that the first tablet of God's holy law is meant to safeguard love and honor to God. All sin, whether a violation of the first or second tablet, ***is against God Himself*** (Ps 51:4). Because our created identity is that of a worshipper, all sin is a failure to value God as He deserves. In our age of license people seem oblivious to what they owe God. As a consequence, they *normalize* their idolatry (Col 3:5).

The devil's cosmology uses idolatry to deface the image of God in man and to fragment the human unity of soul and body. Lucifer's express purpose is to use idolatry as the means of working against God's purpose of making man and woman in His image and likeness. The evil one cannot change our ontology (creational identity) or human make up directly, but he can do it indirectly. His tool of choice is idolatry. Idol worship in all its forms defaces and fragments the image of God in us. The enemy used the ancient lie to sever us from the knowledge of God and to attach us to the world as our 'preferred source of fulfillment.' Satan's hatred of God is expressed in his malevolent wish to shatter the image of God in us by means of idolatry. The evil one uses lust to make us listless and apathetic about staying free through holiness—he wants us to drop our diligence and to devalue our liberty in the Lord.

The evil one knows we are created to be worshippers. And he knows that the worship of God is our freedom, and the worship of idols is servitude. Therefore, idolatry is inseparable from dehumanizing bondage. When we take the glory, attention, adoration, and devotion that belongs to God and give it to created things, we are committing idolatry. Bondage and servitude is the enduring consequence.

Porn, as sexual idolatry, weakens the very things that true worship is designed to strengthen; our freedom and liberty in Christ, the unity of our Christian experience, our humanness, and our ability to reflect God's character as the image of God. The remedy for our brokenness is Christ Himself. The gospel promises us that in Him we are complete (Col. 2:10). This means that our former fragmentation by sin is 'healed' in Christ. Now we are to live out our completeness in Christ by presenting members of our body to God daily (Rom. 6:11-13). The Apostle Paul tells us in that the members of our body are like strategic 'weapons' which carry out the agenda or campaign of our master. Obedience is therefore a 'whole soul and body endeavor'. Again, this is how we can eliminate the *disconnect*.

Biblical cosmology is God's blueprint for us, the very opposite of the disconnect we see in our culture. To the degree that our lives are ordered according to His 'blueprint' is the degree to which we are in touch with reality. Evangelicalism is 'doctrinally emaciated' without biblical cosmology. For those who have lived self-directed lives, despising the divine blueprint, reality will hit like a thousand sledge hammers on the day of judgment. They will discover to their horror that their sinful self-direction did not create a new reality. This is God's world—it operates in the precise ways He has determined. This knowledge is central to the fear of God—it is His universe.

The relation of man to woman was the first 'boundary' and design that the Lord formalized

with the institution of marriage. God established, then blessed, then formalized by matrimony the creational design of one man designed for one woman for life (Gen. 2:18-25). This *creation structure* involves the participation of our body and soul in the marriage relationship (1 Cor. 6:15-20). The cosmological (creational) structures established by God are filled with His goodness, justice, and wisdom. As mentioned, these constitute a ‘blueprint’ for us by which we are to be governed. Only by our alignment with this blueprint can we truly say that we are walking with God—serving Him, obeying Him, demonstrating loyalty to Him. The rejection of this divinely ordained ‘blueprint’ is the dishonoring of God. This is why porn is such a serious sin—it is a declaration of war upon God’s goodness reflected in His all-wise ‘blueprint’ for us.

As champions of truth, Christian husbands and fathers need to be protectors against the disconnect that severs the roles of soul and body. As Christian men, we need to blast sexual lust out of the small truncated category in which we have placed it. It is all too often relegated to the ‘little’ zone called “my problem with sexual lust.” Biblical cosmology helps us burst the issue of mortification of sexual sin out of too small a category in which we have treated it as “just my private bosom sin and personal heart struggle.” No, cosmology smashes through this artificial disconnect and shrunken perspective by bringing us face to face with God’s infinite wisdom in founding reality upon His all-wise and just creational structures.

Man’s humanness and dignity are inseparable from the fact that as the image of God, he is a ‘bounded’ creature. This is at the heart of our creaturehood and our humanness. As the only order of creatures made in the divine image, we must find our purpose in our creational identity—that identity being to reflect the moral majesty of our Creator with our whole being, both soul and body. Our problem as men (locked in combat with sexual lust) is that we have tended to see God’s commands against impurity as separated from God’s plan.

As a consequence, we all too often resemble the world’s mindset when we imagine (even for a moment) that God’s laws against sexual impurity are but a religious imposition of morality upon society as opposed to being the moral fabric of the universe and reality itself. This is why we must hear biblical truth through the perspective of biblical worldview. Only then will we have the totalizing picture that puts the universe together (Rom. 11:33-36).

We desperately need our worldview strengthened so that we understand the seriousness of the implications of allowing the disconnect to open us to the worship of created things. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. That means that we function as His hands, feet, and voice—expressing the personality of Christ through the activity of our bodies. Your body is your chief spiritual resource. No wonder the Apostle Paul says to the Corinthians (many of which were trapped in the Gnostic disconnect), “the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body” (1 Cor. 6:13). The Gnostic disconnect (and its accompanying immorality) is not private sin—it affects the health of the entire body of Christ. This disobedience is a serious matter.

We are commanded to daily commit our body-soul unity to the Lord as His possession. The biblical call to offer ourselves (body and soul) to the Lord as a living sacrifice has an immediate corporate application (Rom. 12:1-2). In this passage of offering ourselves to God, Paul uses the word “body” to refer to the whole self—the whole human life.¹⁶ When we yield our whole being to the Lord

as a ‘living sacrifice,” we are placing our bodies at His disposal in order to be a blessing to the members of Christ’s Body. “For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:4-5).

The human being as the image of God also requires body-soul unity. As a new creation in Christ the dichotomy of soul and body is removed. We realize God has made both to be united in worship and service to Him. Our body and soul working together reflects the very character of our Maker. Being possessed by God does not mean only our spiritual life is His but our bodies as well. Christ died to make us whole—to ultimately remove every vestige of disconnect. Why go back to the disconnect He died to remove?

Endnotes:

¹ Greg Johnson, *The World according to God* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2002) pp. 141-142

² Peter Jones, *The God of Sex* (Victor Books, Cook Communications, Colorado Springs, CO, 2006) pp. 21-26

³ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (InterVarsity Press Academic, Downers Grove, IL, 2006), pp. 533-534

⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, CA, 1988), pp. 30-31

⁵ Greg Johnson, p. 21

⁶ Dallas Willard, pp. 76-77

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 89-90

⁹ Ibid, pp. 125, 128

¹⁰ By “epistemic lordship” is meant that Christ, as lord of all knowledge, is the final source, authority, and arbiter of truth—He is our epistemology—our basis for knowing what we know with absolute certainty.

¹¹ Norman Klassen and Jens Zimmerman, *The Passionate Intellect* (Baker Publishing), pp. 30-31

¹² Ibid, p. 151

¹³ T. Austin Sparks, *The Prophetic Ministry*, p. 22

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 186-187, 195

¹⁵ John Piper, *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*, Conference, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN

¹⁶ Ranald Macaulay and Jerram Barrs, *Being Human: The Nature of Spiritual Experience* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1978), p. 53.