

The Image of God and our bodies

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INTRODUCTION: God's 'glory story' is the greatest reclamation project conceivable; He is recovering His image through His Son.

2) The 'image of God' -- man possesses aspects of human nature not shared by animals (Gen 1:26-27). Those include moral consciousness, the ability to think abstractly, an understanding of beauty and emotion, an eternal soul, and above all, the capacity for worshipping and loving God. Man created in the image God points to the day when the eternal Son of God would come to earth as the perfect image of God and receive the human nature given Him by the Father (Heb 10:5; Luke 1:35; Col 1:15).

3) The image of God is at the very core of our identity and purpose as human beings. Our identity as His image means we must know God to know ourselves. To reject the knowledge of God is to completely miss our identity as His image-bearers (Rom 1:18-21, 32; 2:14-1).

4) Since man is the image of God, sin is always the misrepresentation of God. Our moral duty is to be like Him in holiness, to reflect His character (1 Pet 1:15-16; Eph 5:1). Our sin misrepresents what God is like, this helps us understand the seriousness of sin in God's eyes. We are made to represent His character; He can't be indifferent toward sin.

5) We were created in the image of God to commune with Him, to share His purposes, and to share His dominion. The image of God places man in covenant relation to God. We are obligated to interpret all the works of God truthfully to the glory of God. It means that man's faculties are designed to receive divine revelation (Holy Scripture).

6) Fallen man bears a distorted image of God. That image, therefore, needs to be renewed through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Col 3:10; Eph 4:24). God's wonderful plan in the Gospel is to restore sinners to the true image of God through Christ who is the perfect image of God (2 Cor 4:4-6; Col 1:15).

7) The Scriptures indicate that both body and soul are for the Lord (1 Cor 6:13). The biblical foundation for personal responsibility before God is tied to the following principles: 1.) The body never makes you sin. 2.) The physical body gives 'shape' or expression to the inner responses and commitments of the soul.

8) Redemption in Christ 'stamps' the image of God upon us afresh. Now as God's possession, we are called to live as the image of God in the power of the Spirit (Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-7). This is only possible if we uphold as sacred the moral laws and creation structures by which we are limited and bounded by our Creator.

I. Sensual sin finds its 'entry gate' at the disconnect between faith and life.

A Gnostic-like disconnect is re-emerging in the church today. The attitude of ancient Gnosticism: "Since they had received divine knowledge and were enlightened, it didn't matter how they lived in the body."

In our idolatrous culture, the divinely imposed values of self-control, delayed gratification, and the indirect pursuit of pleasure through righteous ends are colliding head on with the values of boundless self-expression.

Darwinism claims to have a scientific explanation for everything: from maternal love, to the Protestant work ethic, to criminal behavior. The net effect in the minds of most was to replace biblical cosmology (God's goal and design of creation) with a material worldview. God as personal, transcendent, involved with creation was demoted.

When one allows the Bible to describe salvation and science to comprehensively describe the creation, it produces a tear or gash in our thinking.

How does this divided view of reality manifest itself in Evangelicalism?

II. Growing up without biblical cosmology—the phenomenon of being a Christian, yet ‘metaphysically lost’. *The absolute truth of cosmology is essential in interpreting the universe truthfully to the glory of God.*

In the present state of affairs, it is most common for Christians to begin with soteriology instead of cosmology. As a result, the doctrine of salvation is easily privatized—reduced to merely inward, personal, and pietistic.

III. The human body, ‘commuter vehicle’ or center of personality and moral volition? What is the immense significance of being embodied? *A fragmented worldview without biblical cosmology will ultimately affect the way one views the human body.*

The culture's wrong-headed ideas about spirituality are contributing to Christians' misunderstanding of the body. (2 Cor 5:1-10ff.).

The biblical doctrine of the soul-body unity preserves the truth that the human body was created to be the vehicle of human personality in the service of God (Gal 5:13).

The epidemic of cyber-porn among Evangelicals is not merely attributable to technical advances which have increased both availability and anonymity.

IV. Ethical symptoms of disconnect—the ‘pornification’ of a generation.

The epidemic of Evangelicals committing fornication and viewing pornography may be the most telling symptom of the Gnostic disconnect.

Al Mohler has warned that the pervasive plague of pornography represents one of the greatest moral challenges faced by the Christian church in the postmodern age.

God’s gift of sexuality is designed to pull us out of ourselves and our self-occupied concerns and desires and toward our spouse.

The above is significant to our understanding of the unity of God’s plan for husband and wife. Marital relations, as God designed them, are character-building and culture-making. These relations are character-building because a man brings his entire lifestyle of masculine responsibility to the marriage bed.

Kevin Scott states in, The Porning of America, “the influence of porn on mainstream culture is affecting our self-perceptions and behavior in everything from fashion to body image to how we conceptualize our sexuality.”

V. The disconnect is widening—broadened by techno-consumer culture.

“The screen has been framed as the real world—we have gone from Windows as a ‘window’ to the world—to Windows is the world. The screen has become the world.” (Grant Horner).

The “pornification of culture” is shaping the way in which this society approaches sexual curiosity and the way in which it invents itself sexually.

VI. Sexual sin—misplaced drive or dysfunctional worship? *When sex is taken out of its good, God-given context, it becomes a false integration point (or idol) which fragments the person’s humanity.*

VII. How do we get faith and life ‘reconnected’ again? *Sexual sin is a dysfunction in worship. Sexual idolatry is the activity of seeking integration by means of a substitute god.*

Believers trapped need a biblical strategy that is holistic. This proactive strategy for victory must include: repenting of idolatry; retraining in worship; rebuilding the biblical view of sexuality; and reclaiming the truth that our body is a chief spiritual resource.

VIII. The human body, ‘beast of burden,’ or spiritual resource? *Our bodies are to be used for the spiritual ends for which we were saved, that is the Holy Spirit’s goal (Rom 6:11-13; 12:1-2).*

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.

Our rising generation has been so indoctrinated with disconnect ideology, we need constant reminders that the body is the battlefield of worldview.

We need to recapture the necessity and priority of transformation by God’s truth.

IX. Reuniting reality—by worshipping the Lord of reality. *Christ does what Plato and the Greek philosophers could not do, in Himself He unifies all reality. He links visible and invisible reality. He reconciles singularity and plurality.*

It is all too common for believers to see obedience as a narrow bandwidth and not whole life affections.

X. Biblical cosmology is our lens for viewing ultimate reality. *When we analyze life by means of the authoritative perspective of biblical cosmology, there is an intensely satisfying intellectual fulfillment in seeing the unity of all knowledge and the wisdom of divine purposes.*

This is why beauty is the battleground for the souls of men and women.

Idolatry defaces the image of God in man.

Biblical cosmology helps us burst the issue of mortification of sexual sin out of too small a category—we have tended to treat it as “just my private bosom sin and personal heart struggle.”