

For Those with Broken Bodies

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Date: 06 April 2025

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of a upper back lifting. But really the aim right now this week has just been to deal with this wave of pain that I've been experiencing.

Some of the worst pain I've actually had in a really long time, maybe ever, except for like acute injuries. And so that's been kind of an adventure. It started, I think, with the flight to the Philippines.

[1 : 5 3] And it's just kind of continued to get worse and worse and worse. Anyway, so that's what I was just doing. I was at the gym and then while I was on the exercise bike, I was thinking about the people in the Providence family that are not doing well physically.

We've got a few folks that have had rather acute issues recently and some of them just sound absolutely terrible. And so my mind is often with them and my prayers are often with them as I am doing physical activity.

I'm thinking about them and what they're going through. This led me in a weird way to begin thinking about teleology. Teleology is just this way of understanding things by the sort of figuring out their created purpose.

And a good example that people use is if you look at a coffee mug, you see it's got a little handle there. You see it's got it's a vessel and you can sort of infer just by the design of the thing what it was designed to do, which is to hold beverages and the handle implies the holding of a hot beverage and so on and so forth.

So I was thinking about teleology and then I started thinking about my mom when I was growing up. She was, my mom was and still is just a relentless decorator.

[3 : 1 2] It's just never stops. She herself just had a bit of a health issue, was in the hospital for a few days. And I guarantee you, promise you this, I haven't talked to her about this, but I promise you that as she was laying in that hospital bed, she was looking around that room thinking of what she would do to decorate it if she were allowed to do so.

I used to come home almost every day from school and see something that my mom had done at home in terms of decorating. And one of the most comical aspects of her kind of manic decorating was that she would almost never use a hammer to drive in these little finishing nails that she used to hang up things.

Her go-to tool was a butter knife. I'm guessing that's just because the hammer was further away and she didn't think that it would necessarily be needed or what, but it was pretty common to see her hammering little finished nails into the wall with a butter knife.

And, you know, why I was thinking about that was it's a teleological kind of curiosity because butter knife is definitely not made to do that.

It's definitely not made to drive in nails, but it kind of works. And because it kind of works, one can forget that it's not really intended to be used for that purpose.

[4 : 36] I don't actually remember seeing my mom use a butter knife for the purpose it was designed. It were mostly just little tiny hammers. Anyway, I was thinking about that related to the body in particular.

And I want to talk a little bit about this little line that Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6, where he says, the Lord is for the body and the body is for the Lord.

The body is not meant for sexual morality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. A couple of thoughts here. First of all, toward those people who are struggling or tempted toward sexual sin, I want you to think about the butter knife.

Your body is not actually built to be an endorphin and dopamine playground for you to explore. Will it kind of work for that?

Yeah, it kind of works for that. And thus, so many people are enslaved to using it improperly because it kind of works, but it's not actually designed for that. Your body was actually designed to bring glory to God.

[5 : 43] That's what it was designed for. That's the teleological purpose of your body. And so one of the things you'll find when you finally stop using it for what it wasn't designed for is you begin to look back and think, why did I ever think that was okay?

Like, why did I ever think that was fine? And the answer is, well, because it kind of worked. You kind of cheated the teleological function enough to feel like it kind of worked.

And so that was one thing I thought about. And then more directed toward those who were and are struggling physically, I want to impart something to you that I think is just fundamental to being able to endure physical difficulty well.

And that is to just understand that your body is actually not teleologically made. The human body is not teleologically made mostly for your happiness.

It's not used mostly for you to get things done. It's not used mostly for you to earn money and so on and so forth. The fundamental purpose of your body is to bring glory to God.

[6 : 50] And, you know, you can see how actually these two groups of people, some who are struggling in a way of misusing their body for sexual pleasure, and some who are just frustrated because their bodies are so broken, they're not working like they're supposed to, it's keeping them from doing things they want to do.

You can see that both of those frustrations and discouragements must be cured by a reexamination of fundamental teleology. And that is, what is your body for?

And the answer is, of course, your body is for the Lord. And so when someone is sick and they're frustrated by all they can't do, the only actual cure to that frustration, and the only way you'll actually get joy and peace and contentment in the season of sickness is to just keep reminding yourself, well, actually, this body is mostly for glorifying God.

And right now I can do that. Stop focusing on all the things you can't do and just understand what you can do is actually the most important thing and what your body is mostly for, and it is to bring glory to God.

So the challenge there is because it's such a supernatural truth, it's such a not self-evident truth, that you're going to have to keep telling yourself that in the middle of physical sickness.

[8 : 14] You're going to have to keep telling yourself over and over again. My body is actually fundamentally for bringing glory to God, and I can do that in sickness. I can do that in suffering.

My body can still fulfill its primary purpose, even though a lot of these peripheral purposes are kept from me. You know, you could imagine someone inventing a car that has, amongst the various gadgets inside, like a hot plate or a crock pot or something.

This is sort of, you know, the dream vehicle for some of us Baptist types. It's like I bought a minivan with a built-in, you know, a built-in crock pot.

That would be pretty awesome. But if you don't have a crock pot in your car, it's okay because that's not really what cars are for. Cars are for getting you from point A to point B and all the other things that cars could potentially do, including making you look cool, giving you a fun experience, cooking eggs or a pot roast, all of these other things that a body could do.

If your body doesn't do those things, that's okay because it can do the one thing it was made for, and that is to bring glory to God. Now, I want to leave you, this is going to be real short, but I want to leave you with this great glorious promise that is contained in this phrase where Paul says that the body was for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

[9 : 42] We've really only talked so far about how the body is for the Lord. What does it mean when it says the Lord for the body? Well, there's a few layers to this. One of the nice things about being well-read in a systematic theology sense is that you can kind of reliably say true things even if the text isn't actually about that.

So I don't know if what I'm about to say is Paul's point. I know one layer of Paul's point is he's using bridal language. The body's for the Lord and the Lord's for the body. He talks about this again in 1 Corinthians 7.

You know, husband is for the wife and the wife is for the husband. It's this mutual ownership, this mutual relationship. That's true also in the book of Ephesians in chapter 5. So that's definitely one thing he's saying.

But there's another layer to this. And again, I don't know for sure if Paul's saying this. I'm not going to take the time to go study this text extensively because I know what I'm telling you is right. I just don't know if it's right in this verse.

It's encouraging nonetheless. The first encouragement, you were made to glorify God. You can do that in sickness. The second encouragement, what does it mean when it says the Lord is for the body?

[10 : 53] One thing, one thing that's true is that Jesus Christ took on a body so that it could be crucified. It could be made unwell.

It could be disfigured. It could be killed. And in those actions, that body that was given to him made a way for you to know without a shadow of a doubt that one day, according to his perfect timing, you will receive a new body.

Jesus took a body in part so that it could be crucified, killed, and buried, and raised so that he could bring you and me along into this incredible experience we call glorification where one day when the Lord returns, we receive new bodies that work perfectly.

And then, you know, there's really no like, there's really no gap anymore between all the peripheral things a body can do and the main thing a body is supposed to do, which is to glorify God.

See, now, like, especially like using an example of sexual immorality, there's a big overlap. Like, you could potentially use the body for a peripheral purpose that completely eliminates its primary purpose, which is to glorify God.

[12 : 10] But in heaven, in the new heavens and the new earth, all of that will be perfectly harmonized and synced up. And so one of the things I tell sick people, people who have chronic disease and so forth, is the Lord is for your body.

He has a plan. He took on flesh in part to give you a new body one day and you will be killing it one day. One day, you will absolutely be well.

In the meantime, comfort yourself by understanding that the primary thing your body's for is not frustrated by your sickness. The primary thing your body's for is not frustrated or set back by your sickness.

It's still fulfilled. That is, your body is still glorifying God, whether it's working perfectly or barely working at all. If you will, by faith, hand your body over to the Lord daily, repeatedly, every time the ache comes, every time the frustration comes, every time there's a new revelation of something you can't do, keep giving your body to the Lord and saying, you know what?

I can't do X, I can't do Y, I can't do Z, but I can still do A. And A is glorify God with my body. God will take care of you and he will give you joy if you can just keep reminding yourself over and over of that fact.

[13 : 34] And then couple that with this great hope we have that the time is coming when all of this will be done and you will not suffer anymore. You will be as healthy as is possible, healthy beyond our wildest imagination, our ability to ask or imagine.

So yeah, that's what I was thinking about at the gym. And I just wanted to pass that on to, especially my friends who are struggling physically. God is using you. You need to just take that by faith and keep telling it to yourself and one day God will renew you.

All right, friends. God bless. Be well. We'll be right back.

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