

I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

The Key to Your Life in One Verse

(April 24, 2021)

Ladies and gentlemen, there is one verse that, if you take to heart and actually live by, to the extent you can control your life, this verse will determine the outcome of your life. And I'm not talking about John 3:16, okay. If you get this verse down, John 3:16 will come with it, okay. And this is actually a verse in the Old Testament. It's a Proverb and my friend, John Stonestreet, from the Colson Center is going to enlighten us on this verse. John is the President of the Colson Center. You may have heard him, you may hear him regularly, on Breakpoint, which was originally started by Chuck Colson. And now John has taken over that since Chuck passed away about nine years ago, and he's leading so many other aspects of ministry that you need to know about that we'll get into a little bit later in the program. But it's always great having John on the show. John, how are you?

John:

I'm doing good, Frank. It's good to see you, my friend.

Frank:

You too. And we were together last week. Our mutual friend, Dan Forest, our former Lieutenant Governor here in North Carolina, was holding a conference for men up at the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove. And I left early in the morning to come hear you speak because I love the way you speak. I love your material and how you present it. And you just gave this great talk centered around Proverbs 4:23. And maybe we can unpack that a little bit today. But first, tell us about Proverbs 4:23. Why is that such an important verse?



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek PODCAST

John:

You know, over the last year, Frank, at the Colson Center we've been struck by how revolutionary these kind of basic truths of Proverbs can be. Like every religion, every worldview, as you know, has its wisdom literature, right. So, can go to the Eastern religions, and they have their wisdom literature. And Islam has wisdom literature. And so on. A lot of times, though, this is kind of like esoteric nonsense, right? It's like the guru with the beard up on the top of the mountain, and you go talk to him, and you're like, I'm not even sure what he said but it sounded right. You know that that's kind of the wisdom literature of these other religions.

Proverbs is just in your face, down to earth, don't do stupid things, don't listen to foolish people, you know. And some of it it's so blatantly obvious, but in a culture that has run away from truth, it sounds revolutionary, right. So, you can think of something like, a soft answer turns away wrath. That actually works, if you've ever tried it. But can you imagine restructuring our entire media around that Proverb? I mean, we'd have to fire everybody and start over, right, And I wouldn't be the right one to take it over either, right. So, this is the brilliance of Proverbs. But you know, really, if there's one Proverb that they all center around, it's Proverbs 4:23.

You know, different translations, you know, translate it a little differently. You know, the NIV says, above everything else. Like, if you don't do anything else, do this. The ESV says, do this with all diligence. And it's this, keep your heart, keep your heart. Don't let your heart go. In other words, we're not just a product of what we do, what we do is a product of who we are inside. Protect your heart, don't let it be drawn to the wrong things, don't let it think the wrong thoughts, don't let it be addicted to the things that will destroy it, don't let it be disordered.



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

And I tell you, there's a music video, and I won't often recommend this on, you know, Christian radio, but, you know, it's been voted by some the greatest music video of all time by Johnny Cash. He redid a song called, Hurt, which really, the way he did it was auto-biographical. If you see the video, it's stunning. I mean, it'll take your breath away. And the punchline of this song is, if you do nothing else, keep your heart. And Johnny Cash gets to the end of, kind of telling his story, and he said, If I had to do it all again, the one thing I'd do is keep my heart. I'd find a way to do that. And that's really what Proverbs is saying. Keep your heart keep your life, lose your heart, lose your life. That's the math.

Frank:

Now, what does it mean, John...here's the NIV translation of it. The nearly inspired version says this. "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Now, in our culture, as you point out on Breakpoint...and friends, if you're not listening to Breakpoint every day you should. You can just go to the app, go to the iTunes app, or whatever app you use to get podcasts. And it's four or five minutes every day. John is normally doing it. It's tight, it's right to the point. But John is, as you've talked about before on Breakpoint, guarding your heart doesn't mean following your heart. There's a difference. What is the difference? Because our culture says, Oh, just follow your heart. Why is that not good advice to follow your heart?

John:

Right. Well, listen, I think Aristotle gave us a sense of this, and then CS Lewis commented on it. So, in that wonderful article that Lewis wrote,...he called it, *Men Without Chest*...it's the first essay that became the first chapter of the book, *The Abolition of Man*. And, you know, Lewis himself said, for every new book, read three old ones, I'm always like, for every new book, read three CS Lewis books, and *The Abolition of Man* is profoundly important. In the first chapter of,



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

Men Without Chest, he's talking about Aristotle, and Aristotle said that the head is the seat of the reason, and the belly is the seat of the passion, and that the way to be an ethical person, or a good citizen, is to figure out how to have your head govern the belly. Which is a great idea. And Aristotle talked about the habits that we need to have in order for our head to govern the belly and that was really helpful.

But if you've ever been in a real conflict between the head and the belly, you know what wins most of the time. The belly is really hard, the appetite, lust, you know, gluttony, these are things that control us rather than we control them. And so, what Lewis realized is, just thinking correctly about them, you know, is not going to be enough. My friend, Michael Miller, of The Acton Institute, you know, will put it this way. You know, he said, you know, imagine that your belly, the gut, is the 800 pound gorilla, and it's down there going, feed me, feed me, I'm hungry, I want. And the head is like an 80 pound Professor with a bow tie, right. I mean, the professor might tell you what to think, but if there's a battle between the gorilla and the geeky professor, the gorilla is gonna win every time.

And so, Lewis realized, the importance of the moral imagination, the importance of the will, you know, basically a well cultivated heart that loves the right things and can help the head govern the belly. And that's what we mean by the heart. It's not emotions and that's probably...you know, one of the confusions in our culture is that Disney has convinced us to follow our heart, as if the heart is always wanting the right things. What Lewis said is, you got to cultivate the heart. It's got to want the right things. Scripture says elsewhere, set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, because where your heart is, that's where your treasure is, right. Jesus shows up on the scene, he takes two capital offenses in the Old Testament, adultery and murder, and backs them up, backs them up into the heart. You know, don't look at a



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

woman lustfully. Don't consider a man, you know, as someone you hate, like, you wish he weren't alive. That's the same thing. That's how powerful the heart is.

Frank:

It is, and if we can't guard our hearts, our lives are going to fall apart. And this verse is a verse, when I taught through Proverbs on our TV program. this was the one that I highlighted to John because I think it says so much. In fact, just before the break, let me read the entire passage because it gets right to the point of what Proverbs is all about. Well, we'll start in verse 20. It says, "20 My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. 21 Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; 22 for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body. 23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. 24 Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. 25 Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. 26 Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. 27 Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil."

And when we come back from the break, John Stonestreet, my guest today from the Colson Center...actually the best website is breakpoint.org...is going to take us further through this to help us guard our heart. We're back in just two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

If you're low on the FM dial looking for National Public Radio, go no further. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. That's our intent anyway. You're not going to hear this on NPR. My guest is, the great John Stonestreet from the Colson Center. Best website is breakpoint.org. John has also taught for many years at Summit, another great ministry. And before we get back into our discussion about Proverbs 4:23, how you should guard your heart because everything



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

else flows from it, John, one way people can do this is to attend next month, the Wilberforce weekend you're holding in Fort Worth. What is that all about?

John:

Yeah, well listen, one of the challenges, just kind of going on the heart again, is thinking that our heart and what we think are separate things, right. You have to think rightly, you have to have the right categories. And one of the most important observations about our cultural moment right now is that we're not thinking clearly about what it means to be human. We know we're not thinking clearly about what's right and what's wrong. But that's even fruit. That's not the root of the problem. The root of the problem is what Carl Truman, who will be one of our speakers at the Wilberforce weekend, next month in Fort Worth, has called, you know, basically an anthropological crisis. In other words, a misunderstanding about who we are as human persons.

And in fact, the dominant idea, as he will articulate at the event, is that whatever we express, whatever we think we are, then magically, it changes who we are and that's who we are. And that's where we see so many of the confusions. So, this is an entire weekend that will look from a multitude of angles at one theological concept that I think is fundamentally essential to a Christian worldview, and culturally right now, crucial to our witness. And that's the image of God. In other words, who are we as human persons? It shapes our understanding when it comes to abortion and bioethics, when it comes to sexual morality, when it comes to dealing with the really hard questions, like, for example, the racial divide in America and everything else.



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

And, of course, we know about all the letters of the acronym, all our fundamental misrepresentations about what it means. And I mean, the LGBTQIA acronym, the one that keeps growing. All of these are misunderstandings about what it means to be human. And here's the good news about it, is that Christianity has the best answer on the market about what it means to be human, by far. Every religion has to answer that question, not only where do we come from and what's right and wrong, but who are we as humans? Are we different than the animals and how and why? This is the fundamental strength of the Christian worldview.

Tragically, I think if you went from church to church to church and said, hey guys, what are human being, they might answer right that they're made in the image of God. Then you say, well, what does that mean? Like, what difference does that make? What is the image of God? And then I think you hear a lot more crickets. And so, that's why we're locking in on this issue. Because again, I'm gonna say it again, foundational to a Christian worldview, that's big enough to understand what's happening in the world, crucial to our cultural witness right now, in a cultural moment where there's no agreement on what it means to be human, what grounds our human dignity, value, all that other stuff.

So, the Wilberforce Weekend is one of the events that Chuck Colson created years ago. We've been carrying it on since then and we always try to help Christians understand the cultural moment better. That's what the event has always been about. We've got a deep dive intensive on image of God as male and female on Friday. And then we are talking about the intersection of the image of God and culture Friday night and Saturday. Speakers include: the Benham Brothers, you know those guys...



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

Frank:

...from Charlotte, here...

John:

...Rebecca McLaughlin, and a new name for us, an apologists. We've also got Alisa Childers.

Frank:

Yeah, Rebecca wrote that great book, *Confronting Christianity*, and of course, Alisa with the book, *Another Gospel*. Those are great books and you're having them both speak.

John:

Yeah [unintelligible]. And then of course, Carl Trueman and Ryan Anderson, people that are just helping us understand the anthropology of our moment. But Alisa Childers, I'm really excited about her session because I think in her take that liberalism or progressive Christianity is a different gospel, that means it believes different things. We know it believes different things about human sin and salvation, but she's gonna suggest that they have a different view about what it means to be human. I mean, that's huge. If you have a different theology and a different anthropology, you're definitely talking about a different religion.

Frank:

But you just said something, John, I want to come back to. You said that this new morality that's being pushed on us, LGBTQIA, as you mentioned, is really the fruit of what people think about what human beings are. And you also mentioned, okay, we're made in the image of God. What does that mean? Unpack that for us. What does it mean to be made the image of God? Now keep in mind, friends, you're going to get a bigger definition if you go to the Wilberforce



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

Weekend, but spend a few minutes on that, John. What does that mean to be made the image of God?

John:

Yeah, look, this is one of those things where a child can wade and an elephant can swim, right. In other words, you can go as deep on this as you want. First of all, the image of God is the fundamental identity that we have as human persons in the creation story. So, this is what makes us different than the animals. Of everything that God made, he only gave his image to one thing. That means, first of all, we can do certain things like God: we reason in ways that are different than animals, we imagine, we create, right. I mean, humans eat, we garnish our food. You know, to me, that's weird. I think the only garnishing you need is bacon. But that is a pretty cool, you know, thing, when you think about the power of the human imagination. In fact, we're going to come back to this, on Proverbs 4:23, the ability of humans to look at the created order, and then imagine a world that doesn't exist yet and bring it to that. That's the image of God. We see what humans can do.

We also see the relational aspect of what it means to be human, right. So, we're not just in the image of God, we're in the image of the God that actually exists, which is Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, God the spirit. Most religions, most worldviews, will treat relationships as something that humans do. Christianity sees relationship as being part of the identity of God himself. So, relationships aren't just what we do, they're who we are, right. In other words, you can't not be relational. The Psalmist will tell you, one of the things that means is, you're known, buddy. You know, you might think you can hide from God. This is a very relevant point, by the way, with Proverbs 4:23. But you may think you can hide, you can go to the heavens, you can go to the depths of the grave, and God sees you, God knows you. And I've talked about this



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

with enough college students that the idea that God sees them and knows them is, for some, a source of incredible meaning and encouragement. And for some, it scares the you-know-what out of them.

Frank:

It's terrifying. Yeah, terrifying.

John:

Absolutely everything.

Frank:

Everything? Oh wow, yeah.

John:

The other aspect of this is, I think, really fantastic. Which is, if you just look at Genesis 1:2, where it says, the earth is formless and void, and you watch the actions of God for the rest of Genesis, one in which he's speaking...and by speaking, he's filling the emptiness and forming the formlessness, right. So, he speaks the light into the empty darkness and then he separates the light from the darkness. So, he's giving the day and night shape, and the light and darkness shape, and the dry ground and the expanse separation, and the waters, and then he fills all of this creation with living creatures. And then what does he do? He separates them in their own kind. So, the whole Genesis chapter one is God solving the problem that Genesis 1:2 describes, that the earth is formless and void.



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

And I'm not talking about the age questions in the gap theory. I'm just talking about what we actually see there. And then what happens? Well, Genesis 1:26-27, we have the image bearers popping on the scene, and you have a couple things that take place. Number one is the language changes. Up until that point, God creates by saying, let there be, and poof it happens. But then he says, let us make. So, you have this trinitarian conversation. And then instead of just us puffing into existence, so to speak, you actually have God forming man out of the dust of the ground, which is physical. Breathing to him the breath of life, which is spiritual. Man becomes a living soul.

So, the separation in the human experience is not between our bodies and our spirits, or between the flesh and the soul. To be a soul is to be physical and spiritual, which is huge in a culture that says, it doesn't matter what your physical body is, it only matters what you feel inside. The Bible doesn't allow us to separate our bodies...the created way that God made us and which he called good, in fact, he called very good...from what we feel. Our feeling doesn't dominate our bodies. In other words, we are designed, we are given to ourselves. God creates us. So, the importance of the physical body is huge.

The other thing I would add is the role that we play. Now if you're someone who says it and it happens, that means you're in charge, right. Like, you know, you used to run a company, Frank, and you would say, I want this to happen. If people did it that respected your authority. God's so in charge, he speaks to nothing and nothing obeys him and become something, right. I mean, he determines not only what happens with what exists, but whether it exists or not. And then what does he say Genesis 1:26? God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them rule, let them have dominion. So, you have, in being part of the image of God, a shared authority that God gives us.



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

Now we're not in charge, we're not the ones ultimately in charge. We're the ones that are supposed to steward this world, this created order, to make it everything that God wants it to be, which means the work of our hands has incredible meaning. It means that our bodies have meaning. It means that the spiritual sense that we have that there's something bigger than just the physical world also has meaning. It means that the work of our hands has meanings. It means that our imagination to make the world everything that it can be, that also has meaning. So, the universe, because of the image of God, is embedded with deep meaning and purpose that gets, obviously, frustrated in the fall. And how does God solve the problem? By becoming human. So, this human question is important at the creation part of the story, it's important at the fall part of the story, it's important at the redemption part of the story. It's essential all the way through.

And the fundamental mistake that our culture is making and doing it a number of different ways...always love GK Chesterton's line, Frank. You probably know this one. There's a million ways to fall down, there's only one way to stand up straight. There's a million ways that our culture is missing what it means to be human, right.

Frank: Yeah, he also said that fallacies don't cease being fallacies when they become fashions.

John:

Right.

Frank:

You know, it's really fashionable to say that I am what my feelings are. But that's still a fallacy if you look at reality. Sorry. Go ahead.



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

John:

Yeah. Well, it's just the promise of the fallacies is that this will bring you purpose, this will bring you meaning, if the whole world changes to align to whatever you think. And what we're seeing, not only, is that becoming increasingly absurd as people come up with more and more absurd ways to deny what's observably true about who they are, but we're also seeing that it's not bringing the joy, the peace, the meaning, the happiness that it's promising.

Frank:

No.

John:

And that's, one of the, I think, the most damning things on the transgender question, in particular, is that I talk to parents all the time, you probably do, Frank, as well who tell me that my kid's struggling with this, but they're scared because what they have been told is, if they don't go along with the fantasy their kid will kill themself. It's an awful, awful threat.

Frank:

So, more on this right after the break. Hang on, John. We're gonna be right back. We're talking to John Stonestreet of breakpoint.org. I'm Frank Turek. You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. We're back in two minutes.

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. That's the verse from which we're, kind of, tooling off into different areas. But that's what we're going to talk more about here in this segment and the next with my friend, John Stonestreet, from the Colson Center. He's the President the Colson Center. Easiest website to find him and what they do at



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

Colson Center is breakpoint.org. Everything links to that. We talked a little bit about Wilberforce Weekend coming up in May. And I'm going to ask John in the next segment to talk about something that can help you in a much more even robust way than just a weekend. He's got a program at the Colson Center, which is a long term program that can help you impact the culture and impact people around you for Christ, in a way that very few programs can. So, we'll talk about that a little bit later.

But let me go back to my friend, John Stonestreet. John, we're talking a little bit about the image of God. That's how we're made. We're made in the image of God. You talked a little bit about that. But let's just jump to the real practical part of this in the sense that, if we're made in the image of God, there is a purpose to life. What is the purpose of life? Why are we here?

John:

That's what's so important about realizing that you're created and not self-determined, right. In other words, if you're self-determined, the purpose of life is whatever you want it to be. If you're created then the purpose was given. T.S. Eliot is one of my favorite writers, contemporary of C.S. Lewis. He put it this way. I'm paraphrasing, but he said, look, before you know what you should do, or what you should do with something, you need to know what that something is for. So, that purpose, what am I designed and created for, is huge.

Now, here's why this matters for Christians. Because talking about identity is pretty popular in youth groups, and discipleship programs, and so on. But we often talk about identity in Christ, as if it's not connected at all to our identity in creation. Right? So, it actually becomes, identity in Christ language in churches, too often, becomes kind of a sanctified self-help, you know, self-esteem thing. Now, there's no question that when we are saved, we're re-made, transformed



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

into the image of Christ. But Christ is the Redeemer, the restorer of God's created order. And so, this is part of a story. Jesus Christ doesn't save us from what God created us for, Jesus Christ saves us to what God created us for. So, our identity in Christ is best understood in light of our identity in creation.

And what do we read in Genesis 1:26-27? Be fruitful, multiply, fill the world, fill the earth and subdue it. In other words, this God created purpose is for us, not just to be consumers in creation, like all the other animals are, but to actually be co-creators, to imagine, to build, to work. And after, you know, all of the creation gets impacted by the fall, that means confronting what's wrong, that means correcting mistakes, that means doing the work of renewal and restoration. Second Corinthians five is my favorite explanation of this, where Paul says, if anyone's in Christ, he's a new creation. And the very next verse is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself and has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation.

So, if we've been reconciled to God, then we've been given the ministry of reconciliation to tell others how they can be reconciled to God, but also to help put all the broken and fractured pieces of the world back together again, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and for the kingdom of God. And we don't do any of this like we're in charge. That's where all of this gets misunderstood.

Frank:

Yeah.



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

John:

Because so much of modern life is like, you determine what's right, you determine who you are, you determine what your [unintelligible]. But that is fundamentally wrong, if we were created, because if we were created, our purpose is given, not self-determined.

Frank:

Westminster Confession says, the purpose of life is to know God and glorify Him forever. What does it mean, in your view, to glorify God forever? What does that phrase even mean?

John:

Well, listen, the first thing that makes sense of that, obviously, is where the 10 commandments begin in the Old Testament, which is recognizing God above everything else. So, there's the worship aspect, directly, of acknowledging that there is a creator, and that it's with a capital C, and that he's the one in charge. Right? Then secondly, it's observing what the creator wants. We forget that, when God created his world, he called it good. Like, he was happy with it. He liked the way it was going you know. And sin happened, and it all gets, you know, corrupted. But we remember that, after the fall, the curse doesn't change God's created order.

Now, the curse for humans is, when you fill the earth, that's going to hurt, and when you form the earth, or farm the earth, or subdue the earth, it's going to be frustrating. Like, you're going to try to grow stuff and it ain't gonna happen. You're going to send an email with great intentions and it's going to be misread. And you're going to, you know, lose an employee. I know that hits close to home to you, like it does to me. You know, you're gonna say something to your wife that you think she's gonna love and she's not, you know. These things...



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

Frank:

Life's a struggle. Yeah.

John:

It's a real struggle, though. That's right. So, in other words, it's just those two components. It's recognizing who God is and recognizing who God has made us to be. And of course, not only who he's made us to be personally, but together. You know, recognizing God's created intent for marriage glorifies him. We're told over and over that God loves his world, you know. So, when we live and highlight what is good, we fight what is evil, we confront what is broken, we restore what we can, and we imagine what's missing. I think all of those are ways in which we glorify God. And when we extend it beyond just, kind of, the spiritual, you know, personal, happy clappy, feel good about Jesus sorts of ways, to the whole breadth of the scope of the creation...remember, God didn't just create us, he created the entire world...and so, when we live in alignment with that, that glorifies God,

Frank:

You know, it may have been Thomas Aquinas who said this. I think it was him who said that God gives us the dignity of causality, that we can affect time and eternity by what we do. And look, if there's no eternity, then there's no ultimate meaning. You know, if everything just ends, and we all go to heat death, and there's no eternity, then nothing has ultimate meaning. But since that's not the case, since there is an eternity, then what we do here has ultimate meaning.

I want to go back to the transgender issue for just a minute, John, because you're dealing with this quite a bit through Breakpoint and the Colson Center. I think I remember Tim Keller saying this in a sermon once. He was talking about, actually, somebody else and he said, my friend said

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I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

to me that my wife has been married to five different men and they've all been me. In other words, the point is, is that our feelings change over time and to put all of your identity in a feeling that may change, and probably will change, is fool's gold. So, I just want you to, sort of, comment on that, because it seems, as you just mentioned, if we're created, we do have a definite mission. If we're not created, and there is no God, then even the people claiming that you have to accept my identity, have no moral grounds to put that impetus on you, because there is no objective morality. That's just their opinion. So, go ahead and comment on that, if you would.

John:

I mean, this was all the devolution of post-modernism that we predicted, right? I mean, I remember, you know, being told back 20 years ago, when we started teaching on post-modernism, and you were too, Frank, and we were told, that's a slippery slope, it'll never happen. Look, when Chuck Colson put together a document of conscience on life, marriage and religious liberty in 2009, there was nothing in here about where this would lead, in terms of the transgender confusion. And yet, here it is. In other words, this devolves pretty dramatically, and it devolves into a power struggle. In fact, that was the line of Frederick Nietzsche, and then Foucault, you know, explaining post-modernism, that if there's not a given reality, then might makes more than right, might makes reality. And realities are separate for each individual and the best we can do is try to balance out the power.

Well, we realize that didn't happen. So, now we have the most powerful people in the world claiming to impose justice because of how the powerful misuse their power in the last generation. So, in other words, it's now just a power game. Whoever holds, you know, the chords, it can actually determine it. And what's missing in this whole conversation, and your



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

example of, you know, from Tim Keller, and the guy says that my wife had has had five different husbands. What an unfair thing to ask a spouse to do. And that's what we don't realize. In other words, when reality is whatever we want it to be, when my identity is whatever I choose, and I then try to force that on other people...

This is personal to me. I'm going to try to say this in an appropriate way because it is so personal. It's part of my family. And I've watched a family member with a child deny who they were created to be and try to pursue a transition in gender. And for everyone else, it's like a death. Because none of us knew. None of us was...you know, the new name, the new identity, wasn't part of our lives. And especially for Mom and Dad. Can you imagine how painful that is?

Frank:

Oh, yeah.

John:

But who cares? It's a cruel thing to do to other people.

Frank:

It is.

John:

And that doesn't get said a lot, but it needs to be said, because there's a moral high ground assumed in the transgender issue that we would not let someone get away with in any other circumstance. The ability to tell a doctor, remove this healthy organ to correspond with my



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

fantasy. We would never ever allow someone with an eating disorder to demand medical care, you know.

Frank:

Yeah, liposuction. Yeah, no, it really has taken the day so far, and tolerance is a one way street, you know. You have to do what I say but I don't have to do what you say. And there's no moral foundation for this, John. If there's no God, as you know, there are no objective right or wrongs, and yet, they are saying that if you don't agree and celebrate what I want then we're going to hurt you, basically.

John:

Right, they're claiming an absolute power on this, but it's all based on power. It's not based on any...

Frank:

Right. Right. Right.

John:

..metaphysical category that can ground right and wrong, and that's what makes it really scary. Because, you know, it hasn't been that long in history since we have seen what happens when people are able to gain absolute power, not only culturally, but politically, and enforce that power in employment and family law, you know, and the legal system, you know, and so on in the home.



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek PODCAST

Frank:

Now they're saying a parent can't stop their adolescent from mutilating their body or taking drugs that are going to actually sterilize them. I mean, this is serious stuff. And it's all built on a wrong view of our anthropology, where we came from, and that's what John and his team are going to talk about in the Wilberforce Weekend. Go to ColsonCenter.org and see more about that coming up in Fort Worth in May. You want to be part of that. And there's another program I want to tell you about right after the break. You're listening to, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, with Frank Turek. My guest is John Stonestreet. Back in two.

I'm talking to my friend, John Stonestreet, who is a wealth of great information, not just apologetically and theologically, but also culturally. In fact, there's a book behind him if you're watching the YouTube version. It is called, *A Practical Guide to Culture*, that he co-wrote with Brett Kunkle. Very good book that you can avail yourselves of. But, John, let's talk a little bit. Let's go back to the verse we started the show with. Above all else, guard your heart for everything you do flows from it. That's Proverbs 4:23. And in the talk you gave last week, when you and I were together here at the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove, you put five L's out that help us guard our heart. Can you just kind of go through that quickly? I know you're not going to really do it justice, because we have limited time, but five L's; they're all alliterated with the letter L. Go ahead.

John:

Yeah, I always joke I used to be Baptist, so I have to elaborate everything, you know. So, but the five L's, this is a way of being intentional and if Proverbs 4:23 says anything, it's...you know, most people are victims of the culture, but Proverbs 4:23 is yeah, make the decision now with all vigilance. If you don't do anything else, keep your heart. And these are five ways, I think, to



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

five questions we can ask ourselves to, kind of, look at whether or not we're keeping our hearts, whether the culture is pulling it here, our sin nature's pulling it there.

The first one is: What do I love? Saint Augustine is the greatest theologian, one of the great theologians, in the history of the church. And he highlighted that humans are at nature lovers. And it makes sense, right. It's the greatest commandment; love God, love neighbor. And Augustine said, look, we have to love the right things because love and worship are interchangeably used, almost, in Scripture, and it basically is, look, love God and then you'll be able to love your neighbor. So, we have to love the right things because our loves shape us, and we have to love them in the right order. In other words, you can have wrongly ordered loves. How much of progressive Christianity, right now, is trying to love neighbor before loving God and getting it just backwards? So, love God, love neighbor. What is it that I love?

The second question, a second L is: What are my longings? If our loves are about intimacy, longings are about imaginations. We talked a little bit about the power of the heart and the human capacity to look at what is and imagine what ought to be. And Jesus came and said, look, if you imagine sin, it's like committing it. Why? Because our loves shape us, our longings aim us. We walk in the direction of our longings. And these are the things that we coddle in our minds. Late at night, you're lying there in bed, we think it's just us, and we think, if only. If only I could. If only I did. Now the imagination is not something to stop, because imaginations are the source of the great acts of kindness, benevolence, great feats of engineering and human accomplishment, and argument and philosophy. All of this is part of the imagination. But it has to be moderated because every affair started in the imagination. Every affair did.



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

Frank:

And what you said earlier, that falls into this too, about one of our jobs on Earth as imagers is to create. And one of the ways you can create is through your imagination. But anyway, sorry, keep going.

John:

But you can create pain. I mean...

Frank:

Yeah, that's right.

John:

...you can ruin someone's day...

Frank:

Or life.

John:

...by imagining they did something and then saying it. Yeah. Or their life. Yeah, that's right. So, what are our loves? What are our longings? They're what are our loyalties. This is a distinctly important question to ask in the western context, where we always have the time and the money to do what we actually end up wanting to do. But we have so many options we can't do everything, right. So, we will make choices. Now, we often think about loyalties as being kind of grandiose, like, am I loyal to my country, am I loyal to the flag, am I loyal to the church? Our loyalties are tested in mundane ways, right. My loyalties to my children are tested by my



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

iPhone. Now if you ask me, if you put a gun to my head and said, choose one, your kid or your iPhone, it's an easy choice. The hard choice is when I come home every day and it buzzes.

Frank:

Sorry, dear. [laughing]

John:

[laughing] Yeah, that's right. It's like, am I gonna turn my attention from my kids? I often put it this way: Am I gonna put down my kid and pick up my phone or put down my phone and pick up my kid? So, my loyalties are tested in these everyday ways. And our culture puts us on schedules for little loyalties.

All right, the fourth one: What are my labors? This is a reflection of anthropology. This is a reflection what it means to be made in the image of God. Work is not a result of the fall work is part of our dignity. Toil, the frustration of our work, the misdirection of our work, that's the fall, but our dignity, when we create, and invent, and imagine, and innovate, and write, and build and design, these are things that we are able to do because of our image of God. But you know what? What do we work hardest at? If we work hardest at our own glory, if we work hardest at our own financial success, if we work hardest, you know...or if we actually deny that God given goodness of work.

This is what's happening with young men. I often say this, you know, when I speak at Summit, is that young men these days work harder not to work than it would take to work. Right?

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I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

Frank:

Yeah. Yeah.

John:

I don't know if you remember, there was an article years ago that said, you know, I'm not an atheist or a theist, I'm an apatheist, I don't care. And that's just a very Western privilege. If there's an example of Western privilege, in other words, our ability to amuse ourselves to death and not think about what really matters, that's it. And so, really looking hard at, what do I work hard for, what do I think is worth getting up in the morning and doing? That's that question.

And then finally: What are my liturgies? Now liturgy, of course, is an ecclesiastical word. It describes, you know, traditional churches, if you're Lutheran, Anglican, Catholic, Episcopal, there's this liturgical form of worship. And the whole idea from the Church Fathers was that look, we won't do what we should, so we need to be ordered. And it becomes liturgy, then becomes habits or rhythms of worship. What we forget is that our culture puts us in liturgies too. One I always like to joke about is like, we have a holiday that's all about giving thanks, right. So, we think, oh, we're giving thanks. The next day we trample security guards for flat screen TVs.

Frank:

Even that night, John, we do it now.

John:

It's not even the next day now, it's that night. We go from being fundamentally thankful to fundamentally consumer oriented, right, which is a huge, huge thing. Pascal, you know,



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

famously talked about the God shaped hole and all of our hearts. And listen, we live in a culture that liturgically will orient us to, I have a Lexus shaped hole in my heart that can only be filled by a Lexus or fill in the blank. And so, these liturgies, these rhythms, you know, it's just a matter of evaluating them. The Johnny Cash video, again, I struggle to recommend, you know, these sorts of things. But you got to look at this video, because it's an autobiographical and you'll see the liturgies that took over; the liturgy of fame, the liturgy of music, and all of that sort of stuff. And how, at the end of his life, he looked back, and he goes, man, if I could do it all again, I'd keep myself. I'd figure out some way.

Frank:

What's that video again? I saw it had 100 million views. It's called what again?

John:

It's called, Hurt. The song is called, Hurt. And it was interesting because the original guy who produced this was Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails. Let's just say, non-believer. But Johnny Cash's manager brought it to him, and he said, I don't know if I can do it. And then they turned it autobiographical. And, I mean, it'll take your breath away, because it is an embodiment of this Proverbs 4:23. So, here's what you do with these five questions; loves longings, loyalties, liturgies, and labors, is get alone with the Lord. Ask him to, you know, with the power of His Holy Spirit, to make you honest. And then after you answer the questions, find someone who knows you better than you know yourself. And by the way, if you don't know someone who knows you better than you know yourself, that's a problem. You need somebody like that, a spouse, or a friend, a mentor, and ask them to just shoot straight with you. Now I know some guys on here are going, man, I don't want my wife to answer what do I love the most, right.



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

Frank:

Yeah right. What my loyalties are. Yeah right.

John:

Yeah, that's right. So, but here's what we have to go back to, is the foundational common sense wisdom of Proverbs that God has kindly given to us, which says, the wounds of a friend are faithful. Right? We have a culture that says, you know, we want the cuddles of a friend, the accolades of a friend. Proverbs goes, you know what, you need a friend that loves you enough to hurt you.

Frank:

Yeah, love does not mean approval. Yeah, if they hurt you, for the right reason, that's gold right there.

John:

And I'm not talking about abuse. I'm certainly not talking about spousal abuse, physical abuse, spiritual, you know, emotional, or anything like that.

Frank: Right.

But someone willing to look at you and tell you the hard truths. I mean, how much of Proverbs is, Frank, take correction? The wise man takes correction, the foolish man doesn't.



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

Frank:

Yeah. Yeah. There's no question. And I'm reminded of Thomas Sowell who said, when you tell somebody what they want to hear, you're helping yourself, when you tell somebody what they need to hear, you're helping them.

John:

Yeah.

Frank:

And we don't want to tell them what they need to hear, because we're afraid that they're gonna get mad at us. But that just shows you're more concerned about yourself than actually helping them. John, we only got a couple of minutes and we need to get to this right now because this is extremely important. Some of you have been listening to this podcast awhile. Hopefully you're getting some benefit from it. You know, there are ways you can go further. You can take CIA, our CrossExamined Instructor Academy, a three day program in August. Some of you know about that, some of you have been there. You go to our website, CrossExamined.org. You can take our online courses at CrossExamined.org. That will help you go further. You can go even further than that, and go to seminary, like Southern Evangelical Seminary (ses.edu). But if you want to, kind of, go somewhere in between, than seminary, you don't want to go that far but you want to get more than, say, a three day program, my friend, John Stonestreet, has put together a great program called, Colson Fellows. John, we got about a minute. Just explain what that's about and how people can get involved.



I don't have enough FAITH
to be an ATHEIST

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

John:

Well, important nuance. Chuck Colson put this program together and we inherited it and thought, man, when he passed away, this is something we can't let go of. Chuck believed his greatest legacy would be Christians everywhere, this idea of reproduction. And he wanted Christians to realize, number one, that they had a responsibility to think like a Christian, right. It wasn't just your job, Frank Turek, as a professional apologist, or my job, as somebody who gets to have a platform. Every Christian is called to love God with his mind. Every Christian is also placed in a time and place. And so, connecting those two: what is true and what is this cultural moment, is the calling that all Christians have. So, this is a nine month, deep dive into Christian worldview, cultural analysis, and cultural leadership. And what we do is, we run this program through cohorts, so in 50 different cities in America, and also online for where we don't have cities, we have people studying with us for a year. And it is a deep dive that ends with a strategic plan on how you can live out what you've learned in a strategic plan of application.

ColsonFellows.org.

Frank:

Join it, friends. ColsonFellows.org. Be a part of it. Nine months. It'll change your life and it will help you guard your heart. Thanks so much to my guest, John Stonestreet. I'm Frank Turek. See you next week. God bless.

