

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Have We Lost Our Minds? | with Dr. Stan Wallace

(September 10, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, there are five big questions in life. Origin, where did we come from? Identity. Who we are, or who are we? Meaning, why are we here? Morality. How should we live life then? And finally, destiny. Where are we going?

Now, these questions are all interdependent. In other words, the answers to one affect the answers to the others. But the one we've seen in our society that many people have been struggling with right now is the second question. And that is identity. Who are we? What is our identity? What does it even mean to be human?

Are we just bodies or do we have souls? Is there a spiritual realm to life? Or are we just simply molecules in motion? And by the way, what is a soul? Do you have a soul, or are you just a body? And do you have a mind? Or are you just a brain? Is there any difference between your brain and your mind? Is everything matter?

And what does it matter if everything is matter? And has neuroscience disproven the soul? Because sometimes you hear that neuroscience has disproven the soul. What we're going to talk about today, these may seem like theoretical topics, but they have very practical input.

We're going to talk about the question, 'Have We Lost Our Minds?' And it's actually the title of a new book by Dr. Stan Wallace. The subtitle is 'Neuroscience, Neurotheology, the Soul, and Human Flourishing.' Now, Dr. Wallace is the president and CEO of Global Scholars, which is an academic ministry equipping Christian professors to be the aroma of Christ from 2 Corinthians 2:15 in higher education worldwide.

He's studying under the great J.P. Moreland, and he helps college professors all over the world be more of a Christian witness. So, it kind of dovetails what we're doing here at CrossExamined. As you know, we're going to a lot of college campuses.

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In fact, we just were at UT Dallas and Arizona State. Next week, we'll be at Western Carolina University, and many more this fall. So, keep an eye on our website. But let's talk about the question, have we lost our minds? Dr. Stan Wallace. How are you, sir?

STAN:

I'm great. So good to be with you today. Thanks for the invitation, Frank.

FRANK:

Oh, absolutely, Stan. This is such an important book. It seems like it could be technical, but you write in a very easy way for people to understand. Let's start at the beginning. How did you even get interested in this topic of neuroscience, neurotheology, and the soul?

STAN:

Well, I'll tell you, I have been blessed, as you mentioned, to know and be mentored by J.P. Moreland for almost 30 years. And it's something he's passionate about, because his mentor, Dallas Willard, was passionate about it. And they both understood what I have come to realize, that, well, first, the soul is under attack today, both in secular culture, but increasingly in Christian communities, by these Christian physicalists who want to identify our beliefs and desires and even character and very selves as either identical to our brains or emerging from our brains.

But the fact of the matter is, human flourishing comes only by understanding that, no, we're a soul that has a brain and uses a brain, but ultimately, it's our soul that, that loves God and loves others. So, as I started to understand both the philosophical and theological issues in play and those very practical issues about then how do we engage in spiritual formation and in ministry, that I realized, well, this is a really important topic.

And I was reading good literature at an academic level in my graduate work on this, and since then, but I wasn't seeing much in a, I say, semi-popular level treatment. And so, just thought maybe that's something I could bring to the table that could be helpful to try to translate some of these very good things being done by J.P. and others at an academic level for the broader church to understand better what we are and how we flourish.

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FRANK:

Let's start with the definition of a soul. What is a soul, and why do we think as Christians, we have a soul?

STAN:

Well, the best definition I can give is that our soul is an individuated human nature. And I go through an entire chapter to unpack those terms. But basically, a nature is a set of abilities that we have and that sets us apart as us, as a human type thing. So, human nature would be different than the type of nature my dog has. And each nature is individual. You and I both are human that share human nature, but I'm not you and you're not me. So, there's something that individuates us and that together is a nature, is a human nature or soul.

Now, the important thing is what those properties or capacities of the soul are. And in the human soul, there are six. And here's the analogy I use that you can sort of visualize with. Think of a Ferris wheel, a very small Ferris wheel. Six cars in this Ferris wheel, and people are lined up to get in.

So, the first group shuttles into the first car, and they know each other and they're talking to one another in the car, and then it rotates, and the next group gets into the next car and they're talking to one another, having a good time, but they can talk to the people in the first car because they're pretty close together, and so on and so on. And all the cars are filled up with people.

Well, that's a picture of the soul. Each of those cars is called a faculty of the soul. It's a grouping of capacities that are like one another in certain ways, like the people in the car know one another, have some kind of relationship. Well, let's take the mental faculty. There are beliefs we have, and there are desires that we have, and those are more closely related than, say, our volitional capacities to make choices and to act.

And so, there's different capacities of the soul. So, you have the mental faculty. You have the volitional faculty. You have the emotional faculty, you have the social faculty to relate to others, the spiritual faculty to relate to God, and the sensory faculty to engage through the body the world around us. And by understanding those faculties of the soul, how they relate to one

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another, we can understand what human flourishing is because it's essentially having a proper ordering of those so that they relate to one another in healthy ways.

This is where professionals step in if that's not the case, if you have wrong beliefs that lead to wrong emotions, that lead to poor choices, well, you have a counselor help you think through and correct your wrong beliefs that have influence on what you feel about yourself and maybe what you choose to do. So, those relationships and understanding them help us to flourish and to love others. Well, to help others flourish as well.

FRANK:

Now, Paul talks about the idea that if you're absent from the body, you're present with the Lord as a believer. So, that would obviously seem to indicate that there's an immaterial sense to ourselves that if we're absent from the body, we still have consciousness, we're still present with the Lord. How does that relate to the idea that we have a soul with these different faculties? And why would any Christian suggest that we don't have that individual, immaterial soul?

STAN:

Sure. So, the first question. Yes, clearly, Scripture talks about us being able to live past the death of our body. So, we are that thing that certainly has a body, but lives for a period until the final resurrection, apart from our body. And that's our soul. And it's that soul that then has those capacities that, if you notice, Jesus says to the thief on the cross, he could still exercise even when he's disembodied.

He says, today you'll be with me in paradise. There's a sense that the thief will know that he's in paradise, he will worship and rejoice. And so, all of these things are true of our soul. These are capacities of our soul that right now we use our body to exercise, but we don't have to. It's not necessarily the case because we are ultimately a soul that has a body.

So, yeah, we live on after the death of our body, then we have a resurrected body that we live in forevermore. So, I will recommend to readers for a deeper dive theologically, the book by John Cooper, 'Body, Souls, and Life Everlasting,' which is the best theological treatment of the body soul union. And I forgot your second question, got going on that.

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FRANK:

Well, why would any Christian suggest that only physical things exist? Because you're saying there are Christians out there right now and you cover them in the book that have this view that we are just molecules. And I somehow, they, it seems to me, overlook the quite obvious point that Paul's making, that outside of our molecules, we're still conscious beings and we'll be with the Lord until our body and our soul are reunited in the final resurrection. So why would any Christian be a physicalist like this? I just don't get that.

STAN:

Right. There's a group of folks who call themselves neurotheologians. It's very popular in evangelical circles today. Two of the leading proponents are Jim Wilder in his book *renovated*, and Kurt Thompson in his book *Anatomy of the soul*. They say things like, let's see.

Wilder says, brain functions determine our character as opposed to our soul, or our brain creates and maintains a human identity, which historically is what the soul does, and then actually reduces or identifies the brain with the mind by saying the conscious attention of the slow track of our brain is usually what we mean by mind.

Whereas historically, I think biblically and philosophically, the mind and the brain are distinct. The mind is our soul, our immaterial dimension, and the brain is part of our body. And then Thompson, similarly, he says it's a left hemisphere of the brain that sets me apart as me, not the soul.

In fact, he says, the brain and mind are closely enough related to seem interchangeable. So, yeah, there's this real strong sense in their writing that either the brain is identical with the mind and vice versa, or at least the brain produces the mind in some way. Thompson says the mind is housed in your physical self and depends on your body to function.

So, no body, no mind. So, if there is something distinct from the body or the brain, "a mind", it's not an enduring soul or mind. Which is the biblical view that we do endure through change and even the death of our bodies. It's some kind of a mind that emerges from our brain and is dependent on our brain to exist and goes away when we die.

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So, it's a very different view. But, yes, it's very popular. I think there's a number of reasons why it's popular. Four I've identified. One's theoretical, and that's simply that it's sometimes hard to understand how what we discover in neuroscience fits with this understanding of an enduring soul. Or sometimes, it said, a substantial soul, a soul that stands under all the changes of our body. And so, you know, without going into all the details.

FRANK:

They're in the book, by the way, ladies and gentlemen, have we lost our minds? Neuroscience, neurotheology, the soul and human flourishing by my guest doctor Stan Wallace. So, yeah, we can't get. We can't unpack it all. Unpack it at all. But I'll say, okay, just give us an overview then.

STAN:

Yeah. It's a confusion of constant conjunction. Two things always come together, a neural event and a mental event. With either identity. The reason they always come together is they're the same thing. The mental event is nothing but the brain event. Or at least there's a causation. The brain event causes the neural event.

So, when the brain events stop, the neural event or the mental events stop. So, it's just a confusion of what identity is. And identity is not constant conjunction. It is, in fact, something very different. I go into that.

So, there's that theoretical confusion. Why I think some people, including believers who haven't thought a lot about the nature of what they're saying and what they're claiming is identical to our brain, namely our mind or mental states. It's easy to make that confusion. second is historical. And the Reformation was great in some ways, but in some ways, we lost something.

Namely, in the Reformation, we tended to throw out some of the thinking that came through Aquinas and other Catholic thinkers who understood the soul and body as a deeply united, functional whole. If you want the technical term, it's hylomorphism, that Aquinas modified, I think, within some biblical parameters to allow for the soul to live after the death of the body.

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But the point is that it was a very deep, functional unity of the two. And in enlightenment, Descartes came along and gave a very different view of the soul body relationship. It's called Cartesian dualism, named after him. There was this kind of a ghost in the machine idea where the soul is stuck in the body. It's unnatural, it's not healthy, it's a problem.

And so, rightly, I think Christians have rejected that idea, but they think that's the only way you can be a dualist in terms of having a soul and a body in play. So, I think they're inclined to say, well, we've got to go with some kind of a view that is physicalistic in some way, because we don't want to get stuck with this ghost in the machine idea that is so problematic and really is gnostic.

It very much downplays at best, or at worst, fully discounts the body and the physical realm as good and part of God's, God's design for us. So that's kind of a second historical, a third, to be honest, is exegetical. Some believers go this way for what they would say are biblical reasons, because, and this harkens back to the earlier point, the scriptures do talk about us as a deep unity.

You start in the Old Testament reading through, and you'll get a real strong sense that we function as one thing. We have this immaterial and material dimension. But, but there's a lot of talk about us as this united being, this one being. Some take that to mean we're an ontological unity. In other words, in our very being, we're one. There is not a distinction between soul and body in that view.

But as you read on later in the Old Testament, and especially then as you get into the New Testament, progressive revelation gives us more and more clarity. And I, we get a clear and clearer sense that, no, although there's a functional unity, we're an ontological duality in our very being. We're a body and soul duality where the soul lives after the body dies, although we do function as one.

So that's an error that's made, that's theological. And I don't understand why it's made, because as you read the rest of scriptures seems to become clearer and clearer. But there are a lot of exegetes who are arguing for us as one thing, not a duality on that basis. And then last is a

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sociological factor, just that, you know, our culture seems to be going that way, and it's just a pretty strong stream to swim against, to say, no, we're a duality of body and soul.

All right, so how do they deal, then, when Paul says that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and Jesus says to the guy next to him on the cross, today you're going to be with me in paradise. Obviously, his body is still hanging on the cross. So, how do they deal with that?

If they're going to say that we're just physical unities and there is no soul, how do they, what do they say about this? And there are different, different folks who are going different directions, writing different things about this. Joel Green, New Testament scholar. Fuller is one of the leading Christian physicalists trying to make sense of these passages.

FRANK:

Well, Fuller, there's his first problem. I'm sorry, go ahead.

STAN:

So, yeah, and this is really what, in the book I mentioned before, John Cooper's body, soul and life everlasting. He spends pages and pages of going through each of the arguments and trying to say, okay, here's the textual basics that's being used, and here's where this really doesn't work.

One of the places, I'll give you an example, that there's an argument made has to do with our eternal state not being us as a continuant but being us as something that does cease when our physical body dies. But God remembers us, so he, he contains us in his consciousness such that we endure in that sense. And then when the physical body is resurrected, we are again constituted.

So, I think it's hermeneutical gymnastics. I think it raises real metaphysical questions of how something can cease to be and come to be as the exact same thing, as an exact replica, as one commentator says, critiquing the view, you know, I don't want to see my departed love.

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I don't want to see, when I enter the eternal rest, exact copies of my departed loved ones. I want to see them. I want to be with my father. Not a really good copy of him that God remembered and recreated. Right?

FRANK:

And not only that, it doesn't deal with what Paul said or what Jesus said. Those, those don't cut it. Thirdly, in a modern realm, you got to deal with NDE's, near death experiences, where there's remote viewing going on of people who are alive right now on an operating table somewhere, yet they're viewing an accident that occurs, you know, miles from the hospital, because their body or their soul has left their body, and they've witnessed it.

And then when they're brought back to life, so to speak, they tell about this accident. There's no way they could have known it. There's over 300 of these kind of veridical NDE's. So, I mean--

STAN:

Gary Habermas writes some really good stuff on that, I think you've had him on the show. And he takes cases where the person has no reason whatsoever to endorse this view. People who were atheists, neuroscientists, scholars who had a career built on denying these realities, and they had an NDE and came back and said, okay, yeah, this is a reality.

FRANK:

Yeah. So, it doesn't seem to fit. I might bring up another instance in scripture, and that is the transfiguration where you have Jesus standing there with Moses and Elijah. Did Moses and Elijah really exist, or was that some sort of hologram?

You know, I mean, or were they in their physical bodies then? It doesn't seem to say that. I don't know. This neurotheology doesn't seem to fit with the facts, but you go through it in the book. So again, the book, my friends, is called 'Have We Lost Our Minds? Neuroscience, Neurotheology, the Soul and Human Flourishing' by my guest Dr. Stan Wallace. Go ahead, Stan.

STAN:

Can I throw one thing? I always want to make sure I mention this. I believe at least the neurotheologians I have studied, like Kurt Thompson and Jim Wilder, are men of deep faith.

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They want to serve the kingdom. They're doing their level best. I have no animosity toward these brothers. I just think that we're all called to sharpen one another. Iron sharpening iron.

And I think this is an area where they at least haven't been very clear, if not have explicitly endorsed an anthropology that's contrary to the biblical and philosophical data. So, I want to say, yes, they're doing good work in as far as they're providing data on here's how we care for souls. It's just when they transfer into the, okay, we ground that now in the brain that I have problems.

So, for instance, Jim Wilder makes a lot of attachment theory, the idea, and there's a lot to it, but basically that we are healthy in all ways, spiritually, emotionally, and so on and so forth, when we have good relationships with others, including with God. And absolutely. And a lot of people have read his work on attachment theory and benefited greatly from it because it's absolutely correct.

The problem is when he then says, and it's the brain that is attached. No, it's the soul is attached. And when you're giving advice and somebody's taking that and, in their soul, they're developing deeper attachments to God and others, they're flourishing as a result of the advice. They're just not taking his physicalist underpinning.

And that's what I worry will continue to seep into the church and we'll become more and more practicing physicalists. And that has huge implications for our spiritual formation and our ministry.

FRANK:

Let me give you one argument that a physicalist might get or might make, and maybe you can respond to it. We all know, tragically, that many people we love get diseases toward the end of their lives. They get dementia, and it does change their personality. It changes what they can know and what they can do. It does seem like there, therefore, is obviously a connection between the brain and the mind. What is the proper way to understand that relationship without being a physicalist?

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STAN:

Absolutely. Yeah. So, first of all, there absolutely is a deep causal relationship between the brain and mind and mind and brain. It's two way. This is a point Dallas Willard made often, and the analogy he gave at one point is that it's like somebody in one of these big earth movers who is pushing buttons and pulling levers and getting it to move according to the operator's will, to engage the world in the ways that the operator wants it to engage the world.

And so, that's the relationship between soul and body. It's a little deeper than that. You can go a cartesian route on that, but Dallas wasn't trying to do that. But the point is that it is our soul that uses our body to engage the world and live in the world and flourish. However, the earth mover can have an hydraulic leak, and all of a sudden, you push that button, and the. You know, the. The backhoe doesn't dig dirt.

Well, now, that's not a problem with the operator. That's a physical breakdown that limits the operator's ability to do what he wants to do. He still has a desire to dig dirt. He still has the capacity at a higher order level to dig that hole. He just is blocked from accomplishing his will in the world because of this hydraulic leak. Okay?

So, in the same way, yes, we are connected to our bodies. And if there's a breakdown physically in our brain and certain, uh, connections that aren't being made, we are thwarted in our soul, our ability to get done what we want to do, to think well, to make the right choices, whatever it is, because we are embodied. And to engage in the world, we've got to have our bodies in working order. Does that make sense?

FRANK:

Yeah. Yeah. That's an analogy I've heard. Maybe it was J.P. that made something similar. And correct me if I'm wrong here, because maybe I don't have J.P. right, J.P. Moreland, that you could use that same analogy with a driver in a car.

STAN:

Yes, that's the analogy he uses.

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FRANK:

Okay. So, yeah, you're sitting in a car, and that's the soul, and the car around you is the body. And if something goes wrong with the car, you may want to drive it, but you can't because mechanically it's broken down. So that might be another way of looking at that as well.

STAN:

And I always want to be careful because I'm trying to represent both J.P. and Dallas well, because neither of them are cartesian dualists in the sense of kind of a ghost in the machine, where you're disassociated, really, from your body, but emphasizing you are distinct from your body. That's the point. You are not the backhoe; you are the operator.

But you're in this deep, deep relationship that that analogy doesn't quite capture. Maybe if you're strapped in forever and couldn't get out, that'd be a little closer. But, and also, it's a good place to be. You're not trapped in the backhoe. That's where you're created to be. So, yeah.

FRANK:

Another problem, I would think, with this view that we're just molecules in motion is how do these so-called Christians, who, you say they're orthodox Christians, but they have this odd view that we don't have a soul, or the soul and the body are the same, so they can't be separated. How do they deal with free will?

How do we have free will if we're just molecules in motion? That would seem to indicate that every thought we have is the result of the laws of physics. So, we're not really reasoning, we're just reacting. It would seem that reason would go away, too, if we don't have this difference between mind and brain. So, how do we deal with these problems, Stan?

STAN:

Right. And I do identify three areas that the mind is clearly distinct from the brain, free will, rationality, and our first person perspective. So, I go through those in some detail because that's clear cases of what we have that the brain doesn't have. And so, I think the short answer to your question is all through the books. And I cite a number of places, these neurotheologians I look at, talk about being free, making choices. They assume freedom. They also assume rationality and first person perspective.

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So, they're just not consistent. And the fact of the matter is, and I say this all love and respect, but it's clear. And I make this case in the book that they just don't have much of a foundation in the theological and philosophical issues about what are we. What is the nature of the soul? Such that, for instance, Thompson gives us a bibliography where he cites the sources he's used, and they're all folks from the last 50 years or so, whereas this conversation has gone back to the ancient Greeks. But also, they're all physicalists, as far as I can tell.

There's certainly no philosophers or theologians who have done serious work from a dualist perspective, whether it's cartesian or the Thomistic dualism or the holistic dualism I'm advancing. And so, I just don't think they're aware of these issues for whatever reason. Really don't know why. But they're clearly not aware of these issues in what they write.

FRANK:

Wow. That seems such like a huge oversight to me, that they have to know that there's an element of immateriality in reason and free will. They don't think that?

STAN:

Well, no, I think they'd certainly say that that's the case, but they haven't put that together with the claims being made about the brain as the source of my character or the source of my desires or choices. So, I think it's just a disconnect in terms of consistency. And, you know, I just want. I'll be fair to these, these gentlemen, because they are dear brothers, and I don't want to be critical in inappropriate ways. But it just seems that they haven't had the training in these fields. They're a little bit outside their lanes.

Just like if I start making claims about chemistry, somebody who's got training in chemistry is going to probably see some things that I'm not saying quite right, because I really have no idea what I'm talking about. It's just not my field. And it's not something that, you know, I would take offense at. I would want to acknowledge I'm not a chemist, so I don't really have a lot to say about that. Well, this is areas of theology and philosophy that delve into what the human person is, and it's just not where they get their training.

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So, this is the idea of a university where we had to listen to one another. So, the theologian, the philosopher, the psychologist, like psychiatrists, the neuroscientist, we all ought to be around the table and all contributing to it. And our bibliographies ought to contain people from all those disciplines who have something to say about these things.

And that's my challenge, is that's not the case in the works of these neurotheologians. It's just scientists. And as much as science gives us truth, it doesn't give us the whole truth. There's an underlying view of how we know what's real. That is part of the culture, and I think is underlying this conversation. It's known as scientism.

And it basically says, you know, if science doesn't say it, it's either not true or it's not as true. So, we need to find ways to find science that backs up what we say to really justify the claims. And so, the only thing we've got is neuroscience. We can't really appeal to theology or philosophy for knowledge. And so, yes, we'll ground all our thinking about spiritual formation, in this case, in science. And that's just the wrong way to go, because if spiritual formation is soul formation or spirit formation, neuroscience is going to be interesting in terms of some of the ways that our soul uses our body, but it's not going to give us the whole story.

In fact, let me quote Dallas Willard, and I'll be done. He says, the greatest need you have, and I have, is renovation of the heart, that spiritual place within us. And he says, as much as neuroscience can tell us about the functions of our brain, it really doesn't say anything about our heart or our soul or our spiritual formation. And so, that's, I think, where the hangup is, is trying to ground everything in science when there's other disciplines that actually tell us a lot more about what we are and how we flourish.

FRANK:

Yeah, of course, one of the great problems is, as Einstein himself put, he said that the man of science is a very poor philosopher. The problem is, if you want to be a good scientist, particularly on issues that cover a broad range of disciplines, you have to be a good philosopher, because philosophy is how you interpret the data. And as we pointed out on this show many times, in fact, I had J.P. on to talk about his book on scientism.

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Scientism, as we all know, if you've listened to this show, ladies and gentlemen, we've said it many times before, is self-defeating. To say that you get all your truths from science is not a scientific claim itself. It's not a scientific truth. You can't prove it in the lab. You have to...

It's not a statement of science, it's a statement about science. And so, when people today, as you well know, Stan, I'm talking about our audience now. When people today say, well, we have to look for a scientific solution or we have to look for a scientific source for this knowledge, that very claim itself didn't come from science.

It's a philosophical assessment of reality, which isn't true, and yet they think it's true. And this is why you say in the book, and we'll get to it in a few minutes, that our enlightenment hangover has left us pretty much devoid of coming to the right conclusion on some of these issues. But I want to quote JBS Haldane, who was an evolutionist about a century ago, pointed out the problem with this physicalist worldview, that we're just molecules in motion.

Whatever we think is the result of the laws of physics. He said this. "If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true, and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms." So, he saw the self-referential problem with this idea that we're just molecules in motion.

We're just moist robots. If we're moist robots, we shouldn't believe anything we think, but we can believe things we think, therefore, we are not moist robots. And Stan points this out, by the way. Again, the book is called 'Have We Lost Our Minds?' by Dr. Stan Wallace, my guest today.

And before we go on to the next topic, I want to point out that this coming Thursday night at 9:00 p.m. eastern time on our YouTube channel and our other social media sites, we're going to have Jack Hibbs, Pastor Jack Hibbs with me, and we're going to talk about how to love your neighbor through politics, a bold and biblical approach with Pastor Jack Hibbs.

We're going to answer these objections. Should Christians be involved in politics? Isn't that divisive? Won't it drive people away from the gospel? Does it violate the Constitution? These kinds of things. We're going to see that we have a biblical responsibility to love our neighbors

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through how we vote and how we get engaged politically, particularly during this election season.

So, you don't want to miss this. Thursday night, 9:00 p.m. eastern. It'll be live and you can ask Jack Hibbs a question. We'll take questions off the stream, off the chat there. So, be a part of that particular program, how to love your neighbor through politics. I also want to mention next week we'll be at Western Carolina University, Lord willing, on the 18th of September.

And then on the 20th I'll be with my friends Natasha Crain and Alisa Childers at a church in Buffalo for the Unshaken conference. Yeah, that's Buffalo, New York. Hopefully, snow will not start that early. September 20, the first day of fall. Check our website, crossexamined.org, for more about that. And we also have some online courses you want to be a part of. 'Train Your Brain.' That's logic. And 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist' starting this week. Go to the website for more on that.

All right, Stan, let me ask you about something you write in the book. You said this. "The fact that now even most Christians simply assume that material and efficient causes are the only relevant explanations of physical reality is an indication of how steep we are in Enlightenment philosophy, in this case, the Enlightenment's philosophy of science."

Let me ask you this, and you can unpack this. Take as much time as you need, because it's an important concept here. What is a material cause? And why do people today think there really only are either material or efficient causes? What are they missing?

STAN:

Yeah, you're right. It's a long conversation. Let me try to be very brief. So, the first person to really think about the world and discovering what's in the world was Aristotle. And he has a book called Physics and other books where he engages these issues. And he says something I think is very wise. He says, there's four different things we've got to explain, or four different parts of an explanation of anything we see in the world.

So, let's just say you're out walking with your wife in a new subdivision, and there's a house being built, and she says, wonder why that's there. Right? Well, you could answer in four ways,

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and they're all four correct. You could say, well, because there's bricks and there's lumber. Right? There's the material cost, the matter that's being put together in the structure.

And you can say, hey, workers are showing up on the job site every day, and they're building the house. Well, that's true. That's the efficient cause. That's the energy that's making it happen. That's true. But you could also say, because there's an architect who's developed plans, and there's that form that all this stuff's being put into, the matter that the workers are crafting together.

That's the formal cause. And then there's the people who wanted a house. That's why the house is there, because there's a family who wants to move in here. It's the final cause, the reason for which. And he said, you can have all four of those explanations to have an adequate explanation of anything you see in the world, anything you're trying to explain.

Now, notice the first two are things that are empirically verifiable. You can see, touch, taste, smell, and hear the workers on the job site putting together the materials. You can't see the formal cause or the essence, the plan, so to speak. And you can't see the final cause, the reason for which it is made.

So, in the Enlightenment, Francis Bacon came along and said, you know what? You know, we just want to develop technology that lets us live better. We don't need to know about those formal and final causes. And by the way, they're spooky anyway. They're immaterial. We want to get rid of anything immaterial.

So, let's just do science based on the material and efficient cause. And wrote a book, 'The New Organon', which was the new way to do science and off and running. So, most Christians just assume that's the way you do science. I want to argue for what a number of my friends and colleagues term a neo Aristotelian philosophy of science would say no. We ought to be thinking about the formal and final causes as part of explanations of anything, including the human person.

So, yes, we are matter in terms of our body and our construction that has got a certain phenotype, a certain structure way it goes together. That energy is in play with. But we've also

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got a soul, a formal cause, a form, an essence, humanness that we, by the way, share with Christ and share with Adam and all share together, which means we can talk about things like justice for all, because we are all ultimately the same thing, right? We're all human. So, there's this very real thing called a formal cause, this nature. And then there's the final cause, the reason for which we have been created to flourish and fully love God and love others.

So, that's a very brief trip through the ages. But where it's helpful is us in post Enlightenment, especially Protestants, to say, well, there's a whole tradition of thinking about things that's very different than the narrative we get today and that we ought to at least think about as believers, even if we end up rejecting it and just being folks who go with Bacon on that, at least we ought to know why we did so. And in this case, I don't.

FRANK:

Well, Francis Bacon and just about all the founders of modern science were Christians. I'm not sure that they would want the result that has occurred as a result of them just focusing in on the physical world, because science meant knowledge back then, and we've now taken science to mean just the physical aspects of reality. And that would only deal with efficient and material causes, as you said.

But formal and final causality are things that we've kind of lost in our kind of consciousness when it comes to thinking about these things. And I think the final cause argument for God is one of the most powerful arguments that all of nature is going in a direction repeatedly and consistently. So, there must be someone directing it, an active mind directing it.

And I think that in the modern era, Ed Feser's done some good work on that. I don't know if you who Ed Feser is. He's a Thomist, now teaches at Pasadena City College. And his book 'Five Proofs of the Existence of God' and 'The Last Superstition' deal with that quite a bit. I've used much of his material in my book, 'Stealing from God', that everything is directed.

If it's directed, there must be someone directing it. And it amazes me that scientists can overlook that, because the very reason they can make predictions in science is because the world is directed and can be relied on to do the same thing over and over again through these

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natural processes, these natural laws that do the same thing over and over again. And yet here they are claiming there is no final causality to it.

STAN:

All right, right. And you use the word Thomist, which he is. And I want to pick up on that because that's an important word that refers to the thought of Thomas Aquinas. And though that has continued to be a mainstay of Catholic thought, there aren't a lot of Protestants who have really understood Aquinas and the riches in him. There are notable exceptions like Dallas Willard and J.P. and Norm Geisler and others.

But Rob Koons, University of Texas, does a lot on this. But the point is that I think Christians of all stripes ought not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. And in the Reformation, if we thought there's some things we've got to reform. Rightly so. We ought to be willing to look at some of the thoughts of these folks in other areas, like in anthropology, that I'm doing to say, well, maybe we can learn something from folks like Thomas Aquinas, and Selman Aquinas, and Augustine, and others.

FRANK:

Stan, let me ask you this. When talking about the mind and the body, and what does it really mean? We're talking about material causes, and formal causes, and final causes. What does this mean at a practical level, to, say, some of the issues we're dealing with today? For example, how does our thinking on the mind and the body affect the transgender claim that people can be born in the wrong body?

STAN:

Yeah. So, let me go back to the taxonomy. There's three main ways to think about what we are. One's the physicalist. We're just a body. So, if one's a physicalist, that would be a nonstarter, because there's nothing to trap anything in. You're just a body. So, you are whatever your body is. If you're a physicalist, you couldn't be transgender by definition. The second view is this cartesian dualism where my body and my soul are so distinct.

It's the ghost in the machine where the soul is trapped in the body, and it's not a good place to be. I want to kind of sort of get liberated from the body, and that's what "salvation" is in some

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way or another. In that case, then, transgenderism makes a lot of sense because the body, for all of us is, as Plato said, a prison house of the soul. We're all trapped in our bodies in some way.

So, the goal, whether it's in that world or through transhumanism, is to transcend our limitations of the body and be fully who we, namely the inner spiritual being, really are. So, if you're a cartesian dualist, that's the live option. If you're a holistic dualist, like I am, also a Thomistic dualist. A lot of different words used of this view.

In this case, the soul creates the "body" around it, to live in the world and flourish. Well, if that's the case, then whatever my body is, is an expression of my soul. So, there couldn't be a disconnect, because my body is simply the way my soul creates a physical structure to live in this world.

So, again, it depends on your fancy word, right? Metaphysic, your view of what's ultimately real in terms of the person and how, if there's different dimensions, in this case the body and soul, how they relate to one another, as to whether you could go different ways on this question.

Now, like everything, a lot of people, I think, are inconsistent, and they might, you know, they might be a physicalist, but say I'm trapped in this body. And so, at that point, I think it's just pointing out that, wait a minute, you know, which of these propositions do you want to give up? Because they can't both be true.

FRANK:

Right So, going back then, to the people who might say, I'm a ghost in the machine, the cartesian viewpoint, biblically, and say scientifically or philosophically, what would be wrong with that viewpoint?

STAN:

So, let me start by saying there are Christians who take this view. A dear friend of mine passed away, Keith Yandell at the University of Wisconsin, philosopher. There was a cartesian dualist, wrote a lot on this. Richard Swinburne at Cambridge would be cartesian. So, there are believers who are working to defend this view. I don't want to say it's out of court. I just think it's less

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consistent with the biblical record and philosophically isn't as consistent, in my view and others as a holistic dualism.

So now, to answer your question with that caveat, it starts from a view of reality that ultimately is grounded in Plato, where spirit is good, and matter is bad. And so, the healthy thing to do in any context is somehow more and more in the spiritual side of things and less and less in the physical side of things. So, you know, it's going to Bible study and not going to study chemistry.

And, you know, for a college student, that's the important thing to do, right? Be in the Bible study today. Or in terms of our spiritual growth and thinking about what we are. It's other ways. How do we feed the soul and not how do we see ourselves as a unity of soul and body in terms of our formation, which is where Dallas Willard came along and said, no, your body is central to your spiritual formation, hence the spiritual disciplines.

So, there are implications for spiritual growth and spiritual formation that are huge. And I think the cartesian view undercuts that by starting with this implicit understanding of, yeah, the soul, the spiritual is kind of more important and where the real action is and the body is at best a hindrance, if not just an evil we need to somehow fully remove ourselves from.

So, that's where the holistic dualism says, no, when God said, after each day of creation, it is good, and these are physical things He's creating, that doesn't sync with that platonic dualism, that radical dualism. It's more consistent with, okay, all creation, including our bodies, are good and embodiment is good, and we need to lean into that. And that's what holistic dualism does more than cartesian dualism.

FRANK:

So, if you're a Christian cartesian dualist, how do you deal with the fact that the ultimate heaven and earth is going to be a physical place where we are in physical bodies if the body's bad and the spirit's good? How would they deal with...? I mean, that that's our final end. That's where we're going. That's our destiny. That's one of the five big questions we started with at the top of the program. How would they deal with that, Stan?

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STAN:

I think you've put your finger on an Achilles tendon here. The fact that there is a final, eternal, embodied state, which is the way we were created to and best live, is a strong support for a holistic dualism. The argument, I think, and I don't want to speak. I have never been in the cartesian camp, so there could be somebody who could nuance this and make a better case than I.

So, I just want to add that caveat, but I think it would be, well, the resurrected body is so different from this body that it's a good place for us to be. You know, this is more of a machine that we're kind of stuck in. But as we see the resurrected body Jesus had walked through walls. There's some clear differences. And so, given those differences, it's a better place.

FRANK:

Why is it impossible for neuroscience to disprove the soul or the mind?

STAN:

Well, because by definition, science deals with the physical realm. It's a gift given by God to see, understand, and further unpack all of the intricacies that God has created in this glorious physical realm. It just doesn't deal with those things that exist outside this physical realm. And that's not a limitation, because it's never supposed to do that, right?

Every discipline study has its subject matter, and the subject matter of science just doesn't extend to souls, because they're, by definition, immaterial realities. It doesn't extend to moral values either. It assumes moral values. In other words, report your data accurately from your experiments. So, it assumes moral values, but it doesn't study them. It's not the type of thing you study in a beaker.

FRANK:

Right. Yeah, I think it was Einstein who said, you can talk about the ethical foundations of science, but you can't talk about the scientific foundation of ethics because there is no scientific foundation of ethics. Science requires you to bring your morality to the endeavor. It's not something you can discover, as you just said, Stan, in a test tube. It's something that you bring

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to the scientific endeavor, not something discovered by the scientific endeavor. And that's the same thing that's true with reason.

You can't prove reason by science. You can't prove the laws of logic by science. And all data needs to be interpreted, ladies and gentlemen. We've said this on the program many times before, that science doesn't say anything. Scientists do, because all data needs to be interpreted. And that's what is pointed out, by the way, in the book. Again, the book's called 'Have We Lost Our Minds?' Neuroscience, Neurotheology, the Soul and Human Flourishing.' Let me ask you two other things. Yeah, go ahead.

STAN:

You were mentioning something that's really important, I want to emphasize, and that is there is truth that comes through science. You've just mentioned some cases I have. So, it's not one extreme where science is irrelevant, but it's not the only thing that can be said. And that's the point of the university. It's a unity, at least in theory, a unity where everybody is having this conversation. And that's where I think truth is found and what we've got to get back to.

FRANK:

You make a point in the book, and maybe you can apply it to something we've discussed. I just thought it was a profound little quote. You said, "Error is simple, but truth is more nuanced." Unpack that for us. What does that mean?

STAN:

Yeah, thanks. That's a good question. So, we live in an age of sound bites, and sound bites, by definition, blur or ignore distinctions and make things simple. It's either this or that. It's something that can be said in ten words or less. And the art of thinking, well, quite frankly, is the opposite.

It's being able to make distinctions. It's able to say, no, that means not the contrary or means this. Let me just give some examples. I gave one earlier. It's easy to say we're a unity, right? But the key is making a distinction. What type of unity? This is what's not being done.

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So, I make the distinction, are we a functional unity or an ontological unity? Are we a unity of one thing in our essence, or a unity of one thing in how we live in the world? And I think it's the latter. We're a functional unity. But it's not making that distinction. You can put in a sound bite that, hey, we're a unity, so dualism must be wrong. Okay?

That's where that could happen. Or here's another place it comes up. Greek philosophy is contrary to the biblical record. Well, that's a nice, easy, pithy sound bite, but you've just got to step back and say, well, what do you mean by Greek philosophy?

FRANK:

Except where the Greeks are correct. [Laughter]

STAN:

Yeah, yeah, except for there. I mean, if by that you mean Plato, I would agree because of this radical bifurcation between the spiritual and the material worlds and the one being good, the other being bad. Aristotle was a Greek philosopher, too, but he had the opposite view, that this physical realm is a good thing. And as consistent with, I think, the Genesis 1 narrative of God saying, and it is good.

So, it's just being able to step back and make distinctions which you can't make if you're making very simple and simplistic claims about things without being able to, you know, go on and nuance it in these appropriate ways. And that's what I'm trying to do in the book, and I'm trying to model that for other issues that we engage as Christians, to step back and say, now, wait a minute.

We're using these words, and maybe we need to use just ten words here because we're in some kind of a context where I need a short answer. But let me be ready to nuance that if we really want to think well about this issue.

FRANK:

Yeah, there's a thousand different ways to get something wrong, but there's one way to get something right, and that normally takes more than 10 seconds. Normally you have to nuance things because truth can be nuanced. So, I like the quote, though. Error is simple, but truth is

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more nuanced. And of course, that's one of the problems we have in our political dialogue. So many people are making their decisions on slogans rather than truth. And slogans can sound good, but when you unpack them and spend some time analyzing them, you can realize the slogans aren't even true.

In fact, they're hiding an evil like, you know, my body, my choice, or reproductive rights or, you know, these kinds of things. They're not telling you really what's going on. They're trying to paper over them. They're trying to whitewash something that is actually immoral. And you only have to whitewash immoral things. You don't have to whitewash moral things.

So, it's a very important point, Stan. I also want to spend just a couple minutes, because we're running out of time here, but I do want to spend a little bit of time on consciousness. One of the great new atheists, Daniel Dennett, just passed away a number of months ago, and he was a philosopher that once said that consciousness is an illusion. One wonders if he was conscious when he said that. But do we even know what consciousness is?

STAN:

Sure. Yeah, we do. It's the states of the soul, of sensations, thoughts, beliefs, desires, choosings. So, you think about water can be in different states, right? Different ways it exists, different properties it has as a solid, liquid, or gas. Well, a soul can have different states. Consciousness is that state that we are in when we're awake. When we're asleep, we don't have consciousness by definition, or we come up from under anesthesia and we become conscious again.

We become aware. We have sensations. We're aware that our foot hurts where we had the surgery, and we're thirsty and there's a sound in the room. We're now conscious of these things. We, our soul, is now in a state of consciousness, and those are different ways that consciousness exists, as thoughts, desires, awarenesses.

FRANK:

And of course, one of the big debates over, because atheists can't explain consciousness from their molecules in motion perspective, but one of the big debates is they will say, well, we don't know how the mind and the brain interact, so therefore only the brain exists. So, how would you respond to that?

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STAN:

Well, I've got quite a few pages in the book.

FRANK:

I know you do. [Laughter] Give us one or two.

STAN:

Sure, the problem of interaction. First of all, I think it's a huge, well, I'd say it's a huge problem for the cartesian dualists. It's one of the reasons that I am not of that persuasion. It's to be expected, the interaction of the soul and body on a holistic dualist view, where the soul creates the body and therefore creates it in a way so that it can interact with it. But as Christians, we ought not to have any problem with it in any context, because God himself, being immaterial, interacts with the physical world at will.

And so, it's really based on a wrong assumption I think, that for something to interact with something else, those have to be like things. They have to be the same type of thing, whereas God is obviously not the same type of thing as the world created it, but he can interact with it. So, yeah, that's a couple of the things that I mentioned. There's some other reasons that we, I don't think, need to see that as a reason to reject dualism, or at least holistic dualism.

FRANK:

Earlier you mentioned that it's a two way relationship between the mind and the brain. I mean, we're using our brains right now to do things, to even have this discussion. But how does the mind affect the brain? Would the placebo effect be an example? Would stress causing disease be an example? What are some examples of that?

STAN:

Sure, we worry, a state of the soul, and it causes our mind, and our bodies to our stomach to cramp up and cause ulcers. We choose to have certain desires for things that might be good or might be bad, and the soul actually activates the body to go get that thing. I give the example of having a conversation with somebody and talking about going to get ice cream and decide you're going to go do that.

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And so, you use your vocal cords, first of all, to express the desire that you have through a sentence that, yeah, let's go. And then you actually move your body in such a way that you go to the right place. So, this kind of causal interaction happens all the way in positive and negative ways.

And it's to be expected on a holistic dualist view. And only if you assume that, unlike things, can't cause effects, would you ever have this problem of interaction and become a physicalist. And I just don't think it follows.

FRANK:

Yeah, so we know that physical things can affect immaterial things. The question is, can immaterial things affect physical things? And it seems like you just mentioned worry. You know, it does cause your stomach to get tensed up. It can bring on disease. So many physicians say many of our diseases are stress related, so our thoughts are having an impact on our physical bodies. There is this interaction going on between the two. And you unpack more of that in the book, Stan.

STAN:

I do. And Bob Enright, retired now psychologist, who's done a lot of good study on this, where he's found all types of correlations, positive correlations between forgiveness, which is a state of the soul, and in certain intentions toward other persons, and physical well-being, made a career out of studying these types of things.

FRANK:

Wow. Overall, Stan, what do you hope the readers will walk away with after reading 'Have We Lost Our Minds'?

STAN:

Yeah, a few different things. I would first hope that they get a deeper sense of the need to think more deeply about what we are because of its implications in terms of loving God and loving others. Dallas Willard said almost on his deathbed, last few months. He called J.P. out to the house, and they had a long talk.

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And Dallas said, one of my two great worries is that the spiritual formation movement will not be grounded on the richer and richer theological and philosophical understandings of the soul, because he realized without that, you're going to end up either in a kind of almost a pantheistic kind of a world and understanding of the soul, and it's flourishing. Or you'll end up in physicalism.

And so, my hope is that what this book does is it brings at least a little bit more of that nuance of those distinctions, of that theological and philosophical understanding for non-specialists, for those who don't have graduate degrees in philosophy or theology, to have a deeper understanding of what it is that we are.

So, that's probably the first thing. And secondly, the book will serve as an example not just of how to think about this issue, which is obviously very important, but how to think about other issues, of how to, and this is where I'm practicing what I preach. You know, my mantra with Christian professors is bring what you know from Scripture into what you teach and what you write about, because there's an interaction there that we need to unpack.

So, my hope is that for all believers, there would be the sense of, okay, this is kind of an example. And I can now go on and think about other things more Christianly as I'm working hard to bring together what I know from Scripture and what I know from the field that I've got some expertise in or the area that I'm starting to wonder about. So, yeah, those are some ideas. I say a little more in the book.

FRANK:

A lot more in the book. The book is called 'Have We Lost Our Minds? Neuroscience, Neurotheology, the Soul and Human Flourishing.' Where can they find you on the web, Stan?

STAN:

So, stanwallace.org, and I've actually got on that homepage a picture of the book. You can click that, and it's a page devoted to the book with some reviews, a little trailer from me about what the book's about, all types of resources that could be helpful.

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FRANK:

Check it out, friends. By the way, I learned about Stan from our mutual friend Paul Copan. And you know, everything Paul does, I love. So, when he said, hey, you've got to have my friend Stan on. Here we are. Great book, Stan. Thanks for writing it. Thanks for being a part of this ministry where you're trying to actually equip Christian professors. It's called Global Scholars, ladies and gentlemen. You can look that up as well. So, thanks for everything, Stan. Really appreciate it.

STAN:

Our website, if I could, is global-scholars.org. If you're interested in how we're trying to see God's kingdom come and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven, namely in universities, please check us out.

FRANK:

Excellent. Friends don't forget that on this Thursday night, the 15th of September, we'll have the great Jack Hibbs on for a livestream, 9:00 P.M. Eastern time. Then next, next week, I'll be at Western Carolina University. Lord willing, that's the 18th. And on the 20th. Is it the 20th or the 21st? Whatever the Saturday is, we're going to be up at Buffalo with... It's the 21st. Yeah. Natasha Crain and Alisa Childers for the Unshaken conference.

The following week, we'll be at McNeese State in Louisiana, Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. We got a lot coming up. Check the website out for more. And if you're listening to this even later than September 9, you can still join us in the 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist' course. If you're a high school student or a college student, I'll be your instructor.

And for 'Train Your Brain,' we have two courses in logic, one for 6th to 8th graders, and the other for everybody else. You can see those on our website. Shanda Fulbright and myself will be your instructors. Hope to see you there. And Lord willing, we will see you here next week. God bless.

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