

# OpenTheo

## **The Pursuit of Wholeness: Perspectives on God, Self, and Mental Health**

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### **The Veritas Forum**

Perspectives on mental health and existing as a whole person from Dr. David Carreon of Stanford and Dr. John Sommers-Flanagan of the University of Montana. • Please like, share, subscribe to, and review this podcast. Thank you!

### **Transcript**

Welcome to the Veritas Forum. This is the Veritas Forum Podcast. A place where ideas and beliefs converge.

What I'm really going to be watching is which one has the resources in their worldview to be tolerant, respectful, and humble toward the people they disagree with. How do we know whether the lives that we're living are meaningful? If energy, light, gravity, and consciousness are in this street, don't be surprised if you're going to get an element of this in God. Today we hear from Stanford University psychiatrist David Carreon.

In a conversation with John Sommers-Flanagan, a clinical psychologist at the University of Montana. A discussion titled The Pursuit of Wholeness, Perspectives on God, Self, and Mental Health. From the stage at the University of Montana.

My name is David Carreon. The first thing I want to say is a framing comment or discussion around what I'm actually going to be talking about. We're talking about some big topics.

There's several hats I wear, several identities. Thank you. There we go.

Several identities that I have. On the one hand, I'm a Christian. I go to church every week and I am more or less traditional in many of the core doctrines of Christianity.

On the other hand, I am a psychiatrist. I've learned it some pretty mainstream institutions and practice on a daily basis according to those principles. So what I'm going to be doing to discuss, the frame for tonight is I want to tell you how I personally think

about my own mental health and how I might discuss this with a patient.

I don't know if you guys ever saw that this is a cool bumper sticker back in the day. My karma ran over your dogmas. Anybody ever actually seen this bumper sticker? Okay.

It was a thing for a while. The idea is dogma is problematic in karma's cool. Karma's I don't know is murdering your dog or something.

Whatever the case is, it was this idea that we don't like doctrine. I think one thing I want to say at the beginning is we all have a dogma, a worldview, or a set of things you believe. What I'd like to do is tell you where I'm coming from, my background, my thoughts on this.

It's helpful to know what we implicitly believe. Of course, I'd say that it's the subconscious stuff and we got to be aware of that. But I think it's important especially when we talk about worldview.

It's wise to look at the unconscious biases and influences in our beliefs. As best I can, I'll tell you some of the things that are my own. One thing that has always been true for me is I've got very deep democratic impulses that I don't like experts who, having experts in charge of everything.

I like the idea that everybody, especially in important matters, has something to say in a conversation. This is the idea behind the government type of democracy that everybody gets to vote regardless of who they are. Whether you're black or white or rich or poor or old or young, you get to vote.

Everybody's vote counts hopefully the same. The assumption there is pretty profound. But I take that to also be true.

But I think the place that it's different is we like not to discriminate against people on the basis of age unless they get really old. Then we totally like discriminating. What I mean is when they die, when people die, we just whatever, we don't listen to them anymore.

But I like to take especially about these harder questions about God or about doctrine or about these ideas. Try to take those opinions into account and that is sometimes called tradition. It's not that tradition rules out all the time, but at least let's start the conversation with something that most people believe.

And so when I think about my own worldview, that's what I'm going to come from. The other thing I want to say is that talking about a worldview is like visiting somebody's house. And so I'm going to invite you into my house and if you happen not to be Christian and show you around and show you the fireplace and show you the couch I like to sit on.

And so you can learn something. But that's not necessarily what I do in my clinical practice. And so don't take some of the things I'm saying as like, "Oh, I'm imposing my faith on everybody who walks in my door." No, this is like I'm going to tell you as a Christian sort of how things look to me on the inside.

And I like to visit as a psychiatrist other people's worldviews. And if they're telling you about a problem, I go into their own house, their own worldview and work with the things that are there. You know, if they don't have a fireplace, we're not going to sit by the fireplace.

We're going to do something else. So again, this is all by way of long introduction. My own experience.

So I grew up in a Christian home, two wonderful parents that took me to church. I was a pretty intellectual kid and I think that was a challenge at times because anybody's ever been deaf enough. Anybody.

The youth group wasn't exactly intellectual activity. So I had a hard time sort of fitting in but got a group of friends together in high school and we like to argue and debate about whether or not God existed and what the Bible said and all that. And so we did that nonstop.

And at the end of that and that sort of thing continued through college, I came to believe that Christianity seemed eminently rational to me. That's in the debates and sort of trying to come up with answers to these big questions and seeing that Christianity had good answers. And then later in my life in the last maybe five or ten years, it started to have more emotions, spiritual experiences, going to church and actually like crying at the music like that or the sort of worship experience.

I never had that for like the first probably until my late 20s. So that's but now that I do it. So it's a wonderful thing and I enjoy it.

So that's kind of where I'm coming from. Came to psychiatry you know about a decade ago, maybe a little less than that and have been one, have been interested in mental health and neuroscience ever since. So okay, this is so let me talk about a few doctrines and especially especially Christian doctrines because I think there's a lot of things that we might agree on but I'm going to sort of emphasize the differences.

So there's this weird doctrine that like for hundreds of years, Christians were arguing about us. What is the nature of God? Is God singular? Is there multiple persons in the same God? But one common summary of this is we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. Wow, what does that mean? It's really complicated but at least one thing that this is interesting historically but also psychologically is the entire idea of a person came out of the

debates about who exactly is Jesus and how does he fit into the Godhead and how is Jesus kind of the same but kind of different? Well, there are three persons one God and so the idea that we now inherit in western civilization of the idea of a person comes out of these things and that that still applies today.

And even the idea of the nature of God, you know, we like to say a lot of people think God is love but what that has meant prior to creation, love usually means an interaction between two persons but if God was singularity, what does that mean about his nature? So the Christian idea that God is love is that there were persons who were actually in love connected from time in the memorial. There's another one. So this is from the Lord's Prayer, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

That one Christian doctrine that is really wonderful about this optimistic idea that there is an ideal out there. That there is a good that we can look to, that we can aspire to, that we can even know. And whether it be in justice or in mathematics or in the beauty of music, that these things are founded or flow from the nature of God.

And so there's a deep optimism in the Christian worldview that things might not be good now but they're going to get better either in a flash or gradually depending on your viewpoint but things are getting better even if your life is really difficult. Now one other thing that's also important is volition, the whole idea of the Garden of Eden that humans have this ability to choose. That's also important.

But I think that one of the things that psychiatry in some phases has forgotten about or doesn't talk about is volition, the ability to choose. And I think that if you were volition is denied, the shame of being a bad person is exchanged for the dignity, do a rabbit. That oftentimes you like to say, "Oh well they didn't do it, it's just their mental illness." And sometimes that's the case and sometimes yes, I worked in a hospital and there's some definite cases where there is no volition, there's no choice.

But I think that one thing that is true that is there are things that people can choose differently. And giving patients that sometimes is deeply dignifying rather than saying you couldn't have done otherwise. Okay, another one is the ideal.

That there's a difference between happiness and the good. And so it might be on some views of psychiatry, psychology that no matter what you do, you could be a bad person that end up happy. And so here's Hitler and one of his rare smiles.

And Mother Theresa, one of her many smiles. But even if you assumed the outcome was the same, on a Christian worldview, you would say that no, you're lacking something. You're lacking something really important and maybe that something is blessedness or something that is separate from the goal of Christianity.

A few more doctrines, this is about the incarnation. And so the incarnation is something

that's important to Christians because it dignifies the body. So we have bodies, bodies are not bad, physical body is important, because God had one, which is of course mind-blowing doctrine.

But God had one so we can't say anything bad about the body per se. And that was pretty popular in the time of Christianity was around. But narcissism and a bunch of other things and maybe even transhumanism today says, oh, we don't need the silly body.

It's just the ideas that are important. And that in some ways that religious practice is good for the body in general. Here's an old study on a connection between the frequency of church attendance and life expectancy, that the more frequently you go to church, the more the longer your life expectancy.

This is one of the first studies on the subject. And later studies have confirmed this when you adjust for everything else we know how to adjust for, including social connectedness. There does seem to be a net benefit to health.

So too with mental health, this was a well-adjusted study of the nurses health study. Suicide rate seems to drop pretty precipitously as you not change doctrine, but change practice, that the people who were going to jerk more than weekly were quite low, and that there was a difference between Catholics who were stricter on the matter than Protestants on suicide rates. Also behavior.

This is a summary from Robert Putnam and David Campbell, neither of whom are Christian. By many different measures, religiously-observant Americans are better neighbors and better citizens and secular Americans. They are more generous with their time and money, especially in helping the needy and are more active in community life.

Now, the book is spectacular, and I highly recommend it very well done. But then there is the reality that I see as a practitioner, a psychiatrist in the Bay Area. Bay Area is kind of like a where we receive all of the religious refugees, that people are persecuted by Christians all over the United States and flee the persecution of their families or whatever, and then they come off into the Bay Area.

And so I'm seeing a lot of people who have suffered at the hands of Christians. And I just on that note, want to say that it's something that deeply grieves me, deeply moves me, and something that I take very seriously, and Christians do horrible things. And I don't want to excuse or say that that's acceptable.

And of course, continuing the consequences of it, the trauma, the PTSD, the depression, the anxiety, it's something that I have to help make better or or retaliate. So it's very difficult. The other thing about this is sort of views of the future.

Or what's the ideal virtue? So Aristotle might say it's magnanimity. Sartre might say it's

freedom. Buddha might say it's awakening.

For Christianity, the central virtue is love. And that is the unifying direction, the purpose, the one thing that you need to pursue at all costs. And the exemplar is Jesus dying on the cross.

And the story of redemption, the story that we've made choices that are bad, and that this is, we're in the state of continuing to make these choices that are ruining our own lives, but there's a way out and it's through Jesus. That's something that has a lot of elements to it and is profoundly deep. But then there's also the doctrine of the resurrection.

Things aren't going to stay in this present state. That even though the global warming or the depression rates or suicide or whatever other things were worried about, those are only temporary, that things are ultimately going to work out, and that we're part of making that happen, at least in part, or at least as a shadow of things become. Freud said much will be gained if we succeed in transforming your hysterical misery into common unhappiness.

Which is, in one sense, really deep, that mental health isn't trying to make you anything other than undepressed, or at least that's a common aim of mental. And I think there's some figuring that with the meaning of life isn't necessarily what we do professionally. And that Christians also have this idea that sometimes suffering and sometimes physical suffering and sometimes mental suffering is itself good for your soul.

And that's that's also challenging. But that the whole point of Christianity is not to make you undepressed, or not even to make you happy. The point of Christianity is something different.

And I think that C.S. Lewis captures it well when he says this. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses. To remember that the dullest, most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare.

The destination of humans is glory. And that's what Christians, that's what this life is about on the Christian view, on the Christian worldview. And that even though healing and health and mental health is a part of what Christians ought to do, that's not the point.

That's not what it's after. And so what we try to do as psychiatrists and what we try to do as Christians are sometimes aligned, sometimes not. And sometimes they work together and sometimes they part ways.

But those are some preliminary comments. And I hope to hear more. And thank you for

running out.

Thanks, David. Thanks for being here. You guys, David is from Stanford.

And he came to Missoula and he's faced this weather. He lived for a walk today and he wore three coats because he didn't have any one coat that was enough. And I'm not sure if the three coats were really enough either.

Oh, frostbite. Yeah, only a little. So and thank you for coming.

It's a it is one of the wild nights. And I made up this rhyme. It's like I think it goes the weather outside is frightful, but the discourse will be delightful.

You guys are here. And thank you, Gil, for organizing. Thanks, John and Greg over there for taking care of stuff and JJ and Kyle and other people for organizing it in Veritas and all the clubs.

So I'm John Summer Flanagan. I see some students out here. You guys, I'm so much more nervous than I am when I'm in class because I'm going to talk tonight about God.

All right. So I took a little snapshot of my own notes because it's I thought it was funny. And it says I'm going to introduce myself, talk about God, talk about the self and talk about mental health all in 10 minutes.

Okay, enough of that. So this photo is a photo of my parents. And the point that I want to make is culture precedes us.

I was born in a family with a mother who was Italian Catholic and with a father who was mostly Austrian Jewish. So I was born into a family with two religions. They were there before I got there.

And I would guess that I don't remember making any choice to be born into that family and to having two different religions. And I would guess that you guys don't remember being born into your families or your religious communities or your cultural orientation. If those things came before us, it's not like we come with a blank slate.

We come with a culture, a context, a religion, a way of thinking and living. And so as being, I used to say, half Jewish, half Catholic, mostly when it comes to religious issues, I'm confused. But even more than that, I know guilt.

I know guilt really well. So if anybody wants to consult about that later, I'm happy to. I also think sometimes that I'm confused.

Other times I like to think I'm open-minded because I've seen different perspectives in the same household and in the same neighborhood. And so it's really refreshing and reassuring to me to see and my slides aren't really centered here, but I'll read the quote.

But when asked, if he was a Hindu, Gandhi said, "Yes, I am.

I am also a Christian, a Muslim, a Buddhist and a Jew." And so when I hear those kinds of things, I feel reassured. And most of the rest of the time, I just feel a little bit confused about what is really right and true. Around second grade, sort of like Mahatma Gandhi, I'm going to compare myself to Mahatma Gandhi, which is really, you know I'm joking, right? So kind of like Mahatma Gandhi in second grade, I showed that I was a religious prodigy.

And the way I did it was I was going to school lessons at the synagogue, never shalom, in Portland, Oregon. My dad would take us. And one day we had to guess a number.

And I guessed the right number. I got to be the first person to bring home the Old Testament Bible story book. I felt blessed.

I felt so incredibly fortunate. And I got home when I was kind of on a high, you know, second grader, guess on the right number. It was 17, by the way.

So I tell, I continue to show my prodigy-ness by then saying to my parents, you know what? I think that my synagogue teacher in Jewish. Yeah, anyway, so I wasn't a prodigy very long. And so I'm not.

So let's talk about God. So this is a photo from of Sorki, Montana last summer when I was irrigating the alf alpha. And it's sunrise.

And you can see I managed to get a picture of the irrigation pipe that I've opened. See, I've sort of been demoted to just irrigating. They don't let me run the tractor anymore because one time I put diesel fuel in the radiator of the John Deere tractor.

I have a reputation. And so now they let me water the alf alpha. It is fabulous.

And you know, when I think about it, I think if God is anywhere, God is there, God is so big, God is the sunrise, and the water, and me, and the alf alpha growing out there, and so much more than that, right? God is so big, so immense. How do we possibly understand God and how do we put into words the meaning of what God is and might be? So I like this because if you saw God in a mirror, you would know that the objects in the mirror are indeed larger than they appear. It would be the whole solar system in the universe and everything.

That is so immense. It's hard to get our words and our thoughts around it. Another source that I have had in my life that helps me to appreciate the bigness of God is my wife Rita.

Rita, if you don't know, has a God blog. She writes a weekly God blog, 9 o'clock Sunday morning. You can read it.



In Rita's God blog, sometimes God is driving a convertible with her or his hair flying. And sometimes God is a child dying in Yemen, and sometimes God is an earthquake. And God takes all these different forms, and I find it reassuring that Rita sees God as so large and immense and in so many different things.

This is a little passage from one of the things that she wrote that she was saying to God, I need to give until it hurts. And instead of saying, yes, you do, God responds saying, be in your body, be in my body, open your soul. And notice where it hurts, darling, then gently give, but give until it heals.

That's all. Give until it heals. I like that so much better than giving until it hurts.

And there's so much that we can do together as community to give until it heals. And so if you're interested in non-traditional ways of thinking about a big God, Rita has a blog, I've put the link there. Another thing I found that I really like, well, actually I don't like, one of the things that is really hard for me is when people shrink God, shrink God down.

And it also bothers Barbara Brown Taylor, who is a pastor and a writer. And here is what she says. She basically says that the trouble starts, the problem is many of the people in need of saving are in churches.

And at least part of what they need saving from is the idea that God sees the world the same way they do. It's natural to do that, right? As humans, we cannot help but take things that are beyond our comprehension and try to reduce it to something that we can understand. And so I think it's natural but not good that we will sometimes think that we can speak for or know God and that it is reduced to our beliefs, our dogma, as David said, that somehow that's what God thinks too.

There are a couple other less famous theologians here. One is L. P. Berra, also known as Yogi. One time long ago when Yogi Berra, who was a baseball coach and played for the Yankees, he saw a play at second base.

He really didn't like. He ran out onto the field. He started yelling at the ump and the ump says, "Hey, Yogi, man, calm down." I was like a few feet away and you were like over there in the dugout, how could you think that you could see it better than I could? To which Yogi got even more angry and said, "Listen, ump, I wouldn't have seen it if I hadn't believed it." So often our beliefs will shape the things we see and the attitude we have toward other people.

And then P. Simon and A. Garfunkel in somewhere around 1969, that's their academic reference, said, "A man hears what they sang, actually. A man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest." I think those are the dangers of shrinking God and shrinking everything into our small beliefs. But maybe my favorite version of this lesson is from the Sufi philosopher, 14th century Sufi poet.

Sufism is a way of understanding or approaching the understanding of Islam. And he wrote a poem, "I have a thousand brilliant lies for the question, what is God?" If you think that the truth can be known from words, if you think that the sun and the ocean can pass through that tiny opening called the mouth, oh, someone should start laughing. Someone should start wildly laughing now.

I love that. How can we reduce it all down to the words that we say? It is so much more immense than that. So this is a cartoon.

This is one of Rita's favorite cartoons. You can see God in God's kitchen saying something tells me this thing's only half baked and it's the earth. The best part is he's made it out of earthquake, saved 50 cents.

So God saved 50 cents, made earth. It's only half baked. That's us.

We're only half baked. Now, the good thing is maybe God invented evolution and maybe invented evolution so that we could continue to bake and maybe finally we will be done and maybe not half baked anymore. So let's talk about the self.

The self is really almost as complicated as God, not quite, not as big. It's smaller. We know that the self begins with self-reflection.

I have to know I am me. I am separate. I have my thoughts and they're separate from yours.

And so self-reflection as important as it is can get overdone, right? And one of the ways that we know it can get overdone is the fable or the myth of narcissists who looked at himself a little too long and then fell in the lake and drowned. And so we can get preoccupied with the self in ways that are destructive and unhealthy, right? And so I would say one of the most important things I want to say about the self is really something Adlerian. And I know some people in the room know what I'm saying when I say Adlerian, right? You know what I'm saying? Alfred Adler, a famous psychologist, came up with this concept called "Gemeinschaftsgefühl." Okay? Everybody say it with me.

"Gemeinschaftsgefühl." Nice. You guys are great. It's a German word.

It means social interest. It means balancing. It means, and he thought it was a great therapeutic goal, that we shouldn't just do therapy for ourselves, but we should also do therapy.

And Gemeinschaftsgefühl is really about compassion, interest in community and making the community better. It's about empathy, it's about what he called social interest and that complements self-interest. And we need that balance.

And Adler, who sometimes referred to himself as an atheist and sometimes as a Christian and sometimes as a Jew, also said the best philosophy of all is loved by neighbor as thyself. Now that's a tricky thing, right? It also implies that you would love yourself, which is an important place to start too. And so you can see that self-reflection is really something we can't and shouldn't talk about too much unless we also talk about other reflection, about what we are thinking of and feeling toward and how we're helping other people.

So this is a nice cartoon. You can see here, if you can't see it, I can read it. I, because I know it says the guy who's leaving church is saying to his wife or partner, how can I love my enemies when I don't even like my friends, right? How can I love my enemies when I don't even like myself, right? And all those things are woven together and we need to be balanced in those areas.

Last a few words on mental health. I have there no more stigma. There are a lot of different ways I've tried in my life to figure out how to get rid of stigma and I can't figure out how to get rid of it.

I worry sometimes and I know this is an extreme and radical position. I'm going to say it anyway even though I know it's kind of embarrassing to be so radical. But I no longer use the term mental illness.

I just don't use it because I feel like it's so stigmatizing we can't pull the stigma out of it even though people try. So instead I just say to people I don't use the word mental illness unless I'm explaining why I don't use the word mental illness, which I can tell you more about later if you want. But and I yeah I'm trying to do that in a way to be just be stigmatizing.

I'm going to tell this story a little later. It's about the Dalai Lama and a time when Rita and I got to listen to him at Emory University and he had some really interesting things to say about biopsychosocial and so I hope we can talk about that a little bit later. But I realized we need to I need to stop here in a moment.

So let me just say about balance. For me mental health is a lot about balance. It's about balance as I said before between self-interest and other interests or social interests.

It's about the balance between superiority and inferiority. If we get too far on either extreme we get ourselves in trouble right. We become less effective.

It's about balancing the courage to face the tasks of life but also balancing that with encouraging others to face the task of life because we're not in this alone we need to encourage other people. It's about movement. The body and the mind is inseparable.

It's about movement but it's also about meditation and stillness. It's about being able to do both. It's about solving problems but you know sometimes the problems aren't very

solvable and so it's also about engaging in mindful acceptance because there are times when you can't and it's too frustrating and difficult to keep trying to solve a problem that seems insolvable.

We sometimes need to remind ourselves of our values. We need to have love written on our hearts. We need to know where we stand and to be able to remember our values because in the midst of all that happens in the world it's hard sometimes to remember them and to act on them.

So just kind of thinking about the perspectives on mental health that you guys have already talked about and how you think that one might form a personal vision of wellness. Keeping that in mind would you please summarize what factors of mental health your research or your practice or your personal insight emphasizes and how it does so. I just finished talking a lot.

Okay so there's a lot of different ways to think about like different factors and you know sometimes it's useful to lump them and sometimes it's useful to split them. We'll be using in my clinic you want people to flourish brain, body, and soul. Okay so I know the brain is a part of the body.

It's like not like I did anatomy and that was certainly it's a part but then okay what is the soul? Geez that's a hard one too. But there may be different levels of analysis so one thing that helps people with depression is encouraging them to go for walks or having walking groups and that's like yeah I mean whatever it is that led you to be depressed. That seems too simple on one level but on the other level it's like wow there's that depression is a whole body experience.

There's differences in the cortisol in your body. There's differences in your microbiome. There's differences all over the place and so yeah so it's it's plausible that a physical intervention that affects below the neck is going to do something.

Okay so body is one. Brain is another and you know so I do neuro stimulation. So that might be another way that we can treat people is by that or the medications those are often helpful.

But then also but then there's somewhere between brain and soul it's sort of higher or more complex levels of organization. There are the higher things of therapy or you know and even within therapy there's like more profound or deep sorts of things and the psychodynamic side and there's more like well let's just solve your problems right now kind of side. And those are all different levels of ways we can approach treatment but then also ways we could think about factors that that would contribute to mental health or or lack thereof.

So you know some having something terrible happen to a family member that's part of

you too in some sense maybe at the soul level. Having something you know getting hit in the head that's gonna that's gonna affect your brain. So there's when we talk about the wholeness there's there's just many different I mean everything everything affects everything else and again so that's like the but that's not useful.

Everything isn't really helpful. What are some concrete ways that we can actually get better or prevent yourself from getting worse those are the questions. Could you I'm sorry could you quickly define how you define soul and your practice not in your So in practice so soul is just a translation of the word psyche.

So psyche iatros is soul doctor on some level and okay so for a long time that just meant you give medicine to people and that's all but ideally it's something higher it's something more complex. So in the soul sort of in my with my psychiatrist hat on I would say things like your ideas your beliefs your cognitions those go into that heading in that in that practice. Theologically philosophically I can I can talk for another 45 hours about what a soul is and is it different from a spirit than what happens after death and maybe we'll get into that later but that's a great question.

Yeah and so I'm hearing you talk about some of the components of mental health right the you know body, brain, soul and when I think about those things I mean I think about components of mental health too and so it overlaps a bit. I think about the issue of balance like I had on the slide but you know physical wellness and health and we know that the gut and other kinds of physical things really affect our emotional and our psychological functioning and so I think the body and physical I think about the mind and mental psychological health and well-being. I think about social well-being that in fact that that can be central and really central in terms of the beginning of life we are born into a social environment and that the health and the healthy interaction we experience there and then so important to mental well-being.

I think about emotions and emotional well-being and we sometimes think about talking psychology and psychiatry about emotional dysregulation right our affect dysregulation and certainly being able to be balanced and expressive of our emotions but at the same time manage and control them when we can and should right that's important and sometimes we can over control them and I think that happens with a lot of males in sort of the stereotypical male style in our society and then of course the spiritual cultural other kinds of parts of mental health too that can be really you know we can be kind of disturbed in the spiritual realm right there can be an absence of that but also some people will have beliefs that are kind of twisted and to me you know spirituality and religiousness is healthy when it fosters an acceptance and non-judgmentalness an honoring of other people but when it's used to hurt other people and to judge other people to me that's maybe a less healthy spirituality that that makes sense and so I think in each of those domains that you can be you know psychologically healthy but spiritually not healthy and you could be emotionally healthy but physically unhealthy but

they're all related right they're all yeah no and I think that's that whether it's three or six or fourteen that the idea is sobered between two and forty five aspects of mental wellness are a good place to talk about but yeah I like that I like that breakdown well and I think one of the things that the gestalt psychology people talk about is that we can understand the whole better by breaking it down into its parts and so the purpose of thinking about body brain or mind and soul is not to separate them it's to break them apart to try to understand them better so you can put them together and at a higher level of integration I think for me that's also part of mental well-being or mental health yeah I'll agree to you so I'm just wondering one thing that we're talking about for the rest of this week is spiritual health and how spiritual health is incorporated into mental health and how it is kind of part of that whole paradigm that two or forty five and I was wondering if you might try to venture to answer what spiritual health means to you not necessarily in a sterile way or as you know orthodox religious way but kind of what you might say in a textbook what you might say to a class for someone who knows nothing about what spiritual health means to use at all so I'm going to quote I'm going to quote Dr. David Carian here and and and really that's spiritual health spiritual meaning the center is love right that it's that that and you think of love it is kind of like I said before it can be aimed toward yourself it can be aimed toward others and hopefully it's aimed toward both and all and that we try our best knowing that we will fall short to be loving beings and I think that for me speaks a lot to spiritual health I know that's not maybe that I'm just interested in your your reaction well yeah I think you see it's a hard question to I think that's the the question where the like what would a what what within with you kind of got to go to a person's worldview what what a healthy Islamic practice would be might be different than a healthy Christian practice might be different than a healthy Buddhist practice and I suppose if we're constraining it to be how could I help somebody have the best mental health from a spiritual perspective or within their own spiritual perspective I'd say there's there's a few things that come to mind and one is sort of the the aspects of that religion which contribute to other things that we even secularly know it could be good for you so for example a part of Christianity is regular really disabendent that's commonly encouraged and so when you go to church you don't just go to church you also talk to people you might go to a potluck now and then you know things like that and so you you actually get to to build friendships and friendships and relationships and connectedness that itself is independently good for mental health but as some of these slides also show that it does seem like there is some aspect where the churchiness itself is good for your mental health if you happen to be of that of that worldview and unfortunately there's not much research outside of the Christian experience partly because of the being in the United States and having lots of money for medical research in the United States and all sorts of other things that don't have to do with the fact that you know the Islamic practice hasn't been tested as well but I'd say that yeah so there's things that you do at church that are good for you or in practice that are good for you of mindfulness practice has been shown to be helpful and so you know if that's a part of that you'll put us practice or practice or Christian practice or whatever

your practice yeah like not checking your you know not sort of having a fear of missing out on your Facebook feed that's probably praying or meditating or whatever it's probably going to be better than that but healthy spirituality is a hard question because also it gets into these issues of you know sometimes healthy spirituality and Christianity is to experience a dark night at the soul where you might have the physiological symptoms of depression and that's not you know that's not necessarily something you want to like medicate away but that's a that's a that's a hard question so then then you'd have to put a you know religious hat on to answer that question yeah my reaction what you're saying is partly so what's meaningful and the different doctrines will be more or less meaningful to different people traditions and doctrines some people avoid them right and they find them aversive other people find them very meaningful and therefore in some ways it becomes I think healthy good for the mental health to be doing something meaningful and if another reaction I had as I was listening is about participation in church which to me you know I know that when Rita and I go to church we probably go for two different reasons and I go for the interpersonal and she goes more for the spiritual which probably means that I want to I'm more reluctant to go but once I get there I want to stay longer and and so the for me that fits a little bit with the ad larry and idea there's this ad larry and idea that the two things that keep us all from misbehaving or from behaving in problematic ways are to feel that we belong and obviously I think church attendance it really helps with that and the other part is to feel like we're doing something useful and I think that's really something that people do at churches they do useful helpful kind things they do missions together they you know they gather together and they feel like they're important to one another they belong and they're doing important work together and it's both of those things are meaningful so they've actually cut across the different ways yeah and and I guess I I it brings up the I'm glad you talked about meaning because I think that's that's another huge thing that we what we need there there's a another book man search for meaning by a victor frankle and his his observations from a from the holocaust of seeing people who were able to survive versus not just this if there's this deep fundamental need for human meaning and then later studies showing that if you had a sense of meaning and it's an older adult then you would live longer than people who didn't say that they felt what they did mattered and again on this like it's astonishing I mean maybe on some level it shouldn't be but you know it's astonishing that like the thought what I do matters is going to have you have make have a heart attack like yeah I guess on some level it get cancer like it's just all cause mortality so it's like from one level we haven't really worked out the mechanism for how that can happen but but the the observation again and again and again is like yeah this is these are real effects that's that matter and maybe we should stop being surprised by them but I still find myself being surprised when it's like yeah you know not having any of houses part attacks or whatever so so I think that the question though I think that we both nationally and also you know locally and everywhere are facing is like what is our story and I think that you know if you go to church then you know the story is that you're part of this you know this this a group of

people that's trying to bring love and light into the world and you know that that ultimately it's going to be victorious and everything's going to work out and you get to be a part of that that things getting better and better process and that's that's exciting and that's a story and that's maybe part of the you know mechanism of how going to church helps but but I guess what's been your experience on the on the side of helping people who don't have that sense of of ultimate meaning or cosmic meaning and maybe and agnostics or atheists or um nihilists how do you approach them with those meaning questions? Yeah I mean I when you said nihilists I thought of you know John Paul Sartre and his philosophy of I am my choices right that that's who I am so you were I was starting to think about identity as you were talking and how to deal with those people in kind of a concrete way I feel like that they might be nihilists but they do have things that are meaningful and they do make choices and by helping them focus on even the small choices that they make that improve their psychological state or their emotional state or their physical state and by really focusing on those small concrete behaviors that and helping them track those and notice those I think it's there's a chance to grow some meaning yeah that's that's that's that's well put I I've had a similar experience sort of narrowing it down the cosmic stuff doesn't matter then well you know it was meaningful to help the person across the street or whatever yeah there's a funny there's a funny social psych finding it's that it's they say happy people are helpful people right but then it turns out that research shows that the opposite is true too when you help someone it makes you more happy and so I think finding those little ways you know you hold the door for somebody you help shovel the walk on a day like today for your neighbor who's older those just doing those things can feel good to the nihilist as well as the Christian now that we're talking about different human identities um let's move on to the second thing which is self uh and I would like to ask what fundamentally to you is it is a human person and how does your understanding of what a human person is guide or shape how you approach mental health questions oh I think that there's two ways I could answer the question and maybe maybe sort of what are humans you know what is a human person so I think there's a there's one perspective of the sort of different components because they're sort of say well you know humans have two feet and two hands and okay that's part of the person but then you can you know then you might lose a hand or you might lose a foot and then you're still a person right that there's something inherently um and this is something that at least in the the that that we've held for a long time in the west um I'm sure and I'm less familiar with eastern philosophy so I won't speak for um not in my culture but this idea of of um that there is this inherent there there's this inherent dignity in a human being just for being a human being and that that's fundamental and then there's certain um and then there's also certain things that humans can do that are pretty unique and pretty special and I put near the top of the list if not at the top of the list the ability to choose the ability to have volition and connect it to that the ability to think um rationally or reasonably um and you know as part of that whether it be about you know that was a that was an excellent concert or symphony or that was a beautiful painting or whether that's you know the Euler's law or you know



discovering something in math or you know re discovering that wow you know all people really are equal and we should probably have laws to reflect that I mean those are all fundamental humans doing what humans do best and I think at the the core of that is is love so um so yeah so so the ability to reason and the ability to um sort of know what the good is or know what truth is and then the ability to do it this this um this wheel or this volition or this ability to do that and and you do that long enough the end of that the telos of that is is love or agape would you define agape please for those of them um that's a really great question that's a long conversation the short of it is okay so so there there was this in early Christianity there was this difficulty defining what this central virtue was so Paul kind of picked a Greek word kind of it random that didn't have much meaning and then like poured all of this meaning into it and so it becomes this very central virtue for Christianity that's that's different than affection like I am you know you how you feel towards puppies or how you feel when you get a hug like there's that that's one kind there's there's like friendship and like buddies and working together towards a common pursuit that's you know that that's philia and greek and the first one was uh storgae I think and then the third is is eros when you're like really in you know i love what somebody and have this sort of passionate wanting to connect with that one other person um there's that but then there's this other thing that unifies all of those all of those things um emerge or develop into which is this this this desire for the others good this this willing to lay down your life or sacrifice yourself or or desire their good over your own good um that that's is maybe the core of of of this christian conception of love which isn't identical to but is is probably pretty similar to what most people mean by by love and that is the in the christian idea um how we view how god sees his children right so so this is this is all coming from and the origin of this is uh is god that the the best virtue the the most the source of all goodness is god and so the extent to which we love is the is is how it is because god has loved us and that this is something that is a capacity created in us by god so rita and i used to have chickens i you know i felt like things were getting really philosophical so we used to have chickens and this is related so we used to have chickens and the chickens you know if you threw a weed in that they didn't like into the pen they just completely ignored you but if you threw a dandy line they if you threw a worm and it seems like they're making choices right sort of and but my sense is that they weren't really reflective choices they were reflexive choices right they were instinctual choices and i think one of the things that makes people human like you said is the ability to make choices but not just choices that are survival oriented but choices to not be survival oriented to sacrifice yourself to somebody else or somebody else uh a sort of a contemplative choice to to meditate i mean everybody here you guys all made choices to be here tonight somehow you got here and that's a kind of a cascading domino effect of choices of conscious choices maybe you came because you heard there would be treats or maybe you came because you had a friend coming but so but you evaluated and reflected on your options maybe there wasn't a good movie tonight i don't know the state of union is tomorrow night maybe anyway so so you know what i'm saying i'm thinking that one of the things that makes us distinctly human is not

just making choices but making these sort of reasoned reflective choices that are not always self-serving but can be other serving as well and that goes back to the agape i think so i never really thought i was going to talk about our chickens wasn't uh queued up for just this moment you know i so so another thought i have about identity in i think identity is related to what we're talking about right now and identity is gosh there's a you know you probably know urban yalam he's he's one of your neighbors in Palo Alto and he's a famous existential psychotherapist and he used to do this this thing where he would ask people the same question ten times and it was what do you want right to get it to your existential wanting um and some in some classes i used to change it and so that it would focus on identity and i would have people ask each other ten times and i would say david who are you right and then i'm writing it down you know you say what would you say oh i am a child of god i am a child of god and i would repeat that that i'd say and then the only rule here is you can't give the same answer twice right so david who are you well that is my fundamental identity i want to get that answer again you got it number one you got it number one yeah so so you see you kind of go down to layers and people have multiple identities right you might say that i you know i'm a psychiatrist at some point because our roles oftentimes will capture a piece of our identity um and you might say i'm a man right and when i found an identity there's so many things and now we talk about identity politics but you know we have multiple identities and we talk about intersectionalities right we have intersectionalities and identities of race and gender and sexualities and uh and interestingly when i've done this almost never do the guys say i am a man it comes up if it comes up much down the list but the women will say i am a woman pretty or somebody who is diverse sexuality might say i am a queer really high on the list or somebody racially diverse not uh you know dominant cultural white person would would say i'm an native man right as really high on the list which is to me interesting in terms of the salience of different parts of the identity um so it seems like that um almost alludes to conflict bringing out someone's identity how they identify themselves um and i think a great follow-up question is that it would be what do you think are the key issues of personal identity formation in college students what do you see? well there's so many multiple factors and i'd say one of them is related to sort of feeling misunderstood and when people feel misunderstood in some way that often becomes well wait a minute i am you know you don't get me i'm i'm a gay person you know and and that's that's who i am and i want you to be interested in that and to learn something about that right and so those those places where we're misunderstood i think can be really central to sort of the top part of that fluctuating identity but the identity will fluctuate your major that you choose in college gonna push you in a direction for identity business advertising gonna push you in terms of an identity and i with identity comes values and specific behaviors and it builds these tendencies in us to behave in certain ways so i don't know if i answered your question but i said a lot well i'll aspire to the same okay i think but i think that's exactly right that the college is often the first time that you're really on your own that you've been living under your parents roof for you know for your whole life and now you're not being supervised and so you you know your

autonomy is being tested and you know and then even even fun even like meta questions of identity how much is that even something i can control and that's something that's been concerning to me there was a study from 1960 to 2000 the idea of you know it is is my future fate under my own power or is it just going to be determined by factors external to me they're called locus of control there's been a shift towards more in college students more and more feelings that the world around me determines my fate that that the external locus of control by the standard measure has gone up 25% over 40 years just not small and that that affects how you can't even think about your identity that that that perhaps if we ask that question that factors external to me might be higher on the list now than things that i've chosen or things that i i like or things that i'm i have i have volition to change but then you know but if i'd like to be said about the you know sort of career vocation because that's also huge because you know am i going to am i going to have the career of my father am i going to have the religion of my mother am i going to you know drink as much as my parents want me to um or as little or as little or as little um so you've got you've got to make all these decisions and it's sort of this this terribly exciting but also you know hugely important time of making the first step of the first draft of your own independent life plan or your own independent identity as you're stepping out from from from your parents so it's a identity formations is just critically important yeah so just one quick comment and i know our time's almost over but so i love what you said when i asked you who are you and i'm a child of god and i love that and you know that was central to you and what i love about that is i bet that you think everybody else out here is also a thought of god yeah right and so it's this universal way of thinking of and valuing everybody i think that's pretty cool thank you what would be your number one i'm a man moving on thank you so i just wanted to say i know that um i loved what the president had to say and i know mike frost and rick kurtis from curry health are right here and maybe lend it to you guys these if you're college students here their curry health their counseling services and in fact the university of montana wants to support your mental health and well-being and i hope not only do you know that they want to do that but they your your friends want to do that too so for the last and third theme and just to remind the audience we go have a Q&R after this what so kind of contemplating your perspective on god and how one forms a personal vision of wholeness again do you think that the leech and god is necessary for human flourishing why or why not it's a big one so when you say human flourishing you mean like humanity flourishing or a human version um i would mean towards a human person but you think that they're otherwise let's say that there's i think on the the level at which like with a secular hat on i'd say no i think there's plenty of atheists and agnostics who are plenty happy that that on every sort of measure that you could go i mean it looks like the core you know there's there's some correlations some connection that maybe church tends good for you but but sure that's not like uh lock solid thing i do think the the questions uh the the answer to flourishing is are we going to include like afterlife or eternal life or some sort of space following death in that case then certainly but without that i i do think there are influences for the positive that belief in god and particularly religious

practice have fundamental health but i don't think that it's required you know i i don't think so either i think it can help i'm reminded of a book that my friend gary hawk who's right here in the front row suggested to me titled the gospel according to Jesus and i remember reading in there about how the kingdom of heaven is within and i don't and i know the guy who wrote it's a buddhist which you know is important i guess to know but it's the issue of that feels more universal than needing to have a specific belief in god that there are maybe other paths that are meaningful and even spiritual without necessarily believing in a creator sure just about your view on god or or maybe more generally do you think that a view on god has implications for um ethics or values or um or virtues you know i definitely think it helps i mean i think people can have secular ethical perspectives that are really solid and very respectable but i do think it helps that the the feeling of there being a spiritual force underlying ethics and morals can give it more passion maybe and more hopefully more compassionate application too and i guess i asked in the like maybe within if we look at all theists and say uh you believe in god and i also believe in god but i'm pretty sure that god sends his son Jesus to die for us on the cross and i don't know what you would say about that particular historical events um or the nature of Jesus as being you know god in the flesh but well i guess what would whether or not that happens i think changes the character of of god and what might a central virtue what the central virtue might be um would you agree you know we're getting into the territory where i'm a little more confused you know and i mean i think i feel like that the doctrine of religion is kind of a paradox and that it's super informative but also maybe not necessary and that um i'm i'm not convinced that my father's perspective of Jesus being just a guy or my mother's perspective of Jesus having died on the cross to forgive our sins i'm not i don't know i don't know and in my hope and because i feel like it's again too massive and beyond me to know my hope is that it doesn't matter to god whether i know that or not and that faith is more that god is very accepting and gives us lots of grace with regard to the specifics of our religious beliefs that's what i hope is true yeah and i guess i i think that it seems to me that whatever whether it's god is accepting that the nature of god is accepting regardless of belief or that the god doesn't care so much about the god has a nature such that he doesn't he shefae doesn't care so much about the doctrinal specifics versus a god who did this particular thing it sort of in my mind would change with the we both agree it we both like the word love i think we both agree that that's a great word um both love the word love that is such a great word but it seems like it would change the character of the word um that if the central event of history was this particular act of sacrificial love or not that that matters to sort of yeah what what what love really is what this the character this god is like sort of accepting regard but doesn't really care what you believe about him versus wants to build relationship with you via the sacrificial act but those are different persons or god pictures and i think it definitely changes it for you you know i mean i i and i hear that but i'm not sure it changes it for me you know i just i you know that is part of my um less certain part of my faith okay so so that's interesting so so it's not that whether or not but i i guess let's give back to the the question of of what is love and the

sacrificial sense the um the um the poem i give tell it hurts versus give tell it heals is that right yeah um that the the where is the centrality of that giving tell it hurts and tell it kills you um versus rehealing i guess say more about say more about that poem and yeah i mean i think that's uh giving the the conscious human interpretation of giving till it hurts the way most of us would think about it would think about the giving would necessarily require some painful self-sacrifice but if we focus on the other that instead of focusing on ourselves that giving until it heals is something that doesn't bring us pain even though maybe we are sacrificing things but it focuses on the healing that we're providing with the gifts as opposed to the pain that we're experiencing from giving okay yeah and and you know i guess the the agreement on um so it sounds like we agree on doing nice things that are not costly um or doing good things that you feel you feel you can get into the empathetic position of the other and sort of it feels good as you're doing it yeah i can give it i think doing nice things that are costly as good too but what if it doesn't heal i don't think we can know in advance whether what we do is healing or not and so in some ways the spirit of giving is something that's useful or uh it's energy in the right direction you know that makes sense yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah i mean i don't know that we know in advance i mean i know from having done therapy with people for a long time that i'm not sure i mean i think i helped more than i didn't and i think in some cases i helped a lot but i'm sure in some cases might even my efforts to help in that domain were not successful and i i'm never sure when i say something in advance that ah this is going to definitely help this person yeah one time i had my best 50 minute hour ever it was the best i wished it then video recorded i think i was like a star and then at the end the guy just used the f-word to describe what the session was like for him i'm not going to say which f-word but you can imagine funky fun it was the funnest hour i've ever had right so so i think our intention and even our expertise and skill can sometimes just not yeah yeah oh so we've covered a very wide variety of topics in this session and i feel like dave is trying to get me to be theologically the sort of coherent and i'm posting something interesting so we'll put attention um but i think it would be the perfect time to start the q and r yeah you're interested awesome so this question is for both of you so how do what tool do you think a belief in a chance for damnation for yourself not just for yourself but for your friends your family your community plays on your mental health so damnation has enlightened health so the question was what role does belief in damnation have for your mental health either of your own damnation or others right yeah just believe in believing in a health whether it's for yourself or not do you think that plays a positive or negative role in mental health that's a great question um i i think uh i i'd say it would be difficult speaking as a scientist if it would be difficult to disentangle that from other aspects of theology so i i'm actually whenever people ask me a question like that it's like has there been experience it's been done that would answer that question um i but it would be difficult because of the correlation of other things now that being said i have had um i have had patience with this is a huge issue of like i am afraid of damnation and that's like a major fear um and a thing that that you know that that's that's that's a that has to be worked through or processed um so you know and and so

i'd say that uh the and that depending on the theology i'd say that there are certain theologies that do put fear of hell in everybody's heart where that's something that you're like thinking about all the time i don't think that's so good and i mean i would argue with my christian hat on that i don't think that i would agree with that theology um that if you're if you're worrying about hell all the time that doesn't sound like what would jesus was talking about or what Paul was talking about i mean certainly there's times that that's discussed but um so it but i think that on the whole here's here's an answer on the whole i'd say that that doctrine when plugged into other doctrines is what the data shows that that's generally the correlation would be for the better um belief in hell in the united states at least that's people who believe in hell are the people who go to church or the people who have better mental health um though it can like many things be perverted and be uh be bad so just a couple of quick responses one is that we know fear is a motivating factor right being afraid of something will motivate us to avoid it or to deal with it in some kind of constructive way we also know that fear that can make us kind of neurotic and not be very healthy for us so i think it's a double edged sword and that certainly having some respectful fear of the afterlife turning out in a positive way um or avoiding the negative outcome i think that can be a positive motivator but i think it can also just sort of like punishment in terms of using too much punishment with pets or with children or with adults can make them quite neurotic and i think the fear of the punishment of hell can make people be quite neurotic so and that's that would not be a good outcome thank you thank you i'm gonna read off my notes here um so this question is more directed for dr summer's plan again but i wouldn't mind if you both answered so i think that if you could sum up all the world's problems in one word it would be conflict can you hear me okay yeah okay so conflict between wants and needs and nations and religions etc so dr summer's plan again you mentioned love is being of high value perhaps the highest value so it seems that love though is you're differently based on many factors for example some parents may believe that corporal punishment is an expression of love other parents may believe that corporal punishment is hateful so my question is if love is defined as creating the highest good for yourself and others then how do you determine love is actually the ultimate value if so many people differ on how love should be expressed could you repeat the last part of your question sure that's the kind of question i just like to answer it yes sorry it was a little wordy um okay so love is defined as creating the highest good for yourself and for others then how do you determine love is actually the ultimate value if so many people differ on how love should be expressed i find what you said to be very true with regard to my experience as well regarding the many different ways that people try to define and express love and i think that's a problem right it is a problem i'm not sure if i would agree that conflict is i don't know how you described it but i would say that there are times when conflict grows people and it stimulates new thinking and i'm aware that there's a famous conflict management author in the front row who could speak much more about that Joyce Hawker and she's written a book called conflict resolution and it's ninth edition and it's 11th 10th so conflict can be really growthful love can be really growthful and would we

always agree on the definition of conflict probably not we wouldn't agree on the definition of love either but i do think movement in the direction of more loving relationships and and maybe that's part of that half-baked evolution that we need to work on that we need to as a world get clearer on what is loving and what maybe is less loving so i don't know that i answered your question i'd really like to hear what you have to say but i think this gets to the so so two things one i'd say that the this might be love is uh we all like this we all like this word and i think that this is uh maybe maybe checking our cultural biases here as well i don't know that everybody would agree that love is the ultimate virtue of value um that that i again this is this is not my worldview but i imagine that the idea of love as central to say butism would it's something like like cessation of craving might be central to butism and we might say oh well that's just love it's like well no that butism seems to be saying something different and emphasizing a different set of practices in Christianity um and sort of zooming out and saying that like what what do we mean by we want everybody to be more loving um and and as a as a Christian who thinks that is the central virtue then yes of course i think everybody should be more loving um but also trying to understand you know what do we have to learn from from Buddha and this idea of cessation what what can we learn from trying to cut off those desires um and and what you know there's depth there that might allow me in my own worldview to learn well jesif i if i meditate i'm realizing all of these cravings that i didn't know that i had and if i can cut those off then that might allow me to love better which i think is what i'm going for um but i think this is also somewhere where where doctrine really matters where worldview really matters um and trying to get words around love and stories around love what is the what is the greatest i mean who is the greatest hero i who's who's seen um Avengers Infinity War like okay that's it's an important question who is the greatest Marvel hero like is it Captain America with his you know you know being a being a you know nice straight down the middle like follow the rules kind of a guy or is it the the party boy Iron Man or um i've just been handed a Captain America wallet that was exciting but but but you know so the christian claim is the greatest hero is Jesus that that that is who we should all be the emulating but but that's a good conversation what do we have not that we can't learn from Muhammad or or because they're also heroes there's no question about that but but but where are we where are we converging um which of these and and my view which of these these heroes is able to to include or incorporate um which which tent is able to to bring in all of these others and maybe it's the maybe it is the the sort of um the the the tent of tolerance or the idea of you know god accepts all doctrines but that that's hard because it's it doesn't that that seems really good for academics and like most of my academic friends are on that boat you go to like rural anywhere and that's like hard um it's really hard and so the hope for that like to to unite us all as a as a vision of god is is is is is is strained um and so so you know one of the other things i like about Christianity is i think that that Jesus as hero has a has a chance of uniting us in a way that um that's that's special not to rule out the other heroes not to rule out the renunciation of Buddhism or the submission of Islam but those are good things too um and those also should be

incorporated Christians really wrestle with and talk talk to and have to be friends with um those and invite them to brunch and have long conversations and try to learn from each other um but but i think that your question is is very well put uh ways what does it mean to love and then how do we deal with the fact that other people have different visions of what that would look like thank you just one thing to add people have different visions of Jesus too right i mean and so if we take any kind of central concept there are people who believe in it much differently and practice it much differently and there's some people who would say that they're followers of Jesus whose behaviors i would question whether or not they really are and so in the same thing as you the point you made about love i think it was a good one so these two last questions will be the last questions thank you hi um i have a question that was sort of spurred because of the story you told in a way that you came to Christian faith Dr. Carian right yeah okay yeah um you mentioned that it was ultimately rational and i'm curious as to what you mean by finding that that that belief system would open the rational win like there's a i don't know there's a there's a theologically opposing values like Cherokee guards not exactly a Christian theologian but he definitely makes claims saying like to be a man of faith is to be like absolutely against reason like judging Abraham but the sacrifice his son it's not rational but more of an act of faith which is what may have a good man the man of men so so yeah i'm just curious as to if i can it's this is a great question um and you know a character guard as a just somebody that i need to read a lot more of one of one of my mentors is and in fact there's a there's a great veritas form on the veritas.org where my mentor Jeff Schwartz talks in detail about his view on Kierkegaard and how that that does integrate with Christianity. I found myself in the sort of okay so sort of what i would call orthodoxy has this has these like bounds and you know you look back to you know the the creeds of the early church and there do seem to be certain beliefs and christian any maybe uniquely maybe not but at least some people argue uniquely has these bounds of orthodoxy that if you believe the sort of set of propositions that that's like one of the requirements maybe be maybe the requirement for being sort of in this circle when being out of it so for example there are you know you can people use the phrase apis to do you can't really use the phrase apis christian that one of the beliefs of christian one of the things of christianities you believe in god so so to your question i think that the i think that i have lost the thread would you repeat your question my question is your definition of essentially what the definition rational of rationality yes yeah yeah thank you sorry i got off on a tangent there um so so okay so there's this bound these bounds of orthodoxy and i think Kierkegaard is on the far like reason doesn't matter don't worry about figuring things out mystical side of the spectrum um and maybe not mystical but like reason doesn't matter i'm more on the other end where there's like uh thomas aquinas is somebody i like you know like to listen to and they're just don't listen to you in the podcast um you know follow and follow us is you know this these sorts of ideas and i think that on that end i found that in my hyper rationalistic very unemotional maybe suppressed i'm not really sure what was going on i was a teenager but this idea of it really was very intellectual and like you know what world



when you look at a world view what does it have in it and i'd say that um you know coherence um is one uh explanatory power is another uh the not being ad hoc would you just make that up right now and answer the question kind of the thing like christianity in conversation with other world views about you know why is there evil in the world uh why does anything exist at all uh you know who is you know how do we even have a comprehensible universe uh this is all of these questions are are challenging questions and i think the most um the best set of answers uh for me in that process i thought came from christianity and that that is a that is a hypothesis that explained the data best of course it is a hypothesis and is you know being revised and changed and adapted but but i think that that it was the it was the best that i found thanks um my name is kody in this question directed kind of just towards both of you i felt like our discussion on the cell kind of revolved around um these parts of a person who are that's extra physical outside of the physical like choice and reflection on cell um personal will and then our discussion on spiritual health revolved more around the physical which i thought was interesting because we were talking about church attendance and shoveling people's locks as a way to bolster our spiritual health and finding purpose i was wondering if there's a way in your guys mind to separate purpose from physical actions um and find like purpose to be within some spiritual realm that doesn't involve physical can you find purpose without physical action it's a great question i i think that people can um i think that it can feel certain meditative states certain kinds of experiences of um i was thinking of soupy dancing and other but i guess that involves physical movement so but certain kinds of meditative states i think can help people feel very much at one with the universe and with god and that that's quite possible i do think and i've had this experience myself i remember especially thinking about this when i was in college how i would be lying in bed and i felt so like filled with love just filled with love and then then my first conversation with the first person i saw made me filled with not love um and you know annoyance and all those things but and so so i do think that there's something um it's limited is what i'm saying is that experience of non-interactive complete self-reflective spiritual meaning that it's cool and great but it's also limited in terms of um when you get out of the meditative state and then you have to go to the store i mean there are certain kinds of real interactions that happen that makes sense but i do think you can have that meaningful purposeful singular state too i think both are true yeah and i think the thing that came to mind as you asked the question was um victor frankle again where you have literally zero control in a you know concentration camp of your physical environment or what you're going to be doing during the day and yet some people were able to find meaning in that and maybe it was connection with their um with their heritage or maybe it was connection to our hope for a future thing but but people were able to find different things despite no control um it's an interesting observation too about the where our conversation went between self and um and uh and and give the parts of it but um i i do think um i guess just to put it out there there there is such a thing as as christian physicalism um that is to say that you only believe that the the immortal soul isn't anything other than matter um that it's sort of the former shape of

your your physical body so so that the anything we talk about of choice or whatever is is some kind of physical state in your brain um and we can i guess i'm gonna talk about that but but there's you know in addition to the sort of more classically assumed like in the immaterial soul that flies off to heaven there are others that that emphasize physical as well um and i but i do think that's important um and as a as a physician that's important that like and i think as a sleeper in the incarnation that's that's important that that the the body can't really at least while we're on earth be fully separated or maybe even partly separated um from the body and it might just be ways of talking when we talk about purpose um but that that there's a a large extent to which there's there's a correlating brain state um but at the same time that's not enough that we need we need higher language we need more words that's both of us have been trying to avoid more and more words um maybe not answering questions if you like this and you want to hear more like share review and subscribe to this podcast and from all of us here at the veritas forum thank you

[BLANK\_AUDIO]