Bob: We live in a day when people see their bodies and their souls as being somehow separate, disconnected entities. Your soul is what matters, and your body is somehow irrelevant. Nancy Pearcey says that’s showing up in all kinds of things like the hookup culture, homosexuality, and even the transgender debate.

Nancy: Transgenderism is even more obvious than any of the others—that it’s based on a division between the body and the person; because the transgender narrative itself says, “Gender identity has nothing to do with your biological sex.” There is a BBC documentary called Transgender Kids; and it says, “At the heart of the debate is the idea that your mind can be at war with your body; and that when people sense that war within, we need to liberate them from the prison-house of their body.” To which, I say: “Wait a minute. Why not have a higher view of the body?”

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Thursday, August 9th. Our host is Dennis Rainey; I'm Bob Lepine. What does the Bible teach about our bodies, and what do we believe about our bodies and how important they are? We’re going to spend time thinking about that today with our guest, Nancy Pearcey. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. You know, I don’t know that I’ve ever stopped to consider this until recently; but among the gifts that God has given us, He’s given us the gift of a human body. I mean, I’ve been aware of the fact that I have one. I just don’t know that I ever thought of it as one of God’s good gifts—maybe, because it keeps breaking down and deteriorating. [Laughter] I’m thinking, “I got a bad model or something here.”

Dennis: Well, it is the subject of a great new book by Nancy Pearcey, who joins us on FamilyLife Today. Nancy, welcome to the broadcast.

Nancy: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Dennis: The book’s name is Love Thy Body. I have to say, Nancy, I really enjoyed this; because it really takes on the theme of what Bob’s talking about. You challenge people to think rightly about their bodies. For those of you who don’t know Nancy, she is a professor of Apologetics at Houston Baptist University, a best-selling author, married to
Rick since 1976—congratulations on over four decades, by the way—and has two adult sons.

Bob: And can I just say, “I’m a fan”?—okay?—

Dennis: So, here’s the thing—

Bob: —all the way back to *How Now Shall We Live?*— which you co-wrote with Chuck Colson. Then, you wrote the book, *Total Truth*, which was another outstanding book. I have followed your writing and appreciated your clear thinking. In fact, I saw this quote of you as “America’s preeminent evangelical, protestant female intellectual”—that’s what *The Economist* called you. I’m not sure who else is up for the title, but I think that’s a pretty good description. We’re grateful to have you here.

Dennis: Nancy, in your book, it really has an underlying theme that worldviews really determine purpose. You talk about the predominate worldview that is in operation today. Why don’t you unpack that, if you would, please?

Nancy: The book, *Love Thy Body*—the subtitle is *Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*. It deals with those cutting-edge issues that we’re facing every day in the newspapers: from abortion and assisted suicide to homosexuality, transgenderism, and many more. Typically, we try to make sense of these issues, one by one / separately; but we will be much more efficient if we understand that they all express an underlying, secular worldview. If we deal with that worldview, we’ll be much more effective in responding and in teaching our children how to understand these issues. They all end up depending on your view of the body, because ethical issues depend on what you do with your body; so your view of the body ends up being what drives the secular view. It also gives us a chance to develop a very positive, biblical view in response to these secular issues.

Bob: So, what is the secular view of the body? Are we in a—and I’ll use the word, gnostic, because some of our listeners will recognize Gnosticism had this kind of dualism, where our soul is one thing and our body is something else; and the soul is good, and the body is bad. Is that the modern conception of the body, or is it different?

Nancy: It sounds kind of odd, because Gnosticism was an ancient worldview; and we’re talking about cutting-edge issues of our own day. Let me tie it in directly to an example—let’s take, for example, abortion. Most people don’t really know “What is driving abortion, besides, you know, women’s rights?” It turns out that, if you read the bioethicists, who are developing the arguments defending abortion, all of them will admit that the fetus is human from conception. The evidence from DNA and genetics is just too strong to deny it; but what they will say is: “Abortion is okay until the fetus becomes a person defined as a certain level of cognitive functioning, self-awareness...” and so on.
What are they really saying? They are saying, “As long as the fetus is human, it can be killed for any reason or no reason. It can be harvested for organs. It can be tinkered with genetically. It can be picked apart for sellable body parts. Then, it can be tossed out with the other medical waste.” In other words, being human is no longer enough to qualify for human rights; so this is a very negative view of what it means to be human.

As Christians, what we need to do is say: “Wait a minute. God created the human body, and the human body has value and dignity from Day 1.” We are countering it, not only with sort of a negative view: “Don’t do it,” “It’s wrong,” “It’s a sin,”—you know, the “Thou shall nots”—that’s what we’re often known for—

**Bob:** Right.

**Nancy:** —but instead, we have an opportunity to craft a positive message that says, “We have a higher view of the human person; and we have a higher view of human dignity, value, and significance.”

**Bob:** So, talk to me about the relationship between our physical body and our personhood. Are they the same, or is there a difference?

**Nancy:** Let’s take the idea that you can be human, at one point, but not a person until sometime later. That’s obviously assuming that they are different / that they are two different things. In fact, you see the same reasoning used for assisted suicide—it’s just the reverse. What they are saying is: “If, at a certain point, you lose cognitive functioning, then, you are no longer a person,”—even though, you are obviously still human.

At that point, your medical treatment can be discontinued: you can be unplugged; your food and water, in fact, can be discontinued; your organs can be harvested. Again, notice that merely being human is not enough for human rights.

The way to counter that is to say: “God has created us as psycho-social, psychological unities—that we are not divided into separate parts. God created us as a single, coherent, unified being. Our body and soul are, in a sense, just two sides of a coin. They are not opposites; they are not inseparable. Therefore, God has given us—the body has its own dignity and its own value that we need to honor.”

**Bob:** So, key point there—and I think this is helpful. Body and soul are distinct but inseparable; because that’s where we run into problems when we start to think, “Well, the soul is one thing, and the body is something else.” You’re saying that, in a Christian view of the body, body and soul are linked together in an inseparability.

**Nancy:** You know, let’s take another example just because examples really help flesh it out. This is really the argument behind homosexuality, for example. No one really denies that—on the level of physiology, biology, anatomy, biochemistry—males and
females are counterparts to one another. That’s the way the human sexual and reproductive system is designed.

When someone claims a same-sex identity, they are essentially contradicting that design. Implicitly, they are asking: “Why should my body have any say in my identity? Why should my biological identity, as male or female, have any voice in my moral decisions?” This is a profoundly disrespectful view of the body, and it’s also—it has an alienating effect; because what it is saying is: “Your body has nothing to do with your psychological identity.” It has a self-alienating, self-estranging effect on the human personality.

Again, this opens an opportunity for Christians to step in and say: “We have a positive message. We are saying: ‘The Christian ethic brings together body and person. Who you are, biologically, should inform your psychological identity. We are arguing for an inner-coherence, and inner-unity, and inner-alignment between body and person.’” Again, it’s a very life-giving, life-affirming ethic.

Dennis: Nancy, it seems to me—as you look at what you’re saying in your book—that the two different worldviews: one starts with man as the authority; the other starts with God as the Creator and the One who established the purpose of sexuality / the purpose of the body. It seems the world is competing with God and wants to completely eliminate His authority over our bodies and over how we use them.

Nancy: Well, it is even a little bit more complex than that; because, if you look at how secular bioethicists argue these issues, your view of ethics depends on your view of nature. Where is this negative view of the body coming from? Why do they argue that your body has nothing to do with who you are as a person?

It’s because they have rejected the notion that nature, itself, has a purpose. The idea of—that nature is a product of blind material forces; that your body is the product of Darwinian, natural forces that are purposeless, and have no goal, and have no direction; therefore, your body has no intrinsic purpose itself.

So, it—the turning point, historically, was Darwin’s Theory of Evolution, which taught people that the body has no particular value or dignity. That’s why they treat the body as just a collection of cells and tissues and organs, not essentially different from any other chance configuration of matter.

Let me give you an example—there’s a very well-known feminist lesbian named Camille Paglia. She defends homosexuality in exactly those terms. In an essay, she acknowledges, on the one hand, that nature has made us male and female / that we are a sexually-reproducing species. Then, she says, “But why not defy nature?” Here’s the direct quote: “Fate, not God, has given us this flesh. We have absolute claim to it and may do with it as we see fit.” If the body is a product of blind material forces, then, it has
no moral message for us. It is not part of our identity, and it has no intrinsic purpose that we are obligated to respect.

To counter that, we can go beyond just “Well, this is what the Bible says.” We go back to nature itself. It’s obvious, to observation, that living things are designed for a purpose—eyes are for seeing; ears are for hearing; wings are for flying; fins are for swimming. That’s not even a Christian insight; people have known that, back to the Ancient Greeks. Plato and Aristotle, both, said the same thing—they said, “Nature is designed—clearly designed—for a purpose. In fact, the whole development of an organism unfolds according to an inbuilt plan or blueprint.”

The implication for ethics is that your body does have a purpose and that we are called to respect that purpose and that—instead of just saying, “Well, all that matters for my identity is what I think and what I—my feelings/my inner-desires,”—instead, we are meant to look to our biological identity, as male and female, and to craft an ethic in line with that that respects our body.

This is really exciting when you start realizing: “Christianity—it’s not just rules. There are good reasons behind the rules.” When we talk to our children, especially, we need to equip them with the reasons that support the biblical rules.

Bob: Nancy, years ago, I was hosting a call-in talk show. I invited, as a guest on my call-in show, a woman in our community, who was a prominent atheist. I thought, “I just want to have a dialogue with you about your foundational beliefs, as an atheist, and my beliefs, as a Christian, and just see where we wind up.”

I remember, in the conversation, I said something about the complexity of the human body and the magnificence of that complexity. I said, “Just the human eye and how complex it is”—I said, “This just screams for the reality of a Designer with great intelligence.” I remember this woman saying: “I wouldn’t have made the body the way that your so-called God made it. If I were designing it, it would have been much more efficient. There wouldn’t be waste. You wouldn’t have to eat food,”—she had her own design. I said, “Well, why don’t you go ahead and whip one up for us?—just go ahead and make a body that would be infinitely superior to the one that God designed.”

We can talk all we want about the design of the body being good or bad; but at the end of the day, the best scientist in the world can’t make an eye. They can’t even whip up a little blood in their laboratory; can they?

Nancy: That’s true. Let’s bring that back to ethics. How does that impact the ethical issues, which is a topic in my book, Love Thy Body? Take, for example—I have a chapter in the book on the hookup culture. Young people know the hookup script all too well, which is no love, no commitment, [and] no emotional involvement.
In *Love Thy Body*, I have several *poignant* quotes from college students that are really heart-wrenching—like one student, named Alisha, who says: “Hookups are very scripted. You learn to turn off everything except your body and make yourself emotionally invulnerable.” Essentially, the hookup culture rests on the notion that the body is just a physical organism, driven by physical drives and impulses. No wonder, it’s leaving a trail of wounded people; because it rests on a worldview that does not fit who they truly are.

**Bob:** Parents, who are raising kids in this culture, are obviously concerned and troubled by how the cultural narrative is winning the day with their kids in the area of gender and sexuality—in the area of things like abortion / euthanasia—the issues you deal with in your book. The cultural narrative is so loud, so forceful, so strong, and so dominate that, if you oppose it, you will be shamed, and scorned, and left abandoned. A lot of our young people go, “I didn’t sign up for that.”

**Nancy:** That’s why I stress, again and again, how to craft a *positive* message, not just a negative one. There’s a chapter on transgenderism, for example. Here—transgenderism is even more obvious than any of the others. It’s based on a division between the body and the person; because the transgender narrative, itself, says, “Gender identity has nothing to do with your biological sex.”

There is a BBC documentary called *Transgender Kids*; and it says, “At the heart of the debate is the idea that your mind can be at war with your body and that, when people sense that war within, that we need to liberate them from the prison-house of their body.” To which, I say: “Wait a minute. Why not have a higher view of the body?”

Even after I wrote the *Love Thy Body*, I was reading a philosophical defense of transgenderism written by a Princeton professor. I’m trying to find out “What are the philosophers saying?” because that’s what’s going to filter down, eventually, to ordinary people. What was amazing is that, even though with the defense of transgenderism, it admitted that transgenderism involves—and these were the exact words—it said, “…disconnect, a disjunction, self-alienation, [and] self-estrangement.” The author wrote: “Your physical body tells you nothing at all. It *means* nothing. It tells you nothing about who you are.”

So, as transgenderism is taught to younger and younger children—all the way down to kindergarten—our young people are being estranged from their own body. They are being taught that their body tells them nothing at all—that it is meaningless.

What we should be responding with is: “Why not have a *higher* view of the body?” That’s the message we need to get out and equip our young people; because they are going to be treated as bigots and hateful. We need to help them to discuss these issues, showing that the biblical view actually has a *higher* view of the body.
**Dennis:** Nancy, I’m thinking of parents, right now, raising a child in this generation. It’s like—this is an incredibly subtle attack on people’s identity, who they are as young ladies / young men at times when they can’t possibly begin to sort all these things through and spot the deceit / spot the lie in the midst of the propaganda. What would you say to parents about how best to equip their children as they confront this in the schoolroom of junior high, high school, and college?

**Nancy:** I tell lots of stories in *Love Thy Body*. One of my favorite ones is the one that’s at the beginning of the chapter on homosexuality. It’s about a young man, who was exclusively attracted to other men. He became a Christian when he was a teenager and thought, “Well, as a Christian, my only option is celibacy.” Today, he is married and has three kids.

You ask, “What changed?” He writes: “I began to realize that my identity should not rest in my feelings.” He said, “I decided, instead, that my identity should rest in the gift God had given me, which doesn’t change, which is the fact that I am male. I am biologically male, and I should accept this as a good gift from God. The correlation between male and female is not some evolutionary accident. It is something that God intended; therefore, it is a *good* thing. So, to affirm that God’s gifts are good, I decided to accept my identity as male.” He said, “When I did that, overtime, my feelings began to follow suit.”

What we need to help our children recognize is that there is an underlying worldview implicit in their choices. You know, most of us don’t think that way—we think, “Oh, I’m doing what I want to do”; but choices are not just what I want to do. You are affirming a worldview when you make a choice; so, if you choose homosexuality, what you are saying is: “God did not make my body. It is a product of natural selection. It’s a product of blind material, purposeless forces; and I can do with it as I see fit,”—to use that quote from Camille Paglia.

The choice I’m really facing is: “Is it a gift from God, or isn’t it? Do I accept that, or do I reject it? Is the cosmos a product of blind forces / atoms bumping around in the void?” or “Is the cosmos a product of a loving God who created it for our good?”

**Dennis:** And I think, for parents, as they think about raising the next generation, they need to train their kids to know how to think and critically evaluate these voices and then realize life is a by-faith wager. You are going to place your faith—either in the secular voices and their worldview—or you’re going to go back to the Scriptures that have the Prime-Mover and the Creator, who created purpose for every living being, and place your faith in Him.

I think that’s our assignment, Bob—is to help our kids know who they are—spiritual beings made in the image of God, male and female—and to realize they are not a purposeless, random group of molecules slung into outer space with a billion galaxies. They need to realize God’s up to something, and they need to be a part of it.
Bob: And they need to realize that believing in God and in Him as Creator is something that makes rational, philosophical sense. This is not something where you have to check your brain at the door; but actually, this is more rational than the idea that there was gas that exploded, and now we’re all here today. That’s going to shape everything—it’s going to shape how we view life / how we view our bodies.

That’s what’s at the core of the book that we’ve been talking about today—the book that Nancy’s written, called *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*. This is such a critical book in our day. We’ve got copies of Nancy’s book, *Love Thy Body*, in our *FamilyLife Today* Resource Center. You can order the book from us, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com. You can call 1-800-FL-TODAY to get a copy of the book. Again, our website, for ordering the book, is FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call 1-800-358-6329—that's 1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

Now, if you have an Amazon smart speaker—I’m not going to say her by name, because I don’t want to turn the one on in your home; okay?—but you know who we’re talking about. It starts with an “A.” You can now listen to *FamilyLife Today* just by asking for it. Actually, you have to go into the app on your phone, and you have to type the word, “FAMILYLIFE,” as one word. You can activate the app so that anytime you ask for *FamilyLife Today*, our friend, whose name starts with an “A,” will play that program for you; alright? I wanted to let you know about that.

I want to say, “Thank you,” to those of you who fund the ministry of FamilyLife® so that we can expand the number of people who are being reached by this ministry on a regular basis. It’s because of your financial support that we’re able to reach more people, more regularly.

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Now, tomorrow, we’re going to talk more about our bodies; and we’ll talk about how our view of God and creation is ultimately going to shape what we think about things like abortion and euthanasia. Nancy Pearcey will be back with us tomorrow. We hope you can be back as well.
I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

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