

Key Ideas

- 1. **God made us soil and soul, dust and spirit, united together** -----
God has planted the seed of your soul in the soil of your brain, body, and relationships. We are shaped by both dust and spirit.
- 2. **Devalue the soul → weaken moral responsibility** -----
Free will is grounded in the soul. Lose the soul and you start making excuses for sin, praying less, serving others less, sharing your faith less, etc.
- 3. **Devalue the soil → weaken your compassion** -----
We will judge others and ourselves too harshly if we fail to grasp the physical limitations of our bodies and brains. Plus, it's bad for our health!
- 4. **Value both soil and soul → Strengthen your connection to God** -----
God calls us to be stewards of our soil because he wants good fruit. But, God also calls us to rely on him for everything. We can't bear any fruit without him. Learning about the brain and soul helps us to find this balance.

Key Scriptures

- Genesis 2:7; Job 10:9-12;
Psalm 104:29, 139:13-16;
Daniel 7:15; Matthew 10:28
- 2 Peter 1:5-10; Matthew 23:37;
Ephesians 4:1ff
- Psalm 103:13-14; Mark 14:38
- Mark 4:1-20; John 15:5; Matthew 25:14ff;
1 Corinthians 2:10-16; Galatians 5:16-23
Psalm 78:37-39; Romans 8:1-13

Balance is the Key: Virtue is about finding the balance between two opposites... e.g., grace & truth, courage & caution, prayer & action... body & soul.

Questions: to ponder and discuss

- 1 Read Key Idea #1, as well as Genesis 2:7.
Do you tend to think of yourself more in terms of the soil side or more as the soul side?
- 2 Read Key Ideas #2 and #3, as well as 2 Peter 1:5-10 and Psalm 103:13-14. Do you think that there are serious dangers for our well-being if we devalue one side compared to the other? Why or why not?
- 3 Read Key Idea #4, as well as Mark 4:1-9 and John 15:5. How are we both responsible and not responsible for good fruit in our lives? What is our part and what is God's part?
- 4 Connection to the Cross: Christians believe that Jesus is both fully God and fully man. Why is this important to believe in both? If we devalue either the humanity or the deity of Jesus, are there dangers?

Take It Home:

Key Quotes

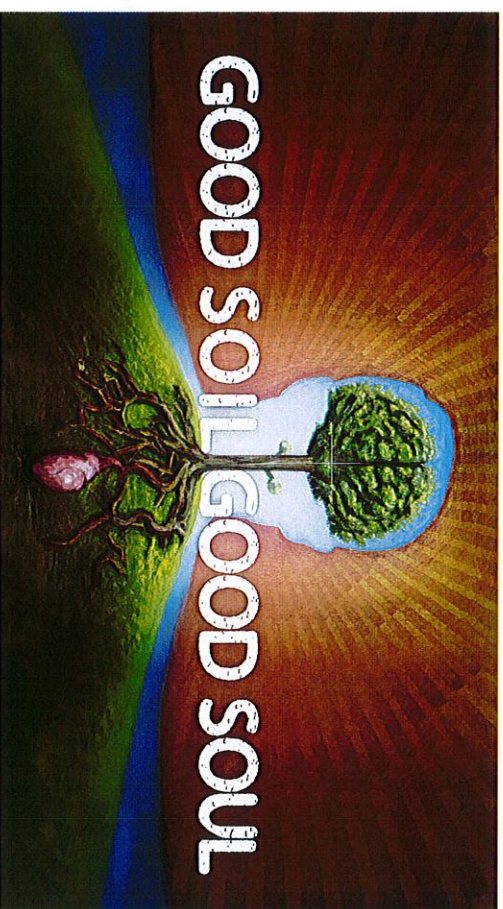
- † "Belief in free will is closely linked to belief in the soul, because no one has been able to figure out a way to explain how the brain – a three-pound clump of electrified meat – can make a freely chosen decision. Which brain cell is the one in charge of all the other billions of brain cells? Physicalism and free will don't mix, and there are serious moral consequences when you devalue free will."
- † "With Physicalism, you toss free will out the window, but with Gnosticism you place it on a pedestal and idolize it. You expect yourself and others to just make the right choice, all the time. 'What would Jesus do? Do that, and don't mess up.' The result is we get really judgmental. We lose compassion. Not just for others, but also for ourselves... We must take seriously the limitations and pressures that the body and brain place on the will."
- † "We can't do anything without God's grace. But our part is to make space for grace. Our soul needs to make space in our brain for God's grace to flow through and transform our whole lives."

Book Recommendations:

- *Earthen Vessels: Why Our Bodies Matter to Our Faith* by Matthew Lee Anderson
- *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis
- *Body and Soul* by J. P. Moreland and Scott Rae (advanced)

Exercise:

Spend a few minutes one morning thinking about how often your body's needs and desires determine your mood and behaviors. Also, consider how other people affect your moods and thoughts. Then, watch yourself the rest of the day to see how the physical states of your body and how your interactions with others influence your thoughts, your emotions, and your responses. Jot down some of your observations at the end of the day. Then, ponder how you could have acted differently, even though your body and other people were pushing and pulling you around. How could the Holy Spirit have helped you?



Session 1:

Balancing Dust and Spirit

Notes: