

Finding Pleasure in Fasting, Sex and Spirituality – Nadia Bolz-Weber with Dave Asprey – #785

Announcer:

Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. In honor of our show today, I am on our 48th of a fast, and this is my third interview of the day. Why? Because you don't have to have a brain that doesn't work when you're fasting. It's entirely possible to do both, if you know how. And the guest today is known as the Sarcastic Lutheran on her social media. And she's got a strange relationship with religion that is frank and includes a lot of swear words. So if you don't like swear words, this might not be the right episode for you.

Dave:

Her name is Nadia Bolz-Weber. She's a Lutheran pastor. She's written three New York Times bestsellers and was a stand-up comedian. And she ran something called the House for All Sinners and Saints in Denver for 10 years, and now she's just a public theologian. She's going to talk with us today about fasting, spirituality, faith and religion, sex, pleasure, and all sorts of things you probably wouldn't expect from a Lutheran minister. Nadia, welcome to the show.

Nadia Bolz-Weber:

Oh, my gosh, I can't wait. Yeah, thanks for having me.

Dave:

I'm going to admit something, I don't really have a good map in my head of all these different Christian derivatives in the US. We've had a leader from the Episcopal church on and I really don't know the basics of what's a Lutheran versus all the other flavors of Christianity. So what's the deal with Lutherans?

Nadia:

The important thing is, we're just better looking.

Dave:

Taller, better looking, smarter. Yeah. All those things, I got it.

Nadia:

No. Lutherans and Episcopalians are just one degree separate from Roman Catholic. So we were the first ones to sort of break off because there was just sort of Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, there was really just these two things. And so in the 16th century, there was the Protestant Reformation. So there was this Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, who realized that the teachings of the church were harming the people in his care. And he thought, we should probably rethink those teachings. And so kind of earnestly he wrote a bunch of them down. And there were 95 of these things he wanted to have a conversation about, and he nailed them to the door of the church in Wittenberg, his 95 theses, and that sparked the Protestant Reformation.

Nadia:

So I come from that direct line, from Martin Luther. So the worship service is going to be similar to Roman Catholic mass. Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Catholics have a similar sort of ancient order of the liturgy that we follow, and it's a sacramental tradition. But the thing that really makes somebody Lutheran, it's a theological identity. Whereas what makes somebody Episcopalian is a shared prayer book. What makes somebody a Lutheran is a shared theology. Lutheran theology is distinct in this way. The point of gravity, the center of the whole theological system is grace. It's not striving to be virtuous, it's not adhering to rules. It is absolutely grace. So that is what is that distinguishes Lutherans from other Christians. And also our theological system is based in paradox and not dualism. And I think that's an important distinction as well.

Dave:

When you said it was close to Roman Catholicism, I'm like, okay, so this is like a guilt and shame based thing? By the way, my family is mostly Catholic, at least was at one point. So that's not a dig on Catholics. I think any of them would say that. So what's the role of guilt and shame for you?

Nadia:

But if the center point is grace, why would you have either now? Obviously, guilt is different than shame. Like if you've done something that's caused harm and it kind of weighs on you, that's good.

Dave:

That's healthy. That's guilt. Right?

Nadia:

That's an internal mechanism that's useful but that's not shame. Shame is like believing that you have no worth or you have no value or there's something so inextricably damaged and bad about you that you're totally irredeemable. And if anybody knew you really, really well, they would of course reject you.

Dave:

Right. So shame is about who you are, and guilt about what you did?

Nadia:

Yeah.

Dave:

Pretty different things. Okay. So those aren't major things. What is grace though? I'm not sure that I know how you're using that word.

Nadia:

No, I love that. Because if you can't define a word, why use it? I describe grace as that freight train that delivers into my life all the most beautiful, transformative and totally on unearnable things like mercy and love and forgiveness, endless second chances, a perfect peach in summer. I mean, there are things that how do you earn it? Do you earn the right to eat a perfect peach? No, it's grace that any of us get to have that experience.

Dave:

So you're looking for beauty and elegance and everything?

Nadia:

I don't know. I don't know that I've ever thought of it like that. But I think I look for what is ... I don't know. I'll have to think about that. I've never thought of it like that.

Dave:

Interesting. All right. I love mapping all this stuff out because there's almost always something of great value in every spiritual tradition, even if it's one that's new to someone. And I'm very happy to learn from people all around the world from wherever they're from to get the nuggets that stick best for me and share them on the show. You're out there, though. I mean, you're straight up like, okay, vice versus virtue. You talk about sex a lot. What's the deal on your perspective on sex? Is that grace? I've done some non graceful things in bed that were pretty fun. Or were they graceful?

Nadia:

I mean, that's why I wrote my last book because what happened was I just kind of ... I'm ordained in a pretty liberal denomination, but they still made me sign something that said, I'd be faithful in marriage and celibate and singleness when I was ordained. And I was married at the time, so I didn't think much of it. Just because somebody is faithful in a marriage doesn't mean it's a healthy marriage. It doesn't mean that the sex life in the marriage is healthy. And we were in this sexless marriage to a very good man, who would never deserve for me to say anything bad about him. He's a good human. But we never connected. And there was this cost to me in having that whole part of myself shut down.

Nadia:

I ended up, like, obsessively doing CrossFit. And I had this like my hair was like half an inch long. There was such a hardness to me. And I think I had to protect myself in a sense is what it felt like. Because I was pastoring a parish, and I was on the road speaking all the time, so it was pouring out. And when I came home, nothing was sort of filling me back up. And so there was a cost to it. So we went through an amicable divorce. But then, when I got together with Eric, my partner, we did connect in so many different ways. We'd been together when we were in our early 20s, and we've sort of rediscovered each other when we both got divorced. And we did connect in all these ways.

Nadia:

And it felt like an exfoliation of my whole being, my whole spirit, to access that part of me again. We were together a few weeks, and then I had to go and support the UK and the German edition of my last book. So I was on the road for a few weeks in Europe. I was walking down the street in London, all this stuff is swirling in my head, and I was just like so amazed by how good it was for me to be having sex again. And then I thought, why did the church make me sign a paper saying I wouldn't do this. How is it better for my church if I'm not getting laid? That makes no sense whatsoever?

Nadia:

I call up Eric, and he's not Christian, he's a heathen. And I go, "Why do you think the church has tried to control sex for so long?" And without skipping a beat, Eric said, "Well, I guess I always assumed that the church saw sex as its competition." And I was like, I'm writing a book. I was supposed to be writing a different book. But that was the point where I was like, no, I have to write about this.

Dave:

I once dated a woman who was Catholic, and her priest told her that sex is how you meet God, which seemed like a very strange thing to come from a Catholic priest. But then again, that was only in the context of marriage. So I guess it was okay. And that led to the question of how would you know? Because you're required to be celibate, right?

Nadia:

Yeah. It's a flawed system. Yes.

Dave:

Do you think it's different for men and women, the need for sex, the desire for sex, the benefits of sex?

Nadia:

I sort of pause when I want to say something really essentialist because all I can think of are the exceptions from what I'm about to say. But given that this is a general statement and says nothing about the individual, I think that there are some biological imperatives that sort of create different response systems within female or male bodies. And I think that there's cultural things that affect those. But this idea that like men are the ones who want sex, and women just leverage the fact that men want sex, I find that to be bullshit. Yeah.

Dave:

Most of the women that I know like sex.

Nadia:

Totally. And also women are very candid in the way they talk to each other about sex in a way that I have found that men aren't as often.

Dave:

How would you know though? Because you're a woman.

Nadia:

I have asked my male friends, like, "Do you guys talk about sex in the way that like we do?" And they're like, no.

Dave:

Probably not. It's hard to say, there's differences there. The reason I'm asking is my new book on fasting, *Fast This Way*, I talk about all the different types of going without that can lead to either biological improvements or spiritual improvements, depending on your goals, and that you don't have to always have a spiritual angle for fasting. And one of the things I talk about is fasting from sex or fasting from ejaculation, or fasting from porn. And you know that those can provide benefits, but the benefits are, at least in the literature I could find in my own experiences, and just being pretty open about this for the past 10 years, that it's very different for men and women.

Dave:

Where for a guy to hold back sometimes is certainly an act of will, and then showing yourself who's boss view is important. But there's other biological things that happen, your testosterone stays higher for longer and things like that. But those benefits don't seem to apply to women at all. Even going back through thousands of years of spiritual literature and biology and all that stuff. So I've always wondered if the rules for women priests ought to be the same as men priests? I don't know.

Nadia:

That's interesting. Yeah, I think that's right. Because also just women have that capacity to be multi-orgasmic in a way that is very different for men. So there's not this sort of energetic depletion that exists. So I think that's a huge difference as well. So I don't know.

Dave:

The Taoist say a woman walks away undiminished from sex. But men don't. And that's why we typically fall asleep right away.

Nadia:

Exactly. Yeah. But there can be a harnessing like of that ... There can for men be a harnessing of that energy if they have a certain practice around not ejaculating.

Dave:

I tried for a year to disprove the Taoist perspective on that by measuring my daily happiness and the frequency of sex versus ejaculation. And to my great chagrin, at the end of the year, I'm like, yeah, they're right.

Nadia:

Totally.

Dave:

So ejaculating less and having more sex is probably good for men. We'll call it a spiritual practice because it's really hard in order to do that. I want to get your take as a Lutheran minister on the Lutherans perspective and your perspective on sex? Because I mean, you write books about stuff like that. Because I guess we've talked about kind of as a clergy person, you're saying, okay, you're not allowed to have sex with your partner unless you're married, but it seems like you're breaking some rules there. Right?

Nadia:

Yeah. Actually, my denomination is in the process of redoing those guidelines. Thank God. So, yeah, technically, am I in violation of that policy? Yes. But I'm one of the few people on the clergy roster in my denomination who's also a public figure broadly. And so I could sort of take the risk of starting that conversation and being public about my life, and it wouldn't have the same consequences for me professionally than it would for a local parish pastor. So there was intention around that for me.

Dave:

Well, I'm glad that you're including that in the conversation, because if it's sort of never there and all parishioners do it, and pretty much most people do it. But it's don't do it or don't do it without rigid

rules, it always seemed a little bit controlling and fake to me versus embrace the spiritual side of whatever you do, including whatever you do in the bedroom.

Nadia:

Yeah. But also, I mean, restriction is the fastest path to fetishization. So to tell people in roles of spiritual leadership that they have to completely not be sexual, you're setting up an entire system for abuse.

Dave:

Let's talk about fasting from food. And this is something that it feels like in a lot of Christian religions in the last 50 years has gone by the wayside. And you look at Jewish faith, there's still a fast, very strict Catholics have some stuff around Lent and all that. But it feels like it's just been eroding. What's your take on fasting from food? What's the spiritual side of that?

Nadia:

Well, I mean, we do keep lent in the Lutheran Church, but people decide for themselves what that is going to mean. A lot of people do have particular types of fasting that they take on during the 40 days of Lent. So that is part of my tradition, it's just not prescribed. My own experience, profound experience of fasting actually wasn't part of the Christian tradition. For the last two years, I've sort of done a thing up on my friend's land, where I have ... It's just 48 hours of prayer and fasting, and I'm outside on the ridge of this mountain, not a mountain, but the hills. With just a bedroll. For two days. Just I stay in one spot. Being a New York Times bestselling author does jack shit for you.

Dave:

Exactly. Good for your ego for about five minutes.

Nadia:

Oh, my God, it does nothing. But I really sought that out because I wanted everything stripped away and to have that experience. And so there's no food or water.

Dave:

You're a dry fast for two days.

Nadia:

Yeah. But the interesting thing is my experience, I genuinely was not hungry or thirsty. And it wasn't because I'm some evolved person, you're also not sort of ... You're sitting in one spot, really, in one little space. And so you're not using a lot of energy. It felt like having things stripped away and gaining a sort of ability to hear from my own source more clearly. So, both times I had ... I mean, I hesitate. When people are like, the Lord said to me ... I'm like, sirens go off. It can be a form of spiritual self-flattery to be like, God spoke to me. It's like dangerous. But I have had experiences where I felt like, some words came to me that didn't feel like they originated from inside of me. And I know that because they didn't sound like me.

Nadia:

Like the first year I did it, it started raining and there was this storm. And in my mind, I was like, fuck this. Like, I'm out. I'm not going to finish this. I'm not going to have a wet bed roll. And I'm under my tarp.

And it's beating in the wind in the rain. I was so like miserable. And then I had this thought, because the ... Then it stopped and I kind of peeked out and there's these like antelope, like a whole herd of antelope like right there. And I turn and I looked the other direction, double rainbow. I'm like, okay, that's a bad ham-fisted, God, but whatever. I love it when God likes subtlety. But anyway.

Nadia:

But the words that came to me were, those are only thoughts. Like, those are just thoughts. Like as a human animal in a situation, you're fine. And all of the misery that you just experienced was not the situation. It was your thoughts about the situation. So there have been these moments of incredible clarity that I've had that didn't feel like came from me. It was accessing my divine source. So I allowed for it.

Dave:

I love that description. The narrative in my new fasting book, which I'm going to send to you as soon as it hits the shelves is, I decided that I was going to spend four days fasting in a cave. Would not have dry fast if had water. Because I had figured out that I was afraid of being alone. It wasn't like a conscious rational fear, it just like I would do anything to not be alone, it's actually a very common thing. And I knew that I was afraid of being hungry because I'd been obese.

Dave:

And so kind of a similar thing. In nature, there's no one around for 10 miles, there's no food for 10 miles, and what else are you going to do, but feel your feelings, and see what's going on in there. I experienced something where after about two days, like the colors got way more vibrant than they were before. I feel like I could see more colors. Do you see stuff like that? Did you find that your senses changed?

Nadia:

I found that I had this ... Mine was more aural. I could hear different bird songs around me and be aware of and start identifying how they were different. I mean, there's so many sounds around us all the time. But our brain has to filter out a lot of that information for us to kind of function and do the tasks at hand. But to slow down that much and to have that clarity, for me, it was about the sounds. Like I could really enter how each of them felt in a way.

Dave:

And your senses got turned up. I'm glad you said that. I didn't put this in my book, so I hadn't thought of it until you said that. But yeah, you hear all the little sounds in nature. There was one evening where, I swear, and I was in a cave that's been used ceremonially for 10,000 years by a local tribe with permission to be there. I swear I was hearing like drum beats and things that were clearly not my heart. I'm like, could there be someone else around? But there's no one around. Like, I've no idea what that was to this day. I can't explain it.

Nadia:

It's a mystery. Yeah, I mean, the thing with fasting, I mean, to get back to the idea of fasting from sex, is that a lot of people have a lot of very strong opinions about pornography, for instance. And I understand there are issues, some serious issues of justice and exploitation when it comes to pornography. But the fact is, is that human beings have drawn erotic imagery from the time we could scratch it inside caves.

Dave:

It's kind of a part of being human as far as I can tell.

Nadia:

Right. And the response that we have to erotic images is an empathic response. And so there's nothing sort of ... That's morally neutral. So I have no problem with the fact that human beings create erotic imagery, and that there's a stimulation that happens within us, that's fine. Just like people have eaten sweets since the beginning of time. There's nothing wrong with them. There have been pomegranates and honey and fruits and dried fruits. And that's just a part of being a human being as well, is sweets. So again, morally neutral. But what is different about then than now with both is that they are now available in a concentrated form and available all the time.

Nadia:

So I don't know that our wiring, the hardware, human hardware that hasn't changed. Same hardware is when it was just a scratching inside a cave of an erotic image or occasionally finding honeycomb. So the hardware is the same. The software like what's entering in has completely changed. We've never had the access to this much concentrated. And so what happens is, I don't think it creates an excess of pleasure. Because you cannot appreciate how sweet an apple is when you just drink a 64 ounce Slurpee. And you can't appreciate how like beautiful your lover's body is when you just streamed four hours of porn with these young, hairless, perfect acting people on a video set. To me, it's not like it's bad that we want these things and there's pleasure, but they actually decrease ... Those things I think decrease the amount of pleasure of our actual bodies and the actual world.

Dave:

And porn is basically like corn syrup then.

Nadia:

Correct. It's high fructose corn syrup. Again, to me, it's morally neutral, it can be good and it can be bad. And pornography is not just one thing. I mean, there's ethically produced pornography. There's Make Love Not Porn, there's feminist pornography, there's stuff out there. I think we have to be careful when we paint things with just one brush.

Dave:

It seems to me that there's also a difference in how it's delivered. So if you're looking at roles of Papyrus, and there's an image on it, it's a lot of imagination involved. And if you were going to really have porn, you go to the [Isis 00:26:11] sex cults where there's sacred prostitutes way back in the days of Papyrus. And that was a very rare thing that had a spiritual component. And now, if you read porn or listen to porn, it activates entirely different parts of the brain than watching porn. When you watch any video, it puts you in this kind of programmable state that you can see it on, EEG, like with electrodes. So perhaps that's part of its corn syrup nature, when porn is on video versus even just a photo or a story.

Nadia:

I think that's right because if you just see a still image, or just read something, or just hear something, your own being has to fill in the rest. Do you know what I mean? You're filling in through your

imagination, and your being is sort of completing whatever that is for you within your psyche. But when it's been completed for you, there's no longer that process.

Dave:

And that's actually a recommendation for people listening. If you're going to consume porn, read it, don't watch it and see what-

Nadia:

And pay for it. Ethically, pay for it.

Dave:

Yep. I agree with that. Because it's important that people make a living. And especially now, it's a problem. So I'm glad you said that. You, you wrote a chapter in your book, Shameless, called I Smell Sex and Candy, which is a fantastic title for a chapter. Tell me about what's happening in there with Jesus being a glutton and a drunkard, and why you called the chapter that?

Nadia:

Well, it was a lot of that argument that I just made about food and sex, but also how terrified we can be of pleasure. And also, it's baffling to me that Christianity became such a body hating, pleasure hating religion, when the whole story behind Christianity is, God decided to have a human body. And then we say they're evil if we actually believe God decided out of all things to slip into skin and walk among us. It's just crazy to me. And also, Jesus was accused constantly of being a glutton and a drunkard. It shows up several times in the text, his very first miracle was turning water into wine. He was always eating with all the wrong people. He was hanging out with sex workers. So that is true. I don't think he was afraid of pleasure, clearly. But then he also fasted in the wilderness.

Nadia:

There was a syncopation between these two things. I get a little annoyed when people are like, well, the real important thing is balance. I'm like, "I don't do anything a little bit. That's not my personality." I have two speeds, go and stop. That's it. That's how I'm wired. And so I went to my spiritual director, and I was like, "I just don't feel like I can balance anything." She goes, "Well, what if balance isn't the goal for you? What if it's rhythm? Keeping a maintainable rhythm between go and stop?" And I thought, that's genius. Like there's a syncopation between these things. And I think that's how Jesus lived. There was a syncopation between fasting and wilderness and feasting and community.

Dave:

When you think about balance, there's two places you can be on a scale to be balanced. You can be right in the middle of the scale and never move, or can be way off on one end. But if you want to achieve balance you're going to have to spend a lot of time way off on the other end. And both of those are balanced. But it feels like this regression to the mean or to the average. There's a word for average, it's normal and it's also kind of boring.

Nadia:

Boring. Yeah.

Dave:

I think that's why Burning Man is such a popular thing. Like, there's too much boredom, people are like, I'm going to get some balance by being really crazy for a week. Right? And then they come back and the average is better.

Nadia:

It's like Rumshpringa. It's like grown up Rumshpringa. Do you know that word?

Dave:

Rumshpringa.

Nadia:

Rumshpringa. It's when the Amish turn I think 17 or 18. They get to go out into the world. They can wear English clothes, they can do whatever they want. And they get to experience all the things that are not allowed them when they're Amish, because that's the only way they can reliably decide if they're going to join the church as adults. Yeah, it's an interesting practice.

Dave:

I wonder if the Mormon mission has some of that in it. I know that they're not supposed to go off and do crazy stuff. But I don't know any teenagers who don't go do crazy stuff. It's an interesting idea to achieve balance. All right you got to see what's out there. I like that a lot. Something that came up when I was looking at all the spiritual literature on fasting, and I'm all about metabolic benefits by themselves, or spiritual benefits and metabolic benefits, but you don't have to have a spiritual focus all the time. But when I go back, it's not even just Christianity. What is the deal with fasting for 40 days? Like, why does that number keep popping up everywhere?

Nadia:

A couple 1,000 years ago, 40 just meant a lot. It didn't mean-

Dave:

It might have been like 30 days, but we'll just round up kind of thing. Is that why?

Nadia:

Yeah.

Dave:

I love it.

Nadia:

It's just meant a lot. It seems like a long time.

Dave:

There's an interesting thing that has to do with 40. And in modern research, if you go about six weeks, which is roughly 40, that's 42 days, that's the amount of time it takes to form a habit. You do something

for six weeks, it's kind of locked in. And then you get Hitchhiker's Guide, 42, life, the universe and everything. So there's something going on around 40 or 42. And I was wondering if that might be part of what they were saying.

Nadia:

Maybe it is. I love that. I'm going to pocket that little trivia.

Dave:

I've always wondered, I've never fasted for 40 days. I mean, I'm probably going to fast for three or four days, I haven't really decided yet, whenever I feel like I'm done this time. And I've done up to about nine days. But it's one of those things where I'm intrigued by saying what would happen if I did a 30-day fast. And there are some places in India where you can go and you reset your biology, you become young, you shed your skin, but they have you on just water for a month in darkness and some really esoteric practices. But then they're like, here's the 150-year-old guy, here's 180-year-old. So there's something interesting that happens, but it's always spiritual and physical when you start getting into those long things. I don't think you can fast for more than a few days without starting to have some spiritual experiences.

Nadia:

Yeah, probably. Also, why would you want to be young? Someone's like, the promise of this thing. It's going to be awful. But the promise is it'll make you young. I'm like, "Jesus, why would ..." I had nothing going for me when I was a young. I had great abs and literally, I had nothing else going for me. Like, why would I ever want to be a young again?

Dave:

The idea for me is I'd like to have the wisdom of being old and the energy of being young so I can do more with the wisdom. I want to build a world where there are people way older than me, who can teach me stuff who have the energy to do it and then the memory. Because there's so many people with Alzheimer's these days. Like we're missing our elders.

Nadia:

Yeah. That's an interesting point. Although, I think just people didn't live that long before. There's a corrosive ... I mean, I had to get an implant, a tooth implant this year. And it's like, I am 51. I reached my sell by date for human beings a while ago. The human beings just didn't live that long before. And so there's some stuff that is like our teeth that it's like jump ship.

Dave:

The Bible says people lived 400 years.

Nadia:

The Bible says a lot of stuff.

Dave:

And 200 years and then ... I have some odd theories about that are maybe real. But there's a number of scholars who are making the case that the maximum human lifespan 1,000 years ago was much higher

than it is now. But the average human lifespan was much lower. So if you made it through wars, famines and plagues, you had a pretty good chance of being an old person who was reasonably healthy. And that old might have meant something different way back in the day. If I want to get really out there, I think, well, there was a comet that hit the planet about 11,000 years ago, very provably that may have brought some stuff with it that lowers human lifespan by causing DNA breakage.

Nadia:

Sure. That's interesting.

Dave:

You could say, Dave, that's the crazy thing I've ever heard of. And like, everything I'm saying here has real possible theoretic things behind it. But our ability to measure time, even color historically is different. There's another theory that we couldn't see the color blue until very recently in human evolution, because it's the hardest one to see with your eyes. Why would you ever call the sea a wine dark sea if you're a Greek? They never said it was blue. It is always the color of wine. And if you can't see blue ... So our perceptions are expanding.

Nadia:

I love evolutionary biology. I think it's fascinating.

Dave:

What's the Lutheran take on evolution versus creationism? I'm curious. I just don't know.

Nadia:

I mean, we're not biblical literalist. So we're free to believe in science.

Dave:

Put it bluntly, why don't you?

Nadia:

Yeah. But actually, interestingly enough, that idea of creationism, that there's a literal seven-day creation, that sort of scriptural fundamentalism is actually a reaction to the enlightenment. So for much of Christianity, scripture was really read allegorically. When we started saying, no, this is like scientifically true, wasn't until the scientific revolution. It wasn't until the Enlightenment, when we started thinking, we can apply human reason to certain problems, and we can prove things are verifiably true through the scientific method.

Nadia:

So after the Enlightenment, when now we think, there's only one way of understanding something to be true, and that's through the scientific method, and we had an increasingly secular age, that's when Christians started to go, well, therefore, in order for the Bible to be true, it must be scientifically true. So we now believe in a literal seven days of creation, and that the earth is only a few 100 years old or whatnot. So that's a somewhat recent way to even view things.

Dave:

Very interesting. It makes a lot of sense. I look at the literal creationism stuff, and I kind of have a hard time because if I wanted to take it literally, there's just too many conflicts in any spiritual literature anywhere. Unless you go back to like instruction manuals from like cave dwelling monks. Like step one, breathe deep. Step two, do this. And then we go, okay, that was more like instructions and there's no dogma in there. But otherwise, the conflicts always kind of blew my head up.

Nadia:

Well, and the fossil record. I mean, there's a lot to sort of go, nah, I don't think this is true. You know?

Dave:

Yeah, there's some stuff in there. What do you do as a-

Nadia:

No, sorry. I want to I want to change what I just said.

Dave:

Okay.

Nadia:

You can look at the fossil record and say, I don't think that that creationism is fact. Because one of the things that the Enlightenment stole from us, and Charles Taylor said, "It gave with one hand and his soul with the other" is the fact that there are different ways of understanding the world that we can understand what is true, what is truth in very different vectors in terms of the human mind and experience. So obviously, the scientific method, science is one way of saying what's true, but it's not the only truth. And anybody who has a spiritual path or spiritual experiences knows this. And so if somebody says to me, do you think Jesus was born of a virgin? Like, do you think that's a fact? I'm like, "Is it a fact?" That's totally unknowable. Is it true? Yeah, I think it's totally true.

Dave:

Interesting. I'm a huge fan of the Enlightenment because it was fueled almost entirely by coffee. When you study it, literally it happened in coffee houses when coffee first came to Europe, and that's where all the intellectuals would meet. And that's why they tried to ban coffee. They're like, it's making all these people do non-churchy stuff because they're thinking and talking and how dare they? Couldn't they just go back to beer?

Nadia:

That's actually true. There was a piece on NPR this morning about Beethoven. And Beethoven, his music was completely a product of the Enlightenment, and specifically, ideas that were coming out of America about truth, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These were the things that really drove his music. And these are ideas that he encountered in coffee houses.

Dave:

I love it. So coffee equals Beethoven. I also have a theory that just about every great work of literature is the product of coffee and nicotine, and very rarely alcohol and pot. But it's usually those first two are involved.

Nadia:

Stimulants. Yeah.

Dave:

Yeah. They make the brain do certain stuff.

Nadia:

I'm a huge coffee person. I only just started meditating a couple months ago, and very begrudgingly. It's never been like my thing, mostly because I can't stand meditation teach. I hate that passive aggressive half whisper that is like supposed to mean they're spiritual. I like immediately don't trust them and assume they're a monster. Anyway.

Dave:

You have to talk in a breathy voice.

Nadia:

Yeah, fuck that. So it's not my thing. I was talking to my best friend. And she's like, "But I just started this thing with this teacher, Jeff Warren, online and I think you'd really like it." And I go, "Well, I can't meditate because I have to drink coffee as soon as I wake up." And like it feels like meditation should be a kind of first thing in the morning, and I already have my first thing in the morning thing. And that's coffee. And she goes, "But you can like drink your coffee while you're listening to the teaching and then do the meditation." And I was like, "Really?"

Dave:

Yeah.

Nadia:

She's like, "Yeah." And I go, "Well, I can't sit on the floor because I have a bad back." Just like muscle spasms if I'm ... She goes, "I just sit in my chair and sit up straight." And I'm like, "Really?" So somehow because my friend said that I could drink coffee and sit in a chair, now I'm meditating every day. That's how spiritual I am. That's what it took.

Dave:

This is a practice I had for a long time until I had kids and it just became inconvenient. I chose the least convenient, most ritualistic way of making coffee. And it's called a vacuum pot. And I would fire up a Bunsen burner. And there's this glass flask. And then you boil the water with a little alcohol Bunsen burner, and it forces water through a little vacuum system up into this container. And then you stir the container with a wooden paddle only three times, and you never hit the sides. And if you stir it perfectly, when the vacuum pulls the coffee through you get a little volcano cone. It's a ritual and it takes about 10 minutes to make one cup of really good coffee that way.

Dave:

So that was part of my meditation. It was like a Zen thing. Like, can I stir it exactly right? Will I get the perfection, we'll call it grace, in just preparing the coffee? And I'd drink that and meditate and there's nothing wrong with that. And then when I had one kid, it was, "Daddy, can we make fire coffee?" But

you don't meditate with a kid in your lap Unless you're some kind of great master beyond me. And so now I do espresso or something gets a little bit faster like a pour over. But yeah, I love it that you're like, okay, sure, do whatever. And even in Tibet when I was learning meditation from the masters there, like, you want a chair? You're from the west. You don't even know how to sit on the floor. I had to do yoga years later to learn how to sit on the floor.

Nadia:

Yeah. I don't have the hamstrings for that. I do AeroPress. That's my thing.

Dave:

That works very well. It makes a great cup of coffee. Except you have to wash it. I don't like washing stuff.

Nadia:

Yeah, you have to wash it, and I use the same beans. There's a local roaster called Pablo's in Denver, and for 10 years I've drunk Danger Monkey is their blend.

Dave:

How could you not? Like, that's the perfect name of a blend for you.

Nadia:

Yeah, Danger Monkey.

Dave:

Well, Nadia, thank you for walking me through your take on fasting and shame and sex and all the other cool stuff we just talked about. I appreciate you being on Bulletproof Radio, and just showing up the way you show up with without shame, just being who you are and doing some good work in the world. Thanks for being on Bulletproof Radio.

Nadia:

Total pleasure. Anytime. Let me know if I can be of service to you. Thanks.

Dave:

Your website is nadiabolzweber.com. And guys, I'll put that in the show notes for you as well. But if you'd like to check out a very unusual take on the world, Nadia's got it. I'll see you guys on the next episode. And maybe by then I'll have eaten, but maybe not.