

From Gangs to the Gospel: An Inside Look at the Faith Journey of Ruslan KD

(February 23, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, there is virtually an infinite number of places you can go to get information in the internet age. I mean, how many millions of YouTube channels are there, or Instagram accounts? I mean, to say nothing of the rest of the internet, where do you go to find good commentary on events related to Christianity, related to the culture, related to the Bible? Well, I've discovered a place that I think is a great place to go to learn about cultural issues, almost in real time.

And the man who runs it actually grew up at least he was born in Azerbaijan, and then came to America as a kid and he has really rocketed to semi stardom I might say. Not only in the hip hop world, but also in the YouTube world, doing a lot in commentary on biblical issues, cultural issues, things that affect us every day in the news. His name is Ruslan, and it's great to have him on the program. He invited me on his program a few weeks ago when I was out in San Diego. And now he has returned the favor when I asked him to be on our show today. So, here he is all the way originally from Azerbaijan, ladies and gentlemen.

RUSLAN:

Wow, what an introduction. Thank you so much. You have a great radio voice, by the way, I want you to know that.

FRANK:

Yeah, not a face for TV. But Ruslan, I did a little research, and your name apparently means lion. Did you know that?

RUSLAN:

Huge, great lion. Yes.

FRANK:

Huge, great lion. Well, you've kind of like, at least taken over the internet in terms of YouTube for Christian commentary for a lot of people. In fact, before I knew about you, it was our events coordinator, Mrs. Heath Maki. She's been watching you for years. When I was going to be on your show, she said, oh, you're going to be on Ruslan's show? I said yeah. She's been a big fan for a long time.

Let's start at the beginning. Born in Azerbaijan. And by the way, ladies and gentlemen, for those of you who are not good at geography. If you're in Azerbaijan, you're probably on the Caspian Sea. If you go south, you're in Iran. If you go north, you're in Russia. If you go west, you're



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heading toward Turkey. It has about maybe 11 million people there. You were born and lived in the capital. It's called Baku. Did I pronounce that right?

RUSLAN:

That's right. Yeah, Baku. Yeah. So, I came from Azerbaijan. We're ethnically Armenian. My dad is Armenian. My mother is Ukrainian or Russian, but she was adopted by an Armenian family. And so, we're culturally Armenian, growing up in Azerbaijan, which used to be a part of the former Soviet Union. That made kind of a big mess of that region in terms of how they were navigating, or not navigating that. And there's been tension amongst obviously the Turks and the Armenians for hundreds of years. Many people may be familiar with the Armenian Genocide of 1915. And those tensions continued to follow Armenians that were living in Azerbaijan.

And tension started brewing in the late 80's because there were reports of Azerbaijanians not being treated well in Armenia, and that made it back to Azerbaijan. And Azerbaijanians wanted all the Armenians out of Baku. And so, what led to this was the pogroms of Baku in the late 80's. And my father was working in Moscow. So, a lot of the men kind of already left the area. And because me and my mother were more fair-skinned, we kind of stayed behind to handle a lot of the affairs, and to handle a lot of the things.

So, the interesting thing about Armenians is we're culturally, ethnically one of the oldest Christian nations. So, we identify as cultural Christians, if you will, a part of the Armenian Orthodox Church. But I didn't grow up with any faith in my childhood. I don't ever remember going to church when we were back in Baku. I don't remember really any mention of the Bible. I didn't know what the Bible was. I don't even think I really heard about Jesus back in Baku. But as we came to America, after we came as refugees, the Armenian Orthodox Church became kind of the cultural hub for all these refugees. We just had an influx I'm talking of probably close to 500-600 refugees that came to San Diego from Baku. And there was this inter knit community of everyone here.

And it was hard because a lot of the folks came up under communism, so there's that mentality. Then you have the practical traumatic events of some of the stuff they went through, some of the stuff my dad went through, and my grandfather went through. And it was just a really weird time. And then you come to America and you're like, I've made it. Like, we're here. This is incredible, right? Because even if you grew up in the Soviet Union, you still idolized America to a certain degree. You still dreamed about America. And so, it was this really weird hodgepodge of experiences for me coming to America as a kid.

FRANK:

Now, isn't Azerbaijan, mostly Muslim?

RUSLAN:

Yes, primarily Muslim. I mean, all Muslim. Armenians aren't supposed to go back to the Capitol. They just expelled 120,000 Armenians from the eastern part of Azerbaijan, which is disputed.

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Eastern Azerbaijan used to be Western Armenia. And so, they just expelled a huge amount that just left and came to Armenia, because of this very conflict that goes back. This is why I came out here and it's still been going on, literally, as recently as four or five months ago where there were all these people that got displaced and these Armenians that got displaced from Azerbaijan.

And because of the constant back and forth in this region, they had a war in 2020 over the same things, Armenians and these historic Azerbaijanians. And there's churches there, Frank that go back thousands of years in eastern Azerbaijan. So, in converting them to mosques, they're doing all kinds of weird stuff in this region. And so, yeah. It's a really messy situation. Very few people are talking about it, unfortunately.

FRANK:

Now, why did your parents decide to leave? I mean, the Soviet Union fell in 1991.

RUSLAN:

We left a few months right before the Soviet Union fell. The timing of that was crazy. So, we left practically because there was fear of violence on us. All the men had pretty much left by that point. And again, we were there kind of handling the last affairs and we applied for refugee status in Israel, and Australia, and in America. And America was the last place we applied, and the first place to accept us as refugees. And so, we left because there was imminent fear of physical harm to us. And there were hundreds of people that got killed in these pogroms in the late 80's strictly on their ethnic identity as being Armenians in Baku.

FRANK:

So, what did your dad do for a living?

RUSLAN:

My dad was a chef and worked in kind of like the service restaurant industry type. So, he moved from being a waiter to being a chef cook. And then he kind of had his side hustles on the side. He would go to Moscow, and get goods, and bring them back to Baku. And he always would have little things. And so, we grew up with kind of technology that everybody else didn't have. I remember being a kid and having a VCR because my dad was able to finesse one from Japan. And so, he was very entrepreneurial in that sense.

FRANK:

So, when you came to America, first of all, you were just a child when you came. You were six. Okay, when did you become a Christian and how did you become a Christian here in America?

RUSLAN:

So, my dad comes, my mom comes, and unfortunately, they had a lot of marital issues back in Baku. They had split up. There were times where I wouldn't see my dad for a while because he was practically away working in Moscow. And when they came out, my mom and my dad had

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this agreement that like okay, this is a fresh start for us. We're going to just clean slate. We're going to work on our marriage. I didn't know that they both had committed infidelity back in the Soviet Union, right? My dad was in Moscow. My mom was in Baku. The tension probably of their marriage is hard.

And my dad was hanging out one day. And I remember coming across these letters with these lipstick, kissy marks on them. And I discovered these, and in my innocence, I was like, oh, this is so sweet. My mom is writing these little kissy letters to my dad. How sweet. So, I bring them to my dad, who loses it. And come to find out, they weren't to my dad. They were actually to my mom's boyfriend back in Baku. That led to my dad leaving, marriage falling apart. That was the straw that broke the camel's back.

FRANK:

Well, hold the thought. We're going to come right back after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. Much more with Ruslan when we come back. Don't go anywhere. We're back in just two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network, website CrossExamined.org. It's also an app you can get, two words in the App Store, Cross Examined. Today, we're talking to Ruslan KD. Look for him on YouTube. Ruslan, just before the break, you were talking about the situation in Azerbaijan, when you were there between your mom and your dad. Pick it up right where you left off.

RUSLAN:

Yeah, so at this point, we come to America. It's a clean slate for them to kind of work on their marriage, if you will. And I ended up discovering these letters with kissy marks on them. And I am so enamored, I think they're sweet. They're for my dad, how awesome. And then, I bring them to my dad, who discovers that they're not to him at all. They were to my mom's boyfriend back in Baku. That's who the letters were for. That was the straw that broke the camel's back. Of course, I didn't discover this until I was an adult when I confronted my dad. Like, why did you leave, right? And he told me the story. You don't remember this. And then like the memories came back. And I was like, oh, I absolutely remembered it.

And so, he leaves. This is about a few months into us being in America. He brought his girlfriend, who then became his wife, from Moscow to America. So, he starts a new family. My mom goes down this dark spiral of alcoholism and just being in an abusive relationship, with just very toxic men. And I'm going to this Armenian Orthodox Church. That was kind of the cultural hub. I get christened. I become an altar boy.

And in this community, there was kids my age 6, 7, 8. And then there was older kids that were like teenagers: 13, 14, 15. And there was a group of teenagers, also refugee kids from the community, that were altar boys with me. And long story short, they ended up sexually

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assaulting me repeatedly, numerous times, through showing me these videos, these graphic adult videos. And that really, really, really did a number on me. Because what happened is, when this stuff finally came out, it was kind of spawned to make me look like the aggressor in the situation. And I was the youngest one. I was the smallest one.

And the way the Church responded to it, or rather didn't really respond or do anything to it, created this very strong vitriol against church, and against God, and against religion. At the same time, my dad was remarrying his girlfriend at the time. And my mom felt like the Church was wrong in remarrying them because from my mom's perspective, they technically didn't get divorced, right? So, from my dad's perspective, we were separated. And I don't know. They may or may not have gotten divorced back in Baku. My mom was like, well, your dad's a polygamist. And I can't believe the Church would allow that.

So then, it was her anger at the Church and my anger at the Church. And so, by the time I'm 10 years old, fourth, fifth grade, I'm a full-blown atheist. I don't believe in God. If there is a God, He hates me. Because why would He allow all this terrible stuff to happen to me? Why would He allow me to be sexually assaulted? Why would He allow my dad to leave? Why would He allow these things to happen? And I ended up going down this path of attempting to be a gang member, of selling weed, of smoking weed, all culminating to me getting arrested at the age of 11. And my mom was kind of shocked. But at the time, she was a single mom. She's working nights, so she doesn't know all the mischief I'm getting into as a kid.

And it was a really dark time for me as a kid. So, this is all fifth, sixth, seventh grade. I am breaking into houses. I broke into my school multiple times, and just stealing things. And it culminated to my mom kind of seeing the direction I was headed. And thankfully, we moved from San Diego, the city of San Diego, we were in the City Heights, Norma Heights area. And we relocated to North County, San Diego, which is where I'm at until this day, Vista, California. You've been here, Frank. It's a bit more suburban, a bit more rural. It's still the city, but it's not the city where I was at. And that kind of gave me a fresh start.

I started focusing on sports, playing basketball. That was Alan A by the way. I was going to be an NBA player. And then I remembered I was Armenian and 5'10". And we've never had an NBA player. So, in the path of sports, now I wasn't smoking weed. I wasn't drinking. I wasn't selling drugs. I wasn't getting in any trouble. I wasn't doing any illegal things. Basketball was my outlet. Music, I always had a desire for that. And I ended up winning a talent show down the street here in Brengle Terrace Park. I won that talent show. And I met a girl at the talent show. And this is the end of my freshman year of high school. And in order to hang out with her on the weekends during the summertime, the only way I could see her was if I went to church with her and her family.

And so, this is at the peak of the seeker friendly movement in the late 90's. And I ended up going to church with her for years, and hearing the Gospel, hearing aspects of the Gospel that really resonated with me. It was about a two year tug of war with God. I'm talking, I needed to

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dig deep into every single question. At the same time, me and her breakup. I started dating a Jehovah's Witness girl. I've got friends that are Muslims. I've got friends that are Mormons. And I am just dissecting all of the different faith views and traditions. At this point, I'm a theist. I'm not an atheist anymore. I'm a theist, because I'm obviously going to church. But I couldn't figure out if Jesus was God Almighty, or if he was just the Son of God. And that's what was kind of the hiccup for me in terms of the Jehovah's Witness girl and some of the stuff they were teaching.

And so, I was working at Pizza Hut at the time. And oddly enough, my manager was a Christian. Our lead delivery driver was a Christian. And they were the ones that kind of really shared the Gospel with me. And then they put the new 'Evidence That Demands a Verdict' in my hand. This is my sophomore year. And that is probably what sealed the deal for me. Second semester of my sophomore year, I'm working at Pizza Hut. I just turned 16. And that sealed the deal for me. And then, I go in the cage stage, which is put them in a cage. Keep him away from everybody. Because then I told the Jehovah's Witness girl she's in a cult, and that she's going to hell. And I became that Christian, the second half of my sophomore year, which wasn't good. I wasn't very gracious or compassionate.

But I knew, okay, Jesus is God. This is the most important thing. And then it took about another year of dating the other girl, and being sexually immoral, and having one foot in, and one foot out. And finally surrendering my life to Jesus the end of my junior year of high school, fully surrendering. I'm going to get into a small group. I'm going to make an effort to be a part of a local church. So, that was like a two and a half year process for me really wrestling with God. I wish it was more like I remember I put my hand up at this moment.

There wasn't really a moment like that for me. I made a public declaration of faith at a Myles McPherson crusade, here in San Diego in the summer of 2002. It was July 4, 2002. But at that point, I had already surrendered my life privately. It was just, there was a public declaration of faith. And subsequently, I jumped into small groups, and leading groups, and ministry, and kind of following the same format that I do on YouTube now, tying in relevant events that people care about, relevant topics that people care about back into the Scriptures. And that was, yeah. That was over 20 years ago now.

FRANK:

You know, I came to faith by reading 'Evidence That Demands a Verdict' too, the first edition. And so, it's interesting that that helped you realize that Jesus was God. I was always a theist. I knew there had to be a first cause. I just didn't know who Jesus was. And then when I got that book, I went wow. This is really true. Now, you've had Sean McDowell on your show recently, who helped update it. I helped update one of the in between editions with Norman Geisler a number of years ago, and now the newest edition.

It probably came out four or five years ago. It still is a great book. It just has so much in it. It's more of a reference book than really a read from, you know, cover to cover. It's more of a reference book, but it's still great work. Now, you got into the music scene. People who see your

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YouTube channel might not know that you really were a hip hop artist first, a rapper first. How did all that happen?

RUSLAN:

Well, growing up in San Diego, this is the 90's. So, this is right in between Tribe Called Quest, Leaders of the New School, LL Cool J, and the gangster rap era was coming in. That's when I got into hip hop. So, initially, I'm into the music. The music was just cool. It was like, wow, this is cool. I was always fascinated with American culture. So back in Azerbaijan, all we had was Michael Jackson. I come to America, and I'm seeing the breakdancing. I'm seeing the DJing. I'm seeing the elements of hip hop in real time.

And so, as a kid, I just kind of started freestyling. And I unfortunately broke into my elementary school. I stole the karaoke machine to make demo tapes of different songs. And that was the initial spark of it, was just kind of as an elementary school kid just kind of messing around. What happened was, when I started playing basketball, I would be the one kid freestyling on the basketball team. And the guys would be like, hey, this is actually pretty good.

For those folks that don't know what freestyling is. It's like someone could beat boxing and throw on an instrumental. And you're just coming off the cuff with whatever's coming to your mind, putting words together. And it's tapping into flow state. It's tapping into that, like, do you know enough vocabulary? Do you have enough cadence and rhythm to come up with freestyle? So, I did that for a while and the basketball players were like hey you're pretty good at this. They were probably telling me you're not very good at basketball. [Laughter]

I did that, and then in high school, I get cut from my junior varsity basketball team sophomore year. And I said, okay, my mom thankfully had gotten me a computer at that time. I started recording myself. And over time, I just slowly built it up to the point where in 2015, I quit my job, and I pursued being an independent rapper from about 2015 to 2020 full-time. I was providing for me and my family in Southern California. My wife was a stay-at-home mom.

And that was a really interesting season, to say the least. But yeah, we ran a little boutique label called King's Dream Entertainment. I was in a collective called The Dream Junkies. We were on the Carson Daly Show, traveled the country, played all over colleges, primarily secular colleges. We were kind of too edgy of a Christian group to play at many churches. We played some churches and some Christian conferences. But it was a lot of secular colleges that would bring us in. And that's how I made a livelihood for myself for quite a bit of time. And then as the pandemic happened, I couldn't do any more shows. There wasn't really a lot of money coming in from the music side because everything shut down.

And so, I was like, man. I was already dabbling with YouTube. I was already podcasting. I was doing vlogs, just trying to experiment. I had maybe 15,000 subscribers at the beginning of 2020. And I just pivoted. I said, okay, I'm home. I'm going to go lean into this format on YouTube talking about my faith, tying in different events that people care about. And by the end of 2020, I

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was at about 60,000 subscribers. I brought on Zach Sperazzo who you've met. Zach's our COO now. And we just thankfully, by the grace of God, continued to scale. And so now, including myself, we have four full-time people.

My wife works with us. We have a couple of remote editors. And yeah, the music was an amazing season. I still make music. I still release music. But I don't like to travel very much. And that requires a lot of travel and doing shows, and tours, and that sort of stuff. But yeah, that's how I got my start in music. It was really just freestyling and God saving me, and me being like, okay. This is something I'm pretty good at. Maybe God can use this for His glory. And I think He has.

FRANK:

Well, now you're over 500,000 subscribers in just a few years. What do you think the secret sauce is, Ruslan? What do people who watch your show say they like about it? The Proverb says we don't want to gloat or say I'm great because of what I'm doing. But when other people say, hey, this is really good. What do they say that's really good about your show?

RUSLAN:

I think there is a desire for people today to be a bit more themselves on camera. So, the more you can really make the listener feel like you're just talking to them, the way me and you are having this conversation, if you can capture that from a content standpoint, I think that's a big one. I've always been very conversational, and it doesn't come off scripted and forced. So, I think foundationally, I think tying that into something that you're an actual expert on. And then I think being in a place where there's a desire for the type of content you're making. So, people genuinely were looking for this sort of content. I had experience with it, and I could be myself on camera.

FRANK:

We're also going to see from Ruslan who his favorite interviews are and what he's learned from these great folks as he's interviewed. So, you don't want to miss the remainder of our program. You're listening Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network. Back in two.

Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen. Frank Turek with you. I want to mention, I'll be in British Columbia this weekend up in Chilliwack, Canada. If you want to be a part of that, go to our website. Also down in Sarasota, Florida, coming up the fourth to the sixth of March, my friend Chip Bennett at Grace Community Church is running ApologeticCon. I'll be there with Alisa Childers, Vocab Malone, John McCray, and several others. Go to our website, CrossExamined.org. Click on Events. You'll see the calendar.

Then on March 9th, I'll be at the Unshaken conference with Alisa Childers and Natasha Crain. I'll be speaking at Metro City Church the following day at the services. And then keep an eye out. We're coming down to Louisiana for Southeastern Louisiana University on the 25th of

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March. We will also be at the University of Buffalo on April 3, and then Boise State on April 8 out there in Idaho. There's a lot more on the calendar. I can't mention it all here. Check all that out. And also, don't forget the brand-new CIA in Charlotte will be happening this August. You've got to go to the CrossExamined website. Look at events. Look for CIA. You have to apply. It's the CrossExamined Instructor Academy.

Myself, Greg Koukl, Alisa Childers, Natasha Crain, Allen Parr and several others will be your instructors. So, if you want to be a part of that, check it out. And if you can't make it to Charlotte, we are teaching the CIA online course. That starts next month. So, if you want to learn how to present this material in a more effective way and answer questions, join CIA online. There's a very limited number of people in that class. You've got to sign up soon. Go to CrossExamined.org. Click on online courses. You'll see it there.

I'm talking to my friend Ruslan. Ruslan KD on YouTube. Great channel, lots of wonderful content on current issues, on apologetic issues, on biblical theology. It's all there. In fact, we're going to get into some of that right now with Ruslan. You've had some great guests. And outside of me, I'm probably your favorite guest of all time Ruslan, I can imagine. Who are some of your favorite guests that you've had on?

RUSLAN:

Oh, gosh, my conversation with Greg Laurie came at a time where there was a much needed shift, I would say, in some of my content. For folks who aren't familiar with Christian YouTube, a lot of the content can very easily drift into dunking on the outgroup. And so, depending on which group you're in, dunking on the outgroup is just easy. So, in my niche, as I was coming up, it was a lot of the, hey, this celebrity pastor said this crazy thing. Ha-ha, this is insane. Right? And I was doing some sort of that concept, which I think some of that is necessary. I think there is a time and a place to call out false teaching.

FRANK:

Sure.

RUSLAN:

But sometimes that mentality can create a cynicism and create a very broad stroke of assuming that every celebrity pastor, all megachurch pastors [are bad]. And Pastor Greg Laurie reached out and was so gracious. And we ended up sitting down and doing several interviews together. And seeing him up close and personal, and becoming friends with him and Jonathan was so fun, and so refreshing. And so, I think the pastor Greg Laurie interviews were great.

We talked a lot about 'Jesus Revolution.' We talked a lot about the Jesus hippie movement. We talked about all sorts of different things. And that was great. But I think the time off camera with him was really great, where I remember one day, we were hanging out and we hadn't had our bathroom built in the studio yet. He was actually our first guest in this new studio. And he was hanging out. And he went to use the bathroom inside the house. My kids were sitting down

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doing home school. And he stops and sits down with them for about 15-20 minutes and draws every single one of them cartoons. And just pours into them. And it was the sweetest thing. I actually got video of it. And I was like, wow.

And so, that to me, seeing him up close and personal started to shift my perspective on mega churches aren't all bad. All pastors that are desiring to reach as many people as possible aren't all bad. Celebrity pastors aren't all bad. And that created a shift in my content, where I don't really do a ton of call out videos now. Again, there are channels who do that. And there's a time and a place for that. But I have leaned into what I call net positive content. So, when someone says something, instead of just trying to come down and hammer on how stupid they are, I tried to find the good and what they say and then gently redirect and correct the errors that they may be communicating. And it's just, I feel more wholesome making that sort of content.

And it was pastor Greg Laurie, and then I ended up having Pastor Chris Brown who pastors North Coast Church here in Vista. It's probably the biggest church in North County. Same exact demeanor, just gentle, just good. And then I started traveling and I discovered that most celebrity pastors or megachurch pastors are a lot like Chris Brown and Greg Laurie, and not like some of the names out there that kind of seem to be enamored with their own ego and their own status. Most pastors are here doing a good job, regardless on the size of their church, regardless on how you think they are. They're genuinely trying to serve people. So, I would say that conversation with Greg Laurie sparked all that off for me. And I'm still friends with them. And it's weird to wake up from a text message from Greg Laurie telling me how great a video was, but it's incredible.

FRANK:

Oh, that's great. These guys that really are doing great work out there. I think of Jack Hibbs, and Skip Heitzig, and Gary Hambrick, and many others. They're really just down to earth guys. They're very humble. Like myself, you know, my new book is 10 Steps to Humility and How I Made it in Seven, which has really humbled me because I've actually made it in six, Ruslan. [Laughter]

Again, we're talking to Ruslan KD. If you're just tuning in, check him out on YouTube. Ruslan, you have a lot of Joe Rogan. You listen to Rogan and Rogan is a very interesting interviewer. He's normally the top one or two podcasts in the world. Why do you think Rogan is so popular? What is it that makes him so interesting to people?

RUSLAN:

I think he is willing to talk about things that most people aren't willing to talk about. He's willing to lean into conversations that are politically incorrect. I think his political views are fairly heterodox. He doesn't fit all the way in the conservative bubble, definitely doesn't fit in the liberal bubble. And I also think that there's a degree of he's been at it for so long, that there's some early adoption that happened for him, you know, 12-15 years ago. I think he's been doing this fairly consistently.

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And so, I think creating the right guests, the right temperament, the right degree of just conversation, and not being able to fit in a box has created a huge, huge audience for him, and speaking to a vast amount of topics. He'll talk about everything from fitness, to politics, to all sorts of different things. And so, I think that's why he's resonated with people. I think lately, it's been some of the being able to take the contrarian position on certain things that the institutions are perhaps not with, whether it's DEI and those sorts of things. And I think that has carved out a very interesting place for him, that a lot of people tend to flock to and check out.

FRANK:

Yeah, and the other interesting thing is such a long form podcast, you know? It's not your standard 40 minutes or whatever. It's like two or three hours, and people really dive into it. And Rogen, as you've pointed out, one of your more recent videos, has Rogen saying, he's interviewing Aaron Rodgers, man, we really need Jesus. He wasn't, as you pointed out, he wasn't really joking about it. He's saying, yeah, we need to get back to reality here in America and around the world. And so, you have a video on that.

You have a video on him reading the book of Revelation and saying, wow, Joe Rogan. Maybe you're right. That's one of the appeals because he doesn't fit in any one box. And, you know, honestly, people who listen to this show are probably Christians, and they're probably interested in apologetics. And they're probably interested in theology and that kind of thing. I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist might not appeal to somebody who is a non-believer, but Joe Rogan can appeal to everybody, right? Because you never really know which angle he's going to come at an issue from.

RUSLAN:

Yeah, and I think he tries to be objective. He isn't always objective, but I think he genuinely tries. And I think that there seems to be a shift happening in the zeitgeist with regards to a Jordan Peterson, a Joe Rogan, of seeing, perhaps not the supernatural aspects of faith, but definitely seeing the practical utility of the Christian faith and how intrinsic it is to the west, to America, and not being afraid to address that, even though perhaps personally, they haven't had an encounter with God. They're seeing the practical side of it, which I think is interesting. I think Justin, who wrote a book recently. He used to be the host of Unbelievable.

FRANK:

Justin Brierley. He'll be on next week. Yeah, he's going to be on this podcast next week. Yeah.

RUSLAN:

Yeah. So, he's expressed some of this in terms of his book. And so, I think that shift is happening in real time. I also think Rogan moved from LA and anyone that's ever kind of been connected to any communities in LA, it's man. Hollyweird is a thing. There's a lot of weird things that are happening there. And I think him probably landing in Austin is beneficial. And there's probably some people behind the scenes consistently leaning into these conversations with him.

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I know we have some mutual friends that have brought up faith on his podcast before. My buddy Zuby has been on his podcast quite a few times, and asked him about God, and these sorts of things. And so, I think there's things that are happening in real time.

And I'm not saying that this is going to lead to some massive revival, or this is going to change America. But I do find it interesting that some of the most influential figureheads in media today, a Jordan Peterson, a Joe Rogan, are becoming more and more outspoken. At the very least, they sound like they're theists. Jordan Peterson sounds way further along in his journey. And I think that's a good thing. I think that's a good thing, because someone may be interested in them and then trickle into a channel like mine, and then maybe trickle into a channel like yours, and then hopefully trickle into a good local church, get disciplined, get equipped, and then go beyond mission for Jesus in the world. So, that's how I see it. I see it in that sense. And I think that's a massive net positive.

FRANK:

Yeah, with the rise of evil, in other words, evil being more and more prevalent. We see it all around us. I think some people are going, wow. Maybe there is a God because things really appear to be going badly. And they may think, just from a pragmatic standpoint, we need somebody to come save us. I think that's basically what Joe Rogan was saying. And then from a philosophical standpoint, people are going well, if there's evil, there has to be good. And if there's good, there has to be God. And so, here's a good ripple effect, ladies and gentlemen. When evil really raises its ugly head, a lot of times it might lead to good down the road because people are shaken from their sort of apathy.

And in fact, when we come back from the break, I want to ask you about this, Ruslan. One of your more recent videos this week has to do with biblical worldview of what apparently Christians, and even Jews, and maybe even Muslims, but more Christians are identifying themselves as basically deists. What do we make of that? They're really not in it for the biblical God, but there's just somebody up there that I can call on whenever I need them. But it's really all about me and what I want out of life. And we're going to cover that right after the break with Ruslan KD. Check out his YouTube channel. Lots of great stuff up there. One more segment with Ruslan when we come back. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. Don't go anywhere.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you want to know more about apologetics, about philosophy, and about theology in a formal way to get a formal degree, there's no better place to go than Southern Evangelical Seminary, SES.edu/Frank. You can get a discount. That's where I went. That's where Alisa Childers is going. Melissa Dougherty is going there and several others. Check out SES.edu. It's all online. You don't need to move. When I went there 30 years ago, I moved because there was no internet at the time. But you can get a great education from your own living room or bedroom. Just go to SES.edu/Frank. You can learn a lot more.

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We're talking to Ruslan KD, great YouTube channel. There's a lot of fresh content up there every week. You want to check it out. And Ruslan, before the break, this latest video you've got on your YouTube channel, you've got Jordan Peterson, Bishop Baron, and also another Catholic priest. I'm trying to think of his name, Schmitz.

RUSLAN:

Mike Schmitz, I think.

FRANK:

Mike Schmidt, yeah. He's got a very popular podcast going through the Bible as well. And you guys were discussing something that the researcher Christian Smith discovered many years ago. He would describe most Christians in America, regardless of their denomination, as believing in what he called moral therapeutic deism. Now, in your estimation, first of all, what does that mean? And does it shock you?

RUSLAN:

It doesn't shock me at all. It means that whether someone's a Christian, Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and they identify as that or they're an agnostic, or they're Jewish, that their worldview is more or less the same. That God ism He's not theist. He's not personal. He's not engaged. He's more distant. He's a deist God. They are viewing God more as a therapist and almost like a genie that you call on when something's going bad, and that their worldviews are indistinguishable from each other. It's not a biblical worldview.

And when you consider how many people identify as Christian, yet how something like the divorce rates versus "professing Christians", not practicing Christians, but the professing Christians, divorce rates from the regular population don't seem to be much different, right? The depression rates don't seem to be much different. And I think when you peel away is that there's a lot of what we would call cultural Christianity, we would call churchianity that isn't reflective or indicative of an actual Christian, biblical worldview.

And in my opinion, this is why so many people are stuck in addiction. This is why so many people are struggling. This is why there's so much compartmentalization with hey, I claim to believe the Bible. But yeah, it's okay if women murder babies. I claim to believe in the Bible but yeah, it's okay if we just redefine what gender is. And I think that's where we are. It's a very interesting place. People are just confused. And perhaps there's a correlation with also the rise of the New Atheism here, with people wanting to make America less and less Christian, and more and more secular.

And now we're in this really fascinating place where the moralistic therapeutic deists don't really speak up and say anything, because they don't really know what they believe. And the New Atheists have kind of ran all of the institutions. And now we're in this really weird place where I don't think anyone's happy with the outcome of all this stuff.

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FRANK:

That's right. Yeah. People who are not necessarily religious in the traditional sense, people like Joe Rogan, and Douglas Murray, and even Dave Rubin, and others are going wow. This is getting crazy. What is going on? Bill Maher of all people, right? Bill Maher is one of the most articulate spokespersons against the juvenile trans movement. When I say juvenile, trying to transition kids. He's going, this is crazy. And he's an atheist. I mean, they're realizing how crazy this is. And they're the ones speaking up. Tragically, few pastors are speaking up and that's a problem. That's why your YouTube channel and others are so important because you will talk about these issues. And by the way, you do it in kind of a coy way. You don't talk about LGBTQ. You talk about...

RUSLAN:

LGTV, because I have a lot of LGTV in my studio. And so, you know, we're fans of LGTVs and the LGTV community. And that's our way of not having our channel flagged in the algorithm. We kind of use code words. Our audience knows what it is and understands it. And it's kind of funny, you know? But yeah, so we use coded language to make sure that we're not kind of setting off those bells to get ourselves blacklisted in the algorithm on YouTube.

FRANK:

LGTV, whenever you hear Ruslan say LGTV, that's what he's talking about. He's talking about the alphabet community. Now, it's interesting, too, that Barna has done some research on this and figured out that only 40% of pastors have a biblical worldview.

RUSLAN:

I saw that.

FRANK:

And about 4-5% of people in the pews have a biblical worldview. They are basically moral therapeutic deists. They just call God, as you just pointed out, like He's a genie. Whenever I need Him, I'll call Him. But other than that, stay out of my life. He's not going to direct what I'm going to think, or do, or who I'm going to vote for, or any of that. It's just, when I need Him, I'll call Him. So, what do you think the greatest problem right now is that Christians are facing?

RUSLAN:

I think the greatest problem right now is that we don't understand that our faith has historically been a practice, and not just a theological head knowledge position. And I think that is tragic. Because if you look throughout Church history, if you look throughout Church fathers, you look in the Scriptures themselves, faith is a practice. Faith without works is dead. And what I'm not speaking about is salvation, right? Because then the Free Grace sticklers will get really angry and say, you're saying works. I'm not saying works is what saves you. I'm saying works is something Christians should do. Works is something that we should practice.

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Ephesians 2:8-9, right? You've been saved by grace through faith. For you are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God predestined in advance. So, there are works, good works for us to do on this side of eternity. And I think that when we just make faith compartmentalized to informational knowledge, it's just information. It's just, yep. I believe Jesus died. I believe Jesus rose. I believe the Bible even though I don't know what the Bible says, or I've never read the Bible. I believe it. That doesn't really mean anything. Right?

But when the faith then is aligned to a practical implementation in a daily lifestyle, you mentioned right? How we navigate our homes, how we navigate, you said 4% of people in the pews have a biblical worldview. Three or 4% of people in the pews probably give to their local churches. They probably do charity. They probably read their Bibles regularly. And I think that is the biggest threat.

We've compartmentalized the faith to just an informational infographics video, and not a practice, a day to day practice. That God's ways are good, that God's wisdom is good, and that it encompasses all aspects of our life. And that is not just for our benefit, but it's also for the benefit of others. That when we are being the hands and feet of Jesus, because we're actually living it out, that we get to be a blessing to our neighbor. We get to do good in this world. We get to be God's Kingdom on this side of eternity.

And I think that's the biggest breakdown that I'm seeing, is that there's a lot of people that they'll check off the box. And we're seeing this less and less with Gen Z, by the way. Gen Z is not wanting to check off the box. Gen Z is over it. They'd rather just tell you, I'm not religious. Where believe it or not, I think that could be a good thing. Because now we can get to the crux of, who is really about this Jesus thing? Who's really about living out God's ways on this side of eternity, and that the bodily resurrection, if true, has radical implications for every area of my life?

It has implications for how I lead my home, how I treat my wife, how I handle my finances, how I take care of my body. All of these things matter to God. And unfortunately, we have compartmentalized them. And as the world is hurting, we're going to see even more disparity. People talk about wealth inequality. We're going to see spiritual health inequality. We're going to see all sorts of inequality because people who are actually practicing these things are going to be way different in the decades to come. And I want to see more people practicing the faith because I think it's important.

FRANK:

It's supremely important. Our job here is to know God and to make Him known. And that requires us not to just talk a good game, but to actually get engaged with people, make them disciples. And in fact, you're an example of that Ruslan, because you didn't just hear the Gospel once and said, that's it. That's for me. That's true. You went through a process. You said several years before you became a Christian. Being exposed to the truth just once, usually is not enough.

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It takes a while for somebody to actually change their worldview, and then actually live according to that change. Hey, I know that there's people listening right now that want some advice from you. Because I know there's a lot of people listening who are apologists or aspiring apologists. They want to make a difference on YouTube or Instagram. You know, with about a minute to go, can you kind of give them your best advice on how to, you know, how to make a difference online for people?

RUSLAN:

I think we have to consider the audience. And I think sometimes, the smartest guys I know, the most educated guys I know, don't always spend the most amount of time considering what do people care about? What are they talking about? And what are they interested in? So, I think if we slow down and say, okay, there's so many guys out here that are experts, they're educated, way smarter than I am. They have way more degrees than I do. And if those guys, those are the people I want to see platformed, by the way. Those are the people I'm excited to bring onto my podcast and share then with my audience.

If those people can tap into what's happening in culture, and then speak to those things from a more educated, more expert level, I think we could see more and more people in the space. Whether it's Christian YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, whatever platform. But we have to consider what the audience wants and consider what the needs of the audience are. And I don't mean just like what do you think their needs are? I'm saying, what are they following? Who are they listening to?

And how can you lean into that and perhaps offer some correction, perhaps affirm some of the things are getting right, and then infuse the actual truth that you've been trained in? And that would be my heart for a lot of the folks out here, because I think there's so many good voices that I'm seeing sprout up. But there's not enough people that actually care about where people are at, what are they interested in, and how they can lean in, and offer their expertise into that.

FRANK:

Go to Ruslan KD, ladies and gentlemen, on YouTube. Where else can people get a hold of you? Suppose they want you to come speak, Ruslan. How do they do that?

RUSLAN:

Yeah, if they go to BookRuslan.com, they can just book me right there. There's a little fill out contact form, fairly straightforward. And so yeah, that's probably the easiest way to get a hold of me.

FRANK:

Well, it's been a pleasure having you on brother. Keep doing what you're doing.

RUSLAN:

All right. Thank you so much, Dr. Frank.

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FRANK:

That's Ruslan, ladies and gentlemen. Go to his YouTube channel or go to BookRuslan.com and learn a lot more. And we'll have Justin Brierley on the show next week, a very surprising development in the world of Christianity and atheism. So, you don't want to miss that. See you here then. God bless.

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