

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

The Truth in True Crime with J. Warner Wallace

(May 10, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, why is America obsessed with murder? Why is America obsessed with crime? Did you know that some of the top podcasts out there are murder and true crime podcasts? For example, Crime Junkie, that's the name of a podcast. Of course, Dateline NBC. And our guest today has been on Dateline, the TV version of it. Morbid is another crime podcast, very popular in America. How about Murder in America? That's a podcast, ladies and gentlemen. People are listening to murder in America.

They're also listening to Rotten Mango, and Sword and Scale, and Anatomy of Murder. Small Town Murder, that's the name of a podcast. And these podcasts have a lot more listens than I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. But they shouldn't have more listens than the podcast of my guest today, the great J. Warner Wallace, the cold-case homicide detective who has Cold-Case Christianity. He's just written a book about murder, ladies and gentlemen. Actually, a book about murder and crime.

It's called the 'Truth in True Crime: What Investigating Death Teaches Us About the Meaning of Life.' And what we're going to delve into here on this podcast is not just talk about murders, and cold cases, and crime. We're going to talk about the lessons you can get from investigating murders, cold cases, and crime, life lessons that you're going to want to know. So, it's always great having Jim on the show. Jim, this book is a little bit of a departure from what you've written in the past. How is it different?

JIM:

Well, as you'll hear in the background, I'm sure at some point my granddaughter, Emma, making noise. Because I really wrote this for my grandkids. I felt like this is the time, at this point in my 60's to kind of say, okay, look. I've written books on why I think Christianity is true, and I'll give you the case for why Christianity is true. But if Christianity is true, it seems to me that its foundational document, Scripture, the New Testament, ought to describe the world the way it really is. And it does describe the world the way it really is.

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It describes us, what causes us to flourish, where it is, why we struggle when we struggle, what it is we pursue that we shouldn't pursue or that we should pursue. These are things that are just true about our nature, and they can be explained in a number of ways. I've seen people try to explain them just through evolutionary processes. But it turns out that every study that's done on the attributes of human flourishing, and there are a ton of these, describes a number. And I've collected all the studies on this.

You see the same attributes of human flourishing when you work murders. It turns out that when people find themselves in that critical moment in which their character is really going to be revealed, and often that's when a crime occurs, you kind of learn. You kind of see, like, what is good about our human nature and what is bad about our human nature. And those things I've kind of collected over the years. I've always wanted to write about them.

And it turns out that there are a number of studies, research has been done on this for years of secular research done on every one of these aspects of human flourishing. And not by coincidence, you could find support for these on the pages of the New Testament if you weren't aware of the studies that are out there. Like, Jordan Peterson's a great example of this, somebody who's deeply familiar with their research on any number of psychological phenomena.

Well, it turns out if you didn't have the time to read that research, you could just pick up about what's true in human nature from the ancient pages of Christian Scripture. As a matter of fact, that's why I think Jordan Peterson finds himself circling back and at some point, addressing the reality that's offered from a Christian worldview. Because it turns out that the Bible does describe us the way we really are. And that you would expect that to be true if Christianity is in fact, true.

FRANK:

Jim, the back of the book says, America's cold-case detective explores 15 surprising rules for life. It made me think of Jordan Peterson's book, 'The 12 Rules for Life.' You've discovered 15 by investigating murders. Before we get into those lessons, though, let me ask you this. Why do you think America, and maybe human humanity in general, is so fascinated with murder and crime? Why is that?

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JIM:

Well, there's been some people who have been writing about this in the last five years, and I've kind of been tracking along. I wondered, too. And I also wondered more than just why are people so fascinated? Because we do it for a living. I never realized that there would be, like, an audience for this. And even when Dateline first started, Dateline was not a show that was so focused on spousal murder. Jim Gaffigan, the comedian's got a great bit on Dateline where he talks about how, you know, Dateline used to be about a lot issues, kind of like 20/20.

Now these are the news programs. And then suddenly it hit on murder, and especially murder of spouses. And now suddenly, that's all. I mean, I've watched Dateline. I still watch Dateline because Keith Morrison is a friend. I consider him a friend, and it's been fun to see him continue and doing all these Datelines. And they're almost always, as Gaffigan says, "they were the perfect couple." And then at some point, someone's getting murdered. That's exactly what you see.

Well, it turns out that even when we were working in cases, I had no idea how popular those shows were, had no idea they were shifting to all about spousal murder and murder in general. But sure enough, they were. And even so much so that when I retired, I was being contacted by NBC and other places. Can you help us develop shows of this nature? And entire networks, like Oxygen, were shifting over to true crime.

Now, what's interesting about that is that the audiences and people have surveyed this for true crime shows are primarily female. And the question has become, well, why would that be the case? I read one analysis of this where the writer, who was a female, said, it's her view that women, because they are largely the victims of these kinds of crimes. I mean, most of the perpetrators are men. And if they're killing another guy or killing a female, most of the perpetrators are. That's true for all of our work in terms of homicides.

Yeah, the most of the time it is men, or it's a woman who's hired a man to get rid of her husband or her boyfriend gets rid of her husband. It's something, it's usually a male dominated kind of suspect pool. And her thinking on it was that women watch these kinds of shows because they really are looking at the cautionary tale. Like, how could I avoid this happening in

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my life? And that's really what this book is really all about. These are rules for life that come out of just object lessons, cautionary tales, every one of these stories. And it's 15 true crime stories, 15 rules for life, 15 evidences that the Bible is telling us the truth about who we are.

And that's kind of the weird genre this is. It's as much kind of self-improvement as it is, you know, making a case or true crime stories. Because a lot of this is just my effort to say to my own kids and my grandchildren who will read this book hopefully someday, that you can learn a lot about human nature and how to flourish by simply being a careful observer. Now, I have 15 rules here because I had 40 when I started, and we had to figure out, like, what book do we write? Was I going to do ten chapters? Was I going to do eight chapters?

You know, sometimes if you're a Christian author, you do eight chapters because, ultimately, these kinds of things are going to be used in small group curriculum. As a matter of fact, for this book, we filmed 16 sessions on Right Now Media for the small group curriculum, and I think it turned out fantastic. But that's a lot of sessions. And so, I wasn't sure really how many. I don't think there are just twelve rules for life, and there are not just 15 rules for life. I think that if Christianity is true, it will describe us accurately to every nook and cranny of who we are. And there are more than 15 nooks and crannies.

Our human nature is so robust, so detailed, and so nuanced, that there's a lot more to write about. But I think these 15 are a good place to start. And my hope here, and that's why so much of the book is about, well, how can you leverage this knowledge so that you can have a better life? That's really where I think. And Frank, honestly, I wrote things like 'Cold-Case Christianity' in the beginning because I was encouraged to do so by, Sean McDowell, our friend. But that probably wouldn't have been the book I would have written.

I would have written this book because I think this book, I didn't think anyone would care why I became a Christian. Why would you? I didn't think of. Well, there's this entire genre, as I'm hitting my microphone here. There's this entire genre of apologetics books. I wasn't thinking of it that way. This is just the way I became a Christian. But I didn't think anyone would care about that. So, this book's a little bit different. I hope it takes us in a different direction.

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FRANK:

There's a lot of wisdom in the book. The book is called 'The Truth in True Crime: What Investigating Death Teaches Us About the Meaning of Life.' You need to get a copy. Just came out. May 7, ladies and gentlemen. And we're going to delve into some of those 15 insights that Jim has discovered by investigating murders. Back in two minutes. Don't go anywhere. Ladies and gentlemen, do you feel shaken with the state of the culture?

Well, if you do and you're anywhere near Pittsburgh, PA on the 18th of this month, May 18, 2024, I'll be with Alisa Childers and Natasha Crain doing the Unshaken conference. That's where we come together and try and show you why you should remain Unshaken, despite the fact that the culture has become more and more hostile to Christianity. And, frankly, more and more crazy. So, go to UnshakenConference.com. We'll also have two more later in the year. One's in Buffalo, New York. Another's in Austin, Texas. All the details on the UnshakenConference.com.

Today, however, we're talking to my very good friend, J. Warner Wallace. His brand-new book, which has the foreword by Alisa Childers, by the way. It's called 'The Truth in True Crime: What Investigating Death Teaches Us About the Meaning of Life.' There are 15 chapters of wisdom in this book, ladies and gentlemen. And it's entertaining because Jim weaves detective stories, cold-case homicide stories right into every chapter. And I'm looking at one chapter right now, Jim. It's the second chapter. It's about fake ID's and a stolen identity. And identity is a big topic in our culture right now. What is that chapter about?

JIM:

Well, you and I, you talk about this as much as I do, probably more than I do. But this is something that I realized that I just stumbled into it. I don't think people understand how deeply identity is connected to every aspect of their life, every struggle in their life. That's how core identity is. As a matter of fact, it's called the core need. One researcher calls it our core need to be known by others. And so, it's so deeply, and I experienced it on a case where I was investigating my last day on the job, and I was with my son.

We were working patrol. I asked my sergeant to let me work that day with him. And it was mostly just us driving around, taking pictures. But we had to handle calls. And so, I was handling

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a call, and it was a guy who had tried to commit suicide. And he did so because he had injured himself years earlier. And although he was a promising football player, that ended up being the trajectory of his life. But what really shook him was that he had a shift in his identity. And I didn't think anything of it. I handled the day and went home that night.

And as I was leaving the compound, I realized that I'm leaving my uniforms behind with my son, taking pictures. I'm never going to put a key in a police car again. Never going to put the key, the core key in the gate again. It is one of those days where you realize that you're about to do a series of things that you have done for decades that you will never do again. And I remember how shook up I was unexpectedly, because most of us cannot wait to leave this job.

You know, we have those little counters, you know, the countdown, how many days, minutes, and seconds you have left on the stupid job before you can leave with your pension. Because you don't feel that way in the first ten years, but you definitely feel that way in the last five. You just seen enough. You've experienced enough. You need out. And that was probably true. I felt like I'd worked every kind of cold case I wanted to work. I've had success in all those. I was just ready to walk away from it until I walked away from it, and I realized my struggle was just in the shift I was going to have to make in my identity.

This had become who I was. It was no longer what I did. And this is so true for men. I'll just tell you that men are in some ways, more tied to forming our identity in our work than any other group. I don't know that women are necessarily as addicted to success and identifying ourselves in success. I didn't put this in the book, but I wanted to share with you something that a friend of mine who, I thought it was so smart when I was talking to him about this. And I think we're doing a podcast; it might have been his podcast. And I remember when he mentioned that, I said, oh, my gosh. This is so true of men.

His name is Dr. Joe Martin, and you can just Google him online. He does work about identity with men. And here's what he says. He says that this is how addicted we are to identity in men. Every time we have a conversation with another man, it's all about the "ations." The conversation, A-T-I-O-N, is about the "ations." The first thing we do is we shake other's hands, and we say, what do you do? We don't care what you do. We're asking, who are you? It turns out, though, as men, we think that. So, the first one is occupation.

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And the first thing we're assessing, of course, identity is always comparative. Remember that. It's always comparative. Identity is not in a vacuum. It's compared to you. It's not about how rich are you, it's how rich are you compared to somebody else, how poor are you compared to somebody else? It's always in comparison. So, we ask the question, what do you do? And what we're really asking, Okay, well, if you're a brain surgeon, oh, my goodness. He probably makes some pretty decent money. The second "ation" is compensation.

We're measuring; we're identifying. We're forming our own identity trying to figure out who are we compared to this guy? Oh, he's a brain surgeon. What kind of degree must he have? Education, next "ation." Was he a good one? Reputation, next "ation." And I'll tell you, if you're a cop, you could have none of those things yet still be the alpha dog in the room. If you're 6'8" and cut like a Greek God. Intimidation is the next "ation." What are we doing here? Well, what we're doing, honestly, is we are forming our identity because our identity is so critical, and it's only formed one of three ways. And you and I have been talking about that.

And it's not like the first two ways is research that we didn't do. It's research that's been done by professionals who study this, kind of like Eric Erickson and other people who have done this kind of stuff have talked about how you form your identity either from the inside out or the outside in. Outside in is the ancient way we form where there's something that pre-exists you, something that's outside of you, that you actually look outwardly, and you grab onto it. It's your race, it's your tribe, it's your clan, it's your city, it's your nation, it's your occupation of your family.

This was true of the guy that tried to commit suicide on that last day of work. He was somebody who came from a football family. How am I going to fit into this family if I'm no longer a football player? I come from a law enforcement family, so I understand that that's how we sometimes form identity. The other way is inside out. It's where you look at yourself and you say, well, I've got this set of desires, or this set of skills that I think I'm really good at this. So, I identify myself. I want to be good at this. I have a series of preferences that I want to be identified by my preferences. Okay, fine. And I want the world outside me to identify me the way that I see myself from the inside.

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Well, that's a much more current way, but I also do that. I mean, I felt like I was pretty good at my job, and I felt like I was naturally inclined to do this. Well, this football player felt like he was gifted in this way, genetically gifted. His whole family was genetically gifted in this way. So again, we have a tendency to do both. It's not as though you only do one or the other. No, you, for the most part, everyone does both of those to some degree compared to the other. But here's the problem. Those are shifting.

And the one definition that you'll see when it comes to identity is the idea that your identity is the way you see yourself. The continuous, stable way you see, continuity and stability are key to identity if you want to thrive. And the problem with forming your identity inside out or outside in, is that those things can be taken. They can shift; they can be taken from you. An injury can end it; a retirement can end it. Or you can change your heart, change your mind anytime you shift. And here's how I tried to say it to you.

We were talking about this, you and I, earlier this week. The idea that if you look at every point in your life where you've struggled, you will find that at that low point in your life, you also struggle with your identity. Your identity shifted in some significant way. So, it's not just that trauma will cause you to shift your identity. It's often that your identity shift will cause trauma. It works in both directions.

And so, if all you wanted to do was protect the degree to which you're going to suffer trauma, you'd be wise to pick an identity that won't shift, that is unshiftable. And of course, the third way to form identity, topside down, where you form your identity in something bigger than yourself. Look, let me give it to you a different way. I say at every marriage that I do, every wedding, I'll say that you need to love your marriage more than you love your spouse. That is the bigger thing. That does not change.

Even on the days when you feel like you guys are changing, or you're having a rough day, days when you want to choke each other, days when you want to be on an episode of Dateline, you have to remember that the marriage matters more than you. Your identity is in the marriage. If you do that, you will protect. Because it turns out that what you identify with is the stuff you're willing to let be your master. And so, be very careful about what it is you are willing to let be your master.

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And so, a lot of this in this chapter on identity was about me. Here I was a Christian. This guy who tried to kill himself was not a Christian when he tried to kill himself. He literally was struggling with the idea that without this, he had a knee injury. He could no longer play the game. He started taking pain meds for the knee injury. Then he ends up being an addict and now he's ready to kill himself. But he wasn't a Christian. I was. Why am I struggling with my identity? Because even though I knew better, even though I knew I should form my identity in the unchanging nature of God, I am in Christ first.

Pride typically takes you back out of that. I mean, you and I know we're in Christ first. But honestly, if you look at how we spend our resources, that'll always give away what you think your identity is. So, if you really look at how you spend your time, money, and talent, you're going to find out. I'm not even sure. Like, I think I know who his master is, and it's not Jesus. So, I think that's what's hard for me. I can write these chapters, but what I try to do in each chapter is have a chase the lead section where I can say, hey, now that you know this is true, how do you leverage this for yourself?

FRANK:

And that's the key. This is a book of wisdom, not just a book of crime stories, but it's actually both. And that's why you'll find it interesting and helpful. And you'll learn not only about your own identity, but who the identity of your Creator is as well. That's what this book will do. Again, the book is called 'The Truth in True Crime.' In case you're just joining us on the American Family Radio network, my guest, J. Warner Wallace, the cold-case homicide detective. The subtitle is 'What Investigating Death Teaches Us About the Meaning of Life.'

And Jim, as you just mentioned, you can look into your heart to figure out your identity, but that's not stable. And that would require you to achieve something where in reality, in Christianity, you don't achieve your identity, you receive your identity, and it's eternal. You can't lose it. God gives it to you. God is the big thing outside of yourself, the big reason you exist, and where you're going, and what your purpose is here on earth. It comes from up. It comes from not just in your heart. It comes from outside of you.

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Your heart's fickle, your heart's deceitful, your heart's changing. Your heart's conflicting. But God is not conflicting. He's not changing. He's not deceitful. He is the ground of our identity. And if you had to pull just one big lesson from that chapter out, Jim, what would it be?

JIM:

Well, let's put it this way. If you're going to form your identity based on your desires or even your abilities, like how well you can achieve something, well, then get ready that you'll always find someone who's a better you than you. When I was a kid, I remember I thought I was going to be the next rock guitarist. I mean, I would spend so many hours learning lick for lick either, you know, Neil Sean from Journey, Carlos Santana.

I remember when Peter Frampton had the Frampton Comes Alive album came out. I just learned that thing lick for a lick, right? And that was who I was until a knucklehead named Eddie van Halen emerged on the scene. And I realized, no, that dude over there, that's the better Jim. So, you have to be careful where you form your identity.

FRANK:

So, he gave up and tried to become an architect, and that didn't work out. And he became a cold-case homicide detective. And after he did that, he became a Christian apologist. Now he's writing on wisdom, 'The Truth in True Crime.' Here it is, ladies and gentlemen. A lot more with the great J. Warner Wallace right 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. We're back in just two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. And when you come with us to Egypt and Saudi Arabia this December, you'll get more evidence. It takes a lot more faith to be an atheist because we're going to the great land of Egypt and Saudi Arabia from December 2 to December 15, Lord willing. And the lady that puts these trips together for us and has put all our trips together, Rhonda Sand has been to Egypt and Saudi Arabia a number of times alone, ladies and gentlemen.

They are safe places to go. And if you want to be a part of that trip, go to LivingPassages.com. LivingPassages.com and search for the Frank Turek trip to Egypt and Saudi Arabia. There is so

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much on the Exodus we're going to dive into when we go there. And of course, we're going to see all the classic sites in Egypt as well. So, you're going to want to be a part of that trip. Go to LivingPassages.com to learn more. And we'll have it linked on our website here soon. We're just reorienting some things on our website right now. But LivingPassages.com has the details. More coming soon.

Sign up because we're not taking a whole gaggle of folks. We're going to have a pretty small group to go there, so sign up before we fill up. Let me go back to my guest today, the great J. Warner Wallace. The new book, 'The Truth in True Crime.' A lot of wisdom in one little book, which, by the way, has 60 pages of notes and another, how many pages in a PDF, Jim? I mean, this thing is heavily, heavily researched.

JIM:

Well, and that was the thing. You're making some bold claims here, and I don't want people to think. So, each chapter, what we do is we, here are my observations working murder cases or working other kinds of cases. And then here's the data from secular research. And so, the PDF file that accompanies the book is much longer word for word than the actual book is because I wanted not just to say, well, here's the study, give you a little cite. No, I want to give you the paragraph from the study that substantiates what I'm saying in the book.

So, yeah, that's probably another couple hundred pages in the PDF file, but that's available when you buy the book. Actually, if you go to TheTruthInTrueCrime.com, you'll see there's a bunch of free stuff. I always feel so uncomfortable, you know, writing a book where I'm asking people to pay for something. I think that just comes out of my own skepticism. As an atheist, I always thought, well, there's the motivation right there. It's always sex, money, or power. So, for these Christians, it's all about the money.

So, when I always write a book, I'm like, okay, what can I give away that has the same value as the book so that people won't feel like, you know, like they're, like it's all a money grab. The reality of it is, as you know, writing books of this nature is really not the kind of thing. I live on my pension. But that website, 'The Truth in True Crime,' will have access to all of the bonus materials.

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And of course, we'll send you links to all the PDF files that go with this book that'll help you make the case, because you're right. We just talked about, for example, about identity. There's a lot of research on identity. Now, what's interesting about that research on identity, Frank, is it's almost always cloaked in other research about purpose and value. Isn't it interesting that identity is very seldom ever studied outside of its impact on purpose and value?

Because it turns out that purpose and value are often how we identify ourselves. Either we'll say, well, this is where my purpose is in life, so I'm going to make it my identity, or this is where I get value, so I'm going to make it my identity. We'd be much wiser, though, to go the opposite way. Let's decide first who we are and then derive our purpose and value from our identity. We typically do it the other way. We kind of bump into it based on, like, if you got hired in a certain career, you know, I was an architect. I considered myself an artist. If you would have seen me in those days, just the way I dressed, would have told you I was an architect.

Why? Because it was such, that was my job. That was my purpose in life. That became my identity. Rather than go the other way, well, decide first who are you? So, here's the illustration I typically use with that. If I was to hold up some weird object, this remote, for example. If I hold up this remote now, this has got buttons on it, but you may not recognize what this remote is. Well, how would you know what its purpose is? Now, I could use it. I could. I could create purpose for it. I could jam it under my door and use it as a doorstop. I could use it to hold up my coffee cup. I could use it to prop up something.

It's got some value just as a rectangular piece of plastic. I could create a purpose for it. But one of the ways you could determine what is the real purpose of this is to say, well, it turns out on the backside, there's actually a manufacturer's name. Let's just Google it, and we'll get the manufacturer up, and we'll say, oh, yeah, this is a remote for this thing over here. Oh, okay. Now I know. Even though I could use it any other number of ways, now I know what its real purpose is. It turns out that's true all the time. If you are questioning what the purpose of an object is, refer to the manufacturer.

FRANK:

So, who manufactured us, then, Jim?

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JIM:

Exactly.

FRANK:

So that's where we're heading.

JIM:

Yes. If we are created beings, then it turns out your purpose will be described on the pages of the manual. And so, that's why it's important for us to decide up front. Are we just accidents? You know, it's interesting, you know, I'm a big Tim Keller fan. And Keller used to say this all the time, and I've said it a number of times now, too. That if atheism is true, you'll be happier and more content as you approach death and as you suffer trauma, as you go through the ups and downs of a rocky marriage or whatever it may be, you will do better if you think less deeply about your worldview.

Because if you think deeply about the nature of an atheistic universe in which nothing really matters and there's no real purpose, you can create something, but you'll be dead in 50 years whether you create something for yourself or not, and the entire universe will cease to exist at some point. None of this carries on. None of this really matters. It's a blip. As a matter of fact, worse than that, in four generations, your great, great, great grandchildren won't give a lick about you, or anything you ever wrote.

Everything is going to expire, and the universe, pitilessly, couldn't care less about you. Well, it turns out you'd do better if you just don't think too deeply about that. On the other hand, if Christianity is true, you will do better if you think more deeply about your worldview. Because in suffering, you have to remember, this isn't the final chapter. There's something more. There's something bigger in this. I can have a Job moment, but the story of Job does not end in chapter three.

FRANK:

Well, you do have a chapter on that in the new book, 'The Truth in True Crime.' It's called 'Sense in Suffering: How to Surprise Yourself by Flourishing After a Trauma.' And I've heard this, Jim, and maybe I read it when I first read the manuscript of this book about a year ago. That's one of

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the problems, ladies and gentlemen, when you write books. You write it, and about a year later, it comes out, and then you've forgotten what you've either written or read about a book you endorsed.

But I thought a good definition of trauma, and correct me if I'm wrong is, trauma is what happens when what you previously thought was true about the world, suddenly you realize isn't true. Like, for example, you may be a young kid and you thought you could trust your stepdad, but your stepdad suddenly sexually abused you, and now suddenly your world is rocked. That's trauma.

JIM:

That's exactly right. And that's what we talk about in this chapter. Cause we see it so often with victims of crimes that they just don't see themselves. Well, this is true. Forget about crime for a second. If you're somebody who's suddenly diagnosed with cancer and you're the first person in your family who's ever had it. By the way, if everyone in your family has had this cancer at that age, you're not surprised when it happens to you. But when you're the first one, you had an expectation. And then what happens is something occurs in life that is radically unexpected, and it shakes the way you either see yourself or the world in which you live.

It's that shaking of worldview that is entirely the problem. And by the way, Christians can also have this happen all too easily. Read Job. Job has got friends who believe they understand the nature of God. And what's happening to Job is foreign to what they expected would be the case. God blesses those who do well and those who have unrepentant sin, hidden sin, this kind of thing. Suffering happens to them. And Job is like, hold on a minute. I don't fit in either of those categories. Why is this happening to me?

Trauma occurs when your view of the world, whether it's religious, spiritual, or not, is shaken by the reality of the world. And then the question becomes, well, how do I move past this? So, on this book, what we tried to do is talk about one family in particular who had such a rebounding view of grief. I worked a lot of unsolved cases that were unsolved for decades. And for the decades that this case was unsolved, I was struck deeply by how much the family was paralyzed by the loss of their daughter to the point where they were just willing to die in grief.

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And, of course, over 30 years, they began to die of old age in grief, never having any closure. Of course, you don't get closure. You're lucky if you get justice, but just never having any resolution, never even knowing if anyone would even reopen the case. And they just started to die of old age, and they died. And the surviving sister just described the family as just lost in grief, immobilized by grief. It's truly the definition of PTSD.

You're going along at a certain level of functioning, and then you encounter this epic moment that changes everything, and you drop to your knees. And if you can't get back to that level of functioning again, we call that PTSD. You're stuck in post-traumatic stress disorder. And, of course, if you can somehow put the counselor or find a way, a mechanism to get back to that level of functioning you were at before, well, now we call that resiliency. This family, this woman actually did better than that.

The sister, once she traveled through the journey with me, and a lot of it was that once she discovered I was a Christian, she needed to process the way she had been viewing the world before. So, she had certain expectations, even as a Christian, that she felt were shaken entirely by what happened to her sister. And she couldn't process how a loving God would allow that to happen in the worldview she held. She hadn't really thought much about the problem of evil because it wasn't a firsthand experience for her until this murder.

And so, what she needed to do is to rethink her Christian worldview so she could more robustly account for evil and suffering. Because most of us in the Church probably, sadly, have a relatively immature view, or not a well-developed view of how God leverages suffering. One thing I see when I read Job, for example, this is not in the book. This is just because I'm in Job right now.

I'm getting ready to do counseling with officers who are critically injured. And I just wanted to get through Job before I get up there with these officers. And what I see in Job is that you have to remember that we have a tendency to think that all suffering is evil. And since God is not the author of evil, God would never allow suffering. But all suffering isn't evil. There are times when suffering is beautiful in what it produces.

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FRANK:

He disciplines those he loves, too.

JIM:

Yes, exactly. And so, there's a sense in which if we don't have a proper view of God's role in our lives and how suffering is going to occur in our lives, well, then we're going to be traumatized by suffering along the way. So, she rebounded in this way. But here's what's great about it. As you study trauma, there's a way to not just get back to resiliency. There's a way to rebound beyond resiliency into what's called post-traumatic growth. And the secular research calls this meaning making.

We as Christians would call it meaning finding. In other words, it's hard to make sense of things if it so violates your worldview that there's no place for this in your worldview. On the other hand, if you rethink your worldview to the point where you actually have a place for this in your worldview, well, now you can rethink what God might be doing in your life.

FRANK:

Peter Kreeft said, the point of our lives is not comfort, security, or even happiness, but training. Not fulfillment, but preparation. This world is a lousy home, but it's a fine gymnasium. And you'll find a lot of lessons in the new book by J. Warner Wallace, 'The Truth in True Crime.' We're back in just two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

Why is America obsessed with murder? Why is America obsessed with crime? Why are some of the top podcasts in America true crime podcasts? In fact, that's a category of podcasts. Why are we obsessed with that and what can we learn from it? Instead of just being interested in those, sins that people commit, wouldn't it be better if we are interested in them to get some great life lessons from them, not only about how we ought to live our lives, but who our true Creator is? You will if you get the brand-new book by J. Warner Wallace. It just came out May 7, 'The Truth in True Crime: What Investigating Death Teaches Us About the Meaning of Life.'

We were talking a little bit about suffering before the break, Jim. Let's kind of close the loop on that. And then I want to ask you the most surprising find that you had in researching to write this book. But let's talk a little bit more about suffering. I ended with a quote from Peter Kreeft,

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who basically said that this life is not all about comfort. It's about preparation. It's about training. This world is a lousy home, but it's a fine gymnasium. I just love that line from Kreeft. What else? Go ahead.

JIM:

Remember how we were talking about how, okay, so it's about, I loved when Tim Keller actually made this clear, surprisingly to me, when he came down with pancreatic cancer. And he fought it valiantly for a while. And he was asked in the last year or so of his life what's changed since he has this diagnosis, this prognosis? And he mentioned a couple of things, but one of the things he said was, I realized that I'm not ready to do what it is God has for me when I get there. Like, I need to prepare myself better in a couple of ways because He's going to have things that He wants me to do.

And I thought, how much of the time do we typically say, well, I want to finish well. And that's not where Tim was. Tim was like, no. I've got to get ready. I thought of it because you mentioned this idea of a training ground. Like, he still, he recognized the nature of life. In other words, we talked about how trauma is. When you have an idea about how reality is, and then it gets knocked in the knees; it gets punched in the face. And now you have to rethink your view of reality.

Well, if you have a proper view of who we are, how we live, what eternity is. Do we experience eternity? It changes your expectations. So, you get the cancer diagnosis and you're not, like, seeing it as all it means is my timetable to get ready for the next chapter is shorter than I thought it was, and I have to prepare. So, I think in the end, what we're trying to do to help people get to post-traumatic growth is to help them rethink. In other words, is there an overarching story of your life? When meaning finding is about you finding where this traumatic experience fits in the larger narrative of your life. Because you may have had a narrative that was false to begin with.

And once you have the proper narrative, you can say, okay, so where is this chapter? Is this the last chapter? Is Job chapter three the last chapter? You don't think Job's thinking that? Of course he is. It's a tragedy. His life story is a tragedy. His last chapter is chapter three. This is true, though. And I've said this now in a number of different ways, and I'll say it with you, too.

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This is true for so many stories in Scripture. One of my favorite is simply John Mark. If the story ends for John Mark, when he is rejected by Paul and is not going to go on the trip with him and Barnabas because this guy's already bailed once on us, he's done. If that's where John's story ends, that's a tragedy. Instead, he perseveres. He uses that story, that part of his life, to learn something. He rewrites his life and sees now what the larger narrative is, becomes one of the best friends of Paul and Peter, ends up writing a gospel.

Now think about that. He ends up writing a gospel. And that means when we see the iconic figures of the gospel, the four heads of Matthew, and Luke, and John, one of them is this nobody named Mark. Wow. The story has a better ending. It doesn't end in the book of Acts. And we have to figure out, and post-traumatic growth occurs when each of us rethinks our view of the story and then finds which chapter this is and how God might use this chapter.

How can Joni Eareckson Tada Get to a point where she feels like her life could be of value, purpose, meaning, impact? Because she didn't let that story, at 18, she was in the hospital. She was determined not to let that be the last chapter. Now, you can try just to muscle your way through this, but the resources offered by Christianity are far better because it's saying, basically, that there is an overarching story. You don't have to create it from scratch. You simply have to find your place. Where is this chapter?

And that's why I think in the end, and this is what I'm trying to do in this chapter of this, of our book is like, how do you do that? Like, every chapter has a section called 'Chasing the Lead.' And in that section, we're saying, okay, you've already learned this principle. Now, how do you leverage that principle for your life? How do you grow on the backside of trauma? And so, my hope is that a book like this kind of bridges that gap. Because when I first started writing books ten years ago, my life was as a lead pastor, helping my congregation do this and learning myself how to help people do this.

But the first book I was asked to write was a book that really dictated the next five books. And during that time, I was constantly asking my publisher, hey, I want to write this book. What kind of book is this? True crime? Kind of some self-improvement and a little bit of apologetics in there. I'm not sure that's a book we want, anybody's going to want. I actually think it's a timely book. I hope it'll help people turn corners.

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FRANK:

In fact, as our mutual friend Greg Koukl has put it. Since we're talking about suffering here, that Christianity is the answer to the problem of evil. I mean, there would be no need for Jesus if there was no evil. There would be no need for Jesus if nobody ever sinned. You know, you can get to heaven by being good. You can. You've just got to be perfect your whole life. Too late for me. How about you? Right? The reason Jesus had to come and save us from ourselves is because we are evil.

You know, we have another mutual friend, Ray Ciervo, who is an apologist in New Jersey. And Ray puts it this way. Here's a summary of the entire Christian story. Number one, God created it. Number two, we broke it. Number three, Jesus fixed it. God created it, we broke it, Jesus fixed it. And, you know, the world's broken. You know, you're experiencing pain and suffering.

And who fixes it? Ultimately, Jesus does. And you'll learn more lessons like this in the book, 'The Truth in True Crime,' by J. Warner Wallace. Jim, I've got to ask you this, too. What was the most shocking discovery that you made in researching this book, and then you wound up making it a central point in this book, 'The Truth in True Crime'?

JIM:

I think it really is this. And if I asked anyone, and I do talk about it a lot, because I think it is strong evidence for the strength of the Christian worldview and how it describes the world we live in. And I hear what I would say. If you thought, as a human, what's the one thing I can do that would help me flourish on the levels that we typically measure when it comes to human flourishing? And those are things like mental health, physical health, longevity, being a better employee. A better employee, or doing better at school, getting better grades, making more income. I mean, you just name it.

FRANK:

Having more friends, having deeper friends.

JIM:

Having deeper connections, having a better friendship, having a better marriage. What could you do? What's the one thing? And if I just said, I'm just going to, you just tell me, what is it? I

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don't think many people would offer this. I think they would guess around it. And perhaps that tells us something, the fact that they wouldn't probably think of it. But it turns out that the data is pretty strong. And I've collected that data. It was fun doing this book, because what I love to do first, like in every case, right? You collect all the evidence, and then you say, okay. I'm about to write out a Ramey warrant for this guy's arrest. And I'm just going to use all this evidence to build this case so that a judge can look at it and go, okay, that's the most reasonable inference.

Let's just go arrest this guy. I start books like this by just collecting data. Research, research, research, research. And that's what we did here. And the research on this particular attribute of human that will cause human flourishing is pretty robust. And it's been about maybe 35 years of research, in the last 35 years. And it's an attribute that we know as humility. I think that's not one that most people would just pull out of their hat. And maybe that's because we're too prideful. But the reality of it is, is that humility is the key to everything.

I mean, we resist people who are proud. We don't like to be around people who are so full of themselves. It's people who are self-effacing, even a comedian. You know, you love comedians that can make fun of themselves. You love working with people who can make fun of themselves. People who actually recognize what they don't know are better learners, they're better employees. They're much easier to live with long term. They do much better on grades. They do better on their SAT's. Yes, statistically, they do.

As a matter of fact, they've even done research to show that they can determine truth from error at a higher rate. Why? Because they're teachable. You can't be teachable if you're full of yourself. Humility is. And what I try to do in this chapter of the book is talk about somebody who didn't possess it, somebody who was a local street legend when I was working gangs and didn't end up well. Because it turns out that our pride causes us to chase things that we shouldn't chase, and then we end up train-wrecking our lives. Most of the time, especially now, I think it's really dominant right now.

Because right now, we are in a social media world that amplifies celebrity. There's no gatekeepers for celebrity anymore. We're right now going to show this video on both the radio. They're going to hear it on the radio. You can probably watch it on YouTube. YouTube

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allows anyone from the comfort of their home with a relatively modest investment to become a celebrity online.

There's no gatekeeper anymore. You don't have to go through NBC, or CBS, or the legacy media centers to become a celebrity, to get millions of viewers to have millions of views. Okay? That means that we have to really ask ourselves, is celebrity good for us or bad for us? If humility is the key to flourishing, it's just the opposite of celebrity.

FRANK:

Yeah, it's something Denzel Washington said. Fame is a monster. And it's true because it can take you down the wrong road. Sex, money, and power are the three big things. In fact, you talk about them in the book, 'The Truth in True Crime.' And, Jim, since we're running out of time, I want to pick up this conversation in the next podcast, which will be the Tuesday podcast, ladies and gentlemen.

For those listening on the American Family Radio network, you will not hear that podcast here. You need to find the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast to hear that. We're going to talk more about how humility is actually the key to success and knowing God. We're also going to talk about what does it mean to love as God loves. But, Jim, if people want to get to the book, 'The Truth in True Crime,' where do they go?

JIM:

TheTruthinTrueCrime.com. Pretty straightforward.

FRANK:

TheTruthinTrueCrime.com. You'll also get many free giveaways that Jim has related to the book. If you go to that website, go there. Get those free giveaways that are very helpful. Get the book, and we will see you here, Lord willing, on Tuesday. God bless.

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