

A TRUE Story That Will Change Your Life Forever with Greg Koukl

(August 15, 2025)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, why are we even here on Earth? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is the big picture? What is the story of reality? Well, there's nobody better to talk about that topic than the man who wrote the book 'The Story of Reality', the great Greg Koukl. He's with me here at the CrossExamined Instructor Academy in Charlotte, North Carolina, CIA. It's always great to see and work with Greg. Greg, let's talk about 'The Story of Reality.'

GREG:

Well, I'm not the author of that book. God is the author of that book. I'm the author of the expurgated version or whatever you want to—

Trimmed down, 'Story of Reality' light kind of thing.

FRANK:

But the name of your book is 'The Story of Reality.'

GREG:

No, you're right. I'm just kind of funning with you a little bit. Yeah, it's 'The Story of Reality.' That subtitle is 'How the World Began, How It Ends, and Everything Important that Happens in Between.' And for years and years, I would think about this concept, and I even had a teaching that I did, trying to develop the basic principles of Christianity, the sine qua nons that without which Christianity would not be Christianity anymore.

What are the essential elements? And I realized, well, God's an essential element. That's the beginning. And some essential elements about who human beings are, how they're made, what gives them value. That's another one. And then, well, of course, man got himself in a heap of trouble, didn't he?



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Now, they've got a rescue plan that needs to be put in place, and God initiates that through Jesus becoming a man. And incidentally, just as an observation, in our story, because every religion is a story of reality. It all means to explain the way the world really is. It's a worldview, a view of the world. And in our story, man can't rescue himself. He doesn't do it. He can't do it. He's not able to do it. God has to rescue him.

FRANK:

Now, that's unique.

GREG:

Absolutely unique in all the stories. And so, in this case, he puts together a very unique plan. And that is, he becomes a human being himself. He takes on humanity to accomplish a particular thing, and that is the salvation of the world. And so, these are the main things, basically.

And it turns out that they all kind of fall in a specific order, topical order, but they are also in a logical order and in a temporal order. So, the story has a plot line. It starts with God, then with man, then Jesus, and then what Jesus does on a cross that determines what happens to everyone at the final resurrection, how the world began, how it ends, and everything important that happens in between. And the reason I put this book together is because I, I became convinced, listening to so many Christians, that they did not have, I'm just going to call it a coherent or cohesive Christian worldview.

It isn't that they didn't understand Christianity in its basic form, that they didn't love Jesus or weren't following Jesus, but they didn't know how the whole story fit together. And because they didn't know how the story fit together, they had trouble, with, especially two issues. One is the problem of evil. Why would there be so much evil in the world? If God exists, how could he allow that? And without realizing that our whole story is about the problem of evil. It starts in chapter three, and then it doesn't end for 66 books.

You know? God is resolving the problem of evil. And then the other question, if they don't understand the coherence and cohesiveness of the story, Frank, is that they're stumbled by the Christian claim, which was Jesus' claim, and all he trained to follow after him, that Jesus is

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the only way of salvation, which is really an offensive claim in a pluralistic culture. Right? And Christians are stumbled by that. But they don't realize that the problem of evil and Jesus being the only way are flip sides of the same coin.

All right? Because singular problems have singular, oftentimes singular solutions. And that's what we find here. Now, when you understand how it all fits together, it makes sense that Jesus is the only way because he's the only one who solved the problem. And when you get a clear picture of the problem, then you can get a much more clear picture on why the solution that God has provided is the appropriate and only solution. So, when you think about it, those five points, God, man, Jesus, cross, resurrection, and I mean here, final resurrection to reward our judgment, perfect justice or perfect mercy, those are the sine qua nons.

Those are the absolutely vital elements of Christianity, and they tell the story. I mean, tomorrow, Lewis's phrase, it's mere Christianity. And they tell the story from beginning to the end. And this becomes the kind of the package that we understand all the particular details with. You know? We sometimes get lost in the details because we don't understand the big picture. We get lost in the forest in the trees, for the sake of the forest.

And so, this was an attempt to try to put that all together, Frank, in a way that was understandable. It's theology, but it's in a narrative form. So, I'm talking-- It's as if I were chatting with you about it and you were someone who didn't understand it, and I try to lay it out for you in a consecutive order, but in an intelligent way without a lot of Christianese and you know, religious psychobabble going on. Just talking. I'm talking to the reader.

And that's why I call it 'The Story of Reality' two ways, because it is the account of reality that the scripture provides for us, but it's also a pretty cool story, and it's a narrative, and it's an account. And so, we follow that account and then we find our place in it, because we have a place in it, because we were made for the story. And the odd thing is, when you think about it, even people who don't believe Christianity, they're still in the story. And the reason I can say that is because the world is the way it is, because God made it that way.

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And you can't get away from that. If Christianity is true, then every human being is made the image of God, and they live in the world that God made. And that gives us a real advantage if we understand reality.

FRANK:

Now, people may be thinking, as we're talking here, when Greg says the story of reality, we often think of a story as a fictional tale.

GREG:

Right.

FRANK:

But in this case, we're not really thinking of it in that sense.

GREG:

No, not at all.

FRANK:

It's more like an account of reality.

GREG:

That's right.

FRANK:

But the word story's better.

GREG:

Yeah. Yes. It's fetching, you know, and it has a winsomeness to it. But, when I was, this is a distinction I make in the book that even though I'm calling it the story, it's a different kind of story. It's a true story. So, when my one daughter was 6 years old, she was reading 'The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe', and the other stories of the Chronicles of Narnia. And she said, papa, is that a true story? And I said, no, that's not a true story. I said, some stories are true,

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some are false. It's actually a fictional story about a true story, if you understand, Lewis' foil with those stories.

But my wife and I made it clear to her that the story we're telling her, the story of reality, essentially. We didn't use that language, but that isn't like that other story. It's not a myth. It's not meant to be understood as a fiction. That's why it doesn't start like once upon a time. It starts, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. That's the start of everything. And then it moves on from there. And so, yeah, that's what's unique.

Using the concept of story is, I think, really helpful. And it is accurate in a measure. Every religion, every worldview is meant to tell a story about the way the world actually is. But of course, they compete with each other, so they can't all be true. And in this book, I also have woven into the account, soft, what I call soft apologetics, just like Lewis did in 'Mere Christianity.' Because I anticipate challenges or questions that want to come up. And so, then I said, and by the way, let's pause for a minute. Let's think about this.

I know what you're thinking. You're probably asking this question, so let's deal with it. So, that's the way that the book is written. I have theology in there. You could think of it as a systematic theology but for beginners almost. Very accessible, telling the story of reality.

FRANK:

Everyone has a story. Atheists have a story. They were just molecules that somehow came into existence out of nothing by nothing. And the molecules are the story. That's—

GREG:

Right. The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be. The Carl Sagan's characterization of the story, right? That's the atheist's story. That's the matter is the only thing that exists story. But of course, there are all kinds of problems with that. And I do deal with some of the concerns right there in the book.

FRANK:

The book is called 'The Story of Reality.' It's about several years now but—

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GREG:

It has 20, I want to say 16 or 17—

I mean, it's amazing. It's been like eight or nine years. Surprising, the time has passed. But it's done well. It's over 100,000 copies. You know, a lot of people, people are still reading it and I'm glad for that.

FRANK:

And it's an evergreen book, ladies and gentlemen. So, you can pick it up, 'The Story of Reality.' We're going to unpack more of it as we go here with my friend Greg Koukl from Stand to Reason. By the way, Greg does a couple of great podcasts every week. One is the Stand to Reason podcast. The other podcast is called STR Ask, where he and Amy Hall answer questions.

GREG:

The great Amy Hall.

FRANK:

The great Amy Hall. She's way better than you, Greg. Anyway, we're back in just a few minutes, right after the break. Don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network and other stations around the country. We're today talking to my friend Greg Koukl, who has written a fabulous book called 'The Story of Reality'. And we're unpacking aspects of that book here on the podcast and radio program today to learn more about 'The Story of Reality.' By the way, you're in the story whether you know it or not. The question is, where are you going to wind up, ultimately? That is a decision you're going to have to make.

And my friend Greg Koukl is going to help you see the big picture of that story. But before we do, Greg, before the break, we were talking about the fact that everyone has a story whether they know it or not. And there are problems with the atheist story about just molecules in motion. What are some--?

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GREG:

Yeah, well, one of the things I point out when I start out with the first section, God. And that's the first step of our story. The first player of our story is God because the story is about God. Okay? It's not about us. And sometimes we get that mixed up and the tail's wagging the dog.

It's really, I mean, with respects to one way some people look at it, it's not so much a story about God's wonderful plan for our lives. It's more about our lives for God's wonderful plan. And how do we fit into that? Okay? And when--

One detail of our story is very important because you have God, who is an invisible person, so to speak, making the rest of the invisible world and the material world as well.

So, in our story, there are two types of things. There are material things and immaterial things. There are physical things and non-physical things, and they're both real. And this is why sometimes atheists will complain about, oh, you don't believe water in the wine. You don't believe in the virgin birth, the resurrection of Jesus. That's ludicrous.

Well, it just depends what kind of world that we live in. And if we live in the kind of world that's described in Scripture, and there's good reasons to believe that, then we live kind of in a magical world, and magical kind of things can happen.

Okay? So, those things are completely consistent with the world we live in. All right? But the competing story, or one of them, is the atheistic story. And their story begins in the beginning with the molecules, you know, molecules in motion. And, as characterized by Carl Sagan's famous line in 'The Cosmos', the cosmos is all there is, there ever was, or there ever will be.

An irony about the cosmos in that line, Frank, I don't know if you thought about this, but this is the most widely watched scientific documentary in history. And the founding statement, the grounding statement, the thing that it's all about, I just cited that from Sagan. There's nothing scientific about that statement.

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FRANK:

No, it's a philosophical claim.

GREG:

Yes. Of course, science can't tell you everything that is, or ever was, or ever will be. That is a philosophical statement. Of course, the whole thing is influenced by that philosophy too. But just as an aside. The difficulty I have, and there are many, but one of the chief difficulties that I have with the matter only worldview, which is the atheistic worldview, which is the worldview of humanists, and secularists, characteristically, and communists.

I mean, this is their world. Lots of people believe this worldview, is it can't make any sense of the most salient feature of reality. Now, remember, we're talking about reality, the way the world really is. We're trying to find an explanation that makes sense of all the details. And so, we're looking kind of for explanatory power. Okay? Can the worldview you're offering, say, Christianity, can that view of reality explain all the important parts of reality?

You know, we were talking a few moments ago about the problem of evil and how that's, in a certain sense, it's not a problem for us. I understand their concerns that we need to speak to. But it's part of our story. You know, we're not trying to deny it. We're not trying to ignore it. It's part of the story, starts early on. The whole—

If we didn't have a problem of evil, we'd have no story. Let's put it that way. And so, we take seriously the problem of evil. Now, this is a problem that atheists bring up all the time, you know? And so, I have a question then when people raise that issue.

I say, well, tell me, when you say there's evil in the world, what exactly do you mean? And they will give examples of it. Okay, they might say rape, and torture, and, you know, global warming. I don't know, what happens to be. Pick your poison kind of deal. I say, okay, and you don't believe in God because that? Right, okay. Let's just say you're right. Let's just say there is no God. Those things that you just described, do they still happen? Yes, of course, they still happen.

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Are they evil? Of course they're evil. That's why I don't believe in God. Okay, now you tell me how you explain there can be so much evil in the world on your worldview, okay? Because God's out of the picture and they think they've solved a problem. But they haven't solved a problem. They've just removed one possible solution. The problem of evil is not a Christian problem. It's not a theist problem. It's a human problem. And everyone's got to face it because it doesn't matter where you lived or when you lived.

Everybody knows that something's wrong with the world. The world is broken, okay? And most people are pretty aware that we have something to do with that or we're complicit in that problem. And so, even if God is—

Even if you know, you're not even considering atheism, the problem of evil is still a problem in the world. So, whatever worldview you adopt instead of some form of theism, because of the problem of evil, you're still stuck with the problem.

Now, with the resources available to you in your worldview, now what? What say you about the problem of evil? How can there be so much evil in the world if there is no God as a standard, a moral standard which clarifies what evil and good is that we get to complain about to begin with?

FRANK:

Sure. Atheism doesn't take away the problem. It takes away the hope that the problem will be fixed. But it's not a problem, as you just pointed out, Greg. Explain that again, because people, we went through that quickly, why there can't be evil unless there's good. There can't be good unless God exists.

GREG:

One way of looking at it is this. And this is just a repackaging of the old moral argument, which I think is wonderful. Okay? And sometimes the way people characterize the problem, people, they just say things ain't right. That ain't right what that person did. They're not the way they're supposed to be.

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Now, when somebody says that things are not the way they're supposed to be, which I think that's a fair characterization. Well, that presumes something. That presumes that there is a way that they're supposed to be. But you can't have a way that things are supposed to be without a supposer.

How about this? If there is no God, there are no laws. There are no objective laws, all right? People play around with evolution. That's not going to get you what you need with the problem of evil, all right? It gives you subjective morality. It doesn't give you objective morality. And that's the—

FRANK:

There are no moral laws of God.

GREG:

Pardon me. There are no objective moral laws. And so, now what? Okay, well, if there are no laws, then there are no broken laws. Like, you can't break the speed limit on the-- What's the German highway?

FRANK:

The Autobahn.

GREG:

On the Autobahn, there is no speed limit, right? But we know there are broken laws. That's the problem of evil. So, there must be laws to be broken. And if there are laws to be broken, there must be a lawmaker. So, we can reason backwards from the problem of evil to the necessity of God's existence.

And not just a God, but a moral God who is the ground of goodness, who is the essence of goodness, not just the definer of goodness, but the essence of goodness himself, who then sets the standards for us, which standards are broken, which causes evil in the world, which people complain about. It turns out that God is the necessary foundation for there to be any morality at all.

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Now, philosophers take exception with that. But look, you know, this isn't my first rodeo. I've been around the block a bunch of times with a lot of people on this, and you're not going to find a better answer to the grounding of morality than a personal God whose character is the definition of morality, is the standard itself. You can do all kinds of other gymnastics, but they're all, you know, like, they're whistling in the dark, man.

It's not going to work. The long and short of it is, you are beholden to a God who made you for himself, and you have not kept his laws. That's the problem. All right. Now, of course, the solution is Jesus. We would get to that. But basically, I'm just simply saying that when it comes to atheism, one of the chief reasons that I cannot take it seriously is it doesn't take seriously the problem of evil. Ironically, it doesn't.

And what's happened sometimes, Frank, and I know you've seen this. Because when they get in a bind, the only option they have really is to deny morality. Deny morality because they have no grounding for it. All right? And so—

FRANK:

But they still get upset when you cut them in line.

GREG:

Yeah, well, listen. That's because they're human beings made in the image of God who live in God's world. You know, this is Francis Schaeffer coming through. Now, that's the reality of the matter. But the irony though is, they don't believe in God because of the problem of evil, and then they instead adopt a worldview, a different competing story of reality, a materialistic one, where the word evil has no meaning, objective evil, and therefore there is no evil in the world.

To which I respond, wait a minute. You just told me there's so much evil in the world you can't believe in God, so now you're not believing in God, and the only alternative is to say there is no evil in the world. What's up with that? So, it's just a conundrum that I don't see how they can honestly escape. And that underscores a point that I like to make with regards to the story of reality, is that we have reality on our side. Reality, and I was going to say properly understood, but it's not hard to understand it.

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These concepts are intuitive concepts. They're common sense concepts. That's what I said. Doesn't matter where you lived or when you lived, everybody knows there's a problem of evil. Something's wrong with the world. But the atheist has to then deny, essentially deny, what everybody knows to be true about the world. Now, this is not good for atheism as a worldview.

FRANK:

No, not at all. And in fact, my mentor, Dr. Norman Geisler used to say this. He used to say that evil doesn't disprove God. It may prove there's a devil out there, but it doesn't disprove God because there'd be no such thing as evil unless there was good, and there'd be no such thing as good unless God existed.

So, ironically, the problem of evil boom boomerangs back on the atheist when he brings it up because he is actually assuming a standard, as Greg mentioned earlier when he says that, ladies and gentlemen. So, the problem is not solved by atheism. Atheism can't deal with the problem of evil because they don't believe in any standard outside of ourselves by which we could even discover what evil was.

GREG:

Now, every once in a while, I'll get somebody push back on me, an atheist, and say, no, no. You don't understand our position here. We're not saying we believe in evil. We're saying that you believe in evil and you believe in a good God, and a powerful God. And so, there's an internal contradiction. Now, we don't have time to go into that right now. But I'll just say that philosophers don't pursue this anymore because they know it does not go through.

FRANK:

Right.

GREG:

It isn't an obvious contradiction because there could be a good reason why God might allow evil for a season. So, there's no inherent contradiction in that. But that is kind of an end around they try to take. Here's the deal.

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FRANK:

Hold the thought. The deal after the break. Coming up to a break. You don't want to miss what Greg is going to say next because these are real problems for all of us. Is there a good God? If he does exist, why would he allow evil? We're going to get to all of it in the true 'Story of Reality,' the subject of Greg's book. My guest today, Greg Koukl. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. Our website CrossExamined.org, CrossExamined with a D on the end of it. Back right after the break.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. My guest today, Greg Koukl. And we're talking about 'The Story of Reality.' Right now, we're talking about the so-called problem of evil. But before we get back to Greg, I want to mention that this weekend I'll be at Grace Community Church in Sarasota, Florida for all the services. One Saturday night, and three on Sunday morning. Check the website out there for the service times. That's our website, CrossExamined.org or the website for Grace Community Church In Sarasota, Florida.

Also, evidence for Christianity is often found in the dirt. That's why the 'Digging up the Bible' course, which I will lead online, begins shortly. If you want to be a part of it, we've got 22 hours of video that goes through the top archeological discoveries found from Genesis all the way to maps, all the way to the book of Revelation and beyond. In fact, we found 107 people named in the Bible. We found them in the dirt and a lot more of the events related to the Bible corroborating evidence in the dirt.

You're going to want to be a part of the course. Go to crossexamined.org. Click on online courses. You will see 'Digging up the Bible' there. I'll be the main instructor. We'll also have Titus Kennedy, an archeologist who has written some great books. They're part of the course. He'll be on one of the Zoom sessions. Check it out. And let me now go back to my friend Greg. Greg, before the break, we were talking about this problem of evil. And you were saying that a lot of times atheists will say, well we don't have a problem. We really don't think there's good or evil. But you say there's a good God, why would he allow evil? Go ahead.

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GREG:

And you're stuck with the contradiction. One thing I said is, and I do unpack this in 'The Story of Reality,' that this deductive problem of evil just doesn't go through. Logically, it doesn't go through. And I explained the reasons why. I hinted at it a moment ago. It's not a contradiction to have a good powerful God and evil if the good powerful God has a good, morally sufficient reason for allowing evil for a season. Okay? Now, that's the work of theodicy.

People might have heard that term associated with the problem of evil. That's trying to think about what some of the options might be. Why would God allow evil for a while? Okay, so that's a separate issue. But all we have to do is have a plausible option or a possible option in order to escape the apparent contradiction. But the kickback that I sometimes hear is, the atheist will say, well I'm not saying there's evil in the world. You're saying there's evil in the world, and you're saying that God exists, and he's good, and he's powerful, and so forth.

You're stuck with that problem. But you can't put this thing on me now. There's got to be a God if I'm complaining about the problem of evil. Okay, that's an end around if they're very, very careful. I know that is an end around for the atheists, but I promise you on the street, I've almost never heard that from an atheist. What I've heard is, there is evil in the world. They're acknowledging the reality of the evil in the world. And why not. For goodness sake, there is evil in the world. And so, once they make that acknowledgement, now I have a piece of the puzzle on the table.

They've already admitted there's evil. And incidentally, we referenced this a moment ago. Unless the evil we're talking about is objective, there can't be a problem of evil. The problem of evil complaint just is that there is real, objective evil in the world. Now, if a person wants to be a relativist and say, well, morality is just an individual opinion, then their complaint about the problem of evil is reduced to something like, I can't believe the existence of God in the world because of Brussels sprouts.

Brussels sprouts? What's that? They're disgusting. You ever taste those things? Now, I happen to agree with that. And I cannot understand like out of nowhere, an explosion. Brussel sprouts are on every menu in every restaurant.

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FRANK:

It's got to be cut very finely, fried right. And you've got to put like syrup on them.

GREG:

No, no, no. There's no redeeming those things as far as I'm concerned. But in any event, notice the complaint has changed now. I can't believe in God because there's something I don't like.

FRANK:

Preference.

GREG:

Yeah, preference. Now, of course there are a lot of people that—

Frank Turek likes Brussels sprouts if they're cut just right and sprinkled just right.

So, some people like them, you know? So, how could there be a case against the existence of God because you don't like some food? But that's what the whole kind of the complaint about evil amounts to if you're a relativist. So, if you're a moral relativist, you have two ways out here, one way or another. You either have to acknowledge the real evil in the world, which I think that's a smart way out. But then you've got to bite the bullet and say, we've got to ground it.

We've got to make sense of why there's a moral law to begin with. And that's going to take you right to God, it seems to me. Or you can—

Excuse me. You can say, all right, I'm going to stick with my relativism, but now you're going to have to bite the bullet and say there really is no evil in the world. And, of course, that's hard to do for one, for human experience. Secondly, it's one of the favorite pushbacks of atheists. They'd have to abandon that as one of their objections to God. But that's what they're left with if the problem-- I mean, if they're going to be the materialist, the atheistic materialist, that's the consistent problem.

FRANK:

You know what the interesting thing about that, Greg? I think if people are honest with themselves, they know with more certainty that murder is wrong than they know that atheism

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is true. So, why would they side with the less certain conclusion? I mean, you know, murder's wrong. You know torturing babies for fun is wrong. You know rape is wrong. To be an atheist, you would have to deny those deep intuitions you have that you are more certain of than the idea that atheism's true.

GREG:

Yeah.

FRANK:

So, why would you do that?

GREG:

Yeah, it's not just the problem of evil in these intuitions that have to be denied. There's a whole bunch more things, too. And I cannot will myself to be an atheist. All right? Because I know too much. And I think if people think about it, they know too much, too, because you'd have to affirm a number of things that are wildly counterintuitive. You'd have to say, well, objective morality doesn't exist, and therefore, there's no problem of evil.

And just a pause here on this particular point. The atheists consistently want to go to Darwinian evolution. Well, evolution explains morality. And my response is, it does not explain morality. It can only explain in principle, and this needs to be demonstrated. I don't even know if it can do this. But in principle, all it can do is explain why we have false beliefs about morality. Oh, that's to help us get our genes in the next generation some way or other. I don't even know how the Darwinian process can produce beliefs of any kind.

FRANK:

Right.

GREG:

But if they do produce beliefs about morality, they have to be false, because the Darwinian model denies objective-- It's about molecules in motion. You can't get-- You can't have a configuration of molecules produce a moral rule, you know?

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So, that's the best they can do is relativism. Okay? And relativism isn't going to work to ground a robust complaint against the problem of evil. So, I'd have to believe that there's no problem of evil. That's first thing. Counterintuitive, radically counterintuitive. I'd have to believe that everything came from nothing.

FRANK:

Without a cause.

GREG:

No cause, no purpose, no reason.

FRANK:

You're giving up science when you do that. Every effect has a cause.

GREG:

Well, that part of science, yes. It seems to be right. Well, that's more philosophical, but metaphysical in a certain sense, but science uses it. If that wasn't the presumption of science, then science wouldn't move forward. They see an effect, and they go, hmm. What caused that?

And that's how they figure out all the details of what the scientific realm has provided for us about the natural world. So, that's a vital part of it. So, I'd have to say everything came from nothing. Which is, by the way-- If creation is a miracle, everything coming from nothing is a miracle too.

FRANK:

Sure.

GREG:

Both sides believe in a miracle.

FRANK:

That's right.

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GREG:

You know?

FRANK:

You know, you mentioned something earlier. They have a problem with the virgin birth, right? They don't have a problem with the virgin birth of the universe.

GREG:

Right. That's good. You know, I hadn't heard of that.

FRANK:

Oh, well, yeah, that could—

The whole universe can come into existence out of nothing, but Mary couldn't have gotten pregnant without a man.

GREG:

Yeah, yeah.

FRANK:

Wait, wait, hold on.

GREG:

No, that's a good point.

FRANK:

If Genesis 1:1 is true, every other verse is at least possible.

GREG:

That's right. I do talk about that too in the—
Look at a guy—

You know, a guy who, an Olympic weightlifter, and won the gold medal or something like that. He could probably carry your luggage up the stairway, you know, kind of deal. So, I'd have to

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admit, or I'd have to declare that there is no evil in the world, that everything came from nothing. Both wildly counterintuitive. I'd also have to say that consciousness came from matter.

You know, they cannot, they don't know what to do with consciousness.

FRANK:

Oh, no.

GREG:

Daniel Dennett, he was so frustrated. Now, he's gone now. But he was one of the so-called new atheists.

FRANK:

He said, consciousness is an illusion.

GREG:

It's an illusion. Now, when I heard that—

At the time, one of my team members came out to me and said, hey, what do we do with this? And I thought to myself, this is absolutely simple to deal with. First Columbo question, what do you mean by that? That is, what is an illusion? Well, an illusion is when your consciousness is being appeared to in a false way. So, you have to have consciousness in order to have an illusion. So, my question is, what's having the illusion? Is an illusion having the illusion? I mean, this is wildly contradictory.

FRANK:

One wonders if Daniel Dennett was conscious when he said that.

GREG:

Yeah, well—

FRANK:

If consciousness is an illusion. [Laughter]

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GREG:

It's so crazy. But notice, though, what he betrays. The difficulty of trying to reduce consciousness to something material, which he wants to do since he was a materialist. Right? But they can't do this. Thomas Nagel, you know, his book, 'Mind and Cosmos', I think is the title of it, where he just makes his-- I think a subtitle was quite revealing, 'Why the Neo-Darwinian Materialistic Model of the Universe is Almost Certainly False.' Something to that effect. He got a lot of grief—

FRANK:

Because he's an atheist.

GREG:

He's an atheist from all his atheist friends. And he says, as you've pointed out, Frank. He's on record saying, I don't want theism to be true. And that's for moral reasons. But he's acknowledging the problem of consciousness. And consciousness fits much better into a theistic worldview than a materialistic worldview. In fact, it doesn't fit at all. And in that book 'Mind and Cosmos', his project was trying to figure out a way to include an immaterial thing in a material worldview.

And that's his big struggle. But at least he was honest enough to say this is a problem we have, and the theists have been getting a bad rap for this whole thing. But they've got a point. All right? And he knows you can't reduce consciousness to something material. All right? Consciousness is awareness, our awareness of ourselves. You know, sentience. You can't reduce. So now, you can't explain then how this immaterial thing can come from a material thing.

They've got to make that point because that's their worldview. And, of course, they can't even make it material. And that's why the only exit for them with consciousness is to call it an illusion. It doesn't really exist. Imagine that, somebody saying that consciousness is an illusion. So, that's a third wildly counterintuitive thing you have to claim if you're going to be an atheist.

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FRANK:

You also have to give up reason. Because if you're just a molecular machine, a moist robot, why should you believe anything you think? You're not reasoning to a conclusion based on following the evidence, you're just reacting. And C.S. Lewis pointed that out years ago, I think in the book, 'The Problem of Pain.' Maybe done that in 'Mere Christianity' as well. But there's so much more to talk about with 'The Story of Reality.'

Reality is best explained by Christianity, not atheism or any other worldview. And that's what we're talking about right now. The book is called 'The Story of Reality', and we're going to talk more about it right after the break with Greg Koukl of Stand to Reason. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. Back in just a couple of minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek on the American Family Radio Network and other radio stations around the country. It's also in podcast. We actually do two podcasts a week, ladies and gentlemen. Only one of them is broadcast on radio. If you want to hear the other one, and I hope you do, it's called I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. Wherever you find podcasts, you'll find that. You'll also find my guest, Greg Koukl's podcast called STR Ask and the STR podcast for Stand to Reason, Str.org.

GREG:

I think we're at AFR also. I think maybe we have an hour that maybe just follows you on—

FRANK:

You're on AFR as well, American Family Radio?

GREG:

Have been for a long time. I think it's one hour. Somebody said it follows your show. I'm not sure, but--

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FRANK:

Well, you can hear Greg there. You can hear him also wherever you get podcasts. But Greg, we're talking about 'The Story of Reality,' and there are five aspects of the story. You've kind of summarized it. Give us those five again and where we are in our discussion.

GREG:

Well, they're in the logical order and they're in a time order too. And that's God, man, Jesus, cross, resurrection.

FRANK:

Okay.

GREG:

And I mean final resurrection here to reward our judgments. You have the beginning, and end, and the important things that happen in between. It's easy to remember. There were just five points. And when I was preaching on this in my church, you know, right when I wrote the book, my one daughter was like about 8 years old. And as I'm giving the points off, she's clicking them off with her fingers. She got it real easily. Most people can. And it gives you a way of organizing the basic concepts of Christianity in an orderly way. I mentioned plot line, because these are the most important things that happen in the order that they take place.

FRANK:

And let me interrupt because you said something to your daughter many years ago, which I thought was very instructive for people. She asked you at one point, daddy, why do you believe Christianity is true? Why do we believe Christianity is true? What was your answer?

GREG:

Yeah, the way she put it was, how do we know that God is true?

FRANK:

Okay.

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GREG:

And I said, I actually paused for a few moments because I thought, gee, this is what I deal with with adults. But now, I've got my kid, and I've got to say it in a way that makes sense to her. But she was quite precocious, though.

So, this is what came to mind. I said, honey, the reason that we believe that God is true, her language. Is because he's the best explanation for the way things are. He's the best explanation for the way things are. And as I thought back on that point, I've used it a lot since then.

And as I thought back on that point, I realized this really captures Frank, my entire approach, to apologetics and defending Christianity. You know, whether it's the resurrection, the existence of God, or any of a number of things that pertain to the Christian worldview and the nature of reality, it turns out that we're the best explanation.

And I don't have to take, like, a burden to prove. I have a burden to prove in the sense that I've got to make a case to demonstrate why I think the claims I make about reality, Christianity, God, Jesus, are actually true. I get that.

But I don't have to prove it in the kind of, the ultimate sense. Some people don't think such proof is even possible. All right. That's not what I'm after. What I'm asking is, what's the odds on favor? What's the most sensible answer, given the evidence that we have? And by the way, that's how science works.

FRANK:

Right. Yeah.

GREG:

They ask the same kind of thing, and it's an inference to the best explanation.

FRANK:

Know God by his effects. All these effects that we see around us and are part of us are best explained by a spaceless, timeless, immaterial, powerful, moral, personal, intelligent being who created and sustains the world to this very moment.

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GREG:

Nicely put.

FRANK:

And, well, that's from 'Stealing from God.'

GREG:

I was going to say. It sounds like you said that before.

FRANK:

Yeah, that's from our—

GREG:

No, but that's right. And so, he's the best explanation for the origin of the universe. He's the best explanation for morality, which makes sense of the problem of evil. He's the best explanation for the appearance of design in the universe, of teleology, that things are made for other things, you know, made for purposes. And, you know, that didn't happen by accident. It was made for a reason.

So, what's the best explanation for that? And there's a whole host of things when you ask that question, given what we know, what we can perceive from the universe, or even when you look at the Bible, details of the Scripture there. What's the best explanation for the existence of this book?

Do we have reason to believe that it has a divine origin or a mere human origin? So, what's the best explanation for that? And that's the way I conduct almost all of my apologetics. And what I like about, pardon me. What I like about that is that it takes some of the pressure off the believer. If we say this is a proof that God exists, let's say some kind of cosmological argument like the kalam. Many of your listeners are probably familiar with that.

Bill Craig has popularized that, or brought it back to life, I should say. And it's a good argument. But if our point is this is a proof for God, then all an objector has to do is find a little possible exception or just, well, what about this and that. And then they're straining at gnats, right? But

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they're swallowing the camel of the most reasonable explanation for the origin of the universe. So, when we back off from the strength of our claim, then we make it-- It makes it much easier for us to make our point.

Because the way I expressed it a few moments ago, what's the odds on favorite? Oh, maybe the universe came from nothing. But is that the most reasonable? Look at your wife, comes home from work. She looks at the garage. She said, honey, there's a brand-new Mercedes SL in the garage. Where'd that come from? Oh, honey, it just popped into existence out of nothing. That's the way the universe came to be. So, I don't know why it can't happen to a Mercedes. What wife is going to buy that?

FRANK:

That's right.

GREG:

Nobody's going to buy that.

FRANK:

You bought it.

GREG:

Yeah.

FRANK:

You bought it for her. [Laughter]

GREG:

That's the way to get out from underneath that.

FRANK:

Greg, we've got just like four or five minutes left, and people have to get the book, 'The Story of Reality,' to get the whole picture. But let's kind of fast forward to the end. Look, it's undeniable that the universe exists. You exist. I exist. There are immaterial realities that exist. The laws of

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logic, the laws of mathematics, the laws of morality. Love is immaterial, right? These are all immaterial.

GREG:

Souls.

FRANK:

Souls, we all—

Minds. You know, these are immaterial things. We know that we violated a moral law. We all have. We know we're broken. We know things are not the way they're supposed to be. How does the Christian story, which appears to be the true story, answer that for people watching right now? What do they have to do?

GREG:

Well, the way that, the way the story ends, and this is in the resurrection section. The way the story ends is one of two things is going to happen at the last trump, so to speak, and that is either perfect justice, or perfect mercy. Perfect justice is punishment for everything you've ever done wrong, and God misses nothing.

This is very important. That's why the books are open. Because these books that I call the books of death, you read about it in Revelation 20. There are a record of the deeds of mankind. Every single thing Jesus said, every idle word that a man speaks of, he will give an account of on the day of judgment. Okay, now this is a courtroom scene, and there's the rap sheet for everybody. And this is not going to be a pretty picture unless your name is written in the book of life. And then what you receive, not by your merit.

All your crimes are in there. You're just as guilty as anybody else. But if your name is written there, it's because you trusted in God's rescuer. You have an advocate in Jesus Christ who is the satisfaction for our sins. And then you get perfect mercy. And perfect mercy is forgiveness for everything you've ever done wrong. And God misses nothing. And that is possible. Now, I jumped over a whole section about Jesus and cross.

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And in that section, we learn what happened on Calvary, that fateful Friday, and then what happened, of course, the Sunday to secure that transaction. There was an exchange made where Jesus took our badness so that we could take his goodness.

All right? That's called the Great Exchange. The Reformers used to call it that. But this is what the Bible calls justifications. There are different theological terms but just think of the trade. It's just a trade. We get the good stuff. He got the bad stuff.

FRANK:

He's our substitute.

GREG:

He's our substitute. And now what this means then. At the last judgment, one of two things is going to happen, depending on what an individual decided about what Jesus did on that fateful weekend. Okay? And the simple calculus is this.

Either Jesus paid, or you pay. Either Jesus pays, or you pay. Now, that's the bad news and the good news mixed in together. But the good news is only good because there's bad news, and the bad news is really bad, which makes the good news, the good news of forgiveness, really good.

FRANK:

You know, Greg, I speak on college campuses. I know you do on occasion. And there's not a college campus I go to where I don't hear some student group or student screaming for justice. Everybody wants justice. But ladies and gentlemen, in the end, do you really want justice? I don't want justice. If I got justice from an infinitely just being, I would be toast.

GREG:

It's like that.

FRANK:

I want grace.

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GREG:

Yes. It's like the photographer took the pictures of the woman and the woman says, these pictures don't do me justice. He said, honey, you don't need justice, you need mercy. [Laughter]

But that's the point you're making. That's exactly the point we're making. We want mercy, not justice. And that is available through Jesus and only through Jesus, because he's the only one who solved the problem.

FRANK:

Yes. He's not the only way in an arbitrary way. He's the only way because the only way an infinitely just being can allow unjust creatures like all of us to go unpunished is if he punishes an innocent substitute in our place.

And he can't find an innocent substitute who hasn't sinned in any of us because we already have. So, what does he have to do? He has to add humanity to his deity, and come to earth, and take our punishment upon himself. This is the story of reality.

It's the greatest story ever told, and it happens to be true. And it's in the book, this telling of the story in Greg's book called 'The Story of Reality.' So, Greg, tell people again where they can go to read more. Because you have a Stand to Reason newsletter—

GREG:

Solid ground.

FRANK:

Solid ground. You have—

GREG:

And our website is STR. Real simple for stand to reason, str.org. You can go in the upper right hand corner of the website or maybe at the bottom if you're on your phone, and you can subscribe. Which means we are going to send at no charge, every month training materials that we write on a regular basis having to do with events, or circumstances, or issues that are relevant to you communicating your faith, your convictions in our culture. And we can sign up

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for the podcast as well through all the standard means. And we do like actually four a week that rotate out there. So, it's all available. Go to STR.org. That's where you can find it.

FRANK:

And check out 'The Story of Reality' by Greg Koukl, my guest today. Friends, it's great being with you. Don't forget I'll be at Grace Sarasota this weekend, Lord willing. And don't forget about 'Digging up the Bible', Lord willing. We will see you here next week. God Bless.

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