

5 Inspiring Stories of Christian Courage with John Stonestreet

(March 13, 2026)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen. Why are you so miserable? Why is the culture so miserable? I mean, we have everything in America, but it seems like we have everything to live with and nothing to live for. What's going on, and what is the solution to all this?

Well, I want to go back a couple of years ago to when my friend, the late, great Charlie Kirk, was speaking to pastors at a pastor summit. And here is what he said.

[Charlie]:

The young kids, they don't want you to kind of sanitize all this stuff for them. They will come in flocks for you to say the blunt truth that you think is going to offend them. Yes, you need Jesus, but do you know why? You see, the reason why it's not yet being translated into revival is that they say, of course, Jesus is your Savior, but we're not connecting the dots. How do you know you need a savior if you don't know what you're saved from? And you only know what you're saved from if you talk about sin.

So we focus everything on the fact that someone's going to save you from drowning. Yet we don't tell a generation that they're drowning. And they're so obviously drowning. It's the most suicidal generation in history, the most drug addicted generation in history, the most porn addicted generation in history, but, objectively, the most miserable generation in history.

And yet we say you're just perfect the way you are. They don't feel perfect the way they are. They're telling you that everything is not okay. They're telling you that something is wrong. And the message that Christianity gives you is, well, he gets you, or whatever that commercial is, right, everything's fine.

No, that's actually not how you win young people over. You win them over being like, you know what? You know why you're miserable? Because you're not following God's laws and



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commands. That's why, actually. And you'll never actually follow all of them. And that's why you need a savior.

Because if you don't have a savior, then you're going to end up in a not very good place, and you won't end up being enough. Boom, mind blown. By the way, this is not like the Charlie Kirk thing. This is how the gospel was taught successfully for 2,000 years. And the last 40 years, we decided to hyper modernize it, and it's been a failure, everybody.

And that is the most important thing. What young people especially are screaming at is they say, give me a structure that I can live my life by. Give me a rubric that I can follow. Don't just affirm every bad decision I've ever made. In fact, it's okay if you tell me I've messed up, because you'll be the first person to tell me I've messed up in my life.

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, in our country, we believe that love means approval. We've come to believe that. And Charlie's absolutely right. We're miserable because we're not following God's commands. We're miserable because people tell us, oh, you're enough.

You're doing exactly the right thing. Oh, whatever you want to do is good and right. I want to affirm you. I want to love you. That's not love, ladies and gentlemen. As the great Thomas Sowell once said, "when you tell people what they need to hear, you're helping them.

When you tell people what they want to hear, you're helping yourself. How often do we tell people what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear? Charlie Kirk was telling pastors, you need to tell people what they need to hear. And my friend John Stonestreet of the Colson Center has put together a new course and a mini documentary, it's 90 minutes long, called Truth Rising, that will help you get out of the doldrums.

It will help you transform the culture. It will help you actually be a disciple of Christ. And we're going to talk about it today with five inspiring stories that this documentary will show you. These inspirational stories will show you how you can actually make a difference and have a purpose in life that extends beyond just this world that we're in now. And so I want to invite my

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friend, the great Dr. John Stonestreet on the program. Here he is. I just gave him an honorary doctorate from crossexamined.org.

JOHN:

I was about to say. Yeah, I'll take it. If it's that easy, man, I'll take it right, right away.

FRANK:

Well, John, tell us about what's been going on. First of all, for people that don't know, tell people what the Colson Center does broadly, and then we'll get into what you've just done in these five inspiring stories.

JOHN:

Well, listen, we believe that Christianity is true. And what that means, as you know, is true with a capital T. In other words, it's not something that is true for us and not for the wider world. It's true for everything. It is the truth about everything. And why that matters is that many Christians kind of see faith in a privatized way.

In other words, it's just about me and Jesus. And Chuck Colson used to talk about this all the time. It's more than just me and Jesus. It's a complete worldview. Now, let's be clear. It's not less than me and Jesus. That's what's really cool, is that the God of the universe actually made himself known to the human race and individually to each of us and then sends his spirit when we embrace him.

I mean, there's a very personal aspect to the Christian faith, but it's not private. It's based on public truth. God exists. The scripture tells the truth about reality. Jesus actually existed. He really was God in the flesh. He died on the cross for our sins.

He rose again in human history. And there are implications of this truth. And really, isn't that what we're kind of talking about here? Isn't that what Charlie was talking about in that clip? Is that what young people are missing is a solid foundation?

We've told them for 40 years or so, as he said it, that it's all about him. It's all about us. Right? It's just all about the truth is inside. I need to feel good about myself. And if I don't have the

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solid ground to stand on, if I don't have that fixed reference point of truth with a capital T, then I'm lost.

It's like having a compass that always points at you. That's not helpful at all. You need a compass that points to something fixed and unchanging, so we can know the truth, know the truth about reality, know the truth about ourselves, and know the truth about human history.

And so that's why that word truth pops up so much in the Truth Rising study and the Truth Rising documentary. It's because we've abandoned truth. We've had this experiment with it, and as you said, it's left us miserable. And there are such tangible expressions of that.

There's so much evidence that this is a miserable generation. And how ironic is that? Because we're coming out of the self-esteem years, right? Remember, like education became all about self-esteem, self-esteem, self-esteem. How'd that work out? We have a bunch of misery. We should try something else. We should try truth.

FRANK:

I want to go back to that analogy that I first heard you say years ago, but it's a great analogy about a compass that points to yourself. A compass is supposed to point to north so you can figure out which direction you're going in. Why is a compass useless if it points to yourself all the time, John?

JOHN:

Well, because let's dump you out into, you know, the jungle of Atlanta there, right? And what you need in the chaos of your situation is something outside of your situation that doesn't change, right? Because in a culture or in a wilderness, the situation's constantly changing.

You need something fixed and unchanging so that you can orient yourself. But if we remove that reference point and you know who, actually, I think predicted this, as well as anyone did? The great atheist Friedrich Nietzsche, in his poem, his parable of the madman.

Remember in that parable, the madman is talking to other atheists. He doesn't believe in God. The other atheists don't believe in God. What they don't have in common is the fact that the

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other atheists think that religion is holding humanity back. The madman Nietzsche, he actually says, look, without God, we're straying as through an infinite nothing.

We unchained the earth from its sun. We don't know what up and down is anymore. We don't know what left and right is anymore. Everything's dark, everything's cold. What's he talking about? He's talking about that the belief in God is a defining belief. And if we don't have a fixed reference point outside of ourselves, then all we have is the chaos of our situation.

That's what's happened, is we turned a bunch of kids, a bunch of young people inward. We told them, you know, Disney movie after Disney movie told them to look inside, look inside, look inside, look inside. And unfortunately, church after church after church kind of came up with a Christianized version of that, you know, that it was really, it was kind of a Christianized version of self-esteem, as opposed to orienting our life around the thing that will never change.

God, who is truth, and God who sent Jesus as truth with a capital T. So it all comes back to that, I think. And that's why a compass needs to not point at you. You need to have a fixed reference point.

FRANK:

Yes. In this narcissistic age, it must point to us, otherwise we don't want to use it. But if it just points to us, it's not really telling us anything. It's not telling us anything that's true outside of ourselves. And I'm not the author of truth. You're not the author of truth. There's a standard beyond us whose very nature grounds truth.

This is why Jesus said, I am the truth, and you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free, ladies and gentlemen. That means if you don't have the truth, you're in bondage. Because if you need to be set free by having the truth, you're in bondage if you don't have it.

We're going to talk about five inspiring stories after the break that are part of this Truth Rising documentary that will inspire you to actually do something with your life. If you're not doing something eternal with it right now, don't go anywhere. We're back right after the break.

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Ladies and gentlemen, you have everything to live with, but nothing to live for. If that's the case, you're listening to the right podcast because we're going to be talking about how to get eternal truth in your life and an eternal purpose.

My guest today is John Stonestreet of the Colson Center. And they have a brand new project called the Truth Rising project. Inside this project, which starts with a 90 minute video, there are five inspiring stories of people who are making a difference for eternity by not obeying the culture but obeying Jesus.

And you can be inspired by these stories to just do what you can do in order to follow Jesus, not just at church, but at home, at work, online, in the voting booth, everywhere. And that's what this Truth Rising project will show you how to do. Before we get to those five inspiring stories, John, I want to give you an opportunity to tell our listeners and viewers about what a Colson Fellow is, and how you have so many of them who have already been trained already in what they're doing. Tell us about that Colson Fellow program.

JOHN:

Well, listen, Chuck Colson believed that one of his great legacies would not just be the organizations he started and the books that he wrote, but also the people that he invested in. So he started doing one-on-one discipleship with a group, that, at the time, was called the Centurions Program.

And after he passed away in 2012, we renamed that program Colson Fellows because really it was so built on this vision of how do we think about all of life through the lens of a Christian worldview. So every year now, in about 200 or so different cohorts, we have church cohorts and community cohorts and online cohorts, we have about 1700 people that go on a one-year deep dive in Christian worldview, cultural understanding, and then leadership.

And you know, Chuck was, we used to joke about Chuck Colson, that God loved us and Chuck had a wonderful plan for our lives because it wasn't just about learning, it was about doing. Every Colson Fellow develops a plan. And we have folks in every walk of life, the medical profession, education, certainly law, lots of moms and dads, lots of second career,

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entrepreneurial sorts of folks, pastors and missionaries who have decided to go on this deep dive of how Christianity intersects with this cultural moment.

And really, Truth Rising is about that as well. Colson Fellows is kind of like the Navy SEAL training part of that. You know, let's go really deep. And it's amazing. We actually have Colson Fellows in eight different countries as well. I was just in South Korea in January.

An amazing group over there. You talk about a group that is facing a fast secularizing society in South Korea, and they're courageous. It's amazing. You talked about the stories that inspire at the end of Truth Rising.

I was inspired by real Colson Fellows on the ground in South Korea just back in January, just seeing how they were committed to training the next generation to confronting the political, shifting winds in that nation there.

I tell you, God has his people everywhere. And as you've been saying, we need to be a part of that. Right? Look, the results aren't up to us, but faithfulness is. Let's be faithful, leave the results up to God. And the only way to do that is to re-tether our lives, re-tether our relationships, our families, to truth.

To truth. All of this goes back to an abandonment of truth, which, of course, how many of the apologists and thinkers that you and I learned from were saying 40, 50, 60 years ago? They were predicting what would happen. Their predictions have come true. What was theoretical for them is actual for us. So the answer lies in what they said. Let's get back to truth.

FRANK:

So, for people that want to get involved and be a Colson Fellow, to really go on a deep dive on Christian worldview, what do they do?

JOHN:

Colsonfellows.org, you'll find out, not only what the program looks like.

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You'll be able to see where we have cohorts, we have regional cohorts, we have church cohorts, as well, we have some online programs. We want to do it in person if possible. It's a 10-month commitment. It's a deep dive. I'm amazed every year because I'm like, that is a lot of time.

That is a lot of commitment that people are committing. What I really love is that we've got over 100 churches that have embraced that depth, that level of training into their own discipleship programs in their church. To me, that's super exciting. They're done with the happy clappy. They're done with the, you know, kind of—

FRANK:

Fog machines and skinny jeans. They're done with that?

JOHN:

They're done with the seeker friendly. You know, it's kind of like what Charlie was saying in that clip that you played at the beginning of the program, like, we need to go deeper. In other words. You know, one of my friends is Larry Taylor, who runs ACSI, the Associations of Christian Schools International. And he often uses this analogy, like the level of preparation has to match the competition. Right? I live in Colorado Springs.

If somebody's training for the Olympics, they don't do it by playing pickup at the Y. Right? What they do is they train. And of course, Paul used that language for Timothy. You know, things are getting serious. You need to go deep. Peter uses that language in First Peter, after telling them that the resurrection of Christ secures all the hope that they will ever need, he then goes, you know, and we gotta get serious about the moment.

One of the guys that's featured in Truth Rising, Frank, is the one and only, the great Brit Oz Guinness. Right? I love Oz. He's become such a friend of mine. He leads the analysis in the first half of Truth Rising, the documentary in which he talks about how serious the moment is.

I learned this from Oz, a decade ago or more in his book, The Call. Because the idea is that Christians are not, we don't just live, we're called to a particular life. And we oftentimes mean, well we're called to a ministry, or maybe we're called to a particular church, or we're called to a vocation.

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And all that's true. But what Oz says there, and I think it's so profound, and I remember it stopped me in my tracks when I read it. He said, most Christians don't fully understand calling, because they have not reckoned with the seriousness of the hour. Or as Os Guinness likes to say, the hour.

Cause he's got that great British, Arnold Schwarzenegger-like accent. But do you see what he's saying? What he's doing is he's referring to a number of parts of Scripture where God says, not just that we're called to a particular job or a particular set of relationships, we're called to a time and place in history, right?

Paul says this in Acts 17, that God determines the exact times we live in, the boundaries of their dwelling. So our time and place is a calling. So if we find ourselves in this crazy moment, right, of international instability, of the decline of Western culture, which is what the Truth Rising film argues for, to kind of the domestic and international unrest, to just absolute division and confusion.

You know, we don't live in a time where we all agree on what good is, and we just disagree on how to get there. We live at a time where we don't even, we disagree. Up is called down, right is called wrong, good is called evil, and evil is called good. But this is apparently where God wanted us to be.

So the question is, how do we be faithful to God in this moment, leave the results up to him, and go forward? And like you said, the stories that are in Truth Rising, these five stories, they're all people who had to deal with truth. They're all people who had to, at some level, come to reckon with how crazy it is in the cultural moment, what truth is, and then they were able to at least answer that question, okay, how do I live?

FRANK:

I understand why Oz is using the word call. It's a better word than the word I'm going to suggest. But I actually think it's stronger than call. And the word is you're commanded. I remember my mentor, Dr. Norman Geisler, years ago, when he was in seminary, he went to.

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He told this story in class. He said, I went to chapel, seminary, and a guy was speaking at chapel, and he said, I've been a missionary for 14 years, and I was never called to go. And Geisler was sitting in the audience, said to his friend, he said, "Good night.

I've heard people who were called and didn't go. I never heard anyone who wasn't called and went." And then the guy said it again. He said, I've been a missionary for 14 years, and I was never called to go. I was just commanded like the rest of you. You know, you don't even need to pray about that, right?

To make disciples. He's already told you to do it, right? And I fear that sometimes when we use the word called, it almost seems like it's a subjective—

[JOHN]:

Like it's an option.

FRANK:

Personal thing.

JOHN:

Yeah, well, I appreciate that. I think that the idea is, one of the things that makes a call really, really important is who it is that's calling.

FRANK:

That's right.

JOHN:

Yeah. Right? So I mean, you've done business consulting and all that sort of stuff. There was this whole moment in the 90s where at secular corporations they were trying to use the word like work as a calling. And you're like, that doesn't make any sense.

Unless there's a caller at the other end of the line. If my 8-year-old boy calls me to do something, then it's an option. If God calls me now, it's like, you're right, it is a command. There's no other option. But even think about this, the part that we've missed in our kind of

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self-centric vision of life that we've embraced, and even in the church, is that we don't talk about God as actually expecting anything of us.

We don't talk about God as actually having a plan for the universe, and therefore a plan for us that we can be involved in. Instead, what we've done, and this is another great irony. There's so many ironies of modern culture, right? Which is we just come out of the existentialist moment where everyone says, make your own meaning, make your own meaning, and make your own meaning.

And where did that bring us? To a whole bunch of people that believe life has no meaning, right? The sexual revolution was like, have sex, have sex, have sex, and forget all the marriage and everything else. What do we have right now? We have a generation of young people, young men, who can't look young women in the eye, much less date them, much less take, and they're addicted to porn, and they're not actually having sex.

You know, I mean, there's so much irony of a culture that promises freedom, but as you said earlier, brings bondage. And the answer is truth. The answer is the fact not only that there's a philosophical notion of truth, but that it's located in the person of God, fully expressed in Christ Jesus to us, With a will and a plan, and writing human history. And so our job is like, man, let's get on board with that. Like, that's meaning. That's huge. That's beautiful. Like, I can sign up for that.

FRANK:

We've only got a minute and a half to the break, John, but just start with one of the five inspiring stories. Why don't we start with, say, Chloe Cole? Start with Chloe.

JOHN:

I'm so glad you went there, because Chloe is an example of being a victim of the worst ideas of our culture, Basically being told, look inside, look inside for your own identity. And so what she began to do was to doubt that she was in the right body. She is one of the millions of young girls, in particular, who this social contagion of transgenderism took over.

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And then she began to realize, no, that's not who I really am. I've made a mistake, and it's a serious mistake. She had a double mastectomy at age 16. And where is she now? Because she came to realize that there's truth, it pointed her to the God, the author of truth.

So by coming to the truth about who she is, she then was able to meet God, who is the author of. of that truth. And now she is on a mission. So it's so interesting how your mess can be turned into your message, and it all has to do with whether or not there is truth.

FRANK:

And you're willing to follow it—

[JOHN]:

And you're willing to follow it.

FRANK:

And Chloe Cole did. We'll talk more about her and four other inspiring stories right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. My guest, John Stonestreet, who heads the Coulson Center and has a brand new documentary and study guide that can help you get on an eternal mission. It's called Truth Rising. More after the break. Don't go anywhere.

AD:

Students across America are more open to the truth of Christianity than ever before. And Dr. Frank Turek is taking the powerful evidence for God to campuses like UC Berkeley, the University of Georgia, Ohio State, and Alabama, reaching thousands in person and millions more online.

But every event now requires costly security to keep students safe. And Cross Examine never charges students to attend. That's why we urgently need your support. The culture is dark, but hearts are open. Help keep the light of truth shining by donating today at crossexamined.org that's cross-examined within the D on the end .org.

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FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, what is the purpose of your life? What is the meaning of life? Why are we here? What are you doing? Are you just supposed to get a whole bunch of stuff and then die and leave it to the next generation? For what reason? Well, we're talking about the big questions of life today here with my friend John Stonestreet of the Colson Center.

He has a brand new documentary out called Truth Rising. It's actually a few months old, but it's just starting to gain traction in churches and with individuals. And it will help you get a purpose in life. You can't do everything, but what you can do is follow what Christ told us to do for eternal reasons and an eternal purpose, and we're going to get back to John in just a second.

But I wanted to mention that this Monday, at 7:30, we're going to continue the Bible You Never Knew series. It will be streaming live at 7:30 Eastern Time. If you're anywhere near Charlotte, North Carolina? It's up at Freedom House Church in Cornelius, just north of Charlotte.

Everybody's welcome. 7:30. Then I'll be at Element Church near St. Louis, Missouri, on the 21st and 22nd. Then on the 24th, Colorado Mesa University, Grand Junction, Colorado. Then two days later, Utah Valley University.

That's where Charlie Kirk was murdered. I don't know how I'm going to react to being there again, but we got to plant a flag there. We can't let Satan win. All of those are going to be on our YouTube channel, streaming live. I want to say Utah Valley is going to be, probably, 9 Eastern because it'll be 7:00 pm Mountain time.

Following that, we'll be at the University of Mississippi, that's Ole Miss on the 31st. And then Rochester Institute of Technology on April 2nd, not far from where I went to school, University of Rochester. Much more on our website. So check all that out, and thanks for your support.

As you know now, whenever we go to a college campus, it costs us at least \$15,000 to go because we have \$10,000 in security. So thank you for your support. You can go to donatecrossexamined.org for more. Let me go back to my friend John Stonestreet. John, we were talking before the break about the five inspiring stories that Truth Rising has.

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And by the way, we'll put the link to the documentary in the show notes so anybody can watch it. And also to the study guide. Tell me a little bit more about Chloe Cole. Because she was a young person that I think was diagnosed with some other sort of mental health issues. She thought the solution to her discomfort was to transition herself. Tell our audience what happened and where she is now.

JOHN:

Well, you know, 25 years ago, the ethicist Oliver O' Donovan wrote on what he called transsexualism at the time, as a theologian. And what he said in that chapter 25 years ago was that, of course, what we're talking about is basically all middle-aged men with a sexual perversion.

Because at the time, that issue was all middle-aged men with a sexual perversion. And yet what we've seen in the last decade is The fact that five to one, the patients that were being seen in these gender clinics that were popping up in hospitals and cities around the West were 5 to 1 adolescent or pre-adolescent girls.

So they're not dealing with sexual perversion, they're dealing with self-hatred. And isn't that ironic? Right, because this is the generation that was told that they will find their truth inside them, that they can be whoever they want to be, that maybe they were born into the wrong body. Chloe was one of those.

She was just your typical on too much social media, pre-adolescent, feeling miserable. She had some comorbidities psychologically, but what they did is what they did to so many different people, which is rush them away from the fact that there is observable truth about their body.

Even if you don't believe in God, there's things like chromosomes, hormones, and body parts that should point you to the truth. But what she was told is that she could be something that she was not created to be, that she could become a boy. And she believed it.

And she was rushed to treatment after just a very short consultation. And as I said, while she was still a minor. And you remember just a couple years ago, we were told this wasn't

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happening. We were told that there were no minors that were being surgically mutilated. But there were.

She was, she was one of those. But you know, who she is did not change. Why? Because truth does not change. You know, and the truth about who we are, the fundamental confusion of the last 40, 50 years in American culture is a confusion of identity.

This is why in our Truth Rising study, we spend so much time unlocking what does it mean to be made in the image of God. Because that is our fundamental identity, and it is connected to who we are at the deepest level there is. But we were told, Chloe was told that she could change who she is just by wanting to, just by feeling a certain way.

And it sent her into a terrible, terrible place. But you know what truth does, Jesus said this, truth sets you free. That's what I love about this story. Truth sets you free. Truth has set Chloe free. And it was truth, not just that she's a sinner and needs a savior, although she figured that out eventually.

But it was truth that she was created in the image of God, female. And that pointed her, ultimately, you know what she says, too, and this is really important that when she decided that she had made a terrible, terrible mistake in her own words, and she became one of the first and most prominent, what are now called detransitioners, people that, you know, again, weren't supposed to exist. All of her people who told her she could be whoever she wanted to be turned on her. When she actually decided that she wanted to be who she really is, they turned on her.

FRANK:

Isn't that ironic?

JOHN:

You know who was there for her? Christians. A group of Christians. One of them was Charlie. And it ended up pointing her ultimately to the fact not only that there is truth about who she is, but there's truth about who she is, because there's a God who is the author of the truth about

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who she is. And now her life has been turned around. And this is the truth of redemption that's at the heart of a world that's fallen.

So, you know, there's people listening, and they're like, man, I've been sucked into this. I've believed the lies of culture. I know I was wrong. And they're dealing with shame, and they're dealing with guilt. This is the message of salvation. This is the message of redemption, what the scripture calls restoration.

Your life can be restored. Your life can be renewed. Paul uses all kinds of 're-' words, right, in the New Testament to talk about the Gospel. Repent and resurrect and reconcile. But that's our role, too, within the larger cultural moment.

If our culture is declining, we can become agents of renewal. Now, what God chooses to do with this moment is up to him. But he uses his people who have been reconciled, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, to become an agent of reconciliation.

And what I love about Chloe's story is that's not just some kind of esoteric, spiritual, nebulous thing. It is as real as the body. It is as real as the world that we live in. Christianity is not just true to me, inside, Christianity is the truth about reality, and that includes redemption and forgiveness.

FRANK:

Yeah, reality is what exists even after you stop believing in it.

JOHN:

Right.

FRANK:

So, Chloe Cole, for a short period, stopped believing she was a female. But she still was.

JOHN:

Yeah.

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FRANK:

And no surgery, no treatment could change that fact. And when she finally came to the realization she had been duped by a culture, she now has flipped completely around and is now on a mission to prevent other people from making the same mistake she did.

JOHN:

Yeah. This is what's so cool. How God is using her is absolutely incredible. And we need that truth, that redemption is possible and that our mess can be made into our message, and that it's through death comes life. Like, that's at the heart of the truth of the Christian message, and it means something substantial. And Chloe's proof of that.

FRANK:

Isn't it interesting that some folks, particularly on the Left, will say, you can be your authentic self, unless your authentic self is a Christian, you can't be!

JOHN:

Yeah, it's like, be whoever you want to be, except that. Yeah, I mean, it was so interesting because the transgender movement told us that we were erasing trans people. But really, what they did is they erased the detransitioners. They didn't exist, we were told. And do they exist?

Are we hearing story after story after story after story right now? I mean, you bet. I mean, to me, it was the most moving part by far of the recent State of the Union address by the president, because that's another story of a detransitioner that he highlighted.

She stood up, a student at Liberty University, and, you know, Jesus Christ is at the heart of people reattaching to the truth. And he said, the truth will set you free, and I am the truth. Chloe's story is all about that.

FRANK:

You also tell the story. Oh, one other thing that I want to highlight is something you mentioned is, there's redemption. There's no redemption on the Left.

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JOHN:

No redemption.

FRANK:

Doesn't matter. It's a constant conflict with the truth. There's no redemption.

JOHN:

Listen, that is such an important observation. And, right now, the truth of Christianity will be seen as bizarre, but it'll also be seen in many aspects as being really compelling. Because it is a terrible, terrible thing to live in a fallen world where there's no possibility of forgiveness. And that's where our culture is. That's critical theory. You and I are guilty not because of what we've done, but because we belong to, we're white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, heterosexual males.

You know, these aren't things we, quote, unquote, you know, chose. So if we're guilty because of those things, then we can't escape that. There's no forgiveness there. So the idea that actual, to respect human beings as real moral agents is what Christianity does, and then it also then offers that hope and redemption. Yeah, that's why it's good news, man. Critical theory is not good news. This is good news.

FRANK:

All right, we're going all the way to Somalia for the next story. Tell us about that story, John.

JOHN:

Well, not anymore, but, yeah. The story of Ayaan Hirsi Ali is one of the most fascinating stories. I was captivated by her story. I mean, I had known that she had become a very popular figure in the New Atheist movement, having come out of a radical Islamic society. Her journey is a journey through worldviews and a journey through culture. So she's born into Islamic fundamentalism, flees an arranged marriage, and lands—

FRANK:

In Somalia.

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JOHN:

In Somalia, yeah. And then, I think, well, they had to flee a couple times. So the details here keep moving. But she ends up in the Netherlands and embraces atheism. I was at a conference in London in 2023, where she's on a panel with Os Guinness, and she says, "I'm now a Judeo-Christian." And everyone gasped. I mean, literally a thousand people, for two reasons.

Number one is we all knew who she was. And secondly, what's a Judeo-Christian? Like, what's that mean? And, of course, at that time, we were hearing stories about people becoming cultural Christians, you know, even Richard Dawkins saying that Christmas carols were really great, you know, and pointing to the good things that Christianity brings the world, but not necessarily the same.

Two years later, at the same conference, she goes through the foundations of Western civilization and gives biblical reference for each and every one. And then we learned that the conversion is personal. And she was willing to tell us that story. And we've got to talk about more details after the break.

FRANK:

Right after the break, we'll see it. We're talking to John Stonestreet. The new documentary you can see for free is called Truth Rising. It will inspire you with five stories. We're going through some of them here. Don't go anywhere. Back right after the break.

Are you just going through the motions, or do you have a real mission in life? An eternal mission? Not just one you made up, but one that's actually true outside of yourself. If not, you're listening to the right podcast because we're talking about how to discover the mission God has given you, given us all.

And there's a new documentary that helps you do that. It's called Truth Rising. It is in the show notes of this YouTube channel and/or this YouTube episode and also, in the notes of the podcast. The author behind it is my guest today, John Stonestreet of the Colson Center.

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And, John, we were talking about five inspiring stories that this documentary goes through. We were on our second one, pick it up right there where you left off, because Miss Ali came from Islam to atheism and eventually Christianity. Pick it up.

JOHN:

Well, she has lived and seen up front, up close and personal, the idea that ideas have consequences. At first, it was the consequences of the wrong ideas of fundamentalist Islam, which she saw not only as consequences in her own life, threatening her own, freedom, but also her entire society's.

And she saw the contrast between other societies in the West. She's the only person that appears both in the first part of the documentary and the second part. The first part where we're talking about how significant the West is and the decline of the West is. But then she also has seen the consequences of the bad ideas of atheism in her own personal life.

She reached a place of meaninglessness. She reached a place of addiction. She didn't know what life was about. And that led her ultimately to Christ. And I don't want to give up too much, but her conversion story is proof that Jesus still works.

It's also proof that we're not on the wrong side of history, like we're all, you know, told, or that Christianity is passe, or that Christian morality is just kind of for the old past or something like that, that chronological snobbery that C.S. Lewis talked about, but that truth transforms and that it both applies personally, to how I think about my own life and the meaning of life, but also at a civilizational level.

That's how big truth is. That's why the truth of the Bible is big enough. It's big enough to sustain both our personal life and our civilization. And that's the lesson you get from Ayaan. There's a lot more in there than that.

FRANK:

Also, our mutual friend Seth Dillon of the Babylon Bee. We've had Seth on the program several times.

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JOHN:

I love the Seth story. I mean, who would have guessed, you know, that an act, of saying something that's true, that as he puts it in the documentary, needed to be said, got him canceled. And here's the other thing T.S. Eliot said for us, there's only the trying, and the rest is none of our business.

So you're faithful and then leave the results to God. There's a great line in there where he's like, I just didn't know we could count on the richest person in the world to bail us out of Twitter jail. And then everything that follows from that. When you think culturally and politically, all the downstream stuff from Elon Musk buying the Babylon Bee and God orchestrating people that clearly aren't Christians for his own purposes.

FRANK:

Yeah, yeah. No, but he bought Twitter, not the Babylon Bee.

JOHN:

Yeah, yeah, sorry. That's what I meant. But to bail the Babylon Bee at a Twitter jam is how he said it. And buying Twitter, it's just an amazing, it's just an amazing story.

FRANK:

Yeah, for those of you that don't know, Seth had this, he was making a joke, as Babylon Bee does, when, what was it, USA Today, that said, Rachel Levine was the Woman of the Year.

JOHN:

Rachel Levine, the Woman of the Year. So that is, a Biden administration official who's a man who dresses up like a woman and was put into a top position in the administration. And then USA Today named him Woman of the Year.

And so the Babylon Bee, as only the Babylon Bee can do, right? Just says, oh, we'll name a Man of the Year. And, you know, this was Cancel Culture. This is right at the center of Cancel Culture. And if you're a media company like Babylon Bee, that's a big risk. Right? You're losing, you know, a million people in your audience, just like that.

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FRANK:

Yeah. Because Twitter said, unless you. Unless you take that tweet down, you no longer have an account. And Seth stood firm and said, sorry, it's a true tweet. We can't take it down. And he didn't know that Elon Musk was watching the Babylon Bee. And then basically, I think, largely decided to buy Twitter based on what happened to the Babylon Bee.

JOHN:

I mean, that's what it seemed like. It seemed like at the time. And then from Seth's own testimony and the conversations that they had, I mean, the morning that he bought Twitter, Elon Musk texted Seth and said, do you want to be back?

You know. So there was certainly a connection there in his mind. But, you know, it tells us that when we rely on truth, then whatever happens doesn't rely on us. Does that make sense? It's like, truth is a foundation for us to stand on.

FRANK:

So that whole story is told in the Truth Rising documentary.

JOHN:

Oh, it's a great story. And it's super funny because Babylon Bee is always funny, but this is a funny way to tell the story.

FRANK:

You want to see that? Also, you've got Jack Phillips in there. That's story number four. I think we're on right now. Jack is just a regular guy. Right? He's just a baker. And yet he stands firm. And what happens?

JOHN:

Well, listen, Jack, Katie Faust, who we'll talk about here in a second. Chloe, if you think. If you're sitting here going, well, I'm not a William Wilberforce, or I'm not a Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I don't know—

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FRANK:

I'm not Seth Dillon. I don't own the Babylonian Bee.

JOHN:

I'm not a Seth Dillon. Yeah. Listen, Jack Phillips is a baker, and God has used him. There's so many things to say about the story. Jack's a friend. I remember where I was sitting on my porch 14 years ago, when I read the headline, Denver Baker refuses to bake same-sex wedding.

And I thought to myself, well, that's weird. We don't have same sex weddings in Colorado. Which we didn't at the time. And second, that dude's gonna be in trouble. And I had no idea how long this would go and that I would get to know him and be able to watch, you know, watch it. But I just want to remind something, because this connects right back to Charlie's comment at the beginning that you played. Do you remember, Frank, how many people 14 years ago, 13 years ago –

FRANK:

Bake the cake! Bake the cake! Yeah, just bake it. Be a Christian and bake it. Right?

JOHN:

Not just the ladies on The View, although they said that too. There were a lot of Christians and pastors who said Jesus would have baked the cake.

FRANK:

Yeah, right.

JOHN:

Aren't you glad? Now, listen. Ayaan Hirsi. Ali was partially inspired to reconsider her atheism because of what, Jack, because of Jack's story. Jack was the first decision in a string of decisions that has secured speech rights and conscience rights for Christians in this kind of LGBTQ culture. There are a lot of people who have come to Christ because of reading Jack's books. Aren't you glad Jack didn't bake the cake?

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FRANK:

Absolutely. He sided with truth. I can't use my artistic capabilities to advance something that God thinks will keep people in hell, will send them to hell. I can't do it. Yeah.

JOHN:

And listen, the personal price he paid. Death threats against his family, losing a significant portion of business. You go on his Google, if you Google his masterpiece cake shop right now. You'll see the reviews.

People lying and slandering, saying there were cockroaches in a cupcake that they bought. I mean, and he was just the target of hate. And you know what he did? He trusted the Lord. I don't know that there's a better example of our lifetime, of, for us, there's only the trying, and the rest is none of our business. As T.S. Eliot said.

He just decided to count the cost, do the right thing, and then he left the results to God. And it took a long time, and it's still probably not over. You know, he was targeted by the state of Colorado, by the Civil Rights Commission.

The state of Colorado allowed a private citizen, another, a man who dresses like a woman, to target him for half of those 14 years. I mean, but you know what? God has used that in profound ways. And I don't know, a more peaceful, joyful. You were talking about why are we so miserable? I will tell you one man who is not miserable, and that's Jack Phillips.

FRANK:

All right, just give us 30 seconds on Katie Faust. People can watch. Katie's been on the show here several times, so people know her story. But give us 30 seconds, then we got to talk about the study.

JOHN:

Well, again, God choosing to use Katie, a pastor's wife. I love the fact that her church stood beside her right, when she was basically outed as an anonymous blogger writing on controversial things. And they threatened to dox her church. And the men in her church said, keep going. And to me, that's just such a great lesson. That what it means for us to live in truth

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is not just for us personally living truth, not just for us to find redemption like Chloe Cole, not just for us to count the cost and take the moment that God puts in front of us and leave the results to him.

But when somebody we know is paying a price for standing for the truth, it is our job to stand with them. There's a lot more lessons from Katie's story but given how many people told Jack he should have just baked the cake, and how many Christians abandoned him. I love the fact that the people in Katie's church stood with her.

And now you look at what she's doing. She's the most effective, powerful advocate for the rights of children—

FRANK:

Yeah. Them Before Us, Them Before Us.

JOHN:

Them before us. It's absolutely stunning. Listen, Truth Rising is about this. We live in a civilizational moment because God put us here. Here are five stories of courage of the kind of lives we need to live. Now you go and do thou likewise. Right? That's the whole math. Right? We live in a moment. God has his people here. You take your place with truth. And you can find out more at ColsonCenter.org/truth.

You can access both the documentary. There's a four-part study too. And I think there are four big ingredients to being that kind of person. Hope. That's First Peter. Certainly, truth, the truth about everything. Identity, what it means to be made in the image of God and really embracing the understanding of calling.

So hope, truth, identity, calling. There are four teaching lessons and then four stories. And by the way, three of the stories are deeper forms of the story of Jack, Ayaan, and Chloe. And the fourth is my story, not me personally.

It's a story of an 89-year-old woman who changed my life because she was willing to tell me the truth. And she was willing to live by the truth. And her little apartment that she couldn't leave

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because she wasn't well enough to leave her house. She changed my life. She changed the life of a community. So again, are we Wilberforces, are we Bonhoeffers? All that stuff's up to God. Be someone who lives a life of truth in this cultural moment.

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, as Tozer said many years ago, and I'm paraphrasing, most churches are so watered down that if the message was poison, it wouldn't hurt anyone, and if it was medicine, it wouldn't cure anyone.

Don't be one of those churches, don't be one of those church members. Actually live for the truth. John, thanks for what you're doing and thanks for the Truth Rising project.

JOHN:

Hey, Frank, thanks for what you're doing, man. I appreciate your fearlessness for so long and praying for you, especially as you go back to Utah Valley.

FRANK:

Thanks, brother. Hey, we're going to be together soon, I think. When is that? End of May? Beginning of May?

JOHN:

Oh, end of May. Yeah. At the Coulson Center National Conference in Knoxville, Tennessee.

FRANK:

Looking forward to that, brother. Hey, thanks.

JOHN:

You too.

FRANK:

All right, ladies and gentlemen, check out the Colson Center. All the links are in the show notes here. And Lord willing, we will see you here next time. God bless.

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