FACILITATOR GUIDE

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FOCUS ON THE FAMILY | COLSON CENTER

TRUTH RISING™

THE STUDY

THE CHRISTIAN'S GUIDE
TO THIS CIVILIZATIONAL MOMENT

Based on the
TRUTH RISING™
Documentary Film

Truth Rising: The Study: The Christian's Guide to this Civilizational Moment: Facilitator Guide
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CONTENTS

Introduction iii

Watch the Documentary iii

Purpose of Truth Rising: The Study iv

Story Videos viii

How to Use the Facilitator Guide x

Format Options xiv

Lesson 1: Hope 1

Lesson 2: Truth 12

Lesson 3: Identity 23

Lesson 4: Calling 36

About 48

Focus on the Family 48

The Colson Center 49

“Christianity is more than a relationship with Jesus. It is more than discipleship. It is a way of seeing and comprehending all reality.”

— CHUCK COLSON

INTRODUCTION

"The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." – ROMANS 8:18-21

WATCH THE DOCUMENTARY

Welcome to *Truth Rising: The Study*. This study is an in-depth companion to the full-length feature documentary *Truth Rising*, produced by Focus on the Family and Colson Center for Christian Worldview.

To view the documentary please visit: **TruthRising.com**. **Before you begin *Truth Rising: The Study*, you should watch the documentary with your group.** The film is hosted by author, speaker, and social critic Os Guinness, DPhil; and John Stonestreet, president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview.



Os Guinness, the great-great grandson of Arthur Guinness, the Dublin brewer, completed his undergraduate degree at the University of London and his doctorate in social sciences at Oriel College in Oxford. Guinness has written or edited more than twenty-five books, including *The American Hour, A Case for Civility, A Free People's Suicide,* and *The Global Public Square*. A frequent speaker and seminar leader at political and business conferences in both the United States and Europe, Guinness lives with his wife, Jenny, in McLean, Virginia.



Colson Center president **John Stonestreet** hosts the *Truth Rising: The Study* video lessons. A speaker and author on areas of faith and culture, theology, worldview, education, and apologetics, John is the daily voice of *Breakpoint*, the nationally syndicated commentary on the culture founded by the late Chuck Colson. He has coauthored five books including *A Practical Guide to Culture* and *Restoring All Things*. Before coming to the Colson Center in 2010, John served in various leadership capacities with Summit Ministries and was on the biblical studies faculty at Bryan College (TN). He is an ordained deacon in the **Anglican Diocese of All Nations** (Anglican Church of North America). He and his wife, Sarah, have four children and live in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

PURPOSE OF TRUTH RISING: THE STUDY

Civilizational moments are rare—and you're living in one.

Museums and history books are full of the accounts and artifacts of once-dominant civilizations that were, long ago, reduced to ruins. Os Guinness often refers to the West, primarily Western Europe, North America, and Australasia—a civilization that has flourished for nearly 2,000 years—as a "cut flower civilization." Detached from the essential truths that rooted and nourished it, the West cannot survive. When an entire civilization abandons truth, there are always consequences.

Detachment from the roots that brought the world such blessing has left the West in a profound identity crisis. While history can tell us *that* a civilization died, and sociology might even tell us *why* a civilization died, neither can help us know *how* to live in the midst of such a pivotal time. But here we are, and thus we must choose: renewal or decline?

For followers of Christ, this is not just a cultural choice—it is a matter of obedience. Jesus Christ is King. And He has placed us in this time and place, not by accident, but by design. Every Christian must decide: Will I obey the call of Christ in this moment, or will I shrink back?

The chaos of a cultural *moment* must never be confused with the *story* of redemption. We have to keep the moment and the story straight. Whatever the future of the West, the Kingdom of God remains secure. God has called us to this moment. We are not here by accident.

Many people think civilizational decline is unavoidable—that we are victims of larger forces we cannot control. Yet Christians know our lives matter and our obedience matters; we are not mere victims of civilizational decline. We can choose. We can act. What we believe and what we do in this civilizational moment can serve God's redemptive purposes.

At this critical juncture in history, the church must find sure footing. And the only way to do that is to be properly oriented to reality.

By reality, we mean truth. By truth, we mean the way God designed the world to work.

Thankfully, God has not left us to stumble through these confusing times without a gameplan. As American philosopher and theologian Francis Schaeffer put it, "He is there and He is not silent." God has spoken to us in many ways: in creation, in His Word, and ultimately through His Son.

Many people approach the Bible as if it's a random collection of wise sayings, stories, morals, and encouragement. It certainly contains all these things, but they're given to us in a larger context. In the Bible, God articulates the Story of our world and the contours of reality. The Bible provides the truth we need to navigate our moment, the truth about reality, the truth about who we are, and the truth about how to live.

Too often Christians retreat from the chaos of the culture around them. We face an enemy who wants to steal, kill, and destroy us (see John 10:10). Satan targets God's image bearers because we represent the Creator of the universe, whom Satan cannot defeat. The kingdom of darkness is aligned against the kingdom of light everywhere God's goodness is found. Our Savior was beaten, mocked, scorned, and crucified. Scriptu

re tells us that we, too, will endure suffering for following Christ (see Romans 8:17; Philippians 1:29).

But as people of the Resurrection, we have every reason to hope. Our high calling as image bearers means we are charged as stewards of God's truth.

This stewardship requires us to prepare with diligence. What type of people will we need to be to live in the world as Christians in this civilizational moment?

Thankfully, God has given us a gameplan. This gameplan dictates what Christians should believe and how we should live.

This study is designed to move Christians from feeling powerless in the face

of cultural decline to recognizing their God-given calling in history. *It aims to do this by:*

- Summarizing God's gameplan for this civilizational moment using four essential concepts: hope, truth, identity, and calling. The four essential concepts are interconnected and provide a framework by which we can (a) approach our civilizational moment, (b) know the true story of reality, (c) know the truth about who we are, and (d) know how to live in light of God's truth.
- Showing you what courageous faith can look like lived out in the lives of ordinary people.

TEACHING VIDEOS

Hope

How to Approach Our Civilizational Moment

Truth

Know the True Story of Reality

Identity

Know the Truth About Who We Are

Calling

How to Live in Light of God's Truth

STORY VIDEOS



Courageous Christians: *A Story of Hope*
Ayaan Hirsi Ali



Courageous Christians: *A Story of Truth*
Jack Phillips



Courageous Christians: *A Story of Identity*
Chloe Cole



Courageous Christians: *A Story of Calling*
Omega Buckner

After completing *Truth Rising: The Study*, you and your group will be able to:

- Recognize the current civilizational moment → Understand that history is at a pivotal point.
- Reframe our perspective through hope → See that we are not powerless but part of God's plan.
- Ground ourselves in truth → Understand the world through the lens of biblical revelation.
- Find our identity → Reject the secular construct of self-definition and know who we are in Christ.
- Step into our calling with confidence → Take meaningful action in our communities.

The *Truth Rising* documentary describes why this is such a crucial moment for Western civilization and calls Christ followers to embrace their calling to this time and place with courage and conviction as agents of renewal, and shows you what this can look like through the inspiring stories of courageous Christians. This study will equip participants to think through why the Western world is in decline, why the essential Christian roots of Western civilization matter, and how they can be involved in practical, everyday ways.

STORY VIDEOS

Expanding on the stories told in the Truth Rising documentary, Truth Rising: The Study takes you deeper into the lives of four courageous Christians. Each story is an inspiring account of what can happen when God's people choose faith over fear in this cultural moment. Our hope is that you would understand the truth, see it lived out in the lives of courageous Christians, then consider where God is asking you to join Him in His work of restoring all things right in your own context.

Featured Stories of Courageous Christians



Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a Muslin-turned-atheist-turned-Christian. She is a champion for human rights, women's rights, and free speech. Born in Somalia, she emigrated to the Netherlands and eventually served as a member of the Dutch Parliament for three years. As an activist, writer, conservative thinker, and former politician, Ayaan is known for speaking truth to power. She is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and founder of the AHA Foundation.



As the owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop in Colorado, **Jack Phillips** has become the name and face associated with business owners standing up for their deeply held religious beliefs.

For over 12 years, the Colorado cake artist has stood courageously and endured targeted attacks against him, his family, and his business, Masterpiece Cakeshop. The first attack started in 2012, when Colorado pursued legal action against Jack after he respectfully declined a request to create a custom cake celebrating a same-sex wedding. In June 2018, Jack received his first hard-fought victory with the U.S. Supreme Court, which held that the state had acted with "clear and impermissible hostility" toward Jack's religious beliefs, violating the First Amendment. The legal attacks persist, and Jack continues to stand courageously for his faith.

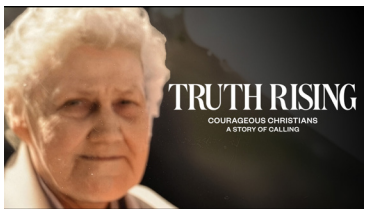


Chloe Cole, a poised and articulate 21-year-old woman, passionately advocates against the practice of transitioning minors.

Driven by a noble mission to safeguard children from potentially harmful ideologies and medical interventions, Chloe draws

from her personal experiences to shed light on the distressing consequences of "gender-affirming care" for adolescents.

Having embarked on her own transition journey at the tender age of 12, including puberty suppressants, cross-sex hormones at 13, and a double mastectomy at 15, only to subsequently detransition at 16, Chloe speaks with firsthand authority on the deeply traumatic effects experienced by minors undergoing "gender-affirming care."



Omega Buckner was a humble, steadfast woman of faith whose quiet life in rural Virginia left an outsized mark on generations of students and church members. An 89-year-old widow when a pair of reluctant teenage boys first knocked on her door in 1990, Ms. Buckner greeted them with warmth, a carol, and a kind of prayer that revealed a deep, lived friendship with God. Over the years, she remembered those boys by name (one of whom was John Stonestreet, who would one day be President of the Colson Center) and prayed for them daily for the rest of her life. In doing so, she embodied a faithfulness that shaped countless lives far beyond the small apartment attached to her grandson's farmhouse. Her legacy, evident in the tears and smiles of former students who had their own "Ms. Buckner story," stands as a testament to the quiet power of steadfast prayer, simple obedience, and everyday hope.

HOW TO USE THE FACILITATOR GUIDE

This facilitator guide provides everything you'll need to lead a church, home, or school group through the *Truth Rising: The Study*. Everything in the participant guide is included in this guide, along with added material to help you lead your group.

The video content includes:

- Four twenty-minute teaching videos on hope, truth, identity, and calling featuring John Stonestreet, president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview ("Teaching Videos")
- Four fifteen-minute "Courageous Christian" stories, one to correspond to each teaching video ("Story Videos")

Explore the "Format Options" page for suggestions on how to use the Teaching Videos and Story Videos during the group session. Select a format that works best for your group!

Facilitator Guide Contents

Each lesson includes a session outline with the following sections:

Follow the instructions provided for each step, along with helpful facilitator tips.

I. **FACILITATOR PREP:** Each lesson includes a "facilitator prep" section. Additional background information for the video content is provided so you can lead a group discussion with confidence.

II. **LESSON ESSENTIALS:** This includes the lesson's "big idea" and Scripture focus, plus additional resources.

III. **GROUP:** This includes the outline for your group session: opening and closing prayers, time to watch the video, and discussion questions for warm-up, reviewing the video content, and application.

Preparing to Facilitate

Before your first lesson, log in to **TruthRising.com** to watch the *Truth Rising* documentary. We also recommend that you (the facilitator) watch all four *Truth Rising: The Study* video lessons before the first group meeting.

Before each group meeting, take time to read the **FACILITATOR PREP** section for that lesson. This section provides a deeper overview of the scriptural and theological concepts presented in the video lesson. If time permits, it might be helpful to also peruse the Additional Resources section.

***Truth Rising: The Study* includes a facilitator guide and a participant guide.** *Every member of your group should have access to the participant guide. Each person will need to create an account at* ColsonCenter.org/Study *to download a participant guide.*

Choose a room conducive to a group study with a large screen, seating, and accessible viewing for all group members.

Tips for Facilitating a Group

We've all probably been part of small groups we enjoyed, as well as groups that struggled to stay on track. Here are a few tips to make your group successful as you facilitate your group discussion:

Pray together.

- Begin and end each session in prayer. This helps remind all group members why you're gathered and what you hope the Lord will accomplish through this study.

Let the videos do the teaching.

- Don't worry, there's no need to be an expert on the content in order to successfully facilitate a *Truth Rising: The Study* group. Be sure to read the Facilitator Prep section and watch the lessons in advance, but let video host John Stonestreet do the teaching.

Establish a positive tone.

- Participants need to know that all group members will be treated with dignity and respect during the lesson. A vigorous discussion of ideas will always be encouraged, but a critical or condescending tone to other group members is out of place.

Keep the discussion on track.

- As the facilitator, your role is to keep the discussion on track. Stick to the questions listed in the facilitator guide, and make clear which question is being discussed. Feel free to pick the question(s) best suited to your group and the time available. Should the discussion get off track, don't hesitate to redirect the group back to the question or content from the video.

Encourage everyone to participate.

- Set the tone up front that a group discussion works best when everyone participates. Promote this by gently encouraging more-reserved group members to join in the conversation.

Make it fun!

- Choose a comfortable location, and have group members bring snacks to share. Make this a time for group members to get to know and encourage one another.

FORMAT OPTIONS

Truth Rising: The Study includes four Teaching Videos and four Story Videos. As the Facilitator, you can choose how to watch the video content in the format which works best for your group.

4-Week Study Option #1

When to Watch the Videos:
Teaching video + story video during group time

Average Session Time:
1.5 Hours

Format:
Watch the teaching video and complete the discussion questions, then watch the courageous Christian story video and do the discussion questions all in one group session

Recommended For:
Groups who need to complete the study in four weeks and do have time for an extended session

4-Week Study Option #2

When to Watch the Videos:
Teaching video during group + story video at home

Average Session Time:
1 Hour

Format:
Watch the teaching video and complete the discussion questions together

During the week, group participants watch the story video on their own

Use the story question as a "Warm Up" for your group time to debrief about what participants watched on their own

Recommended For:
Groups who need to complete the study in four weeks and do not have time for an extended session

8-Week Study Option

When to Watch the Videos:
Spread the study over 8 weeks:

1 video per week

Teaching videos + story videos during group

Week #1: Hope Teaching Video

Week #2: Courageous Christians: A Story of Hope Video

Week #3: Truth Teaching Video

Week #4: Courageous Christians: A Story of Truth Video

Week #5: Identity Teaching Video

Week #6: Courageous Christians: A Story of Identity Video

Week #7: Calling Teaching Video

Week #8: Courageous Christians: A Story of Calling Video

Average Session Time:
1 Hour

Format:
Watch one video per week and complete the corresponding discussion questions

Recommended For:
Groups who have the time to conduct an extended-format study

LESSON 1

HOPE

4 REALITIES

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." – 1 PETER 1:3

FACILITATOR PREP

What comes to mind when you hear the word *hope*? "I hope I get a new car" or "I hope my team wins the World Series this year"? We mostly talk about hope as *wishful thinking*. We hope for something to happen or to change.

But human hopes go far deeper than wanting a new car or for a particular team to win the championship. We want to know what the future entails and if everything will turn out okay in the end. We want to know our lives matter and what we do means something. We want to know if God is there and genuinely cares. We want a faith that endures, even if our personal circumstances seem to be falling apart. The good news for the Christian is that the Bible never refers to hope as wishful thinking. The Bible talks about hope in Someone who will never change.

The Bible addresses these deeper hopes while redefining what hope is. Biblical hope, both for this moment and for the future, is securely based on the reality of what Jesus Christ has accomplished. Christians are people of the Resurrection because Christ defeated death, sin, hell, and the grave (see 1 Corinthians 15). *Christians believe this is the most important truth about this (or any) civilizational moment*.

To rightly understand the world, ourselves, and our place in it, we must first ask what story we are a part of—or rather, *whose* story we are a part of. The story we're in is God's Story. Christians believe this Story isn't merely one option among many plausible and equally valid worldviews. We believe God's Story is the definition of reality itself. In this first lesson, we will examine the four pillars of the Christian's hope based on what God has revealed in the Bible:

1. **Christ is risen.** *The Resurrection is the central moment in human history and the most important truth of this cultural moment.*
2. **Christ is Lord.** *As the Sovereign over all things, the Lord Jesus Christ sits on the throne of heaven and earth. This is true whether or not people recognize it.*
3. **Christ is making all things new.** *The world is moving toward renewal under God's plan.*
4. **God has made us for this time and place.** *We are not in this moment by accident; God chose us to live in this time and place.*

Christ Is Risen.

The Resurrection is the game changer of human history. If you ask most people where the Good News of the gospel appears in Scripture, you might get answers like John 3:16 or 1 John 1:9. But the Good News actually appears far earlier than the New Testament. The gospel begins with God's creating the world and everything in it. The gospel establishes His intentions for the world and His determination to make all the sad things "come untrue." The wounded yet living Seed of Genesis 3 was the resurrected Christ of the Gospels.

To believe that Christ is risen involves more than having a personal, private belief. The Bible sets the Resurrection as the centerpiece of the entire story of reality, the event by which all other events are understood and defined. According to 1 Peter, the Resurrection secures our hope, and Christians should always be "prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

Christ Is Lord.

The Christian faith is deeply personal, but it's never meant to be private.

The temptation for many of us is to simplify the lordship of Christ as a personal, "Jesus and me" belief. But Scripture reveals a fundamental reality that grounds our hope: Jesus Christ is not only Lord of your life, but He is also Lord of all creation (see, e.g., Colossians 1:16-17). And this reality changes everything.

The early church was forced to wrestle with this reality. In the aftermath of the cosmic events surrounding Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, the apostle Peter wrote to those enduring a time of intense persecution (see 1 Peter 1).

The claim that "Jesus is Lord" was, for early Christians, more than a statement of personal devotion; *it carried ideas about ultimate authority*—authority Rome claimed for itself. *Peter reminded these new believers that even in the face of overt persecution, God's plan still unfolds.* The reality of Christ's lordship, even over our enemies, means we should not despair, regardless of the cultural moment we find ourselves in.

In every age there are those who try to assume the kind of authority that belongs only to Jesus Christ. While He has certainly established earthly authorities, there is only One with the power to define reality and determine history. The One who is risen from the dead sits on the throne of heaven and earth. If this is true, despair is a sin. Hope is secure.

Christ Is Making All Things New.

The Bible is not a random chronicle of past events. Christ's death, burial, and resurrection are both the first fruits of what had been promised since the Garden and the ultimate restoration of all things foretold as the new heavens and new earth.

When Christ said in Revelation 21:5, "I am making all things new," He revealed the end of the Story that began in Genesis 1. He said all that was broken in the beginning will be made right at the end. When the Bible speaks of "end times" in apocalyptic literature—most famously in Revelation but also elsewhere in the Bible—it isn't meant to puzzle us but to give us hope.

It gives us hope that, even when it seems as if life is out of control, God is still on His throne. As Christians we are participants in God's Story, and our future is secure. Our moment in history isn't a centuries-long waiting room until *the end*, and only then will our work matter. Nor are we left to despair as mere victims of history in a post-Christian culture. Instead, we are now—in our own way and in our own time—working in Christ, whether *the end* is tomorrow or in 10,000 years.

God Has Made Us for This Time and Place.

In the book *The Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, a hobbit and a wizard reflect on the destruction of Middle Earth at the hands of the evil being Sauron as the land lies scorched before them.

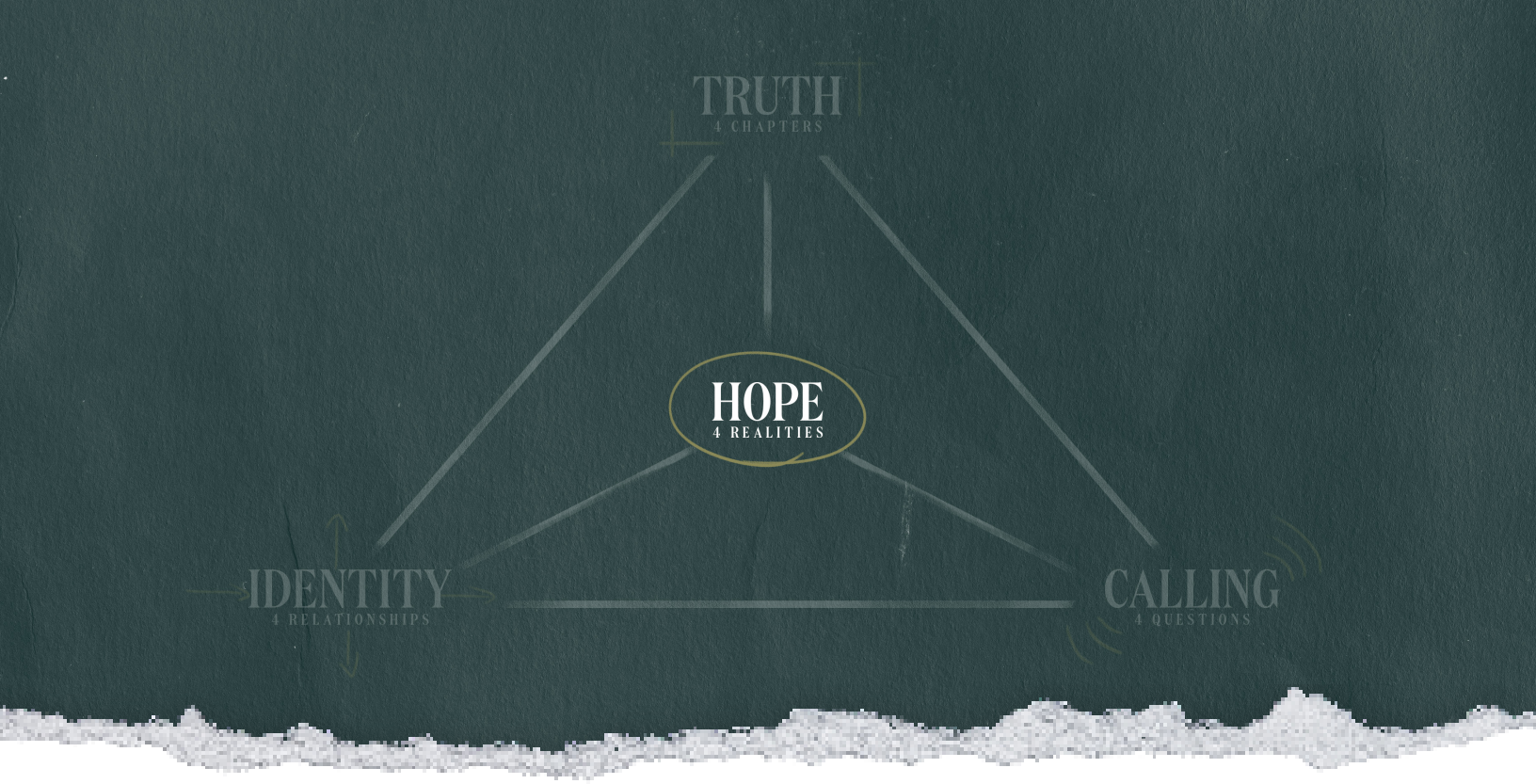
> *"I wish it need not have happened in my time," says Frodo the hobbit.*
>
> *"So do I," replies Gandalf the wizard, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."*

We can easily succumb to the same despair Frodo faced. The chaos of the moment pushes us to escape, put our heads down, and focus on arriving unscathed to our eternal home with Christ.

But if Jesus is Lord—not was Lord or will be Lord, but Lord in the here and now—then we need to set our sights higher than making it through life untouched by the chaos of the moment.

The apostle Paul underscored the reality that Jesus Christ is Lord throughout Ephesians 1, culminating in his prayer for the saints at Ephesus. In verse 18 Paul prayed that they might "know what is the hope to which he has called you"—a hope he anchored in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But Paul didn't stop there. Christ is not only resurrected, proving victory over death, but He is also reigning over all creation. Christ is seated "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Ephesians 1:21).

The wizard Gandalf was right. It's not for us to wish we lived in different times. We don't need to, because God has placed each of us at this precise moment in history for His own sovereign reasons. Our calling is to step into the moment we've been given with courage, because we know who is reigning over all things: our Lord Jesus Christ.



LESSON ESSENTIALS

1. **Big Idea**

   As important as this cultural moment is, it's still just a moment. To not lose hope, we must keep in mind God's larger Story of the world.

2. **Scripture Focus**

> *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* – 1 PETER 1:3

GROUP

Opening Prayer

Pray for good conversation, for eyes of understanding to be opened, and for group members to step into their calling as agents of renewal right where they are.

Warm-up Question

Ask your group members, "Tell the group what drew you to this study. What are you hoping to learn?"

Watch Teaching Video 1



(Please note: An account must be created to view video content. Create your free account **HERE**.)

Click Here to Watch Video

Discussion Questions: Teaching Video

Choose the questions that seem best suited to your group and the time available.

Note that the first question is based on the *Truth Rising* film, which you and your group should have watched before beginning this study.

- In the *Truth Rising* documentary, presenters say our Western civilization is the greatest ever. What are some of the good things about our civilization? What are some of its shortcomings?
- Sometimes Christ's lordship is narrowly defined as His being Lord over our "personal lives." Yet Scripture teaches that Jesus is Lord of all creation. How does the reality that Christ is Lord encourage you today?
- Are you prone to despair in this cultural moment? How do the four reasons for hope discussed in the video offer an antidote to despair?
- How does the fact that God chose you for this time and place help give your life meaning?
- Where has God called you to be an agent of restoration in this time and place? What people, places, and work has He given you to invest in?

Watch Story Video 1



Ayaan Hirsi Ali

Courageous Christians: A Story of Hope

Ayaan Hirsi Ali shares her journey from Islam to atheism to Christianity, and what Christianity offered her that no other worldview could.

(Please note: An account must be created to view video content. Create your free account **HERE**.)

Click Here to Watch Video

Discussion Questions: Story Video

- When comparing Christianity to Islam, how did Ayaan's search for truth and hope ultimately lead her to Christianity instead of Islam?
- Ayaan came to a place of desperation and sought relief in destructive behavior. How did the reality of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection change her life? As you look around, where might God be calling you to bring the hope of Christianity to a world in need?
- In her story, Ayaan references the dangers of an "us-versus-them" mindset promoted by Islam. Where do you see this affecting culture today? How does the hope that God has called us to this time and place, and that He is making all things new, transform the way Christians interact with others?

PRAY

Take time to pray for one another. Here are a few suggestions:

- Ask God to encourage your group with the hope of the gospel and the fact that He is ultimately making all things new.
- Pray that God would use you to help spread hope to those around you—especially those who might be struggling with meaninglessness or hopelessness.
- Pray that God would give you clarity, confidence, and courage to do the work He has called and equipped you to do.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Breakpoint Podcast:** The Colson Center for Christian Worldview.
- Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan* (IVP Academic, 2002).
- Chuck Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Tyndale House Publishers, 1999).
- **Worldview Formation:** The Colson Center for Christian Worldview.
- **Worldview Formation 201:** The Colson Center for Christian Worldview.
- **Lighthouse Voices:** "Becoming a Light in the World."
- Os Guinness, **"Rediscovering Faith in a Culture of Chaos,"** Focus on the Family broadcast recording.
- **ReFOCUS with Jim Daly:** Bi-weekly podcast by Focus on the Family.


“We live in a civilizational moment.”
OS GUINNESS

LESSON 2

TRUTH

4 CHAPTERS

"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him." – COLOSSIANS 1:16

FACILITATOR PREP

It's not unusual to hear someone claim, "That might be true for you, but not for me." Rejecting the existence of *absolute truth*—that which is true for everyone, everywhere—has even crept into the church. Many Christians see their faith as not just personal but also *private*, something only "between me and Jesus." In their view, Christianity affects only their personal lives, leaving many reluctant to even have a conversation about the Christian faith for fear of imposing their beliefs on someone else.

Yet this is *not* the way the Bible speaks about following Christ. Our faith is personal, yes, but it's definitely not private. While we should always engage others with grace, the Bible claims that truth exists and is knowable. Moreover, in John 14:6, Jesus Christ claimed to *be* Truth. In other words, Christianity is not merely true for Christians. It is the Truth about reality, for all people at all times.

This study embraces that understanding of Christianity, and the word *truth* is used to describe reality as it really is. In fact, the Bible doesn't merely contain a set of *truths*, in the sense of disconnected facts or ethical principles for us to apply to our lives. The Bible tells the True Story of the world, the most accurate description of reality and humanity there is.

The biblical account of reality can be summarized in four chapters:

1. **Creation**
2. **Fall**
3. **Redemption**
4. **Restoration**

This True Story of reality is our context for every cultural moment. Even a civilizational moment like ours is, in fact, only part of the larger story told in Scripture, from the forming of the heavens and the earth to the New Creation yet to come. Stories are bigger than mere moments. Stories are the context through which we can fully understand each moment. And to understand *our* civilizational moment, we must understand the True Story of reality. To understand the True Story of reality, we must understand its four chapters.

Creation

The Bible opens with the profound declaration, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The Hebrew word *bara*, which is translated here as "created," is unique in that this verb could have only one subject: God. This is how the story begins, with God's unrivaled and absolute authority over creation.

The fundamental premise of creation is that this world belongs to God. He created everything with purpose, order, and meaning. Even the rhythm of the creation chapter points to His authority. When God speaks, creation responds in obedience. This indicates, as Dutch statesman and theologian Abraham Kuyper put it, that "every square inch" of creation is under the authority of God.

On the sixth day God created the apex of the cosmos: human beings. The same Hebrew word *(bara)* that's used in Genesis 1:1 is used three times in Genesis 1:26-27. This signifies the uniqueness of humanity. God *speaks* everything else into existence, but in Genesis 2:7 He *forms* the first man. Human beings are made by God in His image, after His likeness. All creation points to God, but only humans bear His image.

Moreover, God wishes to be with His image bearers. Throughout Scripture, beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God repeatedly visits His creation and interacts with human beings.

He is not aloof from the world He made. He cares for it, especially for those made in His image. Ultimately, in Jesus Christ, God engages with His world by taking on human flesh.

As the only created beings to bear God's image, humans have inherent dignity and significance. This inherent significance and dignity of humanity is found only within the Christian worldview. Not only does this value give our lives meaning and purpose, but it also has ramifications throughout history. We'll discuss this in more detail later in our study.

Fall

Everything changes in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve were given freedom to steward and care for God's creation, with a simple caveat: "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden" (Genesis 3:3). Deceived by the serpent and the desires of their own hearts, the humans violated this command and ate of the forbidden tree. This decision had cosmic repercussions.

Before the Fall, there was no shame. After the Fall, Adam and Eve hid from their Creator. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve tended the Garden as an act of worship and obedience. After the Fall, work was hard among the thorns. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve properly related to each other as man and wife. After the Fall, they blamed each other, and eventually God, for the mess they'd made. They were ultimately forced from the Garden, and their relationships (humans with God, man with woman, humans with creation, humans with themselves) were distorted and broken.

Most of the rest of Scripture describes the world after the Fall. The effects of mankind's disobedience are observable everywhere. In Romans 8, for example, Paul wrote that creation groans out of frustration and waits eagerly for redemption.

The essence of sin is rejecting God's authority and goodness. From this rejection we, along with the rest of creation, are broken.

In creation, God revealed how He intended things to be. The Fall explains why things are the way they are. Thankfully, the True Story of reality does not end there.

Redemption

After the Fall, things are bleak. However, tucked away in Genesis 3:15 is a promise. God declared to the deceptive serpent:

> *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

This promise is known as the *protoevangelion*, the first proclamation of the Good News. Even before God delivered judgment on Adam and Eve, He promised that a redeemer would come. From the offspring of the woman would come one who would suffer but, in doing so, would crush evil.

This promise of redemption is repeated throughout the Old Testament, through both God's actions and words. Consider a few examples:

- **Genesis 12:** God promises to make of Abram a great nation that will bring blessing to all the nations of the earth.
- **Genesis 15:** God covenants with Abram to give him a son who will be his heir.
- **Exodus 19:** God uses an Israelite prophet to lead his people out of Egyptian bondage.
- **2 Samuel 7:** God covenants with David that one of his offspring will be established as a forever king on the throne.

- **Isaiah 11:** Isaiah prophesies that one will come from the root of Jesse on whom the Spirit of the Lord will rest, whose belt will be righteousness, and who will gather Israel and Judah from the four corners of the earth.
- **Isaiah 53:** Isaiah prophesies that this same servant of the Lord will be despised and rejected; will bear our sorrows and griefs; will be smitten by God and afflicted, pierced for our transgressions, and crushed for our iniquities; and by His wounds we will be healed.

John the Baptist understood this, and upon seeing Jesus he declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Every messianic prophecy of the Old Testament was fulfilled through the perfect life, substitutionary atoning death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul articulated this redemption in 2 Corinthians 5:21, stating, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the Christian worldview provides that which other worldviews cannot: hope. Christians who understand the chapters of creation, fall, and redemption understand what God designed, what sin tarnished, and what Jesus Christ reclaimed.

Restoration

Unfortunately, many Christians have a reduced, two-chapter view of the gospel, as if the story is only about fall and redemption. That view reduces the implications of the gospel to only our personal relationship with God. The gospel is certainly not less than this, but it is also more.

As Paul wrote, "All this [redemption] is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

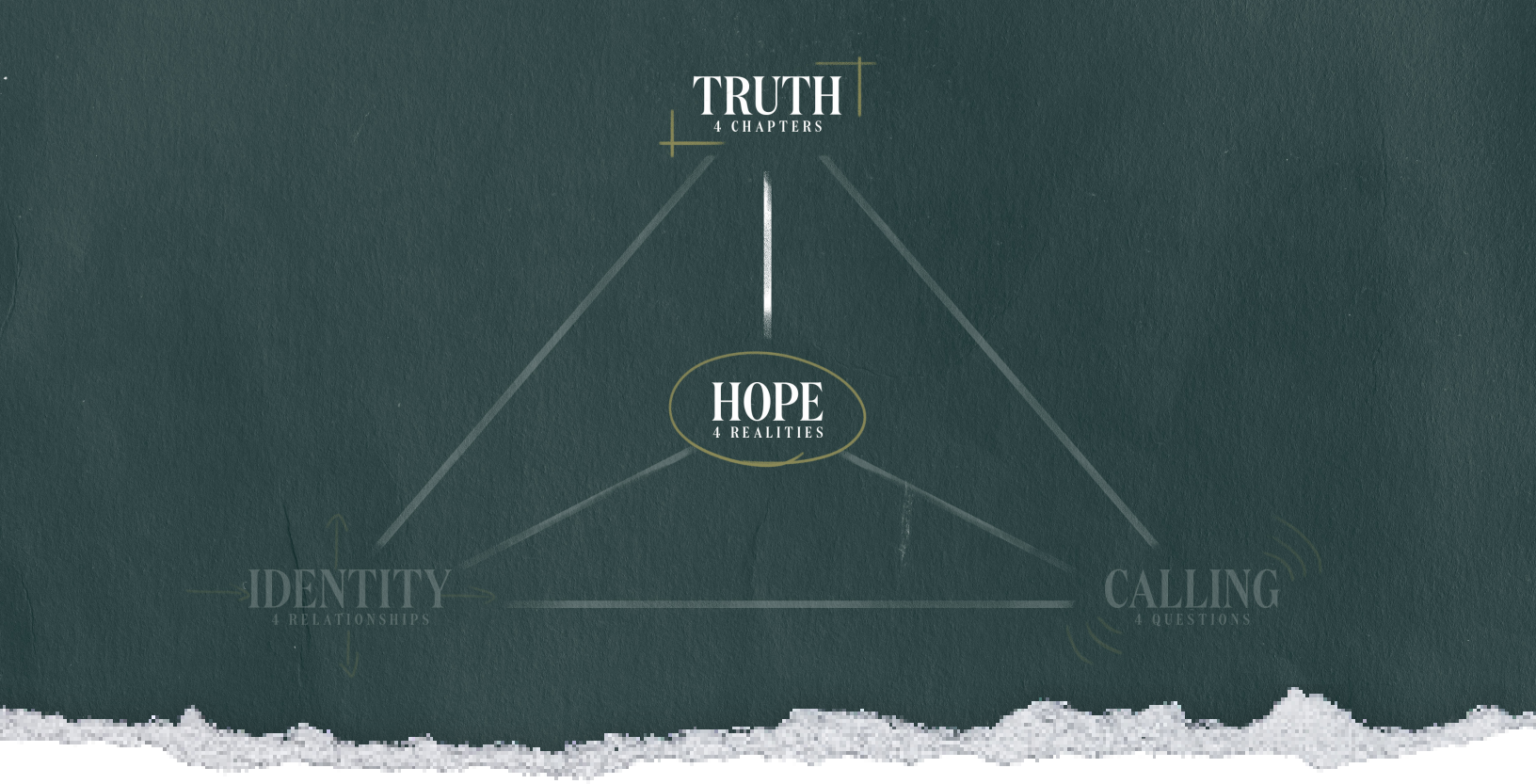
Here and elsewhere, Paul extended the implications of the gospel to all of creation. He also said those who have been reconciled to God have been entrusted with the task of reconciliation. Thus, because of the work of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have a weighty calling on our lives.

Christians should "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Ephesians 4:1). If it's true, as we learned in lesson 1, that God calls people to specific times and places, then we must wrestle with how we might be agents of reconciliation right here and now, in this civilizational moment. As we do, we look forward to the ultimate restoration described in Revelation, when

> *"...the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."* – REVELATION 21:3-4

This restoration is more than a return to life in the Garden, it is an enhancement. In the final chapter, God moves into creation in unbroken, perfect fellowship. All of creation is reconciled to the Creator, never to be broken again.

By understanding all four chapters of God's Story—Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration—Christians can avoid confusing the cultural moment with God's larger story. These chapters provide truthful and cohesive answers to the questions: How has God made me? How are things supposed to be? Why am I here? What has gone wrong? Why are things the way they are? Who will fix what's broken? What hope do we have? How am I to live?



LESSON ESSENTIALS

1. **Big Idea**

   The biblical narrative gives us God's Story of the world. This story is true not just for Christianity. It is reality itself.

2. **Scripture Focus**

> *"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him."* – COLOSSIANS 1:16

GROUP

Opening Prayer

Pray for good conversation, for eyes of understanding to be opened, and for group members to step into their calling as agents of renewal right where they are.

Warm-up Question

Ask your group members, "How is truth defined in our culture today?"

Watch Teaching Video 2



(Please note: An account must be created to view video content. Create your free account **HERE**.)

Click Here to Watch Video

Discussion Questions: Teaching Video

Choose the questions that seem best suited to your group and the time available.

Note that the first question is based on the *Truth Rising* film, which you and your group should have watched before beginning this study.

- In the *Truth Rising* documentary, David Berlinski says, "A man who could not build a pigsty can nonetheless destroy a chateau." Why is it so much easier to tear down something good than to build it?
- How does Christianity answer the question, "What went wrong with the world?" Explain the significance of Christianity's answer compared to other worldviews.
- How does learning the truth about the four-chapter story of the world give us hope in the midst of difficult cultural and personal moments?
- To what and to whom do you think the Lord has called you to be an agent of restoration?

Watch Story Video 2



Jack Phillips

Courageous Christians: A Story of Truth

The story of how Jack Phillips' commitment to Truth took him to the Supreme Court and back—and what God did through a single step of obedience.

(Please note: An account must be created to view video content. Create your free account **HERE**.)

Click Here to Watch Video

Discussion Questions: Story Video

- Some say Jack should have just baked the cake and kept his convictions to himself. How does understanding Truth as reality itself (for all people at all times) inform how we should respond as Christians in this moment?
- Jack had the confidence to stand firm in Truth because he understood God's design for marriage as revealed through Scripture and created order. Why is it important to know Truth so you can live faithfully, especially under cultural pressure?
- In what contexts or relationships do you struggle to speak and live the Truth? How does Jack's story challenge or encourage you?

PRAY

Take time to pray for one another. Here are a few suggestions:

- Praise God for His creation of all things and how He has invited us into relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.
- Where you see the effects of the Fall around you, pray for restoration. Ask God to use you to bring restoration to brokenness in your family, home, church, and community in practical ways.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Breakpoint Podcast:** The Colson Center for Christian Worldview.
- Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan* (IVP Academic, 2002).
- Chuck Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Tyndale House Publishers, 1999).
- **Worldview Formation:** The Colson Center for Christian Worldview.
- **Worldview Formation 201:** The Colson Center for Christian Worldview.
- Robert Velarde, **"True Tolerance: Faithfully Serving the God of Truth,"** Focus on the Family.
- **ReFOCUS with Jim Daly:** Bi-weekly podcast by Focus on the Family.

LESSON 3

IDENTITY

4 RELATIONSHIPS

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'"
– GENESIS 1:26

FACILITATOR PREP

"Be yourself."

"Live your truth."

"Follow your heart."

A widespread and persistent *identity crisis* is one of the defining features of this civilizational moment. So many voices push us to question who we are and then encourage us to self-construct an identity. And it's believable. After all, we customize virtually everything today, so why not customize who we are? Even Christians can be deceived into rejecting who God created us to be and, in the name of tolerance, embrace whatever identity, purpose, and essence people claim for themselves.

The Bible presents human identity as something determined by our Creator and understood in relationship to everything He made.

In the creation account, God announced, "Let us make man in our image." This is how the Bible introduces a character who is central to the True Story of the world: the first human being. In each chapter of the story, from creation to restoration, humans play the prominent role—most notably in the person of Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully human.

In Scripture, God reveals Himself to be, in His very essence, relational. After all, He is a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It follows, then, that human identity can be understood through the lens of relationships as well. In fact, God created human beings with four essential relationships. Humans are in relationship with:

1. **God:** *We are made in His image.*
2. **Self:** *We not only exist, but we also think about existing and wonder why we exist.*

3. **Others:** *We have personal relationships and social relationships.*
4. **Creation:** *God gave us, His image bearers, the task of stewarding His world.*

God created humans to reflect Him in each of these relationships. However, each relationship was damaged, even broken, by the Fall. In Christ these relationships are reconciled and renewed, and in the process our true humanity can be restored. Understanding who we are in light of God's larger Story is essential to securing our identity as it really is.

Let's examine these four essential relationships.

Relationship with God

How God created humans was different from how He created everything else, both in method and in substance. Rather than simply speaking humans into existence, as He had everything else, God intimately formed the first man and breathed life into his lungs. Human beings are the *only* part of God's creation that bears His image. To be an image bearer is the most important truth about our identity.

Bearing God's image enables humans to think, reason, exercise dominion over His creation, and engage in interpersonal relationships. The most important of these relationships is between humans and their Creator. This relationship reflects the relational character of God Himself, who, as Trinity, has always existed in perfect harmony between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

According to Genesis 3, God walked in the Garden with His image bearers. However, after the Fall, the man and wife hid from Him. This indicates two important truths: First, Adam and Eve originally had a relationship in which they enjoyed God and His gift of creation. Second, because of their disobedience, Adam and Eve were separated from the presence of God and expelled from the Garden. God's image in humanity was dimmed by the Fall.

However, even in a world under the curse of sin, human beings still possess fundamental dignity and identity as His image bearers.

The severed relationship between humans and God can be seen throughout Scripture. However, it's just as obvious that God reaches out to His image bearers and, through Christ, ultimately restores that relationship. In His perfect life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection, Jesus secured the means by which human beings can again have a relationship with a holy God.

Yet even the redeemed are not immediately freed from their sinful desires. Through the process of sanctification, believers are made to conform to the image of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This process will continue until the ultimate restoration of humanity, when we receive our glorified bodies and live with Christ for eternity.

Relationship with Self

Human beings not only exist, but we are also aware of our existence. That's unique. God created humans with intrinsic worth, a purpose, and a sense of harmony rooted in being known and loved by God.

Sin also severed this relationship. Since the Fall, humans have experienced shame and confusion about who they are and how they ought to relate to God, others, and the world around them. However, many humans also look to other criteria to help determine their identity and worth. As a result, they're subject to either pride or self-hatred. Sin not only separates us from God, but it also prevents us from seeing ourselves rightly.

Through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, God redeems this flawed understanding. In Christ, humans are new creations, declared righteous, forgiven, loved, and adopted into the family of God.

These truths free humans from defining themselves by man-made categories, all of which fall incomparably short of their value as image bearers. Identity is rooted in grace, not performance. With a right understanding, humans need not strive for self-worth, as it is already inherent within them simply by being human.

Relationship with Others

In Genesis 2:18, God declared it was not good for man to be alone. Alone, Adam was unable to fulfill the purpose for which he was created—to be "fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). Therefore, God created Eve as a helper to complement Adam's work.

Human beings have both personal and social relationships. These relationships take the form of families, communities, and nations. Though God is self-sufficient, the members of the Trinity are in perfect, harmonious relationship with one another. In other words, God doesn't just *do* relationships. He is, in His being, a relationship.

Our need for community reflects the image of God. Perhaps no aspect of Christian theology is more observable than how sin has distorted relationships between human beings. From power struggles to injustice, abandonment to manipulation, humans do not love one another as reflected in the Trinity. Instead, we exploit one another through relationships that are transactional, toxic, selfish, abusive, and a long list of other negative descriptors. When humans fail to see each other as fellow image bearers, they see others as stumbling blocks to their own hopes, dreams, and desires.

Through the work of Jesus Christ, humans are not only redeemed to God and themselves, but they're also redeemed to one another. Christians are adopted into a new family, united not by social status or performance, but through the grace and forgiveness offered by Christ.

The gospel empowers Christians to forgive one another as Jesus has forgiven them (see Colossians 3:13). We are now part of His body, the Church.

Ultimately, as Christians better understand the implications of redemption on their relationships with one another, they will seek restoration on both an individual and societal level. As Christians press further into this understanding, individuals will experience a deeper, more meaningful community with others unified by the work of Jesus Christ.

Relationship with Creation

In Genesis 1:28-31, before concluding the final day of creation, God gave humanity stewardship over the Garden. The order to tend and keep the Garden occurred before the Fall, not after, meaning that working was part of God's design. Work was to be worship—a meaningful way to arrange the gifts of creation to glorify and honor God through both the product and the process.

Because of the Fall, this relationship between humans and creation was also subjected to the curse of sin. Work is now inherently difficult, it's done among the thorns and thistles, but it's not desecrated. How we work is one of the most important ways we reflect God as His image bearers. God calls humanity to labor in the world, mirroring His creative work and authority by exercising dominion over the earth. Humans were to form and fill what had been created, just as God formed and filled the nothingness to become created reality.

Our Lord Jesus Christ redeems work from drudgery to calling. The work humanity does is understood as the utilization of the talents and gifts to worship God and is a meaningful part of God's mission. Though our work is still among the thorns and often alongside other image bearers who don't understand their calling, through Christ it is redemptive.

In fact, according to Romans 8, our restoration in Christ will have a profound impact on the creation. As Paul wrote in verses 19-21:

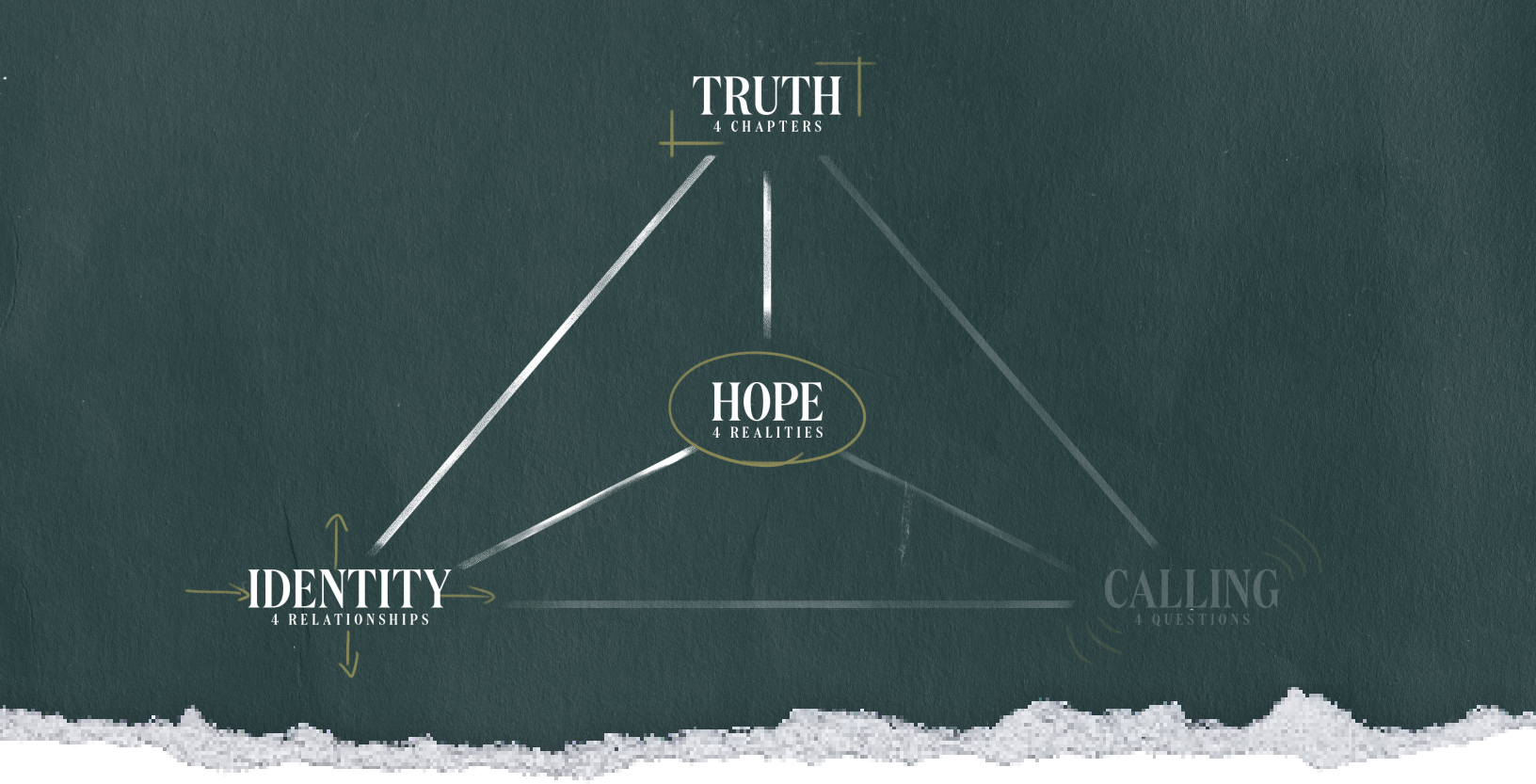
> *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

In other words, the central role God created humans to have within His world is restored through Christ.

This framework for understanding human identity provides answers to the most important existential questions humans have:

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- What is my purpose?

It also provides a framework for knowing how to live as Christians as we ask, "How can I work to restore each of these relationships?"



LESSON ESSENTIALS

1. Big Idea

To be human is to be made in the image of God.

2. Scripture Focus

> *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'*
>
> *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* – GENESIS 1:26-27
>
> *"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."* – GENESIS 1:31

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." – 2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-19

GROUP

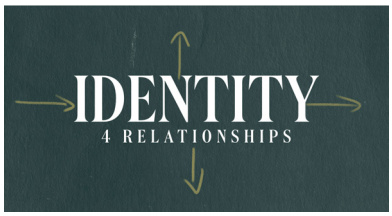
Opening Prayer

Pray for good conversation, for eyes of understanding to be opened, and for group members to step into their calling as agents of renewal right where they are.

Warm-up Question

Ask your group members, "How would you answer the question, 'What does it mean to be human?'"

Watch Teaching Video 3



(Please note: An account must be created to view video content. Create your free account **HERE**.)

Click Here to Watch Video

Discussion Questions: Teaching Video

Choose the questions that seem best suited to your group and the time available:

Note that the first question is based on the *Truth Rising* film, which you and your group should have watched before beginning this study.

- In the *Truth Rising* documentary, John Anderson speaks of the "radical individualism" of our age. In what ways is such a perspective at odds with Christian commitment?
- How has the Fall affected how we relate to God, ourselves, others, and creation?
- How does knowing that human beings are created in the image of God influence your self-worth? The worth of others?
- How does the understanding of being an image bearer as seen through the four relationships shape your calling and purpose?
- Identify at least one relationship (God, self, others, creation) you can seek to reconcile. Then pray for God's work in that reconciliation.

Watch Story Video 3



Chloe Cole

Courageous Christians: A Story of Identity

Chloe Cole describes the adolescent identity struggles that pulled her toward gender transition, and how she changed her mind and embraced her God-given identity.

(Please note: An account must be created to view video content. Create your free account **HERE**.)

Click Here to Watch Video

Discussion Questions: Story Video

- As seen in Chloe's story, How does the denial of our God-given identity affect the four relationships we are designed for (with God, Self, Others, and Creation)?
- As Chloe says, "There's no 'my truth' or 'your truth.' ... Jesus is the Truth." Where does the denial of objective Truth show up in our culture's understanding of identity?
- Chloe says, "I am not just a tragedy...You can live beyond whatever it is you have lost." How does the truth that sin is not the final chapter of God's Story transform Chloe's story? How might it transform your own story?

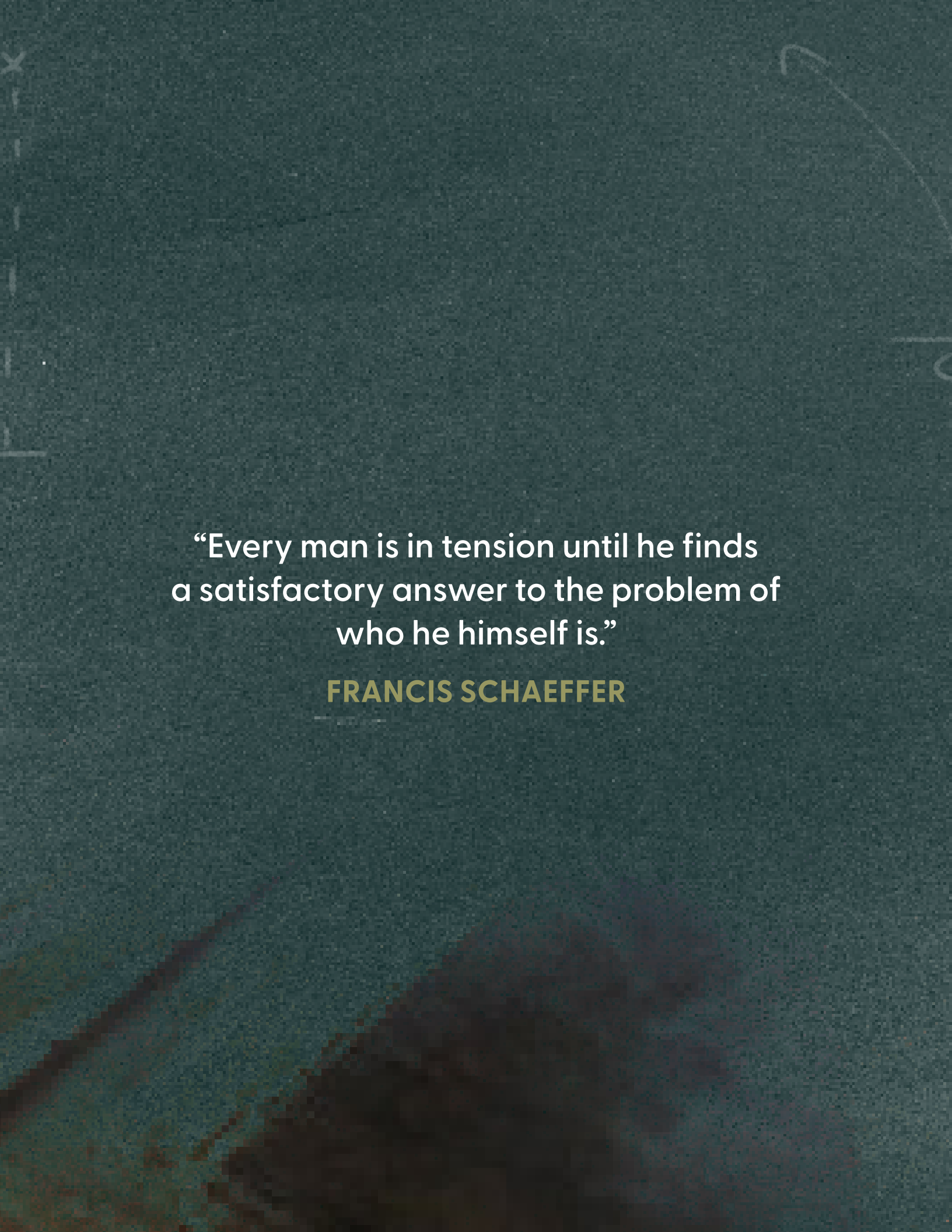
PRAY

Take time to pray for one another. Here are a few suggestions:

- Pray that you would see every person you interact with this week as made in the image of God.
- Pray for the health of the marriages, families, and friendships represented in your group, that they would honor the Lord and be pleasing in His sight.
- Is there a broken relationship in your sphere of influence? Ask how God would want you to be an agent of reconciliation in that situation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Breakpoint Podcast:** The Colson Center for Christian Worldview.
- **The Identity Project:** The Colson Center for Christian Worldview.
- Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (InterVarsity Press, 1968).
- Glenn T. Stanton, **"There Is No Pride in Denying Reality or the Image of God in Humanity,"** Focus on the Family *Daily Citizen*.
- **ReFOCUS with Jim Daly:** Bi-weekly podcast by Focus on the Family.


“Every man is in tension until he finds
a satisfactory answer to the problem of
who he himself is.”
FRANCIS SCHAEFFER

LESSON 4

CALLING

4 QUESTIONS

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." – 2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-19

FACILITATOR PREP

One of the first questions people ask when meeting someone new is, "So, what do you do?"

But there's far more to people's identity, even their "calling," than what they do for employment. The biblical understanding of calling is far richer than that and includes not only what we do, but also how we were uniquely gifted to bear God's image in this time and where we've been placed by Him.

God made us in His image. That image was broken by the Fall. But through Christ, we are restored to His image. He then invites us to join Him in His ongoing work of renewal and restoration. All of this is carried out within a specific moment in history as determined by God. For us, that moment is a "civilizational moment."

We aren't here just to exist or survive. We're called.

How do I take the reality of this civilizational moment, understand it in light of what's true about the world and the human person, and then live it out? This is calling.

Chuck Colson once noted,

> "The question of our day is not what then shall we do, but, as always, who then shall we be? Our identity in Christ will dictate our actions. Our task, first, is to be the church, the bride of Christ, the Body." *(How Now Shall We Live?)*

We cannot understand *what* we're to do until we realize *who* we are as the people of God in this moment. Our calling is a natural outgrowth of the hope, truth, and identity we possess as Christians.

The apostle Paul called believers "[God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). When calling is understood in the context of the true story of the world and who God made us to be, we realize that being a Christian is not merely inviting Jesus to be part of our lives, but also that He invites us into *His* life.

Because this invitation is offered in a particular time and place, calling is not abstract. The families we're in, the churches where we serve, the communities of which we're a part, and the civilizations we find ourselves in—all are ordained for us by God. As God made His image bearers to work in His world, in Christ He has redeemed image bearers to join His work of restoration.

Calling can be understood with four questions:

1. **What is good that I can celebrate and protect?**
2. **What is missing that I can create and contribute to?**
3. **What is evil that I need to resist and oppose?**
4. **What is broken that I can help renew and restore?**

What is good that I can celebrate and protect?

The true story of the world begins in Genesis 1, not Genesis 3. Before sin broke all of creation, God declared His creation "good." Though the effects of the Fall mar God's creation, we should affirm beauty, truth, and goodness wherever we see them. What might this look like practically?

- Celebrating lifelong married love in a culture in which it's rare
- Acknowledging and teaching the next generation about God's good design of male and female
- Pursuing work done well and for the sake of others

- Creating beautiful things
- Caring for God's world in a way that helps it flourish

In Philippians 4:8 Paul wrote:

> *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

This is bigger than simply thinking positive thoughts. This means seeking out what's good and right about the world and using our God-given abilities to cultivate it. Doing so is a way of recognizing that, at its core, this is still our Father's world, and the beauty of His work endures.

What is missing that I can create and contribute to?

The Christian life isn't just about avoiding wrong and doing good. It also involves stewarding the gifts and abilities God gave us. We're made in the image of the Creator of the Universe. We, too, have the capacity to think, imagine, innovate, and, in a very real sense, create. It is humbling to realize that God blesses us with the privilege of reflecting Him as we contribute to the needs of those around us. Such contributions could include:

- Telling someone about Jesus who doesn't know Him
- Starting a business to produce good things and provide gainful employment for others
- Planting a church in a community where there is none
- Imagining and producing stories that tell the truth about the world
- Opening a school or providing quality educational options for parents
- Offering forgiveness in a situation of bitterness and hurt

What is evil that I need to resist and oppose?

God opposes all that is evil. God's holiness would be violated if He tolerated evil, which is why He is just and righteous in His judgment of sin. God calls His image bearers to be holy too. As the apostle Peter wrote:

> *"But as he who has called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"* – 1 PETER 1:15-16

To be like Jesus means to resist Satan as He did (and Adam did not) and to oppose evil.

In this, God calls us to more than a merely private faith. We can't ignore the evil in the world precisely because *He doesn't ignore the evil in the world*. The stance of the church in the face of evil should never be silence or apathy. Just as Jesus Christ worked to defeat sin and its consequences, so His people must also take whatever steps they can to undo the damage of the Fall in this world. These steps could include:

- Preventing pornography use in our own homes and families
- Speaking out against the mistreatment of others
- Clarifying that a particular cause or action is sinful, even if it's culturally accepted or even celebrated
- Learning about and praying for persecuted Christians around the world
- Speaking out or voting against proposed laws that target children for harm

What is broken that I can help renew and restore?

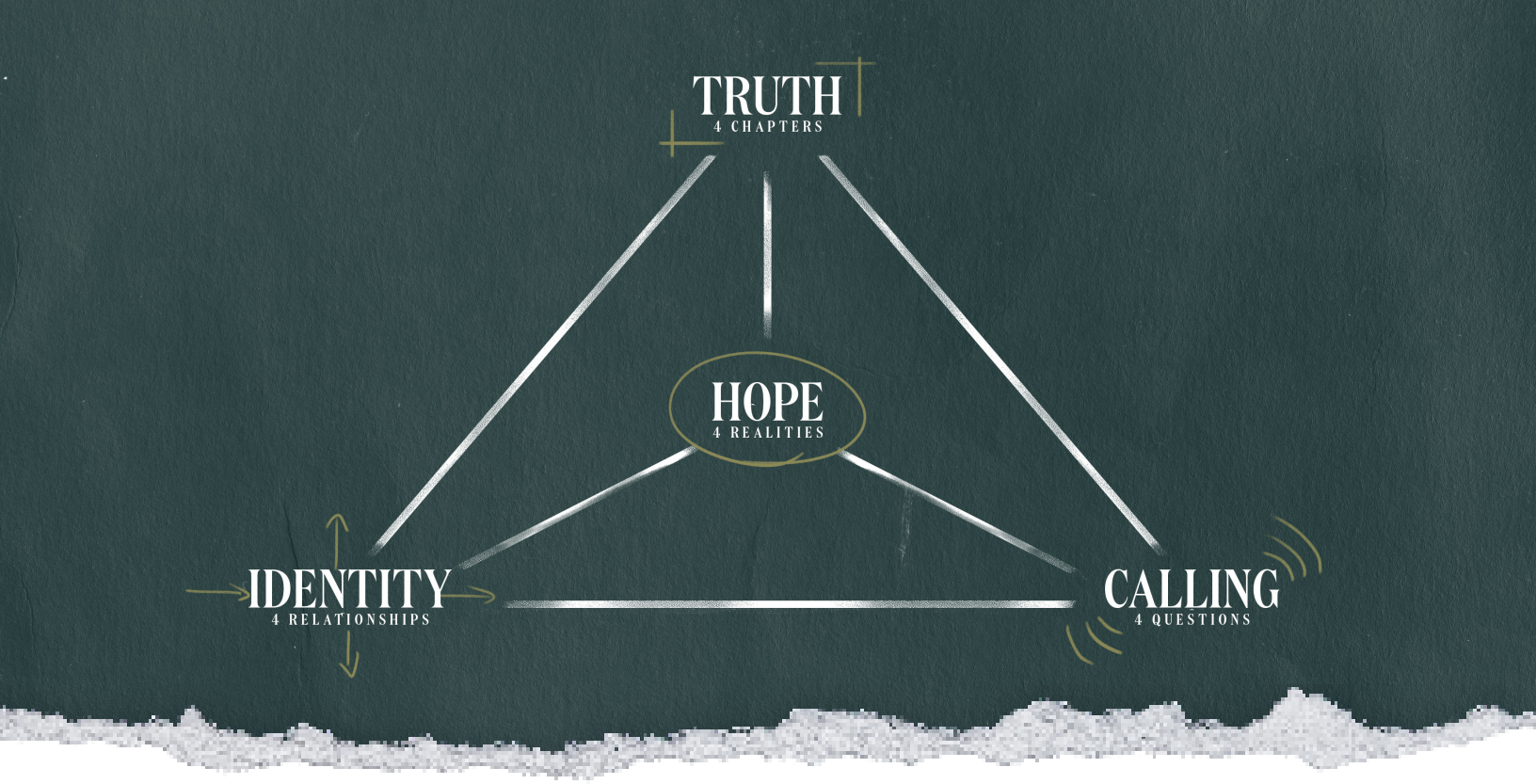
Throughout history, the church has been known for its care of the sick, the weak, the outcast, and those in prison. This began with the first Christians and has continued ever since. In 1 Timothy 5:3-4 and James 1:27, the apostles equated godliness with caring for widows and orphans.

This is to be a defining feature of, not a random exception to, the Christian life.

Mending what's broken involves more than getting rid of the bad; it's about restoring the fullness of what's good. When Christ healed, He not only removed afflictions, but He also restored people to their full health, sanity, and families.

Christians are not Gnostics. We are not called to a merely private faith that stays contained to the spiritual with no rippling effects to the world around us. Christ is our model for how to live in this world as God intends. When we restore what's broken around us, we reflect Him. This restoration process might involve:

- Medical researchers working toward therapies and medications that heal, yet only within proper ethical boundaries
- Helping a woman in an unexpected pregnancy embrace her preborn child and reconcile with her family
- Bringing the gospel to inmates and their families as they deal with the effects of incarceration
- Sharing how a life broken by sin can be restored by God
- Walking with young people who believed lies about their bodies as they work to reconcile with who God created them to be



LESSON ESSENTIALS

1. Big Idea

Being human is not just to exist, not just to survive, but also to be called.

2. Scripture Focus

> *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* – 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21

GROUP

Opening Prayer

Pray for good conversation, for eyes of understanding to be opened, and for group members to step into their calling as agents of renewal right where they are.

Warm-up Question

Ask your group members, "What comes to mind when you hear the word *calling*? What was missing in how you learned to think about it?"

Watch Teaching Video 4



(Please note: An account must be created to view video content. Create your free account **HERE**.)

Click Here to Watch Video

Discussion Questions: Teaching Video

Choose the questions that seem best suited to your group and the time available:

Note that the first question is based on the *Truth Rising* film, which you and your group should have watched before beginning this study.

- In the *Truth Rising* documentary, Seth Dillon says that when you stand for something good, others will be inspired to join the cause. What everyday examples of this have you seen? For example, people contributing to a GoFundMe campaign. People speaking up at a school board meeting. People writing letters to the editor of a local newspaper.
- What might you say to someone who thinks the problems of this moment are too overwhelming for any one person to bring about a solution?
- Looking at the four questions discussed in this video and thinking about the gifts and talents God has given you, what is something
  a. good that you can protect?
  b. missing that you can contribute?
  c. evil that you can oppose?
  d. broken that you can restore?
- What are practical steps you can take to accomplish some of those things, and who can support and assist you with your calling? (Be sure to ask how

you can support your friends, too.)

Watch Story Video 4



Omega Buckner

Courageous Christians: A Story of Calling

How one 89-year-old widow stepped into her calling and made an impact extending far beyond the bounds of a single life.

(Please note: An account must be created to view video content. Create your free account **HERE**.)

Click Here to Watch Video

Discussion Questions: Story Video

- How have you typically understood the concept of calling as a Christian? How did Omega Buckner's story confirm, challenge, or change your understanding?
- How does our identity as image bearers of God give our calling meaning and purpose all of our days?
- Like Omega, being faithful to our calling may also come with the call to endure limitations or obstacles. How does the reality of our hope as Christians help us endure in the face of obstacles?

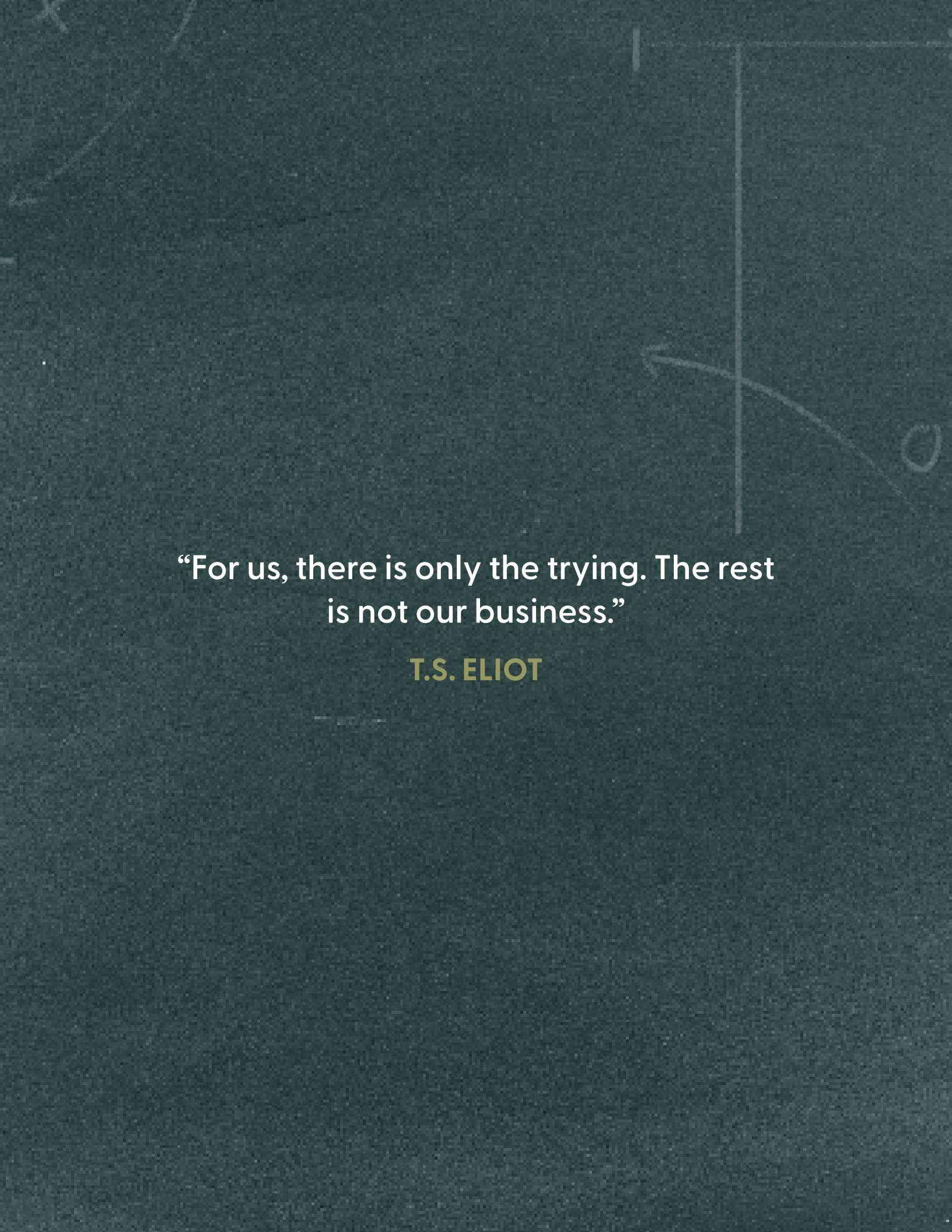
PRAY

Take time to pray for one another. Here are a few suggestions:

- Pray that your group would think with creativity and boldness about how God is calling group members to be agents of restoration in your specific spheres of influence.
- Ask that the Lord would help you take practical next steps as you consider your options.
- Pray for unity among Christians who are working to be faithful, that they would "be one" even as Christ has called us to "be one" (see John 17:11).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Breakpoint Podcast:** The Colson Center for Christian Worldview.
- Breakpoint Podcast, **"Os Guinness Explains Our Calling to This Cultural Moment."**
- Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling God's Purpose for Your Life - 20th Anniversary Edition* (Thomas Nelson, 2018).
- Warren Cole Smith and John Stonestreet, *Restoring All Things: God's Audacious Plan to Change the World through Everyday People* (Baker Books, 2015).
- J. Budziszewski, **"Who's Calling?"** Focus on the Family.
- **ReFOCUS with Jim Daly:** Bi-weekly podcast by Focus on the Family.


“For us, there is only the trying. The rest
is not our business.”
T.S. ELIOT

ABOUT

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

Focus on the Family is a global Christian ministry dedicated to helping families thrive. We provide help and resources for couples to build healthy marriages that reflect God's design, and for parents to raise their children according to morals and values grounded in biblical principles.

We're here to come alongside families with relevance and grace at each stage of their journey. We support families as they seek to teach their children about God and His beautiful design for the family, protect themselves from the harmful influences of culture, and equip themselves to make a greater difference in the lives of those around them.

No matter who you are, what you're going through, or what challenges your family may be facing, we're here to help. With practical resources—like our 1-800 AFAMILY help line, counseling resources, and websites—we're committed to providing trustworthy, biblical guidance and support.

Learn more at **FocusOnTheFamily.com**

THE COLSON CENTER

The Colson Center exists to equip Christians with clarity, confidence, and courage in this cultural moment. Our podcasts and digital resources, including *Breakpoint, the Identity Project,* and the *"What Would You Say?"* video series, equip hundreds of thousands of Christians each year with the clarity they need to celebrate good, resist evil, create what's missing, and restore what's broken right where God has placed them.

Our formation programs, Colson Fellows and Colson Educators, have equipped thousands of men and women to pursue their vocational callings and daily lives with a courageous faith. To learn more about the Colson Center, visit us on the website, on Facebook, on Instagram, or on X.

Learn more at **ColsonCenter.org**