PARTICIPANT GUIDE

PRESENTED BY

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: Participant Guide
©2025 Focus on the Family

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission of Focus on the Family.

Focus on the Family and the accompanying logo and design are federally registered trademarks of Focus on the Family, 8605 Explorer Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920.

Colson Center and the accompanying logo and design are federally registered or common law trademarks of The Colson Center for Christian Worldview, 8675 Explorer Dr., Suite 110, Colorado Spring, CO 80920.

Published in partnership with the Colson Center for Christian Worldview.

www.ColsonCenter.org | **www.FocusOnTheFamily.com**

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Original Art: Coldwater Media

Design & Typesetting: Anthony Loma

ISBN 979-8-89249-103-7

CONTENTS

Introduction iii

Watch the Documentary iii

Purpose of Truth Rising: The Study iv

Story Videos viii

How to Use the Participant Guide x

Lesson 1: Hope 1

Lesson 2: Truth 8

Lesson 3: Identity 17

Lesson 4: Calling 25

About 33

Focus on the Family 33

The Colson Center 34

“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. Scripture 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	STORY VIDEOS
Hope How to Approach Our Civilizational Moment	 **Courageous Christians:** *A Story of Hope* Ayaan Hirsi Ali
Truth Know the True Story of Reality	 **Courageous Christians:** *A Story of Truth* Jack Phillips
Identity Know the Truth About Who We Are	 **Courageous Christians:** *A Story of Identity* Chloe Cole
Calling *How to Live in Light of God's Truth*	 **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 chose faith over fear in this cultural moment. Our hope is you would understand the truth, see the truth 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 Muslim-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 PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Welcome to *Truth Rising: The Study*. In this guide, you'll have everything you need to participate in a *Truth Rising: The Study* church, home, or school group. The curriculum includes four 20- to 25-minute videos featuring John Stonestreet, president of the Colson Center.

Can I go through Truth Rising: The Study on my own?

Yes! This study can be completed both in a small group setting and as an individual.

Participant Guide Contents

The participant guide for *Truth Rising: The Study* contains four lessons, each of which corresponds to a video. Every lesson contains the following steps:

I. **OPENING PRAYER:** Take time to pray with your group before the session begins.

II. **INTRODUCTION:** It's time to get started! Read the introduction together as a group.

III. **WARM-UP QUESTION:** Discuss a conversation starter with your group related to the lesson content.

IV. **WATCH VIDEO:** Each lesson corresponds with a video episode. Your group can choose to watch the video in advance to have more time for group discussion, or watch it together as a group, whichever you prefer.

V. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** Take time as a group to discuss the video using the group discussion questions.

VI. **CLOSING PRAYER:** End your time together in prayer with your group.

VII. **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:** More resources are listed from Focus on the Family and Colson Center for Christian Worldview if group members are interested in going deeper.

Before your first lesson, log into **ColsonCenter.org/Study** *to watch the Truth Rising documentary.*

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

INTRODUCTION

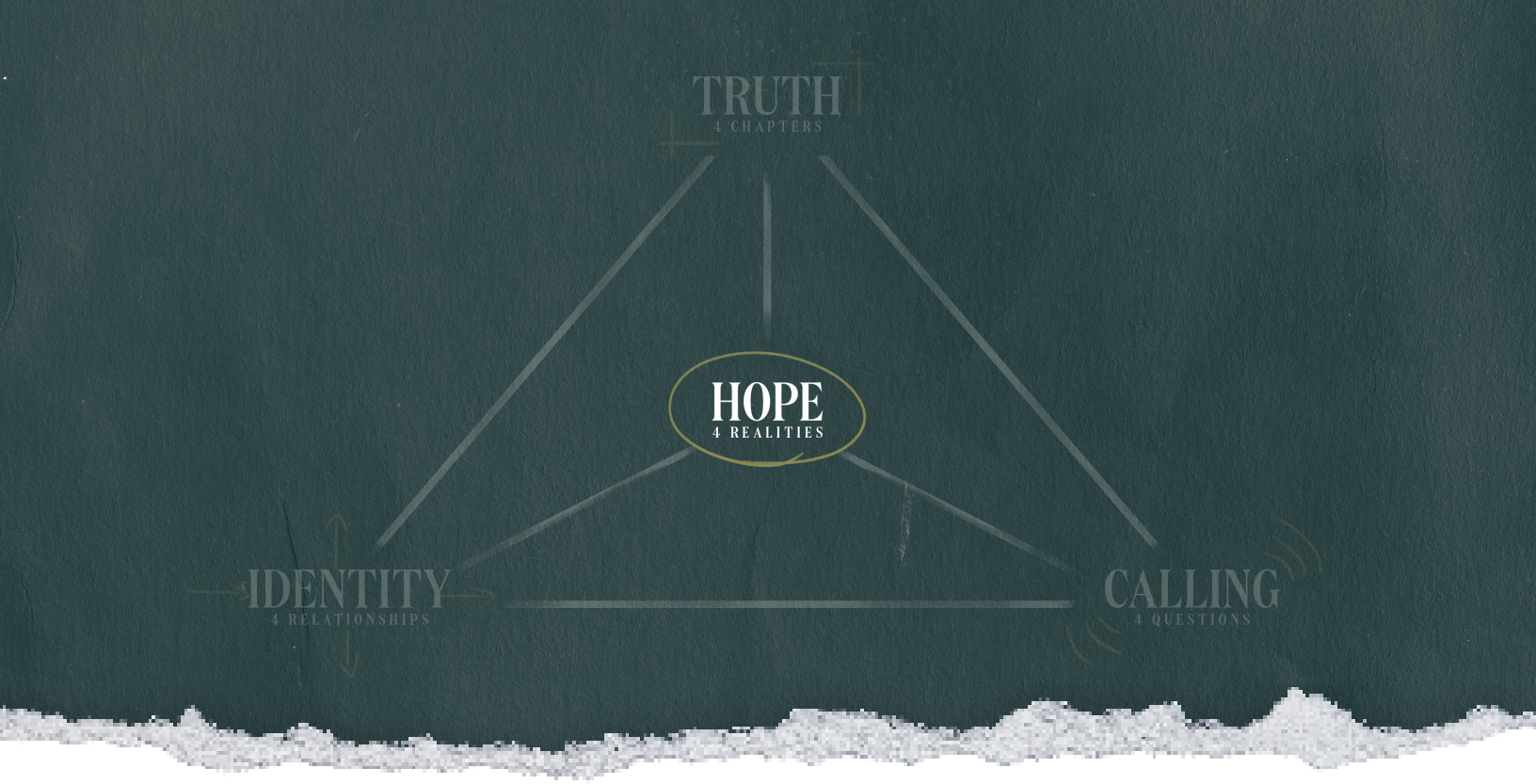
What comes to mind when you hear the word *hope*? "I hope I get a new car" or "I hope my team wins the World Series this year"? We mostly talk about hope as *wishful thinking*. We hope for something to happen or to change.

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.*



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

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

Your facilitator will 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.

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


“We live in a civilizational moment.”
OS GUINNESS

INTRODUCTION

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.

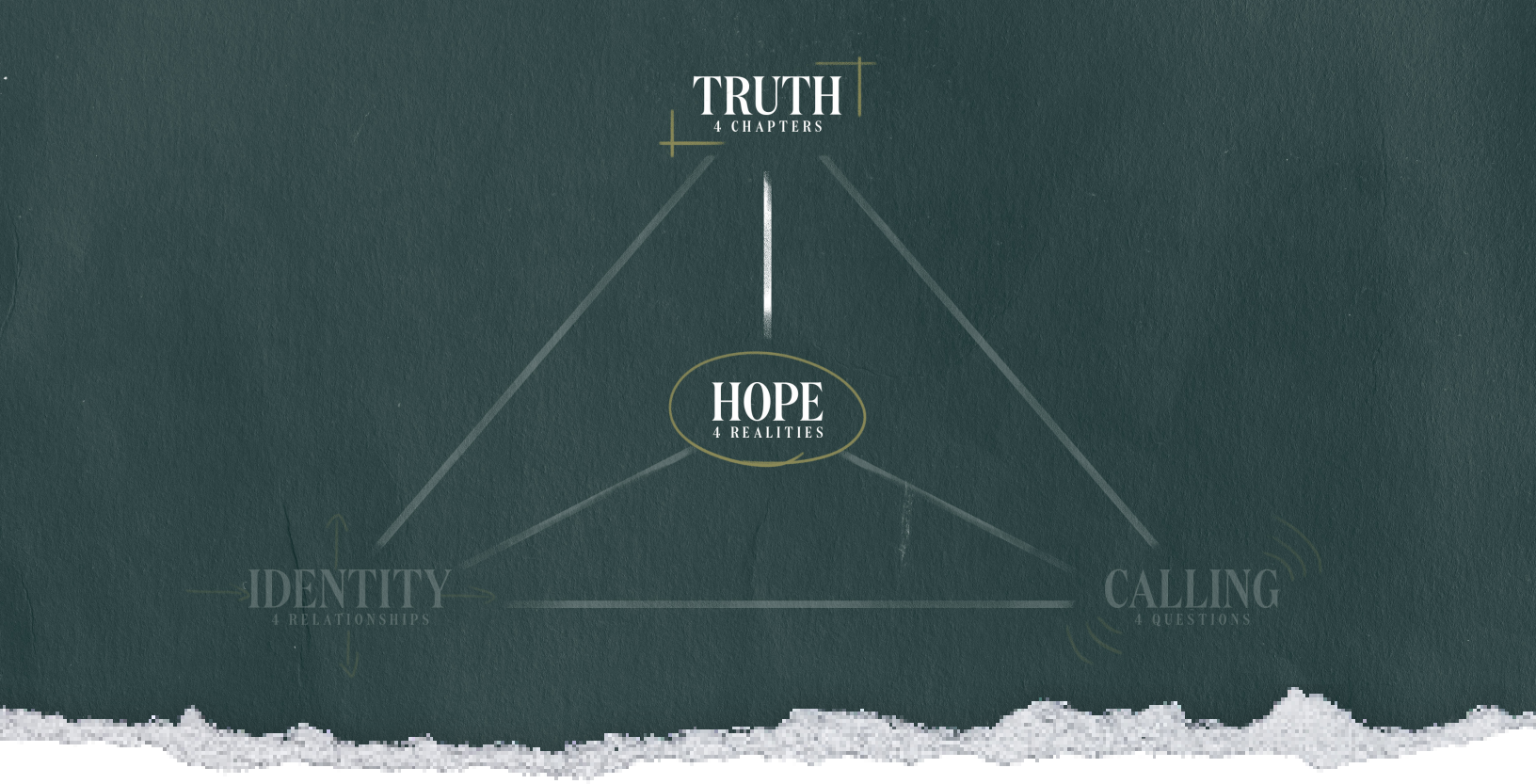
Yet this is *not* the way the Bible speaks about following Christ. Our faith is personal, yes, but it's definitely not private. While we should always engage others with grace, the Bible claims that truth exists and is knowable. Moreover, in John 14:6, Jesus Christ claimed to *be* Truth. In other words, 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, fall, redemption, and restoration.



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

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

Your facilitator will 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 God 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?

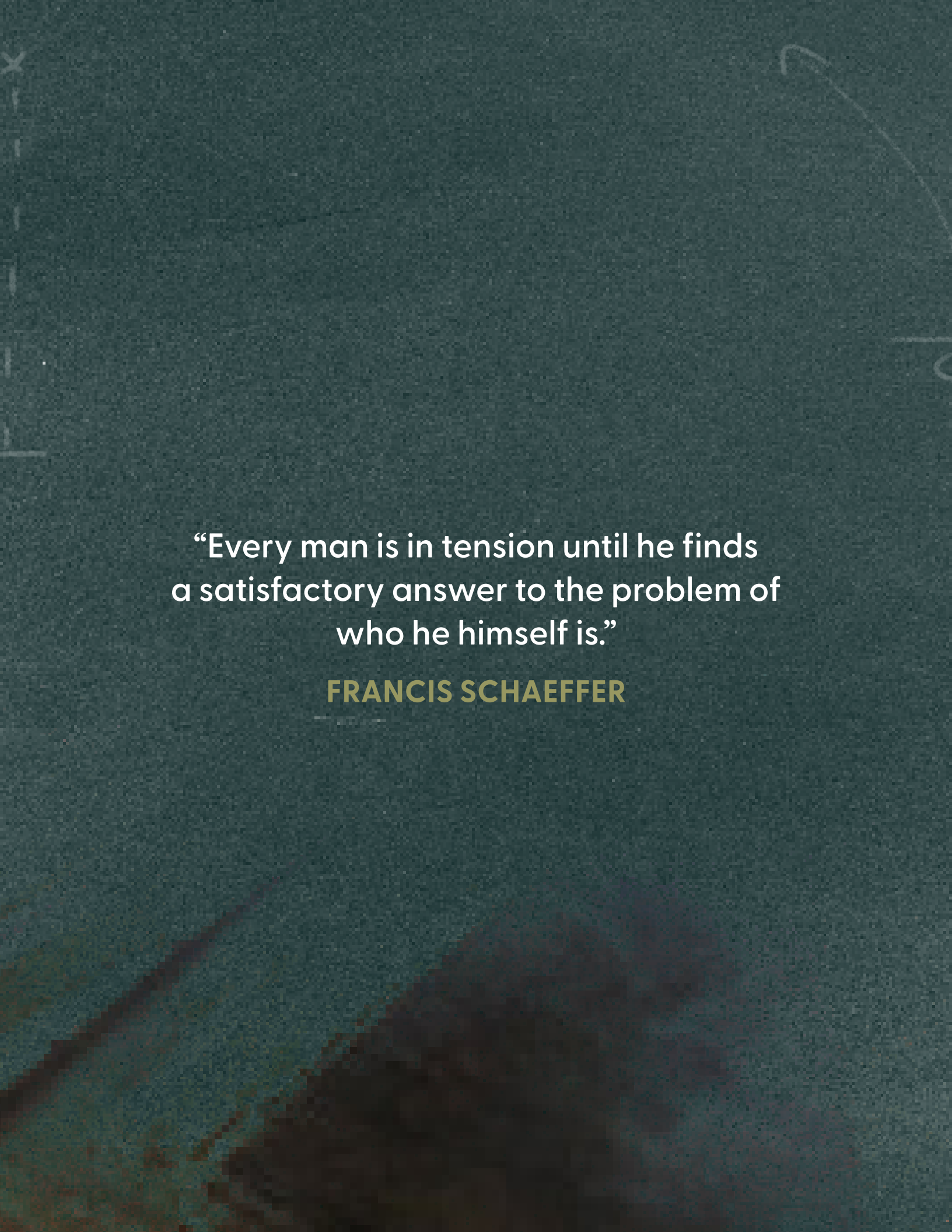
PRAY

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.


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

LESSON 3

IDENTITY

4 RELATIONSHIPS

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

INTRODUCTION

"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.

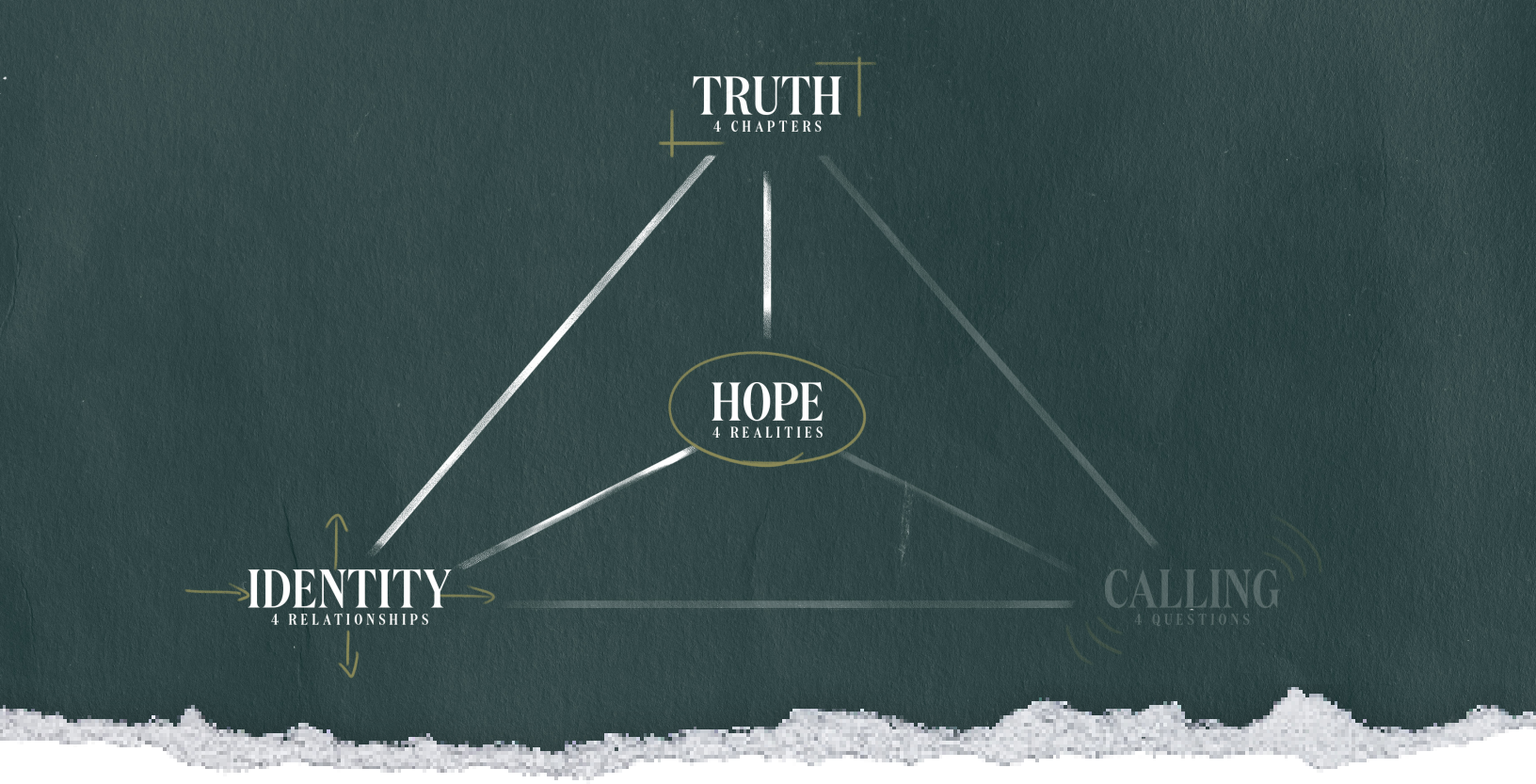
In the creation account, God announced, "Let us make man in our image." This is how the Bible introduces a character who is central to the True Story of the world: the first human being. In each chapter of the story, from creation to restoration, humans play the prominent role—most notably in the person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



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

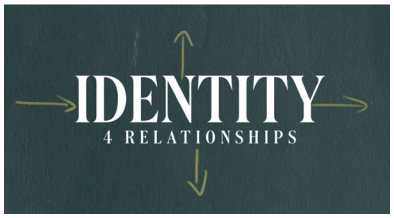
Opening Prayer

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

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

Your facilitator will 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.

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

INTRODUCTION

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?)*

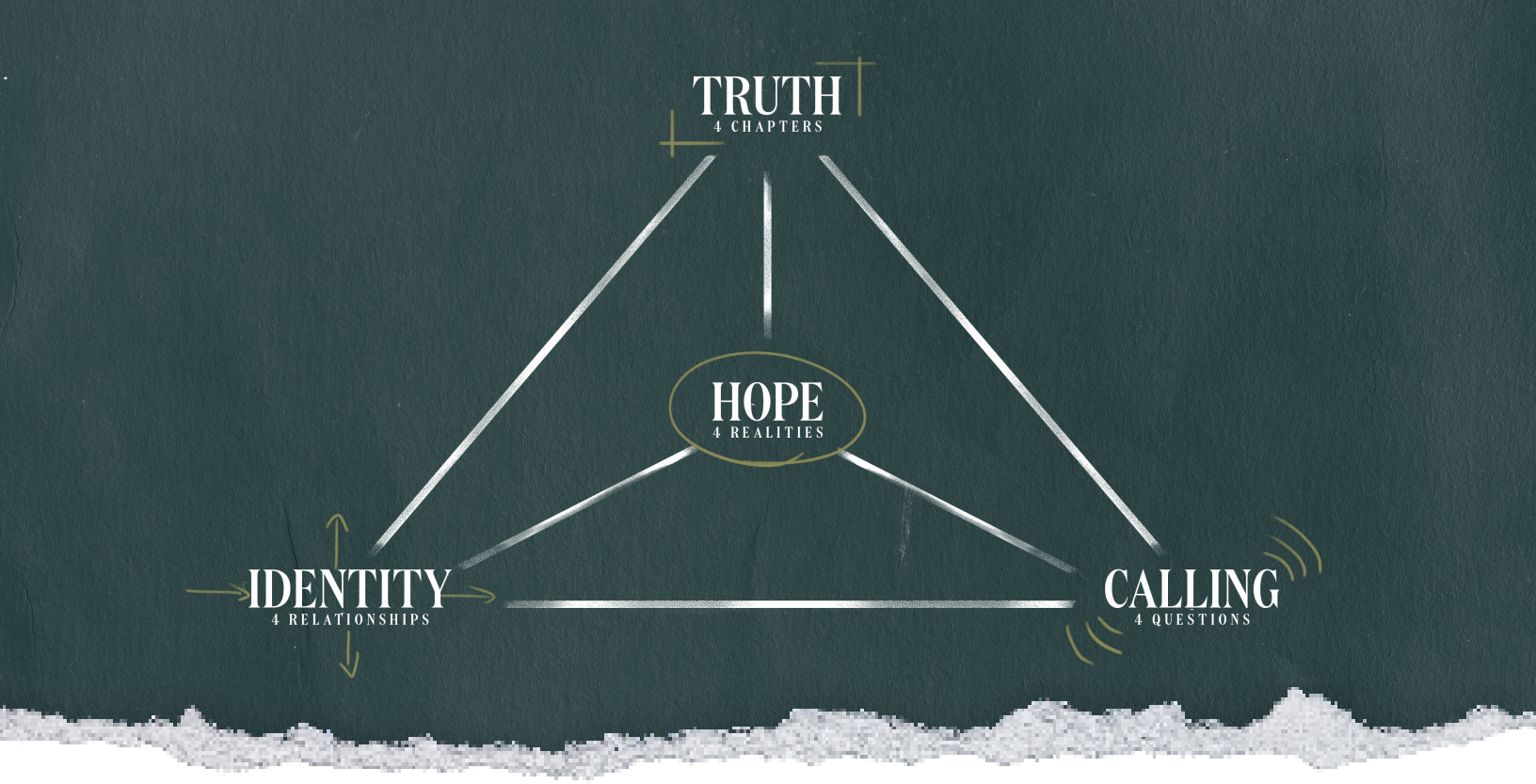
We cannot understand *what* we're to do until we realize *who* we are as the people of God in this moment. Our calling is a natural outgrowth of the hope, truth, and identity we possess as Christians.

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?**



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

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

Your facilitator will 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 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.

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.

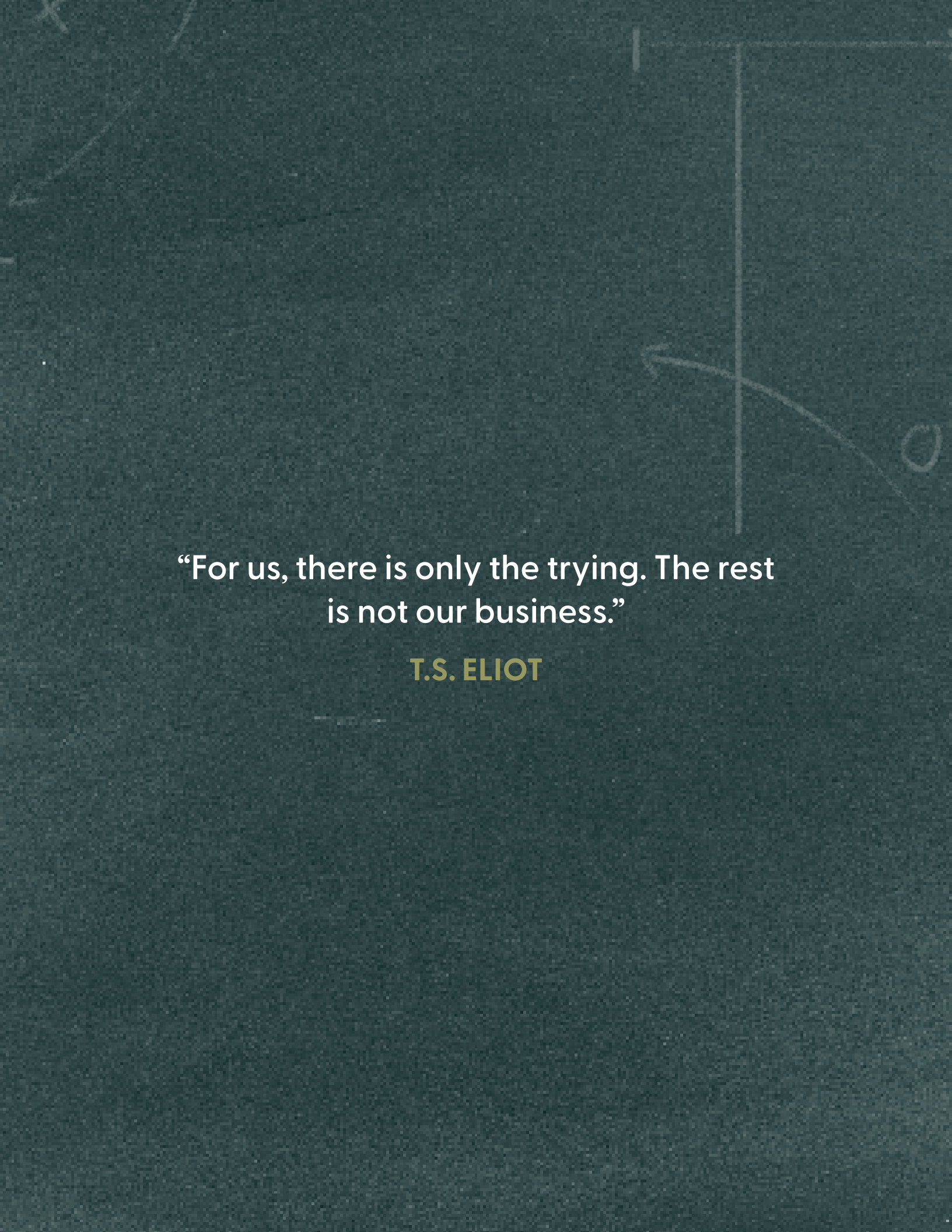
Learn more at **FocusOnTheFamily.com**

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**


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