

Defending Truth in a Post-Truth Age

Featuring Dr. Douglas Groothuis

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TRANSCRIPT

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Welcome to the Wisdom and Influence podcast here at Cornerstone University. It is my pleasure to have the university's first distinguished professor for apologetics and Christian worldview, Dr. Doug Groothuis. Doug, welcome to the podcast.

Doug Groothuis: Thank you. Happy to be here.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: This is your second year now here at Cornerstone.

Doug Groothuis: It is. I'm finishing up second year.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: That's wonderful. Got the grades in. Well, thank you for being here. We brought you all the way from Denver to Grand Rapids, but I wanna ask you about Alaska. Let's start with Alaska because I did not know your background from Alaska. Just tell us a little bit about that, please.

Doug Groothuis: Well, I was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska. I was born exactly two years before it became the 49th state. I planned it that way. And I lived there until high school. Went off to college. But it's a beautiful state, the largest state. I think it has the second smallest population. Alaskans are known for being kind of free spirits and adventuresome and outdoors people. I ended up being a great indoorsman. For some reason, don't really fish or hunt or hike too much, but it's, God's beauty is all over Alaska. It's just magnificent, the mountain ranges and the countryside, just gorgeous place, wonderful place.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: I had a chance just a few weeks ago to meet with Edward Graham in Samaritan's Purse and realized that his father, Franklin Graham, goes to Alaska every summer for two to three months to do significant gospel work with the natives people of Alaska.

Doug Groothuis: Right, the villages.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: And they shared with me the great need there is in Alaska. It's everywhere, but there's just a great need there is there for the gospel, and the great darkness there is as well, and a lot of those villages are not connected by roads. Most of the cities in Alaska are not connected by roads.

Doug Groothuis: Yeah. You have to take small planes. There's a great need. He flies in, brings teams there to help, to support. Wonderful stories of gospel transformation, but also a lot of hard work to be done. There are a lot of struggles with the native peoples, but they need the gospel as much as anybody.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: That's fantastic that they're doing that work. Well, that, I've shared this with you before. I, the first time I came across you, your name was the book Truth Decay. Years ago, I was a

brand-new faculty member at a Christian university, and that Christian school was undergoing a significant drift. It was beginning to drift from its mission in many ways, and some of my colleagues and I had discovered that by reading the senior capstone projects of some of the best students at that university, honors program students. And realizing that in what they were writing, they were in essence confessing to us, to the university, they weren't sure about Jesus anymore. They weren't sure about the Word. They weren't sure about many Christian truths. They weren't even sure about truth. And then I came across your book, I don't remember how or where, and I just devoured it, and then went back and looked at the sources and devoured the sources.

Doug Groothuis: We love that. We love when people look up the footnotes.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah, I looked up the footnotes.

Doug Groothuis: That's why we put them in there.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah, I looked them up, and I literally acquired all the articles. I still have them. And I've used them and referenced them and read them and reread them, and I thought, "This is incredible, what this man has done." And so talk to us about that book, because I know there's an anniversary edition forthcoming, but give us a sense of why that book, and the impact of that book, and now the reintroduction in some ways of that book.

Doug Groothuis: Right. Well, I was worried about the evangelical world. I saw people embracing alien philosophies, particularly concepts of truth and rationality, and I realized that if you get away from truth as objective and knowable through evidence and reason, that you're giving up apologetics, you're giving up theology, you're giving up ethics, and you're just saying, "Well, our community looks at things this way, so join our narrative, but you can have your narrative, too. We don't wanna be too universalistic about things or try to impose our view on everybody." Hold on here. Right. The gospel is for the entire world, and Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to Father except through me." So you can directly attack the gospel and just say, "The Bible's not true" or "Jesus is not Lord," or you can undermine it by false philosophies, but you still keep using the same Christian language, and that's what I was seeing in various writers. And I was teaching on this. I was at Denver Seminary at the time. And I thought, somebody needs to write a philosophical and apologetic book about postmodernism to critique it, and then to reaffirm a biblical view of truth as objective, absolute, universal, knowable through general revelation, we can know of God through nature, through conscience. Of course, we have scripture as special revelation. We have Christ as the personal revelation, the incarnation. So I was really fighting for that, and there were a lot of so-called evangelicals that were going the post-modern direction. And I was very concerned because I could see the result, 'cause we really need to get the word out into the world in every way possible. And one way to not do that is just be lazy or to be a coward. Another way is to think, well, let's just take on the philosophy of the world because the world needs to hear its own language and we need to kind of adjust and twist the gospel, they wouldn't say that, twist the gospel a little bit to get it out there to people so they listen to it. I say, no, we need to know what the world is saying, we need to take it apart philosophically, theologically, and then offer the, as best we can, the true Christian message in love. Speak the truth in love, in the church, outside of the church, have a reason for the hope that is within us, present this with gentleness and respect. Have courage like Paul in Athens. Go out into the marketplace as much as you can, and don't compromise. So that's why I wrote the book, and it came out in 2000, and it seems to have had a pretty big impact on a number of people, especially you.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: I appreciate that. You were just a young whippersnapper when you read the book, right? It gave me a lot of fire. I mean, you talk about fire in the belly, fire in the heart, I mean, that

put fire in me. Because I realized there's somebody else that believes this and thinks this and arguing for this. I realized I was not alone. It was a great encouragement.

Doug Groothuis: Sometimes we feel alone.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You do. Well, I've got a book coming out this summer called Taking Back Truth, which is in a way, a kind of follow-up to Truth Decay. So I look at the erosion of the idea of truth still 25 years later, and how the truth has been compromised about sexual ethics and race and God and so on. So I talk about the truth about truth, the truth about God, truth about morality, truth about religion, and then we go into sexual ethics, matters of race, and so on. So that'll be out in a few months. It's kind of a sequel to Truth Decay in many ways, 25 years later.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Well, we will do some sort of launch here where I think it'd be phenomenal, some sort of event around it. It'd be wonderful, though. Congratulations.

Doug Groothuis: Thank you.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: I remember the first time I also realized the attack on truth, and frankly the attack on the gospel, came from a book that was making the rounds back then called A New Kind of Christian. Brian McLaren, right?

Doug Groothuis: I thought you would say that. That's right.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: And I just remember reading that book, again, as a young whippersnapper, a new faculty member reading the introduction and the first chapter where the argument was presented that post-modernism was sort of the solution to all the church's problems.

Doug Groothuis: That's right.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Right? And so if we went into that route, it would bless and help everyone. And I realized, thinking, no, it will undermine everything we're trying to accomplish. But then I remember, frankly, when I came here to Cornerstone back in 2021, a member of the administration then, no longer here, but then said to me, "We've tried the Bible and it doesn't work, so we just have to try something else." And you said, "You could try another job." So this individual, again, a former executive, an executive member of the former leadership team, said that to me. I'll never forget where I was when he said it. And I thought to myself, this is the same garbage, frankly, I've heard for all, for so many years in academia, among Christians, that the Bible is not enough, the gospel's not enough, that we have to do something else, and that usually meant bringing in cultural artifacts from the culture to help to complete the scriptures, to help the church. And I thought, so help me, help us wrestle with that because that's still out there now. I sense it, I read about it, and see it, that somehow we have to enhance or augment the gospel and the scriptures with all these cultural practices and principles. There's something fundamentally wrong with that, so help us understand that.

Doug Groothuis: Oh, absolutely. You have to make a distinction about where the final source of truth is, and that's in Holy Scripture. So we have this doctrine, this great doctrine from the Reformation, sola Scriptura. The Bible is the only fully authoritative, completely true, without error document. It is our test book for testing other doctrines, testing culture, testing morality. Now, we want to be as culturally sensitive and concerned as possible to bring this Bible into the world, but we don't want to bring the world into the Bible. That's the key thing. And so people will say, "Well, just preaching and teaching the Bible's not enough. We have to spice it up somehow, or maybe we have to downplay a certain idea." There's one person who says, "Well, you know, we shouldn't refer to the clobber verses of the Bible about sexual ethics." I won't name this person. Well, the whole Bible is the Word of God, and we need to handle it carefully, gently, humbly, but when we know what it says, we take it into the world winsomely,

prayerfully, but we don't have an option to adjust scripture. I was just writing, finished up, I sent off my manuscript last night of my new book I was telling you about. And I wrote that chapter on Derrida. You encouraged me.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Good, good. I'm glad you did it.

Doug Groothuis: I was like, give up on the Derrida chapter. Now the president wants me to finish it, I gotta do it. Good for you. So I sent it off last night, and I have a chapter on Kant, and, you know, to try to make it a little simple concept, we can't really have knowledge of God. We could believe in God, but we can't have knowledge, and that set in motion a whole theology called liberal theology, like with Schleiermacher and others. And they said, "Well, we can't really insist that we know God rationally, but we could feel God, and we can make God somehow relevant to, his cultural despisers," the cultural despisers of the church. And no, that's not the approach. You know, I have said for many years, if you can't build a ministry on the Bible and your own personal integrity and prayer, give up. Now, being concerned about how culture communicates, the ideas that are out there, the moods, you know, the imagination of culture, gosh, I've been trying to do that literally now for 50 years. And my great example was Francis Schaeffer. That man didn't compromise on scripture at all, but nobody knew the culture better, the philosophy, the theology, the painting, the poetry. But he brought the word to the world without corrupting the word in the process, and that is the challenge. And I've seen now, I'm 69, I've been a Christian for 50 years, I've seen people dilute and corrupt the scripture to somehow try to reach the world. Well, you're not reaching the world with the truth anymore. So you've lost your mandate from God at that point. Doesn't matter how big the church is, how big the school is, how many books you sell, if you're not faithful to God himself, who is the truth in the scripture, then you're a failure.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: So help us. What do you think is driving that? I mean, you've touched on it a little bit, the culture piece, but as I, you know, there have been so many books written, and oftentimes it begins with... I just saw something yesterday, a piece on The Christian Century speaking about what does the word Christian really mean, and sort of the argument that there are a lot of hurting Christians, hurting evangelicals, hurting people in the church. They've been hurt by the established church, by the institution, perhaps by the doctrines as they've been interpreted in a particular way, and I'm wondering if that's what's feeding some of this, that these sort of narratives that they would call it, or structures are hurting, and we need to change this so we stop hurting people and therefore become much more therapeutic, empathic. Is that what's driving this? How do we deal with that?

Doug Groothuis: Yeah. And there's some reality to that. Sure. I mean, there are hurt people.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Right. So how do we work through that?

Doug Groothuis: Well, I don't know if this was the tact that the article took, but a lot of this is related to sexual ethics and homosexuality, lesbianism, transgenderism, and the idea is that the church has hurt people because it's insisted on a biblical view of sexuality, which excludes that kind of activity. But that's not the way you approach it. The way you approach it is speak the truth in love, be kind, be gentle, be open, but don't compromise on the teaching. And it's true that some Christians have been harsh with people who've had sexual identity problems. They've been cruel. But the answer is not to now compromise and dilute the doctrine to make people feel accepted. The issue is speak what the scripture says in love, pray, come alongside people. You know, there are people who have come out of this lifestyle, who have been very effective in reaching people, like Joe Dallas. Yeah, right. We've been in contact recently. He was in that life for years, and he tried to defend it biblically. And God woke him up, and now he's, I think now for about 40 years, he's been going around the country teaching the truth about sexual identity and what honors God sexually and what doesn't, and he knows how to help the church speak into this area. But you don't somehow change, try to change the scripture to make people

feel accepted. And you know, the word love I think has gotta be one of the most abused words ever in our culture. So people try to justify same-sex marriage and transgenderism by saying love is love. So if two people love each other, it doesn't matter what they do. They have this love. And biblically, love is a person. God is love, and God has a character. And 1 Corinthians 13 says that love does not rejoice in what is wrong. So that's key. Love has to fit the framework of truth. But we've taken love out of truth and just thrown it around like a big cloud, and say, "Well, these people love each other, and these people love each other. And who are we to say it's wrong?" You know, when people use that line, "Who are you to say?" I like to say, "Well, I'm a rational human being who tries to get to the truth. Who are you?" You know, it's like, please, who am I to judge? We're all judging. The issue, you know, as Jesus said, is judge a proper judgment. Don't be hypocritical. Look at the log in your own eye, then you can find the speck in your neighbor's eye, according to scripture. So you don't accommodate in order to expand the church or to be kind to people. People need the truth of God, the living truth of God, and if that's not there, you lose everything.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: One of your areas of study in research is also comparative religions and world religions, and I think you and I discussed this the other day, a significant greater appetite, even within the church and evangelicals, for Eastern religion, Buddhism in particular. I've seen a lot of move among evangelicals and Christians more open to Buddhism, to the syncretism, bringing them together. I've seen this also among the Catholic Church, entire groups that are bringing Buddhist practice into Christian worship and Christian practices. What's driving this, Doug, and how do we address it and help our fellow believers deal with it, and young people who sort of fall under the aura of the mystery, right, and the self-exploration?

Doug Groothuis: Oh, yeah. Gosh, I've been writing about this and teaching about this for so long, and I'll give you a little bit of my story. When I was in high school, I got interested in Eastern religions. This is back in the '70s. And studied them, took a class on Eastern religions in college, and was reading and thinking and wondering if that might be the way to open up to the spiritual world. Now, God got ahold of me and brought me to Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. I realized I was at a fork in the road, and I had to take the Jesus fork, and I didn't know what the other one was, because it was only the Jesus fork, and I'm so grateful to God's grace for that. But since then, I've studied and taught on the world religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, et cetera, for many years. I wrote a book on it called *World Religion in 7 Sentences*. I think people get confused on the area of, again, truth. Can we know the truth about God? And if the truth about God is there's one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit incarnated in Jesus for our salvation, then anything that opposes that, any truth claim in any other religion cannot be true. You can't blend truth and falsity. I think a lot of people are confused on that level. They put spirituality in sort of this nebulous cloud, what Schaeffer called his upper story, where you don't apply reason, logic, and evidence. So pretty much you can accept anything as long as it fits your lifestyle or feels good or empowers you. Now, that's not the Christian view of things. Developing a Christian view of other religions is challenging. It's hard work. Now, you have to say, where is this religion right about some things? I think of a Venn diagram. Here's the Christian worldview, and then here's the non-Christian. I put this up on the board all the time in my classes. Here's the Christian worldview. Here's something that Buddhism says or something that Aristotle said or Plato said. Where do we have overlap, and where do we have antithesis? Where do we have opposition? So you've gotta do that kind of logical analysis and not just say, "Well, I know Buddhist people that are very kind, and I know Hindu people who are very devout." Sure, but you've gotta bring it back to the Scripture and to what is true and what is false, and try to develop a biblical approach to other religions, and an apologetic for other religions. I taught a class called *Religious Pluralism* for 30 years at Denver Seminary before I came here, and that was the whole purpose of the class, develop an apologetic theology of world religions. So my students probably read that and thought, "Uh-oh, I got a lot of work in this class." But even here, I taught the Thursday evening

Bible class. We did a whole class on comparative religion, and that's what I wanted my students here to have, is a biblical apologetic theology of other religions because Islam is growing, of course, around the world. We have, in any cosmopolitan setting, you have Hindus and Buddhists and Taoists, and, you know, we're rubbing shoulders with these folks, and we wanna love them, speak the truth, understand what they believe, get a sense from the Holy Spirit when to speak, when not to speak. But I think people just want to kind of let's just get along. Can we get along? You're spiritual. I'm spiritual. My spirituality's different than yours, but probably they all blend at the top. They don't. They do not. Sorry. No, otherwise, we wouldn't have the great commission to go out into the world and disciple the nations and win people to Christ and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and not in the name of Buddha or Lao Tzu or Confucius or something like that.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You know, talk with us, let's talk about a conversation I've had recently with someone about what appears to be, in their mind, the hard line between wonder, mystery, and certainty in Christianity, right? And so almost the argument that Christianity has no mystery, especially if you speak about the Christian worldview. It's propositional, it's rational, it's logical in the way you all see it. And what about wonder and mystery, and what's the role for those? And I remember a Christian scholar saying, "I side with the poets and the mystics."

Doug Groothuis: I know who you're talking about.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Right? I side with all those. I'm not gonna name the name. I side with, that's where I side, put my faith in, not the other side, right? The Christian worldview and the apologetics piece. But I've heard that critique for quite some time.

Doug Groothuis: Yeah. I think it is a false critique. There's a false dichotomy between those two.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: But talk with us and our listeners about how do we work through the mystery and the wonder and that something powerful and, but at the rationality piece and the fact that God gave us minds.

Doug Groothuis: Yeah. Christianity has them both. Right? And this is this classic fallacy called the false dichotomy. If you insist on proper doctrine and propositions about God and ethics and humanity and salvation, then you have no room for mystery. You don't need uncertainty to have mystery and wonder. You know, we have a framework of knowledge, justified true beliefs about God in Scripture. We develop it through theology. We defend it through apologetics, and there's plenty of room for wonder and mystery. I think of especially Romans 11, where Paul has given us this great body of doctrine. At the end of it, he just marvels at the transcendence of God, and who tells God what to do, and how unfathomable are his ways. I think, Paul, you just gave us all this truth about God, humanity, ethics, salvation, the Jews, the church, and now you're saying how unfathomable are the ways of God. Well, it's basically mystery within a framework of knowledge. So the Trinity, we can explain it without contradicting ourselves, but it's something of a mystery. It's beyond us in some ways. But it's enough part of our intellectual life that we can talk about it, explain it, defend it, and worship the triune God. I think about the afterlife. We're told a lot about redemption in Scripture, the resurrection of the body, the new heavens, and the new earth. But for example, the language in Revelation 21 and 22 is very symbolic. This wonderful place of redemption is like a garden, it's like a city, it's like a temple. It's a real space-time place where we will be, but it's so majestically, transcendently wonderful. You have all these images and metaphors all coming together, and you think, "Well, how wonderful and amazing and remarkable will that be?" We know there'll be no sin, no tears. We'll be with the Lord forever. I think we'll still work. We'll have activities. We'll have bodies, 1 Corinthians 15. But there's a lot of room for wonderment and thanksgiving and praise, and you can't praise God without knowledge. You can't praise God. You can't follow God without knowledge. Francis Schaeffer said, "You can't have a relationship with something you don't know." So

when I see any theology, any spirituality, any philosophy that takes away knowledge of the most important things, of God, of salvation, of ethics, I say, "You have no framework for being human now. You're just kind of making it up as you go along, and you cast the great clouds of mystery and wonder, but you don't even know what you're talking about." So we have knowledge, and knowledge gives us a framework and a foundation for wonder and thanksgiving and praise and just delighting in the riches of God, of our salvation. So I see that as terrible false dichotomy.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: So in your experience, I mean, how much of this when you're doing apologetics, right, do you find individuals — now I've read and thought about this and haven't had these kinds of encounters where there's a real logical problem in their mind with something — and how often is it truly a problem of logic for them, or how often is it really a deeper issue of rebellion? With a facade, with a veneer of the logic or they'll, you know, all the questions they have. I've always wrestled with that, because I wonder sometimes if we use... I mean, we're told in John chapter three, "Men love darkness rather than light." Right. So I just wonder, how much do we love obfuscation? Right? And use that as a veneer to really cover, at the end of the day, we're just rebels. We're all rebels.

Doug Groothuis: Well, we are all rebels. Right? And we have a natural aversion to God because of original sin. However, we can still use arguments to make the case, and what I try to do when I'm talking to someone, and this is how I advise my students and friends, is ask the Lord to tell you whether the person really is asking an honest question or whether it is a smokescreen. And if it's a smokescreen, then you could give the best answers in the world and people will not respond. I mean, Jesus, in His earthly life, didn't reach everybody, and He was the smartest man who ever lived, didn't sin, perfectly filled with the Spirit, He was the Messiah, and some people still didn't have eyes to see and ears to hear. But I say let's give them the best possible arguments. Again, Francis Schaeffer used to say, "Let's give honest answers to honest questions." But we all have that level of, even Christians, you know, that level of resistance sometimes that we have to face. We have to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, follow Him. God opposes the proud and exalts the humble. So humility is the way to knowledge. In any discipline, Christianity, physics, mathematics, you have to say, "I don't know. I need to know." And so when it comes to the most important issue, who is God, who are we, what kind of a world do we live in, what happens after we die, we should say, "I need to know what the truth is, whatever it is, whether I like it or not."

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: There's another book you're writing on the centrality of Jesus, right? The importance of Jesus. And so talk with us a little bit about that because that book, it's such an important book now at this time, I think. You know, last year we had the theme here at Cornerstone University was Jesus Christ, the way of the truth and the life. And our entire mission is built on the centrality. You know, I say Jesus first, Christ first, right? And so talk with our listeners about that book and the importance of Jesus and who He is and for the culture, for our lives, for all that we're trying to do because it's easy now to speak of Him as a teacher, a nice person, maybe He was real. We really don't know that much about Him, but there's so much here to unpack that I think you are taking a really hard look at for us.

Doug Groothuis: Yeah. Yeah, actually the book is done. Thank goodness. It's called What If Jesus Is Right? And I co-wrote it with Lindsay Medenwaldt, who is a graduate of Denver Seminary and professor at Northwestern University. So the idea was, let's write a book for people who know something about Jesus but haven't come to Him as Lord and Savior yet. So there are various barriers that keep people from that. One is just an inadequate view of Jesus. I call this the domesticated Jesus. He was a great teacher, He was a prophet, He was maybe even a wonder worker, but people don't recognize Him as, as John the Baptist said, "The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." "The way, the truth, and the life." The only way to God the Father. So we start very logically, what are the best sources about Jesus historically? That would be the New Testament. We make a case for the reliability of the New Testament.

Then we look at various images, pictures of Jesus. He was only a good teacher, or He was really more like an Eastern guru. So we look at the possibilities, and then we look at the evidence, and we say, given what we have and what Jesus said and what was said about Him by the apostles and what the Old Testament said looking forward to Him, He was in fact the Messiah. He was who He said He was, God incarnate, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and Lord, and the one who will be our judge at the end of history, the Sermon on the Mount ends up with that. So we're either ready to face Him because He's our mediator, He is our savior, He's taken the penalty for our sin, He's paid the price for our sin on the cross. He rose from the dead victorious. So if He is who He said He was in the New Testament, then we need to follow Him. That's the whole point of the book. So the book has kind of a funny backstory. My agent said, "I've been wanting somebody to write a book about the claims of Jesus for 25 years, and nobody's done it." And I said, "I'll do it." And then we found a publisher, and I wrote it, and the publisher said, "It's too academic." And I said, "No, it isn't." And they said, "Yes, it is." And I said, "No, it isn't." And they said, "Yes, it is." And so I thought, "I'm in trouble." So I thought, "Lindsay, my wonderful, brilliant student, who's about 25 years younger than I am, who knows popular culture, who's good at telling stories. Lindsay, would you take this manuscript and craft it and make it more readable, or as young people now say, relatable?" And she did. She loved it. She loved working with her old prof. And the book will be out in about two months. And the publisher said yes. We were really in trouble. This is the most trouble I ever had with a publisher. And I like to think that my writing is approachable and interesting, but I am just a diehard academic and I'm gonna have footnotes and arguments and big words. But she provided her stories and I provided stories. So we're hoping this book will be the kind of book you can give to a thoughtful non-Christian. Not that big, 220 pages. Very approachable, but well-documented, well-argued, no fluff. All the stories relate to Jesus and our lives or someone else's lives. So I am really excited about this book. Years ago, there was a little book, you probably remember it, Gerson, called *More Than a Carpenter*. By Josh McDowell. He took some basic apologetic arguments about Jesus, put it in this little book. That book has sold tens of millions of copies. It's still out there. It's still excellent. But we thought, we wanna do the same kind of thing, little more argumentation. Maybe a few more footnotes, add some new scholarship to it, and so on. So that book should be out in August.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Okay. And so Lindsay and I, I have a list already of folks. I already have a list that I wanna acquire the book and give them as a gift. So I'll sell at least that many.

Doug Groothuis: That's right. At least five or six. So we are excited and encouraged about that book, and since we have two authors, we can both go out and do the podcast and the radio interviews and the book events. But it comes out of our evangelistic heart, and that's something I wanna confess. I'm coming up on being 50 years old as a Christian. And thank God, right from the beginning, I realized that Christianity needed to get into the world, and it needed to be defended. And this is not something we keep to ourselves. You know, we should not be timid Christians. In fact, I was talking to a man a couple days ago, a professor at another school, and he related a story when he was very young, and he went out and just preached the gospel publicly. And he wondered if he should've done that or not. And I said, I'll call him John. "John," I said, "most Christians are too timid, not too bold." "And you went out there. You felt a prompting from the Lord. You didn't know much, but you went out there and said, 'Jesus is Lord, repent,'" you know? And he said, "I said it lovingly. I said it kindly." And he's kind of, all these years later, like 20 years later, he said, "Was I, did I do the wrong thing?" And I said, "No. You did the right thing." So any way I can, teaching our students, writing, being on podcasts, being on radio programs, let's try to get the truth out there into the world, because the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. Let's get it out there. The Gospel's the power of salvation for all who believe. So when people say things like, "We tried the Gospel and it didn't work," well, why don't you try to repent?

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: That's exactly right. If you say, "We tried the Gospel and it didn't work," I don't think you know what the Bible is or what the Gospel is.

Doug Groothuis: That's right.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: That's right. Wow. So Doug, as you look at culture and trends, I mean, you know, you and I have talked about some of the trends, for example, in Canada, right? In euthanasia, and where it's headed, right? As you look at the trend in our country, you know, 50 years of Christian, a public intellectual, all the work you've done, share with us what you see coming perhaps in the culture, and how we should be preparing ourselves for it, whether it's in the area of gender and sexual ethics, or life. I mean, where are we headed, or what does it look like we're headed, and how do we prepare? How do we sharpen ourselves in preparation for what could be happening?

Doug Groothuis: Well, it's hard to know. You try to look at trends. I always look at the worldview basis for culture and for ethics, and it's mixed. It's very mixed. You've got a very secular approach to life, to religion. And we have people who are coming to Christ, are zealous for God. There's strong movements of the Holy Spirit around the world, in America, even in Iran. I've got my little Iran flag here. The real Iran. This is their flag of hope that they can be free again of the Islamic invasion. Millions of, at least maybe a million Christians in Iran. So there's always hope. The gates of hell will not prevail against the Church. That's the bottom line. We belong to a kingdom, Hebrews says, that cannot be shaken. So I just wanna be alert and aware, but this trend, you mentioned Canada, they have something called medical assistance in dying. And over 50,000 Canadians have been put to death by their own medical establishment because they wanted to die. And at first they said, "We're only going to do this for people who are dying, who are in a lot of pain. You have to go through all these checks and balances to get the permission." Well, even that is wrong. Now they're suggesting to people who are depressed, "Well, would you like to use MAID? Would you like to die? We'll help you die." So no belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God, and that every individual has dignity, and that you should not murder a human being. That's so basic. But when you lose that, you start having doctor-assisted suicide, euthanasia, abortion on demand, transgenderism, because we don't respect who God made us as male or female. Broken, fallen problems with sexual identity, yes, but we just say, "No, we're here. We have bodies. We have possibilities. Laws are not beholden to a law above the law, so we can make doctor-assisted suicide legal. We can make it part of the state." And there are multiple states in the United States, recently New York, with a so-called Catholic governor that signed into law something like MAID in the United States. And Francis Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop saw this coming back in 1979. They wrote a book called *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* And they were looking at abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia. They said because of this humanistic approach, bad humanism, atheistic, secular humanism, we have no intrinsic value in the world. It's all utilitarian, pragmatic, relative. We will start to see the erosion of human rights with the unborn, the disabled, the aged, the handicapped, and so on. And that's what we're seeing. So Christians need to stand in the gap in that area and stand for life, stand for the value of human life in this world, you shall not murder, and be concerned about the outcast and the widow and the marginalized, and eternal life. You know, life in this world and eternal life. It's a both/and.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You know, back in 1983, the president back then of Johns Hopkins University gave a speech in honor of Harvard's 350th anniversary, and in the speech he said that the modern American university is godless. That's the word he used. God. It's godless. We are confronting a significant number of questions. You know, he mentioned all of them, right? Nuclear proliferation, war, all these things are happening, and we don't have, he said, a moral foundation to really address those, so we need a new moral code. This was back in 1983. It's worse now than it was back then. Right? The godlessness of the American university. You've been an educator for so many years at Denver, now

we're so grateful here at Cornerstone. Talk with us about the importance of a place like Cornerstone, in the Christian worldview, deeply integrated into the education of current and future leaders at a university like Cornerstone.

Doug Groothuis: Right. Well, scripture says, "Without a vision, the people perish." And it's possible to build your life, to build your family, to build a school on the sand, as Jesus said. You need to build on the rock, on Christ, on that truth. Well, it's absolutely essential for the renewal of society, and for individual Christians, to view their education in terms of the truth of Christianity, the truth of the Bible, and this idea that we're so keen on, of having a worldview. Now, when I first started doing ministry back in the late '70s, we had to tell people what worldview meant. Because we got... You might remember this. You're a little younger. But Francis Schaeffer, Jim Sire, Os Guinness would talk a lot about worldview, and they'd say, "What? What exactly is that?" We'd have to explain it, and then say what it is. Now, most evangelicals have a pretty good sense that a worldview is your basic philosophy of life, the ultimate reality, the human condition, salvation, ethics, and so on. There are different ways of parsing it out. But the issue now is, how do we take that biblical worldview and take it into every aspect of life? How we vote, how we spend our money, our conduct, and in our institutions, like educational institutions. And there are some schools that are sort of legacy religious schools. They'll say, "Well, we're a Christian school, we're a Lutheran school, we're this school." And somehow the worldview, the vibrating truth of scripture applied to life is not being applied. It's really nominal, which means in name only. So what we're trying to do here is teach all of our classes from a Christian worldview. We have assignments, specific assignments, where the students need to explain how the scripture and a biblical understanding relates to the discipline. So I teach an Introduction to Philosophy class. I just finished grading a few days ago, and there's one integrative question on the final, and it's pretty thorough. I say, "Explain the concept of a worldview. What is a Christian worldview in the basic categories of philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and philosophical anthropology? How do you test worldviews, and what is the gospel?" And they've got to answer all these different dimensions of that question because I teach that class as a defense of the Christian worldview in light of the basic topics of philosophy and the history of philosophy. And I tell them a lot, I tell them, maybe if they don't wanna be there, it happens, you're getting a perspective on intro to philosophy that you will not get at a secular school. I've been doing this for 50 years, and I've got a PhD in philosophy. I know how it works, and we're doing philosophy. We're trying to do the best philosophy we can. Be logical, be precise. Get the non-Christian thinkers right when we study them, Aristotle, Plato, whoever it is. But I am attempting to approach this from a Christian worldview so you can see that the non-Christian worldviews have logical and evidential problems, and that Christianity is the best explanation for life, for ethics, for knowledge, for society, and all the rest of it, and it's so exciting when the students really see that. They wake up to that.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You shared with me a wonderful story of a student who took your class and just wrote a wonderful note to you. And just the transformation and just the joy. Maybe you can share that with our listeners, it was a beautiful story of what happened in that class with a particular student.

Doug Groothuis: Well, this was an advanced placement student. And she never said a word in class. I think she did once, because nobody was answering the question, and I said, "I'm gonna make you folks uncomfortable. I'm gonna stand up here until somebody answers this question." She answered it perfectly. She felt sorry for her colleagues in the class. Anyway, she said nothing. She got As on every paper. And I found out she's 16 years old. Advanced placement. At the end of class she wrote me this card, beautiful handwriting, everything fit perfectly, and she said, "When I came into this class, I didn't know what philosophy was, I didn't know what a world view was, I didn't know how to defend my faith, and now I know, and I will take this with me through the rest of my life."

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Oh, I'm still living on that one.

Doug Groothuis: And you don't always break through to everybody. That's right. It's the way teaching is. You know, you've taught for all these years too. But that just keeps you going, 'cause you know, here's a 16-year-old. I'm 69 years old, and she's going to take the gospel, the Christian message, the Christian life out into the world, whatever she does, and I had some small part to do with it here at Cornerstone University.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Share with us, Doug, I always talk about the beauty of teaching. I mean, you've done a lot of writing in your life, a lot of speaking, a lot of research, but in my mind, as beautiful as those things are, there's something so beautiful and glorious and grand when you can teach and mentor students, hearts and minds and souls. I mean, there's just, it's powerful and it's beautiful, and especially when you see fruit from it. Sometimes immediate, sometimes weeks later, sometimes months, sometimes years later. And as academics, I think we've wrestled with this. I remember as a young academic wrestling with the publish or perish, right? Teaching versus scholarship. One of my doctoral advisors, I remember I'll never, he said to me, "Stay away from students. That's success for you in the academy. Stay away." You have doctors saying, "Stay away from the patients. Stay away from the student." And his philosophy was you write, you publish, and you do your scholarship. That's your audience. That's what you focus on. Stay away from students. I realized in my first teaching opportunity, professor track, was that there was nothing as powerful and incredible as being with those students and mentoring and shepherding and teaching. Yes, yes. I learned that. It wasn't likely when I started. But when I ended that first track and I moved to another university, it had grabbed me. I thought, "This is incredible." And so talk with us about the beauty of teaching that sometimes gets lost by us academics in the world of scholarship.

Doug Groothuis: Oh, gosh. Yeah. I love to teach. I tell people the classroom is really my favorite place to be. I mean, not every class. Sometimes nobody's listening and I'm frustrated. But overall, when I see that spark in a student's eye and I see them learning, and they see how this relates to scripture, and I can take Aristotle and relate it to Jesus in some way without compromising Jesus, there's a joy and a beauty to it. And it's better than anything. I write a lot. I just finished a 60,000-word book, and it feels so good to finish the book. And you're chasing down, you know how this works, chasing down the footnotes, and where is that book? And you get a sense of accomplishment. The book comes out, you hold it in your hand, and it's wonderful and will help people. But having that life on life, teaching, learning experience, grading the papers, helping them to improve their writing, improve their thinking, there's really nothing like that. There's nothing like that. I've had students from years and years ago. In fact, one of my seminary students a few months ago said, "I was having a conversation with someone who had a New Age worldview, and I could talk to her in an intelligent Christian way because you were my teacher at Denver Seminary 10 years ago, 15 years ago." So I can't exchange that for anything. I've written academic articles, books, papers at academic conferences. That's part of who I am, who you are. But having that impact on students' lives forever, and many of them become friends, even lifelong friends in some cases, I can't exchange that for anything. So I just wanna do that as long as I can, and I think all of our professors here are like that. That's a beautiful thing.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You know, one of the things I wanna talk with you about that maybe our listeners may not know about is your love for jazz. So I wanna give you an opportunity to talk. Talk to us a little bit about jazz, and you've written some on it as well.

Doug Groothuis: I have, yeah. And so talk with us about jazz, this incredible American art form. Yeah. Well, I try to approach everything from a Christian worldview, and there are a lot of things I love about jazz that really relate to the Christian worldview. One is that everyone has to find their own unique voice on their instrument, so that's being made in the image and likeness of God. We're creatures. We're creative. Also, in jazz, you have to listen to the other musicians. You have to really show affection and

love. Like, I will listen to other drummers playing, so I'll play what I play. So you've got this sense of teamwork and love. You've got improvisation. You work on the standards, so there's a body of work of musicians and composers. All the jazz people have to know this. In fact, was talking to a jazz musician recently who teaches as an adjunct for us, and I said, "How many standards do you know just by heart?" He said, "Oh, only about 200." Okay. So how much of scripture do we have that we can just call on and improvise in the moment, use the scripture and be filled with the Spirit? I like this idea in teaching, actually. I have kind of a jazz pedagogy. So the score would be the textbooks that we use and the other material. It's like I'm the leader of the band, and I set the tone, and then I elicit and solicit responses from the students. And then I jam on that. So a student'll say something, and I'll respond. Maybe another student will say something else. You respond. You have to have big ears, which means you listen to what the other people are playing or saying. And so what I'll do sometimes, a student'll ask a question, and then I'll say, "Did I answer your question?" And sometimes they say yes, and sometimes they say no, and if it's no, we'll try it again, or we'll talk after class. So I find a lot of inspiration for the way I teach and just life in jazz. I think there's a lot of beauty in jazz. I think any gift we experience, whether it's the ultimate gift of salvation or the gift of music or painting or poetry, it's all from the hand of God. The Father of lights in whom there's no shadow of turning, James 1. Now I'll give you an example of this. There's a beautiful, well-established jazz club in Denver called Dazzle. And I appointed myself the unpaid chaplain of Dazzle, because I went there so often. So I would pray for the musicians. I got to know some of the workers and the owner there. And I had some beautiful moments of listening to music and talking. And there's one concert I went to, it was very compelling, and afterwards the saxophonist was there, and it's a fairly small venue, and they just hang around after the gig to talk to people. And the saxophonist, his name is Donny McCaslin, was talking to someone who attended. And the guy who attended was just in awe of the whole concert. And he was saying, "I loved the way you play and the way you smile, and the way you encourage the other musicians, and the music is so powerful and beautiful." And I was standing there, I said, "Yes, isn't it a gift from God?" And the guy looked at me and said, "No, it's a gift from him," and he pointed to the saxophone player. I said, "Well, maybe both." You know, so I stayed out of a fight. I didn't get into trouble. That guy was mad. He's like, "No, it's a gift from him." He had no sense of transcendence. So I was trying to bring in this music we experience is a gift from God, whether the musicians know it or not, so just kind of make that suggestion. Didn't quite work in that case, but it's a source of great joy. It's got a deep history. A lot of racial reconciliation happened through jazz in America when groups started to integrate, like Benny Goodman. And Duke Ellington was originally all Black, and then they had white people, and Juan Tizol I think was from Cuba. So a lot of integration happened in the jazz world before it happened in the larger culture. It's really beautiful. And Black folks also found a voice in jazz and other forms of music to show that they were equal citizens, that they were creative people, they were good people. I wrote a chapter in a book on that actually. So it's been a lot of enjoyment for me over the years.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah, I mean, I'm interested, you know, in jazz, and I think blues as well, which in some ways speak about the pains in our soul, right? And give voice to that. Blues do that as well, and many, many pieces, jazz and others. So there's this element of transcendence in music that kind of cries out. Lament, yeah, crying out to God. But I remember also listening to Elton John's song, Sad Songs Mean So Much or Say So Much, where he literally speaks about the importance of sad songs because they evoke suffering and pain. The dilemma being, though, that there's no hope in these, so people sort of lament and they find hope in lament, but there's no redemption, no healing, none of those things. And so, I see a lot of individuals wrestling with that. They, the music and popular culture oftentimes does speak about some very transcendent things, but no answers are provided, right? Lots of questions or lots of denial, but no real answers. But people go there to find solace or hope or answers. Talk with us about how we should relate to popular culture. There has been an enduring problem, I think, or question, and

we haven't always answered it well as evangelicals. How should we relate to those cultural artifacts in popular culture? I think about anime now, for example. A lot of people, young people, are involved in anime and manga. I mean, just significant numbers, right? And I've had some of them show it to me and say, "Look at this." These are profound questions about justice or vengeance or forgiveness or sexuality. And they're wrestling with this, and they go there for philosophy or philosophical input or insight. How do we relate to these very powerful cultural artifacts, Doug, as Christians?

Doug Groothuis: That's such a big question because there's so many cultural forms out there. It's hard to even keep up with them, really. But I think the first thing to remember is that culture comes from human beings. There'd be no culture if we were not made in the image and likeness of God. The animal world, I don't really think there is culture. There are relationships and communication, but we are the culture creators on the planet. So it expresses our identity, and it expresses our worldview to some extent. So when I look at different forms of culture, I have two things in mind. One is common grace, what is good and beautiful in this art form, whether or not the people are Christians. And then antithesis, this is very much coming out of Abraham Kuyper, what can't be redeemed. It's just not right. The worldview is off. Or the form is not the proper form to communicate what people are trying to communicate. So you've gotta look at content and form. Where can we embrace it and appreciate it? Where is it creative and interesting and fun, there's nothing dark about it? And where do we have to say, "No, that's something we need to stay away from." And I think evangelicals need to say no more to more things, to leave room for yes, to leave room for what is good and true and beautiful and godly. And there's so much out there. But if anything really afflicts your spirit or makes you angry or bitter or lustful or something, okay, well, just stay away from that. So it's not like you can just put the gospel, the Christian worldview, into any form easily. It doesn't fit in some cases. You've gotta fit the nature of the art with the message. And I read a book many, many years ago, I don't know if you read it, by Ken Myers called *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians in Popular Culture*. I taught that book for 20 years at Denver Seminary. And he's gone on to have this wonderful ministry called Mars Hill Audio where he interviews authors about culture, ideas. And he gave a very good assessment of popular culture, that popular culture has to be critiqued. It's not neutral. We've gotta evaluate it biblically, worldview and content, and ask what does it do to our soul? What does it do to society? I mean, for one thing, if you're a Christian, do you wanna have a gangster mentality to life? No, I don't think so. You wanna be godly and be courageous, but there's an ethos out there you don't wanna have as a Christian.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Well, it's a challenging area. It's very challenging. I see so many individuals in the culture, right, in communities, right, within culture, with particular worldviews in the content of those bringing particular forms, and I've always thought in my own mind, boy, we have to educate ourselves and help educate others. How do we wrestle with that? How do we go there if we need to? Or when we are introduced, how do we wrestle with those fundamental truths, as wrong as they may be, that people hold onto and embrace because it gives them meaning and purpose? And so how do we do that without ourselves becoming poisoned, right?

Doug Groothuis: Well, the big inspiration for me was Francis Schaeffer. I read his book *The God Who Is There*, which came out in 1968, and that's a different world in many ways. I read that right after I became a Christian, about 50 years ago, and he was fearless. He talked about music, sculpture, philosophy, theology, poetry, everything. And he was trying to see within these culture expressions what the cry of the human heart was, and a lot of it was despair. No hope, no meaning, no value. He said we have truth to bring, but we care about these people. They're not just examples for apologetics. They're human beings who are suffering and need Christ. So I've tried to take that sensibility into my sense of culture and develop a theology of culture.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: It's a profound moment for us, I think. A lot of people full of despair and are looking, and I think oftentimes it's easier for us to say as believers, "It's bad, it's bad. Don't look at it. Don't touch it." But that may not be enough. I think we have to be able to provide a counter-response, which requires that we have some knowledge about what it is that they're talking about so we can speak about it intelligently. One of the things I've always appreciated about you is when you speak about the philosophers, you wanna get them right. Right? You don't want to just, you know, give a caricature, which is easy to do, but you wanna get them right and be fair and be appropriate so then you can talk about them and defend scripture and what they're saying. And it's not an easy thing to do, but boy, the popular culture's very powerful and it's very influential, and more people are there than there are in philosophy.

Doug Groothuis: Oh, yes. Well, I think educators, especially Christian educators, have to be aware of how certain aspects of popular culture can undermine education. Because people are distracted. They're not entering into the world of knowledge carefully. So part of my philosophy of teaching is that I view the classroom as what I call a sanctuary for knowledge. So it's a sanctuary. It's different than being out on the street. It's different than being in a theater. It's different than being at home in front of your computer. We have congregated to learn something important. So that means we take a moment of silence to start the class. We pray. We invoke the Spirit as the spirit of truth to teach us, and for my class, my topic, we have no screens. So students print out the notes. I spend a lot of time working on detailed lecture outlines, and I say, "Okay, here's the notes. Here's what we're going to do." And we don't need any technological mediation, at least for philosophy the way I teach it. And it can be a challenge for students. They twitch for a while. But it's a real education.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah, you're really re-educating. You have to re-educate the sensibilities, not just give them new knowledge, but the sensibilities. Like, we can sit and talk about hard ideas, and I can ask you a question and nobody talks, and we can just sit with that for a while, until the 16-year-old AP student says something, because she's embarrassed for all of her fellow students. You have a gong you use, I've heard, yes. Talk about the gong. We actually talk about that. That's very important.

Doug Groothuis: Well, I'm an old rock and roll drummer, an old garage drummer. I don't have a set anymore, but I have a very beautiful Zildjian gong. I should've brought it, you know, in case you nodded off. I could hit it and wake you up. But I bring the gong to class, and I tell them, "This is gonna be a gong quiz day. So I will make marks on the board every time one of the students makes a good comment, good question, and we need to get to 15. If we get to 15, everybody gets an A," so they're motivated. And every time they make a good comment, I hit the gong. And I start out the class with a gong swell, where you go from very low to very loud, and I said, "This is Biblical. Psalm 150, 'Praise him with the loud crashing cymbal.'" And I also say, "If you fall asleep, I'm gonna pick up this gong, come right next to you, and hit it." So I bring the gong in two or three times. It's fun.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Doug, thank you for all you do here at Cornerstone.

Doug Groothuis: Oh, you're welcome. I'm so happy to be here.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Happy for your commitment to Jesus and the gospel, and the hard work that, and the beautiful work you've done. May the Lord continue to bless it. It's great to have you with us.

Doug Groothuis: Well, you're welcome, and I'm so happy to be here and look forward to continuing to serve.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Great. Thank you.

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