



There Must Be More: Interview With Frank Viola

Ray Edwards: Hi, this is Ray Edwards, and this is a special bonus episode of the *Ray Edwards Show* Podcast. This episode is an interview with Frank Viola, a Christian author. I tell you that right upfront because if you don't normally like the spiritual foundations element of the podcast, then you probably will not dig this episode because it's going to be mostly, well it's going to be all faith focused because Frank is a Christian author. I'll just give you that warning upfront if that's not your cup of tea, then you may just want to wait until Monday's regular episode, where we will talk about marketing and prosperity and those things. With that being said, let's get to it.

Frank, you are joining the ranks of those who will be able to say they have published either a giant book or a good doorstop, or a good device for holding down the coffee table.

Frank Viola: [laughs]

Ray: This thing is massive.

Frank: Yes, it is. That's why we call it the *Titan*, and I'm looking forward to seeing the reaction the people have when they get a copy of it. Like I said, we have a disclaimer in the beginning that we are not responsible if your coffee table breaks, if you dare to put the book upon it. [laughs] Or as Donald Trump says, "Our covfefe table". [laughs]

Ray: So physically this is a hardcover book. It's 800 pages. What?

Frank: Yes.

Ray: What is in there?

Frank: Yes, 800 pages, a double-columned, Ray. Double columned. It has over 380,000 words that I have written myself since 2008, all the way to 2016. It's eight years of writing of material that has never been published by a publisher, some of which was rejected by my publishers because it was too controversial. They didn't want to put their name on it, [laughs] but I wanted to get it out, so I put it in this book.

Ray: Well, the design looks amazing and I've already ordered mine, so I can't wait to get it. I can't promise you that I'll read it all in one sitting.

Frank: [laughs] Yes, well, we figured that the average reader will take 25 years to finish; but if you put it in your bathroom, you can start pecking away out of it right away.

Ray: Yes, let's dig a little deeper into the content. One thing I noticed is there are 14 unreleased books that are now part of this book, which the title is *There Must be More*.



Frank: Yes.

Ray: Let's first actually start with the title. What's that about?

Frank: I guess that really is the mantra or tagline for my own Ministry. In my own spiritual journey at an early age, in my early 20s after I was exposed to so much of what's in Christianity today from the charismatics to the Southern Baptists to the word faith, to the various different denominations in Christian Missionary Alliance and Vineyard and so forth. I had a question burning in me and years later I was able to articulate it into a sentence and that is, "There must be more than this". [laughs] "There's got to be more than this".

When I read my New Testament and then I look at the landscape of Christianity, the Christianity that I've been exposed to which is very eclectic.

I just have this burning desire to know what is, "the more"? Because there has to be more. There's got to be more. Interestingly the way the book is set up, the title is *There Must Be More*. When you turn the cover over, Ray, it says, "There is more".

[laughter]

Frank: Consequently, we are giving the promise to God's people that yes, in fact there is more and this book tries to crack the door open to that Universe that there is more to the Christian faith, there's more to the scripture, there's more to Jesus Christ and there is more to the church than most of us have imagined or have been exposed to or have been taught.

Ray: Well, I'm going to try to go for the easy answer. Where is it?

Frank: [laughs] Well, take your 800 pages and two columns of two colors.

No. There are different subjects that I treat. When you talked about the unreleased books, there's actually 14 books in this 800-page limited edition volume, which we're only printing once by the way and never again. But here are the titles, Ray. We've got *Rethinking the Mission*. This is a whole new paradigm on what is God's mission, what is the Missio Dei, what is His timeless purpose.

Then we have one called *Rethinking the Church*. As you know, I've written a lot about ecclesiology, a lot about the church. This particular book contains my memoir of how I left what we would call traditional Christianity or the traditional church, the organized church, and found something on the other side that was so incredible that I read about in the pages of the New Testament. Then there's *Rethinking the Spirit*. This is all about the Holy Spirit, a different view, a new look, a fresh look, rethinking spiritual growth, rethinking conventional Christianity. We have my critique of John MacArthur's book *Strange Fire*, which took dead aim at the whole charismatic viewpoint.



This book is called *Pouring Holy Water on the Strange Fire*. What I do is I take a part of MacArthur's thesis, because I'm someone who does believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But I have a different view than the pentecostal view. It's not the cessationist view, which says the gifts are gone and it's not the pentecostal view as well. We have a book called *Discipleship in Crisis* in this volume, *Magnificent Obsession*, which is about God the eternal purpose, rethinking the will of God beyond the evangelical when the pages are blank. Then one called *Straight Talk to Pastors*, which is DEFCON one compared to *Pagan Christianity*, which I know you've read [laughs].

Ray: Yes.

Frank: That has a lot of vinegar in it. Then *Epic Jesus, Practical Help to Christian Communities, Discipleship in Crisis*, and then one called *The Deeper Journey*. So yes, all 14 books are contained in this one volume, *The Titan*. I'm really happy about it, Ray. It's a great feeling to put all of your unpublished work in one volume. This is not the scraps. But some of these I considered to be my best writing compared to some of my other work.

Ray: What do you hope people will take from this book? What do you hope they'll do with it?

Frank: I hope that the effect will be what the effect was on me, because anything I write has come out of my own experience, my own vision, the things I have discovered and learned in my own experience. That is radical transformation. Radical transformation in the way we think about the Christian faith, the way we look at the scripture, the way we relate to Jesus Christ, radical transformation in our life, how we live the Christian life, and radical transformation in the practice of fellowship in the church. In other words, the same things that changed me drastically. I want to communicate to the Lord's people and see the same effect happen with them.

Ray: I know a lot of people, or some people at least, were thinking, "800 pages?" Is this the book that we should start from the beginning and read to the end, or we should pick and choose? What do you think about that?

Frank: Yes, that's a great question. Actually, there's a table of contents in the beginning that presents all 14 books, all 14 sections. I just recommend that readers, if they're very linear in their practice, they can start from the beginning and just go through to the end whenever they finish it. Or, if they're not linear and they're not tied to that approach, they can just take sections that they're interested in. For example, let's say they want to see John MacArthur's *Strange Fire* shredded into confetti, they could read my review and start there.

Or let's say they want to read the book called *Straight Talk to Pastors*, which is all about who pastors were in the first century, how they functioned, what they didn't do in comparison to today. From beginning to end, it's a chronological look in the book of Acts with the Epistles,



blended in of what leaders were in the first century. They can start there. If someone's really interested in, for example, the church, they can start with rethinking the church. The table of contents is a great navigation guide to point them to whatever they're interested in. They can just start there and go through those sections and then move on to others.

Ray: If there are those of us who've read many of your other books, will we find this one very different?

Frank: You'll find it the same in terms of the style because I wrote them all, this book as well as the others. My voice will be the same, but the content is going to be different because I treat subjects, Ray, in the *Titan* that I don't treat in my other books and also, too, this book expands some of the themes that I've written about in other books. For example, in some of my other books, I've talked about the Holy Spirit, I've talked about the power of the Spirit but I've never really gone into detail on First Corinthians 12, my understanding of the gifts of the Spirit mentioned there.

I never go into my view of the baptism of the Holy Spirit which is incredibly controversial, even after the charismatic movement started in the 1960's. I take a view of the baptism of the Spirit that's neither the Pentecostal view, and neither the cessationist view. It's a view that transcends both. You're going to find new content, fresh content, areas that I've never discussed anywhere. I've got a whole chapter on swearing which I think you need to read, Ray, because your problem with profanity is what really provoked the chapter.

Ray: You've been reading my mail.

Frank: [laughs] Folks, I'm just joking. I've never heard Ray say a curse word in public.

[laughter]

Frank: Or private. There's a lot of issues that I treat in it that I've not treated in my other work.

Ray: You may not know the answer to this, how much does it weigh?

Frank: [laughs] Yes. I don't know the answer to that.

Ray: "That Frank Viola, I buy his writing by the pound".

Frank: [laughs] I'll tell you this, it probably weighs more than six or seven of my normally produced published books. Because it's big. It's over 8.5 x 11. Those are the page sizes. When you put the hard cover on it, it's actually larger than that. It's sown bound. It's not glued, it's sown, so the quality is spectacular. It's got two colors, you got black and then you have green inside which matches the cover. It's just a well-produced book. I'm very happy with it, and I've got to give credit to Ralph Polendo.



If your listeners go to violatitan, that's violatitan.com, they can see a little video which, by the way, my daughter created who's not a professional videographer, but she likes our cat so you will see probably the first video of a book promotion with a cat being featured in it.

Ray: That video was awesome.

Frank: [laughs] If you're a cat-lover, you will enjoy the video. You get an idea of what it looks like and what's in it and so forth.

Ray: What kind of person would be interested in getting *The Titan*?

Frank: Well, that's a great question. I think anyone who's looking for a blunt force object for a time of need, or for someone who's looking for an excuse to buy a new coffee table. [laughs] Or a heavy unmovable door stopper, or anyone who wants to collect all of Frank Viola's work beyond my mother who, as far as I know, she's the only one. But, no, in all seriousness, I would say that anybody who has within their heart, Ray, the question, "There's got to be more than this". That's really who I'm writing for.

In addition, if someone wants to, or I should say, is ready to look at a view of leadership in the church that is different and challenging

from what we're typically taught, I think that they will find this book to be intriguing as well biblical and true to the first century writings of the New Testament. Anybody who wants a fresh perspective on the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the spirit, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, anybody who opens up the Bible in their life at any point and says, "The pages are blank, I can't get anything out of this. Where's Christ in this? Where's the Lord in this?"

There's a book inside *The Titan* called *When The Pages Are Blank*, and it gives you very practical ways to approach the scripture where you will find life and energy and the Lord in it. I think readers will appreciate that, but it's mainly those people. We also have, Ray, on the page, the book page Violatitan.com, there's a very long lengthy "frequently asked question" section, so it gets into some of the benefits of the book and who the book's for and how it will help readers.

Ray: Well, I highly recommend that people get hold of the book. I've got another question I want to ask you, but first I want to just give people a heads up. You've got a special pricing situation on the book that's coming to an end here real soon, is that right?

Frank: Yes, that's right. Right now it is on discount until September 1st, and after September 1st the price will go up more than it is right now. Not only that, but we're going to base the number of copies we will be printing on the pre-orders. Consequently, we'll look at how many pre-orders we have on September 1st, Ray, then that's the number we're going to use to calculate how many we print. I will tell you that so far, and we're doing this recording at the end of August, near the end of

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August. We have thankfully over reached our goal of the copies we wanted to print, but I wanted to print more, I want to thank the Lord for that because I didn't know [laughs] if anybody was going to buy this.

Ray: So there really must be more?

Frank: There must be more, and there's more copies to be printed if you order a copy. This may not be everybody's cup of tea but if you go to Violatitan.com and it looks like something that you feel will benefit you, or you want to buy it as a gift for somebody, makes a fantastic gift. There will be shipped before Christmas, and the price will go up on September 1st. If you get it before then you're locked in, you will get a copy but as I was saying we're not sure how many copies we're going to print. We're just going to calculate that on September 1st based on the pre-orders and once they're gone, Ray, they're gone, we're never going to do this again.

I've had people ask me, "Frank, are you really tell you the truth? you're not going to print them again?" As if I've lied before.

Ray: You are not lying again are you?

Frank: [laughs]. Let me tell you something, Ray. I want to be straight with you. I used to be an angel, but the backbiters bit my wings off.

Ray: [laughs]

Frank: Even so, it's only going to be printed once, only once, never before, and never again so if this is something that people would be interested in, they'll definitely want to get a copy because we're not going to do it again.

Ray: I'm going to go -- I haven't read the book obviously because nobody's got it except you. I'm really excited about getting my copy, but I'm going to go order a couple for gifts because I know a couple of folks I think are going to enjoy this a lot. I know it's going to be one of the best gifts I've ever bought them. Here's my question I was going to ask you earlier. I have read a lot of your stuff and we've known each other for a little while now, a few years. What amazes me is I haven't read anything of yours that has made me say, "Well that's just crazy, there's no way that's right". I can't say that about most Christian authors.

There's a lot of Christian authors who write stuff that's very edgy and very controversial but I feel like many of them do it for controversy sake, and I read those things and I think, "Well, this is just a load of garbage. It's just not even good research". What I was going to ask you is, I don't mean to be down on anybody else's stuff.

What amazes me is everything you write, to me, anyway, is a fresh perspective and yet it's also biblical, it's also consistent with the nature as I understand it of the Lord and of the body of Christ on the earth. I'm just trying to ask you, what I'm trying to say is how does this stuff come to you? How did you get so smart?

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Frank: Well, the answer to that Ray is very simple, insanity runs in my family and it also runs in yours as well as it appears to be since you like my stuff so much. But no, I will say this, Brennan Manning once said this to me. We were at a conference together, we had a private meeting in one of the sessions and we were talking about writing books. He said to me, "Frank, if you write something that doesn't move you then throw it in the trash; because if it doesn't move you, it's not going to move anyone else".

I learned a long time ago that being a reader, a voracious reader in my 20s, that many of the authors that I was reading at the time were what I would consider armchair philosophers, meaning they were writing things that were simply echoing what they read or other people say. I found this out because I got to know some of these authors on a personal level and I had written to some of them. It was clear to me that they had not experienced what they were writing, in fact, some of them were just at first-rate, plagiarists. They were just pulling from what other people had written, almost verbatim.

I made a decision in my life, Ray, at one point, that I was only going to write A, what I had experienced myself and B, what moved me in a dramatic way. Consequently, whatever I put together, whatever I write, whether it's right or wrong. Sometimes I write things and I'll say, "Hey, I'm not sure about this, this is how the terrain looks from my eye, but I'm looking at the back of the rocks, you might be looking at the front". I may be wrong about this but nevertheless whatever I write, A, it's come out of my experience and B, it's moved me.

I'm also open to be corrected by anyone. In fact, when I released the book *Pagan Christianity* and a little red book that George Barna put his name on, he was a co-author, I should be fair there. We were ready for hate mail, and we got tons of it, I was getting hate mail from Quakers. I was getting bodily threats from the Amish, [laughs] who are pacifists [unintelligible 00:23:16] folks.

Ray: You got to really work hard to get those.

Frank: [laughs] Well, it made a lot of people angry, it's the only book that I know of in the English language that has a disclaimer from the publisher. I kid you not, get a copy of *Pagan Christianity* by Frank Viola and George Barna and you will see the disclaimer by Tyndale, bless their hearts, they published it. The thing about it is that if I believe something and it is a vision that burns in me and that I am so convinced of and it's radically changed my life, I'm not afraid to put it out, but I'm also open to be corrected. We had lots of people criticize that book, we had lots of people write critiques.

We put together a page on paganchristianity.org, Ray, which answered every single criticism, every single objection even from scholars. To this day, we're talking what? Almost 10 years later, that book stands unrefuted and it stands indisputed and it stands on its own because every criticism has been answered. I only say that because it's one thing to put something out and not be willing to engage in those



who would criticize it, and I'm very, very open to criticism. I have another point to make too and that is *The Titan*, I call it the detail follow-up of *Pagan Christianity* and everything else I have written that's controversial.

Because in many

ways I believe that *The Titan* is more radical, at least some of the chapters are and that's why some of the publishers say, Ray, I'm going to give you an exact quote. They said, "We cannot put this in a book".

[laughter]

Frank: Anyway, I may be getting more hate mail from Quakers and the Amish in Memphis if this thing gets in their hands but I welcome it, I welcome criticism.

Ray: They may even bring the Mennonites into it.

Frank: [laughs] Yes.

Ray: Then will know it's gotten serious, I'm so looking forward to this. I have enormous amount of respect for you and George for *Pagan Christianity* and people who know me, know that I annoy the heck out of them for a long time after I read it because I won't stop talking about it. I'd be in church, I'd be like, "You know where that came from? Let me tell you". Finally it get to the point where they would say, "No, I don't want to know where that came from, just let it alone Ray, all right?" I get the sense in everything you write, that you love the Lord and you love His Body, which are the people of God.

Frank: Amen.

Ray: And I think that puts, if I can use a little Christian is, it puts a grace on the way you write that I feel does not feel harsh or hurtful, but it feels loving and if anything, is a correction, it's a gentle and needed correction. I'm really excited about this book.

Frank: I appreciate the compliment, I'm humbled by it. One of the things that you usually find throughout every chapter of this book or every book that is in this large volume, is that I do my best to exalt Jesus Christ beyond the stratosphere. I think that the Lord has gotten short changed in so many elements of Christianity today. I made the statement several times that I have sat in conferences, some of which I've spoken in and some of which I was just there as an observer, but listening to other speakers I started to develop a habit and that is, I would count the number of times they would talk about my Lord.

It seemed to have been a consistent pattern that Jesus Christ so often did not get mentioned in a 60 minute message, but once or twice. You'll look at Paul Tarsus and you open up, say, the book of Colossians, or the book of Ephesians and count how many times he mentions the Lord Jesus Christ, it is mind boggling and here's a man who had a vision of his Lord that was so powerful and so radical and so intense and

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so life changing, that Christ was just spilling out of every pore of this man and when he would take up his pen and he would write, it was Jesus Christ in the big things and the little things, in the circumference, in the center and everywhere else.

That's what I tried to do in this book, is lift up the Lord and all these subjects, the controversial ones, the difficult ones, the problematic ones, to point out straight to Jesus Christ because that's who the Holy Spirit is pointing us to constantly. He has not come to point to Himself, He has come to reveal Christ, He's come to glorify Christ, He's come to magnify Christ. If you want to find a spirit filled person, it's not the guy that does the miracles and cast out the devils and raises the dead, although those things are great, it's the guy that is obsessed with Jesus Christ and speaks Christ in everything he says. So that's what I attempt to do in this volume, Ray, and hopefully I've pulled it off.

Ray: Just one more time, if you would go over the details of where people can go to get a copy?

Frank: Yes, absolutely. They can go to violatitan.com that's V-I-O-L-A-T-I-T-A-N, violatitan.com and they'll see an amateurish video done by my daughter, go easy. If you like cats, you'll really appreciate it. By the way, my cat loves this book, Ray, she is the number one fan. That comes true quite strongly on the video, and then there's a frequently asked questions, there's photos of the book and so forth. Again,

we have a discount until September 1st.

Also, I want to say too that the proceeds, the net proceeds of this book are going to be going to various things. One of which is a family where the wife is very sick and she's trying to raise money to get the proper care that she needs. This is a friend of mine, a brother I really love in the Lord and his wife is really struggling right now with a rare illness. Also, others of it are going to go to the poor. Anybody who knows me, I have a strong ministry to the poor and the oppressed, and then we also have some projects we want to do to advance the kingdom. Anyway, this is not for personal profit. I'm doing just fine in my own personal life but we want to see others helped, that's why we're doing this.

Ray: You're not going to use it to buy a Bentley?

Frank: [laughs] I don't even know what a Bentley is, Ray.

Ray: Well, I appreciate you so much. I appreciate your work, and I can't wait to get my copy of your new book.

Frank: Praise the Lord. I can't wait to hold the first printed copy in my hands. I'm really looking forward to it and they should be shipping around October and so God willing, you'll get yours. You will definitely get yours before Christmas. "That, I can tell you". To quote our president. You'll get it before Christmas. [laughs]

Ray: Thank you, Frank.

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Frank: Thanks, Ray, appreciate it.

Ray: I hope you found this bonus episode of the show useful, and then you enjoyed it. If so, then maybe you'll consider subscribing to the podcast if you have not already done so at rayedwardspodcast.com. With that, until next time, I pray that you would be in good health and prosper in all things.