

OpenTheo

Football, the Future, and Personal Piety with Justin Taylor and Collin Hansen

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

If you want a longer-than-usual discussion about football, you've come to the right episode. After ruminating on why Americans like football so much, the three amigos turn their attention to more familiar themes, prognosticating on which Christians around today will still be known 50 years from now. This leads to a subsequent discussion about strategy versus faithfulness, and then a final conversation about the missing piety in our age.

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Transcript

[Music] Greetings and salutations, welcome to Life and Books and Everything. Kevin DeYoung and I'm joined with my good friends Justin Taylor and Collin Hansen. I think I used the wrong preposition there joined by with Among Something.

And I've done a few podcasts of reading articles but this is really the first official podcast

of the new year so glad to have you with us and I'm excited for the various people that I have lined up for this semester. And as I've done before, really glad to start and end and in the middle and have various times with Justin and Collin so we'll get to them in our wonderful, what shall we call it, revelry in just a moment. I do want to thank Crossway, our sponsor, and mention a new book by Gavin Orton, Humility, the joy of self-forgetfulness such a great phrase of what humility is.

There's that famous line, at least I've always paraphrased it this way from C.S. Lewis that if you need a truly humble person you won't walk away thinking, wow, so humble as if they just drew attention to their meekness but rather you'd walk away saying what a wonderful time it was because you wouldn't even realize that the other person had been focused on you and asked you good questions and was a wonderful person to be around the joy of self-forgetfulness. That's true humility and in this book Gavin encourages readers that humility is not an abstract virtue but a mark of gospel integrity looks at a personal level in the context of the church. So you can look for this wherever books are sold, you can go to crossway.org/plus get 30% off with your crossway plus account.

So Collin and Justin, hello Collin, how are you doing? If anyone's watching this they see you are dressed up rather nicely. Did you sleep in those clothes? Are you going back to church today? It's a little more true than I want to admit right there and I just want to acknowledge Justin as wearing the official uniform of the state of Iowa, the hoodie. I'm rocking the hoodie and Collin's got the tweed jaggin up.

I just played professor for two weeks so I'm just kind of eager to remain in that role. Justin, you have a good microphone, good headphones, everything sounding good, you're looking good. Thanks Kevin.

For a matter of time. I know that my understanding is that people have enjoyed not being able to hear me but we decided to fix the microphone. We're thankful for that.

In fact I want to read just a little bit from our listener mailbox. This was of course our last episode with the three of us right before Christmas so one of them said Dear Santa. If you find, if you and the elves could find anything around the workshop to upgrade Justin's audio and Mike Game, I'm sure Cornhusker, Elvis and J.I. Packer fans around the globe would be grateful.

That was very well said and then this one, this one is just as good. I love this podcast and this is probably my favorite episode to date. Something about it totally cracks me up and just found out the video version is on YouTube which is super cool but why are so few people watching this? Well I think we could answer that but it is such a great podcast.

The listener continues. It is very interesting to put faces to the voices I've been listening to also. I agree with the above comment about Justin's setup.

He sounds and looks like a foreign war correspondent calling it in from a bombed out youth room in a church basement but you can't hate on a guy who loves Elvis. That was a great comment. A bombed out war correspondent and are you in the youth basement of a church Justin? Where are you? I'm actually in my home bunker but we could have YouTube down here.

Is that what the basement all across Iowa look like? That's just a standard Midwestern basement. I think I've seen that a thousand times. Yeah, is the ceiling like six and a half feet? Yeah, popcorn ceiling.

Yeah, popcorn ceiling. Our basement, of course they don't have them in the south water table or something but the one in our last house in Michigan, I would stand on the treadmill and I couldn't really run because my head was hitting the basement ceiling six and a half feet. You got to love the basement.

The one thing missing is the little basketball hoop on the back door. Ah, yes. We've perfected all of our dunking techniques that we never use for the rest of our lives.

I dunked twice, I think. I was in college. Not like in a game but like.

I bet both of you have the ability or had the ability I should say. I could run and then just kind of like get up there and then kind of fling it in and touch the rim. It was not a rule of decisive dunk.

And the crowd goes wild. Yes, not during a game. A little sports talk so hang in their listeners or hit skip 30 seconds a few times but we're in the middle of January and there's been a lot of time.

I think we're in the middle of the day and there's been lots of football. Did you guys watch? Did you watch a lot of bowl games? Are you into the NFL playoffs? I think you are. Why do Americans love football so much? Colin, I actually, I think you were tweeting something about this in small markets and things.

So give me why football? Why has that become, I think baseball is the national past time in an historical way. Why, by every objective measure it is the most popular sport in America and people love football. Why do you think? I think Kevin, it's a match for the medium.

It works really well on TV. It's just, it's a made for TV sport. When you think about it and you wonder, what difference does that make? Let me suggest to you basketball on radio.

It doesn't work. Soccer on radio. It doesn't work.

Baseball on radio works. Baseball on radio works perfectly. In fact, in a lot of ways baseball on radio is better than it is on TV.

I don't know how to describe that, but it is. Yeah, it's slow enough and you can sort of, you know, a sharp liner to right field through the second, but you know what that looks like. There's just some, you can picture sort of things happening.

Yeah, the football on radio, very hard to. It's hard, but it's still more doable than baseball or basketball and soccer because the action is more or less continuous in those sports. Yeah.

And so football, at least the pauses allow you to explain some of it. And you get somebody on radio like Kevin Harlan and it's just outstanding. I told my kids yesterday, should I preach like Kevin Harlan? Turn in your bottle to the book of the Koolies Easties.

Oh, I love Kevin Harlan. Oh, he's good. But I think that's what it is because if you think about it, college football has been prominent for the whole 20th century into the 21st, but professional football really wasn't.

It rode up with TV. So I think it's a match for the medium. And I mean, we also just have to admit the obvious in a fallen world, it's gambling.

I mean, that's why it's popular among Americans because of gambling. And related to that fantasy football and the way that works. It's also just there's just enough of it so that every game really, really, really matters.

But not, I mean, that, yeah, it's just, it's the right match for the amount of time. Baseball is just too much. Basketball, hockey, they're all just too much.

And so each game you don't really get excited for, but that's definitely the case with football. It's a good match for the timing. I think that point about, I'll go ahead Justin.

I mean, maybe you were going to pick up on the same point that, you know, if you tried to watch an NBA team and watch every game that they played, I mean, how many games are you talking about, 100 games? More. But with football, it's, I mean, we think about the college football season. You're talking 12, 13 games total.

Like those are, that's your time. I also wonder if there's something to do with the diversity of positions. And I haven't thought this through, so maybe it's kind of a quack theory.

But, you know, in soccer or as football as the rest of the world calls it, you know, everybody has to be able to kick the ball. Everybody has to be able to dribble the ball, defend the ball. With football, you have guys who, they don't have any skill position in terms of, they don't need to be able to throw a spiral.

They don't need to be able to catch the ball. They just need to be a massive person in the middle who just pushes people. And then you have others who are kickers and they

don't do, they don't have to be able to tackle, they don't have to be able to push anybody, they just have to be able to kick the ball.

And then you have the skill position. So it's an interesting mix of body types and people and different skills that all come together to somehow make one sport. And I'm sure there are examples in other sports like that, but maybe it's more noticeable or extreme with football.

Yeah. And I mean, people say it's quintessentially American. I mean, I, maybe, I mean, you say it's flamboyant, it's aggressive violence.

But it's also highly technical and specialized. I mean, that's the thing is, yeah, cerebral, I mean, it really, there's all sorts of things going on. And you hear people who really understand the game, who are commentators and they know all the lingo of a cover to and a shell and a wheel route.

And there's just a lot of things going on all the time. It is very intellectual. And I think what you said, both of you said cannot be overstated.

Just it's the principle of less is more when you think it's September, October, November, really for college football and some go through December. And the NFL season gets longer as the playoffs get longer. But you're still talking an extra month of January.

I mean, there's just a long time where there's no football. And then you have it once a week. Of course, it's now sprinkled through most of the other days of the week.

But yeah, it's just a lot easier to focus on and every game has some potential for. And I don't know how this happens or if we're, we're just attuned to the good games and forget the bad games. But it seems like so often, I mean, just this weekend of playoffs, I mean, the first game, Seahawks 49ers ended up being a blowout in the fourth quarter.

But it just seems like more often that there are so many really good games. And it's something about maybe how football is structured and the way you can be down three touchdowns. And if you've got 15 minutes left, you still feel like, okay, we score and we stop and we got a chance.

It just, it lends itself somehow to a lot of drama. So I've thought often, why do I, I don't watch almost any sports, but, you know, I am not watching NBA, especially because the Bulls aren't very good. Maybe when it gets to the last rounds of the playoffs, I'll watch some.

But even then you got best of seven. It just takes a long time. So football, playoffs, one and done.

You know, I will find myself watching week five football games in a way that I won't

watch other things. So what's your explanation? We won't stay on this longer. But, you know, people from other countries in particular, in particular, if they love soccer/football, they'll say, but you're American football, look, they run hard for six seconds and then they stop for the better part of a minute.

How is that exciting? How are these athletes? We must just be conditioned that that's how we watch football because, and then you get all the replays and the analysis. It doesn't, it never feels to me like stuff's not happening. It feels like you get 30 seconds to get geared up for something, something really exciting might happen on this next play.

What's your explanation that it doesn't feel slow or boring to us? Oddly enough, go ahead, guys, it doesn't. I think you have to have grown up watching it or have played it yourself or something along those lines because it's just kind of inner blood, inner DNA, it feels natural to us. If you guys have ever missed a college football game, you know you can go onto YouTube the next day and in 20 minutes see every play just back to back with.

And it's so boring to watch football that way, even though you're seeing all the exciting things, but there's something about the rhythm of it and not knowing what's going to happen. I haven't thought about it. The other thought my wife was just going to peering in on some of the World Cup from last year, and I think at one point she said something like, wait, there are no commercials in this.

And I think Kevin actually think the commercials have become part of the spectacle. Now that's obvious with the Super Bowl in there. I mean, we're there for a lot of people that are bigger than the game or the halftime show.

There's just an entire world that's built up around football, around those rhythms that like Justin said, we've just come to expect. And now there is a lot of talk about the commercials or about just the products that are associated with it. Yeah, so I don't, I mean, I think it's football.

So when you play it, the levels of physical exertion, it's pretty, it's not the same as soccer. I wrestled and wrestling was a lot harder. But it's a, it requires a tremendous amount of physical exertion because of the combination of strength, but also stamina as well as speed and other forms of agility in there.

More so for the, you know, those guys on the outside rather than the inside, but still even for them. I think two critiques of it. One, which you don't hear very much of at large, but a good Christian consideration is college, thankfully, is on Saturday.

NFL most games are on Sunday. It overtakes the Lord's Day. Some folks would, would say you shouldn't watch it on the Lord's Day.

Even if you are watching it, one thing to watch it as you drift off and take a Sunday nap

and it's not the pinnacle in shaping of your day. But for a whole lot of people, even for Christians, it becomes this shaping force around which church and other Christian things fit in. And yeah, that's wrong.

That's unfortunate. I think that the other objection you hear much more, of course, is violent. And, you know, everyone was tuned in either in the moment or later with Demar Hamlin and grateful to God that he seems to be made up.

He seems to be making a really good recovery and it was a cool moment to see not that actual moment, but some of the subsequent things that people actually praying and some Christians praying on air. So there were good things that came out of that. Do you guys have a problem in your conscience with, let's just take the second objection for a moment that this is so violent or this is like the gladiatorial games and people are, people are risking their lives just to entertain us? I do think the voluntary nature of it makes a difference.

Yeah. Go ahead, Justin. And the millions of dollars.

Right. Yeah. Go ahead, Justin.

Yeah. And I think that there have been so many things that the NFL has done to try to mitigate the violence. It's an inherently violent sport, but they've tried to do better, I think, in terms of the concussion protocols.

Back when we were growing up in the 80s and 90s, I mean, they were just, if you watch any of these highlights of a receiver going across the middle, it was. It probably should have bothered a conscience is more. It doesn't bother my conscience, but that's not to say that it shouldn't.

But I think the voluntary nature of it, the fact that they've tried to address it, I don't know how you can get around the fact that it's grown men wearing helmets trying to hit each other as hard as they can. And they're bigger and faster than ever before. I mean, I remember so as a Bears fan, that's the last thing we had to really cheer about.

1985 Bears. Wasn't there a hit? Was it Wilbur Marshall hit the Lions quarterback? Maybe Eric Hipple or somebody. And I mean, he just went flat on his back.

I mean, he must have been passed out, concussed, and people had to go over and lift up his arm. I mean, he was just knocked out cold from a hit, helmet to helmet. I remember watching that as a kid, and it was like, that is the coolest hit.

And I remember the voiceover guy talking about the Bears defense and saying the final step is unconditional surrender. And it's just a lot, I mean, I do think it's a step in the right direction that that sort of scene now. Well, one, there'd be more protections for it and the person would be ejected.

Yes, the protections for the quarterback can be too much. But I do think as much as football fans want to still see collisions and big hits, I don't think very many fans really want to see people concussed, want to see people tear their hands. I don't think they want to see people tear their ACL, want to see gruesome.

Now, it happens. I read what's it after the Demar Hamlin thing. Of course, a lot of people, you know, pontificating about it.

I want to say it was the Wall Street Journal, but it was an article that said how much more dangerous football was, especially in its early days. And it had something like, you know, multiple people died each year. And of course, they had very few protections and people were breaking bones all the time in the pile.

Actually, it's not making light of the very serious nature of it. But this sort of thing that happened was was was a rarity. And as much as you can make a violent sport safe, it is safer than it used to be.

Yeah, the old college days were just were just. Oh boy. Just brutal.

I mean, we're talking earlier, early 20th century, two other quick things Kevin on why it's popular. One, my years living in Chicago, Justin can attest to this or disagree with this. I always thought what what connects this disparate group of many, many millions of people.

Really, it was only the Bears. I mean, if the if I'd been there in the 1990s with Michael Jordan, it certainly would have been the Bulls. But truly, the Bears.

I mean, keep in mind, of course, for people who don't know, you've got two baseball teams. And so that doesn't, you know, that doesn't unite everybody. The colleges don't unite everybody.

There really wasn't anything else. The politics sure doesn't, except with some level of frustration, I guess. But that unites everybody.

And also, you guys, as everybody listening to the podcast knows, I'm going to find a way to turn it back to there. It's not a coincidence, Kevin, that the terminology used there was unconditional surrender. I know.

That's a big part of American history. That exact phrase right there. So especially the college game mapped very much onto a lot of uniquely historical factors in American life, especially related to its warfare.

All right. Well, thanks for hanging with us for our 20 minutes on American football. So Colin, later, I think we have it planned later sometime this spring.

We're going to talk to you more at length. And hopefully Tim will be able to come on.

We're going to talk about your new book, which is coming out soon about the formation of Tim Keller, something of a biography, but really intellectual influences on Tim Keller.

And I was listening to your podcast, Gospel Bound, last week in Jim Davis was interviewing you. And I think he said, I don't think it was you, but I think he said, you know, Tim's going to be one of these people that folks will be reading and talking about 500 years from now. I don't feel comfortable making predictions about 500 years.

That was not me. That was definitely him. That's a long time.

But it did give me thinking perhaps a little more manageable 50 years from now. Let's talk about Christians more or less in our networks, though. I use that very loosely.

I'm just thinking about very broadly kind of evangelical Christianity. Who are the folks that you think people will still have heard of and know of 50 years from now? And I asked the question that way. I'm not asking, who do you hope, though maybe they overlap? And I'm not saying even necessarily who will they be reading, though that's certainly one way they will still be heard of.

But it could be in other ways as I think about it, there are at least three ways that a Christian might be known for generations. One, most obvious is people are still reading his books or her books. They still read them.

They're still useful. Or they raise something at a particular time. So they continue to read their books.

But another way is the person was influential in an institution, started at institution, was a key member of an institution. So their ideas are still carry forward in an institution, I think about. I just read over the weekend.

I had a plane trip. And I read John Mather's biography. He hadn't read it before of Cornelius Vantil.

One of the reasons people still are into Vantil, talk about Vantil, is so much of his legacy is perpetuated there through the book. And they have a hall named after Vantil. So that continues a legacy when you have some institutionalization of it.

And then a third way in which I think is if you come to symbolize a particular movement or moment or hinge point in history. So I think of Harry Emerson Fosdick. I don't know that people, even liberals, read him.

He's largely forgotten even at the institutions at which he served. But he's going to show up in any sort of Christian history text. And indeed, I wrote an article about him last year for the 100th anniversary of his sermon on Shella Fundamentals Win.

Even though he's not my go-to guy, obviously, but just as an important history. But he

was important at an inflection point and came to represent popular liberalism among Protestants in the first half of the 20th century. So there's several different ways.

So with that understanding, Colin, besides Tim, let's say Tim's one of them, who are some people that you think 50 years from now Christians will still know of, heard of, be talking about? I love this question because it kind of scratches a lot of itches for us with thinking about history and thinking about influence and strategy and the church and giving thanks to God for people that whose works we still benefit from. So I think Kevin is helpful to think about what factors allow somebody, you mentioned a lot of them, allow somebody to be remembered. And so let me take two examples, I think one who will endure, and I think I'm going to explain why, and then one who will not.

The one I think will not endure is Joel Osteen. I think the TV medium is really easy to get dated quickly. The styles, the cadences, the aesthetics, yeah, Robert Schuller.

And also there's a certain sense in which it meets the moment, which makes it really, really great for that time, but not really otherwise. And related to that, I mean, I would argue that, well, we could have a fun argument about where you'd put Billy Graham in the history of American evangelicals, or even evangelists of all time in the church. But I don't think we're very far away from Billy Graham being more or less forgotten because of the television medium and because of the moment.

And this is the key factor because he was not primarily a writer. Now he did leave behind a whole bunch of written works and obviously an entire library is full of sermons, but that just wasn't his particular gifting. So oddly enough, if Billy Graham is going to be remembered, it's going to be through the continued institutions that he was a part of and that he facilitated the Gordon Conwells, the Christian Today's, the Wheaton Colleges on and on and on through that.

So I just, I don't think it, I don't think that concept favors the visual medium in that way. So the person I think will be remembered is John MacArthur. And so let's work through, I think, some of the reasons why one of them is because of his international reach.

That's got to be a big part of this question, Kevin. If you're only operating within the United States and in English, it's very unlikely that you'll be remembered just given the way the trends are looking for Christianity in general. And so, so John MacArthur just his remarkable reach internationally and in different languages, I think allows that plus a very extensive library of written works, some of which have already been considered classics.

And there's also the unique ability of MacArthur to be able to reach people who are very thoughtful, very learned, educated, but he also really appeals to masses. That's not easy to be able to do there. And so one of the, but going back to the international part, that's actually one of the overlaps between him and Tim is how widely their works are

translated.

And just a key factor in there, but, and I actually would say both of them as well, have that ability to reach the learning thoughtful people, i.e. they can be the study of scholarly interest, which is the last factor I would add in there. It really helps if people write about you. And if you leave behind a record that people can, people can trace.

So that's, that's, that's why I think, I think, especially of John MacArthur in our era as being somebody who'll be remembered in 50 years. Yeah, that's good. I, I had MacArthur as well.

People will read his commentary. Of course he's started schools and that's something of like, and you just, you meet people who are MacArthur guys. I mean, they've gotten that imprint and, and have learned from him.

So I certainly think that I have some others, but Justin, who's on your list. Yeah, the, the Graham references interesting and maybe the three of us think about history a lot and talk about history and try to do a little bit of history. But for those listening who don't think about these sort of questions, this might be a, an anecdote we're citing and maybe illuminating that William Martin when he was working on the great biography of Billy Graham, profit with honor.

I think he was, this was probably writing 20 years ago, said that most of his university students hadn't heard of Billy Graham. Yeah. I mean, Graham was still alive and there was no one more famous than Billy Graham.

Billy Graham wasn't just Christian famous. He was one of the most famous people in all of America. On a scale that no one would compare to today.

Right. In the Christian. I mean, you have to go back to George Whitfield and nobody else is even in that same category.

And the man's still alive and most university students don't even know who he is. So that just gives some humility of it. Yeah, the 500 year thing is bonkers to even be thinking about that 50 years is worth thinking about, but it might not be what we think it's, I think, Collins, right? That the people who are written about, dissertations are written about, right, probably tend to be more likely.

I agree with Kevin's categories too. I had jotted down ahead of time. Similar categories.

Another one, I think could be controversies that they're involved with that shape things and also saying something new, you know, some sort of new paradigm. And I think that's one of the reasons that we're still talking about Vantil is that he was trying to come up with a new system or recover a system or something like that. So I'll throw out a few names with the caveat that, of course, we don't know.

I think Al Moller will be one. I don't think will be necessarily read, but we'll be talked about because of his role in the turnaround with Southern Seminary. That's just if you're trying to tell the story of 20th century Evangelicalism, especially the latter half of the century, you can't tell that story and you can't tell the story of Southern Baptist without talking about Albert Moller.

I'll throw out a couple names that maybe you guys wouldn't think of and maybe disagree with, but I would say Doug Moo and Tom Shriner. We don't think of them first, but I think commentaries can endure. Now, it may be different 50 years from now, just as newer commentaries are constantly supplanting older commentaries, but we still talk about C.E.B. Cranfield because he wrote such a wonderful magisterial commentary on Romans.

So I think those two guys with how prolific they are and their focus on the Pauline Epistles that 50 years from now, students might still know those names. Justin, let me ask you a question on that one. I want to get your take on this.

So does NT right end up in that same category because he's obviously so incredibly prolific? Or is he not in that category because compared to those two, he's much more sort of innovative in the sense of with new, well, obviously with a new perspective, but he's pushing back so much with the way that works in scholarship when you're pushing back, sometimes then you get pushed back against and then you get you get nudged this side and somebody else emerges in your place because Moo and Shriner are very consciously in the reformational tradition and NT right is very consciously arguing against it. Yeah, right is an interesting one to think of and that distinction between are we talking about still being read or being read about make them into play there. I mean, we're still talking about E.P. Sanders, even if people aren't actively reading him a lot.

But I think right would be another category of somebody that because he's so prolific and because he's dealing with timeless texts and he's not just dealing with some theory that goes off the scene. I think that's a real possibility in his resurrection book isn't going anywhere. And he's soon that I mean, who else is even going to undertake something of that scale because of his work on it already.

Yeah, and I tend to think that those who are sticking most closely to biblical texts writing about Bible thinking about Bible trying to stone Bible have a more more likely chance of actually being read than somebody who's really into some particular theory that comes and goes. So I tend to lean towards thinking MacArthur and Piper would be in that category 50 years from now. It's just going to be difficult to erase their influence that that spans generations.

It's not like they just influenced people who are dying off and has a global reach in terms of people being affected by them in Africa and in the majority world. And I think they're just, they're interesting people to listen to and there's, they're men of their times, but there's also sort of a timeless quality of talking about big eternal things. They've both

been involved in controversies.

They've both have had a role in institutions, whether that's the paratrooper organizations, kind of more broadly speaking or educational institutions. So I tend to think that the two of them can also throw sprawl and packer in there and, you know, will they will be still be talking about them? But I are a small group watched a packer or a sprawl, holding us a God video series and it's, I don't know how old those videos are now 30 35 years old and they still feel so relevant because he's talking about God and he's talking about sin and he's talking about justification. And I think that those topics are not going to be passe as long as they're Christians.

Yeah, you guys have hit on a key point and that's, I mean, there's always a need for very timely that speaks into a particular issue. Say why we're not emergent, but nobody, I mean, I think I get the sales reports. I mean, it's like five books sold or something.

Yeah, hopefully it was necessary, but that's that's niche and that's not going to be read. You think about sprawl, MacArthur, Piper, Keller. I mean, I don't know, I imagine that that reason for God still sells well, but it won't be too long before some of those objections will be dated.

But Tim stuff on prayer on suffering on preaching on forgiveness. I mean, these are bread and butter issues. So I had sprawl on my list, certainly with with Ligonier going very strong, doing really good work that will continue to perpetuate spruals legacy.

And just what you said, even the videos still seem, you can tell the aesthetics are dated, but the energy is is there and the communication is there. I think, you know, Mark Deaver doesn't love to write and he hasn't written as much as some of these other people, but I think certainly what nine marks has done, especially in the Baptist world or low church evangelicalism to think about ecclesiology is leaving an imprint and will be something that people talk about. And it may take somebody to do some digging in some research, but it wouldn't have to dig too far to just realize how many people mark platform and how many people were connected to and the key role that he played.

I think Rick Warren, I don't know if people will be reading the books that he's written, but I think they'll be reading about him as someone who at least exemplifies a certain moment in the church's history and he has had a very wide global reach. So I think people will be at least talking about that moment in time where the Rick Warren purpose driven way of doing church was ascendant. It's hard to tell it.

Let me, on that one, just go ahead. I think that's a good example of somebody who will definitely be written about. Yes.

And I think if we want to put on our historian hats here, the easy framing for Rick Warren is that 2008 to 2012 window. That Bush period was when Rick Warren's ministry

flourished and sort of culminates there toward 2008 with the debates, the transition with President Obama. And then by 2012, it is a different country.

Whatever that Rick Warren as the successor to Billy Graham, that era of fusion openly by partisan, I mean, of course Billy Graham was a Democrat, bipartisan appeal of evangelical leaders. Maybe it comes back someday, but it was dead after 2008. Now, what do you mean Billy Graham was a Democrat? Billy Graham is not known for, he was close to a lot of precedence, but you mean in official party registration? Well, the president he was closest with was Lyndon Johnson.

So he was forceful. Yeah, he was closer with Johnson. Anyway, that's my argument.

Justin, Ty goes to you. Who was he closer to? Yeah, I would say probably Johnson, but I mean, he really was drawn to Nixon. I think he stayed a registered Democrat his whole life, but I think by the end he was watching.

Well, I'm just saying that's what I think. He was a Fox News Watcher in his letter. Your point is, I mean, he more or less did a not so subtle advertisement for Mitt Romney when he was running.

I'm just saying, I'm just saying that during that time, after Kennedy, whether it was Johnson or Nixon or Ford or Reagan, like Billy Graham was still the person that you call all the way through 9/11, he's this unifying figure, even as a Republican. And then Rick Warren stepped into that role for a brief period of time from post 9/11 into 2008. And then it just, like I said, it may come back someday, but at least in this context, it's more or less disappeared.

So you can see Rick Warren playing like the central role. I mean, he didn't do anything wrong. Just saying he's the symbol of that change.

That's all I was going to say, Kevin, Kevin. Yeah, yeah. Right.

I agree. And I think there was that there was a time, and I think Rick Warren shows that where you can be known as an evangelical biblical on abortion, on gay marriage, and yet people, Democrats will still respect you and listen to you and maybe want to show up like they did. And you can be that conservative, and yet, you know, lean over to the other side and how you talk about race or justice and the conservative side kind of knows where you are on those other issues.

And so they allow, and just the lay of the land is so much different now that you couldn't do that. I think of someone like Francis Schaeffer, I could be wrong, and I'm not denigrating him. I'm just observing that unless you grew up in that time where Francis Schaeffer was big, I don't hear a lot of people reading Schaeffer.

I know you republished last year, Crossway, a little book from Schaeffer, No Little People.

And we gave that out to our staff. So it's not that he's not still worth reading, but some of that cultural, it seems like a cultural artifact when you watch the Howland showing that you're not going to be able to do that.

Howland showing now live. We were maybe at the tail end of that. I remember watching some of those in Sunday school, but even by the time I got to watching them, it was interesting.

The knickers and the seams a little bit different that maybe that's someone who spoke well at a particular cultural moment, but I don't know if people are going to continue to go back to Schaeffer's books for the next year. You'll always be the central figure in evangelical political engagement on abortion. So that's another way you'll be writing about that.

Yeah, the writing about, but not of. Yeah, and it'd be interesting to see if Keller's legacy follows a similar trajectory of maybe people even respecting Kim's Tim's cultural analysis more than they did Schaeffer, but 50 years from now, 60 years from now being drawn. So, I think it's Kevin alluded to earlier to his work on prayer, his work on suffering, because it's really hard, I think, to stay for us to go back 75 years ago and read somebody who's on the cutting edge of cultural analysis culture just changes.

But when you're talking about the sort of permanent things, that's why I think somebody like a piper, people will still go back and want to know what did he say about prayer, or what did he say about preaching. You know, analyzing the exact things that are happening in a certain day. That sort of thing may be a dissertation would be written about, but I don't think your rank and file evangelicals going to go continue to read that last, I may be wrong.

So, the first chapter of my book on Tim is about how of his sense that by 2008, he publishes his first book, *The Reason for God*, It's the New York Times bestseller, but already in his own thinking, the book is at a date because of the long-term transformations in Western culture, the questions have changed, and then I add another dimension which is that not only did he see that changing in a long-term trajectory, which the making sense of God was an effort to try to redress, but the bigger challenge is that *Reason for God* doesn't have a chapter on sexuality, which is wild, to think about, like I said earlier, the change between 2008 and 2012. Let me ask a related question to this discussion, and we're all going to want to say, well, it's both of these things, but I want to press in as we think about history, and let's just assume that there is a way to have a desire for good, godly influence. I think evangelicals, pious Christians were nervous about selfish ambition, about seeking vane glory, that's good to be aware of, and yet we don't want to be so cautious that we never attempt great things for God, expect great things for God, from God, William Carey, that we don't have any ambitions in a good holy way.

So as we think about making a difference, whether that's saving souls, affecting the culture for human flourishing, building up the church, how do you guys wrestle with, because I feel this in my own head and heart. On the one hand, I want to say, just put your head down, keep your hand to the plow, be faithful with the one thing after the next, you never know what God's going to do, just eschew all of that strategy, grant, grant, plan, vision, just keep doing and leave to God whatever sort of influence. And then the other hand, I want to say, well, these different people at different moments, they did have some strategies, they did get together, they did network with other people, they did dare to dream about different things.

So how do you guys find that? How would you instruct pastors, other Christians listening out there? What's the balance between just be faithful, leave it all to God, and you know what, we really need more conservative Christians to be shrewdly strategizing, fundraising, planning, network building, institution building to make these things happen? Justin, you got any thoughts on that? Yeah, I think there is definitely a category of sanctified shrewdness, sanctified savviness, sanctified strategic thinking, and we can all think, we can all think of ways in which that goes wrong and is unsanctified, and there has to be some, we don't want to say golden mean, between, I just put my head down and I don't ever think more broadly about how these various things are coming together and people who are doing it wrong. So I think one counsel, as you are thinking through these issues, is to look at those extremes of somebody who never thinks strategically, they're only just doing their next sermon. And the other person who always seems to be scheming and strategizing and doesn't seem prayerful, and just ask what feels wrong about both of those, what do I want to avoid, and then how can I, in my little sphere of influence, make a difference and think carefully.

And it'd be interesting for us to go back and read a biography of somebody like a Harold John Akenghay, who from all accounts was a very godly pious, bright man, but he was always thinking strategically, he was thinking in terms of institutions, he was thinking in terms of networks, and he was thinking in terms of relationships, and then to ask yourself, should I be one of the leaders of that, or should I be more of a support player. So for example, in my own self conception, I see myself as more of a support and more of somebody who comes alongside others. I'm not the conference speaker, but I may be the behind the scenes guy in, and can think in terms of strategy, where Kevin, I think you play both of those roles in your particular calling and vocation.

So I don't think there's any easy answers, but I think probably some people should be thinking less strategically, and some people should be thinking more. And there's a great Francis Schafer anecdote that maybe some of the listeners have heard where he and Edith are sitting together and wondering what would happen to the typical board agenda of a Christian organization or ministry, if all of the verses in the Bible about prayer and being led by the spirit were cut out of it, and they concluded most organizations really wouldn't look that different. And so I think that's an important reminder of even when we

do strategic shrewdness and strategizing, it really needs to be in humble dependence upon the Lord, it needs to be in the context of Godly church involvement and leadership, and not to just operate in the flesh, because there's a reason Paul writes against operating in the flesh so much.

It's tempting for all of us. So now we wait, Colin, telling us the real answer. No, I don't really know what to think on this one.

It's funny you mentioned Akengay. I thought about that anecdote that stuck with me from one of those people, I think we'll remember in 50 years George Marsden, because we'll still be reading and benefiting from his works, writing on the history of Fuller Seminary, and Akengay deciding not to move to pass it in a full time because he's driving around Boston, he randomly sees one of his elders on the street. And that's God's sign that he shouldn't go out there and how much history changed as a result of that.

So no doubt he was a very strategic guy, but also in his own understanding was attentive to the strange unexpected leading of the spirit. I mean, I think what's amazing is when you look back from the Bible all the way through Christian history, that there's always, God always is a great thing. God always does unexpected things, starting with the incarnation itself, starting with the cross itself.

And then you look through history and it's just stuff you don't expect like Martin Luther. I don't know how you could possibly strategize all of that. It just doesn't work.

So it's amazing how the Lord seems to use people and situations that you cannot possibly strategize. But then he does also often bless those efforts. So I think for example about R.C. Sproul, and I'm really grateful that he followed in Francis and Ede Shafer's example and started the Ligonier Valley Studies Center.

I mentioned the influence on the Kellers and many others through that. But I'm also glad that somebody there had the foresight to say that is a really difficult kind of ministry. And there's this emerging new media called video.

Not just television, but video cassettes and VHS and ultimately that you should get involved with and on the ground floor with essentially in this wonderful place called Orlando, Florida. So I'm really glad that they were strategic about that. So I don't have a great example, but it reminds me sometimes Kevin of something from you.

I'm sure you borrowed it from somebody else, but if everybody hates you, you're doing something wrong. If nobody likes you, you're doing something wrong. It's got to be similar on this strategy.

If you're never strategizing, that could just be a misguided piety. But if you're always strategizing, maybe you think you're God and you're not obviously. Yeah.

And one of the other tensions over use the word is to understand that when the Lord is doing something, he's always doing something, he's going to use a variety of gifts and personalities and strengths and weaknesses. And on the one hand, we don't want to just excuse where those strengths become real weaknesses or sinful predilections. And on the other hand, we have to allow that, you know, he raised up a Luther who was a certain kind of leader and bombast, who was very different from Calvin's second generation.

And Luther was different from Malenkton, who helped to be a synthesizer. And... And Zwingli. Yeah, it was Vingly.

When I was leading our little renewal group in the RCA, and certainly never thought that I was Calvin, wouldn't call myself that, but I was always painfully aware that as I was leading it, it felt like we needed a kind of Luther that I wasn't, that my predisposition and my way of doing things is to want to say, "Okay, let's try to look at this and be very careful and nuanced and let's think through." And so I can lead forth, I think, with some courage to call out error and theological problems. But it's felt, you know, sometimes you have a Luther kind of who sometimes says he goes too far, you know what? You shouldn't have said it that way. And you were too unguarded in that moment.

And you don't excuse the sins that Luther committed, you know, especially at the end of his life and things he said about the Jews recorded. But God uses that. And all that has to say, without just giving people a blank check to do whatever they want in their own, you know, sinful personalities, I think we all have a tendency to say, "If only everyone kind of operated like I did and had my strengths and kind of saw things, and, you know, that person's too guarded, that person's too bombastic, and yet the Lord needs all sorts of people, needs people to fund it, needs people to be out front, needs people to write the carefully nuanced, creedal statements, need people to be popularizers, need people to be in the scholarly wings of things." And so all that is an exhortation, wherever you are listeners, you know, there's a lot of different ways that God can use you and will use you if you, you know, give your one or five or ten talents to him.

If we transition from that, why don't we, you know, I gave you guys several, you know, six, seven, eight different things we might talk about. Let's, let's end here. I would like another time, maybe, because it's related to all of this.

I'd like us to talk about the role of seminaries and the state of seminaries. I'd like us to talk about publishing and Christian books and what strengths or weaknesses and, because those are two, you know, alongside of, they're not as important as the church for sure, but they are supported by the church and they support the church. Those two engines, at least for, you know, 500 years with book publishing and for, you know, at least for 200 plus years with the seminary model, have been key drivers for either health or weakness in the church.

But maybe we can end here and just introduce a word that has maybe fallen on hard times and it's the word piety. Okay, let's just put it out there. We understand how the word can be misused or can refer to a sort of Christian disposition that either is pie in the sky or is negligent of the life of the mind.

Pietism is a whole strand of Christian renewal movement. So yes, we understand the word piety. If you said, well, that person is very pious.

It's often used as an insult. They're, they're overly spiritual in a self-aggrandizing way, or they are entirely focused on just a few areas of perhaps spiritual disciplines, or they're given to legalism, all the ways in which piety means something bad. But that is an outlier, if I'm not mistaken in the history of the church, that pious and piety are very good things.

So has earnest Christian piety fallen on hard times? Have we become overly sometimes intellectual, overly sentimentalized? Have we become so shaped by the sort of late night talk show host vibe that's too cool for school, sort of cynicism, that when you meet someone, who's earnestly unapologetically pious in the TV they don't watch and the way they keep the Lord's day or the way they're always talking about Jesus, the way they're always wanting to pray for people, the way I'm asking the question is suggesting something of an answer in the affirmative. But I want to hear from you. Have we become allergic to piety? And what's behind that? And what's a remedy? Justin, I know you've given some thoughts to this.

Well, yeah, it is a leading question and I think that you're probably going to get the answer that you want from both of us that we agree with you. It does seem like there's an allergy, there's a hesitation, and I wonder if maybe a small part of it is that there's something inherently awkward about talking about your own piety. We're all so fearful of pride or tooting our own horn and wanting to avoid Jesus's injunctions against public displays of piety that end up being hypocritical, that we're rightly on guard about not saying, "Hey guys, how are you doing? Can I tell you about my quiet time this morning?" It went on so long.

Lost track of time and missed a couple of meetings." That would be one possible explanation, probably not a massive part of it. I think there's probably another part that a lot of us carry around latent guilt that were not as pious or godly, I think would be another synonym there. Just good old fashioned godliness.

I'm not happy with where I'm at in terms of my prayer life, in terms of my thought life, in terms of my purity and in terms of my passion. So that combination of not wanting to be hypocritical and feeling some guiltiness. But then I think there's also just an anti-fundamentalistic overreaction that it doesn't feel cool to be talking about those things.

You can be much more hip and cutting edge talking about the latest thing that's in the

news and not talking about the things of the Lord and why we love him and what he's doing in our lives. I think that it's an neglect. I think we're impoverished for it.

But it's still the case, at least for me, that when I come across an older saint in particular who is just an old fashioned godly person, there's something refreshing. It's like meeting somebody who's spent time with the Lord and there's an attractiveness to their, your drawn to them. And the best sort of godliness doesn't make you say, wow, that person's incredible.

I mean, going back to your earlier comment about the humility book. But more, I want to be like that. I want more of that in my life.

I want people to see God in me and through me. I was just thinking that same thing, Justin, that, and going back to our first topic, it made me think that if somebody came and berated me for watching football, saying, how can a Christian possibly do that on the Lord's Day, I'd probably be a little bit defensive. But if somebody said, ask me how I'd spent my weekend, I said, I went to church and I watched them football and they said, oh, great.

And they're like, yeah, I spent my Sunday resting, praying, catching up on some Bible reading, spending some time with my family, cooking a long meal, be like, oh, that sounds kind of great. I wish I'd done that instead of watched football. So there is a certain attraction there.

The other concern, though, or the concern that I would throw out there, Kevin, is that I do think to come back to another earlier theme, the medium is partly the message in there. Twitter certainly does not seem to accord very well with piety. And I'm blaming the medium there.

I'm blaming the piety there. And Facebook tends to, it incentivizes outrage as we've talked about many times on here. Piety doesn't get a lot of attention, doesn't seem to work with the algorithm in there.

Not that the point of piety is the attention, it just doesn't seem to accord with what is trying to be drawn out there. And then I think that a more Hamlin situation is actually an exception to this. But generally speaking, displays of piety on TV don't seem to translate particularly well.

I'm not sure why. But like I said, the Hamlin one was an exception. A lot of people praying together on TV shows, on the game itself, in groups, kneeling.

Actually really was very moving and compelling. But so I think that's one reason it's just fallen on hard times is for whatever reason our media do not incentivize that kind of behavior. But I think going, when we know it, when we see it, and it's not used as a thank you God that I'm not like that other man, it is a beautiful, inspiring thing.

You want more of it. I was just sharing here about one of my former colleagues, Lyle Dorset, here at Beeson. And the way he would walk around our halls and just in stop with anybody at any point and pray with them right there.

I just said, that is somebody I want to be like, and I'm just trying to emulate that as I can. It doesn't come naturally to me, but what just inspired me with his piety. Yeah, there were always stories about Jay Christie Wilson around Gordon Conwell about that and just stopping to pray for anybody at any time.

Yeah, I agree with what you guys have said. I mean, we've all known people, maybe we've been the people who put on piety like a suit coat that's two sizes too big. And you can tell that they're putting on a garment that's not really theirs.

And it could be in an honest effort, they're going to grow into it. And so it's okay. But at worst case, they're wearing a garment of piety that people know personally is not really them.

And that's what turns people off to it. So there's that understandable reason. But I think we need to be honest with our own hearts.

Sometimes we just, we don't like to see people who seem to be more passionate about the Lord than we are. Or doing something that we're not in. And sometimes it's just not having the category to understand, you know what, if somebody else gives up, you know, throws out all of their TVs, maybe a wonderful act of piety for them may not be what you have to do.

But I like what you said, Colin, there's a way of, you know, rubbing piety in someone's face. And then there's a way of living out your Christian life in a way that's attractive. And I think, you know, Justin, you've said this before to us privately and hinted at again here today.

It is possible. And the three of us are, you know, we can fall into this as easily as anyone. Where you are, you know, a professional writer, Christian thinker, Christian communicator, and you end up talking about a lot of ideas, doing a lot of analysis, doing a lot of evaluation.

No apologies for any of that. All of that's needed and good and necessary. But if no one ever hears you exalting and extolling the Lord and marveling at the cross and that you're a sinner and your sins are forgiven.

If the worst sins are always other people and, or we talk about our own sins, but it's really clear. We're really just saying, thank God. I'm not like these other people.

We sort of, you know, lash at our own tribe, but in a way that says, you know, communicates. Well, but obviously I'm not the one doing these things in my tribe. I also

let last thought and then I'll just, I'll give you one last question as we close.

But this may seem self serving because I'm a pastor, but I do think, you know, there's, there's something different in a broader ecclesiastical culture or just Christian culture that is fundamentally shaped by the sermon or fundamentally shaped by other media. And obviously we're not against those other media. Here we are doing a podcast.

All of us are on Twitter. We write blogs. We write articles.

But it does strike me as a big change from, say, the heyday of, of YR R, where it seemed like everyone would talk about the sermons that they were listening to and who are the preachers. And yes, that had a danger of celebrity pastor and all the rest. But I think there is something salutary when sermons, which by their nature, if they're good sermons are exalting in the gospel, extolling Christ, unpacking scripture.

That's the shaping background noise of a Christian culture. I think when it's podcast, it's something different. It has a different shaping effect.

And so I just want to put out a plea to pastors there that your weekly work and preparation of the sermon is absolutely indispensable. And so I think that the sermon is a very important thing to do. And I think that the sermon is a very important thing to do.

And I think that the sermon is a very important thing to do. And I think that the sermon is a very important thing to do. And I think that the sermon is a very important thing to do.

It's because we're not putting the technological genie back in, but I do think the way in which a sermon shaped people can have a very good effect on piety. So let me ask you one last question. And speaking of technology, as we close, mention this from our good friends at Desiring God, Tony Ranky's book, Tony, I think is coming on in a couple months here to talk about this.

God technology in the Christian life, Tony is senior teacher at Desiring God, host of Ask Pastor John Podcasts, and really has given a lot of thought to the issue of technology and is not a luddite thinking it's all bad. In fact, he thinks there's great promise in it, but he's given a lot of thought to how Christians can use instead of be used by technology. So God technology in the Christian life relates to so much of what we're talking about.

So my last question as we close, just thinking about this personal piety question, what's one thing that you are learning about the Lord at the moment? What's one thing you're learning or one thing that's particularly precious to you about the Lord as you've been reflecting and growing and just give us a little glimpse of what the Lord's doing in your life and why you love him. Colin? This is so, I love that question, Kevin, and it's so interesting coming off teaching a class on apologetics for a couple weeks. The thing that really emerged for me was God's inscrutability.

That seems so weird, but there is something really comforting for me to know. I don't really understand what's happening. I can't figure it out that there's a hiddenness to God's will.

We just had a really interesting discussion in our class because some of the students were upset about the way I was presenting things and are just not upset but just confused. I just went back to God's inscrutability and said, "I can't explain this. There are things that just don't make sense.

There's a hiddenness. I just went back to Job. I said, "How does Job work?" I'm not exactly sure why, Kevin, that's so comforting to me right now.

But that's one thing that I think also testifies to his glory. His ways are higher than our ways. We don't understand him always.

Sometimes we barely get a glimpse. Justin? I think one thing that as you ask the question, Kevin, it stands out to me. It's just the Lord's kindness and forbearance and patience and long suffering.

In two categories, one towards sinners like me who've been saved, whose salvation is secure and whose inheritance is secure but continue to be beset by the sins of the flesh. But also towards those who are not yet saved and I think here of family members and friends and those who have marriages that are coming apart at the seams and to think about the Lord's long story. He's long suffering.

He's outside of time. He's eternal. We tend to think of that, I think, as a problem to be solved philosophically.

But there's also a great comfort that he's not bound by our time or our timetables. And so for prodigals or for those who have marriages that are coming apart, the Lord's working, the Lord's doing something, and it's almost never according to our preferred time frame. But he's good and he's God and he's with us and he's working on our behalf.

And he still saves sinners. That is Christianity 101, but when you really stop to think about it and when you see him actually do that in somebody's life, it is an incredible encouragement that the Lord still rules from the throne and still take sinners and transfers them from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of light. And when you really see it, you do.

You know you're seeing a miracle of his regenerating grace. Sometimes people coming to the Lord makes sense and you can see it and there's a background and they're taking necessary steps and maybe grew up. But it still happens all the time, all over the world.

You think there's no explanation for this. Yes, God used means and people and books and sermons, but God just decided to save someone to get a hold of this person's life

and make them new. And he still does that by the power of the gospel and by his word.

One of the great privileges of being a preacher is I get to spend time in the word as my job and hopefully my sermons before they become sermons minister to me so I started a series three weeks ago on Leviticus. And the theme I think of Leviticus which can be the theme for the whole Bible is how can a holy people dwell in the midst of a holy God, an unholy people, or how can a holy God dwell in the midst of an unholy people. And Leviticus begins with these sacrifices and the very first one is the burnt offering.

And then you got the grain offering and the piece offering and they build on each other because the first one's about atonement, grace and then next one's about gratitude and the next one's about fellowship and gathering. But foundational to all of it is that atonement that all the other subsequent steps of the Christian life depend upon that. And when you realize morning and evening these sacrifices are taking place and the priests make sure that the fire on the altar never goes out.

It was a literally constant reminder that I'm a sinful person in need of a substitute, in need of a savior. That fire can never go out because there's never a day when I don't deserve to die and that animal just died in my place. And again, that should be Christianity 101 and it is, but it's easy for it to become somewhere in the attic of our mind.

And so I rejoice in that. Thank God for that. And the sinner in need of grace every day.

Colin, Justin, thank you for this. Thank you to our listeners. Look forward to being with you again.

And until next time, glorify God and join forever. Read a good book.

[Music]

[Music]