

OpenTheo

Discerning My Vocation, with Dr. Julius Kim

September 2, 2020



Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

In this episode of Life and Books and Everything, Kevin DeYoung, Collin Hansen, and Justin Taylor are joined by Dr. Julius Kim—President of The Gospel Coalition—to discuss each other’s seminary experiences, issues in evangelicalism, how to discern one’s vocational calling, how to be a better preacher, and, last but not least, which books have been most influential in the life and ministry of Dr. Kim.

This episode of Life and Books and Everything is brought to you by Crossway, a publisher whose goal is to publish gospel-centered, Bible-centered content that will honor our Savior and serve his Church. The Crossway title we want to highlight in this episode is, *Weep With Me: How Lament Opens a Door for Racial Reconciliation* by Mark Vroegop, with contributions by Thabiti Anyabwile, Trillia Newbell, Jarvis Williams, John Onwuchekwa, Collin Hansen, Mika Edmondson, and more. In an effort to bridge the canyon of misunderstanding, insensitivity, and hurt, Mark Vroegop writes about the practice of lament. Vroegop invites readers to mourn with him over the brokenness that has caused division and to use lament to begin the journey toward a diverse and united church. Pick up your copy of *Weep With Me* by Mark Vroegop today. Timestamps:

Weep With Me: How Lament Opens a Door for Racial Reconciliation by Mark Vroegop [0:00 - 1:43]

Where we went to seminary and the different branches in evangelicalism [1:43 - 27:58]

Wrestling with my vocational calling [27:58 - 39:38]

How to become a better preacher [39:38 - 52:10]

What books most influenced Julius Kim over the years and what he is reading now [52:10 - 58:07]

Julius Kim’s prior wedding band career [58:07 - 1:06:38] Books and authors that have influenced Julius Kim:

Knowing God by J. I. Packer
How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture by Francis Shaeffer
Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin
Institutes of Elenctic Theology (3 Volume Set) by Francis Turretin
The Heart of a Servant Leader: Letters from Jack Miller by John C. Miller
Influenced by Ed Clowney, Henri Nouwen, and Eugene Peterson.
Books that Julius Kim is reading right now:

Alexander Hamilton by Ron Chernow

Transcript

Hey, everybody. It's Colin Hanson here, one of the hosts of Life and Books and Everything. I think you're going to enjoy the episode that we have for you today, talking with my new boss Julius Kim, the president of the Gospel Coalition.

Before we get on with the podcast, I wanted to tell you about a new title that I think you want to check out from our friends at Crossway. The book is Weep With Me, "How Lament Opens a Door for Racial Reconciliation." Certain by Mark Vergup, Mark Vergup is the pastor of College Park Church in Indianapolis. He's a friend.

He's a council member for the Gospel Coalition. This book is an effort to bridge the canyon. I think it's very timely of misunderstanding, insensitivity and hurt on issues of race relations.

Mark introduces the concept, biblical concept of lament, to be able to help us to bridge that canyon. He invites us to mourn with him over the brokenness that has caused a vision and uses lament to begin that journey toward a diverse and united church. The book also includes prayers of lament from a number of different people, John Anwood Chequah, Isaac Adams, Danny Aiken, Micah Edmondson, and I also contributed one of those laments.

So the book, "From Crossway Weep With Me, How Lament Opens a Door for Racial Reconciliation" by Mark Vergup. Check it out now on with the show.

[music] Greetings and salutations.

Welcome back to Life and Books and Everything. Our loyal listeners. I'm going out of limb there with the plural.

Could be singular. Thanks, Mom. But good to have you all with us.

We have a very special treat. Our very first, and hopefully not our very last, but opportunity to have a guest into the virtual studios. We have with us the right honorable, esteemed Reverend Dr. whatever titles El Presidente.

El Guapo, known to some Julius Kim. Julius, very good to have you here on Life and Books

and Everything. We'll be hearing from Julius in just a moment since Julius comes to us from the world of the seminary.

Still has a role there, though now president, we are thankful, president of the Gospel Coalition. I thought it would start Colin and Justin. I'd love to hear from you.

What was your experience in seminary? Any listeners who are wondering about seminary? Is it worth it? What did you gain? Where did you go? What was that like for you? We're a big fan of seminaries here on the show. Colin, start with you. I graduated Kevin from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School back in 2010.

Julius and I have that in common, though he was getting a PhD while I was getting the MDiv. One of the big advantages of seminary, especially Trinity is not huge, but it's also not small. You have a chance to be able to get to know your professors in many cases.

I was really blessed to be hired by one of my professors at the end of a seminary Don Carson. Then one of my other major influences and mentors, which I share with Julius in this regard, is John Woodbridge. One of the things I remember, in addition to everything else that I learned, which was wonderful in the MDiv curriculum, one of the things I learned from John was not only being an eyewitness of much of evangelical history and a man of many fascinating stories, but I just remember his encouragement to use whatever gifts God had given me to build up the church, to encourage the church.

My bent as an editor and a journalist is naturally analytical and often critical. One of the things that John did for me was to just encourage me to flip that around and say, "Use those gifts to be able to tell encouraging stories." He and I worked on a book together called "The God-Sized Vision," a revival story that's stretched in stir, which was built off that relationship that we had. I'll just never forget that.

I can look back at another common friend of ours, Scott Manage, just a huge influence on my life, not even so much in what he taught, but in his manner, in his churchmanship, and the way he led his family. I think that's one thing that's very different from what you'll often get in high school. Often, you'll get this different from your college experience in many cases, especially if you went to a research university.

That was life-changing for me in seminary. I'm really glad I went and glad I went to Trinity. Colin, I remember years ago you giving one great piece of advice.

I haven't heard any since then, but I remember this one really stuck with me. I just thought of it when you mentioned John Woodbridge. I don't know if it came from him or just came from you, but it was maybe after sometime after I wrote the emerging book.

I remember you saying, as a young man, and we were all 10 years younger then, that you wanted to try to write things where it would be to your advantage to be young, or to your advantage given your state and life, which really just clicked for me. That was one

of the things to write why we're not emergent. As Ted and I were 30, or their Bowser early 30s, was a plus, whereas you have 30-year-olds writing their second memoir, or writing their parenting book, or not that there couldn't be good gospel insight there in your marriage or parenting book.

That just made a lot of sense. I've passed it on to other people who want to write off and I'll say, "Trap, find what's the hook? What's the angle? Why should people listen to you?" It's not about your story, but use who you are, where you are, to lend some extra interest or credibility. Was that just your insight? I think that's my insight from publishing, just that you'll find writers who they read John Piper, they read J.I. Packer, and then they want to imitate them.

I'm sorry, but you probably don't have those gifts, but then on top of that, you're also probably decades younger than they were when they produced that. It's very difficult to try to more or less compete with them in a marketplace of ideas. You need to write from a perspective that where your youth becomes an advantage.

That's why we're not emergent, that's young, restless, reformed, trying to tell stories and observe trends that are only discernible when you're younger. But then, of course, that's also a viewpoint that can change with time. Now, Kevin, you're in a position where you can write some of those theological works because you've built up knowledge.

I'll say this about seminary. I thought I knew some things going in there because I had a good undergraduate education. I worked for four years at Christianity today before there, but I can't tell you how often I go back to what I learned in those three years of seminary.

It's so foundational to what I know. And it's also enabled me to be a lifelong learner. If you learn nothing else in seminary, to help you to know what to study for the long haul in ministry and in life, then you miss something.

But that's what it did for me, and I'm really grateful. Justin, tell us about your seminary experience. Yeah, my wife and I got married in summer of '98.

And the day after the honeymoon, we moved up to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and became part of what was then called the Bethlehem Institute TBI, which is over the years now morphed into Bethlehem College and seminary. Different than TMI. That was a different thing.

Although we did discover that TBI stands for traumatic brain injury. Brought that through ahead of time. Probably also too much information, I would say.

So I'm privileged to serve on the board of trustees there now and really have a heart for that school. And yeah, we don't have enough time on the podcast to enumerate all the ways in which it has influenced me, hopefully for the good. I think the biggest thing

about starting with, I'll just call it Bethlehem College and Seminary, is that it was a church-based educational program.

So in terms of the rigor of the exegesis, you needed to pass a Greek entrance exam to get into it. We're doing very serious exegesis, very serious theological reading, not as much historical theology in those days, but it was very rigorous academically. But it was all done in the context of the local church.

So you're being mentored by church elders, you're sitting in on church meetings. It had a great impact on me, not only to be learning a theology of suffering from books, but to see the young mother with cancer dying and needing to get gospel hope and then minister to the congregation. So that tendency that there is historically to kind of separate out the church and the academy, to start my theological education in the context where those two were deeply integrated together, was just a wonderful gift for me.

That ended up going to crossway and the TBI program was not designed to be a four-year seminary MDiv. So I ended up completing my education at the graduate level through RTS, through distance, through traveling down, taking a week-long intensive classes before going on and doing the PhD. That's great.

Okay, Julius, where did you go to seminary? Yeah, I went to Westminster Seminary in California for my MDiv. Okay. And then after that, did work at Trinity, as Colin mentioned, from my PhD in historical theology.

Who was there at Westminster California when you were there in whatever age you want to be? Yeah, this is the early 90s. When I was there, we had some of the original men that came from Westminster Philadelphia. And so for those of you that are interested in history, Westminster California was established in 1979 at the 50-year anniversary of Westminster Philadelphia's establishment.

And so this was the brainchild of Edmund Clowney, one of my mentors. I can talk about him in a little bit. But he wanted to create a West Coast branch.

Originally, it was set for San Francisco, but they couldn't find the property. They were just too expensive and not enough churches there locally to support this new work. So they ended up in El Sanjulus, couldn't find enough support in Los Angeles.

And then there was a little church down here in Escondido that had some property and some families and stuff. So that's how they came to Escondido. Also, a little trivia fact, I think they also came to Escondido because our first president, Robert Strimple or Bob Strimple, he was a systematician, was really the the handpicks successor to John Murray, Bob Strimple, had respiratory issues.

And so living in San Francisco was just too moist and Los Angeles had too much smog.

And so providentially, San Diego worked out perfectly in terms of the temperate weather and the climate here in Escondido, which we're actually a little bit inland, is a lot more like a desert. So it's a lot more dry.

So that's how West Mr. California ended up in Escondido, California. Did they have a vision for California right from the get go? I mean, I could understand we want to do something out West, but they could have said Kansas City's West or Dallas or Denver, was it's we want to go as far West as we can before touching the ocean? Correct. So I think the vision was beyond the West for the Pacific Rim.

And so their vision was to reach the world through the West Coast, at least this side of the West Coast or the United States. And so that was part of the original vision from what I understand, was they wanted to have an entree to the to the Pacific Rim. Interesting.

Yeah. So then you went to Teds from there. I did.

Right. The New York City, your PhD work. Correct.

So John, John Woodbridge was my mentor. And I worked with him and another fellow that you know, they're in Alabama, now Doug Sweeney. Doug was also a church historian there at the time.

And so he was my second reader. So I work with Doug and John on on Restoration England. So early modern English history on the Anglican Church.

Now come on. Why that area of study? I mean, you have obviously you have the interest in preaching and assume you want to be a pastor at the time, but what was the draw towards historical theology in particular? Yeah, that's a great question. I there was actually no interest in even in a PhD early on when I was getting my MD if I wanted to be a pastor.

And then I was going through my MDiv. My wife and I, as we were praying, we felt a heart to be involved with training leaders in countries that just didn't have as many opportunities that we do here, for example, the United States, namely Bible colleges and seminaries. And so we started praying about potential missions work.

I wanted to be a missionary, more specifically a missionary, not only planting churches, but also training future pastors. That really was a was a heartbeat of mine or desire of mine. And so when I mentioned it to my mentor and clowny, he actually suggested that I get a PhD.

I had no desire to be a PhD to do a PhD and no desire for academic work. But he felt like that would open up more up more doors overseas as well, getting a PhD. We didn't have children at the time.

So he thought, you know, this is the time to do it as you get old or it gets more difficult to do a PhD. So just go do the PhD and then go overseas with that PhD in hand. And little did I know that he had actually other plans as well.

Dr. Clowney was a tremendous friend, father, father figure, etc. And as I was finishing up, as I was finishing up my PhD, working on my dissertation there in Chicago, I got a call from him saying there's an opening at West Mr. California, actually in PT. And because he didn't tell me this was because he was finally retiring.

He had retired several times before, but then he moved out to Escondido and teach part time to help the practical theology department to be with his family. He had a daughter and her family here in California. And he was going to leave for good.

And he wanted somebody to take his place. And he had thought of me as that person. He never told me that.

I only found out after he died from his from his widow from gene that his desire was for me to come back to teach preaching and pastoral ministry at West Mr. California. So he saw something in me that I didn't even see myself. And so for that, I'm external.

He's eternally grateful for his wisdom and leading in my life. So all that to say, that's a very long way of saying. So he suggested, as you know, Justin, there's not many PhDs in preaching, unless you go overseas, like to haul in maybe even England, and you design your own dissertation essentially.

So he suggested church history because it's a broader avenue by which you can actually read a lot in the area of preaching. And so long story short, I got connected to John Woodbridge. I wanted to study church history.

I also wanted to be a good churchman. John was really influential in that area. I went to John to actually study Reformation Church history.

I was interested in a French friend of Calvin, an evangelist by the name of Pierre Viret, a Viret more known for his work on government and politics in church to church state relations, lesser greater magistrates, and how to relate. I think Calvin gets a lot of that from Viret, but I was interested in him as a preacher, because even in the 16th century, especially in France, he would command crowds of 5,000 people. In evangelistic settings.

I was intrigued by that. Wait a minute, here's a reformer, a friend of Calvin having these evangelistic meetings of 5,000 people. So I wanted to study a little bit more of his theology and his theology of preaching.

And then this long story short is getting longer, unfortunately. And then I was taking a seminar with John Woodbridge on the origins of the enlightenment. Fascinating, fascinating period of study.

That's one of his areas of specialties. He's an enlightenment scholar. And as we're going through this seminar, the origins of enlightenment, I was fascinated by a group of English rationalists by the name of Latitudinarians, they were called Latitudinarians and Arians by their enemies.

Now it's fascinating how they popularized their understanding of rational religion through, especially their preaching. And so I got interested in their sermons, started reading a bunch of 17th century Anglican sermons, talk about things that helped put your wife to sleep when I started reading these sermons to her. But so that launched a whole kind of area of study in the history of preaching.

So that's another area that I started reading more and more upon going all the way back to Chrysostom and others, but especially in the 17th century, Anglican rationalism. And so my primary sources of understanding that period and their theology and their preaching and their understanding of the relationship between church and state in England was sermons. And I think that was kind of really the foundation of my teaching preaching.

So Julius, you studied John Tillotson then. That's right. That's one of the major.

I mean, he was for the next hundred years, maybe. I mean, he was the guy that if you were interested in English speaking preaching, it was him, whether, I mean, even evangelicals liked him, everybody wanted John Tillotson. So do you think now, I think, if anybody's heard of him in our circles, it'd be sort of, eee, latitudinarian, rationalist.

Is that fair or have we been too hard on him as a preacher? Yes, great question. That's essentially my dissertation, is that I think the current, current assessments of John Tillotson and his friends are probably a little unfair. They essentially just for at least conservative, evangelical preachers in our world, John would come across as a fairly, it's like a winter day, like cold and breezy, right? That's what they call the Anglo-consonors of the day.

Just cold and breezy. Emphasizing the rational parts of religion, rational parts of Christianity, de-emphasizing the supernatural, for example, emphasizing morality over and against doctrine. It's kind of like the deeds over the creeds, right? If you can wouldn't say that.

And so for those of us that are interested in creeds and the importance of the intersection of creeds and deeds, doctrine and life, John would come across too much as a moralist, which had a proper gospel foundation. Now, did John believe the gospel? I believe so. I believe so.

In fact, he spent the latter years of his life defending himself against those who considered him a "socinian" or an "erian", an "antitrinitarian". So he believed in all that.

So it was a matter of difference and degree, not in kind.

It was his emphasis, right? For his day, for his time, as he looked across his world, which was England, right? London and England. Having gone through the wars of religion, people dying over their view of transubstantiation, for example, or not holding transubstantiation. He said, "Do we really, should we really shed blood over mystical doctrines like that?" But it wasn't just the Catholics, right? It was also the Puritans.

The Puritans are shedding blood over predestination. It's like, really? Does anybody really believe in predestination? John Tillitz would say. But that's not even the point.

Why would we have to kill one another over doctrines like transubstantiation on the one hand to Catholics or predestination on the other hand, these Puritans? So what we need for England, what we need for communal stability, for political, civil stability, we need a rational religion. Furthermore, this is the onset of the scientific, the rise of science in the 17th century, and trying to understand our world through mechanistic forces and not just by faith. And so what he was afraid of was the onset of not only deism, but also atheism.

So he said, "We need to offset not only these wars of religion, but we need to offset all these folks that say that no way God doesn't exist. We can explain why the world turns the way it does through mathematics and astronomy." So he said, "We need a religion that's reasonable, rational, but also ethical." And so what I tried to do is just argue in my registration, if there are reasons why he chose to emphasize those elements of Christianity, because that's the context he was in. So in his context, do I understand him? Absolutely.

Now looking back and thinking about our own context here in the United States or in the world, is that the approach I would take? Probably not. But I think to be good historians, we have to be fair to him in his context. So I want to come back to that, but throw it open here Justin and Colin, because I've had this thought before.

It may sound strange, but that some of the, well, seeker sensitive is an old term now, mega church. Those sort of pastors, we could all think of three or four half a dozen prominent examples, have, they're sort of the tillits in of our day. Now you can replace rationalism with relevance.

They're popular. They're gifted communicators. If you, if you scratch down deep enough, there's probably, yeah, not jettisoning the basic convictions of the gospel.

And yet not wanting to emphasize those things that they see as divisive. Let's try to be bare bones. Let's, let's try to, let's present this Christianity in a way that will have maximum palatability for the people in our day.

So you read their sermons, they're going to seem as different as can be from Tillinson, but I don't know, Colin, you ever, have you ever made the connection between John

Tillinson sermons and, uh, will it, Greek? I don't think I have Kevin. I just want to go back to the discipline of historical theology. No, no, don't hijack my thread.

I want you to do you have anything to say about that? Then you can hide it. I know nothing about John. Okay.

Well, then don't talk about him. What about the, you know, just the, just give her the one topic that Colin doesn't know anything about. He also was a great grandfather of a civil war colonel.

No, he wasn't, but I had me go in there. I was like, is there a Tillinson like colonel that I'm missing here? Let's some more regard. That's the, that's the what I just want to echo on what you're saying there is the value of being able to understand people in their context.

It's easy to be able to just lift somebody. I mean, sometimes you can even, you can read something from somebody in your thinking. This is, this is supposed to be that special.

It really seems pretty basic to me until you realize, well, it's basic because that thing that that person wrote has changed world history and you don't even understand yourself or the world without this. Sometimes I feel that way about Augustine. You just, oh, this seems kind of, oh, right, because he's the one who made it up for the first time.

And so I just, that was what I was thinking about in all this is the value of historical theology to be able to put people in their context, understand what issues they're addressing. So we don't run into this challenge of being able to lift everything. And then also, I mean, I presume that it helps us to understand the first evangelicals or the awakening because it must have been a response to this, right? So I assume that our negative views toward that era is largely because of the seeming loss of the heart religion.

But see now we're at a time when heart religion seems to be everything and evangelicals have a hard time connecting their heart religion back to their creeds. And so Julius, I assume you've been able to bring that all the way back full circle being in kind of a supremely creedal environment like Westminster. Yeah, for sure.

For me, it's been an interesting exercise as I moved from my doctoral studies to a very, you know, as you know, very strong, creedal, confessional environment, a place like Westminster, where oftentimes I think frankly unfairly the the the charges leveled against us that we don't have, we have big brains, but very small hearts and even smaller, maybe feet and hands, right? And I think that's unfair. But I think it's it's worth at least discussing how in each generation of evangelicalism over the centuries, at least here in America, how you've seen this kind of this kind of pull push of emphases, whether it's doctrine, life, you know, personal piety, you know, I'm trying to think of that article, maybe it was David Wells wrote an article a while back in that book, Reformed in

America where he talks about those three extremes, right? And I never saw them really as unique things, whereas we're more like a Venn diagram, right? There's the doctrinalists that really emphasize theology and there's the the the the transformationalists, right? And then there's the pietus. And I see, when I look at evangelicalism in America, it's like these, I'm remembering like this exercise machine called the Bowflex, we're kind of move one way or another, depending on how you want to do that, these big rubber bands.

And so for me, evangelicalism is like these rubber bands, I would stretch more to an addoctoral, you know, emphasis or a personal, pietistic emphasis or a more transformational emphasis, depending upon the leadership, the context, the issues of the day. And I think there's a lot we can learn from history in light of that. Yeah, I've often thought that seminaries, and I'm sure it's true with churches and people in general, but are formed and have an identity around what are we helping people not to be? So some seminary is come here because we're not liberals and others are we're not TRs, the truly reformed, or we're not evangelicals by that meaning we're reformed more than we are evangelical, or we're not cipariens, or we're not two kingdoms, or and some of that's inevitable.

And I've always tried to be upfront with people that, you know, I'm shaped by seeing my team as the not liberals, like those those are, I think of the kind of the bad guys we're trying to guard against, at least in church circles, it's theology going in that sort of direction. But I've told that to students before as they look at seminaries to just try to, and it's not that one has to be right, one has to be wrong, but just try to gauge what they're responding to because that's going to give you a flavor. I wanted to ask Julius, but I love for Colin and Justin to jump in as well because all of us have been trained in seminary.

Some of us have gone on to do other schooling after that, and all would have a heart to pastor people. And I'm good friends with all of you and would would come to you as my pastor at any point. And yet making your first calling and vocation a pastor is now with the other the other you three guys have have done.

So how have you thought through because I bet this this comes to a lot of guys. Went to seminary, I wanted to be a pastor, and you very much are a pastor, Julius, you have been for all these years, but you get the point that I'm making. You've seen your pastoral identity first through a professor and then also serving a very meaningful way in the local church.

How did you wrestle with that? How can we help other guys wrestle with that? We don't want them to feel like they're not, you know, they're a ministry failure if they get an MDiv and they they go into publishing or something. And on the other hand, we don't want people to think that, well, the real, you know, if you could be a professor, do that

because I know, I know a lot of guys who are, you know, pastors who think the professor gig is the really sweet gig. But then I actually know the professors that look and like, oh, man, I would love to be a full-time pastor.

That looks, I don't have to teach the same people the same things every single year. So how did you wrestle with that pastor, professor dynamic and Colin and Justin, I know you've thought through some of the same things in different ways. We'll start with you, Julius.

Yeah, Kevin, I've thought about that quite a bit, not only having been in the teaching world for the last 20 years, but also been a pastor for the last 20 years while I've been teaching. But I think one of the things that I tell my students who oftentimes will come to me and ask me, you know, hey, hey, Dr. Kim, I know I'm getting an MDiv and I should be a pastor, but really the sweet gig is being a professor. I want to do what you do as if there's like this chain of being, right, being a professor is high is more spiritually higher than being a professor.

I don't know how many times I have to remind them. I said, I think you're one misunderstanding our calling. You're understanding just mis-understanding calling to begin with, you have to do what you're called to do and gifted to do.

God gives gifts to the church and he helps them do their calling. And so if you're called to be a professor, you'll have certain gifts and the ability to do that. You may be called to be a pastor and you have to be faithful and do that as well.

And so I think one of the things that I've tried to do is explain to them the importance of finding and discerning their calling. And for most guys in the seminary, the calling to the professor is very, namely, how should I say this? There's not many guys at the seminary that are called to be a professor. It takes a unique mind and heart and will, in my opinion, to be an academic and to go into that world.

And so part of that's just discerning and learning and stirring the gifts and trying the gifts. But that would be my initial kind of statement to them is just make sure you understand your calling and to obey that calling. I have more to say, but let me turn it over to the other brothers here and see what they think.

So Colin, how have you thought through? I remember having these very conversations with you. And I think there was a time where you really felt like I want to be a local church pastor. If I'm not doing that, being the editor for the gospel coalition is something down the totem pole.

And some of us even said, we appreciate that instinct. And yet there's something very unique in what you can do in this role. So I'm answering the question for you like a bad host.

How did you think through what to do with this pastoral urge? Yeah. Well, I would agree with what Justin had said, which is that I began to understand more clearly the calling as one toward eldership more broadly. And I felt like that was a calling and that was a gifting that others had recognized in me.

But it wasn't necessarily the same thing as working as a full time pastor. And then from there, I had to be able to differentiate between the internal call, which was the desire to be in that role. And then the external call, that was sort of stage two, the external call being an actual church that wants to pay you money to do this thing.

And then a third layer right now, which is talking with an experience to pastor out of Australia, I was sharing my angst of, I mean, ever since I joined TGC, I had actually turned down Don Carson several times. And I said, I just, I want to be a pastor, could you just let me do that? And finally, he sort of said, okay, go ahead and, you know, just stay in touch, whatever. Well, when I talked with this friend from Australia, he said, you know what, you're probably only decent at your job at TGC because you'd rather be a pastor, because it puts you in the mindset of the pastors and it puts you in the mindset of the local church leaders.

That's who you think of yourself as. And I'd say especially under Julius's leadership as TGC seeks to serve the local church, that's very much our identity. And see, identity of the resources that we produce to come alongside, to be the best friend of church leaders to help to equip and to train and to encourage them and all of their many giftings.

And so I don't know if the Lord ever does have that in my future. I've learned long since to leave that up to him. And I think I've been affirmed in what I've been doing for the last decade.

So that's, you know, I've just found the secret of contentment in that circumstance and continue to fan and flame the desire to be a pastor. And just the fact is in the local church that I'm involved with, with our shepherding structure, there's about 150 people that fall under my responsibility as a shepherd. And so if I ever feel like I'm lacking in pastoral opportunities or, I mean, the need is right there in front of me.

Nobody stopping me from serving these people as a pastor, as an elder that I've been called to be in any way that I can. And so the only thing that stops me from doing it is my own willingness to serve in that capacity. So it's been a long process and you're right, Kevin, we walked through a lot of that with Justin, talking through that a lot of that angst, but the Lord has been kind.

Justin, anything to add? Justin, in case you don't know, you, no one listening can see our squad cast glamour shots and how they put in, if you don't put in your own name, they put a name for you. And Justin is communicative, you know, which is ironic because his communications often flicker and I'm kind, sith, am I a kind, oh, okay, I always think of

myself as a rather kind sith. And I'm more of a breakout guy than a keynote usually to.

Yeah, that's true. Justin, do you have anything to circle back to add in your own thoughts here? No, I would just encourage people to keep asking the question. Bobby Jamison is actually doing a book for Crossway on how to aspire to be an elder, how to aspire to be a pastor.

And sometimes really helpful to work through a book like that is he takes somebody who's gone through the path ahead of you, helps you to ask the right questions. I do think we all hear our products of evangelicalism and also critics of it. And this is a broad generalization, but we tend to be individualistic as we think about our calling and, you know, just praying by myself and feeling something willing up inside of me.

And I think we can learn from our puritan forefathers on this issue and a biblical example that this is a community decision. And if nobody's encouraging you to do it, and if you feel this calling, that's probably not the right thing. But you want to have wise counselors around you, friends who can speak honestly into your life and situation.

So it was a privilege to be a part of those conversations with Colin as we talk through, what are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? What are your desires? What do people see as a primary gifting? And then just to know that the Lord does guide and he does guard us from mistakes and he will put us in the right position to fulfill that aspiration that we might have. That's really good. And it, I'm sure you'd all agree, it's isn't like this is something you do when you're 27 and you never have to think through it again.

So this is something that you continue to wrestle with throughout your days. I think I can share the story a few years ago, T4G gathering, John Piper in his 70s at the time was reflecting asking us, do you think I'm a preacher who writes or a writer who preaches still wrestling with his own sense of calling and vocation? And what do you think we told him? I'd say a writer who preaches who doesn't like going to church meetings. Now we all said he was a preacher, a preacher who writes.

What would you think? What would you say, Julius? Yeah, that's interesting too. I would say he's a preacher who writes. And interestingly, a lot of people who have asked me, like people who I meet, my barber, I remember the first time, I went to a new barbershop, they asked me what I do.

And I was kind of torn, like, should I tell them I'm a professor at a seminary, a pastor at a church, what do I say? And I actually just said I'm a pastor who teaches at a seminary. That's essentially who I am, you know, because I take my ministerial call so seriously, when I took my vows before God and the church as a minister of the word and sacrament, but whose primary duty as a minister of the word was to teach and train future pastors, I said, that's who I am. I'm just a pastor, I'm a minister who has spent

some specializations, and as a result, who has some gifting and teaching and training and mentoring future leaders.

But essentially at the core, I'm just a pastor, I'm a shepherd of God's flock. And in this way, I think it's important for me, it's important to remind myself of that even as the president of TGC is that essentially I'm a pastor. I'm a pastor called by my church to pastor not only my local church, but the broader church through this parichurch ministry called TGC, who essentially exists to support the local church.

And so everything's about the church to me. And so for me, I tell a lot of my young students, men, what the calling to be a pastor and a shepherd, arguably, is the highest calling one could ever receive. Christ died for the church.

He didn't die for the seminary. He didn't die for a parichurch organization. He died for his people, the church.

And so to be a to be an under shepherd of the chief shepherd of the sheep, what can be greater than to be a part of that undeniably marvelous ministry of walking in the footsteps of Jesus. And so I just I keep telling my students, we need more pastors. We need more pastors.

There's enough professors. We need more pastors. And so that has always been my cry at the seminary for the last 20 years.

So sticking on that theme, I'd love to hear your take because you taught preaching. I'd love to hear you can take this in three or four different directions. Some of your favorite books on preaching, tell us a little bit about your book on preaching, but maybe start with you know, what's what's your assessment of preaching or to narrow it a bit? If there's somebody listening to this who's been preaching five, 10, maybe 25 years, how do they get better? What what your estimation is is, you know, maybe the thing or a thing that if you could wave your magic preaching wand, you would you wish preachers could understand or a skill.

Give us your homiletions wizardry here, Julius. How do we need to improve his preachers? Yeah, that's a that's a tough one because they're just it's not unlike mastering other skills, right? There are I was watching the PGA championship this weekend and I and I continue to marvel at how skilled these guys are with the metal stick and around ball and how they can but almost at will decide where that ball's going to go, right? But it took as you know, to be able to to be at that level, and you're talking hours upon hours, you know, what is Malcolm Gladwell so say 10,000 hours at least to master something. And so one of the things I tell I tell young preachers as well as old is be patient because this is something that you can improve on for the rest of your life and I'm a golfer and that's one of the things I love about playing golf is that it's a game that I can play for the rest of my life and continue to improve.

But the same time as you improve, there are certain things that you can do like go to the driving range and make sure your grips are whether it's working on the fundamentals of the game or getting coaches to help you fine tune your game who see things that you cannot see in your swing. So similarly what I would say is if you're a young preacher, make sure you got the fundamentals right. Is your grip right? Is your stance right? Are you balancing yourself over your feet? Similarly in preaching, there are certain things that I believe are foundational to preaching like the interpretive as well as the organizational and the delivery communicative aspects of preaching.

And that's kind of how if I can do the shameless plug and that's kind of how I've designed my my book. My book is for young preachers who are learning how to preach better and what does what does it mean to interpret the scriptures doing justice to both the human author but also the divine author and finding gospel centrality and interpretation while doing justice to the text. But also then organizing in such a way that's logical and linear and helpful for people for maximum attention and retention and then delivering it in such a way with passion and understanding how the brain works so that people actually remember what you say.

And so these are some fundamental things that you need to know to begin or if you haven't ever learned it, you've actually learned to become a better preacher. And then for those who have been doing it for a while is find a coach. And there are different coaches that are available to you.

My best coach frankly is my wife. My wife knows me well. And so she for my 30 years of preaching has been extremely instrumental probably more so in my earlier years in helping me.

Now I have to admit that that created some awkward conversations around dinner at times. My wife is gifted with the gift of bloodness and so that's always good. And so she's always been great.

But you know we've worked out a system where you know we usually waited not we didn't talk about it Sunday on the way home from church. But I'm very vulnerable and sensitive. We always waited until Tuesday or Wednesday dinner for her to say, Hey, did you think about this? Could you think about this? What I heard it? This is what I heard or when you did this it seemed to be distracting or whatever.

And so like, huh. So my wife has always been a good coach. And you're also a good coach is actually video.

It's actually videotaping yourself. And you see things in your communicative style and in your messaging, what I call nonverbal messaging that a lot of young preachers even old preachers don't even realize that they do. And and I think a lot of church members are willing to overlook a lot of distracting qualities about your delivery because they love you

as a person, which is great.

But if we want to master our craft, which is to be great communicators and shepherds with our voice and with our body language, then you know watching a video could be helpful. And then lastly, one last thing is finding other mentors like other preachers, gifted preachers who can then help you. And so that's something that I'm actually thinking about right now as I transition over to TGC and I have this gift of teaching preaching and the skill.

How can I use that gift that TGC to coach future preachers? And so that's something I'm thinking about. I don't want to replace the seminary. The seminary brings all of that together and kind of a crucible experience of three, four years.

But if there's something that I can do to kind of coach and mentor preachers right now with the skills that I have, maybe that's something that I can that I can maybe establish at TGC. So those are just some thoughts. Kevin, about any of you guys who are some of the preachers, maybe it's sermons that you go back to read, but maybe it's people that you're listening to now who are some of the guys who really encourage you.

If you have an hour in the car and you want to listen to a sermon, who might you find on your phone? One of the things that I found Kevin is just a Kevin. No, well, I thank you. I appreciate that.

How personal it is. So I remember thinking about the gospel coalition that one of the main things we're committed to is expository preaching. No coincidence that Julius is our president.

And then I remember thinking, are we talking about the expository preaching of Tim Keller? We talk about the expository preaching of Don Carson. We're talking about the expository preaching of John Piper. Because you listen to those three guys.

Yeah, pretty different. Very different. And so I'll just say personally, as with a lot of my things in life, it's some combination of Mark Deaver and Tim Keller.

Now, it is one thing. I mean, I would probably, when I'm preaching, I preach more like Mark. So I think I just learn more from him.

Tim is different from me, but he challenges me in ways that are just very, very fascinating and just learn a lot from him there. But I go back generally to advice that Carson gave me back when I was in seminary, which was one of my biggest blessings was being pastored by Kent Hughes at college. Church, he's listening to Kent.

And he said, one of the beautiful things about Kent is that you can actually learn how to preach from Kent. You know, his process is there. He's very structured.

He's very clear. He's incredibly gifted. But you can actually, you can learn from him.

Oh my goodness, Julius and Kevin, you guys must have stories of the people who you can just tell immediately. Like, Kent translates across a lot of cultures, not every culture. We're going to translate across a lot of cultures, but Piper or Keller, especially that's, I mean, you can spot that kind of person from a mile away.

And so in developing my preaching, but also just benefiting from it, one of the thing I'll point out though is that I remember with my, the pastor of my church, I started to notice that his sermons were really just more engaging lately. And I just, I liked what I was seeing. So I kind of like with kids, I try to catch my pastors doing good, not doing bad.

Nobody likes that kind of person in your church. So just saying, I just been so impressed and so edified by her preaching lately. And he said, thank you for a number of weeks.

I've only been listening to black preachers. And I could tell, I mean, it was really good. I mean, so it's not his style.

And he didn't sound like that. But his imagery was so much more vivid. And there was a dynamism and the illustrations were so much more helpful in some ways.

And like, well, that's so, so I could listen to Tim and I could listen to Mark all the time, but I also want to push myself to listen to some really different folks who I'm not going to be their style, but I'm going to learn from them. Julius, I want to hear from you. Who do you listen to? I think one of the things that I've been careful about, especially when I was preaching more regularly, was actually not listening to anybody at all.

Because I found that even in my the process of crafting my sermon, I was too tempted to steal a phrase or a line or idea or even a move, right, moving from, let's say, interpretation to application. And I really wanted to force myself to learn the craft of finding my own voice. Right.

And I think that's it's a hard craft, right? It's a hard process to trust that over time, your voice will become greater and better. And so that's one of the first things I did was just not, not listen to many, but I actually love my local pastor. His name is Ted Hamilton of my PCHH where I serve as an associate pastor.

Ted, really, for me, is right along the Tim Keller line. He's a former attorney. He's a corporate attorney who after 16 years went to seminary.

And so clearly he has the kind of like John Calvin asked ability to think through a lot of the content, but then organize it in a way that's very clear and compelling and persuasive. But he's also, he's a careful cultural apologist as well for those living in Southern California. So what Ted does extremely well is he takes the same type of moves that Tim would make.

But Tim does it for people living in Manhattan. Ted does it for people living inside San Diego, California, wrestling with their questions and concerns. And so having now listened to him for now 19 years, I can honestly say he's actually getting better every year.

So he just did a series through COVID on the fruit of the spirit and applying the fruit of the spirit to how we're treating one another during this COVID experience. And it was phenomenal, excellent, gospel centered, doing justice to Pauline theology. But at the same time applying it to the current questions, concerns, complaints that people are having in light of this COVID experience.

And so I really enjoy Ted's balance there. And so I love listening to him. Thank for like it to listen to him every Sunday.

Oh, that's really great. And I just love the reminder, Julius, for any young, any preacher out there or anybody who's just listening to preach it is really hard thing to do. I tell my students that it's the closest thing to X knee Hello, that I encounter because you read the commentary, you study, you got lots of ideas and there's there's a blank page, there's a blank screen each week.

Okay, what direction do I take this? How do I come up with this? And I've just been, I think, convicted and courage in the last year or so, just what you said, Julius, I want to I want to keep getting better at this. I mean, before the Lord, and it's not going to be finally my ingenuity, but I want to get better at this. I listened to other podcasts, you know, people doing what we do, just talking.

And I realized there are a lot of really smart people out there who write great stuff in other fields. And it's hard to talk well. You think about politicians who have an army of people who are speech writers and they can give the same speech in different places.

And a pastor, it's got to do it. You know, very few have anyone helping them with research. You got lots of books, but you have to do that every single week.

And you got to come up with something. I mean, the TED talks that light the world on fire and go viral, you know, that's 20 minutes that somebody had the opportunity to craft probably over a year's give it one time, memorize it. Great.

Really, really impressive. Now do that every week for the rest of your life. It's very difficult for sure.

And if you're good at it, it will look easy to be. Yeah, they'll think anybody could do that. Of course, when it looks when it's bad, it's really bad.

It's so painful to see. But yeah, it looks effortless when it's good. So this is life and books and everything we're going to end now with books.

Julius, few categories. So just give it lightning style. What are some of the most influential Christian books over the years? Give us three, four, five, whatever comes to mind for you as a Christian leader, pastor, the most influential on Julius Kim.

Yeah, great question. I'd say as a college student, one of the most influential things in helping me direct me toward reform theology and the emphasis on the sovereignty of God and the doctors of grace or JF backers knowing God. I interested in cultural apologetics was how then shall we live? Francis Schaper.

That's in my college years. And then when I got to seminary, probably the most seminal book for me was actually, I know strange, this may sound strange, but it was actually devotional. What I read it too was was Calvin's institutes.

I was shocked when I finally read Calvin at how devotional his theology is that is this marriage of the head and the heart that I think a lot of people misunderstand about Calvin. And Calvin's motto was my heart I give to thee, right? Not my brain and my mind. And so Calvin, and then in terms of my theological precision, when I was in seminary, it was Turretin.

I really appreciated Turretin's led to theology. So Calvin Turretin, and then in terms of pastoral theology, as I went through seminary, moving into pastoral ministry and things like that, again, this may sound strange, but in addition to Keller, I was reading, well, I should listening to Keller at the time. Who was I reading? I was influenced a lot by it in my preaching by Ed Ploughney and Calmyschoff.

Yes, Tim was. Yeah. We're both disciples of Ed.

Who else was I reading at the time? Jack Miller. Jack Miller was actually quite influential and it's hard for people. Jack really taught me what it means to have his book, Heart of a Certain Leader, right? And so while I might not agree on everything with Jack, I really, when I read his letters in that book, Heart of a Certain Leader, he really profoundly helped me understand what it means to truly love your people as a shepherd.

And Henri Nowan, I think, again, he's a Catholic mystic. Nowan really helped me connect the head to the heart, more so. And again, I don't agree with him on everything, but man, here's a guy who tries daily to walk with God.

And you can, his words just bleed a person who walks with God, right? And that's what I really want for myself. And so Nowan's been influenced by Eugene Peterson. Somebody who's also been very impactful for me, again, in the balance of his theology and life as a pastor and as a Christian.

Peterson has always been very influential to me. So those are just some rapid fire names that just come to mind that have influenced me over the years. Any favorite non-Christian books, whether fiction or nonfiction? Yeah, I love historical novels.

I love historical fiction and nonfiction. That's just my love of history. So anything historical fiction I love, I'm actually trudging my way through Hamilton.

I don't even know how to pronounce his last name, but turn out. Turn out. So my, where are you on this, Julius? I'm at about 200.

I gave up. And I'm about to give up. I did.

I'm about to give up. Okay, so I should not bother. I should not bother is what you guys are telling me.

I'm fine. I need people. I am the most stubborn reader alive.

You know, turn out for me, he's a little over the top in his writing style. So there's more of a stylistic thing for me. He's a little over the top.

And it's almost like he wants to impress me with his knowledge of even his words. Like, is he writing with a thesaurus next to him? It's like, it's every paragraph. There's a word that I don't know.

We've talked a fairly well read guy. We've talked about this on this podcast before. Okay.

Tommy Kidd or a good friend who just says, look, if your biography is longer than 250 pages, I don't understand what you're doing here. So, so it's not not just a thesaurus, but also just the sheer length. And so, I mean, I felt like, Oh man, COVID, I mean, I'm in playing piano again, I'm going to pick up Hamilton.

No, I don't think you need it personally. Yeah, I don't think you need to read the whole thing. That's just my boss.

Julius. So I did. Yeah, read my book, Colin.

I've already read your book. Sorry. Sorry.

Sorry. By the way, you need to say what it is. Tell us what your book is.

Yeah, it's called preaching the whole council of God. It's put out by Zondervin. Sorry, Justin.

And it's designed and deliver gospel centered sermons. And so it's really, it's essentially built, made for essentially designed to help first year, second year preaching students at the seminary, but really anybody can pick it up because in it, I try to help anybody who doesn't teach the Bible, frankly, teach anything, learn some foundational things of how to put together a structured and organized idea and then delivered in a way for maximum attention retention, and then hopefully by the Holy Spirit's power transformation. So, what am I reading now? I'm reading actually two main areas, Kevin,

and I'll show you what I'm doing at TGC president.

I'm reading books on race. I think I need to be more well versed than that. So I'm actually working my way through Ibram Kennedy's book stamp from the beginning.

I've already worked through some other books. And so that's that seems to be a seminal work that a lot of people refer to. So I'm working my way through Ibram Kennedy's book.

But on the other hand, you you introduced a book by Smith on institutional intelligence. Yeah. So I'm working through that as well.

So those are my two big areas of reading right now is on race and justice issues, but also institutional management and leadership. And so that's what I'm reading now. All right.

Last question, just so you know, real life, I'm getting texts, my son, I dropped them off fishing somewhere. Can you come ASAP? It is pouring out and I can testify. It is pouring out.

So this is how much I love you, the listener, my children are getting pouring wet. But is it true, Julius, to quote the moody blues that you were just a singer in a rock and roll band? How did you hear? How did you know? Yeah. Well, tell us you're you're you are really musical, like not just, yeah, it's, you know, I taught myself GCD on the guitar in college, but you actually play, give us a little bit brag on yourself.

Okay, what would your wife say to brag on you about your musical abilities? Yeah, you clearly don't know G very well. She would never brag. Yeah, you would be the opposite as a good Korean wife.

She would put me down. She would think that putting me down, she's actually elevating me. Okay, that's a Korean way.

But let's try the American way, since I'm a Korean and an American. Yeah, let's do it. We we've boasted our glories in America.

So this this seems appropriate here. Yeah, so ever since I was a young man, I love the guitar, I love music. And so I thought I was actually going to be a music major in college.

I dabbled in it for a little bit. I was a biblical studies major and then a music minor. So I played guitar, I played piano, I did voice.

And then I decided there's no future in this at all. And so wisely, I chose the pastoral ministry, which of course is much more lucrative, fiscally. And so more of a hit on TikTok.

Yeah, and so over the years in church ministry, I served by using the gifts of music. So I used to be lead music through guitar, piano, voice, I don't know, 20, 30 years. And then more recently, a providentially.

And then when I was in high school college, you do the requisite high school garage band college garage band. I try to do that for a little bit and primarily playing covers, try to dab a little bit in original music, but primarily just covers. And then more recently, you find this group on YouTube.

No, what was the name of it? What was your name? Videos did not exist at the time. What was the name of the band? I'm not going to tell you. I'm not going to tell you tell me who you want to see me in a mullet with the rings.

Okay, don't imagine me with a movie. Tell us at least what covers you were doing, what kind of bands. Yeah, so back then we were doing premiere.

Well, there was a Christian rock music stage. So I don't know if you remember that in the 80s. Yeah, when I was really like, I didn't do Petra, which was like the heavy metal Christian.

So in Southern California, there was a group of musicians that we all loved. It was like undercover, 441 and all these smaller Christian bands. And so we were trying to emulate them.

So back then, we were trying to be the next you two or the next alarm. Alarm was another Christian band out of Ireland that so that was kind of my thing at the time. And then later, fast forward, oh, this is like 10 years ago.

A good friend of mine ruling out my church got diagnosed with with blood cancer with multiple myeloma and 50 some years at the time and was really depressed driving home from the doctor and happened to pass by a music store. And he went in and bought the guitar. He's always wanted his whole life, which is a Gibson ES 335, but the kind Chuck Berry plays.

Cherry Red ES 335. That's not expensive. That's not cheap.

Bought that guitar and then bought an amp brought it home. Wife says, what are you doing? That honey, I've been diagnosed with cancer. I might die within a year.

I'm going to start a band. No joke. Calls me to Julius.

I remember you used to play in a band when you were young. Do you want to get together and jam? Sure. No idea that he was diagnosed with cancer.

But let's just jam. Let me call a buddy of mine. He plays the bass.

Let me call another buddy of mine. He plays the guitar. So we meet at the church that play guitar.

So the four of us, they said, well, we should actually have some ideas. All right. Let's play

Roar Orbison.

Pretty woman. Let's play the Eagles. So let's play the Beatles.

It's kind of like the standard 50, 60, 70s music that everybody loves dancing and singing along to. So we chose those music, got the chord sheets, listened to it, played it. And we played about four songs in this hour.

And then he told us why we're playing. He goes, guys, I have cancer. Then as we're trying to fight back tears, we're like, well, what do we want to do with this? He goes, let's start a wedding band.

And so that started a wedding band called The Decades. We were called The Decades. The fabulous decades.

And so we played several weddings. We played Fourth of July. We played a large event twice, two years in a row.

For the City of Redlands, I know it doesn't sound like much, but for the City of Redlands, they had this big fireworks show that the city puts on. And it was at the University of Redlands Stadium. And we played in front of like 12,000 people.

And so had an opportunity to play little gigs like that. And, you know, for me, it wasn't about the money. It was just being with my buddy who was dying of cancer.

And he actually passed away four years ago until the band stopped. So we haven't, I haven't played in a band since. It feels kind of weird actually to play again.

It was a special moment. There was a special time period of about two, three years where we played with him. He was a lead singer.

I played guitar and bass, depending on the song. And so that was kind of my little short wedding band career. That's great.

Bittersweet, but a great story. I hadn't heard that before. Julie's will have to have you back.

We didn't get to hear enough about your lovely blunt Korean wife and your two equally lovely, I'm sure daughters. But thank you for being with us. Thank you for your years of training ministry students at Westminster continuing to do that in a different capacity.

Thank you for coming on board to serve TGC as president. We're thrilled that you're in this role. We're grateful to have you at the helm and to have you as our friend as well.

So thank you, brother, for being here. Thank you for having me. What a pleasure.

Look forward to being with you all next time. [Silence]

