

OpenTheo

Tim Keller on Reformed Resurgence

February 1, 2021



Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

Timothy Keller, the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, is the special guest for this conversation. Along with Collin, Justin, and Kevin, Tim Keller discusses the Reformed movement itself, The Gospel Coalition, and what comes next in Evangelicalism. Along the way you'll hear advice for evangelizing, warnings about Christian celebrity, and of course book recommendations for pastors and leaders.

Life and Books and Everything is sponsored by Crossway, publisher of the ShortStudies in Systematic Theology Series, edited by Graham A. Cole and Oren R. Martin.

The Short Studies in Systematic Theology Series is designed to equip the church to faithfully understand, love, teach, and apply what God has revealed in Scripture about a variety of theological topics. The series gives valuable advice on applying spiritual gifts in the preaching and evangelism ministry.

For 30% off this book and all other books and Bibles at Crossway, sign up for a free Crossway+ account at [crossway.org/LBE](https://www.crossway.org/LBE).

Timestamps:

Promoting, Celebrating, & Articulating Systematic Theology [0:00 - 1:30]

Tim Keller Fighting Sin Not Cancer [1:30 - 17:03]

Top Book Recommendations for Forming Pastors and Leaders [17:03 - 21:37]

Tim Keller's Other Spiritual Gifts [21:37 - 27:13]

British Evangelicalism [27:13 - 34:20]

Reading at a Rural Church; Eating in a Big City [34:20 - 39:41]

Reformed Resurgence: The Young, Restless, & Reformed Movement [39:41 - 51:06]

Evangelical Celebrities [51:06 - 54:33]

How to Define Evangelicalism: Models vs. Institutions [54:33 - 1:00:34]

More About the Pastor Celebrity Experience [1:00:34 - 1:10:20]

Post-Movement Evangelistic Strategies [1:10:20 - 1:12:25]

Encouragement [1:12:25 - 1:15:20]

Books and Everything:

Dynamics of Spiritual Life, by Richard F. Lovelace

Evangelism Through the Local Church, by Michael Green

Evangelism in the Early Church, by Michael Green

Between Faith and Criticism, by Mark Noll

Reformed Resurgence: The New Calvinist Movement and the Battle Over American Evangelicalism, by Brad Vermurlen

Transcript

Greetings and salutations, welcome back to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin Deung and you're not. I'm Kevin and I'm joined with Justin and Collin and we have a special guest.

I know all of our guests are special, but we do have a great guest with us and I'll introduce him in the next video. I'll introduce him in just a moment. First I want to thank again Crossway for sponsoring Life and Books and Everything.

I want to highlight their Short Studies in Systematic Theology Series edited by Graham Cole and Oren Martin. Crossway, I love this about Crossway, I'm not saying this because Justin's here, but they have taken such an interest in promoting, celebrating, articulating, systematic theology. You see this from the ESV Study Bible to a lot of standalone monographs that they've published to larger whole systematic theologies and then this short series is great.

We had Scott Swain on a couple months ago to talk about his book on the Trinity. Graham Cole has one on Faithless Theology, the new one I just got. I know Justin's reading it through as well.

Gerald Bray's Attributes of God and there are more coming in the months ahead. So that is a very good series. Thank you to Crossway.

Our guest today is the Reverend Dr. Mr. Friend Tim Keller. Tim, we are so glad to have you on the show. Tim probably needs little introduction was the pastor for many years of redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City and some such title still for redeemer city to city or some grandpuba of sorts and author of many, many influential excellent books dealing with apologetics preaching prayer, the Psalms.

I'm sure most everyone listening has read one of Tim's books or Tim and Kathy's books. And Tim has also been a friend to each of us and has been instrumental in the Gospel Coalition and many, many other pursuits. Tim, thank you for joining us.

It's great to be with friends. It's great to be here. Okay, so we're going to talk about a couple of different things, but I'm sorry, I have to ask an obligatory question, but we ask it because we do care about you and lots of people are praying for you.

How are you? How are the cancer treatments going? How can we be praying? We're so encouraged to have you here? Well, let me just say to all your listeners who have a chronic illness, you know that when you have a chronic illness on the one hand, you would be so upset if people never asked you about it. And on the other hand, it's so tedious to be constantly asked about it. But so I would just say those of you who are listening with chronic illness, just put up with it.

People are going to ask you about it and do it because the alternative is a lot worse. But people care so much and I get asked a lot about it. The cancer treatments the first six months went unusually well.

That's enough to say pancreatic cancer is about as bad, you know, one of the two hardest to treat, very lethal. And, you know, so I'm still not sure it hasn't been eradicated and actually with pancreatic cancer, by the way, even if it would become non-visible, nobody would really believe it's gone. Nevertheless, the first six months were really great.

Unusually good. It's put me in a position where I have a lot more energy. I'm doing pretty well, but I still have to have cancer treatments every two weeks indefinitely.

And the chemo is, you know, creates fatigue and a lot of other things. So I'm actually doing pretty well, especially certain times in my two weeks cycle right now, because my next chemo is on, it's two days from now. So the last few days before I have the chemo, I'm pretty much, I feel utterly normal.

So I wanted to give you normalcy. So I put this, when Colin and I talked about doing this, I just chose a week that I knew it would be okay. So prayers are huge.

And frankly, everything we prayed for six months ago, we said, "Oh Lord, don't let this be cancer." And the answer was, "It is." Ever since then, we've gotten, virtually everything we've asked for, we've gotten. I mean, the Lord is, he's chosen the path for us, and we're

walking it and very grateful for whatever path he gives us. I heard you say something, Tim, on another call we were on.

Maybe you've said it publicly, but if I heard you correctly, I hope I did because I've repeated it. It really stuck with me. You said something like, "I'm not fighting cancer.

What did you mean by that?" What I meant, I'm fighting my sin. Yeah. Well, if it wasn't for my sin, I would be completely resting in Christ.

And the resurrection would be spiritually real to me. And I would be fine. I absolutely find spiritually and emotionally in every way.

And the fear is the anxiety, and the sadness, and the grief, and all that. I mean, to some Greek, Jesus was a man of sorrows, and therefore, the fact that either Kathy or I, after all these years, will almost certainly one of the other of us is going to see the one die and spend some years here, probably without the other one. That is the one grief that's worth crying about.

It really is. I think God would say that's right. I think if Jesus was next to me, he'd cry too, because he cries out those things.

But the point is, it's my sin that keeps me from the spiritual realities that would just buoy me up. And therefore, the way you handle, I think the way I handle imminent death is by fighting my sin and getting deeper communion with God. That's certainly how John Owen did it, as you know.

His meditations and discourses on the glory of Christ, the last thing he wrote, which is, I think, luminous and wonderful. That was basically what he, that's how he was dealing with his imminent death. And that's what I'm trying to do, too, because I'm not writing that book.

It's already been written. So, yeah, I mean, if that's helpful to people, that's really it. I mean, I guess one other thing, Kathy and I would really be rich if every time somebody said you're battling cancer, or we saw somebody, Tim Keller's battling cancer.

I don't know why that's the term. But we always feel like, "Ah, yeah, of course." I mean, I don't want to be a nitpicker on that. But the point is, that's actually not the fight.

It really isn't, because, you know, I'm 70 years old, so I'm going to die of something, not decades away, but probably years away. So, the thing I have to do is fight my sin so that I'm actually ready. I have a lot more to say about that, but I don't think that's the subject of our podcast.

Well, but it's very helpful. And so thank you for letting us ask about that. And those little, they're not throwaway comments, at least not for the rest of us.

It stuck with me when I heard you say that. And it also stuck with me. I heard you say something about your, you finally, you know, Kathy said, "You should have just been living in the gospel all these years to have the courage to say no to everything." But now you have the ultimate card.

You can really say no. Have you felt like it's focused, I mean, it hasn't focused you so much that you didn't say no to Colin to come on here. But besides that, as it focused you and, wow, I need to be doing certain things I wasn't doing, or I need to say no to more things I had a hard time saying no to.

Yeah, the very first day after I knew it was cancer, I sat down with the journal and had about as much of a Pentecostal experience as a Presbyterian can, which isn't much. But the two words that came to me were your sanctification and focus. Both of them are going to be put on steroids.

And I do get steroids and then come off of them every two weeks. That's a huge big problem. But the fact is, the real thing, my prayer life's been put on steroids, my sanctification, because you can't get through the day or the week without God's reality.

And on the other hand, my focus has been put on steroids. I am saying, well, what if I have a year, if I have two years, if I have three years, even if I have five years, which would be a great thing. You know, if you beat it back that far, what do I need to get done? So yeah, absolutely.

And so being here is the first failure of focus I've had. It's my cancer diagnosis, but apart from that, it might be one more thing because I do think this is probably fruitful for people. John Newton says, one of the biggest thing he battled with is inordinate attachment to the things of time.

Not bad for a guy. I never went to college, by the way. And we realize, Kathy and I realize that the cancer thing has really shaken us.

She tends to attach her heart and get deep rest from places we've gone. So we've got a place at South Carolina beach. We've got a place in England we have often gone to.

And she just lives for going to those places, partly because over the years it was when I wasn't, you know, consumed with work, also their beautiful places. On the other hand, I always found, I was always, I rested in frankly ministry accomplishments, ministry goals. Hey, we've done this.

We got this started. We moved to that. And we realized in many ways we were resting on hearts in these things.

In other words, the other night we said, we really try to turn this world into heaven. We were trying to make a heaven out of the earth. And as a result of that, we were always

unhappy because you can't stay in England.

You have to come home. You can't stay in South Carolina. And these things, and sometimes places that we always went to get sold or something else and then we can't go back to them.

Meanwhile, I was never enjoying my day because I was always thinking about tomorrow and all the stuff I have to get done and how I'm behind. And what's happened with the cancer is suddenly we say, I've got a, I can't, we can't make a heaven out of this earth because it's going to be taken away from us. And it just jolts you so much.

You say, I've got to make heaven my heaven and God my heaven. And here's what's really weird. When you actually make heaven heaven, the joys of the earth are more poignant than they used to be.

That's what's so strange. We enjoy our day more than we ever did. We look out on water here, the East River.

So for example, and we've got, there's a whole lot of things that we never really enjoyed that much because we were too. The more we make heaven into the real heaven, the more this world becomes something we actually are enjoying for its own sake instead of trying to make it give us more than they really can. So oddly enough, and this sounds very, I know this sounds pietistic.

It's just not at all. I mean, it's hard one. We've never been happier.

Day to day. We've never enjoyed our days more. We've never enjoyed hugs more.

We've never enjoyed food more. In other words, we, you know, she'll say this would be great to make. We've never enjoyed walks more.

We've never enjoyed the actual things we see touch, taste, hear, and smell around us more. It's almost like, why? What's the matter with us? And the answer is we got our hearts off of those things so weirdly enough, we enjoy them more. So the things of earth have not become strangely dim as the hymn writer says.

Yeah, we'll see. But we know what that means, but you're saying there's an acuteness now to the enjoyment of these earthly things in light of heaven. Right, and by the way, in Calvin's little book of the Christian life, it's a remarkable spot where he says that we actually don't believe we're going to die.

It's where he says, when you actually see a dead body, you can philosophize about the brevity of life, but then you go off as if you're going to live in perpetuity. He actually says that. We all are absolutely sure of our perpetuity.

But then he says, he says, we've got to stop loving the things of the earth. Set our hearts

on heaven. I've been reading this lately.

But then he turns right around and says, that doesn't mean that we've got to become this ascetic thing that you despise it. You have to love it. This is a gift.

So he does his Reformed Calvinist thing, that this world is a great thing and the creation is good. And we're not being play-tonists that think of the world as being bad. So he has the same kind of interesting back and forth where he says, you've got to stop loving this world so much.

And then immediately turns around and says that we have to appreciate it and praise God for it every day as we partake of it. And that dialectic, which I guess I was never really existentially experiencing, it's very powerful right now. This isn't what you actually asked me on.

No, it's really encouraging. It's really encouraging. If you could go back to him with your book on suffering, would you write anything differently? Would you add a chapter if the Lord gave you another five years? Oh, yeah, you could.

The other point is there's something, not the principles. But what I could do is I could probably be a little more... I mean, the book on suffering, all my books basically are sermons. I don't mean that they were just taking my sermons and putting them into print exactly.

What I mean is they're based on sermons on suffering, just like... And as a result, sermons are never... yeah, sermons are always kind of fairly general. They're not like pastoral letters, which are much more... a little more detailed and a little more specific. And I think if I was going to write on suffering, and by the way, right now I am trying to write an article on our experiences.

I'm not quite sure where it's going to go, but it's just a little more... It's more boots on the ground, Justin. It's a little more... One of the things I discovered was just because I believe in an afterlife, a crisis like imminent death doesn't operationalize it. So that whole Jonathan Edwards thing about it's one thing to know, honey sweet, but it's something to taste it.

It's one thing to know there's a resurrection. It's another thing to actually be comforted by it. And that doesn't automatically... I mean, one of the main things is when there's a crisis, it doesn't automatically go into operational mode.

You have to operationalize it through the ordinary means of grace, actually. But you have to operationalize it. I don't think that's the sort of thing I probably say anywhere in the book on suffering.

It's probably because I haven't been on this end of it. So I can get pretty specific, and I'm

trying to journal some of those things. As you get as this is focusing you, do you have a book or two that you're thinking as the Lord gives life and breath in months and years? Tim Keller wants to write this.

Wasn't it tea David Gordon when he thought he was dying? He wrote "Why Johnny can't preach" and sort of he thought that was his last words of the world is preaching's terrible. Do you have something like that? I don't have a new book that I want to write because I've got cancer. No.

You guys might find this interesting since you're all in the book stuff. I was actually contracted to write a book on forgiveness. There's two ways to go at that.

One, of course, is the more pastoral, like people who are saying I have trouble with bitterness. But it's interesting recently, Elizabeth Brunig, Elizabeth, she writes for the New York Times on it. There's some place where she tweeted she says, "We've never had a culture that more demanded atonement without offering any prospect for forgiveness." In other words, we demand atonement and we're very moralistic, but we've lost any ability to forgive.

So at a certain level right now, I think the whole thing of forgiveness is not just a pastoral issue, but it's actually a cultural issue. So I'm pretty excited about that book, but actually I contracted for that book like three years ago. I'm writing it this year.

After that, most of the books in the queue are books I wanted to write anyway. Kevin, I'm just like to stay alive enough to do them. But I don't have any new, no.

Nothing burning. I need to write about this for that. So let us ask you, we're going to talk about a specific book, and not your book, but Colin Justin, let's each of us will limit ourselves one book question for Tim.

So here's my question. Let's take out some obvious. No C.S. Lewis.

Let's take out who else would be obvious for Tim Cal. No Martin Lloyd Jones. No Jonathan Edwards.

And let's think in particular for pastors or Christian leaders of any kind. What are a couple books by people living or dead, you would say I would love to put this into your bloodstream. Maybe it's because it was particularly influential for you, or maybe it's more recent than that.

Give a couple of really key texts informing Christian leaders and pastors. Well, I actually do always a fair amount of trouble with these questions. I mean, I'm not going to.

Are you as mad as John Piper was? No, because I never get as mad as John Piper. I never have the same level of emotion that John Piper has in any degree. But it doesn't surprise

me.

He was mad at that. I mean, the real problem, of course, is that you, at a certain point, even the books that were very seminal to you, if you keep on reading and reading and reading and reading, you develop views of things that really aren't based on any one or two books. Right.

And those things that were seminal become sort of second nature to you. And you're like, well, of course, I should have only seen that. Right.

Well, I'll tell you. I would say that interestingly, two books that helped me when I got to Redeemer. Here's what I did when I got to Redeemer.

I started here. I went back to a book. I picked up a new book.

The book I went back to was Loveless. My name was Desperately Life. Okay.

I mean, I'm out on the Gospel Coalition website over and over again, saying this was a seminal book for me. But at the same time, another book I picked up at the time was Michael Green's "Evangelism Through the Local Church." Gordon Conway had read his book "Evangelism in the early church," which also, by the way, I think, that, along with his local church, the thing about the book on the local church was kind of a brick. It's sort of a compendium of all the kinds of evangelistic methods, things you can do to evangelize in a particular town or neighborhood.

It was sort of mind-blowing to me. It's still, I think, it's dated, but it's still actually a terrific book because it just goes to show that we're not doing half of or a quarter or tenth of what we could be doing in any... He was an evangelistic fool. I only met him once over in Oxford when I was speaking over there, but he was just unbelievable.

And those two books, that book just showed me... I mean, there's a whole lot we could do, and it put me onto a much more... I actually wasn't all that much in an evangelistic mode as a minister, or even as a person until I came to New York. That book helped me. It was also the fact that I had so many non-Christians that showed up because of various reasons that I think maybe wouldn't even be reproducible.

But I had a high, high percentage in the early days of redeemer of non-Christians coming every single week. Maybe a quarter to a third of the people who were there were not believers. I don't know if I could do that.

Anybody can do that anymore. And reasons that happened was probably just in God's providence. But that book helped me, and Loveless really helped me.

And then I guess the little later on, just trying to think about on the leadership side, not a great leader, never have been. In other words, there are some ministers that actually

preach out of their leadership gift, and I lead out of my preaching gift. In other words, people tend to follow me because they like the preaching.

So what was your other, I mean, so preaching, we all know that Tim preaching teaching, I'm getting off the subject here, but I'm curious, what would you say or what would people in your church say? Well, we see that, but here's Tim's other gift, one B, that people may not have seen. If you just said now it's not leadership, is it evangelism? Is it pastoral care? It turned, weirdly enough, I was almost 40 when I got here, but I would never have thought I had an evangelist to gift until I got here, and I did. It's actually one of the reasons why some of those spiritual gifts, inventories that were popular years ago, the spiritual gift inventories where you say, are you good at this, and you like this and all that.

It's all based on your own self-knowledge, and if you'd asked me in the 1980s or 70s what your gifts are, I would never have given myself any points toward evangelism. I got here, something about the situation drew it out. I do think people would say he's got a gift of evangelism.

I think people would, I don't think beyond that, weirdly enough, I don't think, I think people would say he has a really good memory. I keep trying to say that's not a spiritual gift. He says, "But you've read so many books and you remember so well what you read." I try to say, you realize, I said before I get puffed up, that is not a virtue, it's not a spiritual gift, it's not a spiritual fruit.

I have a really good memory. Now that's kind of has to fade. According to the books, it's faded since my mid-50s, somewhere in there.

That came in handy, but I wouldn't call that a gift, even though it really came in handy. It really did. It just made, because in a place like New York, the ability to cite other references a lot.

It gave me that professorial. I didn't try to affect the professorial stance, I just am. It put me in good state.

There was a lot of things that you wouldn't say gifts, it's just that God and His providence gave me things that fit Manhattan at the time. You like to learn things and think about things and read widely. You do have an ability, whether spiritual gift or not, to dissect and find patterns and themes.

All of that has served you well. Let me just ask a quick follow up to that, because you've mentioned that your emotional register is not like John Piper's. It doesn't have the same highs and probably doesn't have the same lows.

You mentioned the professorial nomenclature. Have you ever felt guilt that you are not emotionally demonstrative? Have you ever struggled with that? There's something

deficient in my teaching. I should be pounding the pulpit if I'm a real preacher.

Justin, that question makes me furious. No, actually, no. I can tell you a true story, Justin, real quick.

I had a couple of Hispanic members of my church. We don't have a lot of Hispanic members. Here's probably why.

One guy actually admitted that when he would bring another Hispanic friend to church, he would say, "I know it doesn't look like he really loves Jesus, but he really does." It basically just saying he doesn't seem to get all that passionate. Here's what I found, actually, it did mean that everybody's preaching, in fact everybody writing, preaching, whatever, is a scope. There's a spectrum of people you can reach.

Whenever you try to change to reach more of these people, these people over here become less reachable. For example, an awful lot of non-Christians I talked over the years told me they were so happy that I never got all that like that. But usually they were white people or highly educated people.

Not necessarily all white people, but they're more educated people and the people most wary of evangelicals in particular. Just told me you just don't seem to be like the others. I always feel made to feel guilty, not so much for my sin, but for my lack of emotional intensity.

It also, some people said, "You look like the kind of person, if you're convinced that Christianity, maybe I could be because it doesn't look like you got swept up in anything. You look as cynical and as dubious and as skeptical as I am." Sometimes I would say, "Well, if I wanted my church to be a little less white in Asian, a little bit more multi-ethnic, I probably ought to be preaching like John Piper." But on the other hand, A, that wouldn't be really how I say authentic. It's not my personality.

What I should do is just be really, really as good as I possibly can through the personality God's given me. True through personality. And then if I do that, then I'll reach the people that my personality can reach instead of trying to market myself and say, "Well, I need to be a little bit more like this because I'm trying to reach this target group or something." So, that's really good.

Justin, do you have a book question? We haven't gotten to the main reason we have Tim on here, but that's okay. So, kind of a book/movement question. I've always thought, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, that you and Don Carson have a soft spot in your heart for British Evangelicals, and that if you had two manuscripts come to you at the same time, you only had time to endorse one.

You would always incline toward endorsing the British folk. What have you learned in particular from British Evangelicals? How have they influenced you? I don't know if

there's any books in particular, but... Our cover has been blown. You're right.

You're true. That's actually pretty interesting. Well, you made Don's Canadian, and though he grew up in French Canada, he's actually not French-Canadian.

He's okay. The Canadian's any married a British woman, and he got his training over there. And we're also about the same age.

Here's something you might find interesting. One of Mark Knoll's earlier books is a book called *Between Faith and Criticism*. And there's a really... The reason I found out about the book was because he wrote back in the '80s, he wrote something that when I was at Westminster Seminary on the faculty, it went around pretty quickly.

I was just pointing to it. Mark Knoll said that from about 1930, he says, from about 1930 to 1950 or so, you could say that it would be an exaggeration to say that the high level of the British people were in the United States. The high level scholarly interaction of Orthodox Christianity with the academic world was confined to the faculty room of Westminster Seminary.

High level American, excuse me, high level American Orthodox evangelical interaction with the world of scholarship was confined. It would be an exaggeration to say it was confined to the faculty room of Westminster Seminary, but not much, he said, but not much. He said there would be somebody at Gordon College, somebody at Wheaton, but by and large, what happened from the '30s to the '50s, Mark Knoll said, if you were a college educated Christian and you wanted to read some really good scholarly exposition of evangelical doctrine of theology, you had to read an English author, including Lewis, who... So yes, Lewis was not an evangelical.

But the point is, when I became a Christian, which was in the late '60s, there was only... There was I Howard Marshall, who wasn't reformed, but you know, you read him, there was... And there was Packer, there was Stott, there was C.S. Lewis, there was Lloyd Jones. Definitely. Yeah, it was all British, and the reason was I didn't realize that until Mark Knoll said it was because everybody in America largely went off into Bible institutes.

The American evangelical just vanished. And there were reasons why scholarly evangelicalism didn't die in the UK in the same way. It was partly because in the book it said, the UK university stayed with classical education longer.

So you could learn how to read text. It's one of the reasons why I must say UK evangelicalism is sort of theologically weak but biblically strong. Right.

It's why systematic theology, unless you go to Scotland, is not very big. It's all biblical scholars. I mean, they still have that prejudice.

You know, we're not really reformed, we're just being biblical. And that's very much a Stott, not a J. Packer, of course. But the prejudice there was people like Stott and people like that, you could get a really first class education in understanding the biblical text, even places where they weren't evangelical anymore because they were still giving you the Greek and the Hebrew and the Latin and all that stuff.

So it was a really interesting point that I've learned from Mark Knoll, why if you're a Christian like me, became a Christian in the late 60s, you basically had to get completely, you're basically built up only by English authors. Now that, and somebody actually said when Bill Lane, who was my New Testament professor the first year at Gordon Conwell, in 1973, came out with his gospel of Mark with a new international commentary. It was the first scholarly commentary New Testament work probably since J. Gresham Machin, written by an American.

Oh, you have to go back to Machin before you find something that scholarly, you know, that everybody recognized. So, because actually before that, you know, think about the old NIC, it was FF Bruce and Leon Morris and all those guys. I mean, we didn't even have Americans doing anything.

So anyway, that's why the soft spot. And in some ways, as a Presbyterian, I think even Don as a Baptist would feel this way. Another reason we like to go back there so much is we do feel like we are bringing something.

We actually do feel that they are too allergic to systematic theology. And they like us sort of, I'm a little, I think how much well it depends. Kevin gets over there enough to know that there's a lot of tribalism over there too.

And one of the advantages of being Canadian or American or even Australian is if you show up, you're not quite a member of one of the tribes. So there was a number of years in which, in fact, I can go even further. I remember Rico Tysos to say, if we get an American like me, and probably right now Kevin is sort of the new version of this, they can get Charismatics and Protrust people and middle of the road people, you know, all to get it.

They all come to the conference because he's American. They've read his books. But if they get somebody from any of those tribes to do the conference, then nobody from that tribe will come.

So there's a lot of reasons why we've been very engaged over there over the years is partly I feel like, oh, I've told them that. I feel like I owe British Evangelicalism of debt. I can't repay.

But also because I think Americans have got some things that we can. Same thing with a Dutch, by the way. In some ways with getting to James Eglinton recently more.

And in some ways we have stuff that they need. The Neo-Calvinists need America because we've got so many more people and churches and where is James going to get all his PhDs? He's going to get a lot of them from here. But on the other hand, we need them because we actually haven't, we've never produced a Boving here.

So anyway, I'm just saying it's really important to be international if we cause it possibly can. And that's a little bit behind that. I see Colin taking notes there because this is a... This is what Colin does.

It's an important issue. Okay, Colin, do you want your book question or should we just jump in? I can do a book question. Okay.

I think this might be interesting. So Tim, you really came alive as a reader in college. And then that extended from those several years into seminary.

And then you went from there to leading a church in rural Virginia. How did that affect your reading life and how did you take the best of what you'd been reading those years in those environments into really, really, really different situation? Well, I did plenty of reading. Actually, back then, I had no money, by the way.

I would just let you know, from 1975 to 1984, my salary, Kathy and I were trying to say, my annual salary, now I got a man's furnish free. Okay, just keep that in mind. A man's furnish, totally free.

Everything paid for, you know, they paid the church paid for the electricity and everything. But apart from that, I had, my salary started \$8,000 a year. And I think grew to about \$12,000 a year.

And even my own people, most of them worked in the factories. Back then, in those days, if you worked at a plant, you made \$15,000 a year, \$14,000. And it was understood that basically the minister would make about half of what everybody else was making.

Something that I think I don't agree with anymore. Because I don't know how you're supposed to live in the town. So I had no money, but what it meant was every Christmas, basically all my Christmas gifts were books.

No matter who, Kathy or my parents or my in-laws, everybody, anybody wanted to say, "What can I get you?" I said, "A book." I gave them the list. And they were mainly for many years, Colin and everybody. Banner of Truth books, basically.

So, I mean, I got, you know, I just read my head off. When I was there, that's when I was reading Thomas Brooks, John Owen, a Spurgeon, which wasn't a Puritan, of course, but I mean, Banner of Truth books. And I got those things and I just, you know, every, and I spent a whole year reading the books I got at Christmas and hardly getting any books

otherwise, because I just didn't have the money for them.

So when I got to Westminster Seminary then for five years, and I was at it, not only, you know, there was a bookstore there and with incredible faculty discount back in those days, and also I had a library there, then I started, I began to read more widely and broadly, you know, a lot of other theology, a lot of, you know, anything like that. So that's how the reading thing happened. So I did read down there.

I did, but I also learned, though, that every, you know, in, by the way, in Europe, you can tell where you are by smelling the cheese, because every hundred, every hundred miles the cheese changes. Okay. In the south, you can every hundred miles, the barbecue sauce changes.

Do you know whether you're in Eastern North Carolina or Central North Carolina or Western North Carolina or South Carolina? What smell changes in New York City? Well, first of all, you know what's really weird is we've got everything because, I mean, you can find every kind of barbecue here. You have to know where it is. But you also find every kind of cheese there.

I remember, I remember I had some people from the Netherlands once walked into Zebars with me on, you know, on the, on the West Side, and they were shocked. They said, you have every kind of cheese I would find in the Netherlands, as I've never seen any other place in America like that. And it depends, Kevin, it depends on the ethnic enclave.

You have to know where they are. But you can find virtually everything, as long as you know where the little colonies are, where the oceans live, where the creoles live, not something. I mean, when I was, I got my vaccination last Sunday, older people, of course, don't speak.

The older people in the city don't speak English as well as the younger people do. I was out in Queens and I was in a line there with a lot of older people. But a lot of them had signs around their neck saying, I only speak Creole.

I only speak Tagalong. I only speak, you know, you know, Tommyl, sort of, in my saying it right. And you just, as long as you know where they live, you can find everything, whether it's anything.

That's a cool thing. Anyway. Are we going to get this back to books? Yeah, we are.

Well, they're going to be very, very unspiritual question. I'm going to go ahead and comment though. Tim, have you, have you, have you ever watched the film? My food better than I ever have.

The Netflix special, you may not watch stand up comedians, but Ryan Hamilton. You

ever seen him? No. He's a Mormon.

He's from Idaho. It's very clean. He's doing his bit in New York City that's recorded on Netflix.

And he's making all these New York City jokes. And one of them is people say, if you can make it here, you can make it anywhere. And he says, yeah, you walk outside and there's 16 pizza restaurants within three blocks.

Yeah, I can make it. I want to see you make it in my small town of Idaho. He was gently ribbing the New Yorkers who were laughing at it.

And every one of those 16 is named Ray's Pizza. Yeah, I think he may have said that. Yeah.

That's pizza in New York. Yeah. All right.

So we want to talk about a new book by Brad Vermehrlen. And it's called, I know it's hard for you to pronounce Dutch names. I know.

Well, I'm used to saying Vermehrlen is what I would have grown up with, but there's an L in there. It's a hard. Vermehrlen.

Reformed resurgence. And it's his published doctoral dissertation that he did at Notre Dame. Correct.

Under Christian Smith. Yep. Under Christian Smith.

So it's a favorite, favorite Catholic. Catholic. So there's a, so it's a, it's a sociology of religion sort of thing, but he is talking about, and I think it may sound sort of self serving that we're talking about it, whereas some of us, I guess all of us in a way have kind of been living in this.

But I think it's worth talking about. And Brad's done a nice job on the book. Sort of chronicling.

What might be called the reform resurgence young restless reformed. We mostly want to hear Tim your thoughts on the book and the movement, what it is, but Colin, we'd be remiss if we didn't start with you, you invented the whole thing, not very many people in their early, and you were 20 something right when you invented a whole movement. Colin, what is this thing? What were you writing about? And does it still exist? So what I was writing about Kevin was a sudden growth of interest in reform theology, especially aspects of so tearyology among people you wouldn't expect it from.

And so we're talking Baptist, we're talking Charismatics, we're talking about young people growing up amid post modernity, suddenly reading Edwards and Calvin and

things like that. And so, near as I could tell, a lot of that growth was concentrated around the mid to late 1990s, which is about the time when I'd entered college and had experienced that myself in a, in a crew movement where everybody's reading Edwards and they're reading Piper and things like that and Spurgeon. And then that would continue on and grow in a number of different ways I wrote the original article in 2006 that was following the Together for the Gospel Conference, the first one they had ever done.

And again, one of the interesting aspects of that was how you had a Presbyterian and Charismatic and a couple Southern Baptists working together on this. And what brought them together in part was their shared, reformed, broadly reformed convictions. The book then came out in 2008.

One person I met in 2007 declined to participate in the book. He's one of the guests on the podcast today. But he would, of course, play a significant role in that movement through his books that Tim would write starting in 2008, especially, and also through some institutions, including the Gospel Coalition, which Tim, of course, had helped to co-found with Don Carson and where I would start working with them in 2010.

And we're previous to that. A couple bloggers named Kevin DeYoung and Justin Taylor signed up. So Tim, do you consider yourselves yourself, maybe not the young, but were you a key figure in young restless and reformed? And what do you see about, has the movement just gone the way of the emergent church and the whole thing sort of fell apart? No, I mean, the book, which talks about the movement, it profiles three churches and it profiles several organizations.

So I get in there more often because on the one hand, I'm one of the three churches that were profiled. Profiled Mark Driscoll's Mars Hill Church when it existed and John Piper's Baphlon Baptist and Tim Keller and Redeemer. But it also spends a fair amount of time on the Gospel Coalition because it's one of the main organizations and Don Carson, I founded it.

I would say, and I do think we are past our prime, but not necessarily bad. So let me just explain that. I think pretty briefly because everybody here has got the ability and the right to weigh in on this.

We're all kind of, I think, equal actors in this. Brad's book is actually saying, and I think rightly so, that the young restless reform movement was not so much necessarily about taking a group of people and growing it, doubling it, tripling it. So now there's more Calvin, twice as many Calvinists or ten times more Calvinists.

He says it's probably true. He says it's almost impossible to really judge that, really, but it's almost certainly true that there's more young, reformed people. But he says the key thing was that the young restless reform was basically a way of trying to fight for the

center of evangelicalism.

He's a sociologist, so what he's trying to say is he says there's mainstream evangelicalism, Christianity today. There's progressive emergence, I mean, you know, Rachel Haldevin's other people like that. There's the Neowana Baptist, the Scott McKnight, Jesus Creed, the Missio Alliance, that sort of thing.

And then there was the, you might say, the reformed evangelicals in which he kind of puts people, by the way, like John MacArthur and RC Sproul and the gospel coalition and the other for the gospel and so on. And he says that group actually has become more prominent through this movement. And I want you to know, I think that's actually what I have to say that Don and I originally felt that the evangelicalism that we knew, and this actually goes back to justice question, the kind of British evangelicalism we knew in the 50s and 60s.

Even though it wasn't all British, it was Carl Henry, Harold Ockengay, John Stachey, Ipacker. It was broadly reformed, it was a very high view of scripture. It was culturally engaged, but pretty orthodox.

And we felt like evangelicalism was broadening out. And we actually felt like the old center was moving. And then evangelicalism originally was sort of smack it between liberalism and fundamentalism.

And now it was sort of, we actually felt like there was a fundamentalist side to it that was developing, and there was also a liberal side developing, and it was all under evangelicalism. And we talked about that. We talked about certain seminaries that were, we were bothered by the, by the excesses of both Pentecostalism, the excesses of the right wing.

Moral majority stuff. And we were also concerned about the excesses of the emergent church and the progressive stuff. And we actually wanted to strengthen the center.

And Brad Vermerlin is actually perfectly fair in saying it was really more about symbolic capital. It was more about trying to create a situation in which more young people saw that this is a real viable opportunity. I mean, a real viable place to stand.

Obviously some people have resented it, and I felt like we were gatekeepers. And I mean, that can happen. Absolutely.

I don't know. There is a downside to it. But I don't know how else you do it other than what we did, which was we were just trying to create institutions.

And the crossways is a part of that, by the way, even though we didn't start cross-wing was been there for a long time. But these institutions are actually showing that we're trying to legitimize a certain kind of evangelicalism that we think we wouldn't say it's the

only evangelicalism. We just think it's extremely important.

Is that about power? Is that about trying to get legitimacy? Does that delegitimize certain other people? I mean, for Vermerlin, Brad's actually pretty frank about the fact that that is actually kind of what's happening. And I didn't offend me a bit because I do think that we were trying to lift up a kind of evangelicalism that we want to see grow, that we think is healthy, and that we think the church in general needs. And we thought it was weakening, and we were trying to strengthen it.

And that does end up being, you know, gatekeeping and power politics, and that's what a lot of the other groups, Christianity today, emergence, emergence, you know, the other groups actually do not like us because they feel like we're trying to delegitimize them. I don't know. Anyway, we ought to talk about that.

Certainly online, that sort of thing is happening all the time. But I actually thought the book was great and fair. Yeah, I'll ask a question to get you Colin.

So, Tim, what would you say to, and you hit on some of the criticisms, and we want to be self-reflective, self-critical to the degree that the four of us are a we in this, but also not self-flagellating? So, I can think of a series of criticisms. Some people would look at this reformed resurgence, and perhaps from the left would say, well, this is just really neo-fundamentalism. Right.

And it's just the return of the patriarchy, all of that. You'd have others who would say from the right, you know, kind of earlier on, it's not confessional enough. You don't really have a high view of the church.

It's parrot church is bad. And then sort of mixed throughout it is it's big EVA. It's the industrial evangelical complex.

More recently, the last four or five years, it would be you've gone too far to the left politically or yeah to. And so, hit on any or all of those responding to those criticisms. What's fair? What's unfair? What do we need to learn from? What doesn't hit the mark? Well, you know, the reason I was actually very encouraged to read the Bauvink biography was that's the very same thing that would happen to him.

People thought that it was a schizophrenic, a modern and a confessional Bauvink. Because sometimes he would write a whole book on a Christian view of psychology in which you seem very appreciative of what modern psychology said, but then critique it and come around. So he was also given the same, he got it from the left and the right.

You're right about, by the way, the older, you might say criticism from the right might come from someone like Daryl Hart, who says you're not confessional enough. And now it's coming from people like, why didn't you come out in favor of Trump more strongly? Because now it's a disaster. So they come out and why are you talking about justice?

That's just, that's Marxist.

The left actually in some ways is watching, and there is a certain amount of fragmentation happening on this, and they, I think they're keeping, they hate us too because they really feel like we're really bad with the return to the patriarchy. I guess I would say, originally we didn't have institutions here, and Brad hints at this at the very end. I think even though we're past our prime in some ways, we're moving into a better position where we're going to move the movement forward through institutions instead of celebrities.

As you know, Carl Truman always was at least half right about the fact that the early part of the Gospel Coalition was all about celebrities. And some of you know, Mark Devere actually says, yeah, you got a bunch of these celebrities, they basically have a common reformed, evangelical approach. So let's get together and let's try to bring in their constituency.

That's right, and we bring them together and then we get them into the website, we get them into buying these books and that sort of thing. Now the fact is when you get started, you really, everybody, there's nobody really doing a quality control, because when you start, you actually are all starting together and you're looking at each other. And so for example, I would say we all felt like we could help Mark Driscoll.

We knew he was brash. We could see that. But it's the same thing, we're not a denomination.

And we said, yeah, okay, look at how we, and James McDonald too, by the way. I mean, maybe I shouldn't be out here doing this. You could see what eventually happened to those folks.

And we kind of felt like, all right, well, let's all, we're getting together. We didn't think of ourselves as a tight denomination. It was more like those two conferences and let's talk together.

And we can help each other grow. But we had a lot of high profile. I mean, everything from Dameron Patrick to Josh Harris to, you know, we've just had a lot of high profile.

That's the problem with the celebrity mode. What's happening is, I mean, take a look, Kevin, you are not probably ever going to be the celebrity of John Piper. No.

And I think it's partly because there's a lot of reasons that you're younger. And I actually do think it's more of a baby boomer thing, the celebrity thing where we really not part of any organization. And I actually think that the future of the movement is stronger because you've got these institutions going.

I mean, if you have 40 million discrete visitors to the website in a year, if you have, I

don't know what crossways is, what amazes me is crossways putting us as substantial books. I can't believe you're actually turning a profit. I guess you are, because evidently they're still paying Justin salary.

Still the Frank Paredi. Yeah, well, I don't know. Well, the thing all I'm trying to say is I think we're moving into a, I think the old Young Wrestling Reform movement is a little as past as prime.

It was celebrity driven. It was, and the new one, you know, as we go forward, it shouldn't be anymore. And we've, and we're bloodied a little bit by it.

I do think some of the individual celebrities are, you know, in other words, whatever John Piper says, or I say, is going to be connected to the gospel coalition. It shouldn't be like that. In other words, it should be more institutional.

And the institutions ought to speak as a group instead of somebody being so identified that, you know, whether that person does well or not, then the entire organization goes down with, frankly, the same problem with Robbie Zacharias, actually. It wasn't an institution. It was built around him almost.

It was built around him completely. And so if something comes out here, which almost certainly it is, it essentially devastates the institution. So I'm really glad we're moving in a different direction there.

And I think therefore it's a good direction because I don't see any doctrinal waffling. It's a sort of thing that John and I always wanted really. That's good.

I'm doing all the talking. Colin, you had your hand up first. And then Justin.

Well, I was going to ask Tim about the model versus control. You know, purpose that you raised there for the gospel coalition because what really changed for me was editing the book for views on the spectrum of evangelicalism with Andy Nacelli for Zondervin in 2010. And I identified more closely with Al Moller's perspective in that book, which is as a confessional evangelical.

We should be defined theologically, historically as an orthodox movement within Protestantism. But then when he's challenged by Roger Olson and John Stackhouse, he has no response to them for how they're supposed to control. And I wanted to dig a little bit deeper there with you to help underscore for listeners what you mean by we just wanted to set up a model because I try to tell people this that we don't have any ability to control.

We're not, we can't tell you you're not an evangelical. We can't tell you you shouldn't have a place to speak in here. There's no mechanism to do that.

There's no institution of evangelicalism. All we have is an institution called the gospel coalition, which has a lot of people who wrote the website and come to the conferences. So, if anything else you want to say about the purpose of TGC and how that continues simply as a model for what we hope others will find attractive and follow in Christ.

Well, being a, I have to say, being a denomination, don't be an independent church. And I mean, obviously Presbyterians are going to beat that horse. But I do think there are a fair number of independent, I mean America loves, read the democratization of American Christianity by Nathan Hatch.

It's a real unbelievable eye opener. And every, on every chapter, when I read it, I reread it recently. And one, it basically talks about the fact that when everybody started moving west, the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists said, no, we still want an educated ministry.

We still want to have doctrinal control. But the Methodists in the Baptist said, no, we'll just ordain people. We don't have to train them because they'll be closer to the people.

They'll win people. And so the Methodists in the Baptist like grew like crazy, but had almost, but it also basically was a lot of demagoguery and it was, it was an over adaptation to American culture. And there wasn't any ability to get kind of a critical distance because they didn't really understand their Bible very well.

And on one chapter, I think, oh, this is terrible. The next chapter, he suddenly realized, hey, the Presbyterians and Episcopalians couldn't reach slaves. The Methodists in the Baptist did.

And then the next chapter, so, oh, okay, that's right. Okay, because they couldn't, the slaves couldn't understand the Presbyterian sermons, but they could understand the Baptist sermons. Then the next chapter, suddenly it looks terrible again.

So the point is, Evangelicalism is too adaptable to culture. It always has been. Its strength is that sometimes God uses that.

And that's the reason why Evangelicalism is so strong. On the other hand, there's a downside, which I think we're seeing right now in the political realm, where there's no ability. They don't have, so many Evangelicals don't have the biblical and theological ability to get critical distance from the culture.

And we are part of that Evangelicalism. We just are. Gospel Coalition is not a denomination.

It's a voluntary association. And we, you can't say, if Justin Taylor says something on his blog that represents everybody, or that Kevin does, we have a very broad statement of faith which gives us some boundaries which are really important, and a lot of people

think it's too narrow. But it's way, way broader than a confession.

On which you build a denomination. So I would say, just don't make, I mean I know Darryl Hart's always saying the Gospel Coalition is a kind of denomination. And unfortunately it has been for a lot of independent type people.

I would say, get in a real denomination with a true theological tradition. And have discipline. That's okay, sorry, I'm going on too long.

But don't make the Gospel Coalition be a denomination. It has been okay, maybe so. But we don't have total control over it.

And therefore we don't have control over Evangelicalism. Admittedly, if you've got a great website, it almost seems authoritative. You say, wow, look at all this.

And then you go to some other website and it's kind of, we have more symbolic capital. And I don't think there's anything wrong with that. It's the same thing as just good preaching.

Good preaching. You learn how to adapt. You use the audience's language.

You use the audience's lived experiences for illustrations. Is that getting symbolic capital? Yeah. Is that manipulative? Not necessarily.

It could be. Okay. I think at its best, TGC, Together for the Gospel, Desiring God, Nine Marks, are leading people deeper into a rich theological, ecclesia, a logical tradition.

And it's worse, and maybe not even through the fault of those organizations, it becomes the new tradition. Now, tradition is always layering on itself. So, you know, Lord willing, some of the books that are being published now, people are going to be reading John Piper books or Tim Keller books or Don Carson books in generations to come.

But I've always felt like it's doing admirable work when it introduces people to the old banner of truth books, when it introduces people, doesn't take Presbyterians out of Presbyterianism, but shows them broader and deeper into their roots. And even more so with those who come out of less confessional traditions than we would Presbyterian wise. Justin, you wanted to ask something.

I wonder if we could go back to the celebrity question a little bit because I think when people think about why are are and TGC, if they're critical at all, the celebrity issue comes up. You know, when Josh Harris, to use his phrase, excommunicated himself from the church because of his beliefs, there was a lot of chatter about the problem with Christian celebrity. And if you look back at Josh's trajectory, actually, Josh was writing books about humility and about orthodoxy and about purity and wasn't traveling the conference circuit.

And he was mainly focused on a local church. So the criticisms and the actual patterns on the ground don't always fit it because it's kind of one size fits all easy criticism. You know, Darren Patrick, I don't know that Darren had groupies.

You and John Piper, I think, are the most popular by far of the TGC council members. And both of you run in the opposite direction of celebrity culture. You know, you put somebody like Mark Griskell Mark was obviously cultivating something.

But what would you say are ways that younger Christians or Christians who achieve some sort of notoriety of popularity can avoid the trappings of celebrity is them, while avoiding the kind of one size fits all easy criticism. Well, listen, I do remember, I didn't say, I knew Darren a long time ago. I actually didn't keep up the relationship and when things went south for him in some anyways, I really, I didn't talk to him.

So I don't know this. I did read where he, at one point he actually said he had become obsessed with his image online. Do you remember that? He talked about that.

That he realized he had gotten trapped into cultivating a voice and a brand and an image online. In spite of the fact that he didn't go around, the old way of doing celebrities was you, I mean, back as far as Billy Sunday was, you know, going and speaking to big conferences. But I don't think you have to necessarily be on the conference circuit just to now to be sort of trapped into that.

One of the things that happened to me when the books started coming out, and this is one of the reasons why no offense to Kevin or any of you, but I try to tell at least pastors to be careful about writing too many books. You know, Kevin's probably heard this. I mean, I usually say, A, your mind tends to change.

Fortunately, Kevin's mind never changed. So that's easy. Oh, that is true.

It's a steel trap. Well, you know, if you, if basically if you're right about everything when you're 25, there's really no reason why you can't spray it. That was about 28, but I mean, yeah, it would take you that long.

Yeah, pretty, pretty locked in. That's what happens when you're Dutch. Yeah, that's true.

I got to say, once the book started coming out, and I wrote my reason for God, I was 58 when I wrote the book. When the book started coming out, instead of talking afterwards, I would come down after the after the service, walk down and just greet people. Before that, it was always New Yorkers, either members or visitors from New York, and then somewhere around the year, about 2010, most of the people that would come forward, that would push forward people said, I read your book, could you sign the book? Or could I take a picture with you? That was a big change.

And I, I utterly hated it. Utterly hated it. And it did mean that no matter what, you say

you're trying to go away from celebrity, well, this still happened.

And it was largely the books. And I got to the place where I couldn't do it anymore. I know where I actually, because you can see if you're, if you're visiting in town from Texas, and you wanted to hear Tim Keller personally after reading his books, you're going to be the first one to push to the forward if he's just standing there.

And any non-Christians or even members, they're not going to do it. At that point, it just, that was a very big part. I did a lot of, in a sense, pastoral ministry and even evangelistic ministry for a good hour after every service.

And I couldn't do it anymore. It was just taken away from me. Also, by the way, so I'm trying to push back a little bit, Justin.

It doesn't matter whether you seek celebrity. If you write the books and you get well known, you get a lot of people following your social media, you feel the pressure. And you get, you get a lot of, you know, hate mail, you know, various things.

You also get a lot of ridiculous adulation, adulation too. And the other thing is, you know, I don't know whether this is going to be true or not. I do know that the articles about Ravi Zecharisa came out in September from some women say he will always say, "You don't know the pressures I'm under." You know, I think when, the reason why David looked at Bathsheba and said, "I want her." You know what? He probably said, "Nobody knows the kind of sacrifices I'm making.

Nobody knows the pressure I'm under." "Nobody knows what I have to do for Israel, and I deserve this." So what happens is there's a kind of self-pity that grows with the celebrity and also very often a business that keeps you. Now, I'm talking to a man who sees this now, too busy to really cultivate the prayer of life you ought to. So God isn't as real.

You're talking about a God that's more abstract. You put all that together. There really is the fame, social media, the books.

It comes on you. And I actually still don't think that it's good at all for anybody. It's a lot of pressure.

I'm very glad that John and I got through, I guess we got to the finish line without emotional breakdown, and the fair, embezzlement, you know, something like that. I understand exactly how that happens, or pressure to be something you feel like you can't be. So anyway, I think, you know, I'm all against the celebrity culture.

I'm part of it, even if you're running away from it. And therefore, I'm saying I think it's good if our movement moves away from the big names. Yeah, Colin? The video is helpful on these podcasts.

I was actually talking with somebody recently, I think Kevin and Justin were on this thread as well, where somebody said that the timeline of Young Rest was reformed is 2000 to 2016. And Tim, I know you're a student of revivals throughout history as I am as well. And how you know a revival has happened is because the revival has ended.

And that's how you look back on the first Great Awakening, distinguished from the second Great Awakening, distinguished with what's happened in our day. And perhaps we now have, like you said, we're past our prime, maybe 2016 was the end. Well, let's jump in right on that.

I'll never forget you and I were together on Election Day. You were here in Birmingham in 2016. Oh, yeah.

Hardly. Any of us could have imagined what would happen that day. And I don't think I could have had any clue of what would happen after that.

How do we navigate through such a different situation? And I agree with you about the transition toward institutions away from celebrity. I think that's that's overdue for us. And I'm grateful for that.

A focus also on local churches as the priority of a minute street as opposed to online or as opposed to conferences and things like that or even books. I'm all on board on that as well. But how do we deal with the situation now where we don't believe we've changed in terms of our theological convictions? I go right back to what you and Don and John and everybody else signed on to in 2007.

And it would come across as pretty dramatically radical, the Gospel Colossians Foundation documents written back then for today. So maybe this is maybe a last question for us. But how do we navigate going forward? Given that we don't think we've changed.

We're keeping that flag there. But it seems like a world has changed quite a bit and not for the better in terms of how our situation is. Right.

Well, no, actually as somebody, see, I'm old enough to know that, I mean, I stopped changing fairly. What happened, you evolve more when you're younger and then you get to a spot near there you are. And there is no doubt about it.

You can see it and how people respond to John to John Piper is that the culture is more fragmented and the church is more fragmented and the people are more hostile to one another. And so we need to stay where we are and let everybody do what they want to do and talk about stay where we are. Because the institution, see, I'm going to give you another couple.

Acts 29 is a church planning movement. City to City is a church planning movement.

Even though we're, Acts 29 is a formally reformed movement.

City to City has reformed theology in its training, but it doesn't just train reformed churches. So there's a fair number of churches that we start that are not reformed, but basically we move them in that direction or we do reform people. You've got church planting movements, mostly really going on, but mostly not through celebrities.

You've got publications, you've got websites, you've got organizations, that's how it should go. But stay where we were, stay where we are. Honestly, not let people say, I know that we are at the end, but let me just, I saw a tweet not that long ago saying Rick Warren, Tim Keller, John Piper, they were good in their day because they just said the church needs to preach the gospel and not get too political.

And you send people out there to do cultural engagement. That's not going to work anymore. First of all, it's time to be smash mouth, it's time to get political, it's time to not try to be above politics.

You need to call people out and you need to, and by the way, you're not going to be able to do cultural engagement because if you're an eventual girl, you're not going to be able to get a job. So it's a combination of kind of raw drayer and Donald Trump. And that's not where the gospel coalition is, we actually still believe we can preach the gospel.

All these extremes don't have evangelistic strategies. I actually don't think the emergent has an evangelistic strategy. I don't think mainstream Christianity today has much of an evangelistic strategy, it's very pragmatic.

I don't think the Rod Drayer approach, the Benedict Option has an evangelistic strategy. And I know that the Trump right has no evangelistic strategy. They have no way of saying we're going to convert a lot of people.

And I think that's still where we are and that's unusual for us. And the evangelism, and I still think we evangelize in the institutional church and then we disciple people and send them out to be salt and light, including doing politics and working for justice and caring about the poor. But that's old fashioned and I think we need to stay right where we are, but don't do it through celebrities, do it through institutions and I think.

And the very, very last couple of sentences, Kevin of the Vermurland book, Brad says, he says no matter how you look at it sociologically, he thinks there will always be a market in the world for the kind of Christianity that we represent, which is pretty interesting. Of course, he's pretty sympathetic. I guess a Christian.

He says, they where you are because there will definitely be plenty of people who say this is the way I want to go. Okay. Tim, whenever you lose your gospel focus again and can say yes to come on the podcast, we would love to continue this conversation.

I love the way that you ended it there with some encouragement, hopefulness, not patting ourselves on the back. I think all of us would agree as a thing, new Calvinism, why are our reform resurgence as a thing? Really, who cares? It's all had down anyway. Yeah, as a thing, it was in one sense, it was way overblown to say it was one of the top 10 things changing the world.

So I think all of us would be much more interested in our local churches in these institutions, which matter how is crossway doing reform theological seminary Westminster. I mean, all of these things matter much more than the big picture, ism or movement. And so certainly some of that influence was exaggerated, but as we were saying over email a couple of days ago, Tim, I think there's a lot of reasons, even the midst of this fragmentation, which you're absolutely right about, to see encouragement.

You go, you travel around the world more than I do, but I've been around enough to see a lot of these things are, I mean, there are really exciting things happening. In the UK, in Turkey, in East Asia, in the Middle East, I mean, things that in the Spanish speaking world, things that haven't happened before. And it's not about Tim Keller or John Piper, it is genuinely about the gospel and the Reformation truths we love.

I mean, this stuff is really happening, or I can say as someone who teaches pastoral ministry students, they always tell me their favorite book in the class. And a lot of them say their favorite book in all of seminary is Don Carson's book about his dad, Ordinary Pastor. They love that book.

And I have them write a paper on one hero living in dead, and the ones that they write about who are living are most invariably, you know, their grandpa who is a pastor, their dad who is a pastor, and R U F Campus Minister. People that most people will know nothing of, and they're so moving. These people are making a difference in people's lives, the sort of stories that people will often not hear.

And, you know, Don would always say he was so encouraged by the generation of seminary students coming through. And so I think there's lots of reasons to see that Lord, may you keep us humble and keep us preaching and keep us on the main things as the main things. And Alistair Begg would say the main things are the plain things and the plain things are the main things.

And I do think that God, though it may surprise us how he does it, will honor that. So thank you, Tim, Colin, Justin. Wonderful to be with you.

And the invitation is always open. We would love to have you again, Tim. So until next time, glorify God, enjoy him forever, and read a good book.

[Music]