

OpenTheo

A Little Bit of L, B, and E with Justin Taylor and Collin Hansen

June 21, 2023



Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

The triumvirate managed to get together one last time before setting sail for summer plans. With little time to spare before Collin needed to run Tom Cruise-style after a plane bound for the UK, the three amigos chat about the legacies of Tim Keller and Harry Reeder, the books they've been reading and hope to read this summer, and whether they think we've reached Peak Pride in America. Plus, you'll hear whether Kevin ever plans to drink Bud Light again (and whether he's ever had that or any beer ever).

Mentioned Blog Post:

Preaching Resources: A Summer Reading List

Chapters:

0:00 Intro & Sponsor

2:35 Summer Plans, Civil Wars, and Sioux Falls

12:53 Tim Keller's Ministry & Legacy

32:45 Remembering Harry Reeder

39:35 Books

57:30 Are We at Peak Pride?

1:06:10 Closing Comments & Sponsor

Transcript

[Music] >> Greetings and salutations. Welcome to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin D. Young, and I am here with the esteemed Trio, Justin Taylor, Colin Hansen.

Good to have the band back together. And we will jump right in in just a moment. Life, Books, and Everything.

That's our very esoteric outline for this morning. We are going to talk a little bit about life and then books. And maybe we'll hit on everything.

I want to thank Crossway, our sponsor. And in particular, mention this is really an impressive -- they do a lot of impressive things. But they are working on the complete works of John Owen, the first available volume, the Holy Spirit, the Helper, which is volume 7. The series edited by Lee Gaddis and Sean Wright.

Owen, as most of our listeners will know, is one of the most important theologians in history. There's not too many people you can say that and not be exaggerating, but it's true. And this is a -- is this right, Justin? A 4D, 4-0 volume series to be released over a six-year span.

The complete works of John Owen. This is a monumental undertaking. So do check out this.

It's volume 7 on the Holy Spirit. And then the Helper, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter is volume 8. So these first two volumes are available. Justin, anything else you want to say about this? I mean, how long has Crossway been working on this? This sounds like a major undertaking.

Yeah, I don't know exactly how long, but it feels like at least a decade of talking about it and working on it, you know, just getting the material and then its fresh translations of all of the Latin as well. The 40th volume is actually just a volume of indexes of the entire 39 other volumes. So really excited about it, but it is a monumental undertaking with an international team.

How many volumes were in the old Banner series? I think 16 in the Hebrew and is it 20 in the -- Okay. So they don't match up exactly. No, no.

And this has more material than is in the big one, too. Yeah, amazing. So thank you to Crossway.

All right, Colin, Justin, good to have you back. We were going to have a conversation a couple of months ago, and sadly, our conversation was going to be with Tim. And Tim is going to be with the Lord.

So happy for Tim, sad for the rest of us. And we were going to talk about Colin's book. Now, I believe, Colin, you've had lots of opportunities now to talk about your book and to talk about Tim.

And of course, we miss our friend and our brother, and we'll get to that in a little bit and

maybe just share a few reflections. I know we've all had opportunities to do that already. But life.

All right, we're here at the summer. Colin, you are literally about to catch a plane, like Justin said, like Tom Cruise style, running after the plane filled with separatists or the syndicate. How come anytime I'm watching a TV show or a movie, and there's just a really, really big group of bad guys.

It's the syndicate. So what are you doing? You're catching a plane out of the country. Yeah, if Tom Cruise brought all of his kids with him, that would be a quite different movie.

Do you get mistaken for Tom Cruise? All the time, or every random Midwestern guy who played football. One of the... Or should the offensive lineman on the 4 million busgrats? I don't know. Tanagers.

That's the tannagers. I don't know what a tannager is, but that's what they are. Yeah, so we're actually headed to Tindale House in Cambridge.

I know a place that's near and dear to many, including Crossway. A lot of great partnerships over there. So at their kind invitation, I'll be renting out their Hawthorne House for a month with my family.

And very eager to be able to be doing that. I'll just be working on various things, including just books for other podcasts and other things that I'm writing and some different apologetic works on morality, especially. So it should be a fun month.

We'll have an event in London, I should say, as a tribute to Tim and as a remembrance of his ministry. And I'll talk a little bit about the book there. And it's their 20th wedding anniversary for Lauren and me.

So we'll have a little bit of time to ourselves as well over there. But yeah, I mean, it's going to be a fun time. And then I've got an eight-year-old son who absolutely loves history, loves a hold of two.

So yeah, surprise, surprise there. So we'll get over to Europe Lord willing and the continent and see some things. Yeah, England's over there.

It's not Europe anymore. Yeah, that's right. They're totally separate.

Yeah, I got it better. It could be clear. You got a Cross-net channel.

And yeah, so we'll get a chance to see Bastone and Normandy and Tossen Paris there a little bit as well. So it's an epic and daunting trip, but we're looking forward to it. And I know you and your son love the Civil War.

So you're going to go over there and like they had their own Civil War son and see some Civil War sites. It's going to be very confused. There was a time when I was walking him around town and I said, "This is just such the perfect day." And he looked at me and he said, "Dad, it's not the perfect day." The perfect day would be seeing a World War II battlefield and a Civil War battlefield in the same day.

Now, he didn't clarify which Civil War, so that should be possible. It should be possible. I find that the English Civil War doesn't loom as large in the imagination as the American Civil War, which was understandable.

It was longer ago and their history is much, much, much, much longer. And yeah, I don't know. Have you reflected on that? Have you thought about it on the reading? Why that Civil War doesn't mean nearly as much? The reallocation.

I mean, they just thought about everything forever. I think that's true. I think it's just a longer perspective.

And I don't know the per capita deaths and things like that. I think the reason the American Civil War looms so large is because it was the first truly modern war that presaged what we saw in things like World War I. So I think that in some ways would be a closer parallel than the English Civil War. It's just when you see one battle at the outset of the American Civil War, having more casualties than every other American conflict combined to that point, I think that gives you a little of that perspective.

Plus, I think it mostly lives. I think it also could be Kevin because of its regional. Yeah, right.

I was going to say that it wasn't regional in the same way. Yeah, exactly. So it's a lot of the American South's identity that keeps that alive as well.

So yeah, but I'll be looking forward to that. I remember going over to a couple of times I've been in Germany, and we don't talk a lot about the wars of religion or the 30 years war. And yet that one looms a lot larger than just about anything else in terms of people's remembrances of devastation.

And that had a lot of similar consequences in terms of setting trajectories for what countries would turn out and what way and what religion. So some ways that one stands out a little bit more. But for somebody who's, I mean, going all the way back to college, studying European history, I've never been to the UK.

This will be my first time. You've never been to the UK? I know. Don't mention the war.

So first time, yeah. Yeah, so beautiful. Justin, are you going to the corn palace or Omaha or what's on your summer schedule? Yeah, true story.

The only travel I've done so far this summer is to see falls. So yeah. Yeah, because you walk a river trail? No, just went to a Wild West water park.

So yeah, not quite as exciting as gun, trapping the old grounds of the Civil War and it's all it's all in the eyes of the beholder. Just that's true. No, just some Midwestern travel of Minneapolis and Chicago.

So no, no huge travel plans this summer though. We'll maybe go down to Texas in July and see our oldest daughter who's living in Austin. Well, meet her down there and get to see her.

So that'd be great. Good. She keep in Austin weird? Yeah.

Austin's keeping her weird. Well, yeah, we for the first time we are not going back to Michigan or at least not the whole family. Maybe we'll see if somebody, my wife or I can get a quick plane trip up there sometime later in this summer.

But we're at that age. Well, we have a lot of kids and so we have some that are working. We have some that are very young and don't travel well and some that are going to various camps.

So we don't have plans to really do any family vacation. We're terrible people. But that's, you know, and this sounds like a lame excuse, but any parent out there who has this situation will understand this is not lame.

We have a four year old. I'm not exaggerating. He cannot ride more than a half hour without puking.

Yeah, he just can't. You got to pump him full of Benadryl, Dramamine. I think it's the same thing.

And he just so to drive 12 hours up to Michigan, we have learned is somebody sitting next to him holding a trash can for a long time. So the cramming 11 d'uns into a 15 passenger van and driving 12 hours is got to be difficult and flying. All of us is expensive.

So we are mostly staying put here and I will get some time off in July and have some vacation and some study leave. And my big project is to finish a book called Daily Doctrine, which I think I mentioned before. And I hope somebody actually buys this book when it's out there because it has been the book that I've worked on the longest.

It will be the longest. It's probably, I forget what the contract says, Justin Garazzo is doing it, thankfully, but it's probably 150,000 words. So it's kind of a mini systematic theology.

It's kind of a daily devotional 260 chapters on theological topics. So Harry Potter, here we come. This is going to be, it's going to be put my kids through college, but I'm, I have

185 chapters written.

And so I have 75 more to go. So each one is about 550 words. So I've got 25 days set aside in July, three a day.

This is about what I can do. It's a bit of a grind, but you are excused for not taking a family vacation. That's why I'm not taking a family vacation.

You've sufficiently explained yourself. I've been worried about taking my one year old on a transatlantic flight and just what are people going to think? But what do people think when the Deung family walk onto a plane? They think a lot of alternating between, wow, that's amazing. Is that a reality show to probably a lot of judgmental thoughts? It is the, you know, everyone older than our four year old can be fine.

And we're good parents so we can pop them in front of an iPad. But the two year old and the four year old, so we flew to Michigan over Christmas. And yeah, even that, a two hour flight and then waiting in line for, I think we had to get two rental cars or something.

Yeah, it is, so going over overseas with little kids, yeah, don't be afraid to drug them. Everybody knows, everybody knows you're not talking about a vacation. You're talking about a trip.

It's a trip. It's not a vacation. The vacation's coming.

Having another location. Later when the kids are out of the house. All right, so Colin, you've, I know, had lots of opportunities since Tim's passing.

I've seen you on lots of different media, secular media, Christian media, talking about Tim. So just give us any insights, any particular conversations you had with Tim coming to the end of his days. Were you guys in contact about how the book was doing? Did he let you know that? Yep.

I'm just a matter of days or weeks. Oh, it was a good question, Kevin. You know, we had an event for the Keller Center for Cultural Apologetics in New York.

And so at the end of April, and we didn't plan that expecting that he could come. We did plan it knowing that if he could come, that would be the only place where it would work for him to do so. But when we were there, he had just gotten back from Bethesda.

And he really, he'd had a really rough day. It was just a lot of rough days there in the end, but still spent an hour talking with everybody who was gathered there, all the different fellows and leaders of the Keller Center. And it turned out to be a really, just as you'd imagine, a memorable time.

One challenge, as you guys know, is that there wasn't any mental decline at all for Tim.

Of course, it wasn't that kind of disease. So in a lot of ways, when you're talking to him on the phone or on Zoom or on this podcast, you're getting as much or more than you ever had with him before.

So you're kind of torn like he doesn't look very good physically. And also, it's really amazing how that he was willing to do this even in that state. At the same time, you're thinking, but he's as sharp as ever and has a lot of things that he still wants to do and is still hopeful about those different things.

And then the negative reports just started coming in fairly regularly from that point. And so it's, yeah, I mean, I had just texted Michael Keller yesterday on Father's Day. That's, I mean, you're just going to have all these different markers now here throughout.

And I will say that I am grateful for this chance and I'm grateful for every other chance to be able to talk about Tim. You often hear with grief that that's what you want to do. You want to celebrate, you want to give thanks, you want to talk about who that person was and is in your memory and what they've done.

So it's been a really good way to be able to grieve. And I'm just grateful to God for so many different things, but I'm especially grateful for the time that we did have with him on this podcast. That's still, you guys know from this podcast or other podcasts, sometimes you're doing something that just feels different and feels special.

And that just felt anointed by the Lord in, and I think listeners have responded likewise, in ways that I haven't had that experience very often. I did do another podcast with Justin Breyerley in the UK with Max McLean and with Molly Worthen. And my interview that I did with Molly was very similar to that, in the sense of you can just sense the spirits doing something in particular in that environment.

But that was the one podcast. I'm sure a lot of people listen to this podcast have already listened to our interview with Tim, but if not, I'd just encourage you to go do that. And if people are going to listen to another one, that one, just listening to Molly offer historical context was really special in that episode as well.

Yeah, I go back and listen to the one that we did with Tim. Yeah, I had, as I think I wrote in my tribute, I had my last communication with him was about the the podcast. I mean, you look back and you wish it weren't something so mundane, but you don't know how someone's life's going to go.

And we certainly had plenty of non-mundane conversations. But typical Tim, very gracious, I had written this review of your book. It was really more of a reflection on Tim's ministry for first things that came out in the spring.

And it was appreciative, but it also took several areas of differences between me and Tim. And typical when I followed up with Tim, hey, did that come out okay? He knew I

was going to do it, but he didn't read it ahead of time. And he just said, oh, no, thank you.

I'm so excited. I'd love to talk about that. Kathy appreciated it.

So it was very gracious of Tim. I'm sure if we had had the time, he might have found areas to drill down or push back on. But it was really good.

And I'm, you know, there's just the Lord's providence that didn't have us talking about that or talking about the book, but it was very gracious up to the end to say, yeah, I'm eager to get out of all the things that he had to do wanting to do this. But I'm sure he was kind in that way to many other people. Have you guys been surprised? Maybe we'll start with Justin.

Have you been surprised by the number of of tributes that have come out to Tim? I think we all understood what a what a key figure he was in our neck of the woods. But New York Times, Washington Post, Atlantic National Review. I mean, I don't know how many just mainstream secular publications ran tributes, everyone from Catholics to non-Christians.

Have you guys been surprised by the number and quality of tributes that have come out for Tim since his passing? Yeah, I think anytime that you have somebody who's an Orthodox Christian or lowercase O, it's surprising to see people paying attention to them because we're I think we're just used to somebody like J.I. Packer dies. J.I. Packer is a giant in evangelicalism. But you know, the Washington Post might have a little obituary on him, but they don't have a major article.

And I've been reflecting on why is that the case. And I think one of the reasons is that Tim just simply befriended so many people that were in influential corridors. And he lived in the epicenter of the United States.

That's a huge thing. We're not talking about that. It is so different.

He lived in New York City. His story is intertwined there. If he lived in Jackson Hole, Wyoming or something like that, it would just be different.

And he intentionally sought out and people sought him out. You know, before the interview that Molly Wirthin did, nobody would know that this very accomplished historian is having private Zoom calls with Tim to ask about assurance, the salvation and evidence of the resurrection. So he would just quietly did that.

And I think another part of it is that, you know, not only is he in the epicenter, not only is he building these relationships with influential writers and thinkers. But he also died in his prime age, 72. He died young.

Right. If he'd lived to be Packers age, that would have been another two decades of ministry. And by that time, if you die in your 90s, most of the people that you've influenced, you're no longer actively ministering in the same way.

You're not churning out new books. You're not going on the speaking circuit. You're already a bit of history.

Right. Right. And I think there was something too about the fact that Tim privately reached out to so many people, not just at the kind of the highest levels, but you know, things came out that most of us wouldn't have known that somebody wrote a blog post and Tim followed up and said, Hey, want to chat and they developed a relationship.

And then Tim is also one of the few people that's actually been on social media. And there are people like John Piper who are on social media, but they don't interact with anybody. Tim was very accessible for somebody being as famous and influential as he was.

He would just he would respond to people. And so I think that gave a large swath of people, even those who didn't know him personally felt probably some form of connection to him. Colin, as you've read lots of those tributes and you knew Tim very well and wrote the intellectual biography.

Is there something that's been missing or something that people aren't understanding about Tim or maybe it's not a misunderstanding, but maybe they just don't know what have we not heard something good or I don't mean something bad, but maybe just something about the way he was that that hasn't been out there yet. I think Kevin is connected to the nature of my book, meaning that there's not a lot about the impact. And I think it's because of what you guys have talked about there.

It's because there was still an expectation of a lot more ministry to come. Other books to come. I mean, essentially he had retired from Redeemer Presbyterian Church, but he'd not remotely close to retired from ministry when he died.

So my book for a whole variety of reasons just because of our relationship, not knowing the future with him. There were a lot of reasons why I didn't talk about that. It was never in the conception of my book that it would talk about his influence.

But I think guys that that's the open-ended question that I've gotten a number of different times. And that's the thing that you can't really assess with Billy Graham. You're talking to get another 25 years basically that he lived.

And from there you're talking about, okay, here's the difference that he made. We can assess the influence of his ministry. We can look back on these things.

You can do some of that with Tim, but so much Ed is still really open. And it's also made

me help me to realize as well that it is appropriate for this particular podcast, a lot of that's not determined in several lifetimes. Historians will determine that.

So one of the things that I've said is we can assume that Tim will be remembered probably pretty similarly to a John Stutt or a J.I. Packer. I think that's fairly safe to assume. But Tim was also such an expansive thinker and doer, a practitioner and a theoretician, that it's possible he'll be remembered on a much grander scale.

Not that that really matters to him because he's seeing Jesus face to face, but it's just part of the work of history and subsequent generations to process, to do that work. And so that'll be interesting to see how does that actually get remembered. We just don't have the context to be able to know.

We don't know is the gospel coalition going to disappear in five years, is city to city going to take a radically different turn is something going to happen in New York City that would snuff out aspects of redeemer Presbyterian Church. I don't know, but those are the kinds of things that dictate so much of that legacy. So bottom line, I think Kevin Anstinger question is simply the legacy.

Normally when we're talking about obituaries, we're talking about legacy when it's interesting, as we've seen here, most of the tributes, instead of talking legacy, have talked about relationships. Yeah, and it's a really good point that is intuitive, and yet we forget it, that so much of someone's legacy is to be determined by the people that come after him. And you can't determine that, obviously, when you're gone.

I mean, you just think about people at the founding era of, can you guys hear me? Sorry, my camera keeps turning off. You think about the people at the founding of our country? Well, you didn't know what the United States of America was going to be. So I studied John Witherspoon, and he's key president at the beginning of Princeton.

Well, you don't know that Princeton's going to become Princeton. It's the College of New Jersey. It's this small place.

It meets in one building. There's a few dozen students. So there are stories like that all the time.

We just celebrated the 50th anniversary of the PCA. And so we remember some of the founders and some of the key influences. Well, when you started that, you didn't know, is it going to get bigger? Is it going to be smaller? Is it going to go for 50 years? Is it going to go for 500 years? And so someone's legacy can be augmented or greatly diminished, just depending on what happens to them, their followers, the institutions they were a part of.

And those are things over which they have no control. So a lot remains to be written about Tim. And I look forward to, I mean, yours was a great start.

And you understood that's what it was. It was a great start. I look forward to dissertations being written, other biographies being written, looking, trying to place him in his intellectual context, looking at strengths and weaknesses, looking at all of this, because he really merits that kind of attention.

What were you going to say, Colin? Well, I was just going to use the kind of cliched example of Alexander Hamilton, in that case, of just think about the different, think about how Thomas Jefferson's legacy went a certain direction, especially because he lived for so long. And especially because of his correspondence with John Adams, but then consider the importance of Thomas Jefferson in founding one of the political parties. That's still around, whereas Adams did not, the Federalists were gone.

Therefore, people don't remember Adams, they remember Jefferson. Jefferson's this titanic figure for all these, you know, centuries, of course, but then consider more recently. Now all of a sudden, his reputation is much worse.

And somebody like Alexander Hamilton, who despite all of his accomplishments, was in many ways a footnote. Except for the \$10 bill. Yeah, except for the \$10 bill back, you know, during from that time.

But what did he have? Well, of course, Lin-Manuel Miranda, I mean, that's right. But second, and of course, Ron Chernau before that, but he had Eliza. He had his wife who lived for decades and decades and decades after him.

And a lot of that dictates things of how history goes. So yeah, I mean, it's, I guess, I don't know how you guys think about this, but the way I make a good think about it is it's a fun thing for historians, but it's not necessarily a great thing to think about yourself precisely because it's, I mean, it's just being humble before the Lord realizing that you can't affect these things. And also, what does that matter? It's not what you experience.

And it does help you to see, then also those eulogy virtues that how you would be remembered is really more about who you invested in and how you treated them. Justin, you've been very close to John Piper and we love John as well. And you've done a lot of work on him and his materials.

Does he think about legacy? I mean, we pray John's got many, many more years of fruitful ministries in really good health at the moment. How does he think about it? Because he must. And it's not, if you do it in the right way, it's not vain.

In fact, it's stewarding what God has done through you at that age to think about your legacy. Have you had these talks with John and how does he think about this? Yeah, we haven't talked about it directly that much, but I think that anybody who has any measure of influence thinks about it to some degree. And I think that there's a question of, do you try to suppress that as an inappropriate thought or do you try to steward it well? John

has a great organization built around him with desiring God that can take some of that burden and say, well, we'll think about this.

I know one of the questions for the ministry was thinking about post Piper, what becomes of desiring God? Do they do more of the Ligonier model or do they do more of the Martin Lloyd Jones model? The Ligonier model is a lot of people who have been influenced by sprawl, but they can write in the same vein and trajectory as sprawl or Martin Lloyd Jones ministry. That's just we're just making available what Martin Lloyd Jones preached. It's not any sort of movement, any building of that way.

So I think John has had the luxury in a sense of letting a team around him think about those questions. But yeah, I think it's just human nature to wonder how will you be remembered and how can these ministries and institutions that one has started continue on in the same way and value the same things even as they adjust contextually as various things change. And as we know the three of us, no matter what safeguards you put in place, it's very difficult to continue a ministry, especially if it's forward thinking and creative and expansive.

So that's what I was going to say just briefly there, Justin, is that it's so interesting that Piper and Keller, such expansive thinkers, such wide ranging figures as part of why they are different thinkers and very different from each other with also some interesting overlaps, which is something that I talked to John about for my podcast and reference, yeah, in reference to Tim. But that is precisely what makes it so difficult for them. And so one of the things that I'm working on with Tim right now, I'll be talking about it at the Gospel Coalition's National Conference in September.

I'm doing to talk about Tim and it's from the first message he gave at the first gathering that would become the Gospel Coalition. This was May of 2005. And he's describing legacy.

And it's the legacy of Jonathan Edwards in that case. And he's describing the Noel and Marsden and others, the way that those ministries had fragmented into Edwards of a kind of a, you know, over here, the Princeton tradition over here, the New England tradition over here, the Finneite revivalist tradition, but how he, they all kind of came out of him, but they went in very different directions. And Tim's talking there about how that has been lost for more than 250 years, basically, at that time.

And I think in a lot of ways, Tim was trying to bring those things together. That's what I'm going to be talking about there. But it just shows you that's hard to hold together when you're doing that much.

And it's no surprise that when legacy comes into play, your successors might be good at one of them or two of those things, but they really can't hold all of them. And sometimes things get out of whack and you take different trajectories. That's a real danger.

And to remember that Tim was preeminently for most of his life, a pastor. And he did, and many of his books come out of those sermons, but he was doing the weekly grind of putting a sermon together every week. And even when the church was big and at a very big church, there's some nitty gritty things you can't do, but he still had staff meetings and still had elder meetings and still had probably some visitation and counseling.

He had the things that pastors do and piper, same thing. Because people have wide expansive ministries and writing ministries, it's easy to think that they're just a public figure and forget they're embedded in this local church. And that's what was most important.

I want to just mention before we get on to some books, I do want to say something about our friend as well, Harry Reader, Colin, you were the one who called me and I saw Colin Hanson. And I knew either there's some TGC meltdown that sometimes when you call or I knew that Tim was very sick. And I was sure you were calling and you said, I bet you think I'm calling to tell you that Tim has passed away, but I'm calling to tell you that Harry Reader.

I mean, I was in shock, thank you for letting me know. I was in shock and it was just within moments in that, you know, the article came out on one of the Alabama news sites and started going around really quickly. And it seems from talking to the family very likely that he didn't pass away because of the car accident, but by a heart attack or some heart episode and had been having some signs of that and fatigue and other things over weeks and months leading up to that.

And there's some comfort perhaps to think of it in that way. But I was just at General Assembly and it was a good General Assembly and there were lots of comments and remembrances, a name that people wouldn't know as well as Steve Smallman, who was a pastor at McLean Pres in DC and also one of the he was in his 80s and he passed away shortly before Harry did. So there's lots of mentions of Steve Smallman, Harry Reader, and Tim Keller, these three men in their 70s and 80s who all passed away within days of each other and Tim and Harry within 24 hours of each other.

And for, you know, Harry didn't write the books that Tim did, but for people in the PCA and anyone who came across Harry, I mean, he was a force of nature. And of course, I serve at Christ Covenant here in Charlotte and that's the, this is the church that Harry came to start. And so I'm, actually, there's a funny story a couple of weeks ago somebody came through, this was after Harry passed away.

And I think somebody was visiting and they said, I know I visited here a couple of years ago when you were on vacation and you had had Harry come in and preach for you here back at Christ Covenant. I invited him back. And this person said, I said, wow, Harry, it must be so really great to be able to fill in and preach in Kevin, Kevin D'Young's pulpit.

And he said, this person said, Harry's eyes got, got wide and I was smiling, came over his face and said, well, I think it's nice that Kevin D'Young gets to preach in Harry Reader's pulpit. Well, yes, I can just imagine Harry saying that and very true. So I was, got to sit with his wife and his three kids at a luncheon at the PCA General Assembly and talk to them, which was wonderful to reminisce.

But if you're not in the PCA, you might not know the impact that Harry had and the dynamic preacher that he was and no Briarwood. Colin, Colin actually went with me on one of the Harry Reader Civil War trips. We went to Gettysburg and to Antietam.

I've often joked with Harry. I thought the North won these two battles, but I mean, he had such a command. He really was a self-taught expert in Civil War, regiments, and history and all the things and love to draw those leadership lessons.

But Colin, if people aren't familiar with the PCA and aren't familiar with Birmingham, where you live, they wouldn't know what Briarwood, Briarworld. In fact, somebody said at the funeral, which was just a beautiful, wonderful funeral, that Harry would say, "Briarwood is not a big church. It's a small city." With its own police force.

Tell us just what's the, you live in Birmingham. What's the effect and the resonance there and what kind of shadow, literally and figuratively does Briarwood cast in that area? Yeah. Birmingham is a small enough city and Briarwood is a big enough church where you can legitimately say that it has affected the city, that it's shaped the very nature of the city.

Briarwood grew along with the suburban growth of the city. So some much is- Frank Barker was there and Frank Barker. And also, it's also big enough to be able to have so many different streams to be part of it.

And so it's very difficult to characterize. So when you say PCA, people have their own conceptions of what that means or what it doesn't mean. And Briarwood really defied and defies to this day a lot of those different things.

And so, but the one thing that comes to mind is just their absolute commitment to mission. Yeah, that is a thing. Locally and internationally, they are a force.

And no matter where you go in the city, somebody is connected to Briarwood. It's as simple as that. And it literally is the place where the PCA was founded.

They've got the official plaque right out front and everything. December 4, 1973. We just remembered 50 years and how many times we saw it vase.

Now, not the same building that building subsequently, but Briarwood is the mothership of the PCA. So there you go. And so, and Harry, look, I give the guy all the credit in the world for succeeding Frank Barker.

I mean, Frank said, and he lived for almost all of Harry's tenure. A living legend, Briarwood as well. So, I mean, one other thing that Kevin, I was thinking about, I don't know if Kennedy Smart's name came up at all in general assembly.

Yeah, for sure. But it's fascinating. He's the person who brought Tim down to West Hope well and outlived Tim.

Still alive. Still with us. Yeah.

Which is amazing to think about. But that was a, I mean, even, even, I mean, Tim and Harry, as, as, you know, obviously, Kevin didn't always agree on things, whether at the Gospel Coalition or more broadly in the PCA and just having, losing both of them at the same time was, was tragic and symbolic of, of all the work that they also did to, to put the denomination on a strong trajectory, even as they kind of worked through some other differences there. So, people outside the PCA might not know if, I mean, if you, the, the five biggest churches in the PCA, I mean, you, you would have a Deamer and you would have Briarwood there among those very biggest and, and most influential.

So, it really, it really is a loss. Justin, anything to add before I switch us over to talk about some books? Don't go for it. All right, books.

So, it has been a while since we talked about books. I'm going to give you some, let's go around the horn twice here, which I'll be brief, some books that you've completed and then we'll go around a second time, some books that you're hoping to read over the summer. So, I'm going to give you quantity.

I'm not going to say a lot about these, but I, when I finish a book, I just write it down. This nice little book, Moleskin here and I read books in different ways. So, sometimes it's more of a skim.

Sometimes it's close read, but let me just give you some books I've finished recently that I enjoy. There's a whole bunch of them. Let's see here.

Oh, this might be a fun summary for someone. It's got a great title. Have you read this, just a call in? It's by Susan Wells, an assassin in utopia, the true story of a 19th century sex call in a president's murder.

I have not, but I'm intrigued. It's intrigued. It's about the assassination of Garfield.

Yeah, sure. Okay. And so, it's not a long book.

It's well written. It kind of weaves several different stories at once and it's got that great title and talks a lot about weird utopian, oh, night, a community in upstate New York. So, that was Matthew Roberts, pride, identity in the worship of self.

Matthew is IPC, a Presbyterian pastor in the UK. And that's a good book about this issue

of identity published by Christian Focus came out this year. What else did I just finish? Yeah, some people may be interested in this.

Raphael, Manuel, criminal injustice, what the push for decarceration and de-policing gets wrong and who it hurts most. So, a criminal justice book, whether everyone agrees with everything or not. But that was a good book.

And let's see. Oh, just mention one other. Mary Harrington, feminism against progress is a new book that came out.

So, there's a number of these. This is, it's different than the Abigail Favale. I interviewed her on the podcast.

And she has become, she became Catholic and writes now as a Catholic. And Mary Harrington, I don't know where she is at on this journey, but is a feminist who is now coming to see the dead end. So, feminism against progress, this kind of cult of progress.

It's hard reading in a way as some of these books are like Louise Perry's was. It talks very matter-of-factly about the way that sex operates in our secular world. And sometimes as maybe somewhat sheltered Christians, and I'm glad to be sheltered, you forget just what it is like.

And so, it's bracing at times. But as one of these, it seems like increasingly, there's like one of these every six months now is from a really bright female author who's seeing the dead end that is mainstream feminism. So, just finish that.

Justin, what have you been reading? We'll go around a second time to what you hope to read this summer. Yeah, two that I've completed recently, Garrison Keeler's *That Time of Year*, which is his memoir. Keeler seems like he writes a memoir every few years, but I listened to it on Audible where he reads it in his wonderful voice, although he's I think he's 80 now and his voice is slowing down.

So, it's one of those you can listen to at 1.5 speed. But I think only a Midwesterner would truly appreciate Garrison Keeler's voice and his insight and his wit. Another one I recently completed, Gerald Posner's *Case Closed* on Lee Harvey Oswald and the JFK assassination.

It is so fascinating, especially if you're inclined like we are. And just, he tries to say it is case closed. It is not open for discussion whether or not there was a conspiracy, whether there was somebody on the grassy knoll.

And he'll mention these various conspiracies and they all sound plausible. Did Ted Cruz's father have anything to do with? He did. That's the one exception.

He'll just have these very matter of fact footnotes about this person you think, "Wow,

that really does sound intriguing." And they'll mention this person actually spent like 17 years in a mental hospital and was arrested for perjury several times. So, it's a great historical investigation. So the conspiracies he has convinced you none of the conspiracies hold any water.

None at all. It was a very, very good book. I've never read anything quite like that that's just so definitive and came out in '93, I think, and I hadn't heard about it before.

So, I've got several that I'm reading two I'll mention historically and one can a church-related book dwelling place of plantation epic by historian Erskine Clark just from Mark Knoll's blurb. He said it's one of the best books ever on what it meant in day-to-day terms to be slaves and slave masters in the Antebellum South. So, he has a treasure trove of research and it's sort of an upstairs downstairs book, a historical book on slavery where he has the primary sources from the plantation owners and from the slaves themselves and kind of weaving in three generations of family history.

And it's, I just got it too. So, I'm going to let you get a head start and try to catch up. It's a big book.

But Justin, you will pass me. No, but it's a narrative. I mean, it's written as a story, but it's not maybe there's a few having to fill in the gaps, but it's not historical fiction.

I mean, it's rooted in really impressive primary source research. And what I gather from just the beginning and some of the front material is that I don't want to say he's sympathetic to both sides, but I think he presents the humanity of the slave owner and yet over time how the humanity is degraded, even as they tried to want to do the right thing, but in this institution leads them to work against their own good instincts and then trying to show human agency for the slaves. There's fewer sources there, but does a good job.

So, any initial insights as you've started? No, just a few chapters into it, but I think that he seems to be doing the sort of thing that I really appreciate and I think you guys do too of sticking with just the facts of history, but also writing with the flair or the eloquence or the instincts of a novelist, of wanting to paint a picture and not just do facts and dates, facts and dates, that kind of history writing, which is so boring and has turned off so many people to history. He's kind of combined the two into an epic tale, which you can only do. Your material, your writing, can only be as good as your sources.

And so he has the sources and then he has the literary skill to pull it off. Another book, more recent, Timothy Egan's "A Fever in the Heartland", the Ku Klux Klan's "Plot to Take Over America" and "The Woman Who Stopped Them". He's a New York Times best-selling author, Matt Smethras, recommended it to me.

So those are kind of... Matt Smethras is not the New York Times best-sew. He is not the

New York Times best-selling author, but maybe someday. Someday.

Someday. Someday. Yeah.

So that is really good historical nonfiction. Is it about the KKK in Indiana? Because for many years, that was the largest KKK presence was in Indiana. Yeah.

1920s Indiana and one out of every three men, white men who were born in the state were part of the Ku Klux Klan at that time. I mean, they're infiltrating the churches, they're paying ministers, you know, pay them \$10,000. I think that... I can't remember how many counties there are in Indiana.

If there's 99, 97 of them had a KKK chapter. So it's really just eye-opening. I didn't realize the extent of the KKK at that time.

But interesting book. Sobering. Yeah.

Colin, what have you been reading? I'm going to give you five and I'm thinking about Kevin De Jong in particular with the ace. Okay. Okay.

So first, this just feels like the kind of book that I would read and I would mention just to bug you, Kevin. Hartmut Rosas book, "The Uncontrollability of the World." Exactly. Short book with just big picture ideas about the nature of modern life and why it feels so difficult.

For us, we're trying to control it, but the more we try to control it, the more uncontrollable it becomes leads to a lot of basic anxieties. Yeah. At the same time, I also mentioned David McPherson's book from last year, "The Virtues of Limits." That's definitely an LBE, kind of, I think that would accord with our basic political philosophies and instincts there.

So I also commend McPherson. He didn't cite Wendell Berry until the very end, which I very much appreciate there. Yeah.

A Catholic perspective, he's a professor at Creighton University. So Aaron Omaha. A few more.

So Peter Williams, this is forthcoming from Crossway, "The Surprising Genius of Jesus." Just an exploration of the Old Testament allusions of Jesus specifically in the parable of the two sons or the prodigal son. So that book was right up my alley for a lot of different reasons, in part because of Tim's work on the parable of the prodigal son, two sons, but also because I just, ever since studying with Don Carson, I love Old Testament, New Testament use of the Old Testament. And this book is so rich with those allusions.

This just, that's the kind of, that's the kind of Bible study that I like most. And so that was a really fun read. Another one, Kevin, has felt like a book that you could have written is

"Stadius Williams forthcoming Zondervin book, Don't Follow Your Heart." So yeah, he's still the title.

So exactly. So very, very similar there. And then another one, probably given me more food for thought than any other, not because it was necessarily new, but just comprehensive.

Gene Twenge's new book on generations. Oh man. I mean, not that it's so interesting that so many of the Gen Z, for example, in Millennials, I know Buck the Trend, and yet it's very difficult to argue against the aggregate there.

Simple way to put it, guys, is that is blindingly obvious that as family and religion have declined, different forms of expressive individualism and anxiety have skyrocketed. And it's like, wait, what's happening to this generation? Well, they've decided and been convinced that everything that every generation before them did, they shouldn't be doing and they don't seem to understand that it's not working very well. So interesting perspective there from Twenge.

Yeah, good generations. If you guys have other books, here's a few that I'm hoping to read this summer. Let's see what I want to mention.

Okay, this is for you, Colin. Here's a book that you're not going to read. The Leiden synopsis of pure theology.

So this is and yep, this was by four Leiden professors after the Senate of Dorit, 1620, 1625, the Davenant just published a two volume edition. There had been an English translation several years ago, but now in two volumes. So it's a two volume systematic theology, but it's in the style of a disputation.

And for reform theology nerds, this is a big deal. RTS asked if I'd write a review of it in the fall. So it's two big volumes.

So I'm using, I'm trying to read, there's 52 of these disputations. I'm trying to read one each morning as part of my quiet time. Colin, so I got that.

Maybe you'll appreciate this more, Colin, but probably not. I'm also making my way through the old banner book, Southern Presbyterian Church leaders by Henry Alexander White. Oh, no, I would be interested in that one.

Yeah, yeah. So it's from the late 1600s to the early 1900s and just playing catch up for me. Now this one, you really, you've probably read this.

I haven't read this, but so I did a blog several years ago. You should go find it. Maybe we'll put it in the show notes where I asked a number of people on the TGC Council.

Give me a preaching book. So these are all pastors because during the summer, I always

like to read, maybe reread a preaching book and maybe read a preaching book I hadn't read. So I asked about 15, 20 guys, give me some recommendations of preaching books you like.

And I've gone through that for several summers and find new ones. But so the one book, you won't be surprised by this, but that Phil Reichen mentioned was not a preaching book, but a fiction book by Frederick Beekner Godric. Have you read that? I haven't.

I haven't read it. So it's nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. It's based on a, he was a real live 12th century, holy man in England, but it's written very, I just started, it's written very sort of poetically.

And we'll see if I, if I make it through, Phil, your, your artsy recommendations, but doing that. And two other ones, separating church and state by Stephen Green is a new book that came out talking about the history of church and state in America. And then a big biography about halfway through Scott Berg's biography of Woodrow Wilson, not my favorite president, but Terry Johnson, who's the pastor at historic independent presence in Savannah recommended it to me several months ago.

And we're tracking, we're about moving at the same pace. We're about halfway through. We're into World War I. And we both agree that it's, it's well done, but it's pretty, it's pretty hagiographical.

You think only Christians write hagiography? This makes Wilson like he wasn't really racist. He really didn't do it. He ever, he was right about almost everything.

For, for Presbyterians, you know, the front part of his life, wow, this, this guy was one of us. He was deep. His dad was a Presbyterian pastor and, and professor.

And so that was really fascinating. And then Princeton, of course, he's Princeton president. And the longer he lives, the less I like him.

But I'm halfway through his big book, I think I should finish. Justin, anything else? He had our church on, as an elder, I'm over now the children's ministry, which is not my forte necessarily that we have five kids. But I've got two books.

I'm going to try to read the summer one is D. Pack, Rejus book, R E J U, published by New Growth Press called on guard, preventing and responding to child abuse at church. So trying to kind of rework our documents and a few things are more important for children's ministry than making sure that we're protecting our little ones. And then the TGC crossway book by Jared Kennedy, keeping your children's ministry on mission, practical strategies for discipling the next generation.

So going to try to be thinking about children's ministry in the next month or two. Good. Also, get all your books.

Oh, go ahead. Just I'm also on the nightstand, have Matthew Barrett's new book, *The Reformation* as well. Oh, yeah, I was going to mention that too.

Retrieving the one holy app, Catholic and apostolic church, which is a great doorstopper and also just chock full of an incredible amount of research. I mean, the sort of thing. Impressive achievement.

900 pages. And Matthew is probably about our age. It seems like the sort of book.

Yeah, it seems like the sort of book you would write at the tail end of your career. I mean, the footnotes themselves, you guys know doing academic research. You know, some of those meaty footnotes could take an entire day to write, much less to read and process all that material.

So kudos to Zondervina Matthew for that achievement. Yeah, it is impressive. Did you get your books out in that you wanted to mention anything else, Colin? Yeah, a few.

I do read books that are not from Crossway, but I do love to read books from Crossway. Andrew Wilson, 1776. Actually, what is it remaking the world? Is that the title? So I've already read through an earlier draft, but that's one of the main things.

I mean, boy, Justin, if endorsements are indicative of anything, that's going to be quite a book. So love Andrew's work and very interested in that one. I've also got on my list, Samuel James, digital liturgies, as well as Matt Martin's reforming criminal justice there.

Benjamin Watson's got a new book coming out, *The New Fight for Life*, interested in that one. And then the other one that I'm looking forward to this summer, Tara Burton's new book *Self Made*. So yeah, it should be a good summer.

Lots of good reading. All right, life and books and everything, we've run out of time for the everything. I'm going to ask you an impossibly difficult question, but you're going to just give me a one sentence answer.

We are more than halfway through what has unfortunately been dubbed as Pride Month, trying to be at Robbie George. And there's a trying to redub it Fidelity Month. I think of it mainly as birthday month, my birthday.

I have two other kids. We got we got birthdays on June 18 June 21 June 23, birthday month. So we've seen already, it seems to increase each year, both the obnoxious pagan displays of Pride, you know, to the point of flying the transgender LGBTQ+ flag in between the American flag at the White House.

But then also boycotts and increasingly people who say enough is enough. So here's my impossible question. Have we reached peak Pride? Is it, are we going to look back? Say, you know what, this was at the crest of the madness.

And though we're not going to be, you know, turn back the clock 100 years or 200 years, we are going to say this was a unique season of madness. And we've pulled back from some of the insanity and some of the the soft totalitarianism or no, although there are people who are standing against it, all of the forces of media, education, institution, and increasingly politics and often in both parties are on one side. And so nope, we're not anywhere near peak Pride.

What say you, Colin, peak Pride, yay or no? Yes, let me explain just briefly why. So yesterday in church, I was teaching my third of three weeks on cultural apologetics. And I walked them through Jonathan Heights moral foundations.

I was going to mention that. And specifically, the reason I walked through that is because it gives you the language of being able to understand the difference between the LGBT and the right. Okay, so I mean, we don't have time to you can you could perhaps do that, Kevin.

It's your podcast. I'll let you dig did if you want. But they don't touch the same moral foundations.

Let's I'll just give one care harm. Okay. So basically that the harm principle is the dominant moral principle in our society.

If it doesn't harm anybody, what's the problem with it? So gay marriage looks like it doesn't harm anyone. You're harming the nice people who just want to get married. You're the problem.

You're the oppressor. And especially once different things related to STDs and others were sort of out, you kind of banned from being talked about in relation to those activities. There's no harm.

Well, wait a minute, with kids, there's definitely harm. And then you look at the National Health Services in the UK and they're banning puberty blockers for for minors. And you realize, Oh, okay, so that principle doesn't work in the same way.

And so what I was teaching this church was simple. It was that homosexuality as an issue kicks in around puberty. Now, you know, there may be some inclinations and things like that before that, but that's when it usually presents.

The transgender question presents from birth. I mean, does not at birth. And so every one of the moral foundations looks different.

I guess I'll mention one more authority. Normally, that's one that liberals are not seen to be to be caring much about. But the authority issue under transgender ideology is really is really thrown for a loop because you're undermining parental authority, even for liberals who don't like the way that their children are being sort of legally taken away

from them in places like Minnesota, California, and elsewhere, if they're transitioning and they don't support that, even if they're liberal.

But here's the other way that that is sort of thrown for a loop. Since Jonathan Knight wrote that book, *The Righteous Mind*, we've had a lot of changes Donald Trump, COVID-19. Now, Kevin, bring it full circle to your point about peak pride.

All of the authority now is pro pride. It wasn't that way in 2012. It was seen as a pushback rebellion movement.

Now, it says capitalistic and mainstream as anything could be. It is all the power. So all of these different moral foundations are different.

And the transgender jump is the main reason that there's a huge difference. And the comedians are often the canaries in the coal mine. They have a sense for what is the dominant? What has the authority? So there's nothing cutting edge about, you're not going to have a Dana Carvey church lady sketch.

I mean, what people don't know what church ladies are in, in sort of school Marmue. It's going to be the transgressive boundaries of comedy are going to be towards this. So, yeah, right, Justin, I don't know if Colin did one sentence, but all of his sentences were helpful.

What do you say? Peak pride? Yes or no? Yeah, I mean, similar to Colin, I would say that I don't think we're at peak pride in terms of homosexuality. I mean, now you have President Trump wanting to be on the bandwagon of I'm in support of Pride month to, I think that only increases. And I think that hopefully we've reached the peak in terms of the transgender issue and start to see that go the other way.

But I think the Overton window has shifted. And so that now you seem conservative, you can seem conservative or sane being very pro gay, but just not into the transgender agenda. So it's, it's definitely shifting.

So I give a yes and no answer to that. And Andrew Sullivan. There's an example right there, the key figure in the K. Rowling movement, JK Rowling, same thing, key, you know, key figure both.

But yeah, but of course, they've both taken a lot of heat for not continuing to support. Yeah, Abigail Share, who's got a great book, *Irreversible Damage* is pro trans, pro trans for adults. She just doesn't like it for for young girls who, you know, are shifting.

But she's seen as so conservative that she, you know, like JK Rowling is getting banned in certain quarters. So the window is shifting. And yeah, it is a good reminder for us that the future, except for God's perspective, has not been written.

And it's easy to think that it's just obviously going one way. But it's, but it's, it's not we don't, we don't know what it is. And lots of things can happen.

I remember hearing somebody ask Keller about, you know, are you pessimistic about the future of the church in America and typical to him? He was sort of, well, here's all the reasons why, but he ended with some optimism. And one of the points he made is, you know, you don't know, but that this next generation rebels against all of this stuff. And you're seeing, I don't know how widespread it will be, but you're seeing glimmers of that you see more Gen Z men think feminism harms people than helps people.

You're seeing a slight uptick in, you know, interesting that the uptick in identifying as conservative is going slightly up, except for white women, where it's just going hard to liberal. So there's an increasing gender divide there. And it wasn't for the first time in decades, the percentage of Americans supporting gay marriage, like slightly ticked down.

I mean, not enough that that's going to probably change culturally. But with, with the T, I think some people are saying, hey, we did not sign. And you know what, if I'm going to be culturally transgressive, no pun intended by not going with the T, then I might as well do do this as well.

But I overall, I share the same, basic pessimism, but perhaps this particular madness has reached a peak and I can assure you, I will never drink Bud Light again. I've never, I've never had it to this point in my life. And I can safely say, I shall never drink it again.

All right, thank you guys blessings on your summer hope to stay in touch via text and otherwise and safe travels as you run with arms flailing about as you try to catch your, your plane and hope you have a wonderful time. And for all of our listeners, thanks for tuning in. Let me mention on the way out, make sure you read your Bible this summer.

And if you need a new Bible, check out Scriptura, they have heirloom quality Bibles. I actually do read from a scripture Bible, they can re re cover your old Bible, and you can get 15% off there with the code LBE 15. So grateful for scripture of Bibles.

So until next time, the size reading your Bible, glorify God, enjoy him forever and read a good book.

(dramatic music) [Silence]