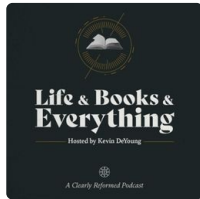


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Five Books to Take On a Desert Island, Why The News Makes You Dumb, and Why Politics is the True National Pastime

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

Originally released on June 23rd, 2020, Kevin DeYoung, Collin Hansen, and Justin Taylor discuss the five books they would take on a desert island, why the news makes you dumb, and why politics is the true national pastime.

Transcript

This is Life and Books and Everything hosted by Kevin DeYoung, Justin Taylor, and Collin Hansen. Greetings and salutations, welcome back our faithful listeners. I'm here as usual with Collin Hansen, resourceful Skywalker, and this is by my name. My picture, Hater of Humanity.

That's just all of the Kevin DeYoung statues have been thrown into the sea in the past week, and that's okay, they didn't look much like me anyways. Good to be with you guys. Let's just try to talk about something very non controversial.

Here's my question off the bat. Collin, you said this is an aside, several of you guys. I want to explore it with you.

We all like sports. We talk about sports. You said sports didn't used to be so political.

Yeah. And so left, leaning, not leaning, just left. So the SBS were last night.

I didn't watch any of it, even in a time when there's actual sports happening. I don't watch the SBS because I figure the great thing about sports is you don't need an awards banquet. You put your hands on your hands.

You play sports. You play games to tell who the winner is. We don't need a red carpet.

We don't need to get dressed up. You just decided who won it. So I didn't watch it, but at least two of the hosts were Megan Rapinoe, Sue Bird.

So there's going to be celebration of LGBTQ and all sorts of things. And sports, how did this happen? Because it's not simply the case with sports or at least ESPN that it's just following the culture. You can say that now about Pride Month when Oreos and all these other products are just celebrating Rainbow Month just seems like the thing everybody should do.

But some of these sporting organizations or events or agencies were not just following culture, but they were shaping culture in a certain way for certain reasons. When did that happen? How did that happen? Why did it happen? What are your thoughts, Colin? I was thinking about this this weekend, actually. And I think our original American sport is politics.

I think our country has been always absolutely enthralled with politics. I think you go back to the earliest days, the colonial days, and Kevin, this is where you're the expert. But I think there's just always been a pull in that direction to a certain extent and culturally speaking.

I think it's hard to resist that. And I think this is what the key was. The key was the switch to the internet.

And what the internet has done is it has really fragmented audiences in so many different directions. But in fragment in the audience, it's actually forced other audiences, sort of other media to be able to consolidate. So let's think about this.

So Sports Center, even the 1990s you're watching Sports Center, it's the only place for you to get all of this news before the newspaper comes out the next day. Then you're looking for comprehensive coverage. You want to know what happened, you know, young Colin Hansen in South Dakota on the farm wants to know the score of the Royals Indians game.

And he's going to wait to watch, and he's going to be mad if he doesn't get to see highlights from his favorite team, the Royals. Well, of course, nobody would think this way anymore because you're watching the game live. You can get live highlights on Twitter.

You can get it on your app. And so, and then you can watch MLB Network, and they're going to do live break-ins and live games and things like that. So what it's done to the sort of broadcast media or big cable media is it's pushed them into sort of trying to get the largest audience segment possible.

And so that's for example reason why you see other sports like baseball fall away while the NFL rises. That's why you see like other teams fall, but then you see the Cowboys come. I think a turning point, at least in my viewership, was the obsession with Terrell Owens when he played for the Dallas Cowboys.

It's like they just could not get enough. Colin also saw the RISE in his sock. I know the moment I remember guys, do you remember when he did sit-ups in his driveway and it was broadcast live? I mean, I do that often.

No one pays attention. It's off everything. No cameras.

That's right. So there was a distinct shift at that time. And then all of a sudden, then you get better feedback in terms of what people are willing to watch.

And I think what people realize that they wanted to watch, and this goes back to pardon the interruption, goes back to first take. And then you band to see that overtake a lot of the sports broadcast shows. Then of course, you can see Skip Bayless becomes a big part of this.

Stephen A. Smith. And you start to see, wait a minute, why is everything in sports set up between a black guy and a white guy? And why don't we not talk about the sports anymore? Why do we keep talking about the issues? I think our original national sport is politics. It's arguing.

And I think that's why people watch Fox News. And so I could combine that with some views on journalism because it's like the news writers. They've flipped completely.

And Bill Simmons is one of them. And he has written about this. They've published on this, I think, at the Ringer of how that's happened in the last 15 years.

But I think the biggest change is that the internet fragmented markets and then forced consolidation around the sort of base approach, which is get people angry. And that's what the most people want to watch. Go political.

And that's true across all media platforms. If you have three networks and you get your news for that half hour time slot, now it was slanted to the left. It wasn't completely objective.

But there was a sense of you had to appeal to middle of the road. You couldn't appeal to just a niche where nobody is getting a big market. I mean, the most watched programs are in the millions, not in the tens of millions.

And so you don't have to appeal to a broad segment. And I think then part of it must be that those who, and this is a product of larger cultural trends and Colin, you talk about journalism or just who gets into media or who's, and then it becomes self perpetuating the sort of people like them who get in. If you don't even know anyone who thinks differently than you on the topic du jour, whether it's sexual matters or whatever, you are not going to try to present both sides because as far as you know, no reasonable rational person really thinks differently.

And so you can traffic exclusively in self congratulations because you're not aware of any real person who thinks differently. So you don't have to be broad and you don't really have to try to convince people. I got a few more thoughts go jump in Justin.

Is it still surprising to you guys that they were able to pull off a kind of a progressive agenda with a largely conservative audience. I mean, you think of a typical guy who watches Monday night football obsessively, you don't think of him as you're flaming liberal. I mean, speaking broadly, you guys still surprised even given everything that you said that the conservative audience basically stood with increasingly left leaning reporter certainly.

But did they, so isn't that the whole point of the Kaepernick situation. So I think the only league that truly survived to tend to stand a stride our political divides was the NFL. So in the middle of this, baseball has continued a pretty longstanding decline.

Baseball's audience is as old white male. And so generally conservative golf is pretty similar. College football has an extremely conservative fan base very regional, especially in the Midwest and the South.

The NBA has moved in an explicitly very progressive urban direction that's been longstanding, but especially in the last 15 years or so. And the NFL, I think, was the last league that really was trying to sort of be across all of America. And that's why the flag thing.

I mean, the widespread response from my conservative friends, especially people that I grew up with was they were so angry. They would never watch the NFL again. Now, I doubt they followed through on that.

And I got to admit, that didn't make a lot of sense to me. I didn't understand that. But I was really surprised that that was the way I saw a lot of fans respond.

And we saw the ratings did dip that year. Though the thought is, the one reason they probably dipped is because of a lot of interest in the election, the 2016 election. It probably wasn't so much Kaepernick.

It was that people were watching political entertainment instead. And Colin, you pointed out politics are national pastime. I would have to know another country well enough to know in what ways America is unique.

But maybe someone from Canada seems like they wouldn't say. Well, how long your elections are, Kevin? Well, yes. I mean, at my point was going to be historically, you see it.

Somebody recently made the point. We have been through these cultural upheavals before where there is a crusade of righteousness that will admit no dissenting opinion.

And looking back, we can see some of them.

We like some of them. We didn't like. So where it might have been in the Great Awakening might have been Evangelicalism, or in the 19th century, perhaps Abolitionism.

The beginning of the 20th century, Prohibition. I mean, there is an example. If you are a righteous person, you're not for a drunkenness.

Are you? You have lonely. Remember Billy Sunday, a full of baseball player was one of the leading. I was going to say just to clarify one thing I was saying earlier, 72 Olympics, of course, major political, Muhammad Ali, all sorts of stuff there.

But then you revert to Jordan. I do think we've entered into a different thing. Sorry.

I was thinking there about Prohibition part with the lesson. Yeah, I was just saying, you have lonely, J. Grisha, who says he's not going to, he can't pass vote for a resolution that's going to explicitly endorse the Volstead Act because he doesn't think that he has the ability as a minister to say that the Bible compels them to do so. It's extremely unpopular decision to make.

So on the one hand, yes, we shouldn't be surprising with whether we think they're righteous or they're half righteous or they're mistaken. These sort of totalizing campaigns, moral campaigns, we have always been a relentlessly moral people. The brief interlude of relativism was trying to broker some negotiation, I think, on the left when they felt like the right was still a sentence.

And now that the right or traditional, whatever you call it, is no longer a sentence, all of those claims for relativism are gone. How do you guys calculate the issues? So just take the sports and ESPN in particular, fully behind. I mean, they were ahead of the curve in giving Bruce Jenner calls himself Caitlyn Jenner.

The Courage Award. Was that the year where they bought it or where it was paid for in return for the ABC News exclusive? Two years back to back where somebody won the Arthur Ashe Courage Award for being LGBTQ. And I think one of them was, I think maybe it was that year, they had to give the award in exchange for the interview, if I remember correctly.

So why, why that issue? Why do the liberal elites, and it sounds like I'm going on a rant here, but I don't use that redundantly, but why would those media outlets, sports in particular gravitate toward that constellation of issues in wanting to champion their version of the good, the righteous, and the beautiful? Why not something else? How do you make sense of it, Justin? I really don't know. The only thing that comes immediately to mind is that is the issue of the hour. That's the leading edge of what is progressive and right.

Whatever the opposite of being in the end, or if there is to be an enlightened person in the 21st century to be free of bigotry and prejudice and free from animus and hatred of humanity. This is the place that you have to land. And, you know, what's especially striking is what a worldview of contradictions it is.

I mean, if anybody should be pushing back against transgenderism, it should be people in sex specific sports. You know, the WNBA should be flatly against transgenderism. If there's any sort of logical consistency and coherence to a worldview, but of course it's not so sociologically, I don't know the answer to the question theologically.

I mean, that's at the heart of who we are when we're in rebellion against God, when we don't have a transcendent God above, and we don't have a functioning anthropology that understands the goodness of God's design. We just end up in a mess of absolute contradiction that makes no sense, but everybody thinks it's absolutely correct. So, again, sociologically, I don't understand it.

People smarter than me can put those pieces together, theologically, I guess it makes it a bit more sense. That's good. Colin, are you the smarter person to know? No, definitely not.

I will. What I will say, and I mean, you could apply a little bit of economic analysis to say the obvious, which is they wouldn't do it unless it made of money. So, at some level, the success of the gay rights movement is tied to the fact that they have convinced corporate America that the only way to be able to make the most amount of money is by going all in, which is why we see all the logos and rainbows.

This year I was actually reading an article that we in Illinois. Now, most of the businesses are many businesses or something like that now have gay pride flags out front for pride month, which obviously is a big shift from five years ago, let alone 10 years ago or 20 years ago. There, so at some level, I mean, it sort of suits capitalism to do so.

At another level, I would say, just looking back sociologically on the profession of media, sports media, before the 1980s, it was a working class profession. You didn't go to college to write about sports. Since the 1980s, you do.

And you go to certain schools that were main unnamed and their, you know, private liberal universities, and these are the kinds of graduates that they produce. And so I think also at some level, journalism and broadcasting, broadly speaking, since the 1970s, so that would kind of fit within my paradigm here. And, well, I mean, it goes back early into the Muckraking period, early 20th century, but I think sports is seen as being trite compared to the big issues of our day.

And so I think there's an inferiority complex that comes with sports broadcasters and journalists that says, if I really want to be doing something important with my life, I need

to see sports as a kind of utility toward accomplishing that end of social justice. And so I think all of that has made for a pretty profound change. But again, and I want to let me give a contemporary example on this.

This works in multiple directions in multiple ways, both negative and positive. There's not only a negative to this. A positive to this is that I'm in a state where with our second most famous sport, NASCAR, Talladega, we're talking right now during that race.

And where we had a noose that was hung in the garage of an African American driver. And that kind of thing, in one sense, does not really surprise. And then this is how all things come full circle.

The US senator from Alabama has to go on Paul Feynbaum's sports show to talk about this. But anyway, so I would just say the when we look back historically on the relationship between politics and sports, it's always been there. I think it's accelerated.

A lot of it is bad, but some of it is good because I sure am glad that people are speaking up, including journalists, and they're not saying, hey, we don't talk about politics when it comes to hanging nooses in black drivers, garages with NASCAR. So, mixed bag for me. Right.

No, I agree it is mixed bag. This would be my quick three pronged theory, not just for sports, but just the advocacy for LGBT in particular, but could be other sort of social justice issues. I think one, we live in a country and in a time where it can seem as if suffering is unusual.

That is we are not surrounded. There's all sorts of examples, of course, we all have bad things in our life. But I mean, children aren't dying all the time, women don't usually pass away in childbirth.

We all have stories of cancer in our lives and our families. But I mean, in a historical sense, the sort of grinding poverty that most people have lived in, that's not most of us are living. The sort of things that would cut you off at the knees in early age, we're not having life spans to the 80s.

So, one, you live in a time where suffering then is not what is to be expected. It's unusual. So, second prong, therefore, is those occasions of exquisite suffering, genuine at times, perceived at other times, get our attention.

And so, I think the matrix, though nobody is spelling it out like this in a kind of syllogism, when it comes to what sort of things do we think about it? Because do we think we can safely promote, parade? I think it has to be someone or something that involves suffering or victimhood. And again, it could be genuine. You see it, my family watches American Ninja Warrior.

You show most of those people, you know, there's some story of suffering. They're dead. The Olympics.

The Olympics. Tom Renaldi, one of my favorites. It's every college game day.

So, it's, you know, Jonathan Heights' moral matrix that it's suffering in particular, it's oppression and harm. So, suffering is unusual. So, we gravitate toward the stories of suffering then seem unusual.

And on the good side, we're particularly compassionate to them. On the more cynical side, we could say that we find that there's great virtue in platforming them. But then there's the third component because it isn't that all kinds of suffering.

I mean, you're not going to see the SBS talk about, you know, the cake maker who lost his job. So, it's suffering that is either at the agent of the suffering is either faceless or the colonist. Or the culturally repugnant other.

So, this is where sports, we'll see if this changes in the years ahead, has been for the last years. Very traditional, it comes in the military. Very supportive.

The flyovers. The big unfurling of the flag. Of course, Colin Kaepernick has changed the dynamic of that.

Off but paid for by the military. Paid for by the military. As a recruiting tool.

Yes, and, you know, it's not unheard of for all sorts of shows to do the video of a soldier who's reunited with a family member. That's, but it's not the soldier as a soldier, as a warrior, it's as a sufferer. And so, and that's okay because it's, it's rather nameless, faceless.

So, it either must be, it's sort of, they suffer from cancer. They're away from their family in the military, or the suffering comes at the hand of the culturally repugnant other. Which is why you're likely not to see some big campaign for the Uighurs in China.

That's going to cost the NBA some money if they do that. Or there's a face to it that's sort of, that's not supposed to be the team that we're against. Or if Muslims were the perpetrators of some oppression.

But if it seemed to come from Christians, from conservatives and some circles from, from Jews, from anyone who is considered to be the out group from our group. So you get those three factors and I think it just, it goes through and it makes sense that, of course, we would promote and celebrate this. And it feels like we have nothing to lose and we only have to gain, and maybe there's a genuine sense of compassion and care about the issues, but it may just be a way to, to thumb our fingers in someone else's eye.

I mean, that's a lot of what goes on. It's both the right and the left, but performative

pieces that are ways of making a point that show the moral inferiority of the other side. Yeah, I think you're exactly right, Kevin.

I think I vote for you as the smart one of the group. I knew I was going to ask the question. Yeah, I agree.

It still seems to me with all of that said, which I think is absolutely spot on and really insightful. It still seems to me like something that's fundamentally abstract. Like easily approved in theory, harder in practice.

It's one thing for Bruce Jenner, who's this older retired guy on and how fast he can even run the mile. Another thing if LeBron announced that he's transitioning and joining the WNBA, WNBA and wants to give it a shot, see if he can make it in the women's league. I mean, what would happen in that kind of scenario? To me, it still feels like it's this thing that feels great to affirm in theory, but when you actually get down to it and a man can break every woman's record and dominate a sport, I don't know what had happened to that kind of thought experiment.

So Colin, this ties in with this discussion, but transitioning just a bit. How does the news make us dumb? I've written about that before Joe Carter's written about it. Maybe you guys have too.

There was a book by John Somerville, *How the News Makes Us Dumb*, IVP published it back in 1999. All the examples would be of the news would be woefully out of date, which sort of proves his point, because that's one of the points in the book is you read something in the paper online. And you think, I'm up to date.

I know what's going on in the world. You come back six days later, let alone six months later. Most of it is.

What? Why were we talking about that again? And this plays into our current cultural upheaval and tensions and why real episodes of injustice turn into massive cultural conflagrations with real world consequences. What role does the news play in that and how are we susceptible to it as Christians? What do you think Colin? Well, people are not familiar with the concept of pseudo events. I would encourage them to look up Joe Carter's writing on this for the Gospel Coalition.

Well, it's elsewhere. It's one thing that we try to avoid at TGC, though, a lot of times we get sucked into it just like everybody else, because it's the thing that people want to talk about. But I don't know if I'd say the vast majority, but a lot of the things that you encounter in the news simply are only like, it's like the Kardashians.

We're just going to talk all about Bruce Jenner and the Kardashians, apparently today. They're famous because they're famous for being famous. It's news because it's news.

There's no actual connection to it. There's no necessary. There's no there, there.

There's no connection to what is going on in your life. I think if I wanted to borrow from Ross Douthit here, I would say at some level it's a sign of decadence. It's a sign of affluence.

It's a sign of leisure that we have enough time that we can engage in these kinds of pursuits of endless discussion about things that sometimes they definitely do matter. And oftentimes they don't. You cannot really explain how they do.

And so the concept of a pseudo event is something that's, I mean, for an example, it would be, I don't know if you guys saw this Washington Post piece recently where they were talking about a black face costume from several years ago that was not intended to be offensive, but of course it was black face. So it was offensive. That did a big problem at the party and apologies all over the place and people storming out again a collection of Washington Post reporters.

So anyway, in this major newspaper, then recirculated, I think it was four years later, three years later, I think the journalist says something like recently surfaced this, you're like, well, wait a minute, who recently surfaced this? You did. By writing about it right now. So there's also a, this is funny Supreme Court law for journalists, but it goes back to New York Times.

It'll last. It's gonna be funny. No, well, you can lie about any public figure in the United States if that person's a public figure in print.

It's constitutionally protected to lie about them. You have to, you can make stuff up. You can, I mean, that's why we have tabloids and things like that.

It's very difficult to sue successfully in the United States, different in Britain, but it's different here. But here's the thing, how does somebody become a public figure? Because you write about them. So it's a catch 22 for people.

You write about them to make them a public figure. Then you can say what you want about them because now they're a public figure. That's the way our media works.

And so pseudo events are similar to that. I'm talking about this because, and I think just one, because I'm talking about it, I think there's one thing just to keep in mind that, and I say this all the time with breaking news. Cable news, wherever else you're looking, they have to fill the time broadcast.

So whether nothing happens that day, or the whole world is up in flames, it's going to be the same amount of time that they have to fill for their show. So if there's no news, they'll make it up. And not only amount of time, but they have to speak in such a way that keeps you on the hook to keep you coming back after this break.

You can feel your, despite your knowledge and your best attempts, you feel your pulse starting to race. And they call it, I have to find that out. That's going to change everything.

And I can't believe this would happen. And it's worth pointing out too that this is not the pseudo event thing is not something that came along in 2016 or 2020. Daniel Burstein, I think it was 1962, published the book, *The Image Guide to Pseudo Events as history*.

Something like that for the title, speaking politically about America and identifying that, pointing at least that terminology of pseudo events. And that's nearly 60 years ago now. And think about how much the news, whether it's mainstream papers or just your social media feed, convinces us that we know what's going on.

This is one of the brilliant things about Summerville's book. He says, "Okay, you're going to say, well, if I don't pay attention to the news, I won't know what's going on." And he says, "You don't know what's going on." Yeah, you'll find out who won, who's the new president or you'll find out who won the sports game you care about. But that's part of the illusion of how the news makes us.

You think you now know what is happening in a country of 330 million people. So you guys know I was thinking about writing about this. I may not post it, but just to talk about the juxtaposition of these headlines here in Charlotte.

You mentioned so, Big Banner and the Charlotte Observer homepage was this story about Bubba Wallace and the news found in his garage stall. And that's noteworthy. Whoever did it should be denounced and should face whatever criminal penalties are available for that sort of thing.

I mean, it's shameful that that would happen. Above that, a lesser news story was the fact that two people killed, twelve people injured in a shooting in a neighborhood in Charlotte last night for an ongoing Juneteenth celebration. And the first thought was, "Oh my, is this going to be George Floyd all over again? This is going to be absolutely horrible." And they don't have a suspect.

Last I checked. They said there's 400 witnesses and they don't have any leads. But there was a march earlier this afternoon led up by a group of protesters with Black Lives Matter hashtag.

But one of the flyers said, "Black Lives won't matter to them if they don't matter to us." And one of the neighborhood councilmen has said, "This is not reflective of who we are as a community." So all of that I take to mean that it seems that it was someone from within the community, an African American shooting into a crowd, and there were dozens of shots fired. So I don't know what all the details will be. That's a horrible incident.

And my contention is that neither of those, if it turns out to be a white person who put the noose in bubble wallaces stall, if it turns out to be a black person who is shooting up this party for whatever reason, I don't think either of those events should be determinative of what we think about black people or white people. I know that may sound controversial. It's not to discount history and real problems.

But it is to say that the news will shape in time how we view these things. And it doesn't take very many in a country that's a continent wide and 330 million people, whether it's with school shootings or if you hear of every hurricane that comes or every turn, suddenly you think everything is worse than it ever was. Well, we're more aware of things.

It's not discounting where things may be worse. But actually, the news tends to exaggerate the state of problems, exaggerate current dangers. Because headlines of good people helping other people don't drive traffic.

Headlines of natural disasters, tensions, problems, huge issues, especially as they fit in with narratives that are unfalsifiable. They can perpetuate and they can have real world consequences. I mean, I shudder to think, not only because it's wrong and sinful, but if that episode in Charlotte had been the act of white supremacy, I mean, the city would be on fire.

I mean, literally, it would be horrible. And I don't think the news, wittingly or unwittingly, gives them power to the bad people instead of the good people. The bad people, you do your act of violence and we will write it large and everyone will respond to it.

Push back. I know there's lots of nuances and caveats with that. But it's a real issue and we're kidding ourselves.

If we think we're, I mean, you put a camera on every single person in the country. If you knew everyone's word, thoughts and deeds, it could be a pretty dystopian picture that would reinforce any worst case scenario you could draw up. And it will begin to have, if it doesn't already, some real world consequences, which could be very ugly.

I may have even shared this on this podcast. I can't remember. But one example that I will often cite to explain this came from my speaking up at, but an Ivy League school Cornell to a Christian Union group.

And I was meeting with the students. It was the 2016 election. And I was asking them questions because I was working on a book on the time on politics and religion and race.

And I asked them, what does your average Cornell student think about Christianity? And they all responded the same way. These are Christian students, evangelical students, they responded the same way. They said they think of the, why am I blanking on the Baptist church? Westboro Baptist, right? Okay.

And they said, okay, so Overground family, Kansas, cult stands in for 2000 years of the largest religion in the world. 300,000 churches. Yeah.

And there's only one way to explain how that happens. And that's through the power of media and through news to be able to feature the, the odd. And I would go so far as to say, and this would be a whole nother discussion we could talk about, but I think the whole sort of underlying premise of journalism makes it unstable for Christians.

And actually think the Academy is pretty similar to this. I don't think it's a surprise that this goes bad for Orthodox Christians with both media, as well as with the Academy. Because the very premise is it must be new.

It must be different. That's what makes something newsworthy. It has to be unusual.

And if it bleeds, it leads. And it bleeds at least. So, so in the Academy, it's the same thing you get published because you generally have done something that's new and different that's overturned a previous consensus.

I think we undersell that the very professional premises that we buy into are very difficult to hold for Orthodox Christians in a stable way. Justin, I don't know with you any thoughts. I'm interesting a whole different controversial topic there, but I think it's connected to what Kevin's talking about.

Well, I think one of the things that Kevin said is that, you know, we don't have sort of private cameras into every single person's home into every single person's thoughts. And even if we did, how could you process all of that information? Millions of people, right? So it seems like there's only two recourses, broadly speaking. The two extremes are you get all of your knowledge by anecdote, or you get all of your knowledge by statistics.

And most of us, our eyes glaze over with statistics. It feels kind of cold and heartless. And we all just know that you can manipulate statistics and make them say anything you want.

And then on the other hand, if you're just relying on anecdote, like most of us live in just one city, we're not cosmopolitan travelers. We don't know hundreds of thousands of people. We know hundreds of people at most.

And so neither of those seem like very tenable ways to reach definitive conclusions about something as big as our country is. So it makes sense to have something like a news outlet that can speak authoritatively for us. I mean, I think back to myself as a kid in the 1980s watching Dan Rather and Peter Jennings and Tom Brokaw on TV.

Those were the three guys and they kind of had that voice of God, Aura. And I remember sitting there, whatever grade I was in, third grade or fourth grade thinking, if only I could

know as much as Dan Rather. He knows about everything.

He knows all of these countries. He's a great news reader. He reads so well.

No, but I really did think that like if I could someday attain to that level of knowledge about politics and history, he just seems like he knows everything. He doesn't miss a beat. He doesn't say, "I haven't really thought about that or I'd need to study that more." There really is a voice of God, Aura, that comes with journalism.

And I think at some level it feels reasonable. Here's somebody who has the resources to go out and ask lots of people. They have the resources to go and ask the very best experts.

They write better than I do. They're smarter than I am. They're better educated than I am.

They can put all of these things together and tell me the way things really are. And of course now, news has become so partisan that you can choose, even if you know that intellectually, that there's good guys and bad guys, now you can choose just the good guys. You only watch your Fox News.

You only watch your MSN, BC News. And it's deeply problematic. I wish that there was a place for good journalism because theoretically it should play a really vital role.

And I think it still can. But the way in which we can be manipulated of what are the issues you should care about? How should they be framed? It just feels really problematic. Colin knows it's better than anyone.

Really good journalism takes a long time. It's a lot of work. When did that article come out about the Malaysian air? That thing was amazing.

I think it was a he who wrote it. That was an amazing piece of journalism trying to explain how that happened. But that doesn't come in the moment.

It's not the way the business model really works. No, it's not the way the business model. That's going to get your clicks.

And you said it exactly right, Justin. We can't just shape the world by either of those two things. I mean, I love charts and numbers and statistics.

I have the latest big book of statistical abstracted United States, which tells you all sorts of fascinating things. And I think we ought to have that sort of bird's eye view to make sense of the anecdotes. And yet you can't pastor people by statistics.

And all of us, every single one of us, are making, we can't help. We're generalizing creatures. We have to make sense of the world that we live in.

And so we base some of that upon a lot of that, upon what we see and what our experiences have been. There's nothing that's going to stop that from happening nor should it on one level. We simply need to be aware that the media is one huge shaping agent of that.

And it's not without its own passions and agendas. I mean, in this book, Somerville says the news exaggerates the extent of disaster in the world. The news entices us to overreactions.

The news over-emphasizes the role that government plays in our lives. Because think about how much of the news is about politics. I mean, it reinforces... Because it's sport.

Because it's sports. Well, that's true. It is.

It matters. No, it's a game. People have pointed this out for years.

Most of the post-debate commentary for presidential debates are about who won, how they do, who look this. Most of the commentary on the campaign itself are horse race issues, who's up, who's down. It is.

It's covered like a sport. And even for the conservatives who say part of their worldview is limited government, when you ingest so much news that is relentlessly focused on politics, it convinces you that what happens in Washington really is the most important. And really should be the most important.

And to quote one of our politicians, I mean, Ben Sasse is often pointing people has written Senator from the great state of Nebraska, pointing out that that shouldn't be. That's not the way that the political structure of our country. It should be that your local family and church and even local elections are much more important than that.

But everything in the news screams at us. The government is massively important in your life, should be important in your life, and is probably there to fix the problems in your life. We're a very religious country.

We're a very religious country and you will not find religion covered on the evening news unless it's something to do with politics or controversial. That's a huge part of your daily lives or unless something goes bad. Yeah, it's handle.

Yeah, exactly. Which Kevin does the factfulness book talk about news or is it not focused on that? I just ordered the book today, but I haven't read it yet. Hans Russellins.

Yeah, I've read about it. I haven't read factfulness either. I'm the only one I think here's read that one.

I read Greg Easter books, book from a year or two ago about same kind of idea on what's the title though. Why everything is getting better, though it doesn't seem like it is the big

idea of the book. Does factfulness talk about media, Colin? Yeah, I can't remember the specifics there.

But again, what I want to reiterate is that no matter how much better things get, news media with the way it's set up will continue to portray things as bad and getting worse. It's the entire foundational premise to news judgment. And at one level, it's kind of Christian in, as you imagine, you know, so I've gotten an eagerness for the coming of the kingdom of Christ, you know, and impatience with this world as it is.

But that's probably being overly generous. I think at some level, it's just we tend to be, I mean, I talk about this all the time and it's just in a book that I'm working on now. Fear and loathing are what sell us in media, not fear, not faith and love.

Faith and love don't get headlines. So as we transition to a cheerier topic, our last topic, but I want to spend some time here because this is a fun question for you about books. You've all, you know, we've all got the question, what book would you bring with you if you're stranded on a deserted island? I want to nuance that a little bit.

Okay, you guys get five books. The Bible is already there. In fact, Justin, it's a really robust ESV study Bible.

In fact, maybe we'll make it an ESV interlinear. So you already have Greek and Hebrew there. Okay, so you got a Bible.

And let's not say an island, whatever your preferred, if it's an island, if it's a chateau in the mountains, this is not punishment. And you're not, they're not there forever. So you don't have to bring the shipmakers guide or how to build radios out of coconuts.

You're going to be there six months. You're marooned. You're locked away for six months.

We'll make it somewhat enjoyable. No, enjoy. You can have some food provided for you.

In fact, it's not solitary confinement. You get to see your family from time to time. Okay, so we're making this a good case scenario, but you're away for six months.

You've got a Bible. You've got all this time. You have no obligations, no responsibilities.

You're just, you're going to read and train for triathlons, no doubt. What five books are you bringing with you? And will allow that if it's a multi-volume, you know, they just couldn't really print the whole book in one binding. We'll let you bring that, but you can't bring a set.

You can't bring the complete works of John O' and count that as one book. So rather than do five at a time, let's go around. Okay.

Like a draft. Yeah, we're going to do, well, okay. So here's mine.

My first one is actually very easy. I had to think hard about the other ones, but I would bring a hymnal. Oh, that's a good one.

I would bring the Trinity hymnal. It has the Westminster Confession and Catechisms in there. I thought it was going to be the minutes of the Westminster Assembly.

I did think about that, actually. Thank you. But a hymnal, I'm going to want to sing that's going to nourish my soul.

So whenever people ask me that question, it's easy. The first one is a hymnal. Colin, what's your first pick in the marooned book draft? Okay, well, just because you started out on a very pious note, and most of mine are not that way, then I'll continue in that theme.

The letters are John Newton. I, man, I want to be like John Newton when I grow up in Christ. That stirs my soul right there.

So after hymns, John Newton, but again, that's going to be the last of my pious picks. Okay, Justin. Do we have Logos Bible software? No, no, you don't have a computer.

You don't have access to the internet or Bible software. Andy Nacilli would kill this question with us. He would.

20,000 books on the laptop. Yeah, mine, I'm not as pious as you guys, I guess. The City of God by Augustine.

Wait, did you just make that up? Did you feel like you had to say that? Or you were going to say City of God. You couldn't bring all of Oliver O'Donovan's works or Michael Oakeshot or somebody or. Okay, City of God, that was actually on my short list of possibilities.

In Latin. No, I've said God. That's two, I guess it was, it's one volume, 10 volumes.

He had, I think, to marinate in another world and to spend time with somebody like Augustine in his beautiful mind, to get inside somebody from that many centuries ago who thought differently. All sorts of things that we would disagree with, but the ability to speak thousands of years later, a thousand and a half years later to contemporary relevance and power to have mastered that book would feel like it would be worth my six months in the chateau. Very good.

Okay, next round. And I was, that was a strong possibility for me, so I'm going to leave that out. So next, I think in categories, after the hymnal, I want some dense books.

I want books probably that I've read or I'm familiar with because I want to be sure that

they're going to be useful. I'm going to like them. I don't want to take any chances.

So I definitely need a multi-volume systematic theology. The question is, which one? And there's a lot of strong contenders. You can't go wrong with Bobbing.

I'm tempted for a brockle. There's such a piety to his work, but I have to take Turritin, not a surprise. It's so difficult.

It's dense. It's layered. I just feel like I can spend months in here and be learning all sorts of new things.

Take lots of notes. So I want to get, do a deep dive into systematic theology and I'll go with Turritin. Colin, what's your next pick? You know, as I was thinking about this question, I realized that I almost exclusively read for intellectual and moral improvement, which generally is probably pretty good, right? But I didn't really take your question that way.

I guess I kind of assumed I was going to be stranded here for the rest of my life. I wasn't going to be coming back. Well, you can still have fun, but yeah, you're coming back.

Okay, well, I didn't think about it that way. So I really didn't think in terms of moral improvement. I really thought in terms of what I would enjoy topically and also just quality of writing.

And so my next one is going to be, again, these are all going to be weird, Barbara Tuckman's Guns of August. Well, I've heard that that's a very good book. Just entertainment.

But entertainment of just like this world-changing variety like, are you serious? This all actually happened? How could nobody have stood up and stopped this? That is a page turner if you love some history. So Barbara Tuckman's Guns of August. Okay.

I've actually got two systematic theologies on mine, but just the multi-volume. I think I'm going to go with Bawvik. Okay, good.

So I think to get the learned theology and history in there, but something that's also going to keep me oriented toward piety and worship and not just go off and learning more about different scholastic categories without the heart application as well. So a Brock may have been a good one as well, but Bawvik comes to mind for me. You don't think Turritin has the heart application? Ouch.

Justin, give him a chance, man. I know. I need to give back to Turritin.

Yeah, I understand. You know, Bawvik, I will not complain with that choice at all. You haven't memorized that, don't you, Turritin? Don't you? Do you get a critical instruction? Yes, I do.

Large parts. Large parts. Not Latin yet.

Okay, round three. Books on our mountain chateau. I'm still needling through some options here, but another category, this is very cliché, but okay, so I want to bring a fiction book.

I want, I'm all by myself. I want something that brings me to another world, expands my creative horizons. Justin, if we had more time, if we had more time, I'd let you try to convince me of something by Dostoevsky or some classic piece of Russian literature.

I didn't even include any of that. Okay, my wife would have me bring middle march, but I just want to know that I'm going to like it. So I'm going to bring Lord of the Rings, and it's going to be good.

It's going to be familiar, but it's going to be uplifting. It's going to bring me to a place. It's going to be good.

So I know I'm going to like it. There's a lot more that I can learn by reading through it again. So there you go, Lord of the Rings.

If there were maybe the complete works of PG Woodhouse, maybe I'd try to put them all together, but just one book will do Lord of the Rings. All right, Colin. I just don't know.

I'm just glad you guys include me in this podcast, having never read any above ink or Lord of the Rings. Thank you for that. I'm going to go.

I got two more. I got two fiction here. So I'm going to go with one of Kevin's least favorite.

I'm going to go with Wendell Berry, Memory of Old Jack collection of short stories there. I would, I'd miss home. I'd miss my friends.

So I live in the agrarian dream somewhere. Would be. I would be.

No, I would, I would just a, you know, Wendell Berry is appropriately described as an agrarian. But having grown up on a farm that kind of cured me of agrarianism. So I really, what I'm always drawn to with various is depiction of community and personalities.

And I would miss people. So memory of old Jack Wendell Berry. Justin, on to you.

Oh, stick with the fiction I had Lord of the Rings done as well. And for different reasons, Kevin, I have not read it either. Oh, I've read the Hava out loud to our kids and I'm a, I'm Tim Keller would say I'm a very bad Christian.

Tim has read it like 50 times more than I have. But get immersed into an imaginative

world and to know that work as well as one could would be worth it, I think. Yeah, that'd be good.

You could actually do that in real life too. Yeah. Okay.

You could read those books. Just could. All right, we got two more books to bring.

This is where I'm uncertain, but I want to category something history. I want it to be big. So I thought about, you know, a Ron Chernow something maybe does the whole Robert Caro LBJ series.

Counts, but then I'm thinking, Shelby Foote. I haven't read through all of Shelby Foote's three volumes, Colin. You're, you're, you're, you're getting, you're getting warm.

I know we're a massive church. Her biography, but I'm just thinking as a pastor and thinking of coming back in six months and so I'm thinking of something church history. Maybe the, I got him right here.

The special. I know Nick Needham. Two thousand years of Christ power.

I, I, I haven't read those. So, you know, I read who still Gonzalez those two volumes. Other people read louder at, but.

Shaft is dated, but the classic. So, so maybe that I just find. A church history that I, that's big and long and can immerse myself in and feel like.

I'm learning from the past. So I'll, I'll go with that a shout out to Nick Needham, though. He doesn't have his all the volumes done, but he's got four of them.

Okay. That was a great. It was really good.

Have you read them, Justin? No, but they're good. I've just read one of them. Yeah.

All right. My next. Yes.

Okay. I'm continuing. I'll stick with your, I'll stick with your theme there.

I'll go with Shelby foot and I'll go with volume two. I, I'd like to give me the whole thing. That's fine.

It's in a slip cover, you know. Yes. True.

I'm too though, Fredericksburg, the Meridian, mainly because it includes stars in their courses, which is on the Gettysburg campaign. And as I always say about Shelby foot, it's not because every historian agrees with them. It's not because, I don't know.

I mean, I'm just thinking about this a lot over the weekend of how history disabuses us of

so many different notions that would be so helpful in comforting us to us today. If we knew more history, we'd be more comforted today because we'd realized that what we thought we knew about the past was wrong. And foot is so great about just taking you into the drama of history.

And so can't beat him when it comes to a dramatic look at history. And again, I was thinking entertainment. So that is entertaining to me.

Justin. I'm going to be Kevin happy with this one. Calvin's institutes.

Yeah. I'd like to just know that book backwards and forwards and crossway has engaged in a process of doing a new translation from scratch with breaking news. Yeah.

New notes. Kevin doing the translation. No.

In this spare time. There's so many kids. I was going to say you've got your kids working on it.

Well, yeah, they're just an army of translators. They're just minions. They're like the young Institute sweatshop basically.

They're dressed up in the Knights of Templar sort of regalia. Keep going Justin. No, I just, you know, to know a work like that.

And it's, you know, if the Lord carries hundreds of more years, that book is still going to be read and people are going to profit from it. So, and I would love to eventually see the crossway edition be done so I can read that if my time away coincides with the crossword publication. Mm hmm.

All right. Last book. I don't know.

I'm going to not really answer it because I just can't decide. I want to say institutes. I might go back to to brockle.

City of God was on my short list. You know, I want something old that I know is going to be, like you said, Justin, soul enriching, technically proficient, turretin, I think, I find that soul enriching, but something else. So maybe the Institute, it's not the same kind of systematic theology.

Or I thought about a really good Bible commentary, you know, a big thick one, Mu on Romans or one on Genesis. Take one of the most important books of the Bible, Genesis, Isaiah, Romans, and get a dense commentary. So there I just gave you a bunch of options, but I'm going to give you a different one.

So Kevin gets 10 books. I know. Give you 10 books.

That's the problem. But here's, okay, this is what I'll set a lot and I'll take or sinus's commentary on the Heidelberg catechism. Oh, I got it wrong.

Okay. So I get the Heidelberg catechism in there. I get theology.

I get the heart and the warmth of it. So institutes or sinus commentary on the catechism. Colin, what do you got for your last one? Continuing in my theme of zigging, as you guys sag, I'm going to go with Volume Two, The Immigrant Series, Wilhelm Moberg's book, *Unto a Good Land, Story of the Swedish Immigration to Minnesota*.

Paul, Paul, Paul. No, I was going to pick. I got a 900 page book called *Dutch Chicago* about all the Dutch settlers in Chicago.

So I'll see your Swedish arm hand. I would, I would enjoy that. I would enjoy reading that history.

It's a great book actually. Okay. So go on.

I just think that just going back to imagine what that experience was like for people who had never been more than a couple miles away, few miles away from home, to cross an ocean, to go into a major city, to go on a train across the country, into the woods, on the frontier, Native Americans, all that sort of stuff and try to make a life for yourself. It's no wonder it's dramatic. And that's what I would enjoy reading.

Unto a Good Land, but it's part of the Immigrants Series published by the Minnesota Historical Society. Historical Society. I'm sure it's very good.

It sounds like this sort of book. It's a novel again, not an unfiction. If Andy Dufrain had tried to put that in the Shawshang prison, he would have been killed.

I just think Morgan Freeman would have killed him. He would have given some better books. But no, it's great.

Anyway, I appreciate your friendship. Okay. Well, did you, this is a decide, well, I had Ligonett, a church years ago and doing interview with him and I asked him, you know, his best, his favorite book, Oh Man, I have it some, and I was expecting, you know, Calvin something.

And it was something like the Green Hills of South Carolina or some sort of book. And I just, like, a history of Clemson football. Yeah, I was like, really? And he was waxing on about, and then Mel, his brother sent me a copy of the book later, I think.

And yeah, if you want to all things South Carolina history. So I appreciate the rootedness. Nice.

Nice. I did. Mel, if you're listening to this, it's got a place of honor deep in the shelves.

Just did you got to bring us home? Yeah, I think probably Kevin's book, Deung Restless and Reformed. That book is evergreen. Never goes out of date, out of style.

I'm going to cheat on my final answer and say a book that actually doesn't exist, but the collected writings of David Palace. I think I was just reading an essay from one of David's books this morning on something I'm kind of struggling with personally. And every single time you open up David's writing, I mean, he was not a prolific book author.

He was a prolific, he wasn't even a prolific essayist, but when he would write an essay and it might take him several months to complete, it's full of Bible, it's full of wisdom, it's full of insight, it's compassionate, it's courageous. So I don't even think of him first in terms of kind of the counseling wars, but as a student of scripture and application, the man just had few peers. And so if I'm trapped in a chateau for six months, I want to use the opportunity to do a lot of hard work and few people can help me like a David Palace and Ken.

I'm glad you said chateau because I would so much rather be there than on a desert island. Yeah, yeah, we have options. No, that's great.

I mean, David Palace, how many people can you say? I've never read something by him that I wasn't helped by and found insightful. It just really good. And no, to end us on God bless us one and all we will be back next week, Lord willing.

And then we are anticipating taking some time off for the summer, as many of you do. And then hopefully doing a bit of a podcast 2.0 with exciting details to come. So pizza ranches of the world, Sour Patch Kids, other sorts of delectables.

No one looking for to sponsor something that is going through the roof. We are all ears. No, we're so glad to have you listening with us and hope to see you next week.

And until then, I hope that you will glorify God and enjoy him forever and read a good book and whatever chateau you find yourself.

[MUSIC]

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