

# OpenTheo

## Abortion, Threats to the Church, and Depicting Jesus

September 21, 2021



### Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

In this episode Kevin and Justin take a long, hard look at abortion in America. With the new law in Texas making news, and a potential challenge to Roe v. Wade, they help us get back to basics with practical resources for changing hearts and minds regarding abortion. They also ask where the primary threat to the American church is coming from. Is it secularism from outside, or corruption and sin inside? And in a moment of light disagreement, they discuss the pro and cons of depicting Jesus in media like The Chosen. Plus, the book recommendations that are not at the top of everyone's mind.

Life and Books and Everything is sponsored by Crossway, publisher of The Death of Porn, by Ray Ortlund.

In The Death of Porn, Ray Ortlund writes six personal letters, as from a father to his son. Ideal for individuals and small groups, it will give hope to men who have been misled by porn into devaluing themselves and others.

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

Timestamps:

Eradicate Porn [0:00 - 2:30]

Nebraska vs. Michigan State [2:30 - 6:06]

Abortion [6:06 - 32:12]

Is the greatest threat to the Church internal or external? [32:12 - 50:26]

Problems with Depicting Jesus in The Chosen [50:26 - 1:03:01]

Non-Top-Ten Book Recommendations [1:03:01 - 1:11:55]

Books and Everything:

Resources on Abortion:

The Case for Life, by Scott Klusen dorf

SLED argument against abortion

Pro-Lifers Shine on Twitter

Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case Against Abortion Choice , by Francis Beckwith

Abuse of Discretion: The Inside Story of Roe v. Wade , by Clarke Forsythe

Eternal Perspectives Ministries , with Randy Alcorn

Robert P. George and Patrick Lee

Marvin Olasky, book on abortion forthcoming from Crossway

Non-Top-Ten Book Recommendations:

- From Justin:

Commentary on the New Testament, by Robert Gundry

Wrestling with an Angel: A Story of Love, Disability and the Lessons of Grace , by Greg Lucas

Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief, by Bruce Milne

- From Kevin:

True Devotion: In Search of Authentic Spirituality, by Allan Chapple

Wisdom in Leadership, by Craig Hamilton

The Book of the Dun Cow, by Walter Wangerin, J r.

The Everlasting Man

## **Transcript**

Greetings and salutations listeners good to have you with us this is life and books and everything. I'm Kevin DeYoung joined with Justin Taylor, Collin is out and about mourning the wildcats defeat the hands of Duke, perhaps lighting a candle for the rest of Alabama's season since they almost lost to Florida, but we do have two thirds of the three musketeers here and good to be back with you after a few weeks off the schedule hopefully for the rest of this year is to release a new episode about every other week. So good to be with you here and you can subscribe hopefully and get these at least twice a

month that at least keeps us sane and if you're hanging on our every episode then you need to listen to some other podcasts.

No, glad to have you with us and glad to have you listening and glad to have crossway sponsoring life and books and everything. Ray Ortland's new book it has a very Ray sort of title it's good the death of porn and Justin what is Ray talking about what's he trying to do in this book is it is it just I don't want to say just another but my impression is it's more than a sexual purity book it's that but there's other elements to it. Yeah, I think that's right it obviously sexual purity is at the heart of it but Ray is writing to men in particular and with his fatherly voice addressing the next generation and calling men to be noble men to recognize who they are created to be and I think one way to put it is that this is not just a book for individuals but Ray really wants by God's grace to start movement to eradicate this great evil to social injustice that ruins men's lives, ruins families, ruins sexuality so that's what he's calling us to do and a few people I'd rather have doing it than Ray Ortland.

Yeah so check out that book. Justin and I are going to start with this is the part of there's two kinds of LBE listeners there's the group that says please talk more sports banter that's a very small group I think then there's everyone else I'm hitting the 30 seconds ahead 30 seconds ahead get done with this so okay you can hit that a couple of times but this is a big week for our friendship Justin because Nebraska travels to East Lansing to take on the Spartans who are surprisingly looking good this year 3 and 0 up to 20 or 21 in the latest rankings how are you feeling Nebraska put up a better than expected showing against the Sooners? Yeah I think Scott Frost the coach said we are good enough to be anybody in the nation and we are not good enough to lose each week to anybody. That's pretty much true and you just want things finally to break Nebraska's way but it hasn't done it so far but I do think it was a better than expected showing.

You know your team's not elite when you're praying that you're not completely blown out and embarrassed and where you pray well you're actually praying that Justin I did pray a couple of times Lord if you just want to be gracious and I don't know theologically how to work that out but I think well the Lord tells us to pray about all the things so they weren't a long extended prayer it was no fasting but there were a couple prayers. Do you ever pray for Sparty? So yeah I'm Sparty for college and then all Chicago teams for pro. I have prayed with my kids I've stopped short of praying for dubs.

I've prayed that people would do their best nobody would get hurt. They would glorify God but yeah certainly in my heart there's been okay Lord you can sort this out probably not theologically justified but you want to make people like me feel blessed here's how you could do it. Michigan State Nebraska is the only football game we've seen together in a person.

Yeah you came and was it just you or was Malachi with you? Malachi was with me. Yeah

and you wanted to leave early and this was a crazy game because Michigan State was way ahead the whole game and like by three touchdowns or something and we're trying to beat the rush of getting out of there and it was a night game and I had church the next morning and then on our walking away we're stopping looking into bars because Nebraska just kept scoring and almost came back a miraculous crumble on the part of this Barton's almost. So I left the game early and one of the epic comebacks of all time came down to a final play that we watched through a window.

Yes I remember and I was about ready for my evening which was just going swimmingly to like I'm not spiritual enough to have to get up and preach tomorrow now. All right so we'll be texting during the game seven o'clock or eight o'clock sometime. Yeah I think it's okay.

Central from the welcome back listeners welcome back now we are talking about other issues besides sports but we should just do a whole sports podcast of course. In recent weeks Texas passed an abortion law restrictive abortion law used restrictive in the good sense because restricting the killing of human life is a very good thing. The Supreme Court has not ruled on that case they have a Mississippi case which many people are suspecting hoping praying others fearing that would strike down Roe but what the Supreme Court did in this Texas case was decided not to intervene not to they allowed the law to go into effect and so that sent some people into apoplectic shock and concern and of course if it comes from Texas or Florida that just adds to the I can't believe Texas and Florida are doing that but as those who hold to the Christian view that all of life innocent life should be protected we see it as a good thing but I want to use that to talk for a little bit about abortion and I'll start here we'll get to some resources and some apologetic angles but I wonder if you have this sense Justin that I have I have here's the pessimist in me coming out I have this pessimistic thought that if the court strikes down Roe now that would be hopefully they will and Christians have been in conservative legal scholars have been working toward that end and almost you know even liberals will agree that as a piece of constitutional law it's vacuous even if you think that abortion should be legal at every stage of a pregnancy as a piece of constitutional law it has no basis in the Constitution so if Roe is struck down the pessimist excitement sees that many Christians who now are and have been very supportive of pro-life and Roe is bad might suddenly turn now that they are seen as the victors and say oh I don't know this maybe we should have you know a number of laws maybe that we don't want to go too extreme and we'll backpedal if there's a victory and if the the cultural eye is squarely focused on the pro-life cause that some Christians will flinch and say oh I we won this and now I need to sort of apologize for it am I being too pessimistic yeah I think so but you might correct me then no I hadn't thought of that angle I think that my concern is more that there's the engaged pro-life activist who's reading stuff every day reading books on this thinking about this debating on it I think the the general Christian is concerned about it and the big bullseye is take down Roe and once Roe goes if it goes

lord willing then I think complacency is probably more likely than backpedaling or apologizing or anything like that so the focus then really shifts to the state legislatures and laws at that level and I just wonder how many Christians will be energized kind of at the state level I think the way that life is supposed to work is that we're supposed to be more energized more involved the the close to the cocentric circle is to us and it expands out to the national level and yet the way that media is incentivized we would be sort of just the opposite way we spend most of our time thinking about the national level and very little thinking as it comes closer into us into our state politics and and local politics and the like I'm sure you've read these similar articles and you see the polling on Roe and on the one hand if you just ask the American public do you want Roe to be overturned fairly strong majority says no but then if you ask people what Roe actually does and you say well do you want this do you think that abortion should be legal at every point of a pregnancy then pretty strong majorities don't so it shows among other things that most people don't really know what Roe is and that shouldn't be surprising most people don't know what it's going to be in any Supreme Court decision even one as famous as Roe and most people on the street probably will interpret the invalidating of Roe the overturn of Roe v Wade as abortion is now banned across the country and that's not what the overturn of Roe that may be what we hope state legislatures will do but as you just pointed out Justin it then allows for a democratic process for actual laws to determine in actual jurisdictions what they want the law to be rather than manufacturing out of thin air a constitutional right to something that no one thinks was intrinsic to the founders original vision so I do hope that Roe is overturned first things the latest issue had a series of articles Roe must go and has from a number of different scholars and angles and Robbie George goes out and he says I'm going to predict six three that Roe is going to be overturned and if it isn't he thinks it's a catastrophic loss and not not only human life of course that's most important but he says of the whole you know conservative legal constitutional movement or if the Supreme Court tries to find a middle ground and he argues convincingly there really is no legal ground with this Mississippi law and with Roe that they're utterly incompatible and if the Mississippi law can be upheld and then Roe must go so that that is coming but we don't have to be constitutional scholars here on life and books and everything though we fancy ourselves as such but we want to think Christianly just in how would you you got you know a minute or two with someone who's genuinely seems open to persuasion if any of those people exist do you have a quick back of the envelope apologetic for pro-life yeah I think that I've really been influenced by Scott Cluisendorf who wrote a book for Crossway the case for life and we're going to do a second edition of it that'll come out at the end of 2022 but Scott does a wonderful job you can probably find on YouTube his you know one minute apologetic for pro-life and he really wants to focus the issue and this is what I would try to do in a conversation if you gave me 60 seconds on an elevator and somebody said hey I'd love to talk about a version with you the number one issue is what is it I think it was Greg Coco said you know my when my kids yelled to me hey dad can I kill this everything depends on well what is it is it a cockroach or is it the puppy

from next door what what it is determines what you can do with it so the number would question is what are we talking about what what is this and it is a human life and that's the the scientific answer I mean we we have science on our side in terms of this is a human being it's an undeveloped human being but it's a full organism that is developing according to its own processes and so Cluisendorf just he's got a little acronym sled SLED and says there's only really four possible differences between a baby and the womb colotophitis whatever and a newborn baby that's size one's bigger than the other there's level of development one's more developed than the other there's environment they're they're located in different places and then there's degree of dependency the the baby inside the womb is more dependent than the baby outside of the womb and the point of that is all four of those things none of them are morally relevant in determining what something is and whether it has a right to life you're not you don't have a greater right to life based on your size you don't have a greater right to life to um based upon your dependency I mean somebody on a kidney dialysis machine who's dependent on that to live is not less worthy of life or has less of a right to life so that would be one angle to come at it just focusing the issue on what it is so you could talk about all of these things about economics and those are important issues and uh the mother but that question is what is it that we're talking about killing so we want I think the abortion debates thrives in euphemism talk about being pro-choice why I like choice a choice to do what is a choice to abort what does it mean to abort it means to kill to kill what to kill a human being so I think that's the the way to focus it the other little technique that Clucentor fuses is called trot out the toddler so any any objection that comes you say well what if this was a toddler that we're talking about you know talking about bringing a child into the world who's unwanted well what about an unwanted toddler can you kill a toddler no you can't what's the difference between killing a toddler and killing a baby that's inside the womb so those are some angles that I come at it with yeah that's really good and encourage people to google or maybe we'll put a link to it in the show notes but the sled acronym from scott clucentorf is really useful because science knows that life begins at conception you know the president may have forgotten that he said that or changed his mind for some reason but people know life begins at conception uh you know you're two cells and you're multiplying and each of us everyone listening to this for human being we are the the same organism that began at that moment of conception or there wasn't at you know five weeks or five months or five years outside of the womb suddenly something else happened there is an organic connection I think also you know on a personal level if we're talking to people especially you know someone who's maybe considering it or we're trying to help those in crisis pregnancy centers who may help those who are considering it I think you you try to project into the future and help people realize it what what might be what do you think would be the bigger possibility of regret that you would abort this child and be be haunted with the decision for the rest of your life and again you put that in a way you know knowing the person you're talking to I'm just speaking in sort of abstract terms or you know that seems like a very real possibility and actually likely versus you have a child in its difficult circumstances in 20 years from

now as this child has grown up there is there is no chance virtually no chance you look and you say I wish this human being that I've cared for and loved had just never even come into existence there's just there's no chance for that the the abortion debate even though people trot out science it's not really about science it's tied up with other sorts of personal sociological cultural issues you often hear my body my choice it's often seen as some dystopian handmaids tail and men putting women in their place but you look at the you know one quick rejoinder is you look at the polls women are more opposed to abortion than men are so to to make it sound like well women are just all for this and it's the men that are trying to control women's bodies actually women feel even more strongly against it and of course the my body my choice breaks down if it's another body inside your body and we want to provide as churches as institutions the sort of institutional structure that can help women in genuine positions of vulnerability and need so we take that seriously but it does seem at least on the just the political angle and the the people cheering and yay let me say out loud and celebrate my abortion it's tied to some vision of the family or lack thereof and some vision of what fulfilled womanhood looks like that this is a way to be more fully liberated and I think as as men or we have to do is say you know who abortion is going to help a lot actually men it's going to help men to be less responsible men to have to take responsibility for that so we want to fully exhort men who are half of the equation in pregnancy but often it's seen as something that is going to liberate women and to not have abortion legalized is somehow to put women in their place and send them back to the dark ages what sort of thought or response would you have to that Justin yeah I think that I mean maybe it's not popular to say but there is that desire to want to have the freedom to be just like a man and I understand the existential links of that reality that men can impregnate women and can just move on can flee the relationship can move out of state can act as if they have no responsibility so you're trying to put myself inside the mind of a pro-abortion rights woman I can understand that and I think the response there is not to make abortion legal but to call men to fulfill their responsibilities we want greater responsibility we want there to be babies conceived in wedlock and for men to be on the hook for pregnancies that they create so it is a difficult situation and that's where the debate sometimes moves beyond just a debate about biology and a debate about kind of constitutional law but women feeling like they are put in a position that's inherently unfair and yet God created male and female and he created us differently and created our bodies to do different things but I think that men should be taking the lead and moving towards women in need and supporting women what I won't have it on my fingertips maybe we can throw it into the show notes if we can find it but there was a woman one time who said on twitter so those of you who are pro-life out there tell me what have you done personally to help women in need or who have conceived babies in difficult circumstances and it's probably one of the most encouraging things on twitter just to see tens of thousands of responses of people saying well here's what I am doing and I think we need more of that sort of narrative to carry the day against the prevailing narrative that just makes all this look bad right so before we move to another topic some books

that we might recommend so Scott Cluissendorf has some really accessible books on the topic so you can check out here the name of the one you guys did escapes me right at the moment but the case for life yes equipping Christians to engage the culture Francis Beckwith has a book a little more scholarly I think is that called defending life I read that one a number of years ago I've blogged before about Clark Forsythe's book on Roe v Wade and I just reposted that nine myths I was just trying to summarize his research but nine myths about Roe v Wade and these myths are trotted out constantly number one if before Roe v Wade there were just tons of back room back alley abortions coat hangers women dying in the tens of thousands utterly false utterly false the myth that Roe was based on excellent deep medical research also false like people have shown even the very scant information that was put forward was shown very quickly to be cribbed from other sources not at all reputable so that's a good book that I've used before if people want to populate these myths again what are some of your go-to and do you have some works in the pipeline that crossways working on yeah I mentioned earlier that Cluissendorf is doing an updated edition of his book so that'll be out before the anniversary of Roe v Wade I should mention Randy Alcorn's name too.

Roe v Wade is very sharp very articulate very passionate has his own story of of putting his own financial well-being at stake in order to protest abortion and I think that if you have people in your church or you're just wanting to get into this issue Randy may be one of the best on ramps he he has his own internal perspective ministry website with lots of great articles and then little booklets it just he excels I think at accessibility and is a very good researcher as well on a more scholarly level we've mentioned Robert P George out of Princeton and and guys like Patrick Lee writing books together on embryo and he is just one of one of our best thinkers in terms of combining legal knowledge philosophical sophistication not making explicitly religious arguments books more natural law arguments a book we have coming out at crossway again end of 2022 beginning of 2023 in January is Marvin Olasky with co-author Leah Savis for World Magazine. Working title is containing abortion 1629 to 2022 the years how Americans learned it was unsafe struggle to make it illegal and sometimes make it rare so Lord willing that book will come out and be able to document that Roe v Wade was overturned but Marvin Olasky is probably written the best social history of abortion and this is updating his work on that and taking it into the 21st century into 2022 so look for that that's really good I can't remember if I just read this in that first things maybe it was from Robbie George but somebody made the astute observation that there's there's parallels between well there's parallels between slavery and abortion debates and issues and people have pointed that out before but I was reading you know the slavery in antebellum America you know at the beginning part of the 19th century there's definitely a sense even in the south certainly the upper south that yeah slavery's it's it's not good but yeah we don't quite know how to get rid of it and it's it's decreasing and it's probably on its way out and acknowledgement that this is really not ideal at certainly and maybe even some people say it's wrong but no one they don't quite have the you know the



moral courage to do something about it but that really changes when you get to the 1840s 1850s lead up to the Civil War that now there are strong apologists that this is really essential to our way of life this is really a better way of organizing society in your way capitalism in the north is is is more benighted and it takes on a vociferous defense of something and you can in a general sketch you know look back at Clinton's famous phrase safe legal and rare you know an acknowledgement in the 90s among democrats at least that president that this is not ideal this is not what we want but let's let's try to make it so it's the least access to it it's legal okay that that's their position you would be hard pressed to find people on that side wanting to say safe legal and rare because even that last word rare suggests is probably not ideal and at best and now you have let's celebrate our abortions and the infamous scene of what the new york legislature you know resounding and applause when they pass these pro-abortion bills and people in marches with women's anatomy on their heads and it's it's taken on even in our half a lifetime such a different Paul and I I you know I fear you know the lord looking upon us and that certainly we have many many sins as a country and it seems cliché to say that abortion is different but it really I mean if it's a life and we've established it's a life there is no other issue in our contemporary culture or politics no matter how bad things are where a whole lot of people are saying that life does not deserve to live even if you take the most you know extreme examples of other sorts of injustice and and don't put any caveats around it you still have everyone most everyone saying well that's not good we just disagree about what we're seeing this with abortion is so different and if the lord is gracious and we see a change in our laws and in our hearts in this country no doubt we would look back and say what were we thinking that we have laws the only places that have laws as extreme are places like China and North Korea that have laws as permissive and as extreme as we do in the United States so that's there's the end of my little sermon no I think you're 100 right and it somehow it thrives in euphemism and it also thrives I think in secrecy that if it was somehow more out in the open and that's why there are people who advocate you know showing pictures and saying we need to open the casket as it were and to show what what's going on here I mean if if there's no morally relevant difference between a toddler and a fetus what would we be thinking if there were 50 million toddlers who had been killed 60 million toddlers who have been killed I mean we wouldn't talk about anything else that would lead the news every night and yet it's it's different it's in secret we don't see it and we don't talk about it and I think ultimately at a spiritual level we don't want to be aware of the sort of crime and injustice against humanity and ultimately against God so may he be merciful upon us I remember one of Piper's sermons on abortion and he was taking from the line at Jesus trial you have said so and he was he was playing off of that to say just like at Jesus trial his his opponents that they knew they knew and they didn't want to acknowledge what they could see and what they knew and so it is with with abortion you have said so and I've often thought of that that we don't want to look at what this is and what it entails so perhaps that's a good segue to talk about something that you and I have talked about many times and Colin's been in on this conversation and so have a number of our friends

and I'm going to frame the the question in a way that's probably the first thing we want to say is that's not a good way to frame the question but just to get the question out there there's it are the problems facing the church in 2021 are they primarily we're all going to agree they're both but are they primarily the biggest threat facing the church is a secular liberalizing ethos outside the church or are the biggest problems facing the church our own hypocrisy sinfulness perhaps threats from the right within the church and you do see among people who agree on many formal statements of theology and faith you see it play out online and we see it play out in our own lives just very different instincts on whether what we should be most concerned about right now is the march of a aggressively liberal hyper woke cancel culture catacizing the church or is it well of course we don't like that but is it really the threat is our own unfaithfulness our own lack of integrity our own unwillingness to see our own sins and that's the danger of young people leaving the church because they see how much we've failed to live up to our own Christian values and beliefs obviously the short answer is both of those are evident in places but how would you answer that question Justin or maybe you want to start by framing the question in a different way no I understand the framing of the question and yeah it is one of those that come down to how you define your terms and what context you're talking about but I think that the the main point is still clear where should our focus be and what are we most suspicious of and what are we kind of working against and I think that some of the answer to that and of course I'm more interested to hear what you would say versus what I would say but who are we talking about is maybe one of my first questions so I mean you can start at the the broadest level let's say you know global Christendom I think because it's sort of work into concentric circles from there you know you talk about the American church and then we can make that smaller the American Protestant evangelical church and then can think about my own denomination or my own church network and and finally down to my own local church the the whole point of just mentioning that is that I think that the answer can actually be different for say my local church versus evangelicalism at large I think that it's somewhat context dependent so if I have a church that is located near a university and lots of college students coming in and it's a public university there may be challenges there in terms of our own body life together and the sort of things that we have to address that may be different than a more rural congregation in the smaller town it may be different depending upon your denominational affiliation you know the the sort of things that a southern Baptist church might be dealing with could be quite different than an OPC church in the the northeast so I'm not trying to just punt it down the road but I do think that it's somewhat context dependent and can have different answers different legitimate answers we're all going to agree that it's both I mean both are problematic but one might be more problematic based upon your own cultural situation denominational situation ecclesiastical makeup than another one so now that I punted you give us the real answer and then I can't correct with it well you know it to state the obvious it's no secret if people read what I what I write they would say well Kevin I think you are trying to trying to acknowledge both of those fears and dangers but you seem to

write more about the the dangers from the left or you know I wrote a piece recently on the culture catacizing us with the rainbow flag and sexuality so that's true and I I try to be honest with myself and why do I see that and what do I see and try to acknowledge the other set of problems and try to do that in a way that doesn't I don't want to just be throat clearing yeah yeah yeah we all know that that's but there's nothing really to talk about there there's there's millions of Christians there's thousands and tens of thousands of churches even in this country so in having this conversation surely one of the places to start is to say I acknowledge on either side how you come at this to say to our friends whatever the other side is I acknowledge that there's no doubt that there's would be plenty of evidence for you to draw to see things the way that you see things and we don't want to pretend that no there's there's no threat from the left or you know what none of our churches ever have integrity problems or never sweeps in under the rug or we never act hypocritical of course all of those things are happening and then maybe it's helpful to make sure we don't deal with caricatures in either direction you know sometimes you know take CRT for example not Carl Truman you know those are his initials I always had to think why is everyone what did Carl do but critical race theory there's characters in both ways there's a caricature from the right hey you you're talking about justice and you're saying that there may be lingering effects of Jim Crow that have yet to be eradicated that's critical race theory well that's just a showstopper that's just a conversation ender uh you don't have to have critical race theory to say any of those things on the other hand I do sometimes hear a very dismissive sort of you know your local Baptist conservative Presbyterian church you know if you think that people in your churches are picking up um Delgado or whoever and they're reading all of the critical race theorists you're kidding yourselves they're not reading that stuff well yeah that's not exactly the argument that the rank and file person is is passing around um primary source CRT material though I do think that does happen in some churches but the argument rather is these sorts of ideas and ways of looking at the world and in pitting people into groups of oppressor versus oppressed seeing racism as uh systemic and everywhere rather than perhaps lessening and more isolated and you can argue about the the certain tenants of CRT but it's you can be influenced by those ideas without having people in your church know that they're influenced by those ideas so I think it's a caricature if we just sort of set aside and say look all of your people that they're not reading this stuff so therefore it's not a real threat uh just a few other thoughts Justin you know I'll see what you want to agree or disagree with certainly uh you know just generations that's going to make a difference are we talking about uh 60 and 70 year olds who may watch traditional right-wing media and they're picking up on that and there's there's not a danger of them you know they still have enough cultural memory of what life was like and church was like and America was like that they're not in danger of adopting these other ideologies and maybe they need to be pressed on some other ways love of neighbor or dangers of conflating America with the kingdom of God whereas if we're talking about younger generations uh the dangers might be in a different direction and what prompted this discussion that that you and I had with some of our friends

several weeks ago was just thinking about my oldest going off to college and hearing from friends and others what many of these colleges are like and that's an objective fact not just many but the overwhelming unless you're going to a college or a university that distinctively says you know either we are conservative uh you know politically like Hillsdale or something or we are distinctively uh robustly evangelical and Christian the default of all the other hundreds and hundreds of colleges and university is you're going to find this stuff and it's not just you're going to find it it's going to find you and often it's going to present itself to you that either you bow down to this you wear this flag you wear this shirt you do this thing you march in this thing or else you're not really a part of our polite society and that that's that's a real danger and I think we're kidding ourselves if we think that uh that's not going to be the overwhelming mainstream cultural pressure just if you're watching movies listening to music watching tv shows the David Wells quote I always trot out whatever makes sin look normal and righteousness looks strange that's going to be in the broader culture now your point Justin is maybe there's a culture within your own ecosystem or church that has made you know abusive behavior look normal or hiding sin look normal and that may be the case for sure writ large our society is giving us one sort of message about what sin is and what righteousness looks like uh last thing I got a lot of thoughts but just last thing I mentioned to you the other day Justin maybe some small way forward as Christians disagree about what they see and what their suspicions are and where the slope is slipperiest is to state things positively when we just are uh chiding one another why don't you get your act together this is the biggest problem of the church we we instinctively bristle and we feel defensive whereas I think if if we were putting more positively here's our vision for healthy church here's our vision for what good godly pastors look like they're doctrinally formed they're ethically formed they're formed by good Christian discipleship mature understanding of themselves and others that I think there's more agreement on the positive issue and sometimes when we just look at it and want to make sure everyone agrees on the criticisms we're seeing it can be harder to find some agreement so I got other thoughts that's enough of a soliloquy what do you want to say yes no amen to Justin yeah I think you and I would have both agree that at the end of the day the solution is going to be the same preach the word pray disciple catechize it's going to have different forms perhaps in terms of application but also think we need to remember judgment begins at home inside the church and we move outside and so it's going to require wisdom it's also going to require I think not living by anecdote alone so you and I each have friends one one friend might say I get calls every week from pastors talking about the threats coming from the right another friend it calls every week about the challenges coming from the left that I'm trying to talk pastors through and both are true we need to not live by anecdote alone but try to see what the state of the church is and try to move beyond just our own personal experience because it's so tempting to take personal experiences and then extrapolate that upon all churches and all pastors and all situations and it's really the case so at the end of the day the answer is both and then context dependent I think it's going to depend on where we're at and what the call of the hour is in our

particular context as we speak and minister and it is one of the challenges with our digital age is we see everything and we see everything from everywhere and I used to think that well you can explain this person's view and this person's view because of where they're situated and if you were in a conservative Baptist situation or if you were in New York City you'd be different but I don't think that's the case anymore because we can we can find online plenty of evidence anecdotes arguments to reinforce how we already see things so you could you could put me I mean maybe I'm sure something would change but you could put most people you can put them in rural Alabama you could put them in in Manhattan you could put them in San Francisco and you know you could put one sort of person in San Francisco who says this is why we need to be pushing so hard back against the left because brothers I'm living it it's right here it's on our doorstep and someone else might say in that very same spot well this is why we need to build bridges because they have so many stereotypes and they see all these things and if we don't lead with love we're never going to win a hearing and both of those things could be true and so maybe this is putting you know my cards a little bit on the the side of the secularizing militant left seeing that as a concern greater concern I don't know but I do think it's the case that we have thought for a while that if we that we can out nice their flank and if we if we just double down on what great people we are and we're not causing a ruckus and we're not causing trouble and we really really are going to be your your best neighbors in the whole world of course we want to be the best neighbors and with some folks that will you know that's what we want to do to a door in the gospel full stop if we think as a grand cultural strategy that is going to prove sufficient now I don't know what does prove sufficient other than we pray and we live like Christians and we preach the gospel so I don't I don't have an answer that leads to 20 years from now you know everything looks better but I do think in particular with younger generations sometimes feel like I if I keep my head down and I'm really really nice I'll be able to skate through and that's not going to happen that's not going to happen in your workplace that's not going to happen with the way online works you and if you it will buy you a few extra minutes then your friend down the road but eventually if you say no I think we don't just choose our biological gender it's it's given to us and it's a gift from God and it's not mutable and I think that not all forms of sexual desire and fulfillment are pleasing to God or good for human flourishing and no I'm not going to like your post about love is love or with the rainbow flag man at that point no matter how much of a great guy or woman you are you're gonna get buried and we need to help our people to be prepared for that yeah I and the two poster boys in this example I think is Max Locato and Louis Giglio I mean you criticize them for various things nobody has ever said that those are not nice men they're just kind gentle culture warrior has never been their stuff no and and yet both of them have been canceled for giving hate-filled sermons on homosexuality that were delivered years ago and yeah you're you're not going to nice your way out of the culture war yeah all right uh we'll come back to that sometime when we have Colin who can uh set us all straight but so he will have thoughts he has he has thoughts theories even one of the things we talked about before we'll just do this quickly

and then we'll finish with some books but you and I thankfully agree on most things which is really good because we're both right so it's good that we can see that one thing that we disagree on and may not be a weightier matter of the law but we've talked before about this television series the Chosen about the life of Jesus and we'll just it's a lot of people love it and some people have questions about it I have increasingly got questions for people pastor or professor what what's your take on the Chosen it's uh unlike other version other attempts at this there's high production value there's good acting um it's it's entertaining to watch uh it is trying to present faithful to the biblical storyline so I have my reasons for being not in favor of it and you have some reasons for thinking yeah it's basically a good thing so we don't have to do a lot of back and forth but just our listeners can listen and they can discern for themselves and at least get um what what's your you know elder Justin Taylor my family is watching the Chosen every Sunday night is that a good thing should we be doing that what say you yeah I think that it is a good thing on balance uh anything I think that gets us thinking about the biblical Christ I think is a good thing and I think that it should always have governors around it and we probably the the more people get into it the more we need to remind them that there is only one authoritative account and it doesn't have special effects and one of the things what the Chosen is they do some creative storylines and I don't think do anything contrary to scripture but fill in some details I mean it doesn't take reading the bible very long to realize the bible is oftentimes not interested in going into a lot of details you know they don't say hey here's some background on this person here's a sort of lifestyle that they grew up in or the challenges that they faced as a boy so as a storyteller sometimes you you have that liberty to come up with back stories um I mean maybe a more interesting discussion would be the I think it's called Luma series that does the the gospels and there's literally no dialogue other than the gospel I mean what's in the text so there's no creative storylines there is still depicting Jesus which is one thing that I don't know if you want to get into that we I do disagree a little bit all right well go for it what's what's the the problem with depicting Jesus is it more theological exegetical for you or is it more practical in terms of the the dangers on the ground as a pastor so it's both and you know that this is not front and center and my sermons or or ministry and so I'm sure that whether it's this series you just mentioned or it's the Chosen or back in the day the the Jesus film which I assume is still being passed out in evangelistic settings do I do I question that people are genuinely helped by this drawn into the scriptures that God has done good things yeah I I acknowledge that so my concerns are on both of those levels you mentioned so on the direct theological and this is you know stronger in the Westminster tradition than in others and it's there in the larger catechism and you know a number of ministerial candidates will take some level of exception to the the Westminster strong stance against images of Jesus and part of it is because it says even mental images of Jesus that's hard to completely put a governor on but I do think it is telling that we don't know what Jesus looked like and you could say in a way that Jesus the incarnation quote broke the second commandment okay I get that and I get the danger of thinking of a docetic Jesus he wasn't really human and could

we really see him so I understand those concerns and yet to present Jesus in realistic terms I think is a violation of making image you're showing God I mean the the Son of God and there's only one way that the Son of God wish to be seen and we can't see that right now and so we talked about this for I think the danger is I think that theological danger is actually greater with the series like the chosen or the Jesus film I think it's less in more abstract pieces of art or you know I think the great the dangerous greater in children's books that try to present cartoonish Jesus then in books that you know present obviously more abstract you know some thinking of the you know the biggest story book Bible coming out and there's going to be some pictures of Jesus it's hard to do 400 pages without ever showing Jesus but it's it's you know he's he's green and he said you know you're not thinking that's what these people really look like I think there's less of a danger for that maybe that's where I'm not as hardcore as some of my Presbyterians friends would be so you have that showing God he came in the flesh we don't know what he looked like we don't have that then there's the the practical sort of existential and it's connected to the first that I I'm I worry that a steady diet of that becomes very hard not in your to not form in your mind's eye well that is what what Jesus looks like the famous Walter Saloman you know painting of of Jesus of course very you know you know Anglo or to tonic or something looking and of course that's not accurate and I don't think it's wrong to present pictures you know to depict Jesus in different cultural settings and yet if you grow up with that in your Sunday school around your dinner table it's hard not to then when you close your eyes and you're thinking of you know praying in Jesus name that that picture comes in and that's mistaken and with with a series like the chosen in order to the gospels don't make good TV because they're not interested by and large in the things that good stories are interested and that sounds well it's a greatest it's the greatest story ever told well it is but you think about the crucifixion there's detail but it never focuses on you know Mel Gibson like the the utter pain of it it's on the shame and it's on the sin and to present compelling artistry and entertainment and television or movies you have to do a lot of character development you have to do a lot of what's going on inside you have to presume a lot of things with and you have to have the lighting and the music all of those are telling a story and I guess my contention is they're not as negligible as we think that they actually are very essential in telling and making the story and they begin to shape us and disciple us every music crescendo every close-up every sort of like they're shaping us as to what the stories were like I don't am I concerned that Justin Taylor or some of our you know are watching an episode and all of a sudden they they can't do good exegesis no but I think if that's your diet of Jesus even if you're a great reader of the bible I think it just can't help but form and shape the way you think about him and the way you understand those stories and all of those elements are extra biblical even if they're trying to be faithful to the general thrust of it I remember I wrote a paper this is the sort of person I am I wrote a paper in seminary against the Jesus film and one of the the lines I remember from there is people were reflecting you know it's like seeing Jesus and there's another he's you know just giving the gospel is it Luke that they use it's like seeing Jesus in real life well no it's not it's a

British actor who's there portraying Jesus and I think in evangelistic settings it's particularly dangerous you've you're you it's one thing for people like us who have been around it our whole lives to then see it and have the grid to interpret it but in an evangelistic setting how can you not help but think well that that's the person that's who it is that's even if they tell me it's just a movie that's sort of the shape and how I understand this Jesus to be so I think there are real dangers in that all right I've given my eight-minute sermon here and I will give you the final word my friends have told me on the podcast when I say you get the last word I always then say something afterwards so I'll actually let you respond to that and we'll be done with it are the rumors true that you actually went on submission trips and handed out copies of your paper before the team got there and showed that Jesus yes and then we many thousands came to know the Lord that way I think that you make a lot of legitimate points and I think that it's more compelling when you talk about the the practical ramifications in terms of some of the drawbacks because we by and large especially outside of confessional Presbyterian Reform circles tend not to think about any of the drawbacks these things only think about what it how it aids us and and yet I would say I think that there's a continuum so every pastor who has preached on Easter Sunday and goes into any level of creative meditation embellishment thinking through different aspects of what must have been like for our Savior is doing something that goes beyond strictly the text there's a form of creativity and a form of meditation and yet we need to be careful about it and so you know do audio bibles that put music behind their their reading and that there's an interpretive effect the the Bible narrator we're talking about just about audio at this point but there's an interpretive level there that's that's trying to go into emotions so I would find it hard to just be strictly black and white and just it's all or nothing I think we can be aware of the dangers on the theological side I'm less convinced that it's problematic to depict in any form the humanity of Jesus I think the disciples have memories of Jesus and they saw him in their memory is it wrong for them to have had mental images of Jesus if it's not wrong to have mental images would have been wrong for them to sketch something I don't think the shroud of Turin is probably legitimate but it seems like a good Westminsterian confession of us would have to burn the the shroud of Turin because there there may have been an image of the Christ on there so if you saw Jesus you can have a picture of him in your head we'll read that if you've seen him in person they get an exception when they take their vows right well it wasn't written for the apostles so all right that's that's those are those are good points and I have other thoughts but I did say you have the last word so this is the the final thing talk about books we talked about lots of different categories of books and some of our favorites and most influential give me two or three books that you've loved let's let's stipulate Christian books edifying Christian books that aren't on everybody's top 10 list or you know the the jipacker the John Piper the Tim Keller the Calvin the Bawink so do you have two or three that you found and they don't have to be world-changing but you think wow those were really helpful and I don't hear people talking about them and it'd be worth mentioning yeah two or three come to mind one of them is Robert Gundry's commentary



on the new testament so the the subtitle is verse by verse explanations with a literal translation and Robert Gundry is a retired New Testament professor he was actually the guy that John Piper was responding to him on the imputation of Christ and the act of obedience of Christ he did a commentary on the entire New Testament translated the entire Greek New Testament to kind of a literal translation and then just offers commentary on it and it has been one of the best resources I found Hendrix had put it out and Baker I don't know what the backstory is on the book I think it may be coming out now in two volumes but it is one of those that if you're doing devotions on your own or you're getting ready to teach something or you preach something it's always worth consulting he's he's very concise and very helpful another book that comes to mind just a completely different genre is by Greg Lucas wrestling with an angel a story of love disability and the lessons of grace Cruz de Forum put out this book several years ago and I was honored to do in a little endorsement for it and you probably haven't heard of Greg Lucas he's a police officer in west Virginia who has a son Jake was 17 years old I think when he wrote it and is an adult now but just talking through disability and our second youngest son Zephaniah has cerebral palsy and is not verbal and is uses wheelchair and walker so just listening to a theologically oriented Christ-centered father writing about raising a son with disabilities was just very moving to me and encouraging to me so there would be somebody who's you know Greg's not lighting up the world in terms of the conference speaking circuit the book was undoubtedly not a bestseller but a quiet faithful book that I really appreciated and maybe just a pluck one from the theology realm Bruce Milne's little book tell the truth just summarizing compactly doctrine books like Wingardom systemic theology you know far surpassed that in terms of reception and sales but that's a beautiful little book that I've appreciated over the years and worth going back to if you're thinking about something theologically so those are two or three that come to mind those are good I knew I was going to ask the question I didn't take enough time to peruse my bookshelves and come up with all the answers so I'm sure I'm forgetting books that I've read so much of the books that we love are when we read them did we read them and they just hit right at that moment what we needed to hear or we read them when we were new Christians are really growing in our faith and it became a go-to book I sometimes have those books I think that's not a go-to book for you I've always go back to because it was when I read it a few things there's a book called True Devotion by Alan Chapel Chappelle I think it's published by an Anglican publishing house and I think he's Australian it's called In Search of Authentic Spirituality and it's published by what Latimer something Latimer house and I'm looking at it but True Devotion I've used this for a staff book before Latimer Trust is what it is came out in 2014 I was in the UK one time and heard William Taylor who's at St. Helens and his friend of mine and he was introducing me and he said how much he liked what is the mission of the church and he said I had our whole staff book go through staff go through it and he said that's the second best book I've had our staff read so I had to say oh well that was nice what was the first book he said well sorry is the book this book by Alan Chapel True Devotion in search of authentic spirituality and it's a look

at evangelical spirituality it goes after some of the Richard Foster ways of doing spirituality and it goes back to the Bible but also to the Reformers to the Puritans and says some of the things that we take for default evangelical spirituality we're actually not in our four fathers and mothers and simple things like prayer is a conversation where I speak to God and then I listen to God he says no they said prayer is you speaking to God the Bible is you listening to God so it's a sort of book well opens people's eyes people may not agree with it but I found that to be helpful there's also a book just sticking with Aussies wisdom and leadership I've mentioned before published I think with science media Hamilton is the author and it's a big thick book and it's lots of chapters on leadership and you know he says they're they're the pastors who read John Stott and D.A. Carson they're pastors who read Bill Hybels you know it's dated they might not do that anymore and the leadership stuff and he's trying to say hey I'm this guy who wants to read Carson and Stott but we have something to learn from thinking about with it the book's too long but it's got lots of chapters it's really practical and helpful for leaders in the church and then a book maybe I mentioned before when we were talking about fiction books I don't read a lot of fiction but Walter Winegren's book the book of the Duncow I was surprised how much I liked it I had my wife Rita and she was sort of meh I don't know why why did you like this so much but I I found it captivating and in moving and last one is sort of cheating because people have heard of G.K. Chesterton but I think if they've read Chesterton they've read orthodoxy and I think my favorite book of his might be the Everlasting Man it's not the easiest read I'm having our staff go through it and right now and I think they're thinking why did you have us read this book he's he's a very witty writer he's very aphoristic in the way he writes which can be good and bad but he's really looking at the the sweep of the history of man and the history of Christ and it's over it's almost a hundred years old and it's just very relevant still today so that's a book by an author people probably heard of but maybe haven't read that book any last word mr. Beat Sparty co-hostors all right we give us a prediction and let's should we put something on on the line for this prediction I can't eat little Caesars anymore but what's a good like a good gluten-free product how about five guys they're they're I can get there all right so we'll do I have to pay for your entire family to go or just you yeah it's over a hundred dollars for our entire family just me okay we'll put a five guys all you can eat meal plus the peanuts which are back and if it so I'm going to say Sparty 38 Nebraska 31 what say you first numbers that came to my mind were 35 21 Huskers okay all right you heard it here first thank you Justin I always appreciate talking to my friend until next time or if I got enjoying forever and read a good book

[Music]