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What Happened to Young, Restless, and Reformed?

January 24, 2024



Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

In this extra-long episode, Kevin teams up with Justin and Collin to talk about something they were all deeply involved in: the movement known as the Reformed Resurgence, the New Calvinism, or YRR. What was this movement about? What went right? What went wrong? Why did the movement fracture? Is "Big God theology" in retreat or just flourishing in different ways? Stick around for reflections on these questions, plus some book recommendations and how to fix college football.

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Light + Truth Podcast

Transcript

Greetings and salutations. Welcome to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin D. Young, Senior Pastor of Christ's Covenant Church in Matthews, North Carolina.

I am joined by my familiar guests, Justin Taylor and Collin Hanson, who is looking like he's been in the Grand Cayman Islands with sun bleeds. I'm just hearing in through the Birmingham sky. Or just fake podcast lighting.

One of the two. Fake podcast lighting. Very good.

Good to see you guys. All right. What should we, I've got some good things for us to talk about.

But let's start where everyone wants us to start. Football. I mean, Nick Saban, Collin, you saw this coming.

You had an inside knowledge of it. What's the word out there in Alabama? When did you even tell? When did you do the news? When did he, when did he give me the news? He failed to notify me. Believe it or not, you guys may have heard the story that at 3.59, the day that he retired, he was interviewing candidates for jobs.

And then at 4 o'clock, he announced he was done. It really did seem to do with the fact that he couldn't tell assistant coaches that, you know, that he was going to stay. He said, it got harder and harder to lie about things.

I don't know. We're not taking it well. In my neck of the woods, we got, we got people jumping in, bass, pro shops, tanks, naked.

Over here, we've got guys getting stuck in outdoor vases and they have to, I mean, it's chaos. It turns out the only thing separating Alabama from Florida becoming Florida man was Nick Saban. Now he's gone and we're just Florida.

So that's, we've got to deal with that. So anyway, it's pretty rough. But hey, I mean, this

is a life in books and everything special.

We got a South Dakota coming to Alabama. Yeah, right. And Curtis Riggs, I was talking about one of my high school teammates and play it.

When you say grew up with them, it doesn't mean you guys were buddies. Oh, I grew up watching him. Yeah.

So, but I mean, it's up to go to. I grew up with whole Cogan. Well, it's not Dakota.

We all really did basically grow up together. It's just not that it's not that big of a place. So, yeah, when I was when I was playing football in high school, that was when he was excelling at the University of Sioux Falls, his quarterback, Curtis Riggs, their famous coach, Bob Young.

Bob was really big in fellowship of Christian athletes and I had just become a Christian at that time. So it was really cool to watch and very exciting him bringing a South Dakota accent to Alabama is quite an adjustment for us to watch. And him also bringing South Dakota levels of dress formality or informality, we should say, is also a little bit of an adjustment.

But it's it's quite a sight to behold not going on. It's the South Dakota accent, different demonstrably than the Minnesota. It's just a little less pronounced with a little little little little little more Western twang, not really Western twang, but a little more country than that.

But it's basically the same. Kristi Noem. That's a good authentic South Dakota.

Yeah, he doesn't. Kalan doesn't have it quite as much. But keep in mind, 10 years ago, he was still the coach at Sioux Falls.

I mean, that's quite University of Sioux Falls, NAIA. That's a that's a big jump in 10 years. Indiana, Fresno, Washington, and now Alabama.

I certainly don't think he would have seen that coming in 10 years ago. In the spirit of the airing of grievances, which by the way, after that episode, I'm just I'm just noting grievances everywhere. Getting ready for next year.

Yeah, I mean, almost every other day, I'm remarking, I need to write that down that that too is a grievance that I'd like to keep track of. So I'm sure I can't possibly remember all of them. But do you guys have do you have one thing in your mind that you think could fix college football that is somewhat in the realm of possibility? I mean, what's going to happen? Everyone that I that I know who knows people and knows things says the name, image and likeness.

Wild Wild West days we're living in where it's just out in the open. Yeah, you got to pay

somebody \$2 million. You know, high school kids getting NIL payments just pretty out in the open for years before they matriculate to college.

Do you guys have a solution? I think it's running for commissioner football. So he's thought to this. He's got to give it to each.

Well, I'm interested to see how this is working for Nebraska. But, you know, back, it was about 10 years ago or so when the union, the movement for unionization started at Northwestern. And it was widely criticized.

The quarterback who undertook that and ended up the coach having to be in arbitration and things like that. It got really nasty. Ultimately, we're going to have to have collective bargaining and the students are going to have to become employees.

It just isn't any other option other than that because it'll be in the best interest of the universities because they have to be able to negotiate contracts and be able to hold the athletes accountable to contracts because they're going to have to have to have to have to have to have to have to have to have to have to have to have to have to become employees. And the transferring and the NIL's deals aren't working for them. So they're going to have to concede.

I think that's what will have to happen. Then you see if you have if you have salary caps or things like that. But the simplest way to look at is to say, college football could go the baseball route, whereas every man, woman and child for themselves and the sport shrinks, or they go the NFL route where they're all in it together and the whole sport increases.

That's my guess. But Justin, what are they saying in Nebraska about it? Or in Iowa about Nebraska? Yeah. I mean, Matt Rulepoint, Matt Rule came from the NFL to back to the college ranks.

And he pointed out there's no contracts. So I just heard about Florida player, high school kid, who has offered like a 13 million five five year deal. And then it didn't materialize.

There's no guarantee that you're getting that money. So how do you prevent people from, you know, you're a college kid. You're moving across the country going to university thinking you're going to get X amount and you're not.

So yes, something has to standardize. But Nebraska's on top of that. And I think I think if you're not, you're you're kind of dead in the water these days.

All right. So life and books and everything. Let's go to the books before we go to our main topic for the day.

Any book you guys read over the holidays or started. That's worth mentioning. You got

anything for us, Justin? Now, mention two that I started and haven't finished, but one non-Christian one Christian David Grands, the wager.

I don't know if either of you have read that, but David Grand is a narrative nonfiction author investigative journalist, writes for the New Yorker, probably at the top of his game, I would say, and, you know, on Eric Larson type, but he wrote killers of the flower moon, which has become a long movie. And he is very good and wrote this about the wager, this ship that crashed and basically begins the book by saying I wasn't there. I didn't see any of this.

I don't know definitively what happened. But as a historian journalist, when you are dealing with a plethora of good source material, you can reconstruct the story, especially if you're gifted as a, a neurotivalist. So that's one.

Would you say I have a plethora? I have a plethora. Let the reader understand. The Christian one is a crossway book.

I read from every crossway book, but don't sit down after they're published and read every single book, unless they're by Colin Hanson and Kevin DeYoung, of course. Does anybody, I mean, does anybody sit down and read every crossway book? I think there are some guys and women are sales and marketing. They seemingly have read every book.

It's crazy. But Jonathan Lehman's book, On Authority, there's so many books as a publisher that you think, what can we publish next that has not been covered? This has not been covered recently, adequately from a reformed evangelical perspective. And I think Jonathan landed on something that's really important.

It's not marginal. And that there's not a lot of great resources on thinking through authority, divine authority, authority in the church. We've got elders who've got congregation, authority in the family.

You've got parents and children, authority in marriage and the workplace. It's a really important topic. And I don't know if anybody else has really worked through biblical material, theologically conversant with a heart that wants to care for society and church and family, so appreciating Jonathan's work on that.

Yeah, that's good. I have that and I've just started it, but looking forward to reading through Jonathan's book there. I've read a, well, I'm always a fan of Alan Gelzo's next book, and he's going to be on LBE soon.

So his book? Again? Yeah, he is. That's like the best LBE interview ever. And he's got a lot of interesting books.

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He's got a lot of interesting books. And he has really choreographed, many lengths. They think he records the book.

They know all sorts of things, so the book has lots of stories that you'll find really fascinating. And then it's also communication blah blah blah baby. So he distills these into some basic principles of how to communicate with people and how to get what you want.

So on the on the negative side, you know, if if you're just coming to the book and you don't have any kind of virtue or moral compass or Christian background and I don't know what his background is, you could just use the book on, oh, here's how to manipulate people. Here are the techniques of, you know, active listening, the questions to ask, the ways to negotiate, you know, a moral compass and framework and actually there are some moral principles in this book. It could help you with everything from talking to your teenagers to negotiating conflict on an elder board or in the workplace or trying to get a better deal on a house or on a car.

It just really fast. I mean, I don't know if there are any lessons in there that will strike you as, wow, I'd never ever thought of that before, but he really distills them well into kind of sanctified common sense principles that you realize, oh, yeah, I do see how I'm glad that you've you and other people have thought through how to negotiate with with terrorists. And one of his big points is it really takes the the soft power rather than hard power that is old school mechanism of just in your face.

I'm not giving that to you sort of put people, you know, in their place, he says rarely works, you need them to know that you're trying to understand what they want, what are their issues behind the issues, because everyone, even in those situations has something that they want, even if they haven't quite realized the thing that they want. So never split the difference. And that's gonna help, it's gonna help me be friends with you guys.

I don't think it's not easy. I don't negotiate with terrorists and toddlers. That's right.

But I would give myself, Colin, did you read a Russian novel or? I did, I did just pick up

another Scandinavian work the other day that I'm looking forward to. No, I thought of a few books in particular related to to this podcast and our friendship. One of the ways to put it, I think in there is to say it's a really good book to read with your elders in your church, especially those who would wear the different authority hats in the home, in the workplace, as well as especially in the church.

And so really, really interesting, really good and wide ranging book in there. So thought of that one, Kevin, the book that you just mentioned there sounds a little bit like David Brooks's How to Know a Person. So I wonder why there's been a multiple books that seem to be very popular, just talking about how we can be friends with one another, maybe as a post-COVID kind of phenomenon going on there.

But another, I don't know, have you guys read the Meachum book on Lincoln? And there was some fluid in a marms and noble, but yeah, I mean, I would, I would recommend it. Of course, it helps if you just love reading about Lincoln, like, like we do. I had somebody tell me the other day that they, they really like Meachum, but they got into this book and they thought, Oh, it's way more academic than I was expecting.

That's actually why I like this book because I don't like Meachum's other stuff always for the opposite reason. So this one was really, really good and felt like it shed some light. But the one that I wanted to mention here, I have either of one of you in Kevin.

I've had him, I've had him on gospel bound, but he'd be a good guest for you here as well. It'd be Get Married by Brad Wilcox. Yes, he's coming on LBE in a few weeks.

Okay, perfect. Yeah. So I would have, I should have expected that.

That is a really, really helpful, fascinating book, another one that I just think should be widely read by church leaders, by, by families, anybody trying to think about the big issues of why people are not getting married and not having kids anymore. But I don't know what you guys see. But when I mentioned things like the, the just precipitous decline of, of children, as well as of marriage, I don't think most people even realized that that's happening.

What do you guys think? Is this like common knowledge that we're in this demographic collapse, almost around the, I mean, almost everywhere around the world and, and that very few people compared to any other generation are getting married anymore? I think it's, I think the news of that has, has snowballed in the last 12 to 18 months. Okay. I mean, there've been, there've been books on this and I wrote a piece in first things last year on it.

So I know there have been books for the last 10 years or so, but it does feel like very imperfect sense of looking around. There's just more and more people in mainstream news sources writing about this. So I feel like it's getting known.

I don't know about the person on the street. And I also think I live in, I hate saying a bubble because that sounds negative, but I think I live in a, in a pleasant world of surrounded by a lot of Christians and healthy Christian institutions. And we all have problems, but healthy families where I think I don't see in my immediate circles, this precipitous decline, the person with nine kids says, but I think more and more people are aware of it.

What I don't think they're aware of it, I think they're aware in an intellectual way. I don't think people realize, no, this is not just a kind of hand ringing as Christians like, Oh man, this is so bad. People aren't having getting married and having kids.

This is the explanation and explanation for almost every societal ill we have, not the only one, but an explanation. It's both cause and effect of, you know, almost every societal ill that we have. And we just saw that the population in China is, you know, turned a corner last year, a bad corner is declining and is now declining precipitously.

That means very bad things. Just look at in the United States, various states, where people are leaving outbound migration and where they are coming, like they're coming to North Carolina, they're coming to Florida, they're coming to Texas. There's a whole lot of things you can do in a state when you're growing, when more people are there, more tax base and you dream and you plan versus Illinois, Iowa, Alabama is probably growing a little bit.

I don't think I don't think people realize the major effects this will have. And anything that that that's deep is is very difficult to change. One of the things I said in my article last year was, you know, the government may be able to come up with with different tax policies and programs that encourage people to have the kids they want to have.

There's no record around the world of government programs that convince people to have the kids they don't want to have. If you want to have a kid and you're just kind of thinking about, man, I just don't know them the money and the there are some things around the edges that can nudge people. But by and large, it's a lack of a desire to get married early or at all and have children and that is deep and systemic and going to be very hard to change.

This wasn't going to be the topic, but run with that Justin before we switch over. Going back to Colin's original question, my sense is that most people don't think like you guys think and just think of this issue only anecdotally. So if you're in a church where the kids graduate from youth group, they go off to college, they come back and they get married that summer, you think marriage stuff is going great for the generation.

If you're in the opposite situation and kids are in their 20s, they're getting into the 30s, they're not dating, they're not having kids, they're not getting married, then you start I think I think the average person in the street only thinks of this in terms of what do I see

in my immediate circle and it is not cognizant probably of larger trends. And so that's my contribution. All right.

Thank you for the books. Now on to our topic of the day, but first to thank our sponsor, the aforementioned Crossway. Thank you Crossway.

And encourage folks to check out Johnny Gibson's new book. So it's just been a great series of books. First be thou my vision, 31 day devotional, which you can use over and then there is one for Advent and now he has one coming out for Lent Oh sacred head now wounded for individuals and families, 48 day liturgical devotional guide that will lead readers through Easter Holy Week, Pentecost, and just like the other ones, just really rich, deep, thoughtful, easy to use, pulling together resources from in particular, the Reformed tradition, but you know, good, deep, Protestant, liturgical kind of devotions.

I've heard lots of anecdotal evidence of people using this in their churches, sometimes in their services and their homes. So Oh sacred head now wounded by Jonathan Gibson. What I want to ask you guys about is a topic that we've talked about a lot in private and at times we've said, well, should we should we have an LBE episode about this? And so we're gonna venture it.

It's probably a topic we'd have to return to two or three or four times to do it justice. And we won't be able to say, you know, a fraction of what we might say. But that is to talk about this thing called YRR, young restless and reformed movement.

Sometimes it was called the new Calvinism or the Reformed resurgence. What sparked this recent round of some discussions and ruminations is an article that Jake Medor and mere last year last year last week and some reflections in particular about Gen Xers. So Justin and I would be toward the end of the Gen X cohort.

And I think Colin, you're just over into the earliest of the millennials. So we can welcome you as, you know, a vagabond in our midst. So you can feel free to riff on what Jake's piece was about and just thinking.

And I think one of the, you know, one of the themes that in particular we may want to talk about is, you know, what's one of the problems that young, then young, Gen X leaders, pastors, thinkers were promoted too soon. And so he was comparing with like Keller and Piper and others who really kind of came on the scene publicly when they were in their early to mid 50s, which, you know, that's still more than five years away for me. I'm 46.

So was it that people were elevated to positions of leadership, prominence, platforms too soon and have proven to flame out in different ways? So that's one thing. And last word of preface, one of the difficulties, I think for the three of us in talking about this and why I haven't ventured this as a conversation point, is because this is going to sound sort of

full of ourselves. But I think the three of us had a had a front row seat for a lot of this.

I mean, Colin wrote the book *Young Restless and Reformed*, though some people have said that I wrote the book, not Kevin, believe in a John James McDonald was insistent that I wrote the book, I didn't. And so the three of us have been involved in a lot of the institutions, conferences, organizations with it. And so one caution is, I don't want to talk about myself, a second caution is, I don't want to talk like this was of such worldwide magnitude that it demands all of our attention.

And then third, because, you know, we have relationships, some of these people, we had relationships and we don't so much anymore. But many of them, we still do. I'm just very, very cautious.

I think it's easier for someone who's a relative outsider, maybe new one or two people, or someone like Jake, who's maybe 10 years younger, is what I think he is to write about it than having been kind of right in the middle of it. Because as soon as you start talking meaningfully about why we think this happened and this didn't happen or what went right, what went wrong, you start talking about people. And you could say out there, well, this is, you know, good old boys network, people circling the wagons, you don't want to, well, you know what, this happens in every human endeavor, an institution.

The people who say that about young wrestlers reform, they have their school that they don't want to, they don't want to say things about, you know, their former whatever colleague or we all have circles of friends and some of those friendships get complicated and some of them become ex-friends and some of them have disagreements. And so I think that can be cowardly reticence, but it can also be wisdom and understanding that, you know, sometimes we need the perspective of not just a few years, but many years or even decades to kind of talk about some of these things that happen. So that's been my caution in talking about this in a specific way.

But with all of those as our guardrails and our caveats, perhaps we can have something meaningful. What was, why are, was it good? Is it gone? Did it fall apart? Let me start with you, Justin, with some definitions. How would you describe to someone what is or was young wrestlers reformed? Yeah, so two guys will throw the book on the topic.

I should start with with you guys. But I think yet, you know, kind of a street level way of defining things, it was a movement involving a lot of pastors, but not exclusively, that's celebrated and was into big God theology to use Piper's way of defining it. And they had a gospel centered flair to it, that for all the good, the bad, however you want to evaluate it, the players who were involved with it, whether that's speaking or publishing or organizing, we're seeking to tie things to the gospel that the Christian life is about going deeper into the gospel and spreading the gospel and rejoicing in the gospel.

It had elements of Calvinism and Reformed theology. Perhaps Kevin might say with a

particular baptistic flair to it, the Presbyterians and Baptists and Anglicans and Lutherans, but I think mainly Baptists and Presbyterians were kind of the drivers of it and a complementarianism, I think was another feature of it, perhaps not always kind of the leading edge, but there was a conscious thought that if you're Reformed in your soteriology, if you're complementary and in the way that you think about church and home, and if you love the gospel, then we can work together and we might have separate churches, we might have separate publishing houses or whatever, but we can gather, we can learn from each other, we can kind of link arms in a common way. So that would be off the top of my head.

And I would say as a movement, it had the definitional strengths and weaknesses that are always there with evangelicalism. And I know some people argue, is evangelicalism even a thing? Should we be saying the term anymore? And it's true, I was just reading something recently from Mark Knoll where he acknowledges to call the word evangelical, of course, is very old, but evangelicalism as an ism wasn't really talked about until post World War II, this neo evangelical consensus. So yeah, it's always difficult to say, well, what is that? And it has the same you know, the breadth of it can be a blessing, it's bringing together lots of people across denominations, but mainly Baptists and Presbyterian.

But the challenge then is, well, there's there's no ecclesiastical structure, it's not a denomination, it's not a church. And like evangelical movements tend to be, it centers around certain people, institutions, conferences. So with YRR, it wasn't so much colleges and seminaries, those certain ones would be favorable to it.

But I think we'd all say that together for the gospel conference, the gospel coalition website and conferences and regional chapters, Acts 29, was a part of it. You know, sovereign grace ministries and those churches are older than that. But you know, that was one thing.

And it was a bringing together desiring God for the, yeah, desiring God cross way. And it was a bringing together, which I want to come back to, of a lot of different movements that had, as you said, I think a big God theology, Calvinist soteriology, inerrancy, penal substitution, complementarianism. Now I'm going to come back to I think one of the weaknesses inherent was it was a relatively thin doctrinal set of boundaries, important, but maybe not as robust as it needed to be to hold the movement together.

But you know, I think during those those years, let's just say maybe 2000 to 2015, I think you could you could look around and see as lots of people noted, that's a lot of the same people at those conferences and those conferences and people coming together and often endorsing the same, you know, each other's books. And there was something that was not completely defined, but not completely undefined that was growing in attracting people and was used of God, I think, Colin, you wrote the book, How Would You Define

Young Restless Reformed or The New Calvinism? Well, I think it's important that I didn't call it young reformed. Yeah, I mean, it's young restless reform.

And the reason that that was significant is because anything that you're rightly pointing out here or that anybody else has criticized, it was there from the beginning. When a Jesus movement charismatic church network discovers the doctrines of grace, that's going to be an interesting mixture. Let's see how that plays out and then combining with the homeschool movement.

Okay, that's a lot of stuff there. What how's that going to play out? What happens when you combine the secret church pragmatic approach with the emerging church ethos in a post Christian environment, recognizing the emerging manhood crisis. And then you throw reform theology in there.

Oh, and then also throw some some charismatic theology in there. What's going to happen with a bunch of young gen X folks when that when that happens? Well, that was that was restless. And we've kind of seen what's happened there with X 29 and with Mark Driscoll in particular.

So part of what I observed as a journalist was these interesting mashups, almost like a, you know, a Grammy Awards when you have all these different styles of music that are clashing together on stage. And sometimes it is incredibly beautiful. And sometimes it just sounds, it sounds bad.

And that's basically what you what you get it with young restless reform. And like you said, Kevin with with any kind of movement. I did a book in 2010 on on revivals.

And one of the things that was most helpful for me to see there is that by definition, every revival ends. The when a revival does not end, that's when Jesus comes back and you get the new heavens and the new earth. But otherwise they always end.

And sometimes people have more negative or positive use toward revivals within their own reform tradition. Kevin, of course, we've seen that in the Presbyterian church throughout time. And that that is that continued through young restless reform, some with more positive and some with more negative views.

And we can talk about some of those negatives, especially from a from a Presbyterian perspective. But every movement, I mean, even say the first great awakening that only lasted a few years, maybe three, maybe four, something like that didn't last very long. But successful revivals, blessed by God, they institutionalize.

And that's effectively where we've been for for quite some time. And so, I mean, we'll come back to this in terms of evaluations, I'm sure. But my overall perspective is that you had something of a revival.

However you want to describe that, that institutionalized the way that successful revivals usually do, and the influence of new Calvinism, it's not so new anymore. But in the sense of Calvinism itself, always being a significant influence in American religious life, that continues like crazy. And all you'd have to do there is look at your seminary numbers.

And you'd see the ongoing influence of Calvinism there. Those are a few thoughts, Kevin. So here's where I want to go.

Let's you mentioned evaluation. So let's talk about what was good. Then let's evaluate some problems.

And let's look at that twofold, both problems that the movement could have seen or should have seen and ones that nobody could have seen and everyone's facing. And then we'll end on, I think, a positive note asking the question, well, is it over or what continues that is encouraging of this kind of impulse? So first then of those three or four questions, evaluating what was good. Because I think it's easy now, people just list like you did, especially after the podcast, like Driscoll, Mars Hill, and you can just list.

And then it's just all sort of bad. And in particular, if you want to come with a, you know, Jesus and John Wayne kind of squint to see and put the worst possible construct and blame the theology for personal failures and all of that, it's easy to just have a negative. We were all there.

There were tremendous blessings of books, of conferences. I mean, I'll just say the most wonderful times I've had, you know, outside of the local church, we're at those together for the gospel conferences where each sermon seemed to build on each other. And we just have, you know, I have memories that I'll always remember of sprawl or a Piper message.

And even the conversations, because Mark Deaver was always very intentional on sequestering the speakers through all the meals, because he wanted the relationships to build. And every January, we would meet at Southern Seminary and Al Moller would host us. And, you know, I considered a privilege to be in some of in that fellowship and among those friendships.

And we had really substantive conversations. We didn't always agree with each other, but we really did pray for each other, ask what was going on in each other's lives. There was at its best in those best days a real friendship that that was behind the scenes and spilled over into some of these conferences.

And, you know, even today, I meet all sorts of people who, you know, got their theology on the right track through one of these networks or a crossway book published at that time or through John Piper leading them into Calvinist's soteriology. So it would be really, really unfair to just look back with a very cynical squint as if gospel coalition T4G, you

know, these various speakers and movements associated with it didn't do by God's grace a lot of tremendous good in what they celebrate from that era. Four or five things come to mind.

Number one, publishing and institutions. I think you can have you can make a lot of noise. You can have a lot of energy.

In our world, if it doesn't translate into publishing, and if it doesn't translate into institutions, it's sort of like a firecrackers. You know, it's a main thing. It's bright.

It's brilliant. But books often are what change people long term and institutions change people, even though they might not be the the sexiest part of a movement. I think they're essential to, and there was serious publishing and institutions developed and changed and solidified.

Secondly, there were really serious talks. It could have been a lot of kind of workshop-y things. It could have been a lot of frivolous things, but you know, if you went to the average conference, you could a guy stand up there and lecture essentially or preach for 45 minutes, 50 minutes an hour.

And, you know, in the emergent context, it was all let's sit on a bar stool and talk and invite dialogue. This was, we are going to preach. We are going to teach and people would sit and listen to substance.

So I think that's an interesting thing. And they were serious. It wasn't a lot of frivolity or gamesmanship.

It was guys who were really prepared and brought substantive messages. Third, there was a theology of suffering. I think that when Matt Chandler got cancer, if you can talk about the collective ethos or mindset of a movement, it was a sobering moment.

And I don't think you could have a substantive movement without acknowledging the reality of suffering in the world. And you would have John Piper and Tim Keller and R.C. Sproul, mature men who had seen affliction and had lived a number of years and held people's hands when they died teaching and modeling how to walk with people through suffering. Two more that come to mind.

Number four, if I'm not losing track of my numbering, there was a worshipful element to it. I think if you asked any of the people at T4G, what's your highlight? You know, they might say Kevin DeYoung, sermon, HP Charles, talk with us. They might say that first.

But the worship to gather together and to robustly sing and it wasn't just we're going to just kind of mumble through a song or two until we get to the main act. But people were there to express themselves in worship and in singing. And I think that was a sign of health.

And then last thing I'd say quickly is just I think evangelical Christians sort of get a reputation for they adopt the latest trends about five years after the world. Does it were always behind the times? You know, we make we do romance fiction after the world makes that popular. I think with this movement, there was an appropriate place of trying to use the latest technologies to spread the gospel and to teach.

So early adopters with podcasting, with websites, with making sermons available. I think all of that was just helpful if you want to influence of movement, take advantage of the latest technologies. Jake touches on this in the essay and maybe we'll come back to some of the things in his essay.

But I thought that was an interesting thing that it was able to develop without the social media structure, but to take advantage of websites and podcasts and the like. So it could spread without some of the damaging things that come along with the technological spread. So those are those are five things.

That's my list. What do you have Colin? Just a couple things. One of them you just built on right there, Justin.

I think given this technological revolution to put it mildly that we're living through of the internet, something was going to emerge in that in that atmosphere. And you saw the emerging church as Kevin wrote about of course in 2008. And that was the basically the premise in a lot of ways to my book in 2008 as well was the spread of emerging, the emerging church and Rob Bell's Numa videos and things like that that were insanely popular at that time.

And so it was anything but clear where these things were going to go. But one of the great blessings that continues through this podcast so much of our relationships have been built this way. And of course my my day job with the gospel coalition is all because of the way these reformed ministries came together around the internet with a positive engagement exactly of what you're talking about there, Justin, of getting out great material almost all of it free to the point of just unprecedented access to great current and historical resources for the church.

That was a totally something was going to emerge with that revolution. And I'm really grateful that it was a lot of a form theology. The second thing which is sometimes off people's radar.

I'm not sure why but crossways played a huge role in this is actually women's publishing and really pause. I mean we're in an era where if you look at the top best selling books, many of them read by women, a lot of it today is still unfortunately really not good. Some of it's just not great.

Some of it's really bad. Some of it's okay. Some of it's even good.

But a lot of the stuff that crossway has produced really serious material by women. Some of it for women. Some of them for the whole church.

Authors like Jen Wilkin and Rebecca McLaughlin have only emerged in the last still 10 years. Or so that was a huge blessing that's changed all countless lives. Tossen Rosaria Butterfield in there.

I mean these are total changes from what had happened before. And I think Kevin, one of the things that actually we probably do bring to the table that other people don't, you did a good job of explaining all the things that people can rightly maybe criticize or hold against us in this conversation. But one of the things that we can talk about is that we know what it was like before.

Because we grew up in it. I mean we went to the seminaries, we went to the universities, we saw these things, we were in the publishers, we know what it was like before and after. And of course this is the same for those who are older.

But I think we experienced them in some ways at a younger age that was formative and that kind of bled through this transition. So those are a couple of good things I'd mentioned Kevin. You also said something important Justin about pastor led.

And here I'm going to say this as a pastor, so maybe it seems self-serving. But I think conservative evangelicalism is healthiest and best when there are pastors to lead its doctrinal, its piety, its worship formation. And I think we see this even kind of before young wrestlers reformed.

I mean you think of a Jim Boyce, Sproul, MacArthur. Now one of the knocks, and I think it's somewhat fair, today I know some people will say well there can be an unhealthy clericalism that makes it sound like pastors. They're going to give us our political theology.

The pastors, it's true, pastors aren't experts on everything. And we shouldn't think that only pastors can speak meaningfully to Christian people and to churches. So I totally agree with that.

One of the things that pastor led does though is that at its best it focuses on doctrine and history and missions and worship and evangelism. And it brings to bear a perspective that I think is missing. And as somebody pointed out last week with the dozens of books being published against evangelicalism right now, you can just look at them.

I don't know if any of them are written by pastors. It's not that there aren't pastors who have those criticisms. But I think it does shape you in a different way.

Before you criticize a whole ism, you're thinking of the very people that you're leading,

that you're loving, that you're serving. So I think that's really good. In some ways, this movement we're talking about is victim isn't quite the right word.

But it is a victim of its own success. Meaning there are certain things that grew to such a size and maybe eliminating other sorts of voices that everyone is kind of now a part of this conversation. And a lot of disparate voices are in there.

In other words, if somebody from McCormick's seminary in Chicago doesn't like something we're doing, it's like, well, you're not, I don't know, okay, fine. You're not in our networks. You're not at the conferences.

But as this thing grew in more and more people, that's how it goes. And there are more and more people having these conversations. And I think to maybe transition to some weaknesses, I think if people just said yes to Calvinist's soteriology in a general sort of way, and complimentarianism in a general sort of way, sometimes it was like, oh, well, that's it.

We're all on the same team. And it could mask over really significant differences. But one of the, you know, the really good things is, you know, expositional preaching, the centrality of the local church, to your point, Justin, crossway can't publish all of these good books and this renaissance of systematic theology and all the rest.

If there aren't people to buy them, and I think it's owing at least in part to this movement from 2000 to 2015, that there are people who want to read these things and buy them. And, you know, Colin, you and I know that, you know, sometimes we've disagreed about certain articles that TGC has published. And probably no one has said more internally about that than I have.

It's true. Everybody should know that. We have a lot of these discussions privately.

Well, I mean, to be quick, but here's what I want to say positively, positively, because there are, I could, you know, if you guess the articles that Kevin Deung has disagreed with, you're probably right. But here's what I want to say. I mean, TGC has always, you know, emphasized expository preaching, this centrality of the local church, it's always sounded a clear note on abortion.

And, you know, we don't, it's easy to just kind of take that for granted. But those are pretty big things that a lot of people agree on, and we should be thankful for it. What were you going to say, Colin? Well, and that didn't exist before.

I mean, that the one I keep emphasized that did not exist before. I was just going to say that in in some of the criticism I see people give you Kevin about what you oppose publicly or not, sometimes I think people can be rightly cynical about that. I mean, in the sense of saying, well, I see what he's saying publicly, but who knows what he's saying privately? Well, I do know what he's saying privately.

And there's a lot of good and necessary. And I think for the most part, healthy disagreement about, I wouldn't just say specific articles. I would say just what exactly should we be emphasizing and how? And I think if you're going to have a healthy institution, let alone a healthy movement, you have to be able to have those conversations.

You have to have them among people who are our friends. And if, and if you're an institution that doesn't have some tension there, then you really don't represent a very large group of people at all. One of the other tensions to mention in here, and then I'll get back to you guys can get back to some of the evaluation, comes from the international side.

This is an international movement now that it wasn't when I wrote my book in 2008. It's another part when you talk Kevin about the broader evangelicalism discussion. It's right to think about the United States when it comes to that, but there's no ownership of anybody of evangelicalism, but certainly not in the United States.

When I go to Amsterdam or Stockholm, where I get invited to Kuala Lumpur, or I'm talking to people in Cambridge, they're just individual places recently, or Edinburgh. I mean, these are people who they have their own expressions of the same movement, but a similar appreciation of what we're talking about here. And I'm sure Kevin that's represented in the people who listened to this podcast.

That's another blessing, but it comes with attention as you pointed out, because there's going to be agreement on some of these essentials, but what decide what it decides that our essentials and non-essentials are all of a sudden they're going to switch over time, those non-essentials, and some of those non-essentials have become more essential in some people's eyes and have created a lot of understandable tension. So, Justin, you can riff on that, or we can turn the corner here as we do evaluation and think about what were some of the things that we should have seen, and maybe we did, and maybe we said it, other people did, so you can make the we as generic as you want, but that this movement should have seen we're going to be problems and shouldn't surprise us that there's been the fracturing that there has been, and then we'll round that off with the things we couldn't anticipate and then end with some positive. So, go ahead, evaluation, Justin, what are some of the writing on the wall we should have seen in the heyday of this movement? Yeah, I'm hesitant in some ways to answer that, because I'm just so aware the hindsight is 2020, which is a crochets, but it's true, and I was thinking about these things in the heyday, you know, like, am I judging this person wrongly? Am I being naive? Is this person should not be trusted or published or invested with this authority? And some of that may be just reflexive defensiveness, because none of us, the three of us, are detached journalists or historians looking at this real far, but we're all involved with people and with various things.

I think it's very difficult to handle success, rapid success. I think that you can shore up a lot of weaknesses, but you can't get an injection of spiritual maturity. So, I think some of those things where we were investing too much in people who were not prepared to handle it? I think that's one of the points.

In Jake's message and you've alluded to it, his article, you alluded to it earlier, Kevin, that it's not that John Piper wasn't known or had published anything until he gave his one day thing, but his most prominent message was when he's in his 50s and same with Tim Keller, when you have some of these younger guys, when they're hitting the peak of their career in their 20s and 30s and publishing, I think that that can be problematic. And I don't think that we always know how people are going to handle number one success until it happens and number two, adversity when it happens. So, you can have a football team that just, the locker room culture is amazing when you're on a winning streak and then when adversity starts to happen, intentions start to happen, what is your culture like within that? So, I know that one of the criticisms going to be that the agreements seemed more substantial than they were in reality, but I think the agreements were about things that genuinely did agree on.

Some of the things hadn't come down the pike yet, so you don't know how people are going to react until those things happen. I think I'm rambling incoherently here. So, on this.

No, it's not incoherent. I'll jump in. We're not rescuing this line of thought.

No, I don't need to rescue it. You are right and it's a good caution and even my own mind, I can think, yeah, well, I should have seen this clearly, but things seem more clearly than they do at the time. But a few things that at least should have been some cautions and I think people saw.

So, we talked about elevating some people too quickly, but now having said that, I hope maybe even some of us would represent Gen Xers. All three of us were elevated at young ages who, you know, at least haven't flamed out. So, you know, we can point to the people, some of them are friends and we've talked about Josh Harris.

We had meals with Josh. Josh is completely deconstructed. He's very public about that.

So, yes, I do think people were elevated too quickly. And I think that was often because they had people since they were on the right trajectory and maybe, you know, the wisdom might have been to try to understand where people, you know, did they have the roots that went deep enough? But as you said, hindsight can be 20/20 on that. One of the things that you alluded to, though, is I do think while there was real agreement on the issues, I think at time it was not deep and historic enough.

So, here's easy for me to say, but I did say this to some people back in the day that I

thought, and this is the Presbyterian in me coming out, I thought the, you know, the movement we were having of coming together would not last if it didn't get, you know, much deeper into history and into historic confessions in seeing ourselves as, you know, unapologetically a part of a deeper tradition and a deeper movement that didn't just start in the 1950s or didn't just start in the 2000s. So, I think that was a weakness that people could have seen. And there was genuinely, here's the good and the bad.

It was a season and era of coming together where now we are in, I would argue a 15 year period of redrawing those lines where the burden is not on coming together, but on making sure that our particular tribe is, is pure. And I don't say that in a negative way, because I think both can be good impulses. But just think about the names, even Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, sort of before this a little bit, together for the gospel, the gospel coalition, the names themselves suggest we're bringing together people in this, this movement, in this moment.

And Mark Dever was very upfront with he wanted T4G to be a pastor's conference. It wasn't, it wasn't meant to be more than that. It was to encourage pastors and he wanted lots of pastors there.

And so he's going to bring people who would attract lots of pastors. And so, yeah, was a movement as wide as John MacArthur and Mark Driscoll, the Mark never came to T4G, it was quite a deliberate decision. Was that bound to have really serious fissures and fractures? Of course it was.

And I think it's probably another five, six, seven years to, to finally resort and reshuffle the deck and figure out, well, where are the, the new alliances? So I think there was too little, you know, we talked about a center bounded set, not a boundary bounded set, which sounded good, but what did it, well, yeah, but what are the, what are the, the boundaries? And I think as the, some of the issues changed, we just, we, sometimes we're maybe caught, and I'm saving this about myself, caught flat footed, is how to address a new set of issues for a movement that was particularly addressing one set of issues. Okay, inerrancy, Reformed Soteriology, Complementarianism. And once you get on board with those things, what happens when a new set of issues come about? And, you know, it was heavily Baptist.

I think it's some of the, the largest T4G conferences when there's 13,000 people, there were like 200 people from the PCA. Now the PCA is much, much smaller than the Baptist world and Presbyterians may feel like they have precipit, precipitaries to do this. But I, I think one could rightly say that, well, it wasn't really a, you know, Anglican.

It wasn't Lutheran. It was Baptist with infused with some, some Presbyterianism. But on the other hand, that's often been kind of how the evangelical movement has existed and has operated with, you know, lots of Baptists and Presbyterian capital are Reformed guys, you know, writing the Theologies and, and guarding the flanks.

Colin, what else would, would you say? Are there some things that folks should have seen at its heyday? And I also, last thing that came to mind is, you know, when that article came out, one of the things that's changing the world is the New Calvinism, the Time Magazine article. I think a lot of us sensed there, there's a real cutting, a double edged sword when you're the cool thing. And so, Emergent, okay, not going there, Seeker movement had kind of crested, and that was a boomer ethos.

And now this had the vibrancy of this is the cool thing that's happening. And that attracts a lot of people who think this is the really fun, exciting, big new thing that's happening. And that's bound to get a bandwagon where everybody doesn't really fit.

Colin? Well, it's interesting. My hesitation, I'll just share one thing that I think was, should have been seen in hindsight, because so many of the things that people say or even that have come with this conversation, these have been conversations that we've been having with each other and with lots of other people since 2008. This isn't these aren't new conversations.

You could say, well, should have seen more of the antinomianism coming? Well, among our peers, we were having those things. Or even you mentioned our friend Josh in there, the mantle of leadership and burden for Josh was always heavy. That was always hard for him.

And that was something that we tried to encourage him through. I mean, you could just keep talking about specific things or, you know, other people that you look and say, hmm, probably should have seen that coming with a Mark Driscoll or James McDonald. And you can think, well, I mean, yeah, kind of did.

It felt like it was pretty unstable from a from a beginning stage in there. So the one thing though, that I think is pretty clear, it's going to be the flip side to what I said earlier on the internet side of things is probably I jump in on these things because that's the area that I work on the most. You know, there's a big difference that I see between boomer parents and Gen X parents on the one side and then millennial parents when it comes to their kids and technology.

It's interesting that boomer parents and Gen X parents seem to be a little bit more older Gen X optimistic about technology or neutral toward technology with their kids. And then all of a sudden 2012 happened and smartphones happened. And now we've got a decade of research that shows that this is really bad, really bad for kids.

And millennial parents began to adjust on some of that. I think a similar thing has happened with the younger generation. So we talk about not promoting young people too quickly, though, again, it's kind of a double edged sword there because the three of us were all promoted at early ages, Matt Chandler, David Platt.

It's not like every story played out negatively. It's just they just played out differently. Similarly, when you look at the people who were promoted early on, I think we just look back now and say, younger people see that there are more dangers.

That's I think one of the things that Jake's piece got got right was that younger people now are more aware because of social media of the dangers of being successful. Because the moment you're successful, it will be extremely, perhaps even overwhelmingly negative of an experience for you. Whereas early on, as Jake said, you were shielded from some of that negative feedback and it delayed you became more prominent.

And it collapsed. I think now, kind of like pastoral ministry in general, young men in particular are less likely to say, yes, I want to jump in there and become a theology and church influencer at age 22 or 24. I think they recognize that that is a that's a hard road.

That's a really good point. I do think there was a temptation and sometimes it was a vain ambition. You know, 15 years ago, sort of aspire to be that person on the platform.

And that's always, you know, can be in the human heart. But I think there's a lot of people calling who now fear. Oh boy.

I mean, the thing I'm circling here on my paper over and over again, the internet. Yeah, exactly. Now it existed, but not in the way it does now.

So yes, the reformed resurgence has fractured massively. Some of that could have seen coming. Some of that are for noticeable reasons.

I think one we haven't talked about, just to use Marston's categories that Keller often employed, doctrinalist, culturalist, pietist. While everyone shared, you know, some of the same doctrinal parameters, not everyone was a doctrinalist first. And the people who were culturalists were not the same kind of culturalist.

I think the pietists actually was, weren't the leading edges. So for example, I'm a doctrinalist. I could make the case why, but I'm just, I'm a doctrinalist.

One of the reasons C.J. Mahaney and R.C. Sproul could get along so well, even though very different in some very different theology, they're both first doctrinalists. They're both thinking, let's guard the theology and the doctrine of the church and pass on. Where others, yes, they agree with the doctrine, but they're culturalists, but of two different kinds.

The culturalist of, you know, maybe MacArthur or even, I think, how AI, you know, and I've seized things which would be, there's a lot of danger and we have to build walls to protect that infiltration or the Keller, Acts 29, you know, we need to build bridges to reach that culture. Now, I think both are, are justifiable impulses depending on the

situation, but you, you have all of that people signing the same kind of statement of faith, but really their impulses are very different. And then you have the, the new digital age, which makes it much more difficult.

I mean, I don't know. Will, will there ever be a Billy Graham? I don't mean, you know, of gifting and Billy Graham had his own, you know, you know, Ian Murray wrote the book on how Billy Graham's kind of approach was not good for evangelicalism. So there's criticisms there, but I just mean someone who is broadly by lots of people, most Christians and even non-Christians thought of as one of the good guys.

Will that be possible? Not just because it can be hard to think about the gifts of a Keller or a Piper or a Carson being replicated, but to your point, Colin, you know, that the internet specializes in bringing people down. I mean, just think of, you know, some of our heroes, what, not that they had skeletons of the closet, but just normal human foibles or bad staff experiences or top down leadership styles, the sort of things that would have come out and been laid at their doorstep had they been prominent in this, this internet age, which would just be shocking. Quick point on that, Kevin, Billy Graham went through many of the most tumultuous, political and racial challenges that anybody can possibly imagine, but he never would have survived the internet age with those never.

He could have even survived Lyndon Johnson in the Vietnam War. He survived Richard Nixon in Watergate. He survived trying to navigate desegregation and Martin Luther King Jr. in the South.

He survived all of those things. No chance. He would have been able to survive that in the internet age.

No chance. And to give an illustration from our circles, I was in the Piper archives recently and Piper has talked about an article that he wrote for their church newsletter in the 1980s that came as close as he's ever come to getting fired. That may have been an overstatement, but people, it was on sexual purity.

People in the church thought, oh, this is too. You're talking about things that should be kept private. It was provocatively stated.

It was a provocative article. It was John Piper and 40 years old writing there, and it caused a stir at the church. And somebody, I was just talking about it with somebody at Desiring God, and they pointed out nobody knew about that outside of Bethlehem.

He did that. It was hard. That would have been, people would have been quote tweeting it and dragging him and trying to make him... Imagine if that had been asked Pastor John.

Right. Right. Exactly.

So being able to weather controversies in the pre-internet, I had some advantages for people like that. And to just round this out, the evaluation about the things that we couldn't see. Ferguson in 2014, Trump 2015, 2016, other racial issues, but George Floyd, COVID.

All of... Rifra in there in 2015 as well. Rifra in there? Yeah, right. Freedom 2015.

Yeah. So all... I think it's safe to say, at least in most of these spaces, there was a kind of unwritten rule. I... Not rule, but understanding that we're probably not only conservative theologically, but everyone's kind of conservative politically.

And so you can talk about beware of the idols of the donkey or the elephant, because everyone kind of figures, well, you're probably, because of the abortion issue and others, probably mostly Republican here. And I think as there was a real growth with African Americans coming into this movement, I think in hindsight, it was an uneasy alliance. And I think it led people on both sides to maybe kind of put their best foot forward with, yeah, I'm with you on this, but maybe I got some political things I don't agree with, or I'm with you on acknowledging America has racism in its past, but I'm not quite all the way with you and how to describe what's going on today.

I think those underlying tensions, which we're kind of navigating and putting our best foot forward, all of those events that we just talked about, expose them and the internet, blew them up. And when I have people say, look, the reform evangelicalism has fractured, and I've written about it, it's undeniable that it has, but I also want to say, tell me one movement that hasn't fractured. Both political parties are desperately trying to figure out what is their core constituency, those political lines are being redrawn.

Academy, elite institutions are in disarray, conservatism as a political movement is having all massive fights on what it means to be conservative. So the internet age gives outsiders an outsized voice. And so the good thing is, yeah, if you have something thoughtful to say, or even if you just say something loud enough, and often enough, you can get a following and get a hearing.

And that's good when people need to blow a whistle and there's voices that would have been unheard. It's also means that those who have to run and manage institutions are always at a disadvantage. Now they may still have power in an institutional way, but they're always at a disadvantage because they have boards, they have employees, they have all sorts of things that they have to think about where somebody else over here can come at you, come at you hard, and then say, why didn't you give us a response? All of those dynamics are at play.

Ask any university president, ask any media leader. It's a totally different space than it was before. By the way, here's one thing that you guys could or anybody listening can do.

Ask a group of young adults in their 20s, what year the state of California banned gay marriage. Ask them what year they did that first. They'll respond with complete shock that it saying that it ever did that will make a no sense to them whatsoever.

Second, when they say something like 1980 1960, something like that. And you say 2008, the same year that Barack Obama was elected president and he and Hillary Clinton both were against it. Oh, and by the way, Barack Obama also did an event with John McCain at Rick Warren's church.

Yeah. That will completely blow people's minds. So also to understand the pace of social change that was not necessarily inaugurated but was carried through eight years of president Obama, especially on sexual issues, and then from 14 on to 21 or so on racial issues, that pace of change.

I'm talking with somebody soon about this on my gospel by podcast, but it these are the two. I would say the critical race theory quickly, in 10 years, it was a corner of the academy to taking over every elite institution. In 10 years, before most people even realized it happened, gay marriage is the largest and most successful social change in a short period of time in American history.

Those two things happened at the same time, at the same time as young wrestlers were formed. And there were mistakes in hindsight. Absolutely.

That whether it's critical race theory or broadly woke, what that looked like 10, 15 years ago is whether it's different or not, or it just didn't see all of it. I think some people thought, we kind of lean into this, spit out the bones and I really appreciate Neil Shenvie's work and Pat Sawyer. I think they've done really good work on exposing what that is and Carl Truman too.

And I mean, the T and the LGBT was almost, I mean, it wasn't there. It wasn't there. Not no eight, but by 14, it was the top search term at the goshbookoalition.org. Transgender was the top search term.

That's so quickly that happened. And one of the difficulties that I still wrestle with is a pastor. There are many times where I thought, okay, do I want, part of me wants, you know, Mark Deaver or Ligon or somebody, you know, way in on this big issue.

And then part of me wants to say, well, Mark's pastor in Capitol Hill Baptist Church and he's teaching about Baptist polity in nine marks. And I kind of want Mark doing Mark's thing. So I think a lot of us have pastors have wrestled with, where is it faithfulness to speak into some of these hot button issues and the assault from the left? And then where is it being unduly distracted? So, you know, I've written about Doug Wilson before and Doug has one approach to it.

And I agree with many of the things that he's against. And I'm on record of saying that's

not the approach that I favor. But I think it's one approach to say, we're going to comment on almost all of this stuff.

And as a pastor, I'm often wrestling. Okay, New Yorker, whatever does the article with the cats and polyamory. Yeah, should I write an article about that? I have a website.

Should I do some on world opinions? You could certainly make the case that I should. But then I also fall back and think, you know what, it could be my full time job to comment on all of the bad things that are happening every day. So when do you say something when don't you? I think that, you know, the the the blogosphere has massively changed.

It used to be a lot of pastors. And I think, you know, there's very few pastors because you have to be ready to comment on something almost instantly, which is hard to do when you're working on your sermon or visiting somebody in the hospital. And you have to do it constantly.

So I think the the the punditry sphere has been professionalized in a way that makes for some better commentary. But also it means that you're having you're having certain you're having people who are who gravitate toward punditry rather than pastoral ministry. That's just what I imagine that decision real quick.

Imagine that decision in 1996, Kevin, about whether you should comment about the New Yorker with polyamory. First, would you be a New Yorker subscriber in 1996? Well, I'm not, but I just see it on Twitter. Yeah.

Or my friends show it to me. So first, you're not even subscribing to the New Yorker. And neither are the vast majority of people in your congregation or even people that you know.

That's number one. Number two, imagine I'm at Christianity Today magazine. And I think it's a big enough deal that I ask you to write about it for us.

Okay, that's one thing. But second, otherwise, you don't have an option to write about it. I guess you could write about it in the Charlotte Observer if they wanted you to learn my church newsletter.

But yeah, I guess you could. But the fact that anybody would have to decide, do I want to talk about this on my podcast? So I want to write about this on my website. Again, that's a post internet discussion in the past.

You would have, first of all, you wouldn't even know that it happened. Second, nobody else would have cared that it happened. Third, you would have said, I'm sorry, I have a hospital visitation that day.

I mean, I can't do it. That's a totally different decision that everybody has to make now

than they had to make before. Right.

So we expect this constant commentary and punditry. And if you're not doing it, then you're not engaged. You're not involved.

And I want to say, well, there's a lot of other ways to make a difference on these cultural issues. But we have gone way over time. Are you ready? Can we end with the last question? And we want to make sure we hear from Justin.

So I'll ask it provocatively, you know, reformed evangelicalism is very fractured. That's undeniably true. And we I've said after 15 years of a coming together phase, I think we're in 15 years of a redrawing splintering phase.

But could you make the case that the young restless reformed or the reformed resurgence of the new Calvinism is still going strong and has not died in ignominious death? Give us some good news, Justin. Yeah, I think when asking that, I think you guys will be on the same page here. We don't want to deny or downplay or be Pollyanna ish and say, Oh, there's no, no problems.

Everything is just as it was before. And this is all just spoke or attack or something like that. You're totally right.

There has been fracturing. There's been splintering. There's been relationships that may not be restored and reconciled.

This side of the new heavens and the new earth. And yet at the same time, I think you're right, Kevin, that God is still working. You know, add to my list of grievances, people who say that, you know, a work of God was totally stopped in its tracks.

I just think that's wildly untrue. I'm biased looking at crossway. Crossway is flourishing as it never has before is is pumping out 100 plus books a year that are substantive, that are operating out of a quote unquote big God theology framework and applying that to children, applying that to pastoral issues, applying that to women, applying that to teenagers, addressing everything from biblical studies to systematic theology to depression, anxiety.

It just we are living in a golden age in some respects of Christian publishing. What what we're seeing in terms of conferences, we may not have the one large convening conference, but Colin can speak to this. The TGC numbers are flourishing on the website and conferences.

It's, you know, we've got the Quorum Dayo conference, pastor's conference coming next month that is going to draw pastors to a local church. There's still a lot of great energy. The last T4G, it wasn't like, you know, 200 pastors just showed up in a cavernous room.

It was filled the cross conference, the sing conference. There's there's still a lot of energy and there were some people who kind of jumped on for the ride when it was the cool thing to do. And when it started to get attacked or people presented it as a bunch of Neanderthal men who were trying to suppress women jumped off the bandwagon.

But there's there's a huge contingent still I think that that believe in this theology and want to link arms with fellow believers and want to worship and want to stir each other up to to love and good deeds. So I think it's still going. There's undoubtedly fracturing and splintering, but I think the Lord's still in it.

Yeah, and our desire is not for any sort of, you know, movement that gets named by us or by anyone else. The Lord can do a million things in a million different ways and local church is more important. I would even say your denomination, if you're part of one is more important.

But just by those measures, you know, the reports of its death have been somewhat exaggerated. So the cross conference had 11,000 students there to hear good teaching and preaching and missions and sold 47,000 books, I'm told. I mean, that's four books per person for those students.

Some of those books are going to change those students' lives. Just some of the networks that I know, the PCA, I think is more robustly reformed and confessional than it was 25 years ago. And it's growing very slightly.

But in this cultural context to be growing or not shrinking is something. I mean, RHB with our friend Joel Biki, I mean, has grown exponentially. Ligonier, I'm told still has some of their best conferences and best giving.

So there's lots of these ministries or just think of the four principles from together for the gospel, all of whom are my friends. As far as I can see, Liggins doing a great job, RTS is flourishing. I know that to be true because I work at RTS.

I think AI's venture with world opinions has been successful and boys in Southern are still going strong. CJ and his local church and Sovereign Grace are continuing to grow and have lots of fruitful ministry. And then Mark, CHBC is a healthy growing vibrant church and nine marks continues to grow.

So just to look at, yes, it looks differently. But once you start to health, and I'm with you, Colin, when I travel around the world, it's not that they care about being a part of something called young wrestlers reform. They don't care about that at all.

But they do care about these resources. And they still are listening to many of these same voices. And we have much to learn from them as well.

But there's there's a lot of energy all around the world still on discovering or

rediscovering this theology and finding health and vibrancy and doxology in it. So Colin, give you the last word. Sure.

Well, just speaking on behalf of TGC, I wish we were this dead 10 years ago. We would have been in much better shape. Largest budget we've ever had, largest giving we've ever had.

I think a lot of this has to do with your perspective. If you're a super online middle aged person, then I suppose you can declare the young wrestlers reform dead, I suppose that's us Colin super online middle age. Well, we are exactly.

But but see, we also have the benefit of being on the other side of the curtain. And I think when you're on the other side of the curtain back in those heyday 10 years ago, you actually probably saw a lot more bad 10 years ago behind the curtain. But but in the front for super online, it probably looked a lot better.

But see now to the super online because of all the attacks, because it just when you become institutionalized, you become more of a target in this era. We've been talking about it probably looks worse, but behind the curtain, it looks a lot better. It looks a lot healthier.

And I think just last word here, if you if you're a woman, if you're a student, if you're an international church leader, this whole looks, this is very different. This is a golden era for you. When you consider the conferences, the publishing, even some of the ways that God is making the gospel clearer to people and more compelling to people against the alternatives of a world that feels increasingly unlivable.

A lot of the signs that we see among youth are are really positive in there. So just a lot of it depends on which perspective that you're coming from. But just again, if you're looking from TGC's perspective, you're saying, well, I mean, and going back to what you said earlier, Kevin about the Jesus and John Wayne stuff.

I mean, I think we have about the largest women's conference. There is and 488 women signed up for our latest women's ministry cohort and things like that. It just the metrics from behind the scenes don't look bad.

They look super encouraging, especially compared to 10 years ago. But the narrative quote unquote, the narrative is what usually kind of plays out on Twitter. And that's just it is very different.

Yeah. And there is no long term life in any movement that is just parasitic as a critic of some other person movement theology. And so what remains to be seen, what happens with the, you know, this whole other kind of movement that is anti evangelicalism, anti complimentary and anti a whole bunch of things.

And there's a whole cottage industry of books. And I don't doubt that they can sell a lot of books, but unless there's some positive vision of something you're building to, that won't last. If you're just saying, thank God, I'm not like those other nasty people over there who are doing dumb silly things, it won't last.

And let me just end with this encouragement to be committed to your local church. The Lord has not promised any school, any movement, any ism to last, only that he will build his church. So I think that's one of the healthy things.

And hopefully, you hear that. And support your pastor, pray for your preacher. I meant to, I missed the ad for desiring God, but I can say it, you know, seamlessly, listen to good preaching.

Like, like all of us have benefited from from Piper and light and truth podcast, which is their new one that gives old sermons from from Piper is a great place to start. There's Sinclair Ferguson has one, Eric Alexander. I mean, we have such an embarrassment of riches.

You can go online and listen to some of the, the, you know, the greatest preaching in the English language from the last half century, and be blessed by it. And the most important preacher in your life is the one that stands up in front of your church behind your pulpit on Sunday morning. So pray for him and encourage him.

And hopefully, something we've said here can be an encouragement to those men as well. So thank you, Justin. Thank you, Colin.

And thank you to our listeners until next time. Or if I got, enjoy him forever and read a good book.