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Live Conversation with J. Ligon Duncan, III

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

In this episode of Life and Books and Everything, Kevin DeYoung interviews Dr. J. Ligon Duncan, III, chancellor of Reformed Theological Seminary. This interview was recorded live on stage from the Faithful Conference at Christ Covenant on November 7th. Listen and you'll learn the books and people and places that made Dr. Duncan who he is. You'll even find out his DJ name.

Timestamps:

Early Life and Conversion [00:00 - 7:16]

A True South Carolinian [7:16 - 10:17]

Encounters with God in Study [10:17 - 15:20]

Taking the Racial Blinders Off [15:20 - 23:08]

Critical Race Theory [23:08 - 27:47]

Reformed Books [27:47 - 31:57]

Covenant Theology [31:57 - 33:08]

Ligon Unplugged [33:08 - 38:50]

Lightning Round [38:50 - 48:27]

Books and Everything:

Knowing God, by Jim Packer

Search the Scriptures, edited by Alan M. Stibbs

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, by Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Reformed Dogmatics: Theology Proper, by Geerhardus J. Vos

Dr. Duncan's Class on Covenant Theology in the RTS App (iOS | Android)

Favorite Hymn: "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds," by John Newton

Systematic Theology, by Louis Berkhof

"Denn alles Fleisch, es ist wie Gras," mvt. 2 from Ein deutsches Requiem, by Johannes Brahms

Transcript

[Music] Greetings and salutations. Welcome back to Life and Books and Everything. This is Kevin DeYoung.

Next week, hopefully, I will be joined again with Justin and Colin as we finish off this season before we take a break for the holidays. We'll be interviewing Carl Truman and talking about his excellent new book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Soul*. For today, we have a special interview.

This took place about 10 days ago at our Faithful Conference hosted at our church. After his opening address, I took about 45 minutes to interview my good friend, Ligon Duncan. I hope you'll enjoy the conversation that Ligon and I had a couple of Saturday evenings ago in front of some appropriately masked and social distance people at our church.

I was able to talk to Ligon about his background, about his love for Clemson football, about critical race theory. And of course, we talked about books. If you're not familiar with Lig, you need to know that he is the Pope of Presbyterianism.

Well, if there was a Pope, he would get a lot of votes. But he was, for many years, the senior minister at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi is now the chancellor and CEO of Reformed Theological Seminary. So yes, he is my boss.

A lot of people can say that about Ligon. And in addition to all of those things and writing books and having a PhD from the University of Edinburgh, he is, as everyone who knows him can attest, a fine, kind Christian gentleman. And he's a good friend to me and to many others.

So I hope you enjoy this interview with Ligon. Good to have you with us. Well, I don't know if this is fun for you, but one of the reasons I do this conference, I started one like it in my last church and then trying to fit some starts to get it going here but COVID and other things interrupted.

But here we are. And for me, I love to be able to bring in friends and leaders like Ligon and get to hear him preach, of course, and teach. But this is almost the highlight for me.

It's to ask him questions, interview him. It's fun. I learned things, but it also feels like you're not a stranger here, Ligon.

But it also feels like getting my church family to know a friend of mine and getting this good friend to know these dear brothers and sisters here at Christ's Covenant. And I know we have some folks who are visiting from other churches. We're glad you're here.

So I'm going to, I have, look at, I'm so, you can tell I'm not millennial. I'm still Gen X because I wrote things out on a notepad interview, Ligon Duncan. Maybe the most important question.

What is the score of the Clemson game? I have no idea. Somebody, some worldly person out there. I have tried not to think about that so I could serve you well.

Why is it Notre Dame's winning? But, you know, it's early. It's early. Well, just... So, tell us just a little bit, and I got a bunch of questions.

So, do as best as you can for a preacher to be short. I know it's hard for us. Tell us a little bit about your background, your family, how you became a Christian.

I grew up in Greenville, South Carolina. My dad was a ruling elder in our Presbyterian church, my home church. My mom was the choir director.

So, we were the last ones to leave church every Sunday. So, I grew up in a wonderful Christian home. Mom and Dad, you know, taught me the gospel and the scriptures from my earliest days.

My father helped me memorize the shorter catechism when I was three years old. I made a public profession of faith when I was about ten years old. My pastor had done a wonderful job of explaining the gospel.

He was a man named Gordon Reed who taught at RTS and pastors to this day. Pastors to little churches down in Sardinia and Al-Haloos, South Carolina. So, I had a wonderful home life and church life where the gospel was taught to me from my earliest days.

And, you know, I can't remember a day when I didn't know that I was in need of grace and that I didn't know that Jesus was the one that I needed for my Savior. And I professed that publicly when I was ten years old. And then really, by the time I was fourteen, felt a call to the ministry.

And your mom is still at? Mom, God willing. She's an impressive woman. God willing will be 88 years old in about a month.

She is still living in Greenville, living with my youngest brother, Mel. And she is still the matriarch of the family. And are you, so Mel Duncan is on staff at Second Press, Greenville.

Some of you know that. Some of you maybe know Rick Phillips is the senior minister there. And you are a proud South Carolinian, but you've been Mississippi for a long time as well.

I don't know anyone who is more South Carolina than your brother Mel. He is very South Carolina. Now do you share that? I preached there two years ago for their conference.

And I was doing Sunday. So I sat in on the Sunday school and once you know it, your brother Mel was doing a Sunday school class on South Carolina Presbyterian history, which increased my knowledge multiple, multiple fold. Yes indeed.

It was not great before that. Are you just as die hard about all things South Carolina? Very much so. Very much so.

My dad was from Union County, South Carolina, just south of Charlotte. And came from a family that had been in South Carolina since before the Lord proprietors had contract from the King to be in Charleston. So the family has many generations of South Carolina history and dad was a history buff and I've always been a history buff.

So I love all things South Carolina. There's a famous story when John Lafayette Gerudo, the famous Charleston preacher, was released from, he was a prisoner war during the Civil War. And when he was brought back on a wagon from the prison camp that he had been in in the North as the wagon approached the state border of South Carolina.

He shouted out to the driver, "Stop the wagon. Stop the wagon. I must lay my head on the bosom of my mother, South Carolina." And John Adger in his biography says, "It was a strange scene, but it was characteristic of the man." Yeah.

So that's a typical South Carolina. I had my phone over there, but my watch is connected to it and it just said that Mel Duncan texted me. So I can't see what it is Mel's watching, but he's got something.

So when I thought I'm very happy to be here in Charlotte and moved here over three years ago and my family and I love being here, I'm a Yankee. You know, that's where I'm from. And when you grow up north of the Mason Dixon line, sort of, especially in Michigan, everything south of Michigan.

So I remember one time I was at a conference in Louisville and I got back in one of our deacons said, "No, when you were out of town this week, were you in Texas or where were you?" I said, "Well, I was in Louisville." He said, "I knew it was someplace down south." Just sort of all kind of-- Everything is down south, yeah. So when you said this to me many times, and I should have been smart enough to realize this, but you know, you talk about how different Mississippi is in South Carolina, when you're from Michigan, it's all kind of just down south. Just like everyone said, "Now you're from Michigan."

I went to Minneapolis one time. No, that's Minnesota." They will start with N, it's very confusing, and they're cold. What's different? You've been a Michigan- Oh, I mean, there are a lot of different subcultures in the states in the south, but there are also subcultures within the state.

So in many of the coastal states, there will be an upcountry, a Midlands, and a low country with very distinctive cultures. So in South Carolina, the low country was dominated by the English planter class. The upcountry was dominated by Scotch Irish yoman farmers.

And so you had very, very different cultural, political attitudes depending on what part of the state you were from. And then states like Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi were often populated by the third sons of families in the Carolinas that didn't have any land that they could get from the family farms. So they moved to Georgia or Alabama or Mississippi to get farmland and start their own families out.

So when I first got to Mississippi, I ran into a lot of names that I recognized as South Carolina surnames, but they were people that had come to Mississippi many years ago in search of land. So you do get different cultures. In Mississippi, you have part of the coastal region of the state, very Catholic.

And there's really not a really Catholic part of North or South Carolina, but there's a Moravian part of North Carolina. So you get all of these different interesting things in different southern states that impact the culture. So just give it to a straight.

What is the South Carolina stereotype about North Carolina? Oh, I shouldn't say that. They're almost Yankees. But you would have to read the introduction to Ben Roberson's Red Hills in Washington to get the South Carolina take on North Carolina.

Well, I can tell you what my kids think of South Carolina. That's where you go to buy fireworks. Ah, because you go across the border and you get fireworks.

So you grew up in South Carolina. You went to Furman. You went to Covenant.

And you got your PhD in Edinburgh. What did you learn at each of those places? Maybe it's an academic answer, but maybe it's how you grew in your faith. Just give us a quick snapshot of God's work in your life at each of those institutions.

The Lord was really good to put men in my life, not just my dad, who was a great dad, but other godly men in my life. From my high school to my college to seminary and to postgraduate work. You just had a wonderful effect.

Not all of the ministers, some of them ruling elders, godly laymen. That taught me what it was like to be a Christian man, what the important things in life were. So my college choir director had a huge impact on me.

Was really, really good to me. And I learned a lot in that context. When I was in St. Louis, Robert Rayburn, who had been the longtime president, the seminary sort of took me under his wing and mentored me and was really good to me.

As was David Calhoun, who you'll have read, David was a historical theologian who fell of South Carolinian, the son-in-law of Allen Flee. Some people recognize the name of Allen Fleece from Columbia International University and Graduate School. David was very good to me.

And then I had the same experience in Edinburgh. So good church life in each of those places. And godly men in my life that modeled either good pastoral ministry or just good Christian living.

Did you find lots of Duncan's when you lived in Scotland? Duncan is so much more a, it's the given name more than a surname in Scotland. You do find Duncan's, but Duncan is typically a first name. And you can imagine with the name "White Mind," people were confusing it all the time.

My Duncan Ligon, what am I? So, yeah, you do run into a lot of Duncan's and stuff. How often have people wondered if Ligonier ministry is your ministry? Oh, all the time. I do credit Ligonier.

Ligonier is one of the reasons why people can pronounce my name. That's true. Because you can imagine with the name "Ligonier" you get called all sorts of things.

And when I started doing stuff with Ligonier ministries, I started having people say, "Hey, is this named after you?" and they could say Ligon. And it's Jay Ligon. So what's the Jay and why'd you go with Ligonier? Well, my name is Jennings Ligon, Duncan III.

So my father and his father were both named Jennings Ligonier. And now your son is. And now my son, Jennings Ligon, Duncan IV.

Jennings Ligon was the name of a circuit writing Methodist minister in the edge field district of South Carolina in the late 19th century. And he must have had an impact on my great-grandparents because they named their third son after him, Jennings Ligon. And one of the interesting things about that is my father-in-law comes from a line of Methodist ministers.

And in the old Methodist directory for the conference in South Carolina in the 19th century, the name Harley, which is my wife's maiden name, is right next to the name Jennings Ligon in the old Methodist directory. So my father-in-law's ancestor and the person for whom I named are right next to one another in the Methodist directory, predestination. So at any rate, yeah.

What did you study with your doctoral work? And who was it with? I worked with a man

named David Wright, who was an expert in both Reformation and in early Christianity. And I got terrible advice from a professor which I've always been glad that I got. The terrible advice was go do something in my PhD that I had never worked on before, which is just all advice.

That sounds like bad advice. I mean, it's criminal, criminally bad advice. And so I spent two years feeling like the stupidest human being on earth because I'm studying with one of the best guys in the world on this topic.

And I know about what a seminarian who's had one ancient and medieval church history course knows. But I'm really glad I worked in early Christianity because most Protestants, certainly in the 1980s, were not paying a lot of attention to early Christianity. Now today, the Lord has raised up wonderful Bible believing reformed theologians like your Christian education pastor here, Blair Smith, who know the fathers.

But that was not super common in the 1980s. And by the way, RTS has been blessed with a sort of fate of riches in that regard. We've got a number of guys that know their stuff in early Christianity.

And that's very important in our day and time. So going back, you're obviously proud in an appropriate way of being South Carolinian, being Southern, being however many generation, Presbyterian and ruling elders in your family. So you're grateful for your history.

You're grateful for your southern history. You're not looking to topple the metaphorical statues in your past. And yet you've spoken at number of venues, you know, quite personally and publicly at times about your own experience of race and understanding race.

What have you learned in the last 15 years? Well, I'm not aware of it. It was just that I had blinders on. Kevin, and part of those blinders had been actually cultivated to me in the way that history was told in the South.

And part of it was just not knowing what to look for. And I've gone back in, for instance, I've gone back and I've looked at notes that I took in, I took a Southern Presbyterian history course with David Calhoun in 1985. David, he sprinkled all the breadcrumbs out in there.

I mean, all the things that I should have known and everything should have come together and clicked. I should have known in 1985, but for whatever reason I am slow. And it just took the Lord a long time to open my eyes to, oh, oh, that's what was going on.

So, you know, I'm not a historical iconoclast looking to sort of debunk everybody in the past or, but I also, as a good historian, I want to be honest about what had happened.

And Mark Devere and I've talked about this a lot because he had a very similar upbringing. He was in Kentucky and had a very similar view of the South and the politics and of culture.

And he and I have both said that our historical reading in the last 20 years has really ruined the nostalgic sort of view that we had had about the Southern past. And, but honestly, that's a more Calvinistic way of looking at things, you know, because this is a fallen world and people are totally to pray and they do terrible things. And even wonderful people can do terrible things.

And so I want to be honest about all of it. And, you know, just because a person, you know, even a great person does something wrong or holds wrong views doesn't mean that everything else that they did doesn't matter. But you do want to be honest about the effect of those things that they had done wrong or embraced wrong.

So it's safe to say you and I probably learned American history from our, did you go to public school? Probably in very different ways. I mean, I, and I'm not saying what was better or worse, just, I mean, growing up in Michigan and a public school in the 80s and 90s, we certainly learned about the Civil War. And it's kind of, I mean, it's important that we watch the Ken Burns thing like every year in my history class.

We often had the coaches teach the history classes, the offensive coaches, but they got to enjoy a lot of movies. You know, good for you if you watch the Ken Burns stuff, but the funny thing is in our own day and times, you know, Ken Burns is being criticized for being far too safe. Right, right.

Yeah, it shall be put on there. But we, you know, I just learned, it was sort of a straight line from that to Martin Luther King Jr. who was a hero and was great and the Civil War was, you know, I haven't learned, you know, Lee was an admirable person, but good thing that the union won and sort of next part of the history and you probably learned it a different way. Yeah.

Yeah, and, but honestly, the, the similarities between the way that American history has been taught in the Northern schools and the Southern schools are greater than the differences action. Right. So both Northern and Southern public education had a very similar view of Reconstruction and it was a view of Reconstruction that was highly influenced by the way the Southern, the way that the other schools were taught.

And then the Southern thinkers tried to influence the way that that that Reconstruction was perceived. It was a kind of great corruption. And, you know, thankfully that finally the troops were removed and the suppression left and things were much better once they were gone and actually reconstruction in the Northern, Northern school textbooks probably was taught very similarly to the way it was in Southern school textbooks.

And of course, I wasn't interested in that era. I was interested in the Civil War. I was interested in the American Revolution.

I was interested in the First World War and the Second World War and the Great Depression. I wasn't interested in Reconstruction. And that really is the era where so much gets set going forward into the 20th century.

And I, that's just something that I did not adequately study or understand. So as you look at, I don't want to say a church like this, but maybe just more broadly to PCA and just stick for a moment thinking about the issue of race, which is so difficult. Where, where are you concerned from the right and where are you concerned from the left? Just speak to what you think some dangers are.

Well, you know, I think our biggest challenge in the PCA since 1973 has been that of indifference rather than some sort of active racial animus, sort of animating our life and philosophy in church life. I think our founding fathers actually faced squarely the issue of segregation and rejected it at the outset of the movement that formed the PCA. And that was actually a brave and courageous thing to do in the Southeastern US of the 1960s, where you had real life segregationists running for political office and winning it and where you could still be ostracized social justice.

And ostracized socially for not upholding that ideal of segregation and founding fathers like Jim Beard and Don Patterson and Kennedy Smart. And I could go down a long list of these men all squarely said, we want to be a denomination for all people. We want to reach out to everybody.

And that's a brave thing to do in the 1960s and early 70s. So it would be wrong to paint those men as sort of out of control racist. I think when Jim Beard spoke about this on the floor of General Assembly, he said the thing that bothered him looking back is that they had not, they had not cared enough about the issue.

And they had not been able to do the same thing. They had not been able to do the same thing. And they had not been able to do the same thing.

They had not been able to do the same thing. And they had to do the right thing in that area and try to work towards racial harmony and solidarity and reconciliation. I just think there are a lot of historical forces at work that are going to make that long, hard, slow, frustrating work.

Last question on this topic. So I can sometimes feel a little bit in a no man's land because I do think that white reform Christians have often been indifferent. And we have often been blind to invisible barriers we have.

So I want to acknowledge that and I want to be sympathetic and I want to always be open to learn from you and I have been on some of the same calls. And I always learn

from these sharp, good, hard African American brothers. At the same time, we hear a lot about critical race theory.

I do think that's a big problem and I think it's a totalizing sort of ideology. What do you think we should be on guard from the left for lack of a better term with the kind of cultural pressure to think about race in a certain way, which at times is at odds with biblical anthropology and hermeneutics? Well, I think for one thing, we need to look at where those problems are. I wouldn't have known what they were called, but even when I was in Ferman in the late 70s, early 80s in English and history, I was seeing stuff.

I wouldn't have known to call it critical theory, but I was seeing queer theory in English class. So we had to read an article called "Come On Down to the Rack, A Honey," which was a homoerotic retelling of Huckleberry Finn, where Jim and Huck had a relationship going on. So I was in the 1970s and 80s, I was already encountering some of those things, where's this coming from? And so critical race theory is part of a little cotena of critical theories that have been making their way through the humanities for the last 30 years.

And I think at the university level, we really need to keep our eye on that. And people like Jonathan Hite and heterodox Academy, and there are lots of secular non-Christian scholars that are really... Yeah, John McQuarter, I mean, there are a bunch of people that are really concerned about this kind of stuff. I've been a part of a group called the National Association of Scholars that, again, they're not Christian.

They're a lot of more secular, evolutionary, but they hate this kind of bad approach to the humanities, bad approach to history. And they're basically calling... they're calling for a modernist rebuke of postmodernity and its relativism. So I do think we need to keep our eye on that and ask ourselves, how does that impact our young people that are going through that kind of education? What attitudes do they have coming out on these kinds of issues when they come back into the churches? Are they aware that that's working on them and that they may not be getting a clear picture of a field because of the grid I was telling you the other day? My son is in a critical theory English class right now, and he is having to read all of this stuff.

And so that's actually been good to be able to talk through that with him and point him to good resources to go to. I think in the current conversation on that, we're hampered by some bad faith players on both the left and the right. Some guys on the sort of alt-right, I would say, would say every time somebody raises a concern about racial history of the past, they're immediately accused of being a part of Marxist, critical theory, blah, blah, blah.

I'm actually trying to be biblical about this and think about it. So I think you have to watch out for it being used as a bugbear or a scare word or sort of an epithet to stop conversation. On the other hand, there are serious people, interestingly, our mutual

friend Tim Keller really concerned about how he sees this playing out in Northeast elite universities and how it shuts down conversation and you can't have rational discussion because if you even hold a view, this shows that you're indifferent to the lived experience of minorities and this kind of thing.

He's really concerned about this and appropriately so at the university level. So I think you can simultaneously say that's not going to be helpful in this area, and yet we've still got problems that we need to work on in the area of race or whatever other critical theory area of interest there. Well, I've lost my question.

Let's take it back to Reform Theology. You're a young Christian. What were some of the formative books that really shaped you in thinking and being a reformed Christian? Knowing God was huge for me.

John Neville was a PCA minister in Hendersonville, North Carolina, who was a good friend of Jim Packer, and had Dr. Packer come and speak at the PCA Church in Hendersonville. And when I was 14 or 15, I went and heard Dr. Packer speak, and as a teenager, I read his book a couple of times. I probably got five copies of it that I've marked up.

I'm actually teaching my son and daughter and future son-in-law through that book on Sunday nights after church right now via Zoom. That book just had a huge impact on me knowing God. A little book called Search the Scriptures that InterVarsity produced basically just a Bible reading plan.

That was before I ever started working through the Robert Murray-McChane daily reading plan. I went through Search the Scriptures and marked it off. Went through it probably two or three times in my teenage years.

That was super helpful. I was starting to become aware of RC Sproles popular stuff. At that time, Sinclair Ferguson was another person.

My pastor was on the board at Westminster Seminary, and Sinclair was a new professor at Westminster in the '70s. He came and did a Bible conference at Second Prison Greenville. I was really being exposed to the best contemporary guys in Reformed theology.

Then, of course, they started getting me into Puritan literature that I had never heard of before. My mother was a big Lloyd Jones fan. She had a copy of the old Lloyd Jones Sermon on the Mount in the two volume set.

The way it was originally published that she just read until it was falling apart. My pastor was a big Lloyd Jones fan. I remember getting a gift of studies in the Sermon on the Mount and some of the early Lloyd Jones Sermons that got put into book form.

I had a good foundation laid for me in my teenage years, just with the good

recommendations of my pastors and parents. What's been a book you've read in the last year or so that provoked you, moved you, stimulated you intellectually. Maybe you loved it or maybe it just made you think about something.

I have a book that is so hard. Just do something? The hole in our hole. Yeah.

Let's talk about your books, Kevin. I just wish my books would be your favorite, maybe. I have loved reading through Vos's Reformed Dogmatics.

For people that sort of play the biblical theological Vos over against systematics. Give us a quick category in case people think, isn't that the same thing? Isn't all theology people? People will use the term biblical theology to the study of the Bible from the standpoint of the unfolding of redemptive history. So you're sort of moving historically and chronologically rather than topically.

And so system theology wants to look at the Bible topically and ask how all the topics of the Bible relate to all the other topics of the Bible. And how do you summarize those things in a faithful, helpful way? biblical theology will move thematically and chronologically across scripture. And when they work right, they both go together and they help one another.

But some people have sometimes pitted them as an either or rather than as a both and. So when you read Vos's systematic theology, it lets you know how he is able to operate in systematic categories with just as much comfort as he does biblical theological categories. So that's been a fun thing to read through.

So some of the people we know, John Piper's thing is Christian hedonism or David Platt's thing is radical and Tim Keller's thing is the city. Is your thing covenant theology? Covenant theology has been my great love since I was a seminary student. And I would say it's probably either covenant theology or the Westminster standards.

I mean, I just I love teaching the Westminster standards. And I love teaching covenant theology. If if anyone you can go on your phone later, you get the RTS app.

You go there to the bottom listen, I think, or lectures. And you can get several classes for free and you can listen. I've been listening to some of my car.

Liggins class on covenant theology. So you can get 30 hours or whatever it is of lecturing on covenant theology. Good for driving around, good for housework, good for maybe sleep.

And you can you can you know, this is very good for sleeping. You can download that RTS mobile app for free and then there are over 45 courses for free, the whole horses. They're there and there's some really rich stuff.

Is it true that you mow the lawn with with the top with the like a little RTS pin and a suit? What what does the ligand unclogged look like? You saw me this morning unplugging my clips out there. You had a Clemson out there. And the khaki pants.

Is that as unplugged as again? No, I mean, I will wear shorts around the house. Okay. But not not.

But normally I am like this. Okay. Would anyone ever catch you in the grocery store in my flip flops? They might catch me in the local grocery store in my cargo shorts and my t-shirt and my keens.

And is that scandalizing for you and me? It's embarrassing for me when I do that. So normally I just dress like this. Yeah.

It's good. It's good. So give us give us one thing that you're good at that we wouldn't know you're good at.

We know lots of things you are good at and then give us one or two things that you're bad at because it can seem like ligand just you know, knows everything and knows everybody. So give us a surprising good thing and then a couple of things to make us feel good about ourselves. [laughter] That you're bad at.

Well, I used to be good at basketball and I'm bad at it now. Okay. I was the player coach for the University of Edinburgh Basketball Club while I was there.

And that we traveled Europe playing games and had fun doing that. But my basketball days have long left me. It helps when you're in a place that is just learning what the game is about.

[laughter] Well, actually almost my whole team was made up of Americans. Okay. So I had one Scott, one Scott, one Englishman and one German and the rest were Americans.

Although I must say my Scott was my, well he was my best scorer. He didn't believe in defense but he could score 30 points a game. But yeah, once upon a time I was good at basketball but I am not anymore.

I love history. I just, I love reading history for my personal edification. Any kind of history, world history, American history, military history.

And so that's something that I love and love being able to talk to people that like to read books. And so you and I will talk about things that we're reading and benefiting from. What am I, I'm bad at a lot of things.

I'd have to be here for a while. Okay, I'm bad. I don't, I don't, I'm terrible with cars.

And he wears Mike Miller. He has helped me change my point. I'm terrible at it.

No, no, no, no, no. Okay. Or home repair.

My kid, the other, one of my kids the other day, there's a lot of them said, "Dad, can you help me hang this up?" And my wife just says, "You're probably going to want me to do that." I mean, I just had to turn in my... And your man hard run. And it's true. I like monkey around with some things at home, but I'm not handy like some of these husbands are handy out here.

You know, there's some things that I'm good at, but the, you know, we start messing with electrical stuff. I'm going to bring in somebody that actually knows what to do. Now you're from South Carolina.

Do you, do you like to kill animals? I, I have never hunted. Okay. I've never hunted.

All right. You fish. I am too impatient to fish.

Yeah. My boys, they, it's, you can all be proud. They, we moved out here and they, they go fishing all the time.

They're fishing. They find a little pond in the woods and they want to go fishing all the time and they didn't get that for me. Wow.

At all. My dad took me fishing zero times. You're watching the integration show or something? No, I don't know.

So what else, I want to keep going. What are you bad at, legs? Are you a good at, are you good at wrapping? Isn't it true? No, I'm really bad at wrapping. I'm very old schooler.

But you and I have done it before. But wrapping has moved far beyond my abilities. I could do the early stuff that came out.

I got into that because I was a DJ in high school. And so I was not only the school DJ for my high school. And thus, you know, often was involved in hosting the dances and things.

But I got asked around to do different things. And during that era in the 1970s, the first rap songs went mainstream. So when you're a DJ sitting in dances, you listen to songs over and over again and you can memorize them.

And so that's kind of how I got into school. Did you have a DJ name? Oh, you heard it here, live league. Did you always have a good voice for radio? I'm jealous of that.

It's all my mom's fault. Yeah, I got it from mom. Yeah.

Can you do? Give us a little DJ league voice. We'd start off in the morning something like this. Good morning from the top of the building and inside the door marked authorized

personnel only.

This is W-G-H-S. That sounds pretty good. Good job.

Did your mom always say you had an outside voice? Yes, I always got caught in class when I was talking in the back of the classroom. Miss Finley in third grade always knew that it was me in the back of the classroom. But it's a great teacher voice.

That is true. That's the flip side of it. I told my wife, I said, "Now look, little old ladies are going to come up to meet the door of the church and they're going to tell me what a great preacher I am.

Understand that what that means is they can hear me." That's true. It means absolutely nothing about the quality of what I'm doing. It simply means that they can hear me.

All right, we have about five minutes left. I'm going to do some lightning round. And I know it's hard to think of favorites or a favorite.

What's a favorite hymn of "Lig and Duncan"? How sweet the name of Jesus sounds. And "Lig is a good singer." That's the other thing you could have said people may not know. Again, because my mom was the choir director, I had no choice but to sing.

So from the time I was a little kid, I was singing with mom and have grown up in choir. And I love to sing hymns and songs. Do you remember there's a video of this somewhere? You and I were in South Africa.

We did that T4G tour here several years ago. We were headed to the airport. It was me and you and Bob Coughlin was in the car and it's two or three other.

And what were we singing? We were all singing something and Bob took a video of it. It was parts and I mean it was- It was good. I mean I thought we were good.

I thought we were a boy band. It was good. Yeah.

Ready to go. You took the baritone and take the high tenor part. Okay, what's your favorite? It's like picking your favorite job.

What's your favorite systematic theology? You're on the desert island. You only get one of them. But you can bring all the values.

It's so hard. That is really hard. I still like to give students Birkhoff.

Just because okay, you don't have time to read four volumes of Bobing. So you're going to have Birkhoff plagiarize the important points for you. That's why nobody realized until Bobing was translated into English.

Right. That he basically wonderfully plagiarized. And so it's a good introductory

systematic still.

And it's probably been the one that I have assigned more often than any or other one. But I really love Turretan. I know you did.

Well, that's right. Turretan's institutes at theological, uh, a link to theology would probably be the one. If you made me take one, I'd say going to have all three volumes.

So very good. All right. What was the favorite book you preached from as a pastor? Sermons here.

You really loved. Um, I loved going through first and second Thessalonians because I don't think I'd ever realized how pastoral they were. You know, you talk about the pastoral epistles versus second Timothy and Titus.

But I realized first and second Thessalonians are just as pastoral as those two letters and really, really important for the living of Christian life. So that kind of caught me by surprise how much I enjoyed preaching to those books. No one will remember here.

That was the first sermon series I did when I came here. I didn't go through the whole books. I did five or six weeks on, uh, what Paul was thankful for.

And I looked at his prayers and first and second Thessalonians and what he was thankful for and read that back. What sort of church do we want to be? So yeah, it's very pastoral. What about your favorite musical artist? Give us a Christian one and a non-Christian.

Um, I have always loved Earth, Wind and Fire. That's a non-Christian musical artist. Although Phil Bailot was a Christian.

Okay. Um, even though they were kind of. Can you remind us of an Earth, Wind and Fire song? Oh, my.

Boogie Wonderland. Can you remind us of what I've heard of? September. Okay.

Yeah. Um, after the love is gone. All right.

This is a little bit before my day. Yeah, it is before you're in diapers. Yeah.

Yeah. I've heard of them and it's like the, the stoic, like the elementary principles of the Earth, Earth, Wind and Fire. Uh, so I love, I love the elements.

E.W. and F. Um, uh, let's say I'm a seven, now I'm a Christian. Yeah. Um, I love, I love choral music more than I like contemporary Christian music.

So for, for sacred choral music, um, I, you know, I love, um, I love Bach and love to listen to Bacharals and, um, oratorios and things of that nature. You have a favorite piece you sang in the choir? Uh, I, I love, um, the choral finale of Mollers, Second Symphony, the

Resurrection Symphony. Uh, my favorite movement in all sacred choral, uh, music is, um, the, uh, Denales Fleishes, it's the grass in the, the second movement of, um, bronze.

That's our favorite. Um, I'm Deutsches Requiem, uh, so, uh, all fresh, all flesh's grass. It's a, it's a powerful, powerful, uh, meditation on, um, death and resurrection.

Uh, and it's, it's a Protestant Requiem. Um, and that's so, yeah. Just a plug for that, Nathan will appreciate whatever he is.

But, uh, there is, you know, Ken Meyer starts about fine culture and folk culture. Yeah. And both have their place in sort of folk culture, we might call popular culture.

It's very easily accessible in order to have training to, you get it, you listen to it first time, you hear it on the radio. The first time somebody sings it in church, you think, I got that. That's a good melody.

And by and large, that's, you know, that's what you're going to do with the congregation singing. Yeah. There is something that I hope is, will, will not be lost on the church because there is this rich tradition of rich choral music.

Right. And it takes something to, to appreciate it, to understand what's going on, to, but those, those broms, or I told Nathan, because I'm preaching through Genesis that I'd love for our choir to do. Aaron Copeland has a, has a piece in the beginning, which is a wonderful 15 minute corral, just the exact words from the King James in Genesis one at the Genesis two.

And there's some of these pieces that are really moving, even though sometimes not like Bach, who is a serious Christian. Sometimes they're not Christians at all. Like Ralph from Williams, who is not a serious Christian, but his arrangement of Psalm 90 in the Miles Coverdale version of Lord Thou hast been our refuge in one generation to another before the mountains were brought forth or ever to work.

Earth and the world will make that is an unbelievably moving piece written by an unbelievable. Yeah. Favorite movie.

Favorite movie. That's hard. What, what was the movie? Recent was 1917.

Yeah, I did not see that. Unbelievable. I've heard it.

Yes. Single footage of World War one. Unbelievably powerful.

Chariots of fire. Love Chariots of fire. So I saw it in Scotland.

And so it's the opening scene of Chariots fire, if you remember. They're running down the beach with Ben Jealous playing in the background. And at the bottom of the screen is they run up along the building, along the beach, and then you see a building in the

background.

It says somewhere in the south of England. Why? Because they're running across the beach in St. Andrew, Scotland. And they're coming up on the old course and the clubhouse in St. Andrews.

And it says somewhere in the south of England. So the sky's boo. Well deserved.

Do you have a favorite TV? Do you watch TV besides sports? Do you binge watch anything? You watching the Mandalorian? I am watching the Mandalorian. And my kids kind of clue me in on what things I need to watch. And I mean I love Sherlock Holmes, the BBC Sherlock Holmes with Benedict Cumberbatch.

And I watch that whenever they come out with those. Said things like that. Favorite part of the BCO? Favorite part of the BCO? Don't you have something? The preliminary principles are awesome.

They're absolutely of the best preliminary principles you can read anywhere. Liggin, we are very indebted to you for giving us your time. Thank you for being with us.

Let's thank Liggin for being with us answering. You can see why I like doing interviews because I can ask just whatever fun or deep question I want. Alright, I'm going to close us in prayer and we're going to try to be mindful of Lig's time, not only for the game, but we've got him working hard and he's got to get back to the hotel and get some rest and preach for us three times tomorrow.

So let's pray. Father in Heaven, we're grateful for our brother and friend and pray your blessing upon his work, his leadership that so many of us feel and appreciate. And we pray now that you give us grace as we return home and prepare our hearts for Lord's Day tomorrow.

Most of us for worship here at Christ Covenant or for others as they may be in other churches in the area or perhaps other churches wherever they are. We pray that you would bless them be with all the preachers who are preparing heart and mind to bring a good word from the scriptures tomorrow. We ask in Christ's name.

Amen, man. You've been listening to life and books and everything. Hope you enjoyed the conversation with Lig and hope you will join us next week as Colin and Justin are back.

And we interview Carl Truman on his new book. Until then, glorify God, enjoy him forever and read a good book.

[Music]

[buzzing]

