

OpenTheo

Life and Ministry with Carl Trueman

November 21, 2023



Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

In this fun and frank discussion, Kevin and Carl talk about everything from Billy Graham to Pride Month to Christian Nationalism. Along the way Carl reveals what he hates about America and why he is not a Catholic.

Transcript

I suppose I shouldn't say that this is the most fun part of the conference for me because it's the only part where I'm talking and that would be sort of self-serving. But I do really enjoy having these great speakers come in and good friend, I don't know, ten plus years that Carl and I have known each other and been friends. So it's a real delight to have them in here in such a fascinating, stimulating talk.

And hopefully it will wet your appetite to come back tomorrow. Of course, if you have your own church, in the area, you can go there. But if not, and if this is your church, we hope to see you here for the sessions.

I know that some people are still coming in from the lobby and they'll find their seats. We're going to try to, I guess, the we, and this is me because it's up to me to get us done by 8.30. And if you would be gracious when I close us at 8.30 to let Carl and Katrina slip out. As you can imagine, he's getting ready to speak three times tomorrow and have a full day.

So we'll be away. To bless him, to help bless us tomorrow if we can let him head out without any questions tonight. But he'll be around after the service tomorrow.

So this conversation that I'm going to have with Carl is also going to be on the podcast, life and books and everything. So you can find it there. And for those of you who are listening to this later, this is part of the Faithful Conference on a Saturday night with Carl Truman at Christ Covenant Church.

So greetings and salutations, as I like to say. And since it is part of the podcast and people have given some of their good resources toward the podcast for me to mention

them, let me mention our sponsors. I'm sure there's something that Carl Marx would have to say about mentioning the podcast sponsors.

But crossway and want to highlight their ESV chronological study Bible. And they make a lot of good study Bibles, of course, and we love crossway. And you can visit their website and grateful for their partnership also desiring God, a new book by John Piper Foundations for lifelong learning education in serious joy.

So both of these are new releases. So thank you to crossway and to desiring God. Carl Truman, welcome, glad you're here.

So you were mentioning in the talk this evening, of course, that you're from England. And you gave us some wonderful illustrations. I love about the Fox and the chicken.

Some of these people know from sermon illustration that a year or so ago, my son got a chicken at a white elephant, you know, Christmas party. You give a high, high, funny gift. And he got a live chicken.

He texted us, which he doesn't usually do a lot of text, which he also doesn't do. It was it was one of the most exciting days of his life to be given the chicken, which is sadly, I don't know if I can say with the Lord, but in wherever chickens go. Did not go into our bellies.

We just didn't know how to take care of a chicken, but a fox did not get it. So you gave us a little bit of background. I wonder if you could say a little bit more about just reflecting on how do you think that you're upbringing, whether being English, being rural, being not the upper class, I think would be safe to say, how you think that's shaped you and your outlook on things.

That's a huge question. Very postmodern sort of standpoint epistemology, but just tell us a little bit. I think of a way of dodging the question and talking about anything but myself.

That's a very American question to an Englishman, right? Yeah. I grew up in a very loving but not a Christian home. My lasting memories are both my parents have school at 16, but would determine that I was going to go to college.

So dad, mom and dad taught me a great love of books and also were of that generation that thought that getting a good education was the secret to getting a good job moving on in life. So there's certainly that positive impact. My dad wanted me to be a medical doctor, and I sometimes done the Freudian thing on myself and thought it was getting a PhD away.

I knew I'd let my dad down, but at least it was a doctor. He could actually call me a doctor. My school was very, I went to a very traditional boys school.

It was a state-run school, it was called a grammar school. Very traditional. I did Latin from age of 11, had a sort of standard grammar school education.

Team sports are very important. I did not thrive at team sports. I'm more of a loner in a lot of ways.

But team sports are important for making you realize that you're part of a team. That the individual is not the be-all and end-all. That definitely shaped my thinking.

I became a Christian my first year at university. I'd heard Billy Graham preach when I was 17. I was taken to a Billy Graham rally by my best friend who was later my best friend.

I was a very charismatic Pentecostally Anglican. I've never, I don't think I've ever actually written anything that has criticized Charismatics. That's because I'm very grateful to my charismatic friend.

It was not the Reformed Presbyterians who told me about Jesus. It was a charismatic Anglican. I've always felt very important to be grateful to people who've been kind to you and done good things for you.

But it was reading books by J.I. Packup, particularly God's Word that brought me to faith. Say more about, of course, in Charlotte. I don't know if you've ever been to the Billy Graham Library here in Charlotte.

It's worth visiting. He's buried there and his childhood home is brought out from the country. So it's nice to walk through.

This is Billy Graham's country. Say a little bit more about, do you remember what he was preaching on or what it was? The American accent. That's not the recollection of it.

But it did, it made me want to go to church. So I attended the local, I attended my friends Anglican Church. It's a sort of charismatic Anglican church.

And then it was when I went up to, I went to the University of Cambridge and I started attending Eden Baptist Chapel. Where the preacher wasn't, I have to qualify what I'm going to say because of the way the story ends. That's a sad story.

It isn't you know the story I'm going to tell. The preacher is a guy called Dr. Roy Clemens. I still think that I probably learned more about preaching and more about theology from the sermons I listened to from him.

I attended Eden for two and a half years when I was at Cambridge. Tragically he left his wife and ran off with his young male assistants and sort of immersed himself in the... It was very public. It's not a secret here.

It made the front page of the British National Press at the time. Because he was considered to be one of the great preachers in the land. Yeah, he was considered to be the next John Stott.

He was of that sort of stature nationally. But I learned a huge amount from him and I think his preaching really solidified my thinking on a whole host of points. You talk about being a doctor, one of my family's least favorite dad jokes and I have many.

But one is like a few weeks ago my son really cut his thumb with a cut-code knife. He had to go to the ER and whenever there's some kind of medical diagnosis or something I walk in and say, I am a doctor. Dad, stop.

You're not a real doctor. You wrote a big paper on something. Going back to becoming a Christian, a three-part question.

You can answer this theologically or personally. But just get briefly, why are you a Christian? Why are you a Protestant? Because you have lots of good Catholic friends. Why are you a Christian? Why are you a Protestant? Why are you a Presbyterian? I'm a Christian also because I became convicted of the truth of the Bible and I convicted of the need of Christ as my Savior.

Good? That's good. Why am I a Protestant? Why am I a Protestant? It's not because I can't remember why I'm a Protestant. I think which of the reasons shall I give? Because didn't you say one time that I think in a conversation or something you said, if someone's going to not be Catholic they need to have a reason? Yeah.

Well my reasons I think would be twofold, a justification by grace through faith. And the second reason would be, now I know that the concept of the clarity of scripture needs to be qualified and is often not as straightforward as many people think it is. But I think scripture is not as obscure if I can put it that way as Catholicism claims it is in order to bolster the authority of the church and specifically of the pope.

I'm not a Catholic because I think above all, in fact I was having a, I got into a discussion with Catholic friend Erika Bakkiyoki on this. She's a wonderful person. But she was telling you why you're a Catholic.

And I was saying because of Mary and she said, well that amazes me. I thought it would have been because of the real presence and for her the issue is Christ truly present in the sacrament. If you go to be a Catholic for me, I tilt towards nature and I think the problem with stuff and I think Mary would be the great example of that for me.

And I'm open to, certainly open to Catholic friends saying to me that Protestantism has not given Mary the honor that she should be given. I mean she's the mother of Christ, all generations should call her blessed. I think Protestants in reaction to Catholicism have marginalized her as a biblical figure.

But the amount of weight that is placed upon Mary to me, wow, if the church is going to be able to define that, it can pretty much define anything it wants. You can be a co-redentrics, a co-mediatrix and of course Catholicism in the U.S. is the most Protestant kind of Catholicism, meaning you go to Africa, you go to South America, Latin America, it's incredibly syncretistic and very much so with Mary. Well I've noticed among people I know who, well in my church in Philly there are a lot of congregants who were former Catholics and I don't mean this in a condescending way but I mean they were ordinary people.

They just wanted to go to a church where the Bible was believed and seriously taught. The friends I have converted to Catholicism tended to be intellectuals, attracted by the liturgy and attracted by some of the philosophical slash social teaching kind of stuff. Sometimes as Protestants we haven't done our people any favors because we sort of, somebody comes and they says oh and so am I, where was he, I want to see he's one of our guys and I know there's differences there but if you haven't opened up the history of the church before 1517 or something and someone starts digging around in there and they say well if I've got to become Catholic to get this.

So why Presbyterian? There aren't very many in England. Plain teaching in the word of God. Well I'm here here.

We should never underestimate the power of the imagination on how we think and on my first Sunday in Aberdeen as a PhD student I was all on my own and I went to the Free Church of Scotland. I happened to be renting a room and a house owned by a member of the session there and I sat in a pew and at the end of the service there was a tap on my shoulder and I turned around and it was a little old lady called Effie Morrison who asked me if I wanted to go home for lunch and that meant a lot to me and I don't want to reduce my Presbyterianism to hey somebody was kind of a Presbyterian church to me but I'd be lying if I were to say that did not have an impact on me. At the time I was sort of Baptist congregational in my kind of thinking then the other side of it was my experience of Baptist slash congregationalism was a bad one and I became convinced that some form of connectionism was important in order to adjust as to what Paul was teaching in the New Testament.

It strikes me that elders cannot have the authority that Paul ascribes to them in the New Testament if ultimately the congregation have a decisive vote in what's going on. Did you end up in the OPC because that was a more natural fit from Westminster or? Do you know the answer to that? Is that a set up question? That's just a lead issue. I want to just want to hear.

You want to hear the story. You probably know the story. I'm in the OPC because I lost a family vote.

Well we moved to Philadelphia for a short while Katrina and myself and the boys

attended a Reform Presbyterian church. I was going through the ordination process in the Free Church of Scotland or beginning that route and the RPs were a Sam singing denomination as the Free Church of Scotland it was at the time and although I'm not by conviction exclusive Samadists I felt a certain obligation to support the local Samadists. Well for various reasons I won't go into that that was not working.

We never became members there so we then started looking for another church and there were two churches that we looked at. One of them was Church called Christ the King in Conchahochen. It's a PCH church with a man called Adam Bryce who was pastor and to this day I still think Adam Bryce might be one of the best preachers I've ever heard.

Very talented preacher, lovely fellow. And there was a church, it was then Gwynedd Valley Presbyterian Church. It became Cornerstone Presbyterian Church and we were sort of divided between the two.

And because there was no doctrinal difference between the two of them I decided hey let's have a family vote and I got two sons and Katrina and myself and we voted and I voted for the PCH church. I lost 3-1 and I honor elections if you're like I know that I lost. So yeah we ended up going to the no regrets on that front I've been very happy in the OPC the OPC is very kind to me.

I like the fact that in my 20 nearly 20 years of being in the OPC but as a member and then as a minister it's been a comparatively peaceful denomination so very comfortable in the OPC but the first choice was the OPC. I love the OPC and that my wife had an OPC church and they have a family in the OPC if you ever want to come. I don't know they talk about swimming the the Tiber or something I don't know what swimming the scoocle I don't know what river would demarcate the OPC to the PCA but we're glad to be on the same team.

I want to go back to I didn't mean to ask me questions about Catholicism but it makes me think and I know Carl writes for first things which is a Catholic journal really influential and but you know friendly to evangelicals and to serious Jews as well and I know some of them you know them a lot better and so those would be a lot of your your friends. I mean I've kind of thought think is it does it say something meaningful about our time or is it just a a coincidence of history that at the moment the six let's say conservative justices on the Supreme Court are all Roman Catholics the only Protestant is maybe the is one of the liberal and you know she's defined herself as non-denominational Protestants I don't know how deep that Protestantism runs but does it say something is there something about you know intellectual heft in American culture that highly intellectual Roman Catholicism is carrying the way in a sense that evangelicalism isn't anymore. Yeah it's a good question there's probably numerous factors coming to play into the reason why Catholicism has proved to be so intellectually

strong in the legal and ethical spheres.

I do think there's a part of the sociology of America is America was a very Protestant country for a long long time and I think what happens when a country is is default Protestant it makes Protestants lazy you know if the country simply if the moral intuitions of the country track with your own moral intuitions why bother developing ways of thinking about morality and ethics. You can count on the cultural courage to do the work for you. And then when the cultural winds change 180 degrees in the space of 20, 25 years you're very very ill prepared to handle that.

Now praise God a lot of what Catholic thinkers did in the areas of ethics moral theory is is not distinctively Catholic in it's not tied to Mary and Dogmore transubstantiation. So there's much there that Protestants can use to their benefit and profit. But I think Catholicism just being more of an outsider religion was more self-conscious.

And it pounds that in various ways I my good friend you know from there friends a very close friend from his a Catholic I asked him maybe 18 months ago whether he was seeing the same kind of anger in Catholicism that seemed to be burning at the heart of evangelical Protestantism in America and he said not really and then he made a very interesting comment he said but of course he said we never thought we owned the country and I thought that was very insightful that when you have a church culture that really thinks the country belongs to it and suddenly the country doesn't belong to it anymore. Well when people have something stolen feel they've had something stolen from them they tend to be very angry about it and it struck me as a very insightful comment that I also think plays into answering the question you asked about why are we so badly. Yeah and I think it's for better and worse I mean I think it leads evangelicals to want to do culture reclamation in a good sense and at times it leads to this kind of undue anger anxiety because of that sense that weren't we kind of the ones in charge and there was a default mainline Protestantism and so you write about a lot of these kinds of issues to part question I'll let you define the term first and then you can tell me if you are one or not what is a culture warrior and are you one? David Frank seems to think I am but he also seems to think I'm a theologian of philosopher as well neither of which applied I think cultural warrior is I think it's generally a pejorative term and we tend to use it with reference to the people who are pressing for things in the culture of which we do not approve it doesn't seem to me that the culture war is being waged by those who wish to maintain the old status quo I think to defend a status quo is a different strategic move than to try to tear down the status I don't want to cite Nietzsche too positively but Nietzsche has this interesting in his book the genealogy of morals where he's talking about change in moral codes he wrestles with what he sees is the shift between good and bad and good and evil and you might say well there's only good and bad and good and evil well Nietzsche says what's interesting is this the good man of the old culture becomes the evil man of the new culture the bad man of the old culture becomes the good man of the new culture and he's talking about strength versus weakness the old

strong man becomes the evil guy the weak becomes the good guy I think in the culture war the culture warrior the culture warriors on the left have a vested interest in presenting those who I think simply want to see basic standards of decency maintained in society as being dislike walking down M Street in Georgetown in pride month as I did a couple of years ago and thinking this is filth there is pornographic filth in these windows that wouldn't have been there 10 years ago am I a cultural warrior to object to that I don't think so I'm simply somebody who wants to say actually I think there are decent ways that human beings should behave and interact with each other but the old civic Christianity for all of its faults supported and was therefore a good thing to that extent one thing to maintain those does not make you a cultural warrior yeah I've said before in writing and maybe publicly that I'm sure when I was younger maybe 15-20 years ago I would have spoken more negatively about any kind of cultural Christianity and probably would have said with a kind of quick back at the hand well good riddance and you know the sooner the better it's going to make the church stronger it's just going to show who the real Christians are the only thing that's fading away is just nominal Christianity and of course there's an element of truth in some of that but the naivete is you know it cultural Christianity doesn't make one a born-again Christian but it makes some things much more plausible makes the signs he's safer for children yeah and so to to wish away some where you know one author said in the 60s he was writing this is sort of a political conservative and he was saying in the 60s he said of course Christianity in America always has been and always will be our public truth and he was writing in 63 so right at the cusp of this before oops yeah well it's not the public truth a little bit more in the south but all of that is changing very quickly and and and we're worse off because of it you talked about the the speed of the change so when you think about you know Obama campaigning we just say he believes that marriage is between a man and a woman and before he changes his mind you know kind of have Joe Biden flow out the the change and you can speculate whether that was Obama's position real position at the time or not but at least he felt cultural pressure that was not very long ago the democratic candidate said that I don't know if any republican candidate even if they believe it will want to touch that question at all so the speed that this has changed does that make you discourage of course it does and does any of it make you encourage and by that I mean when something flips so quickly I wonder if the flip is much more shallow than we think so well how do you make sense of how quickly this has changed it it's possible the flip is much more shallow I think but I don't think so or it's possible that the holding on to the the traditional morality was shallow for a long time and that's why it flips so quickly yeah I think I think that's more likely the case thanks for ruining my my optimism no but I do think there are areas where we can be optimistic I think pride month was much more muted this year than it was the year before and even reading the reading the gay press on pride month voices are starting to emerge amongst the particularly the lgb community let's forget the tea for a minute saying why do we need a month veterans only have a day we we just need a day to celebrate our civil rights well you know we might not want to have a day to do that but it strikes me that's an interesting there's a

feeling there among some that the hand has been overplayed and that there is some backlash coming I think on the t issue as well the the number of I think the t issue is doomed in the long run for a number of reasons I think all the medical evidence points to the fact that transition surgery doesn't work suicide rates run roughly last on a look roughly 30 even for those who've transitioned doesn't make any appreciable difference and that tells me that we have a terrible mental illness here that sooner or later society has to face up to entreat appropriately we're seeing lawsuits emerging people detransitioning one was filed just two weeks ago by a girl who with all kinds of comorbidities etc goes to her doctor and I think and now she's suing because that destroyed her life and I think the court on the t issue I think the courts will decide it I think it's America and when big cash settlements start being paid out the science will miraculously change overnight so I am relatively optimistic on the t because Britain it is pushed back much more on this than America has yeah there are fights going on in but I would say the tilting Europe is is is moving a slightly more conservative direction whereas America has not yet reached the limits I think of where it's prepared to go on this yeah so that was gonna be my question do you think to use the term do you think we're peak woke we were talking or is that yet to come and is there is there some more sanity another side we were talking over lunch with the pastors is some of these polls for whatever their worth that I think it was even among Gen Z among young people for the first time with a young cohort the the favorability towards gay marriages decreased ever so slightly yeah I didn't think after a burger felt it would decrease with any any age cohort and especially you know we talked about with young men that there's a sharp divergence happening if you read the social survey in a sociology between young men and young women young men are becoming at least identifying as more conservative in some of that's in healthy ways and some is you know attracted to unhealthy influencers and the like but do you see sanity do you see the fever breaking I think could do I think the Supreme Court judgment on affirmative action in higher education will have ramifications beyond higher education already hearing from friends who teach in the business departments at Grover that yeah this is beginning to have an effect on how business is nothing they've got to be very careful on some on some fronts now so I think that that decision could well put a put the brakes on some of the more radical DEI kind of things emerging I think the the what concerns me is that we need to make sure that we don't simply get rid of the work of the left by producing a kind of work of the right yeah that's a real danger I think the emergence even in some Christian circles of the idea that we have no enemies to the right that's a very sinister development when I see Christians saying things like that's kind of no I'm sorry if if there's a guy out there who's teaching people to look at my wife my granddaughter or whatever just as a piece of me I don't care where he is on the political spectrum he's a post liberalism is a Matthew Rose is that the name Matthew Rose yeah very very insightful book that just looks it's called something like post liberalism or the right after liberalism and just looks at these various things as somebody said tongue in cheek but it's very true if if you didn't like the religious right wait till you see the irreligious that was raw staff that I think yeah was that

there and it can be hard sometimes PCA OPC they have a you know a a Machen sort of instinct the the most conservative position is always right but the right is even something different than conservative I'm not I don't want to give up the term conservative can can means has more ideological roots to it but but there are all sorts of things and by post liberal I don't mean political liberalism in America I mean sort of the western uh Christian and enlightenment tradition of conscience and individual rights and uh the rule of law I mean you see this conversation what what just expounded a little bit more what what concerns you with that no enemies to the right philosophy and what's coming after some I've said at times there is a kind of uh you know yeah there's a there's a right-wing wokism as there is a left wing I mean there are various things that concern me I think from the church's perspective the church has to be very careful but she keeps her mind focused on things above and not on an earthly kingdom and let's not say we neglect the earthly kingdom we have duty of citizens responsible citizens to to try to make sure the streets are safe for men women and children of an evening you know out for a walk it's those kind of simple things but we need to realize that the church's task is not to bring about some kind of religious heaven on earth and I think again when you have had a close identification in in in America between Protestant Christianity and the nation it can be a danger to get those two things confused now I'm not in saying that impugning the motives of people are patriotic and love the flag I'm an all immigrants do I love the country that's taken me in but I want to make sure that the church does not get so involved in in that kind of thing and your Christian nationalism is an interesting concept that's batted around now quite often it seems to mean it's a little bit like culture warrior okay your pro-life so you're a Christian nationalist it has a sort of silly anybody just to my right application but I do think Christian nationalism is real I do think there are some real Christian nationalists out there and my worry with them is not that they pose an existential threat to American democracy I think they're a tiny minority they're very big and loud online but they can't even get a Supreme Court justice elected right where they pose a real danger I think is to denominations and congregations they could do a lot of damage they're not going to do a lot of damage to the nation but they could do a lot of damage in churches if they lead churches to get the gospel confused with a particular political platform particularly a party political platform and you know it's another conversation I'll be on the podcast another time but because Christian nationalism it was largely a term of derision and then people began to own it and for many people maybe some people here they hear the term they think I want to make the nation as Christian as possible and I want to influence our nation and it was founded by a lot of Christian people and a lot of Christian principles and we want to have Christian influence so that's what that's what a lot of people mean and that's yes and amen to all of that and then there's a you know variations of the kind of intellectual dog when I'm with you I don't think that it's going to amount to a great threat but it will be it will be easily brought out just like theonomy was in the 90s everybody's going to be a theonomous now it's everybody's going to going to be this and so a southern baptist was made the speaker of the house and Christian nationalism is for the next few weeks yeah

right it's as long as until they have to vote on it again all right I'm going to the last 15 minutes you know change just a little bit and just think a a little bit more about ministry and life and things but sort of a question to bridge both of those topics at the lecture you gave in New York was that just a week or two ago Carl this honor of giving this a prestigious lecture in New York City did a fine job somebody asked you or did it come up I think it was a question something about why don't you like worldviews it wasn't worldviews it was a text of that question in it was an absolute set up right now somebody read a text yeah so and you gave a good answer of what's what's what's good but why why don't you use the term worldview or what do you think is not as helpful about that term well my alternative term is one I borrow from the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor he has this rather it's rather awkward term social imaginary what makes it awkward is he's using imaginary as a noun rather than adjective so it's an inelegant phrase what he's trying to get out with social imagining is the way that most people live their lives and the way that most people believe the things they believe isn't the result of a self-conscious working through the arguments or a self-conscious intellectual commitment to a position about which they have been consciously persuaded whereas I think and I think that's true you know why don't I why do I think stealing's wrong I've not read well actually I have read but it's not what persuades you have argument that taught me to believe that stealing's wrong it's the fact that when I was five I stole something and my mum caught me and I was in serious trouble and I decided hey I don't want to be caught by my mum doing this again it's a really bad thing I'm just not going to do it why do I leave rooms through doors rather than through walls I'm not a particle physicist I have no idea why walls don't work for exiting and doors do they just do and the point Taylor's making is that so much of what we believe actually just arises out of the way we live the way we interact the rituals we have my concern with worldview and interesting that the time the last time I was asked that question before New York was when I was in Charlotte doing head-to-head with John Stone Street who's a huge liberal with golf and I called him out on it in my lecture and he picked me up on it in the queue and afterwards the reason I don't like worldview is I think it places too much emphasis upon the intellect not that the intellect isn't important it's just not as important for what we believe as as we might think so for example use gay marriage I remember in the run-up to the Obama failed decision in 2015 I was teaching in the seminary and students would ask me numerous points during that year can you give us some good arguments against gay marriage to which my answer is I give you half a dozen good arguments against gay marriage but none of them are going to work because none of the people who've changed their mind on gay marriage have done so because they read an argument and it you said one time somebody said we lost the argument and you said no there was no argument there was no argument yeah it was Willing Grace it was positive presentations of gay couples on the TV it's people knowing they're gay neighbors who are lovely people it's it's it's more subtle the way we think than than just worldview now you might be able to press people back and say well if you hold this position then logically you must presuppose that or you must be committed to this worldview I have a suspicion a

lot of people would just shrug their shoulders and say yeah I guess I must and then carry on with that that's very about it again right so it'd be fair to say you're not against you know one's you know mental frame being shaped of course yeah and you believe in worldview in that sense it's just as as a singular category if we as Christians think the way to you know prove our children or to get ourselves as loving God with all of our heart so strength in mind if if the main way we're doing that is just get these 12 worldview planks down yeah okay do that think that you teach you know at a liberal arts college but you're missing the way most people come to the decision they're they're not so much rational as they are rationalizing and so when they walk away and you just won the argument and it doesn't bother them because they kind of think well I don't know I could probably some other smart person has another way to look at it it's the things that make us what what has the world what made you laugh what made you cry I've quoted so many times the David Wells line that worldliness is whatever makes sin look normal and righteousness look strange and that happens not because someone made you read some of the critical theorists or the Frankfurt school that you might talk about though their ideas are important but it comes through the media and the movies and the things that we've just instinctively started laughing at and thinking we're normal so the big question is are we are we powerless against those things you talked a lot about technology what do we we're probably gonna have phones we're gonna have cars we're gonna listen to music on our you know private setting what do we do I mean I don't think we're powerless at all one I think although it isn't the solution realizing that there's a problem it's part of the solution so when you become for technology when should you become conscious that technology is actually shaping the way you think there is a possibility of resisting that in some way so I think that is certainly the case secondly and I want to talk about this more tomorrow I do think that there are intuitive dimensions to how we all live that we can capitalize on as Christians and I use one this evening you you can be trashed online by people anonymously or whatever they'll never say that to your face why not because bodily interaction is different I mean I've not debate isn't live debate is not my strong suit I've been involved in a couple of live debates in my time my limited experience tells me that in live debates what happens is generally the temperature goes down right actually why because you're exchanging jokes between speeches you're laughing you're smiling there is a human interaction that takes place there you gravitate towards some common ground yeah that helps so I do think that there are things that that will can allow us to resist the sort of the disembodied frictionless conflicts which so mark our time at the moment if we can capitalize on them and just I think to encourage folks here that we're not powerless and that you many of you are doing more than you realize to use this metaphor of of liturgies what shapes us the rhythms of life you go to church you know maybe twice maybe three times you you read your bible you're in a web of if you're blessed with a web of family and friends who are Christians in a thick kind of culture all of these things have reinforcing so that when the the deceptions of the world hit us that's what seems strange and you don't quite know how to answer some of those questions when you get them but it just doesn't feel

right as opposed to what does happen often is we have people in our churches who know the right answers but they've long ago sort of given up their their moral framework or into their intuition they're holding by a kind of tether but their whole intuition is already gone where the where the world is what what what have you found with your own kids and now that they're grown but practices you did or things that were helpful we taught them basic catechism we prayed with them I think more than anything else we we we had at home to them that being in church on Sunday was critical importance and I'm thinking you know about you were saying that our intuitions tell us things when I remember one incident when I was away I was away and Katrina couldn't drive at the time or didn't have a car so I went to the church at the end of the road which at the time was PCUSA it was a fairly conservative one but the boys and Katrina went one Sunday and there was it was a woman preacher apparently and we didn't make you know we weren't in the game we've never been in the game of of of of smashing talking trash about churches to the kids so we were just sitting over dinner on the Monday and I said the boys how was church yesterday and they said well dad the preaching I said oh what was wrong with the preaching I wondered if they were gonna say it was strange to hear a woman preach they said preaching was really superficial they were like 10 and 8 at the time and they're like wow we've never actually sat and discussed what good preaching was we just made sure they sat under good preaching and I can't remember the discussion from there I doubt very much if they could have pinpointed necessarily why it was superficial but they knew it was superficial there's an intuition and I think yeah when we're shaped by the church our intuitions are shaped all right we're almost out of time what do you like to do for fun I like to what is Katrina she seems fun what does she do then oh she buys coats and jewelry if I didn't have to spend all my time earning money to pay for coats and jewelry maybe I have a road bike that I live to ride in the summer I've just bought a pellet on bike that I'm now using to keep fit in the winter once I've stopped my travels which had been a bit intense for the last 18 months I was learning and taking lessons in bluegrass banjo so I'm aiming to get back to bluegrass banjo very Appalachian of you know but the other I just loved my extreme idea we we now travel together most of the time and I just love when I'm on my own love being with my wife traveling it's it's it's not good on your your bike right you remember when uh however many olympics ago it was and uh you know the Brits won all these you know rowing or canoeing or cycling and who said as long as the Brits can be sitting down while we do it we're really really quite impressed at you know that's your playing and biking with the athletic prowess if we're seated so thank you for living out to that I know it's it's very typical of maybe it's America maybe it's just if you're in a different culture but you know you've been in America for a long time what surprised you when you you came here and what do you really miss about England one of the weird things about being an immigrant is the country you're left behind changes so you can never go back I think of the hasmen poem the happy highways where I went but cannot come again so I miss the England of the 80s and the 90s now thankfully my home village has not changed that much so it's still going to get a pint at the pub but England has changed I think something

something's been a lot I feel very wistful when I think about England now because so much has been lost from when I grew up there what do I find strange about America well I remember yet cheerleaders that's very strange to me yeah I could never get over when we get a hockey games or as we call them ice hockey games in Philly I could never get over the dramatic difference between the home side scoring a goal where the place just explodes and the absolute silence when the away team score a goal but of course it's a big country so there aren't many away supporters oh you're used to somebody just drove from me filming into Manchester and cheese with strikes and is an abomination the greatest and richest nation on earth and what do you do with your time you put cheese in an aerosol can what are you doing and but the thing I the thing I loved about America when we came here that I feel has been lost I love the can do optimism of America and we were out just three weeks before 9-eleven air change pretty quick you know I think that was in many ways 9-eleven we don't know the full impact of what 9-eleven did to American culture we're too close a lot of things I think I talked about tonight connect to 9-eleven as well I like the the can do American confidence it's very great contrast to to the British yeah you think of you know Reagan's famous morning in America I don't know I mean not very many candidates of I want to campaign on a new day it's it's midnight in America and things have never been darker it's good friend of mine Frank Beckwith who's professor of law at Biola who told me once that the day after 9-eleven I think he drove to the FBI recruitment office you know I'm giving up academics I'm joining the FBI because I want to fight these people I think it was around about 2020 with all it was going on in 2020 he said to me you know if happened today I wouldn't bother he said these people are not worth fighting for and that really really seemed to him that a sea change had taken place particularly among a rising generation of Americans that let him think I don't know that I'd sacrifice myself these days so last question to end on because there's plenty to be genuinely discouraged about but to end on a optimistic note I know you have great students that grove and probably by bias selection I trust that the places you go to speak feel like encouraging places and you travel around what do you see and and hear that give you optimism and encouragement for the church in particular yeah I think young people certainly my experience of young people that grow have great young people and the church we go to grow great young people I'm encouraged on that front I'm encouraged that so many are willing to they know that it's going to get tough but they seem up for it remember years ago Rusty Reno called me he was involved in some scheme and he said well you will you stand with us on this I said sure if you're going to go down fighting I'll have you go down with you and he said I intend to fight but I do not intend to go down and that's what struck me yeah that's that's a good attitude and I think I am encouraged that we have small numbers but increasingly committed and thoughtful numbers because if the LGBTQ movement teaches us anything it teaches us that a small committed group of people can transform a society and I think that we have among our young people the kind of talent that if it's focused and organized and it deploys itself with care charity and wisdom can move mountains so I mean I'm actually I don't like the term snowflake because I think

young people do I was chatting in class yesterday I said you know you have a you guys have it a lot tougher than I had it I have never in any workplace secular or otherwise ever come under any heat for the views I hold that's not the world you're going into that's you know I was very privileged and all the young people there struck me as yet and they're ready for it so yeah very encouraged by that yeah very encouraged and there's my sense is there are of course there's bad churches there's lots of good churches lots of ordinary faithful churches our friend Todd Pruitt wrote a very good article something title something like you probably didn't have a bad pastor yeah to say they're out there but you probably had a pretty good pastor yeah and I would say to most but you probably had a lot of really good church people I see the students at RTS they're not looking to be famous they're certainly not looking to be rich they want to be committed to a local church they believe in good doctrine and good preaching and I see people here at this church and many others in town and in our presbytery who want the same thing so there are reasons for optimism that's what annoys me about I won't mention names but you can put names to them people who write for places like the New York Times and are always bashing Christians these are Christians bashing other Christians and bashing the church now there are bad apples in the church there are bad players but my experience of church has been good faithful pastors not being paid very much working very hard and faithfully in small non-prostigious congregations where the congregation themselves it made up of the soccer mums the guys who give up one weekend to help renovate the church give up their time for the young people I think we should not allow the those who've made careers out of bashing the church do not represent in their writings what he's actually going on in the church in this country here here Carl Truman thank you for being with us tonight we're going to be gracious uh hosts and let Carl and Katrina leave and let's stand and let's close by singing the doxology together praise God from whom all blessings flow praise him all creatures dear me though praise him the voice of the sun and we go