

# OpenTheo

## Preaching and Pastoral Ministry with John Piper

February 20, 2025



### Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

In this wide-ranging interview, recorded live at Christ Covenant Church in conjunction with the Coram Deo Pastors Workshop, Kevin asks John about everything from preaching style, to the influence of his parents, to growing up in the South, to his strengths and weaknesses as a pastor. You'll hear lots of stories, pastoral wisdom, and personal transparency. This is one episode you won't want to miss.

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Books & Everything:

Ask Pastor John

The Supremacy of God in Preaching

GPTS | Midweeker

Master of Arts in Theological Studies

## Transcript

We're glad that you can be listening to this special live recording episode with John Piper and want to mention from Crossway the book, Ask Pastor John. 750 Bible answers to life's most important questions. Maybe you've heard me mention it before.

It really is an excellent resource. Even if you don't read it all the way through, I am certain that every Christian will find dozens of questions in there that are interesting to you and will help you as you think about ethics and disciplines and theology and maybe even some questions that you were afraid to ask. Thankful for our friends at Crossway for sponsoring LBE and check out this Crossway book, Ask Pastor John.

Desiring God has been a long time sponsor of LBE and recording this episode with John at a preaching workshop weekend. It would be fitting to mention one of the classic John Piper books, The Supremacy of God in Preaching. It's one of the first books I read as a pastor.

I've come back to it. Often in this short book, John calls pastors and preachers to the Unshakable Foundation of God-centered Christ exulting proclamation to remind us and even if you're not a pastor, it'd be helpful for you to know what the aim of preaching is to remind all of us of God's glory at the center of every sermon. Greetings and salutations.

Welcome back to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin D. Young, Senior Pastor at Christ Covenant Church, and I'm recording this in the sanctuary of Christ Covenant Church and our very special guest this morning for this live recording. So as you're listening to this, wherever you are later in the week or month or years, if you hear noise in the background is because we have a couple hundred people here from Christ Covenant who have come out on a Saturday morning to listen to me talk with Dr. John Piper.

Pastor John, thank you for giving so much of your time to be with us for the better part of a very long weekend. Thank you for being at the workshop on Thursday. Thank you for preaching tomorrow.

Thank you for giving us your time. You're welcome. Thank you.

John, we were speaking at the workshop on Thursday, which was for pastors, maybe five or six hundred pastors. In particular, we were talking about preaching. And one of your messages, you gave 10 reasons, 10 points for the privilege of preaching.

And I told you the effect on me was once again, to feel so blessed and privileged to be a

preacher. I won't ask you to do all 10 points, but can you just give us from your own heart and soul? Why do you feel it is such a privilege to be a preacher? Well, I remember the first one. I remember the last one.

And so that's good bookends. Let me start with the last one. I'm not really worthy of doing.

That's what's called a privilege. And that's infinitely true about preaching and sinful pastors. We just don't deserve such a privilege.

So to the degree that we are unworthy to that degree is preaching a greater privilege. So as you feel less worthy, your sense of this is great. It goes up.

And that's where I ended. And the other nine were cast in a certain light by the fact that. And by the way, you're not worthy of any of them.

But the first one was we get to live in the Bible. And that's a privilege because the Bible says that it is more precious than gold and sweeter than honey. So I get to spend my life in a book that is infinitely valuable and infinitely sweet.

How good is that? I mean, there is no other job like that that I know of. And I think the illustration I gave was what I got my first job at Bethel College teaching Bible. How much you get paid? \$10,500.

I thought it was awesome. I took the contract home to Noel and I said, they're going to pay me for reading the Bible. And for telling people what I see.

And that's the way I felt ever since. People didn't pay me to do this ever since then. To actually look at the Bible, spend the whole time looking at the Bible and then going to things like this and telling people what I saw.

So those are two of the benefits. One of the points that you made was to emphasize the unique kind of word ministry that preaching is. You did such a good job in your first talk.

I had a whole bunch of notes that I never got to. I just mentioned Jonathan Griffith. It's one of the books I put in my Baker's dozen of preaching books.

He has a book preaching in the New Testament. And he looks at these terms. You and Giletso Mai, Katan Gello, and especially K. Russo.

And he looks at these terms and he argues and I agree with him and I think you would too. He says there are semi-technical terms normally referred to preaching by some recognized authority. And K. Russo, he says, is the most specialized term with the narrowest range of meaning.

So the argument of his book, and it's in that series that Don Carson edited the studies in New Testament biblical theology, the ones with the amazingly boring gray covers. And his argument

is there's lots of word ministry in the church. And you and I would have some friends even in ministry who would maybe argue that.

We're all doing word ministry and the pastor gets up and that's just another kind of word ministry. But he's really saying, biblically, this is a unique kind of speech. So why is that so important? And how do you describe that K. Russo verb in particular? Maybe the place to start there since we've, I don't know who listens to your podcast.

I mean, whether it's just pastors or I guess it's much more than pastor. So let me start by acknowledging that the New Testament puts a very high premium on the word ministry of these people. Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, leaving you to fall away from the living.

God, that's your job. That's the job of everybody in the church to keep each other saved by exhorting one another every day. Okay, so I just want to start there and say preaching is not the only ministry of the word that is essential.

Although, I think a case can be made from those cotton, yellow, on on yellow, young guilds of mine and kerosso and others that preaching first existed. I mean, those words first existed for public announcements without any regard to Christianity. Young guilds of mine, you can bring good news that the battle has been won.

And you walk into the city with your young guilds so your good news and you announce our army won. That's not Christian. That word is taken over by the New Testament.

And all the filling of gospel reality and what God has achieved in Jesus for us is poured into it. And first it's used publicly in evangelism. You read the book of Acts.

All those words are mainly evangelistic. They're not mainly worship services. However, Paul takes these words and he brings them, I argue it in my book on preaching.

He brings them into the church and uses them to present every man mature in Christ. That's not evangelism. That's what you do here on Sunday morning is I'm laboring through a certain kind of speech to capture the gospel precedent of people's hearts and present everybody mature in Christ.

So he comes into a town, hear ye. They didn't have any blogs and how many radios, they didn't read videos. They had people and they stand on the street corner and they say, hear ye, hear ye, hear ye.

The emperor has a message for the citizenry of this city. Everyone who has been in rebellion until now may receive a free and complete pardon and amnesty. If he bows before the king repents of his sins and receives the forgiveness of free grace from the king.

That's an announcement. That's news. The main thing that happens in this pulpit is news.

And that unique God, unique book Bible and unique people of God gathered here in Sunday morning have called forth, I think, in the New Testament and in history, a unique kind of speech called preaching. And it's really remarkable when you think about it. I'm old enough now that I've watched the waves of disillusionment with preaching come and go.

So let's get together and do finger painting on the wall. That's what we'll do on Sunday. I'm not making that up.

People in the emergent church said that in my town. Yeah. I can give you names.

I know their names too. And that lasted. That captured a few thousand people.

Oh, that's just awesome. Preaching is so one sided. It's so male and centric.

It just doesn't involve any back and forth. Yeah, that's done for. That will never last.

And that goes away. And here we are again. This has been happening for two thousand years.

I keep looking at you. I know we're being recorded like this. I'm supposed to talk to him.

No, you can talk to them. You're a preacher. I can buy.

We had an audience here. So folks that are watching online. Sorry about that.

I just, where was I? The finger painting. Bad. Yeah.

And it comes and goes. And isn't it amazing that people have been preaching for two thousand years. It cyclically you get bored with it and it always comes back.

It's usually boring because people do it badly. And when it's done well, it is not boring. It feels unique, essential, and corporate worship would be wanting without it.

So I'm a believer. I really, I mean, I've done it for so long and gave my life to it. And if it weren't valid, I would have wasted my life.

I think I've given this illustration, at least in my classroom. I have before, when I was candidating at my last church and had a men's coffee in the morning, that candidating weekend and someone came up. It was a PhD student in English literature.

Don't hold that always against somebody. My wife studied English literature, but he came up and he said, now, and I'm, I'm all of. I was, how old was I when I was candid here, 25 or something.

And he said, are you, are you going to continue with this monological, modernistic, enlightenment, hierarchical, one way mode of communication? Are you more open to postmodern, discursive, dialogical mode of communication? You know, throughout all the words. And I said, and I think I don't always talk like, but I just said, if you mean, am I going to

get up on Sunday and preach for 45 minutes? Well, you listen to it. That's what I'm going to do.

And he left the church. Yeah. Yeah.

But I'll bet he's disillusioned somewhere. He was on his way toward that. It seemed to me.

You see these things, as you said, they come and go, oh, we can't do this. This is, and they slap a label on it. That's Greek, not Hebrew, thinking.

That's modern, that's enlightenment. Go back. This is, this is what they did in the Jewish synagogue.

This is what they did. Ezra. Okay.

We're going to get up. What do we do? Everyone's gathered. We're going to read it.

Explain it to you. We're going to herald this. Good news.

That's right. Yeah. Just to balance things.

I, I was aware. That my demeanor. And aura and persona on Sunday morning was quite authoritative, forceful, and unapproachable.

Like people would say, I could never be his friend. I mean, he's just. So on Sunday night, I don't know how you do it.

I think you do it more traditionally, but I came down out of this down there with an overhead projector. Anybody remember what those are? An overhead projector, which I would use a iPad now. And I put the text on the overhead projector.

We had about 200 or 300 folks. And I taught them and I welcomed questions. I dressed differently.

I'll wear a suit tomorrow morning because that's what I always wear on Sunday morning when I herald on Sunday night. I didn't wear a tie. I dressed like this more or less.

Just to say there were two things that Jesus did with his disciples. He went up on the Mount of Transfiguration and they saw him transfigured and they fell down on their faces and they didn't know what to say. That's Sunday morning.

There's a reverence about it. There's a sense of Jesus is here in his transfigured glory and we come in and we go vertical. For 60 or 90 minutes and we meet God.

Jesus also went out in the garden and up on the Mount of Olives and he sat down with his disciples, put his elbow on the ground and he looked at them and said, how did it go today? And he taught them just the 12 face to face, informal. It wasn't the Sermon on the Mount or the Sermon on the plane. It wasn't the confrontation with the Pharisees.

It was just us 12 and that's what Sunday night wanted to feel like. So Transfiguration, Mount of Olives and we had, I was two kinds of people because I think Jesus comes to us that way, right? Don't mess with Jesus. He's electric.

And yet, don't turn the embrace of Jesus to do a headlock. That's what I said. His great line yesterday.

There's the sweetness and the embrace of Jesus. I wanted my people to know I'm approachable. Sunday morning did not look that way.

He was prophetic. He was forceful. He was Moses on the mountain and in the evening he was Jesus in the garden.

I hope. So John, you do have, some may describe it, forceful personality and I've had the privilege to get to know John over many years. Do you remember one time after a, is it a gospel coalition meeting when we were at Southern Seminary and some of us went up into one of those rooms there where Al puts us up and we're watching hockey game? You may not remember this book.

I don't remember. Okay. Anything about hockey.

You know I'm from Iceland. Yeah. I just, we're watching and you said the same thing.

I don't know if I've ever seen hockey and you were, John was like, what's going on? I can't even follow the puck. You are, you are all in. So John is the same person wherever he is.

How do, how have you tried to help? You talk about being approachable to your congregation thinking in particular other pastors or young men here aspiring to pastoral ministry who think I, I don't have, that's not my personality. And can I be a preacher if I'm not wired just like John Piper? Yes. Probably especially.

It is ironic, isn't it, that Jonathan Edwards is my main dead hero outside the Bible. And from all the few reports that we have of his preaching, it was flat. I mean, he had a little, he had a little notes like this.

You can see him at the Yale library. I've seen him. And, and he held his little book with that notes.

He put his arm on a pillow and he basically read. This is one of the most powerful preachers in the history of the world, I think. And I still read his sermons to this day.

And he, he was not energetic or forceful, except what they said was he was blood earnest. And that was his power. Blood earnest.

And so there's Edwards. I, I, I've taught preaching and I've made some pretty bad mistakes about judging who could be a preacher and who couldn't at first sight. For example, a young

man who's, I mean, there's like 14 or 15 guys in the class.

And I'm, I'm assessing as we introduce and talk and have back and forth. I don't see how you'll ever be a preacher. And just because the personality is so quiet and then so laid back and so soft spoken.

So I require them all to memorize at least seven verses of the Bible in a row and recite them to the class from memory to help them find their voice besides the preaching moment that they do. And this one fell that I thought was the most soft spoken quiet. He'll never be a proclaimer did the best of all in that moment.

He, it wasn't loud, but it was unusually articulate, well spoken, poised, gracious, and its own way forceful. So I've had to be really careful. Look at any, anybody and say they will or they won't be a preacher.

I just, I'm very suspicious of my own judgments in that regard. I think the Holy Spirit is the key, your personality, and he is willing to speak through an ass in the Old Testament. And therefore you have hope that he will speak through you.

And therefore the main battle is not to be a certain personality, but to be authentic through and through and to trust the Lord with all your heart. And then to grow as you're able in craft. I was just reading this morning.

I wanted so bad to throw this in. So here's a good place because I read it this morning. I mean, Exodus 35 to 37.

So this is all about loops and purple and gold and acacia wood and, oh my goodness. What, what in the world is? And, and bezel eel and a holy ab, holy what, what it said was the Lord gave craftsmanship to these people. So the women were weaving goat hair to make the curtains that were 30 cubits long.

Good night. That's an amazing project. And, and the, these men worked in gold and they worked in wood and they had craft.

And I thought, thank you Lord, that there's, there are little elements of craft that you have that I have that any of these aspiring pastors can develop. And you can work on it. You can grow.

So there's this core reality of, of humility and faith and trust and knowledge of the Bible that make the core of, of a preacher. And then there's the, the over a lifetime growing in the craft of words. And just one more observation.

When I thought about that craft of words. It's amazing to me that in the Old Testament and the new, there are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of metaphors. It's like in the Old Testament, you can hardly read two verses without some analogy.

The Lord is my shepherd. There's one. He makes me allowed down in green pastures.



There's another one. He leaves me without steel waters. There's another one.

Well, walk through the valley of shadow of death. There's another one. These, these are all pictures.

The Bible talks like that everywhere. That's craft. Why does the Bible do that? Why does the Bible not just give a straightforward prosaic descriptions instead of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of my cop overflows? Well, what come? Where's the cop? It's a picture.

It's an analogy. And the Bible does this all the time so pastors should get good at that. They should get good at that.

They just copy the Bible. Okay. That's my little, from the devotions.

That's very good. We like your devotions. The Puritans were so good at this.

We're reading as a, as our senior staff right now. Thomas Brooks, precious remedies against Satan's devices. And just all the time dropping.

I mean, the one I've used many times in preaching here is he says repentance is the vomit of the soul. Oh, good grief. Yeah.

It's a, it's a word picture. You don't want to dwell on it. It speaks to what repentance is.

He has so many lines like that. One of the things that isn't as a privilege of preaching on the privilege of preaching here and we were talking last night. Almost all of our people, I think, are really easy to feed.

And it makes it, it makes it a joy. They're eager to feed. They're, when you're walking with Christ, you know, this sounds like a cop out for pastors.

But it's true if somebody said, how, how can I help my, my pastor be a better preacher? Well, you can pray for him. You can also pray for yourself about the quickest way is for your walk with Christ. All of a sudden the preaching, that's not all that good.

Just, you have so much kindling or you're so easily fed that, that, that preaching feeds you. And that's what I have a delight to do here. People give, give me the word.

I think sometimes preaching classes don't serve church as well if they think that week after week, the pastor needs to just get the biggest hook and the greatest story to come in. No, if you do this faithfully to your people, they're, they're, they're ready. And don't need a 15 minute introduction to convince them this is going to be interesting.

Yeah. Turning your Bible. Turning your Bible.

Here we go. And let's get going. And it's frustrating in heartbreaking the way I hear so many people, I'm sure you've seen this ebb and flow over the years, who Christians, or at least

professing Christians who think it's a prophetic kind of to just lambast the church.

What, what have you done as a pastor to keep your heart soft and tender toward your people? Did that come easily? I imagine in decades of ministry there were seasons. It didn't. How did you prevent by God's grace not becoming cynical or frustrated? I don't know what I would have done in a church that wasn't like what you just described.

I came to Bethlehem. It was a, I think they would have said dying downtown church 111 years old. And there were 300 people there on Sunday morning and they were.

90% gray heads. All the middle aged folks had moved to the suburbs. This was smacked downtown two blocks from the where the Vikings play.

It's just it's right downtown. The freeways crossed and the freeways were built in 1967. And everybody thought that was the death mill of the church because the church sat right there.

If you can see it, you can't get to it because you're on the freeway. So this is just a dying situation and they were so hungry. They was pastor and he actually has kids.

He's got three little kids and another one can be born soon. So I was loved by older people who were hungry and they made my life very easy. Which means that the people who didn't like me were always cushioned by God's grace in the people who did and were thankful for the ministry of the word.

So there were it was easy to get bitter and angry toward little clicks that didn't like you for whatever reason. I mean, I think I told you that when I published that thing, I won't even mention here that I shouldn't have published. She took my hand to the door and she said, you're sick, pastor.

You're just sick. You can ask me later, he published something that had a creative title with truth, but maybe not wise for the church news. But I went after her.

She lived in a trailer in northern suburb and after she told me I was sick, I called her up and said, can I come visit? Yeah. And so I went to just try to heal things. So this is one answer to question to one way to keep from becoming bitter about a click or a person is just go after them.

It's hard to be bitter face to face. It's easy to be bitter to an imaginary person who's beaten up on you. And keep them at a distance.

You can feel bitter if you're looking at them. The dynamics of the spirit in her and in me don't let that happen so easily. It didn't work.

I mean, she left the church. I did everything I could to to win her, but she left the church. So there was that kind of situation, but I think staying in the word, being loved by significant numbers of people, constantly preaching to yourself what a shepherd is.

Shepherds don't exist to make their sheep miserable. They exist to keep them alive and put them in green pastures and I steal waters and beat off the wolves and they're not the wolves. So I think the biblical picture of what a pastor is is key.

Believe that. And then having people love you and then going personally after the adversaries in the church so that you don't treat them as artificial distant enemies, but rather real life persons you want to win. I want to highlight here a mid weaker.

What's that? It is a special missions cohort that Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary is hosting. It's one of their limited cohort of pastor's church leaders. This intensive seminar focused on fulfilling the great commission.

There's a deadline for an application. March 21st, you can go to [gpts.edu](http://gpts.edu) and find more information. This missions mid weaker will include speakers.

Chad Vegas, Brooks Buser, Jonathan Master, Michael Morales. Get excellent teaching, build biblical foundation for missions, whether you are in ministry, thinking about missions. Just want to learn more.

Check this out from our friends at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. And also from our friends at Westminster Theological Seminary. They have a complete master of arts in theological studies degree.

And as little as one and a half years, you can take the next step in developing biblical literacy, spiritual discernment, understanding apologetics, church history, many other topics along the way. There are lots of free Bible study resources available online. Lots of them are great.

But a program like this can give you some of the shape and discipline and cohesion to understand the Bible at a deeper level. Their master of arts in theological studies degree. You can learn more at [wts.edu](http://wts.edu) slash maths.

That's M-A-T-S. John, you've had in your decades of ministry. You've had a lot of success.

Sold millions of copies of your books. Preached at a large church. I don't know.

I've been checked recently. Have a million followers on Twitter. People are eager to meet you.

Take a picture with you. You have that can be one set of temptations. You also have people who are not a part of the John Piper fan club.

If you wanted to, you could go through Twitter and get both of those. How have you maintained equilibrium? Neither of those tempt you or one more than the other. The praise or the, you know, believe your own press clippings or the people that think you're awful and say terrible things about you.

Is that tempt you to bitterness or reprisal? How have you handled being a very public person

with very public opinions about you? I'm not bothered by adversaries because I don't read them. You say they exist. I take your word for it.

Sorry to discourage you. They're out there. Twitter for me is just a pulpit.

All I do is quote Bible verses every day. And I don't look at any comments at all. I think you and I have the same, I think, approach.

And I know some of our friends like to get on there and like to mix it up and like to have dialogue. My line has always been I use this as a microphone, not a telephone. That's exactly.

I've never thought of that, but that's true. Amplification. If people want to hear this.

Yeah, just turn me off if you don't like it. No, you don't have to read what I do. So, yeah, I don't read other people's stuff.

And by the way, here's a little thing about a million followers. It does say a million. Guess what? There's 11,000 people who look at these tweets.

I know that because the little numbers that show up under them, they show up the same number every day. It's 11, 2, 11, 3, 11, 7. 90% of those followers don't even exist on Twitter anymore. They signed up eight years ago and they haven't looked at it for seven years.

So, they don't be impressed with these numbers. They don't mean anything. This is a handful of folks out there that look.

But, look, here's the reality is you got to marry the right woman if you want to stay humble. Because she's not impressed. I mean, this is huge.

It really is. I do not come home to accolades. I leave accolades and come home to reality.

This is totally true. Totally true. And she, I can show you the little, the little, she texted me.

Yesterday was Valentine's. Here I am. She's a thousand miles away.

And she said, would you be my Valentine? Little hearts at the beginning. Hearts at the end. She's a good wife.

But she's not impressed with you. That's a part of it. The people that are around me are really not yes men.

Okay. The Desiring God guys are smart. They know more than I do.

They read more than I do. They write as good as I do or better. And so I haven't surrounded myself with a bunch of cheerleaders, you know, cheer givers.

So that's a crucial thing. If you want to keep your head on straight, you elders that are out

there. Just don't be impressed with Kevin.

He's not that big a deal, right? Just keep him faithful to shepherding his people and keep his feet on the ground. Don't let him get a big hit. So you're who surround you makes a big deal.

But the most important thing is, is God and his word. We, we reform folks. If you're a good reform theologian, you should be flat on your face.

Thankful for grace. It is totally free. We don't do anything to deserve it.

We are unworthy people. After you've done your whole duty, say it was only my duty. I mean, here's the sad thing about human nature.

You can espouse reform teaching, which is the most humbling teaching in the world. And brag about it. There are braggarts on the internet who strut their reform theology.

Doesn't have the aroma of brokenness about it. That's totally inconsistent. So that's another piece of keeping your equilibrium, staying humble.

Is that we have a God and we have a theology who is gloriously gracious, infinitely holy. We don't deserve anything. And he's chosen to pick us up out of the trash heap of humanity and use us in some measure.

And we should be, like I said in my, one of the points I made at the preaching thing was, you should say from the pulpit, I'm thrilled to be your pastor. But that shouldn't be the main note. The main note should be, I'm thrilled to be a Christian.

Because Jesus said to the 72 when they came back, and the demons are subject to us. And Jesus has popped their bubble. Do not rejoice in this, that the demons are subject to you.

Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. That's the great thing. And your people should see that.

Like my pastor is amazed that he's a Christian. He's not amazed that he's a book writer. He's amazed that he's a Christian.

That he woke up this morning and God was pleased to put faith in his heart again. And he didn't apostatize overnight. That's a miracle.

So we should just be continually amazed. And that's probably the key to keeping our. There's, I've reflected with Justin Taylor, our mutual friend and some others before.

There's a long line. It's very sad. I won't mention any of their, any of their names, but in particular, Gen X pastors, many of them were on gospel coalition at one point and just gone and, and really bad directions in my estimation.

And hopefully I, I haven't, but I think just what to underscore what you said. My wife and my,

my elders and elders who that I have here and similar elders. I had it at my last church.

You know, not just I'm keeping you in line. But I mean, there's some things that guys say out there that pastors say online and I just think, how did you just say that? And your elders not call you up a half hour later to say, what, what did you do? And I think I would have these elders, but they would also call to encourage me. And, you know, I have a wife.

We were joking about this, but, you know, I love that Tricia. I tell people, I don't, I'm not looking for my wife to be an honest sermon critic on Sunday afternoon. Some guys say that my wife's my best critic.

She gives their best. I want just, I love you, hun. And that was good.

And you're in all of you who know Tricia wouldn't expect anything different than that. Do you, do you get that? I do. I know.

Well, it's another conversation. No, I just love you so much. I love snowwell so much.

Yes. When I say Tricia, I just, man, that didn't feel very good. And she'll say, oh, but you were.

And I said, well, what did you get out of it? And she'll say, well, that kids were pretty rambunctious. I don't remember that much, but. That's my man.

Yeah. She was, she was gone yesterday taking all nine kids skiing in Virginia. It was crazy.

I don't know if she did that, but she's on her way home now. And so I sent her a text and I found this real nerdy, seminary kind of meme that little picture. And it said Solomon had 700 wives because he never met you.

Amen. Yeah. There you go.

So go ahead. That's a winner. That's great.

You can use it. But I would, I would come, come back. I think especially, you know, when I started writing books in my last church, when I started there, I had six elders.

They weren't on the internet. They weren't reading my stuff. Tricia doesn't read anything.

She doesn't have time to read anything. She needs a directory to keep track of who all these people are. She knows who John Piper is.

You know, so it's just really good. And it's really dangerous if any, in any profession, but especially a pastor. If you're not excited to come home.

And if you think that's, that's the world out there. And praise God that he has kept you all these years. Have, were there times? Go ahead.

Don't lose your train of thought. Let me just say what a great, an amazing evening is for us. So we have two chairs.

They face the fireplace. They're, they call \$700. We got one of them free because we complain that the other one was stitched badly.

So we have these two chairs. They're super comfortable. They sit about like that.

And there's fireplace. We don't have a television. And just hit me the other night.

I'm sitting there reading this novel called The Yearling. And she's looking at her phone. I think she's, she's playing games.

She's, she's listening to a book and she's playing these games. And we haven't said a word for two hours. Now, if you're with a stranger and you sit in the same room for two hours, don't say anything.

Just weird. And he's super awkward. And we're just, that's just as natural as can be.

Isn't that wonderful? We need to be in the same room. I used to ask her, what, what's an ideal evening? And God must, my study is upstairs. And so if I'm upstairs, nobody crosses that line.

But it, she says, just being in the same room, doing what you do and doing what I do. That's what a good evening is. That's, that's what our marriage has been like.

Like hours and hours of silence. It's just wonderful. Okay.

Now back to your point. I'm going to now follow up on that. What do you and Noel or what, what do you do for fun? You guys years ago, you watched out and happy together.

Do you watch things together? Do you have, do you have hobbies, John? I, he's a perfect picture of our fun. The Scrabble Board is on. So the chair sit like this, put a stool here, put the Scrabble Board.

It's a twerly board. You put it there. We've had it for 50 years.

This 50 year old Scrabble. And we're competing. He's ruthless.

And, and I, this is like a week ago. I put a seven letter word. That's used all your letters.

You get an extra 50 points. Only I used a letter that was out there. So it was eight words and it touched on two double words.

It was 122 points. And she beat me. That's our marriage.

I mean, I, I just, you can't get any more than 122 points in a Scrabble shot. See what I mean, John's like this all the time. That's what we do.

That's what we do about things. So someday somebody doing some research about our marriage will take this thing because we keep all these scorecards and they're in there. Does he send them to Justin so he can.

I'm not going to do that because I'm, and somebody's going to figure out which one won the most often. Well, there's just no doubt who won the most often. She beats me.

She's so good with words in it. But so there that's what we do for fun. That's one of the things we do.

John, is it true? So you know, we, we believe we're complimentarians and you're the head of your home leader in your home. Would, would it be fair to say you're the more affected, more emotional of the two of you? Yes. Without question.

That's been one of these problems in our marriage. Touch me. Say something tender to me.

Why am I the romantic? You're the man. I'm the woman. What's this? They don't tweet that particular line right there but within, within context.

So what, and as you should not surprise her at all. Yeah. So what have you done? How, because I, I get this question a lot.

You have two people say, okay, I hear, I, I believe what you say about men and women. But man, our marriage doesn't seem to fit what maybe is true in 75%. Because maybe you're in the, whatever the percent of it's flipped.

So how do you still have that flip of affective and say rational or practical maybe. I don't think that's implied in head and submission. Correct.

But people can, can think. All right. So the woman has this emotional range, the husband's logical, rational, this emotional range.

We've never known that. That's crazy. We do.

We're just, we're just totally the opposite. I mean, we, we, we take it, you know, INTJ. I mean, that's, you know what the tag line of INTJ is? There's always room for improvement.

That is not easy to be married to. Get that. Get that.

INTJ. Marzburg. Yeah.

And for the tag line, there's always room for improvement. I'm a perfectionist, which means if I'm not careful, she can never please me. And that's been huge.

That's been a huge problem that I have, I easily and de facto communicate. You don't measure it. That's been very hurtful.



Very wounding. And we've had to really work to figure out what's wrong with me. Why do I, why can't I find a better way to do that? Part of that's on her because I'm the one who's generally saying tender and soft and kind.

I write poems. She doesn't write poems. I send her a poem for Valentine's Day.

In fact, I call her and read it to her. I wrote a sonnet for yesterday about what it's like to love across the miles. And she doesn't do that.

But now. I've got a nevertheless, right, rain in. My INTJ ishness and her, whatever, they're the opposites of each one of those.

And. It's, it's taken me. You will own this or not, but I will sometimes show Justin Taylor who both know well.

Say, I think, I think confrontation is one of Pastor John's love languages. Now, here's what I mean by that. When, when you tell me something that, you know, there's a little fly in the ointment of something or you didn't.

I know John respects me enough. To be himself. And, and, and I take it.

I think this I'm taking it right. You can say no. And I really don't.

That makes me very happy to hear you say that. That you feel it. I take it as John feels an equality that he can speak to me and tell me what he thinks about something where maybe he wouldn't sometime else.

I do not handle you with kid gloves. And, and that you're, you're right. I remember one time we were at a conference.

I'll tell you later, if you don't remember what it was. There, there was someone else who I thought gave a very. Wild, crazy, not very great message.

And I give a message. I'm trying. And we got in the speaker room afterward and you were.

You were needing, needling me about some turrets and quote. I said, and I think I asked you privately afterward. I said, okay, I appreciate that.

Why don't you say anything about, you know, that fellow's talk. And I think you said something to me like. I wasn't going to get anywhere.

I took it as a compliment. I can needle you about a turret and quote. Have you had to, because, you know, you talk about approachability.

Surely in pastor ministry, you worked with people, especially as you got older and staff got younger who, who were intimidated. Or did they give you a, a deference that didn't help collegiality? How did you cross that? Yeah. That is such a good question because, because I

have a close group of fans.

And our native talk is really rough. Okay. You know, like the band of brothers in the army.

Like we don't use bad language. It seems like all army movies is bad. And we don't do that.

But we're, we're rough. We speak that way. Why did you say that? That was stupid.

And that's not hurtful, but that would hurt a lot of people. And we had a staff member who I did not realize was being wounded by this banter in the staff meeting. I just, I was oblivious until it came out how, how, um, uncaring, he's uncaring.

He's harsh. He's mean. And I'm thinking, Oh, my goodness.

I can see why he would say that if he's not of this ilk and, and I had to try to patch things up with him. And I realized I really do need to do some audience analysis here or one or one or one or in a group and not talk that way with everybody, but rather move in. And, and I realized he's got more Bible on his side than I do.

The Bible doesn't really prioritize tough talk as love language. It's way more into be tender, hearted, kind, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. That's just powerfully needed by John Piper, tender, hearted, kind, forgiving that feel of a personal interaction would be less natural to me.

And I'd need to work on it, especially if, if I discern anybody is not at all going to take the tough language well. So I don't have that worked out in my mind, frankly, of, of whether the, the comrades in arms kind of tough talk among a band of brothers is altogether healthy. I like it.

But I don't, I don't know if it trains me into most edifying speech. To your credit, I've seen personally, and maybe secondhand others have told me, you are an exceptionally good letter writer or email writer. I would say, you know, right up there with, you know, a John Newton, very pastoral, very tender.

And so I think there's another, I don't want to say another side of you because I think everything's the same, but I've seen that and I think it, it's probably a way God's wired you. They're the same mind that wants to write your wife a sauna or a poem has that pastoral sense come through even more strongly, I think, in the written word. I want to ask earlier, in those years of pastoral ministry, did you ever seriously think about leaving pastoral ministry to do something else? I thought about leaving the church for another church once or twice.

And the Lord was so good. I've only served in one church in my life, 33 years in one church. So I don't have any experience of serving a different kind of church.

And the Lord only let serious invitations to leave come when I was happy. So they didn't work. And it had some moments where you weren't as happy.

Yeah. And they didn't come. I mean, that's just providence.

It's just sweet. Stay where you are, Piper. So, but as far as thinking about I'll leave and I'll teach college or I'll leave and I'll even be a missionary.

I always entertained that possibility, but it never rose to the level of you should. So no. What influence this could be a long, long answer.

I know we want to try to respect that we said it would go an hour though. I'm sure many people here would love to go several hours. Can you talk about the influence your mom and dad had on you as a pastor? Your dad was a preacher.

Yeah. Your mom, I remember very moved with one time at T4G. I think it was a Q&A.

Someone asked you, you know, why you believe the Bible and among many other things you said, because my mom, I told me it was true. Yeah. Talk about your mom and dad.

Well, to be honest, I think that's probably why most of us believe is because, I mean, if we grew up in a Christian home, we believed because mom and dad believe that's what you do. And then as you own it, you might walk through crises of needing certain kinds of confirmation and evidence. But to be honest, we are all shaped by our parents.

I think my father influenced me as a pastor by being number one Bible saturated. His sermons were full of Bible. He didn't like to have a verse and then tell stories.

Verse, verse, verse, verse, verse, verse. My father was an evangelist, not a pastor. But I heard him preach often and he preached in settings where he was trying to win people to Christ like a Billy Graham on the small scale.

And I think I grew up thinking that's what you do. You saturate your Bible. Your sermons with Bible.

Secondly, I would say my father had an unusual. I've often said my father's the happiest man I ever knew. And I think I'll still say that.

And he would come home from his two or three, four weeks away and he would tell exploits of the triumph of the gospel which we loved and he would tell new jokes at the dinner table. And what made him such a good joke teller is that he laughed hardest at his own jokes. And he was a little bit portly.

He described himself as toothpicks in a watermelon. And he would just shake all of them. And I'm just laughing my head off and mothers laughing the tears of streaming down our face.

And that was our, those were the happiest moments. Mother laughing with tears on her face at daddy's jokes and his belly shaking. And then came the ice cream.

So humor and yet I never saw anybody's eyes please in the pulpit with earnestness about the judgment of God like my father. It is a point in the demand once to die and after that the judgment. I mean I'm just sitting there as a kid thinking.

Two. And that's the happiest man I ever knew. So those never seemed opposite to me which was a great gift I think.

Mother often said my daddy lived in Romans and my mother lived in Proverbs. Proverbs are just one verse long and then you start over with the new verse. And when I was away at college and graduate school that's what she quoted.

She'd send me letter every week and at the bottom trust in the law with all your heart to not rely on your own insight. In all your ways of knowledge you make your past straight Johnny. He's quoted Proverbs.

So her mind was not kind of a long logical linear development of an argument but rather bullet points of wisdom. And nobody, I couldn't, I couldn't talk in front of a group when I was safe from grade six to end of high school. I was frozen.

She took me to a psychologist to try to figure this out. Nobody understood why. I didn't know why to this dad.

I don't know why. But I couldn't talk in front of a group. I froze muscles.

Nobody understood and cared for me like my mother. That time she took me to a, now you understand Christian counseling today is just a given right? That didn't exist in 1960. Psychology was not a good thing, right? That's just so secular.

So off the charts. Why would you go there if you're a Christian? And I'm married to, I mean, I'm in a fundamentalist home. And that's how desperate we were to figure out what's wrong with me.

So it takes me to the psychologist. And I remember they showed me a Rorschach. What do you see? Butterfly.

Butterfly. What else? And when we were done, this woman psychology said, I think you got problems with your mother. I'm out of here and I never went back.

If there's anybody that's not a problem in my life, it's my mother. Don't you begin to lay this. How old were you? That was probably 14, 15 years old.

We just knew wherever my problem is, it ain't mama. Sit on my bed, rub my back. When I'm just scared.

Spittless that I have to read a 15 second report in class tomorrow. And couldn't do it. I just want to ask you, if lightning round, if you give a couple quick thoughts, what did you, in addition to

preaching in the study, what did you find most life-giving in pastoral ministry? And what was a drain? You just, when you saw that on your calendar, you knew, okay, I'll do it, and it's right, and I'm going to be exhausted.

For God's pure grace was, I loved my staff and my elders, and they were life-giving meetings. I know a lot of pastors just dread elders are deacons meetings, and staff is tense, and God surrounded, we had a theological unity, we had a philosophical unity, so that to meet with the staff each week and to meet with the elders every three weeks was life-giving. I loved it, that was a pleasure.

And we'd go away, and I would insist that we always play together. We'd always do volleyball or something, besides all the work that we do, we're going to play together. So that was big.

Premarital counseling became a weight. Like, I'm happy, I want to do your wedding, but I don't want to meet with you forever. To try to help you get ready for marriage.

And I did it, I did it for goodness knows how many couples, but it wasn't a delight to me to take a couple and talk about conflict and talk about sex and talk about, because it was just the same thing over and over in. That was a weakness on my part. I should love that, right? I should love helping a young couple get ready to make a good success of their marriage, but it was a burden.

My elders removed that from me at my last church at some point. Similar, I hope I wasn't terrible at it, but they said, you know what? We're going to make this easy for you to say no. We're telling you, you don't do this anymore.

And then they got half a dozen other couples who were thrilled to do it and just lay people in the congregation and said, we love meeting with us. Well, my others did, it was great. A somewhat similar question.

My theory with people who have lots of gifts, and you do have lots of gifts, you want to be humble about them, but you have lots of gifts and gifts that not everyone has, gifts that I don't have. And many of those are evident, speaking, preaching, smart, writing. I often think people who have a lot of, there's a maybe a more invisible superpower, as it were, I think about Mark Deaver.

He's got a public ministry, but I don't know anyone who is better at relational glue. And somebody, some historian, cannot tell the story of this moment in North American church without Mark Deaver just loving people and being off the church extrovert. So I want to know, do you have a superpower, a gift that is less visible and then to balance it out? What's a weakness that John Piper has that maybe people wouldn't know? Well, the second was easy to answer, but I'm trying to think if there's any superpower that people don't know.

You're very disciplined. I mean, I wonder if that's, you're on the treadmill, you're in the word. You know that.

So it's not secret. Oh, well, I just ruined the secret. Give me the secret one.

I can't think of one. All right. The weakness.

I'm prone to be self-pitying, solid. I mean, I've got this cluster of besetting sins and they've been around for 56 years of merit. And I think I've learned how to put them to death, but they still need to be put to death.

So you're a romantic. Your wife is not. After 56 years, you still hold out the hope that she might say something romantic.

And this year she writes this on. And she didn't when you got home. And therefore you go up to your room.

And if the devil gets the upper hand and your flesh triumphs over the spirit, you sulk and you feel self-pitying. And self-pitying gives rise to sullenness and sullenness can become anger. And anger can kill other proper emotions.

I think that sequence is not untypical in men who are strong. They're hidden babies. They want to be mother.

And I had a very tender, caring mother. Maybe that's part of why I look like poor Johnny. And I want her to do that.

And that's the invisible weakness of this strong prophetic writer books. And so, I mean, I took a leave of absence in 2010 for 10 months to work on this. Everybody knew it.

I said to my elders, we're going to work on my soul and my marriage and everything. And I think the Lord taught me some pretty serious things about how to crucify those before they get the upper hand. I could give you illustrations about how that works, but you wanted lightning around.

This is not lightning. So that would be, that's easy. And I could probably multiply weaknesses.

But if I have a strength, you probably know what they are. And I don't think there's any hidden strength like Sunday. I'm going to be strong and you don't know what people can see what your, your strengths, I mean, it is, you know, your authenticity.

It's an overused word, but it's true. People, nobody can say, I don't know if John really believes this or I'm not sure if John's really into this. You know, I don't think everyone has to live in the same house two blocks from the Viking stadium, but you have.

And I've been there once. And it's a, it's a, it's a fine, plain, ordinary house. And how long have you had that sport coat? I have no idea.

I've got, I've got two of these. So no one could say, John is living high in the hall. If the

temperature had been just a little bit higher, I would be in my brown one.

Yeah, closer. I think should not. I mean, I live with an allergy against clothing statements because I grew up in the south where the evangelists who came through were a different color sport jacket every night.

And I hated it. And I thought I'll never, ever, ever try to make a, cut a, you know, cut a swab in the world with coat. Yeah, my wife is on my, she'd be, she would be mortified that I have these cords on because the back end is shiny.

Johnny, don't wear those anymore. I like them. Comfortable.

They don't have any creases. They're just easy to. Okay.

One or two more questions. John last night met with some of our pastors and elders and it was amazing. There was 14 of us.

I bet 10 of those guys had lived in Greenville, South Carolina at some point. I couldn't, you know, in school or they were from there and we'll have some more at the lunch in a bit who are from there. You've been in Minneapolis for almost all of your adult life.

What, but here you are in Charlotte and everyone here has probably been to Greenville. It's a very different city than I'm sure it was when you grew up there. Are you still a southerner or what part about growing up a southerner has stuck with you? Well, I wonder if I'm in a room of southerners or if you're all transplants.

There's a lot of transplants. My parents are from Pennsylvania. They went to Greenville because Bob Jones was in Greenville and my dad and my mom went to Bob Jones University and they stayed.

So they're transplants. They never sounded like southerners and in one sense, they never acted like southerners. They never had an example of the tribute to my mother had a huge impact.

So in 1963, racist issues, big, my Southern Baptist Church passed a motion that blacks would not be admitted to the worship services because if they show up here, it's just a political statement. That was the rationale. My mother voted against that all by herself.

My sister got married in that room and my mother had a black friend and she invited her to come. Nobody had sat in that balcony for 30 years and my mother, five feet two and explosive with indignation, comes over, grabs their arms and walks them smack dab into the sanctuary and seeks them. So we were not southerners, very good southerners when it came to race issues.

There are certain pastors. It's hard to conceive of Tim Keller about being in New York City and Mark Dever and Capitol Hill Baptist and I'm sure you didn't think of it like this. You got your first job there in Minneapolis, but I don't know.

There's something about cold, frozen, tundra, some life of suffering that seems like John Piper in Southern California in Southern Florida. Miami, I've always thought really out of place. People ask me, where would you live if you could live anywhere in the world? I'd say heaven.

I have zero desire to be in any geography. I want to be where certain people are, right? And if they're in Afghanistan, they go there. If they're in Minneapolis, you go there.

So people ask like, do you know this is going to be the coldest week of the year in Minneapolis? Zero today is going to be 11 minus 11 when I get home on Sunday night. That's 43 degrees below freezing. Like living in your freezer for three months.

And people wonder, how can you do that? I say, all the people, they're there. My family's there. My kids are there.

Vikings are there. My son likes the Vikings. My family is there.

I don't have any. I don't care about geography. What do you hope would be your legacy? You think about that 79 years old? Yeah, I do.

It'll all be, I mean, I won't get to choose my legacy because it's all online, right? Everything I've ever said is a desiring God. That's why I have to preach a new sermon tomorrow morning. I hope he will be known as Bible-saturated, God-centered, Christ-exalting, people-loving, mission-advancing, he was the hyphenated guy.

And his favorite hyphenations, favorite hyphenations were God-centered, Christ-exalting, Bible-saturated, people-loving, mission-advancing. If those stick, I'll be happy. Amen.

Let's thank John for giving us so much of his time. Thank you. This has been a live.

I was supposed to advertise something. I was okay. They want me to do this before we wrap up.

Give us Lord willing. John will be back here for Kormdeo Pastors Conference in 2026, March of next year. You were here for 2024.

Tell us, if I can put words in your mouth, why you were glad to be here last year. Why you're excited to come next year and why the Lord uses Pastors Conference. I like hanging out with you.

That's the main reason. Well, thank you. And the people that you have.

I mean, conferences are for a lot of people, including me, occasions to hang out with friends. That's what they are. You go to conferences because you're going to meet up with people you don't get to see very often.

The focus is so God-centered. The worship is God-centered. The Bible is prominent.

You expect me to do what I love to do. And the people are hungry. I remember this place is full



and they were hungry.

So, to go to places where you're wanted, where what you love to do, they want you to do, and where the people are drawing it out of you and you're building up in the face and making God look big, why wouldn't you want to do that? Amen. Thank you all for listening into our listeners wherever you are. Thanks for listening to life and books and everything and special guests.

John Piper, until next time, glorify God, enjoy him forever and read a good book.