

# OpenTheo

## Christmas, Best Books, and Renewing Evangelicalism with Justin Taylor and Collin Hansen

December 13, 2022



### **Life and Books and Everything** - Clearly Reformed

The gang is back for one last episode in 2022. There is the usual sports banter (very brief), and some good natured ribbing toward Justin, who seems to know nothing about pop culture but still has dreams about Elvis. The three friends share some of their favorite reads from the past year, and they wrap things up discussing an article by Paul House about J.I. Packer and how to renew evangelicalism.

### **Transcript**

[music] Greetings and salutations! This is Life and Books and Everything Good to Have You With Us. I'm joined for the last LBE. Oh, perhaps if I write something I'll read one of my short articles, but last real LBE of the year.

So it's good to have Colli and Justin here with me for all manner of revelry and book-related hijinks and end of year Christmas reflections. Coming to you in just a moment, I want to thank Crossway and encourage you a book we've mentioned several times before, but at the end of the year, it's a great time to mention this again. The B-Thow My Vision by Johnny Gibson to 31-Day Liturgical Guide Designed to Provide Structure to the Daily Worship of Individuals and Families.

I don't know how long, I suppose if you did everything, it might take 15, 20 minutes, but it's really well done. It's lovely to hold and to look at and give you readings and a prayer and intercessory prayers and from confessions. It's kind of a scaled down daily book of common prayer geared with a Presbyterian bent.

What could be better than all of those things? It really is rich. So pick up a copy, it makes a great Christmas gift or something as you're starting the New Years. I want to try to re-up your devotional life.

This would be a great resource. Thank you, Crossway. Do you guys do New Years resolutions? What do you usually do or do you have something in mind, Colin? Well, I do

have hopes.

I don't think I formally do the resolutions, but I definitely have hopes that they'll ask me for a little while. Habits would be better than hopes, but you're in a good time. I mean, you definitely come through feeling like I'm excited to get back to normal eating normal food, having a normal work routine, having normal workouts.

It's definitely that the holidays are wonderful, but they are much. I mean, in my household, my wife's birthday, my older son's birthday and my daughter's birthday are all within two weeks, three weeks with Christmas. So it gets just me a little bit much.

I'm our four-year-old. He just turned four on Saturday and he has asked for probably every day for nine months, if it's his birthday, Amaro, and has told us every day of presents he wants. And by the end of his birthday on December 10, he was already telling us what he wanted for his birthday the next day.

And then we tried to inform him his birthday would never be farther away than it was now, but there was Christmas, and that was a new concept. And so that gave some hopes brings eternal that there's yet another gift-giving holiday. And he said, "Who's that for?" I said, "Well, it's for Jesus." "Well, do we have to get Jesus' presents?" "Well, Jesus gets you presents." So, some good theological moments.

Justin, do you do resolutions coming into the new year? I've been kind of hit or miss whether I formally do them or not. I don't really write them down, but it's sort of a perpetual resolution of "Read more Bible, get better shape." You haven't been getting it better shape. Right? And I'm trying to read my Bible too.

Yeah, kind of doable. But, yeah, it does seem like even though you know that there's not necessarily something magical about the calendar turning over and a new year beginning, it does feel like, "Okay, this is a fresh start. Maybe this is the year where everything comes together." And I think even if it doesn't, maybe you get a few weeks of better habits and more resolve.

Yeah, I'm like you guys. I don't write things down for a new year's resolution, but it does feel like, "Okay, it's a good reason to try to get some better habits again. Mine are usually the same.

More scripture memorization, less time on my phone or in front of the internet somehow." And just more slow, quiet moments of reflection, which are hard to come by partly because of my stage of life, partly because of my own way of living my life. But I always come into the new year. And isn't it? You know, Christmas has a certain feel to it.

I think I said this last year, Christmas, at least in our culture, often seems to throw people into the past, into, there's old movies, nostalgia. You know, it's a wonderful life is another classic American Christmas movie, but even Charlie Brown Christmas is a very

sort of classic dated feel. It's like Christmas throws you back into sort of sepia-toned or black and white past where all of a sudden you transition to New Year's and it's a very good gosh and loud and obnoxious and rockin' New Year's Eve with crazies.

It's just a weird, it probably says something about what America is like in the space of those seven days. And then in the middle of all of it is a whole lot of football. And really getting a sense of what America is like.

Have you guys been watching, speaking of the other football, the World Cup? You know, all my teams are gone. So I shouldn't say all of them, the US, of course, and then the Dutch. And I was rooting for the English.

We had eight of us in our family each picked four teams. We're recording this here Monday. So I have one team left.

I picked Croatia. So I'm putting all my chips in on Croatia. Have you guys been into the World Cup? I like it for the history as in I like to be able to come up the combinations of historical conflicts between the two.

So that sounds, yes. But England, France was a lot to draw on. I gotta say though, it's hard to top Morocco versus France.

I know. There is some serious medieval crusades warfare going on between Morocco and France. And then it was Morocco and Portugal before that.

Exactly. So it's a march through the Iberian Peninsula up to meet the French, if only it were being played in tours. So I like it.

I like it for that. I think it's just nice to watch a sporting event that a whole bunch of other people care about. So it's tense, but that I don't have a stake in it.

I don't really care who wins. That's pretty fun. Justin.

I think that's the most common Hanson answer. Yes. Yes.

That's true. Yeah. I probably represent all of the people out there that haven't watched one second of the World Cup.

So you can keep shame upon me. But I have no idea who's playing until I see some notice on the news. He's got Nebraska recruiting to follow.

Yeah. It's going to be huge with Matt. What happened to Nebraska volleyball? The first time in 10 years, I think they didn't get to the lead eight.

Well, we won't talk about college basketball with Collins. It's not really, Colin, you get Northwestern. You went there.

And then, oh, I moved to Alabama. I'll take Alabama. That's true.

Yeah. But they did both beat Michigan State. Hey, if they're going to be good, I'm going to claim them, especially with what's happened to Northwestern Athletics.

So I'm going to accept that Northwestern and Alabama, both beat Michigan State. I will just not rub it in. You're welcome.

Yeah. Thank you. Christmas.

All right. Just fun Christmas exercise. Fun for us anyways.

I'm going to give you some Christmas movies. And I want you guys to give it. Love it or loathe it.

I want you to try to not be in the middle, but I want you to, yes, I love this. I will watch it even if I'm embarrassed to admit. Or, oh, please.

Okay. So no shame zone. All right.

It's a wonderful life. Love it. Love it.

Love it. Yeah. Die Hard, which is a Christmas movie.

I know what I'll die hard. Not a fan of never seen it. Never seen it.

Never seen it. Never seen it. Well, if you do watch it on TV so it bleeps out, there's a lot of swearing in the original.

Okay. This was just the list that was printed out. Best Christmas movies.

Scrooge. Why would you see that movie? Okay. There's my answer.

No. No. Is that the one with Bill Murray? One of them.

Yeah. Okay. How many editions of that one are there? Yeah.

I was thinking about that. The Scrooge. I mean, the Christmas Carol, my wife loves the George C. Scott version.

So that's good. A Christmas story. Do we have to love it or hate it? Go ahead.

Okay. Well, what? Yeah. What's your eh? I loved it growing up.

I loved it growing up. I think I get a little more cringe as it gets older. It doesn't age as well.

But a lot of happy memories to watch. I can't watch it on repeat is what I'm saying. I

enjoyed watching it.

I like remembering it. My son's friend got a BB gun a couple years ago. I mean, that's I just can't keep watching it.

What about you? Yeah. Whenever it's on, I think I'm going to like this, but I don't. The yeah.

Oh, there's the funny line and it's going to poke. But yeah, it is. And so it's the lamp.

It's weird. It's weird. You're tongue on the pole.

Was it a play at first? Because it seems like you watch it. It doesn't kind of have the action of a normal movie. Like things just kind of.

They're waiting for the set pieces. Yeah. I don't know.

Miracol 34th Street. I've never seen that. It was a good one.

It was a good one. Okay. National Lampoon's Christmas vacation.

I bet that's Kevin's favorite. I do like watching that one. I can rewatch that one.

I have to. Yeah, cousin Eddie. Again, when you watch it, pretty good.

You go. Oh, I forgot about all that. Let's get the TV version.

Yeah, you want the TV or fit angel or something here. But yeah, I like home alone. I do like home alone.

Good one. I mean, we're also the right age for home alone, meaning we're about the same age as McCauley Caulkin. So when that came out, that was a big deal.

Christmas with the cranks is on the list here. Never seen that. No, I think I've seen a scene or two, but I haven't seen it.

Elf. You got a lot of it. I do.

Yeah. I mean, if I could just if I could just find it on TV, where is it on? I can never find that thing on TV. Someone playing right now.

It is on. Okay. This is my wife's favorite.

And she always wants to make the kids watch it. And they just did watch it over the weekend. And I think they actually liked it.

White Christmas. Gotta be white Christmas. We only sold my son on it because there were soldiers in it.

But I think yeah, there wasn't enough dancing soldiers. Yeah, I think that caught him a little by surprise. But yeah, it's my wife's favorite movie.

That's a good one. Justin. I don't know if I've ever seen it.

Oh man. Justin, have you done anything in your life? I'm reading I'm reading more Bible while you guys are watching. Oh, yeah.

I know. You watch this. You watch this.

You just like the hallmark Christmas movies. Okay. One calls the heart.

What's your favorite season? Oh, yeah. Right. I'm just waiting to hear Kevin if you're going to mention my favorite Christmas movie.

But maybe it's still okay. What is it? Muffits Christmas Carol. Oh, really? Yeah.

Okay. My family was watching White Christmas and being Crosby singing. I'm dreaming.

So I started singing it. And my teenage daughter said, Dad, we only need one person singing this. So I turned the sound off and I just kept singing it.

And she was not pleased. She said that's not what I meant. Classic dad.

Classic dad. Okay. What about this? How about some Christmas songs? We're not going to do hymns.

We all love lots of hymns. secular Christmas songs, the type that are playing in the mall. They're playing on the radio station.

The ubiquitous all I want for Christmas is you. By the by the Queen of Chris. Didn't she try to legally trademark her name as the Queen of Christmas and the court said, No, you can't do that or something like that.

What do you do you like it? I have to admit, I tell myself I should hate it, but I don't. I kind of like it when it comes on Colin. Paul, Paul McCartney wrote it right.

I don't know. Yeah, I think that he wrote it and he gets like a million dollars a year from residual royalties. If you guys ever seen the chart that shows how many people start listening on Spotify to that song and it's sort of like it's begun.

Like October 10th or so, all of a sudden it just starts to spike a little bit. I mean, I say I'm feeling pretty good as soon as you hear her her tones beginning at the, you know, kind of warming up those vocal chords. It's a good, it's a good feeling.

Written and produced by Kerry and Walter F and say F. I did not see anything about Paul McCartney here. Are you sure you're not thinking of last Christmas? Because he did write

last Christmas. Okay.

Okay, well we'll find out where Paul McCartney wrote. Oh, Santa Baby. Oh man, that's on my list of no, that's on my list of no, I can't do it.

No. Winter Wonderland. Yeah, Rudolph.

Don't mind it. Don't mind it. Rudolph brings up nostalgia.

Grinch, I love the Grinch song. It's quite a, it's quite a well written song. It is and you know who sings it.

It's Tony the Tiger. Same guy who was Tony the Tiger. Yeah, saying you're a mean one, Mr Grinch.

If half of what we've said on this podcast so far is accurate. I'll be pretty surprised. Yeah, Paul McCartney also did the voice for the Grinch.

Boris Karloff had a, had a, the flu. Yeah, this, this whole set that I planned here is not going as well. Blue Christmas.

I love a little Elvis Blue Christmas. Alright, what, what, what's your favorite song that I missed or your most loathsome? I gotta add a couple ones that I just can't, I can't do. I mean, I used to, I used to like when the top 40 station would, would flip over into Christmas music, but it becomes the same 10 songs.

Yeah, very much. And I'm sorry, but last Christmas and wonderful Christmas time, I can't do it. I can't do it.

So give me some serious XM holiday traditions and I'm okay, but I can't do the top 40 stuff anymore. Maybe it's cold outside. Yeah, no, oh my goodness.

It's amazing how these things become nostalgic for us until you actually listen to what they have to say. So, I mean, there's a lot of great ones. I just can't do the top 40 ones.

Justin. Great, I got read over by a reindeer. Let's not talk about famous Midwestern Christmas songs.

Uh huh. Did we miss any of your favorites or most infamous Justin? No, but I did Google and it's, Paul McCartney wrote "Wonderful Christmas Time". Oh, we knew that because he sings it.

Alright, I can't keep up with the pop culture stuff from you guys. Kevin is on top of this game. It's not really pop.

It was how many years, who was decades ago, wasn't it? Top culture in the 80s. Yeah. Good.

Well, this is... We should have stuck with Nebraska signing day. Yeah. Okay, I'm ready for that one.

So you didn't watch the World Cup. You do know the Beatles broke up. Yeah.

Okay. Alright. I'm still an Elvis guy.

You still know this guy. I should have dreamed about Elvis last night. When I was a kid, I used to pray before I would sleep that I would dream about Elvis, because I like Elvis so much and I never ever had an Elvis dream, but I had one last night.

I don't know if I want to ask about what. He was just singing. Yeah, he was singing to a lady.

Wow. This is really going off script here, but thankful for our sponsor. Ripping cross way.

You know, at the food lion, right by my house, about two miles down from the house, you go to the back of the parking lot, and there's a little band shell, very many, and there's a little plaque there that says... I think it's Elvis's grandparents lived here in Mental, North Carolina, or something, and he would come and spend summer holidays here. So right there, just thousands of people a day go past there. Don't even know the rich history right here, almost literally in my backyard, that Elvis would come during the summers.

I did wonder where you were going with the whole back of the food lion parking lot. There's a lot of good stuff at the back of the food lion. I'm tying that one back.

It's not the Harris teeter, the pigly-wiggly. It's not the publics. I mean, we're not better than people.

Who can afford it anyway? Yeah. Well, let's try to salvage this and talk about books. We often end with books.

We're coming to the end of the year, and what are some of the best books you've read? Maybe you got one or two published in the last year? I mean, not you personally though. You might have that, but one or two you've read that we're published in the last year and one or two just other great books. And I'm not going to limit on how many you mentioned, but we're going to limit on time.

So if you want to just rattle off a bunch, you can do that, or you can sell us on one or two. So give me like two minutes, Colin. What are some of the best books you read from the last year? For our very patient video, folks here, I am going to share a world after liberalism, philosophers of the radical right by Matthew Rose.

Kevin, you alluded to this in your review of Steenwolf. And this is very insightful. Two books I read this year, Matthew Cottonetti's the right, and this has been the most helpful books for me to understand the shifts in the Republican Party.



There's a line in here where he says that to imagine an anti-Christian right is difficult, but there is a post-Christian right that is waiting to be born. And so the way, if you've been following along with a lot of the conversations with Tom Holland and Glenn Scrivener about the Christian origins of kind of the liberal political order, by which we mean simply our democratic political systems, this is a very, very, very good companion about the way that some anti-Christian writers, but who are aligned with Christian, some Christian leaders on the right, are recasting kind of a post-liberal future. We could get into a lot more there, but suffice it to say that was one of my best reads of the year.

Really well written and short, yeah, short, presents at various points a beautiful Christian alternative to some of these ideas, but it's sympathetic in that trying to be fair to what these ideas are about, not sympathetic to them in the end, but yeah, really, really good book. Well Kevin, I thought, I mean, maybe people who've been listening to us for the last three years, thank you for your patience. I've been able to pick up on this, but I think they'd be able to see that we agree that there's just returning to a kind of basic procedural liberalism is not enough, it's not sufficient for Christians.

And yet this post-Christian right-wing approach is problematic in all kinds of different ways. But you did such a good job at the end of your Wolf Review, Kevin, of being able to say that there are many things we appreciate about this political order, but that it has to be ordered ultimately toward God and it needs to be mediated through these institutions of family and community and church. We've talked about that before.

And that's what I think Rose does such a good job of. I assume he's Catholic and I didn't see that. Coach John Paul II in the end, and so I would assume that he writes a lot for first things.

First things, yeah. So I assume that, but he just does a really good job of talking about the way that we can't just continue down the road of unfettered individualism, but we need the communal organizations that allow the individual to flourish. And I thought, I think that's where we ought to be here.

So that was one of my favorite reads. What else you got? My other one real quick. This was published, I think last year, Hillary Mantell's *The Mirror and the Light*.

It's the third and final of the Thomas Cromwell series. Unfortunately, Hillary Mantell died this year. First two books in the series, both won the Booker Prize for top fiction.

I mean, *The Mirror and the Light* could have as well. I mean, we, oh man, I don't think I've ever identified, which is probably a negative, never identified with a character as much as Mantell's version of Thomas Cromwell. Just that I think the interpret, the whole question is, who is he really? Is he just a shape shifter? Is he have deep convictions? I think he has deep convictions as an evangelical.

He's just trying to survive in an era where nobody keeps their head. And yeah, spoiler alert, of course he dies the same way as everybody else. But man, absolutely amazing historical fiction.

Hillary Mantell, *Mirror and the Light*. I haven't read any of those. Oh, you got to.

I've got to. All right, I'll try to be, I'm going to list some. I'm going to write up in the next day or two my top ten reads from the past year.

So I'll put those on [kevindyoung.org](http://kevindyoung.org) and you'll get the full list. But the good country, a history of the American Midwest in the 19th century. And I'm having John Lough.

Is that how you say his name, Colin? On the podcast in the new year. Really well written, just in it helps if you're from the Midwest. But even if you're not, that's good.

And a book that a lot of people haven't talked about, the myth of American inequality was really good. It's kind of an economics nuts and bolts book. A crossway book, old one, but the the Scharnock existence and attributes of God volumes are just there.

You love just holding them and then reading them really well done to crossway. And some books I read not published in the last year, but that I just remember as some of my favorites. I finished at the beginning of the year, Bradley Burtzer's biography of Russell Kirk.

He's a professor. Burtzer is at Hillsdale. Anyone who writes a really good biography on almost anyone is worth reading.

As you just get insights into what another human person is like, especially if they were interesting and did a lot or wrote a lot and Kirk wrote a ton. David Hackett Fisher's *Albion Seed for British Folkways*, I admit I skimmed it. It's massive.

But just his whole concept of these four British folkways in early American history and how that continues to affect that there's just there's not just one idea of liberty. There's really four regionally distinct ideas of liberty and then he traces that with dozens of other categories. J. N. D. Kelly's book, "*Golden Mouth, The Biography of Chrysostom*." I know lots of our students at RTS have read it.

It's a sign I think one of the classes. I hadn't read it, but I read it when I was preparing a Sunday school class on Chrysostom. Man, people aren't going to like this, but he sort of reminded me like the Mark Driscoll of the early church.

Take out all, you know, use your discretion and how you understand it. I just mean he was, he made a lot of people upset and he spoke harshly to people and of course didn't do all the things that happened at much. Why do we remember him so positively? Well we should remember him.

Well right, but I just, how do you make that many people angry but then also instructive for us? Yeah, well I'm using it at my time here, but he was deposed at the Senate of the Oak and then it's fascinating to read the 27 charges against him and it was things like he called this abbot a little weirdo is the translation. He used the porcelain from the the baptistry and gave it to the poor or something. He didn't deal with people delicately.

He upset the the Empress more than the Emperor, but you know often was poking people in the eye, but he was so unbelievably popular with the people. So that's the short answer. He was so popular with the people.

He died in exile. He's considered a martyr. Marge doth it to the Black Sea, but then within, you know, a decade or so the empire comes around and rehabilitates his reputation which never was really lost among the people.

So that's, that's why. And then David McCullough passed away this past year and I read probably three of his books, 1776 again. The Wright Brothers, which I hadn't read before.

Yeah, North Carolina has that great line. I'm not from Ohio, but has that great line like the very first is you know what was the origin of their success and it was something like to have good parents and the good fortune of being born in Ohio or something for the Wright brothers. Alright, Justin, what are some of your favorites from the past year? Yeah, I would say from the past year you keep in mind those two categories of recently published versus just having read them in the past year.

I wondered should I mention any books from crossware? Should I just say no books from crossware? No, yeah, I mentioned crossware. Yeah, I mentioned it. I'll mention two which we've already talked about, Be Down My Vision.

In terms of a book that impacts your piety that is conducive to worship, is God-centered, is biblically oriented. I mean, Johnny's wasn't writing a lot of new stuff fresh. He was compiling and arranging but he did it such a beautiful way that anything that helps me worship the Lord and walk those ancient paths is really a welcome resource and Johnny's going to do some more of them for crossways so I'm excited about that.

Another one that I thought I'd mention which I we've mentioned on previous episodes is just the crossway expository Bible commentary series. Those are really good. Yeah, read through Esther, read through into Psalms now and into the Proverbs and dipping into other books of the Bible.

Just it's exactly the level that I want and need. It doesn't assume a lot but it's in more depth than say a study Bible or something like that but not 75 pages on two verses. So I really appreciated that.

Again, you detect the common theme in terms of the Christian theology stuff. I'm looking for stuff that's going to help me read the Bible better and worship the Lord better. And

then kind of on the more political, historical, cultural front, I think this is probably in our top 10 or 20 for all three of us.

Matthew Cottonetti's the book *The Right and I* noticed that it made Trevin Wax's top reads of the year as well so it's the right the hundred year war for American conservatism. And just written I think in a style that the three of us appreciate its history, it's got a narrational organization to it. There's interesting characters, there's illumination for our present conflicts and it just makes sense of a lot of things.

It's maybe not the definitive telling but it puts a lot of things together that were more disparate in my own mind. In terms of a big history book, Gordon Wood's *Empire of Liberty*, a history of the early republic, which is in Oxford history of the United States series which is still not complete. There's one guy I think, I won't shame him publicly but I look in Wikipedia and I think he's been working on it for like 20 years.

But you understand why Gordon Wood as an Ivy League historian is revered and maybe an overstatement to say increasingly reviled because he represents sort of an old school historiography that knew how to tell narrative and didn't seem like it was necessarily having an axe to grind and can celebrate what was good in America and yet doesn't whitewash the sins and shortcomings. And then finally a younger guy, I don't know his age exactly, but Garrett Graf, G-R-A-F-F, online he looks like he's maybe in his 30s or 40s if being in your 40s is still considered a younger guy, I think you have us like to think about. Absolutely, absolutely.

The first book that I listened to from him, this was an audible was the only plane in the sky which was an oral history of 9/11 and I'm sure it's powerful to read it. It was more powerful to hear it because they, when they had a New York City firefighter, the voice actor kind of had a New York gruff male voice and it was just incredibly moving and powerful to listen to and then I followed it up with his next book which was a big book, *Watergate and New History* and putting together things that hadn't been put together before Garrett Graf certainly has the narrow title gift and investigative journalistic research historical abilities that are the sort of things that draw me into a book. I think I asked you before the *Watergate* one long and is it giving *New History*? Yeah, it's full.

It's long, it's a fat book and he's pulling together stuff. I don't know how many *Watergate* histories have been written since the Deep Throat died and that was revealed so you know everything prior to that also becomes *Passae* so he's drawing on new research that I don't think anybody's kind of put together all in the same way before and even corrects Woodstein and Bernstein like hey they actually lied about this part and you know based on what we know from historical records so it was a really interesting book and it sort of feels like okay you just really need to read one book on the other side of the screen and then you just have to read it and you just have to read it unless you become a weirdo and decide to read a dozen of them. Yeah that reminds me a book I didn't mention but

I'll probably put on my list is Nuclear Folly the history of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Oh yeah listen to that one that was a good one. Oh you listen to it how do you say his name it's like a Ukrainian or Russian last name but yeah it's I'm not quite through with it luck we would say as Christians God's providence people praying but you just realize this really could have happened and of course one of his you know he has more access than other people have had to declassify Soviet papers and conversation so it's certainly not pro-Soviet but it does present Cruz-Chef with his own sort of moral compass so and and you realize for good things that Kennedy did I mean he just what he's having is having an affair with a 20 year old intern at the time and he's got you know debilitating back problems and it's amazing any of our countries stay afloat it's amazing that things aren't always a lot worse. Kennedy is one of those figures who continues to diminish through history from kind of the the natural of the surge of interest from you know after his tragic death but the more historians seem to go back the more they seem to locate new problems with him not only in the origins of Vietnam and we knew about Bay of Pigs but then also I mean if I remember correctly that book is pretty negative on Kennedy especially in the sense that Kennedy was forced to concede it was a loss he did I mean in the end we didn't have nuclear war but he did have to concede something and ultimately had to lie about it and basically just tossed Adley Stevenson to the wolves for it.

And was sure that that Berlin was what they were after all along when right when they weren't and you can be forgiven for not knowing what but because Bobby Kennedy wrote the history the first sort of history understandably that shapes how everyone thinks of it I did go and re-watch the movie as it called 13 Days that has Kevin Costner and yeah I mean it's a good movie but I mean it presents the Kennedy's as very principled heroic stand up against their benighted advisors and war mongering military officials to work for peace and do the right thing which isn't that a classic medium of the is the message there yeah I mean that's the media the movie trope that you have to fill if you're gonna talk about that right all right we're gonna transition to one other topic and before we do so want to mention a sponsor Desiring God we're all very thankful for the work that Desiring God does and a book that we've mentioned before worth mentioning again workers for your joy by David Mathis we've heard many rise and fall stories in our day of various Christian workers or leaders but scripture gives us a positive vision for what leaders in the local church are to be workers for your joy the call of Christ on Christian leaders David Mathis aims to address that and the needs we see in our own day by casting a vision from scripture of what we're supposed to be and that's fundamentally workers for joy and you can purchase this through Westminster books of course crossway is a great site to go for crossway books and Westminster books it's always trying to undersell Amazon and good to support them whenever you can and we're thankful for DG as well here's what I want to talk about for our remaining minutes here Thamelios weird name good good word but great resource that comes out through the gospel coalition it's an academic peer reviewed journal and it's for free and it's

amazing how almost every article I want to read almost every book review I want to read and this last volume an issue that came out a week or two ago had I think at least three articles about J.I. Packer and this one by Paul House Paul's at Beeson right correct yes and goes to Briarwood J.I. Packer in the next wave of evangelicalism foundations for renewal and Paul goes through and talks about the different waves first wave rekindling the UK evangelical heritage second wave expansion and limits of UK evangelicalism in its institutions third wave expansion and limits of North American evangelicalism and it's the 29 fourth wave seeds for renewal 1999 to 2020 and I'm happy for you guys to go back and I know we love talking about Packer and you can talk about what House says about Packer in those four stages but I want to make sure we also focus on five which is foundation stones for the next wave of evangelicalism and just think together in light of Packer and that good history where Paul leaves us with this article and that's thinking about the next wave of evangelical renewal and maybe the most important question at the beginning is is there such a thing as evangelicalism and if there is is it even worth renewing what say you Justin I think there is something known as evangelicalism I think it becomes more confused and more contested as time goes on especially as the media is insistent that it just represents the right wing and Republican voters and then certain people sort of adopt that terminology for themselves even if they're not classically evangelical but Don Carson I mean has made two points because this is an issue that's exercised to him over the years number one we want to contain the word evangelical if we can because it's a biblical word the evangel is the people centered on the good news upon the gospel of Jesus Christ and then Don has also made the point that probably we need to have some form of adjective in front of it so you know are there progressive evangelicals? Are there classical evangelicals? And in so far as we're talking about classical evangelicalism represented by the likes of in the 20th century somebody like a Carl F. H. Henry or a J.I. Packer I think we need to retain that and I think I agree with Paul House we can build upon it I think that Mark Noel talking about David Bevington's work when time said that there's no such thing as evangelicalism and David Bevington has given us the best definition of it so there's there's a paradox there I think when you talk about evangelicalism it's hard to delineate it and then you stack away so that everybody who there are people who are evangelical who don't claim that they're evangelical and there are people who claim to be evangelical who aren't evangelical there's one way that I'd put it and obviously we can talk a lot more about that but I would say yes there is something that's evangelical and there's something worth preserving and trying to expand and yet at the end of the day I think we still need to remember in our own personal lives our local church is the most important thing you know our denomination but there's this wider network there's this family that that can be a force for good and we want to try to expand it and preserve it from my point of view yeah it's notoriously difficult and there's lots of lots and lots of historical work and argument on whether it exists did it just start in the 18th century with Wesley Whitfield Edwards is it really if you look at the Bevington Quadrilateral you can put all of that back into you know the first or second generation of the reformation or when we talk about evangelicalism are we are

people just talking about that post-world war II, Henry, Akengay, Billy Graham, all of that I think there's nothing particularly ingenious about this but I think historically evangelicalism is against certain things at certain times and so one it's not Catholic now I know there are Catholics who call themselves evangelical I understand historically the first evangelicals are Lutherans so not Catholic they're Protestant and then you go to the 18th century and you have to say evangelicals are not anti-awakening if you put it in the negative so there's part of this pietist tradition and part of this new light friendly toward the awakening and then I think you go to the 20th century and you say not liberal so if you're talking about reformational favorable toward revival and awakening not liberal Protestants that's sort of gets at least my mental framework situated to what we mean by conventional. Only one part missing there Kevin that's a really good way to put it I think only one part missing post-1957 not fundamentalist. Right yeah so but I love that historical way of framing it because I was just thinking the same thing of it's not it's hard to when you just say what it is positively it gets really amorphous because there's no institution there's no control but then when you say what it's not not Catholic not old light not liberal and then not fundamentalist whatever is left over that's kind of evangelical right and there's you know I'm a I'm a Presbyterian first in the sense that that's going to be my that is my denominational home and that's where I find my confessional boundaries and there is a thing called the Presbyterian Church there's not a thing in the same way called an evangelical I mean there are denominations with that name we know but not a denomination that now you're part of evangelicalism here's the statement of faith so I understand all of those critiques and I think they're fair critiques and yet if we say that sort of call and definition that you just gave whatever is there and I'll just speak as a Presbyterian yes if I if our influence as Calvinist reform Presbyterians can be bigger than just in our Presbyterian denominations as it typically has been throughout history and certainly throughout American history then wouldn't we want to think and pray and invest in some efforts to be leavened so we don't have to just choose I'm only interested in this this one thing or this one area versus others and so I do think it's as an ism is something that's still worth pondering still worth renewing now this leads into the heart of the question for so many I think evangelical now is just attached to certain institutions some of which came out of the post-World War II consensus and that's why when we have these fights and I won't name the sort of people or sort of institutions or informational organizations that we might be in constant you know scabbles, hard scabbles, squabbles with but the reason those things you know we don't get in people in our tribe don't they're not getting in fights with the United Methodist I mean somebody is but you don't pay attention to it or even to the PCUSA but you go back in the 20s and 30s of course all of these because the fights have sparks to them and fire and smoke when they're with people that you're you used to be aligned with or it seemed like you were or it seemed like you were sharing a denominational home or you were sharing a network of influencers or publishing houses or schools or magazines and this happens we know this happens in history and this happened in the 20th century at least a couple of times where there's a fallout and so now generations

later you know you don't get been out of shape about you know what happens at Riverside Church it's a whole different network different but now we're certainly in the middle of a sifting of a number of evangelical institutions some of which have served the Lord well and might not make it some of which have taken a turn in one direction or another so Colin is it what do we do with this institutional fallout? do we try to renew? do we uh say well some are going to go one way some another let's start new institutions how do you think? I know you think about these macro sort of issues a lot you know it's interesting Kevin about that piece by our friend Paul House it's that the institutions don't normally last they just they don't normally make it there's lots of places that used to be a big deal and they're not anymore so the spirit seems to blow where he will and that's one of the things Paul talks about is the necessity of institutions but not putting our faith in those institutions but ultimately putting our faith in God and our trust in his word and that's kind of the evangelical spirit is that it doesn't inhabit an institution it tends to morph according to the times as a renewal movement as opposed to an institutional identity so that that is one thing to just not put our faith ultimately in institutions because the the the challenges that often gave rise to them except the church of course yeah except for the church and yeah mostly talking about paratroopers though I will say over time those institutional local churches don't necessarily right continue either um you don't have Jonathan Edwards church out there as an evangelical institution today uh Princeton Seminary they were one of the first churches to perform gay quote-unquote marriages in the state of Massachusetts Jonathan exactly and Princeton Seminary may be the most important evangelical institution in the 19th century is not a friend of evangelicals today so I do think we just need to be chastened by the spirit and I still think places like Beeson Divinity School where I serve Christianity today these places I think those institutions are worth supporting they're worth fighting for at least um and they are I think properly described as evangelical but I think and so I don't I do think the evangelical spirit is a cooperative one but it's intention between the liberalism and the fundamentalism there is a sense in which sometimes you do need to separate um to be able to preserve the mission you must separate but at the same time you have a natural bent toward wanting to work together with God's people as much as possible insofar as you share that gospel message and that gospel mission uh to see people's lives transform now and into eternity as they escape the judgment of God through the grace of God through Jesus Christ so that's just how I think of it it is worth fighting for them but I think it can be tempting especially if you're people like us all of whom are aligned and working for evangelical institutions it can get really there's a lot of things that can happen when people are trying to preserve the institution they can lose focus I'm not criticizing our organizations for doing that but they can lose the focus on the mission and and that is the mission is ultimately what what Paul's calling us back to what Paul is saying is make sure you're not so focused on the evangelicalism that you forget the gospel for which we exist in the first place so yeah a lot of good thoughts I'll add that I'm less sanguine about I'm not as sanguine as you are about all the things you just mentioned in your list uh I'm not sure if Christianity today is going to end up pulling in



the same direction that it's not what I mean I'm pulling in yeah I just meant to say that it's evangelicalism is not a thing but there are institutions that you could only describe as evangelical and I was just saying it's worth trying to preserve them but it's not worth like ingesting all of your hope in them that's all I was trying to say I wasn't trying to make a you know broader statement on that sorry go ahead yeah Justin yeah the institutional thing is the most interesting to me because Christianity today is a good example of an umbrella it was pitched originally and founded as an umbrella organization that can appeal to all evangelicals of Goodwill that they can turn to that as a magazine for news and for book reviews and for editorials that are setting the direction for the future and my sense is that in this current climate it's going to be very difficult for any sort of I mean for lack of a better term call an umbrella organization that appeals to all sides of the spectrum on these various issues so can those umbrella organizations survive it seems doubtful to me it seems like they're going to either have to go to the right or to the left or to focus and can no longer uh just contract right yeah I mean that big try to be this big instead right right and can't then a related question is can new umbrella organizations be started you know another organization would be the NAAE National Association of Evangelicals back in the day that I don't I don't really know of any living evangelicals who looked at the NAE for guidance these days other than perhaps some mega churches but what sort of organizations and institutions do we need to start what's working and what can't work so I look at an organization that I'm no longer part of but used to be a part of Desiring God and from all accounts they're thriving they're growing they're prosperous they're turning out good material but they're not trying to be all things to all people they they know who they are and they're appealing to a certain demographic and get a lot of shots from both the left and the right but they sort of know who they are and they're keeping their head down and they're not interacting on social media with critics I tend to think that's probably the future is not an evangelical organization but many evangelical organizations appealing to niche constituencies and then seeing if they can expand those and get more people to join them that to me seems like the institutional wave of the future rather than something that's going to be a rallying cry for people kind of across the spectrum I may be wrong on that well there is real real quick on that point Justin those are great points there are umbrella organizations for evangelicals that are very successful the most successful one is called the Republican Party I mean that's the problem is but the way the best way to convene is to focus on the politics because the politics is in a binary all of our other issues are all over the place on baptism and how do you approach this issue over here but the advantage of politics is that it's this or that there's not really you know there's not a bunch of shades like there are with our denominations or our churches or the media landscape so oddly enough the easiest way to organize evangelicals is to focus on the political binary and then we're right back to the problem that you started off with us talking about which is the political fascination go ahead Kevin well I was just going to say take a little different direction the challenge is this is true throughout her church history we can certainly see it just in the last 75 years evangelicalism groups coalesce around a

set of issues that it and there's no Bible verse that just tells us which issues you should put for front and which ones you shouldn't so take something that we're all very familiar with new Calvinism young restless reform thank you Colin you know a certain set of issues in erancy and penal substitution complementarianism doctrines of grace not liberal not emergent a whole set of things but yet there were other things that were okay will uh polity will have what differences will be okay there some sacramental differences will be okay differences over charismatic stuff which was dividing churches like those in previous 10 or 20 yeah the previous generation but but also what happens is there are certain unwritten kinds of expectations so just take on the charismatic issue I think with that sort of young restless reform network it was it was kind of an unwritten yeah it's uh it's the open but cautious and it's the cessationist but you know that's not what they get up but those two kind of groups can exist but then when the open but cautious became open and I'm all in on this and we really this is front and center of what we that was always there so there's these groups that come together and they have certain things that they say this is what we're about and there's other things that we're not going to make as important and then there are there just certain ways of being that you don't even realize initially you all do share in common which may be sociological, theological, ecclesiastical and so it's bound to happen that certain groups that started in seminaries and networks and magazines that started in the 40s or 50s or 60s around a certain set of issues now new sets of issues and we've seen this even in the last 10 years with all of our networks new sets of issues and it's not as simple as saying you know what we already established the right core of ideas and we shouldn't be divided over these new issues that's sometimes true I think we would say if churches and networks and institutions just started saying we're now putting our masking stance in a statement of faith we can look and say well that's a mistake and some maybe de facto kind of started to do that but we could say that's a mistake that's one where you should just say guys let this play out don't let this but then there are other issues that are going to come up because we would have people who would say on sexuality issues well there's lots of smart people on both sides who are trying to figure out and how to minister to LGBT friends and all the three of us would say that these yeah you're right the Christians in the past didn't write these into their statement of faith because they didn't have to but now we're not going to be faithful in our generation if we count these as just agree to disagree big tent issues and you know what the arrangement that they came up with in the 1950s serves us now in the 2020s or even what happened in the 2005 now serves us so there's no one right answer to say adding new issues is always a mistake and divisive or to just always agree to disagree when new issues comes up because hey you know what we all agree on the nice scene creed and we all agree on the apostles creed but that's wonderful and that's not to be taken for granted and our Catholic friends agree on the nice scene creed and the apostles creed and the Reformation still happened and we need to have the historical awareness and also honesty to look back and say you know sometimes in the heat of the moment our historical heroes made things too important that we can now say ah you couldn't figure out how to figure you know get along with

that one and yet there are some things that they elevated of real central importance that we would do well not to forget so I'm not answering the question except to say anyone who tries to say it's very simple is going to be mistaken let me give you a quick quick illustration of this Kevin so one of the things I was hoping to do this year and you guys are going to give me you guys are just going to grown at me is that we had some folks reach out who wanted to update the this is from the Packer article the international council on biblical inerrancy okay right and they wanted to update it in the offing for a while yeah exactly and and they wanted to update it because there are new challenges that the original statements don't adequately express in other words the proposals are coming from conservatives saying we need to strengthen this from a conservative perspective but the problem is when you go out there saying hey we need to update other people here you say we need to change and change can only be from the liberal perspective so it's just interesting looking back on this year we were trying to say this is a there are new challenges that need to be addressed in order to be faithful in our generation but then the responses but once you open that up it's just going to be a Trojan horse for liberalism and you're going to undermine the whole thing which was not the case but you can see how that works out and when I went through that experience I thought that helps to explain a lot of how these move these evangelical movements have a hard time adapting with time because you either get frozen in a certain moment with issues that are not as pressing anymore or you do you try to update but in the updating you do run the risk of veering off into a different direction and losing some of your original consensus there so it was just a good illustration I felt like from this last year the challenges that we're talking about.

Justin, last thoughts before we wrap this up? No other than just to say let's keep the memory of Packer alive and well. Oh praise God yes thanks. I'm grateful for the Familias article and the three of us all had our disagreements with Packer especially as it relates to his forays into Roman, Catholic, ecumenical, dialogue and certain decisions he made but I think one of the easiest things for evangelicals ironically to forget is personal piety and integrity and we all know it's important we were reminded of it when there's a pastoral crises and people flame out and have moral failings and the like but we need heroes you know with a lowercase H that are men with feet of clay like ours and who are sinful but who sought to walk by the spirit and to live a sanctified life and to live a life core on dayo J.I. Packer was that and he was a man who read his Bible regularly and loved God's people.

I mean Paul House has a little line in there about he wasn't always strategizing about here's my 10 year plan my 20 year plan. He kind of took assignments as they came to him. Not everybody should do that necessarily but there's something so refreshing about the man his godliness and his devotion to Christ and his unashamedness to speak about his love for Christ and his intimate walk with the spirit and all of those sort of things and just think let's keep the memory alive and seek to replicate that by God's grace in our

own lives as he as he wills and as he enables.

That's a good word and piety can unfortunately be a bad word for people and I know there's a pietyism that feels as it were but I think pietyism and piety is you're absolutely right. If we're living in a day where we become freshly aware of public sins among Christians and Christian leaders and it's good to have our eyes open to that I think at the same time we can become blind to private sins and by that I mean the sort of old fashioned what sort of language do you use? What are you watching? I think we've become aware of how people treat and mistreat others but some of those concerns I mean I was just said something about somebody's language last week and tweet at me was "Oh this Victorian sensibility" I mean that's what you just slap on if Victorian or Pietistic and how dare you and I just want to you provided a good segue for ending this Justin with referencing here at the end of Paul's article he talks about Packer left he calls him four stones for the next wave of evangelicalism good mixed metaphor of stones and waves or maybe the stones are thrown in and creating ripples yeah so first he left the foundation stone of a strong family second Packer modeled the foundation stone of humble service taught small colleges that boasted no international scholarly reputation third he this is your point he wrote books and articles that came his way and fourth he imitated the English reformers he admired he believed they planted seeds of renewal that he ought to cultivate and that's so true and it seems unremarkable and yet it is in those remarkable steps of lifelong faithfulness that genuine seeds of renewal in your own personal life in your own family and we have to remember some of our heroes you know Spurgeon of course he had a massive church but his reputation now is different than it was when when he was in his heyday and so is Edward and same is true for so many who seem to be less than they are now or seem to be more than they are now and I think of the wonderful work the Lord has done through publishing houses like crossway and through faithful schools and seminaries and RTS is the one I work for and you work for you know do some teaching at Beeson and we could name others but I think at its best evangelicalism has been strengthened and renewed and you think about how just the banner of truth how much the church has been served in these last generations by the work that Ian Murray and others have done to publish these books that we just take for granted and now crossway does so much of that and so do other publishers but books that you know you read about here in Packers day they go searching and scrounging around libraries for old editions of these they just they didn't have things that we just now can click and be on our doorstep in two days such an embarrassment of riches so there's much to be thankful for and always much work to be done and thankfully the Lord is the one doing the work thankful for you guys hope you have a great Christmas and happy new year sure we'll talk by text before that but looking forward to having you back on LBE with the three of us come January until then or if I got enjoy him forever and read a good book

[Music]

(buzzing)