

OpenTheo

Team Compassion vs. Team Courage

October 7, 2020



Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

In this episode of Life and Books and Everything, Kevin, Justin, and Collin are back together to discuss some of the more pressing issues facing the church today: sexual misconduct and allegations, this time concerning the late Ravi Zacharias, friendless pastors, the curse of fame, dangers facing the church from “the Right” and “the Left,” and helpful books for forming one’s political philosophy.

This episode of Life and Books and Everything is brought to you by Crossway. The Crossway titles we want to highlight in this episode are the ESV Scripture Journals (Illuminated Scripture Journals and the Greek Scripture Journal). Bible readers can take extended notes or record insights and prayers directly beside corresponding passages of Scripture

These thin, portable, long-lasting notebooks are great for personal Bible reading and reflection, small-group study, or taking notes through a sermon series.

Timestamps:

Our attempts at journaling [0:00 - 10:34]

The sexual misconduct and allegations of Ravi Zacharius [10:34 - 37:10]

Agreeing and disagreeing on the dangers facing Reformed(ish) Evangelicalism [37:10 - 1:01:14]Books to help inform a political philosophy [1:01:14 - 1:18:33]

Booklists:

Justin:

The Contested Public Square: The Crisis of Christianity and Politics by Greg Forster

Political Visions & Illusions: A Survey & Christian Critique of Contemporary Ideologies by David T. Koyzis

A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles by Thomas Sowell

Kevin:

The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and the Birth of Right and Left by Yuval Levin

Christ and the Kingdoms of Men: Foundations of Political Life by David C. Innes

The Federalist Papers

Collin:

Them: Why We Hate Each Other--and How to Heal by Ben Sasse

Transcript

(upbeat music) - Greetings and salutations. Welcome back to Life and Books and everything. You will be very glad to know that Colin Hanson and Justin Taylor are back, although you may have been wishing for more bobbing all the time.

But Bobbing has left the building and Colin and Justin are back. So you can determine whether that's a good swap or not. - It's not a fair trade, not at all.

And just so people know, more people listen to that episode than any other episode we've ever done of Life and Books and everything. So I think we've found the formula, less of me and Justin. - Well, more of Kevin and Bobby.

- And more of Scottish accents, people from across the pond. I guess they were, they were tired of our Midwestern shtick. - Well, it's back.

It's back and better than ever. All right, we are glad to have Crossway once again as our sponsor. We are very grateful for them, their partnership and the fine resources that they publish.

We want to mention today the ESV scripture journals. There are a number of options, the regular scripture journals, Old Testament, New Testament sets, also sold individually. ESV illuminated scripture journals, which are illuminated and Greek scripture journals, which is very cool, with the Greek scripture journal New Testament set, with the Greek New Testament produced by Tyndale House Cambridge with added space for notes in the margins.

These are great for people who love to take notes in their Bible, people who want to listen to sermons, your pastor's going through a book of the Bible and you get one of the scripture journals and you want to take notes right there as you're listening to him preach. And maybe for people refreshing on their Greek or new students learning the

language, it's a great way to take notes alongside passages in the original Greek or pastors preparing for sermons. So check out the ESV scripture journals.

Justin, do you journal? Not necessarily with those, but just curious. There are two types of Christians, the ones who journal and provide ample evidence for future biographers and those who don't. - And the godly shallow type.

Yeah, I'm in the latter category, I don't journal. I have a few journals, if anybody were to go through my files and find many started journals that begin January 1st, dear journal, I probably won't continue doing this for many more days, and then it kind of drops off a few days later. So I like to take notes when I read and write margins, but I've never been a dedicated sort of notebook journaler.

Are you guys? - Well, I did some, I journaled for a season in college and I think I needed to be in that introspective moody, sort of not that ever who journals is introspective and moody, but for me, it fit. But I didn't last for very long when everything shut down with COVID. I heard lots of people saying, start a journal, record what you're seeing, what you're feeling, what you're experiencing.

You're gonna wanna go and show that to your grandkids someday. It's gonna be really interesting. I did that for a few days and then I thought, this is an ending, and then I decided I'd do it once a week.

I did that for maybe a month or so and I realized, well, this is gonna keep going for a long time and so I don't know. I will have like six journal entries that will be a real treasure trove for my grandchildren someday. Colin, what about you? - I took a class in seminary on pastoral theology.

We had to read a Eugene Peterson book and I think the professor's comment back to me was, do you have any kind of interior life? (laughing) Wow, that was to the point. I think it was the first assignment in the class as well. I guess I wasn't in the quite the right mood.

Now you'd think for somebody who writes as much that I would journal more, but it's never been natural to me. I've prayed sometimes in written form in the past, but that's been quite a while now. So for some reason, I just don't do that.

So I guess if anybody wants to know what I think, they're going to have to listen to these podcasts. - Yeah, that's right. - In the future.

- Justin, it's not a secret that John Piper is a prolific journaler and it's always amazed me because he, for years, is writing sermons, he's writing books, he's writing blogs and I genuinely enjoy writing, but when it comes to a journal every day, when I've tried, it just feels like, ah, one more thing on my writing assignment that I have to get done. Now I gotta write in this journal. Have you ever talked to John about that? I mean, he must not have felt that way about journaling.

- Yeah, I think that's right. I don't think he thought of it as here's a duty that I have to do, but here's something that helps me to think, he said many times that he doesn't know what he thinks until he writes, to hold a complex argument in your head or to kind of work out implications or definitions or nuances. So he is the sort of person who, he said before that he would write the same number of books, even if no one ever published them and I think the journals are probably similar for him.

Not just narrating what he's feeling on a particular day, but also trying to work out theological problems and make observations and try ideas out to see what they look like and what they sound like. So, yeah, I don't think for Piper, it ever felt like a duty or a half to do, but something that he wanted to do because it helped him. - I wonder his life is obviously gonna play out very differently, but I think about that with Bonhoeffer, so much what we have of Bonhoeffer with these journals that are filled with a lot of speculation.

It's very hard to reconstruct his theology as a result of that. What do you think that might mean for John Piper? Is people look back, are they going to be able to see a pretty natural progression and understand how it all fits together like a puzzle piece? Or are they going to open their eyes and say, whoa, this gives me a whole new perspective on what he was thinking or maybe even a scary one. - Yeah, I don't think that it would be in terms of some massive revelation or some completely different John Piper.

But when you're talking about somebody like Bonhoeffer whose life, he lived a number of days that the Lord appointed for him, but he did not live a long life, so it's more of a fragmentary record of what he believed, what he thought, and any particular day. So I think anytime that you have someone like a Martin with a king or a Bonhoeffer, somebody who's who lived, what we would regard as half of a life of a long life, then it ends up being more fragmentary where somebody like Piper has published so much in print, unless there's some secret struggle behind the scenes. I think there ends up being more continuity where when it's more fragmentary approach, you can have more ambiguity or more revelations because they didn't make a certain struggle public or a certain strain of thought.

But this relates to Edward's studies as well because now we're picking apart everything that Edward's ever wrote and said. And some of the things that he didn't intend for publication or didn't think it was ready for publication primetime would have had more nuance, what if it had been, what we would say today, workshoped more, I kind of thought through, got more feedback. So there is some danger in going back to a journal of an Edward's and saying, this is what he thought.

Well, it may have been what he was musing about one night by the candlelight at midnight and not what he would have said in a sermon or a lecture or in a print book. Justin, can you give us the line you were telling us that Fred Sanders shared this exact

quote from Jonathan Edwards? I don't know if this was in his journals or some letter somewhere, but this is perhaps a reason to keep some thoughts on the inside. Do you have that in front of you? Justin.

Yeah, this was-- There he is. I'm here. This was Edwards, I think, declining-- or presenting his qualms to Princeton College about why he would not make a good president.

And he ultimately felt divinely led to do it and was confirmed by friends and family and then ended up dying after a smallpox inoculation. But he said to them, I have a constitution in many respects, peculiarly unhappy, attended with flaccid solids, vapid, sisy and scarce fluids, and a low tide of spirits. Oh, I mean, said you sound perfect to be a college president.

Come on, come on. No wonder the marriage to a difficult man book was published. Yeah, but that was back in the day when people talked very freely about their solids.

You read some of Calvin's last letters and it's a little bit TMI. You could have just-- Yeah, that's where later Victorian sensibilities came in to just, you know, let's just use some euphemisms. All right, but we weren't going to talk about flaccid solids.

We'll do a whole episode sometime on John Calvin's health. It'll be even more popular. I love having episode, I promise.

It will be. OK, I have no way to make a good transition into a serious topic. So pause, serious.

OK, here we go. Last week-- well, it seems like every week in 2020 is some hard news, some bad news. And last week with First Christianity Today had an article later follow up podcast and then World did a little more reporting talking about the allegations against Ravi Zacharias passed away a few months ago.

And I want to use this as a springboard, not so much to talk about the particulars of the allegations against Ravi related to sexting allegations and these inappropriate behavior that's hardly the right serious enough euphemism for it if the allegations are true, but moral turpitude at these spas. But it causes us to reflect once again on what are we doing? There but by the grace of God go I, I always want to give a proper expression of our own sense of fallenness. But insofar as we've learned anything, Colin and Justin, what sort of things are you doing in your own life to protect your life, your marriage, your walk with the Lord? What sort of lessons have we learned? I mean, we could go through a litany of fallen leaders, some of whom were or are friends, some who have died, some who are still trying to make a comeback in ministry.

So there's too many stories to profitably want to recount. And I'd like us to at least reflect for a few minutes on what we learned from them. But before we do that, I wonder, do you think that these sort of catastrophic falls-- and let's just put out there, we don't

know.

I don't have any inside information on Ravi Zacharias just dealing with the allegations that are out there. And at this point, as best as we can tell, it seems hard to think of a counter story to the one that's there. But we reserve final judgment.

And hopefully, the ministry will be providing more information as they can. But do you think this is happening more often than it used to? I mean, that's what you hear. This is the way we have celebrity pastors or big EVA or evangelical industrial complex.

That's why this is happening. Or do we just hear about it more because of our connected world? What do you think, Colin? I don't think this is the interesting answer. I think we're just hearing about it more.

One thing that's brought the three of us together is those friendships, but then also our love and interest in evangelical history. And there are exceptions. Billy Graham is certainly an exception when it comes to money and when it comes to sex.

But he wasn't an exception when it came to family. I mean, he and Ruth had a strong merit, but the kids had a really difficult time there. I mean, you could just keep looking.

There's been a lot of major challenges for evangelical leaders. And a lot of why we don't know about them is because we've forgotten or just never taken the time to look. So I do think we're struggling a bit from a case of presentism.

But that doesn't lessen any of the concern, I guess. And it's also not particular to evangelicals. And yet, nevertheless, it's a major problem.

I'm wondering, Kevin, you guys, you've just read Paul Tripp's book, "Lead." And we've talked about that book a lot, the three of us, personally. And I think it's dead on when it comes to turning the attention away from the individual into the community. And I think in almost every case, you could see some of these things coming, and you could see it in community.

So let's take the Ravi Zacharias piece as an example. We're not trying to dwell on this. But we're going off some of the reports that we've seen.

And we've reported Lee that he didn't have any friends, or nobody that he could trust to talk about these things. There's been no mention of any church involvement, no pastor that we've seen anything from. You have a ministry that bears your name, and where a number of family members are on the payroll or on the board.

You can talk about this as a particular thing with Ravi. But it seems pretty clear there's a bigger community dimension going on. What did you think, Kevin, about that aspect of Paul Tripp's book, about behind every leadership failure is a failure of leadership

community? That's the real genius of the book.

And plug to your fine podcast interview with Paul about it, where he's really following up from *Dangerous Calling* in this book, "Lead," to say, it's the lack of friends. It's the network. It's the failure to have gospel community around demand.

Now, there's, at the end of the day, there's no foolproof scenario that keeps us all out of sin. But one of the things that we see with these sad examples, it's not like everyone is going to say, oh, everything I knew about him was terrible. Whatever the situation may be, there will always be people for whom say, oh, this doesn't look like anything of the person I knew.

And so it's a reminder to me to not just ensure that there are some people out there that would say, oh, Kevin DeYoung is a great guy. I got nothing but good things to say about him. But what about the people who see the sinful part of me and the ugly side of things? Do they have such a place in my life that they'd be able to speak into it, that they'd be able to say something? And I do think that one of the reminders is there's a massive danger, the more authority you are given or accrued, that you only put people around you who are going to affirm you, who are going to-- maybe their job depends upon you, maybe their platform depends upon you, and you have an unhealthy environment where people only want to tell you things that you want to hear.

And I want to be appropriately nervous that I would ever have that sort of relational ecosystem around me, because it doesn't serve me. And you don't have to be world famous like Robbie Zacharias was. You can be in your own little church world that you can create this sort of structure around you.

And the three of us have talked that I do think sometimes there's a peculiar danger for those who are-- whether it's leading their-- heading-- headlining their own ministry or often church planters are peculiarly in danger of this, because they may have as their leaders the very people that they led to Christ. They may tend to be all younger. It's hard to make that transition to see that you're no longer their father in the faith, but you're now a peer, or you actually submit yourself to their leadership.

So I think those sort of situations lend themselves to unhealthy dynamics, not that you can't in a traditional church, but there are some things if you come into a church setting and you're 30 years old and they have 60-year-old elders who have been around the block a time or two and aren't on the internet seeing your latest, greatest post or tweets, they're going to be a lot less likely to blow smoke wherever you blow smoke and it holds you accountable. Another element here is just a number of days on the road. I hear this about musicians a lot of how much divorce and difficulty they face.

There's a common alley there being on the road. And also, the difference between being a pastor and a speaker like this is a pastor, ideally, will be in one place long enough for

the people to not be impressed with him. Whereas a speaker can go from-- That is true with the impasse.

You can go from place to place and always be the star when you're a speaker. And you're the greatest hit, too. Yeah.

And that goes-- --for one great talk. And people at your home church, like they've heard you're good, you're good, you're ugly, in terms of your delivery and your content. And moods-- you can go all the way back to evangelical history.

This is George Whitfield. I mean, how you can perfect a sermon when you preach it hundreds of times. I want to hear more of Justin's thoughts here.

But Kevin, I want to ask you a follow-up. We've known each other for a long years, all three of us, and have been friends for a long time. Enough to see a lot of life change, enough to see a lot of change with our friends as well.

But Kevin, I wonder, is that a trait that you would consider would be a strong suit of yours without having friends for a long time? Actually, heard from one of your friends recently who told me that I should ask you about the serial dance. I should get you to talk. I'm talking too about that.

I just-- I have my sources. You know me. You know me, Kevin.

I'm a journalist. I have my sources. But you have friends going all the way back to seminary.

They didn't know you as Kevin DeYoung, writing all these books, pastoring a big church, interviewing famous authors about Bob Vank. They knew you as a goofy seminary student. But I don't-- friendship, it doesn't come easy.

But it seems like you've been able to keep some really long-term friendships. You tell us more about that? Yeah, I mean, the pastor needs friends and needs friends in his church. But you're going to need friends outside of your church, too.

So I mean, I have two very good friends from high school. We don't see each other all that often. But we climbed a 14er in Colorado a few years ago.

So we do when we can. And one of those friends is we were in the same kindergarten class together. So he's my longest lasting friend and friends from college.

And then you alluded to these friends from seminary. They were a group of us, nine in total. And we're getting together in three weeks.

We get together every fall. Just be six of us this time. And yeah, those guys know all of the-- I have lots of strange things about me.

This cereal dance being one of them. We'll have to save that for another time. Something to look forward to.

Yes. And when I'm there, they call me by the worst nickname that I have been given, which is Celine. Because when I was-- Deon is a very common name where I'm from.

Oh. Among Dutch people. But they heard it.

And they all thought it was Deon. So they called me Celine Deon. So it's still-- I don't even when I'm around them.

I don't even think of it. They're like, hey, Celine, where you want to go for dinner? And it's like, that's me. I'm Celine.

Celine with the philiacs. Yeah, that's right. So it does help.

And then I talk to you guys more than is healthy and have other friends. I mean, I think it's not foolproof, but it's really important. Justin, how do you see this? What's sort of-- I know none of us are trying to put ourselves up as the example in all these things.

But any lessons that you've learned or you've reflected on some of these catastrophically difficult falls and allegations we've seen? Yeah, with regard to your original question, it's really hard to figure out, is this happening more frequently? Or are we just hearing about it because of how connected we are all to social media? I think one facet of it has been that victims feel more empowered to make their allegations public, whereas that might not have been true 10 years ago, less true 20 years ago. Further back you go, I think the harder that was for somebody to come forward. Another thing that strikes me is that you think of the triumvirate of sex, money, and power.

And I think it's always been the case that if you were involved in a sex scandal, if you got caught in bezeling money, that's an objective thing. But in some strange way, it's been encouraging that there have been church discipline issues of pastors and failure and fallout from abuse of power. I don't think that that was happening as much in the past.

I mean, the abuse of power was, but the ability to hold somebody to account for that. So those are maybe a couple of counterintuitive ways to look at whether we're just hearing about it more. Or I don't think that necessarily the amount of sin is increasing, but I think that amount that we're hearing about it is increasing.

I don't think there's any foolproof way for us to prevent it or to prevent it from our friends. You can always deceive people. You can always be doing something from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. on some device that's not connected to covenantize.

If you want to fool those around you, you can. I don't know that you can do it forever. But apart from some sort of having a polygraph in the pastoral office every time the pastor

comes in, I don't think there's any way to absolutely prevent it.

But I do think there are things that we can do. And one of the things that comes to my mind is the role of the conscience. That as my conscience starts to get dulled or the biblical terms defiled, seared, as I tell a white lion, and it doesn't prick my conscience, it doesn't bother me, I can move on.

And the next time it might get a little bit easier. And the time after that it gets a little bit easier. I think those are danger zones.

Those are, you know, you're driving down the highway and the warning lights are coming onto the dashboard. I think we need to pay attention to those and work hard to keep a clear conscience to have people to whom we can confess our sins, to have people who are willing to ask us questions that we're willing to be honest with. It was really striking with Ravi Zacharias that to my knowledge, he wasn't a member of a local church.

I don't believe his family is connected to a local church. And, you know, I mentioned that on Twitter and a number of people said, well, that might not have prevented it or, you know, the church might not have handled allegations well. But I think there's something intangible, almost indescribable of all about being connected to a local church where you were accountable to other people and you are putting the community before yourself.

So all of those things, I think there's vertical dimensions to this and horizontal dimensions. And sometimes we can so focus on the horizontal dimensions, you know, just you can achieve purity by having the strict, discover and eyes setting or having the greatest accountability system. And I think those things are important, but if you don't start with the vertical of Matthew 5.8 blessed are the pure and heart for they shall see God.

If that's not your primary motivation, if that's not your great fear, if you're only thinking about those whom you will let down, I think you're in a danger zone. So the vertical and the horizontal both need to be there, but the vertical Godward direction needs to be a primary focus of our lives or I think we're in another danger zone. - I think at least one, maybe both of you read Malcolm Gladwell talking to strangers.

In one of his themes there is we all have a default to truth. We tend to believe what people are telling us. And he gives all sorts of stories of when that didn't serve people well, but he also says life would be insufferable if we were all like whatever his example in the book, the guy who broke the, was it the in-round case or? - No, the Bernie made off, the Bernie made off.

- Yeah, it was Bernie made off. Guy who said from the beginning, Bernie made off his corrupt and he just spent 15 years of his life basically trying to tell everybody. - Yeah, right.

- And he was never gonna believe him. And really suspicious, at least as Gladwell presents him in the book. And you see that guy, you think, well, good for him, but Gladwell says if everyone was like that all the time, life would be miserable.

So we do, it's natural and in some ways it's commendable. We have friends, we believe people around us. We don't want to always assume the worst, but that's why as you said, Justin, it's important to attend to our own conscience because very few people wake up and never, if you're a Christian, I hope, you know, today's the day I ruin it all.

Today's the day I'm gonna go from a happy marriage and not looking at anything I shouldn't online and I'm gonna try to find an affair. Now, it's all of the little, you know, it's the sociology of broken windows that when you clean up the city, you have to attend to the small things, to the graffiti, to the broken windows because when those things are broken down, it gives a pervasive environment where greater criminality is liable to happen. It's the same thing in our lives.

I do think, you know, just back to the original question I asked and I'll let you wrap up this segment with anything else you want to add Colin, but it is important to realize there are good stories out there and they don't get as much press and sometimes we're not even at liberty to share them, but I think all three of us know of experiences. Some, we would all know the same ones and then each of us would have different instances where we've seen people in ministry and positions of power who sin and they do follow the steps that are necessary and they do confess and they do step out of the ministry for good or for an appropriate season. They do work through a presbytery.

They do submit themselves to a board of elders or to an outside group and they really do get help. And so there are redemption stories where people's sins are forgiven and people learn and grow and understand the gospel and new and fresh ways. And that really should be the story for all of our lives 'cause our sins may not seem so catastrophic, but all of us sin.

And then I always want people to know, maybe I'll write a blog on this sometime, but every year when I teach my pastoral ministry class, I give an assignment that people, that their final papers, they have to write on two pastoral ministry heroes. One from the past and one from the present. And so the present is usually a father, a grandfather, an RUF pastor, their childhood pastor.

Most of these people are names that almost no one will know of. And yet these men and all of women in the class who write of different heroes or heroines in their own life, they write about people who are faithfully plotting, doing the right thing, name, not in lights. And I still believe that those stories are far more prevalent than the catastrophic crash in burns.

We just, it's like the news. The news is never gonna headline with normal good things

happening today. The news is always oriented to change into bad news.

That's what gets our attention. Not, hey, nothing went wrong in this person's, walk with Jesus this week. That's not gonna show up.

And so there are many good stories, and it's important for us to put those out there, and TGC has done some of that, and even just remember in our own lives, how many reasons we have to give things. Anything to add to this or subtract, Colin? - One thing quickly, I mean, you're right about what news gravitates toward. That's a major factor there.

But the normative doesn't get the attention. When things go the way that they should, but I also think that if most people knew what it was like to be famous and Christian, they would not want to be famous, and they might think in the end, they wouldn't want to be Christians. And it should not be something that we aspire to.

If it's a burden the Lord brings into your life that you are called by God's grace to bear for the good of the church, then so be it. But it definitely should not be something that you aspire to because that attitude itself is going to get you into trouble. But also if you knew, it just might not be nearly as appealing as you think.

And so I do think, Kevin, if we're looking overall at the differences between high profile Christian leaders, I think there probably are higher attrition rates for the high profile Christian leaders. And like I said, you add in some of those factors like being on the road all the time, can't be a part of church. Everybody thinks that you're great wherever you go.

Those are not what you would do if you wanted to live a quiet and peaceful, dignified life before the Lord and with your neighbors. - And one of the indications I think is when does the extra added normal become better than the real ordinary normal? So do you desire, would you rather preach at your own congregation for your own people? Or would you rather preach somewhere else in front of people you've never met? And of course, it's fine to be excited to go speak or excited to travel at times. But if I find myself wanting a trip because getting away from my wife or my family or my ordinary circumstances is better than living in those circumstances.

If I'd rather be speaking to those people than to speaking to my own people, I'd rather be on the road than be at home. All of those are warning signs. One of the things I've prayed and I'm sure, I've told the Lord, Lord, I'm not sure I mean this but I know it's a good thing to pray.

So I'm gonna pray it. And I said, Lord, don't give me success until I don't want it anymore. So may it be that when whatever that success looks like, whatever are small fishbowls that we don't want it and we endure and again, John Piper would be the first if he were here to tell us what his sins are.

But I've seen him stand in line for sometimes hours, waiting for people who wanna talk to him, who want him to sign a book or their Bible. And someone may look at that and think, that's Christian celebrity, that's Christian fame and only the Lord can know a man's heart if he's waiting there with a line of people to see him and he's feeling proud. But I know for someone like Piper and for most of the brothers that I know, it takes a great deal of humility to actually do that.

When you'd be rather doing almost anything else than standing there and waiting and having awkward selfies and awkward phone calls, awkward book signings. And so I think you're right Colin, it's not what everyone thinks that it is and the real joys in life and ministry are gonna be those treasures that you have with the people that you know and love. - Did you come up with that yourself? Kevin, just out of the blue that don't give me success until I don't want it anymore? - As far as I can recall, I came up with myself.

- That is helpful. I wrote that down, I am going to pray that. - I think that brings a lot of clarity.

I'm gonna tweet it and either do Augustine, Luther, Chester Finner, or Melissa. How about Abraham Lincoln? That sounds like Abraham Lincoln to me. - Uh huh.

- In fact, it would be his political career. - Yeah. Well, if you found that I stole it from someone, let me know.

All right, we will thank you for that. And I do appreciate you guys are good friends and really do mean that and hope that you would speak into something in my life if you felt like, "Huh, something that you're different than you were when you used to go to Pizza Ranch with us." - But isn't that the Midwestern sensibility? I mean, we're just looking for a chance to knock you down. - I know, it is good.

- We're just looking for it. So this is a different topic we've talked about a lot. How to get at it.

What it seems, okay, let's take our world and let's say it's reformed, reformed-ish, take people who basically agree on really important theological tenets. Inerrancy, historic, orthodoxy, Calvinist soteriology, we would say, complementarianism. That's a lot to agree on.

The expositional preaching, you know, the sort of people that would, or maybe they wouldn't anymore, but you know, it would go to T4G, would go to TGC, just take this kind of tribe of theological agreement with everything out there in the world. That's an awful lot to agree on. Now, we have talked somewhat on this podcast and more just privately about how much this cultural moment, and even this ecclesiastical moment, is made difficult because even among those who agree on an evangelical, reformed-ish statement of faith, do not agree on what our biggest challenges might be to that shared

statement of faith.

To put it very crassly, are the dangers coming more from the left, from outside, from the culture, or are the dangers more pronounced from the right, perhaps within our own churches? Is the need of the hour to build bridges, or to build walls? And you can find scriptural reasons and metaphors to do both of those. Are we team, do we need team compassion? Are they're the ones who want to build bridges, and they're the ones who are saying, if we could just be gentler, more gracious, more winsome, we'd win a hearing, it's the harsh, it's the belligerent, it's the tone that's driving people away, team compassion, or is it team courage? Hey, look, the visit goths are at the walls. We better man the barricades, or we're gonna lose our souls, we're gonna lose this next generation, and what we need is courage, do we need some people to flip over some tables, and to fire some warning shots, and to take out some wolves and some goats, and let's get on with it, and you can make a scriptural case for that.

So I'm gonna put you on the spot. Colin, make the case that the biggest danger for our theological tribe is coming from the left. Coming from the left.

All right, well, you practically quoted me earlier in my Blind Spot book, Kevin, thank you. 2015, courageous, compassionate, but I add. Oh, that's right.

I add commission in there. So, 'cause I don't think that most of our issues are a simple left, right, binary, but they are more of a triangle. And so there's an evangelistic focus, there's a compassion focus, there's a truth telling focus, so we're not typically dealing with that poll.

But the reason we, the argument that I would make for why the biggest fear, or why the biggest concerns would come from the left to answer your question would be because, yes, there are a lot of debates about what's happening inside the church, and yes, there are problems with things like white supremacy, explicit white supremacy, racism, and things like that, inside the church and historically, the dominant message that the church hears and is catechized that our young people are growing up with is almost exclusively coming from the left. Whether it's they turn on and they watch the NBA finals or whether or not they're going to college and the training, whether or not in their workplace, just what they're learning in public school education, growing all the way up, the consistent messages routinely reinforced through our cultural catechases are coming from the left. That's the argument that I would make.

It's not necessarily the argument that I hold, though that's only if you make me choose. I think that is a genuine major problem, and I would happily team up with anybody who saw that as a problem, and we wanted to work together from a Christian perspective to combat that problem. - And I gave you that one because I know that we've talked about this some, and again, I don't know if we disagree, but it may just be different things we're seeing in our context or sensibilities, and we'll come back to that, but Justin, you

wanna try to make the case that the bigger danger for our theological tribe at the moment is from people to the right, and perhaps within.

- Yeah, if you're asking me to make that case, I'll do my best to make it. - Whether it's yours or not. Good forensics class.

- Yeah, I think that the sins of the left are more obvious and are more marquee sins, and the sins of the right are more subtle, at least to those who are conservatively inclined, and therefore because they are more subtle, they're harder to discern. It also requires looking within to see if we are committing any sins of commission or omission. I think that because a lot of times those on the right are aiming for good outcomes, and here I'm interweaving the political and the theological, because we want, for example, to see Roe versus Wade overturned, that's a policy good, I think that we would agree to, therefore there can be a temptation that the ends justify the means, and so a subtle, sometimes not so subtle, utilitarian ethic comes up play that the end justifies the means, and because we are aiming at something virtuous, we can bypass virtue in order to get there, we can support people who act with vice rather than virtue, and we can also be, we can assume the gospel, and then end up forgetting the gospel, all of us were aiming towards ostensibly righteous aims, and I think that because of the subtlety of how that can work, because of the goodness of some of those aims, we can be taken in and not even realize that we're the proverbial frog boiling in the pot of water to realize that we are giving up the ship to mix a couple of metaphors and introducing all sorts of problems and compromise.

- Okay, so-- - Come on, wanna follow up on that one? - Let me, let me, go ahead, let me, all right, let me try out this, and then, Colin, you can respond to it, because I'm thinking about this all the time, and I maybe, I just need to, like you said about John Piper, I need to put some thoughts on paper to find out what I think and clarify, but one of my working supposition is that, because the threat, well, number one, I think the, and you can disagree with me, I think the biggest threats are coming from what you described, Colin, from the entire cultural catechesis, call it woke capitalism, it's not just Hollywood, it's not just the academy, it's now sports, it's now everything that we see in the air, that we breathe, there was a good article today, I'll maybe send it to you guys, why the young hate the Tories, so it's in a British context, and it's more political than religious, but it dovetails with that, and you could definitely apply it to an American situation of why the conservatives in Britain are finding that younger and younger people absolutely, don't just disagree, they hate what they stand for, and there's a whole number of factors there, and again, we're not equating conservative politically, always with conservative theologically, but there's some overlap in the analysis, so I think that part of what's happening is as Christians sense that they are more and more inhabiting a hostile place, where their views are held with not just, you know, dismissal, but genuine derision, it is bound and is already then prompting a visceral sort of response, that this is really threatening, and we're not making up the threat, and because that's there, we're bound

to have at times maybe an overreaction, or to want to defend what we ought to properly defend, and do it in ways that either are ineffective, or unpersuasive, or we end up defending sometimes the indefensible, or we find co-belligerents with those who are in no ways, really friends to Christianity, all of those are problematic, but I still maintain that the cultural air that we're breathing is eroding Christian faith from the left, and as that is already infiltrating the church, will continue to make life difficult for those of us who believe in the centrality of the gospel and the efficacy of the scriptures and testing everything against the Word of God. So Colin, how do you respond to that, agree, disagree, nuance, add or subtract? - I think I can agree with you while adding some depth. So-- - You're saying I'm shallow.

- You know, I implied it, I didn't say that. - Yeah. - Okay, so take three different places that I've lived.

I guess my main point, Kevin, is that I don't think all of these cultural conversations are national, so I think that's an important grid, but I think they can be localized. So let's take South Dakota, my first 18 years. If you're really obsessed with racial issues, especially black-white issues in South Dakota, that's probably going to be a strange emphasis of your ministry.

Now, there's gonna be different emphases such as Native American concerns that aren't as much of a pressing issue in Alabama where I live now, but that's just black-white, racial dynamics, not a major part of life in ministry in South Dakota. Okay, fast forward to Evanston, Illinois. If you're not really concerned about what you described, about capitalism, cultural Marxism in educational institutions, intersectionality, if you're not concerned about that in Evanston, Illinois, then I don't know, I don't know how you can be faithfully discipling people that are coming through your church or through your campus ministry.

That's a major problem. I'm gonna leave out most of my years in Wheaton because I didn't really understand Wheaton very well for the eight years that I lived there. I never was a part of a Christian college.

- It was true. - Well, thank you, Justin. Technically, as Carl Henry said, I lived in a suburb of Wheaton.

(laughing) In Wheaton, it was a dream. You could just hear that. - I thought Wheaton was a suburb of South Holland.

(laughing) - You Dutch, that's typical. Everything revolves around Amsterdam. Okay, so, and then in Birmingham, if you don't care about racial issues, something is something is off, given that history.

So that's one thing. We're not always having national conversations. The local emphasis

can change.

The other point I wanna make is that I don't, the Bible does, I'm not so much interested in the left right polarity, though, that can be helpful sometimes. I'm not entirely dismissing that. I mentioned earlier, my triangular approach.

But then I also want to, I wanna point out that I think, and Kevin and Justin, you guys can push back on me in this, 'cause I don't wanna overemphasize something here. But I think on the main, the Bible is more concerned about what happens inside God's people than what happens outside. It seems to assume the outside is going to be hostile, and they're going to be problematic for us.

But that it's not insurmountable if God's people will simply be God's people. If they will just trust God and they will live with holiness, there won't be any problem there. They can withstand whatever the world brings to them.

I think that's an Old Testament and New Testament dynamic. So instead of saying left and right, I typically wanna say three ways, compassion, courage, commission, that's just my way of describing it. But then I also wanna say, we should be more concerned that God's people are living faithfully than we should be about the threat that the world brings on God's people.

Though I don't wanna make, that's not a sharp dichotomy, 'cause of course what happens in the world is going to affect God's people. - Right. - If it goes back to what your point is earlier, Kevin, the confusing part for me is watching Christians team up with non-Christians because they imagine going after common enemies inside the church.

That's what's confusing to me right now. And yes, I do think that we genuinely have a lot of disagreements inside the church, but what's confusing to me is how we so immediately gloss over all the commonality that you started this with, Kevin, and latch onto some of those supposed or alleged disagreements, some of them are real, some of them are supposed and alleged, and that we use outside non-Christian voices to be able to sort of trump, I didn't mean to use that specific word, but I mean, trump the unity of the church. - Just a verb.

- Just a verb, it's just a verb. But that is the atmosphere where things are so politicized that it seems like our Trinitarian unity, our unity in Christ doesn't seem to matter if you disagree on a political issue. It seems then all of a sudden you have more in common with atheists who don't believe in God at all because of your focus on politics.

Justin, what do you think? Push back on me there. - If you're interested in that line of reasoning, Samuel James recently did a letters and letter G piece along those lines, which I think is-- - Honey, woah, yes. - Yeah.

And for listeners who like to hear Colin Hanson mues about these topics, he actually

wrote a book for Crossway, titled Blind Spots on this issue of seeing things from only one perspective. Colin, I think you're right. In the main, let me complexify it even further.

What do you do talking about within a single church? I think that there's a significant generational divide there. So in the church setting that I'm a part of, am I more concerned about threats from the right or the left? I think it depends on if you're talking about the 60 year old guy who's been there for 30 years versus the 17 year old who's going off to college in a year. To me, I'm not super worried about the 60 year old with certain temptations in the same way that I am with the 17 year old.

So I agree with you, the more that we try to present just, is it yes, is it no, is it left, is it right? What's the one thing happening? I think I agree with Kevin there, but I agree with the complexification. Once you get into real life and you actually ask what it's like in a local church setting, it depends a lot upon age and gender and geography and history, experience, suspicions, dispositions, race, all of those sort of things. Yeah, and I'm sort of all out here.

Well, one word there, because you really raise an issue that allows me to nuance something. Let's take my own church as an example of what we went through in this last summer on racial issues. Mentioned there, of course, we're in Birmingham, so the racial issues are going to be very significant with our history.

And we had some people respond in ways that I thought were extremely unhelpful from the right. And we've tried to address those issues as much as possible. But what I said to other elders was, for every one person that I see spinning way off to the right, I bet we have five or six people who are more likely to spin off to the left.

And that's because our demographic, even in this Birmingham environment, is actually, is very young. And a lot of them are very much oriented toward a lot of the justice messages, some of which are really good, some of which are very unhelpful. And so even in that environment, as I'm looking as a pastor, I'm thinking, yes, of course, I'm really upset to watch some of my church leaders be enamored with neo-confederate writings.

I'm very upset about that. But then I'm also afraid, even more afraid, just numerically speaking, of people I see where, wow, this has simply gone all together into left-wing politics. And I don't even see the gospel here anymore.

So I think that's lost, Kevin, in how we play these things out on Twitter, and how we play these things out on websites. I guess that's what I'm so confused about. So help, as Justin said, help set us straight.

- Well, no, I'm not that you're straight, but I think that's really good. And I appreciate what you said, Colin. It helps me clarify my earlier point about threats from the left on the outside.

I should have made clear. I'm not thinking so much of, boy, what's happening at Princeton, and that has to have us all alarmed, but more, where do we see these ideas, whether they're formal theories, or they're simply the air that we breathe, or the messages that we receive, every commercial break, how are they being unwittingly assumed in the church? So I totally agree, and you see it in Paul's letters. What he's concerned about is not so much, now he's concerned of, you know, you see this in Revelation, a persecuting government, but they're most concerned with the church then standing fast to that, not capitulating, not giving in.

So the church very much has to, but if I can footnote my book, which sorry wasn't by crossway, but that one that no one reads anymore, why we're not emergent, you know, I wrote about the seven letters of the seven churches. I think that's very instructive, not what I wrote, but those first, you know, chapter two and three in Revelation, because they do describe, and you see the example, you see Jesus, he does not talk to every church in the same way. And so he can say to Ephesus, "You've lost your first love." That's the message some churches need to hear.

And you can say it's love for the loss, love for the Lord, love for evangelism, all those things. But then there's Thyatira and Pergamum, which are over tolerant. He says, "Jesus has this against you.

"You tolerate that woman, Jezil. "You're too tolerant of things." That's not a message that many people are gonna hear. So it takes a lot of pastoral wisdom and nuance.

And so here's a recurring theme on this podcast, and it's the blessing and the challenge of our digital age because you tweet, you blog. One time you're talking to everybody, but you can't help but have in your mind what you see in Birmingham, what, you know, maybe I grew up with in the RCA or what Justin's seeing. So we're all bringing to our message, which ostensibly is going everywhere, our own set of concerns and issues.

And so it means that as readers, we need to be discerning. As writers, we need to be careful. But it also presents the challenge that so often, we get, just using a royal we, one track mind and how we read things.

And there's a way to be helpful. We've talked about this too. There's a way to be sensitive.

Okay, how would someone who's been a victim of this read it? How would a single person, how would a married person, how would a black, white, male, female? There's a certain sensitivity that's appropriate. And then there's also a place where we can no longer write or communicate with any real verb or function because we're assuming that everyone is going to bring to bear their own hurts. And so in one of my many aborted blog posts, Justin may have more than I do.

We may be running neck and neck. Perhaps Jonathan Lehman is up there too. Although he's winning with aborted tweets.

World's worst tweet draft. Thanks Justin for setting him straight on that. - At least he circulates them beforehand.

- Yes. - Of course they come public. - But that was, you know, a blog post that I'll have to finish sometime is just saying, we expect our communication to be at once universal and at the same time so personal that it's as if you're my pastor speaking to me.

So people will say, well, would you, is that how you would speak to someone who had suffered, you know, a loss by suicide and they're, well, no, but I'm not having a counseling session with that person right now. So all of this comes into, I think there is, it's incumbent upon us as writers, but it also means a certain realism as readers to understand and probably means for someone like you in your position, gospel coalition, Colin, and Justin, it's cross way, I'm sure you have to think about because you are trying to reach a wide audience, trying to gauge what is the need for this cultural moment. And, you know, I haven't said you straight or figured it out, I'll pray for you.

And you know that I'll tell you when there's things I like and I've told you when there's things I didn't like. - That's true. - So thank you, brothers.

- I think you did that more with Colin than with me. - Well, that's 'cause your books, you know, they're already out and they're... (laughing) - Look, it's part of my job description. I don't mind it.

I expect that if you're, you're exactly right, Kevin, about the internet. I think we underestimate what role that plays here. It's not gonna be possible to make everybody happy, but at the same time, that shouldn't be your goal is to make everybody unhappy.

So there's a medium in there of, you're not trying to offend people, but some people, it's just going to happen if you're doing what you think is the right thing to do if you're recognizing that threats come from multiple corrections. - Last question, tying it all together, books. Give me a two or three, well, just limit it to three.

We could come up with 30, but books that you think would be helpful in forming a political philosophy. These can be Christian books, Christian classics, new books, or could just be classic of moral political philosophy. Anything you want, so don't limit yourself to, they have to be three famous Christian books.

But if someone said, you know, a recent college grad likes to read, hey, what are some books that you think would be good for me as I try to formulate my own way of thinking as a Christian about politics and it's probably going to be somewhat American-centric 'cause that's who we are, where we are. Give me two or three books, Justin. - Yeah, I think one that I would start out with would be a book that I think is still available, print on

demand, but it's Greg Forrester's, *The Contested Public Square*.

It's a good book, *The Crisis of Christianity and Politics*, put up by IVP several years ago. And I think one thing that's nice about that book is that it gives a historical overview and introduces readers to the great classic works from Plato's *Republic* to Augustine's *City of God* and moves eventually to medieval thinkers and reformation and natural law and religious liberty. It's just a really nice introduction to who the main players are and the history written from a confessionally Christian perspective.

Another one would be David, and I'm sure I'm going to say his last name wrong because I've never had to say it out loud before, but Quasus, the Canadian Reformed political theorist, *Political Visions and Allusions*. A really interesting, helpful book, working through all sorts of things from progressivism to Berkean conservatism, to socialism to communism and looking at how all of them as secular theories fall short of the glory of God and have elements of idolatry and shows how the gospel offers a better answer. A really, I think nuanced, interesting, informed book.

- Justin, what I have, I've heard that book mentioned a lot and I haven't read it. Would, so it sounds like a book I would really like and then I have one or two little yellow flags going up. Do you think I would like that book? - I think you'd probably have little yellow flags going up on it, but I think you'd probably like it as well.

I think one of the potential critiques of it is that it can make it seem as if even though all of these ideologies fall short of the glory of God, maybe some of them fall further short than others. I think he believes that. I don't know how clear that always is, but I think for somebody of his knowledge and background as a neo-kiperian, I think his analysis will make you think and I think you'd probably enjoy it, even if you had a few qualms.

- Does he present what he thinks is the biblical model with no idolatry and has that model ever been a governing philosophy on the planet? - I don't think that he thinks that we have achieved utopia. To what degree he lays out his alternative perspective and how realistic it is. - I'm not sure.

- Yeah, I wasn't saying utopia. So I asked the question in an unhelpful way. So okay, we'll talk about that.

And I mean you and others that I know and trust really like the book, you just are getting my yellow flag as I've heard it used sometimes. So I'm not critiquing the book because I haven't read it. Is it as if we can transcend all actual human forms of government.

It's like the famous quip, whether it's Jew or not, when D. James Kennedy, someone didn't like evangelism explosion. He said, "Well, I like my way of doing evangelism better than your way of not doing evangelism." So it's sort of, okay, what is the democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others? - I've heard that quote from

Kennedy, attributed to Moody. - Yeah, I know, I've heard it to.

- I think Moody got it from Kennedy. - Yeah. - It's just a few people here.

- Yeah, I think originally it was Luther though. (both laughing) - Lincoln before that. - Yeah.

- Okay, I'm sorry, Justin. - You had a third one, Justin? - Was anybody else gonna say conflict divisions by-- - No, it's all you-- - That's all you-- - I'm saving that for you. - Now Thomas Sol is not a Christian, at least an Orthodox one, but I think that that book is very helpful and maybe an interesting place to start if somebody doesn't necessarily want a Christian perspective that wants to see a relatively non-polemico even-handed book that tries to lay out, why do we disagree? And why is it that the Democrats tend to line up on one set of issues and Republicans on other set of issues and he argues that there's a difference between the constrained vision and the unconstrained vision and that we simply have different presuppositions about what is entailed by freedom and by justice and by power and equality.

We're operating with different definitions and different ways to get to our desired ends. So it's just a very interesting book. Sol can be polemical in some of his other works and he's kind of become a punching bag on some of the racial issues, but in this book in particular, I think it's just a really nice introduction.

Doesn't say everything that needs to be said, but I think it ends up being eye-opening for the different presuppositions at play among various parties when it comes to political ideology. - That's great. That leads into my list and we'll give Colin then the last.

Along those same lines, I would recommend you've all of Ian's book, The Great Debate, Edwin Burke, Thomas Payne and The Birth of Right and Left. Similar pedagogy as the sole book, except the Dean is looking at just two thinkers, Edmund Burke and Thomas Payne, who overlapped and interacted some with each other. Now Americans will hear Thomas Payne immediately think common sense and he's the hero who sparked the revolution.

When you read Thomas Payne, you quickly probably wanna sift out some of the draw so long with holding up to be a champion of independence, at least on this side of the pond because you've all makes the case that really the birth of the left is more with the ideas of Thomas Payne and The Birth of Right is with Edmund Burke. So again, it's just very helpful and he's not arguing one way or another. People who read his books know he's a thoughtful, conservative or center right sort of voice but I think that's a very good historical book to understand and gives you a sense for where right and left come from.

Ultimately though, they do come from the French Assembly and where they were sitting on the right or on the left. That's why we speak of those directions and to make things

very confusing in America, the red and the blue should really be switched. Blue was the color for the conservative royalists, right? And red has always been the color for liberals, red is the color of communism, socialism.

So whoever first put the red blue map up with Republicans and Democrats have not done us any historical favors. And then a Christian book, again, I don't know how to say his last name for sure, David Ennis, I-N-N-E-S teaches at the King's College, Christ and the kingdoms of men. I believe he's also ordained in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

This came out just last year, I think. Again, I don't agree with every last thing in the book. He's a bit more critical about classic liberalism than I might be, but classic liberalism is fair to be criticized.

But I think if someone was just saying, I'd like from a reformed voice, how would I begin to think of what a political philosophy might look like? That's a good book to start, and I found it helpful. And then the third book, I tried to think of what would be a classic, what would be something that would be helpful. So I thought about maybe Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution of France, but I'll go with the Federalist Papers.

Every American should read at least some of the Federalist Papers. And something is wrong with our educational system. If you can get through college, really if you can get through high school even, and you've never read any of the Federalist Papers.

Is that you, Colin? - None, never so. - None. I was a history major.

- Never so. - And you never, so. - Never signed.

- You know, it's a-- - If you're the graphic novel version, though, that would be-- (both laughing) - Justin, there's probably an audible version that you can listen to. - That's true. - Or a Wikipedia page.

- Or Wikipedia page. But Eve, so these are a series of, I should know the exact number offhand of its 90 or what it is, how many articles that Hamilton and James Madison, John Jay, published. It's on the ratification of the Federal Constitution, but it gets into political theory.

And again, it's not that you say this is lifted from the pages of scripture, obviously it's not. It's drawn from all different sources, but it's very, 85 Federalist Papers. Thank you, Justin, just look that up.

I was pretty close off the top of my head. It's really helpful to just say, okay, here are some of the key founders trying to think, not from scratch, but a new nation with centuries of natural law, of basic Protestant assumptions, and new enlightenment philosophy, how do, and ideas of classical republicanism from Rome, how do they think about government? And whether you agree or disagree with all of it, I think that's

extremely helpful, especially it is for understanding our American system. Colin, you get the last word, what are your three books? You get to go last at one hour and 12 minutes in, by the way, Kevin, Price is Right Rules, you went over, so you lost.

Okay, all right. I start with two essays. I teach a class on Christ in Culture for My Church, and we cover politics in there.

Two essays or two documents, I assign, Lincoln's second inaugural address, and King's letter from Birmingham Jail. Very good. I think the two best examples of public theology in American history, which is notable, given the ambiguities we have about King's life, and Lincoln's faith, and orthodoxy.

So still, nevertheless, as documents, they are not inspired in that biblical sense, but they are inspiring in that sense of understanding the essential elements of that sort of a rebirth of freedom that was provided through the conflagration of the Civil War, and then ultimately renewed through the Civil Rights Movement. So related to that, I commend Taylor Branch's American the King Years' Trilogy for shaping a lot of my perspective on 20th century politics, at least, in the Civil Rights Movement. - And there's a one-volume small version of it.

- Oh, it is. I didn't know that, which I've read. - Well, yeah, the three-volume-- - You came back through the three-big-vog.

- Oh, like, 2,400 pages. - Yeah, yeah. - So that's a wise decision.

- Okay, so the three books I wanted to mention, first one, will be Senator Ben-Sass. - But those weren't even the books? - No, you're critiquing me for price- - I don't know, I got to go last. - You mentioned, okay, okay.

- I wanted to mention Ben-Sass's book, Them, Why We Hate Each Other and How To Heal. That's from 2018. Reason I mentioned Senator-Sass's two reasons.

One, because it is easy to sit in the distance and to muse on these things. I have a lot of respect for people who are inside trying to implement them, even under very easy to criticize circumstances like Senator-Sass is in. So that's the first book.

Also, second reason for that is because I resonate strongly with his Midwestern localism. So his Friday night in the high school gym feeling that he describes with community could not resonate more strongly with me. And that is the kind of politics and community I was catechized into without knowing it.

And remains very, very much my political philosophy today of the strength of local communities. That's the Tocqueville part of me that I didn't realize. Another thing I wasn't assigned in Tocology.

Second book I wanna mention is James Davison-Hunters to Change the World. Actually edited a book five years ago called Revisiting Faithful Presence to Change the World. And Al-Molar, Greg Forrester, Karen Alice from Ompierre, Daniel Strange, Hunter Baker, a number of other people who contributed to that book.

I don't know if I'm still convinced with his philosophy of top down politics about the influence of the elites and the need to be a faithful presence among the elites to bring political change. What I will say is that I don't know where to find this in his canon, but in personal conversation with Professor Hunter, he really did more than anybody else to change my emphasis on politics away from campaigns and individual politicians and more toward the atmospheric conditions of our society. And that has been a godsend to me through the last six years to not see these things as mere manifestations of a candidate or a moment, but something that's much bigger to our culture.

We've been talking to three of us about David Brooks's recent essay in The Atlantic about our cultural moment and politics. And that would be a good practice example of what I've learned from Hunter and tried to implement. Last book then, nobody will be surprised to hear me recommend The Righteous Mind by Jonathan Hite.

Kind of you're a pastor dealing with these issues politically within your church, even though Hite is not a Christian, not a believer in God and not a conservative, he will give you a lot of ammunition to understand the way people think tribally and the way they think sort of instinctively and intuitively. And that will help you to navigate very difficult situations. So yeah, those are my three books, a couple essays and a trilogy of books.

- Yeah, you mentioned several things that you assigned for your Sunday school class and other books you had edited to get to as a preface to your books. So that was very, very sneaky. We hear many comments that people want to hear more from Justin Taylor on this podcast.

And Justin, any last word of wisdom you have for us? - No other than thank you, Mom, for writing in to complain together and everything. - And that's why people want to hear from Justin. - The dry jokes that we all know so well are merely everybody's being introduced to them now.

- Yes, the tweets or the emails or the texts and you go, wait, was that a joke? I'm not sure. And then was that joke on me? So thank you. - If you have one, they usually are.

(laughs) - Indeed. All right, thank you, men, for joining the discussion again. And thank you to all of our listeners.

Check us out and hear various streaming apps or podcasts and subscribe and like us. And if you don't like us, just pray for us then. All right, we hope to see you again next time.

Until then, glorify God and join forever and read a good book.

(gentle music)

(buzzing) [Silence]