

# OpenTheo

## John Piper Talks Books

January 6, 2021



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

John Piper sits down with Kevin DeYoung to discuss human purpose, pastoral leadership, the advantages of reading slowly. And of course they discuss books, too. So many books. Reading them; writing them; loving them; but most of all desiring God through them. (See the full list below.) And in this conversation you will get a picture of what will perhaps be John Piper's magnum opus.

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Books and More Books:

New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional, by Paul David Tripp (get 30% off)

Thinking God's Thoughts: The Hermeneutics of Humility, by Daniel P. Fuller

The Unity of the Bible: Unfolding God's Plan for Humanity, by Daniel P. Fuller

Freedom of the Will, by Jonathan Edwards

The End for Which God Created the World, by Jonathan Edwards

The Religious Affections, by Jonathan Edwards

## **Transcript**

(Music) Greetings and salutations. Welcome back to season three of Life and Books and Everything. So glad that you've joined us here.

We have a special guest which I'll get to in just a moment. Colin and Justin are not here. The Lord willing, they will be rejoining me for an upcoming podcast.

Very soon Colin is perhaps just reveling in the victory of both of his football teams. Alabama and Northwestern and Justin is wanting to give Scott Frost a bro hug, he said, to encourage him on tour next year. But good to be with you here and good to be starting this season.

The plan is to record this season every other week and maybe there'll be some sooner than that, some less frequent than that. But that's the plan and we'll move throughout the spring with 10, 11, 12 episodes. So glad that you can be with us and hopefully this will be an edifying conversation.

I'm sure it will be today. I do want to thank our sponsor again for this season. Crossway, great to have them sponsoring the podcast and fitting that we would recommend at the

beginning of this new year one of their really outstanding and I am sure best selling books by Paul David trip, New Morning Mercies, a daily devotional, a daily gospel devotional.

So I'm sure that many people at the beginning of this year are thinking about some habits, resolutions, maybe wanting to start a daily reading plan or a good book to supplement with the Bible for a devotional. And as a pastor, whenever people ask, what can I read? I want something that's not so long. I'm going to be lost, but I want something meaty.

I don't just want a paragraph of a story about somebody's dog. I want something good and rich. There's always two things that I recommend.

DA Carson's volumes on For the Love of God. And then I recommend Paul trips, New Morning Mercies. So check that out.

And as always, if you can get a discount on the book and other books and Bibles at Crossway, if you go up and sign up for a free crossway account at [crossway.org/lbe](https://www.crossway.org/lbe) for life and books and everything. So thank you to Crossway. I'm very excited that we have a good friend and good pastor, preacher, author, someone who will need very little introduction to you.

But I'm honored to have him on the program. And that is John Piper. John, thank you for taking time in your schedule, even if someone else had to cancel to get time with you.

We're glad to have you here. John, thanks for being with us with me. I just, me, thank you.

Yeah, glad to be with you, Kevin. Tell me, John, what did you do? What does John Piper do over Christmas and New Year's in the midst of coronavirus? It was quiet and the setup for Christmas that we usually devote an entire Saturday to transform the whole house outside and in was modest because we knew nobody was coming to visit us to enjoy our efforts. And so we fixed the living room where our two chairs face so that it looked like Christmas and the rest of the house didn't except for outside.

I turn our house into the storehouse, put a store in every window and hang Jesus as the reason for the season on the door. And so it's the first house people see you when they drive into Phillips neighborhood, which is kind of a depressed neighborhood. And I'm doing everything I can to undipress it.

And one, one little way is to put light and stars at Christmas time in a house because most houses in our neighborhood don't look any different in the dead or winter. And they do any other time. So that was the decoration part.

And on Christmas Day, one of our five kids joined us with us, and we enjoyed that. But

hearing what happened to others, like our poor friend Justin makes me kind of glad we didn't have 25 people over. Yeah.

So we're going to get to, John has a new book, perhaps his magnum opus. We're going to ask him about that. And we're going to talk about other books before we get there.

But just a few things. And I don't think John needs an introduction. But John, tell us a little bit about the last few years.

Just tell when did you retire? And what have you been doing since you're no longer the lead pastor at Bethlehem? Right, we don't like that word retired. I know it's nothing. No seashells are implied.

Right. In fact, I am unusually fortunate. And I take that really with a tremendous sense of mercies from God, unusually fortunate that the last day I was paid by Bethlehem Baptist Church, I think it was March 31st, 2013, the next day I was on full salary at Desiring God.

Not many pastors have that enormous privilege to move out of one ministry and into another, which can last as long as I think straight and have motivation. So that's the timeframe. What was that piece? Seven and a half years or so that I have not been the lead pastor at Bethlehem, but I have worked full time at Desiring God as a teacher and writer and participate in the lead team there.

So my job there is making S Pastor John, making look at the book, writing books like the one we're going to talk about, participating in the decisions at the leadership level and so on. It's a full time job. And yet I feel as a 74, almost 75 year old that it's not nearly as pressured as the pastor didn't therefore suitable for a man with less energy than he once had.

And do you seem like you're just amazingly productive and you're still running on the treadmill? I imagine do you feel like you don't have as much energy? When I'm awake, I feel like I have plenty of energy. But I got a birthday card. No, I'm giving a birthday card.

Here it is beside me. I have a good friend who's my age and I'm giving him the birthday card. Here's the picture is of two old people dead asleep on a bench.

They look like the 1920s and inside it says 8 PM already. That's true. I go to I head for bed at 930 and I get up at six and I feel great right now I could run a mile.

But I will I will talk out tonight. So I mean in my pastoral days, I would work on Advent poems till two in the morning and preach three times the next morning year after year. So that's absolutely impossible now.

So count your count your blessings while you're in your 40s. Yeah, yeah, well, I don't yeah, I would be out if I stayed up till two. I don't do that.

But I'm thankful for what I what I have. This isn't anywhere. We're going to get to the questions that we talked about.

But I'm just curious. What advice do you give? I think there's probably a lot of pastors or ministry leaders that listen to this John and you're right to want to say I'm not sure about the word retire. But what what counsel do you give for pastors? Because as you said, not many people have the opportunity that you have or people may not even have the same interest to think, well, I'm I'll put aside full time pastoral ministry at 70 or 60 something.

And then I'm just going to write and and yet it doesn't seem to me that the attitude that says I'll just die in the pulpit one day is always the best for the health of a church. What counsel do you give to men approaching what we would think of as quote unquote retirement age when they're not sure what to do after pastoral ministry, but they feel like I probably need to let a younger man, you know, have the reins here. Right.

There are several questions in what you just said. The one is discerning when and why one should step back, even though one can keep preaching and the other is what in the world am I going to do and how important is it that I do something. And with regard to the first one, perhaps I could just be autobiographical.

I had all the passion and energy in the world to keep preaching at age 67, which is when I step back. And I had colleagues who were saying, John, just preach, just preach. That's all we want you to do.

You don't need to step back. And I said to them and they knew this, they're just being nice. I said, it doesn't work that way.

A pastor cannot lead a flock by just preaching and disappear for five or six days and then step into the pulpit and trumpet the vision that the elders have guessed in his absence. It just won't work that way. He has to be in the thick of things.

So my rationale for believing my time was over was that the church had either outgrown my abilities or outgrown my motivations. I'm not sure which because of its complexity. We had 125 employees, 40 elders, three campuses.

And it was extremely complicated to figure things out. I was finding in staff meetings and in elder meetings, you're not as creative as you once were. You don't come up with good solutions like you did.

So that was a signpost for me. New leadership will take this church where it needs to go. So something like that, I mean, there are all kinds of reasons why God might say to a man, time for a new ministry, not a non-minister, which leads us to the second question.

Then what do you do when you're done? And I would say, even if you don't have a ministry to step into that's paid, live on whatever you provided for yourself and create a

ministry. I mean, every human being is created by God to minister until they breathe their last, even if it's just praying in the hospital bed while you're waiting for your heart to stop. So just don't think in terms of play.

Don't think in terms of not having anything to do in the morning. Oh, wouldn't that be wonderful? Absolutely not. It will not be wonderful.

I mean, Kevin, I have felt this even the last 24 hours because I've been on vacation for three weeks over these holidays. And as the alarm went off at six this morning instead of sleeping in, I was so thankful because sitting in the chair on vacation, I just thought, what if my next 10 years were like this? That would be horrible. I mean, just horrible.

We're just not made people, human beings are not made to be on vacation until they die. Then we get vacation. And actually, I think they'll be productive work to do in the kingdom, but vacation will be mingled appropriately.

That was a great answer. Well, we're going to talk about books and we're going to get to your new book on Providence. But I want to ask you some general questions about books.

And I know whenever you talk about favorite this best that it's really hard to do. So it's fine. Some of your favorites or bests for most influential.

Let's start here. What have been two or three especially formative books for John Piper as a Christian? Well, let me preface this whole section of our interview with my complaint. I thought that I was trying to forestall that.

But I mean, you and Mark never just make me very nervous because whenever I get in front of you guys for an interview, you ask me about books and you know that I don't read fast and therefore I don't read a lot of books. And my memory is just terrible. It's always been terrible.

And no, it's worse than ever. Therefore, it comes never or the young and saying, well, I don't know the last three books you read on such. I can't think of a single one embarrassing.

Okay, that's my preface too. But I have some notes because you sent me these questions. That's why because I knew that complaint would be there.

Yeah. Okay, so even now my memory is lousy and I'm going to hang up from this phone call in an hour and I'm going to kick myself because I said something was the most important book. I said, what? I didn't even mention that.

Okay. Formative books. My whole life was experienced a Copernican revolution when I was 22 years old in the in the hermeneutics class and the unity of the Bible class and in

seven seminars with Daniel Fuller who taught me how to read the Bible by arcing that is taking every proposition seriously and how it relates to every other proposition around it until you see the author's argument in the compelling and true way.

And so his hermeneutic syllabus and his unity of the Bible book, both of which are imprinted by the way now the the hermeneutics syllabus is called thinking God's thoughts at Amazon and you can actually get it and unity of the Bible may be out of print but I think it's still imprinted. So that's foundational and Edward Jonathan Edwards and Dan Fuller merge in their influence. So if I had to pick out profoundly transforming books apart from Dan Fuller's influence with his syllabi, it would be Edwards freedom of the will, Edwards and for which God created the world and Edwards religious affections.

I mean those those three books are after the Bible, the most important books informing John Piper's life. Now you only keep going or stop? Yeah, yeah, don't go. You got more books.

I want to hear them. You said two or three. So yeah, I've got more.

So I'll try to tick them off really quick because I think they're interesting as far as understanding where Piper come from. How do you get to be? How do you get to be the way he is? Edie Hirsch, validity and interpretation, absolutely decisive in persuading me that the way to understand meaning is by authorial intention, whether divine or human in the Bible, whether the Constitution, you're an originalist or not, whether the contract you formed in selling your house really matters what the author intended or not. That book validity and interpretation persuaded me if you give up author intention as the quest of interpretation, you give up authority in the Bible.

Huge, huge. I read that I think in 1971. I think I read that book 15 or so years ago because you mentioned it.

And it's a technical book, but it's mostly readable and it's not very long. So I would encourage people to like it. I'm a cognitive college freshman and I prepared 52 study questions to go with it.

And they were just blown away about how difficult they found it. And yet I said, this is, you got to settle this. What are you one of these kinds of people who say, oh, you can just make a poem meaning anything you want to mean.

You can make an essay meaning anything you want to mean. Meaning is what you fuck in the eye of the beholder, blah, blah, blah. And I said, nobody lives that way.

You don't teach your bank statement that way. You don't treat contracts that way. You shouldn't treat the Constitution that way.

And by all means you shouldn't treat the Bible that way because you throw God out the

window if you do, just put yourself in his place. So Edie Hearst, C.S. Lewis, take your pick, taught me to this day to hate chronological snobbery, the tyranny of novelty. I mean, for a 20 year old to be taught that new is not better is gold.

So good. It's gold. So romantic rationalist, the mingling of logic and poetry.

Lewis, incomparable. I mean, because that's what I wanted to be. I wanted to be razor sharpened my thinking.

And I wanted to write poems from my wife. I wanted to cry when all the cry and laugh when all the laugh and sore when all the sore and sink when all the sink. And Lewis was just there when I, when I needed him, I still listen to Lewis today.

This morning, I was listening to letters to Malcolm chiefly on prayer on my, on my telephone. And the last thing about it, Lewis is that there's a, there's an anthology called A Mind Awake. And that's the best way to say it.

He wakens my mind. I go back to Lewis because he wakes me up to look at Kevin there and see, okay, doesn't have glasses on. He has two ears on the side as he had a nose on the front, a very odd protuberance for a being.

He has books behind him. He, Lewis sees, sees the world. And he sees it was such concrete, touchable reality that he just wakens you up to, to the sleep walk that you're usually in.

And I'll just mention two more. J.I. Packer introduction to, to the death of death for a young Calvinist to read that was like putting steel in your spine. I mean, it was just a massively important little, little book to this day, I would recommend to people just go find you can find it online for, for free.

And John Oh and death of desk got me over that hump. And his communion with God and glory is with Christ. Oh my goodness.

You know, you ask an another place, what books do you return to? I don't return to many books. That's a little time. But yeah, if I want to get ready to die, I'm going to go to the glories of Christ and communion with God with, with John Owen.

Absolutely. Well, I'd love to follow up on so many of those books. Let me, let me take this and piggyback on something you said earlier.

And you said in many different places that you read slowly. And I think people might assume, come on, this is John Piper. He reads slowly.

He probably only reads 100 books a year or something. But I think you really mean you read slowly. I had one of my classes at Gordon Conwell.



I had Richard Lovelace. He taught a class on Edwards. And you would have hated it because not what he said.

And it was Edwards. But he assigned the whole to volume banner squint print editions. And he just said, I know you're you're going to have to skim most of this, but just do the best you can and plow through it and skim all of it.

So you get some sense for everything that Edwards is doing. And I don't know, would you have dropped the class? How has the flow reader? Because I think you can see, oh man, that's a negative. But my, my contention is, it's probably also made you the most careful reader of texts of anyone I know.

So how is being a slow reader shaped you as a thinker, writer, preacher, pastor? Well, first of all, comment on teachers who assign bazillion pages. I think the training students in bad habits. I mean, students do not need to be given the skill to skim.

They need to be given the skill to dig. We're born with the skill to skim. And that is, rake leaves.

Nobody born with the ability to dig minds and find gold. They got to be taught how to pause over a sentence, see the logical connection with the next sentence, ask about an apparent contradiction and not give up until they found 10 pages later, the key that goes back and unlocks the paradox. That takes time and effort.

Nobody's born with that. I just hate it when teachers train students in superficiality. Okay.

So there I am justifying my existence. And I understand that. And therefore, Andy Nacelle will correct me.

And because he's got all kinds of wonderful four levels of reading and he takes them all seriously. And his kind of biography for somewhere. And his wife, by the way, bless her heart, one of my favorite human beings, said to me over dinner with a bunch of couples, John, I really think you are dyslexic.

And I said, well, I don't, I don't, I don't, most of the time transpose telephone numbers, but I do sometimes she's no, no, no, that's, that's not it. There are all kinds of things that go into that. And, and I suspect she's right.

My layman's interpretation and my slowness is simply this. The way my brain works, and I've tried everything under the sun to make it stop working this way, is that I don't comprehend what I don't are audibly saying my throat. So I cannot read faster than I can talk.

So what's that? 250 words a minute. That's incredibly slow. I mean, you can't get

anywhere.

And the effect that's had on my life is, is your right, negative and positive. I mean, God makes no mistakes, right? This is just the way I was born. And I know that because of how hard I've tried to break it by taking all kinds of reading courses and whatnot.

And God doesn't make a mistake. And therefore God's good. And therefore, it's been good for me mainly, although I feel it as as negative a lot.

It, it is one of the main reasons I left academia. I went as far as I could go in academia got my degree by the skin of my teeth, I think. And always felt like I was pulling the wool over people's eyes.

There's a name for that. I can't remember when you think you're gonna be found out. Okay, never mind.

There's something. Yeah. Yeah.

People who listen to this don't know exactly what I'm talking about. And I went six years teaching and I required one book to be read every course like probably appreciated it. But then when you had 50 questions for them, they appreciated it.

They had to read it. They had to take a test on it. And they didn't like it.

So it knocked me, I felt like I left academia because I felt like I will never be a significant scholar, meaning a scholar has to be well read in his discipline and stay up to speed reading latest things and interacting with them, which I just was laughable when I thought about it. So I thought, okay, where can I work where you don't have to do that? Answer. In the past, you only have to read one paragraph a week.

Yeah, that's right. If you're Lloyd Jones, maybe just one word. Of course, if you read the book, "Preaching in Preachers" by Lloyd Jones, his description of the intellectual of work of the preacher is utterly unrealistic.

You should read lots of biography, lots of history, and lots of exegesis and lots of that. You get done reading that chapter and you say, well, that's not encouraging. No, yeah.

Vocationally, it has been decisive. I mean, that's the only partially a joke that pastors do not need to be expert in a hundred things if they feed their flock faithfully and people grow and get saved and are released and empowered in their vocations to do what God wants them to do. They're going to keep coming back there.

Here you and they don't usually ask you how many books did you read this week, Pastor? They just want to know, tell us something God said that'll make a difference in our lives. So that's been huge. There's something deeper.

Kevin, you want me to keep talking about this? Yeah. The impact of a slow reader? Because really, you jump in and stop me. But I think this is really significant.

I think reading slow has been a safeguard against becoming a dilettante. What do you mean by that? Well, here I'll give you an example to show what I mean. Just recently, I was rereading an excerpt from my journal when I was in Germany.

And I was on a trip with other PhD candidates. These were English speaking guys and we were in a huddle one night at a at a gothouse and and and they were talking about the books they had read about a particular issue. And I was sitting there feeling absolutely, totally intimidated.

I hadn't read any of those books. And they were all quoting this author and that author and back and forth, the banter was going and opinions flying right and left. And I was sitting there thinking, okay, maybe I should just go back to my room.

And then I said, but you know, what you guys seem to be arguing for doesn't really fit with and a quoted a Bible verse. Silence. Hmm.

I said, I said, what do you guys do with that text? Because if I read it right, it means this and and so that what you just said wouldn't fit what you just said wouldn't fit. That was like an epiphany, Kevin. It was like an epiphany.

Here is hopelessly, poorly read John Piper, stopping the mouths of brilliant guys who read 10 books on this topic. Stopping me with my Bible verse. Right.

I mean, I mean, I sat there thinking, okay, I don't ever have to be intimidated again. And that's the way I feel. I feel that way with you.

Like you read like crazy. I looked at the books you'd you and these guys at TGC play up what you're going to read this summer. They're kidding me.

But when we get together, I don't feel like I guess I better keep my mouth shut with Kevin because I don't know anything. And he knows everything and which is true in one sense. And yet in my sense of what the world needs and what the church needs, I've generally got something to say.

You do. And I think most people would would find it hard to think that you would be intimidated of me or Devere or anyone else. And I wanted to talk about that because we do this is life and books and everything.

And right or wrong, I think Justin and Colin, are guys that read a lot of books. And are, but we read them in different ways. And when people ask me, how do you read all those books or as a pastor, do I need to? I mean, the first thing I always want to say to people is, look, there are a few things I do well.

And I love to read and I read a lot of things. And but one of the last things I want is for a pastor to feel like they need to have a, I mean, I look at there's other people. I look at John Wilson or Andrew Wilson and UK and some of these people that have just lists of hundreds of books that they read in a year.

And I'm not sure how that happens. So I don't think everyone has to read in the same way that you do. And I don't think you're saying that because you read slowly.

But I would sure rather have a pastor who is going to be mastered by not just one book though, obviously that's most important, but by a few very good things then to feel like in order to keep up in our hearts. Yeah, there is that huge desire to be able to, did you read? I mean, you and I have been in conversations with Al Moller and I'm not saying Al's doing this, but I'm saying, I remember one time in one of our meetings, I said something, Al, have you read? And I think Mark or somebody or CJ afterwards said, Kevin, don't ever start it. And with to have you read.

Of course he's read it. Don't even go there. Just ask for a page quotation.

Yeah, because he's probably looking at it at that moment. So I think it's good for people to hear and for busy pastors and church leaders to hear John Piper is a slow reader, doesn't try to read everything or most things. But what he does, he reads very deeply.

And that's what I tell people when they say, well, what are these guys like that you know? And they think, I bet Piper knows everything. And I say, with all kindness and charity, no, he doesn't. But what he knows, he knows better and deeper than anybody else.

That's not true either. I commend you for the depth and the care with which you read what you read. And that's to be commended.

Yeah, we turn, we turn vices into virtues, we turn weaknesses into blessings, which is exactly what God wants us to do. Right? I mean, when he writes 1 Corinthians 12 to 14, the weaker members have an absolutely essential place and all kinds of weaknesses figure in to making the church strong. Before we leave this, let me just mention one other thing that it has hindered.

Because I'm, you're right, I am not encouraging people to be narrow in their reading. We do need to have cultural perspective, historical perspective. We can't slip into a cocoon between us and our Bible, me and the Holy Spirit and my Greek text.

And I don't, you know, to hell with all the historical guys, that's an absolutely horrible attitude which will not produce good fruit. We need to listen. And one of the negative effects is that it has very limited my capacity to be a cultural commentator.

Here's what I mean. And just one example, I have never publicly said anything critical

that I can think of. This may be wrong, but in my memory about Joel Osteen.

Now from people I trust, I suspect that Joel Osteen's ministry is defective in not preaching sin the way he should or other things. The reason I have never gone after him is because I've never read one single paragraph that Joel Osteen has written, not one. And I don't intend to unless somebody comes after me and says, "You gotta read this article because it's wrong." And that's how I usually become a cultural commentator.

I read an article. I respond to it. So that's a real weakness.

I wish I could read more widely about the craziness that lots of people are saying is out there and I could read it and then more intelligently respond, but I can't. Yeah. Well, that's a good insight.

And I would say, I think we have no shortage of cultural commentators today. And we may very well have a shortage of people who want to go as deep as they can into God's Word or to Edwards or Turretin or whomever Owen. And I think it, you know what, I was going to insert when you said, I don't comment on Joel Osteen because I haven't read a paragraph.

I was gonna say, "Well, that doesn't stop a lot of people from doing settlers how to read a book." And boy, did he disabuse me of that process of criticizing before you've understood it. I mean, that's the one point that stood out of that book to me is, you better be able to reproduce an author's meaning so that he approves the way you describe it before you act critically or say critically anything about him. Man, yeah, you're right.

That should not, I mean, Christians ought not to act. So a few more books before we get to the book that you have coming out. So whatever you have on your notes here, I would love to know a key book or two.

And when you entered Pass from Ministry, I'll tell you, when I was starting out, one of the first books I read, my first year of Pass from Ministry was Brothers We Are Not Professionals. There were many others, but I remember literally being on my knees at my bedside, praying over things I was reading in that book. And it just was the right book for me at the right time starting out Pass from Ministry.

Thank you. I wonder, do you have books like that when you were starting out in Pass from Ministry? You know, when you mentioned being on your knees, an essay came to my mind that I read in the early days and it isn't on my list. It's Warfield, the emotional life of our Lord, the emotional life of theological students or the spiritual life, something like that.

Yeah, right. And he answers the question, what are you doing, you know, telling students to read 10 books and stay on them instead of telling them to be an hour on their knees.

And he said, what? Instead of being on your knees for 10 hours over your books.

And well, I mean, it sentences that change my life. Sentences change my life. And that was one of the, oh my goodness, what a false alternative, right? Between let's read for 10 hours and let's pray for an hour, which should it be? Well, no, get on your knees and read for 10 hours, prayerfully.

That's right. So anyway, your question, books, the beginning of the ministry, that was, I don't even remember where that was. I think there's a David Wells, Calex, a message.

Yeah, he, I think he did a little, a little forward to the pamphlet on that. We had to read it at Gordon Conwell. And I remember that very line.

What is 10 hours in your books, if not on your knees? Yeah, that's what it should be. Charles Bridges, the Christian ministry, really deep marked up for it my first year in the past, because I was, I didn't know anything, you know, I had never buried anybody. I'd never visited anybody in the hospital.

I think I'd done one wedding. I'd never baptized anybody. I'd never dedicated a baby.

I skipped all the practical courses in seminary. I was as green as you could be as a pastor at age 34. So I, I read Charles Bridges.

I read Edwards, the Excellency of a gospel minister. Oh my, John the Baptist, he was a burning and shining light. And Edwards goes for, well, 30 pages on burning and shining, burning and shining.

And when I'm done, I'm saying, that's all I want to be. Burning and shining, burning and shining, zeal and truth, zeal and truth. Oh my, Edward's is just, he gets it right just about every time, except on eschatology.

And a couple other things, but mostly, mostly, that's true. That's true. We could talk about baptism, but we won't.

But I was thinking of some other things. But yeah, right, you were Spurgeon lectures to my students, but specifically the minister's fainting fits. Yes.

And the blind eye and the deaf ear. I mean, the book is worth buying just for those two. And the, the second one, I insisted that my wife read the blind eye and the deaf ear, because it's all about being criticized as a pastor.

You should have one blind eye. Who is that famous, uh, uh, sea captain who put the telescope to his blind eye and said, I don't see any. Yeah, right, right.

I don't. But anyway, that's the idea. You did.

If you know they're criticizing, you put your deaf ear out to that side and put your blind eye to that side and, and we've walked into the pulpit with courage and humility. So those two essays in that for this young pastor was so, so good. So was Lloyd Jones preaching and preachers.

Um, here's one I bet most of you wouldn't know about, even I don't know if they're in print, but Warren Wiersby back in the 80s produced three volumes of little biographies called, uh, walking with giants. Yes. And I read them.

Yes. And then listening to the giant and then giant steps. I mean, they were so popular.

Yeah. He had to keep producing them. I would, I would go to bed at night and I'd read one of those, you know, they were only what? Four, five pages long as a biography and I'd get all fired up.

Yes. That's the kind of pastor I want to be. So biography was just huge in those days, but you'll notice what's missing from that list, Kevin.

Know how to books. Yeah, right. Well, what about leadership? What about management? What about getting the right program for discipleship, but visitation, evangelism and, and how to on preaching and frankly, Kevin, I should have.

Yeah, I should have read those. Maybe I would have less longer in the ministry. It's if I had, but they just killed me.

They just killed me. I couldn't do it. I could not read most how to books for the pastor because they were deadening to my spirit.

So, and, and staying alive was my number one job. And there's, and some of those books are good. And many of them are not worth reading, but I think we all are glad that have some other people read some of those how to books and if pastors limited time dive in, what I also was going to point out with almost every book you've mentioned, I mean, a lot of the, okay, they're, they're dead guys, but a lot of them are really dead guys.

And it's mostly dead. Yeah, right. I'm mostly dead.

And there is something to be gained, I think in particular, you know, I know as a pastor what I'm facing right now. And so there's an instinct to want to read people speak to what I know I'm facing. But what I want more often is I want people who, who know what I'm really, the things that are the same and have been the same in pastoral ministry for ever.

Those are the ones that are going to be more helpful. You need some of the other ones. How can you help me navigate coronavirus? All of those things, but I want to think Tony would be a good example of writing about modern technology, which, which I don't read

anything about it except Tony, because he's a friend.

And I'm glad Tony's doing what he's doing. Absolutely. We need, well, if I was raising kids right now, I would be looking for somebody to help me know how to manage screen time.

I would want to know how, what do you do? When do you give a kid a phone and what kind of limits can you put on him and how in the world can you rescue your 13 year old son from what he can find on the internet? Remember what I always like when I was 13 and didn't have any pornography available to me at all. I had to make it all up. So oh my goodness, I am not opposed to people given their best biblical effort to understand contemporary challenges.

Right. John, do you have a go-to systematic theology? Who do you, when you think I need to know what I ought to, how to think clearly about justification or anthropology? Who do you go to? No, I don't have a go-to or a favorite. Although that's not quite true.

I don't have a favorite, but I probably have go-tos. I, for example, I recently wrote a book on Saving Faith and I went to Bavink because somebody said you got to read Bavink on Saving Faith. So I read that section.

I recommend Groodam all the time because he's so accessible and so textually oriented. My reason for not dipping into most systematic theologies to find answers is because I have to work too hard to find them because I am so textually oriented. I really want explanations for texts and I don't want to read 10 pages to find out what this man thinks about Romans 3.28 on justification.

I need something more focused and systematic theology doesn't generally do that for me. So that again is a weakness. It's a weakness.

It's not a strength. I'm not recommending it. It's when you have, and I tell my guys, look, you're going to be in the ministry.

You got to preach on Sunday. It's got five verses in this text. You can't read 50 pages about this generally.

You got to find people that help you see what's really there in this text. Do you have a favorite biography? It's hard to say a favorite. What are some that have been particularly edifying to you? Right.

It is hard to put one at the top. So let me mention several. And I enjoyed thinking about this really did because you know for 27 years we did the Bethlehem Conference for Pastors or the Desiring Conference for Pastors and I did a biography every year.

Yeah. People should get that book crossways a collection of them and they're really



that's a reflection of two things. Number one, I love reading them.

So I'm just maxing them. I'm just killing two birds with one stone. And the other is that Ian Murray, bless his heart, we just exchanged email the other day.

He's still working hard. And he so ministered to my soul in the early 80s with his audio biographies at the Banner of Truth conferences. I just, when I'd listen to him talk about Spurgeon or the Puritans, I'd say, I want to do that someday because I get such help from listening to his telling the story of somebody's life.

So anyway, all that to say, I love biography. I try to keep reading biography of regularity. There's one sitting, one, there's a biography of John Wesley, a rational enthusiast on my table downstairs.

And I'm slowly working my way through it. So here, here are my top biographies. Peter Brown on Augustine or Augustine.

David Danielle on William Tyndale, that might be at the top. My high, you have raved about that book and just make you feel good. I haven't read it, but I've heard you speak about it often.

It doesn't make me feel good about you. No, I'm sure. Why haven't you read that book? And then no, no, it is, oh, I could stop.

We could pause here and I could talk why, but let's keep going. George Marsden on Edward's and Ian Murray on Edward's two very different kinds of biographies. And I love both those guys and both those biographies.

Courtney Anderson, what's called, "Do a Golden Shore" about Ed and Aaron Judson, THL Parker on Kevin. Calvin, if you got to, I'm sure it's not the very best on Calvin, but it's so accessible. I love that little one and the big one.

Roland Beighton, here I stand, Luther, and all those little ones about Weirsby. So those are some of my favorites. That's great.

And you mentioned a few moments ago, and we will get to Providence, I promise, and be mindful of your time. But this is so much fun for me to get to ask about books with John Piper. You talked about books.

You don't go back to books very often, but are there some books that you know? The Lord will speak to me through this book, and so you go back to it and read it. So I don't have too many of those either, but preaching and preachers is one. Calvin's Institute is one.

The Heidelberg Catechism is one. There are a few things that I know, maybe precious remedies against Satan's devices. What are some that you go to and you know you're

going to be edified again? The Bible.

You didn't say leave out the Bible, so I'm going to say the Bible. And it's, I mean, oh my, to spend an hour with God talking to me. Come on, who would not want to listen to God talk an hour a day? They've got to be insane, not to want to listen to God talk an hour a day anyway.

So that's number one. Owen's Glories of Christ and Communion with God, Lewis anywhere just to dip in and get the sense of life. Like I said, I'm listening right now to letters to Malcolm, Chief, on prayer.

But here's here's what I should say, because it this is the closest to what you asked, namely, that you return to for something for your soul. I have 90 volumes of poetry outside my study of the door here on the left. Regularly, I will walk by that shelf, reach almost randomly, pull down one of those volumes, open it and read a poem.

And who are these poems by? This is just an anthology of great poems? No, no, these are 90 different books by different authors. Okay, just the poetry section of your library. Exactly.

It's like walking up to Barnes and Noble, poet. And most of them are not Christians. So they're not going to, they're not going to edify in that sense, but they waken, they waken to reality.

And you ask questions and you see things that you didn't see before. So for example, the anthology, now this is an anthology called Sacrifice of Praise. It's an anthology of Christian poetry from Kaedman, that is from the Middle Ages until the middle of the 20th century.

That book has probably sat on my bedside table more often and longer than any other book in the last 50 years. Well, it's not 50 years old. I forget when it was published.

So when I think, when I'm not on a regular reading regimen, just trying to push through some book because it needs to be read, but rather just dipping in to soul awakening literature, more often than not, it's poetry. George Herbert would be my top lover of my top loved poet. You know, it's, it's maybe, I hope it's encouraging to people how different God makes people.

So I, I'm not opposed to poetry. I think I can, I benefit from poetry. I do not have 90 volumes of poetry in these books behind me.

I don't know if I have nine volumes, but I don't say that again. That's, that's probably a weakness. I could pull off, you talk about systematic theology, I could pull off Turritin, which is so dense, but I, it's so precise and careful and there's distinctions upon distinctions.

I always feel like I learned something and it, it warms my heart. I don't think that's how John Piper is wired and I'm just saying. No, no, no, no, no, you're not understanding romantic rationalist and C.S. Lewis.

I am totally wired that way. I love precision. I love that.

I love logic. It does warm my heart. I do.

Somebody said that Edward's book, *The Nature of True Virtue*, was as close as you could get to the beauty of the intellect. I knew exactly what they were talking about. I read that book, which is one of the hardest, most complex, abstruse books of Edward sitting on a swing in the backyard of my wife's parents' house in 1971, staring at the woods in Georgia and wrote a poem about it.

So I totally get it. Amen for Turritin and Amen for Kevin. Well, and amen for good poems and what can explode in the good way the, the, the, the, that logic, and this is your ministry, you've taught on this, that, that logic and affections work together.

They're not opposed. So amen to good poetry and good systematic theology. Tell me, and then we'll get to Providence, tell me, thinking about your books that you've written.

I know it's like maybe talking about your kids, but I could tell you some books I've written, I've written as many as you have, were more enjoyable than others. Some are sort of nearer to my heart than others. Do you have a book that was hardest to write? And do you have a book that you're, you're happiest about is, is first among equals in your mind of your favorite John Piper books? So those two questions, hardest and favorite.

It's probably not accurate because the last one always feels like the hardest. Okay, because the others are fading into a romantic memory. So I would say Providence, the one we're going to talk about was the hardest.

And it was the hardest because it was the biggest and the most comprehensive. And that's what makes a book hard for me. Gathering and collating and bringing to some coherent order.

Thousands of pieces of information is a daunting task. So Providence was very difficult and took longer than any other book that I've written to write. Another one like that, and this book also might be among the most gratifying or sad, is what Jesus demands from the world.

I thought you were going to say that. Because I was in Cambridge on a sabbatical back in 2006, I think it was, and I had a good three, four months to do nothing but that book. And I collected every imperative or implied imperative in the four gospels, and there were about 500 of them.

And I stared at them for weeks saying, what are going to do with that? I want to write it. The goal of that book was to write a book on Matthew 28, 20, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And I've said, now where's the book that does that? That helps people do that.

All that he commanded. All that he commanded. Not all that he taught.

That's another book I'd like to write. The teachings of Jesus, but I probably won't get around to that. We'll see.

But I can gather everything he commanded. So I gathered them. 500 implied commands in the gospels.

And I stared at them and stared at them and finally got about 52 little chapters. And that book was very hard to write and gratifying to write. And it's been disappointing because I don't think most people know what that, well, first they don't know it exists, and others look at it and they don't have any idea what I'm trying to do.

So that book did not do what I hoped it would do and who knows. Maybe the Lord would rescue it. Because I wrote it for missions.

I wrote it for missions. The great commission is to teach all the nations everything to do, to observe everything he commanded. And I don't know of another book besides that one which aims to do that.

You know, it would be worth, I mean, it would be worth at next cross conference. Lord willing, there's a next cross conference. You and I just came from the one several days ago.

That would be worth a panel or a breakout or something because it's a very good book. And I think you're right. Most people don't think of it as anything to do with a missions book, but it is and it would be really important to unpack that.

Thank you. I appreciate that. We'll see.

Desiring God is the book that probably is the most gratifying because it's the one that seems to have altered most paradigms. And that's very significant. You know, chipping in another idea alongside other ideas in people's minds is one thing.

Saying something that alters the way they look at everything is another thing. And of all the books that I've written, that's the one that people say such things about. It totally turned their world around when it came to how joy and the glory of God fit together.

I know you were listening to the cross messages. You may have noticed that at the end of my introduction, I was playing off of a line in a church autobiography, but I was talking about wouldn't it be great if people looked back at our lives and saw that time and again,

we were choosing the interests of the kingdom over our own best interests, something like that. And then I said, and I didn't, I said it a little tongue and cheek, but I meant it seriously.

I said, and this is just to your point of how that book shaped how I think of things and make sure I'm saying things correctly, I added an aside that said, John Piper would want me to add here that ultimately sacrificing for the kingdom is not opposed to our own best interest. I totally heard that and appreciated it. Amen.

And it's right. And I don't know if I read that book how I would have put those together. Talk about this big book, 700 pages, Providence.

Well, when does it come out? I think the technical release date is February 11. Okay, so I'm sure people can go to Crossways website or other websites. And we encourage, I think there is a, there's going to be a really good deal at WTS books with this that's going to be, I don't know if it's there yet, but when it releases later this month, it's going to be there.

You can go there, you can go there, okay. It's mid-provokes and they have absolutely astonishing. It's half of Amazon's price.

So, we, and they do really good work. So just tell me, because you talked about the difficulty. What was the process? How long you've been working on this? What is, did you just try to write about every passage in the Bible that has something to do with Providence? Give us the sense of how you put this book together and how long you've been working on it.

I've been working on it for about 74 years. Yeah, right. And along the way, you know, 22 years into that 74 year effort, I formed the habits of trying to read more carefully and think more coherently, which means that I began to form the habit of spotting tensions in the Bible and working hard to get to the common root that relieves the tensions insofar as that's possible.

They're not all relievable in this life, but most are, I think, because God wants us to understand him, not just worship, in definability. And then maybe 20 years ago, can't remember about that, I took a paperback version of an NASB and so I'm going to read this through this year with a blue highlighter and a yellow highlighter. The blue highlighter will underline everything where it looks like God is in control.

And the yellow highlighter will be text that are problematic for that viewpoint. And when I was done, as you can imagine, it was an extremely blue Bible with a sprinkling of yellow Bible. And then, I don't know, maybe seven or eight years ago, I gave that to the guys that desired God and I asked them, would you turn those texts into a Word document for me? I don't know how they did it, but they did a lot of work and they did.

So they hand me a single space Word document and all those texts now typed out and it's what 70 or 80 single space pages. And that's what I began with. Namely, what do I do now? And I went through those and I began to look for categories, all right? Control over nature, control over Satan, control over death, control over birth, control over disease, control over wind, control over birds, control over worms, whales, stars.

And when I was done, I had them tagged. Now, given the wonderful search capacities of a Word document, you can isolate those categories. Bang, just like that.

I mean, core Edwards, how did he do what he did? And even even a paper. No, he's using bills, the back of grocery slips. So anyway, we got no excuse for not being productive, that's for sure.

And so gradually, I distill these into categories. I try to figure out how the categories relate. And I realized at one point, the whole process of actual writing took about two years.

And I said, I can't just keep thinking. I must just start writing. That's why it works for me all the time, because when I start writing, then ideas for order come to me.

And so I began to write and lo and behold, a few days into that writing, my whole conception of the book changed. I was going to write a book on the nature and extent of God's providence. And I realized every time I try to write something, the question, why did you do that? Why did you do that? Why did you do that? The why question, I said, I can't leave the why question for another book.

And so the book is now about probably a third longer than it would have been, I think 16 of the 45 chapters relate to the why question, namely the goal of providence. So there are three goals, namely the nature, the extent, and the goal of providence. And God, over those two summers, I think it was 18 and 19, put it together.

I'm going to go back to something you said about the process here. And it's so true. And I find that you often have to, sometimes you just you can see the end from the beginning and you know where you're going.

And so often though you need to start writing and putting thoughts on paper and then your thoughts get clarified, I enjoy writing. It's not that it's not hard, it is often. But I know many of our friends, and again, it's just I was talking to Max Stiles.

I wish I could. I mean, he is amazing evangelist. He has amazing stories.

It's probably because he's so extroverted. He was talking about the books he's writing. And he just, oh, I hate writing.

And I heard Mark Dever say, I like having written. I get the sense you love not just having

written, but you love sitting down to write. Is that true? I've really tried to understand what drives me.

It is true. And the way I've I presently understand myself is this. I read Dorothy Sayers in college, the mind of the maker and bells went off.

I am a maker. John Piper is like a carpenter who likes square edges and he likes rooms well finished. He likes boards that are clean cut.

He likes nails that are flush with the two by four. He likes looking at a cabinet when it's done. Only I do it with words.

That's why I like poetry. Poetry is shorter. And it has form and I love form.

I love a form that works. I love a well articulated sentence, a well argued paragraph and a well constructed chapter. It is beautiful.

It's it's I don't want to be too fancy and say it's art, but it's craft. It's at least craft. It's like a man who makes chairs.

He weaves chairs and he loves to make good chairs. Well, I weave paragraphs and chapters and I love to. So yes, I do.

I was a lit major and I took writing courses and I did it not to become something but because of who I was. That's just the way I was wired. So I'm with you.

I don't want to romanticize it and say that those first stages of staring at 500 commands or in the case of Providence, 60 single space pages of hundreds of categories of control passages is easy. I mean, the mental work to distill from 500 down to 52 categories and then create words that explain those categories. That's very hard work, but oh, so gratifying to see it come together.

And I just one more thing. I am so thankful that most pastors do not write books because when I'm writing them, I look out my window and I think I should be on the street. There are lost people out there.

There are tent cities. It's 22 degrees outside. It'll be minus seven tonight.

People are living in tents five blocks from my house. What are you doing? Right in the book or talking to Kevin? That's the kind of thought that goes through my mind over and over again. And I have to preach to myself both grace in case I'm making a mistake and the diversity of the body in case I'm right that I should be doing what I'm doing.

So anyway, if a pastor's listening to this and they've never written a book, never planned to write a book, let them know I'm singing their praises. Here's an illustration of this. Tom Steller who worked with me for 40 years or 33 years and he just, he's now a missionary,

busses heart to Cameroon after 33 years with me and 40 years at Bethlehem.

Tom could easily have gotten a PhD's brilliant exege and he moved into one and he moved out and he decided for his family sake and for what he's doing in teaching in the Bethlehem Institute, he wouldn't do the academic route and his students said to him, he was so encouraging to him and me, he said, Tom, you are we are your dissertation. We are your dissertation. I mean, when pastors get to heaven, what they will be rewarded for and what people will sing praises about is not that they've written in the book.

Neither you or I are going to get any kudos for writing our books. We are going to get kudos, if any, for being faithful to the truth for preaching and teaching and loving people with the truth. Yeah, I mean, I know just what I think, I know just what you mean by all that.

I think of a friend in ministry, maybe you've been listening to this and it's easy for people to think, Oh, Kevin, how do you write so much books? You're so productive. I feel that same thing you do, John. So I'm encouraged by your thought there of trusting in God's grace and trusting that he gives different gifts to the body.

But I have a friend in ministry. He volunteered to be a ride-along chaplain for the police department. And it does that early into the morning, late at night, he rides around with these guys.

He sees lots of stuff. He helps them if they have to go to the knock on somebody's door and give bad news. He ministers to the officers in the car.

He tries to share the gospel. I think that's go go go go. That's amazing.

And, you know, part of me is like, I wish I was wired like that, not making excuses that I couldn't do that. But that sounds really amazing and not what I'm doing. And so it's very easy for us in any walk of life, moms, pastors, whatever, but to think, look at what that person's doing.

And you're absolutely right. The measure is faithfulness to the truth. So that guy riding around with the police officer, is he faithful to the truth? You're writing a book if you're raising your kids faithful to the truth.

So thank you for that. That's a good word. Let me just, I know I've taken a lot of your time, John.

A few more questions about this book because you are so careful with definitions that we can't get into many of them. But you distinguish between some key terms like providence and sovereignty. Let's just start there.

Is there a difference? Sometimes people use them interchangeably. Right. I was



generally using them interchangeably as I thought about this book for years because I thought I'm going to write a big red book on sovereignty someday.

Like the big blue book on complementarianism, I'm going to write a big red book on sovereignty and now I've written what on providence. And the word providence isn't even in the Bible. Neither is the word sovereignty.

Neither is the word discipleship or the word counseling or... Why? Why did I switch? Because I realized that sovereignty is God's right and power to do whatever he pleases. And our God is in the heaven. He does whatever he pleases.

Beautiful statement of sovereignty. Providence is God's purposeful sovereignty. He is going somewhere.

He's taking the universe and everything in it in a direction. And everything he does is not only powerful but wise it is fitting a plan that he formed before the foundation of the world and is going to be perfectly accomplished. So that's the difference.

Sovereignty is power and authority to do whatever he pleases. Providence says he does that purposefully. That's good.

Why is it... Let me ask a question. I'll give an illustration and let you answer the question. Why do you think so many people, maybe Christian leaders, maybe just Christians, can recoil at this idea of providence when it's so writ large across the Bible and it's so meant for our comfort.

And so here's my illustration. When I was in my last denomination in the three forms of unity where our doctrinal standards for the Heidelberg catechism, I would ask somewhat tricky, I admit, but it was a fair question. I would ask at the ordination exams, I would say, would you, if you're a pastor and you have to go to the hospital and some very difficult situation of suffering, would you feel comfortable, not comfortable, would you speak to that person their moment of pain and suffering and loss that all things come to us, not by chance, but from God's fatherly hand.

That fruitful years and lean years, prosperity and poverty, health and sickness, life and death, all things in fact come to us from God's fatherly hand. And I was just quoting from Heidelberg catechism question and answer 27. So they should have said with their ordination vows forthcoming, of course I would, but nine out of 10 in this denomination anyways, think it'd be better in the PCA, future ordination said, well, no, I wouldn't be comfortable putting it that way.

And then they were still ordained. That was a problem. Why, why do even ordinands and ministers and so many Christians, they if you say Providence, yay, Providence, I like that God's sovereign, yes, God's in control, those sort of, but when you put real meat on the bones, some of them want to spit it out.

And I'm sure your book, because I haven't read all 700 pages addresses that. How do you get to the heart of that? Well, the pastoral timing question about what you say in a hospital room is not exactly the same as why people choke. That's true.

It's sovereignty of God, they are related, but they're not the same. So let me take a moment at a time. People balk at the total sovereignty of God over all things, including human decisions for bad reasons like arrogance and man centered pride, which Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 1, where he says he's going to remove all human boasting by choosing the way he chooses, that him who boasts boast in the Lord.

So that's a bad reason people want themselves to be their own God. And so they hate for God to be God. But cutting people who are Christian, a little more slack, they're poorly taught.

And they've been taught so badly for so long about the nature of free will that they don't see how it fits with what they think is necessary for human responsibility. I mean, if a person has been taught for 40 years, that in order for a human being to be responsible, he has to be ultimately self determining, he will not be able to understand or embrace the Bible for it says, because the Bible does not assume that. And so those are two reasons badly taught.

And therefore they have unnecessary and artificial obstacles that they have to get over, even though they're Christian and rebellion in the human heart that hates God being God. Now, with regard to the timing issue, I might have flunked your ordination exam because I would have said, now, Kevin, you're asking me what I would actually say to a person with tubes in his nose. And a heart monitor that's beating 30 times a minute.

And the doctor saying he's got three hours to live. Is that what you're asking me? And I do my ask the question better than I just did. But yes, go ahead, because you're making an important point.

And however you ask it, it gives me an opportunity to say what every pastor knows, namely that there's a time for everything under heaven. When I wrote the book, Spectacular Sins, which is seven chapters on God's control and sovereignty over sin, I began with an illustration of some truths are warm and tender and precious and feel like a really cozy blanket on the couch that you wrap yourself in with the fire in the fireplace. And that's good.

Others look like tire irons. They're hard, they're cold, you keep them in the trunk. But if you got a car that needs to be lifted off of your loved one, you don't want your blankie.

You want a tire iron. And so my point is there are moments for the blanket and there are moments for the tire iron. And if somebody is raw, I mean, I've walked in, you have to Kevin, I've walked into many hospitals with the body on the table.

And the wife or the son beside the dead body. And what you do at that moment is you take them in your arms. And if you know them at all, you cry on their shoulder.

You don't say anything, you just cry on their shoulder. And when you get your voice back, you say, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

That's what you say first. And then you gauge where they are, right? You gauge where they are in handling this and that will wisely determine what comes out of your mouth next. But here's the point, sooner or later, a day later, a week later, a month later, they need answers.

They need biblical answers. Did God hold sway in my husband's life when he fell over in the driveway at 62 or didn't he hold sway, Piper? And there you don't pull any punches. You say God was in control and then depending on where they are, you deal with how you help them embrace that with joy.

And it is joyful. It is wonderful to know Satan is not in control. Random fatalism is not in control, a good wise sovereign God is in control and he will make it plain.

Yeah. Well, and you've said this many times I've heard you say, but when we preach, we're preaching to help people die well and we're preaching to help people suffer well. Yes.

And that's what you're giving them in that moment. I now sometimes say whether it's about providence or some other thing. I'll say it in a Sunday right here in the relative comfort and safety of this moment and this place sitting in these nice pews listening to this.

You need with the Lord's help to decide that this is true. That's right. And I'm going to be an anchor for you because when you get to that moment, you're right.

I can think of examples as you can of a wife crying almost shrieking. How am I going to live without him? How am I going to live without him? And if you do Romans 28, 28 in a clumsy way, it's just a stiff arm that feels like stop crying. It'll be fine.

But at some point, hopefully earlier and then also later, that needs to be a ballast in the boat. Right. That is the flip side of what I was saying, which is just as important.

Namely, if I'm a pastor listening to this, the key question is not pastoral timing about the moment of crisis for handling the providence of God. The key question is, you got 10 years before that wife is going to lose her husband. In 2031, he's going to drop over dead and you're going to be her pastor.

Will you have taught her well? Oh, Kevin, I cannot tell you how preciously, deeply gratifying it has been over the 33 years at Bethlehem to watch people move from

suspicion of God's sovereignty to the love of God's sovereignty and then walk through hell holding on to God's sovereignty and to tell me with tears in their eyes. Thank you. Thank you.

I don't know how I would not be insane right now. Had I not sat under your preaching of the sovereignty of God, that is wonderfully gratifying. Let me give you one last question.

It's so generous with your time, John. You say in the book, Romans 832, maybe the most important verse in the Bible, big statement for John Piper to make. What do you mean by that? How does that fit in with what you're hoping to do with this book? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, pause now, get the wording, not spare implies there was some obstacle to be overcome.

There was some difficulty for God in doing this, so to speak. We all understand God can do anything he wants, but when the language of God did not spare his own son, the implication is, oh, how he loved his son and the thought of exposing him to spitting and beard pulling and mockery, nails in his hands and the sin of the world on his shoulders was, in a sense, abhorrent to the Father. So he who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all.

And then the aforchiori reasoning from the greater to the lesser, if he did the hardest thing, will he not with him freely give us all things? Now, the reason I say this may be the most important verse in the Bible is because it's the verse underneath Romans 828, holding it up. 828 says everything's going to work together for good for those who love God. Why? Because Christ bought them and he overcame every obstacle in the Father's affections in order to secure them for us so that when that word everything, will he not with him give us all things? That's really true.

All things that we need to glorify God, all things that we need to do God's will, all things that we need to make it to heaven, all things that we need to be perfectly happy for ever and ever in God's presence, all of that owing to the fact that God did not spare his own son, which means that every single promise in the Bible is rooted in Romans 832. All the promises are yes in Christ Jesus. They are yes in Christ Jesus because the logic of Romans 832 holds.

So I, you know, if I had to go to the mat right now and pick a verse in the Bible, that's the most important verse all things considered. I'm probably going to go with Romans 832 as being the one that warrants all the promises of the Bible. Now, the providence of God relates to that because that promise cannot come to pass if God does not have the power and authority and wisdom and grace to bring it to pass.

And that's his providence. John, thank you for, I'm going to let you have the last word there. Thank you for being with us, spending so much time to talk about life and books and everything.

Once again, the book is published by Crossway. It's just called Providence. It's 700 pages.

It's I'm I have it, a PDF printed out here, and I'm looking forward to reading it in more in depth. Thank you, John. Encourage readers to look for it, especially WTS books is going to have a big, they already are having a big discounted sale and you can get it there.

It comes out in the next few weeks. John, thank you so much for spending time with me. And let me just say publicly, how much I love you and have benefited from you and your teaching and your preaching.

And thank you for being a friend as well. Thank you blessings on you and Colin, Justin, I love your work. I love your friendship.

It's been an honor and a joy, no question. Wonderful to be with you. Thanks.

Until next time, which hopefully will be very soon. May you glorify God, enjoy him forever. And if you're not a terribly slow reader, read a good look.

(buzzing)