

OpenTheo

Evangelical Elites

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

How do you use the term 'elite?' Is it positive or is it a term of derision? Elites, and especially Evangelical elites, have been criticized a lot lately. Collin, Kevin, and Justin have given this matter some consideration, and on this episode they offer their thoughts, turning the focus both internally and externally, with both positive and negative critiques. But first... books! They've been reading a lot. You'll hear about productivity, theology, classic fiction, and of course a lot of history.

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Timestamps:

Books First! [0:00 - 2:25]

Collin is surprised. [2:25 - 7:36]

Kevin is restrained. [7:36 - 19:18]

Justin is almost finished. [19:18 - 28:54]

Elites in the Spotlight [28:54 - 37:54]

Hating on Elites [37:54 - 43:03]

Evangelical Elites [43:03 - 46:40]

Public Religious Research Institute Survey [46:40 - 49:08]

Elitists Out of Step [49:08 - 53:35]

Kevin Responds [53:35 – 58:34]

Elites Not Reading the Room [58:34 – 1:02:11]

The Inner Ring [1:02:11 – 1:03:15]

Encouragement [1:03:15 – 1:07:18]

Books and Everything:

Collin:

Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe--and Started the Protestant Reformation, by Andrew Pettegree

Pilgrims and Priests: Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society, by Stefan Paas

Kevin:

Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals, by Oliver Burkeman

Them Before Us: Why We Need a Global Children's Rights Movement, by Katy Faust and Stacy Manning

Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body, by John W. Kleinig

The Viking Heart: How Scandinavians Conquered the World, by Arthur Herman

1984, by George Orwell

Justin:

Proverbs: A Shorter Commentary, by Bruce K. Waltke and Ivan D. V. De Silva

The Zealot and the Emancipator: John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, and the Struggle for American Freedom, by H.W. Brands

Lincoln in Private: What His Most Personal Reflections Tell Us About Our Greatest President, by Ronald C. White

Lonesome Dove: A Novel, by Larry McMurtry

Articles on Elites:</

Transcript

Reading and Salutations This is Life and Books and Everything. Kevin DeYoung, and here

with Collin Hansen and Justin Taylor. Good to have you with us as the band is back together to talk about Life and Books and everything.

We are sponsored by Crossway. Grateful for the many good books that they publish. Want to mention today just recently released is the ESV Concise Study Bible.

So many people, it's not an exaggeration to say hundreds of thousands of people. I don't know Justin, it's in the millions probably. But have made use of the ESV Study Bible, and if your arms are tired from carrying that around, now you have the ESV Concise Study Bible.

So you still have great resources and notes. And I assume Justin articles and essays, but in a more concise format. So check that out.

Anything else you want to say about that new resource, Justin? Nope, it's concise. It is... oh, and that was a concise answer. Wonderful.

We're going to jump right in. And usually we meander... well, there's two kinds of listeners to this podcast. There's a listener that says, "Please do more Big Ten Sports banter." And then there are the other 98% of our listeners who say, "How many times do I have to hit fast forward 30 seconds before I get through that?" So you'll be glad to know we just did all of that for 20 minutes before we hit record.

So it's out of our system. And all the coaching questions in Nebraska's sad season in Northwestern's equally sad season. That's sad, both of sad.

And Michigan State's surprisingly good season. So that's as far as we'll go with college football and sports. Usually we meander through a few topics and then we end by talking about books.

We love books here and we want to reverse the order and we want to start by talking about books. So Colin, we'll start with you. Yeah.

Give us a few books. What have you been reading? You can give us books you just started, books you finished in the last weeks or months. Give us whether you like them, love them or something else.

Yeah. What are some of the things you're reading? Give two. So these are two books that I read before I recently traveled to Europe because I thought they would be helpful with some of my preparation for those visits.

And one of them was Brand Luther by Andrew Pettigree. Have you guys read that book? No, I know of him. Good scholar.

Yeah. So came on 2017 with the flurry of 500 years since, since 1517 in the famous Fittenberg door, I am always interested reading about Luther. So I've set up a form this

podcast to give me Luther and Churchill and I probably will read a biography of each of them every year.

And so Brand Luther was, I liked it because I also work as a, as a publisher. So I thought it was interesting the perspective that he brought on Luther, not just as the churchmen, not just as the theologian, but also as the master of the printing press and also the master of the popular treatise. So essentially two major arguments in this.

One of them is that Luther took a very personal keen interest in the economics of printing. And in fact, the author Pettigree says that that kind of comes out of his father's background in mining and, and business and things like that. But he says, I mean, it was a very important thing, not only that, you know, that there was capacity to be able to publish, that there would be that it would look beautiful, that it would look high quality.

All these things that I just kind of took for granted before I just hadn't, hadn't thought about. So really liked that book and gave me a new perspective. Also, I don't know, I mean, sometimes major things are the things you overlook.

But one thing guys that I, that he argues here also is that Martin Luther effectively created or invented the popular theological treatise. And I thought, well, I mean, the, the epistles certainly I think are that way. But I thought, okay, I'm going back because of course we know he wrote in the vernacular.

So he wrote in German also, you know, but that was a major innovation. But I thought, wow, did he, did he invent the popular theological writing, popular theological writing? He may have, I'm not, I don't know, I'll defer to you guys if, if so, the argument would be prior to that theological writing was, you know, by scholastics for scholastics and in Latin. And not in a popular language.

No, you would have popular sermons and sermon collections. Yeah. But I suppose theological treatise as its own category sounds plausible to me.

I haven't thought about that. It's interesting. That's what I mean about Luther is how many, how many books, how many biographies I've read about Luther.

And you just seems like there's always something else that you learn in there. So I'll jump to my other one real quick, another one that I was. So first, first part of my, first part of my trip last month was in the Nordic countries in Copenhagen.

And then the second was in the Netherlands. And so I read a book by a Dutch missiologist, Stefan Poss, called Pilgrims and Priests. And this was a really interesting reading experience because a lot of it's focusing on missions in a post Christian society.

And that's a lot of what I was speaking about in Europe. So I wanted to be up to date on some relevant current thought. And there was a lot of really interesting, really helpful

stuff in this one.

It was written very much from a practitioner perspective, as opposed to a high level academician. But I also was fairly disturbed by the dismissal of aspects of Orthodox theology in there. And also especially the doctrine of hell.

And a lot of it just made me, and when I got to the end of it, it just made me come back and say, I'm not quite clear after reading this whole thing exactly what the gospel is saving people from. And when I see a lot of that, unfortunately, in missiology. And that was, it turned out, I'm glad I read this book because when I went to the Netherlands, that was a clear area of emphasis that I got within that community.

I was speaking on contextualization. As an example, and the challenge was, how do you stick with your Orthodox theology? And at the same time, also contextualize it in different cultures. And so that was what they had assigned me.

And after having read this book, now I understand much more of why they wanted me to talk about that. Because sometimes those two things don't go in hand in hand. Contextualization means, okay, we also have to leave behind a number of other outdated theologies.

So, Pughamson priests by Stephen Poss. Very good. So you're a restrained Colin, only two.

I did. I knew you'd have about 10, Kevin. So I wanted to feed my time to the gentleman in North Carolina.

Yeah, I'm going to limit myself to five. So real quickly, one, Oliver Berkman, 4000 weeks, time management for mortals. I read one or two productivity time management, the kind of books a year.

And I probably read 15 of them over the years. And so they say a lot of the same things. But almost always, there's a handful of best practices or good ideas or reminders.

I would say this one is sort of a middle of the pack of time management productivity books I've read before. I think the strength of it is you can hear it in the title, 4000 weeks. So he says on average, we have about 4000 weeks, which makes your life seem very short.

50 weeks times 80 years. Time management for mortals. So it's good in that he's acknowledging our mortality.

He sort of tells his story as a time management guru who has come to the realization that just new time management tricks is not really going to help, not really going to fix what ails us. So there's a good sense of human finitude that runs through the book,

which is good. And that we simply have to make hard decisions because we really can't do everything.

I also appreciated, it's some really good paragraphs that convicted me again about not going down the cesspool that can be social media. Why do we enter in and say, I want a lot of people I don't know. And maybe some I do.

I want you to take up a lot of my mental space right now. And I want to just give that gift to you. Why do we do that? On the not as good, I think his non Christian bearings come through often in how he views spirituality and how he views religion.

So some good things I'd say sort of middle of the pack time management book. Second book is, well, of course, I won't mention Gelso, but you should listen to the interview I did with him on the Robert E Lee. That was an amazing interview, Kevin.

Well, he's amazing. I mean, he is an amazing to interview. He is energetic.

He's obviously knowledgeable. His Christian faith comes through. Yeah, it was really fantastic.

Yes, great questions. But as somebody who does a lot of interviewing, usually the guest does make that. And Gelso was no exception.

He was simply I mean, again, I could have list if you guys had kept going for three more hours, I might have been the only person left, but I was still with no well, I've heard from others. And I don't hear that from all of our all the podcasts I do or interviews, but that was really good. So another book, Katie Faust and Stacy Manning, them before us, why we need a global children's rights movement.

You heard of that book either of you guys? Not me George did. Did a forget it's a preface or a forward to it. So these are women who are work.

There's this organization then before us and it's about children's rights. So the title there is we ought to put the rights and the needs of children before the desires and self actualization of adults. These are conservative women who go through their Christians, but it's not a Christian book per se.

They go through a lot of medical research, sociology research, go through various topics, arguing why biology matters, why kids need a mom and a dad, why surrogacy is a selfish thing to do. So talk about transgender. So they hit on any number of hot topics related to family life, sexuality, gender, it's a punchy sort of book, but it pulls in one place at a popular level and distills a lot of the larger research on some of those issues.

And so someone's looking for a book that would hit 10 or 12 of those topics. That's a good one. And then last week I took a prayer reading day and got read through start to

finish John Kleinegg, new book from Leximpress called Wonderfully Made a Protestant Theology of the Body.

We need more and more good theologies of the body. He's a Lutheran. So here and there as it connects with Lutheran theology, I'm not Lutheran and reformed obviously so I didn't agree with all that.

But it's he's an older theologian from Australia, Lutheran, he writes in a very understandable way, clear, really a beautiful book putting forward a positive vision for the body. So again that it touches on all the hot button issues of transgender and human sexuality and homosexuality does so in a very unflinching way. But to use an overused word, win some way.

So good if you're if someone's looking for a book that you might read as a small group at your church or even want to read for your own edification or devotion or a Sunday school class, you could do well to read Wonderfully Made a Protestant Theology of the Body. And then I'll just mention two books that I am not finished but I started Colin you'll be very excited. Yes.

The Viking heart. Yes. My biography.

Your biography. The Colin Hansen story. Your hand your Danish.

Yes. Well also Norwegian and Swedish. So.

Okay. Did you know this? Do you know the difference between Scandinavian and Nordic? Well Nordic I did learn that while I was over there. Nordic includes Iceland and Finland right? Right.

And it's in other islands. Yeah. Fero.

Fero islands. Right. Fero islands.

Yeah. Okay. So the Viking heart by Arthur Herman, he famously wrote the how the Scots invented the modern world which is a good book.

And he's he puts a lot of research in. So it's a popular level history but he's put in a lot of time and effort to distill and obviously he's talking about the very sweeping history. So the Vikings, you're talking about thousands of years of Nordic history.

And so talks about the wrath of the Norsemen and then all the way through to the contribution that Nordic countries have made in defending and saving Protestantism he says and their contribution in World War II and then in the United States. So I'm not too far into the book and I'm reading it and listening to some of it as I'm on the way. So the Viking heart, this is a fun book by Arthur Herman.

And then I sadly, I rarely read fiction but I've been meaning to pick this up again and I finally did and now I'm hooked and I'm about halfway through remembering what I read back in high school. I'm reading 1984 by George Orwell. There's more sex in the book than I remember.

I knew that Winston had with Julia but I forgot about that. I'm like, oh that's right my kids read this in high school. I guess I read this in high school.

So I mean it's there it's not told in great detail but it is a significant plot point along with the obvious themes of totalitarianism. And maybe another podcast, you know we can talk about George Orwell and the totalitarian vision. It's striking on the one hand a number of things that aren't true today.

So the totalitarian nightmare he's depicting in part is one that's so sexually repressive. That's why Winston has this affair with Julia because the party doesn't want you to have any sex is only for producing good future party members. And actually they pontificate that part of what the party wants to do is they don't want you to have this enjoyment of sex.

So you have all this pent up energy that can only be used for marching and hating your enemy. There was something interesting about that. So that's not our problem today of sexual repression far from it.

But then there are other aspects of it that are becoming all too eerily familiar. The thought police and the face crimes and the way you have to watch your back and you can't you sort of look furtively at people. Are they someone who also dares to think differently than the rest of the world around them? And just well written as a writer I'm reading it and noticing an economy of words strong punchy nouns verbs doesn't waste words strong diction.

So you can see why people have read it and it's a classic. There you go. I used up some of your time Colin.

Let's give a follow up question Kevin. Yeah. So I've heard of pastors having a prayer day and I've heard of reading days but what is a prayer reading date? Is that half the time is devoted to prayer and after reading? So I took a day and went away for overnight went away for about 24 hours and spent some of it reading my Bible.

Some of it literally sitting in a chair and just being quiet and looking out the window for a half hour and went on a long for me a long run. So I'll go on a long walk or a long run and I can pray then and think through things that may not have time to sort of ruminate on and then I turned off my phone. I didn't bring any work.

I didn't bring my computer and yeah I had three or four books and made headway on a number of them and tried to do both of them. I've taken just prayer days and I wish I

could say that I'm really good at just doing nothing but praying for 24 hours but I'm not. So to pray some of the time and then read books and books you know I didn't bring commentaries for my sermon.

I didn't bring books that I'm reading through to prepare for RTS just books on my shelf that I wanted to get to and read. Sounds wonderful. Oh it was wonderful.

I thought man I got to do this. I got to get one to week. Once a week is the idea but no I can get yeah I'm not doing it once a week but something on the calendar would be great.

Justin you read wonderful and terrible book proposals all the time. Do you have time to read other books? Yeah somewhat. I should be the encouragement to the average listener because I don't read as much as you guys.

I don't complete as many books as you guys. So I think I probably start more books than you guys with my job and with my personal interests but I'm reading a book on Iron Man triathlons right now which has been really, no I'm just getting up for real. Wait what? There is a book there's a book called Iron War which is about the famous battles in the 80s between them but that's not it.

No that's not my cup of tea. So I'll give you all books that I have not finished but I've been dipping into and want to finish the Lord Will's but give me different categories one in the kind of Bible theology category. I hadn't heard about this but I somehow stumbled across that Bruce Waltke has a new commentary on the book of Proverbs and we probably all know of his massive two volume hardcover nikot commentary.

I don't know when that was published maybe 15 years ago now maybe 20 but this is called Proverbs the shorter commentary published by Erdmans and it's co-authored with Ivan D.V. De Silva who is a professor of religious studies adjunct and I think a former student of Dr. Waltke's and interestingly enough a former detective I believe so perhaps he used some of those skills and piecing together various things so it basically abridges the massive Proverbs commentary but also updates the literature as well so that's a it's been an edifying book to dip into Waltke as a really clear writer very profound theological mind and he's actually doing a new Psalms commentary not a commentary but an introduction of the Psalms that Fred Zaspall is helping him with walkie is 92 years old now and still actively working in I believe he's an Anglican now have I saw that correctly so that's kind of the Bible theology category everybody in says an Anglican that's where we're all at it Lincoln you know that I always have to have something with Lincoln going on and the three of us I think briefly discuss this book but the zealot and the emancipator John Brown Abraham Lincoln and the struggle for American freedom H.W. Bran yeah I'm about halfway through that I stalled out over the summer yeah he's an interesting he's an interesting author he does a lot with primary sources sort of here's John Brown in his own words in a letter and here's Abraham Lincoln and pretty short

chapters going back and forth between the two so yeah it's good I know a whole lot more about Abraham Lincoln than John Brown my knowledge of John Brown is from other just larger civil war sort of history so I'm learning a lot about John Brown so I liked it I got halfway through I think I was losing patience like man are we up to Harper's ferry or what when is this gonna happen but what did you think about it yeah I'm not too far into it but I like the idea of dual biographies I've always liked that I I'm sure it's one of those things that is it's hard to do well but when it is done well it's interesting to set two people in different contexts sort of in dialogue with each other and I think James Oakes did one of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln and and brands I read an interview one time where he said that he's he's sort of secretly writing a history of America through biography but he never told his publishers but he has this whole concept in his mind of eventually telling the American story through biography so he's done Andrew Jackson and Aaron Burr and some of the financial titans and he's an interesting author because I think he if listeners don't recognize the name if you see his picture you'll recognize him from any history documentary because he's one of those interesting talking heads he's he's able to convey in a storytelling mode the history of what was going on and so I like to read history to to know what happened but I also am interested in seeing how people write history and then I just ordered a new Lincoln book I wonder if you guys have heard of this by Ronald White that that name Ringabelle yeah sure yeah Mira, can you let's see he's a grand right yeah it wrote a Lincoln he's a Christian I don't know exactly of what kind but he's probably done as much as anybody in terms of writing on Lincoln's words and speeches and so there's a new one by him Lincoln in private what his most personal reflections tell us about our greatest president and basically he's going through Lincoln would write something on a scrap of paper throw it in his desk and 13 years later he'd refer to it almost like if we had a you know word documents or post-it notes but unless you I mean there's really no way to kind of pull all those together unless you visit multiple libraries or work through multiple volumes and Ronald White has pulled those all together and and tried to kind of give us the more private side of Lincoln which is tricky to do that was one thing interesting about Gelzo's interview with Kevin is how difficult it is to try to track down everything from Lincoln yeah right around it is from Lee from oh yeah sorry from me also yeah sorry that's what I meant both of them same thing yeah with all of the history work you would have thought there would be a critical edition of someone would have collected all of the letters and but it's amazing sometimes some of the things that aren't done my PhD supervisor is working on in England a massive multi-year decades project to publish a critical edition of all of Wilbur forces letters and that will be a major undertaking to get them to find them to try to read them transcribe them and yeah we owe a lot to historical grunt work from people who do those sorts of things and then provide those resources for decades or centuries for people to then call through and use but what were you gonna say Justin yeah I'm not sure what I was gonna say but it is striking that somebody like Robert E Lee with how much the Civil War has been covered and you know it's not like nobody's written a biography of him before that that someone somewhere some center wouldn't have transcribed every letter that he's

ever written and that makes your job pretty not easy but easier as a biography just you know pull down those letters copy and paste and put them in your narrative but when you have to travel to a place and sit in a dusty library and try to transcribe letters that's amazing I have a one fiction book that I've started which I don't know if I'll make my way through it because it's thick it's lonesome dove and I'm curious if you guys have ever finished it probably Collins readily once a year but no I I haven't read a lot of Western or watched much Western literature or film so I was as good as the hype Justin I hear a lot of hype that's for sure um I am on page 16 so not yet it's more comedic than I expected but the the blurb on the back from USA Today says if you read only one Western novel in your life read lonesome dove and it won the Pulitzer Prize so it will probably be the only Western I read from now on although my grandfather wrote that Western novel your grandfather did he did he was a farmer and a chef in South Dakota and at night worked in a novel and I have it printed in my office it was self-published posthumously but so it's it's in my bloodstream but I haven't finished that one either all right well that's a perfect segue to something else but everyone look up Justin's grandfather's sod busting South Dakota story I'm expecting a copy in the mail Justin all right it's like that uh famous time when I was interviewing Ligon and asked like his favorite book of all time and it was I won't even get it now but it was something about the low country of or the up country or some such country of South Carolina and I just and then immediately after I sort of gefaud his brother Mel sent me a copy of the book in the mail post haste and probably would to any listener who wants to know more about the history of South Carolina and where is it on your shelves that I'm looking at right behind you Kevin I'm sure I know isn't it somewhere it is somewhere I still have it to pull off probably on your nightstand oh right yeah yeah all right so here's what I want to talk about now that we talked about books I want to talk about elites so let me give some some context and then my opening salvo and then we'll see where the conversation goes a number of articles or posts have been written in the past week or two about evangelical elites mark galley in his newsletter was decrying his own former employer and uh at ct and as he said it uh a tendency to want to play nice with cultural elites at least that was one of the themes you also have uh Carl Truman who wrote a a lengthy and as Carl's pieces are you know very well read educated interesting piece at first things he was making some of those same points uh and in particular arguing that the the days of Noel and Marsden advocating for just the best Christian scholarship to overcome the the scandal the evangelical mind and the people in the academy will see our work and praise us and bless us for doing the the best scholarship we can that that's just not going to work anymore there's too many cultural obstacles in most fields that was some of Carl's argument and uh Tommy Kidd gave something of a response to Carl's piece agreeing with some of it and pushing back on other aspects and then over the weekend David French wrote also about evangelical elites and as you might guess uh not entirely disagreeing with what Carl might be saying but his take is more along the lines of okay well yes we know that there are those problems but really the the larger issues in our churches have to deal with this reactionary moment among conservative Christians and if we want to see the problem it

is us and the problem of the elites not dealing with uh their own kind so I'm not so interested in us picking winners and losers of those arguments uh all of us know at one level all of those men and there are other people who have weighed in on it but it is such a hot topic I thought we'd talk about it and here's my opening salvo not to so much solve the question but to complexify and that is to ask what I think is often missing from some of these you know good thoughtful critiques is a definitional question who are the elites and we should say at the outset unless someone say physicians heal thyself I'm sure by some measure uh Colin Hanson Justin Taylor Kevin DeYoung are elites so not trying to pretend like we're looking from some uh high mountaintop and not affected or not in the mix of all of these things but what's interesting to me and I don't know the the history of it somebody could argue for this but it seems to me uh elite has certainly become an almost uniformly bad word and I wonder if that's always been the case now there are still contexts where if somebody said oh my son is an elite athlete uh my daughter is an elite musician that would still be considered a compliment but in almost any context in our culture if you are considered among the elites that's not a compliment that somebody's paying to you almost surely some sort of critique is going to come that you of the elites have not done something have not guarded something protected something promoted something I'm not saying whether that's right or wrong I'm just first of all noting that the word itself connected to that it seems we we can't escape that this whole discussion is both produced by the internet and is an internet phenomenon meaning one of the reason surely that we're suspicious of elites often for good reasons I'm not saying that there aren't good reasons to be suspicious of some elites or to point out their failures but certainly it has to do with the internet that more than ever before we can hear from anybody and everybody and so there there is no just one or two or a handful of elite voices and the internet itself is destabilizing to any notion of elites or elite institutions or elite gatekeepers it's not at all a coincidence we talked about this before that we live in a day of populist upswell and uprisings for good and for bad all over the world politically all over the world in our country on the right and on the left and even within ecclesiastical circles because the internet is in many ways an engine of populist foment and then here's my last thought in this opening cell phone and maybe just didn't get ready to solve the problem for us I'll turn it to you next but you think about who who are the elites who are the the people that we're looking for now many people have made the observation of heard Jonah Goldberg say this and he's right we're we're going to have elites it's just a question of whether you have good ones or bad ones so if we pretend that you know what the answer is we won't have elites you know probably the people who are going to say that really loudly are actually elites so they're going to be elites they're going to be people who control levers of power authority they're going to be people who have bigger followings they're going to be people who have a platform so there will be elites in any movement any culture they're just will be so the question is what sort of elites are they and it seems to me there's a lot of different ways to define an elite is an elite someone based on certain skills capabilities characteristics you do this so you're an elite so is it a is it a gift ability character sort of thing is it a position of

authority is it you're a president of something you're in a heaven endowed chair at some institution that has cultural cache you have a position at the commanding heights of culture and media so is it a position in an institution is it a platform so whether you have a position or not if you write a lot and speak a lot online and people follow you does that make you an elite or on the most the the most kind of existential sort of practical level is an elite you can look at an elite like this if if you wrote a piece or if you said something publicly about why you should or shouldn't vote for Donald Trump would a lot of people start talking about that if they did or would or whatever sort of you know hot take you have if everyone would start that probably means you're some level of an elite someone who you know they can speak till they're red in the face and if nobody is talking about it are they an elite so we have all sorts of different kinds of elites or at least maybe that's one of the questions are is it really so different certainly the internet gives us a different way to have elites and it allows different people to be elite in a certain sphere or culture of influence but it also destabilizes the normal mechanisms of protection in publishing guarding etc so i got more thoughts that didn't solve anything but it just complexifies the issue to ask that central question who are the elites that either need to do their job or haven't done their job Justin what say you I think you're right Kevin that elite still has positive connotations when we're talking about performance or reaching a certain level if you're an elite financial advisor if you're an elite athlete that has positive connotations I think what has negative connotations is the idea of elitism or being an elite test and so it's difficult to separate out someone who's an elite not necessarily for the fact that they run faster lift more or make more money than everybody else but I think those words tend to get jumbled up in our our conitative index to coin a term so you don't find many people bragging about being an elite in terms of having opinions or influence or movements or those sort of things I think the populism angle that you mentioned is significant as well there are certain segments of evangelicalism right now who seem to be tapping more into the populist vein and that allows them to avoid the term elitism because the elites are the object of their own criticism so they can posture themselves as sort of a man of the people or a woman of the people speaking on behalf of the silent majority versus those people pulling the power levers behind the curtain so I don't know how important it is to to define it other than to note that there's not one definition and it tends to be used as a term of abuse it tends to be used as a critique of someone to your left or to your right that you don't like so I think if you are operating with a relatively objective definition feel free to use it but if you use it just merely as a term of derision I don't think that's entirely fair and I think the galley piece by the way if if listeners haven't seen is a sub-stack piece that mark galley wrote but then he followed it up this weekend with another piece that's more self-critical saying that he was not intending to throw former colleagues into the bus which I think is pretty disputable but he then turns the focus upon himself as own adaptations with elitism so I thought that was an interesting move by galley's part but maybe add just one more thing and then Colin will set us all straight here I think going back to Mark's original piece we should be really cautious of judging people's motives and that's a word for

myself as it is much a word to someone like Mark Galley motives are notoriously difficult to sauce out we can talk I think more confidently about writers posture or inclination or suspicion or the fact that they've moved from where they have been previously and seem to be going in a certain direction but to try to identify someone's motives for why they're doing something I think is always put you on somewhat perilous grounds doesn't mean I mean some motives are obvious some people confess to their motives but I think whenever we're talking about elites whether again to the left of us or to the right of us which just use caution before assigning a bad motive to somebody who's doing something perhaps differently than we would do Justin that's a really good word because such as our human nature that we rarely in trying to evaluate someone's motives impute to them better motives so as we might do that in a really strong friendship or relationship we try to give people the benefit of the doubt but in these intramural disputes or people at a distance and even people close to us rarely do we think you know what I bet their motives were really they were trying their best to serve the Lord and just trying to do it and life is complicated and it's hard to even know our own motives you know we have mixed motives even on the best of days so to your point Justin it doesn't mean that it's irrelevant and sometimes it's worth talking about but there ought to be a caution because what may be to us and obvious in all of us all three of us have done this because we're sinners we've also had it done to us in public things we've said or written oh not we know what this is all about this is this shows what an awful person he is and now we see his real motives rather than dealing with what's actually been said or written or heaven forbid giving somebody the benefit of the doubt and trying to assume that perhaps they had even better motives Colin what do you think I know you've thought a lot about this yeah probably probably more than I needed to so we're talking especially about evangelical elites here and I think that's important to say because evangelicalism is not an institution so if we're talking about politics here you could talk about the Republican Party you could talk about the Democratic Party you could talk about Congress White House judiciary the bureaucracy you could talk about a lot of different things but in terms of evangelical elites there's no there's no position essentially there's no there's no place so interestingly you you touched on this Kevin but we're not so much talking about denominational figures or even pastors in some ways we are but you know they're supposed their institutions are not evangelicalism so they may be evangelical elites but they're not the evangelical they're not big eva essentially first of all I find that to be very confusing but I think it makes sense in terms of the dynamics of evangelicalism is this trans-denominational network thing and who are the people who control the networks there so essentially it seems like we're talking about colleges seminaries and publishers all of which are represented on this call so I think that's how we can conferences perhaps yeah conferences I think they're often offshoots of those but you're but you're right um so that's I think how we end up in the big eva category but if you're the head of the southern Baptist executive committee you're not which is really strange but that's I think why that dichotomy works that these are the trans-denominational networks of evangelicalism as opposed to the denominations the

churches so that that'll make a lot more sense of what I'm gonna what I'm gonna say here about evangelical elites so I think the the insinuation or the explicit critique that came through in a number of the of the essays that you cited Kevin is that the elites have an elite test Justin you had a good distinction there they have an elite test attitude that scoffs at regular evangelicals essentially the the critique seems to be that they are out of step with real evangelicals because they want to be now I'm not sure it's ever explicitly stated but it seems to be because they want to fit in um or they want to they want to make money one of the two there seems to be the the guests I'm not sure what other motivation there would be and this is significant because large churches are all over the place a denominational leader can be a number of different places but publishers colleges and seminaries do tend to be in certain locales they do tend to be in bigger cities or they do tend to culturally um be a little more liberal in general so I think that's again part of where the insinuation comes of of the sellout and I think we can easily identify that there are a lot of examples of this in evangelical history the person who is the the institution that is supposed to convey evangelical beliefs but because of their desire to be a part of the guild or to fit in or to to to play to their you know to their guilds requirements they they change their faith if that were not the case then a lot of Christian colleges would still be Christian today and not what they are so that just kind of lays the groundwork for what I'm gonna you know say here and I'm interested to get your guys thoughts on this so I'm gonna go back to the public religion research institute survey in march of 2018 it asked evangelicals I think this was white evangelicals but it was asking them what should the priority of government be and the number one response was reducing health care costs I was number one for white evangelicals number two was reducing the budget deficit number three was addressing the opioid epidemic number four was immigration reform number five anti-immigration laws and number six gun control now and this was a little bit confusing for me gun control I think is on here because it was a priority for government and it was gun control it was already loaded as a term so I think it was a bottom priority because they didn't want the government to do gun control so I think that's why it was there so just a weirdly worded question there I let me take it a step further than same um same survey 25% of white evangelicals said that their candidate must share their view on abortion 25 one out of four 45% said that abortion should be only somewhat not two or not at all difficult to get means less than 20% of white evangelicals think that abortion should be completely illegal okay so the reason I'm saying this is because one of the explicit critiques was evangelical elites are sellouts when it comes to abortion they just want to be able to fit in so they hide those beliefs and that's how they get published in the New York Times or things like that but I think the biggest example of how elites are out of step is not on abortion because the survey shows that I don't know how much of a priority abortion is and I'll get that a little bit more in a second but the main way that evangelicals elites are out of sync with evangelicals is on immigration and I say this when it comes to um when I mean my background being in republican politics for decades republican politicians were pro-immigration but republican voters were not as a clear example of of an elite

that is disconnected from the actual voters and that really changed 2015 and 2016 of course with senator sessions here in Alabama and then ultimately president trump and I would say another example of this of how elitists are very much out of step is that your typical christian college professor and seminary graduate I would even say cares way more about ethnic diversity and watches way less fox news and listens to way less play travis on talk radio I think that's I think that's fair to say I don't think that's even a controversial thing I think that means they're very much out of step in terms of not having the same view on those things add to that they also probably because of what I mentioned earlier they tend to spend way more time around liberals christian college professors publishers just where they're located they tend to spend more time around liberals and work in fields especially in the academy that are dominated by liberals and I mentioned that we could all cite examples of capitulation whether the motive might be and I would say it's also fair to say that when you're talking about fitting into the broader culture that seems to again be the elites want to fit in and that's why they're at a step with everybody else and it's going to be sexual issues that's that's always the king of the intersectionality olympics it's always sexual issues so that the view is you've got to toe the line on those issues and I think that temptation is very clear and I think you can see that all over the place and and uh anyway so let me jump in let kind of my wrap up here I think what we're talking about here more than anything else is something that the three of us have discussed quite a bit including on this podcast is really the phenomenon of the inner ring of a simple desire you want to be able to fit in you want to be able to fit in with the people that you care about you don't care about fitting in with those people that you don't care about ever the society is full of inner rings and the elites are one of those inner rings and there's a million different inner rings to put it mildly among the elites right there and that's why I think this discussion could be framed very differently about how all of us tend to want to fit in and we tend to want to think tend to think tribally about this and what will keep me in good terms with the in crowd this is uh this is on brand for this podcast but I was visiting my within my family earlier this spring and I was you know driving the pickup truck and listening to the WNAX out of uh out of South Dakota and all of a sudden you can just almost feel all these assumptions begin to make sense suddenly in a different context messages re-enforced I think there's just when you're around a lot who wants to be the one person who's always out of step with everybody else no matter where you are you just you want to fit in there and I will say um this that when you put when you put all of this together the one area where you're really really really going to be out of step today across the board is if you're out of step with liberals when it comes to sex and when you're out of step with conservatives when it comes to race that that you're basically you're just not fitting in anywhere in our political dynamic and our cultural dynamic and it's not a very fun place to be and let me connect this back and then we can there's I gave a lot of put out a lot out there but if you're an elite publisher let's bring this back to the beginning and all of us would be you know kind of connected to this world if you're an elite publisher you know a couple things one of them is that you won't publish on abortion you'll be very tempted not to

because the sales aren't there I can say that list I mean if I'm big EVA internet site guy we publish on abortion all the time and it just people just aren't interested in it it just doesn't get read you can conclude that what you want and if you publish on race you will get a lot of attention but you will get a ton of hate you'll get a ton of hate of that so this concept of fitting in of wanting to be liked by other people I think broadens the conversation in a way that shows that all of us are tempted in these ways and elites are tempted maybe in certain ways okay I threw a lot out there all right well Colin as usual has the the big macro view there's a lot of a lot of trees in that forest I won't try to pick it pick one I think I agree with with 85 percent of that yeah so let me let me just steal a few other thoughts so try to be real quick and some of this overlaps with what you said but number one every group is going to have some measure of elites you can you can start a conference tomorrow and a publishing site tomorrow that's all aimed at how bad whatever whatever big media whatever big people whatever put big in front of it big pharma big whatever and if your thing has any sick what's that PJ Flak oh big big husker nation so whatever you do if that has any success somebody's going to decide who speaks at your conference somebody's going to decide who who publishes on your site somebody is still going to have some lever of authority what do you do with all the media or the money that comes in yeah and if you turn a money and if you so if you want that new thing which is against the elites to have any sort of brand consistency you're going to have to have elites who are calling the shots somewhere there so that that's for a second and you said this well call and it's sort of Justin but we all have a crowd that we are inclined to appease if not to appease that may be too strong not too upset yeah and sometimes it's for very selfish prideful reasons it could be that's why we don't we don't know our own motivation sometimes maybe it is for money maybe it is connections maybe it is smoke filled back rooms other times it's well boy this person said this and you know what I have a relationship with them or there's a a network that I'm in and well I don't I'm going to deal with this privately or I'm going to sit this one out because there's a relational cost or an institutional cost and it doesn't seem wise when when you have no institution to account for it's much easier to you know when I was younger I always felt like man why don't people just always say exactly what they think about everything that would just be easy well those people don't in time build things because you have to know when you say and when you wait for another day and when you work behind the scenes so we all have that inclination just that's two three and this is where some of the where I do agree with some of galley's emphases and some what Carl said and I don't know that the others would necessarily disagree but we do have to be prepared to stand out I was just preaching last Sunday evening on second Corinthians six do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers and it's true many people have made this observation but it used to be for most of the history in this country that to be a Christian was a net positive it was good social for your social standing and that wasn't all bad civil religion wasn't all bad it made converting to christianity uh more palatable easier the downside was it led to a lot of hypocrisy and nominalism then you move to christianity as a net neutral and I think that was some of the critique saying we've moved past that

stage where okay as long as I do my job I'm tolerant of other viewpoints and I show that I can do the best work possible you know the broader world of Hollywood the academy media big corporations though though I can still rise to the top I just have to be respectful of others and disagreements and show that I can do the work better than anybody else and that world does still exist in some parts of the country in some industries so real quick just to land this very long soliloquy plane that kaland and I have been flying separately to just in chagrin yeah we need to be prepared to stand out and the days of christianity being a net cultural positive or even a net neutral are gone in many places and certainly in most places of the academy and that's where carol's point was certainly well taken we need to be prepared to have a christianity with a cost and then the last thing is to say I don't you know this is critical maybe it's self-critical if we're of the elites or critical of whoever the elites have been of evangelicalism I think many evangelicals in evangelicalism have been prone to miss a mood and to see it and maybe a first reaction of some elites is to be dismissive of it and some of this populist mood needs to be critiqued but I think it is always a danger of whoever whatever you elite you are by some definition if you're an elite by definition something's working for you you've people have listened to you you have a position of some kind you have a platform of some kind and so there always is going to be a danger for those people to think well look just just do what we did just play by the rules just why are you so upset about things and so I think there is a real critique there to miss a mood that things aren't working for lots of people and there is a good reason to be fearful not in a quivering sort of way but fearful of many things that are changing rapidly in our culture and I think when elites are quick to be dismissive of that and think that any sort of consternation over that is a problem and if we just here's what I'm saying we can't just out nice our way if that was ever the case we can't do that anymore if we just are nice enough dog on it people will like us and that has been somewhat a failure of elites across the board and you know just to be fair nobody nobody has navigated these last five years very well there's just been so many issues so many difficult issues and the the internet we forget is what has made so many of these things possible in good ways and really bad in other ways so enough for that Colin or Justin any final thoughts yeah Kevin I'm just going to quickly give an example of what you talked about right there and then I'll toss it over to Justin to wrap up there but the one example of that would be the way Brad Wilcox and other sociologists will point this out the way Evan Jell elites in politics tend to be dismissive of the significance of marriage but there's but there's a but they practice that they practice marriage but they don't preach it to others so they say for everybody else it's not that big a deal but of course they know it's a big deal so they do that so that's kind of that mood that they kind of miss the way working class communities have dissolved as as the sexual revolution has destroyed the nuclear family in many different ways or in some ways the economy has helped to contribute to that downfall so they'll say on both sides you can both political sides you can see problems there and that's a good there's an easy example for me to say because that's where my disagreement with the elite opinion is is seen but I'm sure we can help with many examples toward ourselves Justin

do you have some words to wrap up I just want to go back quickly Colin to your mention of The Interring by CS Lewis and uh ashamedly I didn't think of that essay when this whole elite discussion was going on but it really is apropos and I think it was Andrew Wilson perhaps who mentioned that local church elder should read Lewis's essay together once a year and just give you one quote from it he says I believe that in all men's lives at certain periods and in many men's lives at all periods between infancy and extreme old age one of the most dominant elements is the desire to be inside the local ring and the terror of being left outside it's just really a timeless essay that we all need to take the heart uh that that desire to be in the inner ring and if we have any level of influence we're going to be in an inner ring and it's it's good to heed Lewis's advice and to be aware of it and to work against some of the unfortunate tendencies that tend to obtain when we are part of such a a club or a culture it's a great word Justin let me uh let me just end by trying to encourage pastors and let me say to all our listeners lest you think we are elites you should see how convoluted our technology abilities are we never can get this thing started and um the power went out here I dropped out we can't see Justin he can't hear me somebody stole my mic somebody stole my mic yeah so if this is a bit disjointed that's that's why because we are certainly not elites when it comes to podcasting capabilities uh but I did want to just land on trying to encourage I know we have lots of different listeners but for pastors it can and somebody pointed out that uh it is interesting how the conversation about elites usually takes place without pastors I mean it's it's people who have other sorts of platforms and we're happy to listen to those people and I benefit from them and but it it can be dispiriting to be a pastor here's a a tweet I don't know you know I'm not even familiar with this person but uh this was a tweet that I think Justin pointed out a couple of weeks ago and it would it really hit home with me as a pastor he said as social media and society folks focuses almost exclusively on bad pastors and bad pastoring there is almost no cultural support or encouragement for sincere struggling pastors it is a thankless job outside of the encouragement of some faithful saints and with within the congregation next tweet as an example I usually face many critical responses of pastors and the church at large whenever I post anything that addresses the needs of sincere pastors some do not want that discussion to be made public this harms the general health of the church and church leaders Douglas Burst B-U-R-S-C-H um not be familiar with him but uh thank you brother this very good word and it is easy to whether we're talking about elites or we're talking about you know the Mars Hill podcast and the abuse of authority which in elites have failed at times and power gets abused all of that is true and yet in the midst of it it can seem very discouraging for the local church pastor who's sitting there saying ah where do I fit in what what support is there for me I'm trying to prepare a sermon this week I don't have time to weigh into these meta evangelical discussions now I'm people are suspicious of my own influence or authority and what sort of support is there for me in the midst of two years that have a tumultuous election and race riots and we're back to fighting about masks again and all of that and so this one to encourage brother pastors out there to keep your hand to the plow and pay attention to your Greek and your Hebrew and your English Bible before you

listen to podcasts like this before you need to be well informed on the controversy du
jour your labors are not in vain and your work matters and your sermon matters and it's
always a burden of mine I'm sure because I am a pastor to want to encourage the local
church pastor in the midst of all these larger discussions which can be dizzying and at
times feel like wow we're all failing no brother you're very likely not failing in your
compassion and your care and your hard work to care for that flop Justin Colin thank you
for being here in the midst of technical difficulties and we'll try to do it again until next
time or if I got enjoy him forever and read a good book you

(buzzing)