

# OpenTheo

## A Very Special Episode with Justin Taylor and Collin Hansen

January 16, 2025



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

There has been some concern that Justin and Collin have been kept out of the “very special guest” designation. In order to make up for past offenses, this episode, with two very special guests, is being hailed as a very special episode. The three amigos start out by talking about football (of course) and a new cultural openness to Christianity. Then they turn their attention to New Year’s resolutions (which they all have) and books on time management and productivity (which Justin and Collin do not read). The episode finishes with a sweet conversation about their wives and lessons learned over the decades of marriage.

Chapters:

0:00 Sponsors & Intro

4:15 Football, Culture, and Spirituality

15:26 Goals, Habits, and Productivity

40:07 Sponsor Break

42:02 Marriage, That Blessed Arrangement

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Books & Everything:

Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church

Serious Joy Conference

The Pastor: His Call, Character, and Work

WTS | Master of Arts in Theological Studies

The Spirit of the Game: American Christianity and Big-Time Sports

Rules of Life (Justin Taylor)

Marriage: 6 Gospel Commitments Every Couple Needs to Make

Mystery of Marriage

The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God

When Sinners Say "I Do": Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage

Love That Lasts: When Marriage Meets Grace

Gospel-Shaped Marriage: Grace for Sinners to Love Like Saints

This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence

## **Transcript**

Today's episode of LBE is sponsored by CrossWay. I encourage you to check out the book by Paul David Tripp, lead Gospel principles for leadership in the church. I read this when it came out and even took our staff through it.

It's an excellent Paul Tripp book as he's responsible for the church. He does always looking at the gospel, and here it's applying the gospel to leadership in the church, both those who are aspiring leaders, and those who have been in pastoral ministry or church ministry for a long time. So pick up a copy of Lead, wherever books are sold.

Thank you to Crossway. And thankful for other sponsor, Desiring God. I encourage you to check out the 37th Annual Serious Joy Conference with Desiring God, which will be held this February at the Bethlehem College and Seminary.

Join DG teachers like Marshall Seagull, Greg Morse, Scott Hubbard, as they lead a breakout track called Spiritual Ministry in a Secular Age. They will explore challenges that face the church today and awaken us afresh to the unseen God and his unseen world with the goal of fruitful ministry in this generation. You can go to the Bethlehem College and Seminary website, look for Conference 2025.

I was at the conference a couple of years ago. It can be cold, but the fellowship is warm, the teaching is good, so check it out. Greetings and salutations.

This is Kevin DeYoung, and you are listening to life and books and everything, or you may be watching life and books and everything, and if you are watching, you already know that our very special guests include Colin Hanson, who is in a shirt and tie. He is... Don't forget the coat. And a coat, yup, shirt, tie.

Cargo pants on the bottom. Short, and cargo pants, and Justin Taylor, who did tell us he did drop off his kids, it was one degree in Sioux City, and you did have cargo pants? Short. Just shorts, okay.

Still wearing them. All right, well, we'll take your word for it. Don't need visual confirmation.

Kevin, you're continuing with having athletes on as your special guest, right? Well, really improving. Improving the athletic prowess, I would say. Yeah, if anyone, you know, Sidney McLaughlin, and her husband, Andrei LaVroni, I mean, NFL player, fastest woman in the history of the world, and offensive lineman, so.

Yeah, I mean, nine-man football, the Midwest, I mean, there's no greater athletic achievement in my book. Yeah, so is it a matter of principle, Justin, that no matter how cold it is, you refuse to wear pants? I prefer wearing shorts when I can, but it's not socially acceptable. Oh, boy, socially.

So it does get cold, not, it's not, you know, Sioux City, but we have a lot of mornings that are in the 20s here, so it's cold enough, but my kids, all of them, most of them, at least several of them, like Benjamin, he has made it a life goal, never in the history of going to school to wear anything but shorts. So, so far he is, he's bat in a thousand on that streak. That's living the dream.

There's cold in the Midwest, and then this morning, I could feel the plaque on my teeth kind of freezing up, and that's when you know it's like, that's a special level of coldness, when the nostril hairs start to, you know, stiffen, then. Yeah, there's cold in there in the Western cold. Yeah, please, please share more.

My wife was giving me a little bit of a hard time that I was not referring to you both as special guests, so I want to say, this is very special, very special guests, and good to be with you all. Okay, we're gonna get into some, our topics, but, so I imagine you've been watching some football, people love to hear us talk about football, and we hit on this a little bit before just, it is a vibe shift, something more real going on in our country, spiritually, you know, it's ambiguous, but yet discernible, and have you noticed, I was just talking to a group of friends about this. It does seem like, and I guess maybe I'm thinking, in particular, of watching college football and NFL, college football, maybe after these bowl games, it does seem like they're gonna interview, you know, the quarterback, the MVP of the game, and you just expect now, he's going to say, and before I do anything else, I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now, on one hand, this is not new in America, especially in college football, you know, it's Tim Tebow, so there's a long history of doing that, but it seems more common, and here's even more importantly, and this is a very, you know, imperfect sense, but it seems more genuine, like the, you know, the Boise State player, who after they lost, is just coach, no coach, really. I wouldn't be, I wouldn't know Jesus if I didn't come here, or, you know, my good friend, Blair Smith, who you guys know, he's a big Ohio State fan, he's telling me, Trevion Henderson, a

bunch of players on Ohio State really seem to be having, you know, a new commitment to Christ. I just read today, Marcus Freeman, of course he became Catholic when he became the coach at Notre Dame, make sense, but he reinstated the tradition of making all the players go to mass before every game, and, you know, and of course he says, you know, we're, you know, not everyone's Catholic, but we all trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, like, really? Okay.

I mean, is this, is this, we just have our eyes open to it, or people just feel like they don't have to be shy about it? Or is there something really interesting and let's hope exciting happening? What do you sense, Justin? Yeah, I'll go first, because Colin always has more thoughts and more informed thoughts and more detailed thoughts than I would, but just to mention a book that just came out from a friend of mine at Baylor, Paul Putz, P-U-T-Z, pull up the name of the book, *The Spirit of the Game*, American Christianity, and Big Time Sports. Paul's a really gifted historian in his 40s who's been working on these issues for a long time, and, you know, so if anybody's interested in kind of doing a deeper dive into the history of it, it didn't come out of nowhere, and I don't think it's just that we're noticing it more, it does seem like something's happening. How do you quantify it? It's difficult to say, but it's encouraging, and it's one of those rare areas.

You think about all the different cultural, influential factors, there's movies, there is business, there is education. Sports has always been that one where you just don't have to be ashamed to talk about Jesus in a way that doesn't apply to the Academy and doesn't necessarily apply to the secular world. So there's definitely something different going on.

It's hard to know spiritually what's going on. If are all of these guys committed to biblical sexual ethics, for example, does it have an effect on their use of the mouth and the tongue when they're speaking? How does it relate to holiness? How does it relate to Trinitarianism and Confessionalism and all those sort of things, but to explicitly naming the name of Jesus is a good thing, and you hope that all of the other things that need to go along with it, the confession of faith and a holy life and a biblical understanding are part of that as well. It's encouraging.

Yeah, what do you see, Colin? I was going to mention the same book. I'm looking forward to talking to Paul on my Gospel Bound podcast later this year. I think we've all been around long enough to know that this is not new, meaning any sport that has Tim Tebow in it.

It's in college football, perhaps because of its regional orientation, largely Midwest and South. I think lends itself to this in a lot of different ways, but definitely something has changed, but I wonder about this, guys. Have you noticed that it's some sports, but not other sports? So college football is probably at the top of that.

NFL, there's still quite a bit of that. So football in general, I think, and I don't know about track and field. You might be able to go into that for us, Kevin, but golf is very high levels of outspoken faithful Christians.

One of the really successful professional golfers in my church lives here in Birmingham. And so I see a lot of that. There's a very active chaplain movement within that baseball.

You see some of that, not the same level of football. Basketball, you don't hear about this nearly as much. I'm not sure why.

So I don't know, sometimes I've wondered if there's the structure of a sport in some way might contribute to the pursuit of spirituality. And specifically, I've often thought about golf and baseball. I think we've talked about this before on this podcast.

They're, you know, they're failure sports, where there's a lot of the mental game of learning how to cope with failure, which Christianity, you know, that's part of what we offer of what Christ offers in there. And football, I don't know, guys. I wonder, again, what we're seeing is just plain encouraging.

I'd rather have this than anything else. And I wonder about just being one of the last bastions in our culture, which I know we've talked about in this podcast as well, where there's teamwork, there's sacrifice, there's physicality, there's submitting yourself to the good of others. It's sacrificing yourself, blocking, I mean, all those sorts of things.

I wonder how much that contributes. But, you know, I went back and looked. I'm going to, this is going to sound kind of strange, but I have never been an Ohio State fan or a Notre Dame fan, but I've just found myself drawn to teams because there seems to be something different about their character this year, especially Notre Dame.

But when I was looking up, you mentioned Trivia on Henderson earlier and was just looking up the evangelistic rallies that he had led on campus and things like that. And yeah, something's different and it's definitely been encouraging. And just one other thought piggybacking on that structural comment, when you have a big staff, you know, if you have 105 to 150 players on your team, then you have a big enough support staff where I think like basketball, you know, they might have 15 guys in the locker room.

And so they maybe can't have chaplains and Bible study leaders and that sort of thing. But different assistant coaches with different beliefs. You know, Nebraska would be a great example of that.

Right. Ron Brown. Well, lots more we could talk about there.

And of course, lots of people are talking about, you know, Wes Huff on the Joe Rogan podcast and follow that up with Mel Gibson, of course, Catholic and believes in the resurrection and sometimes a little crazy. But, you know, there are lots of people are talking about what is, it genuinely seems to be an openness. And interestingly, of course, we're talking about sports, but all these examples have to do with men.

And that also fits with what a number of even secular sources have said about young men in

particular being more open to religion, more open to conservative ideas. And I think what we're likely to see is what has happened at different times in history is it's really good. There's an openness.

And what happens is sometimes then there's a syncretism. This is what Justin's hitting on. It's one thing to, yes, Jesus.

It's not okay. Now, where's the rub? Even in our culture, it's not that people have an easy time believing in the resurrection. But there's in our culture moment, there's less offense to that than what Jesus says about marriage, for example.

So there's always going to be, you know, I forget what, you know, text thread we were on, but somebody passed around this rally, this Catholic rally and a bunch of young, you know, thousands of young people chanting for Mary, for the Virgin Mary. So, you know, as Protestants, I'm not seeing that as a good sign. But also an interesting sign that across the board, maybe people are open to transcendence, open to seeing Christianity as something almost subversive and something that pushes back against the emptiness that's out there.

So lots of things we could talk about. Have you guys a quick note on this one, Kevin? Have you guys noticed there's less opposition to it? So go back to the Tebow era or go back to Kurt Warner or any number of prominent examples that we've had there. There was almost always backlash.

There were almost always voices out there saying, oh, come on. Just be quiet, play ball. We're sick of hearing this.

That's the part that I don't hear a lot about right now. And that could just be the changes with sports media. It could be that.

Well, I think it's very anecdotal, but I think even on college campuses, I think there's been a change in the last five years. If you say five years ago, you know, wokeness, what exactly does that mean? But it communicates something. If you think peak wokeness and just more hostility.

And not that there isn't. And of course, it's going to depend on are you at a, are you at an SEC, ACC school or are you up in the Northeast? But I think there really are discernible changes. I mean, I think I mentioned before, when I dropped my son off at NC State in the fall, and I mean, the only signs for campus groups I saw.

I mean, it was 80% of them were for Christian groups. Some Catholic, some evangelical. And then there was a few for some Jewish groups.

Now that's NC State that, you know, it's not, I don't know, it's not Harvard, Princeton, Yale. But it, there's an energy and an openness, I think. And we should, we should give thanks for it.

And churches should be teaching and preaching boldly, humbly, joyfully. So amen, lots of good

things going on. Let me talk about, here we are recording.

This is the middle of January. Are you guys New Year's resolutions people? Do you have goals for the year? Do you stick with them, Colin? You got anything that you're trying to, you know, you're, you're, you know, an intellectual, emotional, spiritual, physical specimen. But do you have any, any goals for the New Year? How are you doing? Trying to dress up, dress up my friends, one of my, one of my goals.

You know, I, I, I don't think I'm any different from anybody else. I have aspirations relating to, to food that I shouldn't be eating and being in the gym and, and reading my Bible, you know, all, you know, regularly and taking notes and things like that. So it's pretty mundane.

The only difference for me is that with working out and things like that, I decided to try to get a jump start. I thought, I can wait until January. But the problem is there's a lot of bad stuff that can happen between October and January one with the holidays and everything.

So I thought this is going to be easier if I get this thing going back in October. So I've made some major changes there. And I think one of the, the thing for me is, it's taking me a long time to figure out what works and what doesn't work within the nature of ministry and things like that.

But I've noticed that scheduling something that I'm paying for outside of my house that's guided is what's really helpful for me. So yeah, I definitely have those basic, basic thoughts and, and I've just learned over the years that those things are even more important to keep up this intellectual and physical and spiritual. So, so give us what's one of the specific ones, because if you name it here in front of our millions of listeners, then we'll be able to hear how the countable.

What, what do you mean? Just like what? Yeah, what? Go to the gym three times a week or run a half marathon. Yeah, three to five times a week. Okay.

And, you know, I don't know how you guys are with this. And Kevin, you, how long have you been running? Just like that's been your thing. I've always liked running ever since I was in middle school.

And I got married and I didn't do nearly as much of it. And, you know, put on one or two pounds a year. And then you multiply that and it adds up.

And then I got celiac. I thought I was just getting in great shape. Turns out I had a disease that helps me lose weight.

But since 2014, I have been very disciplined in running, biking, or swimming, now mostly running or swimming, you know, almost six days every week. Well, part of what I was asking is because there are many reasons for me to be working out, many reasons for me to go into the gym. It's a great thing just given the nature of my work because I'm in the office a lot or I'm in

the house a lot.

So I get to see other people and things like that. But I've heard this from plenty of others and I was wondering about it relating to running. Clearly it affects my mood.

I'm in a much better mood after I work out. It's clear that there are direct mental effects of that. So you hear that about running and whatnot.

But if you had talked to me about that in my 20s, I never would have thought about that or connected with that. But that's one thing. It is related to maturity, spirituality and things like that.

I've just realized how important it is for my job, for my spiritual health and everything like that, that just to be in the gym three to five times a week. I mean, it really is and everyone knows this, but it really is hard to exaggerate how good it is for someone. I'm sure I get more done by doing exercise than I would do without it for all those reasons you said.

It helps emotionally. It helps with stress. It helps spiritually.

It helps physically, of course. And for me, I never ever run with anything. I don't run with my phone.

I don't really use it. I never listen to anything. I don't listen to music.

I don't listen to podcasts. I'm kind of, you know, sometimes people will find out you're a runner. Can we go running together? And I might do that, but really it's like, that's me time.

No, I am happy to go out and run in a straight line and turn around and come back and have my thoughts or pray or just look around. Yeah, it's really invaluable. And then swimming is great because you can't.

It's really hard to talk underwater. So, I have been to hotel pools where the kids have their iPhones and a plastic pouch around their neck underwater. Yeah.

That's really a sign of like civilizations almost over. I haven't seen that one yet. Kevin, that's going to be one of the few times in your life really when you could just be like, there's no input.

And nobody has your ear. Nobody can bother you. And I wish I were better at, I mean, it's one of the things I'm always trying to do better.

I wish I were better at just sticking my phone in a drawer, turning it off, not looking at it for hours, but I'm not. And so that's a really good, good. I don't, I don't have my phone by my bed.

I put it in somewhere else. So I try to do that, but I'm too tethered to it. It's a bad habit.

And so exercise, yeah, you're right. It's one time absolutely no input. Well, what about you? You got any goals, Justin? Yeah.



Just want to maintain my current weight for the year. No, I, I think Colin's laughing a little too loudly. No, I was there.

There was an elder in my last church. That's a big accomplishment for me at this. No.

So I used to say that my goal was to never get 200 pounds. And there was an elder in our church who said that, you know, that was my goal too. And I was kind of looking at like, I, you're, you're not 200 pounds.

And he says, that was my goal. So once I hit it, I kept going. I didn't want to be 200 pounds.

My goal in seventh grade. Yeah, I have the same desires to be exercising more, to be praying more, to be in the word more. I try to be in my Bible every day, but I am just, have never been one of those guys that at the end of the year think 365 days, I followed a plan with Bible reading.

And I want to do that. So I'm doing the ESV study Bible Bible reading plan, which is, is nice because you can do it online, but you can also, it's also synced up with audio. So you can listen to the podcast each day because of the reading.

So I've been enjoying that so far. I lean a small group in our small church. And before the new year kind of led the group talking about resolutions and really liked an article at TGC that I don't know what year it was done several years ago.

Pastor Jeremy Liniman wrote about trying to think through a rule of life rather than resolutions. And maybe, maybe Barry or somebody can link to it in the show notes, but I put it together in a Google Doc and it was just really helpful for me because when I think about resolutions, I think about eating, exercise, Bible reading. And he was just coming up with different categories that don't even have to be daily commitments, but can be weekly, can be monthly.

You know, maybe a commitment of want to have somebody from the church into our home once a month. That's not committing to doing that every day, but at least once a month we want, want to do that or I want to work on building relationships with coworkers or I want to do something where I'm volunteering in the community, something like that, which I just thought was a really helpful exercise that goes beyond just the health and praying and Bible reading to kind of think through some other facets of life and to think through they don't need to just be daily commitments. Some of them can be weekly commitments.

Some of them can be monthly commitments. So I found that a helpful framework to try to think through just various areas of life. Where can I be God-centered and gospel-centered and biblical? Just to mention the last one that I hope I don't annoy our kids too much with it, but I know most families have group chats and just trying to not just do informational, you know, what time does practice end and not just do, here's a funny meme, but here's a verse to think about today.

You know, here's something that encouraged me, and just to feed biblical truth into even the group chat, that's something I'm trying to do these days without going overboard or being hyper-spiritual. It's like, can we try to be thinking about eternal things along with all of the mundane things of life? That's good. My ratio of memes to Bible verses on the family group chat is 100 to 1 or 100 to 0. So that, no, that's good.

How to redeem that? It is when we talk about these disciplines and eating scripture. It's a lot of exercise. It's a lot of the same things for most people.

It is always that fine line between, okay, we believe in God's grace we don't want to think, all right, I'm a good person today. I did it. And yet, you know, you miss 100% of the shots you don't take.

So you need to have some goals and some people to help you stay accountable. For me, one of the things, I mean, for years, I'll always say, I've said this often to you just at the beginning of the year, I say, I want to be more faithful in memorizing scripture. There have been seasons in my life where I was, you know, really disciplined in that.

And it's amazing. It's not that every one of those verses or chapters or parts of the Bible, I could just recite off the top of my head, but it's amazing how quickly they come back. Or if you hear it, it's just there.

And so, you know, any of us, anyone listening to this, however old you are. And if you say you're bad at memorization, just think a verse a week. You know, even two verses a month.

If you did two verses a month and, okay, so you got 24 verses, even if you forgot half of them, they're going to be somewhere there and you're going to get to the end of the year and you're going to have, and just when I'm memorizing scripture, it's amazing. It's how the Lord works, but how often, oh, that's really relevant right now. And it's one of the things all of us, I mean, we know Andy Davis, he literally wrote the book on scripture memory and he's amazing, just has maybe the whole New Testament by now.

But, you know, John Piper, in a way that isn't showing off, he is always on panels and conversation. He just has scripture at his fingertips. And it's powerful.

It's a way in our own hearts and in talking to other people that it has the Word of God as power and to be able to cite a general truth or in a paraphrase is good, but to quote it even better. So, you know, navigators has their list of Bible, I think it's 60 of them. And I've, you know, made it through a third of them a whole bunch of times.

And then, okay, then it starts to get hardy kind of back up. So I'm stating that out loud here that I'm really trying to stick with that. And it's like a lot of disciplines.

If you can do it for five minutes a day, it's not a big deal. And if you fall behind, then okay. Justin, I'll plug, you didn't ask me to, but I just plugged the ESV app.

Of course, there's lots of good apps and Bible things. But I do think, you know, I do think reading the physical page is different than listening to it. But for a lot of human history, most people listen to something read to them.

So, I think ideally you have more input by physically reading a page. But if you can't do that, and there's some days that I'm listening to it. And so the ESV app has at least one audio that's free and you can then subscribe to it and now unlocks 10 or 12 different voices.

And you can put, you know, ambient music in the background. I'm sure there's other good apps, but listening to scripture can be really powerful too. Now, it's one thing if you're just doing it and it's kind of there to check a box and you're not paying attention.

But to have someone read it to you, sometimes even hits you in a different way. Do you guys have just last thing on this kind of topic? Do you have productivity kind of books that you've read over the years, time management? I know some people say it's not time management, it's person management. Looking back, I think this is, so I'm in a group of eight or nine guys from seminary, we get together every year for a reunion.

It's a great time of laughing and food and praying and a lot of us have the same issues every year. And I would say for about 10 or 15 years, they always knew my issue was I feel overwhelmed, I feel busy, I don't know, I'm kind of stressed out. And I would say the last number of years that hasn't been as dominant, I was trying to think, well, what changed? And I think it was, I don't think it's any one thing, it's probably you get older, you're more okay letting go with some things, you understand your limitations.

Maybe you get to a point in your career where you have more freedom to do the things that you want to do and think you're good at. I think you increase in some competencies, you get better. So it's not any one thing, but I would say certainly for the first half of my ministry, I was reading almost always reading a productivity book.

And sometimes Christian, sometimes not Christian. And it's a sort of thing, it's not where you're going to get your richest, deepest theology. And if it's all you're reading, it's going to leave you pretty shallow.

But there's a lot of good insights that I picked up from most of those books. There was almost always two, three things that stuck with me or really were helpful. And in the middle of that, I wrote *Crazy Busy*, which was my own attempt to try to process these things.

So I got a bunch of books, but I'll start with you guys. Do you have any of this kind of genre that you recommend to others that have been helpful to you? Colin? Well, yes, but Ivan Mesa, my good friend, our friend and colleague, and he is the expert when it comes to this stuff. And I find, I think I'm pretty productive and I'm certainly very highly motivated and I'm not sure what it is, Kevin.

It doesn't connect the books, the thought of reading the books somehow to me seems

unproductive. It's a very odd thing to say because I don't think it's true. I just find other people, I respect that other people enjoy them.

And obviously these books sell like crazy, but I think one of the things, I don't know what it is that I'm skeptical about. I think it's in some ways that these systems seem to come and go so often. And I kind of just, I don't know.

Maybe it's also my intuitive sense of things, but I'm not really good when it comes to this stuff. Yeah, it is interesting. That's another podcast sometime.

What's a category of book that other people find really helpful? Because we all have those that people, I know people are always reading certain kind of ministry books and I say, I feel bad just saying, I don't know, I feel like I know what they're going to say. So I totally get what you're saying, and yet I would eat those up like skittles. I just, I knew it was skittles, not a steak, but I always liked those and connected to those and enjoyed hearing what other people do.

Justin, has this been a diet of your reading? Yeah, this is going to be a bummer of a segment for you. All right. Yeah, I have not read a productivity book for years.

Last one I read was probably crazy busy, but, you know, back in the day, David Allen's getting things done system was kind of, you know, everybody was talking about it and we even tried to kind of institutionalize it a cross way to some degree. And then Matt Berman came out with his, what's best next. We was trying to take some of those insights and, you know, he tried to read every productivity book on the planet and then apply kind of more of a gospel centered framework.

How do you think about productivity? What is productivity? Why should we be productive and some of the best practices? But since that time, I really haven't returned to that. And I wonder if some of the tools now that are available technologically help to do that to some degree that can, you know, there's apps and there's websites and there's tools that make people less dependent on, I'm going to go read a book about how to do a system and implement it, but, but I don't know. You're asking the wrong two guys.

Great segment. Well, here's what I've liked. I read a couple of maybe two or three or Peter Drucker books, you know, that's going way back and, you know, and just his idea of posteriorities.

I've shared with many audiences many times that you don't have priorities in your life unless you have posteriorities unless you have things you're not going to do. Everyone can say, I have 10 priorities. No, you don't have 10.

That's a to-do list. You don't have a priority until you have things you aren't going to do. So I talk about that at some length in my pastoral ministry class that pastors get into ministry because they like to say yes to people, which is good.

And yet one of the hardest things is you have to be a no person. Your schedule is going to be overrun. Your budget, your ministry is going to be overrun if you just say yes.

So that was helpful. I've, you know, Greg McEwen, his book, Essentialism, and then the follow-up was less so, but I found that to be really helpful just to think of it. And a lot of these, you go, okay, here's somebody's ideal and I realize this is not going to be my deal, but essentialism.

Just talking about what are you kind of uniquely good at. I've read, I think, almost all of Cal Newport stuff, deep work and several other iterations of that. Just to talk about how you need undistracted time set aside to really do deep thinking and processing.

You know, lots of people out there still on the bestseller list is the book Atomic Habits. There was an earlier book called Habits. I forget who wrote that.

What's the main upshot on Atomic Habits? I'm noticing, by the way, that a lot of what I've learned, I learned these things downstream from people like you. And so it's sort of like what Piper says, not books that change you, but paragraphs. It's like the insights I seem to get and try to implement, but without reading the book.

So this way that I learned from others. Yeah, I think, you know, the Atomic Habits, and I think you can go and find a podcast with these guys. And sometimes you get in our podcast, somebody interviewing them, you get the gist of the book.

But, you know, he has different, in order for a habit to stick, you have to make it attractive, you have to make it simple. So really things, you know, if you want your Bible reading, you know, put your Bible out. So you find it first thing in the morning, you know, couple it with a cup of coffee.

These are a lot of things when you hear that. Oh, yeah, that makes sense. It's intuitive for a lot of people, but they're just good reminders.

So, boy, lots of other things, but that's probably enough since this was a dud of a segment. So if you don't like any productivity books, you think they're complete waste of time that are unspiritual, you have some friends here on this panel. If you like reading those and you've read dozens of them like I have, then you can pick up some... Kevin, I can think of a worse segment.

You could do a segment on running books. I have read dozens of running books also. Nope, I didn't think that was going to be... Maybe the previous guests? Yeah, previous guests.

What do you do at... What do you guys do at the gym? Are you guys, you know, lifting, hitting the weights? You guys are looking swole. So, I mean, I did was just talking about this with my wife last night, and it's just taking me so long to kind of figure this out. I found that I just need a mixture of different things, and I need other stuff so that I'm not bored with it.

Is that why you mix martial arts? Exactly. Exactly. Some boxing in there.

I saw Mike Tyson could still do it, and I thought, well, hey, let's jump in. Get back in this. No, I mean, the strength stuff comes naturally, but cardio just kills me.

That's one reason I'm doing a client in the running direction. Justin and I have said to each other many times, you know, the strength stuff comes naturally to Colin? That's true. Well, I just, I mean, it's just... What did my dad say one time? He said something like, Colin, there have been many happy, heavy handsons over the years.

Here's the type of Midwesterner where people are like, you know that guy, Colin? He's as strong as it not. It's all about taking tractor wheels out in the field, turning them over, not for exercise, but just because dad's like... Just go ahead and clean the field. It's over Miyagi of Midwestern farmers.

Have you guys seen those memes about Midwestern men's calves? Yeah. The calf muscle? Well, it's like, I don't know, this guy hasn't seen a gym in 50 years. He's got the biggest calf muscles.

And then somebody replied to that and say, well, I'm guessing by the top half of that guy, he's carrying around like a hundred more pounds than the rest of us. Right, no wonder. I don't know.

I resemble that meme. Yeah, but I don't know. That's, I mean, so I, I love, I know that so many people love running, but some of the same, but it just seems like the variety, the strength, the fact that I struggle so much with cardio, though I do do it a lot to try to improve in those ways.

I once asked some of this question, Kevin, and I guess it would be interesting to flip back to you to say, do you think everybody could enjoy running? I'm not talking to people who have, you know, some clear disabilities that wouldn't allow it, but do you think, like, if I wanted to run a marathon, do you think that I could just, you give me a plan and I could just pull it off? I think you could finish. Okay. A marathon.

No, I think lots of, I think most people like having run and maybe not even like having run. No, I, lots of people hate running. So you, you are in, in good company if people don't like running.

I don't think everyone likes if needs to like running. I have, I have a physique to use the term euphemistically. That is, it is, it is better at long distance running away from people and then lifting weights.

I wish I, when I go into the weight room, I am like every stand-up comedians. I'm like, oh, I'm in the painter scaffolding, you know, Brian Regan. I'm like, what, what, what am I doing with, with this thing? I went once over break with my son.

Of course he's 19 and he's a, you know, just a beast guy. He's like, yeah, he's like, dad, you don't know. That's not really how you use that.

Like, I don't know. I just run. I can't be lifting weights.

Put your shirt back on, dad. Son's out, guns out. We have two other sponsors this week.

First, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. We just had Jonathan Master, their president and friend of mine up here to preach at Christ Covenant. He's doing a great job and really good things are happening down at Greenville.

They have their annual conference. It's called the Confessional Conference. In Greenville, this March, 11 through 13.

And this year, the theme is on understanding the role of the pastor. But this is a family conference. So certainly it's for pastors and those training for ministry.

But anyone who wants to understand life in the church and what it means to be a pastor, how they can encourage their pastor should check it out. Teachers like Craig Troxel, Jonathan Master, Terry Johnson, Ian Hamilton, and several others. So go and register [gpts.edu](http://gpts.edu). Early Bird deadline is January 31.

And finally, also grateful for Westminster Theological Seminary highlighting today their Master of Arts in Theological Studies program. If you want to study God's Word in greater depth in this new year, including Learning Greek and Hebrew, you can check out WTS's Biblical Language Certificate Programs. These are 100% online.

We'll help you tackle the difficult task of learning a new language so you have people to lead you in the way and hold you accountable, but also at your own pace, learn and grow. Enjoy these designed courses with expert instruction, student support, and get a certificate and be plugging along toward a future degree at [WestminsterGoToWTS.edu](http://WestminsterGoToWTS.edu). Well, this is a great, great LBE. Okay, I'm going to try to redeem the time productivity-wise with one final category of conversation.

Like a lot of guys, we are probably typical in not talking about our families as much as we should. How many times did it come back from some trip with guys or even talking to you? How come Justin's wives? Oh, that's... Yeah, when did they get married? That's right. They have kids.

And so maybe kids another time. And Justin, introduce us to... She's not here, I don't think unless she's hiding somewhere, but tell us about Leah. How did you guys meet? How long you been married? And then we'll go to Colin and then we're going to circle back around and see any lessons learned over your years.

But tell us about married life. Yeah, we were married in 1998, summer after graduation from college. So a whole bunch of Christians in our school that were in our ministry that we all graduated at the same time.

We all got married at the same time, so we've been married since 1998. And we met each other in elementary school. We were in the same United Methodist sit up in the balcony and laughing during the sermons as we shouldn't be doing.

But she was one grade older than me. And yeah, same youth group. And I liked her starting between fifth and sixth grade.

And she liked me during our final year in college. So we had a... It's a long time to live with unrequited love. It is.

Tell me about it. But the Lord was gracious and she finally came around. And I think looking back, if we had started dating in fifth or sixth grade, it probably... We started dating in fifth or sixth grade.

We've been together 35 years at age 45. So no, I'm blessed to have her as my wife. And God's given us five children through adoption, so we're very thankful.

She's a good compliment to me with an E. What is one of her top gifts, virtues? What's the thing that people just say? They walk away really impressed with Leah. Everybody who meets her likes her and wants to become her best friend. And she will come back from the grocery store with a new Facebook friend.

And I say, like, I've never talked to a person in a grocery store ever. Yeah, even the person at the checkout. How's it going? A nod? It's sufficient.

We're not here to... I know. Just give me the receipt. I don't want to build a relationship.

But she just has an ability to talk to anybody, to ask questions, to make them feel like they're the center of the universe. She's interested in people. She forms friendships quickly and everyone likes her.

So quite different from me. I'm just eager to get back to work. Are you more like opposites attract? Or you birds of a feather? Yeah, maybe a little bit of each.

But I think we fit well together. But she definitely has a lot of strengths that I don't have. Did she know that you liked her since 5th grade? Was it like, so you're saying there's a chance and you just... Yeah, I had 15 years.

I had a friend talk to her friend on a youth group trip. And she was like, I don't want to date during the summertime. This is between 5th and 6th grade.

And she was like, during the school year, that's... And she had a boyfriend come 6th grade. But we remained good friends the whole time. And I wanted to make it happen.

The Lord's timeline was a little slower for her. What your parents have allowed you to date? Did they have strict rules? Did they call it courting? Did you have to talk to the father? No. I mean, not strict kind of courtship rules back then.

So I think they would have been fine with it. Do you not hear the United Methodist part of the conversation? No. That's a conversation for a whole other day.



All right. Colin, how long have you been married? I've been married since 2003 to Lauren. And we met right after she got to college.

It was one of those campus ministries you're talking about there with all the signs and everything. And she had just become a Christian as a senior in high school. So pretty dramatic conversion toward the end.

She went to Northwestern. Yeah. So she came up to Northwestern, wanted to be on Sports Center.

Came up with a lot of... Why did she... I mean, that's a big deal to move from Alabama to Chicago. It was just because of that program? Yeah. So extremely rare.

So if you're going to do broadcast journalism, you've got a few really good options. Syracuse would be a good option. Missouri would be a good option in Northwestern.

But just kind of with where she was with her academic performance, she was looking at Ivy League schools. So Northwestern ended up being kind of the combination of both there. But extremely uncommon for people in now where we live in her hometown in the south to go to college in the Midwest at all.

And definitely not Northwestern. So yeah, it's a totally foreign thing. So that was very odd.

There were definitely way more international students than there were Southerners. And so we remember a friend of mine who was leading a Bible study that she was in. She came up to me at one point and said, God, you got to meet this girl.

She loves college football. And that was odd for a woman in college at Northwestern at the time. But it was also somewhat odd for me that I cared so much about college football.

So we bonded over that initially. But, you know, she has any number of different academic interests as well from history to theology to politics. We took some classes together, things like that.

Just had a lot to talk through. Even though I think in a lot of ways we were more of an opposites attract situation just when you start with the very premise of her being a vegetarian and me growing up on a farm of beef cattle. She still is.

She still is. She was horrified by Upton Sinclair as a sixth grader. Kids read that stuff.

Exactly. You sound like my father-in-law. What are they brainwashing these kids with these days? So that kind of speaks to she's a more self-controlled person than I am.

And very, very loyal, very consistent. And yeah, so we always have plenty of things to talk about. We just actually started leading a small group from our church again in our home.

And was a great example of what we like to do together in ministry, but also just seeing her shine. Just one last point here. Of course, the three of us have known each other for a really long time.

And you guys have known me for a long time before we had kids. And there were a lot of reasons related to that, but especially infertility for a long period of time. And it's always interesting to me now that if you met Lauren, you'd think she's the quintessential mother.

She's so caring. She's so thoughtful. She's so, she's got everything put together.

She's helping out at the school, all that kind of stuff. And yet, if you had met her before that, she was the corporate woman. She was the high-powered corporate executive at age 29 out in New York, things like that.

And so neither, I mean, that wasn't a bad period of time. The Lord did some great things, but it's just been wonderful to see her live into that calling and to really flourish that way as hosting people in our home and helping to lead that group and being a mom and our kids just adore her. Do you agree on the Civil War? The war between the states? The war of Northern aggression? I'll tell you the little story on that one.

There was a time when we went around and did battlefield tours. So again, she shares some of the historical interests, not to my level, but, you know, she's a wonderful kind wife. So go to this in battlefields.

And there were moments where we'd end up in these different places and she would become very kind of unexpectedly emotional and just kind of connecting with the experiences that the soldiers would have faced in these specific locations. Found out later, they were the literal locations where her great-grandfather had been. And specifically one of them where he had been wounded and ultimately how he survived the war.

Was he at Gettysburg? He was at Little Round Top at Gettysburg, 4th Alabama, Little Round Top. That's where he lost his arm. He charged up.

He faced the bayonets. Yeah, he was not the side with the 20th Maine, but he was right next to them. Right? Yeah.

And went right up the hill. So you know, you can basically identify almost exactly where he fell. A U.S. surgeon saved his life.

We still have not only, you know, that we have X-rays that were later taken. We've got all the medical reports from the surgeon and everything. So, yeah, obviously she, you know, she's on the northern side in terms of the outcome.

But there was just a direct connection. And I will sometimes just look at our kids and you think looking back that, you know, the actions that happened that day were the reason they're

around. It's amazing.

So, Kevin, share your story. I met Tricia. I was at Gordon Conwell.

She was at Gordon College. Not officially together by that point, but two miles down the road. The Gordon Conwell guys sort of had a reputation because we could use the facilities at Gordon College, their gym and things.

And, you know, there's a lot of guys at seminary. There's a lot of Christian girls at the college. So it was sort of, what's the seminary guys? Voltering in, swooping in here.

What is bad reputation? So I always made a point to, I'm not, I'm just using the gym. I'm not here to try to find younger coeds. But we met at church, went to First Presbyterian Church in Ipswich on the North Shore.

We really love that church. It was OPC at the time. It's now PCA.

And she would say, you know, that she met me or she saw me. I was in Sunday school class. I wore funny ties.

I said funny things and would answer the questions like that hardly sounds like me. And she was there and we first met a long story. But we, the first time that I remember meeting her was after I had preached one Sunday night.

I like to say that I had an altar call and she came forward. But just met and it clicked that, oh, Tricia Beebe, you're a student at Gordon College. Ah, and honestly, since that day in February of 2000, not gone a day without thinking of her.

So we got married in January of 2002. So we just celebrated last week, our 23rd wedding anniversary. And we have nine kids ages four through 21.

And I mean, everyone, I mean everyone who knows us as a couple. Say, Kevin, you are really lucky. Even, you know, it's not, you expect that from her parents, but it's also my parents.

It's also my friends. Like you really hit the jackpot. Not, not, not, not just being polite.

You really did. So she is just lots of people say, oh, you, you know, Tricia can make people feel really welcomed, very warm, remembers details. She's, she's terrible at trivial pursuit.

She's terrible at knowing what's going on, like cultural things. Joe Rogan. What? Who's that? Never heard of him.

And she'll just remember stuff about everyone's life just last week Colin. She said something like, I don't know how it came up. I think one of the, the sports report, there was, you know, one of these women on the sidelines.

And I said to my daughter, you know, would you want to do that? And she's like, no way. And

then Tricia said, well, isn't Colin's wife wanted to be on ESPN? Like what? I don't call it a long time. I don't think if Colin's married.

What? I don't think so. And she was right. Yeah.

So she is really, she is a great friend to people. I always tell people, you know, I don't know what my approval rating is at any church. But hers is always a hundred percent.

Great job security. People love Tricia. And, you know, I know lots of good Christians who have really hard marriages for all sorts of reasons.

And maybe that's another podcast episode or almost out of time. And I sympathize with that. And there's lots of good resources.

And you can both be really mature, godly people. And for whatever reason, the family you're from, the way you talk or can't talk, it's just really hard. And of course, we have, you know, disagreements and fights like anybody.

But it's, it's, it's just because of Tricia, it's not been hard. I think marriage, and for me, has been easier than I thought. And then I'm a worse parent than I thought.

I read a whole bunch of marriage books. And I'm like, oh, okay. Tricia makes this relatively smooth.

And then there's a whole bunch of ways. I'm not the parent that I, I wish I was. Any quick, okay, quick, you know, to distill the years of wisdom that we have right now among the three of us.

But there's anything you just think, I wish I could tell my younger self or I wish I could tell somebody out there in, in, in married life, what sort of lesson have you learned that you would want to pass on? I'll, I'll just give you, you know, one, I, I think, I'm speaking to husbands in particular. But when you do have those disagreements, you know, to just take the first step of a little thawing. Now, I've been blessed that with, with, you know, some, some marriages, the spouse just puts it right back in your face.

But with, with Tricia, anytime I take a little step. And even if I'm sort of telling myself, I'm not sure I really think I'm at any little step toward her, you know, just creates a little thawing of the ice. Even sometimes I will say, and it gets a kind of joke, I will say, when I can tell, we're both mad at each other, I'll say, I just want you to know, honey, I forgive you.

Which is, you know, sort of not what to say in one level, because that implies that she's sinned against me and she'll give a little smirk. But anything you can do to forgive, to take one little step to be the one to open up the conversation. And at least, you know, both of us in marriage are not the, the yellers, we're not the ones that burn hot in an argument where the ones both of us would get cold and quiet.

And so it's, it's, that's one thing, laughter, I mean, there's so many things, I mean, lots of studies

have shown both with, with husbands and wives and with fathers and children. A warm, emotionally healthy atmosphere. And, you know, I just ask husbands, does your wife, does she laugh? You know, does she sing songs out loud? Does she ever do a, you know, a dance in the kitchen? You know, some of those are measures of just what's the atmosphere like in your house? What about you, Justin? Yeah, I don't know that I have great pearls of wisdom off the top of my head, but what, I'll just mention two things.

Number one, Andrew Peterson's song. I don't know if you guys recall, I'm sure you've heard of dancing in the mind fields. I think that is such a beautifully meaningful song.

And the lyrics to that, I think one of the lines is, is harder than we dreamed, but that's what the promise is for. And I think that it's helpful sometimes just to step back from all of the to-do lists and the mundane and the busyness of life and to really think about the covenant, the promise, the design of God. I think if you lose sight of that, then you can be just kind of tossed to and fro by, you know, the fun times and the really hard times and lose sight of what all of this is for was going to keep us together.

I think as, as the three of us, you know, approach the age of 50, we see more and more couples that once seemed really strong and that may have been part of our church and may have been in our peer group who are no longer together. And it's, you know, it's a great sadness, but to meditate upon God thought up marriage, God design marriage, He designed marriage to point to eternal realities. I think that for me has been just a really helpful thing.

And another thing that's just, it's a truism that's true, that you want to have just great quality time together. And that quality time can't be manufactured necessarily and it often comes in the context of quantity time that just being together and planning those times and having uninterrupted time together. The quality oftentimes emerges in that, but you can't necessarily just plan out.

We're going to have half hour of quality time on Wednesday. And so giving of yourself and your time and putting her before other things, I think, is not always easy, but it's really essential, I think, to making marriage work. Colin.

You know, it's more common for people today to be married later. And our own examples are on the opposite end of that. And there are many advantages to getting married later.

You often have more money, more established in your career. Maybe you've been through graduate school. Also, you often have more of a sense of who you are.

You've created some adult identity. You have more sense of your goals, things like that. You know, not a lot of that's the case when you get married younger.

I was 22. Lauren was, Lauren was 21 and met, as I mentioned earlier, you know, right after she became a Christian, essentially. And there are some real downsides to that.

But I still recommend it in many, many different ways because there's something that happens when you bond together in that one flesh union with somebody with whom you grew up. And part of it is a way of just extolling the virtue of my wife. And I can't hardly fathom how much she's had to endure and to put up with, for me to, you know, to sanctify.

And a lot of different ways just to mature emotionally, things that have taken decades. I mean, it's not like things that, oh, that was, you know, 15 years. No, we're talking things that continue to happen there.

And so there is a special kind of attachment that comes when you, when you haven't had money together, when you go through all of those formative experiences of becoming an adult and building a life together. There are a lot of things that you take for granted in good ways because you know of how you've leaned on one another in there. So, you know, different, different things can be advantages in different ways.

But the main thing I just look back on with appreciation is, is just for her loyal endurance through that process because it's definitely, definitely required in my case. And I'm sure in a lot of cases when, when you get married young. And you talk about, there are advantages to growing up and depending on the person and you form your, but, but the disadvantages are really the, the flip side of that.

If you're both 30 years old, you both have established perhaps your own career. You have friends on your own friends, your own friends, your own way of doing things, your own rhythms. Your own vacations, you always take with these people, you know, all sorts of things.

Yeah, you're, you're merging to much more independent lives than the model that, you know, I was 24 Tricia was 21. She graduated from college. I graduated from seminaries.

We're both, we're both starting out adult life. We both finished schooling and now we're doing this together. So our, you know, our first apartment, our first time because we grew up in, you know, families with four kids each.

So our first time ever living, you know, by ourselves is with each other. And we went grocery shopping to, she had never been grocery shopping. We went grocery shopping on our honeymoon together first time.

Yeah. So there are, there are advantages to it. Last thing as we wrap up and you guys have failed me so far in coming up with a lot of book recommendations, but marriage books, you know, some of the ones that a lot of people read, you know, I've, I've read and found helpful too.

So I Paul David trips book on, on marriage. I don't know if he has more than the, the first one, but you know, that was good. I read that early on Brian Chappell's book.

I remember reading was good. One by Mike Mason, the mystery of, of marriage, which is a

different kind of marriage book. It was a poetic kind of look at marriage.

I remember both my wife and I read that and liked it. Keller's book on marriage is good. There's Dave Harvey's Dave Harvey's when center say I do.

Do you guys have other marriage books you're often recommending to people or have helped you? Yeah, and in addition to the ones you guys have mentioned Gary and Betsy kucci crossway book on, I think, a gospel center marriage and your colleague Kevin Chad and Emily Mandix. Yeah, that's good. I have a co-authored book on gospel shaped marriage as well.

So I think Jay has a book on marriage. This momentary marriage by Piper too. I think a lot of these, this is similar to what we said about productivity books.

It's like you take, there's one big insight that you get from a book. You know, we, we all read shepherding a child's heart and there's like, okay, there's one good principle to take from that. I think Piper's to think about the, the permanency of the covenant and the reality of that.

You know, that may not be your, you know, here's eight things to do on a Monday morning type of marriage practical advice book, but you know, to kind of think about the big picture. I think Piper's book is still helpful there. And I'm not really recommending this book, but it is a, is a good conversation point.

The book, How to Stay Married by Harrison Scott Key. I cannot entirely recommend it because it's lots of bad language and it's a ludicrous situation. I just have to say, and the reflection on churches.

I don't endorse all sorts of stuff there. All I'm trying to say about the book is that it is, it's kind of a radical experience. Very honest, radically honest.

It's a radical extreme if of not only how exposed we get in marriage, also the objective strength of the covenant of marriage. And also the, the extent to which grace can extend. Again, I wouldn't, there's all sorts of caveats that I need to offer within that, but I think one reason it's appealed to a number of people is because it is the opposite in so many ways of the message that people hear today about marriage, which is basically it's a contract of convenience.

This is like, this is like a covenant of blood, you know, that you get in that. So again, caveats in there, but it's been a very, just an interesting observation that opens up some interesting conversations. Well, maybe another time we will talk about kids in parenting books.

As I often tell people, if I, I probably won't, if I write a parenting book, I think I'll call it the inmates are running the asylum. So I already have the title just in. Or yeah, or the subtitle is how to parent like a grandparent, because I'm already doing that.

Not the candy. Yeah, more, more on that later. You know, it's a bad guy.

I swear in a lot of candy. Yeah. When the kids are like, I'm grand, I'm grandparent, I have a lot

of rules.

Not doing something right. Colin and Justin, happy new year. Happy football watching, blessing to you and your wives and family and grateful for you guys and your friendship.

Thank you for listening to Life in Books and Everything, a ministry of Clearly Reformed. You can get episodes like this and lots of other resources at [clearlyreform.org](http://clearlyreform.org). Until next time, glorify God. Enjoy Him forever.

And read a good book.