

# OpenTheo

## Life and Ministry with Mark Dever

November 18, 2022



### Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

In this fun, punchy, and (hopefully) edifying conversation, Kevin interviews his good friend, Mark Dever, about his conversion, his ministry on Capitol Hill, whether you have to be an extrovert to evangelize, and why Kevin likes G.K. Chesterton and Mark doesn't.

Timestamps:

Intro, Guest, and Sponsor [0:00-4:21]

Does Membership Make Churches Unfriendly? [4:22-8:58]

Dever's Youth and Conversion [8:59-15:13]

Practicals for Evangelism [15:14-19:14]

Dever's Later Education [19:15-25:42]

Ministry in DC [25:43-36:16]

Dever's Influences [36:17-40:22]

Strengths and Weaknesses [40:23-44:10]

Presbyterians and Baptists [44:11-48:14]

Evangelicalism [48:15-55:12]

## Transcript

[Music] Greetings and salutations. Welcome back to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin DeYoung and we have a special episode today.

I know they're all special, but this one was recorded at Christ Covenant Church as a part of our Faithful Conference, which we host every fall. And we had the privilege of having Mark Dever from Capitol Hill Baptist Church be our speaker. And he gave four addresses

on healthy churches and healthy members from Saturday night and then through Sunday.

And as a part of the Saturday evening session, I always interview our speaker, which I enjoy. And Mark is such a good interviewer. And I was able to turn the tables and interview him.

And hopefully you'll enjoy it. I think it's okay to say it was enjoyable. Hopefully entertaining is in too strong a word and hopefully edifying in there as well as we talked for about an hour about Mark's conversion and his ministry on Capitol Hill and life.

And of course books and a little bit of everything else, including poking fun at each other, which is, which is some of Mark's love language. And I guess mine as well. So hopefully you will enjoy that.

And we'll benefit from the conversation we had. I want to mention before we get started with that, from Crossway, Creed's Confessions and Catechisms, a reader's edition edited by Chad Van Dixhorn. Chad's a good friend of mine and Chad has done a great job with this book and Crossway has done a wonderful job putting together Creed's, Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed, Bells with Confession, Hottabar Catechism, Candidora, Westminster, Shorter Catechism, all sorts of creeds and confessions in this really handsome reader's edition.

In fact, before Mark drove back up to DC, we went to the RTS bookstore. He got a stack of books, including two copies of this book, Creed's Confessions and Catechisms edited by Chad Van Dixhorn. So do look for a copy.

It's very useful. You'll want to have it. And then also, speaking of Chad's employer, Westminster Theological Seminary, a book put out by Westminster Seminary Press, which would be a good one to check out as we come into the Advent season called The Coming of the King, 25 Daily Readings for Advent by JC Ryle.

I hope you have read JC Ryle before. It's the most well-known book is Holiness, but everything Ryle writes is clear and punchy and to the point and edifying. So this is a great book to pick up.

Maybe give it away for a gift or Thanksgiving or Christmas. WGS books has it on sale for up to 56% off. That's just \$4 per copy.

If you buy in case quantity, maybe give away at your church. The Coming of the King, 25 Daily Advent Readings from JC Ryle. And now hope you enjoy this conversation with Mark Dever.

Glad to have you with us as we will go for another 45 minutes. Mark said, "Is this really going to be interesting for 45 minutes?" I said, "Well, you have something to do with

whether it is or it isn't." So we'll see if we go 30 or 35 or 45. But I love to be able to do this.

I enjoy getting to ask my friends questions. Mark, as he said to me earlier, he's usually the one who does interviews with people and ask questions. So maybe some other time.

You can come back and just ask me questions. But tonight I'm asking Mark questions about life and ministry. And it's a way to learn from my brother and to get to know him better and hopefully to enjoy eavesdropping in on this conversation.

We are recording it and I will put it out on my podcast, Life and Books and Everything, so that will come out. And if you're listening to this next week on the podcast, glad to have you. This is recorded on Saturday night at the Faithful Conference at Christ Covenant Church.

So Kevin, can I ask you a question? Okay. Let's say that your guest actually was married by North Carolina Presbyterian pastor 40 years ago. This guest? Tell us more.

And let's say this North Carolina Presbyterian pastor retired to the Charlotte area. And let's say I were wondering if anyone here was in contact with said pastor. Mention said pastor.

Ed Hennigar? Anyone? Anyone? Ed? Ed? Ed's not here tonight. Just come up and find me if you've got any info about Ed. Ed and Judy.

Hennigar. Is he still around? I don't know. With the Lord? I don't know.

Okay. Well, we will add if you're listening. He was an awesome pastor.

Great. Wonderful. We're going to get to your bio in just a moment.

But just following up, really appreciate what you said, the emphasis on conversion. And I didn't get a pracy on your talk, so I didn't know you were going to talk about the believe belong, but I'm glad you did because that is very popular. Has been for the last 20 years or so.

Now, you think made clear at the end that when you talk about believing before belonging, you don't mean you're not welcome to come and hear our sermon until you become a Christian, or you're not welcome to join our home group for a barbecue as we play games together. That's not what you're saying. Not at all.

When Jesus said in John 1334 and 35, a new command I give you love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another. This is how the world will know that you are my disciples. The world must somehow see that.

So I'm not suggesting that we have a kind of Amish retreat from the world as a kind of

surprising mission strategy. No, I think the distinctiveness of our lives lived among the world is what God uses to draw people. And certainly in our services, we very much want to have non-Christians present.

I'll often say when I'm preaching from the Bible, please open. It's found on page 709 and the Bible is provided. The larger numbers of the chapter numbers, the smaller numbers, the first numbers.

If you don't have a copy of God's Word, you can take it with you. Just take that one. Consider it a gift from our church to you.

We would love for you to have a copy of God's Word. So I'm always addressing non-Christians, but we don't determine what we're going to do in the service based upon non-Christians and will they understand it. I was really struck by the line you said because I've heard it before and it's well-intentioned that line and when you become a member at the church, that's when the church stops being for you.

I understand the impetus is... I think it was made well-known by a preacher here in this city. Perhaps. To bring people in an outward facing... Charlotte just gives us so many gifts.

There are many gifts. On the rest of the rest of evangelicalism, we thank you. Yes, we thank you.

And we're glad that we could marry you. Yes. So unpack a little bit more.

What's the problem with that statement? Isn't that just wonderfully evangelistic? It's to misunderstand what the church is about. The church is not a stationary Billy Graham rally. The church is far more than that.

It's not here merely to invite people to faith in Christ. It's here as a family to grow people up in Christ over decades. Paul says very clearly to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 14, 26.

All things must be done in the assembly for the edification of the church. So that's the ruler you use to figure out what do we do at church? What has God told us to do? What will build up his people? Yeah, and we understand some people can be a part of church as consumers. And if they are, they may not be converted if they're just here to... They could be immature.

Yeah, or immature. But so at our church in Washington for about ten years, sitting right up in the balcony was one friend who lived about half a block down. And he was a self-identified agnostic.

But he was there very regularly. Well, I was very glad to have him there. Sometimes my

sermon say things really just for him.

But I didn't calibrate my whole sermon to him. I calibrate my sermon to the members of the church. So, let's back up.

Did you grow up in the church? I grew up at the first Baptist Church of Madison, Bill Kentucky. And when did you become a Christian? Are you aware of the time? Yeah, I became a Christian as a teenager. What was that story? Because I have it correct.

You at least went through some time of being an atheist or an agnostic. How stole to the claims of Christ? Yeah, I was very proud of never being an atheist, but I was an agnostic. You know, an atheist has no God, an agnostic has no knowledge, no certainty.

And I would say from ages 10 to 13... Now, how did you come to that at 10? I mean, it happened. How does a 10-year-old decide I'm an agnostic? So, neither of my parents went to college. But at our home, the music that played all the time was classical music.

We had encyclopedias that I just read voraciously. I'm seeing the problems. And Dad had bought the Harvard Classic series along with the encyclopedias set in the 1950s.

And I literally, when I was 10, read the entire thing. I mean, I read the Iliad, I read the Ruby, I read the Socratic dialogue as a Plato. I mean, just the Koran.

You were a fun 10-year-old to be around. Man, I was out in the country. There was no neighborhood.

There weren't other kids to play with. I just sat and read all the time. Yeah, served you well, except you became an agnostic.

Well, it's because I was kind of on a search for the meaning of life. Yeah, right. You know, I thought this is going to be a skeleton in a box soon.

And when I'm 10-11, that's what I'm thinking about. This is going to be a skeleton in a box really soon. Is there anything I'm supposed to know about this life? And what brought you to the answer? I looked at different philosophies, and then that I sort of exhausted them.

And then I looked at different religions. And I looked at Christianity to last, because I assumed I knew it growing up in America. But then when I did read the Gospels, Jesus surprised me with things that seemed common, and I took for granted, and others that seemed strange.

And then finally, it was more of the historical question of trying to figure out what happened so that this Messiah figure, this leader who was crucified, which seemed to be historically reliable knowledge that he was crucified, how come a few days later all of his disciples who were betraying him or deserting him or denying him or scattering from him

a few days earlier, why are they all back together, telling the same strange tale about him getting up from the dead? And then they don't hide. They all end up dying for telling the same strange tale all over the world. So something happened, and it was me just working on trying to think through as clearly as I could from the crucifixion to the resurrection or Pentecost really, what happened.

And I realized while I was doing that, that I was reading and rereading the Gospels, but I was reading them like Thomas Jefferson, assuming that the supernatural was not true. And when I realized that the supernatural, I didn't know the supernatural wasn't true. I didn't know there wasn't a God.

I was not an atheist. I was always very proud of not being an atheist. To me, an atheist was in a worse position intellectually than a Christian, because at least a Christian thinks there's a source for absolute knowledge.

The atheist admits there's no source for absolute knowledge, yet makes this absolute claim. So to me, that seems an intellectually ridiculous place I didn't want to be in. So agnosticism, who can say, I'm not sure, seemed the way of wisdom.

So I realized I was reading the Gospels like an atheist, and I was kind of embarrassed in front of myself. And so I thought, okay, I guess I don't know there isn't a God. I don't know there isn't this God.

I guess I should read this stuff at least once, as if this could all be true. So is this when you were in high school or in college? High school. High school.

And then you went where for college? Duke University. Duke University. And what did you study there? Double majored in medieval history and New Testament studies.

And you were already a Christian. I was a young Christian. A young Christian.

Did you find opposition? Did you find intellectual questions that upset your young Christian faith? You went to Duke? I found a lot of opposition. I didn't find questions that upset my faith because I had become an agnostic. I mean, rather I had been an agnostic.

You've gone through. I became a Christian. So my agnosticism, I already had the problem of evil and all the things that some prophets would raise in objection to Christianity.

So I had already thought about those. No, Duke's liberalness in religion was interesting to me and useful filling out of stuff I'd already been thinking about. We were joking earlier.

Your wife has said this about you that you're always confident, sometimes right. That's right. Yeah.

Yeah. Thus, Kevin would say, "I'm a very happy Baptist." Yes. Very, very happy.

Very... A Baptist greater than which none can be conceived. Yes. Oh, that's a covenant on my way to the cabinet.

So where did you have that confidence as a young Christian? You did. Were you sharing your faith when you went to Duke? A lot. You were sure about this.

Yep. And owing somewhat to your personality? I think a lot. A lot.

It was a problem. Yeah. So how... You know, normal means of grace.

Yeah. For sure. Yeah.

Your height is part of your leadership. Something. Your mental quickness.

Yeah. So how about Piper drinks energy drinks before he goes in public? Yeah. People think it's the Holy Spirit.

It's energy drinks. There's not a thing in the world wrong with using normal means, ordinary means. He's so passionate because he's so short.

Is that what you're saying? No, I'm saying... Oh. I'm saying the caffeine energizes. Yeah, I understand.

So what do you... Ah. So there is it. He uses means.

He's sovereign. I understand. He's sovereign.

I understand. So what I'm talking about evangelism, it can seem like... Is evangelism just for extroverts? No. Max Stiles, a little book called "Evangelism" is really good for this.

He shows how it's the work of the whole church. And not everybody is going to have the same function in evangelism. So I think that there are people who prepare the meal.

There are people who present the meal. There are people who invite the meal. There are people who talk to you during the meal.

It's all part of evangelism. Because I've been with you and your... I wish I were the sort of personal evangelist I've seen you be. Just don't have a problem telling people things, starting up conversations.

That's a natural ability that the Lord's honed for spiritual purposes. Or would you describe it as something more? No. Sounds fun.

Would you have a gift of evangelism? I don't think so. No? You like to talk to people. If someone's sitting on the plane, do you hope that they talk to you? I mean, I would like

them to be converted.

Yes. I'm with you. It kind of depends on how much I've got to do.

Yeah. Right. I fly a lot.

I get tired. I... Yeah. Anyway.

I often have my assistant sitting between me and whoever the next person is. Yeah. But he'll be faithful to evangelism.

And I'll support him in it. I'll tell the story of myself. We're flying to California and you know, Barry who works with me.

We was sitting in the middle. There was another person over here. Turned out he was a pastor because we were flying to the same conference.

So it wasn't... It was a good guy to talk to and flying to Dallas. And they talked the whole way. And we got off of Dallas and I just said, "Barry, I'm really sorry.

You really took one for the team." And he said, "Are you kidding? That was the greatest two hours of my life." Or something like that. And they just had a great time talking. And so I really appreciate that.

I would hope that the person would say, "Can you tell me the gospel?" And then I tell them and they say, "Thank you. I believe." And then I could go back. And then I could share it on Sunday and people would say, "Wow." What a personal thing.

Well, okay. So here's the tip. The next time you're at the grocery store and you don't do the self-checkout.

But you actually get to the line. Just when you're there and the person of the cash register, just say, "How is the sermon in church on Sunday?" See what they say. You can say that here.

Yeah, just throw it out there. See what they say. Yeah.

Yeah. I remember several years ago at a meeting in Grand Rapids and Harry Reader was there. He's another good at talking to people and evangelists.

And just, "How can I pray for you?" That's another good line. People very rarely will turn down prayers. One of the things I've heard you say, I've repeated it, so I hope you said it, that perhaps the chief thing you pray as you think about evangelism and specific people is the conviction of sin and their life really has stuck with me.

Why is that so important? Well, it's very much like what I was talking about tonight. If we talk to people about Jesus, but they don't understand themselves as having any need for



a Savior, then other than them hearing from us about someone that we admire, what we're saying doesn't make a lot of sense. Some of you will have heard of Ray Comfort and Way of the Master.

Ray's a New Zealand brother who is a tireless evangelist. And Ray really specializes on using the Ten Commandments with non-Christians as a way to help them see their own sinfulness. And you can go online and watch them doing this in countless interviews with people at the local college.

And while I don't think you have to do evangelism that way, it is a good example of what I'm saying that you need the laws conviction before the gospel sounds like the good news it is. Go back to, you went to Duke. When do you start to feel a desire for ministry or do people tell you you should be a pastor? Well, it doesn't finally happen until in 1993, I visit the Capitol Hill Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington.

It had the name Metropolitan in it. I grew up staring at the call and then in my prayer time on the Monday of that weekend, I just feel a particular conviction that this is what the Lord wants me to do with my life. I was not expecting it all and really was not kind of pleased about it.

I'll come back to that. So you went to, before that you went to Cambridge. You did a PhD at Cambridge.

You did a PhD at Cambridge. You're going to teach historical theology. I'm going to be at Southern Baptist.

I grew up. At Southern Baptist seminary or just whoever would have you? Either. Either.

And who did you study with? At Cambridge. Yeah. My supervisor is Amunduffy.

Oh, you're right. Right. And you did Richard Sibs.

That would give us a minute on Sibs. Who was he? Born 1577, died 1635, never married, Anglican, evangelical preacher, masters in Catherine's on Cambridge, Richard Grey's in London. Must have his book, The Bruised Reed.

Wonderful meditations on the mercy of Christ. So never married? Is there a tradition among Anglican evangelicals that you've heard? Most of the pure ministers that we read, John Owen, Thomas Goodwin were in fact married. And it's usually their sons who end up doing the biographies and keep things.

Sibs never married. There was nobody to keep his life record. And we never had a biography written by a contemporary of his.

But yes, there are, you're referring to Charles Simeon and John Stott, Dick Lukehouse. Yeah, yeah. There is a kind of minority tradition of unwed ministers.

So when were you wed? You said 40 years. I was wed in June of 1982. And when did you meet Connie? In September of 1970.

Was she at Duke or Gordon Conway? Duke also. Okay, so you went to Gordon. Say me or Duke.

All right. So you went to Gordon Conway. Yeah.

As did you. And are you going to visit it before they sell it? Well, yes, I don't know. Yeah, I'm sorry for that.

So more on that later. There's the two of us. Okay.

So you were there. Good experience at Gordon Conway? Oh, great experience at Gordon Conway. It was wonderful.

And who was really influential for you there? Roger Nicole. Oh my goodness. I mean, this was in the 70s.

Did you overlap with Tim Keller? Tim's a decade ahead of me. Yeah. So I know I look old.

No, you don't. Look at it. Do you dye your hair? I could use some help.

I know you don't. Just keep going. I would never dye my hair.

And I think white hair is a sign of honor. It is. I respect you.

Yeah, thank you. I come by very naturally. That common grace.

Do you dye that color? Since I've been 30. Yeah. Anyway, Gordon Conway, Roger Nicole, Gordon Fee, David Wells, Meredith Klein.

I mean, just spectacular professors. But you went there not thinking you were going to ministry yet? Oh, I actually went there thinking of pastoral ministry. That was about the only six months that I did.

Oh, okay. But as soon as I get there, Nigel Kerr, Church issue prof, was he still there when you came? No, building named after him? Yeah. Yeah.

William Nigel Kerr, a wonderful man, took me for a walk and just said, I was in his English Puritanism seminar and he just said, listen, you're very clever. You really just need, you need to do a PhD in teach. And I kind of wanted to do that.

I like studying and teaching. So I let that and didn't think much more about it and just immediately shifted to thinking more academically and thus I went on after that and did a THM and then a PhD, which I would never have done. I was just going to go into the past.

Well, I get a PhD. You're going to go into the past, right? Well, I ask you, Kevin, why? But you have one. So you were there thinking of teaching.

Yeah. And this church found you? Yeah. So you had the church? Found in 1878, right on the same corner we're in now, same statement of faith.

It's always been an evangelical church. So I said Metropolitan was also in the name for liberal church. I assume it was named after Spurgeon's Metropolitan Medical at the time, which would be the most well known Baptist church in the world at the time at the nation's capital of England, right at the center.

So they with hope would have named this church the same. And it was what rolled at Carl Henry play in having you come? Carl F.H. Henry, theologian in the 20th century who helped found for seminary, the National Association of the States. And so you went, you weren't thinking about past from ministry? No, I was going to be back in the state, I was living in England.

I was going to be back in the states that summer teaching a class at Beeson on either English period as I were Jonathan Edwards. I did both and I don't know which I taught that summer. And I said, listen, I've got a free weekend.

I can fly with a pre-treat that weekend if you want. And so I did. And how many people were there at the 130 maybe? Older congregation? Very old.

So they were 70s, 80s and 90s. But we love you, we love all of you. Yeah, they were good.

They traded you well. Wonderful, wonderful. I mean, you know, I went there as the pastor.

I began in '94. And for the first couple of years, you know, if we take this as roughly the sort of shape of our church, because it is kind of like this, yours is much more beautifully done and larger. But if you imagine a smaller, older, uglier version of this, it's our church building.

It's very stately. It is more expansive. You know, we have four major intros and exits.

And in '94, '57, at every door there's a man in his 90s. You know, Homer, Calvin, Mr. Trainham, Charlie. So they were all in their 90s.

So you were 33? 34. 33? Yeah. So you were in the early 90s, you were in the early 90s.

And you were in the early 90s. You were in the early 90s. You were in the early 90s.

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You were in the early 90s. You were in the early 90s. You were in the early 90s.

You were in the early 90s. I think consumer debt is the same thing as the national debt. I don't think Romans speaks to our national debt as being morally wrong.

I think our national debt is an economic measure of what the economists who create the money supply and control it feel the worth of our economy is. It's just a different kind of thing. I don't think it's a clearly moral thing.

I think what we are currently doing with it is a good idea. I can't say it's a one-for-one moral matter. I didn't feel I had a voice that I could legitimately use my role as pastor in my members' ears.

Did you say something in the pastoral prayer after Roe was overturned? Yes. Yeah. Because there you get into a clearly moral issue.

If it's a burgafell, if it's Roe, when it touches issues, they're clear in scripture, partisanship doesn't matter. Both the parties can be in line of the post, both parties in line of the favor. They can split between them.

That's irrelevant. But when there are differences that are not fundamentally indisputably more-- They include some matters of prudence and the expectation. Love of taxation, right.

It's not a totally amoral issue, but it's not so clear. Right. So, campus outreach in 2010, campus outreach Charlotte, sent a group to Washington, D.C. to start a campus ministry.

Yeah. And is that still going? Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Thank you very much. Well, and then Dave Russell came back here. Yeah.

It was Mike Ross, who was the pastor here then. And so Christ Covenant passed off a sort of regional leadership for a new region. It's a capital hill Baptist.

And we-- it took our church a while to decide this. Dave Russell, who was the CO leader, spent some years cultivating our eldership in the best political sense. And it finally worked.

And then he came and moved and lived there and was an elder with us and led the ministry and did a superb job before he moved back down here, sort of re-planted Ochrester Baptist over on Monroe. No. Yeah, up in Cotswold.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Very good church. Yeah. Recommend people want a lot of Baptist church.

Go there. Yeah. So, we pray for them and they pray for us.

Yeah. Do you have a favorite book you've written? That I've written? Yeah. I mean, none of them.

I mean-- Do you like writing books, Mark? I don't think I'm a great writer. You like having written books? No, particularly. And you don't like writing them.

No. Do you like writing sermons? No. Do you like preaching sermons? I do like preaching sermons.

And do you-- And I like studying the Bible. You like studying the Bible. I love studying the Bible.

And do you like to be around people? I love being around people. You are. You like to be around people.

Yeah. When I get too old to preach, I just make me the receptionist. I would love to talk to people and see how they're doing.

Mark will put on Twitter. I'm working on my sermon on John right now in my study. Does anybody got any insights on verse 5? Yeah.

Anybody in the area want to come up and study with me? I don't think that's true. Yeah, no, but you-- OK, but you have-- I've been in your study when you're working. And you love to have people just drop in.

Yeah, because I can drop in and out of my work. Yeah. So I'm doing my work, but if I want to know what somebody thinks of somebody who says, "Hey, any thoughts about this?" And I'll throw out an idea.

I love having the kind of flash response. You like to be surrounded by people. Yes.



I mean, maybe not always, but a lot. Yeah, not every person, but some people. Yeah.

You, yes. Well, thank you. Is that-- you know, the senior pastor's personality does permeate into the congregation for good and for ill.

What is-- is that hard for the congregation to keep up with you? I mean, there are hundreds of them. No, I mean, I think they're fine. They're fine.

I don't know. Do they feel I got to be heaven-- I got to be as extroverted as Mark? I don't think so. Okay.

Good. And your wife likes to have all the people around her as long as they're upstairs and she can be downstairs? Yeah. Connie is more normal, I would say.

Yeah. She's not a huge introvert, but she's not a huge extrovert. But she's-- you know, if we're going to have somebody over in dinner, she's the one who suggested it, not me.

Yeah. Yeah. And if you are in D.C., you should visit Capitol Hill Baptist and just to picture it.

There's a parking lot. Well, for four cars, I mean, please walk there. Yeah, right.

It's very small. Uber, don't bring your car. Mark's house, townhouse, whatever is right there.

You can see the church. You have a 30 second walk. And then there's others that have-- and you've bought up some of the other buildings around.

So it makes community-- We built five new houses. Have you seen it since the new houses that we built up? No, just your pictures of it. Oh, you have come.

I haven't been there since then. Come over there. I've seen some of these things come to D.C. All right.

Well, if I have a friend who can invite me, I'll find a way to come. You know, RTS has a campus up there. Yeah, it's very good.

So Colin Hanson has written a book on Tim Keller that's coming out. And it's about becoming Tim Keller. He's tracing Tim Keller's influences.

So I said-- From his rural Virginia pastorate. Yeah, well, that's one of the-- but I think even before that, sort of what are the intellectual influences on Tim Keller and Colin says it's Ed Clowney, Jonathan Edwards. C.S. Lewis.

OK? It's good. I've asked Justin Taylor, who's an expert on John Piper's life. Yeah.

So what's John? He said it's clearly for. It's his parents. It's C.S. Lewis, Jonathan Edwards,

and Dan Fuller.

Yeah. That's good. You would have guessed that.

Yeah. Do you have such a list of two, three, four seminal influences living or dead on your life? I don't have a small list of that. There are a lot of authors that I like.

Who would be some of those? Calvin, John Gill, C.H. Spurgeon, John Bunyan, Martin Luther, Augustine. Kind of C.S. Lewis. Kind of a love hate affair with C.S. Lewis.

A lot of our friends have C.S. Lewis, and I'm with you. I mean, I certainly-- he's an amazing writer. There's lots of things that people from-- he's never been my go-to guy.

When I read him, and I haven't read him in a while, he's always better than I expect. I'm going, "Oh, that's insightful. Wow, that's well-expressed." But if you ever try to start relying on him like you would, Calvin, he disappoints badly.

No, you should not think, "I'm going to have C.S. Lewis shape my theology." You should think, "I'm going to have some penetrating insights into our world and human spirits." He's like a much better version of G.K. Chesterton. I like G.K. Chesterton, too. But he's a wonderful style, but he's a Roman Catholic bigot.

There are some of that. I mean, he really misrepresents Protestantism badly. Oh, yes, for sure.

So I don't care how eloquent he is, he distorts things so much, I never recommend to go to G.K. Chesterton. We just read him in our staff. And when I quote him-- [laughter] --and when I quote him in my sermons, I will not even say his name.

I will just say, as one author has said. Well. Because I do not want anyone to read G.K. Chesterton because of me.

Well, I like G.K. Chesterton, and rummage out the very stereotyped bigotry towards Calvinist. So anyone else, not G.K. Chesterton, got that? I mean, living influences, Harold Porty, the Baptist pastor in my church growing up, I think was a good influence. Ed Henniger, the Presbyterian pastor that I attended at Blacknell in Durham in college was a great model.

More recent Lloyd Jones? Are you not a Lloyd Jones guy? You didn't cut your teeth reading or listening to his sermons? No, I like him. But I didn't read Lloyd Jones until I was in college. And by then, I've kind of encountered almost everybody, like Sibs, who's going to be huge to me.

I would say a lot of Ian Murray's books have been influential for you. Oh, I love Ian Murray's stuff. That's right.

But Ian, although he's 30 years older than me, for some reason, he feels more like a contemporary. Maybe because I've known him for so long and I've seen him write the books and I agree with him on what he says. So what are some of the people who don't know Ian Murray's start at Banner of Truth? He's a wonderful brother.

He's 91, 92, now he lives in Edinburgh. His wife Jean. And he writes history that you will like to read because he tells you not only what happened, but the significance of what happened.

And his theology is good. He believes the Bible is true. He believes God is sovereign.

And he will read history in a way that is much more spiritual. And that says he's like the Puritans of old only writing today. And I love it.

I very much appreciate it. What are your, what are one or two strengths of Mark Devere as a pastor and one or two weaknesses? They're usually related. Yeah.

Strengths, I really do love the Lord. I really do love people. And you love the Bible really.

Those are three indispensable. It's very easy for me to give myself to studying the Word. I love doing it.

So the most important things about being a pastor, I love praying. So the most important things about being a pastor are things that I love to do. You know, downsides, I don't think I'm the most empathetic person in the world.

So if you're struggling with something, I understand you're struggling with it. I'm not sitting there hurting with you. I'm like, you're struggling with that.

Okay. It's not that I don't want to. It's just I'm just, I'm thinking about something.

So I think, I think I'd be much better professor than I would be a pastor. I think I'm a little misplaced as a pastor. But I think it's what the Lord's wanted me to do.

So that's what I've done. Yeah, but you are so people oriented. You love discipling.

I mean, there, I don't know. I think there will be a book written of Mark Devere someday or at least a pamphlet or something. I hope someone, I hope someone will write a book.

I hope BB. No. Let me put in a plug.

I hope Jonathan Lehman will write something someday because I think there is a lot to learn and there's a lot that the Lord has used through you and may he give you many more decades. But it will be one of the legacies will be the many, many men that you have poured your life into. How many years ago was it when the church surprised you and brought back interns and associate pastors and is my maybe by 15th anniversary

there.

So 10 years ago. And how many men was that at that time? I got 100 maybe. 100.

Yeah. So I mean by this time hundreds who are in ministry all over the world and one of the things Mark does really well, he's confident and has this sort of, but you shouldn't mistake that for a vanity because he's very humble in sharing a platform and giving away your platform in one of the things I appreciate and maybe it's from spending time among the Brits, but you always are going to undersell what's happening, what you've done. I see people, even some who might be our friends or in our circles who always, it's always the biggest, the best.

It's always over selling. And I don't know that I'm truly humble, but I'm at least proud enough to know what doesn't look humble and to try and to not look like that. But I've always appreciated that you will undersell what you're doing, what the Lord is doing through you.

And it's very refreshing. Does that come that just a personality thing? Is that studied? I think it's a personality thing. Yeah.

I have a prayer. Don't need to be the center of everyone's thoughts and attention. No, and like I say, even when I'm a non-Christian, I'm thinking this is going to be a skeleton in a box soon.

So I've got a real sense of the passing nature of life. So my importance is small. So yeah, it's not a big deal.

At various times and conferences, and you've done this with LIG and of course, Presbyterian and Baptist, and so there's differences and good honest disagreements, striking at times, but playful at times too. I don't want to ask you about those. I want to ask you, what do you see among Presbyterians that's encouraging? And let me tell you what among many things that I think are encouraging in evangelical Baptists.

I think when you have an evangelical Baptist, you're going to find a way to do that. Find someone who's focused on the cross, the blood, heaven. You see that in Baptist hymns.

That's what we're talking about. Jesus is coming back. You've got to get saved.

There's an earnestness to go, to share, to speak the gospel, to not lose sight of the main things. Jesus died for sinners. We've got a message to tell these.

So there are lots and lots of things. And I think that is a good leaven for Presbyterians, less we be lost in our thoughts or off and lose what is most central. So thank you for that.

You can, if you see dangers, but what do Presbyterians have to offer for the broader reformed, conservative, evangelical world? I'll begin this with just a story. My uncle used

to tell me about his aunt, who I knew she was still alive when I was a child, living the same town. An interaction he had with her probably in the 1940s when he went to a Boy Scout service at the local Christian church, First Christian, disciples of Christ, Alexander Campbell, immersion of believers, looks like a Baptist church.

But there are many in their theology. Anyway, so Uncle Bill goes to this Boy Scout service at the Christian church and he comes on very excited and tells my aunt, who is born in Kentucky, probably about 1900, never goes to college, always served her dad, who's a Baptist minister, never married. A very strong Christian.

He tells her, "Wow, Aunt Charlie, this is a great service. I really like that Christian church. It's a lot like the Baptist church.

The Baptist church ever burns down. I'm going to the Christian church." Aunt Charlie was very bothered by that. She said, "You will not." She said, "The Christian church may look like the Baptist church, but the Presbyterian church believes like the Baptist church.

If the Baptist church ever burns down, you will go to the Presbyterian church." She was in dead earnest about it. The series is uneducated, a woman in rural Kentucky in the 1940s. There is that commonality that's left there in our genetic makeup that Baptists and Presbyterians, as dismissive as modern big Baptists may be of little Presbyterians and as condescending as elite Presbyterians may be to work at a Baptist.

There is a genetic relatedness that is there in the concerns and theology and the categories that are used in the authors that are cited in the mutual love of our Anglican friends. In England, the three old denominations would be considered the Presbyterians, the Congratials, and the Baptists. They all came out of the Church of England in 1662 at the Great Objection.

There's great commonality between those four groups. The Anglicans and the Presbyterian Congratials of Baptists, difference is only being polity and understanding of Baptism. Having said all that, it's a great amount of appreciation.

I would say clearly the learnedness of the Presbyterians is the great gift to the doers of the Baptists. If we are the Romans of the evangelical world, you are the Greeks. Do you call yourself an evangelical? Happily.

Happily. Do you believe in a thing called evangelicalism? Yes. Is it worthwhile project? I think historically and sociologically it exists.

How much you want to spend staring at it and studying it? I don't have a lot of interest in that, but I understand why some people would. I'm interested more with theological definition of everything that should be and teaching that. Yes, and I'm interested in that.

I'm also asking about the, is it enough to have Baptists doing their Baptists doing their

Presbyterian thing or in addition to doing that, is there also something good necessary called evangelicalism where we're doing things together, you started together for the gospel. That feels like an evangelical impulse. Yes.

You could describe it that way. I would rather use a less hegemonic term, sure, it could be trendy, and talk about being more Catholic, not Roman Catholic at all, but truly universal, which doesn't demand us all get into the shape of the evangelical house, but rather lets the Presbyterian and the Missouri Synod Lutheran and the Anglican and the Baptist and the 4C Congregationalists and the MacArthur Right Bible Church person all be their own, so they don't have to fit into our house, but us perceive in the Lutheran Study Bible the germ of the gospel that we treasure or in the work of RTS or in Carl Henry's work as a Baptist theologian, or in the history of congregationalism in New England like John Cotton, that in all of this we perceive the same truth. So I'm a little more interested in letting each of the traditions speak for themselves and rejoicing in all we have in common and commonly being in each other's churches and encouraging each other, but being true to our own understandings.

You read the six volumes of God Revelation Authority by Carl Henry, one of his favorite philosophers to reference his Gordon Clark. Yeah. Who's grandson? Is our very own Nathan Clark George, yes.

The, oh yes, you should who and all, yes, ask him, put philosophy to music. Do you think we are less together than we were you who began together for the gospel? Yes. Why? I think some of the we's are still together as together, but I think all kinds of sociological things from race to politics to government response to COVID all within a space of 2014 to 2020 just hit evangelical churches one after the other in a way that man, if we're sitting around 2012, we're not seeing that coming.

And I've also postulated that with COVID it wasn't, it was the responses, but it was also the reality that as everything is shut down normally a lot of folks like us who would see each other often conferences, traveling, speaking, overlapping, just that relational, it's, it's harder to say some things online if you had just saw the person in person. No, that can make you cowardly. Maybe you should say some, but some things, but there was a whole relational overlapping that was gone.

Yeah. And I think it just made it a lot easier. A lot of that was already happening would have happened, but I just have to think that some of the things that played out would have happened in closed door conversations before that and maybe some of the worst excesses could have been avoided.

Anything to that? Yeah. Okay. You're not, you don't buy it.

Oh, I mean, that maybe 2% of what one on 1% of what one. And what, what hope do you have, give us as we bring this to a close, if the tribes are splintered more than they

were? Will there be a helms deep? Yes. Will the elves and men forge an alliance once more? They will.

Yes. They will. Um, I think that the reality of hell, what we deserve and the reality of God's grace in Christ will continue to overwhelm souls until Christ returns.

And depending on when he returns, those souls are perhaps not even born yet. And those people will perceive in each other their common indebtedness to the Lord. And that will outweigh their differences over baptism and polity.

Anything else you wanted to say, Mark? Very thankful for you and your ministry. Very thankful that Christ's covenant called you to be their minister. That was the prompt.

That was the prompt. When he was up at his church in Michigan, had the joy of preaching for him up there, and knew this congregation through Harry Reader and was very thankful to see the two brought together. I thought it was a great marriage and a prayer.

It's very good to be here. You're being kind, you're yanking. Oh, there.

Yeah. He's a good man. He's a good man.

He means well. If he seems blunt. He's from Michigan.

If he seems condescending, if you're not Dutch, you're not much. Yeah. I mean, there's lots of this stuff going on.

But what a good work of God has done to his brother. No. And to the great prophet of not only this congregation, but many of us around the place who use the books that he writes and reference blogs that he writes and the Lord has given him a good brain.

I've said before, one of my cousins used to say that was our, we'd go on the family crest. We mean well. We can put that in Latin.

We'll just be somewhere. So Mark, thank you for your friendship. Thank you for being here.

And we look forward to seeing you tomorrow morning. God bless. [applause]

[music]

[music]