

OpenTheo

What We Love About Christmastime

December 15, 2021



Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

Kevin and Collin enjoy a fun conversation about the best parts of the Advent/Christmas season, as well as some of those things that are just more annoying. Plus, by popular demand, time management and productivity tips! Learn how Kevin manages to read so many books and also be present for his family.

Life and Books and Everything is sponsored by Crossway, publisher of *Be Thou My Vision: A Liturgy for Daily Worship*, by Jonathan Gibson.

In *Be Thou My Vision*, Jonathan Gibson has created a 31-day liturgical guide designed to provide structure to the daily worship of individuals and families. Designed to be read in 15-20 minutes a day, this beautifully produced liturgy will give readers focus and purpose to their daily quiet time while teaching them historical prayers, creeds, and catechisms that point them to Christ.

For 30% off this book and all other books and Bibles at Crossway, sign up for a free Crossway+ account at [crossway.org/LBE](https://www.crossway.org/LBE).

Timestamps:

You Just Keep Turning the Pages [0:00 - 4:22]

Airing of Christmas Grievances [4:22 - 11:51]

Favorite Christmas Activities [11:51 - 24:33]

Keep Christmas Messy [24:33 - 31:25]

Time Management & Productivity Tips [31:25 - 43:22]

How to Read 82 Books in a Year [43:22 - 57:31]

Kevin is working on new books. [57:31 - 1:02:36]

Books and Everything:

Psalms in 30 Days, by Trevin Wax

“Joyous Surrender: A Rhapsody in Red (and Green),” by Joseph Bottum

(Sleigh bell sounds from zapsplat.com.)

Transcript

Greetings and salutations to our loyal listeners, or those who are disloyal, but we're glad to have you anyways. Welcome to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin DeYoung and I'm joined here with Collin Hansen.

Justin Taylor is not with us. Justin had the equivalent of the dog ate my homework. He is starting some writing leave, so that's good, but he also said what he couldn't find his AirPods and his microphone was gone and he never picked up the... because he always has the AirPods, which don't work.

He wants to plug into something. So I sent him some, but he said he never got them. Maybe somebody home alone style stole them off from his house or something.

What a rough place. Yeah, Sioux City is where dreams go. Well, anyways, we miss you, Justin, and hopefully we'll have him back before too long.

It's been a while since we've been here and Lord willing. I think we have one more podcast in this season and hopefully, I think next week, the plan is to have Joel Beakey with us to talk. If there's anyone who can talk about books, he writes a lot.

They publish a lot, so Lord willing, he will be with us. Today, we are sponsored by Crossway and this book just came out. I can't remember if I mentioned it in a previous episode, but I am really excited about this book.

I don't know if you've seen it, Collin. Be thou my vision and liturgy for daily worship. Do you have a copy yet? No, Crossway, please.

Yes. I'm waiting for my leather bound copy, but this is a nice hardback with a slipcase by Jonathan Gibson. The Gibson brothers do a lot of great stuff, but what is this? It's a very attractive looking book and it's 31 day liturgy for daily worship.

I've tried many times to use, not quite the daily office, but something like that or the Book of Common Prayer and there's a lot of history and there's a lot of riches in there. As someone who's outside of that tradition, there's just a lot of flipping in the pages and a lot going on. What am I supposed to sing now by myself? What am I supposed to read? I take this to be putting it all.

You just have to keep turning the page and each day will give you a reading and a short prayer or the Apostles Creed or the Nicene Creed Assurance Apart. You can add this in with your daily scripture readings. They have some assigned scripture texts and different prayers for different Sundays of the year.

It's a reformed one month version of using some of that tradition of daily prayer. It's 31 days. Go ahead and turn it over and use it for the next month.

I need a lot of helps in my prayer time and my devotional time to keep things fresh and keep things going. I just got this. I'm really excited to use it.

Be thou my vision. Thank you. Johnny Gibson.

I was just looking, Trev and Wax has a new book with B&H on the Psalms as well, going through monthly. I've been using that lately and so I'm eager to integrate this one as well because I do think that as I've learned more about myself every year, I do need those structures. I need those forms to help guide me in those emotions.

I'm eager to get that copy. I don't know if I'll get the Kevin Deung treatment with Leatherbound Copy, but maybe somebody will be listening. Well, yes, somebody or talk to Westminster Press or somebody who's shipping it out.

Probably, you know, authentic goats were raised for this very purpose. Animals were harmed in the production of the list of those. We're not talking Naga Hyde.

Many nogs lose their lives, lost their lives. All right, we are in the thick of the Christmas season. I love Christmas.

If you don't love Christmas, why do I see somebody tweet yesterday, somebody that said, well, considering that Christmas is only mentioned in two of the gospels and Paul hardly ever talks about it. I don't know why we make such a big deal about it. Someone responded and said, I am going to Christmas so hard in response to that tweet, which, of course, doesn't really appreciate all of the incarnational theological, language and Paul and fulfillment passages.

So it is there, even though the quote Christmas story is only in two gospels. But I thought, Colin, we've talked just a little bit. What do you love about Christmas? And let's just put, obviously, we love at the heart of it, the incarnation and what it's about.

Jesus check. Yeah, so Jesus is the reason for the season. We got that check.

Check. Before we get there, I didn't tell you I was going to ask you this, but in the spirit of Festivus, perhaps some airing of grievances. I got a lot of problems with you people.

I've got a lot of problems. Okay. Give me some things.

Are there some things about Christmas? Obviously not the real reason, but about the whole thing that annoy you, that you want to air your grievances. Okay. I'll give you a few.

Okay, so I can think about it. I actually most of the Christmas songs, even though some of the secular ones can be in most of them I'm okay with. I'll make the kids turn off whenever.

Last Christmas. Okay. No, can't do it.

I like Feliz Navidad the first time he says Feliz Navidad, but that song, I mean, I guess it's the Spanish teaching song. It says the same thing. I only like it when it's in the Taco John's commercials.

Taco John is great. And wonderful Christmas time. That's just not doing it for me.

Okay, another thing. I got to be careful how I say this. Yeah.

Because this is unique to our family somewhat, but the Christmas teacher gifts is a real. Now, any teachers of my children listening, we love you. You're worth every penny.

You're underpaid. We are happy to get you gifts. It's just the multiplying factor.

We have seven kids in school. Sometimes they have multiple teachers or they got a gym teacher. They got an art teacher that you start multiplying that.

And we're looking at upwards of 30 40 different teacher gifts. So I need to point out the obvious here, Kevin, which is the number of children. Yeah, that's right.

This is quite the same issue for everybody. I know for us. Yeah, that's why I think if you got two kids in school and you're thinking, I'm going to make two little zucchini breads and give them to the two teachers.

That's great. So we're going out the night before and just going to CVS and getting spending like big bucks on just Amazon gift cards. How many is 15 to little 50 is going to break the bank.

Send in kids out the door with just drop off these Amazon cards. So it's just it's the number of children. Christmas shopping is very stressful for us every year.

We say we're just getting a few gifts and then it multiplies and. Okay, last thing sort of this is more serious, but I've written about this several Christmases and so just my little soapbox any pastors out there. Don't get cutesy.

Okay, don't, you know, have a Merry Christmas m.a.r. Y. Everyone's done that before. In fact, my whole life growing up as a Protestant. I think I've almost every Christmas here

somebody say have a Merry Christmas m.a.r. or they talk about, you know, Protestants never talk about the Virgin Mary, though.

Every year they say that and every year somebody's going to run, you know, CT's going to do a cover story on we never talk about the Virgin Mary, except we talked about it last year and we never talk about it. And somebody else has a book about it. So of course, talk about, talk about Mary, but yeah, don't get cutesy.

There's visitors there. There's new people or there's old people just need to be reminded of the story. Don't tie it in with whatever movie or cultural moment.

Talk about the incarnation. Talk about Jesus coming to save his people from their sins. Just hit it.

Just write down the middle. All right. What are your airing of grievances before we turn positive? So this is so on brand that we started our Christmas episode with an airing of grievances.

It's very true. Nick Stephen like it doesn't matter how good you have it. You fans are a disgrace.

I took that personally. I mean, I took that personally. Yeah.

Well, I have a couple to mention here and one of them was. So I'm just in the age of doing Christmas concerts now for my kids. And part of that's because last year with COVID, we didn't have them.

And so this year I'm going to the Christmas concert and all the parents walked out when their kids grade was done. Oh, yeah. No, I couldn't believe what I was seeing.

I was like, what is happening here? And I mentioned to my wife, I'm pretty sure we're all going to get a pretty angry message from the administration after this one. Sure enough, there was the angry message of if you're going to come to the Christmas concert, you actually have to say for the whole thing. You can't literally walk out in the middle of the concert when your kid is done.

So that was one of my airing of grievances. The second one is is rather unique. It's unique to my family.

My daughter's birthday is right before Christmas. My wife's birthday is right after Christmas and my eldest son's birthday is right after. After hers.

So you want to talk about the busy holiday season of Thanksgiving and Christmas. Add three of your five family birthdays in the middle of that. And you try to not gain weight.

So, oh man, that's always a love hate. I love the celebration. There's so much to look

forward to.

And I remember a couple years ago, my daughter, she just, maybe it was my son. I can't remember, but one of them just was like emotional and it just overload. I mean, grandparents and cousins and birthdays, all sorts of stuff.

It's so wonderful. And then it was like this little nervous system was just overtaxed enough and it was just nonstop screaming. And I thought, well, that's what the rest of us feel like we just have a filter.

Those are my earring of grievances. Okay, those are good. So, okay, there's much more that we love about Christmas.

I don't know how many I wrote down. Obviously, there's thousands of things. But I wrote down.

Are you a big Christmas guy? Are you a big Christmas guy, Kevin? Yeah, I accept this is cliché, but it gets so busy and it feels like it goes by so fast and already here. We're in the middle of December and we have to get a bunch of presents. The Dutch are big Christmas people, right? They are.

Yeah, we love Christmas. Despite the reform, I'm going to get to that. Okay.

All right. Okay. I have three or four things.

How many do you have? One overarching one. One overarching. Okay.

I'm going to do a couple, give you in the middle and I'll come back. So I don't still little quick here for too long. So, okay, Christmas cards.

This is owing to my wife. I wouldn't do this. Now I write the card and I give myself a word limit.

I get a third of a sheet, which means with 11 of us, you get like a sentence. And I try to keep it light and send out the Christmas card. So my wife loves getting people's Christmas cards.

She loves, she reads it all. With updates, which I found the South doesn't do. My wife was appalled at the dates when she was from Midwest in the South.

We just give you the family photo. We don't tell you anything. Yeah, shut her fly.

Take care of it. That's it. We did nothing.

But you're more dressed up, but we, you know, we get more dressed up in the South. Like how does everyone look so good? Yep. How did this happen? So, yeah, my wife loves it a little bit more than I do, but I, it is a great thing.

You get a once a year. Oh, yeah, I remember those people or, oh, I'm really, we haven't talked for a while. I'm glad to see how they're doing and get their picture.

And inevitably, we always say, how come they look exactly the same and we're getting so old? All of those corn fed lowans shame on you. Actually, when William Taylor was here a couple of weeks ago at our church from the UK, I guess they don't do this in the UK. You can correct us, but he was, he was teasing America.

And he said, you in America, when you do your Christmas letters, you put a picture of yourself. It's like, Merry Christmas. Look at us.

Okay, I don't know. I guess maybe that's an American thing to do, but it's nice. You get to see your friends.

So the Christmas cards. This is going to be a lot of people's favorite, but, you know, all the churches I've been a part of. We end the Christmas Eve service, candlelight, singing Silent Night.

And it's, I mean, perfect is too strong, but it's just lovely. And, you know, it's dark and all the candles and the kids are holding one and you try not to melt the place down. And you sing it and you go around and you do verse one again and you do it.

I can tell. Oh, man. It's just what it should be.

It's, it's peaceful. It's serene. It's focused on Christ.

I do. You talk about, do I love Christmas? I do. I miss the snow.

I don't miss winter. And truth be told, even in Michigan, you don't always get a white Christmas. So, yeah, if you're going to be in Michigan and it's 38 degrees in rainy and you have black soot on the side of the road, your mind's will just be somewhere south where it's 60.

True. Yep. But it is true this time of year still.

We love the mild winters and the short winters here in North Carolina, but my kids do say it just doesn't feel like Christmas. It just doesn't feel like Christmas. You don't have snow.

You don't have even the possibility of snow. It is for the Southerners who I can't imagine the cold. It is a glorious thing to wake up with eight inches of fresh snow.

And it is just a new world about you. So, I miss the snow. And any of you listening who are going to have a white Christmas, enjoy it.

So, there's a few. I'll come back to my big one in a moment, but what's yours? I wonder if

Southerners realize or other people listening around the world how rare, though, it is to get like a white Christmas, a snow on Christmas. Yeah.

Usually you got snow on the ground, but it's not like it snows every day or anything. So, and again, as you mentioned, the temperature, I was with my family in South Dakota a number of years ago with my son, my oldest son, my older son. And we got sleet and freezing rain, which that's the worst.

Yeah, right. Because if it had just been five degrees colder, it would have all been beautiful white snow. It would have been five degrees warmer and it would have been just a rain that would have been miserable, but not that you can't go anywhere because you're in peril with black ice.

A couple of mine that I would just building off what you're mentioning there, Kevin, it is a lovely thing with the Christmas cards of all of my friends and family over the years to be able to, we put them on the, on the door back doors of our kitchen. And so when you're in the kitchen, you turn around and, ah, there are, there are friends. It's a lovely thing to see everybody's smiling faces and see their families grow and expand in all these different ways.

So anyway, that's, that's one thing I love. And I was a, I was preaching in South Dakota recently. I used a candlelight service illustration.

And I'm sure, you know, I didn't make all this up. But I was talking about the, the witness of Christians individually versus the collective witness of the church. And I was working off my rediscovered church book.

But this was original. I mentioned that when you think about the witness of a Christian in a dark room, one candle is a beacon of hope. But in a candlelight service, when every candle is lit, that light makes the darkness go away.

It chases the darkness away. And I thought it's a good illustration between the differences, the differences between the individual Christian and our corporate witness as the church. And anyway, so I'd love those memories.

Shout out to my, my grandma, grandpa, Hansen's Lutheran church in Brookings, South Dakota, growing up there at their candlelight service on Christmas Eve. And speaking of that, I wonder, Kevin, I like to ask people this question as an, as an icebreaker. I say any place and time from your life, past or present, where you can go and say that you ever felt or feel perfectly.

Perfectly safe and content. And I can say that that place for me used to be Christmas morning slash afternoon at my grandma and grandpa Daniel's house on the farm. And I can always think of the sort of the picture window in their living room, looking out over the farm and usually snow out there.

Sometimes my grandpa putting on a fire, all the presents there, all the food, my aunts and uncles, my cousins, and just sitting there on that carpet floor. There's a sense of perfect peace and contentment and satisfaction. And for me, that is just to imagine eternity with our Lord, Jesus Christ, being infinitely somehow better than that is an amazing hope.

Because just as a child all the way through my teenage years, I just remember that place of just knowing the way, I mean, of where to put it there is to be completely known and loved by those people. So, I don't know, Kevin, if you have a Christmas related version of that or just a different place, I'll have to ask people that. And it tells you a lot about them and a lot of people never thought about that before.

That's a great question. And you think the Bible is so rich, there are so many different ways that heaven is described. It's a garden.

It's a city. It's a place be dazzled with jewels. It's a place with lavish trees.

But one of the themes is home. I think Will Metzger's evangelism book hits on that, *Going Home*. And that's one of the ways.

Now I know there's people for whom going home is... But even then, you long for maybe something you didn't have. But there is a richness in that. You hit on that with Christmas.

It's that feeling of this is truly home and peace and joy and Christ. So, you know, my tradition from my family that now we have in my family, many traditions, but like a lot of others probably have this. We Christmas morning, we gather around the table and we have the Advent wreath.

And each of my kids who can read will read something from the Christmas story and then somebody else picks Christmas Carol and we sing a verse or two. And it takes 15 minutes and you go around and just people get to read something. People get to sing something.

You go around, you light the candles, you have fire, so that's fun. And I remember doing that growing up and now I do it with my kids. And it's everything.

My kids get up so early, so it's still kind of dark outside. The sun's just coming up when we're doing this. And you're singing and you're reading the story.

And there's such an anticipation. Probably my wife's making cinnamon rolls or monkey bread or something in the oven. The kids are just absolutely beyond excited because there's a mound of presents under the tree that they're going to open.

And yet we're singing these songs and we're going to pray and we're going to read. And yeah, for those moments now it's all going to be a whirling dervish, a tornado of

wrapping in the matter of minutes. Yeah, about to 2 p.m. things are going to get real.

Yeah, they're going to get real. And that's where I'm driving to the church dumpster to throw away all of our cardboard boxes. But yeah, it's that moment is, I mean, really is priceless.

It's beautiful. Well, the anticipation is such a big part of Advent. It's also a big part of our Christmas rhythms.

And in this case, though, the anticipation in our faith is worthy of the realization. But in Christmas, the realization is never quite as good as the anticipation as a child. When I was a kid, I gave myself this little acronym, TAC, Think About Christmas.

Like I needed to tell myself to do that. But once you got past Thanksgiving for a month, I mean, it got me up every day. Look at the tree.

Any more, think about Christmas. It was that anticipation. And there's something Christian about it that you would think your birthday maybe should be better because that's your day.

Just you. All to yourself. Everybody says happy birthday to you.

But I don't know. I don't know anybody who likes their birthday better than they like Christmas because joy is meant to be shared. And you're, and you get something, you have joy because you got something for somebody else.

What did Jesus say? It is better to give than to receive. That's one reason why I think it's actually better, Kevin, as a parent. I mean, you can't go back and replace that experience as a child.

But the joy and satisfaction that wells up as a parent giving on Christmas. Yeah, I think that's what makes the difference is that you're Santa. Well, you know.

Yes. No, you're right. It is.

It's a ton of work and we're, I mean, we'd rather sleep in. But once we have to get up anyways, we're as excited to see their joy. That's something that God has, I mean, there's something in the emager day.

There's something there in the image of God that God has stamped on us that we realize on Christmas. What are your other ones, Kevin? So let me just mention one other thing and we can move on. But you talked about either reformed and maybe the Puritan understanding of Christmas.

I will dare say that perhaps the Puritans had a bit of an overreaction. Oh, hello. Yes.

You got to reserve this before the Joe Biki episode. Oh, that's true. I was doing okay.

That's right. Oliver Cromwell did cancel Christmas and surprise, surprise, it was not popular in England when he did that. So here's what I mean.

There is a certain impulse towards Christmas that wants to strip away all of the tackiness, all of the godliness, all of the commercialization. And I get it and that's a godly impulse that sort of decries all that, all the accouterments, all of the barnacles that have come upon Christmas. And so there, if you call it a Puritan impulse that says, well, of course, some Puritans will say, why do we even celebrate Christmas or Advent? There's nothing like this in the Bible.

And I understand that strict, regulative principle argument. My response has always been, well, is it wrong? Is it wrong that we would focus on the incarnation? No. Might there be some wisdom if the whole world is even in a crass way sort of thinking about this that maybe we would devote a few weeks in our schedule and calendar to do it? So maybe that's too pragmatic for some.

But I have come around to embrace the whole spectacle that is Christmas. Now we don't want it to distract us from what is really important. But I come back to this famous essay, at least famous in some circles.

Have you read the, how do you say his last name? Joseph, bottom, bottom. Well, I don't want to miss. I just thought it was bottom.

Yeah, OK. Well, B-O-T-T-O-M. The Pride of South Dakota, right? Yeah, that's right.

So we'll try to put this in the show notes. It's on the public discourse. But joyous surrender, a rhapsody in red and green.

And he talks about the imp-- he has a friend, and he says he's a godly friend. And he wants to do away with all of these other trappings. And he'll just get himself one little branch to put in a pot.

And he will hardly decorate it. And he wants to sort of focus on the austerity that was there in Bethlehem. And he says, well, that's commendable and wrong.

So I'll just read a paragraph. He says, give me the vulgarity of inflated reindeer bobbing out of the lawn. Give me trees drooping under the weight of their ornaments.

Give me snowpile to the rafters that doesn't crushes my wife's scatters wildly around our home, like breadcrumbs leading back through the woods. Give me houses so lit up that neighbors dream at night of sunstroke. Fruitcake, so dense they threaten to develop their own black hole horizon.

So he goes on and on. He says, tastefulness is just small-mindedness pretending to be

art. And Christmas isn't tasteful.

Isn't simple. Isn't clean. Isn't elegant.

Give me the tacky and the exuberant and the wild to represent the impossibly boisterous fact that God has been introduced in this world. And there's something really right about that. Yes, Christmas can be, it is commercialized.

Yes, it can distract us from what really matters. And yet if you think about what would people do, God came into the world. You know what? Some people are going to put inflatables in their front yard.

Some people are going to have what elegant people would consider tacky or gaudy or over the top or kitschy. That's what people are going to do. And so I appreciate Jodi's essay there that says, let it all come out.

Some of it is tasteless. Some of it is yes, it gets commercialized. But listen, there's a fact that God came into the world and it swallows up everything else.

And so let's embrace all of the cacophony of sound and colors and pageantry of Christmas. It's sort of the vision. GK Chesterton has this.

C.S. Lewis has it, putting Father Christmas into the Narnia story. This story is bigger than all the other stories. So let it encompass the joyous celebration that we all put out in our wonderfully sometimes tacky human ways.

Makes me think, I hadn't thought about this, Kevin, but growing up, we didn't have a lot of money. They're the kind of people who, if you're going through the grocery store, you couldn't afford to buy the candy or the magazines or anything like that. We just had to be very strict about what we could get and what we could not get.

And then there was Christmas. And one thing I always appreciate was how I would try to be the responsible older brother. And I would ask for things, but I always worry about how my parents supposed to pay for this.

And then my younger brother. He would always just go for the big thing. And I'd think, oh man, how are they supposed to pay for that? And somehow my dad specifically would always find a way.

And there's a bit of a prodigal son dynamic in here. I should say the parable of the two sons where I could be somewhat resentful of that. But now, as you mentioned this, I look back and I just appreciate that my brother knew that his parents loved him and that my dad loved to find a way to make this work, even though he didn't know how to buy that in the '64 or whatever, things like that.

And so things that make much more sense to me now as a father with three kids, as

opposed to just being the oldest son in the home. And so, yeah, Christmas brings out these kinds of things. And man, this has been fun.

What's it just next year with Justin? I know. If you can only find his headphones. Maybe a good Christmas present for Justin.

That's true. Justin, some headphones, but put some sort of security measure on him like that. Yes, right.

So we won't belabor the podcast, but maybe one or two other quick topics we can hit on Colin. We've maybe touched on this before, but believe it or not, it's probably the number one thing people write in about. I don't think we're getting hundreds of people writing in, but as they trickle in from time to time, we've had more people ask us, "Would you guys talk about time management or would you talk about how you get things done?" I think some of that is a sense, maybe right or wrong that people have, "Wow, you guys must be doing so much stuff.

How do you do it? How do you set your priorities?" Well, you're writing books and reading books. You're writing, yeah. That is hard.

So you're talking about books, it seems like you're reading and writing books all the time. So it's hard to talk about, I don't know, I don't feel like I'm doing anything special, but I'm sure I have some things I'm good at and some things I'm not good at. Are you one of those productivity nuts, Kevin, in terms of reading all the books and having everything all figured out? Yes and no.

So I'm putting out this week and maybe it'll be out by the time we get this podcast up, and I'm putting out my top 10 book list. This year I'm adding a whole bunch of other books I've read. I read a lot of books and I have a whole section there on the productivity books.

I don't know, I probably read five or six or seven productivity books. Yeah, you'd qualify. Yeah, you'd qualify.

So I read them all the time. I don't put everything. I don't begin to put a fraction of what they suggest into practice, but every time I read one they're sort of like my skittle books.

You can down them. They're easy. But there's always a few habits and a few things that stick with me.

So I do think about those things. I like to think about those things. How can I best make use of my time? But I get this question asked a lot and I'm not always sure how to answer it, but here's a few couple things and you go Colin.

One is people have to realize just the nature of what I do is very content heavy, meaning

people see more of what I do with my time than someone else who's a great counselor who's walking with someone for two years every other week for an hour at a time. I thought that I don't meet with people. I meet with people all the time, but that's behind closed doors.

So I'm writing blogs, writing articles, doing sermons, writing books, doing podcasts. All of that is outward facing content production. And because of that, I mean, there's dangers, of course, of vanity or pride or superficiality, it also means that people tend to see more of what I do than other people who have different kinds of jobs or callings.

Two other quick thoughts. One, think of people following me around and I don't suggest that you do, but- It's an invitation. Yeah, you would find I work hard and a lot, but I'm not a workaholic.

At least that's what the people here say, "Oh, I'm glad to find you're not a workaholic," meaning I exercise almost every day. You have hobbies. I have hobbies.

I do stuff with my kids. I get to their cross-country meets, Christmas musicals, swimming. I get to as much of that stuff as I can.

The church here, Christ coming is really good in that it's a big church, and so there are a lot of responsibilities, but that also means unlike solo pastors out there who really are my heroes. I do have a lot of other people who can cover bases for me, and the church is really good that I generally have about one or two meetings a week at night. There's a lot of other things.

There's kids stuff to go to and other sort of activities, but I know some pastors say, "Oh, I got to be at the church three or four nights a week," so I really appreciate Christ's covenant limits it in that way. I'm not one of these guys who stays up till two in the morning and gets up at six, or I probably go to bed at 11.30, get up at 6.30. If I get seven hours, that's good. If I get less than that, start to drag.

If I can get more than that, it feels good. I'm not above taking a church chili in 20-minute nap in the middle of the day. That helps a lot when I can do it.

I'm working, I don't know how many hours I don't usually add it up, but it might be closer to 60 than to 50, certainly not in the 40s. It's working, but it's not a medical school intern or something on call all the time. I don't think people need to hear my weekly schedule of everything that I do, but I have it pretty neatly blocked out of Tuesdays or mostly meetings.

Other days, I have sections that are open to meet with people, and then I have blocks of study and writing time. I need about four or five of those during the week, and those might be four or five hours, three or four hours, so maybe I need more like five or six, I forget. Depends on do I have one sermon or two, am I doing a lecture at RTS that I've

done before or a new one, am I trying to write an article this week, do I have a podcast this week? I've worked very hard with my assistant, Barry, to get that really locked down and get a really good routine in my schedule so that the blocks are accounted for.

When I come home, I think I'm like a normal dad. Our house is crazy. That's not a ha ha ha.

No, it is crazy. The inmates are running the asylum. That's, if I ever write a parenting book, I think that should be the title.

The inmates are running the asylum. It's just madness of trying to help with dinner and help with cleanup and get some kids to bath and some kids homework and some kids to bed with nine kids aging from one to eighteen, our bedtime routine lasts from about seven thirty to eleven. And that's just, it is.

It's constantly on our feet. So I think there's some things also in ministry that at a bigger church I don't do. I do go to meetings.

I lead meetings. I have prep time, but I'm not the one running everything. I'm not the one who has to not in the hospital.

Often, I'm not doing every funeral. I'm not doing very many funerals or very many weddings. So there's some things that I don't do and there's things too.

I don't, I will have TV on, Jeopardy in the background, sports. Maybe my wife will sit down rarely and watch Joanna Gaines, but I don't know. We don't have shows.

So I'm not judging people who do, but I just, we don't have any time to, oh, have you caught up on this show? We don't watch, we don't binge watch things. I've been watching you. No, we don't, we don't go out.

We don't, you know, we're just trying to get through and get the kids to bed and clean up. I'll maybe say a little bit more about reading in just a moment, but what's your schedule look like? Well, let me, yeah, schedule is one with, as somebody who has a respect, I think, I'm going to have a responsibility to help oversee a number of different aspects of work. One of my major responsibilities is to be available to people, be available to people to call, to meet with them.

And so I go into my schedule with a, with a good bit of fluidity. Now I have to say you're exactly right that if you don't block off sleep and if you don't block off exercise and things like that, then for me that doesn't happen. I have to be able to say this is going to happen in those cases.

And as a result, sometimes it doesn't happen to my detriment, but I try to be available to people. I also then, I'm an, I'm an inbox zero guy because, yeah, I mean, to me, the

anxiety of unfinished responsibilities hangs over my head. And I also think that as a boss, I need to make sure that I'm not holding up other people's work, that I'm not a reason that they're not able to meet their deadlines.

That's part of my being available theirs. So I mean, I, I'm not saying you have to do it that way. And I haven't always done it that way, but that's the way that I handle things.

But I think the, and I have got something about reading there to say as well. So we'll do that next, but the next, but the one thing I can say that I think is a legit productivity principle that makes a huge difference in my life. And I thought I've maybe mentioned this before on this podcast, but back in seminary was a class that I don't recall being particularly helpful, but the professor talked about how it's really helpful to work a week ahead on your assignments.

And that became a principle for me of working ahead on everything. So whether it's a book deadline or class lectures or article deadlines or things like that, I'm almost always working ahead. And because I'm working ahead, that allows me to be able to be available.

It also decreases the anxiety level a lot. And I find that it's one thing to be able to sit there and say, I may have to work until six or seven tonight on a Friday on an assignment that's not due for two months. Okay.

It's one thing to do that and you can hunker down and do that and look, if something comes up like on Friday, my document didn't save, so I lost all that work. Yeah, I know. And then I came back, but I found some time on Saturday night.

Well, my son and I were watching an Alabama basketball game. And then I was able to recoup that time. It didn't end up being a big deal.

I can do a lot of things if I'm doing that, but not if I'm having to pull all nighters all the time to try to cram something in. Or imagine Kevin with this class that I'm teaching, it starts January 3rd. I mean, if I had not prepared all of that over the summer and just really worked extremely hard to do that this summer, well, you know, my Christmas would be like, I mean, I would just be working nonstop through that holiday.

The anxiety levels would be there. I wouldn't be in the right spiritual or emotional mindset to teach the class. My family would suffer as a result of that.

So that's, I mean, I've got, I had a number of people come in and oddly enough, they wanted me to give the same lecture to different places end of January, early February on what's happening in this evangelical moment. I was like, okay, that's another hour and a half of lectures I have to produce, which is a lot of time. But it worked out okay because I mean, because I'm available because of other projects I've worked ahead on, I can do some of these more, more last minute.

And then it's been okay all of a sudden my Friday, I usually don't schedule meetings for Friday, so I can work on this stuff. But let me transition into the reading, Kevin, because I would just say, yeah, if you're in a ministry line of work like we are, or you're teaching all this sort of stuff, when it comes to reading and why would you live in books and everything, you can't teach unless you're reading. I mean, you can always go back if you're an elementary school teacher and God bless you, we love you.

Yeah, you review some lessons and things like that, but you have a curriculum and usually you've taught it before. And so I know you, Kevin, in those situations you're teaching homiletics, these aren't brand new things there. But generally the reason I'm able to put together these two for me last minute lectures is because I spent time reading a book that I didn't know was going to be great, but it turned out to be good enough that it could sustain the entire lectures.

Essentially, it was that insightful on the essential issue in both of these topics, from this major topic. So if you're, I mean, it's the classic thing, if you're a leader, you've got to be a reader. If you're a teacher, you've got to be a reader.

You have to have something to say, and that comes from not only your experience, but then also the time that you spend on reading. And it means that you can't do some other things. I wish I were a golfer, but I don't have time to golf because I'm reading.

And that's not going to golfers out there. You can do both if you should help some other things in your life. And increasingly this is true.

There are two types of readers, people who read books and people who read tweets or people who read. True. Now that's an exaggeration because you and I both read tweets and both read stuff online.

But I do find in my own distractibility that, wow, I don't know if you, how well you can do both. And if you have to choose one, choose books. It's also true.

And you hit on this with just productivity, especially if you're producing teaching, content, speaking, writing, that content builds. Now you don't want to cut corners or always go back and refurbish sermons. So I do that.

And I don't, so I hope it's not wrong to do that. It's true. I remember one of the messages that LIG preached at T4G and it was tying together all these themes from the Old Testament.

And somebody asked, how long did that take you? And he said, my whole life. So in a way it took however many hours it took. But it also was, however old you are, you know, 50 years of learning the Bible, pulling things together.

So you keep thinking, you keep reading, you keep growing. You should have more things

to work with. And then it's rearranging the pieces.

That's a good point, Kevin, with these topics that I'm giving at a church and at the Evangelical Free Church Conference on sort of our divided Evangelicalism and the top 10 theology stories that I do every year. Yeah, if somebody asked me, how long would it take you to write those lectures? I'd well, you know, take a number of hours to go back and review things. But ultimately, and that's 25 years.

Yeah. That's 25 years of experience and reading. And this is an old adage from the productivity literature.

Peter Drucker famously said, if you're going to have priorities, you need to have postpriorities, meaning everyone talks about what you're going to do. But none of those priorities mean anything if you don't have postpriorities, meaning if you don't have things you're not going to do. Anybody can say these are my 10 goals for the new year.

But what are the things therefore you're not going to do? I remember one time when I first met Mark Deaver and I was wrestling with my own schedule and I asked him, how do you do all the things you do in typical Mark Deaver understatement? He said, I'm not any busier than anybody else, which wasn't true. But then he said this, and I've repeated it often, probably on this podcast, he said, I just have to say no more often than many people. Yeah.

That is true if you're not saying no to things. A schedule is a way to lock in where you're going to say no. And there's lots of things.

I'm always telling people, you don't have to, you don't have, praise God, you don't have the same gifts I have. I don't have the same gifts you have. I often look at pastors in particular that have more gifts than I do for maybe they're more extroverted or they would be the last person in the room and they would just want to talk to everyone.

They'd love to meet everyone. They get energized by meeting new people. They're great evangelists.

I wish I had some of those gifts and I don't want to excuse myself for not being faithful. And at the same time, if God has given me some gifts, I think reading and thinking and processing information is one of them. And I'll just say this quickly about.

Yeah. Go ahead. So given that part of advancing in life and career is finding those things, especially in leadership that you can uniquely do to advance an organization, a church and entrusting to others that you have raised up those other things that they can do just as well or better.

And I can't do that. You're talking about solo pastors. Again, I understand that's not going to be the case there.

But if you had the opportunity to focus on what you're essentially, you know, I don't understand. I do like the essentialism book. And so people ask about reading and I hesitate to say this because people say, well, you read this many books.

I've read. This is the first year I've kept track. And I've read 82 books.

Hello. Last year. Now listen though, people say you can't really do that.

Well, it's true. So listen to how I read these books. So about, I don't have the exact numbers, probably 10 of them were books I read, you know, I finished a commentary, read a book on the Lord's Prayer stuff I've read in the course of preparing for ministry.

This doesn't include children's books. Doesn't include children's books. No, doesn't include, no, green eggs and ham.

So you have those. I about four or five are books I listened to on Audible. Only four or five.

Only four or five. So when you're running, you're not listening to books. I never, ever listened to anything when I run.

Ah, so you're just alone with your own thoughts or prayers? Yes. That's one of the great things about what I never listened to anything. So that's just in the car.

So I finished the Churchill biography this year by Andrew Roberts and most of that I listened to. Are you going to do the King George biography from Roberts? Well, I just saw that and I'm thinking about it. He's good.

He's very good. So some of those, so a few I listened to, but then I read books in different ways. So a good number of those books I read, you know, I think I'm a pretty fast reader in read the words on the page.

And then there was a bunch of them. I mean, a thick book. So I had to maybe I shouldn't say this.

You know, I reviewed that big, thick enlightenment book for TGC. You're welcome. Yeah.

It's like 800 pages. Now, how did I read an 800 page book on the enlightenment? Well, this is what I'll do with a lot of books like that. I read, I read the introduction.

I read the conclusion. Maybe I'll read the first two or three chapters in the last one or two. So I get the big picture idea and then I will turn every single page and I slow down.

Okay. I'm getting this. This is interesting.

So with that book, there were several chapters I read more carefully and then there were several I had to do a power skim through. And so I do that with a lot of bigger books. It's

one of the reasons I don't read as much fiction because you can't do that with fiction.

Oh, no, you can. That's a really good point. Yeah, you're gone.

What just happened? I need to know. Whereas nonfiction books, I just I realize I'm not going to get all this, especially a big, thick book about something I'm just learning about. The point is not that I've become an expert.

The point is I got a few of the big ideas and now I know where stuff is at and I can come back and look at my underlines and use it again. So I know not everyone does this. Piper doesn't read like this.

Andy Nacelli, our friend, is big on different ways of reading. And I agree with him. So there's I have three or four different levels at which I read books and you are an expert in the enlightenment.

I mean, you teach it. You have a PhD. Yeah.

So that's I just I've said this many times on this podcast, but it's the kind of books there. That's right. There are huge swaths of historical reading that I can handle fairly quickly because of my prior knowledge on that subject matter.

I know what I'm looking for there. Yeah, right. But you have some books.

The physics book, right. And all of a sudden I'm not a good reader anymore. And no, or computer programming or something.

I'm not fast. I'm not knowledgeable. I don't retain it.

It's about it's about your knowledge field. Yeah. And I don't necessarily think, you know, the person who reads five books in a year and reads five great books and reads them carefully.

Praise the Lord for that. So we have different things. So I let us just saying there's different ways to read books and let us and others read the books so that you don't have to.

One of the things when you read that volume is you do end up having to read a number of books that you actually would not recommend that you don't like. I mean, part of that's just some of us are first adopters on these things because of our jobs and because of our interest in that. And so that's why I love doing this podcast because we can tell you what books you should use your time on.

We don't spend a lot of time on once you shouldn't waste your time on. We like to give you some examples of trust us for every one book. I recommend at least and there's probably five books that I've also had.

And I know people have different views about books, but I think if you start a book and it's not doing it for you, you don't have to finish it. Or you know what, you can now you got to press through enough, but you're trying to learn. So that's hard for me to do.

I keep thinking there's going to be a payoff. Well, I do too, but I've had to just I just bring them home, you know, at home or books I'm reading and then sometimes I just say that's been there for two years. Yeah.

I'm not going to do. *Goldfinch* was the last book that I abandoned. I abandoned that novel.

Anyway, yeah. Well, you're right. If you can't get to 82 unless you're quitting on a number of books that you just you should not be wasting your time on.

Yeah. Life is not that long. Especially in your 40s.

That's right. And some you're plowing through to get the information and read. I tried early on, I was going to set out, you know, a great plan to be well rounded and praise the Lord.

If you can do that, yeah, I hadn't worked for me. I read what I'm interested in running history, productivity, theology, politics, economics. Yeah.

So yeah, I'm opening it with questions in my head, stuff I want to learn, stuff I want to see that keeps you turning the page. And then sometimes you realize, oh, this isn't a book that I thought, but I'll at least flip every page and plow through. Okay.

And you're preaching. You're preaching might be better if you were reading some novels, but again, there's a cost benefit for all these different things. I read, I read, I mean, you can't force yourself to, I read one novel this year.

Well, you can't, you, oh, yeah. Well, you can't force yourself to do something that you're not. That's one reason I read multiple books at a time because you're not always in the same mood.

And it is very hard to be a reader if you're not reading things that you enjoy. There's a time in life, my early twenties and my college years were the years for me to read a bunch of things that I didn't know anything about. And my gosh, my world changed as a result of that.

But now my world's kind of narrowed a little bit. And I just can't, I just got to read stuff that I know I'm going to read because if I don't have something on my, on the, my side table that I want to read, right, then I'm going to open up my phone. Yeah.

And I mean, I hear the books you read are Trevyn Wax is a pretty eclectic reader and reads or let alone John Wilson. That guy reads the most eclectic and just. Ian Russell

Moore, both of them are much more, I mean, we're all more eclectic than you are, but I would say John and Russell are far more eclectic than I am.

Well, yeah. And sometimes I read, yeah, I'll read Trevyn's list. And I think, oh man, I would be a better person if I read that or, you know, Piper World War one memory that he, that the World War one memoir that Trevyn put, I put that on my list right away.

Anyway. Yeah. Yeah.

I don't do poetry either. Yeah. And you don't do systematic theology.

No, I don't do systematic theology. I do some, but probably the last one I read there was Michael Horton's justification. I read that not long ago, but that was, that's just not my typical, and I don't teach that and nobody ever invites me to come teach on that.

So, but it's all a different level. We're talking seminary level here. You teach that at a seminary level.

I teach cultural apologetics at a seminary level. So there are different things there. And, but if I were doing youth, but if I were doing youth, well then yeah, then I'm doing systematic theology or even adult Sunday school, I could do systematic theology for that.

So part of it's just understanding your own gifting. And I think that was just one thing I had to realize it was in seminary when I realized, okay. I can pass through system, et cetera, certain kinds, but I'm just not, I'm not going to be good at this.

That's not your thing. No, my thing. Nope.

Okay. Uh, we done? You want to talk about anything you got? Well, I want to hear, I want to hear Kevin. I've got some stuff I'm excited about in 2022, but really a lot of those things are slated for 2023.

So stay tuned. Hopefully we'll have some exciting things beyond coming out in the next year. So Kevin, I want you to give a preview because you're always working on stuff and I don't think a lot of people know about a big thing you've been working on, which I'm just thrilled with because of my stage of life.

Give the folks a few of you. Sure. Well, I have, uh, I have three books coming out next year.

So they've all been only three for a while. Well, one is with Westminster seminary press, uh, John Witherspoon's. Oh, on justification and regeneration.

I wrote an introduction and did some not, it's not a, it's not a critical addition, but I did some halfway scholarly footnotes to help the reader go through kind of like Piper did

years ago for Edwards in for which God created the world. So I'm really excited about that. I think they're very readable.

Um, Witherspoon was a clear writer. So treat us on justification and regeneration. So that was, I didn't, I didn't write it, but I did the apparatus and introduction.

Yeah. Second, a book with crossway on the Lord's prayer. So that came out of sermon series that I did.

And I did a couple of years ago, 10 commandments. Did the Lord's prayer a few years. Hopefully I'll also do the apostles create at some point.

And then the, the one that you were, I think referring to is the biggest story, storybook Bible. So working with Don Clark again, the fabulous illustrator, of course, the biggest story came out, however many three, four years ago. And soon after that came out, crossway talked to us about, Hey, would you do, would you guys partner again and do something on a bigger scale? So it is, it's much bigger.

It was work for me, but it's pretty much a full time job for Don for a couple of years. Wow. Wow.

Because it's 104 stories. Each story is about four or 500 words. So this is a big book.

And he did four new, four spreads for each story. So he's been working to write to, to do over 400 illustrations for this book. So there's 52 stories from the Old Testament, 52 stories from the New Testament.

So each one, you know, 400 words, what's that? You know, it takes five, 10 minutes to read. It's written at the same kind of level with the same sort of story arc to it. But obviously the biggest story was sit down, read it in 20 minutes, 10 chapters, you get the whole big story.

This is all of these individual stories yet. How do they connect with the big story? And the challenge for me as a writer was, how do I do that without making every story the same formulaic connect to the big story? So it was a lot, it was actually a lot harder than I thought because to write each, each chapter has to have its own narrative arc to tell the story and to tell it well, I had to get in and think, okay, what is the theology here? What is going on? A lot of it I preached on before just over the course of 20 years. So that helped.

But I'm really excited. Crossway has been fantastic and they're going to make curriculum out of these. That's what I was going to say.

There's also a curriculum, right? They're going to make curriculum. That'll probably be out in the subsequent year. They're going to like Sunday school type stuff, right? Yeah,

because you got 52 weeks old tests, 52 weeks new tests that they're going to do some other, you know, they got some people reading the book, recording and doing some Bible things.

A whole suite of products, but the big thing coming out in March or April is going to be the biggest story storybook Bible. And I'm really, really excited about that. My kids are going to wear that out.

Well, I hope so. I hope so. I will.

Exciting things ahead in 2022. Well, so we got one more episode of this left with Joe Piquey. Yes, I really will.

They're going to take a little break over the holidays and see what the new year brings. But good to be with you again, Colin, and we'll wish Justin well as he looks for the dog that he does. He's out searching right now for those headphones.

He's knocking on doors. Yeah. Who knows what he's doing.

Yeah, he's knocking on doors. He's detasling corn. No, that's all detasled.

He's making Sioux City tourism videos. We built Sioux City on rock and roll. We love you.

We love you, Justin. Yeah. All right.

So, joining with us until next time, Blore, if I got enjoy him forever and read a good book. Thank you.