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Christian Witness in Public Life with Paul McNulty

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

With a 30-year career in Washington, D.C. and going on ten years as president of Grove City College, Paul McNulty has had a remarkable career. Recently, Dr. McNulty, a PCA ruling elder, gave the commencement address at Covenant Day School (where Kevin's kids attend) and then spoke during the Sunday school hour at Christ Covenant Church. This is a "live" recording of Kevin's conversation with Paul last Sunday. The wide ranging interview covers everything from politics to Christian education to suffering and loss.

Transcript

(music) Greetings and salutations. Welcome to Life and Books and Everything. This is Kevin DeYoung.

And need to give it just a little bit of intro to our special episode today. Hopefully by the end of this season, so in the next few weeks, I will have a wrap up discussion with Colin and Justin. I'm looking forward to that.

We were originally planning and had it on the calendar and then had to get bumped, but we were hoping to do it again. And in God's Providence, we won't be having that podcast where we talk to Tim Keller about Colin's biography. And we've all been grieving that and also enjoying the celebrations.

Many that have been made and commemorations of Tim's life. So I'm sure Justin and Colin and I will share a little bit more about all the things that have happened since last we met. So we won't be having that podcast, but we have a special one here to fill in the gaps.

And I think you're really going to enjoy this conversation. It's a conversation that I had with Paul McNulty. Paul McNulty is the president at Grove City College, Grove City, Pennsylvania, a small liberal arts, excellent Christian college.

And Paul, as you'll hear in this conversation, has had a fascinating life, has done a lot of things in Washington, D.C. for 30 years. And now in its 10th year as president at Grove

City, he's also had personal loss and suffering in his life, losing his son a number of years ago to cancer. And so you're going to hear all about that.

We had Paul in to do the commencement address for our high school, Covenant Day School. And he did a fine job, excellent job giving a commencement address on Christian identity on a Saturday morning. And then he stuck around for Sunday.

And we had a combined adult Sunday school class, which was a conversation between me and Paul asking him questions and learning more about his life and his role in politics and the Christian as a statesman and Christian education. And so we'll get to that in just a moment recorded live and our Christ Covenant Sunday school class. I do want to mention crossway and desiring God or sponsors for this episode.

So grateful for both of these ministries and commend to you again the republishing of knowing God by J.I. Packer, modern Christian classic and crossway has done a new beautiful hardcover edition. So do check that out. If you haven't read knowing God, you should, you must.

Great gift for somebody else or just a new copy in this beautiful hardback edition. So J.I. Packer originally published in 1973, so the 50th anniversary. Check that out from crossway.

And we're also grateful to desiring God and want to mention a book that actually has been on my wife's nightstand, Rich Woons by David Mathis. It's a devotional book and it leads you to the cross and leads you to Easter, but it can be used at any time in the Christian life to get us to think about the cross and the empty tomb. David is senior teacher at desiring God.

If you're looking for a tool to draw your mind to the person who worked of Christ, check out Rich Woons by David Mathis. So thank you to crossway and to desiring God. And here then is the conversation with Grove City President Paul McNulty.

Glad to have you here for the last Sunday school time before we take a bit of a break over the summer. Good to have you here. And I know some people will still be coming in.

And what we want to do, I won't give an introduction to our speaker Paul McNulty because I'm going to ask him questions. Some of you may have been here at the CDS commencement yesterday and heard the wonderful talk that he gave about Christian identity. And it's a real joy to have Paul and his wife Brenda with us for the weekend.

I've gotten to know, maybe we'll get into some of that story, but I met Paul maybe ten years ago and then have, you know, intermittently we have lots of common contacts and friends and he was kind enough to host me and Ian. He did go to NC State, but he made a very good pitch for him to go to Grove City. And he's going to do the same for all of you and your children and grandchildren this morning, but a wonderful, really in the

truest sense of the word Christian statesman for many, many decades with a career in Washington.

And then for the better part of these last ten years as the president at Grove City College. So Paul, welcome. Let's welcome him here.

And I thought we didn't have chairs and ferns, but we'll just have a conversation, give him an opportunity to share a little bit of his background about being a Christian in public life, being a Christian in higher education, and then we'll see how the time goes. And then we'll see how the time goes and may give you an opportunity to ask questions. So very easily to begin with Paul, tell us a little bit about your background, your family, how you became a Christian.

Sure. Thank you. Good morning, everyone.

And is that there? Yeah. It's a, it's a, just a delight to be here with you this morning. And I was saying yesterday that I felt like I've been here before because during COVID, Brendan, I would watch Kevin preach.

And we did that place like Maine and so forth. So did the camera add 15 pounds? That's right. Yeah.

But it's an interesting perspective when you watch that way. But anyway, so I grew up in the Pittsburgh area and I grew up as a Roman Catholic. And my parents were very devout Catholics.

So I was in church every Sunday. I was in CCD and, and all the things that a blue collar Catholic family in Pittsburgh does. And, and so I never, never doubted that Jesus was real.

I just didn't know what that meant in any kind of personal sense. And so when I was, oh, I'm coming up on it, some, I think significant anniversary here because it was like, yeah, I may be at my 50 year Christian mark because it was about 73 that my older sister who had become a Christian share the gospel with me and in the summer of that between ninth and tenth grade. I remember seeing in my backyard and just thinking, Lord, I want you to be real to me.

I know these things, but I really want to know that I am yours. And, and I really felt a sense of identity change at that point. And so got involved in young life some, but still really very little knowledge of the Bible and theology.

And I go to Grove City College as a runner. I was a cross country runner and they recruited me to run there and I get there. And within a month in the, one of the courses that was required called religious and philosophical dimensions of life.

Today we call biblical revelation. I caught a world view and I just got very excited about that. And that was really kind of the start of the idea of pursuing life as a Christian very intentionally thinking about what is that going to look like for everything that we do.

Is that where you met Brenda? And so Brenda went off to another school for a couple of years and then transferred to Grove City College as a junior, which was great because by the time I got to my junior year, there wasn't a girl on campus that would go out with me. So I had a little more. Someone knew and she was willing to do that.

And so we started dating our junior year and then we got married after my first year of law school. I went right into law school and we waited for getting that one year out of the way and then we got married. And so, yes, where we were to go to law school? Capra University in Columbus, Ohio.

Okay. Yeah. Why'd you go there? Well, a lot of things in God's providence when it's the only school that accepts you, that definitely is one of the ways you see his hand in your life.

Yeah, it's the fleece. It's a kind of indicator. I don't know.

Maybe I'm superstitious or something. Now, I had roots in Columbus. My dad was from Columbus and Brenda actually, because she went to Denison University and maybe I didn't mention what school she had also a lot of friends in Columbus.

So Columbus was a good spot for us to be and I grew up as a Ohio State fan too. So I was all things Columbus at that point. Somewhere out there in the country, Mike Ross is smiling.

He's the former pastor here. Oh, I regret it. And everyone knows he just about would have put Buckeyes on the polka.

Anything against University of Michigan at least. Yeah, that's right. That's right.

Sorry for... But now I'm a grossly wolverine. So there you go. I know.

Yeah, so we were there and that was a good place for us for those three years. And tell us about your kids, your family. So we moved to Washington, D.C. right after law school.

We get to Washington in 1983. I took the bar exam in Pennsylvania and the next day of end of July, August 1st, I started as the council for the House Ethics Committee in the U.S. House Representatives. So we moved to Washington, D.C. and we are just living out of suitcases as a young couple.

Brenda gets a job at the Christian Action Council of a pro-life organization on Capitol Hill. And then she gets... And because she's working at a pro-life organization, of course she gets pregnant right away. And we had our first daughter, Katie.

And so we have four children. And so Katie was born almost 40 years ago. And four children between 84 and 92, Katie, Joe, Annie and Corey.

And now we have four and a half grandchildren. Four and a half. Yeah, one's due in September.

Okay. And with your family, if you don't mind me asking, you've had deep loss and pain that some parents in here are in that group and know what it is. And tell us about... Yeah.

Well, so our son Joe, 10 years ago, died of cancer. He was 26 years old. He contracted a very aggressive tongue cancer.

So his head neck type cancer. And went through, you know, just really horrific treatment. It takes a lot to kill... For cancer to kill a 24, 25 year old.

They're strong. He was a very athletic guy. So it was a fierce battle.

And finally, he was a law student at the University of South Carolina down in Columbia. Attending first press down there and really plugged in. Strong follower of Christ.

And gave his parents the best gift any child could ever give parents, which is to go to the Lord trusting him without question and giving us an unshakeable hope for where he is and the opportunity to fellowship with him again someday. So that was extremely painful and very formative in our lives. We are always thankful for Joe's testimony.

Joe was actually in a book study up until the last week of his life reading "Hole and her Holiness" by Kevin DeYoung. And Kevin came down to Columbia to first press to do their annual Bible conference two months after Joe passed away. And even though our daughters were spread out all over, in fact, Corey, our youngest was a student at Grovesley College.

She was a junior. We rallied them all together, you know, two months after the funeral. Brought us all down to Columbia just to be in that weekend conference so that we could hear Kevin talk about that book.

And that's when I met Kevin. So the Lord has his plans and they're just amazing. That's the Lord's side.

That's always good. And so, but that's, and Brendan and I walked through that together and we were, by God's grace, in a place where we could appreciate biblical truth in the midst of a most difficult trial we'd ever imagine. Anything just one more on that topic, anything to say, anyone who's had that loss, maybe at the front end of it, or maybe it's been 40 years.

And as you know, it doesn't ever leave you. Just a word of hope, comfort for parents,

grandparents who have had to walk down that road. Well, as I was saying, I think that being all out in our trust for the Lord, all out in his plans is critically important for peace.

And I don't know how we would have dealt with it otherwise. The loss is extraordinary. I mean, three daughters, one son, he was my best friend.

He was going to be a lawyer. I mean, we thought alike, we played together. We went golfing in Scotland together.

We did, we were pals. So, my life changed ten years ago like that. I think about them every day.

But I think about them, and here's the key. It's like Psalm 45, 46, when we say, "Hope in the Lord." Every sentence has to end with the right punctuation spiritually. It has to end with, if I'm having a tough day, I'm thinking about him.

I have to finish that thought out by saying, "But I trust you, Lord." And I know that by your grace, Joe was professing faith in his last breath. I thank you for that. And I know that your plans are good, period, and then move on.

If I have to do that 20 times in a day, so be it. And you probably do sometimes. But as long as I finish the sentence the right way, that's the key thing.

Well, thank you for sharing that. And the story about the hole in our holiness is just about the nicest thing anyone has ever said about a book. So, thank you.

Let's go back. You said you moved to Washington, D.C. in 1983. You were a lawyer.

You're still our lawyer. You're always a lawyer. You can't leave that behind until you get to heaven, I guess.

But were you doing politics at the time? No, I wasn't a political person. While I was in law school, I was interested in constitutional criminal justice issues, public policy, though primarily. And all I knew was I wanted to work in public policy.

I was working for Ohio State Agency on ethics, government ethics. And I knew I wanted to work in public policy. So I would, I'd say to Brenda, you know, Ray Als is running around looking for a law firm job and so forth.

I would love to go. If we're going to do public policy, let's do it in Washington. Why do it anywhere else? Right? And she would look at me and go, "All right, which she's had to do now for 42 years." And so I was like, "Okay, let's go." And so off, you know, we went, but here's the key.

In the spring of my third year of law school, I went down to Washington to do what people do, which is to kind of network and see if I could find work. And because I had

worked for the Ohio Ethics Commission, I had a lead with the staff director of the House Ethics Committee. And I got into CM, which in itself is an interesting side story.

I get into CM and I'm sitting down with him. And he, we're in the US Capitol and he looks at me and he says, "Why should I hire you?" By the way, he was a North Carolinian fellow. He said, "Why should I hire you?" And I had like a few minutes to answer that question.

So I gave my best shot. When I was finished, he goes, "I'm going to hire you." That work is. So I was a little stunned and I get back in the car, drive seven hours back to Columbus.

And I tell Brenda, "I just got a job as a counsel to the House Ethics Committee." And she's like, "All right, very good." But as I told other people, they doubted it. No, no, you didn't. I said, "Yeah, one trip.

One day. You got a job." So I actually called him a couple days later and say, "Did you actually offer me a job?" Did that happen or did I miss something there? No, no, no, you're coming. You come on, show up on August 1st.

You'll be the counsel. Anyway, that was. And I show up right when the sex and drug scandal is going on for the House Ethics Committee.

This involved members of Congress and bad behavior involving pages. And I show up just as that investigation is unfolding. And then a year later, at age 25, they put me in charge of the Geraldine Ferraro investigation for a reason because Geraldine Ferraro... I was expendable.

Exactly. Geraldine Ferraro was Walter Mondale's running mate in '84. She was a member of the House Representatives.

So when she was picked, and of course, a historic woman being a nominee there for VP, when she was picked, some activist types went and looked at her financial disclosure forms that she had filled out for six years and found that she had not disclosed her husband, John Zakaro's income for six years and claimed that she had no benefit from his money. And that became the subject of an investigation that lasted throughout the presidential campaign. And of course, the Democrats were in charge of the House and they wanted to fix this and so forth.

So they pick the rookie to do the investigation. And I spent, while we're having a child born in October of '84, Brenda's wondering where am I? Because we took those classes and I'm supposed to be there. But I'm in New York going through Geraldine Ferraro's checkbooks.

Showing that she benefited from her husband's income. So that was life got off to a fast

start. I say so.

So we'll jump around a little bit and we're not making partisan political... He has a very interesting career. You can already hear. So fast forward maybe 15 years and you're involved in the impeachment process? Yeah, I was working at that point as the lawyer for the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee.

I spent 10 years on Capitol Hill, 10 years of Department of Justice and 10 years in private practice, but not in those blocks, but three years here, four years there. So I was at the... At this point I was mid 90s, 98. I was the counsel for the House Judiciary Committee.

I was the Chief Counsel of the Crime Subcommittee. And the summary hide from Chicago was the chairman of the Judiciary Committee. And in the summer of '98, Ken Starr delivers to the House of Representatives report on the investigation of Bill Clinton.

And now it's a house's job to take up an impeachment. This was in the days when impeachments didn't occur every two weeks or so. This is rare at that point.

It was novel. And so Andrew Johnson was the previous impeachment. Right.

And... It weighed 140 years. Yeah, they weighed a little time. And so I was put in charge as the spokesperson and kind of the choreographer of the impeachment process as Chief Counsel.

And that went from the summer of '98 until February of '99 when the Senate acquitted him. They did not just remove him, but he was impeached on two counts in the House. So it was an extraordinarily stressful experience.

But it was one that in relation to the call of being a Christian in public life actually set me up for some positive things because I had to do battle every day, with the White House spin doctors and all this and the Democrats who were protecting Bill Clinton and how we connected with each other and how I treated them was important for subsequent circumstances. Yeah. Did you think in that process either, "Wow, I'm a part of something historic or at the same time my career is over after this? How did you think about it? And how did you maintain your Christian integrity? Because on both sides of the aisle, there's lots of pressures to... It's one thing to say, "I'm a Christian and that gets you something with some constituencies." Another thing to continue to live like one.

Right. Well, it definitely thought I was historic. I mean, I was a history major in college.

I love history. That's all I ever read and so forth. No question that these incidents, these occurrences, you know, I'm appreciating what this is amounts to in the historic context.

But I wasn't... One of the advantages that Christian has or should have in these situations is trust. So I don't think, I don't recall worrying about, "Well, my career is

cooked" or something like that because I felt that I've been brought it by God's sovereignty into this situation and if it's over, fine, but if it's not, we'll see. So that wasn't really... I get stressed out more over doing the job right, which is the hard part, and that, you know, being pushing and pushing each day to sort of be successful in that day.

Again, kind of back to the sense of, "Well, that's the calling we have to do that." But what I was conscientious of in that situation and others like it is what the Christian has called to be like in the situation. Christians too often want to think about public policy and politics as kind of the end. We win, they lose, you know, and they would deny the idea that the ends justify the means.

It's sort of almost like give, right? And that's just not what the scriptures describe. The scriptures describe truthfulness, peacefulness, love, justice, and that's what we're called to on a daily basis. And so if you're by grace thinking in those ways, it can be transformative in the midst of a real bad... I imagine it stands out.

It can really stand out. Yeah. So much so that even your opponents, now again, the times have gotten rough.

I'm not so sure it says true today by the common grace of it all. It's shifting. But in the 90s, it wasn't as much a liability as it was almost like an advantage to be truthful, for example.

Right. Just say, "Well, I'm not going to spin this. I'm just going to try to be as accurate as a constant." People might say, "Well, we don't agree with him, but he's a good guy and he's an honest Christian." I think that's kind of what you're going for there.

Yeah. That's what you're hoping is coming out, is that they see your lived differently and they appreciate that. So having spent 30 years in Washington, is it the case that, oh, if people could see how it really works, wow, it's worse than you think, or you know what, on the inside, there are actually a lot of good people trying to do the right thing, or maybe it's both.

It is both. I wish I could give you a better answer. But the reality is, I got to know very well a lot of wonderful people, members of Congress, senators.

Well, I worked for George Bush, for example, for most of his two terms, and spent a good bit of time in his company. I just admired his way. He carried himself.

I admired the way he expressed himself. I was in some very difficult moments with him. I had messed up a few things that he was very upset about, but he treated me with respect.

I get very upset when I hear a president just using foul language, because I think that language really matters in leadership. And President Bush had a tremendous way of

exercising self-control in difficult situations. So I saw a lot of good that way, but I also saw a lot of really bad stuff, too.

Among other things I did was I was a prosecutor, too, so I was involved in overseeing the terrorism prosecutions from 9/11, and a five-year trial with Zacarias Massali, who was supposed to be the 20th hijacker. So I saw the darkest of humanity in addition to being around people who were wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ. And did you talk to President Bush as brothers in Christ about his faith? Some of you may have seen he issued a statement when Tim Keller died, expressing appreciation for Tim's ministry, and has been public about that famously in the debate, said Jesus was the philosopher, influence the most, and Billy Graham's.

What can you say about that? I didn't have that kind of... My interactions were pretty business-like. So unlike Mike Gerson and Pete Wainer and others who were really intimate with him in terms of bringing his voice out, I didn't have that responsibility. I was the Deputy Attorney General, so I was over there dealing with National Security Law and Order things.

The most I could say is that I was hoping that the way I was handling myself with him and the way I saw him handling himself, that he knew there was something at work there, but I wouldn't say that we got into any kind of details about that. So you worked post-9/11, prosecuting terrorists. You worked on the impeachment trial of Bill Clinton, and you're the Deputy Attorney General.

You might call me the forced gump of Washington. Those sound like three fascinating in, on some levels, horrible jobs. But what of all of that 30 years in Washington give us a high point and a low point professionally? Yeah.

Well, high point might have been working with the men and women of that terrorism prosecution effort post-9/11. Just... Well, even on the day of 9/11, just being with John Ashcroft and being in the Command Center at DOJ, by the way, a brother in Christ, and he and I did have a lot of conversations about our faith, which was wonderful. My one of my jobs was to do the transition of the Clinton Justice Department to the Bush Justice Department, which is kind of like overseeing a team that audits the department and gets everybody in place to hit the beach on January 20th.

And so I got... I was responsible for getting John Ashcroft ready for his confirmation hearing and sitting behind him during the confirmation hearing and slipping him notes the whole time and helping him survive. We can see you there. Actually, there is a little... In fact, Joe Biden, one point points me out, he's asking a question.

I taught Ashcroft just never answer a question. And so he's giving this three-part non-answer and Biden says, "Oh, come on. You know more about that, John, that you're saying.

The guy behind you prepared you better than that. He kind of calls me out." Anyway, so... But being with him, so he and I had a lot of great conversations. And during that preparation, at one point the first day after we were kind of went away to a little retreat for a few days just to work, we're about to have lunch.

And Ashcroft says, "Let's pray." And then he prays this beautiful prayer. And I'm almost hell like one eye open because I'm with a public official. It was like doing a real Christian prayer, you know.

And it was after how many years I've been in Washington. This was kind of a beautiful experience. So anyway... But then at post 9/11, I get confirmed for that U.S. Attorney job in eastern Virginia three days after 9/11.

And so out I go. And just being with those men and women who were so dedicated. Today we have just seen so much stuff that gives us concern about the FBI and DOJ priorities and so forth.

And I have a lot of views on that subject. But I was with just dedicated people who cared about protecting Americans and doing the right thing and what justice required and being willing to say something wasn't stacking up and the evidence and walking away. I just found that to be the highlight of my time down there.

Now the low light, when I was Deputy Attorney General, there was kind of a crisis which is kind of a Washington, D.C. invented thing often. You know, they make... The media kind of controls what will be a crisis and what will be a gate and what won't be a gate. And so we had U.S. attorneys who were dismissed and it turned into a thing.

And I had worked at the department under Bush 41 in the early 90s and I was back and I was Deputy Attorney General so I had a lot of years in, loved the department. And I was just really wounded over the politics of all of that. And I was dealing with Chuck Schumer who, going back to that impeachment, I developed a relationship with where he trusted me.

In fact, one day he calls me over on the floor of the house and he speaks this Jewish word to me. And I said, "What does that mean?" He said, "It means Man of Truth." Oh good. You're a man of truth.

Now when I tell people that Chuck Schumer likes me, that does not help my stock. Right? With many people. That's not the problem.

I want to sit you in a situation. Exactly. There's a confirmation here when I was Deputy Attorney General and afterwards he's hugging Brenda.

And I don't want the students to actually go on YouTube and see that hearing because the view of the president will go downhill fast. But Senator Schumer says on Meet the

Press. Well, because I testified about this thing and I was not given the information before I testified.

And so, wasn't I found out about some shenanigans that had been going on between the White House and some folks at DOJ. I called Schumer and said, "Hey, I'm sorry. I didn't know that when I testified." So he goes on Meet the Press and says, "McNulty called me and told me he lied." Well, when you work on developing your career for 30 years, that's a wound.

That was one of my low days, right? Because what do you do about that? You can't pull that back. And integrity was something that... But then I learned about the idol that we can make when it comes to our own integrity. And I had to be humbled by that.

And during this time, I say a little bit because you're not only a faithful member at McLean, the president. That's point, New Hope Presbyterian. Oh, it's New Hope.

We planted New Hope Presbyterian from McLean. Okay. You started out at McLean? Yes.

And then New Hope and a PCA ruling elder for many years. Yes. So what role has did that play in giving you ballast and foundation during... Because I imagine many people, again, may say one thing about their Christian faith, but aren't actually going to sit in a church someday after Sunday in DC.

Right. But you were. Well, that's actually... Folks asked me, you know, how did you as a Christian deal with that whole world for those years? And I would say that being a PCA elder, which started in 1986 and didn't end until I left in 2014 to go to Grove City College.

So that was a long run. And no break in there. We didn't have like, rotating off or anything.

That was critically important for me to have my priority straight as someone on Capitol Hill or a DOJ. Between family and that church responsibility, getting home for supper when I could, you know, just trying to get to my kids' events and getting to session meetings and then having the word preached every Sunday faithfully. You know, and that... Those truths just, you know, embedded into our hearts, which made such a difference, by the way, when we lost our son in 2012.

Because, you know, you think about truths preached for that long period of time. You know, what you do is equip these people for those hard things. And so being an elder was really, in some ways, a great advantage.

It was a great gift to be able to have... In the mid-90s, right around the time of the impeachment, I was the moderator of the Potomac Presbyterian. So there I am at Saturday morning. I hope that was less stressful.

Right. There was something about that too that was a little unsettling. But it definitely was critically valuable in keeping me grounded in God's Word.

And I'll tell you a little funny story. When I became Deputy Attorney General, I had a protective detail that, you know, drove me around 24/7 and Big Suburban and all these, you know, Deputy Marshals. You know, it was kind of fun going to restaurants.

They'd save a table for you so you didn't have to worry about waiting. That was kind of cool. But when you first started a job like that, the protective detail sits down with you and they were in my deputies conference room.

And they say, "Sir, just tell us about your life because we're going to, you know, be with you now all the time." Vacations, hiking. By the way, when you go hiking, they have a backpack. And in the backpack, they have a defibrillator and an oozy.

That's really kind of everything you need. Yeah, that's all you need. That's all you need.

Like, it gives you full coverage there. Right. That's the best sort of sure-put.

Yeah. So anyway, I say to them, "Okay, well, here's my deal. I got a church on Sundays.

We'll leave the house about nine o'clock." And we go and we were met in a fire hall second floor, so we set up. Okay, so they were not as familiar with church setup. That was kind of a new thing for them.

But then I really blew it and I said, "And then we go back at five." And that was- They said church is open again. You're doing church twice in a day? Yeah, yeah, trust me. You must be a really lapsed Catholic.

So for two years, those dear guys who have become like your best friends, by the way, they're picking us up in the morning and they're taking us back at night and they're standing in the back listening to preachy. It was kind of a fun deal. Did it make an impact on them? A couple of guys, for sure, you know? But it's hard to say.

They're professionals and they try to keep that somewhat. But on the other hand, we were in long drives together in a lot of long conversations. And it had to have an impact.

And of course, the years later, I ended being deputy at 2007. But then when our son passed away, they were all there for his funeral. Oh, good.

And we had a fantastic service. And the gospel was just preach, preach, preach, preach. And so they, a lot of friends got a chance to hear that.

So let's fast forward to your current career, which is quite a bit different. Yeah. But I'm sure you were felt prepared for it.

So why did you in 2013, 2014 leave after 30 years in D.C.? Your son passed away a year or two previously. You had this church community of friends and supports. And you pack up and you go to be the president at Grove City College.

And to be president of any kind of school, college is a really hard job. And the average tenure is six years, so congratulations. You're more than 50% past that.

What was that sense of calling? Why did you make that move? Yeah, well, I was on the board of trustees of the school. And I've been on the board for 10 years when the search began. And the way those searches work, as most of you may know, they get lots and lots of names from lots of different people.

And it's just a step-by-step process. So at the beginning of it all, sure, let's be open to it. Brendan and I love the school.

It was very, you know, formational in the deepest way for us personally. And we had two of our four children go there so we had stayed connected and I was on the board. So there was a lot that we cared about.

And there were two things, I think, for most of my mind when it started getting down to crunch time. One was I wanted Grove City College to be explicit, clear, unambiguous about its identity as a Christian college that we were all in for that. And we had a great history of faith and freedom, but maybe a little bit more of this political conservative feel than, say, a traditional, clear Christian college might be.

So I didn't pull a bait and switch. I told that to the search committee and the board when the process was going on, that this is something that I would be speaking to. They were interested? And they wanted it.

They wanted it. Which is a wonderful story about how that process evolved and how receptive they were and have been to that priority. But then back to our son.

If you had asked me in 2010, what do you think of college age students, I think, well, I'm not so sure I know how to relate to them. And they're kind of annoying. And I like them when they're little, but then later on, when they become serious adults, in between it's kind of a hard age.

You lose a son and you realize how much you love that age. Because I watched what he went through and I watched what his friends did for him and I watched how important it was for him to have an anchor. And I fell in love with college students.

And now that's the best part of the job. It is being with these 2000 souls who are just so lovable, even when they're annoying, even when they're bad at times. But for the most part, they're just the delight.

It's a delight to spend time. And there's no limit in one day the amount of impact you can have on their lives. So between wanting it to be a clear mission and wanting to love the students, that's what Brendan and I really were drawn to.

And 10 years later, I can sew nine years now. I just finished the ninth year. That second part about students has been better than we even thought it would be.

Now, we live about 50 yards from a men's dormitory of 250 guys, our bedroom windows, maybe 50 yards from there. So I miss the quiet days of prosecuting terrorists. But it's still an incredible blessing.

And say a little bit about your vision for, and obviously your context of Grove City, but Christian education, these are not easy times. In higher education and Christian education, anyone who follows the news with Christian colleges and seminaries, just in the past two years, it could name half a dozen off the top of our head that are going entirely online or they're selling their campus or they're closing their doors. And I have to think that we're probably just at the cusp of a number of those closures happening.

So what are the challenges and what's your vision for Christian higher education? Yeah, there are tremendous challenges that it's going to get much more difficult as well going forward for the whole sector of smaller liberal arts colleges especially. Yesterday I talked about identity to the graduates that they have to find their identity in Christ. And there's this real pressure today to find your identity in your inner feelings, to kind of look within and say, this is how I feel and so expressive individualism is paying attention to your feelings and being authentic and living according to your feelings.

That's the inward look. And we talked about finding your identity in others and their approval, which can be the ruination of a young person to look for that kind of approval, but to look for your identity in Christ. Now if you understand that our identity is found in Christ as someone made an image of God and then through Christ redeemed and made new, that this gives us all a purpose.

And I think for education it really has three key things. First of all, when it comes to identity and learning, we understand that all things were made by Christ and all in Him, all things hold together. And so therefore we're able to really learn truth.

If everything is about how I see it, if it's individualized, then there is no truth. In fact, any truth claim is an oppressive threat to my individual identity. So for the Christian education world we have to appreciate that we turn that over and we say, "No, there is truth and it's by fine our identity in Christ that we actually get to know what is true." Wisdom is what? The result of the fear of the Lord, this humble reverence for God.

So whether you go to a Christian school or not, I think there needs to be an appreciation always of what real learning looks like. And then there's Christian community. How can

you have real community if everyone is controlled by their own defining identity? Therefore, there's no respect.

There's no transcendent point of reference that's saying this is who you are and validating who you are apart from what you think you are, what you feel you are. And so you can only have real community when you see that everybody is an image bear and I can respect you even if I disagree with you, which is what you don't see on college campuses when they're all about individual identity. And then lastly, I think it gives you purpose.

Students today graduate from college. They have a degree but they don't know what they're going to do with their lives. They're lacking a sense of calling in the secular sense.

And identity and calling go hand in hand. It's like the Star Wars characters, Luke Skywalker or Rey, once they figure out they're a Jedi Knight, now they know their purpose. Until then, they're just kind of wandering around some dusty planet trying to figure out who they are.

So we have people who send their kids at all sorts of places and one of the blessings is there's lots of, we do campus outreach with college campuses around here and there's at state universities, there's RUF, there's CO, there's crew, there's lots of good things. So there's lots of, and I know you're for Grove City, but you had kids who went to all sorts of different schools. And so there's ways to follow Christ at different kinds of schools.

But thinking about your, so we send kids or grandkids off to school, you get them. What do you want to say to parents, either positively or negatively, when you meet a student that either, you can answer one or both, the positive or the negative. You meet a student and you think, I want to shake their parents' hands because I can tell they did something right.

Sure. Or if you want to say, I want to ring their parents' neck, how could they let this kid come here. What do you see with the college student that makes you unbelievably encouraged? Or, wow, we've got to help these people before they get here? Well, I think, and we obviously have a very skewed perspective because we get to see tremendous young people showing up on campus every year who are fairly well prepared to make the most of the experience.

And so then, when I think about what those parents did, I think about all the purposefulness, the intentionality associated with giving them a real appreciation for wisdom, for learning God's Word, for worship, for the things that go on in a college setting, a Christian college setting, that make it extraordinarily special, to take advantage of the kinds of professors and classes that are available. When I speak to the freshmen when they show up that first week, I get them in a room like this, 600, they

just go off the boat, and 600 of them just looking at you like, and I say, now there are three things you need to watch out for being distracted, being disinterested, and being disagreeable that will stand in your way, making the most of this. When you came, I don't mean to embarrass you, but when you came, and he spoke on our campus a couple years ago in our auditorium on the immutability, it was your first time.

Yeah, it was the immutability? You remember better than I did, but it was at night. It was a heavy talk. It was heavy.

Real heavy. And two, no. There were 750 kids there.

They didn't get chapel credits. They did get chapel credits. But that's okay.

There were 750 kids there. And they're taking notes as you're going on for like an hour, right? It was heavy, yeah. But that's why I love about the place.

They took advantage of that opportunity. That they didn't miss, I mean obviously we have 2000s, that was a slice, but that's a big deal. And so many places you go, you might have 50 kids that kind of show up or something.

So when parents prepare students to be ready for the experience, the opportunity to take advantage of it, humbly. And what I want to ring there next sometime is when they're just like, you know, being an idiot about it, right? Like this is spending mom and death money. Yeah.

Did you hear Kevin DeYoung speak? Who? What? Oh man, pay attention to this stuff. It's going on around you. Don't miss this opportunity.

So, you know, there's in God's timing, everything is perfect. I have a lot of alums that will come up to me and they'll be in their 40s and they'll have maybe a kid coming now, 50s and they'll say, "Presmic Nelly." When I was a student here, I didn't pay any attention. But now I am so on board, right? Right.

So the Lord has his plan, right? And I just want them to get their plan organized sooner than winning until they're in the 30s. Because I often say education is sometimes wasted on the young. Yes.

And then you realize all the things, "Oh, I should have paid attention to that class." Right. We're having, for our faithful conference, which we have each fall, it'll be in November, I think. We're having Carl Truman come.

Many of you would have read Carl's books. It was a long time professor at Westminster, but has for a number of years now been at Grove City, so kudos to Grove City and the good work that Carl is doing. I'll give you a chance to plug another professor or two.

Obviously you want to plug lots of them. But for a Christian church audience, any

professors that should go look up in Google or on Amazon that, "Hey, this person's writing a good history book, political science, Christian sort of stuff besides, obviously there's lots besides Carl." But we know of him. Yeah.

Some others that... Yeah, I would say that, well, in that department, before we move off of religion, we have always had an extraordinary group of professors for an undergraduate school. I would argue that we may have the strongest, reformed faculty for undergrad in the country. And we're very intentional about that.

I don't hire professors, but when it comes to religion faculty, I hire professors. We're going to make sure we get that right. And so, regardless of what you're major... I mean, I was a history major, but I took many religion courses.

This goes back a long time, this commitment to having great faculty there. But it's gotten much better. Solge Biune is the chair of that department, is an extraordinary professor.

And he's with a group of students right now in Korea. He takes them right after graduation. He took a group of students over to Asia.

And he's going to take a group in January to Israel. He's extremely thoughtful. And so we have a great department.

I'm going to get in trouble leaving some of the people out. But we also have a department like English where you might think, "Oh, English. College English professor? Whoa, right? I'm not a Grove City.

We have a safe group of college English professors who are... In fact, the chair of that department is now the Provost at Covenant College. And the new chair, Josh Mayo, just one professor of the year. But these are people grounded in biblical truth, but love literature and love the truth and the learning that can occur by reading well and having, as Colin used to say, conversations and great minds over the centuries.

So English department is a great department. We have a superstar, polycyed professor named Paul Kengor. And Paul is one of the leading Ronald Reagan experts.

He has written a book by the way called a memory, many books, but one of them is called "A Pope and a President," which is a book about Ronald Reagan's relationship with Pope John Paul and how together they had a plan to bring down the Soviet Union. And he's got into their personal communications and written this book. It's fascinating.

So Paul Kengor is a superstar kind of in our polycyed department. And we also have a very strong STEM program. Half of our students are either biology or engineering or some discipline within STEM.

And again, being taught by thoughtful Christian people, but also being prepared for biomedical ethics and a number of key healthcare related industries and things going forward. So we're really thankful for, we have about 150 full-time faculty for how they have come to the school because they want to teach and they want to mentor. That's kind of the key.

Yeah. And you have to raise how many millions dollars now you just told us? We just announced our campaign for \$185 million. So \$185 million, if we could just throw on five and you could build a track, a Warner Park, and I mean it would be easy.

You just have \$190 million for the difference. It seems like a daunting task and it is, it is for sure. We're at 30% of that has been raised already.

So we're really thankful. We're renovating our Hall of Science, which was, by the way, this is a great story. In the 1920s, the Board of Trustees had the vision to build the chapel, which is a gorgeous building.

The chapel and the Hall of Science together, and they were the only thing in the sort of upper campus, we call it, and they were dedicated on the exact same day purposely to show the connection between faith and science. And J. Howard Pugh, kind of a well-known American industrialist, he was our benefactor. He graduated from Grove City in 1900.

And J. Howard Pugh gave fantastic dedication speeches that day. So now, 92 years later, or whatever it is, we're coming back to renovate that Hall of Science. And that renovation is estimated to be around \$48 million.

So it's a big challenge. But the Lord has been faithful and we're going into it with a great deal of hopefulness, which is great provision. Let's see, there's a lot of us in here, and so we probably need to take people who are sort of toward the front so we can hear.

But we have time for a couple of questions. Why don't you raise your hand if you have a question for Dr. McNulty, and I'll try to call on you and repeat the question so people can hear. I don't want to be here.

Wherever you. Yeah, sorry the lights. Okay, yes, Scott.

Early on in your talk, you said where government affects, seems like an obstacle. What can we do and what can people like you do at this point on helping maybe re-correct something about government? So let me just repeat the question for everyone. Government ethics with this extensive experience there, it looks very discouraging from our vantage point.

What are things we might be able to do to help move things in a better direction? Yeah, my biggest concern right now is that as a nation, so I'm speaking now in very broad

general terms, we are losing our commitment to moral standards. We're losing our commitment to saying there's right and there's wrong and we know what wrong looks like and we believe there ought to be accountability for wrong. We've become kind of, I don't know, lulled into the sense of, well, they all lie or, well, that's kind of what they do.

And when I start off my career 40 years ago in Washington working for the House Ethics Committee, I went into that and generally speaking, I was in an atmosphere where if you crossed a line, you crossed a line and it was being an issue. It might not always be a perfect accountability for it and so forth, but it was an issue. And then within the last, I would say, 10 years or so, we have been somehow convinced that, for example, when something's not true, it doesn't really matter.

So I guess my answer to your question is we have to fight for truth. We have to fight for right and wrong. We have to be willing to vote that way and speak to that and say, no, no, no, no.

It's not all relative. It's not just the ends that will justify the means. There is a right, then there is a wrong and we have to hold people accountable for that.

And so I really struggle with and I actually feel like a weight on my heart when we hear lies and that's just sort of accepted as well, that's just what they do. We can't let that happen. We can't give into that.

That's been one of our strengths as a country that we've had a lot of weak leaders, so I'm not trying to be Pollyanna-ish about this. But we seem to always be able to come back to a point where we say, no, no, no, we do believe that there is a standard by which people need to be measured when they serve us in public life. That's good.

Yeah. One or two others. There's one back there.

Yeah, go ahead. I was thinking in your experience in this year and right now, what do you think is the most impactful area of study that a college student has? Great question. What is an impactful area of study for a college student? I was actually talking about this last night a bit and I would say that the humanities, generally speaking, are really important because at the end of the day, it's about what it means to be human and not just what it means to be an accountant or an engineer or whatever the discipline might be.

If you come out of the undergraduate experience and there's not more wisdom in relation to the human experience, how we've been made, how we are to understand each other, what are the great truths and ideas of history, the preservation of Western civilization, those are the things I think that matter especially. Our school, for example, every student is required to take 48 hours of a core curriculum, whether you're an engineering student or an English major. Now that 15 hours are five humanities courses

and civilization and literature, civilization and the arts, biblical revelation.

We call it the speculative mind but it's the idea of world view, Western Civ history. Then we have a writing course too that students require to take. So I just feel like equipping, our mission is we equip our students for their unique callings through a Christ-centered, academically excellent and affordable learning and living experience because by the way, we live on campus.

We have four-year residential, everybody lives on campus, can't live off campus. We have beds for 2,100 students. So there's a learning experience in living together in community for four years.

But I'd say that answer a question, it's that humanity's core that will equip you for being able to adjust, adapt with artificial intelligence on the rise. The people who are going to make a difference are the people who can understand what human beings do and things that computers don't do. One last question, anyone? There's one over there.

Yeah, go ahead. Question about high school standards in the United States today. If you receive them in God's school programs, under graduate programs, or in law law, are current standards within the high school world? So what are current standards? What do you see high school standards? You probably get a good cream of the crop.

Yeah. We are getting good cream of the crop, so we're blessed by that that we attract exceptionally strong students, and so they seem to be equipped. But I will say that most of my faculty would say that we're not on the upswing, but we're more on the downside when it comes to basic things like writing ability.

And certainly in a Christian college, we're concerned about biblical literacy. There's an issue there. So we get our students from a very wide range of schools.

Maybe roughly speaking, have come from public school, classical Christian schools, classical schools that are not necessarily Christian, Christian schools, homeschool. So you see a range of how students are prepared. And so it's hard to generalize in some ways.

But I would say that there has been kind of a slippage in the way in which a number of types of schools have prepared students, and we feel as though there's some remediation more now than maybe in the past. That's why we started the writing requirement. That's a relatively new thing, 10 years.

But we saw writing as being weaker. I teach constitutional law class, and in the papers I get, I see that struggle. And I think that I think the schools need to just be really focused on those skills so that they can be most successful in the opportunity they have before them.

That's good. We have come up to our time. Let's give Paul, let's give Dr. McNulty warmest thanks.

Thank you. Thanks for listening. Hope you enjoyed that conversation.

We have just a couple of more episodes before I take a break over the summer. So grateful to have Paul and his wife Brenda with us at Covenant Day School in Christ Covenant over the weekend and thankful for the opportunity to share that with you. So until next time, glorify God, enjoy him forever, and read a good book.

[Music]

(dramatic music)