

# Being Christian in today's culture Episode 5: What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness?

## TRANSCRIPT

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**NOTE: This transcript was AI-generated and has not been fully edited.**

[00:00:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Welcome back to the Denison Forum podcast. I'm Mark Turman, Executive Director of Denison Forum. We're going to sit down again with our Cultural Apologist and Co Founder, Dr. Jim Denison, in a moment. We're going to talk about the next topic in our series, Being Christian in Today's Culture. If you're just stepping into this series with us, this is an eight episode series, and you're welcome to go back and pick up from the beginning.

We did an overview and a couple of topics that we'll announce to you in a moment. But this is going to be an eight episode series in total, and we're just rounding the corner of the halfway point. We're talking about what Dr. Dennison likes to refer to as the seven foundational pillars of biblical flourishing and how we flourish in a way that God has described in the Bible and how that can be.

That relates to our culture, how we can be the salt and light that God desires for us to be as we walk with him and represent him as his ambassadors in this world. We're seeking to equip you and others to think biblically, to live holy, and to act redemptively so that the world flourishes, so that it's a better place for everyone.

Until Jesus comes again, which is the only time, of course, when it's going to be exactly the way it should be. So we've looked at a couple of topics already. We had a, as I said, an introduction to this series, we talked about as the first foundational idea or truth that you have to embrace biblical truth and authority.

If we don't start there, then the rest of these topics from a biblical standpoint don't really work. So we have to embrace. The word of God, the scripture as God's word to us and all that it reveals to us. That leads to the next foundational pillar, which is the necessity of faith in Christ and the power.

Of having faith in Christ in our culture today. We talked about last time, the sanctity of life in a lot of different aspects. And then today we're going to talk about biblical righteousness, which is a big, big topic. We'll move forward from here to talk a bit next time about biblical sexuality.

We'll also have a podcast on civility, political civility, very pertinent as we move into the coming months.

And then we'll tie this all together with a conversation about cultural engagement. We'll talk about the how of getting into these areas and representing Christ and being influential in that way. So, That's where we've been. That's where we're headed. We'd love for you to go back if you haven't already and listen in on the previous conversations and stay with us through this series.

Let me also remind you that every one of these conversations is built on a white paper that Dr. Dennison has written. Those white papers will be always in the show notes. Of every episode. They will also be available on our website

we hope that our conversations will spur you to go and to download those white papers, to read them carefully, to pray over them extensively, and to use those as a way of equipping yourself as you get into these topics.

And as you have opportunity to represent Christ in these ways. So that's a mouthful to set up our conversation today. But Dr. Jim, how are you doing?

[00:03:16] **Dr. Jim Denison:** I'm doing well today. Mark, how are you?

[00:03:18] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Doing great. We have covered up, covered some really good, not covered up, hopefully, but covered some really good conversations to this point, and I'm looking forward to having this conversation with you about biblical righteousness. This white paper that you have written covers a lot of ground. And is going to be one of the more more challenging topics for us to get through all that you've written.

We could, we could probably talk several days on any one of these topics. But we're going to try to cover the idea of biblical righteousness, but as a way of maybe getting us started what do you mean by biblical righteousness? And. What does that actually mean from a scriptural point of view?

[00:04:03] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, when we think about biblical righteousness as opposed to righteousness as it's defined in the secular culture and so forth, I really think you're looking in three dimensions. You're thinking about being right with God, being right with others, being right with yourself. There are a variety, as you know, Mark, of Hebrew and Greek words that can be in this conversation that have in them something along the lines of not transgressing lines and a negative point of view of being properly lined up in a positive sort of a sense, but biblical righteousness as being right with.

Something or someone it's a, it's a concept that has a kind of an alignment sort of a value in it. And so it doesn't exist in a vacuum is what I'm saying. Nothing is righteous unto itself. It's not intrinsically or endemically righteous as our culture sometimes thinks can be the case. We're right in terms of our relationship with.

Right with God, right with others, right with ourselves. And it's in all three of those all of which are causal. They connect to each other in pretty direct ways. So not just correlated, but they're causative as well. And so the more we're right with God, the more we're able to be right with our neighbor and ourselves.

And the more we're right with our neighbor, the more we're able to be right with God and so forth. And so it's that multidimensional sense. It's a relational category and it has to do with living in a way that God can most ultimately bless.

[00:05:17] **Dr. Mark Turman:** So is it is it better you think for us to use this term? Is it less? Less dangerous in some ways in conversations with others. There's a lot of conversation today about justice and particularly about the qualifier social justice. That can be a lightning rod in particular conversations.

And we're going to move into some of the topics that relate to this and that express this idea of biblical righteousness. Do you think this is a better terminology for believers? in their own conversations with themselves in their own mind and their own thinking. And, and then as they get into conversations with others, is it, is it just too volatile in some ways to use the idea of justice and particularly social justice?

[00:06:02] **Dr. Jim Denison:** That's a freighted term today. It really is. It didn't used to be. There was a day when the two phrases righteousness and justice could be somewhat interchangeable, you could think, especially in a legal construct, you could think of them as being somewhat the same. If I'm declared righteous by the law, that's the same thing as justice having been done or my having lived by just means in a legal sort of a construct.

But these days, it's As you know, the word justice itself is freighted with so many other adjectives, whether that's social justice, that's racial justice, that can be criminal justice and typically reform is what we're thinking about. Criminal justice reform or social justice reform. And now we're into equity versus equality.

Now we're into DEI things. Now we're into critical theory and all sorts of manifestations there. So all that to say the word justice itself no longer is a synonym for righteousness and carries its own baggage. or its own affiliations anyway. That's why I think the short answer is yes. A simpler way to look at what we're getting at today is to think in the concept of righteousness and then apply that to issues to which justice is relevant as well.

But do it in the context of a biblical sort of a worldview rather than so much a social construct.

[00:07:11] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. It's, it's really kind of a shame in some ways that the word justice has been, been carried or conveyed so much baggage recently, but are we still, you know, Are we still talking conceptually about the truth that Micah calls out in Micah 6, 8 of, of loving justice and loving mercy and walking humbly with our God?

Do you think, are we still in line with the spirit of Micah in this conversation?

[00:07:37] **Dr. Jim Denison:** think we all hope so. That would be the desire, absolutely, certainly. That's one of those keened up verses in scripture, isn't it? One of those places that really God just reveals His very heart to us. Amen. The things that God most wants for us and most wants to see in us. And so what Mike is describing there is the biblical construct that I hope we're able to kind of clarify and unpack and apply to life here as well.

So I think it's very much in that Micah mindset that we're having this conversation today.

[00:08:04] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Okay. I want to make sure we're still in that same theme. Cause I think that's a great place for us to go and a great, a great word for our culture today. You begin this white paper talking about biblical righteousness with a call out of hypocrisy. And we know that one of the common accusations that comes toward us as people of faith of people of commitment to Christ is that we and all the people that fill churches are hypocrites.

And, and that's oftentimes given as a very strong reason why People who don't follow Christ choose to stay away from him is because they see various levels of hypocrisy in our lives. We certainly see that on too often occasion with spiritual leaders, with church leaders. I'm thinking of the clergy abuse case.

Thinking of how that looked in a in the Protestant world within the Southern Baptist world, but also within the Roman Catholic world. If people are looking to level that accusation, they typically have a lot of evidence. But what is the connection that you're laying out here in terms of hypocrisy and how.

The drive for approval is really the thing that sets us up in many ways to be hypocrites and to not be righteous. Unpack that for us a little bit.

[00:09:22] **Dr. Jim Denison:** There is that drive for approval that's in us. John Powell in his book, Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Really Am, answers this question pretty simply, and it's because I'm afraid you won't like me. And so psychologists have what they call this idealized self. The person you wish you were, the person you want other people to think you are.

You go through life typically trying to project that person to other people and trying to live up to that, all the while knowing it's not who you really are inside. And knowing that if anybody saw behind the mask, it's And so who we really are, they wouldn't like us very much. It's like a counselor told me one time along the way, I'm not who I think I am.

I'm not who you think I am. I'm who I think you think I am. Which is a bad way to live, isn't it? But out of that context, we have this sense inside ourselves of hypocrisy as a result of that, because none of us is living up to that idealized self that we wish we were. Think you can even make an argument here that this is in some ways a vestige of the fall.

Plato had this idea that our souls existed in a pre incarnate state, and they sinned, we would say, and they were punished by being put in our bodies as the prison house of the soul. They got that from the Orphic cult back three centuries before Plato. There's something to that, to the idea that we have, not that he was right about being punished by being put in bodies, but this idea that there's something in us that knows we're not who we ought to be, that knows we're not who we were created to be, that knows we're not as righteous.

That's As God wishes us to be, and as we wish ourselves to be. And so we can do one or two things here. We can either posit an idealized self. We can either put a standard out there and seek to live up to it all the while, knowing we'll fail and people will accuse us of hypocrisy, or we can set the bar so low that we give up on that project and then no one will accuse us of hypocrisy because we never attempted to be better than we are.

I choose the former over the latter. I would rather strive to be more than I am and fall short than not strive to be more than I am. Never they say a pessimist is never disappointed, never fail, but then never succeed. Never become more than I wish to be a dear friend of mine a mentor said I'm not the man I used to be and never was but that doesn't mean I shouldn't try and so really that's the option here Isn't it?

That's the choice between us. We can fear the charge of hypocrisy You know, someone said the church is full of hypocrites and someone else will know there's room for one more You know, we all are that on some level. So we could be the, we could go the direction of some of the skeptics that would say there's too much hypocrisy in the church for the, for the gospel to be true.

If you're going to apply that, that really you're going to have to say that of any worldview that asks you to be more than you are. You'd have to apply that to any religion, any secular worldview. You'd have to apply that to Platonism and Aristotelianism because they ask us to be more than we are, and we're going to fall short of that and therefore it could be considered hypocrites.

At that point, there could be no worldview that could be aspirational on any level. If we're going to be afraid of the charge of hypocrisy, when we fall short, I would rather, as I said, seek to be more righteous than I am, know that on occasion I'll fail, but hopefully on occasion I'll succeed. And worry less about the skeptic than worrying about or thinking about my own heart and making certain I'm being the best person I can be within the power and strength of the Holy Spirit.

To me, that's the right way to go. That is, by the way, the way that human progress has always advanced. It's the only way progress has ever flourished. I think it was Thomas Edison, who was famed for having said anyway, that with all of his failed attempts to do various things, he said I didn't fail. I just found ways not to succeed.

I found ways that didn't work. It's the other way to look at it. Remember Rick Warren saying years ago that you need to think of what you're doing in church life as an experiment. It's not a fail or succeed. It's a thing you're experimenting and experiments don't always succeed. But you learn something when it doesn't work just as you learn something when it does.

There was an athlete that some time ago, Mark, said, I never lose. Oh, it was Jalen Hurts, the place for the Philadelphia Eagles, said, I never lose. I either win or I learn. I either win or I learn. He's a very strong believer, by the way, and I think there's a lot of truth in that idea.

[00:13:32] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, that's a great idea. It makes me, it makes me think of the cleaner under my sink, formula 409. I don't, you know, it's a good preacher story. I don't know if it's true, but over the years, right? We, we heard this idea that, you know, formula 409 got its name because they tried 408 formulas that didn't work and they finally landed on the one that did.

I have no idea if that's actually true or not, but it makes for a good.

[00:13:56] **Dr. Jim Denison:** I hope it

[00:13:56] **Dr. Mark Turman:** for a good truth to makes for a good illustration anyway. But that's a great setup to one of the things you call out in the introduction of this, which is. You talk about righteousness and biblical righteousness, but then you quote Jesus in his words that Jesus said that in the Beatitudes, that that we will hunger, or we should hunger and thirst for righteousness.

So what's, what are you calling out here is the difference between being righteous or doing righteousness and hungering and thirsting for it. What was, in your understanding, Jesus getting at?

[00:14:34] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Isn't that interesting that he didn't say to be righteous. He said to hunger and thirst for righteousness. I think first of all that is that's an implication that Jesus because he obviously knew human nature, with divine omniscience knew us scripture all the time Doesn't it says Jesus knew what was in a man or knew what was in their thoughts or Jesus knowing their thoughts said this Or said that and Jesus knows our fallen human nature.

He knows that we're not righteous You Yeah, absolutely. I mean, scripture is clear about that. All of sinning comes short of the glory of God and the wages of the consequences of sin is death. But we can still hunger and thirst for something we don't now have. I'm thinking in terms of the masters that got concluded pretty recently, back when I could play golf, back when I was even a decent golfer, I could hunger and thirst to break par.

Doesn't mean I would. But I could hunger and thirst to do it. And the more I hungered and thirsted, the better I got, the closer to breaking par I got, and so the hunger and thirst for something is to, as we were saying before, to have an aspiration, to be better than we are, to be more than we are. If Jesus said, blessed are the righteous.

None of us could pass muster. None of us can be that. None of us can do that. And Jesus knew that. He was the only sinless person that ever lived. So that's why the Beatitude doesn't say blessed are the righteous. It says blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Because no matter where we are, we can always strive to be better.

We can always strive for more righteousness with God, others, and ourselves than we currently have. And that's the aspirational goal. That the Lord is after. C. S. Lewis said that one of his writings made something along these lines, the point that the Lord will forgive our attempts to be better than we are, but he will not forgive our giving up, our decision not to try to be better than we are, to settle into where we are when we abandon the attempt.

That's when we're where we don't want to be as long as we're trying as long as we're striving in the power of the Holy Spirit we're making progress that we're hungering and we're thirsting to be the people that we wish to be that's who Jesus said is a blessed person

[00:16:30] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, it makes me think of Browning, I think it was, who said A man's reach must exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for? That there always needs to be that aspirational side. Right. And so yeah, I just, I love when you call that out. I, I, if I've ever thought that I forgot it, but that idea of, of hungering and thirsting Jim, when do you, where do you think, or how do you think a Christian can understand the development of that hunger and thirst in their soul?

How does, how does that work in the believer's life to, to say, to where you could ever look at yourself in the mirror and say, you know, I I think I have a greater hunger or a greater thirst for

this thing called righteousness than what I used to have. How does a believer think about that, you know, in a growth process?

[00:17:18] **Dr. Jim Denison:** that's great question. I think it works really on several levels You know, you think about the statement about Jesus. I grew in wisdom and stature in favor with God and man. And I think there's some of that that might apply to this as well. When you grow in wisdom, what we're doing here is we're growing intellectually.

We're growing to understand. I'm not the person I wish I was, but I need to be more than I am right now. And how much better my life will be if I attempt to do that. If I strive to be a better husband, we'll have a better marriage. If I strive to be a better father, better grandfather, we'll have a better family.

So I'm going to think in those terms, I'm going to be measuring on some level. I'm going to set some goals. I'm going to have some aspirational desires as I get up today, Lord, in these ways, I'm going to strive to be a better husband, or I'm going to be a better follower of yours. I'm going to be someone who prays with more regularity.

I'm going to be somebody who studies scripture more intently. We can set those kinds of goals in a way where we're thinking, we're working rationally. We're working intentionally toward this larger purpose. And that's one way of expressing and experiencing a hungering and thirsting to, to be the righteous people we wish to be.

But it says Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature, so there's a physical dimension to this, too. There's a dimension to this in which we can't do this ourselves. I need the power of the Holy Spirit to help me do this. I'm fallen. I have a fallen human nature. I seek to be my own God. I seek to strive after my own thinking.

I would so much rather give up than go on some of the time. I would so much rather set the bar lower so that I don't have to strive to go harder. So there's a fleshly dimension to me here. Jesus didn't have quite that, obviously, that same fleshly temptation. He had the same fleshly temptation, not the same fleshly sin, obviously, that we do.

But there's a sense in which in the flesh, I really need help. I need strength that I don't have. So I have to grow in wisdom and stature, then in favor with God. It's where I'm saying, Lord, help me to be the man I'm not. Help me to strive, help me to become that. Fill me with your Holy Spirit. And the closer I get to God, the further away I realize I am.

It's like the fellow that was walking someplace at night, and a car drove by and splashed some road water up on his pants. And he thought he was fine, thought everything was fine. But the closer he got to the street light, the more he could see the mud on his pants. Until by the time he



was in the light, he knew he had to go home and change. If you turn the lights down slowly, you know, in the room, your eyes adjust to the dark. It's when you get in the light that you see the stains on the clothes or the soul. And so it's staying close enough to God, seeking enough intimacy with God, where I realize how far I have to go. And where I'm asking for the help and strength of the Holy Spirit to do that.

But then the last dimension growing in favor with God and man, there's a human accountability piece to this as well. As we've talked about before, there's a real strength in asking other people to help me be the man I wish to be. And me do the same for them. Iron sharpening iron. There's a sense in which we can meet with accountability partners and say, you know, I'm really setting goals in this space right now, or I'm really struggling in this area.

I want you to pray for me, ask me hard questions. Hold me accountable and I'll do the same for you and have this kind of a mutuality of communal growth together. And so I think there's intellectual dimension. There's a fleshly dimension where I need the help of God to do this. There's a sense of growing closer to God and intimacy and a sense of partnering with others.

And all of that is ways of which we express hunger and thirst. And the funny thing is, the closer we get to this, the more we wish we had this. Again, the quote C. S. Lewis, it takes a good man to know how bad he is. He said, a bad man doesn't realize how bad he is. It's a good man who realizes how short he is of being the man he wishes to be.

And so it's really the more we hunger and thirst that we find ourselves hungering and thirsting. You know, the old saying is seeing is believing in scripture, believing is seeing, the more we believe, the more we see, the more we strive to To be righteous. The more we are empowered to strive to be righteous.

And then this pattern begins to set in and it's a wonderful pattern. It's what the Bible sometimes speaks of as sanctification. It's this idea of spiritual growth, of being made more holy as we're continuing to position ourselves through the means that we're talking about today. So anyway, those are some of the ways I think some of the disciplines by which we can hunger and thirst for righteousness in practical terms today.

[00:21:30] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, that's helpful. Also reminds me, you know, part of the reason the church exists is to hold create environments where we can give our accountability away. And I, I would try to remind particularly the men in my church that, you know, that, that verse iron sharpens, iron is a great, great understanding, but you have to remember when, if that's going to happen for iron to sharpen iron, there has to be proximity and there has to be contact.

So, we, we have to build trust relationships and when iron sharpens iron, there's always sparks and there's always heat. So it's not always going to be comfortable. You know, when you, when

you give your accountability away to your fellow Christians and say, look, I want to be more of the person that Christ wants me to be.

And if you do too, let's do that together. That means you're probably going to have some hard conversations from time to time, and you should be prepared for that and ready to be uncomfortable so that you can both get better. So you can both walk closer with Christ. Jim, in your, in your paper, you're.

You call out and you, you delve into some really big areas that our culture is struggling with five of them. Actually, you talk about racism, gender equality, and things like equal pay for equal work. You talk about immigration, economic righteousness, and you talk about creation care. We could, we could write books and do hours of conversation on every one of these topics.

But maybe as a way of getting into some of them specifically there was a thought I had a question I wanted to ask that kind of in some ways covers all of them because this is one of the problems I see in our culture, which is it, it doesn't seem like we have the ability to talk about And celebrate progress that's been made in one or more of these areas.

While at the same time acknowledging and focusing and working together on the things that still need to be corrected. It almost seems like in our culture, we become so combative that if, if you're not a victim of one of these things, then you're not legitimate to talk about it. Are you seeing some of those same kinds of struggles is, is that a concern?

That we all need to try to work on with all of these issues as we get into them.

[00:23:49] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Oh, I think so. Absolutely. I think I may have mentioned in earlier podcasts and advice I was given along the way. We were just starting this ministry. It was going to be a not for profit ministry, going to be donor based. And so this friend asked me who's your enemy? And I said what do you mean?

And he said to raise funds, you do three things. You convince people they have an enemy, convince them they can't defeat their enemy, and convince them you'll defeat their enemy if they give you money, or vote for you, or whatever it is you want them to do. In that way, these topics become weaponized.

They become means of advancing myself, whether I'm trying to get a bigger social media network and platform, megaphone, whether I'm trying to get elected, whether I'm trying to raise funds, whatever the case might be. There are ways in which these justice issues sometimes have been weaponized with and simplified with bad guys and good guys.

We're the good guys. That's the bad guys. And at the end of the day, if you're not with us, you're for them. And if you're with them, then you're the enemy. And now we've got this enemy that I

am defeating if you'll be on my side or if you'll give me whatever I'm seeking. And so there really is rather than a common cause kind of a consensus building sort of cooperation and compromise for the greater good.

We are in this season now that says that compromise is evil, that says that because the other side is dangerous and a higher percentage of Americans think the other political party is dangerous than ever before in American history, a higher percentage of Democrats and Republicans don't want their children to date somebody from the other political party than ever before in American history.

We're just in this season now where Republicans are convinced that Democrats and Democrats are convinced that Republicans are absolutely dangerous to the Republic and to the, to America's future. We're in this kind of sort of a zero sum, no holds barred sort of a deal. So in that world, it's more important to be pure than to make progress.

It's more important to not compromise in Congress, even if your bill goes down in flames, than it is to get 80% of what you wanted by compromising with the other side. The founders intended a system whereby all the parties at the table could be at the table and they could find a common cause, a common good that would benefit the majority and the consensus with the loss of the extremes on the edges.

That was the reason we have this kind of consensual democracy that we have. The Israelis do it a little differently than that. As you know, they have a parliamentary system and in their Knesset, they have 120 seats and it takes 61 seats to be a governing majority and no party ever gets that, so a variety of parties have to cobble together.

They don't have a two party system like we do. They have 17 parties or whatever, depending on the election it might be, and that they cobble together a 61 vote majority of those various parties. And now, at least within that governing coalition, you've got this kind of consensus building that's intended in the way the system works.

And so whether you do parliamentary, you do a two party system, whatever it is. The goal was. To get these people together at the table and create out of compromise and out of community and a desire for the collective good, an advancement of the democratic experiment. And we've lost that now across so much of our, of our political environment.

I know we'll talk about civility down the way, but we've lost so much of that, of that belief in compromise and that desire to achieve the 80 percent that is the greater good than if both of us lost. Because at the end of the day, I don't get elected to go to Washington to pass bills. I get elected to go to Washington to advance my own megaphone and my own platform and to

convince my own constituents back home that I'm defending their ideas, even if in defending their ideas, we can't advance the common good.

It's a dangerous place to be for a democracy, but it is where we find ourselves. Right now. And that's why the Salton light of the gospel is so urgent today.

[00:27:35] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And it's, it's just strange, particularly from a governmental standpoint that we've given up the idea of compromise. And you know, I've heard you talk before about how people today use their. Place in an institution as a platform for their own advancement. And that's, that's what you're referring to.

That might work in certain ways if you're in a company, but it just really breaks down when you get into government, which operates so much on the fundamental principle of compromise, either compromise or power, you know, domination. Where do you think it is that we just gave up the idea that compromise was a good, a good goal for us?

[00:28:18] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, I think the truth resources here. You've all 11 has done a lot of work in this space and a lot of what I've learned, I've learned from him at that point is he's demonstrated that some of that has to do with social media. And the fact now that we all have our own megaphones, as we've talked about in the past, without having to go through editors to get published, to get in a newspaper or to get airtime or whatever it could be, I have my own access to communication through the social media platforms that exist.

Now I want to level that they didn't. Used to exist. And so that's one thing whereby I can use my platform, whether it's in a company or it's in Congress or whatever, and my own social media platform to get a hearing I couldn't have otherwise just as a quick example of that, Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, AOC as she's called, is brilliant.

using social media to make her ideas public. And so even though she's very early in her career in Congress, even though she was elected from a district up in the New York City area that didn't have a lot of political power, a lot of political platform, she was immediately one of the best known national figures because she could weaponize social media so effectively.

And encouraged other colleagues of like mind to create a thing they call the squad and be able to use their social media voice together in a way that that advances them in previous generations. That would have been impossible. You get elected to Congress or what's called a backbencher, and you have to go through two or three terms of building relationships and earning the right to be on more influential committees and then still more influential committees, and that eventually to chair the committee or be the ranking minority member or took a long time.

To get to the place where Congress could advance your personal celebrities, what I'm saying. And it worked against that. The whole point of Congress was to serve the collective good through the unified house, whether it's the house or the Senate, that was the whole point of the exercise. The whole reason that those two branches existed.

And so social media has changed so much of that by giving that immediate pathway. To be able to give visibility in ways you couldn't have in the past. But I think another piece of it, and Levin talks about this as well, is we're in such an activist age now that so many, especially younger people are so participatory through social media and other means in specific social agendas.

And they bring those agendas with them. Where they work or where they live, where they go. And so they see the company that they work for as a means to advancing those values, to advancing those social agendas, whatever they might be. And they choose their employers based on what positions those companies might be taking on those values.

And they affirm their leaders to the degree that those leaders affirm those values. And so now you see politicized companies in ways you never used to. I mean, that was a day when no one would have any idea what the head of a firm like Apple's position on something like same sex marriage would be.

That wasn't what they were in business to do. They were in business to sell computers and technology. And it was kind of against the bottom line to take polarizing positions on social agendas. But nowadays, if Tim Cook doesn't take positions that he's taking there, he's not going to have the following inside Apple that he does.

Because a lot of why those folk work for him where they do is so that the company will advance these values that they themselves personally believe. So they see the company as a platform for their personal values, not just the CEO's values. That same psychology translates over to government as well.

Translates to the church. As well, I have to hasten to admit, we have a lot of celebrity pastors now who are using pulpits and using the size of their church and using their media presence as a means to a personal celebrity that transcends that church or that denomination or that historic set of values and beliefs.

And so I think it's a value driven, activist culture, and then it's a social media platform that gives those values a megathon. That has turned institutions into a means to an end, rather than as an end unto itself.

[00:32:12] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And one, just, just a really good description of how technology has changed so much about our world, because like I said, when you look at Tim

Cook or other, particularly business leaders, government leaders business in this case, you know, it's, it's not just Tim Cook, but it's also the board of directors behind him, right.

That board of that board of directors is charged with stewarding that company in a way that keeps the company healthy. And so the board is either going out and looking for a Tim Cook type figure. Or they're following a Tim Cook type figure because they're sensing something in the, in the culture that will respond positively to it and continue to advance both their careers as well as their company, because they go hand in hand which really sets us up well for a conversation, a little bit about racism specifically, you call out a quote from Nelson Mandela that nobody is born hating.

But they have to be taught to hate, particularly to hate people of a different color or a different group or different tribe. But if they can be taught to hate, they can also be taught to love. How, how would you say that we could probably pick up some ideas and start teaching people to love better?

It seems like there's evidence everywhere that we're teaching them to hate and using technology in a big way to do that. But how could we also turn that around and teach them to love?

[00:33:39] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, that's a good question, and Nelson Mandela's speaking more sociologically than he is individually, obviously. To the degree that racism is an expression of the will to power. It's always been with us, unfortunately, tragically. I might be inferior to my African American friend in every way, but if I'm convinced that my white skin makes me superior to his black skin then my will to power comes to play and racism becomes a means by which I feel myself to be empowered and to be a person of value and worth and it's sin, it's absolute.

And it's part of the sin nature, I think, the fallen will to power human nature that drives racism. But I think in a sociological sense, and certainly on a practical sense, Nelson Mandela is exactly right. I can think about my two grandkids. I have four grandchildren, but two of them are attending school in an elementary school that is a dual language.

Experience where they're being immersed in Spanish as well as in English. And they are as anglos their minorities their racial minorities in the school that they attend it would never occur to them to think in a discriminatory way toward latinos Even though latinos are the majority in their school that would never occur to them These are some of their friends that they play with every day.

It's people that they're doing life with Someone would have to come along and teach them to hate latinos As Anglos, because it's not coming naturally to them. And the reason for, and it gets to

the answer to your question, I think, is that in building community around shared purpose, we find a commonality of heart.

And that commonality of heart can be more powerful than the drive to hate. That is fueled by racism and by the will to power. I'm thinking about that John Grisham book that was made into a movie, *Time to Kill*, in which Samuel L. Jackson plays the African American who won't give away the story, but anyway, but Matthew McConaughey as his lawyer.

And so you've got the white lawyer defending the black man. And at one point McConaughey's character says to Jackson's character, he says we're friends. And Jackson says, we're not friends. And McConaughey's character says what do you mean? And Jackson's character says your kids don't play with my kids.

So in the last scene of the movie, I get chills when I think of it. McConaughey's family pulls up, gets out of the car so his kids can run over through the front yard to play with Samuel Jackson's kids. There's a commonality there. Now, if we do it as an end to itself, I don't know how successful that is.

If we get together and decide today, we will not be racist today. We will not discriminate, you know, and we're going to do that on some sort of enforced uniformity. I don't know how successful that ultimately can be. I guess it can. I guess it helps on some level, but it's when we have a larger purpose that draws us together.

that I have seen this work most successfully. When we pastored in Atlanta, for instance, we worked with churches in the Summerhill community in the center central district of Atlanta. We had great relationships with them, Anglo and African American, but what we made our greatest advancement was when the Olympics came, because so much of the 1976 Olympics were in the Summerhill community.

And so our church partnered with Summerhill churches to reach out to those that were attending the events there. And in that common cause, whether it was handing out water or tracks or doing clowning or whatever it was we were doing there, we were partners. We weren't one trying to, on some level, be nice to the other.

We were equal partners. We were peers toward a larger purpose. And it was in that that we found ourselves able to build community. On a new level. And then beyond that, our men's groups got together from several churches and our church there. We just decided we're going to do a Bible study together. A men's Bible study.

It's all equal footing. It's all peers in this deal. We're just going to come together on Saturdays and study scripture. That turned into backyard fellowships that turned into home groups.

Wonderful ways. And which racial barriers were broken down, because the point wasn't breaking down the barrier.

The point was having Bible study together, or building a Habitat house together, or working in the Olympics together. And it was in being united around a larger cause. You know, you put the chair in the middle of the room, and the closer you get to the chair, the closer you get to each other. And so to me, you build community around commonality.

And as you do that, you find God's love for others. At the end of the day, the bottom line, of course, is asking the Holy Spirit to encourage us and empower us and enable us to be the people that we wish to be, but we can't be without the Spirit at work in our lives. Love is the first fruit of the Spirit, and it's seeking that fruit that is really the bottom line.

[00:38:03] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Jim, as we continue to think about Biblical righteousness and particularly racism and the problem that we face with that as a big part of our country going all the way back to its founding, it, it seems like in some ways, and you call this out in your paper here, that we seem to be, have made some significant progress, but in the last few years, we saw things like the death of, of George Floyd and several other events and, and situations of, police killing black people or, or other things like that.

And it seems like we've taken huge steps back. Talk about that as a reality, how much of it is statistically supported, how much of it might be perception. Talk about what that has brought to us over the last 5-10 years

[00:38:54] **Dr. Jim Denison:** you know, the old saying is perception is reality, and that's not always true, but it can be true. Sometimes what we perceive to be true, we then turn into reality, don't we, as the way, by virtue of how we respond to what we perceive to be true. And I think there's some of that on both sides of this.

There's really no question, statistically, that since the Civil Rights Movement began back in the 1950s to today, there's been enormous progress on a wide variety of levels. The so called redlining. Before by entire neighborhoods were discriminated against in terms of getting bank loans and having even grocery stores placed.

And that sort of thing is significantly less than it ever was before. There's much more, I think, awareness of racial injustice issues, systemic issues relative to education or policing or criminal justice, that sort of thing than used to be the case. I think we're seeing significant progress relative to economic advancement.

For racial minorities there's good statistical evidence that poverty rates are much improved from what they were back in the 50s and 60s for those that are in minority communities across the



board. There are certainly tragic exceptions, but as a general rule, there's a rising tide here on some very significant levels.

If for no other reason than that the old Jim Crow kind of endemic sort of racial prejudice that was so systemically part of culture is now understood not to be what culture should be. Language is different. Even the way by which people speak of other people is dramatically different from when even I was a child.

That what were givens in society when I was a kid are not givens anymore. And I'm so grateful for that. So glad to be able to rejoice in that fact that so much of what was just taken for granted now is understood as, as being dangerous to society on so many levels. So I think we've made some enormous progress relative to attitudes, relative to a poverty level significantly, even education opportunities and that sort of thing.

And we're grateful for that. All of us are, but we have so far to go. really have so far to go. There's still such significant pockets of systemic racism, places where individuals based on their skin color really for instance, a recent survey sent out resumes and kind of a blind survey.

And those that had African American sounding names received about 30 percent of the callbacks. That those that had Anglo sounding names there was a police district in the Midwest where it was discovered that traffic stops for those with for African Americans went down significantly after dark when the police could no longer see the color of their skin.

And there was thought to be a very causal relationship between those two facts. It's still the case that African Americans are sentenced to two or three times longer prison sentences than Anglos for the same crimes across the board. There are exceptions, but those are tragic realities. We certainly have a long ways to go.

But that doesn't change the fact that we've seen significant progress. And for that we should be grateful, even as we're working to try to get to a day where Where we have the kind of all men are created equal ethos that this nation was theoretically founded on.

[00:41:48] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And that, that seems to be the theme of all that you're trying to convey to us in these four or five topics that you call out. that we've made progress, but we have a significant challenge ahead of us still. And particularly, you know, we, we hear more and more talk and, and the utilize utilization of this term systemic racism, which is real, which is what you've been describing.

But you also describe that we, we have at least a three front challenge in front of us, that there is the legal side of this, the practical side of this, and the spiritual side of this spiritual is kind of the

one that maybe I resonate with the quickest because, you know, the Bible says in places like Ephesians, that Christ has brought down the dividing wall.

Between us. And, you know, as much as we see racial animosity between different groups, that's nothing compared to what we understand about the problem between Jews and, and Gentiles in the New Testament. So, unpack that a little bit. What do we mean by doing all that we can individually as believers on the legal side, on the practical side, which addresses some of that systemic reality, but also on that spiritual side, because You're, you're very careful to tell us that laws don't change hearts.

So how can we engage?

[00:43:04] **Dr. Jim Denison:** And we need to do all three. We certainly don't need to be waiting until everybody's heart is different to try to make what legal progress we can make and what practical progress we can make. Laws are a good thing. If laws do nothing other than restrain human behavior to some degree, we're all grateful for that.

I'm glad as I'm driving around on I 20 here in Texas that we have speed limits. I would imagine some people are driving slower than they would if we didn't have speed limits, even though you can't change the heart of somebody. That doesn't want to respect the law. The very fact that they understand there's accountability is a benefit to the rest of us, just on some basic levels.

So we certainly want to be grateful for believers in all three places and want to do what we can to support them. But the point I think is pretty simple. And it is that the human heart is really at the essence of what we're talking about right now. And racism and other systemic injustice issues are expressions of the will to power of the basic drive in human nature to be our own God.

To take advantage of others as a means of advancing ourselves, to see life as instrumental rather than intrinsically worthwhile, as we've discussed in a recent conversation. And once we see other people as a means to our end, then, that's really where all of this begins, isn't it? Racial prejudice is a way by which I can feel superior to somebody of a different skin color.

Economic prejudice by which I think I'm superior to somebody else because I have more means than they do, or educational prejudice, a whole variety of these, gender prejudice by which I consider myself superior to somebody of a different gender and so forth. And so that's just a baked in way by which the will to power gets exercised.

And only the Holy Spirit can change the human heart. That's something only God ultimately can. Do so laws could restrain behavior, but they can't change hearts. That's the reason why praying for a spiritual awakening, praying for a movement of God's spirit, and then responding by

sharing our faith, by doing all we can to lead people closer to Christ is the most patriotic thing we can do.

It's the most basic essential way we can serve this nation. We want to be a nation God is able to bless, but we can't be a nation God can bless if he can't change hearts and therefore change hands and heads and ultimately the trajectory of our culture.

[00:45:06] **Dr. Mark Turman:** And that, that pertains to other things, like you said, in this, in this paper, not just to racism, but to other things I want to touch on for a few minutes as well. Like I said, we need to be grateful for laws. We need to contend for laws that make sense and that constrain evil. and point us in the right direction.

But we do need to train, pray for that spiritual change, which ultimately is the only permanent change that can actually make the world better on a long term basis. Jim, you also called out gender and genderism or gender inequality in this paper. Lots of talk even in churches these days about women and the role of women what they can or can't do, that kind of thing.

Lots that we could talk about. You give a great explanation about inequalities in pay between men and women doing the same job, which has been a long term issue. within our culture, but what's, what's the foundation that we need to remember? You know, this could easily drift into a conversation about people's understanding of sexual identity, things like, you know, is gender a social construct or not, what are some of the foundational things you really want people to hold on to?

I've heard you teach and talk many times about Jesus's relationship with women, how he elevated women. What are the, the things that we really must hold onto foundationally in this conversation to pursue biblical righteousness for both men and women? Right.

[00:46:33] **Dr. Jim Denison:** for that. You start in Genesis 1, where it says so clearly in Scripture that God created man, male and female, He created them. In the Hebrew there is, you know, there's a parallelism. Hebrew poetry is typically done by parallelism. And so when the first line says that God created humanity, and then the second line amplifies by saying He made the men and the women, all of that is meant for us to understand that there's an equality in all of that.

And then in Genesis 2, when it says it's not good for the man to be alone, I will provide a helper meat for him, as a literal translation of that. The actual Hebrew here can be rendered, a superior who helps the inferior, is a way to translate that Hebrew. And so even in Genesis 2, there's at the very least a sense of equality here, with Adam and Eve, with males and females, equality of value, equality of worth in the eyes of the one who creates them.

That's what Jesus comes along to elevate every way he can. Every opportunity it seems that he has, he wants to come along and make us understand how women are to be valued equally as men in the eyes of God and in the eyes of the, of the family of faith as we advance the kingdom forward. You're thinking in Luke chapter eight of how it was women who were some of his most significant financial supporters.

You think of Mary and Martha. Of course, as two of his most devoted followers, and how Jesus often elevates Mary's example of someone sitting at his feet that's something a rabbi allows a student to do. So by her sitting at his feet, Jesus is welcoming her into his seminary, as it were. Jesus is, is admitting her into his school.

That's the, that's the posture that we're meant to understand here. And then in Jesus resurrection, of course, as we know, the very first human being to meet the risen Jesus. The risen Lord is not Peter. It's not John. It's Mary Magdalene who becomes the first apostle of Easter. The first eyewitness, the first one charged with the good news to take the gospel forward.

From there you get into Lydia, who was the person who hosted the first church service. Church in the European world there in Philippi. It seems from the references there that she wasn't just a hostess, but was on some level, some level, the leader of that church meeting in her home, maybe even the pastor of that church.

However, you'd like to see that Aquila and Priscilla that are so often mentioned in Paul's dealings in Corinth and other places. And often Priscilla mentioned first. In that, in that relationship, Junius in Romans 16, 7 counted among the apostles. There are a variety of ways to translate that, but most would think that's a female.

who is understood not as among the original 12, of course, but one of the apostolic leaders of the church in Romans 16, seven. And so really across the new Testament, this remarkable kind of cacophony almost of, of evidence for how the gospel sees us all as the same and elevates us all as people of inherent worth and dignity.

And as you've said, Mark, this isn't a day when women are seen as possessions. They're the possession of their father till they become the possession of their husband. The mother is, is to be seen as an instrument for the raising of children. It's understood that the father's going to have sexual relationships with prostitutes, temple prostitutes, with others outside the family.

That was a given. In the culture, tragically. And so this idea that women are intrinsically equally valuable to men, it's just something that was absolutely revolutionary when Paul writes in Galatians three, there's neither June or green slave or free male, nor a female. All Abraham's seed and heirs according to the covenant, he, I, he makes a statement there that we are still trying to catch up to in our society today.

[00:50:02] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, it's so much for us to think about there. And just that fundamental basic respect for all people we talked about in our previous episode, the sanctity of life, seeing that in every person, regardless of their race, regardless of their gender that we start from that place of the sanctity of all life and valuing them.

And then, like I said, just love the way that you described that Jesus. drew women as well as men into his relationships. And then he disciplined them like in the example of Mary, and then he deployed them that they may not have had the term capital A Apostle applied to them like the original 12, but that word means to be sent.

And they were and are sent to tell the story of Jesus, just like, everybody else, just like every man. And that they are very much a part of that story, Jim, with just a few minutes left in our podcast on biblical righteousness, have a couple of questions. Maybe we can get to real quickly. One of those that's really very much on the minds of people today has to do with immigration.

With welcoming the foreigner into our midst you also called out, I remember in an article that you wrote a week or two ago about how we now view each other when we first meet someone new, we view others now more with suspicion, Rather than with curiosity can you kind of describe that phenomenon that's occurred just apparently in the last few recent years and then just some fundamental ideas that we need to think about when we're hearing this large cultural political debate about what's going on on the southern border of our country, just our total scale?

Thank you. Approach to thinking about immigration and those kinds of issues. What do we need to first start with? Maybe just a couple of first principles that we need to hold on to.

[00:51:51] **Dr. Jim Denison:** It's understandable, I think, on some level that with rising crime rates with so much even online that is victimizing people where we constantly feel ourself barraged by threats. That we would see other people through a hermeneutic of suspicion, through a hermeneutic that assumes that they're here to injure us, they're here to hurt us, rather than they're here to help us.

It's, it's just understandable, I guess, that there'd be a defensive posture that would become so, almost a pandemic of its own. That contributes to the loneliness epidemic of our culture, to the anxiety that comes out of all of that, and all the ways in which that's manifesting in physical disease and relational difficulty, all of that, because we feel ourselves under assault.

Right now on so many levels, Christians, especially, I think, because, and understandably on some levels as we're being caricatured as a KKK, homophobic, bigoted, prejudiced, narrow minded, discriminatory people. And our faith is being seen as dangerous to society. And so there's really kind of this, this posture isn't there that sees other people as dangerous on some level as, as, as out to hurt us in some way.

And then it doesn't take much evidence to really convince us that we're right. In a way that really makes that even worse, I'm afraid, on some level. And the right way to, I think, respond to that is to start with the biblical text that says, God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a power and love and a sound mind relating to other people through a hermeneutic of suspicion and fear is the wrong way to relate to people.

We obviously want to be careful. You want to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. We certainly don't want to be naive here as we relate to others, but to see others as someone Jesus died for. Is, I think, the place to start. To see other people, whether they're immigrants or they're not, whatever their particular class or culture or demographic might be, as someone Jesus considered worthy of his death.

He would die again just for them. Is I think the way to start seeing them the way God sees them the old augustinian statement God loves each of us as if they're only one of us and so we start by asking god to help us Love people the way he loves people and and and respond Defensively if we must obviously don't be naive about any of that trust but verify as president reagan said But at the same time start with a position that's more positive than negative I think whether that's your neighbor down the street or that's your new neighbor on the southern border relative to the southern border itself The massive reason, I think, if we could reduce this to anything to grossly oversimplify on some level, Mark, but the, the basic conundrum I think we have biblically here is that on the one side scripture so, so constantly calls us to affirm the immigrant.

Scripture says, I mean, the Lord speaking to the Jews, reminding them, Hey, you were immigrants at one point. You were exiles out of Egypt. You were immigrants into the promised land. Now you're to treat the alien and the foreigner in the way you would wish to be treated. We see that all across the Old New Testament.

We're to value others as God does, and we're to see immigrants as guests. As a welcome into our culture. That's been America's position historically for the most part as this melting pot kind of idea, a nation of immigrants, as it were, recognizing how immigrants are the lifeblood of our economies and of our society on so many levels.

And so we have that as one narrative that's biblical and historical on the other side. Scripture teaches the value of borders and the absolute, with clarity, significance of law and order. A Romans 13 kind of a move that makes very clear that we are to obey the law, we are to obey the magistrate, those that are in position of authority over us.

The immigrants of the biblical era are not illegal immigrants. These are not people that are breaking laws to cross barriers. These are not people that are on some level, flouting authority in order to knowingly, intentionally break border laws in order to come into a country. You don't have fentanyl issues in the New Testament.

You don't have terrorism issues in the New Testament. You don't have bad actors. We're a weaponizing immigration as a means of overwhelming governmental authority and probably importing nefariously into our country as a means of undermining our future on some level. And so none of that's part of the biblical conversation about welcoming the immigrant.

So how do you balance those two things? How do you create a consensus that everybody's happy with, that values individuals, but at the same time values the rule of law, is the issue that's ahead of us. Then, as you know, a variety, and we discussed some of this in the paper, a variety of ways of trying to get at that, ways of trying to create pathways to legal immigration for those that are already here, for those that were born here the parents of those, anchor babies as they're called, dreamers, children that were brought here through no decision of their own who did not knowingly violate the law, that were brought as young children here, but nonetheless were illegally brought into the country, and should they be treated differently, and all sorts of ramifications.

That's why it's such a difficult thing. It didn't used to be as politically divisive as it is today. There was a day when there was a sense that the border obviously needed to be addressed, but we could do this in a more holistic way. Now it's become, in a number of ways, a partisan hot potato as well, and it's being weaponized in political purposes as well.

So we're not going to solve that in the next five minutes, but that is the essence of the issue from a biblical point of view, I think, is the the significance of borders and the significance of people and bringing those together is the challenge from a biblical ethicist's point of view.

[00:57:06] **Dr. Mark Turman:** And not, as you just mentioned, not letting the partisan mindset take over every single issue. That's in front of us. Jim, so much more we could talk about and that you write about in this paper. I want to again, encourage our listeners to go to our website [denisonforum.org](http://denisonforum.org) or to the show notes of this podcast and to download and read the full paper That you've written here, a couple of other items that we don't have time to talk about.

You talk about economic inequality and how important that is growing in our culture. You talk about creation care that is so much on the minds, especially of young people. And all of these things and more, there could have been other topics included in this broad umbrella of biblical righteousness, but maybe as a way of wrapping this up.

Why is it that you think that our nature as human beings seems to be to take What is really complex, everything we've talked about in this podcast about biblical righteousness, the spiritual dimension of it, the application in racism or relating to people as men and women economic issues, immigration, all of those things, especially on a scale where there's 330, 300 million, 350 million people in our country, not to mention the countries around us.

But we have this real strong tendency to try to take complex things and oversimplify them. And then, as you said, militarize them. How do we recognize that in our lives? And how do we develop a greater hunger and thirst for righteousness?

[00:58:42] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Isn't that a foundational question? Because I'm as tempted as anybody is here at that very point. I know I keep coming back to the will to powers, the basic drive in human nature, but I think it is the desire to be your own God. Now for reasons we've talked about in a place where we have a megaphone whereby we can communicate our version of truth to the world on a platform that never existed to us before.

Again, as we've said before, the way you get a hearing in such a cacophony of a volume of ideas out there is to have an enemy. That people can't defeat, but that you'll defeat if they'll listen to you, or vote for you, or click on your stuff, or whatever it might be. And so demonizing the other side is how you get heard.

That's how you make progress in this world where being heard, where being celebrity is, is the value that people seem so much to be seeking and embracing. I'm sure we would have always been that way in human nature. Human nature doesn't change. We just have no means to do it.

[00:59:33] **Dr. Mark Turman:** right,

[00:59:33] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Previously, as we've talked about, when you couldn't get on television easily or get on radio airwaves to get something published in a book or a newspaper, it wasn't very tempting to weaponize the other side, to militarize the conversation so as to advance my own social media platform or whatever, but it certainly is now.

There's a means of doing that now, but it really requires the old, if it bleeds, it leads sort of a us versus them, zero sum kind of a mentality. And that's what we're seeing in Washington. That's what we're seeing in local politics as well. That's what we're seeing in so much of the, of the debate that's going on right now around these very, very complex issues it has to fit in a tweet.

It has to, it has to be something that goes on a t shirt, doesn't it? It has to be people tune out so quickly. Our attention spans are so much less than they ever used to be. And so, we have to simplify past what really is appropriate, just even to be heard and in order to make an enemy that I can defeat.

And so this mentality that is going to be the death of us. as a culture. It really is. It it really, I think, in so many ways imperils what a consensual democracy is all about. I mean, the founders knew what they were doing when they started out in a belief that all men are created equal. If you lose that, you lose consensual democracy at the end of the day. You either have a caste system, you either have a class system, or you have an all men are created equal system. You've



got to choose between those things. And if you are inherently inferior to me, racially or demographically or whatever, if you're the enemy to me then we're not created equal. Then this foundation that our, that our democracy depends upon is fractured.

And at the end of the day, we're going to weaponize our democratic means, our, in order to accomplish the end that we intend. People forget that Hamas won the elections in Gaza. Back in 2005, the Palestinian Authority, Fatah, enormously corrupt, horrifically corrupt. And so the people genuinely elected Hamas in Gaza.

And then as soon as they use the levers of democratic election to get themselves empowered, they immediately jerk them away. And there've been no election since. There will not be elections. Now they're using the mechanisms of democracy to advance their authoritarian, totalitarian, horrific, terroristic aims.

And so using that as a means to the end is is, is unfortunately what we're seeing on the front page of our news every single day. So as believers, we can come along and be optimistic here. We can be hopeful here. We can be people who pray for the Holy Spirit to manifest love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control through us.

And what a difference that'll make in the culture. It won't take many of us manifesting the fruit of the Spirit as light in the dark for the culture to be drawn to that, because there's something intrinsic in us that wants what the fruit of the Spirit offer. We want to be better than we are. We want to be the people we were created to be.

And when we demonstrate that in our compassion and we offer that in our witness, the Holy Spirit uses what we do. And the darker the room, the more powerful the light,

[01:02:41] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yes, absolutely. And that's a, that's a great thing about following after Christ is that he puts that hunger and that thirst in us. in us that desire to be the person that he originally always dreamed and knew we could be when we were in relationship with him. And also to help facilitate and build a world that flourishes along kingdom principles, along those same ideas of righteousness.

And that, you know, there's always going to be this tension until we see Jesus face to face that We're happy to see when progress happens and we're, we're grieved when it doesn't, when things still need to be improved and flourishing needs to come to more people, whether it's across races or across genders or across other kinds of divides.

So much in this conversation that we could continue. I want to, again, just encourage you, please go to our website, [denisonforum.org](http://denisonforum.org), download the white paper on biblical righteousness. You'll

find it also in the show notes of this podcast. You can get to it quickly there and want to just, again, thank you, Jim, for your great work in this area, for this conversation.

I want to thank our audience for tuning in, listening to us. We're about halfway through now our series on being Christian in today's culture. What does it look like to embrace seven biblical pillars that help all of us flourish together until Jesus comes again? We'll see you next time on the Denison Forum podcast.

Thanks for joining us.