

# Being Christian in today's culture Episode 7: Why must Christians be civil in uncivil times?

## TRANSCRIPT

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

[00:00:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** This is the Denison Forum podcast. I'm Dr. Mark Turman, executive director of Denison Forum. We're sitting down again with Dr. Jim Denison, as we continue our series called being Christian in today's culture, as we talk about seven pillars of biblical flourishing, that will help if all of us as Christ followers embrace them and implement them in our lives through the Holy Spirit, that it will bring about a greater sense of kingdom flourishing, God's kingdom. flourishing for us and for others. And so, the Denison Forum podcast is what I like to call a place of clarity conversation where I and Dr. Denison and others at times come in and we talk about the events of the day and how biblical truth, how following Christ intersects with that and how we can be his ambassadors, cultural missionaries, if you will, in our time, and that we would help people to think biblically, to live holy and to act redemptively.

In ways that again, make the world a better place while God is also being honored. So, Dr. Jim, how are you today?

[00:01:07] **Dr. Jim Denison:** I am well, my friend. How are you?

[00:01:10] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. I'm looking forward to this conversation. You know, the, the great thing about this podcast is we pick up such light topics, you know, like, biblical faith and biblical sexuality and the sanctity of life, we just deal with the shallow water kind of stuff, right?

[00:01:25] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah. We're all bored, you know, looking for something more to think about. I mean, I'm feeling pretty good about the Rangers at this point in the season. You know, they're kind of through the hardest part of the year and got some injured people that are going to be coming back, don't know what to think about the Cowboys.

Yeah. I didn't tell you this, but they asked me if I'd be willing to be running back for them in the coming year, but I'm kind of busy and didn't really have time to do that. So, they're still looking, you know, for somebody

[00:01:46] **Dr. Mark Turman:** know, the salary wasn't all that great, was it?

[00:01:49] **Dr. Jim Denison:** now that have to match what I make here, you know, in the ministry and they weren't able to do that.

And so, yeah, so, you know, lots we can talk about there. I'm sure it would be very helpful. Yeah,

[00:02:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** coming your way. I was thinking maybe the Mavericks, but more likely the Dallas stars. You just seem like a hockey guy to me, you know?

[00:02:07] **Dr. Jim Denison:** that's me. Yeah. That's me. Yeah. People don't know that about me, but yeah, that's you know, if you ever saw me on skates, you, you'd never want to see me on skates. So,

[00:02:14] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. I mean,

[00:02:15] **Dr. Jim Denison:** yeah, those guys are amazing to me.

[00:02:17] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah. Mike Madonna and then Jim Denison. They're just, I mean, just a half

[00:02:20] **Dr. Jim Denison:** it. They're synonymous really. Yeah. How do you play football and basketball on skates? Which is what those guys do. I mean, that's amazing to me. What athletes, they're just incredible. So, yep. So remember the first time I went to a hockey match, actually I was with some friends, so they gave me, they had seats right on the ice, so to speak, you know, with just the plexiglass in front of you.

And the first time the guy smashed into the boards, they're like three feet away. I thought my life was over. know, it's one of those life flashes before your eyes moment. Man, those guys are athletes. They're really incredible. So, nope, they haven't reached out to me yet, but I'm, you know, but today's young.

[00:02:55] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, they probably, yeah, they just haven't gotten around to it. And the other, the other great thing about at least, you know, hockey in the Dallas area is they have the loudest horn of any horn you'll ever hear in,

[00:03:05] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Hmm. So true.

[00:03:07] **Dr. Mark Turman:** sporting arena. So.

[00:03:09] **Dr. Jim Denison:** It will echo in yours for a week after you hear it.

[00:03:11] **Dr. Mark Turman:** that's right. That's right. Well, we want to continue our conversations about the seven pillars of biblical flourishing.

And as they have been helpful to help us to understand really what it means to be Christian in today's culture. And like I said, to be cultural missionaries we want to talk today about the lightweight topic of political civility, and we'll get into that in a moment, want to remind our listeners that all of what we're talking about is built on a white paper or a series of white papers.

I should say that you have written on each of these topics. And if people want to read more in depth, beyond listening to this conversation, you can find those white papers in each of the show notes of the episodes of these episodes. Eight issues or eight episodes, I should say. You can also find them at our website, which is denisonforum.org. And you'll find all of the podcast, as well as all of the papers that Dr. Denison has written for this series. You'll find all of that information there. You can read it for your own enrichment and equipping. You can use it if you're in a teaching context. All of that is what we would love for you to do as a, we provide resources.

To people to help them to walk with Christ and represent him well, as we talk about in these in this series, that if every one of us would recommit ourselves on a whole new level. To speak and to serve Jesus by living out the great commandment to love God and love others by these seven pillars that we think that God would do an amazing thing.

And let me remind you of what these seven pillars of biblical flourishing are embracing biblical truth and authority, the necessity of faith in Christ. Sanctity of life for all people, biblical righteousness that includes things like racial harmony, immigration, biblical equality, and other expressions of justice.

We talked last time about biblical sexuality. Today we'll talk about civility, particularly in a political context, and we're going to finish up our next and last episode in this series on cultural engagement. Jim, I just wondered these. Things as I remind myself of them over and over through our conversations They seem to be both timely and timeless would that be a fair way of describing these seven things?

[00:05:29] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Well, I hope so. We'd want them to be timeless in the sense that they're foundational principles for all believers at all times. That's why they're rooted in scripture, obviously, and in 20 centuries of Christian theology as well. But because God's word is always relevant, human nature doesn't change, divine nature doesn't change, anything that is biblically timeless is also timely in the context of our current issues.

And so really the job for anybody that's trying to think and live biblically is to ask yourself, what does the text intend to say? And once you understand that intended meaning, how is that relevant today? And there's always a way that that's relevant. There's always a question being asked, an issue that we're facing, something that we're up against for which scripture is still relevant because it doesn't change because God's word is still God's word.

I was at a philosophy class 40 years ago. Mark Wood came across a statement in the textbook that said the Bible doesn't have to be made relevant. Because human nature doesn't change. That was one of those wow moments for me. One of those things, all we have to do is remove the roadblocks. If, for instance, you're preaching on the parable of the Good Samaritan, people do need to know who a Samaritan was.

They do need to know who a Levi was. They do need to know the context. But once you explain the context, you're not making the parable relevant. All you're doing is explaining the context. Then the point of the parable becomes immediately as relevant as when Jesus taught it 20 centuries ago. So all we have to do is remove the cultural roadblocks and let the Bible speak.

Martin Luther said the Bible doesn't need to be defended so much as it needs to be uncaged. And I love that metaphor. It's a lion. Lions are relevant wherever lions find themselves. And so it is with the Word of God.

[00:07:05] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Right. Yeah. Well, yeah, that's a great, great word to set up our conversation. As we talk about civility politics, we're here in the middle of spring, I guess. And we're obviously aware of where we're headed in terms of our democracy and political election in November. And we can expect already seeing some signs that political Rankering and, and argument and, and all kinds of things in this, in this year are heating up, but really for the last five, maybe you could even go back even 10 or more years.

And we have heard the word unprecedented used a lot in a lot of different categories of our culture. But probably none more than in this area of politics and government and elections and politicians. How can we really say that, that these times are unprecedented when, you know, if any of us have had history classes, we had political science classes, we know that there's this sense in which politics is always rancorous, it's always in some degree unpleasant.

Upon what do we really say that, that these are unprecedented times?

[00:08:18] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, and I, I hear you and I agree with you that on one level, that's really a tough claim to make. If you understand much about American history, the election of 1860. Abraham Lincoln's election led directly to the Civil War. And so, yes, we're in times of political rancor, but there's a movie out about the Civil War, and there are books written about the Civil War.

You and I have read one recently. But it's really implausible, I think, to think that we're on the edge of a North versus South secessionist sort of, kind of Civil War eminence relative to this election. And so it'd be hard to say that our divisions are unprecedented and that therefore the weight of what we're against is on that level unprecedented.

You could look at the global situation, look at where we are with China, where we are with Iran, where we are with North Korea, but we've been there in the past. Think about the Cold War, think about World War II. Think about the Great Depression if you're thinking about economic issues in which we that we're facing today.

If you're thinking about social unrest, well, again, we've had times of enormous unrest across our history. If you're thinking about political rancor, well, go look at the election of 1800. It was the first, it was 1796 was contested. Obviously John Adams Thomas Jefferson. 1800 especially. Look at how rancorous it was.

Look at how divisive it was. Look at the language that was used. very much. As these two individuals were were competing with each other. The way the press was being used, all of that. So, in one sense, there's nothing new under the sun. You know, as, as Gleesie asked, he says, where I think we are unprecedented, relative to our politics, is relative to our larger culture.

And that is that we are, for the first time in American history, in a true post truth, post truth culture. A true post truth culture. Moment never before in American history has the world been at a place as we are now, where relativism is so dominant, where there is no such thing as truth, we say, which is itself, of course, a truth claim.

And so we're at a place now where even basic terms like, what is a woman? What is a man? What is a boy? What is a girl? Basic concepts of gender and sexual orientation, basic sense of of right and wrong is questioned in a way it's never been before. So in that sense, we're in an unprecedented time, and that's a foundational issue, because it's awfully hard to make common cause if you don't have a common vocabulary.

It's awfully hard to go someplace through a compass if you don't even agree there is a north. You can have your campus, I can have mine, but they're both pointed at north, one would say. Well, if there is no true north, you just have your north, I have my north, then how really can we make progress together?

And that's what frightens me most. That would be unprecedented about our cultural moment is just, it's so difficult to come to compromise and consensus and alignment, really even hard to have a conversation if you don't share a vocabulary. When I've been to Cuba over all these years, I just, unfortunately, know very little Spanish and a few phrases, but not much more.

And before long, I am not able to have a conversation with these dear people that I love, that I pray for. Pastor Carlos, I pray for every day. But if we're together after more than 30 or 45 seconds, we can't talk because we don't share a common vocabulary. That's, I'm afraid, where in many ways our culture is now.

And that worries me enormously. And that is, on some level, unprecedented, I think.

[00:11:32] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And lots for us to think about inside of that. You know, I, I saw where you wrote recently that in some ways we don't even disagree about what is true north on the compass, but that we don't even think there, some don't even think there is a compass. And, and that we're living in that level of chaos in seems like increasing chaos with things that even in history going back over, you know, some 250 years now, we still haven't seen some of the things we're seeing today.

So that is some sense is unprecedented. One of the things that people talk about in our current political environment is how many people are going to vote there? You know, you and I have lived long enough to know when voter apathy was a real, real big issue and something that got talked about a lot.

We seem to be on the other side of that now, where many are saying that the upcoming election in November will be One of the highest, if not the highest level of voter turnout. What do you think that says about where people's thoughts and hearts are? What does it say about our culture? Why are so many, even so many Christians that, you know, you and I've had this conversation offline before where people that I've known for decades who never seem to be interested at all in politics have suddenly in the last few years become hyper energized.

What might we understand from that phenomenon?

[00:12:58] **Dr. Jim Denison:** we look at it from a demographic point of view. From the point of view of an evangelical Christian, we have been now for a period of time in a world where we've been taught by pastors, by churches, by public theologians, to be engaged politically, that we need to be good citizens and we need to be involved in the political world.

And so many of the issues that are at play today are issues that are close to our hearts. Submission primarily. And then religious liberty issues relative to LGBTQ activism and all that's inside that. And so, for those of us that are evangelical Christians, there's a reason to vote now that maybe hasn't been as as deeply held as is the case.

And it hasn't been as emotionally motivating. As, as we would see now, and it's certainly being reinforced and being encouraged by, and should be, by pastors and faith leaders who are certainly telling us and should be telling us to be involved in the political process and to vote, but

there are reasons now to vote that maybe hasn't been as emotional for us, for those that are more secularist, but still care about those issues, and there's a lot of writing about this.

I've written about this myself. Politics have become the new religion. They have attained that sense of fervor that has typically been associated with religion. There's been this sense of almost denominationalizing around parties and around specific issues and such. And there's been a fervor around political process now that we're seeing for lots of reasons.

And it's leading some people to be in political engagement on a level that hasn't been the case in the past. And then from a partisan point of view, it's been documented over the years that people are more likely to vote against than to vote for. They're more motivated by fear than they are by favor.

And we're just in a world now where a huge percentage of Americans will vote for anybody but Joe Biden. Another huge percentage will vote for anybody but Donald Trump. They're not voting for, they're voting against. Each of them convinced that the other is a threat to the future of democracy. They're being told that by the other side, and many are believing that.

And so there's a fervor to vote because they really do think of themselves as saving our democracy from the evil that is on the other side. There's some motive around some of that. I guess on the fourth level, especially as you got to a younger demographic, you'd think about some of the cultural issues at play, whether that's climate change, or that is, again, abortion activism, LGBTQ activism, things like that.

Especially in local elections or in places where abortion is on the ballot and places where specific cultural issues are front of mind. You're seeing people that are motivated in that way as well. So variety of reasons, but you put all that together and you would expect and should expect a very large turnout, I would think this fall, which is typically a good thing.

for democracy. You typically want more people to participate. Voting is the most basic essential thing that democracy allows its citizens to do. And so we would want our people to be participating in the process, even though they have a variety of reasons for doing so.

[00:15:44] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. So let's talk about the opportunity that's inside of that. I, you and I have been in several different conversations and others as well around the motivation of fear versus faith. That I heard somebody recently say that government and, and the military usually only get attention when they're failing, which is a really hard place to be, especially if you've been called by God to be in one of those environments, right?

That. You only get attention when you're not getting it done as well as it could be or should be done That's a hard place to be

[00:16:17] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah.

[00:16:17] **Dr. Mark Turman:** how is how is politics an opportunity if not a responsibility? For christians to act in faith and not in fear I'm thinking of the bible verse that says that whatever is not of faith is sin for a christian How's there an opportunity in this when we approach this big area of politics, that fear should not be the thing.

That is driving us as believers. Is that the right way to think about it?

[00:16:46] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, I'm glad you, I'm glad you brought that up, Mark. I really would want all believers to understand the truth of what you just said. Scripture says God's not given us a spirit of fear, but a power and love and a sound mind and we're to fear the Lord. And if we fear God, we need not fear anything or anyone else.

And so if we are being motivated by fear. I mean, there are obvious fears in the world. You ought to be afraid of being run over if you're in the streets. You ought to certainly be afraid if you've had a tough sort of medical test and that fear would be understandable. So I'm not trying to be naive here, but I would want to say, if that's your pattern and if that's your motive, and you're really being motivated for whatever it is you're doing in this case to vote by fear, then you want to come back and ask yourself about that.

Well, why am I afraid? Is, is is my faith in God as king in some question here? Is God still on His throne or not? Is God still Lord of the nations or not? Is He still King of kings and Lord of lords? Does it all, at the end of the day, turn out the way He wants it to turn out? I heard years ago somebody say they could summarize Revelation in two words, we win.

Do you really believe that or do you not? And so if I have a fear of the future or a fear for the nation, but I didn't need to come back and ask myself, well, what does that say about my relationship with the Lord and the depth of my trust in him and my, and turning my fear over to him? The thing to do with fear is to turn it over to God by faith and say, Lord, I'm really afraid of where the economy's headed, or I'm afraid of where we're going on this issue with that.

So I'm going to turn that over to you and ask you to help me. To have faith in you, to help me to have confidence in you. And then on a second level, help me to model that for the culture. Christians of all people ought to be modeling faith versus fear in a fear driven culture. People are so afraid right now.

Mark so afraid on so many levels. Loneliness drives us. I think opioid epidemics, horrific fentanyl epidemics are driving. We're, we're afraid relative to immigration. We're afraid relative to the economic future that's before us. So many, we're afraid of AI. We're afraid of climate change. So many reasons why people are really terrified today gives Christians a marvelous



opportunity to step into these conversations with confidence in the Lord that says, God is in charge.

He is King of Kings. He is Lord of Lords. This world is not our home. Anyway, we're sojourners here as the psalmist said, we're passing through This place is a means to an end. And so let's learn, let's love the Lord. Let's love our neighbor and let's use this world as a means to that. And we can be that model in a way that can really be transformative.

I know, you know, the story about John Wesley's conversion, but he had come to the United States, oddly enough, as a missionary to To the American indigenous population, though, he came to discover that he had not himself had a genuine conversion experience. He was in the ship, as you know, going back to Europe, having had a failed experience in the new world and this terrible storm breaks out and everybody's terrified for their lives and calling out to God and shrieks and just all sorts of just terror there as he writes the story, except for this one group of Moravian brethren.

As they were done, who are praying, they're singing hymns, they're they're confident. There's a, there's a calm about them that he just was shocked by. And when the storm passed, he went to them and ask why, ask what it was. And they explained their faith is in God, not man. And they knew whatever happened, they'd be well, they would either wind up in Europe or they'd wind up in heaven.

And either place was good for them. And Wesley said later that that experience was instrumental in his conversion. And when you think about all the lives influenced by John Wesley, Think about the courage of that group of people whose names we'll never know this side of heaven on that ship who manifested faith in the face of fear and the difference for the world.

So let's be Moravian brethren on the ship in the midst of the storm, knowing at the end of the day whether we wind up in Europe or we wind up in heaven. We're going to be fine.

[00:20:35] **Dr. Mark Turman:** And like you said, when you, when you properly fear God and revere him, then you don't have to fear anybody or anything else because you know, your future is secure and we, you know, such an important word in a generation of fear and so many things, you know, including social media that makes people, especially young people feel like that they.

Don't stack up that they aren't pretty enough or smart enough or capable enough and therefore unworthy. And and so many things just seem to contribute to that to that sense of fear. I heard even getting ready for this conversation with you. I heard the organizational expert, Patrick Valencioni, you talk about a Christian who kind of had a whiteboard up on the wall where he went to work every day and.

On that whiteboard, there was a throne and every, every day he got up to go to work, he drew a picture of Jesus on that throne to remind him of who was in charge of his life and who was in charge of the world. And that, that somehow seemed like a good practice that maybe all of us ought to have some kind of a way to remind us that we do have a king and that he's very much.

In control and he's not panicked even though the world looks pretty chaotic at times. I wanted to ask you and i've had conversations in the past. I even got to quote you this morning in a conversation over breakfast you yeah, I know it's kind of a dangerous thing, but but you've said to me in the past that that things like politics even other things like art and entertainment in our culture Music would be another example That those things are downstream from culture.

What does it mean that politics, particularly in this conversation, what does it mean that politics are downstream from culture?

[00:22:12] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Well, I'm borrowing from my friend Frank Wolf at that point, who's a retired congressman from Virginia and one of the most brilliant statesmen of our time. He's made that statement well known and in our conversations he has shared that with me as well. What he means by that, and I think he's right about that, is that at the end of the day in a democratic system, the way you get elected.

Is by appealing to the fears, the issues, the challenges of those people who are electing you, they elect you for a reason. They elect you to go to Washington and go to the state house or go be on the school board or whatever it is, because they have problems. They want you to help them solve things. They want you to deal with.

And so if you understand what the culture is about, what the consensual beliefs of the people, you can define culture variety of ways. But if culture is what a specific community believes, thinks, and does. If that's how you want it, that's kind of a basic definition of culture. That can be culture for America, it could be culture for your neighborhood, it could be culture for your workplace, whatever it is.

But if it's what a specific community believes, thinks, and does, then that's going to be reflected in those people for whom they vote. And for whom they vote again that's going to be reflected in the degree to which they support the political individual that they've elected and approval ratings, all of that.

And so the successful politician knows that. And understands that he's there to represent, that's why they're called representatives. And he himself and the House of Representatives are called to represent the very people who elected them to do this. And so in that sense, who the politicians are and what they're doing is on some level supposed to be, was designed to be, a representative of that which is upstream from the people who elected and selected them.

On a second level, politicians reflect, not only represent, but reflect, the culture that on some level supported them and elected them. We tend to support people like us. We tend to expect our leaders to be like we are. And so if we're rancorous, they're going to be rancorous. If we're divided, they're going to be divided.

If we are hopeful, they're like more likely to be hopeful. Someone said in a democracy, you get the leaders you deserve. And at the end of the day, our politicians are downstream from culture by virtue of even personality and way of being and and way of, of communicating with each other. Not surprising that the rancor in Washington would exist as it, on some level, reflects the rancor that's in the in the culture around it.

And then these things become self reinforcing. It almost becomes a self fulfilling prophecy. The more rancorous we become, the more rancorous they become, which means the more rancorous we become. And a day of 24 7 new cycles where everything that happens there gets shown over here. On some level, our rancorous leaders make us more rancorous, which then makes them more rancorous.

It gets into this kind of doom loop, as it were, this vicious cycle. But it's on those two levels. They're supposed to be downstream from culture to represent the issues that we wanted them to do. But also they're going to reflect us just by virtue of how the system works and how the human heart works really at the end of the day.

[00:25:13] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And we're in, in, sometimes we're in this really crazy, sometimes unhealthy dance, like you said, between those that we elect and those that those that are electing them, it just gets into. An ever fueling cycle at times because of things like technological connection that has changed the way we do just about everything in our life.

Jim, some of our friends have recently written and categorized that many Americans and even American Christians could be grouped in some ways. And some of our friends describe it this way that Americans and American Christians have now kind of fallen out into three or four camps or groups. Some of us are in the camp called combatants and we just are always perpetually looking for a fight and feel like everything can be put into the category of some kind of a battle.

Others are cynical and just kind of sitting back thinking, Things are never going to get better and we're never going to figure out most of the issues in front of us. And then there are others in this third camp that are exhausted and maybe even becoming apathetic and indifferent to things like politics, because it it's just so emotionally and mentally exhausted.

Would you say that that's. And is there a better option for us as Christians? Is there a better way than those three camps of either being always looking for a fight or being cynical about the

whole experience and and, or just being exhausted and ready to check out is, is, is, is that a fair assessment?

Is there a better way?

[00:26:53] **Dr. Jim Denison:** I think it's fair, unfortunately, as far as it goes, and I would even add that those things can, on some level, reinforce each other. You can be combative and then if you lose you become cynical and if you eventually continue to be cynical you might just be exhausted. You know, you could almost see a downhill sort of a sequence and then eventually something else comes out that gets you motivated again And so you become combative again And then if you if again, you're not successful you become cynical and eventually give up and you become exhausted You could almost kind of see a vicious cycle.

I suppose moving, around inside some of that understandable Certainly to feel that way, a lower percentage of Americans have confidence in our institutions than maybe at any time in Gallup polling anyway, lowest confidence in Congress, lowest confidence in the White House, really, the military is the only of our American institutions that rates highly relative to confidence levels right now.

And so if you have that low a level of confidence, I mean, like seven or 8 percent confidence in Congress last I saw, I haven't looked recently. But. Last I saw, well, then it's hard not to want to be combative about that or be cynical about that, or just be exhausted with the whole thing and just kind of want to go do your own thing.

Of course, the downside to all of that is, and Plato, I think was one of the first people to observe this, is that in a democracy, and he was no fan of democracy inevitably citizens would cast ballots discovering that they could cast ballots based on their personal preference rather than the collective good and democracy would be imperiled.

I think we may be there on some level. And he also understood that in a democracy, if people don't participate, democracy is over. The best way to kill a democracy is not to participate in the process. You're no longer a democracy. It's no longer the power of the people, which is logically what a democracy is supposed to be.

If you're not participating. in the democracy. And so, these three stages are dangerous to the future of our nation and dangerous to the individual who participates in the process. It's been documented that people don't, that don't vote tend to be far more negative about the country on a variety of levels.

They just don't feel the same level of ownership in the country. They don't feel the same level of engagement in where it's headed if they don't vote. If they don't cast a ballot, as simple as that is,

casting a ballot in whatever way they do it, it's been documented that they, therefore, on a whole variety of levels, feel themselves exempted from what's happening out there.

They'll say, well, I didn't vote for them. They'll say, well, that's not my fault. That's not my deal, when it is their deal. In a democracy, all of it is there. deal. And so at the end of the day, they've made themselves the victim of the people that did vote. If you don't vote, you're consigning your future to those that do vote.

And in what world is that a good decision? And so, so we really have to move past that, don't we? Now, there is some eschatology in this. I have to hasten to say there is some Christian evangelical theology that would say the world has to get worse. before the Lord returns, whatever they mean by that, whether that's a rapture, second coming or whatever.

So there has been kind of a retreatism on some level that says, look, I don't, I don't want to participate in the process because the world's going to hell anyway, and it has to, and that's, that's what's supposed to happen. And I'm just forestalling some of that. You see some things like Rod Dreher's, the Benedict option that would say that's so far gone now.

that we have to retreat from the culture for the sake of our own souls and our own families and our own churches and have to do what Benedict did at the monastic movement. And someday maybe the culture will come back, but we've got to save our own kids and our own units, our own communities right now.

And so there's a withdrawal from the culture that could even be intentional in a monastic sort of a sense, as a way of kind of, at some point, Being able to be prophetic to the culture again. So there's some reasons people are doing this that aren't just emotional cynicism or combativism or or exhaustion or whatever.

The way to do this, obviously, and boy, this is tough, but this is why we need the Holy Spirit to help us do this. But the positive way to do this is to see the political environment in which we find ourselves as a manifestation. of what Jeremiah 9 says when it so clearly tells Jews exiled in Babylon to pray for the peace of and work for the peace of the place where you find yourself, to try to be a cause for good there, to invest there and understand that their welfare is your welfare.

Well, if the Lord could ask Jews on exile in Babylon to do that. He can certainly ask Christians in America to do that. There's no biblical place for combativism and cynicism and exhaustion in the place of a positive, proactive, hope filled, salt and light engagement in the culture and in the political process in a way that reflects by virtue of our witness, the one that we serve, and gives us the opportunity to love our neighbor as ourselves.

So admit when you're up against that. It's human nature to have those hard days, I think, and then bring them to God and say, God, help me not to be combative. Help me not to be a cultural warrior, but to be a cultural missionary, as you and I've talked about. When I'm being cynical, Lord, help me instead to love.

When I'm exhausted, help me to be empowered. Help me to be salt and light again. And salt and light is not cynical. It's not combative. It's not exhausted. It's proactive. It's hope filled. And at the end of the day Teilhard de Chardin was right. The future belongs to those who give it the greatest hope.

We want to be those people who give the culture the greatest hope. And the analyst is Dr. Mozer,

[00:32:17] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah, great word, a great segue to where I want to go next, which is more into the heart of this paper that you've written that I encourage people to get and read. From the show notes or from the website. If I was summing all of that up, it really is in this great theme of the opportunity, the calling, the responsibility of Christians to be civil in uncivil times like we're in right now.

And maybe in some degree, that's You know, the world separated from Christ is always uncivil. We could make that argument, but give us a short explanation of what you mean by biblical civility and expand a little bit more on what you were just kind of starting down the road on, which is the opportunity of politics to be a platform for our witness, an opportunity for us to demonstrate our faith, our hope, our love.

What does it mean to practice biblical civility?

[00:33:10] **Dr. Jim Denison:** the Bible doesn't actually have a verse that says, as you know, Mark, that says biblical civility equals X.

It's more descriptive than it is prescriptive in that sense. So it's things like the fruit of the spirit. It's things like loving your neighbor as yourself. It's things like praying for those who persecute you. It's things like getting up at midnight when your friend comes and knocks at the door, you know, looking for bread.

It's biblical analogies and examples that essentially are summarized in loving your neighbor as yourself, one of the most constant themes that you find all through scripture. That's what I think the Bible means when it thinks about what we call civility. The opportunity that's inside that, I think is summarized in the statement, the darker the room, the more powerful the light, the more attractive the light, the more happy us.

the light. The more uncivil the culture, the greater the opportunity for civility to draw people to Christ. It's Jesus statement in Matthew 5, let your light so shine before men that they see your

good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Well, there are a variety of levels on which we can do this.

The first is obviously praying. We're commanded in one Timothy, Timothy two to pray for our leaders and, and to do that wishing their best, hoping for, and wishing their best. Second, it's in our personal conversations. When we're slandering our leaders. We're being unbiblical. When we're slandering others, we're gossiping and we're sinning.

Scripture is very clear that if you have out with your brother, you have to go to them. Matthew 1815, you're not allowed to talk about them. You have to go to them. Anything else is sinful. So much of the discourse in this culture, political discourse, is sinful. It's one thing to criticize the positions of a leader.

We can and should do that. It's another to denigrate the individual. We are called to understand and to appreciate the platform and the position, even if we don't appreciate the person. Paul could write Romans 13, as you know, and tell us to submit to authority, knowing Nero was likely the authority at that time.

One of the most degenerate individuals, maybe, in human history on some level. And yet, Here's Paul, who eventually was beheaded, probably by Nero, not personally, but by the edict, probably of the emperor calling us to respect the position, if not the person. We're not endorsing the person to respect the position, but when we slander individuals, we're sinning.

And so it's in our personal language, we have to so watch our witness. Mark, I'm so concerned that Christians preserve their witness past the election. that would not be so involved in political rancor in these days with what we say and how we act, that when the election is gone, our witness is gone. We don't want to win an election and lose in eternity here, for the sake of the people that are watching us.

So on a second level, it has to do with our personal engagements, personal involvement. On a third level, it has to do with our political involvement. Anything from being engaged in the local politics where you are, parties or issues or candidates, all the way to running for office. I've said this over the years, I'm convinced God is calling more Christians into public service and are answering the call.

Absolutely convinced of that. I think every Christian has to pray about that. I've had to pray about that. Lord, are you calling me into public service? I'm not saying that because I think I have some special ability at that point. I'm saying that because I think every Christian. Should ask that question, Lord, are you calling me into public service?

I spent the summer in 1979 as a missionary in East Malaysia on the island of Borneo. One of the opportunities we had while we were over there was to meet with a fellow named Chuck Morris. Chuck was one of the missionaries who really opened a lot of the work in Borneo years before I got there, established a lot of the churches we were working with.

A real hero. In that part of the world, his cousin, I think Buddy Morris was head missionary, head of the mission force in Singapore, just a marvelous family. So Chuck Morrison, I will always remember this. This was in 1979. A lot of people hearing this conversation don't know there was a 1979, but nonetheless, he and I were talking at this one place and he asked me if I had considered a call to the foreign mission field, as it used to be called.

And I said, well, I would go if God called me. He said, well, don't say that. Say you would go unless God calls you. And I said, well, what do you mean? He said, well, think about it. Think about the fact that America has 5 percent of the world's population. Think about how much of the world, a third of the world that's never heard the name Jesus Christ, another third that's never had a realistic, fair opportunity.

That's where the need is greatest. Shouldn't your proclivity be, shouldn't your de facto be that God would call you where the needs greatest unless he doesn't. Shouldn't we American Christians assume God would call us into the greatest need unless for some reason he tells us. Not to. And I actually had to go through that.

I actually had to pray through that very thing that Chuck Morris encouraged me to think about. I'd apply that to this to say, I don't think God has to call you into public service so much as, He has to call you not to be involved on some level because the need is so great. Whether that's involved in your local precincts, being on your school board, being involved, going to PTA meetings, going to school board meetings, writing editorials for the local paper, being engaged in the process all the way up to running for office yourself, and then being engaged on that.

William Wilberforce. We always talk about William Wilberforce as exhibiting of what one believer can do to change a nation. If that one person in political service is submitted to the Holy Spirit. Why can't that be you or me or somebody hearing this conversation today?

[00:38:38] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, and we can and we can understand especially today in the environment of politics that we all witness from time to time We can understand why people would not be drawn to be in in political service because it can be pretty brutal as we've seen in multiple examples no matter what side you're on so it is an act of tremendous faith, in this environment to step out and to accept that call from God and to become involved.

And like I said, we could understand why people would be hesitant in some ways. The way. People at times have been hesitant to go into the mission field where there are the greatest needs.



Because there's a lot to consider and it takes a great act of faith and a great sensitivity to the Holy Spirit to do that.

Jim, I want to, I want to see if we can come back for a minute to kind of close a loop. When we started this series on biblical flourishing we said that there was a connection, almost a sequence in some ways between many of the things that we've called out here, starting with biblical authority, accepting, embracing biblical authority and truth, and then the sanctity of human life.

How does civility connect to those first two things that we talked about too? The idea of biblical authority and to the idea that every human being is inherently valuable as an image bearer. How does civility and political engagement connect back to those two things?

[00:40:04] **Dr. Jim Denison:** We'd want those, that's a good question, we'd want those that are in public service on any level, even just praying for political leaders all the way up to running for and engaging in public service themselves, to be thinking biblically about all the issues that are before us. Thank you. To be asking, okay, what does scripture say about immigration?

What does scripture say about abortion or marriage or whatever the issue might be in front of us and do our best to think and act biblically and redemptively as we so often say, so that's why biblical authority needs to be at the foundation of everything we do. And certainly how we engage in the context of biblical or political civility.

And then in the context of the sanctity of life, we want to be reflecting and relating to our fellow citizens in a way that respects their dignity, that respects the fact that they're an image bearer of the divine, the Imago Dei, just as we are, and recognizes that we're all equally sinful, we're all equally fallen, we're all equally loved.

By God as a result I so often quote C. S. Lewis, and I guess when I see him in heaven, I'll have to thank him yet again for all the ways he's influenced my life, but I love a statement that he made in one of his essays about democracy in which he, he said, you know, a lot of people have this idea, we get it from Rousseau actually, that we're all such good people that we deserve to be in public office, that we ought to have a democracy because each of us is worthy of service, of serving and of being elected and all that.

He says, that's the wrong idea. He says, I know myself. He said, I'm not worthy of running a hen house is the way he put it. He said, we need a democracy because none of us is worthy of unaccountable authority over anybody else. None of us can be trusted with authority that's not accountable to the people.

And so the reason we need democracy is because we need it. It's not because we're all so good, but because we're all so bad. Well, the sanctity of human life comes along to say, we are

nonetheless people of dignity and worth and value in the eyes of God, but we're also people equally in need of the God who created us, of the God who created us to be sacred, to be good.

people. God doesn't love us because we're worthy. He loves us because he is love. It's not that we're lovable, it's that he is love. And so the other side of the sanctity of life is we're created sacred, but we're also fallen. And all of that I think informs and empowers, I think, a biblical democracy in a way that I could lead to flourishing for the entirety of the community, whether they are themselves believers or not.

[00:42:24] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. So, so important that those things be tied together. But Jim, I've heard others recently say, you know, okay, yeah, I, I give deference to Jesus. I give deference to his teachings and to his ideas. There's an idea floating out there, floating out there among many Christians who say, well, yeah, you know, of course we, we believe in Jesus.

We think what Jesus says is good, but you don't understand the stakes in our country right now are so high that we have to do whatever it takes to. To advance our side or to elect our candidate, there's this kind of, well, you know, in other times we would be happy to be people who exhibit the fruit of the spirit in politics, but this has become so dire that we have to fight fire with fire.

And so I guess that really kind of comes around to the question in my mind, is it for Christians, is it ever the case? That the end justifies the means and that we can, that we can set aside the fruit of the spirit for the sake of a larger goal that we're pursuing. Is that ever the case?

[00:43:30] **Dr. Jim Denison:** No, it's not. As I know, you know as well, Mark. I'm glad you raised the question, but I understand the question. We are facing issues of monumental significance right now. Religious liberty is in many ways really in danger relative to the political process of things like the so called Equality Act were to become law, for instance.

Things that are in discussion right now about Title IX revisions that demonstrate religious liberty again in peril on some level. And so really, as you look at the depth, the enormity of the issues that are out there, I do understand why people could say, look, we have to win at all costs. We have to fight fire with fire.

We have to do what they do. This is how they got elected. This is what we have to do to get elected as well. Well, if that's true, And the Bible is only circumstantially relevant to our lives. If we're going to get into a situation, ethics like Joseph Fletcher talked about there and suspend the Sermon on the Mount, suspend the beatitude, suspend the fruit of the spirit, when we think the conditions are too dire for them, that we've said something significant and important about Jesus, about the word of God and about the nature of the human spirit.

We've said that the Lord couldn't foresee this type of thing. The scripture is no longer relevant, that twenty centuries later we're in uncharted territory now, and we've now found things for which scripture is no longer relevant. Boy, once you start down that slippery slope, where do you stop? Once you start making that decision, who decides that?

First of all, who has the power to do that? And then where does that take you? Once you've started, that's the very thing, the other side, so to speak, has been saying, a number of them, about things like same sex marriage and abortion. And now we're using that exact same argument that we've been so frustrated by, and so we don't want to go there.

Relative to God's omissions, relative to Scripture's perennial authority and the unchanging nature of the human condition. But on a second level, we're misunderstanding the context of the biblical narrative itself. We're not in a time more perilous than the first Christians were. We're not facing, in America, persecution anything like so much of the world.

is facing right now. So many of my dear friends in Cuba are facing, so many of background believers in the Muslim world are facing. Mark, I talked the other day to a young woman who came from Kazakhstan, who when she became a Christian, lost her family, lost her husband, had to flee to this country.

Still, some that followed her here, there was a time when she was persecuted here. For having lived Islam for Christianity. I have another friend who when he came to faith in Christ out of a secular atheistic environment in Eastern Europe at the time, there were assassins sent to America from that country to try to kill him in Fort Worth, Texas for following Jesus. We aren't facing persecution like so much of the world is, and certainly not facing persecution like early Christians were. If Paul could tell Christians to submit to the authority of Rome, knowing that he himself, well, I don't know that he knew this, but he would one day himself be martyred by the Romans.

And he could still tell us we have to manifest the fruit of the Spirit. And Jesus, who would be executed by the authorities, could nonetheless tell us to pray for our enemies. to pray for those who persecute us. Then who are we to come along and say the situation is so dire that we have to jettison or have to on some level put on the shelf suspend biblical teaching about loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us and manifesting the fruit of the spirit.

So yeah, there's never a time the unjustified. So that means last thing I would say at that point is I don't think it works in any way. If we Christians want to come along and fight fire with fire and do this the way the other side does it, well, we're outmatched. Really, just even on a purely secular level.

We don't do politics as well. We don't know how to do this on that level. We're not mobilized like that. We don't have the history to do that. We don't have the strategies to do that. There, I've been enough involved in political processes over the years, and I've known enough political leaders to know that politics is a full time career.

Not just for the people that run for office, but for that massive infrastructure behind them of the consultants, of the lobbyists, of the legal teams, of the advisors that are behind all of that. What it takes these days to be engaged in a political process is really a career, just like any other career.

And if I'm going to come along and try to win that just because I think I can mimic something that I see them doing is on some level naive, just on a practical level, but on a more significant level, we're really, I think, wanting to come back and say Jesus doesn't change. God said in Malachi three, I, the Lord do not change.

Scripture says, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. What he said then he would say today. Well, this true then is true today as well.

[00:48:14] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. Yeah. It's so good for us to remember that, you know, it just makes me think of one of, one of our mutual friends. I heard him say recently that. It appeared to him that many Christians have just become bored with the cross and they've gone looking for other strategies. I wonder, I wonder what you would think of that comment.

Does it appear that many of us have just gotten bored with the way of Jesus, with, with the way of service, of mercy, of. Even suffering for what is right and righteous. Does it, does it seem like we've gotten bored with it, gone looking for a better plan?

[00:48:46] **Dr. Jim Denison:** It does on some level, doesn't it? The thing we have to keep in mind first and foremost is human words can't change human hearts. No politic can save a soul. And at the end of the day, it's eternity that's in question here. 10, 000 millennia. After the Lord returns and we go to him, these elections that we're so concerned about, all that's so frustrating to us right now will have been such a forgotten memory.

It will have been something that was just a dot before the line. It was just a tiny speck in the context of the larger eternal story. That's why scripture calls us sojourners. That's why it's so clear in scripture that we're ambassadors to this world. We don't live here. This world is not our home. We are, our citizenship is in heaven.

As scripture says, and we have to keep that in mind, I think, and when we do, then we recognize it's the cross that changes hearts, not us. It's Jesus atoning love. It's Jesus grace. It's Jesus can forgive sin. We can't. Jesus can change hearts. We can't. Jesus is our only hope for the future. Chuck Colson used to say that salvation is not going to arrive on Air Force One. And so when

we get bored with the cross, it's because we think we can do things more quickly than the cross can do them. It's because we think that the issues that are ahead of us require some kind of activism that it doesn't appear the cross is able to manifest. It's because we prayed it.

Religion for politics, as we said earlier, and politics have become our religion on some level. And I often think, Mark, and I'm sorry to say this, but, and I'm as guilty of it as anybody is, a lot of this, I think, goes to personal issues as well. We get really concerned about religious liberty when it's our liberty that seems to be in question. We get really concerned about the persecution of believers if it's, if the persecution's coming home for us. And again, that's just human nature to do that. I was looking at the news today as I was thinking about things I might write for tomorrow's article and I saw a headline about a flood that had killed thousands of people.

And I thought, Oh my goodness. And I thought, should I write on that? Well, I clicked on it and discovered that this new story occurred in China and I will confess to you, I immediately thought, Oh good. That was my first response. Then my second response was to repent. Of my first response.

[00:50:55] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Right.

[00:50:55] **Dr. Jim Denison:** in China are as loved by God as we are.

Jesus died for them, just like he died for us. But when I discovered that this tragedy happened in a way that didn't affect me personally, it somehow became less important, somehow became less relevant. Praise God that the Lord doesn't see us that way and doesn't want us to either often quote Augustine who said God loves each of us as if there are only one of us.

Now he wants us to do the same thing. And so at the end of the day, it's not that that we're, we, we not only cannot be bored with the cross, we have to be attached to the cross. We have to be the people of the cross. Everything we have to do has to be about the cross. It's the only chemotherapy that can cure the cancer.

That is killing every human being. Otherwise it's the only vaccine for the pandemic that threatens the entirety of the human race. How can we at the end of the day be sharing something other than that?

[00:51:50] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. Yeah. What you just said just sparked a thought in my mind of, you know, we cannot simply be content to be admirers of the cross. We actually have to pick it up. As Jesus said, you have to pick it

[00:52:01] **Dr. Jim Denison:** I have to be bearers of the cross. That's

[00:52:02] **Dr. Mark Turman:** You have to bear the cross in the way that Jesus described in the way that Jesus modeled Jim, with just a few more minutes, maybe a couple of questions before we need to wrap up.

But I wanted to bring up just briefly the the issue of celebrity. You know, that I was recently in Washington, DC, the centerpiece of our democracy. I love just going to DC. We're two years out from the 250th anniversary of the declaration of independence. You know, I, I got to walk on the national mall.

I even Took my wife and I said, we're going to do our best to stand right here on July 4th, 2026 and watch the greatest firework show ever. Yeah. Make reservations now. But one of the highlights I have, I've been to Washington a few times. This was, I think my third trip. I can't remember exactly, but I shared with you, I was going to Mount Vernon for the first time, and it really became for me, the highlight of this trip.

And just again, captured by the uniqueness of George Washington. And we were in the Capitol dome and the, and the tour guide was explaining the picture where George Washington, after the revolutionary war turns in his commission as the leader of the continental army and nobody ever expected that he would do that or even wanted him to do that.

And then the same thing happens after he's been president twice. He does what nobody really expected he won't allow. himself to be called King at any time. And they settle on this term president. And then to the world's utter surprise and even his friends you know, they wanted him to be president for life if he wanted to, and he could have been, but he refuses to do that doesn't allow himself to be elected a third time and goes and spends the rest of his life at Mount Vernon.

It's just an, it really is, the more you think about it, the more astounding it is considering where and how the world had operated up to that time. And it made me think of this of this saying that a wise man once said to me, which is if someone asked for blind loyalty, you'd be a fool not to look. There seems to be.

This sense in our current political thoughts and direction that we need some kind of a political military governmental Messiah some have made pretty strong arguments that we have elevated from the time that television came into the political process in the election of JFK that we've turned the office of the presidency into a celebrity position that it was never intended to have.

And that that's really really skewed the way our democracy was intended to work. So George Washington is an example the issues and problems of celebrity, whether you're talking about politicians or pastors talk about that phenomenon and how we might better think in terms of not seeing and not elevating our, our political leaders to the place of celebrity.

[00:55:13] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, it wasn't Mount Vernon. Marvelous. Walking around just on the merits just to be at the place just as just so beautiful just to begin with it's just stunning really is and it makes sense that and you know where he was in politics to get back to their, you know, I on one level understand that I'd want to be there too.

I'd want to live there too if I could. But he is, as you said, Mark, such a marvelous example to the shock of the world. King George. Said when he turned in his commission, if he does that, he'll be the greatest man in the world is what the English King George said. That's how shocked he was because he could have been dictator for life.

Certainly could have been president for life. And Washington knew this is clear in a lot of his speeches, a lot of his writings, even his journals, that he knew that he was setting precedents with everything he did. As the first of anything, you're setting precedents for all that would follow it.

He felt like two terms was a precedent he wanted to set, for example, and, and of course it was. But Thomas Jefferson and others that followed that precedent even the clothing you wore. Even the way in which he was introduced when he was around, the way that he carried himself, the way that he behaved with others, the way that he engaged with his cabinet, at every point he was trying to set a precedent and the precedent he was trying to set was that of a servant leader, somebody who wanted to serve his country and served only or led only so as to serve, did not aspire to be president.

Did not aspire to be elected again as president. If you read his farewell address, you get the sense of that as well. And so really setting out how this was intended to function and really for so much of American history did function. Interesting to me that Thomas Jefferson, I've been to his grave at Monticello, I've seen the tombstone that he designed himself in which he never mentions that he was president of the United States on his own tombstone.

He mentions that he was the founder of the University of Virginia, the Virginia Statute for Freedom Religious Freedom, and the author of the Declaration of Independence, any one of which is worthy of a tombstone, but never even mentions that he was for two terms president of the United States. It was a servant position for a lot of American history, a little like serving as the president of your local PTA, I suppose, on a much higher level, but nonetheless, you're doing this to be of a president.

Service was more the intention, more the motivation for a lot of this. A lot of that does change with with television and with the time the, the need now for presidents to be actors on the level for presidents to have the trappings of other celebrities around them and being judged in that way, and so it draws people.

Into the office who are more I think attuned in that direction to begin with or more wired that way as well But in addition to that you've all weapon, I think has made the point really well that in recent Years, especially with the advent of social media nearly every leadership position has become a platform for celebrity now It's become a platform for for advancing one's personal Celebrity, whether that's in the corporate world, that's in the academic world.

We have, we have celebrity academicians. Now we have celebrity CEOs. We have people using positions of authority to advance agendas that have nothing to do with that position. I mean, there certainly wouldn't have been a day when somebody in Tim Cook's position at Apple wouldn't be known for their advocacy of same sex marriage or for other kind of social activism.

They'd be known for running a tech company. I don't think anybody, and this was intentional, knew what the political alignment of the CEO of IBM was. Back in the day, the thought was, I don't want to alienate half of my customers here. And so we're here to make business machines. That's what we're existed in.

And now on so many levels whether it's pastors, as you said, whether it's politicians, whether it's people in business or academic these positions have become means of personal advancement, personal celebrity. Well, that certainly cuts against the kind of civility that we're arguing for today, because if our leaders are going to be celebrities, then we're going to be fans.

That turns us from voters into fans. Fans aren't nearly as discerning as voters are. I'm a fan of somebody to the degree that they meet my needs. I like their movies. I like their music. I appreciate their advocacy of whatever issue that might be out there. Even if they have no means by which to have that advocacy, if I'm a fan of theirs, I'll be influenced by what they believe.

And so we have actors telling us what to think about political issues. For example, on both sides of the spectrum, who have, to my knowledge anyway, no means to have any kind of an opinion that should matter more than anybody else's. They have no professional expertise in so many of these spaces, but they're leveraging their position as a movie star to advocate for positions that have nothing to do with their abilities as an actor, a thespian, and their fans.

That are being influenced by all of that. It's a very unhealthy dynamic to turn our presidents into celebrities and voters into fans. There was to be, and the intention of the founders and the Federalist papers make this really clear, a three headed. kind of solution to our democratic governance.

Three equal offices, as it were, three equal functions that were supposed to be held in some level in accountability over the others. If any of them was to take precedence, it really was to be Congress. It's in Congress that people are directly elected by their people. The president is the only one that is elected by the nation.



All the others are elected by their state or by their local district or whatnot. Of course, you wanted a judiciary that was above all of that, that could hold all that to account as well. And so that was really in the founder's mind, not a celebrity position here. You could go, prior to television, you could go for weeks and never know what the president thought.

About what the issue might be. Presidents just weren't the public figures that they are now. Mark, I'm old enough to remember, and I was born two years before the election of 1960, but I'm old enough to remember a day when the presidency wasn't a fact of daily life, but now in 24, seven new cycles where constantly these things have to be fixed.

We're constantly, we're looking for something to say and in this world of social media where the tweet sent out by a president becomes national news or a candidate or whatnot, we're just in what I think is a very unhealthy world. By which we're seeing our presidents, not as servants of the Republic, as George Washington would have said, but as celebrities for whom we relate as to whom we relate as fans.

Washington himself was even afraid of political parties themselves. As you know, you saw political parties as dangerous to the future, much less political parties as platforms for personal celebrity, which is where we find ourselves today.

[01:01:55] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And just, just calling that out, I think is important for our listeners to think about, just to understand that it is different because of some of the ways that we now have an awareness and have a way of. of watching and hearing and being in, like I said, having even the presidency be a part of our daily life for so much of our history.

It was not that way. Jim, this is a way to wrap this up into to land this for today. We've talked about all of these topics and often ended at the same place, which is just a dependence on the Holy Spirit. And certainly political civility requires an ongoing daily dependence on the Holy Spirit. Now you and I, full disclosure, you and I come from a part of the Of the Christian tradition, a part of the evangelical tradition in which the Bible was strongly, strongly emphasized even we might say to sometimes the exclusion of the Holy Spirit.

But help us give us a word to close here on how learning to listen, follow, and depend on the Holy Spirit is not simply an emotive experience. And there certainly is not a. There's not a conflict between what the Bible is teaching us and, and speaking to us about, as well as the Holy Spirit's operation in our life, even how involvement in a faith community, a local church plays into this.

How does all of that kind of weave together for us to really be able to say, to the best of our understanding, I am trying to live under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God every single day in all of my engagements. Give us a word about how that works in your view.

[01:03:42] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Thank you very much. That could be a more practical way to end this conversation. See, you and I, because we're elderly, because we're old people, you know, ancient people are old enough to remember . There you go. We'll go with that. We'll go with that. What were we saying before we got on air about your back issues, Mark, and

[01:03:57] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah, that's right,

[01:03:59] **Dr. Jim Denison:** But, you know, I think, you know, but nonetheless, we digress. And so I guess that's why the Cowboys aren't calling you to be the running back,

[01:04:06] **Dr. Mark Turman:** right. Exactly.

[01:04:08] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, you and I are old enough to remember a day when I think we were almost afraid of the Holy Spirit in a lot of our churches. There was a so called charismatic movement going on at the time and speaking in tongues was becoming better known.

And there was a lot, at least in Baptist churches, almost just kind of a fear of that, of how divisive that could be. And there's, there still is on some level of popular theology known as cessationism, which would essentially, my pastor was a cessationist, which would essentially say that the sign gifts of the first century ended in the first century.

And so, I mean, I remember him saying things like there is no speaking in tongues and interpreting of tongues and miracles and signs that those are no longer operative today as the work of the Holy Spirit. And so the first sermon I ever heard on the Holy Spirit is one I preached back in the day.

And I love my pastor so grateful for him, but that was just the day in which we found ourselves. And so it took me a long time to understand what you just said, which is I can't do the work of God without the power of God. Wasn't ever supposed to, wasn't intended to work that way. If you have an electric vehicle that you never plug in, you ought not be surprised when it doesn't work.

You and I having this conversation over this laptop that's running off of the battery, but the battery is running because I charged the battery. If that weren't the case, you couldn't be doing this. It's not the fault of the laptop. I wouldn't be giving it the power. It was designed to need. You and I were designed to run on the Holy Spirit.

We can't convict of sin. We can't save souls. We can't change lives. We can't do anything that matters. We can't manifest the fruit of the Spirit that is this ability we've been talking about today without the Holy Spirit. So how do we do that on a practical level? Ephesians 5. 18 commands us to be filled with the Spirit.

It's a present tense command, meaning it's a daily thing. It's a command. It's a requirement. To be filled means to be submitted to. It means to be controlled by it, means to be yielded and empowered by it. So the way I have thought of this over the years, and I've encouraged others to think of it, is to start every day, just like you put gas in the car before you drive it, just like you charge your laptop before your phone before you use it, start the day by getting alone with the Lord.

Ask the Spirit to bring to mind anything that's impeding Him in your life. It may not be anything, but ask him to show you if there's anything you need to confess, anything you need to get right with God, and then confess anything that comes to your thoughts. And then literally ask the Holy Spirit to take control of your life today.

Literally say that as you said before about the person that goes to work and puts the cross on the throne there as it were you have to dethrone yourself every single day I don't know how this happens. But by the time I get up tomorrow mark, I'll be back on the throne of my heart Somehow overnight I just get up on that throne I don't know how that happens But tomorrow as I today you have to start the day by getting off the throne by literally saying lord I'm asking your holy spirit to take control of my life I mean literally say those words take control of my life Today, then pray through your day.

I would encourage. Take just a moment and submit the day and ask the Holy Spirit to take control of your day. Have to do this every single day because today is the only day there is. I can't give God tomorrow because tomorrow doesn't exist. I can't give him what doesn't exist. Can't give him Martians because there are no Martians.

Can't give him tomorrow because that doesn't exist. So have to give him every day as the day starts. Then as you walk through the day, stay submitted to the Spirit. When you're tempted, ask God to help you. When you're making a decision, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. When you're blessed, thank the Lord for working on your life.

Stay in conversation with the Spirit. That's what the Bible means by praying without ceasing. Doesn't mean you go through the day with your eyes closed and your hands folded. Don't do that, please. Especially if you're driving on the tollway in Dallas. But as you walk through the day, just be in conversation.

with with the Holy Spirit. My wife and I can watch a movie, sitting side by side. We're not saying anything, but we're experiencing the movie together. We're in each other's presence. You can be in the Holy Spirit's conscious, intentional presence. It's Brother Lawrence practicing the presence of God.

You can do that through the day. My best days are the days that I start by giving them to the Holy Spirit, and I walk through the day. Yielded to the Holy Spirit. I prayed for the spirit to take control of this conversation before we started. And I've heard myself say all sorts of things today. I didn't plan to say, didn't know that I would say, not trying to blame God for that, but trying to say that I think the Holy Spirit has on some level answered my prayer today and your prayer today.

And we're praying that for those that hear this conversation. So nothing more important next to your salvation than being filled with the spirit. That's the power that enables everything else in the Christian life. If Christians are uncivil in this culture, it's because we're not filled by the Spirit.

You can't be filled by the Spirit and be an uncivil Christian. You can't do it. The Holy Spirit cannot be uncivil. And so either have the fruit of the Spirit or the fruit of the flesh. And if you're looking at those, in Galatians 5, they are uncivil. It's a binary choice. What a difference we'd make in the culture if we were filled with the Spirit today.

[01:09:08] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Such a good word. Yeah. And a great place for us to land today and make that your prayer. And even right now, as we close this podcast, just make that your prayer for whatever is on your mind and in your life for this day, that you would put it before the Lord and ask the spirit to guide you want to thank you for being a part of this conversation, Jim.

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