

# Faith over fear in politics and life

## TRANSCRIPT

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

### **Mark Turman (00:02.083)**

This is the Denison Forum podcast. I'm Dr. Mark Turman, Executive Director at Denison Forum and also the host again for today's conversation. Thank you for being a part of this conversation. And we strive to make this an experience for you that this is some friends sitting around seeking clarity that equips us to think biblically, live righteously and serve eagerly for the glory of God and the good of others. And we like to have the feel in our podcast that we're at a coffee shop and having a good conversation and you're listening in, maybe if you could, you'd ask the same kinds of questions that maybe we're going to ask and try to answer. So we're going to pick up again on the theme of politics a little bit, but more on the topic of peace and those, how those things might intersect, particularly around the broad topic of peace and politics, but maybe leaning more into the peace side of that. And my conversation partner today is my friend, Josh Miller. He's been on our podcast before and we get to work together at Denison Ministries and Denison Forum. Josh is the chief of staff and we wrote up this kind of bio for him. I had to rearrange it to try to prioritize it the way I think that he would want it to be heard, which is Josh is a disciple of Jesus. He's also a husband and a father of two sons. He has been vocationally a musician which is a fancy way of saying he had a really great band for a really long time. So he's got stories around that. He's been a filmmaker, a restaurant manager. I didn't know that, Josh. He's also been a songwriter, didn't know that he had been a barista, which means he's part of the coffee snob collection of people at our workplace. He's been a worship leader, a pastor, and as he says, still trying to figure out who the heck he is, or at least what he wants to do when he grows up.

He is married to Devin. live here in the Dallas area with their two sons and we're going to just chat a while. So say good morning, Josh.

### **Josh (02:06.122)**

Hey, good morning. Yeah, you could sum that up, that bio up by just saying confused, I think would be the best summary for that. But yeah, that's a, had a weird life. We could put it that way, but you know, the coffee shop barista stuff, it shouldn't be a shock to you, even though you may have not have known that, but.

**Mark Turman (02:10.97)**

Ha ha ha!

**Mark Turman (02:23.928)**

You know, it was a little bit of a shock just that it was actually a paid vocation for a while. I'm assuming that it was paid. But no, I'm not at all surprised that that aligns with the previous conversations we've had about coffee on a number of basis. But you know, I'm very utilitarian when it comes to coffee. Josh and some others at our organization are a little bit more refined in their coffee taste.

**Josh (02:50.176)**

Yeah, or you could say addicted would also be the other way to say that one.

**Mark Turman (02:53.997)**

Yeah, addicted would work. And, you know, and confused might be a way of describing, you know, your life up to this point. Let's just call it an adventure, which, yeah, which means some things have been great. Some things have been, well, not worth repeating, but all of it goes into exploring and being an adventure for what life is. yeah, so let's go back around to this conversation. You and I were in a meeting, gosh, six months ago, and we were trying to

**Josh (03:03.082)**

There we go. I'll take that.

**Mark Turman (03:23.749)**

clarify, refine, define in fresh ways just all of the things that we're trying to do at Denison Forum and at Denison Ministries, which is a moment for me to plug the additional ministries that are a part of what we do. So if you're new to us or new to the podcast anyway, Denison Forum is one of four ministries that lives under a broader ministry called Denison Ministries that started 15 years ago by our founders, Dr. Jim Dennison, our cultural apologist and his partner in the ministry, Jeff Bird. 15 years ago, they started out seeking to discern the news differently to help people think about things going on in the world from a biblical perspective. And we're still doing that through this podcast, through the daily article that Dr. Jim and his son Ryan write every day. But we also have three other ministries. One of those is a devotional resource, we'll talk about some today, called First 15, which just helps you to spend some time with God, either in the morning or some part of the day, it's called First 15. The idea is spending 15 minutes with God as maybe the most important part of your day. And you can get that as an email, you can get it as an app, you can go straight to the website. And there's resources there, there's scripture, there are devotional thoughts built on that scripture, there's music, there's guided prayer.

And if you're looking for a fresh tool or maybe for the first time in your life, a way to spend time with God that's got some guidance to it, that's what First 15 is all about. We also have a Christian parenting ministry that has resources for virtually every season of parenting that you can listen to, mostly podcasts, but we also have some written resources in that area. But you can listen to a podcast or download a resource to help you as you're trying to be a great parent or even a grandparent. And then we have a Bible study division called Foundations that will help you as you study God's word, either personally or in a small group setting. We have Bible studied resources that will take you through different parts of scripture where you can kind of take a deep dive. Along with that, we have some other things like a ministry to pastors, leaders of churches and things that we're continuing to work on. So that's all of what Denison Ministries is.

**Mark Turman (05:43.653)**

But we in this season obviously are thinking a lot about politics as is our country. We're moving toward the next election coming up in just about 40 days or so. But anyway, we were talking back in the spring about just our overall ministry, fresh vision, that type of thing. We landed on a statement, Josh, this statement, we dream of a world led by faith and not by fear. Why do you think that statement captured us as leaders of Denison ministry?

**Josh (06:12.99)**

Yeah, it's a great question. A great summary of the ministry as well. It's hard to encapsulate all the things that we do that all connect together but look very different from ministry to ministry. And so that's fantastic. But yeah, in terms of a world driven by faith rather than fear, know, it was, it's not a new thought, but was a new thought to me a few years ago that most of the issues I experience in my own life, whether it be sin or anxiety, whatever it may be, at the root of all of that was fear. And so, and then when I went to scripture, I started to see that everywhere as well. As you look at the Garden of Eden, Satan's first really attempt with Adam and Eve was to say, hey, maybe is God really gonna take care of you? Does he really have your best in mind? And he instilled fear, which is what led them to sin. And you see that later on in the Old Testament with the Israelites wondering, did God abandon us? Moses abandoned us up on the mountain. Maybe God has abandoned us. Let's create our own idols out of this place of fear. You see that with Peter as Jesus is about to be crucified and getting called out. Hey, are you kind of with this Jesus guy? And out of fear denies Christ, walks away from the commitment he's been made faithfully for a while because fear creeps in. And so, I began to see that in my own life, reflected in the decisions I would make or not make based on fear, my willingness to follow Christ and obey where he's called me to go and what he's called me to do, dependent on my level of fear. And then when it comes to things like politics, begin to see that everywhere as well, as we look at people who are angry at others or so polarized. When you look underneath you look underneath the anger, you look underneath the judgment, you look underneath the kind of fandom around candidates, you see that there's a fear underneath it and a hope put in people or systems or parties

to alleviate that fear. We're looking for really a different savior. And so, as we were looking at what we could do as dentists in ministries to make an impact in

**Josh (08:37.332)**

our culture right now, how do we not speak to fear? How do we not speak to this issue of us placing our hope in other places than Christ? And so, I think that phrase ended up encapsulating that mission for us in terms of saying, if we're going to combat the issues of today, or at least speak to the issues of today, we need to be able to help people recognize where they're placing their trust and recognize that when we place our trust and hope in anywhere else but Christ, we're gonna realize that that's not a sure place to place our trust and we're gonna have fear as a result. And so that's become kind of a recurring theme for me as I've been, you know, processing this season that we're in, working with my own relationship with God and even doing work in verse 15 is how do we speak to this issue of fear and help get our eyes in the right place as we kind of walk through this season.

**Mark Turman (09:39.535)**

Yeah, it's such a great way of explaining it because the more I've thought about it even from the time we were together talking about this six months ago and going back further to previous conversations, it almost seems like this is like the core issue of our soul in some way. Maybe as you were talking, maybe kind of go back to some of those familiar scriptures, you know, that when Paul's talking to Timothy, he's handing off the pastoral leadership of the church in Ephesus, one of the most important and significant churches that we read about in the Bible. And Paul says to Timothy, remember that fear or timidity is not from God. It's not what God wants you to live by, to be anxious about anything and to let that be the guide or the compass of your life. So many things, you when leadership is handed off from Moses to Joshua, you know, be strong and courageous. Don't let fear be the thing that drives you.

**Josh (10:17.996)**

Mm

**Mark Turman (10:38.885)**

And just so much seeing that as really the core thing, C .S. Lewis that Jim refers to all the time in his writing that, you know, C .S. Lewis said that courage, the opposite of fear is kind of the core virtue of all the other virtues. And we just, we often stand in awe and admire various aspects of courage. But really what's under that is a sense of faith not the absence of fear, but the confrontation of fear with faith. And that's, that almost seems to me to be like, again, the core issue and the thing that is just a daily, almost a moment by moment invitation. And even when you bring it down way below, you know, global politics, national politics, you start thinking about anything that is kind of either irritating or frustrating you.

If you can take a deep breath and step back from that, you almost always get to this conversation. Is it something that, am I trying to engage with this based on fear? Which seems to always be the presenting thing. it's almost like it's the default of our heart and mind. And it's like swimming up river to choose faith. Does that resonate? the way that you've experienced it.

**Josh (12:05.364)**

Yeah, absolutely. You know, I've heard it described fear or anger being a secondary emotion that whenever you're typically angry, there's usually something underneath it. And oftentimes it can be a sense of fear. And I do think it's important for us to recognize that fear is a very normal human emotion and that it's not a shameful thing that we start there. You know, just that God had to tell Joshua to be strong and courageous.

**Mark Turman (12:11.716)**

Right? Yep.

**Josh (12:34.986)**

means that there was probably a propensity for him not to be. We see the commands throughout scripture to do not fear. And that's not, those aren't shameful statements that's saying, hey, I know you're probably, you know, kind of default wired to be fearful, but I'm calling you to something different, something transcendent. And so I think when I was growing up in the church, I viewed fear and even in my struggle with anxiety as kind of a shameful thing that, I'm I see all these commands to not be afraid, but I'm experiencing fear. And so I would end up kind of shutting that down and go, I'm almost pretending, I'm not afraid. I'm okay. I'm not worried, not concerned, because I have faith in Jesus, which it was maybe aspirational in some ways, but in some ways also kind of denied what was a fairly natural human response to when things are up in the air. And so I do think it's important for us as believers to be okay with starting out saying, hey, I'm, I am a little fearful. I don't know what's going to happen. The upcoming election kind of scares me a little bit. I think that's an okay thing to say. And what matters is in where we take it. But when we initially kind of deny what we are feeling in that way, I think that ends up causing more problems because we overcompensate to cover up what we're really experiencing. And we do react with anger, we react with judgment towards others when really underneath it, we're just concerned about what's going to happen. We're concerned about the future. And so instead of redirecting that, taking that fear towards Christ, we end up kind of vilifying people around us to kind of get a sense of control back. when we look at our normal human response to unknowns, when we can't control the future, when we don't know what's going to happen, it is our human response in our DNA to some degree to have fight or flight. That's the human response. And so we need to recognize that that is going to be my default response to unknowns and unpredictability. And so it's okay to recognize that and go, okay, I know this is where my body wants to react. This is how my mind wants to react. But as a follower of Jesus, we do have a command to do not fear. We do have a command to trust in him. We do see that

**Josh (15:01.27)**

He is in control when we are not, that he sees things that we don't. And so to me, I see it more of when I am walking through periods of fear and anxiety, which we are right now as a family with our son going through some medical stuff right now. Instead of going, I'm not afraid, everything's great. Everything's fine. Instead I'm going, well, I'm afraid, but I'm taking that before God and going, this is out of my control. I don't know what's gonna happen here.

It does make me anxious and nervous, but I'm going to take that to God and go, hey, God, can you help me with this? Can you help me to trust in you? Can you remind me of your faithfulness? And that ends up helping us transcend to a place that we can't do on our own. Where I think we sometimes attempt to manufacture peace. You know, I just got to calm myself down. And I don't know that we're always, I don't know that we're capable of doing that. I don't know that we're capable of creating peace. Peace is really a gift.

**Mark Turman (15:47.493)**

Yeah.

**Josh (15:57.556)**

of the Spirit. so, I think that's just extremely important in the season we're in to recognize when we're feeling scared, afraid, anxious, and not pretend we don't feel that, but instead call that out, recognize it, be vulnerable with that, and take that before God and others in honesty and let God work in our hearts in that way.

**Mark Turman (16:23.749)**

Yeah, I think there's so many things to think about there. One thing I think about is, as you were talking, is just that fear in many ways, at least some aspects of fear, are a gift from God. That there's this sense of God's enabled us and equipped us to alert, to kind of be alert to and to recognize and respond to things that we should either be concerned about or that we should avoid.

But you made a statement as you were talking about it. What really matters next is what we do with it. And that's, that's where our broken nature as sinful human beings really comes in. because when that gets presented to Adam and Eve, they have a decision, they have an opportunity, they have a choice to make. will they say, no, you're wrong. We can trust him. he does have our best interest at heart, instead they chose to continue down further the path of fear. And as you were talking, I was thinking about, if there was like a 16 or a 17 year old, 15 year old listening to our podcast and he's thinking about what his experience or her experience is in the high school hallway, like, hey, I wanna have friends, I wanna fit in, I wanna belong. And that's a completely normal human aspiration to be connected to others in healthy ways and to feel like

you're experiencing connection and fellowship and friendship. But then if they choose fear, they often either allow levels of anxiety that caused them to pull away or they make decisions of compromise simply because they're afraid of losing or missing out on that connection. And so it operates at that kind of very granule granular level as well as in these big topics. And so it seems to come around all over the place and then as you were saying that that God commands us not to be fearful which means that we have this kind of gift from him that causes us to alert to certain things and to be concerned but then we're constantly confronted with this choice and

**Mark Turman (18:43.447)**

If he can command us to not be fearful, then that means at some point there was some choice that we moved past that initial reaction to, okay, well, I'm going to choose to stay in fear. I'm going to choose to go further into it, which is where we usually lead ourselves or get led into places of anxiety, depression, isolation, or that fight mentality that we always talk about.

It's that decision, okay, I am afraid, am I seeing this situation appropriately as God would want me to see it, and then am I choosing to respond to it with His help, or am I simply going to continue down the pathway of sin? Is that, am I matching up with what you're saying?

**Josh (19:34.124)**

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, and it's, you're right. I love your example of high schoolers. That's how, you know, it starts at a young age and the contexts are always different. The things that we are afraid of or hoping for on the other side, but the same innate response is still there. And so, but yeah, it's beautiful that God doesn't ask us to do something that he's not going to equip us to do. And so when he does call us to not be afraid, we can then go to him and go, help me do that, you know, and to trust him to help us get there. And so even though the bar can seem high and it can seem unattainable in some ways, the God is really, he's calling us to draw closer to him in that. When we are asked to do something unattainable, that means that we need his help to accomplish it. And so I think that's, you know,

**Mark Turman (20:06.429)**

No.

**Mark Turman (20:20.869)**

Hmm.

**Josh (20:27.766)**

Turns out that most of what God asks us to do and the things he's called us to draw us closer to him. And so even in this area of fear and faith, that's not meant to, for us to go do that independently, but that should draw us closer to God knowing that we're not capable of doing it,

but he wants to walk with us in that. And as we walk closer with him, that is the byproduct of close relationship with God is peace. you can't, you know, I see this with my own

**Mark Turman (20:54.526)**

Right.

**Josh (20:56.458)**

my own kids when they're inherently afraid of the dark or some noise. We had a thunderstorm here the other night that they still get afraid of a little bit. What do they do? They run into our room and get right up on me in my bed and then fall back asleep because they are close, you know? And so I think that to some degree that should be our response. And when we are experiencing times of fear, that should, we should be running straight to God.

**Mark Turman (21:08.985)**

Yep.

**Josh (21:23.924)**

knowing that he is actually the one who can protect us and take care of us.

**Mark Turman (21:29.295)**

Yeah, it's a perfect setup to what I was just wanting to ask you about, which is it's almost like we're confronted with this why in the road multiple times of day every day, which is, okay, this concerns me. I've been alerted to this or I've been thinking about this and we're constantly at this decision point. Okay, am I going to continue down the road of fear or am I going to listen to the call of God to come toward faith, which is a way of coming toward Him. What do you think are some of the signposts that we've chosen the right one of those options in that why in the road? Whenever we're facing any kind of an issue, topic, small, medium, or large, the first thing that kind of jumped in my mind is, is, okay, did I take even a moment, 30 seconds, to pray and ask God for help with this?

That would be like maybe one of the first indicators of, okay, I'm at this Y in the road. I can either choose to be more afraid or I can choose to start trying to move toward trust. Prayer seems like even a whispered prayer. here's an example. Like I came across the other day, was reading, it just happened to be in the book of Nehemiah. And Nehemiah has this desire to go back and help rebuild the walls around Jerusalem but he needs the king's permission and the king doesn't share his faith. And so the king calls him out and says, hey, you look sad. You're not supposed to be sad around me. What's going on with you? And the very next thing that we're told is we're allowed to go inside Nehemiah's head and he whispers a prayer before he gives an answer. Because it's in that moment actually, it's a life or death kind of thing. If the king is angered,



by Nehemiah's sadness, then he can have him executed simply for being sad in his presence. And Nehemiah knows, I need God's help to make this go well. And so he has only like seconds to pray. And he's already prayed about it some before that, but he has seconds to pray. That's one of those signs. Any other ideas come along your mind, Joshua? Okay, how do I know I'm actually trying to choose the direction of faith instead of

**Mark Turman (23:52.099)**

the gravity of fear.

**Josh (23:54.326)**

Yeah, that's great. And I think to your point, prayer is a great indication because I think we live in a culture that promotes hyper independence. And so we are taught to be our own boss, be strong, pull yourself up by your bootstraps, accomplish, achieve, not need people. And so I think we learn that it's not okay and certainly shouldn't be our first response to choose dependence and to choose to get help. Now, I still have a hard time asking for help on dumb things that I should ask for help on. And so it becomes the same way with God that, I should have this figured out. I should be able to take care of this. I should be able to overcome this. And it becomes almost an indication of pride in some ways that I can manage this myself. And so it takes intentionality to go that actually that's not the goal to manage myself. My goal is actually dependence over independence, especially when it comes to my relationship with God. And so I think that's huge. One of the other things I look at and again, is important about first recognizing that I am afraid. I think those are probably hard words for people to say sometimes. I actually am just afraid. But why that's so important is because we can start to identify what we truly are afraid of. What is it that we're fearful of? And sometimes those are really valid things and important things. Again, to your point earlier that God given nature to protect us, you know, that we actually should be concerned. But sometimes they can be indications of things that maybe we shouldn't be so in love with.

**Mark Turman (25:34.383)**

Right. Yeah.

**Josh (25:44.35)**

you know, from at this, just speaking personally, oftentimes the things I'm afraid of are things tied to things in this world that I've held on to, you know, whether it's my, whether it's finances, whether it's status, whether it's things I have viewed as important. When I'm afraid of losing those things, it actually is a wake up call for me that I wonder if I've placed my hope and my joy in things other than Christ. And so, I have to go through this process on a regular basis of first calling out, okay, I'm fearful here, then go, what am I fearful of? And then sometimes that turns to, okay, I actually just need to surrender this altogether. That, okay, my whatever isn't that important. I'm not trying to build my kingdom, I'm trying to build the kingdom of God.

And so I need to, sometimes that just becomes a redirecting of my attention and my focus. And other times it's a, no, this is a good thing or a valid thing, but then I just need to turn and trust God in it. And so, yeah, it's an interesting process that I don't know. I think we often just skip ahead. Oftentimes we just try and get right to resolution rather than giving ourselves time to really process what is we're afraid of and what to do with it.

**Mark Turman (27:08.697)**

No, it's great. And it also makes me think about, you know, one of our previous conversations, had the idea of right sizing things, right? And just this idea when you're, when you're working through this and trying to think through this, that question of, what is it that I'm afraid of? What is it that I'm afraid of losing or experiencing in some other way? And I love what you said about, you know, am I just willing to call it out? Am I willing to name it? And So that really kind of points in some ways to the importance of good friends and Christian fellowship. You know, are there two, three, four people in my life that I can really honestly say, this is, this is what I'm confronting and I am afraid of it. It, it, it is, it is pulling me toward fear. I often tell people when they are going through some kind of a struggle, like, Hey, you need to build your team.

And your team doesn't have to be 30 people. most of the time, depending upon what the situation is, it's usually three or four people. Sometimes it's one or two, but you know, build your team that these are going to be the people who know what's going on with you and they know to pray for you and they know to check in on you. And they know, that they have a place here. You've invited them in to have this place of walking with you through this particular struggle of you standing at a significant place of fear or faith. And then kind of that right sizing thing, know, and like I said, naming your fears is always going to be a step in helping you to get past them and choosing faith. But then even some of the things we've talked about recently in our ministry and also in our personal lives, sometimes we use overly dramatic words that don't serve us well.

**Josh (28:57.847)**

Mm

**Mark Turman (28:59.725)**

But if you're trying to right size something that you're concerned about or afraid of, there's a lot of words to use and they don't all carry the same way. You can say, well, I'm concerned about that, or I'm anxious about that all the way up to, yeah, I'm really terrified of this. But the words that you use are important for your, not only describing it to somebody else, but for you hearing it in your own ears. Because when we're alone,

The devil magnifies the size of it to try to make it more intimidating, I think. Does that make sense?

**Josh (29:34.038)**

Yeah. Yeah. And it's, and it is difficult because it's a lot more vulnerable to use that type of language around, am nervous or anxious. doesn't, it makes, can make you feel smaller. Right? You know, if you're in a meeting and going, Hey, I'm scared of this. That doesn't make you feel like the big, big person in the room who has it all together. That's a pretty vulnerable statement. but it's a, it's an important one, especially if we're going to have a sense of community and be able to trust in God and have a community around us to support us.

**Mark Turman (29:46.947)**

Yeah. Yep.

**Josh (30:03.136)**

we have to start with vulnerability. And I think oftentimes we try to maintain an image of strength or we can react in anger or frustration at another person when underneath we're just kind of scared. so, but yeah, the community piece you're talking about is huge. And we have to recognize that there are a few things that have really hurt us as a society when it comes to community and relationships. And one of those is social media, the digital age. We have a lot of what they call disembodied relationships now. Even as we're doing this interview over a screen, that's better than over social or some type of posting on X at each other or something like that. But we've distanced our relationships to become much more digital in a way that doesn't have any sense of real accountability or commitment to relationships because they've become mostly online.

**Mark Turman (30:37.679)**

Yep.

**Josh (31:00.866)**

And then we had COVID as well that kind of reset what's normal in terms of community and relationships and having authentic dynamics and dinners together and at times where we are vulnerable on a regular basis. And then I think that's also been one of the biggest detriments of church decline as well. Not only that we're seeing people walk away from faith,

**Mark Turman (31:01.128)**

Right.

**Mark Turman (31:16.057)**

Yeah.

**Josh (31:29.448)**

in some ways, but we're also seeing people forget what real community looks like and what real church is in terms of us working together towards a common goal, working together for God to refine us as a community to be better together. And so that becomes a real barrier for us when we do face difficult circumstances, because we've not maintained really healthy relationships and community, even in the good times really don't know how to navigate that when things get tough or where we're not at our best or where we are fearful or weak. It's a much higher barrier to entry to like, can we be friends again? Because I really need some help. Haven't talked to you in a while. That becomes a much more difficult experience when we're not on a regular basis maintaining genuine, authentic, vulnerable community together.

**Mark Turman (32:11.011)**

No.

**Mark Turman (32:22.041)**

Yeah, yeah, so good. And like I said, kind of a call to the local church in many ways. I would often tell people the reason you need to be at church is so you know that you're not the only one that's scared and losing your mind. There's a lot of us being tempted to be scared and lose our minds. And when we're together, we can actually share that and talk about that, pray about that, remind each other of the promises of God and of the faithfulness of God that has always been there. Let's bring this around a little bit more to the current conversation about politics. We had a conversation similar to this on our podcast two years ago, going into the midterm. I went back and listened to some of that. And I started that conversation with you and our friend Mark Legg saying, hey, these are four or five things that we're talking about, or that seem to be predominant in the conversation around our country right now. And I started it this way, all things related to just Donald Trump as a person, as a president as a candidate, sanctity of life issues, obviously abortion being a big conversation, election integrity, the economy and immigration. So now we're almost exactly 24 months later from that conversation. And it doesn't seem like much has changed. Sounds like today, if I was adding in a couple of more things that maybe

**Josh (33:40.829)**

Yeah, sounds like today.

**Mark Turman (33:50.167)**

round out that conversation. Political violence has increased. Obviously, you just point to assassination attempts, two, and even some reports now three possible attempts on Donald Trump's life, one that was in the planning stages. The faltering of President Biden in the middle of the summer that led to the hard pivot to Kamala Harris now being the Democratic nominee and the start and or escalation of two very significant wars that may be precursors to bigger things. Josh, one of reasons I want to bring it up is just that reality that not much has changed. How does that possibly inform our thinking about choosing faith over fear and pursuing peace

through and with God about our political life together? How does the fact that we're still kind of talking about at least five of these things and a few more related topics, you think there's anything in there for us to learn about the fact that it hasn't maybe changed that much in two years?

**Josh (35:00.662)**

Yeah, yeah, it is kind of stunning to hear you read all that back and look at it's definitely not improved and a lot of the things are the same, some are worse. To me, what it really reminds me about is that we can't put our hope in parties or candidates. know, I remember the conversations leading up to the last election around if Donald Trump is elected, it's the end of the world, end of democracy you know, look at how horrible he is, all of those things. And we better elect Biden because he's going to, you know, restore dignity to the office and he's going to fix all the problems. And we're seeing the same thing again this time around. lot of the same language changed a little bit here and there, but it still comes down to one person is the savior and one person is the villain. And the characters change depending on which side you're starting from. But it's still the same. It's the same narrative that

If you're on the Republican side, and this is obviously a bit of a stereotype, but if you're on the extreme Republican side, you're saying, if Donald Trump doesn't get elected to office, our country is over. It's the end of our country. It's World War III, these main extremes, and that Donald Trump is the solution. And then you're on the Democrats side, you're saying there's terror around Donald Trump being elected again that he's the one that's going to destroy the country. you know, all of a sudden, Kamala is looking shiny and clean and bright and like our hope and savior again. And so it's interesting to me to watch that dynamic and to hear the same story reversed from different sides. You know, as you know, I'm from Portland and so I have a lot of friends that are very much on the more liberal leaning side, know, family and friends on that side. And so I see the Facebook posts or the comments here and there and have had some of the conversations around just how horrible Donald Trump is. And I'm just kind of silent in there. And because I just don't, I really don't want to have to take that sort of extreme either way. But then here in Dallas,

**Mark Turman (37:15.269)**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Josh (37:18.11)**

certainly a lot more conservative leaning. And so I hear very much the opposite. And it's the same stories with a different name. And at the end of the day, what it reminds me of is that neither one are going to solve the ultimate problems for us. It doesn't mean that voting doesn't matter. Doesn't mean that we shouldn't have opinions on parties. We shouldn't be active in the political space.

But at the end of the day, they only have so much power. Every single one is a flawed human. Every single one has ulterior motives in some way. Everyone is limited by our government structure. Everyone is gonna have to deal with things that affect the world that are outside of their control. so it's funny, you can go back two years, but you can also go back hundreds of years, you know, to, it was recent, you know, I read a biography on George Washington not that long ago. And it's funny even then to look at some of the debates and conversations and fear around who to put in charge and how to put them in charge and what power to give them. And we are living the human experience right now. You know, it can feel new, it can feel volatile.

**Mark Turman (38:19.213)**

Yeah.

**Josh (38:45.526)**

But at the end of the day, we are living the same human experience that people have been living for generations. And it will always serve us better to put our trust in God and not in people. And so that's been the reminder for me in this season is, regardless of your stance on a position or a political party, do not place your hope there. Do not place your trust there. Do not let them get elevated to a place of being your savior, because you will be disappointed regardless of who gets elected. And so, I expect we'll have, if we do this again two or four years from now, I expect some of the same things are still gonna be there. And so, yeah, our only, not to be kind of trite with it, but our only hope truly is in Christ. God has to intervene. He has to move. And we have to partner with him. That is truly the only option for us. Otherwise, we'll be continuing to live in fear and anxiety for the next four years.

**Mark Turman (39:20.402)**

Yeah.

**Mark Turman (39:41.497)**

Yeah, well said, well said. that, you know, a couple of things that just come out of that, right, is that some of these issues are just deeply, deeply tied to the fundamental human experience of sin and brokenness and our personal and sometimes collective desire for power. And, you know, out of fear, trying to gain control that really only should be understood in the hands of God, and you can't take it away from him. There are certain things that only God can and should be in control of, and he is in control of them. But we have this sense of being out of control and facing uncertainty, and in that we get anxious and we try to control and we try to gain power over each other, and we don't trust God to exercise his power in the most appropriate ways. But it also just

It gave me a sense of perspective as oftentimes, whether you're looking at short, medium or long history, that's one, know, even if you're not a great history person and not everybody is, I have a

passion for it that's bigger than some other people, but it creates perspective on just how life goes. And you'll hear some, sometimes in conversations, the more kind of peaceful voices will say, hey, we've been here before. We faced really big challenges and we've been anxious or nervous or angry about things like this before, but we have found a way to work through it. It also made me think, you know what, I could have saved a lot of time watching and reading and listening to a lot of news because it didn't change that much over 24 months. And there's something actually comforting in that, which is

We, you know, yes, the world does change a lot and sometimes it changes very rapidly, but on most of the major issues, the world and particularly our form of government is kind of purposely set up to move slowly. And there's actually a safeguard in that. We complain a lot, especially in our country about stalemate and gridlock within Congress and how

**Josh (41:54.295)**

Mm -hmm.

**Mark Turman (42:03.445)**

nothing ever really changes and some would even advocate that we need to, as they say, burn everything down. But there's actually some value in it being hard to change our country on a large scale at a very rapid rate. And that means that you have to be committed to bringing good ideas and collaborating with others, if you're really going to bring about meaningful and deep change, that doesn't just benefit a few, but benefits most, if not all people. so, and like, well, I could have moderated my news diet a little bit more because I could have come back and picked up this conversation a lot of different times in lot of different ways. And they're all, as you said, they're all very important.

They're very significant issues that we should be concerned about, that we should be working on, that we should be praying about. But this is a, as we talked about in our previous podcast, these are big questions. These are big issues. And I'll get you to, let me get you to come around to this, maybe pulling from your musician days, which is I've been thinking for a while now how just the idea of volume,

**Josh (43:01.58)**

Yep.

**Mark Turman (43:23.077)**

changes everything. And that can be volume when we think about it from an audio standpoint. know, we could have long conversations about how churches have battled over music and part of the battle is it's just too loud or it's not loud enough, right? But then volume speaking in terms of

the number of people involved. When you're talking about our country, you're talking about somewhere around 335 million people.

**Josh (43:38.518)**

Mm -hmm.

**Mark Turman (43:52.057)**

Does that make sense that in some ways volume changes everything? And if we talk about the volume of your political or your social media conversations, you can really change a lot by the kind of volume that you use, either loud or soft. that, am I thinking in a reasonable way?

**Josh (44:14.774)**

Yeah, yeah, I think so. There's a lot there. it reminds me that the expression talk is cheap. And it's never been cheaper in that previously if you wanted to have conversations or debate over things, you had to do that face to face with a person or in a group. And now you get your own personal bullhorn on social to blast your opinions without any concern for who the recipient is on the other side and how that would be received or how that may be hurtful or constructive or destructive. And so we've become detached from the consequence of our words. And so that's really freed people up in a really in negative way to just spew out as much as you want and not being super concerned about the quality of what you're producing as well. And so I think that's been a real detriment for us in that I think there's a lot of people who

**Mark Turman (44:48.409)**

Mm.

**Josh (45:11.986)**

would say things online that they wouldn't say to people to their face. And so I think that's both amplified the reach of those statements, but then it's also, I think, emboldened people to say things that are just destructive in so many ways. and us as Christians, we need to be more aware of this than most, that our words have power. know, plenty of verses about the

**Mark Turman (45:17.329)**

Hmm.

**Josh (45:41.11)**

power of the tongue and our speech. And we need to be aware of that. And that applies both in our in -person space and digital space that our words matter. and yeah, I think that brings back memories around volume issues in the church. You know, I've had plenty of those.

**Mark Turman (46:00.229)**



hahahaha

**Josh (46:01.516)**

plenty of hard conversations about that. And that may be also one of those conversations that goes on for all time. That four years from now, churches will still be arguing over the style of music and the volume of the worship. so, but one segue on that, that I just, this kind of fascinating story for me, I got this book at Half Price Books a few years ago. I just stumbled on, and it was the history of church music dating back Hundreds of years ago, I forget the date offhand, but I walked through that book, which was mostly pretty boring, to be honest, a lot of boring details, but came across this section where they were talking about this incredible controversy within the Church of England at the time in that people were starting to bring in the organ into the church for the first time. And it caused an incredible uproar because the organ was

**Mark Turman (46:37.604)**

Right?

**Mark Turman (46:53.177)**

Hmm. Yeah.

**Josh (46:59.17)**

the instrument that was played in the bars and the pubs. And so people thought they were bringing in this heathen instrument into the church and it was going to corrupt the church and be the downfall of the church because of the organ. And so I got a chuckle out of that being more in a kind of what the older folks at our church would consider the rock band worship at the time.

**Mark Turman (47:03.058)**

wow.

**Mark Turman (47:21.831)**

Yeah.

**Josh (47:22.21)**

I got a chuckle out of that in that it was the organ actually that was controversial much before the electric guitar. But even in that space, learning how to civil dialogue, heartfelt conversation, talking about what the concerns are, what the fears are, and hearing each other on the other side and their opinions and having a loving dialogue where we actually value the other person and their perspective is important. Whether we're talking about music in church or politics. We've got to be better at seeing each other and the concerns and hopes that they have.

**Mark Turman (47:59.769)**

No, yeah, that's hilarious. And just reminds me of that whole deal that, you know, nobody likes change, not even a baby. You know, when a baby's hungry or dirty, they're crying and they're still crying until they get to the other side of that situation. Everybody tends to see change as loss or uncertainty and both of those make us uncomfortable. Yeah, so I see, yeah, great perspective from that.

Let's talk a little bit about, while we have a few minutes left, just the idea of cynicism. was thinking about this. Read an article a couple of days ago about Metta's founder, Mark Zuckerberg. And this article was interesting in that he, Mark Zuckerberg and his wife have over the last really two decades become increasingly skeptical, if not cynical about politics. Whereas 20 years ago, they set up a foundation and they kind of set about being involved in politics through their foundation. But they got frustrated with the way people were trying to influence them and pull them in directions they didn't want to go. And the article related that he basically made some comments recently at a conference where he was like, you know, I think I made some missteps and I'm just not so sure that politics can be all that we think it can be.

**Josh (49:26.37)**

Mm

**Mark Turman (49:26.423)**

And so I'm pulling back and I'm rethinking. and I've been disappointed by some of the things that have gone on in politics on both sides. and I'm just not sure how or how much I want to be involved. And so I thought, well, maybe that cynicism and that skepticism is an opportunity for something else more helpful. you think that's possible?

**Josh (49:54.058)**

I sure hope so. You know, I think that under that cynicism is just there's been such a breach of trust in the political space for so many years. cynicism comes from being disappointed. And so we've seen that on both sides where there's been a lot of promises made and a lot less kept on both sides. I think the pandemic was destructive in a lot of ways towards that end as well. And then we see a lot of I think people are more maybe a little more savvy than they used to be in terms of seeing through the sheen and the shine of what people say and when they don't mean it or when there's ulterior motives. And so I think people are just a little bit more aware and see through that. And so that does create cynicism. And so I don't know what we do about that. I'm not the right one to speak to what we do about that in terms of politics, but I do think it...

**Mark Turman (50:31.727)**

Yeah.

**Josh (50:49.794)**

is very important for us to not, as believers, as leaders in the church and in ministries, as Christians representing Christ, to make sure that we don't follow the same path. That we need to be people who are very honest, very open, very vulnerable. We need to do what we say we're going to do. We're going to live out what we say we believe. Because people are looking at us too. People see Christians and go, well, you say you believe this, you say you believe in love, you say you believe in self-sacrifice, and yet I don't see that playing out in the way that you talk and the way that you live. You say that you believe in honoring God with your body, and yet the way that you live your life doesn't reflect that. I think that's one of the reasons even some of the pastor failings we've seen over the past year are so destructive in that creates cynicism in that we have people who are promoting one thing and are benefiting off of that platform. And then you've come to find out that there's stuff going on behind the scenes. And that's not a judgment towards the pastors, but it is a call for all of us to be honest, to be real, to deal with our issues, to be vulnerable, to not pretend that we have it all together or that we can do more than we can, but to be true about who we are and that our hope is in Christ, and to make sure that we are advocating more for others than for ourselves. And I see a lot of Christians concerned with, even in the political space, we get very vocal about the things that affect us and get fairly quiet about the things that affect others. And I think for us to be Christ-like, we need to be much more concerned about how this is affecting the least of these, than how it affects us personally. But cynicism is, I think, here to stay for a while until trust is easily lost, you know, for that phrase, it's easily lost and much harder to build back. And so I think we're in that phase right now, both in the political space and I think in the Christian evangelical space as well, that trust has been lost.

### **Josh (53:06.53)**

And it's going to be really, it's going to take a lot of time and faithfulness for that to be restored. And so that's one thing I'm praying for, for the church right now and for our political space is that we could find our trust first again in Christ, but then also people could again, get away from that sense of cynicism and vitriol. I think some of that anger is tied to that as well, frankly.

We are angry because people have promised a lot and haven't come through for us.

### **Mark Turman (53:39.663)**

Yeah, and that's both, as you said, in politics and in the church. And our integrity is one things that each of us needs to work on more. As one leader said, it's not that un-Christian, non-Christian people don't believe the Bible. It's that they're concerned that we don't believe the Bible. And it's manifested by the choices that we make that are counter to what the Bible teaches us. And that's something every one of us can work on for sure.

Let's see if we can land our plane a little bit with some practical advice. You and I have heard Dr. Dennison say several times recently that he referenced a survey in the spring where 40 % of Americans said that they were experiencing significant anxiety, stress, depression over the

coming election. We would have to assume that those numbers have increased over the summer and going into these final weeks. So let's...

**Josh (54:30.572)**

Mm

**Mark Turman (54:36.069)**

We create resources to try to help people, to try to equip them to live more by faith and not by fear and to manifest that in their lives on a daily basis. Tell us some of the things that are going on. You've helped create resources that are more accessible now around this idea of peace in politics, peace in all things, but particularly in politics. What are some of the tools that people can find that we're providing? that might be able to help them as they move through the next number of weeks and months.

**Josh (55:08.118)**

Yeah, I think there's, we've worked really hard to try and be practical with this, because it can feel trite to say, yeah, just trust God more. And so we've tried to get as practical as we can in helping people walk through this season and really draw closer to God in this time, but also practically know how to engage in this time. I think it can feel oftentimes that this is just happening to us, that this season just, we are just,

**Mark Turman (55:16.761)**

Yeah

**Josh (55:37.506)**

at the whim of whatever happens. And so I think it's important for us to know how to take action. What can we do that's practical for us? so I know you guys have done a lot here in Denison Forum around, you know, just finished this election series. And so I'd encourage people to go back and listen to those episodes. I've been listening to all of those. They're fantastic. And then, yeah, with First 15, we created a series called Peace in Politics, which started from an ebook.

I wrote during the last election, as I was experiencing my own anxiety and fear around the election at that time, we created a podcast version just to make it a little more accessible for people this time that kind of just walks through some practical things in terms of what it looks like to trust God, how to have healthy disagreements, what it looks like to actually take that anxiety towards God in prayer. We talk about things like technology. We get real practical in how technology can either help or hurt us in terms of our level of anxiety. So there's a lot of great stuff there that was helpful for me. And so we ended up just kind of turning that into something that was other people could access. So you can search for peace and politics on your podcast app to find that. Or if you go to [first15.org](http://first15.org), we have all the resources there too. so we also, if you're

a parent, Christian parenting, like you mentioned, Mark earlier, has some resources as well. think we have a kind of a, I'm going to butcher the name here, but like a politics simplified guide, I believe for parents, just how do you talk to your kids about this? If they see the news or hear somebody talking about a candidate, how do you kind of walk through that conversation in a way that's helpful and at their level as well? So I'd encourage people to go check any of those out that are relevant.

**Mark Turman (57:10.831)**

Mm -hmm. Right. Yep.

**Josh (57:29.538)**

You can also find, think all of this in one place at denisonministries .org. We have a page there linked there at the top that will kind of list out all of those resources from all of our teams here at Denison Ministries.

**Mark Turman (57:43.353)**

Yeah, well, thank you for that, it's great stuff and we hope it's very useful and practical. you know, there's certainly every one of these situations, including our politics, is not only an area of concern, it's an area of opportunity and responsibility for us. If we could get our minds around the idea, as Dr. Dennison reminds us, that, your witness for Christ will be as important on the day after the election as it is on the days before. And not only that, but just for our own peace of mind and our own celebration of life, being able to walk with Christ, no matter what the circumstances, no matter what the situation, the Bible says that God wants to teach us to be content and to be joyful, whether politics is going the way we want it to go or not.

And that we have the ability to trust him in that way, but we have to choose that daily. And we hope that the resources at First 15, at Denison Forum, all across our ministry at Denison Ministries will help you do that. Josh, thanks for the time. Thanks for the conversation. And even more, I want to thank our audience for listening to us today. If this has been helpful to you, please rate, review us on your platform and share this with family and friends that will help other people to be a part of the conversation. We want to thank you for supporting us with your prayers and with your donations as well. are a donor driven, donor supported ministry and you make it possible for us to provide biblical relevant digital resources for free through your donations and we're grateful for that and we look forward to having you in the next conversation at the Denison Forum podcast. God bless you. We'll see you next time.