**DREW MILLER:** This podcast is sponsored by Regent College, a graduate school of theology in Vancouver, Canada. For more than fifty years, Regent has been exploring arts and theology. You can learn more at rgnt.net.

**JONATHAN ROGERS, HOST:** Hey friends, Jonathan Rogers here. Before we get started, I wanted to mention a new online writing class that I’ve put together. It’s called Writing with Hobbits. Over six weeks, starting August 18th, we’ll read *The Hobbit* together, and we’ll talk about the principles by which Tolkien works his particular kind of magic as a writer.

(ACOUSTIC GUITAR THEME MUSIC FADES UP)

**JR:** Then we’ll apply those principles to our own writing. I’d love to see you there. Find out more at thehabit.co/hobbits.

Welcome to The Habit Podcast: Conversations with Writers about Writing. I’m Jonathan Rogers, your host.

(THEME MUSIC CONTINUES)

**JR:** Daniel Darling is a preacher, a speaker, and a writer. He’s senior vice president for communications at NRV. Before that, he was vice president for communications at the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. That is to say, he is a professional communicator in many capacities.

(THEME MUSIC FADES OUT)

**JR:** His new book is *A Way with Words: Using our Online Conversations for Good*. It releases this week, and when I heard about it, I knew I had to have Daniel Darling on the podcast.

Dan Darling, thank you so much for being on the Habit Podcast with me.

**DANIEL DARLING:** Man, I’m pumped to be on here with you, and I’m glad to receive your invite. I’m a huge fan, so.

**JR:** Well, let’s talk about, um, you’ve got a book coming out — we’ll probably release this podcast around the time the book comes out — called *A Way with Words*. Tell me about that.

**DD:** Yeah, so um… you know, basically this is a book about the way that we act and speak online, right? Um, and you know, I’ve been thinking about this for a while, mainly because my career is basically working with words if you think about it. Whether as a pastor, as a communicator, as a podcaster, as a guy that works in communications… you know, a decade or so.

**JR:** Yeah.

**DD:** And as a writer. This will be my ninth book. I’ve written thousands of articles. I’ll often say to my wife, you know, “People actually pay me for words. Isn’t’ that kind of crazy?” And it’s interesting to me how much Christianity is a religion of words. We have a God who has chosen to speak to us, right? God spoke creation into existence. Jesus is called the *logos*, the Word. Hebrews says that he is the way God has chosen to speak to us in this age. There’s a lot to do with words.

As image bearers, one of the things that makes us distinct from the rest of creation is just how developed our communication is, right? I mean, animals can communicate somewhat, in a rudimentary way, but you’re never gonna see an elephant start a newspaper, or you know, things like that. So one of the ways we image God is we communicate. We use words.

**JR:** Yeah, so when you put it in those terms, one thing that came to my mind is the idea from Wendell Berry. he says, “There are no unsecured places. There are sacred places and desecrated places.”

**DD:** Mmm.

**JR:** And it seems to me, in some ways, your book is about the ways that we desecrate language in our online communication, especially in our online communication.

**DD:** Year, it is. And look, I’m not making the case that we should just… you know, this is not a book about screen time. That is a valuable conversation that others that are better than me, like Andy Crouch, have engaged in. And this is not a conversation about um… (pause) should we go online or offline? I’m assuming we’re going to be communicating online. We’re not gonna go back to the 1950s. The Internet is here to stay. We’re not gonna suddenly become Amish. But what I am saying and getting at what you just said is we have to be cognizant of the way the mediums we use change the way we speak, if that makes sense.

**JR:** Mmhm.

**DD:** Not just advocating that we use more civility online, which is very important, but that we go underneath that and understand what we’re trying to do and what are our motivations when we speak online. What is driving us to say what we’re saying?

**JR:** Oh, okay. So you say we’re going deeper than civility. What is deeper than civility? What is below that?

**DD:** Well, I mean, civility is important, right? I think 1 Peter 3:15 says, “have an answer for every man that the hope that lies within you. Do it with gentleness and kindness.” So the Bible assumes civility and courage go together. That you can speak hard truths, you can have hard and difficult conversations, you can do it in public — as we see in the Bible, you have public polemics and public responses. But to do it with kindness and gentleness. The Bible assumes that.

However, I think we’ve just gotta always be looking at our underlying motivations. And uh, for instance, you know, there’s a temptation for us to curate a version of ourselves online that may be missing or lacking in real life. So I find it fascinating, for instance, that the people who are often the most pugilistic online are among the most gentle and meek at times in real life. And there’s something there. I think also, you know, there’s just this temptation to say… there’s a part of me that I wish I had that I never got to exercise that I can curate online. So if you never were the kind fo strong person or the bully in real life, being online, through the relative safety of a keyboard, gives you that and gives you that opportunity.

It can also happen in other ways. You can curate a version of a parent that you aren’t. Like, you an be a superdad on Instagram, or a supermom, with all those carefully curated images. I’m always a little bit cynical when I — and I post on Instagram and a couple of things — I’m always wondering when I watch people’s stuff, okay, who set up that shot? What was that conversation like? So we can do that. Or the whole vulnerability mindset… that we can project a messiness that is even more messy than reality in order to generate that audience. So there’s just a whole host of motivations, and I think what I end up getting to is that, you know — and I learned a lot from Curt Thompson who wrote ab book called *The Soul of Shame* — to be known by God and to know God is the most important thing, and if you’re known by God and you know God, then you are free to be the person you really are, and you don’t have to project a version that you think will get you affirmation from a tribe that you’re seeking it from. Does that makes sense?

**JR:** Yeah, sure! Here’s something I’d like to talk about for a minute though. In some ways, writing is — well, not in some ways — writing is curation. You’re choosing what to leave in and take out, and any kind of personal essay or memoir or autobiography is a curation of ones image, which I do think is sort of put into hyperdrive by social media. But… you know, it’s not just — this is not the point you’re making anyway — this is not a new thing, the idea that we project a curated image that may or may not — I mean, how often do you…are there books about parenting where it turns out the kids of that author were miserable? Or were there episodes… it’s almost as if this option, this opportunity to be hypocritical has been expanded beyond just people who get published to a whole world.

**DD:** Yeah. You’re right. Like we, um… (pause) You know, everybody is hypocritical in some sense.

**JR:** Sure.

**DD:** Except for Jesus, right? So even the best of us don’t live out what we profess to say — what we say we believe. And in some ways, that is the essence of the Christian story. That none of us are heroes, Jesus is the hero, and upon close scrutiny, even the best lives — the most Sprit-filled, the most exemplary lives — take the microscope, you can find things that don’t match up to what we’ve said. But social media provides us this great platform to project a version of ourselves that we want people to see.

And you’re right, anybody writing, anybody speaking, anybody putting content out there is doing that. I have a whole chapter on that whole idea of platform, how do we think about platform… I think it’s a complicated platform. You know, there’s a lot of conversation today about the Evangelical Industrial Complex and celebrity Christianity and how bad it is. And I resonate with some of that. Except what I find fascinating is the people talking about the problem of celebrity and platform are doing it. You know, I always wanna say, you know, you’re recording a podcast about the evils of celebrity… do you only want that podcast to be listened to by 10 people so you don’t become a celebrity? Like, that is an interesting thing.

So I think we have to accept that anybody who is doing any creative work is… there’s a tacit acknowledgement that yes, we think we have something that we want the world to share and the world to enjoy, and I don’t think we should apologize for that. If I write a book, I do want as many people as possible to read it because I think God has given me a gift and a message. If you record a podcast, your’e hoping the widest possible audience will hear it because it’s something worth hearing. If you are doing a painting or recording an album, you don’t want to restrict it. You want to release it to the world. And our gifts are one way we love our neighbor, one way we serve the world.

At the same time, there is a kind of… I think where we have to just draw the line is… and I think everything we do on social media — and this is gonna come back full circle — what are our motivations? Are we doing this so that we can be a thing? Am I sharing this story on Twitter that maybe I’ve slightly embellished about a situation that happened to me, because this is the moment where if I do this, I’m gonna get an audience, I’m gonna get “atta boys,” I’m gonna get the affirmation that I don’t feel like I get in real life. Those are the questions we have to ask ourselves.

Or are we, as one of my friend’s who’s a filmmaker says, do we have the perspective of the little boy who brought his lunch to Jesus? That I bring the best that I have to Jesus and let him decide what to do with it, to where we’re creating our things, we’re doing our best to get the world out, but then trusting Jesus for the expansion of our platform in the sense that we’re not enslaved to the affirmation of our audience. I don’t know. These are complicated things, and creators obviously have to draw the lines in different places.

**JR:** Yeah, sure. And even the language of trusting Jesus to expand the platform… I think to refine that, maybe it’s just trusting Jesus to get this to whoever needs it, whether that’s a large platform or a small platform, right?

**DD:** Yeah, that’s a great point. That’s really good. And listen, platform is not new.

**JR:** Yeah.

**DD:** We act like it’s a 20th century or 21st century thing. But really, if you think about it, um… (pause) George Whitfield had a platform, he was preaching to all these people. Charles Spurgeon, going even farther back, uh… Augustine had a platform of some kind. Martin Luther, John Calvin… even, look, the Apostle Paul had a platform with the churches.

**JR:** Yeah, but I do think we need to make a distinction between… you're describing people who are tending to their business, which is not platform-building, right? They had business they were tending to. You might make a difference case, but it seems to me that St. Augustine was not in the business of platform building. He was in the business fo preaching, teaching, writing. And I do run across a lot of people who talk about, “Here’s how you build your platform,” and I don’t — I mean, I don’t think — Paul had a platform, but it wasn’t because he was a platform builder.

**DD:** That is a great point. That’s a great point. You know… like, Augustine and John Calvin and Luther didn’t start out to say, “How can I be a thing? How can I build a platform?”

**JR:** Yeah.

**DD:** Now, God expanded that, and then what the question is… I think that is the difference. Am I trying to be famous just for being famous, or do I have good work that I’m tending to? And I think this is what’s really the separator. I’m really grateful, for instance, that I came of age before social media, so that I can work on my craft and hone mac raft before anybody was reading it, thankfully. And, you know, I think of the temptations now for someone who comes out of seminary, and you’ve already got a Twitter following, and you try to let your platform get ahead of your gifting in the sense of like… there’s a perverse incentive to be outrageous or seen as something that you’re not, all these things. So think that is a great point. Where you tend to your gifts and see what the Lord does with it.

And then I think there’s another conversation of — and this is really what gets at the heart of the book. Now that I have a platform of some kind, whether I’m the pastor of a church, or I’m a Bible teacher, or I’m an author… how do I steward that? And do I understand that… you know, I think James 3 really gets to the heart of this. That those of you have been called to be a teacher understand the weight and gravity of that. And sometimes I think when we go online and — especially people with a lot of followers and a lot of people reading what they say — do they understand that we’re in public? That a Bible teacher or someone who has a big following, that everything you say has weight? And do we carefully measure that, and do we steward that well? I think sometimes we get a little fast and loose with our words online, and people who have big platforms, you could lead people astray, you lead people to behaviors that are unhealthy. So I think those are things we need to really consider.

**JR:** Yeah. Um, the… (pause) It seems to me there is a real disconnect between… (pause) Like, when I think about my work as a writer, what I bring to the world is well thought out — I mean, hopefully — well thought, something I’ve worked on, thought hard about, crafted, polished, and then, here it is. And that in some ways is so antithetical to the idea of the hot take for instance. The idea that something happened this morning, and I’m gonna be the first person to say something clever about it. And I, you know, it’s hard to sort of strike a balance between people are always talking about the importance of — and we’re talking about platform-building — the importance of being involved on social media. But social media, in some ways, is so different from what the hard work of writing has always been.

Um, and… (pause) I wanna talk about hot takes for a minute. (laughs) Cause I know you use that phrase a few times, and it might be helpful — when you use the word “hot take,” what do you mean?

**DD:** That’s a good question. Using that word, knowing that I’m guilty of doing hot takes you know, I think it’s kind of a loose term. “Here’s my take on the latest news story.” I’ve gotta push it out there, whether it’s an article or blog or a tweet. I think, pejoratively, it’s kind of used for people who just have a take on something, an opinion on something that might not be fully formed and they haven’t got all the facts. There’s a temptation right now to speak quickly, and I spend a lot of time in the book just talking about how they need to slow down and get the story before we go crazy on it.

**JR:** What is the motivation for hot takes?

**DD:** I just think there’s this pressure that we feel we have that we have to speak out on everything all the time right now. And I even see this, like, people will tweet, “Pastors are silent on this issue.” And I’m like, are they really? Or are they just not tweeting? You know, they could be talking to their elder board at this moment, they could be counseling someone… they could be conducing a funeral at this very moment. And this idea that you have to be as mad as I am at the same issue, at the same time, on the same medium. It’s just weird and something that didn’t exist 15 years ago. Like, 15 years ago, I didn’t care about what a pastor at a medium sized church 3 states away from me thought about some issue. But now there’s that pressure. So I think sometimes we feel that pressure to kind of do that.

And some people are more equipped to comment on things than others. Some people have thought through things. I think the admonition is to really… even as someone who writes op-eds and who tweets about news stories, is to make sure what is the story here? Do we have the full details? And am I the person who should be speaking about it?

**JR:** Mmhm. How many times a day do you send out a tweet?

**DD:** Uh… I probably tweet less than I used to, but I tweet quite frequently. Maybe 8-10 times a day perhaps?

**JR:** Uh huh.

**DD:** About a range of things. I’m not saying that’s a good model, that’s just where I’m at. I’ve probably used that medium more than Facebook for one reason or another.

**JR:** Uh huh. I think I need to change my Twitter bio to say, “You’re gonna be sorely disappointed.”

**DD:** (chuckles) Yeah!

**JR:** Follow if you want to, but there’s not gonna be much happening here.

**DD:** Yeah.

**JR:** And in large part, for the reasons you’re discussing. I feel like my product is not… you know… where my gifting lie is not being wise quickly! (laughs) Hopefully being wise slowly. Whatever I’m being, I know it’s slowly. It’s not quick.

**DD:** Yeah, and I think that’s good, and everyone needs to know their gifts. And honestly, I mean, I like Twitter. Twitter’s a way that you can get, you know… I think Twitter is… more influencers, leaders, more elite than like… Facebook is more of the masses, if you will. But Twitter, you can get it certain people who can amplify your message, so I enjoy it. But I do think we have to recognize that, you know, it can take away from doing the longer work that’s better, right/ The podcast, the longford article, the kind of deeper work that might be more satisfying and a better way to do things. I also think we need to understand that it’s not real life.

**JR:** Yeah!

**DD:** I like using Twitter, probably too much, but… like my church, I’ll bet my church here in suburban Nashville, maybe 10% are on Twitter. So the things that are important to a certain subset of people… it’s amazing how the conversations are different when you’re on the ground. So we just have to know that and not be shaped and catechized by one medium’s conversation.

**JR:** Yeah, that’s a great point. You use the phrase “information discipline.” What do you mean by that phrase?

**DD:** Well, I think we need to… there’s a couple things I’m thinking about here. One is that we need to diversify our sources of information across the ideological spectrum so that we’re not being shaped by one side’s narrative. We live in a time where news is wildly deregulated, for good and bad. So even news, we have to be wise about where our sources are and get it from a variety of places.

I think we should read widely. Read people who disagree with us, read people who challenge us. And then I also think information discipline means we don’t have to know everything. I think there’s a difference between an insatiable curiosity for knowledge that God give human beings that you see commended in proverbs, the search for wisdom and knowledge. There’s a difference between that and the kind of endless accumulation fo facts and tidbits that aren’t really useful.

You know, Nicholas Carr talks about this in *The Shallows*, that we know more information, but we may actually know less. And that’s what I think information discipline is. It’s a hard struggle. I talk in there about my own struggles with when I’m bored or I’m sleepless, just kind of that little phone being that portal to, hey, I can read another article, I can search another thing, and I’ve been really backing away from that. I think that’s important.

**JR:** Yeah, and it feels like you are learning or growing or… it often does, when you’re consuming more and more information. And of course, consuming information is such an important part of being a writer for instance. But I also think that’s a dangerous whirlhole, where you can get in that whirlhole and not get back in the stream of work. Reading another article is so much easier than putting words on the page. And you can always justify with, “Well, I need to do a little more research.”

You know, there are so many parts of the writing process, and because the idea of writing is so comprehensive… staring out the window is part of the writing process sometimes. And yet, it’s not writing. At some point, we have to flip that switch from consumption to production. I can definitely say I need to stare out the window for part of the day, but if I’m staring out the window for the whole day, I’m not pursuing my calling. And if I keep reading another article and calling it research, I can certainly… if my goal in life is to justify my behavior, I can justify that. Nobody can say whether I need to read another article or not. but at some point I’ve got to quit reading articles and produce.

And that’s what’s so… that’s what I struggle with so much, with the fact that I’ve got the Internet on my computer at my desk. It’s like I can — of course it’s necessary. I can’t just shut it off. And yet, I just disappear into this black hole for hours at a time.

**DD:** Yeah, that’s so true. And I think, you know, it’s um… there’s a tension there right? I have the same tension. On the one hand, I tell writers all the time, and I have to tell myself with every book project, that part of the writing process is your’e researching or reading. If you’re not filling yourself and filling that creative well with reading, researching… even reading outside of the topic you’re writing. If you don’t feed that well, I know for myself I can’t create well. This is part of what it means to be humans and not God. God is the font of all knowing. God doesn’t have to research and learn and grow. He’s God.

We human, so we are not God, and we’re human and finite, and there’s a constant need — that’s why the Bible says “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Like, the quest for wisdom and knowledge is an acknowledgement of our weakness. It’s an acknowledgment that we’re not God. Every time we read a book, every time you read an article, every time you hear a lecture, your’e actually tacitly acknowledging that you’re not God and you’re not all-knowing. So that’s a good thing.

At the same time, you hit on it that we can’t just always be consuming. We have to be creating. This is also part of being an image bearer. That we don’t just consume creation. We cultivate it. We till it. We create new things. This is how we obey God and obey the creation mandate. So there’s that constant tension there. And I think this is true even if you’re not a writer like me and you, you’re not creating books. Whatever you are in your field, you know, there’s always an intake, but there’s always an output. There’s always consumption and there’s alleys creation. And that tension is important to maintain. We can get to a place where we’re only consuming and we’re not creating.

Social media and the Internet can feed that temptation, right? I’m sitting at my desk and the Internet’s just there, Twitter’s just there. This is actually the great lie sometimes that our phones teach us, and I mention this in the book. I think I got this from Jen Michel that it goes back to the original lie of the Garden that we can be all knowing.

**JR:** Yeah…

**DD:** Our phones give us this sense… part of the reason we get all twitchy and weird when we don’t have our phones — at least I do — is that you feel like you’re out fo control. I had a whole day last year where my phone… the data plan wasn’t working so all I had was wi-fi? (laughs) So there were long stretches where I’m going between work and home where I couldn’t do my maps, I couldn’t order stuff, I couldn’t make phone calls, I couldn’t look up things. And the phone gives you the sense that you’re God, that you’re invincible. Like, as long as I have this portal, I can do anything! I can order stuff, I can have it delivered, I can order food, I can call people, I can text people, I can broadcast, I can do all that. I think we have to avoid that.

And I think even secular people are getting to this without getting into the theology of it. It’s what Nicholas Carr is saying, that there’s a endless information gathering that is not actual learning and growing, right? There’s this ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of truth as Paul says in Corinthians. So that tension you described is really real, consumption and creation.

**JR:** It’s so funny that you said last year there’s this day that I didn’t have a data plan. There’s also decades that you didn’t have a data plan! (laughs) Our brains are just… rewired. I think they in some pretty literal way have been rewired by these devices. And I loved something… have you read Deep Work by Cal Newport?

**DD:** I’ve read portions of it and I’ve read enough people who have read it, so I feel like I’ve read it?

**JR:** That’s such a great book, and I think one thing he says is don’t take a break from the Internet to do your work. Take a break from your work… think of work as the normative case, and think of the Internet as the not normative case. Which I think is a helpful way to talk about it, but I haven’t done a great job of implementing it.

**DD:** It’s hard to do. And I talk about the FOMO, the fear of missing out. That to me is what drives a lot of it, at least to me. Even while I’m on this podcast, I’m tempted to pull out my phone and check Twitter. Why? Not cause I’m expecting any important news! It’s because I’m worried that in the few minutes that we’re here, something big happened and I missed it and I didn’t know about it. And that’s really a perverse thing, this idea that I can be all knowing. There’ a good and healthy sort of innocence when there’s a lot of things going on in the world that we don’t know about.

**JR:** Sure!

**DD:** Like you said, you know… I’m 42. All my growing up years and all my high school years — thankfully! — into my college years… there were no data plans, there were no smart phones. I didn’t know if a person in Toledo, Ohio went into a store, for instance, without a mask.

**JR:** Yeah.

**DD:** But now someone videos it and it’s like, did you see this latest thing? I didn't know if one of the Kardashians did something.

**JR:** Yeah.

**DD:** You know, and it was okay! There’s a good innocence of not knowing something, but man, it’s hard to discipline ourselves to put things away and just be present.

**JR:** Yeah. You made a distinction that I thought was really helpful, and then we kind of moved on, but I wanna circle back around for just a minute. When you said that there’s a kind of learning that’s recognizing our finitude, it’s a humble approach of saying, I don’t know everything, therefore teach me. As opposed to — and you were paraphrasing Jen Michel — the idea that the Internet says to us, you can know everything like God knows everything. This was the very first temptation in the Garden, the first case of FOMO ever. The serpent saying, I think you might be missing… there’s stuff going on that you don’t know about. And I think that’s a really… I don't know how to make sure that one stays in that position of humility in learning and reading instead of aspiring to godlikeness, but it’s a helpful distinction.

**DD:** Yeah, and I think some of it is involved in… the thirst for knowledge and the curiosity that drives our FOMO, I think is good and God-given, right? I mean, the bible talks about the unsearchable riches of God, this idea that there’s this unsearchable storehouse of things to know is good. I think what gets perverted is our motivations and even the directions where we’re directing our curiosity.

So, if the motivation is I don’t want to be caught not knowing stuff so in a conversation I can, you know, I can appear to be all knowing. And I think the direction of our curiosity can be perverted in the sense of like knowing everything in politics, or every development, or everything in the entertainment world, or every new thing is kind of junk food knowledge as opposed to the curiosity of reading a book. You know, books and longford articles and podcasts are more filtered through a tedious process and a little bit richer kind of things. So we can’t escape the tidbits of information and scrolling Facebook and Twitter and what’s going on in the world. Not always wrong and bad. We all do that. But that’s kind of like snack food, I feel like, versus the real hearty meal of better sources of information.

And we always feel better too, right? I just finished reading a biography of William Jennings Bryan, you know, who was a fascinating figure in the 20th entry. And he’s been dead for, I don’t know, 120 years, 100 years I think, and has nothing to do with what’s going on today. The book was maybe published 10 years ago. So none of that is in the news or hot takes or any of that stuff, but it was such a thorough and wonderful, rich feast to read that book. So things like that.

Or when I do things like sit down and read my Bible, I’m amazed with how my phone competes with my Bible reading, where it’s like I’m reading a timeless passage of Scripture, but I”m like… but I could check Twitter and see what stupid thing is going on over here.

**JR:** So there’s a kind of curiosity that says I wanna know what it’s like to be somebody else, which is a fundamental principle of love, right? I can love my neighbor if I have a better sense of what it’s like to be somebody besides me. There’s a kind of curiosity, kind of learning that keeps me from folding in on myself. And then there’s the — as I’m sure you know, for much of church history, curiosity — I guess the Latin was *curiositas* — was spoken of as a sin, a form of greed. I’m greedy for information, for self-aggrandizement, for whatever reason. And I think that probably gets back to the distinction we were talking about a minute ago. Am I curious as a way of getting outside myself, loving other people, not in a self-aggrandizing way, or is this just plain greed for information and knowledge?

**DD:** Yeah, that’s a great point. And Paul gets at that, right? Where Paul on the one hand is warning in his letters don’t be a busybody, don’t be a tale-bearer, don’t get down in the weeds of endless, stupid controversies? But at the same time Paul is saying over and over again throughout his letters about reading and studying. Like, I don’t think we notice that enough, but Paul is assuming a follower of Jesus is going to be endlessly reading and studying and learning. And Paul, at the end of his life, is about to be executed by Nero is like, “Can somebody bring me some books?” Paul who was trained by Gamaliel, who was one of the most learned and wise people, at the end of his life is saying, “Guys, I need my books.” Like… so you see that difference. I get nervous about people who are not curious and wanting to learn, whether it’s reading or documentaries or however you process information, but I also get nervous about people who always want to be on top of the latest controversy. I think both of those things can be unhealthy.

**JR:** Wow, you using the word busybody is so helpful. it’s like it makes us a whole world of busybodies. As you said, the guy who goes into the store in Toledo without a mask… well, to the people in the store in Toledo, that’s their business, but it’s not my business.

**DD:** Yeah.

**JR:** All these technologies make it my business. And also give me a way to not tend to the business I actually have here that is my business. Okay. Wow. We are running low on time, so I’m gonna skip to the question I always end with, and that is who are the writers who make you want to write, Dan Darling?

**DD:** Oh man, that’s such a great question, and I could do a whole podcast on this. I mean… I’ll just say this. Tim Keller has influenced my thinking almost more than any pastor or theologian. I’ve read almost all his stuff. Uhh… people like him. Someone who is an absolute wordsmith, who every book he writes is an absolute delight to read, is Phillip Yancey.

**JR:** Uh huh.

**DD:** When I was coming of age and just like, man… the way he crafts words and the way he explores ideas, he’s always been that way. I love reading Peggy Noonan. Peggy Noonan has been a wordsmith her whole life, and every time there’s an epic moment in American history, I feel like she gets it in a way that’s hard for other people to do it, in terms of the way she writes and crafts.

Um, man, who else could I talk about here? I like Mark Buchanan’s work, a writer out of Canada. I also sometimes like — I love history, so I read — I’m not a historian but I love history. So anything by people like Ron Chernow or Jon Meacham or David McCullough, Doris Kearns Goodwin, any of those folks, is fantastic. Gosh, who else? You know, I’ll tell you I do like Jen Michel’s work. She’s a great writer.

**JR:** Oh yeah, she really is.

**DD:** She’s such an incredible wordsmith.

**JR:** Yeah, she did an episode of this podcast, and I was just wowed by her.

**DD:** There’s several of those, and I could go on. I just love reading good writing, as I’m sure you do.

**JR:** Yeah. It’s like getting an extra life, isn’t it? I’ve got the life I’m living here, and I can read this book and get a little extra life.

**DD:** And I do want to say this too, and I meant to say this when I said this about platform. Is that writing books, podcasts, all this work… this is a way of serving the body of Christ, even people we don’t know. Think about the ways that you and I have been changed and blessed because we picked up a gook in a bookstore, someone recommended something, by someone we don’t know and probably will never meet. That person was willing to put their gifts out there and be vulnerable and put their stuff out there, not knowing who was going to read it. And someone over here gets it and their life is changed. That’s what I think should motivate us as writers. God has given me this and I don’t know where it’s gonna go, and who knows how it will help or who it will stir that I may never meet?

**JR:** Yeah. Agreed.

(THEME MUSIC FADES UP)

**JR:** Well, Dan Darling, thanks so much for being on the podcast, and I hope we can talk again soon!

**DD:** Yes, absolutely! Thank you, Jonathan!

**DREW MILLER:** The Rabbit Room is partnered with Lipscomb University to make this podcast possible. Lipscomb has graciously given us access to their recording studio in the Center for Entertainment and Arts Building. We’re so grateful for their sponsorship, their encouragement, and the good work they do in Nashville.

Special shout-out as well to Jess Ray for letting us use her song “Too Good” as part of this podcast. Visit jessraymusic.com to hear more of her beautiful songs.

**JR:** The Habit Membership is a library of resources for writers by me, Jonathan Rogers. More importantly, The Habit is a hub of community where like-minded writers gather to discuss their work and give each other a little more courage. Find out more at TheHabit.co.

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(THEME MUSIC OUT)

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