

Freedom, Faith and Forming the Next Generation

Featuring Scott Walker

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TRANSCRIPT

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Welcome back to the Wisdom and Influence podcast here at Cornerstone University. I am delighted to have a very special guest today, Governor Scott Walker. He leads Young America's Foundation, which trains the next generation of conservative leaders and hosts more conservative lectures on college campuses than any other organization in America. Before that, he spent eight years as the 45th governor of Wisconsin from 2011 to 2019, where he took on entrenched interests and won three statewide elections in four years, including becoming the first governor in American history to survive a recall. And his public service started young. Elected to the Wisconsin Assembly in his 20s, then Milwaukee County Executive, a path he traces back to a high school leadership program that gave him the bug for it. He's a pastor's son, raised in Delavan, Wisconsin, an Eagle Scout. He's been married to his wife, Tonette, for more than 30 years. Governor Walker, thank you so much for being with us on the podcast.

Scott Walker: My pleasure. Great to be with you.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You know, when I heard that it started in high school, talk with us a lot about that, because the next generation of leaders in this country, how we educate them and train them, that wonderful work you do at Young America's Foundation now. High school, those years are formative and absolutely critical for our future. Tell us a little about how it began.

Scott Walker: Yeah, it's amazing. In fact, college, high school, and now even middle school students we work with at Young America's Foundation for precisely that reason. But for me personally, I went to a program called — the American Legion has every year, still has it now — called Boys State, and then I went to Boys Nation. There's a Girls State and Girls Nation as well, for high schoolers going into your senior year. And I always loved history. So as a natural, one of my teachers encouraged me to go to this program, 'cause even when I was little, I was thinking about this year in particular. You know, 50 years ago, I was a young kid, and I loved our founders. I was so inspired by the bicentennial. Again, I was just eight years old, and I loved our founders. Years later when I went to Independence Hall in Philadelphia, I was like going to the Justice League. These were my superheroes. That's right. You know? Bigger than life.

And so I loved studying about the founders, what they did, how they did it. And then all throughout high school, I always was really intrigued by history, did well in history, loved that, but thought I'd go into business. But that summer, coming out to Washington, DC, not just seeing the sights — we went to the

White House, the Capitol, the monuments — but the people who put the program on, still today, are typically veterans through the American Legion program. I was just so moved by their passion about the sacrifices — not that they made, they certainly did — but of so many of them telling the stories of those that were lost. Colleagues, particularly one Bob Turner was a Vietnam veteran that was serving in my section, and we went to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The wall itself was just a couple years old back in the '80s, and I was so moved to see him touching the names of men he served with, and it was just a sense of a calling.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah. You know, you mentioned the founders, Governor. So my family and I, we immigrated to the States 45 years ago from Colombia, South America. And came in 1980. Three months later, Ronald Reagan was inaugurated. My father — I remember watching TV — my dad said to me, "What you're watching is historical. Pay attention to it." And so I'm a nine-year-old boy watching this. And so I remember even then, within a few months, just falling in love with America and the founders as a kid. And the first time I went to the National Archives, right, and they had the incredible fresco painting. And they're like demi-gods. I mean, even when I walked in, I thought, "This is incredible." So I want to talk with you about this, because it's so important and essential. And I find so many natural-born Americans who don't care, or hate them, want to destroy the legacy. And yet as we celebrate the super centennial, as Eric Metaxas calls it, the founders and the founding generation is absolutely essential for our future. So talk with us a little bit about why. And you're a believer, a man of faith, Christian faith. This is so important. Even, and I see so many Christians at times who are just, they know what to do.

Scott Walker: Right. Well, one, and it's — that's why I love this year. Our whole focus at Young America's Foundation was freedom at 250. Not at 250, not at America 250, but freedom. Because, and you know it, at so many colleges and universities across America, they're just feeding our young people just horrible things. Not just indoctrination — hatred against Christians, hatred against conservatives, hatred against people who actually believe in American values. And in particular, they love to point to the Constitution as some sort of a failed compromise, claiming that was the founding of our country.

What they forget — you mentioned the archives — is the Constitution was the what. The why, the why was the promise made on July 4th, 1776. That is the promise of America, that all of us, no matter who we are or what we look like, where we come from, all of us are created equal. That God, our creator — God, not the government — endows us with the rights, not the least of which were life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, which by the way, most people don't know, at the time Thomas Jefferson wrote those words, the intent with the pursuit of happiness was really about serving others. It wasn't finding joy and indulging.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Finding yourself, right?

Scott Walker: Exactly. It was serving others. Exactly what comes from a Judeo-Christian mindset. And that it really is incumbent upon — for government that to succeed, it has to have the consent of the governed. Though that promise is monumental. And yeah, were there compromises made later with the Constitution? Initially, yes, but our founders were smart enough to give us the tools, albeit difficult, to make improvements, like the 13th, 14th, 15th, 19th Amendments that put us on the path towards a more perfect nation. It's why, like your family did, every year there's more than a million people who legally immigrate to America, four times more than any other country in the world.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: In the world.

Scott Walker: And so when people talk about the hatred for America, it... and sadly we see pride in America amongst young people at the lowest level it's ever been. I look at that as an opportunity. Because proficiency in American history is also at the lowest level, and what that tells me is in our

schools — not just our colleges and universities, but our high schools, our middle schools — we're not doing enough to teach the truth. And I don't mean whitewashing, but everything about America. The good, the bad, and the ugly. And it's one of the last thing — I get passionate about this, so sorry if I'm rambling on — but the other interesting thing: I just literally a little bit ago was introduced Dr. Art Laffer, one of our speakers who's coming up at our conference, is doctor — it's fun to call him this 'cause he's younger than my kids — Dr. Daniel DiMartino. Daniel, I think he's talked for us on campus more than 50 times. He's not only got a doctorate in economics from Columbia, maybe the only conservative there. He came from Venezuela. So he tells the story of how his grandfather came to that country in the '50s when it was one of the most prosperous countries in the world. It was that way even a few decades ago. Democratic socialism ruined that country, literally ruined it, and now it has one of the biggest refugee crises in the world, including into Colombia and other surrounding countries.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Which by the way, you mentioned that date, 1980. Four years later, Rodrigo Sanabria came and spent a year with us in Bogotá, Colombia, and I just talked to him last week on WhatsApp.

Scott Walker: No kidding. Oh.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah, and he loves America. In fact, one of my great joys was when I took this job, a few years back, when we had Michael Reagan, Ronald Reagan's son —

Scott Walker: and Ashley Reagan, Michael's daughter, so the president's granddaughter, come and speak at one of our events.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Fantastic.

Scott Walker: I brought Rodrigo and his wife and his two sons from Colombia. They spent a week with us, but I introduced them to the Reagan family. And he loved it because he remembered how awesome Ronald Reagan was.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Well, I became a naturalized citizen in '19.

Scott Walker: Wow.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: So, you know, you hit a big battery of questions in an interview with the Immigration and Naturalization Service back then. That was the name. And then you went and you said the pledge, and it was beautiful. People were crying, and the room was full of other immigrants. They gave you a flag, a copy of the US Constitution, and you did the oath. A beautiful moment. But prior to that, when the battery of test questions were given in the interview, one of the questions they asked you was, "Have you ever belonged to the Communist Party?"

Scott Walker: Oh, yeah. Right?

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah. Have you ever belonged to the Nazi Party? I went, "No, these are bad things." Right. Now, a third of the country seems to suggest that, mm, maybe it's not that bad. What has happened for this, for a third to be sympathetic, as someone said, to the warm, quote unquote, "warm embrace of socialism"?

Scott Walker: Oh. It is... Well, I think part of it, unfortunately, is you see Marxism over its history around the world is really ultimately about power. It's why a few years back, you look at the second wave of the BLM movement, these were Marxist-trained organizers. This was not by accident. This was really not about race. This is about using leverage to create division to try and amass power, to pit one group of Americans versus the other. And so one of the things I say to students we work with all the time is, as conservatives, we shouldn't be countering with our own anger. We should be countering with love.

We love America. We understand that the joy of this — one of the great benefits of America is it doesn't matter, Black or white, rich or poor, young or old, whether you were born here or you legally came here from somewhere else, the beauty of America is everyone has a shot. The freedom and opportunity are available to every person in this country.

And I think what has happened — and again, it's why I'm an optimist even in light of this negative news about pride being down, about proficiency in history being down — I look at that and say, well, that's because the rest of us, not these kids, but those of us who are older as a group, not just you and I individually, we've failed these young people. We have failed to say they must know American history. You mentioned that test. One of the things I would love to do is do a national campaign with as many allies as we can to make sure that every child in America who graduates from any high school in this country has to pass the same test that you and your family took. Because I have found some of the most passionate Americans are people who came here particularly from countries where they were either socialist or communist, because they knew how oppressive those regimes were. They came to America. They love America. They adopted all of our principles and our components without giving up each of our individual — you know, that's the beauty of *E pluribus unum*, out of many are one. You don't have to give up your ethnicity. You don't have to give up your heritage. But you come together with those shared American values. I think one of the greatest failures that we've done as a country is not demand that every student in America has to learn those things. Not necessarily everyone has to be a conservative, although I think the more that know the truth, the more likely they are. But I think just knowing true basic American history, and I would add to that, the history of the world. Because as you and I know, there's never been an example of a communist or even a democratic socialist nation that's prevailed.

What Maduro did is unconscionable, but it came about because of — not Chavez — Hugo Chavez. Cesar Chavez is a whole nother issue. But Hugo Chavez, freely elected in 1999 as a democratic socialist in Venezuela. And not long after he took power, what happened? Started imprisoning his political opponents. He started shutting down parts of the media, and worst of all, from an economic standpoint, had the government start taking over things like the oil industry and others. And today, a country that's blessed with abundance has now got people, even working people, picking through the garbage to find food.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: We don't want that in America. Yeah. So, you know, let's talk about the education piece. I mean, middle school, K-12, colleges, and universities, that's my field, my work. But I think you're right. I think you — for decades this has been happening. It's insidious and destructive, and here we are. Right. So let's talk about your thoughts, and how do we take that back? How do we turn that? You know, at Cornerstone we started something, a brand-new core curriculum we're launching this fall, and it's based on three pillars. We call it the Cornerstone Core. The first one's called the Beauty of Christianity. The second pillar is the Wisdom of the American Experience. And the third one is called Market Intelligence. But on the — we wanted to tell our students, "Look, Christianity is beautiful. It's not just a set of doctrines. There's a beauty to God and what he has done, and we need you to understand and communicate that. Beauty's powerful." And then the Wisdom of the American Experience, we developed something called the Cornerstone Great Works Canon of the American Experience. So our students have 350 foundational texts. So we want to roll that out for the country if we could. We think it's absolutely essential to read the Declaration, the Constitution, the Federalist Papers, the speeches of Lincoln and the Douglass debates, all these wonderful things to have a sense of the fundamental questions. So how do we do that in high schools with teacher unions? How do we do that, you know, in small schools? What are your thoughts? Because I think it's absolutely pivotal to turn that and start there.

Scott Walker: I agree. Twofold. On your first two — all three parts agree — but the first two parts of the overall curriculum you're talking about, on the part of how do we get that out there, I... it's a prime example. As much as people think about the White House and the US Capitol, all of which are important, it's in your state houses where it really makes a difference. State houses. And I don't think it's unrealistic to say not only that students who graduate from high school, any high school in a given state, should have to pass the same test. I think in preparation for that, just as people who've come here legally to immigrate to America look at, study for that test, prepare for that test, to do the very things — to talk about the Declaration, to talk about the Constitution, to talk about the Federalist Papers, Gettysburg Address, the letter from Birmingham Jail. I mean, there's just so many documents that are core to the founding of this country.

Now, the beauty of that is, you know, you'll get people protesting. I remember a similar idea was brought up in North Carolina, and almost 700 tenured professors at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill said, "That's outrageous." Well, why did they say that? Nobody said what you had to say about those documents, just that the students had to read them. I think, personally, I think the reason a lot of those radical — and not just leftist politically, but people who hate America — why they didn't want that is they don't want students to read the Declaration. You read the Declaration, you're like, "Wow. Yeah. That's powerful." You read what Lincoln said at Gettysburg, in a speech that he thought nobody was gonna remember. Powerful. You look at the things that shape this country, and then you start to understand the context. Even those who had faults. You know, when people talk even about the Constitution, they'll talk about many of the personal faults of the founders, and I'm like, "Yeah, we all have faults." There's only one guy I'm aware of in the last couple thousand years who's walked on earth who hasn't had a fault, and he's been gone for a while, at least physically.

And so I just think that's one of those where I think it's realistic to go to anybody, either in office as governor or running for governor, anybody running for the state legislature, and say, "How about it? Let's pass a law. Here's a — " you can, we can debate which one should be on that list, but it's a given: the Declaration, the Constitution. You can start going down the list from there. But let's just say every school's gotta have at least one course where the students read these documents. It doesn't dictate what you have to, you know, how you have to teach about them, just that they have to read it. Get them right to the source, 'cause so far they've been hidden.

And then, I think on your first point, to me, love for Jesus — I remember we were traveling once and we were listening to one of our favorite ministers, and right before he got up to give the sermon, he was talking about they had a huge vacation Bible school, and he thanked all the volunteers. At the end he said, "More than just volunteering and doing this," he said, "I really want to thank all the volunteers who helped these children learn to love Jesus." And I said to my staff afterwards — I showed that story — and one, just personally, I want to in my own way try to help people learn to love Jesus. Not just go to church, not be religious, but learn to love Jesus. Well, there's a parallel, God and country. Help people learn to love America. It's not come to more conferences. It's not take more classes. All those are tools, but it is in the essence, we want to help more people learn to love Jesus and learn to love America. And if we do that, the world's gonna be far better.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Governor, when we think about the founders, one of the things that I always think about — it's a child seeing Washington crossing the Potomac, and you read these incredible stories of courage amid so many things that could have gone wrong. These real courageous individuals pledging their sacred honor. And I want to talk with you about how you've developed that moral courage in your life, and how do we do that with how you're doing it at the Young America's Foundation with students. How do we do that in our country? Because there are a lot of good people who believe these things, but

are silent. Are afraid, and it takes moral courage. It takes that spine. So how did that come about in your life, and continues to? How do we replicate that in others and help them?

Scott Walker: Yeah, that's a great question. Two parts. So first personally, not unexpectedly, good role models. My parents — my dad was a pastor, my mom a bookkeeper, but who, I think to this day I've never heard say an ill word of another person, who just always loved people, loved on people, whether it was making cookies, sending cards, sharing pictures, reaching out when they were down and out, just sharing that love and compassion. Certainly in my own school, some of my teachers — I think about the World War I and World War II veteran. Talk about amazing. He was in two world wars, Claire Condon. Mr. Con was our assistant scoutmaster, lived down the road from me. Just what a wonderful guy, would take us scouts out to put flags up on the tombs of all the fallen every Memorial Day and Veterans Day and things like that.

And I think for me personally, all that was great, but both as a child, those influences, but then throughout my life it's just been, you know, if I start and end my day on my knees in prayer with God, the rest works itself out. Courage isn't the absence of fear. It's, you know, God giving you the strength to overcome your fears. A lot of times people think, "Oh, courageous, you have to be, you know, no fear." It's like, no, no, no. The Bible's filled with stories of people who are like, "Not me, God. I don't want to do this." And I've had plenty of times like that myself. But if you're open to God's will, God always — he never fails — always gives you the strength.

The other part beyond just that personal side, to your question, actually it's perfect with the story about Washington. The other day we were at George Washington's Mount Vernon. We had about 1,000 folks there. This gigantic — it's a college conference in this case. We do high school and middle schools, I mentioned, but college students. And I told them the story. I put up the painting of Washington crossing the river there. And I said, "You know, most people see that and you think of glory." And it was a wonderful win, but most people don't know the context of that story. So that's Christmas night and the next morning of 1776. So we think of July 4th. We declare independence. Later that summer into the fall, we all but end the war. We almost are annihilated. Washington ends up with less than about 4,000 starving troops, and they hightail out of New York after they'd been annihilated. They make it across the river and they camp out. And then he realizes if they wait till the spring, the enemy forces are gonna wipe them out.

And so he makes what some might consider to be a desperate move. He decides on Christmas Day to go across a river with people, some of who don't even have shoes on, who are starving, who are tired, who are exhausted, at wit's end, and they make a surprise attack on Trenton in the middle of the night. Thankfully, the Hessians that were hired to take guard of that place had been drinking and celebrating for Christmas, never dreaming someone would attack. And so that attack was probably the most decisive battle of the War for Independence. And so you think of that as a great master move by Washington. It was. But a couple days later at the end of the year, so December 31st, 1776, just days later, all the enlistments of those soldiers were up. They were tired. They were worn out. They're exhausted. They just wanted to go home. And Washington got up on his horse and asked them to re-enlist, and not one of them said yes.

And so he rode away, and I believe God's providence, was inspired to turn around and come back and make a second plea, impassioned as it was. And he asked them, just give him one more month to fight for liberty. And over two-thirds of them said yes, and of course the rest is history. But I look at that, to your question, and I told the students this the other night. When I looked at those 1,000-plus faces, and I look at others like them across the country, I see what Washington saw with his troops as they crossed the river. I don't see tired and worn out and intimidated. I see an opportunity and say, "We have the

truth on our side, but we need to understand that you can't give up the fight." If Washington had given up the fight, which anybody practically could have — that would've been a logical thing. Say, "There's no way we can win this battle." No, he found a way. He didn't give up the fight.

The other thing I'd add to that, particularly for young people, is you're never too young to fight for freedom. On the day we founded our nation 250 years ago, James Monroe, who ended up being the fifth president, was 18. Alexander Hamilton, we all hear about with the musical, the guy who wrote most of the Federalist Papers and the first Secretary of the Treasury, was 21. James Madison, the guy who wrote the US Constitution primarily, ended up being president in his own right, he was 25. And the guy who wrote the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, was 33. That tells me you're never too young to fight for freedom.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You know, Governor, you've had an incredible and distinguished career in public service, and thank you for all you've done.

Scott Walker: My pleasure.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: And I want to talk with you about developing that, and I know so many believers who really have mixed feelings about public service, about being involved. Who say, you know, "The minute you do, your hands get dirty and you shouldn't." And they trace this all the way back to maybe Augustine and the City of God and all those questions. And yet I think if you remain silent, you acquiesce in what will happen. So if you can speak to those of our public who are people of faith, we believe in Jesus, we follow him, but we just can't get involved. I mean, I've heard this many times even from pastors who are afraid to even talk about it, about pro-life issues. It's political, but it's not. So how do we... Because in Michigan, where I'm from, we've seen this. Now, I've only been there for five years, but we've seen what happens when Christians are silent.

Scott Walker: Totally. In fact, you go right to God's word. He said we're to be in the world, but not of the world. It's so powerful, right? It says you don't get consumed, don't get sucked in, don't buy into what the world wants you to be, what society wants you to be, but you can't ignore it. You can't not be there. I mean, Christ came to die. I mean, God sent his Son to Earth. He could have stayed where everything was perfect, but he sent his one and only Son to come and die for our sins 'cause he knew — if that's not a better testimony than how we've gotta be in the world but not of the world, I don't think there is a better one.

But I get it. When I was young, after I came back from Boys State and Boys Nation, I had this newfound interest in speaking and did all sorts of public events. But for a while early on, I think one of the times my father, as a pastor, was on vacation, I preached for him. We lived in a small town. Some of the other pastors said, "Oh, will you preach when I'm gone?" And did that. And so years later, I was just 25 when I felt a calling. There was an opening. I hadn't planned at that age, but I was 25 when I was first elected to the state legislature. And I remember at the time, almost exactly word for word what you just talked about — many of the folks in my father's congregation came to him and said, "We thought Scott would end up being a pastor like you." Said, "Why would he go into politics? It's a dirty thing."

And my father, I thought, had the perfect response. He said, "Well, what kind of people do we want in government?" He said, "We want God-fearing people." He said, "We should be the first ones offering to run for office." Because you want people — not just on the issues, not just those who stand for the sanctity of life, not just those who understand the importance of strong and healthy families and strengthening marriages, all those core things — not just those who understand the role of charity primarily should be that of the church and individual, not of the government. Those are all things you fundamentally want. But in the larger context — don't you want men and women of character? Don't

you want people who every day are trying to wake up and understand, "God, what is your will? What should I be doing to help the people I serve?" And I thought it was just so powerful for him to say that to the folks at his church 'cause they hadn't thought of it. We thought like many others do, "Oh, that's dirty. I don't..." Well, you don't have to conform to the way things are done.

I think increasingly we see this as young people — not just the ones we work with, but authenticity and fairness are paramount across the political spectrum with younger voters. It doesn't matter Democrat, Republican, liberal, conservative — authenticity, which is more obvious, you see something go viral, it can't be made to go viral, it happens. But fairness. So they want authentic things. They want authentic relationships. They want a sense of fairness. Now, some commandeer that for other purposes. "Oh, the rich should pay their fair share." Sounds great to some, but in reality it hasn't worked. If anything, it actually has the most negative effect on people with the least, because then those people don't invest in higher wages, more jobs, more careers, more investment. But you can have those sorts of debates. That's where it's just really, really powerful to have people who have that sense of compassion, who have empathy, and that understand that ultimately you can be courageous if you hand it over to God.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: I remember, Governor, being on a plane last year flying to Denver, and a dear friend of mine sent a text to me and said, "Charlie Kirk's been shot, and I think he's been assassinated." And I was jarred on the plane. And then when the plane landed, almost everyone in the Denver Airport that was walking around was talking about it. With people saying, "You know, I didn't like him, but that shouldn't have happened." "I never really follow him. I can't believe this happened. This shouldn't have happened." Everywhere I went. Share with us, as you travel and you speak, where are we now after that? Is this a before-Charlie, after-Charlie nation? Like, what does that look like, and where are we headed, do you think?

Scott Walker: I hope so. I pray for that. Just as an aside, I remember the same thing. Exactly where I was at, walked out. One of my sons texts me, and he told me, and then he said, "Don't watch — whatever you do, don't watch the video." My kids — Matthew, my oldest, is 10 months younger than Charlie. Both of them... Charlie was from the Chicago area, so actually we got to know him when he came up to help our recall election, close by. Both my kids did some work with him. I saw Charlie and Erica and his parents a month before the assassination. So personally, I was glad Alex told me that, because to this day, I've never watched it, 'cause I don't want to. I don't want to remember Charlie like that. I want to remember him like the guy I saw at the Cubs/Brewers game just a month before.

And ironically, like some of, many of our speakers do as well, Charlie was on a campus, not just talking. He was taking questions. And at the time he was assassinated, he was listening — really important to remember — he was listening to someone who disagreed with him. I get students all the time who ask me, you know, "What's your advice for dealing with people on campus?" I said, "Well, look at him." I read off a bunch of other speakers we have on our format who use a similar format and style. And I said, "You know, don't focus so much on owning." You know, we hear that a lot in social media, "I'm gonna own the libs." I said, "Instead, listen to your opponents. Listen to people who oppose you." One occasionally, not often, but you might actually find a little thing you might agree on and talk about that. But more importantly, most students, like most swing voters in Michigan or Wisconsin or elsewhere, are just trying to figure it out. So the audience you're really talking to is not just that person, it's all the other people watching. And most campuses, a lot of people turn out who are just curious. Number one answer is not conservative for sure, but not liberal either. Most students in college think they're moderate because they don't really know. I said, "So if you listen, it has a powerful impact because, one, you can have empathy for what they're saying, and then say, 'Well, okay, that's interesting, but here's where I think the facts are.'"

Charlie did that so well, and so I hope, particularly for those of us who consider ourselves to be conservative, for those of us who are Christian, that many more have learned by watching — not just that day, that moment, but all the videos. I mean, you're right, I saw the abundance of people who'd never even heard of him before, in some cases. I was shocked. I mean, I always knew him well. Some people never even heard of him before, but who were watching those videos, really seeing what he was talking about, but also seeing the style, the learning to emulate what he had done, and I just think that's an important part.

So that's really positive. The flip side is, sadly, we also saw, horrifically, the people who said, "Oh, I think he deserved it." "He had it coming." Or nonsense like that. I think that's eased a little bit, but just the mere fact there were people like that, and some of those are, again, in your state and mine, are some of the people who elected Democratic socialists in the primary. And beyond politics, I just hope we don't get to that point where that's the majority viewpoint, because as much as I didn't like Barack Obama or Joe Biden, I would never wish ill on them. Never. When someone jumped the gate at the White House when Barack Obama was president and I was governor, I called for the firing of the Secret Service director. I said, "It's unconscionable that someone could, even though they weren't there, thank God, could get that close to the president and for his family. It's just unconscionable." And unfortunately, there are some people that are filled with such anger. I personally think, aside from politics, there's a void.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah. You know, the lack of Christ. It's a spiritual issue. Yeah, there's a void out there.

Scott Walker: Absolutely. Yeah. 'Cause when you see — I remember I once on a plane had somebody come up to me and just scream. And I said... she started screaming. I said, "You know what? I'm gonna pray for you on this flight." And the guy with her said, "Don't you dare." And I thought after, I thought all the more reason why I'm gonna pray for them. Because again, you can even — I don't care if you even come to my face and tell me you disagree with me, but if you're screaming, there's... it's more than politics. It's more than disagreeing. There's some void there, and I think in this fallen world, particularly with — you know, social media was supposed to bring us together. Instead, it's drawn us further apart. When you particularly have young people who were told they were gonna die from COVID when they weren't, when their schools were closed down, when their jobs were shut down, when that had a devastating impact on the economy and on work ethic — there's just a lot of hurting people out there. And again, whether it's with certainly first and foremost sharing about Christ, but even with our love for America, we need to not wag our fingers, but open our arms. Tell them how much we love them, tell them how much Christ loves them, and tell them how much we love America.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You say you start your day on your knees, right? And I want to talk about the importance of a spiritual revival in our country. I was having dinner last night with a very dear friend in Virginia Beach, and he said to me, you know, "Where do you think we're headed?" And we had a long conversation, and he then talked about the importance of Jesus and the gospel for our country, and I thought, "Yes, you're absolutely right." And we've seen a move of this among young people, among college students. So share with us, not just your optimism, but your perspective, your thoughts on the need for that and how do we get there, because at the core of all this —

Scott Walker: We need a spiritual awakening. A great move of God in all of our hearts, beginning with God's people.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Right? Well, and for the heart of a revival is recognizing the void in the first place. So exactly what we just talked about.

Scott Walker: And it doesn't mean we, you know, you walk up to someone who's struggling and say, "You've got a void. Come to find — come to church with me," 'cause I think it's the other way around. It's — I've been saying this at our church. We go to — there's a couple different Elmbrook in Wisconsin, and we go to one near us in lake country, and it was a great talk with our pastor about this. We've had a wonderful tradition of missions for decades, and certainly want to continue to do that. But one of the things I encouraged as our pastor years ago was coming in new — was I said, "Help us awaken us to the idea that missions isn't just sending money or even going to trips somewhere around the world." Missions is talking to your neighbor, your coworker, your other, and just inviting them. One of the things I encouraged our church, which others have done too, was to have more events beyond just church, just the regular service. Whether it's an outdoor service, a baptism. Egg hunt, egg hunt's a good example. We invited a couple other families we knew who had kids. Our kids are now their age. They've started going to our church. We didn't — wasn't a heavy push. It was just there was a void. They wanted not only church, they wanted a place where their kids could connect with other kids. Sometimes it's as simple as that.

Other times, I think particularly a lot of young people, college age and slightly older, there's all the void we talked about. They're working, but they're not in careers they wanted. They haven't found their spouse yet. They feel like they haven't made enough money to purchase a home. They feel like things have kind of slipped away. Just inviting them to something at church or inviting them to a special program or we have a thing called No Regrets for Young Men. I mean, there's just all sorts of things like that where we can just make that invitation. You don't even have to give a full-scale testimony. Sometimes it's just as simple as saying, "Hey, would you like to come with us to this service or this program?" I think there's such a void. I've been reading a book called *Hollowed Out* about this generation, and there's just that void out there that just making that ask — you don't have to tell them there's a void there. Showing that there's people who love them, that aren't trying... again, not the wagging of the finger, but the opening the arms, making an invitation, and then giving them the time to process that. I think that's part of the revival, 'cause revival for all of us in any point in our life is realizing, "Hey, I can't do this alone."

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Just can't do it. You know, several weeks ago I had a conversation on a podcast with Gary Saul Morson. He's the Russian literature expert at Northwestern, and we were speaking about Dostoevsky and communism in Russia and all these things, and he said, "You know, one of the most important things you have to remember is that the ability to criticize — and the freedom to do so — is absolutely essential as a bulwark against this communism and democratic socialism." So I want to talk with you about freedom, liberty, freedom of speech, religious freedom, how important these things are. As you know, there have been senators in the last few years who said, to say that they come from God is like being in Iran, something akin to that. Which was shocking and jarring to hear. But the importance of freedom, the inalienable rights that we enjoy because of God's goodness to us and the declaration of this country, how important it is to protect those now, and even that — the freedom of speech. As you know, in the EU, censorship has run amok. And it's coming here, and people want it here in many ways. How do we... we have to protect it. How do we do that? How do you educate your young people at the foundation to do so?

Scott Walker: You're right. Yeah, that senator, by the way, was from the Commonwealth of Virginia, which I thought was shocking.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: I didn't want to say it. I was shocked. Right? I mean, you're thinking — the mother of presidents —

Scott Walker: Exactly — that wonderful state. Jefferson, Madison, Washington. You're thinking, oh, they must be rolling over in their graves.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yes.

Scott Walker: No, I mean, that's the core of the promise of America — the declaration, that God, not the government, grants us these rights. I mean, that's why oftentimes when we talk about America being exceptional, there's some people, oddly enough, who get offended by that. Oh, you know, we're part of a global community and we are in the church. But what they don't get is our exceptionalism isn't a birthright. It's that promise that, again, made by imperfect people, but the promise that we've been on a path towards a more perfect nation, that recognizes that God is sovereign, and recognizes it right in our founding document. You know, that God's the one who grants us these rights. I just think that that is so incredibly important when you recognize that. That's why we live in a republic, not a pure democracy. It means 100 of us can gather together and if 99 people vote to take away your right, doesn't matter. In a republic, your right is still your right, as we spell out later in the Constitution after the founding of the nation.

I just think, again, it goes back to teaching people about history, including apparently even some of our elected officials. But understanding true American — and not just American history, but as it fits in with the world. But those rights, the Bill of Rights in particular spelled out — if you don't have, you know, the freedom of speech, the freedom to speak out, if you don't have the right to protect yourself, you know, the... people say, "Oh, you know, the right to keep and bear arms, oh, is not for hunters." It's not so much about hunting. It was actually protecting you from an oppressive government. All this was about... I mean, people read not only the beginning of the Declaration, but read all the things... I mean, they spelled it out. It was like a manifesto of saying, "Here's what's wrong with the monarchy. Here's how oppressive they've become. We demand self-governance and an ability to protect these God-given rights." And so being able to protect yourself, being able to speak out, being able to freely assemble, being able to worship God, which by the way is usually misconstrued to say freedom from religion — it's freedom of religion. Meaning you and I can speak out and be practicing Christians, and somebody who wants to practice a Jewish faith or Hindu faith or others can do that as well, without saying, "No, everybody's gotta be a member of this church." But it didn't mean religious values can't be a part of who we are. It's fundamental. So those things, I just think, with all these challenges we face, it just goes back to transparency of giving anyone, but particularly young people, the ability to know what was behind the founding of this country. What do these documents mean?

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: It's why what you're doing is so powerful. We need to encourage others to do. Let young people read the actual documents that are the core of not just the founding, but of the evolution of this great nation, and it's powerful when you do. You know, I'm always captivated by this — the move, you know, we talked about Black Lives Matter just a few minutes ago. You brought it up. But the move away from individuals to classes. And I am mindful of that famous line, "Workers of the world unite. You've got nothing to lose but your chains." And this push toward this classism that's happening in our country now, away from God, our Creator, individuals. Personal responsibility and accountability. This continuing shift in this direction. So, share with us in your experience as governor and now in what you're doing, how has this been continuing to happen? Is it the school? Is it just everyday hardworking Americans who don't know their history well and forget it, and forget to pass it on? Is it a combination of all these things? Are there some nefarious forces out there who are also encouraging this? How is this happening?

Scott Walker: Well, for those who seek political power, you go back to one of the fundamental shifts in the society — it goes back to Saul Alinsky's book, *Rules for Radicals*. So he talked about marching

through the institutions of higher education. It then took it further into K through 12, the teachers' union, other parts of society, and it really is about amassing power. And I think as conservatives, that's often concerning for us 'cause we don't think about governing or shouldn't think — maybe there are a few that do, but shouldn't think about power — other than trying to stand up and defend the fundamental principles of our country. But there are, I think, not exclusively, but many on the left who that's their sole purpose. So it's all about power. And when you think of Marxism, again, it's all about amassing power. The idea that when you divide people into these categories, it's not to lift them up, it's to then, you know, if you have enough, you win the majority, you take control. And once you take control, you never give it up.

I remember — one of the things we do is we have President Reagan's old ranch out in California we bring students to, amongst other opportunities, and when Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet leader, came to visit, they were all shocked. They expected, as they would in most communist countries, there'd be a big palace up in the mountains where his ranch was, and instead there's this tiny little 1,700 square foot ranch house that looks like, you know, it comes out of — like my grandparents' farm was in northern Illinois. They were, like, shocked, but that's because "power to the people" meant the elite had the power and everybody else had the crumbs. I just saw a guy, actually another guy named Mikhail, not the same one obviously, he's gone. But Mikhail that had been at the ranch — I saw years later that I'd been with him, and he said, you know, he escaped. You were talking about coming from Colombia. He came from the old Soviet Union. But he joked about when he was there as a kid, he said the line was, "You know, the government pretended to pay us and we pretended to work." Those things just don't work at all. But again, that's all part of helping anyone, but particularly young people understand — not only the past, but again, right now in Cuba, in North Korea, in Russia, particularly in Venezuela, we have real-life examples of how these policies just don't work.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah, I always think about the great statesmen of the past. You know, you read Winston Churchill, and you read some of our great presidents of the past and how they thought about the world, how they thought about people, how they used persuasion, how they provided a great moral vision to try to bring everyone together. It seems like we're in an opportune time, perhaps the most opportune time in American history to do that now. So share with us about the need for statesmanship, and young people, but in everyday people. You know, we have all spheres of influence God gives to us, and how do we... what's the essence of that statesmanship, and how do we bring that to bear?

Scott Walker: I think empathy and optimism are key components of leadership, particularly to your point about this time, how do you bring people together? Having empathy — so unfortunately some, for some, means, okay, government needs to spend more money, give you more programs. I look at that and, you know, I often said when I was governor, still feel it today, that true freedom and prosperity don't come from the clumsy hands of the government. They come from empowering people to live their own lives and control their own destiny through the dignity of hard work. And so for those who are physically and mentally capable, who are of working age, we're shorting them if we put them on government assistance, you know? King Solomon, who rightfully so is attributed throughout history as being wise, in the Book of Ecclesiastes talked about finding joy in your labor. We're depriving, you know, when we put people on expanded Medicaid or we put them on other government assistance, we're depriving these working age, able-bodied individuals, the ability not just to earn a living, not just to be free of being on the taxpayer's burden, but of the pride, the dignity that comes from work.

A great story — I remember at the ranch, we learned about President Reagan's mother when he grew up in Dixon, Illinois, in the Midwest. She used to take a series of odd jobs. The president's father was an alcoholic, so was in and out of work, and she would sometimes work as a seamstress, sometimes took some other jobs teaching some courses. But one in which she would sing at funerals and weddings, and

occasionally there were families more poorer than even them and couldn't afford the regular rate. So she'd say, "Well, just go get me a teacup and a saucer at a yard sale, and that'll be more than enough." And she — the reason she did that for her sons was to show them that dignity is as important as empathy. You can be empathetic, you can be charitable, you can care for others, but if you just give things away, you're actually taking something from them. You're taking part of their dignity away. And I think in today's society, again, maybe give them the benefit of the doubt, there's some well-meaning empathetic folks, but they don't understand that you're taking people's dignity away.

So I think having empathy, but in the proper way, along with optimism. You know, for all the whining, particularly of late — the big discussion point lately has been the \$20 burrito. Which by the way, I mean, I've yet to find a menu that actually says that — you know, maybe if you had DoorDash and a bunch of other things along the way. But I think particularly again, for young people, at a time when society in general loves looking for people to blame, but you know, at this time, we're in a golden age, you know? In the history of the world, think about — you and I, about the same age, we're talking about growing up in the '80s. We loved it. It was great. We were — Ronald Reagan made us feel good about America again. But average wages, size of homes, jobs are all infinitely better. And I worked as a kid in college to pay for school, selling warranty agreements at IBM. What I can do on my phone right now would take an entire floor of this building. I mean, you can be poor in American terms and still eat better and live better than most wealthy people in other parts of the world. And so I just think sometimes we take it for granted how well we have it in this country, not just financially or economically, but with our rights, with our freedoms, with our opportunities, and we should be thanking God every day for living in the greatest country in the world.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah, my father calls me every year at the anniversary of our coming to the US. He's 90, and he calls me, and every year he says, "I just want to remind you that we're here because of God's goodness to us, and this is the greatest country." And then he says, "Let's pray together." He asked me to pray with him the first time ever. He said, "Can you please pray for me?" This past year. And then he always says to me, "It's better to be poor here than to be poor anywhere else." That's my dad's words always. And I think, Dad, you're very, very, very right. Yeah. And the gratitude, the importance of gratitude. Governor, as we close, if you could give a final message to the Cornerstone University community and the students about the future and the promise and the hope and Jesus in this country, what would you say to them?

Scott Walker: Well, it ties in well with what I was talking about before. At the ages of our founders — these were all men, some more passionate than others, but all essentially believed in Judeo-Christian values. They founded our nation on that. And you think about at the age they were, when you think about the young people in particular you're working with, and all those that support the work that you're doing with focusing on a love for Jesus, loving America, tying it in with the market — this is just such a wonderful time in the history of the world. We have incredible opportunities. But something that Solomon said that was repeated years later by Dr. Martin Luther King, and it simply says — I always remember, you know — that "Darkness can't drive out darkness. Only light can do that. And hatred can't drive out hatred. Only love can."

So when I was a kid, my parents, my mom in particular, used to play the piano for Sunday school, sang a song called "This Little Light of Mine, I'm Gonna Let It Shine." This little light, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine. Be that light in the world. Now, there's a lot of times when, whether it's in our faith or even in our values, where we feel alone, and I think that's intentional, particularly in a lot of places in our world today, where those who share our values are intimidated. They're meant to feel like they're all on a limb by themselves. All it takes is a light or two to shine, and the others around realize, hey, I buy into that, too. And so be the light in the world.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Governor, thank you for all you've done. Thank you for being with us on our podcast.

Scott Walker: My pleasure. Blessings to you.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Thank you, sir. Thank you.

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