

Interview Questions for Joe Thorn:

As oftentimes it is difficult to obtain answers from some when there are criticisms or concerns involved, and in light of the text on your contact page, as well as your email response, we decided to show you the questions in full now as we hope to obtain responses that we can incorporate in our report. We would be happy to call you and ask you the questions, or you may respond below and return. Thank you.

- 1) You will be speaking about justification by faith alone at the conference. While “by grace are ye saved, through faith ... not of works” (Ephesians 2:8), the Scriptures also explain that “the tree is known by its fruit” (Matthew 12:33) and “without holiness no man will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). Do you believe that while men are saved through faith alone, it is accompanied and evidenced by the fruit of a holy life, or do you believe these things do not have to be present to indicate that one is saved?
- 2) According to the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals website, “The purpose of the Alliance’s existence is to call the Church, amidst a dying culture, to repent of its worldliness, to recover and confess the truth of God’s Word as did the reformers, and to see that truth embodied in doctrine, worship, and life.” How do you define “worldliness,” and how do you believe it manifests in its various forms and in one’s life? Would you say your understanding is similar or differs from most who identify as Reformed?
- 3) As you know, we would like to know about your views on Christian liberty. We understand that you hold to the 1689 Baptist Confession, Chapter 21, “Of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience,” which says that “the end of Christian liberty ... is that ... we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our lives.” How do you understand Chapter 21 and its meaning?
- 4) What can you tell us about your personal story? What is your background? In a video for Christianity.com, you note that you had been involved in the occult and Satanism. Can you explain more about that, and if there any remaining effects by your involvement in these things?
- 5) In 2017, you published a series of videos online entitled “Pastors in Cars Smoking Cigars,” with the concept borrowed from Jerry Seinfeld’s “Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee,” according to an explanation in one episode.
 - a) As an example from the series, in one of your videos, after asking if he could identify the song and if he knows the lyrics, you and Jimmy briefly sing along to a line from “The Thong Song,” which is a tune about men getting a thrill out of a woman’s rear end and includes lyrics such as, “Baby, make your booty go/ Baby, I know you want to show that thong.” Why did you have this song on your phone, and/or what was the reason for pulling the song up on your phone? Do you listen to other songs that have sensual themes, or is this an aberration? Where do you draw the line as to when something is not God-honoring in light of Scriptures such as 1 John 2:16, “for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world”?
 - b) In regard to the conversation that takes place in your series, a number of posts online indicate that there is much empty conversation. For example, one Reddit user stated, “He’s great theologically,

but the joyful banter on the podcast crosses the line into distracting nonsense most of the time,” or on the counter, one seminary student who follows you—and who is obviously influenced by you both—stated in correspondence that was read in the video, “Keep up the banter.” With this stated, where do you believe conversation crosses the line into foolish talking (Ephesians 5:4; 2 Timothy 2:16; Proverbs 10:19), or a situation that would raise concern in light of Matthew 12:36, “[E]very idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment”? How do you understand verses about being sober-minded, such as 1 Timothy 3:2?

- 6) During your interviews on Only the Good Stuff’s “Joe Thorn Loves the Darkness” and Popcorn Theology, you make no qualms about your ongoing longtime love for horror movies, such as the films “Frailty”—about an axe-wielding serial killer who thinks he’s destroying demons by murdering people—“The Witch,” in which a Puritan woman is asked by a goat who transforms into a man to take off her clothes and sign her name to a book, and then joins the coven of witches in the forest—and “The Bad Seed”—about a child psychopath who inherited her murderous ways from her late grandmother—and that you watch “on average one new or unseen horror movie each week.”

You also mentioned that you thought the Harry Potter books—about the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry—were “awesome,” and that you like reading dark fiction that is “massively creepy,” where “a lot of people are gonna die” and that you’ve “lost track of how many people get tortured in the books [you] read.” After asking if the host had read any of Stephen King’s son’s books, and he replied that he tried, but “it got super creepy demonic right off the bat,” you identified the book and remarked, “That’s a good one.” You additionally noted during the show that “95 percent of my music listening is heavy metal”/death metal, recommending bands such as SepticFlesh, Skeletonwitch, and Insomnium—which have albums/songs entitled, for example, “The Vampire From Nazareth,” “Worship the Witch,” and “Black Heart Rebellion.”

As one who has a background in the occult and Satanism, how do you watch, read and listen to this material, especially in light of 1 Peter 1:14-16, which speaks of “not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance”? Do you believe that your steady diet of all things dark is having any negative effect on you?

- 7) How do you reconcile this weekly diet of horror movies, which use murder, witchcraft and other evil as a “thriller” to entertain the viewer; reading dark fiction, which similarly captivates the reader with stories of murder, witchcraft and death; and predominant listening to heavy metal and death metal, which by definition is filled with the dark and demonic themes of rage, rebellion, “death, suffering, and destruction” communicated by growling and/or screaming vocalizations; with Scriptural exhortations and warnings such as Galatians 6:8, “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting”; Psalm 101:3, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes”; Galatians 5, which lists murder, witchcraft etc. as the works of the flesh; and Romans 8:6-7, “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”? (Also Psalm 19:4; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Colossians 3:2-3; Ephesians 5:19 and 1 Corinthians 10:31.)

- 8) Kevin DeYoung, who will be also be speaking on justification by faith alone, but at the Pennsylvania conference, said during a sermon entitled “Do Not Love the World” that even though he only watches sports on TV, and his wife watches HGTV, he still has to be careful not to let worldliness creep in. He stated a concern about the world’s influences on people, via the things they are “flipping through on TV, and the stuff they’re putting in their ears, and all of the world around them—all of the thousands of ways in which in 21st Century America worldliness looks normal and righteousness looks so strange.” Would you agree or disagree with Kevin’s take on the matter?
- 9) Various posts on social media from both yourself and other leaders of Redeemer Fellowship place a heavy emphasis on cigars, hard liquor and/or tattoos, as even your Doctrine and Devotion Facebook main profile image represents you with a cigar and Jimmy raising a glass of bourbon, and other posts, for example, include an image from a stated elders meeting that shows a tiered cart of bourbon, vodka, sangria and other hard liquor, and reads “@brianmalcolm knows how to throw an elders’ fellowship,” as well as a Doctrine and Devotion YouTube video documenting your trip to a tattoo parlor, which includes a close-up of the finished tattoo with your skin still bleeding. I’m sure you can understand that this is not what the average pastor and his staff posts on their social media pages.
- a) Are cigar smoking, liquor drinking and tattooing your body a part of your mission work in some way? If not, is there a reason that you regularly post or talk about these things, or are you seeking to communicate anything by doing so? Are you seeking to influence others in any way?
- b) Surely you can understand those who consider the various posts and videos to be provocative and flaunting, and/or remarks such as those expressed on the Reformed Pubcast in which one of the co-hosts said that if someone asserts that Christians shouldn’t drink, “that’s when you bust one open in front of them and chug it in their face, maybe spill some on them,” and you similarly opined that “if someone says you can’t drink Blanton’s bourbon and be a Christian, [the Apostle] Paul would pour himself a double, I believe, and be just like, ‘Hey, what’s up?’” Do you think that the flamboyance could be potentially be a stumbling block to others, where there doesn’t seem to be any reservation whatsoever?
- c) Has there ever been a time that you believe you have crossed the line into what you would consider “excess” drinking, smoking or in other things? If not, what would this look like to you?
- d) Why do you personally continue to obtain tattoos to permanently modify your body? What is your objective in doing this? Do you regret any of your tattoos?
- 10) Would you agree or disagree with those who preach that if a person talks the world, acts like the world, enjoys the same music and/or movies as the world, has the same loves as the world, and is not much different from the world, that they are not walking in the narrow way? How does one delineate the old creature from the new creature? How would you define the sanctification of the believer?

Thank you again for your time and consideration.