



Joanna Meyer: [00:02](#) Hey friends. Welcome to the Faith and Work podcast, where we explore everyday work and God's world. The Faith and Work podcast is produced and hosted by the Denver Institute for Faith and Work. I'm Joanna Meyer, director of events and sponsorships at the institute, and I also lead our conversation around women, work, and calling. I'm joined today by Dustin Moody, who serves as our director of communications. How's it going sir?

Dustin Moody: [00:24](#) Doing well Joanna, thanks, how are you?

Joanna Meyer: [00:26](#) Awesome. Doing really, really well. We're having an adventurous day here at the office. In case you wonder what happens at Denver Institute, we share office space, or not office space, but we share a building with one of our congressional representatives for the state of Colorado and there's a vibrant protest going on downstairs, so-

Dustin Moody: [00:42](#) Very vibrant.

Joanna Meyer: [00:44](#) Yep, five floors below our office and we can still hear the people shouting or police cars outside. It's a fun day.

Dustin Moody: [00:50](#) Yeah, so if you're listening and you happen to hear shouting or sirens, or anything in the background, we are fine, but it's just the joys of living in colorful Colorado.

Joanna Meyer: [01:00](#) Yeah, we're having a great time. So, one of my favorite things about working at Denver Institute is the people that we meet. Their lives and their work just expands my way of thinking and it invites me in to new ways of loving and serving our world and today's guest, journalist and non profit leader, Anne Snyder is one of those people. She's a former journalist and she's worked in research for the New York Times, and now she is director of the Philanthropy Roundtable's Character Initiative. And I have loved getting to know Anne because she brings a unique perspective around the conversation of what it means to be a Christian in the world.

Dustin Moody: [01:34](#) Yeah Anne, as Joanna mentions, is the director of the Character Initiative, and it's a pilot program that seeks to help foundations and business leaders strengthen morally, formative institutions in the United States. She's also a fellow at the Center for Opportunity Urbanism, a Houston based think tank that explores how cities can drive opportunity for the bulk of their

citizens and Anne's also a senior fellow at the Trinity Forum. As a journalist she's written for the Atlantic Monthly and the Washington Post and was a key researcher on David Brook's best selling book, The Road to Character. Welcome Anne.

- Joanna Meyer: [02:03](#) Hi Anne.
- Anne Snyder: [02:04](#) Thank you. Hi-
- Joanna Meyer: [02:04](#) You have a great résumé.
- Anne Snyder: [02:07](#) Thank you, that's sort of accidental. You just follow your nose and it takes you unexpected places, but thanks.
- Joanna Meyer: [02:15](#) Yeah, it's been fun hearing more about your professional journey and all, like you said, the places your nose and your giftedness has led you.
- Anne Snyder: [02:21](#) Thank you.
- Joanna Meyer: [02:23](#) Our conversation today will revolve around a topic that's near and dear to your heart, the question of character, and we'll engage on both a personal level and then more broadly, through Anne's work with character building organizations around the country. My first question relates to where you live, and who you live with, so you're married to journalist and best selling author David Brooks, and the two of you live in Washington DC, didn't you say something like 10 lots from capital hill?
- Anne Snyder: [02:52](#) Yes, tenth street, yes we're 10 blocks away from all of that energy, I'll put it diplomatically, energy.
- Joanna Meyer: [03:00](#) That is very diplomatic. I'm curious, what is it like living in such a partisan environment?
- Anne Snyder: [03:08](#) It's exhausting to be honest. Not necessarily because, in a city like DC you're just around fights all the time, you're not, or at least I'm not. I've never actually worked directly in politics, I've always been on the periphery, and I've kind of traveled more in either intellectual, like, think tanky, or like civil society in the Country at Large circle. I feel like I get the pure breed of person and personality, I'm sure there are pure breeds in politics, it's just a little harder to survive.

- Anne Snyder: [03:44](#) But it's not so much that everyone is acrimonious, it's just that people, they think in partisan categories, like almost as a way of breathing and I think I personally just find those categories to be very A, binary, and B, frankly just sort of shallow or not robustly human. Like, they don't capture the fullness of the human personality and the complexity of life. So it's exhausting more because the prisms that I think a lot of people feel forced to, you know, you always absorb the culture you're in and because DC's culture is fundamentally a political one, the ways in which people talk about what matters sometimes seem to be in these contrived world views and categories. That's just a little tiring.
- Joanna Meyer: [04:40](#) Yeah, I can picture almost like a spirit of people are quick to pick up arms, and I don't mean guns arms, but to take their position and go against each other. Especially if people are divided very strongly in between two camps, you could probably jump into partisan perspectives at the drop of a hat.
- Anne Snyder: [04:55](#) Right. And there's just a lot of immediate, A, there's status wars and partisan, or sort of status assessing and partisan assessing, and it just bleeds in to every room. I remember the first year I lived in DC, my first stint there like 12 years ago, even in the church world, you know, you're looking for where to go to church and people are like, "Well, where do you go?", even in that world or in that conversation as soon as you mentioned whatever the name of the church was, you kind of get that elevatorised, "Oh, I know where you sit now on the ideological spectrum." You just feel constantly labeled, I guess is what I noticed there, that you don't really sense in a lot of cities. That's a downside.
- Dustin Moody: [05:42](#) And I'm curious, what tensions does that bring up in how you interact with your community?
- Anne Snyder: [05:52](#) You know, that's a good question. As much as I say that it's exhausting sometimes and I'll probably stand by that for as long as I live there, I personally have not felt, at least at this point in my life, career, adulthood, I haven't felt like I'm constantly living in tensions. I guess, you know, if you approach people as people first, they eventually respond well to that. Because I think I just try to approach, particularly people I don't know, who I'm meeting and they may be brought to me through a business card or through what organization they work for that represents a certain part of the ideological spectrum, on a social, or economic issue, or whatever, I just ask a lot of questions. I feel

like my curiosity saved me from feeling overly squeezed because how the curiosity then gets quenched is they describe the motivation for their political autobiography for instance, like how they got to the positions they did.

Anne Snyder: [06:57](#)

That is very informative for me, so I think the journalistic curiosity just helps give oxygen to all of it. Because fundamentally I'm then trying to dig in to, "Oh, well this is interesting about your background that made you so, let's pretend you're at the NRA, you know." Those are fun without the political implications they actually lead to more questions of, like, anthropology of who people are and how they became who they are.

Joanna Meyer: [07:27](#)

Yeah, that's fascinating. It's almost like your journalistic skills allow you to get beyond camps or partisanship, to really just get to know the person.

Anne Snyder: [07:34](#)

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer: [07:35](#)

I'm curious what you're learning about what it means to be a Christian in that kind of environment?

Anne Snyder: [07:48](#)

What does it mean to be a Christian in that context? I could answer that multiple ways, I mean particularly right now I probably have to forego the temptation to, so there's a lot of Christians in Washington, and frankly in some of our circles, who are journalists or thinkers, they're public commentators, and in that role many of them who are devout Christians are just, there's deep lament going on, I think about what this current political moment has revealed around their brethren. We just happen to have some of our friends just tend to be very publicly anti-Trump, even if they come from a more longstanding conservative realm and candidly, even if I'm in their court in terms of that lament and, "Oh, this is [inaudible 00:08:40]", I have come to get a little weary of the witch-hunt feel of people, particularly in the Christian community, like getting so obsessed with someone they're so horrified by, and then they're kind of looking for who in the church community is for or against him.

Anne Snyder: [09:05](#)

That in its own right seems kind of limiting, so that's just something I've observed and I think as I've gotten weary I've realized I need to be careful also not to fall in to that. In other words, to be very open to associating with those who, in this

particular political hour which seems deeper in its divisions and in its moral, you know, has some deep moral positioning on questions of race and character and so on, I've just had to be careful to keep an open mind and just pursue friendship first with those who actually may be coming very explicitly from a place of Christian conscious in their heads that they land in a very different place than I do. That's just one caution I've felt and I'm sort of working on, just so that I don't associate with those that just think like I do.

- Anne Snyder: [09:57](#) And then more broadly, I mean, this is a good thing. Because I've never really had my faith be channeled through politics, it's been a very rich season of leveraging gifts of hospitality and the arts, frankly, and other sort of spirits of invitation in to our home, and friendship, and convening people together who would not meet otherwise because they may be very politically divided. It's just been a time to like break bread at the table and often with music involved, that has been a way to subtly do what Christians I hope have always done, which is serve as sort of both hospital and peace maker.
- Joanna Meyer: [10:43](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
- Dustin Moody: [10:44](#) Yeah, that's a-
- Anne Snyder: [10:45](#) But usually you're not typically talking about politics. We only try to distract people in to much more commonalities that they're renascent to acknowledge.
- Joanna Meyer: [10:53](#) It's like a soothing balm and when people can step away from their perspectives they just have a freedom and a healing and a rest they can come.
- Dustin Moody: [11:02](#) And it's just a helpful word for any of us, whether we find ourselves on the right or the left, of getting so wrapped up in a cultural moment, that there are other things that we can pour in to. There are other things in relationships that we can talk about, there's more to us then our politics and that's helpful to remember when we're inundated by Twitter and news and protests downstairs.
- Anne Snyder: [11:22](#) Yeah, right.
- Joanna Meyer: [11:25](#) So in a few minutes we wanna dig in and hear a little bit more about your daily work with the Character Initiative, but I wanna

reflect back on a conversation that you and I have had this fall and around themes related to woman working calling, a really wonderful addition to the Denver community. And while we wanna be careful not to foster gender stereotypes, you talked about four ways that Christian women can really serve our communities through our lives and work and it echoes some of the comments that you just made about choosing to step out of the tension or the conflict of our current political moment to really live out some unique giftedness that God gives us and even though we were talking about that in the conversation around women working calling, I think it has broad relevance to the entire Denver community.

Joanna Meyer:

[12:13](#)

So Anne, you had talked about these four attributes that can give flesh to our way of being in the world, was the idea of personalism, concreteness or living out the incarnation, living an integrated life, and exercising hospitality and I would love to explore briefly each of those four, to give some inspiration to the people that are listening of how they might live out those attributes in their own life. So tell us a little bit about personalism?

Anne Snyder:

[12:40](#)

Yeah, so personalism, where some people I think mistakenly hear as individualism, which is actually not what I mean. Personalism has actually a very rich philosophical history behind it, but it's actually not even an ism, like it's a very real way of being in the world which manifests as just really seeing every person you encounter in his or her full depth. So they're not just a head, or a talking head, frankly coming from a city like Washington which is both a little emotionally avoidant and relies on vast categories to explain the world and enact policies, it's sort of saying, "Okay, these trends are important and likely pick up patterns that are true, that reflect reality. However, the world is complicated.", and especially again, I'm saying this with a journalistic eye, you sometimes learn so much more from really getting in to the textures, flesh and life of people on the ground who may represent these vast demographic categories or voting blocks. So it's just an approach to reality that says life is not best lived on its abstractions and people are open holes, they like find their wholeness and protection in communing with whole other persons.

Anne Snyder:

[14:08](#)

I would so personalism also it's rarely about, we're not interested in transactional interactions, their questions like, "What do you do and what can you do for me?", but more like

deep interest and, "Who are you?, and you know, "Who do you follow? who do you serve? who do you love?" That's sort of in general form the posture and I really came to appreciate personalism and getting to know, and I did mention this I think when I was in Denver, I know I did, but just getting to know the life of Dorothy Day in particular, who eventually was a journalist and became Catholic, and in the synthesis of her writing and her faith, sort of in the years of the great depression, she just both made choices with her life, choosing to live in poverty and cover some of the most searing abject human suffering in cities at that time, by living in those situations and living with those people.

- Anne Snyder: [15:17](#) Because she just spoke from this very, like, grounded place where her writing just had this personal quality, so even though she was sort of illustrating through words this hunger and unemployment and everything that the country already knew about, she was doing it in a way that was really bringing to life the very particular basis and tragedies and hope and she was not only writing in a personalist way but she actually sort of moved her feet in a very personalist direction to not just try to solve a question from afar but to enter in to it.
- Dustin Moody: [15:57](#) Do you think, Anne, do you think that's where some of your coping mechanisms that you mentioned earlier about living in DC and seeing past, whether people sit on the right or the left, and actually thinking of them as just humans, is that where some of that is born out of?
- Anne Snyder: [16:09](#) I think so, yeah. You know, it's like anything where you discover a philosophy that exists and has existed far before you ever were born, but you read about it, and you're like, "Oh my goodness, this is me. This is how I understand my Christian faith it kind of commands me to go.", and I think it says the reason why gender rises, is I do think it may come a little more naturally to women, it doesn't have to, but I think in general women kind of tend to walk around seeing people as whole people right away even if they kind of hide or compartmentalize that sight, if that makes any sense.
- Dustin Moody: [16:50](#) Yeah, I think that's fair.
- Joanna Meyer: [16:51](#) And I think it's an example we see in the life of Christ too. In so many of his interactions he was present and personal with whoever was in front of him. Whether it was Nicodemus

bringing deep intellectual and personal questions in the dark of night, or a woman who was suffering from bleeding, like, he was present with that person in their need at the moment and such a beautiful picture whether it's Dorothy Day, or Christ, or Anne Snyder, of living that out. Can you give any practical examples of what that might look like in daily life?

Anne Snyder: [17:26](#) Yeah, well I'm gonna draw on my work a little bit here and then I can go to some other practical examples. So, I think these days, I mean, something that I've noticed a lot in my work studying, like, both character building institutions and also working for trying to serve and help philanthropists who really want a big bang for their buck and often thinking, kind of, you know very understandably, think in business terms of, you know, they want large scale for great impact and the character space, I think just because character formation by nature is very mysterious, it happens organically, you can't really reduce it to a variety, like a bunch of different parts.

Anne Snyder: [18:22](#) It's like a more kind of, it's not, you can't really disentwine it. There is ways in which a lot of donors I talked to and when I think policy makers I have to think in these terms as well, like they're looking for the McDonald's of character formation, like something that is franchisable, it's a formula that you can just spread over the whole country and suddenly we'd have so many more virtuous people walking around.

Dustin Moody: [18:48](#) It's a strange analogy.

Joanna Meyer: [18:51](#) Yeah, [crosstalk 00:18:52].

Anne Snyder: [18:53](#) Yeah, well I won't tell you who, but actually a fairly well known person who I accidentally sat next to on an airplane a few years ago when I was beginning this work, we just got in to a conversation and he was like, "Oh, I know what you're doing, you're looking for the McDonald's of character.", and I was like, "Huh, I can't argue with you because you're very well respected.", he was an economist by background, "But I really disagree with you." So, I think the personalism in me and just someone who really tries to see accurately and tries to see holistically most of the most transformative experiences and relationships that I think shift and mold all of us in terms of who we are in particular at the level of moral compass and disposition, it's very intimate kind of boutique, if I could use that word, work. It's small, it's like the relationship with the



grandmother, the teacher, the coach, this particular struggle, this particular place, this particular juncture of life.

Anne Snyder: [19:53](#) Like, there's a particularism and there's an intimacy about what molds us in to who we are, that it's just not, especially these days, it's not some formula. That's just something I've noticed pushing back against and I confess, I think it's like the right, even if it's not an easy truth to tell donors, I think it's true and it does stem from a personalist bias. So I acknowledge my bias. That's one way in which my work kind of was influenced by that.

Anne Snyder: [20:33](#) Day to day life, you know, I think you don't even have to call this personalist, but I do think it's like trying to get your bandwidth to a place where you can encounter every person you meet whether it is your Uber driver, or the stewardess, or you know, even if you're a real introvert, just maybe challenging encouragement, but I do think it is to look at every encounter as having some purpose in it and having, you know, where you're just invited every time to acknowledge and honor the dignity of the other person. So anyway, on my best day that's when I feel like life is really worth living.

Joanna Meyer: [21:18](#) Oh yeah, and that flows beautifully in to this second theme that you had given us and this idea of concreteness or being incarnate and present in our flesh with people. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit more about that?

Anne Snyder: [21:32](#) Yeah, again this is quite related to personalism and I was speaking about this really in the context of being female, where I do think it's, you know, a lot of people have written about this, but women, probably a little bit more than men, were just more naturally, like, everything kind of interconnects, which relates to the third one, integration, but we inhabit bodies and I think we tend to be a little bit more aware of that than men do every second of the day. I just remember I was a philosophy major in college and philosophy tends to be very male dominated, which I think at the time was something that appealed to me, and I remember noticing by my senior year, I was in all these final seminars, that despite the fact that often in life guys are often credited as being more practical or steady and down to business and all the stereotypes.

Anne Snyder: [22:37](#) At least in the philosophy context, men were content to wage long algorithmic kind of philosophizing in the clouds, with this philosopher and this particular truth claim, and I just remember

they would be in abstractions forever, whereas I and my fellows, other few females in the major as well as one female professor, were much more, like, "Well, how does this impact the way you might raise your kids? And how might this philosophical theory really shift the way you teach in a classroom?", [inaudible 00:23:12], chicken nuggets, like I just remember in college vividly having those kinds of conversations with other women where we were yearning to bring it down to earth and I don't exactly know where that comes from, but I think when I think about Christ it's always just something that's resonated with the whole notion of the incarnation of making things in to flesh.

Anne Snyder:

[23:35](#)

I live in a city where there's lots of white papers and white papers are great and they're very informative, but I think, you know, or even in my own case, I've just written this book, it's not yet out, and a book is great and it can maybe shift a few minds, but ideally you wanna bring people together in to a community to discuss the ideas and incarnate the stories and somehow find a way of being broken open that's not just head, that's like whole person. I think that's a little what I mean by concreteness. I think I'm very sensitive to textures, physical textures and the aesthetics of the face and all the ways in which that influences how an idea is heard, how you may or not be persuaded by something, how you bond with other people, how you come to trust and respect other people. These environmental factors which are are very earthy actually can sort of change us. It's like being aware that being hungry, you know, being hungry can have a vast impact on how you learn, etc.

Dustin Moody:

[24:38](#)

So Anne, I'm curious, what does this look like more broadly in a work context? Particularly for women who may be struggling to find their voice or find their place in their particular context. What does this idea of concreteness or incarnation look for our day to day lives and our work?

Anne Snyder:

[24:55](#)

I think it really depends on what your work is. Yeah, I mean I answer this very specifically as a writer which I realize is a niche grasp and a niche profession and it's driven my own work is like choosing to be more of a story teller than a conceptualiser. Like, ideally I'm doing both, but I've learned to share concepts through stories which are a very kind of concrete manifestation of a particular worldview maybe, or the story is communicating some bead of truth, sort of the way Jesus did in his parables,

not that I do it that way at all. I think the question has to be sort of specified to context of what you work in, I mean I'm sure it would look very different in a bank. I would love to hear that seminar, like 12 people each coming from different sectors-

Dustin Moody: [25:58](#)

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer: [25:59](#)

Fascinating. I would love to do that. Gives me ideas as someone who manages events here at the Institute of future conversations that we could have and it reminds me of two of my older friends, and by older I'm just meaning that they're no longer in full time work in the corporate sector, they're retired, and they very clearly identify this season of life that they wanna have a ministry of presence. I'm amazed how their physical presence and loving presence in their neighborhoods has just a transformative effect. It's like they're the life giver of their communities. It may be something as simple as going to Starbucks every morning and when they step in that door they are present and incarnate with the love of Christ for people that are there. It's vivid, I mean it's a tangible part of their understanding of their calling in that season and I see the fruit of it, I'm the recipient of that decision that they've made, but I can see how it can infect an entire neighborhood.

Dustin Moody: [26:53](#)

Yeah.

Anne Snyder: [26:53](#)

Yeah, I do think it's something that's weirdly very, every one's very hungry for today, but also it's pretty counter cultural. Mostly because of technology, we're so tempted to not be incarnated, or embodied, or whatever the word, you can use a fancy word or just the word concrete, like present, or we tend to do so much virtually, which boils us all down to images and words instead of, there's just something irreplaceable to what you just said, to full presence. My husband and I are actually wrestling through this right now vocationally because in different ways we each, as writers in our own capacities, we each feel like those words and whatever is written may have, much more him than me, but might have some very broad, geographically wide, national, or at least regional, not impact necessarily, but a platform that gets out there.

Anne Snyder: [27:53](#)

Where just by trying to clarify the contexts in which people think and make decisions and you can preach about certain things in your writing, but unless you are for instance, we both in different ways happen to be talking about community and

neighborhood these days and yet we could really improve on our knowing of every other person on our block and we have a lovely young woman living with us right now who needed some space from a really tough family situation, and we come from very different backgrounds.

Anne Snyder: [28:30](#) She's from El Salvador, and thankfully I speak Spanish because my mother grew up in Peru, so there's the Latin connection, but it's been interesting to notice, like wow, what we talk about all the time, it's much messier in reality when you're trying to overcome the crisis of solidarity and be inconvenienced by someones needs every second who's right there in front of you and what does it look like to say these things and yet, we want to be able to say them and then just keep it all as words on the page, not as lives lived. Mostly because we're protective of our time. So anyways I think it's more of a high call actually to live a deeply incarnate life.

Anne Snyder: [29:17](#) I think pressures of time today and just technology make it very difficult, or make the choice kind of counter cultural.

Joanna Meyer: [29:25](#) Yeah.

Dustin Moody: [29:26](#) Yeah, I think it takes deliberate effort to get our heads out of our devices and Andy Crouch wrote a book a couple years back called The Tech-Wise Family and it was just him sharing a couple of rules that they put in place to encourage their family, just like you were talking about, to be present, to be incarnate with each other and I think it's much easier said than done, especially with the onslaught of technology and tools and ways that we can think that we're connecting with other people but we're only doing it on the surface level. And I think that directly leads in to kind of that next point that you talked about, that idea of hospitality, and not hospitality in, "I'm gonna serve a good meal.", but what is true hospitality as you see the unique gifts that women bring?

Anne Snyder: [30:13](#) Yeah, I wish I could pull it out, but I think it was Dorothy Day, wrote this great quote about men bringing the ideas, women bringing the atmosphere. [crosstalk 00:30:23], sort of like, well women bring the ideas too, but I do think she was on to something true. I notice this, if my husband and I are getting together with another couple or several couples, the host is the married couple and the man is somehow, it's usually the woman is late or the woman is not there, it's totally great, it's fine, but

somehow [inaudible 00:30:55], and then the woman arrives and I just happened to have noticed this repeatedly and everyone breathes a sigh of relief, like everything will be fine.

Anne Snyder: [31:04](#) There's just a fullness of spirit, anyways and again, this is getting in to very dangerous sort of gender stereotype categories, but when I think of hospitality, I happen to love hosting people and the role that food and music and all of our senses play in relating to one another and the magic that can happen around a table humbly laid, but well curated. I love that. I really mean it in a kind of posture of the soul and it doesn't really translate either, but trying to be open to every person and deeply listening and with sort of a posture of potential embrace.

Anne Snyder: [31:41](#) But also there's sort of an invitational quality to hospitality that I've tried to infuse even in my writing, which is technically not actually hospitable, it's like words, but I think there is a way to write even or a way to relate to ones thoughts or ones colleagues or try to change a community of minds that you do by inviting people in to an equalized space where they're asked to reflect, listen deeply, and potentially [inaudible 00:32:17] different and there's just such a really hospitable spirit that can listen well and know how to dance according to what they've heard.

Anne Snyder: [32:28](#) I'm sorry if I'm speaking very vaguely and mystically here, but I guess it's open, it's invitational, and usually I do find people who have this kind of gift of just a really hospitable spirit, they tend to love the arts and they tend to love all five senses. They tend to have an art form with our whole selves.

Dustin Moody: [32:57](#) Yeah.

Anne Snyder: [32:57](#) They know how to kind of put that all together.

Joanna Meyer: [32:59](#) And what's interesting Anne is that you're practicing pretty radical hospitality in opening your home to a woman who's foreign born, who maybe isn't like you in stage or season of life and yet you're welcoming her in to your home, you're creating a space where she is welcome for who she is and I think that's such a beautiful picture of hospitality outside of the physical trappings of what hospitality might look like. I think in my own life I've lived in a friends basement for a couple years, this is probably 15 years ago. I lived in their basement for a couple months like 15 years ago and the first couple days I was there

they had to kind of clarify, like, "You're welcome to be in the kitchen. Just because you're staying in the basement doesn't mean you have to stay in the basement. You're part of our family, you're in our lives for this season that you're living with us.", and that was such a practical hospitality of reminding me I was welcome at the table even if I was an addition that was unexpected in their lives. I think that's a spirit we can bring of hospitality.

Anne Snyder: [34:03](#) Yeah, I mean I felt, like I said, both my husband and I have many miles to improve in doing this well. We kind of took a leap in to this kind of situation because it felt like the right thing to do and we had the space, but we could do it a whole lot better just in terms of our own boldness and presence every minute. We did it impart because when I was in Houston I moved there in a very uprooting time of my life at every level and I started to joke that peoples guest rooms needed to be paid for by the church or something because guest rooms just bless me collectively.

Joanna Meyer: [34:49](#) Totally.

Anne Snyder: [34:51](#) And I just, I was really, especially when you're in a liminal space, which I think broadly society is in a time of massive transition on many levels now, many people particularly young people, 20-30 somethings, don't have the script their parents and grandparents did. There's just a lot of people feeling sort of in some sort of holy Saturday and I think that is to be welcomed and helped in those bridge, to turn sort of seemingly average caverns in to bridges to a new purpose, that's what hospitality can do, both in a very tangible host way when you're a stranger and yet they give you a seat at the table, but even more in just kind of, I don't know what I was trying, like I said before just come and see and we believe in you kind of ways.

Joanna Meyer: [35:47](#) Yeah, I think that translates directly in to the workplace. Often we underestimate the huge impact of middle managers, they don't get a lot of glory within corporations and yet when I think about people that are doing the heavy lifting of people development and productivity, it's focused on those rules. And I think a spirit of hospitality can characterize how a person leads their team. I mean is there a sense of openness with an employee being able to come to a supervisor and be honest with what's going on in life and that's just not pure grace, there's a balance of grace and truth as you're evaluating persons performance. But there is a spirit of hospitality that

managers can bring to the way their team feels and my personal hunch is that performance is better when you have a manager that leads that way but that may be my own bias.

- Dustin Moody: [36:32](#) No, it absolutely is actually. In one of our other podcasts that we're working on one of our future guests has done some research on business improvement strategies and kind of holistic strategies for business, and one of the top criteria for retention and employee morale is their relationship with their direct manager.
- Joanna Meyer: [36:50](#) Yeah, so true. And we have just a couple minutes left, but I would love to hear a little bit more about your work with philanthropy round table and I gained a little bit of insight about the importance of philanthropy the other day because of course our staff team here we went to our local history Colorado, it's our local state museum, and we stood outside and it was a beautiful building and we realized that spaces like that that are beautiful and a gift to the city, a place to learn, they don't get built by ticket sales no matter how expensive the ticket, without a philanthropist underwriting the construction, the maintenance, the facility would never exist as a gift to the city. It just made me realize that philanthropists make strategic decisions with wealth that bless all of us. And so I wanna hear a little bit more about philanthropy round table and also what you're doing with character?
- Anne Snyder: [37:40](#) Yeah, so the philanthropy round table, I mean there's a variety, I would say there's 10 [inaudible 00:37:47], but there's many advisors and consultants, individuals who help philanthropists give well and think about what they care about, think about their family legacy, mission, why they wanna give, motivations, how you could have impact in a particular area, all of that. So those people are out there and then there are a variety of organizations that typically sort of fit on some coordinate on the ideological spectrum, not necessarily, but most these days you just can't help but [inaudible 00:38:20] stand for some people and not others, and therefore you draw who you draw.
- Anne Snyder: [38:24](#) And so the round table I would say tends to be slightly right of center, it draws people left of center to, I'm probably a raging moderate within the organization, I feel a little more progressive than some, but we had about 800 members, so basically a cross between a membership association and foundations big, medium, and small and individual donors, and



then we're kind of a think tank. So we advise donors on a variety of issues and we tend to take those social problems that feel like they're either a ground for great public anxiety about the problem or the issue itself could be at a tipping point of major reform, major renewal, like total turnaround.

Anne Snyder: [39:13](#)

The round table's sort of known for I think being fairly crucial back in the the charter school movement, we have a K to 12 program that's very established and highly respected, we have done work with veterans and helping veterans after the wards, how they really reenter civilian life, and how can philanthropy play a role in that. We're actually just beginning on mental health, which I'm really excited that that's happening and hope that something really neat develops, economic opportunity, and other projects. One it's been a little weird because it's around an area that is really under institutionalized and sort of a serial, so character is kind of not dollars and cents necessarily, you're basically trying to pair dollars and cents to a question of the heart, mind, will and soul and that's always tricky, as the Denver Institute would be well aware of.

Dustin Moody: [40:13](#)

Yeah, absolutely.

Anne Snyder: [40:15](#)

My task has just been to A, I mean I first spent a year listening to every donor we were talking to under the sun who either had a portfolio already existing in explicit character funding and figuring out what that even meant, what organizations were they investing in, why, and then also talking to all those who sort of had the inarticulate but deep care around character and feeling like they wanted to be involved in anything that would form our citizens more deeply. They just kind of wanted to put their name in the ring to somehow get involved on some task force but didn't really know what they thought about it.

Anne Snyder: [40:56](#)

So after that year listening tour, then I kind of slipped to the other aisle of really investigating every institution I could find on the non profit level and the I did even venture a bit in to the for profit world trying to figure out, "Okay, if we don't live in a boy scout society anymore, should we have a nationally scaled organization like the scouts or the YMCA that's sort of able to dance with our new demographics, and a whole bunch of deep societal, tectonic shifts, that have happens over the last century."





- Anne Snyder: [41:34](#) "What does character formation look like at a big and small level and where is it happening else?", so I wound up writing this book for donors, but it's not yet out, it's like a series of stories of the most successful, inspiring organizations and it's kind of accidentally veered into a project and a book that's as much about visual character formation as it is about communal condition. It's really about repairing our social and moral fabric, so the books gona be called, "The Fabric of Character", because it's about all the webs of influence that make us who we are.
- Anne Snyder: [42:08](#) And so it's taken me in to unexpected audiences and I've been in prisons and correctional facilities and 12 step programs and insurance companies and airlines and schools and adult learning groups and college campuses and sectors like sports, art, name your sector, I put my curiosity to it because it's my underlying belief that every spirit in society where many of us are interacting with multiple a day, they're all leaving little thumb prints on us, and so what are the most beautiful thumb prints and then what is going on in the logic of those institutions that are, like, we all wanna be apart of, so they sustain and encourage good character and then especially for those at younger ages, you know, really make us who we are. That's in a very broad, very long tweet, what I do.
- Joanna Meyer: [43:15](#) I love how you express that Anne, because here at Denver Institute we talk about the gospel of being both very personal and also as broad as the needs of the world. So as you're talking about how people at a very high level can engage their communities and create lasting change in life, I think that's what we're talking about, we think about believers engaging the world through their daily work, is that it's very much a personal experience of good and the renewing work of Christ and then at a city wide, organizational, at a state wide level, it's what happens when the gospel is on the loose and people are thinking that translating that renewing power of Christ in to the institutions in our city. And so it's such a beautiful picture, it's an absolute delight to have you on the podcast today, thanks for talking about things both large and small and I would love to know Dustin, as you've been part of this conversation, what do you think your takeaway is from our conversation?
- Dustin Moody: [44:10](#) You know, I think I'm thinking a lot about what Anne said about hospitality and seeing it more than having someone over for dinner, but getting to know the people in my neighborhood. Something that my wife and I talk about, our church is involved



in this sort of neighborhood movement in North West Denver. But yeah, it's easier said than done, we can get in to our silas, we can get in to our homes and our spaces, but that's not where the work of the gospel happens. So what does that look like for us, I don't know, but it's just kind of one of the things I'm taking away from this conversation.

- Joanna Meyer: [44:37](#) Yeah, I really am lingering on that thought of personalism of what does it look like to step outside some of the stereotypes or structures that we might see when we approach a person to really understand their uniqueness and their perspective. I think as someone who reads the news a lot I can easily light my hair on fire over different issues and truly sinking in to understand a person beyond just the headlines or their reaction to the headlines is a powerful reminder for me. So Anne, thanks, what a delight to have you on the podcast today.
- Anne Snyder: [45:08](#) Thank you, really [inaudible 00:45:11].
- Joanna Meyer: [45:12](#) Awesome. And Dustin, you'll draw us to a close.
- Dustin Moody: [45:15](#) Yeah, just one more reminder, for those of you listening, we'd love for you to subscribe to the podcast, leave us a review on the podcast platform of your choice and we love your feedback. We hope you're enjoying this first season and we are excited about the episodes that remain. So, we'll see you again in two weeks.
- Joanna Meyer: [45:29](#) Thanks everyone. Bye Anne.
- Dustin Moody: [45:31](#) Bye Anne.
- Anne Snyder: [45:31](#) Bye.