



Brian Gray: [00:02](#) Hello and welcome back to the Faith & Work podcast, where we explore our everyday work in God's work. The Faith Work podcast is produced and hosted by Denver Institute for Faith & Work. I'm Brian Gray and I serve as the COO here and the director of our 5280 Fellowship. And I'm joined my Joanna Meyer who directs our events and sponsorship here. Joanna how you doing?

Joanna Meyer: [00:23](#) Hi Brian, really, really good. Spring is the air, we're having a great week here in Denver.

Brian Gray: [00:27](#) We finally have spring, yeah, it's really nice. We've got a really neat opportunity today to be talking with Steve Cuss who is a local pastor. Joanna tell us a little bit about Steve.

Joanna Meyer: [00:39](#) Yeah, Steve is the lead pastor at Discovery Christian Church in Broomfield Colorado, just up the road from us here in Denver, and he's a former hospital chaplain. He's a podcast host, which you'll also want to subscribe to his podcast. And is the author of the book Managing Leadership Anxiety, which was released earlier this week. Congratulations, is this your first book Steve?

Steve Cuss: [00:57](#) Yeah, my first book, yeah, that's right.

Joanna Meyer: [00:59](#) Awesome, that's a major milestone.

Steve Cuss: [01:00](#) It is, it's like giving birth to a baby is what I'm told.

Joanna Meyer: [01:03](#) Yeah, we're thrilled to have you in conversation with us today.

Brian Gray: [01:06](#) Yeah, Steve we'll do a couple things. One in our show, we'll throw just a link to the book, and we'll also maybe link to your podcast. But maybe in your own words, maybe you could tell us a little bit about managing leadership anxiety.

Steve Cuss: [01:17](#) Yeah, you bet.

Brian Gray: [01:18](#) What it is and why it was a passion project for you?

Steve Cuss: [01:21](#) Yeah, great, great question. Thanks for having me on the show. Yeah, this project started for me in my early 20's. I had just graduated from college for pastoral studies. My first job somewhat accidentally was as a hospital chaplain. All of this material in the book I really cut my teeth on it in the intensive care wards, and in the emergency room of a trauma hospital. Because I'd have to walk in multiple times a day and I didn't

know what was going to happen. But it was always a lot of pain, or it was somebody in a massive crisis. I had to learn very quickly that there's things going inside of me under the surface that are getting in the way of my ability to be helpful to these people. I was being triggered.

- Steve Cuss: [02:03](#) You know, especially when you were young and you were in the face of death everyday, you start getting triggered about your own fears of death for example. Or what I really notice that I was embarrassed at the time to realize, is when people were unhinged with their grief. I would be triggered because I thought a leader should know what to do. I would act or I would try to take over, or I'd do all these completely wrong things for people who were in grief. Through that process, I learned that in order to be an effective chaplain, I had to name and know the triggers boiling under the surface of my own life. But then the other half of it was I had to learn to walk into a room and pay attention to the dynamics between people.
- Steve Cuss: [02:45](#) It was wild, you'd walk into a room, and you could start to figure out birth order by just the way people were gathered around the bed.
- Brian Gray: [02:52](#) Oh, I'm sure.
- Joanna Meyer: [02:53](#) Wow.
- Steve Cuss: [02:53](#) And then if you just watch how they relate to each other, one of the kids ... Let's say mum's in the bed and she's old. One of the kids is making all the decisions, and one of the other kids is complaining. Like you're the one that all these family dynamics came to surface.
- Brian Gray: [03:06](#) And the one making all the decisions is the oldest, which is the worst right?
- Steve Cuss: [03:08](#) Typically, but sometimes not the-
- Brian Gray: [03:10](#) I'm the oldest.
- Joanna Meyer: [03:10](#) I'm the oldest too.
- Steve Cuss: [03:11](#) Yeah, often times it was the oldest. And there'd be secret keepers. There was several times I'd walk into a room and a child, adult child would beckon me out of the room and try to tell me a secret about their parent who's sick in the bed, stuff

like this. I quickly learned family systems theory, and then in grad school, I took every family systems class I could take. I think I did like 16 hours of graduate in systems theory, and theoretical cybernetics. What was most surprising to me is by that time I'm a parent, and then I'm a youth minister, then I was an associate pastor, I was a crisis interventionist. I did all these different jobs in churches, now I'm a lead pastor. And all those lessons in chaplaincy really came to fruition in my family life, and not just in pastoring but I really think in any organization leadership. All these principles are transferable to any leader or any parent.

- Brian Gray: [04:02](#) Yeah, any family.
- Joanna Meyer: [04:03](#) Yeah, I appreciated that, because often when we think of leadership we think of very clearly defined roles like a lead pastor or a corporate leader, or someone that's managing a team. Really, what you're talking about is living a very integrated life, where we understand how our internal life affecting our external interaction with people. And even folks like a homemaker or a stay at home parent is still leading children, and so the same anxieties and relational dynamics will play out in that setting too.
- Steve Cuss: [04:28](#) For sure. Yeah, if you're a stay at home parent, a mom or a day, and your toddler is making you anxious or making you angry. Which in my definition of anxiety is the same response. Anger or anxiety, it's any kind of impulsive response. Yeah, this material can really help.
- Brian Gray: [04:46](#) Can I follow up on that? There's probably, I feel pretty comfortable with recognizing at this point at 47 years old, recognizing moments of anxiety. I might not have a long time again, in fact the word I would have bristled against. Do not be anxious about anything.
- Steve Cuss: [05:01](#) Yeah, you'd say, "I'm not anxious."
- Brian Gray: [05:01](#) But by prayer and petition, present your request. You know, there's this almost a Christian opposition to anxiety.
- Steve Cuss: [05:06](#) Yeah, it's 'cause Christian's don't know their bible. Since you infected this with Paul, the same Greek word that he used in that, was the same word he used when he said, "I am deeply anxious about all the churches." Apparently it's okay to be anxious at least once in a while.

- Brian Gray: [05:23](#) Sometimes.
- Steve Cuss: [05:23](#) Yeah, but please, what are you saying there?
- Brian Gray: [05:28](#) How can we think about, for the listeners, how can they think about this idea of anxiety so it's not something that they isolate as a clinical diagnosis that's about other people and not about their everyday internal realities.
- Steve Cuss: [05:39](#) Yeah, so I'll give some examples of what would be considered non-traditional anxiety, and then we can kind of talk about the source. Mansplaining is always anxiety.
- Joanna Meyer: [05:48](#) Thank you for saying that. I haven't heard anyone describe that.
- Steve Cuss: [05:49](#) Oh, you're welcome. I know, it's ladies night tonight on the podcast. Mansplaining is always anxiety. When a man feels a need to explain something to somebody who already knows something, that's an anxious response. There's something in that man that needs to be impressive or needs to be in the know, or needs to be right. Really, anxiety is whatever response happens next after you're not getting what you think you need.
- Brian Gray: [06:17](#) That's a great definition, that's brilliant.
- Joanna Meyer: [06:17](#) Holy cow, say it again.
- Steve Cuss: [06:19](#) Yeah, I meant I'll be able to, but basically anxiety is any response that happens next after you are not getting what you think you need in any given moment. Now, my wife is a therapist, if she were here, she would say, "Now hang on, there is some appropriate anxiety." And she would actually be right. The best example we use is the cliché, when your kids playing on the street and you're anxious about it, you run and you rescue the kid. That would be fight/flight anxiety. We're talking garden variety leadership and parenting anxiety.
- Steve Cuss: [06:52](#) For example on a parenting front, I get angry when I'm disrespected. Because I believe in any given moment I need to be respected as a parent, and not just by my kids, by their friends. My kids have learned in our household respect is paramount in or family, but not all their friends have. I've noticed myself having to manage my anger for example and they're blowing my wife off, or blowing me off or something like that, so Mansplaining.

- Steve Cuss: [07:20](#) Avoidance would be a classic anxiety, if you find yourself taking a nap. If you find yourself needing to binge on Netflix, that's an anxious response. Yeah, it's not just worry for example. It's just really anything that you do to overcome this kind of deficit where you think you need something. For me, I always need to be right. I always need to be liked, and it's really funny as a lead pastor I always need to be understood. And the need to be liked and the need to be understood as a preacher is the worst clash.
- Joanna Meyer: [07:50](#) Oh, wow.
- Brian Gray: [07:50](#) Nightmare.
- Joanna Meyer: [07:51](#) Every time you preach.
- Brian Gray: [07:52](#) What if enough people don't line up afterwards to say how good the service is?
- Steve Cuss: [07:55](#) Oh gosh, oh my goodness, yeah. For me, the pulpit has been one of the greatest tools that God has used to help me overcome what I believe I need. I'm now actually quite good at preaching a bad message and being okay. It took a few years, but yeah.
- Joanna Meyer: [08:09](#) Can I just say something? We often here at Denver Institute say that our work is one of the most powerful tools God used to shape our soul. Just as you said that, I'm like, that's such a great example that like the stress and anxiety that we experience everyday. Whether our work is parenting at home or leading a team at the office, that is a tool that's God's going to use to deepen our souls.
- Steve Cuss: [08:28](#) Yeah, I agree, yeah, totally.
- Joanna Meyer: [08:30](#) That's really cool.
- Brian Gray: [08:31](#) You described a couple of situations and used the word trigger earlier. Could you maybe flush that out a little bit. Talk to us first of all what is a trigger? How would you encourage listeners to begin paying attention to what theirs are.
- Steve Cuss: [08:44](#) Yeah, that's a great question. Yeah, so getting into triggers definitely opens the door to a deep well, that can take a lot of time. But in the course of the podcast where you start is you always start with your body, you always start physiologically. For people who are just starting this work and they know that

they struggle with this. You can begin by figuring out where does anxiety first show up in my body. It's a racing mind ... I always get this wrong, I'm the one that came up with this and I still get it wrong. It's a spinning mind, a racing heart or a tightening gut, and for some people it's all three. But even for those who it's all three, it always starts somewhere.

- Steve Cuss: [09:20](#) In my case it's a spinning mind. I know I'm anxious 'cause I'm worrying. Or I'm not always worrying, sometimes I'm just thinking about the same thing over and over, and I believe the lie that I can think my way to peace. It's never true, but that's how I know I'm anxious. Is I go to bed and I'm thinking about something, and I wake up and it's already on my mind when I wake up. Once you know where it starts you can then begin to put some interventions in place. I have some fairly sophisticated list of interventions, if I've gone a day or two where I'm still thinking about the same thing, I'll start doing some deeper work.
- Steve Cuss: [09:54](#) The second level is to simply ask yourself, okay, what is it that I believe I need in any given moment that I don't actually need? It's okay, even in this podcast today, if I leave and you guys are like, "What, that wasn't very good." I'm actually okay, but I believe that I'm not okay. Being able to name it is what flips the power dynamic.
- Brian Gray: [10:16](#) That's really good.
- Steve Cuss: [10:16](#) It goes from it having control of me to me having control of it. And most of us have 30 to 70 triggers like that. The need to be liked or understood or have the last word, or put someone in their place or whatever it is. And then third step if you're still puzzled, you can just start thinking about what do I avoid? That particular staff member, you know, we had a bad interaction three weeks ago and so I'm just staying out of his and her way, that's another anxious response. Yeah, that'd be another trigger.
- Brian Gray: [10:45](#) I'm listening, and I'm feeling like to use other language that comes out of a kind of spiritual formation world. I'm hearing a lot of false self pieces, that are really like our triggers and the false self that we present most often seem pretty integrated to me.
- Steve Cuss: [10:57](#) Yeah, I have a whole chapter on ... I actually wrote a theology of anxiety in the book, and really try to make the case that anxiety

is a spiritual force. I think it's actually a spiritual warfare force that I believe that it competes for the space where God resides. I think it's very, very hard for us to be present to our anxiety and to God at the same time. I think God can be present to us, God can do whatever God wants. But for our ability to be aware of God's presence, I think anxiety blocks it. And exactly that, in chapter two I dig into Thomas Merton's false self. I think Richard Raul calls it the floating self. Yeah, I would say that all of this kind of anxiety we're talking about is the result of depending on your false self instead of depending on God, would be in short.

- Brian Gray: [11:41](#) And that's a practical, multiple times every single day occurrence right, for people in the work place.
- Steve Cuss: [11:47](#) Yeah, I feel like I'm down to about 150 times a day.
- Brian Gray: [11:49](#) That's really good.
- Steve Cuss: [11:50](#) I'm feeling pretty good about that number. But yeah, there is a prayer that I pray actually multiple times a day that I've crafted. It's in the book and it's in my material. It's a simple breath pray, and it's "Jesus died so I don't have to blank anymore." Whatever the blank is for you. I don't have to have gold standard sermons anymore. You know, I don't have to be the smartest person in the room anymore. Whatever I thought I needed I got ... To me this is the power of the Gospel, it has freed me from those false needs, and actually I can rest, I can truly rest as a full human being.
- Joanna Meyer: [12:25](#) Yeah, and a breath prayer, something as simple and as organic as breathing. You can just whisper it to yourself or repeat it in your mind everyday.
- Steve Cuss: [12:33](#) Yeah, it takes about seven seconds, yeah.
- Brian Gray: [12:34](#) I think there's something powerful in this example that would be great if even if our listeners are thinking in this moment. I'll encourage people all the time as an activity of spiritual formation at and for your work. Which is to identify those types of experiences, triggers in this case as we're talking today. Those type of experiences throughout the day that often times pull from your response that isn't the full human being you are and were intended to be, and then attached a breath prayer to those.

- Brian Gray: [13:04](#) I'm spinning mind most often, in terms of how I experience this in your framework. I often times, I'm growing in some body awareness and I can start feeling it in my gut more often now than I could five years ago. But the breath prayer for me at 3:00 in the morning, when I wake up and the mind is spinning is you are God and I am not.
- Steve Cuss: [13:25](#) Yeah, that's good.
- Brian Gray: [13:26](#) I've pulled and carried that in even to the work place, in a faith based non-profit. You are God and I am not, and that just allows me to pause and remember who I am, who's I am. Who's responsibility ultimately this is, I'm a steward and not a creator.
- Steve Cuss: [13:43](#) That's funny, you know people make fun of the old Saturday Night Live affirmations. I've come around on them, 'cause I really resonate with what you're saying. There's something to me about externalizing rather than ... So I say it out loud, I think there's more power in speaking it than thinking it.
- Brian Gray: [14:01](#) It's truth telling.
- Steve Cuss: [14:02](#) I think it is, yeah. I believe a whole set of lies in my head and I have to get them out. I think that's really good.
- Joanna Meyer: [14:09](#) Let's do a case study, because I have a hunch that there are some people listening who might be driving into work. I'm going to just share a little bit of what happened in the workplace here at Denver Institute.
- Brian Gray: [14:18](#) Excellent.
- Joanna Meyer: [14:18](#) Again, it's a tool for God to work on our souls. Recently we were sitting in a staff meeting and reviewing metrics. Doesn't everybody love the external standard of numbers? We're reviewing metrics in a area of the programs of sponsorships that I manage, and I started freaking out. My heart started feeling like it was pounding out of my chest, and I responded inappropriately. I just got really worked up and angry, and I can say this 'cause Brian and Dustin were in the meeting who are sitting right here.
- Brian Gray: [14:46](#) You had witnesses, yeah.
- Joanna Meyer: [14:46](#) They were witnesses, they were part of that. And all I could say about a week later was, I had to tell this to Brian who I report to



in a meeting. A conversation with him I said, "Brian, I do not want to see this kind of behavior continue, I need you to help me figure out what's going on." I would love to hear from you, how do you diagnose it? If someone is in a meeting and they don't necessarily know why they're feeling that way, but they can feel their heart pounding, they know it's not appropriate, what does a person do in a situation like that?

- Steve Cuss: [15:13](#) Oh that's great, yeah. We'll need a little more specifics to be able to help you diagnose it. But I think step one is the fact that you're moving toward is and not running from it means that you're going to do phenomenal. That really is step one, it is counterintuitive to have the brave step of moving toward your mistake and naming it. And if you don't do that, it just keeps you in that kind of regret. Or for people who are comfortable with deeper words like shame and condemnation. Are you able to name what it was that got your heart racing?
- Joanna Meyer: [15:42](#) Yep, it was shame because it was specific area of performance where I had not succeed in the past.
- Steve Cuss: [15:46](#) You failed.
- Joanna Meyer: [15:47](#) And even though I was succeeding now, just even thinking about the potential to go back to the place where I was and succeeding just triggered it.
- Steve Cuss: [15:56](#) Yeah, okay, so it was shame that got your heart racing, historical shame. And then how did you show up in the meeting that was inappropriate?
- Joanna Meyer: [16:04](#) I got really emotional and kind of pushed back against any kind of healthy conversation that could have continued and allowed the entire team to have that conversation, it was disruptive.
- Steve Cuss: [16:14](#) It kind of shut down the openness.
- Joanna Meyer: [16:17](#) Yeah, and nobody wants to see a meeting disrupted because someone's not handling their emotions well.
- Steve Cuss: [16:24](#) Yeah okay, and then Brian, what was your take? As you were in the moment, what's going through your head? You're like, "Man Joanna, what's going on?"
- Brian Gray: [16:32](#) Well actually, maybe because this is really a open dialogue between Joanna as coworkers and friends, I have a little bit

more history. But my first thought was, now turn the case study on me, "Oh, my meeting is going sideways."

- Steve Cuss: [16:48](#) What do I need to do?
- Brian Gray: [16:50](#) "What do I need to do to control this thing and do it right? 'Cause I'm an Enneagram one, and so doing it right is always the right thing.
- Steve Cuss: [16:56](#) Always obsessive yeah.
- Brian Gray: [16:57](#) Always the right thing to do. In the moment I think I knew from some history what might be happening with Joanna internally. It wasn't really, even the aim for the hope of where the conversation on looking at some metrics for our health was intending for us to go. But I shifted into, "I probably should create an offline helpful conversation about this, so that it doesn't become the entire issue in the room." I started kind of back peddling a little bit.
- Joanna Meyer: [17:29](#) My anxiety gave you a little anxiety.
- Steve Cuss: [17:29](#) Oh for sure, it's always contagious. Yeah, especially when it's live in the moment. I think a lot of what you have already done is what you do. For listeners and I guess for you guys, Joanna your ability to actually map out the dynamic of what happened, almost like you're mapping out a game of chess. You get a piece of paper and you'd write down, my heart started racing, it's because of some historical shame. I then overreacted in the meeting and infected the group's anxiety and took it sideways. I would map that out like chess.
- Steve Cuss: [18:05](#) And then the next step to overcome it and to reduce its chances of happening again, I don't think there's like a cure. Is to have a meeting, it wouldn't have to be a long meeting where you lead that. That's your way of the shame has a hold of you, but if in the next staff meeting, you say, "Hey before we get to the agenda. I want to hand out copies of what happened last time." And because you're the one that kind of drew it sideways, in family systems language you're also the motivated change agent.
- Joanna Meyer: [18:37](#) That's fascinating.
- Steve Cuss: [18:38](#) Yeah, you're the one saying, "I don't want to be like this." Most of the rest of the team don't ... Everyone hides from shame, so

if they felt that you're exposed and they love you, they're not going to say, "Joanna, let's revisit this." But if you come in and do it, it makes you in control of the thing that was in control. The thing that took over you and turned you into a person you didn't want to be. By leading the meeting it actually puts you in charge, it's a classic family systems technique from a science called Cybernetics. And that's how you do second order, what's known as second order change. I think this is some of the most powerful stuff I do in the book, is second order change.

- Brian Gray: [19:16](#) Can we differentiate first order to second order change?
- Steve Cuss: [19:18](#) Oh yeah. Yeah, first order of change usually makes things worse. First order of change is people's best meaning effort to change things that only makes it worse. You kind of acted out in the meeting, people's attempted solution is to never talk about it again, that makes it worse. Second order of change is Joanna says, "Hey everyone I've provided a happy diagram." Now if you really want to have fun with it, you always add absurdity to it. I can already tell you guys obviously have a lot of fun together. Either Joanna or Brian, you could have a quick meeting before, one of you brings some humor into it but it can't be humor directed at you Joanna. It shouldn't be mocking, it has to be a unrelated source of humor.
- Steve Cuss: [19:59](#) I'm trying to think. I can't think of an example in your case right now. But it's just something that makes ... Because when you laugh and joke, shame and humor don't stay in the same room.
- Brian Gray: [20:09](#) Here's how I would do it when I would talk my wife and I, and we're trying to figure out a conflict that went sideways. Or in doing premarital counseling for years. We're going to autopsy the dead, we've got a corpse, what was the cause of death? How did it get here? I mean, so in essence, that's not particularly funny, but that's an example of just kind of, "Hey, let's call this what this is." And it's not really a corpse, but you know, let's analyze the cause of death, right?
- Steve Cuss: [20:35](#) Yeah. There's the power of an absurdity. Shame and humor generally cannot coexist.
- Brian Gray: [20:42](#) That's interestingly true.
- Steve Cuss: [20:43](#) Humor is a simple way to get on top of ... Really all we're doing is flipping the power dynamic. Now, if in the next 100 meetings, 20 of them, you know, you only act out 20% of the time instead

of a 100, that's a huge win. I think the other challenge is, this is not like a Dr. Phil where there's a quick prescribed solution and your life's better.

- Brian Gray: [21:03](#) Brilliant.
- Steve Cuss: [21:04](#) You know, you'll still struggle with the same triggers, but you have now got all this power of insight over it. And then part of what we're leaning on now is the whole other half of the book which is, how does a leader not just notice their own internal triggers? But how do they start noticing what's going on between people? And that's what we're talking about here, and that's why it's so powerful, it's 'cause your internal trigger infected what happened between people, and you leading everyone through that journey helps you and them.
- Brian Gray: [21:31](#) Which was my responsibility in the meeting in essence, in terms of just to pay attention to what's happening to between people.
- Steve Cuss: [21:37](#) Right, that's true, and also as a perfectionist, you're always going to think you're always going to be over responsible.
- Brian Gray: [21:42](#) Over responsible for sure.
- Steve Cuss: [21:43](#) Yeah, you're going to be a over functioner. I don't know any leader that's that nimble. Like you can once in a while you can say, "Hey Joanna, I think what's happening is you're exhibiting some shame." But that can be sometimes be 10 times worse 'cause now you're feeling exposed.
- Brian Gray: [21:56](#) Exposed.
- Joanna Meyer: [21:56](#) Look at me and my shame.
- Steve Cuss: [21:59](#) Let's all, let's all look at Joanna and don't blink.
- Joanna Meyer: [22:00](#) Let's all take a look.
- Brian Gray: [22:00](#) What's you're most embarrassing moment? Right now in this conversation.
- Steve Cuss: [22:02](#) Right, right. I think you're stuck, I think what you did honestly sounds right to me. It's like, "Oh, we'll do a side conversation later."

- Joanna Meyer: [22:10](#) Yeah, and a couple things that really helped was having a side conversation with Brian. And I realized in some ways that the issue was not the issue, there were some unresolved conversations leading into that triggering moment, that I am going to take responsibility for and work on getting resolved. And that really, really helps, that allows the overall relationship and culture to heal.
- Steve Cuss: [22:28](#) Yeah, where things get really fun is in our church I'm the top of the organization. I'd hate to give the impression that I'm like the Yoda that everyone else ... So the people under me are doing this to me when I act out. So long as our listeners understands it's not that like Brian is the great guru, and Joanna man, she's worth it but it's difficult, it's not that at all. It's that we all have our shadows and we all have our foibles, and some of my best leaders are leading me. And they're very aware of my shame triggers and my issues. Some of my best leaders will come to me and say, "I don't think you're aware that you're unhealthy right now." 'Cause I'm often the last to know when I'm not well. I'm type A and driven and all of that.
- Steve Cuss: [23:10](#) And so some of my leaders under me, it's a great risk that they take to say to their boss, "You're not well, you're acting out in unhealthy ways." But that's part of it too, I'd hate to give the impression that like I'm some kind of Yoda who's gotten above all this. This is really just a pathway through any situation, it's not that you like graduate and become you know, a monk.
- Brian Gray: [23:30](#) You talk early on in your book, you talk about the idea of leadership is simply knowing what to do in a given situation. I think what you're describing is connecting to this buzzword concept that's been around organizational culture. You've in essence, in some way architected an organizational culture which not only is it okay to point out these things to you but it's-
- Steve Cuss: [23:49](#) It's welcome.
- Brian Gray: [23:50](#) It's an expectation.
- Steve Cuss: [23:50](#) It's expected, yeah it's expected.
- Brian Gray: [23:51](#) Yeah, that's a healthy culture.
- Steve Cuss: [23:54](#) In our church, if staff don't fail they get in trouble. If they don't make mistakes they get in trouble in our staff. You know, we create a welcome cultural feedback but also we expect our staff

to make big mistakes. Once in a while we'll prescribe staff members, we'll pull them aside and say, "You're not making enough mistakes, you've got one week to make a whopper."

- Joanna Meyer: [24:13](#) I would love to see that.
- Steve Cuss: [24:14](#) Because they're hedging their bets you know, they're playing it safe.
- Brian Gray: [24:16](#) Yeah, that's really good.
- Steve Cuss: [24:16](#) Yeah, and organization health. I think the power of the Gospel is, and this isn't original with me. But in the old testament, people really believed that sickness infected health, and so lepers had to be distanced, and sin infected holy people. And so when Jesus comes along, you can't be near lepers and you have to stay away from so call sinners, as if you know [inaudible 00:24:40] weren't sinners. Jesus comes along and he touches the lepers, and his health infects their ill health. And he associates with sinners and he kind of gets them closer to God, like it's a reverse power.
- Steve Cuss: [24:52](#) Cultural health to me, that's what this material does, is you can walk into an unhealthy culture and infect with health. And unhealthy individuals, like we have a staff of 33 I think at our church, most of them part time. Some of them would say that they came in pretty healthy, but it's almost like a positive peer pressure, they also get healthier because of our systemic health. We don't tolerate triangulation and gossip and things like that. We promote risk and failure. And so these aren't healthy beliefs where you know, I can never fail, I can never blow it, or I'm never going to have a direct conversation with someone, they just dissolve.
- Joanna Meyer: [25:28](#) That is so fascinating.
- Brian Gray: [25:30](#) Oh, it's amazing.
- Joanna Meyer: [25:31](#) I'm curious to know, you had referred to not chasing quick fixes, like a Dr. Phil solution.
- Steve Cuss: [25:37](#) Poor Dr. Phil I keep throwing him under the bus.
- Joanna Meyer: [25:41](#) I know.

- Brian Gray: [25:41](#) Do you feel shamed by that by the way? He's triggered somewhere.
- Steve Cuss: [25:43](#) I feel like I'm actually speaking about someone I'm not in the same room as.
- Brian Gray: [25:46](#) I'm sorry Phil. I know you listen to this podcast right now.
- Joanna Meyer: [25:49](#) Somewhere we just triggered Dr. Phil. I'm curious to know for an individual who may be going into work, what does it look like to gradually over time begin to grow in managing your anxiety?
- Steve Cuss: [26:01](#) What do you mean what does it look like? How long does it take?
- Joanna Meyer: [26:03](#) Yeah, or practically speaking. What can a person begin to do now that overtime will bear fruit in their ability to manage their leadership anxiety.
- Steve Cuss: [26:10](#) Yeah, I do think you know, this 30 minutes is a portal into a several month journey, sometimes several years. It reminds me of I've got chronic lower back pain. When I was in my late 20's I went to a back surgeon and he wanted to operate on me, and I'm like, "You've got to be kidding. I'm way too young to have open back surgery." I went to this chiropractor who had miracle status in the community, everyone talked to him like a miracle worker. I'm a natural skeptic, I went in super skeptical. And my first appointment with him, I said, "Hey, do I have to believe to be healed?" It was almost a joke about it.
- Joanna Meyer: [26:46](#) It's almost biblical.
- Steve Cuss: [26:47](#) And he's like, "No, this isn't psychosomatic, like I'll either heal you or I won't. There's no magic, there's no pretend." He said, "However you're only going to be with me for six weeks, and you're going to walk out six weeks later in the same amount of pain you walked in with. But eight months from now, you'll slowly perceptively start to feel better." And that's exactly what happened, I hobbled out of his office after six weeks of treatments and like a couple of thousand dollars in as much pain as I walked in. And then like three months, four months later, I could get in the car, it didn't twinge as bad, and then like nine months later I was pain free, it was crazy. It's a particular technique that doesn't matter for this podcast. But I do think this material is exactly like that. I

- Steve Cuss: [27:29](#) think you start it, and it feels like, "Man, when is this ever going to feel better." Especially because the next phase is you become self aware, especially if you're a perfectionist like Brian. All I've done for Brian is now add another layer of shame, because now he knows his triggers and he should know better by now. You kind of end up saying, "Oh, I should know better." But it takes months and years, but the next step is I think to learn to pay attention to the way people relate as much as what people are saying to each other, I think that's the next step. Is if you put 50% of your mental energy into how are people relating to each other, and how am I relating and how are we infecting each other good and bad? As much as whatever the agenda of the meeting.
- Steve Cuss: [28:16](#) That's what you said Brian. You said, "You know, my job was not just the agenda, but to manage the room." I think that's a huge skill, anyone can do it, it's like a muscle you just have to exercise, but it's going to take a while.
- Joanna Meyer: [28:30](#) Yeah, that's wild.
- Brian Gray: [28:31](#) That's really good. Hey, here's a question I'd love as a closing thought for each one of us. Steve I'll ask you and then Joanne on the same. In response to this conversation today, what's one thing that you would love for listeners to do in response.
- Steve Cuss: [28:46](#) I mean, one thing I would love listeners to do is be brave, I think. And believe that the healthiest leadership in parenting is vulnerable. That would honestly be my number. When I heard Joanna's example, before she even asked for help, what's she's done to address it. It's like, Oh, this is clearly a brave person, who's willing to walk-
- Joanna Meyer: [29:08](#) Some days.
- Steve Cuss: [29:08](#) You know, walk into her ... Yeah, that would be it I think.
- Brian Gray: [29:11](#) Who's willing to podcast things.
- Joanna Meyer: [29:13](#) Yeah, yeah, I guess I would be a very-
- Brian Gray: [29:15](#) Just only that brave.
- Joanna Meyer: [29:17](#) Hey, I do online dating.
- Brian Gray: [29:19](#) Oh do you really?



- Joanna Meyer: [29:19](#) If you want to talk about courage, that is bravery embodied, right?
- Steve Cuss: [29:23](#) So, online dating is an amazing context for this material.
- Joanna Meyer: [29:27](#) Oh, goodie.
- Steve Cuss: [29:30](#) Yeah, you're walking into it, you don't know the situation. How much does the photo have in common with the reality? How many minutes into the meeting do you already know no second date. I think I would actually encourage in online data to triple the amount of dates, if you wanted to get more of these reps under your belt.
- Joanna Meyer: [29:48](#) Well it looks like I have some homework to do.
- Brian Gray: [29:49](#) Especially if this is going to create some great conversation.
- Steve Cuss: [29:51](#) Especially if the dates paying, what's to lose?
- Joanna Meyer: [29:53](#) Yeah.
- Steve Cuss: [29:54](#) The date is paying for your education.
- Joanna Meyer: [29:57](#) Oh, that's wonderful. I'm going to get the book and I'm going to apply it.
- Brian Gray: [30:00](#) Joanna, what's one thing you want listeners to do?
- Joanna Meyer: [30:02](#) I would say, press into this idea, the tension that you feel around at work. Whether it's a spinning thought, a clenching gut or a racing heart, is a tool that God wants to use to help you experience his grace and truth more clearly. And so the process that you're describing, the principles in the book will be a wonderful too to encourage that.
- Brian Gray: [30:22](#) Yeah, I think I'll go practical here up front. I've listened to a number of your podcasts Steve. I just think it's really, really thoughtful.
- Steve Cuss: [30:29](#) Oh great.
- Brian Gray: [30:30](#) I wanted you to join us today, because it's very integrated theologically, and it's very practical in everyday for anyone who's listening to this. What I'd like for people to do is to consider reading the book and begin in their own internal and

personal journey, before they would start thinking about fixing or healing their staff teams based on any of this.

Steve Cuss: [30:49](#)

Yeah, good, yeah.

Brian Gray: [30:50](#)

But just to start and sit with the ... It's just there are a lot of tools, you actually use the word tools, right? There's just a lot of practical tools that give people I think some great interior growth and freedom, which is spiritual formation at and for the workplace. I'll throw in a shameless plug for the book. You'd mentioned to me offline that there's actually going to be some videos that are going to be in connection with that. Will you tell us about that, 'cause the other thing is this is something listeners might consider.

Steve Cuss: [31:14](#)

For sure, yeah, yeah, thanks for that. Yeah, the podcast I agree. The guests on there I'm really thrilled with. I'm learning a lot, I'm getting great information out of the guest. I would say the challenge with the podcast, it is a bit hodge podge, it doesn't lead people through a linear journey. The book is the better resource if you're wanting to go through a journey. I've been living with this material 25 years now. The book is my best effort to give people a pathway and a language that they can actually go on their own journey. And then video series is meant to supplement the book, because I think the best way to go through this pathway is together. I think if you just read the book you get all this content, but the real power is what we're doing now. Is kicking around ideas, that's where you really experience transformation.

Steve Cuss: [32:01](#)

Yeah, I made a set of videos, they're all on my website. That you read a chapter of the book, you watch a video, you get with three or four people and then you discuss. And even some pretty deep tools like how to build a Genogram, and then if you facilitate it, I've got a whole video on how do you facilitate it. If you've never done a Genogram not only are you doing one, how do you lead others to do one? I've made a video on how to do that, there's a downloadable PDF on questions to ask, things to look for. Some of our listeners may or may not be familiar with the verbatim, but Joanna's example is a great verbatim, where you would type up word for word what happened. You would track how you were thinking and feeling at the time, you do a theological reflection, it's like writing a paper. I have a downloadable verbatim for people who'd what to do a verbatim together.

Brian Gray: [32:45](#) That's great.

Steve Cuss: [32:46](#) Yeah, those are some tangible tools for sure.

Brian Gray: [32:48](#) We're going to link to those in our show notes. I would just say, if you think the Western Australian radio voice is good, wait until you see the video face.

Joanna Meyer: [32:55](#) That's going to be awesome.

Steve Cuss: [32:55](#) That's right, it's magic, it's magic.

Joanna Meyer: [32:57](#) Steve you've been a gift to us today. Thanks for wading into our little internal dynamic here at the office at Denver Institute. I hopes it's blessed other people to share in my shame a little bit. We want to encourage our listeners to look at the show notes, because we'll have connections to your book which just came out to this week. We'll have a link to your website, and the podcast they can connect more with you through the show notes.

Brian Gray: [33:18](#) And I'm going to try and get Dustin to link to all of your online dating profiles in the show notes.

Joanna Meyer: [33:23](#) What you don't realize is I have a file of greatest hits photos, only for dear friends do they get to see those. But they're the most ridiculous photos I've ever collected in online dating.

Brian Gray: [33:32](#) That's amazing.

Joanna Meyer: [33:32](#) It's a good, it's an entertaining night.

Brian Gray: [33:34](#) It's part of the future memoir people.

Speaker 4: [33:35](#) So good.

Joanna Meyer: [33:37](#) But we want to encourage people for more conversations like this, to subscribe to the Faith & Work podcast. You can just click surprise ... Not click surprise, click subscribe to be part of our ongoing conversations. Thanks for listening everyone, more adventures and stories in the weeks to come.