



Joanna Meyer ([00:02](#)):

To live in a with God honoring patterns of balance and rest in our lives means you're going to be living a very counter-cultural life, even in your own faith community. But I think especially at work.

Speaker 2 ([00:17](#)):

You're listening to the Faith and Work Podcast where we explore what it means to be a follower of Christ in the workplace.

Dustin Moody ([00:29](#)):

Hey, everyone. Thanks for listening to the Faith and Work Podcast. I'm Dustin Moody, director of communications at Denver Institute for Faith and Work. I'm joined today by Joanna Meyer, our director of events and sponsorships, and our coordinator for our Women in Vocation Initiative and Brian Gray, COO of Denver Institute and director of the 5280 Fellowship. Welcome back to the podcast, guys.

Joanna Meyer ([00:47](#)):

Hi, Dustin. Nice to be with you.

Brian Gray ([00:49](#)):

Yeah, actually really grateful to do this. This is the right thing for the right time for me. I'm looking forward to it.

Dustin Moody ([00:53](#)):

Yeah, today's podcast, we're going to be looking at common questions about work and part of the reason we're reviving this conversation is because the first time we had it, it's one of our most popular podcast episodes. So, some of the material may be a repeat for those of you that have heard that episode, but we wanted to just dive into some of the more common questions that we hear around Denver Institute at our events, at our fellowship.

Dustin Moody ([01:15](#)):

Most people at one point or another have asked or will ask about the integration of their work in faith. So, that leads me to my first question for Brian and for Joanna. We talk a lot about integrating our faith and work, but what does that actually mean practically?

Brian Gray ([01:29](#)):

Yeah, this is a buzzword or a buzz phrase, integrating my faith and work. I think many people use it, few people pause to reflect what do they actually mean by it. I think of it two ways, conceptually, and then I want to go really practically. Conceptually, if we were to think about what are all the ways that our faith leads us towards internal or personal connection with the Lord, and then external or service-based or missional out-workings. all aspects of our faith are in these two categories.

Brian Gray ([01:58](#)):

Then look at all the aspects of our work. What are those aspects from which I derive personal benefit or personal sense of meaning or sense of accomplishment? And then, what are all the external ways that



my work is helping others, serving others, creating a good and a practice? This is two categories with some internal, personal and external, public aspects.

Brian Gray ([02:18](#)):

I would suggest that integrating faith and work means that those are not two columns. Those are not two separate concepts that are for the follower of Christ, that these internal and personal representations of our faith ought to be taking place within the fabric of our everyday life, which is for most of us who are working, at least for those who are working full-time, most of us are going to spend most of our waking hours in a place.

Brian Gray ([02:40](#)):

So, I think that really tactically that we not think of these as separate, spirituality and workplace, as separate concepts, but they're actually deeply wed. They're integrated, they belong together, and we tend to separate them. That's just conceptually.

Brian Gray ([02:53](#)):

Practically, Joanna and I could probably speak to a number of different practices, what this looks like, but really I'll give a personal one that's been really tangible. We will often ask people to pause and to reflect through a traditional, typical work day. What are the types of moments of enjoyment, gratitude, moments of challenge that they experience throughout a particular day, and then to start to identify if there's patterns in those?

Brian Gray ([03:18](#)):

"Oh, I tend to get defensive when someone doesn't like my idea. I tend to immediately come under stress when I feel like I have too many things that I won't be able to get done on this day or in this week." Whatever these triggers are, we encourage them to connect a breath prayer to that very moment so that they're integrating this aspect of deep, rich, old, spiritual practice, which is a simple sentence prayer. They're integrating that into the very things that would solicit the need for a reminder of our union with Christ and service into the world.

Brian Gray ([03:48](#)):

For me, I wake up in the middle of the night and I start thinking about stuff at work or I start putting together spreadsheets for projects that truthfully do not even exist. And my breath prayer is, you are God, inhaling, and I am not, as I exhale. And it's a prayerful, meditative reminder of who's I am. I think we could craft various breath prayers to integrate these moments of frustration or celebration or opportunity or risk or fear or whatever, that those are moments that we are with God for the world, still. They're not separate from our spirituality.

Joanna Meyer ([04:25](#)):

Oh yeah. I think about integrating your faith and work every time I have a performance review. And it's funny talking about that because I report up to Brian, so I'm sitting here podcasting with the person that delivers my performance reviews, but this is an ongoing [crosstalk 00:04:38].

Brian Gray ([04:37](#)):

You better be positive or that will be on a performance review.



Joanna Meyer ([04:41](#)):

It's an ongoing conversation that Brian and I have about how I receive feedback. And if it's critical feedback, I have a tendency to go very deep and negative very fast. The way I criticized myself may be worse than what the person is actually put on the form. And so, when I think about integrating faith and work, every time I get negative feedback at work, it's an opportunity for me to live the gospel in that moment. And I'm still not doing it well, but I'm learning in that moment, I'm loved unconditionally, God desires for me to grow, but that I can rest in the midst of the fear of receiving negative feedback. And to me, that's ground zero of integrating your faith and work. We all have moments like that.

Brian Gray ([05:20](#)):

Yeah, that's brilliant. If you think for most of us, because I'm in a similar boat, I'm my own worst critic in so many ways. But for most of us, when we think about those things that challenge our sense of identity or worth, it's an opportunity where we can realize, "Oh, This is personal to me. Joanna, I might be putting out an aspect of my identity and worth in how much I can get done, how competent what I got done just looked like, whether or not everyone else thinks I'm adding value, et cetera."

Brian Gray ([05:49](#)):

And those are actually the property of the Lord and the Lord alone to speak to that value and worth for us and not to derive those primarily from our accomplishment in the world and what we're doing in meeting. That's a concrete way to integrate faith and work, identity and looking at those idols of the heart that we all have, and where we're giving ourselves to.

Joanna Meyer ([06:09](#)):

Yeah, and to broaden our conversation, get a little more theoretical again, I think it comes back to the idea of a big gospel. So often, we think of a life with Christ as our personal journey, like Jesus is my friend, he has saved me. Or like Brian said, it's missional. It's the overtly spiritual work we do in the world. But really, when you think about it Christ's death and resurrection has taken any area of our world that has been distorted or broken by sin and is in the process of redeeming it. We may never see that until Christ returns, but it's a process, we're living in that reality.

Joanna Meyer ([06:42](#)):

And so, that means anywhere, any industry, any corner or neighborhood of our city that is experiencing the distortion and brokenness of sin is ripe for God to be at work. And so, it's just waking up to that. Give me 10 minutes with anybody listening to his podcast, we'll talk about their work, and it'll be evident where areas of brokenness are. And so, I go integrating faith and work needs an awareness of this spiritual reality in any corner of our lives and saying, "Lord, how might you use me to respond to this? How can I participate with you in the renewing work that Christ can bring to this situation?"

Brian Gray ([07:16](#)):

That's great about that. You've actually alluded to a very simple, practical question. We ask it as an elevator speech question, a room introduction question of our 5280 fellows. 5280 Fellowship as an emerging leaders program that I run here, and as we sit down with a leader in the city so they can get to know you, "What's your name, your job, and identify a place in need of redemption within your job or within your industry or within your community around you."



Brian Gray ([07:44](#)):

We're actually asking people to integrate faith in work. We're asking them to think about redemption more broadly than the individual soul being saved. But to think about God's redemption of all things, Colossians 1, or making all things new, Revelation 21. So, this is an integrating question that we can portably carry with us into every team meeting, into every project that we're attempting to manage with its imperfections and its hiccups and it's brokenness. "What is broken and in need of redemption and, Father, what might I do in response to that?"

Joanna Meyer ([08:13](#)):

Yes, and how can I show a love for my neighbor through the nitty gritty of work. Brian and I were talking about this recently because I'm facing some medical bills in the next few months. Ryan has figured out our benefits policy here at the Institute. And I know he didn't enjoy the experience. It was a hassle. Nobody wants to figure out insurance. But we were talking a little bit about the bills I'm going to be facing and I was in tears because I said, "Brian, this is the most tangible example of loving your neighbors through your work that I've experienced recently. Because you had done such a thoughtful job negotiating our insurance, I will be able to afford my medical bills."

Joanna Meyer ([08:49](#)):

I will not be tanked because of these expenses. And I thought, you didn't realize at the time, but you are loving me through your attention to very non spiritual work. And I think there are so many ways that we can love our neighbor through the way that we approach our work.

Dustin Moody ([09:01](#)):

Yeah, so let's talk a little bit about those ways, and you both hit on loving our neighbor through our work. Brian, you mentioned what can I do about areas of brokenness? One of the common questions that we hear is that, "I don't feel like I have agency in my work to make big changes. What can I do in my limited space, in my limited position?" Maybe they're not a manager, maybe they're on a business leader. "What can I do, practically speaking, to actually make this reality?"

Joanna Meyer ([09:27](#)):

I think start right where you are. If you're in an entry level role, maybe if you're in middle management, invest and address the issues right as you face them because people will see that level of initiative. And often, you can't guarantee it, but they'll interest you with more. And I've often said middle management is one of the most powerful people-oriented roles in an organization. If you want to have influence to love and shape the culture of place, just work with people.

Joanna Meyer ([09:51](#)):

And so, take an opportunity to engage right where you are. And we see the fruit of this kind of thinking all the time with the 5280 Fellowship. A lot of our fellows are just emerging in their leadership, very few of them have C-suite level jobs. We see the incredible fruit it has brought to their work to engage in very small practical ways in the daily. What do you think, Brian?

Brian Gray ([10:10](#)):

Yeah, this question is absolutely in the water for early to mid career folks who may have, at some level, if not an entry level position, early career positions all the way up to positions where they'd like to have



more agency or influence than their position affords them. They don't have the positional authority to make major changes inside of an organization and they wrestle with this question. So, I think there's two things that feel important. The first one is theological, a second practical.

Brian Gray ([10:41](#)):

If we consider the parable of the talents, which really important to remember is that the quantity of profitability of the investment is not what's commended in this parable. It depends on the version. There's one, two and five or there's two different versions with different varying amounts. But the person who invests their talents and makes no return is... The issue at hand here is that they've actually not stewarded the opportunity that they had, in comparison to the person who has 10 talents and returns 10 talents.

Brian Gray ([11:12](#)):

It's not their profitability of 10 talents. It's that they made something of what they had significantly. So, what's really interesting is you have a couple of people in these parables as Jesus has used in at least two recorded instances where he's very comfortable with different people having different levels of, if we can superimpose this question, agency or authority or influence or the ability to move the needle. He's entirely comfortable with that. Whereas we are less so.

Brian Gray ([11:42](#)):

And what he expects, stewardship, is to make more of what you have at that moment. And I think to me, we have to remember that because Rome wasn't built in a day and neither was major change or small significant steps or Eugene Peterson's old phrase was, "A long obedience in the same direction," just a long organizational faithfulness, noticing and making the small right changes will be observed and will be, in many situations, will reward a person with increased opportunity.

Brian Gray ([12:16](#)):

And then, in the fellowship, we talk about the idea of just don't focus on a longterm posture of influence and leadership responsibility, focus on small gestures of that because those small gestures, over time, build this type of posture of agency in the places where we find ourselves.

Joanna Meyer ([12:31](#)):

And for ease into the fellowship program, we are seeing that.

Brian Gray ([12:33](#)):

Absolutely.

Joanna Meyer ([12:33](#)):

Which I love.

Brian Gray ([12:34](#)):

Yeah, absolutely.

Joanna Meyer ([12:37](#)):



You can't guarantee someone to get a promotion, but we're seeing people get promotions because they're doing amazing work and they're standing out for their integrity, for their imagination, for their commitment. He can have a wonderful influence.

Brian Gray ([12:48](#)):

Yeah, we're actually not supposed to be productive, if we use a fruit and a vineyard analogy. Our task is not productivity, it's faithfulness actually. And faithfulness will lead in partnership with the Lord towards fruitfulness in many of these agrarian analogies. But our responsibility is not total productivity and crop yield and all the ways that we typically have a dashboard in our organizations for certain metrics, it's faithfulness leading to overall fruitfulness, which is the shared property of us with the Lord and our workplace.

Dustin Moody ([13:18](#)):

Yeah, we just finished up some work around *Every Good Endeavor*, a book by Tim Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, and there was a passage in there that I came across as we were preparing for this podcast that I thought was helpful to read and reflect on as we're thinking through this question of what can people do with potentially less agency in their work.

Dustin Moody ([13:34](#)):

And it says, "One of the things less senior employees can do is ask questions about the company's mission and, if it is a sound one, treat it seriously and help keep it in the conversation. Leaders often feel overwhelmed by the cynicism and apathy of their employees and lose their drive to hold true to the company's values. Your care and commitment to those values, assuming they are good ones, could be just the encouragement your boss needs. To be a Christian and business then means much more than just being honest. It means thinking out the implications of the gospel worldview and God's purpose for your whole work life, and for the whole organization under your influence. So, even if you are not necessarily directly influencing people, you have an influence on the organization."

Brian Gray ([14:14](#)):

That quote is fantastic. The idea is really important, but it's intensely practical. Just think about, if we all imagine for a minute ourselves in work or our coworkers, people who can point out problems are a dime a dozen. Anybody can look at and point out problems. The gospel is not a story of, look how broken, look how fallen, look how wrecked, look how awful. This will never go anywhere. The gospel story is one of those things in being healed, those things being redeemed. A problems-orientation person is just easy and cheap and easy to overlook and you have dismiss them.

Brian Gray ([14:51](#)):

A solutions-oriented person in an organization is actually incarnating or embodying this gospel story by saying, "I see this, this, and this, and we could A, B, C, D, E. What do you think? Do you want to try?" Those are two entirely different types of people and they're actually both very infectious in an organization, but perhaps contagious in ways that is unhelpful, toxic, or contagious in ways that is redemptive and optimistic. It starts moving a bottom line. That solutions orientation that's in that quote, that is a gospel story posture that we take.

Dustin Moody ([15:26](#)):



Our third question, this one veers into the more practical aspects of our work, but we oftentimes hear people complain about what society will tell us is a work life balance. It's been said often, "I often feel like I'm dropping something. Nothing feels attainable and balancing work and life. What can I do?"

Joanna Meyer ([15:45](#)):

I think that's the question of the American subconscious right now, "How do I make this all work?"

Dustin Moody ([15:50](#)):

Or how do I have it all?

Brian Gray ([15:52](#)):

Yeah, "Dear pot, I'm the kettle, and I'm about to call you black." I am a recovering workaholic who has found his sense of significant enough in the quantity of hours I've worked to try to fight down this tension. So, in this question that's been asked, I don't even feel like that's an attainable goal. The first statement is, that's right, work life balance is not an attainable goal. That is leaning the ladder up the wrong wall. That is an attempt to climb towards a goal which is not the goal that we can maintain on this side of eternity. This is at least a fallen world which has some impossibilities to that.

Brian Gray ([16:25](#)):

Now, we can offer responses, but the first thing is work life balance is a bit of a myth. You can't have it all. I think the difference though is the first thing anybody who's feeling this, which my suspicion is it's probably most people listening, are feeling some version of their own tension in this, and the hard thing about a tension is you are pulled in two competing directions in the moment.

Brian Gray ([16:48](#)):

You feel a tension towards value A, you feel a tension in a different direction towards value B. That is the difficulty that feels uncomfortable. I'd say the blessing of that as if you don't feel that tension, what has gone wrong along the way? Either are you the workaholic, just totally giving yourself in an imbalance on one side? Or perhaps, are you missing opportunities towards a richer or more faithful, perhaps a broader stewardship, of who you are on behalf of the world?

Brian Gray ([17:16](#)):

This doesn't mean work more. This doesn't mean to build your identity there, but if you feel really deeply well rested, this is great, life's going wonderful. Perhaps there's an opportunity for greater fruitfulness. If you're feeling the opposite, perhaps there's opportunity for greater faithfulness in terms of resting from some of these idols of our industry, productivity, efficiency maximization, bottom line production.

Joanna Meyer ([17:41](#)):

Or even just accessibility of being online 24/7.

Brian Gray ([17:43](#)):

No doubt.



Joanna Meyer ([17:44](#)):

It's realizing that to live in with God honoring patterns of balance and in our lives means you're going to be living a very counter-cultural life, even in your own faith community. But I think especially at work, some companies will expect you to be available 24/7. You might have to set some boundaries with your boss that may not be highly appealing to anyone except for you, hopefully, that you're not going to be available at any given time. You may choose to pass up a promotion because you know that to accept it would cost you your relationships or not allow you to be present to your family. There is a big cost, but realizing that God asks us to live sacrificially in every area of our lives can move us towards counting the cost of those changes.

Dustin Moody ([18:27](#)):

Yeah, I think this question brings up issues of Sabbath that I'm getting better at, but I'm certainly not performing well. Last summer, we did some work around Sabbath. We had a scatter course that we released about it, we had had a talk at a previous women's event about it, lots of people are writing about it right now. One of the things that I realized, to do Sabbath well, your community also has to do it with you.

Dustin Moody ([18:52](#)):

If you're being intentional about taking a Saturday or a Sunday of downtime and you're still getting invitations to everything, that's not really a Sabbath. You're not really resting and reflecting and refreshing. Sure, there are some Sabbath practices I think that could be an antidote to this, and especially to overwork. The thing I keep coming back to is to do Sabbath well, everyone has to be on board, whether it's your family, your community, your cohort of friends, and know what that plan is.

Brian Gray ([19:18](#)):

Yeah, we've talked extensively about Sabbath in some other places. I think that the gift of Sabbath and the difficulty of Sabbath and the same thing is from the beginning of the creation story, God has himself demonstrated a voluntary limitedness. "I will work six days and rest one." He has commanded and asked and designed human beings to live within a limitedness that we continue to push against. To be fair, what you just mentioned, Joanna, technology makes that more and more possible. If we are back pre-electricity, there is a limited amount of daylight. It is a resource by which most people can work by day. And after that, we are having the more communal practices around the fire, the shared fire, the place in the home, the lantern, whatever this is, you move from productivity to community. There's no end to that.

Brian Gray ([20:12](#)):

An electronic device, a screen, something glowing is waiting for you to work on depending on your type of work at any opportunity. And so, many people who work in those types of environments have to recognize that the increasing limitlessness of culture is what's creating this tension even more deeply. I think the practice on this is that, for most people, I want to pause and be really sympathetic towards those who are feeling underemployed or who are unemployed or who have interest in capacity for more than what they're doing. Okay, so let's just state that as a reality for many.

Brian Gray ([20:46](#)):



But for others are on the opposite side of this tension who are just gearing up all the time and going and are in a productivity cycle quantitatively, that fits within their work lifestyle, they have to really ruthlessly avoid cheap yeses. "Yes, I can. Yes, I'll take on another project. I'm looking at our communications director. He's looking at me. This is a vice of ours. Yes, I'll take that on. Sure. I'm happy to do that. I'd love to do that too."

Brian Gray ([21:09](#)):

Our interest and our appetite or our organization's interest and appetite for our work bandwidth will almost always exceed a healthy, sustainable human capacity to meet that bandwidth. And that is the limitedness that we have to really embrace. "I have to be more ruthless with nos. I have to kill some of my darlings. I'd love to mentor, fill in the blank. I love to take on this speaking opportunity. I'd love to work that project. That would be so amazingly interesting to me." No, that contends against so many of our values and it's the only way to begin to approach a more balanced relationship between work and our non-work life.

Dustin Moody ([21:51](#)):

Next question, scripture doesn't have a lot to say whether I stay in this current job or leave for another one. How do I think theologically about job transition?

Joanna Meyer ([22:01](#)):

Oh man, that's such a hard thing because you're right, scripture doesn't speak directly to it. One thing that helps me is to step back and say, "Okay, what is mainstream culture saying about job transitions? What's the norm and maybe what would be a contrast of the Christian life to that?" I think we're in a season of work, especially in certain kinds of industries, and I think it's very generational and some changes about work in general where job hopping is the norm, where as long as you stay at a place a year, that's fine. But you could literally change jobs every year and it wouldn't have a negative impact on your resume like it might have 15 or 20 years ago.

Brian Gray ([22:36](#)):

Sales is a classic one.

Joanna Meyer ([22:37](#)):

Sale, technology, I think startup culture. What we don't acknowledge under the surface is it can create this attitude of always looking for the next best thing. It's a little bit like online dating. It's easy to feel like there's always somebody better waiting around the next corner or on the next posting online. And so, being able to look at that desire either wanting a quick fix, the hope for something better, being discontented with the current reality that you have, I think if we can step back and say, "Are those factors playing into my decisions to change jobs?"

Joanna Meyer ([23:08](#)):

Now, hear me out, I'm not saying that any desire to change jobs falls under that umbrella, but I do think it's a cultural norm that we're seeing, especially in a place like Denver where it's a young work environment, it's a hot economy. There are great jobs available, and so it just feeds into this tendency to be dissatisfied and always looking for something better.



Brian Gray ([23:26](#)):

Yeah, how do we think theologically about this? It's not the only exercise, but our Christian spirituality extends beyond our theology. It's the starting and foundation point that our lived experience is built upon. And so, there's two thoughts. One is that this is, at some level, can be a question about what we believe about the nature of God's will. Does God will that I take this specific job at this specific company in Denver or in Detroit or in Dallas or in Delhi? That is the types of questions that are being asked there, show a version of God's will that it's very much a needle in a haystack. And the work of the believer is to listen and to discern and it will be told to her.

Brian Gray ([24:06](#)):

And I'd say that that is another, perhaps broader, maybe more generous, and I would want to suggest a way that maybe more fits with both the narrative of scripture and the lived experience of most Christians over time, is that God's will isn't revealed as frequently and normatively like that. It's revealed within wisdom. It's revealed within asking to examine the desires of our heart. What are the things that the heart loves? God's will is revealed to us within a community of other faithful believers with whom we are discerning the nature of our lives.

Brian Gray ([24:39](#)):

I get three or four people around me and ask them to be a personal board of directors. Should I consider this opportunity or not? Ask me the harder questions. So, these are the types of ways that God's will, for most people in most places, is confirmed or is revealed. And I think this is a God's will question, for so many people, at least it is. How do I think about job transition? Well, it's almost a question of your process. And you could get to, "Do I take job A or job B?" And the answer might be from the Lord, "Yes."

Joanna Meyer ([25:05](#)):

Either one's fine.

Brian Gray ([25:06](#)):

It doesn't matter. It matters why you take job A or B. And I think that maybe leads me to a second thought. I hope I don't sound like a chromogen, but I'm really personally impacted by this old Benedictine Saint Benedict in his monastery, this old value of stability, the pillar of stability. It's about delayed gratification. It's about, to your point, Joanna, not believing the grass to always be greener somewhere else, but to stay and to see what a longer commitment of permanency in a place might look like, what fruit that might bear.

Brian Gray ([25:38](#)):

Toxic relationships, toxic environments. Look, we have to take this really seriously and the believer needs to make sure that they are in a place where they can be healthy, fruitful, producing. So, this is maybe to the exception to those types of places. I've asked Jesus if he put me in the dirt in Colorado someday. "Lord, if I lived a faithful enough life to be able to remain here on behalf of these people in this place, what might that look like?"

Brian Gray ([26:00](#)):

That for me, is an imagination and stability that I never would have thought about in my twenties and thirties, that I never would have thought about if I was just... What's next? What's the next opportunity?



How do I grow? And so, I think this creates this job transition question, should probably raise values proposition questions for people. Do you have to make more money? Why do you believe that? Do you need a better title? Why do you believe that? Is that organization guaranteed going to be the grass is always greener because they have fill in the blank better culture or they have better benefits for workers or you don't have to do as much overtime shifts in the construction role? It is the grass really going to be greener over there or not? These are important questions that people have to wrestle with.

Joanna Meyer ([26:42](#)):

Yeah, what's my motivation? Where are opportunities to serve in the context of this role? Some of those harder questions will reveal what's really driving that desire to change.

Brian Gray ([26:51](#)):

Yep.

Dustin Moody ([26:51](#)):

Last question before we wrap up. I'm going to skip down, guys. My job doesn't feel like a calling. What am I doing wrong?

Joanna Meyer ([26:59](#)):

[inaudible 00:27:00]. We've got to talk about this because it's a question I think more than any that we get here at Denver Institute, is people wanting to know how do I discern what God wants me to do? And I think it comes back, to answer to the question, just some of the misperceptions that we have about calling. I think we have bought into this idea that our jobs, our place in life should be a source of ultimate fulfillment, a fulfillment we can only find in the Lord. And sometimes, that can lead us to think that a job that doesn't seem, I hate to use the word sexy, but it isn't so popular or isn't super attractive that that might not be the place that God has for us.

Joanna Meyer ([27:33](#)):

And actually, Dustin and I were talking about this this morning because we had gotten into a conversation about what did our grandparents do for a living. My grandpa was an immigrant from Russia. He farmed on Colorado's Eastern Plains' poverty stricken existence, and he farmed sugar beets of all things. When was the last time anybody farmed a sugar beet?

Brian Gray ([27:53](#)):

That was 60 years ago, before sugar beets went away here?

Joanna Meyer ([27:53](#)):

Yeah, exactly. I used to play on the old, rusted sugar beet picker on my summer vacation. Dustin, would did your folks or grandparents do?

Dustin Moody ([28:01](#)):

Yeah, all of my grandparents were what we would call blue collar workers. My mom's dad worked in a factory. He worked on road construction. He never learned to read, never finished school. My mom's mom worked in an office at a feed plant. So, I'm originally from central Florida, lots of agriculture, lots of



cows at the time, lots of citrus at the time. That's since changed in the last 25 years. And my dad's parents were both on the packing line at the Minute Maid Citrus Plant in our town.

Joanna Meyer ([28:28](#)):

It's so fascinating because you think about what were their expectations for fulfillment in that type of work? For those folks, what would have defined a good job?

Dustin Moody ([28:37](#)):

I don't think that was a question they even asked.

Brian Gray ([28:39](#)):

Yes, that's it.

Dustin Moody ([28:40](#)):

Yeah.

Brian Gray ([28:40](#)):

Yeah, or how would they sit with this question about the relationship of a sense of calling to that type of work?

Joanna Meyer ([28:45](#)):

Exactly.

Brian Gray ([28:46](#)):

I think the question at the very beginning, "My job doesn't feel like a calling. What am I doing wrong?" The first thing, your job is not a calling. There's not an equal sign between vocation or calling, occupation or job. There's not an equal sign between those. A calling does not equal a job. A calling is bigger, it's a larger story of not what we are called to do, but to whom we are called and by whom.

Brian Gray ([29:10](#)):

As a follower of Christ, I'm called into union and communion with Christ. That motivates my why behind everything I do in life, to love God, to love and serve neighbor. And when I have that who and that why in line, those are the primary aspects of calling. They can be faithfully expressed in a whole lot of places. Oh, yeah, our job is a really significant one where we express that, but it's also, this is a whole life question. I steward a sense of calling and friendships and for me in fatherhood and I steward it in my role and leadership in a local church and I steward it amongst, oh yeah, my coworkers and in my job and on behalf of their people. So, calling cannot be limited a job. That's a first and foremost category error.

Brian Gray ([29:49](#)):

And truth of the matter is I see it almost constantly even for people who go, "Yeah, I know better, but my job doesn't feel like a calling." Maybe that also betrays, to your point, with the types of work that your grandparents did, maybe that also betrays, what I'm really looking for are some assumed up and to the right values that our cultural narratives about work, and it satisfaction or this idea of do what you love, which a Christian should very ruthlessly and carefully examine. Maybe some of those things are



actually getting... Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life. If you've been told this, this is simply a denial of thistles and thorns and the sweat of your brow.

Joanna Meyer ([30:28](#)):

[inaudible 00:30:28] sugar beets. It's awful.

Brian Gray ([30:28](#)):

Yes, have you ever seen my email inbox? I'm so sorry people who emailed me four and a half months ago. I'm still getting to you. We've all got these aspects. I don't love certain things that I do. That's not it's actual goal. I'm faithful to them, I'm trying to steward this one small and hopefully precious life on behalf of service and love of neighbor, and it doesn't always end up in these ways that feel meaningful, feel fulfilling, even when it's occupying an expression of that sense of love God, love neighbor.

Joanna Meyer ([30:59](#)):

Yeah, and you start to realize that some of our perceptions of calling are very distinct to this point in history.

Brian Gray ([31:07](#)):

Privileged, modern.

Joanna Meyer ([31:08](#)):

Yeah, if you're in a certain class or ethnic background, you may have a lot more freedom to choose your job versus taking what's available to you and realizing, even globally, I live in the American West, I live, as we said, in Denver, which is a hot economy. The world is my oyster professionally versus if I was living in sub Saharan Africa and questions about calling are going to look totally different there.

Joanna Meyer ([31:30](#)):

And so, you have to realize, oh, how much of the angst that I feel is driven by this moment in time in this place that I live versus the timeless truth of scripture. Brian, you said as you referred to, God gives us a general calling. There's no guarantee we're going to get a very specific detailed call to a certain type of role or a certain position. And we can rest in knowing that if a general call is the only thing we get in an entire life, that that is enough for a life of faithfulness.

Brian Gray ([31:58](#)):

I won't, by name, show the name of the gentleman that cleans the office in which we get to work and where we're doing this recording, but he and I've talked before. He works two full-time minimum wage jobs, which still puts him below a living wage in the city of Denver because he's not from this country originally and he doesn't have a college degree. If I asked him the question of my job doesn't feel like a calling, what am I doing wrong? If I asked him that, it would be the most socially awkward moment. He would just stare at me like I'd offended him.

Brian Gray ([32:28](#)):

For him, a sense of faithful calling is I'm providing for my family. I'm doing the best I can against some biases against an immigrant in a country that is chock full of them. I'm working more quantity than I want to be and could be, but it's paying the bills. It's keeping the family fed. My kids have an education.



This is a faithful expression of calling, stewarding his abilities on behalf of others in a way that does not feel like what most people feel when they ask this question.

Joanna Meyer ([32:56](#)):

Yeah.

Dustin Moody ([32:56](#)):

Yeah. As we're wrapping up, I'm curious if you guys have one thing you would encourage our listeners to do as a result of today's conversation.

Brian Gray ([33:05](#)):

Oh, gosh, I'm a broken record. I am deeply committed in the second half of my life, or maybe the final third of my life now, to practice based spirituality. Identify one or two concrete practices based on some of these types of questions that resonate with you that you can carry with you into the world. I woke up this morning, every morning I've been praying a prayer of examine for about five minutes, re-examining my previous day through the lenses of gratitude.

Brian Gray ([33:34](#)):

I think it is slowly, slowly making me a more joyful person as I keep a gratitude bullet journal every single day. It causes me to think about work problems and that email inbox actually in different ways. So, I don't know what other people's practices are, but identify small, faithful practices and your faith work integration is a practice based, not conceptual, not intellectual, not knowledge-based activities, a practice based activity.

Joanna Meyer ([33:59](#)):

I think it's working, Brian. No, I'm serious.

Brian Gray ([34:02](#)):

I am not the angry Irish guy I was two months ago.

Joanna Meyer ([34:05](#)):

I see a sense of peace and calm in the midst of a very intense season for you. So, I would say it's working. Plenty of work to do still to grow, but it's working. My tip would be watch and pray. As we think about this idea of a big gospel of Christ at work in every corner of our city and our industries, just look and say, "Jesus, what about this situation isn't the way that you intend it to be? Or how could your love be expressed practically to the people in this place or in these systems and processes?"

Joanna Meyer ([34:37](#)):

Just see how he might spark your imagination to engage. That's what we need. I think it's not of developing a formula for this is what it looks like to integrate faith in the workplace, it's more a sense of asking God to spark our imagination and saying, "How might you work and how might you use me to be part of change in this place?" So, that would be my encouragement for you this week, of just saying, "Lord, what would you like me to see about my work that I haven't seen before?"



Dustin Moody ([35:00](#)):

Yeah, Brian, I'm going to take yours one step further, and for those of you listening, if you are looking for resources that are practical, spiritual based practices for your work, we put together a booklet, essentially a devotional booklet, last year called Spiritual Disciplines For Your Work. That's now available as a monthly download. If you are interested in receiving that each month, praying through things each month, I will link those to our show notes. You can sign up for that and we will send you a download every month.

Dustin Moody ([35:27](#)):

If you are so gracious and want to support the work of Denver Institute financially, we have a print copy of the book available for our new donors. I'll link that as well from the show notes as well. Guys, for your time today.

Joanna Meyer ([35:39](#)):

Thanks for listening, everybody.

Brian Gray ([35:39](#)):

Thanks.

Speaker 2 ([35:42](#)):

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