



Michael Arrieta: [\(00:02\)](#)

So we're simply trying to create a business where service workers are the heroes. We're trying to create a business where service companies are obsessed with service. We're trying to create a business that business is only for people and among people. That is what we are completely assessing is how can we radically enrich the lives of service workers? And we believe by doing that, it would be like running a company in the garden.

Joanna: [\(00:33\)](#)

Hi, and welcome to the Faith & Work Podcast, I'm Joanna Meyer, the Director of Public Engagement at Denver Institute for Faith & Work. And today I'm joined by Dustin Moody, our communications director. Hi, Dustin.

Dustin: [\(00:44\)](#)

Hi, Joanna.

Joanna: [\(00:46\)](#)

As we get our conversation started today, I am wondering if you've ever worked a job in the service industry and what that experience was like.

Dustin: [\(00:54\)](#)

Most of my jobs, early jobs in high school and college were more clerical office jobs, but I did have a couple summers when I went back from college to my hometown and I worked the front desk at the tennis pro shop at the town. So that's probably the closest service industry job that I've had.

Joanna: [\(01:11\)](#)

In college, I worked a number of hard jobs. I remember spending an entire summer cleaning houses and just being on my hands and knees. By the end of the summer my wrists were so tired because I had been doing the repetitive motion of cleaning 40 hours a week. So I definitely know the feeling of that and just how challenging it could be. It just reminded me that service industry work is not easy. Whether you're doing what I did cleaning homes, replacing roofs or killing pests, service industry work tends to be repetitive, it's physically demanding, and it often lacks benefits that care for employees over the course of their working lives. And over a lifetime those kinds of jobs take a toll on individual workers and their families.

Joanna: [\(01:53\)](#)

Our conversation today is with Michael Arrieta. He's the founder and CEO of a company called Garden City, who's passionate about changing the experiences for thousands of service industry employees by creating companies where every worker can thrive. What fascinates me about Michael is that this passion flows from his own experience. His father worked many, many service industry jobs, and so Michael learned firsthand from his dad's experience how challenging this work can be. I'm excited



because Michael will be our executive interview closing the day on March 26th, the Business for the Common Good, which will tell you a little bit more about later in the broadcast. Dustin, would you introduce us more to Michael?

Dustin: ([02:32](#))

Sure. As you mentioned, Michael serves as the founder and CEO of Garden City, a purpose-driven buyout holding company that has raised more than \$40 million of permanent capital to buy, grow, and forever holds service companies across the Southeast. Prior to launching Garden City, Michael was an early employee at DocuSign, where he served as global vice-president, general manager and chief of staff to the CEO. In 2016, Michael also founded MAV Ventures, a venture capital group that is invested in more than 20 companies ranging from technology to healthcare to consumer goods, and New Story, a nonprofit that has built more than 2000 homes in developing countries, and was recognized for creating the world's first ever 3D home printer.

Dustin: ([03:12](#))

As Joanna mentioned, we'll interview Michael about his vision for working as executive leadership during the closing session of Business for the Common Good, a national event we're hosting in person and online on Friday, March 26th. And we'll tell you more about that later in this episode.

Joanna: ([03:33](#))

Welcome to the podcast, Michael. We're thrilled to have you on the conversation today.

Michael Arrieta: ([03:37](#))

Thank you so much. Really looking forward to it.

Joanna: ([03:39](#))

Thanks. So some of the most passionate entrepreneurs are affected because their work is shaped by their personal stories. I would love to know more about your early years, everything from your father's work experience to your first forays in entrepreneurship.

Michael Arrieta: ([03:54](#))

Yeah. My father's work experience is probably the reason why I like to invest and acquire service companies that some people call boring, but I think boring is beautiful. So my father, he had a great job selling insurance in Puerto Rico, when he was in his early 20s making good money, saving, providing for us as a family. Then they moved to Miami where I was born. And because it was a different world and he couldn't transfer his insurance licenses and accreditations, he got any job he could. So he started selling lawn to supermarkets like the Spanish custard that-

Joanna: ([04:34](#))

I love lawn.



Michael Arrieta: [\(04:36\)](#)

I would love to have one right now as I say it at noon. But so he started selling lawn, and then after that he started working in Home Depot and furniture stores moving furniture, and started selling furniture. And it was difficult for him, it really was. It was very much a paycheck to paycheck growing up my entire life. So we had the financial difficulties of never having money saved and not having financial freedom. And he never really worked in companies that really invested into him as a human to have dignity and purpose, and mission and impact. They were just like, "Okay. He's on the P&L and he's a cog in the wheel." And he did a great job, he always provided for us. We never missed a meal, we always had a home to live in, but he never had a chance to really thrive or prosper.

Michael Arrieta: [\(05:29\)](#)

And so I got to see that firsthand. And really it was kind of a double-edged sword. On one side, I fell in love with these service industries because I quickly understood them. Like when I drive into a carwash, I quickly understand the carwash. It's not difficult to understand. Or a dry cleaner or landscape companies, I quickly got them and I fell in love with them. And then on the other hand, I really disliked them, like I really hated them in some sense, because of how they were being operated and ran in a inefficient, unprofessionalized manner. There was so much more opportunity at hand that many entrepreneurs did not take advantage of, and they really took advantage of their people and they took advantage of the opportunity at hand.

Michael Arrieta: [\(06:19\)](#)

So these things always stuck with me, which it took me 20 years to eventually do a full loop around of going into technology in Silicon Valley, to eventually go and say, "I'm actually going to dedicate the rest of my life to focusing and modernizing and transforming these boring services [inaudible 00:06:38] beautiful.

Dustin: [\(06:41\)](#)

Michael, I'd love to talk about that 20 year loop around a little bit more, particularly from the stance or the standpoint of calling. It didn't really suit when we talk about calling, we don't often assume that it is some singular message that's presented to us as the direction for the rest of our lives. It's more of a pattern that God reveals over time through relationships and job opportunities and interests, and that calling is more discerned along a journey rather than a fixed point. And as I've listened to your first response, and as we've talked about this is for the common good, as we've kind of researched some of our speakers, you kind of talk about these themes of sales and service work and service companies. So I'm wondering how those themes have combined to really serve as a calling in your life.

Michael Arrieta: [\(07:25\)](#)

Yeah. I read a book in 2018 when I really felt God calling me to leave DocuSign, where I was an early employee at DocuSign for six years. And I really felt God calling me to leave the technology world and go



into the service world. These family-owned small to midsize businesses and focus on enriching the lives of service workers there. And one of the books I read on this journey, not a lot people heard of this book, but it's called the Dream Giver by Bruce Wilkinson.

Joanna: [\(08:00\)](#)

Yeah.

Michael Arrieta: [\(08:01\)](#)

Have you read it, Joanna?

Joanna: [\(08:02\)](#)

I haven't read it but I'm familiar with his work.

Michael Arrieta: [\(08:04\)](#)

It's awesome. It's a fable. And something that really struck me when I read it is Bruce talked about how if you really dig deep inside, you can probably remember a childhood dream or a childhood passion or a calling that you've always had. And maybe the first thing that comes up is like, "No, no, no. I haven't had one." But if you actually really sit there and simmer in that, you're like, "Actually, I've always been passionate about why, but I never thought I could actually make a living of it. I thought it was just a dream. I thought it was just made up." Maybe it was your father, mother, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, teacher telling you that's just a hobby or something you can't do and go focus on becoming an attorney or whatever. And when I read that, I knew what it was for me.

Michael Arrieta: [\(08:50\)](#)

For me, it was ever since I can remember, I've been obsessed with small businesses. That's it. That was my calling. But I'm not going to graduate school and college and go figure out how to work in small businesses. And the little conversations I did have, I would talk to a small business owner like, "Hi, I'm Mike. I could help you." And they're like, "You're 22 years old. How can you help me?" Like, "I don't know but I'm really, really passionate about these small businesses. And there's something in here, just let me help you." And they're like, "No, thank you." So the opportunity didn't really present itself. But God continuously kept prompting and checking and nudging me something around small midsize businesses.

Michael Arrieta: [\(09:31\)](#)

Now, I didn't see how that was going to come into fruition. Fortunately, last year in 2020, it did. But to answer your question, I think sometimes we probably do know what that calling is. Maybe it's really buried deep, deep down inside from decades ago, but I think we're constantly kind of following that voice of God. I think he eventually does prompt us and check us, give us opportunities to chase that big hairy, audacious calling of ours.

Joanna: [\(10:01\)](#)



Yeah. We often say calling is discerned in the rear-view mirror because it totally makes sense when you're there in the moment, and you look back and you think, "Oh. It's really been here all along. God's been revealing it step by step or he's shown me little threads along the way." And so it's fun to think of your life both growing up with your father and early experiences as a teenage entrepreneur and now leading your company. It's fun to see how that calling has unfolded. I'm wondering if you could explain what Garden City does in laypersons terms.

Michael Arrieta: ([10:28](#))

Very simply, there's hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of thousands of small and mid-sized companies all across this country. If you just think about your home, you have the pest control company, you have maybe a roofer, you have a handyman, you have a landscaper, you have the fence company, you have the HVAC, you have the plumber, the electrician. The list goes on and on and on and on. And then by the way, if you have a car, you have a mechanic and you have a tire guy, and you have all of this sort of stuff. And you have kids that go to daycares and they also go to schools, and you pass toll booths, and you get your car wash. All these things we're saying are all primarily owned by business owners who run small and midsize companies.

Michael Arrieta: ([11:15](#))

Well, the majority of those small to midsize businesses that we look at every single day, they are owned by someone past the retirement age. So they're owned by baby boomers. Stanford and Harvard calls them the Silver Tsunami. So there's this whole Silver Tsunami happening across the country, this massive, massive tidal wave that all these small to midsize business owners, 75% of them, they do not have a liquidity plan so they don't actually have a way to sell the business and capitalize their equity. And number two is they don't have a succession plan. So they've been doing well for a while, maybe they have a 10, 20, 30, \$40 million business, but they don't have anyone to hand it off to because their daughter became a nurse, their son became an architect, and while they run a pest control company. Like their children are not going to take it over.

Michael Arrieta: ([12:06](#))

Or many times your children can't stand the business, because their father was sacrificing throughout their entire time growing up trying to build this company, and they were never there at dinner. So when they even have the preconceived thought of, "Should I take over this business?" They're like, "I hate this business." So it's dirty, it's messy, it's complicated. It's very emotional. So again, there's hundreds of thousands small businesses that they need a liquidity plan and they need a succession plan. So what we created, Garden City, is we are a purpose-driven holding company. A lot of people are familiar with Warren Buffett. He has a company called Berkshire Hathaway. They're known for buying businesses.

Michael Arrieta: ([12:49](#))

They're very simple and straightforward and fair. He'll call a business owner and say, "Hi, I'm Warren Buffett. I know you run a company called Dairy Queen. I like your business, I look for things that make



you unique and competitive, I want to give you a fair valuation. We'll make this process simple. We'll buy the business in 30 days, 60 days. You could stay in the business, you could leave, it's up to you. We're very flexible, we're not going to come in and take out the whole management team, we're not going to flip it, we're not going to rip out costs. We just like the business, if you're interested in selling, we're interested in buying it. Very simply."

Michael Arrieta: ([13:20](#))

We're trying to do the same thing with a Christian flair. We're trying to go into businesses and say, "Hey, small business owner that runs a pool cleaning service, that might be \$10 million of revenue, have you ever thought about selling your business?" And the business owner goes, "Yeah. But I don't think anyone would buy it, and so I just keep running and I'm 70 years old." Well we say, "Well, we'll buy it and you could stay in it for a year or two if you want, or you could get out tomorrow, and here's what we promise you. Number one, we're going to care for your people, so we're all about culture. We're going to set up an environment where your people could thrive and prosper and flourish. So we're going to be a service company obsessed with serving your people radically."

Michael Arrieta: ([14:02](#))

And we'll get into that later what that means, because we look at it in terms of a holistic approach, economically, socially and spiritually. "The second thing we're going to do to your business, Mr. Owner is technology enablement. We're going to modernize it. We're in 2021. I know there's a lot of technology systems out there and a lot of brand and SEO and marketing and all these fancy words that maybe you haven't really explored because you're just like, "Why do I need to explore it? I'm making three, four or \$5 million a year. I've gotten this far without it, I don't need to start worrying about it now." Well, we're going to come in and modernize it, because that's our background."

Michael Arrieta: ([14:35](#))

And the last one is sales. We have 15 mission-aligned investors, that they could actually probably help you strategically be introduced to other people. Maybe like if you have a pool cleaning company, maybe a large country club or a large hotel, that they can make the introduction, so overnight, now your business is getting those contracts as well. So we're being very value add. "And the biggest thing Mr. business owner is we buy and we don't have any intention of ever selling. So we buy and hold forever." So that's what we do. We're going to businesses that are small businesses across the Southeast, we buy them, we grow them, and we hold them forever.

Dustin: ([15:13](#))

Michael, this conversation is hitting a little close to home, particularly because my dad's a small business owner and we're having these conversations with him about what does it look like to plan for his business after he's gone? It's not something that my brother and I necessarily are interested in, so we're having some really interesting conversations with him about handing that over. And there's a lot of issues around identity and purpose and things built into small business owners as well. So I'm curious to talk a



little bit more about that Christian flair that you mentioned, particularly all the way down to the name Garden City. I'm curious kind of what theological underpinnings there are with what you do with Garden City?

Michael Arrieta: ([15:52](#))

Yeah. Let me back up and tell you a quick thing. So Garden City is not going to be for all business owners. I have a family member who he is in his 80s now, lives in Houston, and he has a business that's in our perfect sweet spot. It does about \$20 million of revenue, they make about \$3 to \$4 million per year of profit. And I would love to buy this business. And this family member told me, "Michael, I will never sell you my business. Why? Because I'm going to sell it to the person who gives me the absolute most. And I do not care what happens after I sell my business. They can put as much debt on it as possible, they could fire people, they could change the name. I don't care. I sold it, and I'm out."

Michael Arrieta: ([16:34](#))

If that is your intention, we will never be the right buyer for you. There's thousands of private equity companies that they buy businesses, buy the whole thing with debt, and they're over-levered. And their whole entire mission is a financial mission to flip it in the next two to five years to another buyer. So if we ever compete with those businesses purely on a, "How much are you willing to pay?" we're going to lose every time. Why? Because you could always put more debt on the business, and if you're buying and flipping it, you could pay more. We're buying it with a very conservative amount of debt. And we're buying it with the intention of holding forever. So our message only really resonates to business owners who care deeply, who care deeply about their customers, who care deeply about their employees and who care deeply about their community.

Michael Arrieta: ([17:23](#))

So if you're a business owner that cares deeply about that, then the Garden City message really relates. So what is the theological meaning behind Garden City? It's in the beginning. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the skies, the animals, everything. But he saved something really special on that Sixth Day. His pinnacle of creation was he made man and woman in his image to rule the earth, to cultivate the earth, to multiply here on earth, to co-labor alongside him, to do good here. To grab the kingdom of heaven and bring it onto earth. So that when he looks down, he says, "And it is good." That was his entire original design. Now, we messed up along the way, right?

Joanna: ([18:14](#))

Just a little.

Michael Arrieta: ([18:15](#))

Yeah, right? We messed up a little, but now thousands upon thousands of years later, we still have that opportunity to co-labor with him. To ensure that his sons and daughters have the opportunity to thrive, and have dignity and respect and purpose and live life on mission. So we look at the companies that we



invest in and we say, "If this company existed in heaven, how would it look like? How would it feel? How would the people get treated? What would we do from culture? What we do from technology? What would we do from branding? How would we pay this business owner?"

Michael Arrieta: ([18:50](#))

So we're simply trying to create a business where service workers are the heroes. We're trying to create a business where service companies are obsessed with service. We're trying to create a business that business is only for people and among people. That is what we are completely obsessed with, is how can we radically enrich the lives of service workers? And we believe by doing that, it would be like running a company in the garden.

Jeff Heynen: ([19:18](#))

Hi, this is Jeff Heynen, the founder of Denver Institute for Faith & Work. Hey, thanks for listening to the Faith & Work Podcast and for letting me interrupt you briefly to share just a request. I want to ask you to consider becoming a financial contributor to Denver Institute. Each day thousands of people listen to our podcast, engage our short courses and grow spiritually as a result of generous donors like you. Each podcast episode is 100% funded by generous donors who believe that work as a way to love God, serve our neighbors and demonstrate the gospel to our world.

Jeff Heynen: ([19:48](#))

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Joanna: ([20:22](#))

What's the current reality for a service worker? I mean like what is keeping them from thriving? And then, practically speaking, what are some of the changes that you make to a company's culture that make life better for its employees?

Michael Arrieta: ([20:34](#))

Yeah. So let's start on the current state. I speak to probably on average, maybe anywhere from two to five business owners per day. And let's just say half of those are secular business owners, and half of those are faith-focused believers. Across the board, it's messy running a business. It's hard. It's hard. I mean, you're focused on making payroll, you're focused on making sure that this customer is satisfied, you're focused on making sure that you're sourcing your products on time and you're paying a good amount. You're focused on making sure that you have enough people on staff. And you have a marriage, and you have kids and everything else, and so like all of those things are the things that have to be right



in order for the business to exist tomorrow. So many times that takes up 99.999% of their mental bandwidth.

Michael Arrieta: ([21:31](#))

Now, there's those rare exceptions of business owners who they actually could go deeper. And those business owners, they go deeper on saying, "How can I actually ensure that I have a culture where my people could thrive?" They then spend the energies and the cycles, and they get the wisdom and the sermon to actually stand up what I call a caring environment. But the current reality for a service worker is, you go online, you find a company that's hiring, and you apply for a job at a call it a waste facility, or sorry, a waste management company, and you apply and they get back to you. And they say, "Yes, we're looking for a person to work in our recycling company." And they say, "Come on Monday for one interview." And they come on Monday, and that person didn't fail miserably, so they hire them.

Michael Arrieta: ([22:19](#))

And then they come in on day one, they talk to them for maybe an hour or two, and then immediately throw them into the field. And maybe if it's a company that is a little bit more intentional, they might have them shadow for a day or two. There's no training, there's no vision, there's no mission, there's no values, there's no development, there's no leadership, there's no team building, there's no vulnerability to build trust. They just throw them in. Why? Because they're in over their heads. They have a job that needs to be filled, and they need that role to be filled. So now that person's in the job working 40, 50, 60 hours a week, getting paid minimum wage. They barely have any benefits. If they do have benefits, the benefits are way too expensive.

Michael Arrieta: ([23:04](#))

And they don't have any one-on-ones to know how they're progressing. They don't know if they're doing good or bad in their job. They don't know how they could actually ever get to a point where they could become an assistant manager or a manager, or how they could ever get paid more. It's all nothing is binary. It's all qualitative, it's not quantitative. There's no path to success, no clear ladder to success. And many times, they're a cog in the wheel. They're invisible. I've been guilty of it, walking into a building or coming off an airplane and you have the people wearing the orange vest that are cleaning the seats. And I don't even look at them sometimes. I don't even appreciate what they do. Many times it's a lot of the service workers. They're literally invisible. People look at them like a serial number.

Michael Arrieta: ([23:51](#))

And they're the most important part of our economy. Especially last year, we finally give them a name they deserve, essential workers. They are essential, they're the backbone of this country. Without them we would crumble and fall. So that's the current situation. And guess what? A lot of people say, "Well, hey, at least I have 50 of them on my payroll. At least they have jobs. I pay them on time. Isn't that enough?" And the unfortunate part is, it has been enough. That's the unfortunate part. So now, what we're trying to do. What we're trying to do is honestly, kind of what Silicon Valley did years ago.



Michael Arrieta: [\(24:29\)](#)

Some crazy people in Silicon Valley started saying, "We're going to have a competitive moat around our business to recruit people to say, yes, you're still going to be an engineer just like you were an engineer at that firm, but we're going to go above and beyond and maybe we're going to pay you a bit more. Maybe we're going to give you equity." That's crazy to give a software developer equity back in the day. "Maybe we're going to actually pay for your lunch, maybe even commuter benefits, maybe even phone benefits. Maybe even bereavement. Maybe even paternity and maternity. Maybe even chaplaincy services, maybe even counseling services." And Silicon Valley has gone overboard with all this. Now there's a lot of things saying that they've gone too overboard, but the net net of it is they focused on creating an environment where the workers felt like they were the superheroes.

Michael Arrieta: [\(25:20\)](#)

So what would it look like to bring that into a landscape company? I mean, it would be insane that they would even know what... I mean, they would think that you're playing Undercover Boss on them. They would think that it's a prank. So imagine going into a company and focusing on economic improvement, social improvement and spiritual improvement on economic improvement. Imagine going in and saying, "Hey, everybody. I know everyone that is at a minimum wage right now. That does not jive well with us trying to create the most caring companies that honor God. We want you to have a thing called a livable wage." "Well, what's a livable wage?"

Michael Arrieta: [\(25:59\)](#)

"Well, we know that you guys live in Atlanta, Georgia, and the minimum wage for Georgia does not relate to the minimum wage in Atlanta being in a metropolitan city. We did this study to realize how you may live with a family of three and on minimum wage it's impossible. You would have to have three jobs. And we don't want you to have three jobs if we want you to do an excellent job here. So we are going to change the payment schedule and put you on a livable wage." Companies do this, like Publix, like Costco, like In-N-Out, Chick-fil-A. Many companies do this where they focus on providing a livable wage.

Michael Arrieta: [\(26:32\)](#)

I know a lot of people say, "Oh. Well, Mike, we're running too low on margins, we can't afford that." The companies that we buy, they can't afford that. If you're running on 15% net margin, so you have a \$10 million business and you're making one and a half million dollars a year, I challenge you. Instead of making one and a half million, make a million, take that half a million dollars and pay your people a little bit more. Watch what happens to the P&L the following year. [crosstalk 00:26:58]. Say that again?

Joanna: [\(27:00\)](#)

Turnover drops.

Michael Arrieta: [\(27:01\)](#)



Yeah, exactly.

Joanna: [\(27:03\)](#)

[crosstalk 00:27:03] through the roof.

Michael Arrieta: [\(27:05\)](#)

We've done the modeling before. It takes on average three to five years for you to actually see the numbers to work out. For onboarding, offboarding, training, development, all of that, if you make your people happier, they're going to treat their customers happier which will create a healthier business. So anyways, economic returns. What about if instead of saying we want all of our people to think like owners. "Hey, one of our values, think like an owner. Think like an owner." Well, I can't tell you, "Think like a Christian," if you're not a Christian. That's silly. It makes no sense. So how can I actually expect you to think like an owner if you're not an owner?

Michael Arrieta: [\(27:42\)](#)

However, if I give you all equity from the CEO down to the janitor, and I tell you, "Think like what you are," well, guess what? If you're a driver, that you know your current route is inefficient, and you keep going out of the way to make stops, and you actually now own a piece of the company and you know that every dollar matters, you're going to proactively go out of your way to drive those efficiencies. You're going to think like an owner in many of those cases. So again, there's a reason why it's called an investment. It costs you \$1 to hopefully get two or three in return. So yes, that is an investment to give part of your company up in equity, but you're going to get more in the long term. So those are examples.

Michael Arrieta: [\(28:21\)](#)

Another thing is a ladder to success. Imagine working at a carwash. A friend of mine has a company called EverWash, strong believer based in Chicago. And he gives people a very clear path to say, "You start at \$12 an hour. But if you do this, this and this, a year from now, you'll be at 15. And then from there, if you do this, this and this, you will be at 25. And from this, this and this, a manager. And from this, this and this, a franchise owner." Clear, clear, clear trajectory, nothing up for gray matter. Completely unbiased. They have to go through training, they need to go through things in a weekend, they need to read certain books, they need to pass certain NBOs and KPIs and OKRs, all that. But it's up to them. So you're giving them an opportunity to succeed. So all that's on the economic side.

Michael Arrieta: [\(29:07\)](#)

The second is social side. On the social side, there's many things you can do. For example, there's this very neat concept through a ministry called His Way At Work, that they set this thing up called the care team. A care team allows you every quarter to get part of your profits and put it into a little bank account. Let's just say a company does this for \$10,000 every quarter, \$40,000 a year. And you actually select employees at your own company to manage that pool of money. So they actually manage that care team. And these employees, so you're now empowering your own people, these employees, they



receive requests from their own teammates and their own colleagues on things that they need help with.

Michael Arrieta: ([29:55](#))

"A bad storm came through, it knocked down part of my roof, my roof is leaking, it cost \$1200. I don't have it. My husband just passed away. We don't have money for a funeral. I talked to a funeral home, it cost \$2,000. My daughter needs a surgery," so forth and so forth. So through this committee, they come together, they receive the request every month, and they then go and they distribute out money where they see fit. That's a social benefit. It's phenomenal. Another social benefit is partnering with mission-aligned Christian companies like Ron Blue for financial advice. Or other companies that are local for marital counseling. There's a lot of ministries out there, that we as the business owners say, "We want to make this totally available to all of you at no cost."

Michael Arrieta: ([30:42](#))

The two biggest constraints for any person is marital issues and financial issues. It's 10 times worse when you're paycheck to paycheck, and you're under the whole. 10 times worse. So imagine having that ability that you say, "We understand it's hard. We're there too. And we just want to extend this service to you to meet you where you're at, because we see you and we love you. With nothing in return. You don't have to, but we just want to be here for you." Then lastly, spiritually. I know different people have different styles of this. We're not out to tally up the people that we're saving in our company. God's going to do his thing, we just need to love God and love others radically. And we're just trying to be a servant in our companies. But we are going to be intentional.

Michael Arrieta: ([31:28](#))

It's kind of that seesaw between being legalistic and intentional. It's very difficult. But we're just trying to be very intentional. So our heart is that we're building companies that are honoring God by being the most caring and the most innovative because of what he's done in our life. So we put chaplains in our business, that are there upon request, that are there twice a week in the morning before the shift starts sharing the gospel, that are there if anybody wants to meet and wants to pray. I met a company that I told you about recently, when I was speaking to you and Jeff called... It's a roofing business in South Florida. They have about 400 employees and 170 people have given their life to Christ through the chaplaincy program. There's Marketplace Chaplains, there's Corporate Chaplains of America. It's amazing. It's amazing.

Michael Arrieta: ([32:20](#))

If sports teams have, like one of my investors is Mr. Drew Brees and the Saints. And he talks about chaplains. If sports teams have it and they're so critical to sports teams, or senates or even airports, why wouldn't we have it in our business? Why wouldn't we? Why are we so scared to loving our people through the love of Christ to say that they're forgiven, and they're seen and they have dignity and that they matter? Now maybe it's just because we're scared to make the investment. Again, it goes back to



this whole premise of it's not charity, we're talking about an ROI. You're getting a return on these investments.

Dustin: [\(33:02\)](#)

Michael, before we wrap up, I'd love to hear a little bit more about your personal life as a business owner. You've talked about some of the constraints and the stressors that business owners face, particularly in the context of businesses that you pursue. But you're an entrepreneur yourself, you're a business owner of Garden City, you've got a lot going on, I have to imagine that balancing the demands of work and home can be a little bit challenging. So one of the values of Denver Institute is seek deep spiritual health. So I'm curious if you could just tell us a little bit about how you have structured or decided to pursue spiritual health in the midst of growing a business.

Michael Arrieta: [\(33:39\)](#)

Yeah. I heard something recently last week by the CEO of Grab. Grab is like the Uber for Southeast Asia. They're a \$15 billion company, he's a kingdom leader and so forth. I love what he said, "There's no such thing as work-life balance. There's only work-life harmony." I heard that and I was like, "That is beautifully said." It really hit home. How do I ensure that I'm intentional about my spirituality? I'm so ill-equipped to be a CEO. I'm so ill-equipped to be an investor. If you ask me the role that I'm least qualified to be, I would say an investor. Just numbers were never my forte. I was never a 4.0 student, so forth and so forth. So I must depend on him wholeheartedly. If he does not show up, I'm toast. If he does not show up, I'm toast.

Michael Arrieta: [\(34:40\)](#)

So I integrate it through many different ways of life. One is, I like technology so I leverage different technologies out there to be sure that I get the word, from tactical things such as the Bible app. I just started doing a new thing through a pastor named Nicky Gumbel, it's like Bible in a year, which has been phenomenal. I really like that. To different meditation apps like Abide or Pray.com and so forth. So those are kind of all the tactical things. The other thing is, I really put myself in communities. A majority of all of our investors are all believers. So I'm naturally I'm being counseled, and I'm given a lot of wisdom and discernment by people who value the kingdom more than they do the dollars. And so naturally, we're just integrating all of this through generosity and through caring for others, and humility, and excellence and generosity, and all those things. So it's naturally being interwoven in there.

Michael Arrieta: [\(35:46\)](#)

And then the last one is, it takes a lot of discipline, a lot of discipline. I know how weak I am, and I think once I realized how weak I really am, I realized just how much I needed to put certain guardrails up in my life. So every single day, I leave the office no later than 5:30. No ifs ands or buts. End of story. Done deal. Just because I know how easy it is for me to just work myself to death. I'll work 24 hours straight if I can, so I've made a covenant to my wife, I made a covenant to my family. Actually, when I launched Garden City, I wrote my resignation letter and I signed it, and I addressed it to my board of directors. And I said,



"I know you're probably reading this thinking this is crazy, but if I wrote this back in 2020, and you're reading this right now, please prioritize my family, my kids and I over this business, and please accept this."

Michael Arrieta: [\(36:44\)](#)

And I gave it to my wife and I signed it and I go, "It's yours for whenever you want. Whenever you want to give it to my board, I will leave the company." And so I put a lot of guardrails in place. I delete all my mail apps from my phone all weekend. So from Friday at 5:00 till Monday morning, I don't see my email. So things could be going crazy, I don't care. It's time for me to rest and be with my family. And I just walk freely in the spirit. It's no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me. My two favorite verses it's Proverbs 3:5, Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And don't lean on your own understanding, acknowledge him in all your ways, and he'll show you which path to take. It's just so good for me to say. I don't need to worry. I just need to trust him. He'll show me which ways to take. That's a pretty light yoke. It's pretty awesome. I don't need to figure it out.

Michael Arrieta: [\(37:38\)](#)

And then the second one is Philippians, I think it's four. I always forget. I think it's... You can Google it but it's don't worry about anything. Don't worry about anything, but instead in all situations with prayer, thanks and petition, submit all your requests to God. And then his peace which transcends all understanding will be given to you. Which is just like the best thing for an entrepreneur to hear. Don't worry about anything, but instead in every situation, have those three things. Thanks, petition and thanksgiving and submit all your requests to God. And then what happens? He doesn't say what's going to happen except for one thing, his peace will be given to you. So you will have peace. So a good stress test for me is if I'm walking and I'm stressed about anything, I'm not trusting. It's that simple.

Joanna: [\(38:32\)](#)

Michael, I feel like we're just scratching the surface when it comes to talking about faith-driven business leadership, which is why I'm so excited for our community to get to hear more from you at Business for the Common Good. Thanks for your time today and also your time on March 26th at the event. It's our privilege to know you and walk alongside you and your leadership, so thanks.

Michael Arrieta: [\(38:51\)](#)

Thank you guys for what you do. We need it very much in the marketplace, so thank you.

Dustin: [\(38:55\)](#)

Thanks for joining us, Michael.

Michael Arrieta: [\(38:57\)](#)

Thank you. Have a great day you all.



Joanna: ([39:04](#))

Well, if Michael's interview today piqued your interest, I invite you to join us Friday, March 26th at Business for the Common Good. You can find out all about the event at businessforthecommongood.com. We'll be offering a range of options for participating, whether that's joining us at one of six host sites across Colorado's Front Range. Or if you're across the country, you can also join us as an online viewer. To learn all about the event, our amazing lineup of speakers and register for your tickets, you can go to businessforthecommongood.com, and I hope that we'll see you on Friday, March 26th.

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

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