



Dustin Moody: ([00:03](#))

What word of encouragement would you give to the fathers who might be listening?

Nathan Hoag: ([00:10](#))

Oh, wow. Good question. You're probably better at being a dad than you realize, and you're probably more equipped naturally to be a dad than you realize.

Intro/Outro: ([00:30](#))

You're listening to the Faith and Work Podcast, where we explore what it means to serve God, neighbor, and society through our daily work.

Dustin Moody: ([00:42](#))

Hello and welcome to the Faith and Work Podcast. I'm Dustin Moody, director of communications at Denver Institute. And I'm joined today by my colleague, Joanna Meyer, our director of public engagement. How's it going Joanna?

Joanna Meyer: ([00:51](#))

Hi Dustin, it's going really well.

Dustin Moody: ([00:52](#))

This is the first time we've been back together for a podcast in a while, in person.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:57](#))

What a treat, what a treat.

Dustin Moody: ([00:58](#))

Yeah. It's a good episode. And I'm curious, it's a couple of days before father's day, what comes to mind when you think of fathering?

Joanna Meyer: ([01:06](#))

This is such a good question because I think fathering comes in a lot of forms. I grew up in a home where my dad was very invested in my life, so I had a lot of time with my dad growing up. And very fun memories of trips to the hardware store or learning how to fish in the backyard into a pile of leaves or something like that. But I also think about many of the men that have been in my life that have had a fathering influence, even if they weren't biologically in that role in my life.

Joanna Meyer: ([01:36](#))

I was thinking of my friend Dave, he didn't father me necessarily, but he described an experience with his own family. His sons were playing high school football and the family, Dave and his wife invested very heavily in the life of the football team. And one of the things that he found was that the many, many



meals that they serve the football team in their home before a game, certain young men would gravitate towards Dave in the kitchen. They would just always be found hanging around Dave in the kitchen. And he realized over time that often those young men were from homes where they didn't have really a dad's presence in their life.

Joanna Meyer: ([02:09](#))

And so that sense of presence, of wisdom, of walking alongside of offering care. To me those are all attributes of being a father that aren't limited to a specific biological role. And so that's why I wanted to explore this topic today for the men or women who might be listening of what does it look like to kind of live an integrated calling of both our professional callings, but also those relational callings like parenthood?

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

Yeah. So today we're going to be talking about fathering, but not just the role of biological or adoptive fathers, we want to talk about fathering more broadly and how it can look different for different people in different seasons of life. We often don't think of fathering as a craft or a calling, but our guest today will help us explore fatherhood from both of those perspectives.

Joanna Meyer: ([02:49](#))

Yeah, I'm super excited for you guys to hear from our guest today, Nathan Hoag. Nathan is a friend of Denver Institute, he's spoken at our events, and he's a pastor at The Sacred Grace Englewood, which is a neighborhood church in the Denver area. He's a graduate of Denver Seminary and is ordained in the Evangelical Presbyterian church. In addition to his full-time work as a pastor, he has worked part time for Stranahan's Colorado Whiskey since 2013, and he serves on the board of directors for the Denver Rescue Mission. And if I can toot Nathan's horn a little bit, he was recently named Englewood's citizen of the year, which is amazing. And the reason why we're having him on the show in addition to all of his amazing attributes is that Nathan and his wife, Julie, are the foster, biological, and adoptive parents to three kids. And they currently, you'll hear have three more foster kids in the home. So they currently are parenting six kids, which is just amazing. So welcome Nathan, we're excited to have you here.

Dustin Moody: ([03:45](#))

Nathan, thanks so much for joining us on the Faith and Work Podcast.

Nathan Hoag: ([03:48](#))

Thanks for having me.

Dustin Moody: ([03:49](#))

Yeah, I want to get started kind of at the broadest level. We're talking about fatherhood in the context of calling, but as a pastor how do you explain calling to people?



Nathan Hoag: ([03:58](#))

So it's not an easy answer when somebody asks me the question about calling, whether it's for them or more generally. And I think that's because it's really situational and circumstantial. And I think we over-complicate it so much that when somebody's asking me that question, a lot of times there's a whole lot of backstory and sometimes even some pain that has to be unpacked before we can get to a simple answer to that question. And so sometimes it's an opportunity just to ask questions about their experiences in life and their experiences in church. And sometimes if somebody is using that kind of language they're thinking about calling in such a complicated and complex way that until they can get past some of that it's really difficult for them to even see the thing that's really right in front of them.

Nathan Hoag: ([04:45](#))

So yeah, I think that one of the things I try to help people do is talk through their history and their past, because so much of what you're called to is actually your experiences leading up to the current moment. Where you grew up, your age, your gender, your work experience, your education, all of these things sort of play into your calling, and they're situational, and the right in front of you. It's information that you actually know, but we tend to think that it's some magical thing we have to experience outside of all of those things. So there's a practical nature to it that we dismiss a lot.

Joanna Meyer: ([05:22](#))

Yeah, a very integrated vision of all of the areas of our life being lived before God.

Nathan Hoag: ([05:25](#))

Yeah, all of those things. And I would say that probably the most important part of calling is the housing of that calling, which is you. You are the housing for that calling, and so all the things that you are, are housed in you as the person, and that allows those things to be integrated. Even if it feels like there's 15 different things that are housed in that one person, those things can all be overlapped and integrated in a way that creates sort of one calling or an integrated grouping of callings. But we forget the housing, we forget the person sometimes when we think about this calling is something sort of completely outside of that.

Dustin Moody: ([06:04](#))

Or something to attain to or work towards.

Nathan Hoag: ([06:07](#))

Yes. And then when we think about it that way then it's like constant disappointment, because we'll never really achieved this thing. A, because we could never define it to begin with, and B because it's sort of like a theorial and mushy, and not really tangible enough to go for.

Dustin Moody: ([06:22](#))



Yeah, it seems like the idea of calling has been romanticized, particularly by people outside the church. And Brian Gray, our COO, reminds us a lot that calling implies that there's a color, right? So for our context as believers, God is that color. But for those outside the church I think part of the struggle with defining calling is not knowing who that thing is that's calling you to whatever it is.

Joanna Meyer: ([06:47](#))

I'm being called by who? Who's ringing up the phone?

Nathan Hoag: ([06:50](#))

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer: ([06:51](#))

Yeah, that's really true. So one of the things I love about getting to interview you Nathan, is that you wear a lot of hats. In your introduction we talked about you being a pastor, you're a father of four very different types of kids that you father, you're a neighbor, you're a citizen, you're a part-time distiller, and an outdoor athlete. You do a lot of everything. So how do both pastoring and fathering in particular fit into your definition of calling?

Nathan Hoag: ([07:17](#))

Well it's helpful that they have a lot in common, and I don't mean that to be patronizing toward my parishioners or anything like that. I just mean that leading in a family context and leading in a church context, especially in a small church like ours, those go hand in hand [crosstalk 00:07:34].

Dustin Moody: ([07:33](#))

Both shepherding.

Nathan Hoag: ([07:34](#))

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, it's like simultaneous leadership and care. You're doing those things at the same time, both in a church context and in a home family context. So it helps that there's quite a bit of overlap already in the actual tasks and functions. But in addition to that like I said before, the fact that both of those are callings of some sort that I'm personally called to based on my circumstances and background and all of that, there's so many ways that I got there, that makes them sort of one singular calling because I'm the one that's doing them. They also require some level of clear boundaries and separation and that kind of thing, those are really healthy and necessary. I've watched way too many pastors in general burnout, but especially church planters. And I think I was 28 when I was like, yeah, I don't think this pastor things for me because it's going to kill me. And I was like, that's too young I think to be just burning out on your career.

Dustin Moody: ([08:34](#))

Yeah, I was like a few years in and I was like, this is brutal.

Nathan Hoag: [\(08:37\)](#)

And so when we started planting the church that we're in now I started to think through, like what's a healthy and sustainable way to do this where I could actually do this for a long time? And that's the same way that I think about parenting. So we do have permanent kids, but at that time we had, or around that time we had only foster kids. So these are temporary kids that are coming in and out of the house. And parenting in general is exhausting, foster care is uniquely exhausting, but all parenting is exhausting. And we've found ourselves talking about like, hey, we want to do this for a really long time. I've got this vision in my head that totally stresses my wife out, but I'd love to impact 100 kids in our life. It doesn't mean they're all going to live with us, I don't know how, I don't know what that really means, but I would love to impact 100 kids in our lifetime.

Nathan Hoag: [\(09:29\)](#)

And I think when I first thought about that we had had like five kids or something like that. And we were just like, oh my gosh, this is so hard. And so then thinking through how do I fulfill or pursue, or however you want to say that, my calling as a pastor and as a parent, as a foster parent, and all these other things that you said in a way that's sustainable for the long haul? So it's this long obedience with very few short-term outcomes or rewards. There's not a lot of short-term benefits that come out of this, but there's major long-term gains when you can start thinking of it in terms of decades rather than days or weeks, that kind of thing. So anyway.

Joanna Meyer: [\(10:17\)](#)

I think to be a person that juggles diverse callings means that you wrestle with the conflict or the tension between those callings, and parenthood is one of them. And one of the reasons why I wanted to have this conversation is that I think it applies to both men and women. That sense of how do we appropriately honor that really powerful calling to parent with the rest of life? And it looks different for every person, regardless of their gender, or the community they've grown up in, the type of work they do. But when you think about the tension in time or relational energy between parenting and other roles that you have, how do you navigate that?

Nathan Hoag: [\(10:57\)](#)

I navigate it mostly through trial and error, which is not a very helpful answer to your question. Because I don't know that I've found a specific formula other than just being able to say at this particular time in the day or time in the week, I have to prioritize this one thing over some of these other things. Trusting that in prioritizing that thing it will allow me to approach the other thing more healthily at another time.

Nathan Hoag: [\(11:23\)](#)

So as an example, if I'm going to work on a Monday like today and I'm at the office, at that point I'm not at home, right? So I'm in some ways neglecting whatever home responsibilities that I would have if I was there. But I also need to work, I need to do my job, I need to fulfill that responsibility. And then I need to



learn and be able to just cut it off and be able to stop working so that I can go and be with my family. And in theory if I'm productive, and focused, and fulfilling that calling when I'm at the office, then I can do my job as a father more healthily in a better way, because I've done that well, and I've left that behind, and I can move on to the next thing. The other thing is, and I'm really compartmentalizing this if it's like a hard stop on one and a hard stop on the other.

Joanna Meyer: ([12:15](#))

It's probably a little more fluid I'm guessing?

Nathan Hoag: ([12:17](#))

Yeah, absolutely. It's way more overlap than that. And so being able to invite my family into my work and invite my work into my family, those are important things as well. It's harder for my wife who's a nurse, because there is a very clear delineation and separation between her work and her time at home. And so I don't know that there's a great answer to that question because of her particular occupation, and how there's a kind of a very distinct line between the two. But for me I can bring my work home in a healthy way, and I can bring my family to work in a healthy way. And finding ways to do that has been really helpful as well.

Dustin Moody: ([12:56](#))

You mentioned burnout a couple minutes ago, and I want to connect burnout as a pastor with stress as a parent and what you were just talking about with Joanna and kind of dividing those different roles. I've been finishing up a book group with my pastor, and one of the books we focused on was just sort of about pastoral health. And it seems like part of the reason for burnout among pastors, and I'm curious how this resonates with you, is the variety of demands we put on that role. So you're expected to be a great speaker. You're expected to have coffee with your church members a couple of times a week. You're expected to invest in your elders and your deacons or whatever your governing board looks like.

Dustin Moody: ([13:30](#))

And it seems like the same thing is happening in parenting to an extent, especially as we're coming off of COVID. You've got parents who are working at home and also juggling kids and elementary school. Or if the parents weren't able to work from home they've been working out in contexts that are pretty dangerous with health concerns and things like that. So how did you move past that in your late twenties to kind of say, this is what I'm going to focus on as a pastor? And then what does that look like to say, this is what I'm going to focus on as a parent?

Nathan Hoag: ([13:57](#))

So as a parent, depending on the kind of parenting you're doing, you oftentimes will find yourself in a situation where you can't change your circumstances because the kids you have are the kids you have. And if you're experiencing burnout, I don't know, you got to figure that-



Dustin Moody: ([14:12](#))

Sorry.

Nathan Hoag: ([14:12](#))

Yeah, right. Whereas in a work context, depending on your situation, a lot of times you can change your job. Sometimes you can change your job from within the job. Meaning you can go to the person you work for and say, something has to change, otherwise I'm kind of moving towards a really bad kind of edge of a cliff. Or you can actually change your actual job. And for me that's essentially what I did was like, I need to find a situation where I can be in a healthier work environment. Now what I also did simultaneously was I ended up in a work environment where I was controlling the work environment, which has allowed me to then provide a healthier work environment for other people. So it was a really cool opportunity that I don't think I realized how unique and interesting that was at the time. But looking back I can think of decisions I made early on in planting or church that have affected not only myself, but other people.

Nathan Hoag: ([15:06](#))

In parenting it's really tricky because you can feel kind of trapped in this environment where these people need everything from you all the time. And they're so dependent. And then we have a lot of kids in our home who come from really hard places, and so we're managing not only just dependent children, but dependent children who are carrying a tremendous amount of trauma, they're non neuro-typical. I mean literally before I came here was with my six year old and she was having a full on, she kind of has episodes, these anxiety attacks. And I'm on the couch with her doing that, and it was why I was late. And experiencing that with her sucks a ton of energy out of us. And then I also have five other kids that I'm responsible to them, and I'm married, and I have a job and these things. And it becomes very difficult, especially in a home context because you tend to feel fairly trapped.

Nathan Hoag: ([16:08](#))

And so finding ways to Sabbath from that or take time away from that is really key, I think, to avoiding that burnout vortex where you're just like, I'm spiraling and I really can't get my head above water. And that's why it's really, I mean I see a lot of new parents, especially sort of disappear from their relationships and that's really dangerous. Because you actually need those people to support you and to help pull you out of that. Your kids will be fine, and your kids are tired of you, by the way. That's the thing I tell a lot of new parents, it's like your kids are as tired of you as you are of them. They need you to go on vacation and to take some time away, because they need to be around other adults that are not as stressed out as you are. So yeah, I think finding ways to get time away from the environment is pretty key I think, from avoiding that burnout.

Joanna Meyer: ([16:58](#))

So I wanted to ask a little bit more about what your family life looks like, because you have like a triple scoop kind of kids. You have biological kids, you have adopted kids, and you have foster kids that have



been part of your home. Can you tell us a little bit more about who are your kids and what does it look like to parent those three different types of kids?

Nathan Hoag: ([17:15](#))

Yeah, that's a great question. So I think it was probably seven or eight years ago, well it was actually before we got married, we found out about the need for foster care in the US. It was at a time where it was really popular too among Christians to pursue adoption from other countries. And we were really naive and we were like, I wonder if you can even adopt kids from the US, is that even possible? And we had no idea, and looked into it, and we found out that there were just boatloads of kids in the foster care system for a variety of reasons. And we just became really attached that idea of, even if it's a drop in the bucket, just trying to affect that population. And so early in our marriage we pursued the licenser process and all of that. And we started taking in foster kids, I think it was like eight years ago, seven or eight years ago, something like that.

Nathan Hoag: ([18:05](#))

And I don't know the actual number, my wife is better with this sort of thing, but I think we've had like 20 or 25 kids in our home over the years. And then along the way we had one biological daughter, her name is Lucy, she's going to be six next month. And along the way as we've taken foster kids, a couple of them have stuck around. So we adopted Mia, which is my oldest permanent kid, and she's about to be seven next week. And then we adopted Lucas about a year and a half ago, yeah, about a year and a half ago. And he just turned four yesterday. And then a couple of days ago, I think it was Saturday, three sisters moved in from the foster care universe. So we have six kids right now, four, six, seven, nine, 13, 15. So that's our world right now.

Joanna Meyer: ([19:06](#))

Wow. The phrase came into my head, father to many. Literally, numerically because of the various kids you've had in your home. And also in your role as a pastor, you kind of epitomizes fatherhood in many different ways.

Nathan Hoag: ([19:19](#))

Yeah, it's funny. I've always wanted to be a dad, that was always something that I dreamed of. And if you would have told me the situation I'm in right now 10, 15 years ago, I would have laughed. I would've, like that sounds ridiculous, doesn't sound like me. It doesn't sound like something anybody should do, I wouldn't even recommend that to anybody. And then here we are in this situation and it is really, really hard and really, really beautiful at the same time. Because most of my kids, all of my kids except for my biological daughter come from a really, really hard background. And so we're managing the trauma and the way their brains work, even chemically the way their brains work. In addition to managing six kids, which is just a little kind of a lot of kids even if they were all sort of neuro-typical. And so it's a lot of, it's layered, right? It's like, I'm a dad to these kids, but I need to be a very specific kind of dad to these kids in order for them to flourish. That's really important.





Joanna Meyer: ([20:21](#))

Tell us more about that. When you said parenting kids that have had rough backgrounds, what does that look like?

Nathan Hoag: ([20:28](#))

So every kid, whether they've come from a hard background or not, need something unique. And that's not helpful parenting advice because it's not a simple answer to the question, how do I care for children? Or how can I be a good parent? And that's why nobody's really written a good book on this because there isn't really any one way to parent a unique child, and every single kid needs something unique. And I believe that again, about any kid from any background. And so experiencing fatherhood in a customized way for every kid requires a tremendous amount of curiosity that's like insatiable. If I get to a point where I feel satisfied in what I've discovered about my children, then I'll feel as though I have quote unquote arrived and solved the problem, and they're not problems to solve. There are these magnificent human beings who are fascinating, and complex, and frustrating, and confounding. And that has to, I think be a source of curiosity for me. If it's not a source of curiosity than it is purely a source of frustration. And I will feel like I'm failing.

Nathan Hoag: ([21:44](#))

Versus though, what does this child need right now, or on this day, or whatever? And it's very fresh in my mind, but the situation with my daughter before coming here was on the couch. And I know her really well, so I knew what she needed, I knew what she was feeling. She still can't articulate and verbalize what she's feeling, we're working on that and that's been a process. But I know what she's feeling and I know what she's thinking. And so I knew exactly what she needed at that time, and it meant sort of rearranging my day a little bit. And it meant feeling really frustrated a couple of different times, but that's what she needed in that moment.

Nathan Hoag: ([22:23](#))

And I don't really have the capacity to do that for all six kids, but it's worth a try. I'm going to give it a go even though I'm probably not going to do it very well. I'd rather try and fail than just not try at all. So that's kind of the situation. And my wife's incredible, and she's super engaged, and she's doing all this with me. So it's this mutuality of trying to care for kids from hard places and help them manage everything they're bringing into our home with them, which is a lot of stuff.

Jeff Haanen: ([23:06](#))

Hi, this is Jeff Haanen, the founder of Denver Institute for Faith and Work. Thanks for listening to the Faith and 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 podcasts, 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 is a way to love God, serve



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Dustin Moody: ([24:12](#))

You talked a little bit ago about feeling trapped as a parent sometimes. And my wife and I have a 14 month old, so I'll make the caveat that in the grand scheme of parenting stress we've got it easy right now.

Nathan Hoag: ([24:22](#))

Yeah, that age is tricky though.

Dustin Moody: ([24:24](#))

It is. Like you said, it's both really frustrating and really exciting and intriguing to see him learn new things or discover new things. But at the same time I find myself thinking at the end of the long day like, man, do I have to feed you again? Is it bath time again? So I'm curious, what brings you joy in this season? You talked about taking a Sabbath and having time away from that context, what brings you joy right now?

Nathan Hoag: ([24:49](#))

Our family thrives off of being outdoors. Winter's a little tough for us in that regard, we still find great time out in the snow and that kind of thing. But watching our kids thrive outside has been huge, especially with so many people in the house. We don't have a huge house, and so eight people in a house starts to get pretty tight. And so just being able to get the kids out and do stuff, and so that brings me a ton of joy just to watch them. I don't know, we'll go to a river or something like that. And there are no, we have very few rules when we're outdoors, and so they feel really free to go do whatever. And they end up bloodied and bruised because of it. And they learn a lot from that experience, and that's actually really good for them.

Nathan Hoag: ([25:34](#))

So if I end up in the cycle of mealtime, bath time, bedtime, mealtime, bath time, bedtime, it's maddening. And then you add sleep deprivation on top of that, like a literal form of torture, right? If you were to add all of those things into one and you get stuck in that cycle, it just messes you up. So I think it's really important and it's really helpful for us to just have these things that break that cycle. So weekly Sabbath has been huge for us, but then also just finding ways to say yes as often as we can. You can't say yes to everything, but there's so many things that we have said no to that I can't even back up why we said no to it. It was just no because it would be bad for you to grow up hearing yes too much or



something like that. Very weird parenting strategy. And a couple of years ago we were like, why do we say no to stuff like this? Why don't we just say, how is that going to hurt them to say yes?

Nathan Hoag: ([26:38](#))

And we also want our kids to feel empowered to ask for what they want. We think that's an important thing that we had to learn in our adult years to be able to ask for what you need, to ask for what you want. So we want to empower them, mostly what they want right now is candy. And so I don't know that they're learning the lesson, but to be able to ask for that, even if they're going to hear no, I want them to feel empowered to ask that question. Anyway, all of that was back around to say yes as much as we can and then get them out, active, doing things as much as we possibly can because they don't like being cooped up either. It's crazy making for everybody, I think.

Joanna Meyer: ([27:17](#))

You were recently featured on a website called Dad Craft, and I love even the name Dad Craft because it approaches parenting is something that can be learned. Like it's a trade to be mastered and something to take pride in gaining skill. How do you view fathering as a craft? Something that could be improved on?

Nathan Hoag: ([27:36](#))

I think I see it the same way any craftsman would see their craft. It's not something that you ever really fully master, like mastering something is actually, it's a journey, it's a process, and it's really a lifelong commitment. So I've never spoken with somebody who works with wood for instance who's like, oh, I did it, I'm there, I figured it out. It's like this constant thing that you're toying with, you're experimenting with. So I think fatherhood, it's like a laboratory. I don't know if my kids would appreciate this, but thinking of everything is sort of an experiment, like let's try this out. And then let's be really good about evaluating how it went, and involve the kids in the evaluation involved.

Nathan Hoag: ([28:23](#))

So every time a foster placement moves out for instance, we sit down with the permanent kids and we say, how did that go? What do you think about that? And they're little I mean, so they have really funny stories that they'll tell and their perception of reality is pretty wild. But we try to ask them those questions and go, what do you think about that? That was sort of, for lack of a better term an experiment. Like we invited other humans to live with us for awhile because they needed a place to live, and we cared for them like family, and now they're gone just like that. They're just out of here. So our kids get really attached to these other kids, obviously. So sometimes it's, well I feel really sad because they became like my sister and now they're gone. Sometimes it's like, I never really got along with that kid to begin with, this is great. I have my own space back, things are great. But just being able to experiment and try things with the family and go, what did we think about that?

Nathan Hoag: ([29:21](#))



And that's actually where we've learned what one-off experiences need to become rhythms and practices. Is we tried something and it got great feedback. And we were like, well let's try it again and see if it had the same effect. And then, oh, it turned out the second time he was just as good, if not better. This needs to be a weekly rhythm because it's meaningful and beneficial to us. So I see it as craftsmanship and a craft in that I'm trying things. And when things work, or enjoyable, or meaningful, we try to find a way to repeat them. That's been an important part of it.

Joanna Meyer: [\(30:04\)](#)

Do you have any secret tricks or secretly things that are like your secret sauce of being a dad?

Dustin Moody: [\(30:10\)](#)

Yeah, I'm taking notes.

Joanna Meyer: [\(30:11\)](#)

Well because for some dads it's that they always make pancakes on Saturday morning, or they can fold a napkin into the shape of a mouse at a restaurant, or something like that. Anything that's just distinctly, this is what I do as a dad?

Nathan Hoag: [\(30:22\)](#)

Yeah, there's a couple that have been really, really, really refreshing and restorative for me, and I think for our kids as well. The practice of Sabbath, I've mentioned it a couple of times, so we take a family Sabbath on Saturday. And my wife and I are very honest about the fact that that is not a restful day for us, because it's a family Sabbath. So I recommend to our church and to lots of other people when I'm talking to them about this concept of Sabbath, like there's such a thing as a personal Sabbath and a relational Sabbath I think. We're in a very different situation than when Sabbath first came about thousands of years ago. And so Sabbath for a family is not oftentimes very restful for the parents. And so what we've done with our kids is instill kind of one word understanding of this idea of Sabbath so that they can get their heads around it.

Nathan Hoag: [\(31:17\)](#)

And it is on Sabbath, we move slow. Like we just do things slowly on Sabbath. We do no more and no less than one outing. So we will go out and do something, but it's never two things. And it's always one thing. We'll always go do one thing together that's not at our house. We make waffles every Saturday morning, that's our kind of Sabbath tradition and the kids have that to look forward to. We put a bunch of food coloring in them, they're tie dyed waffles in the end, they think it's like the coolest thing in the world. I don't know what the dye is doing to their bodies, but we're embracing that.

Joanna Meyer: [\(31:51\)](#)

I want a picture of that.



Nathan Hoag: [\(31:51\)](#)

Yeah, I'll send that to you. Yeah, yeah.

Joanna Meyer: [\(31:57\)](#)

We'll put it in our show notes.

Nathan Hoag: [\(31:59\)](#)

We have a couple of other elements of Sabbath, but the primary thing is we go slow. So if the question is, dad, can we do whatever? My response is, well can we do that slowly? Is that something we can do in a slow sort of measured way? And if the answer is no then we just don't go do that.

Joanna Meyer: [\(32:16\)](#)

Like what do you say no to?

Nathan Hoag: [\(32:20\)](#)

I would say no to, that's a good question. If our kids want to go and spend time with friends from school, is a good example. I can't really control that environment. And so if we go spend time with friends from school who maybe I don't know their family very well, or maybe I do know that will be sort of a frenetic kind of stressful situation, then we typically won't do that. I would say no, I think we have said no to birthday parties on Saturdays, because kids birthday parties to me are not, there's nothing Sabbath about that.

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

They're not restful.

Nathan Hoag: [\(32:57\)](#)

No, no, it's a disaster, honestly. So I'm not interested in, I think Julie's talked me into a couple of them, but normally if a kid has a birthday party on a Saturday I will do everything I can to keep us from doing that. Because it's not a slow activity and it doesn't help our family rest and heal, honestly, from whatever the week had with it. So that's been a really, really healing and beautiful pattern for our family over the past couple of years is practicing Sabbath.

Nathan Hoag: [\(33:27\)](#)

Another thing I do on the kid's birthday, and they really look forward to this, is I always starting at two years old, I take them on a one-on-one dad camping trip, just like one overnight. And then when they turn five I start taking them backpacking. So they carry their own, or some of their own stuff, I carry most of the stuff. And so I've done this a couple of times with my daughters now where I take them out into the wilderness and we carry everything. And then we set up a tent and we do that together, and they look forward to it every year and they talk about it. I just took my son last weekend for his birthday, and he talked about it for months leading up to it. And dad when are we going camping? And I'm like, it's



going to be a while, man, there was a lot of snow out there. But they look forward to it. And so I think having those things so that they can actually look forward to are really important, that's helped a lot.

Dustin Moody: [\(34:15\)](#)

You talked about trying things, seeing if they work, replicating them and kind of using those patterns. I'm curious on the opposite side, how do you handle things when they don't go well? How do you handle failure as a father?

Nathan Hoag: [\(34:27\)](#)

Yeah, it's gotten easier over the years because, I mean I haven't stopped failing, but I think after you do it a bunch then you start to just come to terms with the fact that it's part of life and part of reality. So I think also going into most situations with the understanding that this might flop, like it may not be a good experience has been helpful too, both for us and the kids. So I'll tell the kids all the time we're going to go, I don't know, we'll try this restaurant, or we're going to go to this park, or we're going to do whatever, but try to measure everybody's, temper everybody's expectations a little bit. Like I have no idea what this is going to be like, let's go check it out and we'll see how it goes. And then afterwards we'll talk about it. And if it was a bad idea then we'll mark that and maybe try to avoid it in the future.

Nathan Hoag: [\(35:11\)](#)

And we tried the same thing with discipline strategies, and communication strategies, and not just stuff we go and do but the way our household functions. Chores and different patterns for when we have meals together and that kind of thing. And we'll try stuff, and then if it doesn't work... I think everybody's used to it at this point some things not working, and we're all kind of okay with that. So yeah, I think it's tempering those expectations going in that's been really helpful.

Joanna Meyer: [\(35:47\)](#)

It's fascinating listening to you because I realized that one of the key things you can train kids into to be successful adults is knowing how to evaluate their lives, how to handle disappointment and failure, how to move through that, how to rest. Some of the things you're talking about are just core skills to being a healthy human that we may forget.

Nathan Hoag: [\(36:07\)](#)

Absolutely, yeah. And being able to deal with the sort of the ending of a relationship, like a friendship. Or a fight in a relationship or friendship. Instead of just pushing that aside and say, well it's not that big of a deal you're just a kid. Saying, well what did you learn? Or what can you do different next time? Helping our kids navigate that is really important. And like I said, something that I feel like a lot of those things were things I had to learn sort of in adulthood, sometimes the hard way. And I'm hoping that some of the things we're talking about right now as they're young will sort of help them navigate some of those things down the road.



Nathan Hoag: [\(36:45\)](#)

I think it's helpful too, and I think this can actually put a lot of pressure on parents, I don't think this always has to be this way. But when you can come up with sort of those little idioms or the little one-liners that are memorable. Like if you were to ask our kids, and I think even Lucas who's four would be able to do this, but if you were asked our kids what are our family values? There's four, and I think they could fire them off just from memory because we talk about them so much, and they're memorable enough. And they don't even know, I don't even know if they could define them, but they're learning what those things are. Because when then they do that one thing then I'll point it out and say, that was generosity.

Joanna Meyer: [\(37:27\)](#)

Yeah, yeah, tell us what your four are.

Nathan Hoag: [\(37:28\)](#)

Strong, courageous, gentle, generous. So those are four things that we want to be characteristic of our family, both as individuals, but us as a whole. Strong, courageous, gentle, generous. So I think for our daughters growing up in a world that I don't think is fully ready for strong and courageous women, that's extremely important that we help them see what that actually looks like. And my wife is strong and courageous, and them being able to see that modeled in her is really important. And then for our son who is growing up in a world that sort of expects aggression from men, that he would learn gentleness and generosity. And I think that's true kind of across the board, but to have those four there that sort of speaks to a, I think maybe an opposing expectation for their gender or their experience that they can be all for is important to us to help them start to explore and understand.

Nathan Hoag: [\(38:34\)](#)

So we're trying these things out, and I think that's probably our fourth version of values over the years, but that's the one that's sticking and that's going to be, like I'm pretty sure that's it. That's the one. So we have a progression of conversations we have with foster kids when they move in, and the like third conversation is family values. And so tonight or tomorrow we'll talk with these new girls about being strong, courageous, gentle, and generous. And then when they, I mean my hope is let's say they're with us for three months, maybe that'll stick. Because we talk about foster care as parenting on the fly, because you're parenting kids for a very short period of time, and you can't teach them everything. You can teach them like one thing. And so we try to focus on a few things and just hope that one or two of those things stick. And then sometimes those kids come back around years later and they'll remember that stuff and that is like, that feels like a victory that we did something meaningful that shaped a kid's future. And partly because we didn't try to do everything, we just tried to do one or two things for them.

Dustin Moody: [\(39:47\)](#)

Nathan, we'll publish this episode a couple of days before father's day. So I'm curious, what word of encouragement would you give to the fathers who might be listening?



Nathan Hoag: ([39:59](#))

Oh, wow. Good question. You're probably better at being a dad than you realize, and you're probably more equipped naturally to be a dad than you realize. I talk to dad sometimes who feel like there is basically a tremendous amount of research that needs to be done, and I don't know if this is a particularly male thing or just a human being thing, but the idea of approaching parenthood as something to be sort of solved or sort of sorted out on the front end. It's very common among the dads that I talk to, versus thinking of it as this curiosity to cultivate and pursue throughout the course of your kids' entire lives.

Nathan Hoag: ([40:51](#))

And I think that we have innately within us what we need to do, the very basics of fatherhood. And then we overthink it, and over analyze it, and work ourselves into such a tizzy that we end up detaching. And I think that that's really at the root of when a dad detaches from their family or their kids, it's actually because they don't feel equipped like they can actually do it. They've worked them into a belief system that they can't do it or they're not supposed to do it, it's supposed to be somebody else that's doing this. And so simplifying fatherhood into just a couple of norms or a couple of values and structural pieces that allow you to do what you already know how to do.

Nathan Hoag: ([41:39](#))

And then also validating, and I would want to say this too, just validating that there are times where you feel like this is very unnatural. And the naturalness of parenting varies from person to person. There have been moments in our life where we're like, we thought being called to this meant we were going to be good at it. And that's not the same thing. Being called to something and being good at something are not the same thing. So we have been called to this reality, this situation, and I would say we are medium at it at best, honestly. Like I said, we tried to do a lot of self evaluation, and my wife and I both would say there are things that we are way better at in life than parenting. Like I said, it falls kind of in the middle for us. We're like okay at it.

Nathan Hoag: ([42:27](#))

And that was such a hard pill to swallow because we thought that because we were called to it that we'd be good at it, and we're like okay at it. And that was tough, but that is okay. And I know parents who were like, I'm not just okay at this, I'm bad at this. I'm actually really bad at this. And I don't think that this was really ever for me. And I think that that's a misunderstanding maybe of the calling to parenthood. You can actually be bad at something and still called to it at the same time, I think that's absolutely the case.

Joanna Meyer: ([42:58](#))

What a gift for us. Thanks for inviting us into the deep spiritual aspect of parenting, and also the fun of rainbow waffles. I want a picture of those waffles.





Nathan Hoag: ([43:07](#))

Okay.

Joanna Meyer: ([43:08](#))

My hope in this conversation is that men and women will be encouraged in this vision of living before God in all of life, and the freedom to master our craft over time with God. That it's a journey, that it's not a sense of arriving at perfection early on, but a steady process of growth. So thanks, Nathan.

Nathan Hoag: ([43:26](#))

My pleasure, thank you.

Dustin Moody: ([43:27](#))

Yeah, thanks for joining us. Thanks for listening to today's episode. If you've enjoyed our discussion, particularly around the idea of calling, I want to point you to our show notes where we have two resources for you to take a look at. The first is a free PDF download called A Study on Calling, it's written by Ryan Tafilowski, our theologian residence. And it really explores at a basic level, what is calling? What can we learn from it from scripture? And how do we apply it? The second resource is a class on the Faith and Work Classroom called Find your Calling, it's put together by Brian Gray. And if you want to go a little more in depth than the PDF download, then this course is for you. We'll link both of those from our show notes page for this episode. Thanks so much.

Intro/Outro: ([44:13](#))

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