



Bill Haslam: ([00:00](#))

Government is about more than just a few of the big issues that attract all the attention. It truly is about a way to serve the common good.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:18](#))

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.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:29](#))

Hi, and welcome to the Faith and Work Podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, Denver Institute's Director of Public Engagement. And I'm joined today by Dustin Moody, our Director of Communications. How is it going, Dustin?

Dustin Moody: ([00:40](#))

Going well, Joanna, thanks for having me.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:41](#))

Oh, yeah. I'm having fun. I'm joining you today from Beaver Creek, Colorado. I'm attending the Christian Economic Forum, where I have had a chance to connect with thought leaders and business people from around the world and it's been fascinating because the range of perspectives on critical social issues has varied greatly. I've had some fascinating.

Dustin Moody: ([00:59](#))

Sure.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:59](#))

and challenging conversations while I've been up here. How have you been staying busy?

Dustin Moody: ([01:04](#))

Doing well, it seems like things have thankfully slowed down a bit over the summer. Although for those of us in Colorado, I'd love it to cool down a little bit more. We've been having kind of an exceptionally warm summer, which I think plays into how we're all feeling about some of those issues that you talked about Joanna. Everyone's a little hot under the collar when it comes to things like politics, policies, public life. And I think our conversation today is really going to shed some light on that.

Joanna Meyer: ([01:29](#))

Yeah, even though the intensity of last year's political season has calmed a little bit, the partisan tensions still remain. I, over breakfast this morning, had to graciously kind of exit a conversation because someone was ranting about their thoughts on COVID and government restrictions, and I thought, this isn't going to be a healthy engagement, I'm going to graciously move on. It's a real challenge to figure out



how to bridge the gulf between fellow citizens or family members. And I'll be the first to admit, as I said, I really don't know how to respond sometimes, as this political gulf widens. Sometimes I even have moments where I think, is this person living in a different reality than me because they see this situation so fundamentally differently than I do.

Joanna Meyer: ([02:10](#))

And yet as Christians, we're called to live in community and work for the good of our neighbors, regardless of how different or hostile their values may seem. Today, we'll explore what it means to live faithfully in public life with someone who in my mind exemplifies grace, humility, and wisdom in political and cultural engagement, former Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam. Dustin, will you talk a little bit more about Governor Haslam?

Dustin Moody: ([02:35](#))

Certainly. Bill Haslam is the former two-term mayor of Knoxville and two-term governor of Tennessee. During his tenure, Tennessee became the fastest improving state in the nation in K-12 education, and it was the first state to provide free community college or technical school for all of its citizens, in addition to adding almost half a million new jobs during his tenure. Governor Haslam serves on the boards of Teach for America at the Wilson Center and Young Life, and you may remember as a panelist at our event last fall called The Politics of Neighborly Love. Governor Haslam recently wrote a book, Faithful Presence: the promise and peril of faith in the public square, and we're going to talk to him a little bit more about that book today. Governor Haslam, it's good to see you again, welcome back to the Faith and Work Podcast.

Bill Haslam: ([03:15](#))

Well, thank you. It's going to be back with friends.

Dustin Moody: ([03:19](#))

Governor, I have to ask, there are so many ways that a former public official can spend his time or her time after leaving office. What motivated you to write this recent book?

Bill Haslam: ([03:28](#))

You know, like a lot of your listeners, I'm concerned about what's happening in our country. And you know, we have a country that's obviously pretty evenly divided, the last nine presidential elections have been decided by single digits. The Senate is literally 50/50 as we speak, the House has like four seats difference. But we're not just divided, but we're divided and we're mad about it. And we're not just mad, but we think the other side has bad intentions. And it felt like to me, this is a time for people of faith, for Christians, to step into this void. And unfortunately my experience in office has been that people of faith, rather than helping to be a part of the solution, I think have actually exacerbated the issue that we're facing in the country.



Joanna Meyer: [\(04:19\)](#)

You call on some of the ancient biblical writers, early in the book. You quoted Isaiah 59:14, which really captures the spirit of the season in public life when it observes, "justice has turned back and righteousness stands far away. For truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter." I think about both your writing and your political life, sir, and you've worked to restore justice, righteousness, and peace through maintaining what the title book says is a "faithful presence." Could you tell us what that means?

Bill Haslam: [\(04:49\)](#)

You know, I stole the term from James Davidson Hunter, a sociologist from the University of Virginia who, I didn't totally steal, I did call James and say, "Hey, do you mind if I borrow this a little bit?" And it means this, no matter what you're called to do, whether you're a school teacher, you work in a hospital, you work in a manufacturing facility, I think we're all called to have a faithful presence in that place. And so I think part of the issue we have in the public square is we haven't thought about, we haven't really developed a theology of what would a faithful presence look like in the public square?

Bill Haslam: [\(05:29\)](#)

So all of us have been, if you're married, you've read hundreds of books and gone to seminars about here's what a Christian marriage looks like. Or when you were in college, you went to the college class at your church or something on campus, and it was all about here's what a faithful walk looks like as a college student. But we haven't really done that in the public square, I mean, there are certain positions that people say, "well, here's where Christians tend to end up on that position." But we haven't talked about what does it actually look like to walk faithfully in the public square? And because of that, I don't think we've done it very well. And so part of what the book is, is a call to say, if we really do want to walk in a way that honors the God we say we serve, what would that look like in the public square? And my argument is it doesn't look much like what people think of Christians in the public square today, unfortunately.

Dustin Moody: [\(06:29\)](#)

Governor, I want to hit on something you mentioned earlier. It's not just that we're all divided, but that most of us seem to be angry about it right now. There's an antagonism or an animosity that I haven't noticed as much over the past 20 or 30 years. And I want to share some statistics that we referenced at our event last fall, that you joined us for, and kind of talk about how we've gotten to this place where we are.

Dustin Moody: [\(06:50\)](#)

A recent Reuters poll found that one in six Americans have stopped talking to a family member after the 2016 election. Split ticket voting, we know is that the lowest of all time, fewer people are voting for multiple parties at once, 81% of people have a negative view of the other party, 61% of Democrats view Republicans as racist, sexist, or bigots, 54% of Republicans view Democrats as spiteful, and a third of



Americans would be disappointed if a close family member married someone from the opposite political party. You spend a lot of time in public life, so I'm curious from your perspective, how have we gotten to this point where it's not just that we're disagreeing, but we are disagreeable?

Bill Haslam: ([07:30](#))

Well, like two or three things. I mean, let's be honest. Like I said, politics in our country has always been contentious.

Dustin Moody: ([07:36](#))

Sure.

Bill Haslam: ([07:37](#))

One of the things I quote in the book is one of our presidents from Tennessee, Andrew Jackson, when he's on his death bed, they asked Jackson, they said, "do you have any regrets?" And he says, "yes, I wish I had shot Clay and hung Calhoun." Calhoun was his Vice President, Clay was the Speaker of the House, okay. So it's not like these are... And Jackson was being serious, this wasn't a joke, those were some of the final things he said, okay. So it's always been contentious, but it's a little different today for this reason, I do think, and I hate to sound like an old guy in his sixties, but social media has changed everything, right?

Bill Haslam: ([08:20](#))

I mean, the ability to, first of all, we can select who we communicate with.

Dustin Moody: ([08:25](#))

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Haslam: ([08:25](#))

and how we get our information. Secondly, we can hide behind the anonymity of the internet and say things we would never say somewhere else. And I think what has happened is, more and more of us have started thinking everybody I know thinks like I do, except for these crazy people on the other side. And fewer and fewer of us have worked to say, "well, what is their argument?"

Bill Haslam: ([08:49](#))

You know, the very best way to be a part of a discussion is to say, and be a part of a conversation to say, "I'm not coming to the table with the goal being to get my answer, my goal is to get to the best answer." But we've lost that, and it's this sense of I'm here to win. And because of that, we're not really working to understand the other side of the argument very well. We're just trying to get the most clever put down on Twitter, have the best comeback that we can. And I think it's left us with this sense, like you said, that's five years ago that one out of every six Americans had quit talking to a close family member because of the election. Well, we know it's only gotten worse since then.



Dustin Moody: ([09:35](#))

Sure.

Bill Haslam: ([09:36](#))

If we're there, something's wrong.

Dustin Moody: ([09:39](#))

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer: ([09:39](#))

Yeah. It seems like public life, especially political engagement, pulls on our worst selves, our fallen nature. So we think, oh I could be kind, but if I do maybe I'll lose some ground, or I could speak up about something that really matters, but I doubt it's going to succeed. I want to hear a little bit more about that. I think this there's this fear that the country, if we don't stand up and get very aggressive, that the country will be sliding into an abyss of moral values. What do you think feeds that fear?

Bill Haslam: ([10:13](#))

Well, I think it's this sense of, so much is at stake. And I hear the argument you just made, I hear that all the time from folks, like there's just way too much at stake to play by Sunday school rules here. And I think one of things we should always remember if we're reacting out of fear, that's always a bad place to react out, we're never going to get to the best place if we're reacting out of fear. And I think there's a sense of, there's so much at stake that the rules don't apply anymore. But you know, one of the things that I'd ask all of us is, we don't say in business, "Hey, you have to run your business ethically, unless you're getting ready to go out of business. And then the stakes are so high. You don't have to play by the rules anymore." Or in your marriage, like you need to be faithful to your spouse and unless the person in the next cubicle is really hot, and then in that case, you get a waiver.

Bill Haslam: ([11:10](#))

You know, we don't give ourselves passes, according to circumstances. Paul says "I'm a prisoner of Christ," I'm not a prisoner of my circumstances. And so the rules don't change according to where we think we are and what's at stake. And I'd come back to this, I don't know many believers who at the end of their lives have said, "you know, I really, really regret obeying Christ. I really, really regret following scripture." I know a whole lot who say, "you know, I really regret that I decided to play this my own way during this point of my life."

Joanna Meyer: ([11:50](#))

Hmm.



Dustin Moody: ([11:50](#))

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer: ([11:50](#))

What do you think it looks like to practice a more courageous, hopeful form of public engagement?

Bill Haslam: ([11:58](#))

Well, I think it means to walk into places, into conversations that you might not feel comfortable walking into, with people that disagree with you. It means listening and reading news sources that aren't the ones that you would typically choose. It means trying to approach everything in the way that, James says to us is, he describes earthly wisdom then he describes wisdom that's from above. And he says, "wisdom that's from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy, impartial, and sincere." And so one of the things we should ask ourselves as I'm going into this political discussion, or I'm sitting at a dinner party and the conversation's going a way I don't like, is my engagement pure? Is it impartial? Is it sincere? Is it open to reason? Because I don't think that's how most people would characterize Christians' conversations in the political sphere.

Dustin Moody: ([13:03](#))

Governor, you talked about kind of engaging with ideas or even channels or news sources that we may not agree with, and it seems like one aspect of having a faithful public presence is at least engaging with ideas from a good faith standpoint. You mentioned social media, and I would agree that social media has not necessarily been a net positive for all of us in society. I think there are some positive things we can point to that it has enabled, my wife and I are in a situation now where we're finding a lot of support on social media that we wouldn't have otherwise. But in general, to your point, the media landscape is so fractured, we can find news articles, or news channels, or even podcasts that reinforce our own ideas. And it seems like to have a faithful presence, we at least need to engage the opposite side in a good faith manner. In your book, you draw a critical distinction between thinking biblically about politics and thinking politically about our faith, and I'm wondering if you could just kind of explain the difference to our listeners between those two?

Bill Haslam: ([13:59](#))

Well, let me start by saying, I agree with you on the social media. I mean, it's like everything else, there's been good that comes with the bad, but I think the key thing to keep in mind is, what you talked about in what, the term is confirmation bias, that we're wanting people that tell us what we already believe to be true.

Dustin Moody: ([14:22](#))

Mm-hmm (affirmative).



Bill Haslam: ([14:25](#))

And I think our challenge in the middle of that is to say, "where am I listening to news because I like it, it tickles my ears, and where am I listening to it because it's helping me to get to a better answer?" So one of the question I always ask myself when I'm taking in information, am I looking for information or ammunition? Because if I'm looking for ammunition, I'm going to end up in bad place.

Joanna Meyer: ([14:54](#))

What do you think it looks like, Governor, to flip the dynamic of how we think about faith and politics? So I think often we start with our political engagement and then we try and draw our faith into it, versus starting from a faith perspective and allowing maybe our partisan affiliation to vary, or to be a bit of a mix and a match rather than being fully aligned with one particular view. What do you think it looks like to interpret modern politics through a biblical lens?

Bill Haslam: ([15:26](#))

So I think you do it this way, and you know the verse that originally kind of pulled me into public service is from Jeremiah 29. And if you remember, the Israelites were being held captive in Babylon. So we think today's environment is bad, I mean, this is literally, Nebuchadnezzar, you're slaves. Nebuchadnezzar was such a guy that not only did he make them make bricks out of straw, and build things, but he wanted his name inscribed on every brick. Okay, so that's the kind of guy you're dealing with. And basically most of Israel is being held in Babylon, Jeremiah's back in Jerusalem and he writes them a letter. And I always say, if I'm held captive and you write me a letter, I hope it's, here's the plan we're coming to get ya, hang tight, you know?

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

Exactly.

Bill Haslam: ([16:18](#))

But he writes them and says something very different. He says, "Hey, get used to it. You're going to be there awhile." So he says, "plant gardens, build houses, Mary, have your children get married, have them have children." And he says, "seek the peace of the place where you have been called for in its welfare you will find your welfare." And so I think part of, Joanna I think the answer to your question is, it's about, are we seeking the wealth, the peace of the places where we've been called? And that looks a lot different, a lot different circumstances, but here's the point I'd make, as it relates to government is, this stuff really matters. Who we elect to office matters in ways beyond are they going to vote on that one issue like you want them to? And believe me, there are certain issues that are incredibly important to me that I'm going to start when I look at candidates, but also realize that this whole government, that this is about how we make decisions about how we're going to live with each other.



Bill Haslam: ([17:20](#))

And one of the things I think gets underestimated is having government service that provides an effective return for the tax dollars you pay. And so most of your listeners, I'm guessing, don't have to rely on government for a lot. They're probably not looking to see what their tan of benefits are, and most of them, if their family needs mental health help, they're probably getting it from somewhere besides a state agency, I'm making an assumption here, but I bet I'm mostly right there. But for a lot of people that's not true, and everything from, I always said, "if you need a driver's license in the state of Tennessee, you're getting it from us." So it's not like, you know, we've got a lot of competition out there, but how we serve you does matter.

Bill Haslam: ([18:07](#))

And it's the same thing, how we provide healthcare comes in through the government, one way or another, in so many forms. So, are we providing that in the most effective so you get the best treatment, and the most efficient so that it costs not just you, but the taxpayer, the least amount it can for the very best service? So I say all that to say, government is about more than just a few of the big issues that attract all the attention. It truly is about a way to serve the common good, and I say that as somebody who believes in smaller government, I'm not a big government guy, but it does matter that we do it in a way that effectively serves people.

Jeff Haanen: ([18:57](#))

Hi, this is Jeff Haanen, the founder of Denver Institute for Faith and Work, and 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 in our short courses, and grow spiritually as a result of generous donors like you.

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

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Dustin Moody: ([20:03](#))

Governor, talk about that a little bit more, because I think one of the interesting points you make in your book is bringing in this idea of the imago dei, that we're each created in the image of God. And as a believer in public office, how did that theological framework guide your policymaking?



Bill Haslam: ([20:20](#))

So it starts with realizing, when you're in public office, you meet a whole cast of characters of all different types, right? Some of those that think you're the world's greatest and some people that you think, hey, in another context, we would be great friends if we had time, and then you meet some that you think, oh my, I just want to get out of this conversation as quick as I can. And, you know, there's people that, literally you'll be in a conversation and you think, wow, this conspiracy theory that they're clinging to, they really think that's what happened.

Bill Haslam: ([20:57](#))

And so it helps in the middle of all that... And when I'm in the middle of a conversation with either a really difficult person or a person that I have no idea how to respond to whatever they brought up, is to remind myself just like me, they're created in the image of God. And that changes everything. And it's the same thing when I'm in a discussion with someone I disagree with, if I really believe that person on the other side of the table is created in the image of God, then I don't have the option to treat them as less than that, I just don't.

Joanna Meyer: ([21:33](#))

You shared this wonderful quote from Martin Luther King Jr. I am the kind of person that collects quotes and so this one went into my book, and I would love to share it with our listeners. So this is when you shared with us from Martin Luther King Jr. about this idea. He said, "the whole concept of the imago dei, as it is expressed in Latin, is the idea that all men have something within them that God injected. Not that they have substantial unity with God, but that every man has the capacity for fellowship with God. And this gives him a uniqueness, gives him worth, it gives him dignity. And we must never forget this as a nation." So beautiful.

Bill Haslam: ([22:08](#))

It's interesting, Congressman John Lewis, the Civil Rights pioneer who died about a year ago, I think, I read a wonderful interview with him and he was talking about the Civil Rights Movement. And he said, "what people lose is this idea that it is the reality that for most of us, that's what it was grounded in, this biblical idea of the image of God and being created in the image of God." And it said, "that's what was pushing most of us," was this biblical grounding. And so, for me it's that same thing. It's a constant reminder, either with somebody I disagree with or somebody that I think has just coming from an entirely different place, that like me, they're created in the image of God.

Dustin Moody: ([22:58](#))

Governor, you have some strong convictions about the separation of church and state and how it applies to the practice of religious liberty, even to the point of, I think, ruffling some of your Republican colleagues' feathers in Tennessee when you vetoed creating the Bible as the official state book in Tennessee. But that looks like a flash point in the cultural wars. But talk to me about a little bit about the



importance of what the separation of church and state means for you, and why it's important for those of us practicing faith in the U.S.?

Bill Haslam: ([23:34](#))

Yeah, and I think it's a really, very misunderstood concept, in terms of the separation of church and state. I think the beauty of what our founders did is this, they said, "listen, religion is so important to us in this country, it's literally what drove most of the people here," said "that we're not going to let the government play at all." Okay and that's up to us, we kind of like, that's the way it's supposed to work, but that was a radical concept then. I mean, every other government around basically had a state religion and our founders said, "no, we're not going to do that." But they really said it in two ways, when we talk about the separation of church and state. Number one, they said "the government won't establish a religion." And so that's what we talk about, we're not going to have a state-run church. But then it said, the second part is just as important in that it says, "nor make any law prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Bill Haslam: ([24:31](#))

So not only are we not going to establish religion, we're not going to do anything that's going to keep you from practicing your faith. And those are equally important. And so as a country, we've kind of struggled back and forth with that. I think it's, I don't want there to be a state-run church because it never ends well for the church.

Dustin Moody: ([24:50](#))

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joanna Meyer: ([24:50](#))

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Haslam: ([24:50](#))

You can't show me a time in history where the government being involved in the church has ended up well with a church, ever. Okay, so I don't want that to happen. But I also want not just for me to be able to practice my faith, but you to be able to practice yours, and somebody that has a faith that I disagree with as well. I think that's part of the idea of this country and the issue you're referring to, some of our state legislators passed a bill, making the Bible Tennessee's official state book and Tennessee, like every other state, how like Colorado and everywhere else, we have an official insect, and tree, and bird, and song, and drink, and everything else.

Joanna Meyer: ([25:33](#))

Craft beer, probably, here in Colorado.



Bill Haslam: ([25:35](#))

I was actually shocked to find that our, I've been governor for eight years and found out that our state drink was milk, I would have bet on Jack Daniels.

Joanna Meyer: ([25:44](#))

Seriously.

Bill Haslam: ([25:46](#))

Things you should've known before. I thought in making it that, you're either establishing it as the official book of the state, which feels like establishing a religion to me. And then the authors of the bill said, "no, no, no. This is about just recognize its historical importance." And I said "well, in that case, that I think we're trivializing it because we're putting it alongside the Lady Bug, and the Dogwood tree, and other things. So I am not afraid of a country where we allow every faith to have the chance to be out there in the market, and if I have people to say, is this true or not? Again, I'm I have enough confidence in the truth of the gospel that I'm not afraid to say "I want you to be able to practice your religion because I also don't want you to tell me I can't mine."

Joanna Meyer: ([26:43](#))

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. This is changing the subject slightly, but one of the things I have found most perplexing in this season is talking to friends or loved ones who, it seems like their source of truth is radically different than my own. I think, why aren't you reading that? You believe this like, how do you believe this to be true? Why do you think we are struggling so hard to find consensus, not on our interpretation necessarily or our conclusions, but in truth itself?

Bill Haslam: ([27:14](#))

Yeah. I think back to the verse from Isaiah that you quoted at the very beginning, that "truth has stumbled in the public square." I always think, I wrote this book basically for us, as members of the faith, with this whole idea that, before I ask you to take the speck out of your eye, I'm going to take the log out of my eye. And I think, with people of faith, we have lost this idea. We're supposed to be people of truth, okay. We're also supposed to be people of love. We're supposed to be both of those things, but of all people, we're the ones that believe in a true truth. You know, it used to be more the secular left that said "everything's relative." Okay, and so you can't say this is truth for all time, because there is no such thing. And we were like, no, no, no, there is such a thing as real truth.

Bill Haslam: ([28:02](#))

And now, I feel like it's kind of changed to some folks, more on the what would be termed the religious right, are the ones that's saying, "well, that's an alternate truth." And again, I come back to, truth matters. We follow somebody who says "I'm the way, the truth, and the life." Okay, it's all those things, and one of the things that I think I want to encourage us as believers to do is, when Paul tells us to speak the truth with love, to do both of those things, we have some people who take great pride in being truth



tellers. And they're just saying, "I'm somebody who just tells it like it is," but it's hard to find much love from them. And other people who are like, they're great on the love side, but it's hard to find a place where they would take a stand. We're supposed to be both of those things, and it's a high calling. But again, I think it's a place we're called to model out what it should look like for the rest of the world.

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

Governor Haslam, before we wrap up, I want to make a slight shift, and hopefully make this conversation a little more personal for our listeners who probably aren't in public office or aspiring to that. As we think of building a faithful presence in each of our lives, and whatever calling that looks like as neighbors, as citizens, as employees, as friends, what are some of the values, or attitudes, or behaviors that we can adopt in our lives to make a faithful presence?

Bill Haslam: ([29:31](#))

Yeah. So I want to be real clear, the book is not just for people who are running for office, or in office, or somehow associated. I think all of us are called to have a presence in the public square, it's part of seeking the common good. So that might just mean being an informed voter, it might mean being a part of the discussion at your office, or at your school, or whatever it is. So I want to be real clear, the book is really broader than that. But what are some of the ways that we have a faithful presence? I honestly think that it starts with this, it starts with humility. One of the cornerstones of our faith is this idea that we're broken people, for Paul in Roman jail, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Bill Haslam: ([30:18](#))

And that sense of brokenness and the idea that we don't have everything exactly right should be foundational for us. James and Peter both say "for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." And so one of the ways we walk with a faithful presence is to do that. Second is to truly be seeking the peace of the place where we've called, the verse from Jeremiah that I said. And again, that can look like the hospital that you're called to, the academic building, whatever it is, you should be seeking the peace of that place. And then the final thing is this, we have a world right now that's struggling with this whole idea of justice and with mercy. We have people that are saying, "no justice, no peace" and I understand that, okay.

Bill Haslam: ([31:10](#))

But we also know that we want the bad guys to get caught. When somebody kneels on the neck of black man who dies, we want there to be true justice. But we also know that personally, we need mercy. I know that I'm two hours ahead of you all, since I'm on Eastern, you're on Mountain Time, but in the four hours I've been awake today, or whatever it is, that I've messed up 15 times already and I might be undershooting it. As Christians, this concept of justice and mercy at the same time, we should understand, we have a picture of that at the cross. And so if our lives are so infused with the beauty of the cross, that we're people who live justice and mercy at the same time, then I think our lives will speak volumes.



Joanna Meyer: ([32:07](#))

One of the things that stood out to me throughout your writing, Governor, is that you had a real self-deprecating sense of humor that comes from humility of realizing, just as you said, that you did not get daily life and leadership perfect. I'm wondering what it looks like to have like true humility in public life, especially in a culture where it seems like we're rewarded more for boasting, or trying to establish your own personal presence. What do you think true humility looks like?

Bill Haslam: ([32:42](#))

It's a great question. Because even humility you can fake, right? I mean, it's easy to false humility, we see it all the time. I think it really is this sense of, at the bottom of it, to borrow the Rick Warren line, that "it's not about me," that the story is not about me. If, again, as believers, we're supposed to be people that said for I have died, my life is now hidden with Christ's sense of... This is not about me, and my desires, and my needs, and my wishes. It's about trying to follow a God who loved me enough to die for me.

Bill Haslam: ([33:27](#))

And that should be what's driving us. It is really hard, to your point, in today's world where it's like, I don't know if there's ever been a time where self-promotion had so many rewards to it, the folks that go out and be active on social media, with very little connection to whether anything is actually being accomplished or any problems being solved. But I think that sense of realizing there's a way bigger story going on, that God has, for whatever reason, decided to use me as a part of that story but the story's not about me. And I'm going to take great joy in seeing this little piece of the tapestry that God's going to allow me to be a part of.

Joanna Meyer: ([34:13](#))

So beautiful. I would love to give you the final word, Governor. Thanks for just the encouragement and the perspective that you've offered. It is a gift that you have just been part of the Denver Institute Community in the last year. So I'm wondering if you would offer a charge to our listeners, commissioning them to live faithfully in public life?

Bill Haslam: ([34:33](#))

For whatever reason, God has chosen us to bear his image. And we have a world around us that I think is thirsty and aching for a sense of justice and mercy. And they're looking to see, is there somebody out there that seems to know something that's beyond just advancing their own interests? And it's my hope that, in a world that's exhausted and frustrated and thirsty for something that feels real in this world, that we could be those people that folks could look around and go, I've always kind of written off all the whole religious stuff before, but I'm seeing the only people that seem to be living for something besides themselves, are these people who call themselves believers.



Dustin Moody: ([35:24](#))

Great word. Governor, thanks so much for your time today, thanks for joining us at our politics event last fall, and thanks for your time putting together this book.

Bill Haslam: ([35:34](#))

Thanks, it's always fun to be with you guys and I appreciate insight you bring.

Dustin Moody: ([35:39](#))

Governor Haslam, thanks so much for joining us for the podcast this morning. For those of our listeners who want to learn a little bit more, Governor's book is Faithful Presence: the promise and peril of faith in the public square. We'll link to it from our show notes page. We're also happy to provide some resources that we developed last fall around the Politics of Neighborly Love event, which Governor Haslam joined us for. We've got an ebook written by Ryan Tafilowski, our theologian in residence. We'll also provide a replay link to that event as well, if you'd like to learn more.

Joanna Meyer: ([36:09](#))

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