



Elizabeth Mckinney: ([00:02](#))

But really, we've grown to see neighboring more like a crock-pot. It's a low and slow.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:12](#))

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

Joanna Meyer: ([00:20](#))

Hello and welcome to the Faith & Work podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, Denver Institute's director of public engagement and I'm joined today by Catherine Sandgreen, our fantastic podcast producer. Hi Catherine.

Catherine Sandgren: ([00:31](#))

Hey there, Joanna.

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

Today we're exploring a topic that almost any of our listeners can relate to, the work of neighboring. And summer is in the air, kids are playing in backyards, and it's a time of year when we're more likely to see the people that live around us. But that can be a challenging process. Catherine, I'd love to know, I have heard that your appreciation for your community of Englewood, Colorado has grown since the time you first moved in. What have you learned to love about your neighbors?

Catherine Sandgren: ([01:01](#))

Yeah. No, I'm fairly recent to Englewood, but I really love that it does have a small town feel to where I'll go to coffee shops, local coffee shops that have opened up or local businesses. And I'm actually really lucky that my church is also based in Englewood. And so I'll bump into people that I know. And I love that ability to run to the grocery store, bump into someone that and say hello. It's great.

Joanna Meyer: ([01:30](#))

Mm. I live in a little townhouse community in Aurora, Colorado, and it took a while for me to get to know my neighbors. But over the last couple years, maybe it's a blessing of the pandemic, our relationships have become open and tight, which has really been fun. And I've seen that play out in both profound and also humorous ways. I think of a neighbor who died last winter, it sounds so morbid, but right in front of the mailboxes in our community. She had a pulmonary embolism and a couple of neighbors who have background in healthcare happened to be looking out their windows and saw her collapse and ran out and performed CPR. And they weren't able to save her. But what was amazing was to see both the courage in my neighbors and also the following day, there was just an unplanned gathering.



Joanna Meyer: ([02:14](#))

People started congregating out in the driveway where we share that space, and we were able to come alongside the responders and just comfort them and allow them space to share their experience. And it was one of the most profound experiences I've seen of a community coming together.

Joanna Meyer: ([02:28](#))

On the humorous side, our listeners know I have a beloved pet rabbit named Billy. And the other day, Billy got scared by a loud noise and just was frantic. He was running in circles around the room where he lives. And he actually ran behind my washing machine and refused to come out. I mean, refused. I dismantled the entire laundry room trying to get behind the washer and pull him out. So, I had to go knock on my neighbor, Pat's door, who's a pet lover. And all I said was, "Pat, I have a pet emergency." And he was out the door. You should have seen his body language. He goes, "I'm on it."

Joanna Meyer: ([02:58](#))

So, he came over and he actually pulled my washing machine out from the wall and held it. Single-handedly, this neighbor is hauling this piece of heavy equipment, so I could get in there and fish my stupid and sweet little bunny out. And Pat's wife, Denise, said that he was proud for the rest of the weekend because he had done something heroic. He had rescued my bunny. And I think that's the fruit of neighboring, that you can bring your most tragic moments and your silly humorous moments and you can live them together. But that's the sunny view of neighboring. It's a hard process.

Joanna Meyer: ([03:28](#))

Today we're going to talk about what it looks like to live as a neighbor, as part of our broader call to Christ. At Denver Institute, we often say that we live with God in all of life, which captures this broad view of calling. That we live with God in all of the general things, in response to his call to be in relationship with us. We live a life of obedience and discipleship and also in service to the people around us, through our daily work and just through our relationships.

Joanna Meyer: ([03:54](#))

And this says implications for the way that we show up in our communities. Which is why I'm intrigued to talk to today's guests, Chris and Elizabeth McKinney. What's fun is I have known Chris and Elizabeth for probably close to 25 years. We were both in service with Cru, a campus ministry. I got to know them as students when I was on staff. And 25 years later, it's amazing to see how their life and ministry has grown. And so Catherine, tell us a little bit more about Chris and Elizabeth before they join the conversation.

Catherine Sandgren: ([04:22](#))

Yeah, I'd be happy to. So, Chris and Elizabeth live in Columbia, Missouri with their four daughters and a Pomeranian. They work for Cru City and serve as associate staff members at their church called The



Crossing. They write, they speak, and they are passionate about helping people love their next door neighbors.

Catherine Sandgren: ([04:41](#))

Well, hello Chris and Elizabeth. Welcome to the podcast.

Chris Mckinney: ([04:45](#))

Hi, thanks for having us.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([04:47](#))

Hi, good to be here.

Catherine Sandgren: ([04:48](#))

Wonderful. We're so excited that you guys are joining us today. I'm just going to go ahead and jump into our first question for the two of you. I'm really fascinated that your job description can be summed up as neighboring or in that vein of work. Can you go ahead and tell us what does that mean? As well as, how did God lead you guys into this form of work?

Chris Mckinney: ([05:10](#))

Yeah. Yeah. So, we see the term neighboring... I think you can be defined as a neighbor, right? So you can see yourself in your home and be like, "I am a neighbor to my next door neighbor and they're a neighbor to me." Neighboring, goes from that person being your next door stranger to your next door neighbor. And it's moving towards them. It's an active engagement from being a neighbor to, "Hi, my name's Chris. What's your name?" To your next door neighbor. That's what we see neighboring. It's trying to get people moving towards their next door neighbors, so.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([05:48](#))

And as far as how we jumped in, it wasn't accidental, but it wasn't totally intentional either. I mean, we were in one of the most stressful seasons of our lives. It was about 10 years ago, we moved into our home and Chris was commuting to seminary a couple hours away. And we were having a lot of kids in a short time span. And very stressed, not looking for more ministry to do, but really had the sense that if we were going to have any community, if we had to drive across town to get it, it wasn't going to happen. And so, we needed people in real time, right around us.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([06:28](#))

And there was a couple that lived behind us, Bingo and Angie. And Bingo's seven or eight foot tall. He's one of the only people that makes Chris feel small. And he liked to fry things. And so we thought, "Well, let's do a little fish fry. This would be enriching. This would be good. We like Bingo and Angie." And so, he brought the fryers and we made the sauces and had people, BYOP, bring their own protein, BYOF, bring



their own fish. And it was just a small little fish fry in our driveway. And from there, we thought we like these people, we need these people. And so that spring, we decided to do a little Easter egg hunt hunt, and there were six or seven kids there and four of them were ours. And so, it was very humble beginnings. But at that Easter egg hunt, we met a couple named Nathan and Kathy. And they said, "Hey, if you'd ever want to try to build some community in the neighborhood and do some things, we'd love to help." And so-

Chris Mckinney: ([07:39](#))

They're like, "What do you want to do next?" We're like, "We have no idea. We haven't planned past the [inaudible 00:07:42]."

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([07:42](#))

I'm just trying to get through today people. And so, I have no idea. And so she said, "Well, what about a block party?" And so, that was the next step, it was very organic, grassroots, you bring the table clothes, you bring the trash bags, very potluck. And we knew, it was like we couldn't pull the whole thing off. And also, we wanted other people to have a sense of ownership in it too. And what we found was that our neighborhood that we thought was completely shut off, there was no interaction. It was the proverbial, the garage door goes up... We live in the suburbs, that's our context. The garage door goes up, the car pulls in, the garage door closes. I mean, nobody talked to each other. And what we found was that people were actually just as starved for community as we were. And people started coming out in droves. I mean, it grew over the years. But even that first year, we just had a wonderful turnout and we started neighboring. We didn't know what it was. We're still learning, but it was amazing.

Joanna Meyer: ([08:52](#))

I want to hold onto something you just highlighted, that when you started thinking differently about neighboring, your lives were very full, you didn't have a lot of extra time. So, let's just hold on to that. We'll come back to it later in the conversation. But you also highlighted something about our current reality, that a lot of people don't have warm community experiences. I think all the years I lived in apartments, it was very hard to get to know the people around me. And even for people living in more traditional neighborhoods, it's not the '50s anymore, where you may know everybody. How have you seen neighboring change? And what do you think is behind that?

Chris Mckinney: ([09:27](#))

Yeah. So, really interesting, the Harvard School of Medicine did a survey a couple years ago where they compared the definitions of what it means to be a good neighbor, both from the '50s and '60s. So, they found some survey results where people responded to the question, what do you think it means to be a good neighbor? And it was all the things you would think. You know your next door neighbor's name. You introduce the new neighbors to the current neighbors. You can rely on neighbors in times of need.



Elizabeth Mckinney: ([09:55](#))

Bring a pie.

Chris Mckinney: ([09:56](#))

Bring a pie. Your social lives are intertwined. And so they sent out that same survey today, and the responses they got back after they looked at all of them was basically, the definition of being a good neighbor today in our culture is to leave your next door neighbor alone. To keep the peace, keep the noise down, take out your trash, maybe wave, because you don't want to be rude, but wave or smile and then walk back inside.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([10:20](#))

Sometimes not smile.

Chris Mckinney: ([10:21](#))

And sometimes not smile. And so, I think we didn't realize we've been a part of that cultural story. When we moved into our neighborhood, we saw our whole neighborhood leaving each other alone. It was only by God's grace that we were like, "Hey, maybe we should get to know our neighbors." Because it's like a fish swimming in water, you don't know that you're swimming in those waters until you open your eyes and just think, "Wait a second, is this really how God would define being a good neighbor? Is it the biblical story? Would it point to leaving people alone or is there something else?"

Chris Mckinney: ([10:57](#))

And I think that's a big switch that we need to understand and realize if we're going to begin neighboring and begin moving towards our neighbors and pushing through the awkwardness that cultural story of leaving your next door neighbor alone has created.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([11:12](#))

I mean, it might even feel wrong.

Chris Mckinney: ([11:13](#))

Yeah. Yeah. It might feel wrong to go over and say, "Hi, my name's Chris." To your next door neighbor. If the cultural story, the definition of being a good neighbor is to leave your neighbor alone.

Joanna Meyer: ([11:24](#))

Wow. That's really humbling to think about. So, in your book *Placed For a Purpose*, you highlight in scripture, we see Christ teaching about neighboring. It's front and center. It's a great commandment of love your neighbor as yourself or parables like the good Samaritan, but you argue that there's a much broader theological framework that helps us understand our identity as neighbors. Would you tell us a little bit about that?



Chris Mckinney: ([11:49](#))

Yeah. I think it contrasts to the cultural story of leave your next door neighbor alone. So, in the biblical story, I think we see and find God not leaving us alone, but moving towards us. And so, I think you could trace that thread throughout the entire story of scripture, of God is constantly moving towards us, moving towards his people. You saw it in the garden, you see it in Jesus who became a neighbor to us. He's the one who stopped and picked us up and bandaged our wounds, like the good Samaritan.

Chris Mckinney: ([12:21](#))

And then, in scripture, then you see that God does that so that we can go and do that for others. So, Abraham is blessed to be a blessing. God becomes a neighbor to him, to the people of Israel, right? And then he places them in the Promised Land. He blesses them so that their neighbors, the nations, would see how they interact and they would say, "Ah, There's something different about these people the way they're treating each other. Paul says in Acts 17 that God has marked out our boundary places. And he has assigned our place where we will live so that we can interact and reach out and be a blessing to those around us.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([13:02](#))

We've been placed for a purpose.

Chris Mckinney: ([13:04](#))

Placed for a purpose. So, I think, if you walk out your front door, and you think, leave your neighbor alone, you're going to show up as a neighbor in certain ways. But if you walk out your front door and you think, "I've been placed for a purpose, God's moved towards me as a neighbor and He's calling me to move towards my neighbor and He's at work," that's going to change your whole perspective on how you're going to interact with your neighbors.

Catherine Sandgren: ([13:30](#))

I love that. I think through too, just for me even hearing this, you guys have such a deep, rich understanding of what it means to be a good neighbor. And you've had a lot of practice at it. What about our listeners-

Chris Mckinney: ([13:41](#))

We're trying.

Catherine Sandgren: ([13:42](#))

Yeah. And what about our listeners who are maybe hearing this and thinking, "Wow, I do not have the time or I don't want to be that awkward neighbor who's trying to talk about my faith while we're at the garbage cans, or as we're walking into our homes after a long day of work." How do you do that?



Elizabeth Mckinney: ([14:01](#))

Well, I've known Joanna for over 20 years, and we were in the campus ministry together. And we now look back and we affectionately call our time in the campus ministry, the microwave, because we got to see people's lives change. And it happened fast, and it was fun. But really we've grown to see neighboring more like a crock-pot. It's a low and slow. And when you talk about sharing your faith and what does that look like in neighboring? I think for me, and Joanna, you probably remember this from conversations we had years ago. I love to share my faith. I love it. But what I've seen is, in living in the crock-pot, it doesn't happen overnight. It's not like you said, you're walking up and having these awkward, "Knock, knock, knock. Would you like to hear about having a personal relationship with Jesus?"

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([15:01](#))

It's like, these people might live next door to you for a while. And so I think, first off, it is self-identifying as a believer, as a Christian, it's not a bait and switch where you're living as this undercover Christian. It's like, it's okay to post on social media, what books you're learning or podcasts, or let your Christianity be latent in conversations that you're having. But I think it's also having what Dave Runyon talks about in his book, the Art of Neighboring, it's having ultimate motives versus ulterior motives.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([15:36](#))

And that's been something that's really freed us up, that I can care about the whole person. I don't have to treat them like a project and just try to get in a church invite. I can care about their work, their job, their aging parents, their teenager that's going through a really difficult time. Their struggles with their boss, whatever it is. And I can genuinely care about that. And I don't have to try to get it into a conversation that counts as spiritual, or that I used to think of more as spiritual for it to count. And so I think it's over time, just valuing those small steps, like having a dinner party, or sitting out... We have a really inexpensive fire pit that we set out in our driveway. And I found that people flock to a fire, like moths... They to come to a fire like-

Chris Mckinney: ([16:36](#))

S'mores, especially.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([16:36](#))

S'mores. Kids, it's like mouse to a peanut butter.

Chris Mckinney: ([16:39](#))

Yeah.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([16:40](#))



People love fire pits. And so we'll just set it out there. And sometimes it does lead to spiritual conversations, and those, you can continue over time, but it is different.

Joanna Meyer: ([16:51](#))

Yeah. Think about all those pandemic purchases that helped make sitting outside a little more conducive to just comfortable. That actually might help with neighboring. Because I think stepping inside someone's home is a very intimate thing. But joining someone on their driveway or having a beer in the backyard, feels a little bit less stressful. So it'll be interesting to see how that plays out. I have a question for you just about time and schedule. As you said earlier, you were super busy when God put this weight of neighboring on your heart or this opportunity for neighboring on your heart, what would you say to someone that just feels currently overloaded by their life?

Chris Mckinney: ([17:24](#))

Yeah. I think again, you want to... Neighboring, you need to have a long term and a sustainable vision for the low and slow. And I think one way to engage in that is to just value the little things. So, if someone was like, "I'm too busy, I can't do all the things you're doing," I'm saying, do the little things, remove the word just from your neighboring vocabulary. So, wave, smile. It's not just a wave. It's not just a smile. It's not just an introduction. Those are significant steps towards getting to know your neighbors and beginning to build that relationship. And so I would tell someone, just start small and give yourself a ton of freedom. A ton of grace. You don't have to plan the big block party. Just say, hello. Maybe pause while you're getting out of your car if your neighbor's out and say-

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([18:11](#))

Put your phone away.

Chris Mckinney: ([18:11](#))

Put your phone away, say, "Hey, how are you doing? Good to see you. Great weather we're having here." I mean, right? That could be a big step for us in our current neighboring culture. And so that's what I would say is just...

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([18:24](#))

Well, and you've also shared before about doing things that you like, because it's not a cut and pace. And there's different temperaments, and wiring your Enneagram, extrovert, introvert. I'm more extroverted. You're an introvert.

Chris Mckinney: ([18:38](#))

Yep.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([18:38](#))



So neighboring looks really different even for the two of us. And I think if you come at it thinking it's a cut and paste, I have to do it a certain way. I mean, that's no fun.

Chris Mckinney: ([18:48](#))

Yeah.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([18:49](#))

So taking into consideration, we would say we're want to be foodies. I don't know if we're actually foodies, but we love food. And so, we like to cook for people or you, the Hot Ones Challenge that you did, with 15-

Chris Mckinney: ([19:05](#))

Chicken wings and hot sauce.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([19:07](#))

Yeah. Burn your faces off.

Chris Mckinney: ([19:08](#))

Yeah. Yeah.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([19:11](#))

So, you do it in a way that's sustainable gardening, if that's your thing. Or you look for an excuse and something you might enjoy. We're you going to say something else?

Chris Mckinney: ([19:24](#))

That's good.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([19:24](#))

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer: ([19:26](#))

Okay. So I have a couple practical questions of, how do you actually do it? And so you touched on one of, a little bit like, what do you do if you really do have an unfriendly neighborhood?

Chris Mckinney: ([19:35](#))

Mm. Yeah. I mean, going back to our story, when the Ethertons suggested we do a block party, I was like, "That's not a good idea," because-

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([19:45](#))



No one's going to want to come.

Chris Mckinney: ([19:46](#))

No one's going to come to this. Because like we said, it was a very non-connected neighborhood. And so-

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([19:52](#))

I mean for Halloween.

Chris Mckinney: ([19:54](#))

Oh, yeah.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([19:54](#))

There were no trick-or-treaters the first years, the first three years of living in our neighborhood. Everyone left and went to other neighborhoods. Which Halloween's, if you can't meet your neighbors on Halloween, I mean, that's national neighbor day. And so-

Joanna Meyer: ([20:15](#))

Seriously.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([20:15](#))

I mean, it was it was sad.

Chris Mckinney: ([20:15](#))

Yeah. So we can relate. So I think, you want to realize you want to live in God's story in your neighborhood. So that means you God's moved towards you, you want to move towards others. He's at work, right? So walk out your front door and be like, "God is at work behind the scenes. I don't know what He's doing, but I believe that He's at work."

Chris Mckinney: ([20:34](#))

And then, you do have to take a little bit of a step. There is some initiation that needs to take place. And we feel it too sometimes. We're like, we initiate a lot in our neighborhood and that's grown as the opportunities have grown. But sometimes you can feel a little bit like, "Who dug me the mayor of Windham Ridge? Is it okay that?" And every time we feel that we're just like, "Let's just take a step. Let's just see what happens." And people are waiting for someone to just extend an invitation, or plan that driveway, ice cream thing you. And so, I would just say, taking those little steps, and pushing through some of the awkwardness and just see what happens.



Elizabeth Mckinney: ([21:17](#))

And let it be in different stages. It's okay. That like he said, start with a wave, start with a smile. And then I would say the next step would be learning names. I know this is another Dave Runyon thing. But I heard this in a talk he was giving once where he said, basically, I'm paraphrasing, but, "You can't be friends with someone. If you don't know their name." You can be an acquaintance to someone. But that's the whole problem or this idea of next door strangers. If you don't know their name, that's another early step that you can take.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([21:56](#))

And I keep a little note. This is real practical. I keep a note in my phone. And if it's a name that's difficult to pronounce, we used to think we lived in white suburbia, until God opened our eyes to the fact that there are families in our neighborhood from China, and India, and Argentina, and Brazil, and Mexico.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([22:14](#))

I mean, I could go on. We've become close to several families from India and China too. But we have a lot of friends with Indian heritage. And when I first get to know them, I'd have to write it out phonetically. But that means a lot. If you make an effort and you see someone and you say, "Hi Mahesh, Hi Khasa. Hi Amulya. Hi Tulia." They see that effort. And from there, make excuses, I said that already. But instead of thinking of it as a guilt way like, "Gosh, don't make excuses. You should be neighboring." It's more like, "No, make an excuse."

Jeff Hoffmeyer: ([22:55](#))

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Catherine Sandgren: ([23:47](#))

So Chris and Elizabeth, I love what you've been saying about starting small, taking baby steps to get to know your neighbors, and making excuses and not diminishing the small things. Those are important things. Knowing their name, as well as waving, saying, hello. How do you move beyond those small steps? You started to talk about it, but I'm really curious. And maybe you can share a story with us here. About a relationship with a neighbor that turned out from small steps into something really amazing, or like a good acquaintance. Tell us a little bit about how that takes place.



Elizabeth Mckinney: ([24:22](#))

Yeah. Well, one example would be, like I said earlier, we initially thought we lived in white suburbia, but we started realizing that there were a lot of families from all kinds of varying ethnic backgrounds. And we also noticed at our block parties that they were seemed to be a little on the peripheral. They weren't as engaged. And I believe part of that is because even some of their... Maybe they speak broken English, or maybe their names are difficult to pronounce. And so there's just some barriers there that they weren't getting... Yeah. People-

Chris Mckinney: ([25:02](#))

Connected.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([25:03](#))

They weren't getting connected. And so, we started praying about it, "Lord, how should we see this? How should we approach this?" And even, we started praying for someone as like, I don't know if it was a spokesperson exactly, but we wanted some help in this area too, beyond ourselves. And so God answered our prayer and a family moved into the neighborhood, Sibi and Shirley, they were from California, but they were both from Indian heritage. And we started talking about this and we were brainstorming because we all love food. What if we were to do a little, food fest sounds a little overstated, but a mini food fest, at a common space. Like you were saying, going into people's homes can be a private thing. So in our neighborhood, there's a clubhouse available, but we also talked about doing it outside. And we thought, "Okay, what if we were to provide some, Sibi and Shirley could connect to a lot of these families," and we're pretty connected too. So we tried to point them Sibi and Shirley and help behind the scenes, what they ran with it.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([26:15](#))

And so, what if we were to encourage people to bring a dish from their culture and we could all sample. They called it a bite of the world.

Catherine Sandgren: ([26:24](#))

Oh, I love that.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([26:25](#))

And so, we had like 50 families from the neighborhood come and participate from all over. And from there, that was where we really connected. I mean, we knew Lolit and Rashmi, and Smith and Mahesh, and we knew some of these families. But I think after that, we thought... And this was pre-COVID. But we decided, what if we had some of these families over for Thanksgiving, the next night, or it was that weekend.



Chris Mckinney: ([26:54](#))

A Saturday.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([26:54](#))

Yeah. That Saturday. And we could all do leftovers. And selfishly, we're knowing we're going to get some really good Indian food out of this. And of course our leftovers weren't nearly as good.

Chris Mckinney: ([27:03](#))

No.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([27:03](#))

But we had the wine and the pie. And so, from there we built really rich relationships. And it all started over food. And really through God opening our eyes to the fact that, as we saw the common good of the neighborhood and people saw that we cared about a lot of the same things that they cared about, they felt like there was a bridge there that we could all cross. And then from there, you don't know what God's doing.

Joanna Meyer: ([27:34](#))

I was thinking, even random note back to what we were talking about, how do you make time for neighboring? One of my friends shifted her family activity from the backyard to the front yard. And installed a tire swing on their front tree and some little toys out there. And it's amazing. They sit on their front porch and the neighborhood comes to play. And it has changed their dynamic and how they relate to people. And I think it's just observing, what do you have and how can you open the door of relationship? It may take a few tries and experiments, but I love seeing the fruit of those experiments that you have tried.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([28:04](#))

That's awesome. Yeah. They had a tire. That's all it took was a tire.

Joanna Meyer: ([28:08](#))

Yeah. Exactly. That's a gift.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([28:08](#))

That's a great story.

Chris Mckinney: ([28:10](#))

Yeah.



Joanna Meyer: ([28:10](#))

Kids and pets are amazing relationship builders.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([28:13](#))

Yes they are. Although our dog is a COVID dog, so she likes to be socially distanced. She's not that good of a neighbor, but-

Chris Mckinney: ([28:21](#))

She barks at everybody.

Joanna Meyer: ([28:24](#))

That's some coaching to do there.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([28:24](#))

Yeah.

Chris Mckinney: ([28:24](#))

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer: ([28:24](#))

So one of the challenges of living in community, is that inevitably, conflict comes up. Anybody that has served on their homeowners association board, or even attended a meeting, knows that those can be pretty tense. How have you seen conflict play out in neighborhoods? And what does it look like to have a godly presence in those moments?

Chris Mckinney: ([28:41](#))

Yeah. Oh man. The neighborhood Facebook page.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([28:45](#))

We've got enough conflict in trauma for-

Chris Mckinney: ([28:47](#))

Oh man. You

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([28:49](#))

We could fill a cathedral full.



Chris Mckinney: ([28:50](#))

Yeah. Oh man. Yeah. I think one of the things that's helped us, and we've definitely had conflict, whether it's through planning these events and trying to work with people, or neighbors not agreeing on a certain thing and trying to step in and mediate. I think it's trying to have a heart of forgiveness, even just for us and trying to help talk about forgiveness. We've seen and noticed, forgiveness is a very non-common thing. It truly is a unique thing when you forgive, or we just hear a lot of talk about like, "Oh yeah, they'll get theirs eventually." Or-

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([29:37](#))

Just karma.

Chris Mckinney: ([29:37](#))

Karma. "They'll get what's coming to them." Or they just cut off relationships entirely. And I get it, if you've been wronged by your neighbor, yeah.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([29:44](#))

It could be something as simple as someone being in your yard or where does my lot end and yours.

Chris Mckinney: ([29:51](#))

Yeah. Yeah. And so I think as we even are in conflict with neighbors, or talking to a neighbor that's in conflict, we're trying to flavor our conversations with forgiveness, or what would it look like for us to be able to hang in there with them or believe the best. I know it's frustrating. And we've seen God over time then bring reconciliation, and bring... Even if it's like the immediate conflict isn't addressed and figured out, if there's some forgiveness in believing the best and relational connections after that, through some of these events, we've seen some of those relationships mended.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([30:34](#))

Yeah. And you don't have to be there with a pat answer. It doesn't have to be like, the next day you're forgiving. I mean, just letting them into the process of the fact that you want to. Because I mean, we have a neighbor who she's an atheist and then the other neighbor, I'm not exactly sure what she believes, but she's not churched. And they were having a big conflict with each other. And then I got pulled into it and I was frustrated with one of them. And I'm really close with the neighbor who's an atheist. And so just letting her into my desire to forgive. And that's been several years ago, so now she knows I have forgiven. So, it is, it's very upside down. Why would you ever forgive? It's really one of the amazing things we can bring about our relationship with Christ into our neighboring. Just forgiving.

Joanna Meyer: ([31:36](#))

Probably a really powerful way to begin some of those deeper conversations.



Chris Mckinney: ([31:40](#))

Oh, yeah.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([31:40](#))

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joanna Meyer: ([31:41](#))

When have you blown it as a neighbor?

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([31:43](#))

The neighboring blunders, there's so many. Well, one that probably comes to mind most readily, because it was fairly recent. I mentioned Halloween. So Halloween is our baby. We love Halloween because we've seen it grow and really bring a sense of community. But this year, one of our neighbors who she's not churching and we've been friends for years. And she came at me on the Facebook page. And I shut her idea down. And I tried apologizing over a text. She didn't respond. And so, I felt really sad about it because she's someone who... First of all, I really like her. I enjoy her. I've also prayed for her for a long time. And so I didn't know how to handle it because she didn't respond to my apology. So I got advice. I sought advice from another neighbor who also isn't super churching, and asked her to weigh in. Because I had a feeling I'm like, I can't respond to this person the same way I would a sister in Christ, because there's a different dynamic happening there.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([33:03](#))

And she just gave me a lot of wisdom. That was not how I would've handled it. And it wasn't in my timeframe. And it wasn't resolved on my terms, but it worked. It really worked. And so, I mean, I still applied a lot of the same principles of trying to have humility and forgive, but I didn't try to push it into a Christian way I would've handled it with a fellow believer. And it was resolved. Yeah. And so eventually, I did give her a hug when I saw her. And then at New Year's Eve, we spent some time chatting and I did initiate towards her. We've moved past it, but yeah, we've had a lot of our own blunders. But that's okay too, because hopefully that can point them to Christ in and of itself. Say, no, we're not perfect.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([33:57](#))

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

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

So here's a final question I have for you is, we talked about not letting pressure to share your faith, keep you from taking those first steps of neighboring. But there is a certain point, where you would love for your neighbors to know about Christ in an authentic and organic way. What do you think it looks like to begin to introduce spiritual themes into the conversation? And prayerfully, be able to talk more openly about Christ?



Chris Mckinney: ([34:24](#))

I think one of the things we think about is trying to run at the same spiritual pace as our neighbors.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([34:31](#))

Or walk.

Chris Mckinney: ([34:32](#))

Or walk. So if you think about, if you go for a run with someone, you want them to run at your pace. I'm not a runner, I hate running. So if someone's like, "Hey, come running with me," and they are way out in front of me? I'm done. I'm going to quit and go home. But also if I'm like, "Okay, I've been doing this for a month, I'm getting better. And the person I'm running with is lagging. I'm going to just go find somebody else to run with because I want to move."

Chris Mckinney: ([34:55](#))

And so I think like we try to self identify as a Christian, we try to talk about our faith. "Oh man, I really blew it with my kids. I was super angry and frustrated with them. I was feeling really bad about that, but I apologized and just remembered how much God's forgiven me for all the things I've done. And I tried to approach that in the same way with my kids." And so, then when I say something like that, I'm just looking to see how are they responding? Are they like, "Wow, that's really neat. Is that what your church talks about?" And it's like, "Okay, let's keep going."

Chris Mckinney: ([35:30](#))

But if we have neighbors where we've said like, "Yeah, our kids went to the kids club thing over the summer. And it was really great-"

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([35:39](#))

It's a church-

Chris Mckinney: ([35:39](#))

A church event. And it's nothing. No response. No feedback. And it's like, "Okay, maybe we need to slow down a little bit. It's okay." And just start... Maybe they're crawling. And so I think for me, that's one of the things I'm constantly trying to do, is season my conversations, drop thoughts of how the gospel is impacting me today. And be ready to continue moving forward. If that person is like, "Well, tell me more about your church," or.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([36:10](#))

And this is less on an individual level, but on a broader level, we have also offered some book discussions in our neighborhood. So about five years into neighboring, we thought, we basically were asking that



same question, Joanna, that you just asked. And so we decided to do The Purpose Driven Life, which if you've never read The Purpose Driven Life, don't ever doubt the power of that book. Because, it is so... There's a reason why 100 billion copies have been sold worldwide. It's just incredible. And God will use it in your own life too. It's really, really good. But we had 50 neighbors go through that book. And some of them became believers through that. And so then we've offered other book discussions. Right now, we're we're going to do one called No Perfect Parents because, hello. That's us. But we've done ones on anxiety. I think we did... Didn't you do one on work?

Chris Mckinney: [\(37:04\)](#)

I did one on Faith & Work. Yep.

Joanna Meyer: [\(37:05\)](#)

Yay. You go Chris.

Elizabeth Mckinney: [\(37:06\)](#)

So, yeah.

Chris Mckinney: [\(37:08\)](#)

Yeah, yeah.

Elizabeth Mckinney: [\(37:08\)](#)

So, Afraid of All the Things is a really great book that a lot of women seem to really like that. But you do say from the beginning, "This is from a Christian perspective, we're offering this. So one read, you can show up on a Thursday night, we'll provide snacks and drinks." And that's been a great, just open door. We've had nonbelievers say, one neighbor was like, "You need to do one on parenting. You'll get everybody to come." So, yeah, it's been another way we've just opened the door.

Chris Mckinney: [\(37:40\)](#)

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joanna Meyer: [\(37:41\)](#)

I would love to see you guys in action. [inaudible 00:37:44].

Elizabeth Mckinney: [\(37:44\)](#)

It's not always pretty.

Joanna Meyer: [\(37:46\)](#)

[inaudible 00:37:46].



Chris Mckinney: ([37:46](#))

Yeah.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([37:48](#))

Yes. I mean, our neighbors are like, "The McKinneys are doing good things, but man, they can't get their kids to obey them." So, they can relate to us really well.

Joanna Meyer: ([37:58](#))

Yeah. And it's possible to just affirm the unique work that God's doing in your life and also acknowledge that you're not superheroes. What you're describing is not somehow this super spiritual experience, nor is it the cheesiness we see portrayed with the neighbor, Ned Flanders on the Simpsons. You're organically and intentionally living a life of faith with your neighbors and God is choosing to work. And I think that's a model we can all follow.

Joanna Meyer: ([38:24](#))

And it's a beautiful picture of living with God in all of life, which is at the heart of the Faith & Work movement, is that all of our life has lived under God's broader call to live relationship with him and service to others. So I want to give you guys the final word, we like to do that with our guests, offer you a chance to preach it a little bit, to give a call to our listeners of pressing into this journey of learning to be a neighbor and loving the people around us.

Chris Mckinney: ([38:51](#))

Yeah. I mean, I think I would just reiterate the small steps. And I know we've said it before, but repetition is key to learning, right? And so, for anybody out there remove the word just. It's not just a wave. It's not just a smile. It's not just an interaction. And begin to make excuses for relational connection. Because, if you want to see your neighbors come to know Jesus and you want to have those spiritual conversations, we need to build those relationships that can withstand and hold up those weightier conversations. And so, begin in investing in those relationships. Start small, and believe that God is at work. Because He is. He's at work right now in your neighborhood. You may not see it, but He's at work. And He's inviting you into that work. And the way you join him in that is by taking those small steps.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([39:45](#))

And I think, I basically would say the same thing, but I've used the parable of the mustard seed. That Jesus, He really... It's interesting. Chris has pointed out before, the parables are a lot less about information and they're more about imagination. And I think what's so great about the parable of the mustard seed is it really invites us to imagine what God could do through the smallest of seeds. That when it has grown, it will grow into something that will provide shade and rest for the birds of the air. And that's the picture I have of our neighborhood. It's the smallest of seeds. What is the smallest thing that you could imagine doing? That's how the kingdom of God spreads.



Elizabeth Mckinney: ([40:31](#))

And He wants us to imagine. He wants us to think what if Paulie were to eventually give her life to Christ? What if so and so were to live in a restored relationship with their parents? I mean, it's like you just start to imagine, what would my neighborhood look like if the so-and-sos and the so-and-sos weren't at odds anymore, but they were living in peace and harmony as brothers and sisters in Christ? I mean, you could go on and on and on, you're just imagining what God could do through the smallest of seeds. So, I'd encourage you to start there too. Just start imagining. Pray and embrace the mustard seed.

Joanna Meyer: ([41:16](#))

Thanks for sparking our imagination. Chris and Elizabeth McKinney, what a gift and so fun. 20, 25 years later from the time I first met you to see how the work of God in your life and your influence has grown.

Elizabeth Mckinney: ([41:28](#))

Thanks.

Chris Mckinney: ([41:29](#))

Thank you.

Joanna Meyer: ([41:32](#))

Gosh, it's so fun to learn about how Chris and Elizabeth live in their neighborhood. If you've been intrigued by today's conversation, we have a few steps you can take to learn more about this topic. The first is happening next week. It's our Colorado conversation, which should be hosted here in Denver. We're doing it over happy hour. And we're discussing a theology of place. Or what it means to love the place that God has placed us. So we encourage you to come to that. There'll be a link in our show notes.

Joanna Meyer: ([41:58](#))

We'll also be linking to two books, Chris and Elizabeth's book, *Placed with a Purpose*, which is a very practical, biblical look at what it means to be a neighbor. And will also link to Dave Runyon's book, *The Art of Neighboring*. Who knew there were two biblically-driven books about neighboring and they're both great? And then finally, we'll also link to a free three session course on *Reimagining Our Cities* with Greg Thompson and Professor Josh Yates of the Thriving Cities Group. It's for free and it's in the Faith & Work classroom. So, amazing resources to tickle your brain cells and touch your heart. As you think about living for Christ in your community.

Joanna Meyer: ([42:37](#))

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