



Hannah Stolze: ([00:02](#))

Part of the practicality in Proverbs is really, first, a call throughout scripture to be sacrificial in our love for other people.

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: ([00:22](#))

Hi, and welcome to The Faith & Work Podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, the Director of Public Engagement here at Denver Institute, and today we're wrestling with deeper questions about our work, specifically the purpose of business. Milton Friedman, he was a Nobel Prize-winning economist, his thinking dominated economic thought in the 20th century. He argued that a business' sole responsibility is to return value to its stakeholders. A more modern example, Forbes Magazine claims that the purpose of a company is to have a meaningful vision and then to be profitable in achieving it. I read that and I think, "What is a meaningful vision, and who defines it?"

Joanna Meyer: ([01:00](#))

The Bible offers an alternative to the world's thinking in almost every area of life, so what does it mean for business? Today's guest, Hannah Stolze, brings insight from deep study of scripture and her work as a supply chain expert and college professor. She argues that a seemingly unlikely text, Proverbs 31 in addition to other wisdom passages in scripture, hold the answer to these questions. Have I peaked your interest? Well keep listening.

Joanna Meyer: ([01:27](#))

A little bit about Hannah. Hannah Stolze is an academic in the field of global supply chain management and a recent Fulbright scholar to Indonesia. Earlier in her career, before becoming an academic, mom, and wife, she was a soldier with occupational specialties in psychological operations, ordinance, and broadcast journalism. Currently, she's an Associate Professor of Supply Chain Management at Lipscomb University and the Executive Director of Wheaton College's Center for Faith & Innovation. And today we'll be talking about her recent book, *Wisdom-Based Business: Applying Biblical Principles and Evidence-Based Research for a Purposeful and Profitable Business*.

Joanna Meyer: ([02:05](#))

Well, Hannah, welcome to the Faith & Work Podcast. It's treat to have you on today.

Hannah Stolze: ([02:10](#))

Thank you. It's so good to be here.



Joanna Meyer: ([02:11](#))

Yeah, of all the guests we've had on, you have one of the more fascinating career journeys, and I'm wondering if you could tell us a little bit about it. How in the world did it lead you to specializing in supply chain management?

Hannah Stolze: ([02:23](#))

Yeah, most little girls don't dream of growing up and being experts at trucking, so it definitely was a journey. My parents were missionaries actually before I was born, so I'm post missionary, but my parents lived overseas and a lot of my dad's siblings worked in the mission field, and so I grew up pretty blue collar American but with lots of relatives overseas and lots of overseas guests. I always knew that I wanted to do something global. I didn't necessarily want to be a missionary, although I wanted to go into something where I could help people. And just being more academic and booky, initially thought I would do law or something in that space and ended up joining the Army to pay for college. The Army provided me with lots of life experience as well as gave me some opportunities to explore fields that I wouldn't have explored otherwise.

Hannah Stolze: ([03:18](#))

I started out as a cultural analyst, which was a pretty good fit, actually, with my personality and skill sets, I linguist qualified in Mandarin. But after 9/11, they needed people in supply. I actually ended up as a cadet in ordinance. And so, if you don't know what ordinance is, they move in warehouse and convoy explosives. Every kind of munition moves through ordinance. It was actually a really hands-on introduction to supply chain management within the military logistics. And then I got out of that and was a broadcast journalist for a few years, but it started me on a journey with supply chain management. I did my MBA while I was in a public affairs detachment, actually still in the Army. I always thought I would do law, and I had that moment where you realize you're going to go into debt for law school or you can get an MBA for free. So I was like, "Business it is."

Hannah Stolze: ([04:13](#))

So not all of it was very strategic or we'll say God's hand or something. That free MBA did it for me. At that point I was in public affairs in the military and really thought I would do something in PR or marketing, and it just happened that my marketing professor was a railroad CMO. Most of the time when we think about marketing and business, we think about our experience with it as consumers, and we don't realize that most products are actually sold between companies and that products move between companies a lot before they get into the marketplace. It opened my eyes and I was like, "Wow. The consumer side is so transactional, but when you're in the corporate space dealing with companies, it's relational and, even cooler, it's global." And so that was kind of the beginning of the end for me, and ever since, I just love supply chain management.



Joanna Meyer: ([05:08](#))

Yeah. It's fascinating in post-COVID life and we've learned a lot more about supply chain than we ever thought before. I love that you're helping people manage that better.

Hannah Stolze: ([05:17](#))

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer: ([05:18](#))

Tell us about your current work, because you split your time between two academic institutions, one, running Wheaton's Center for Faith & Innovation and then being a Professor of Supply Chain at Lipscomb. Tell us a little bit about both forms of work.

Hannah Stolze: ([05:30](#))

Yeah, absolutely, thanks. My PhD is in business administration with a focus in logistics and marketing. A lot of my research and all of the work I do academically is very supply chain-oriented. I went to Wheaton from Florida State in 2015. When I went into Wheaton, Wheaton has a general business program, I actually taught across marketing and supply chain management. Both two big fields. At Wheaton, Wheaton is a school that is very intentional about faith integration. One of the opportunities I had while I was there to start thinking through how do we really disciple students. Not just teach them in the classroom where we're just doing a knowledge exchange, but really create space for experiential learning. It looks at every level. How do we do research that explores how faith can be integrated in business practice? And then how do we train students to do research that explores ways that faith can be integrated into business practice?

Hannah Stolze: ([06:27](#))

So it's pretty broad across all different areas of business, lots of different industries. 2020 was the year that everybody became aware of supply chain management. And during that year, I had the opportunity, I was approached by Lipscomb. They're building a supply chain program, like many schools are right now, and they were looking for a director, somebody who could launch their supply chain program and a center for... Well, it is called the Center for Transformative Sales and Supply Chain Leadership. I wouldn't have had that opportunity just to really focus in on business practice logistics and supply chain management at Wheaton like I do at Lipscomb, so as a person who likes to say yes and do a lot of things, I talked to both schools into letting me do both.

Joanna Meyer: ([07:14](#))

You published a book recently called Wisdom-Based Business, which draws from both of your passions, from a season of deep biblical study and also your work as both an experienced business leader and also an academic, but it came from an intellectual and spiritual clash between this biblical study and your



PhD in business. I want to hear a little bit more about that clash and how did that channel itself into this book.

Hannah Stolze: ([07:37](#))

Yeah, I think some of that clash came from being a woman and some of that clash came from how the Bible gets taught. I was Army, and then MBA, and I worked in import, so I had a lot of organizational and management experience. I definitely grew up, not necessarily that it was anything that I was taught, but with the perception that if you were called by God, it meant you were called into full-time ministry. And so, in Bible studies and in particular studies that I'm sure we're going to talk about in a little more detail, but in particular passages in scripture, I think we actually read the Bible only spiritually sometimes, if you know what I mean. We read it for, "What does this mean about who I am in relationship to God or who God is?" which are right ways to read the Bible, but we don't always approach-

Joanna Meyer: ([08:29](#))

Always devotional.

Hannah Stolze: ([08:31](#))

Yeah, more devotional. We don't always approach scripture like, "Oh, this actually could be applied to today and the work that I do today." And so, as I started my PhD research and was doing applied work with a lot of Fortune 500 companies, I found that a lot of the things that work and make companies more profitable in terms of brand reputation and driving revenue were actually pretty biblical practices that nobody in the church was teaching, if that makes sense.

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

I'm fascinated because you draw from the wisdom literature of Proverbs 31 with specific business application. I could hear some of our listeners thinking, "Wait, wait, wait, wait a minute, I've only ever heard the passages of Proverbs 31 and other wisdom literature that we see in the Book of Proverbs taught for a female audience or as if women are the recipients of that inspired teaching." And yet, you argue it has much broader application. Tell us a little bit more about that passage. Clarify in addition to these other passages in Proverbs, how does this apply to a broader audience?

Hannah Stolze: ([09:44](#))

Yeah. I love this question. First, I'll tell you a little bit about Proverbs and why it makes sense for the book, and then I want to tell you a little bit about when Proverbs was written, the context of this literature. When we think about Proverbs, in chapter one, Proverbs opens with wisdom and is personified as Lady Wisdom. I don't think anybody reads the Book of Proverbs and thinks, "Oh, it's Lady Wisdom, so wisdom must only be for women." Right? Everybody wants to be wise, men and women. And clearly the teaching that Solomon's taking, he was the wisest, right, he was really wise, and so we



know that God gave wisdom to men. So Lady Wisdom is a personification, and surely, wisdom isn't just male.

Hannah Stolze: ([10:26](#))

The other thing that's tricky about the Book of Proverbs, in the Hebrew Bible, Proverbs 31:1-9 and Proverbs 31:10-31 are separate chapters that show up in different places. So Proverbs 31:1-9 actually shows up more towards the middle of Proverbs, whereas Proverbs 31:10-31, which is a passage we read as the excellent wife or the noble woman, is actually a standalone 21-verse acrostic poem that reads to the 21 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. We see Lady Wisdom show up in that passage again like Lady Wisdom in Proverbs one through nine echoing many of the verses in Proverbs one through nine and really showing another maybe case study of what wisdom looks like in practice.

Hannah Stolze: ([11:12](#))

So that's the Book of Proverbs. But if we read Proverbs in 1000 BC, so Israel, right, is right on the sea, you got battle onto the East and Egypt down to the South and Syria to the North, all of the ancient kingdoms, right, and Israel is a kingdom in the middle, all of the ancient kingdoms had court scribes. Kings would sit and they'd, I don't know, pontificate all day long and scribes in their courts would write down everything they said. And so, Proverbs was written by Solomon's scribes, and we learn that in Bible studies probably. What we don't learn in Bible studies is that wisdom was personified as a woman in every ancient society. So when you read Proverbs 31 today, it's very different read with our domestic housewife imagery. If you would've read Proverbs 31 in 1000 BC, the imagery you would've had is a goddess of war. That's how wisdom was personified back then.

Hannah Stolze: ([12:09](#))

In Syria, the Goddess Ishtar was actually the goddess of war, of love, wisdom, and she held tools in her right and left hand. The really cool thing when we get to Proverb 31 and it says she holds a spindle in her right hand and whatever the stick, the ruling stick or whatever in her left hand, they aren't picturing domestic work. They're picturing Ishtar, the golden goddess to the North who is a goddess of war and action. When you think about it in context, it makes sense that this passage maybe it doesn't have anything to do with women or wives or mothers at all.

Joanna Meyer: ([12:49](#))

Fascinating. I know hearing that will challenge some of our listeners, but I encourage them to check out Wisdom-Based Business where you go into extensive detail in biblical scholarship exploring these themes. One of the themes that you emphasize in the book that comes from this wisdom literature is the difference between business for kingdom work and business as kingdom work. Could you elaborate on that?



Hannah Stolze: ([13:14](#))

Yeah. I would say that I grew up with this mindset. Business for kingdom work is where you have a mindset that you say, "You know what? I'm just going to go out into the business world. I'm going to make as much money as I can, and then I'm going to give it to the church and I'm going to be a philanthropist," and that is awesome. Generosity is definitely a righteous behavior for sure. And so, that's what I would call business for the kingdom, and it's good, and it's great. But one of the things that I was really just amazed by...

Hannah Stolze: ([13:44](#))

I had the opportunity to do my master's in Bible at Wheaton College while I was on faculty full time there. We read a lot of N. T. Wright. He's an English theologian, and he has this one sentence in one of his books that was an aha moment for me, and he says, "We weren't saved from this world," when we accept Jesus into our hearts, we're saved for this world." And that difference between business for kingdom work where you're just making money that you can give to the church and then business as kingdom work, now, all of a sudden, it's not just about making money, but in business, you get to go to work Monday through Friday, the majority of your life is spent at work, and you can build businesses that impact the lives of people around you for the better every day.

Hannah Stolze: ([14:29](#))

So yes, go and give lots of money and be really generous, that's godly. But also, if you think about business as kingdom work, we get the opportunity to go into work every day and to be apostolic in our leadership, to be prophetic in how we lean into God. I mean, the first miracle in the Bible was an inventory miracle. Pharaoh had a dream, Joseph interprets it. He builds a warehouse, the whole world is saved. I mean, we can be prophetic in our work. We can be evangelistic. We can be pastoral in how we manage, and we can serve each other. And all of that shows up Monday to Friday if we're doing business as kingdom work. And I think that's really exciting because it means our whole life matters, not just our Sunday morning work.

Joanna Meyer: ([15:10](#))

I have never thought of some of the Old Testament stories as issues of supply chain, but they are. I mean, you think about often the famines and the shortages and the preparations that were made and even Ruth and Boaz and principles of gleaning. There are a lot of modern principles for business leadership that we can draw from them.

Hannah Stolze: ([15:27](#))

I'm pretty shocked there aren't more theological supply chain PhDs out there.



Joanna Meyer: ([15:33](#))

I love it. I love it. So let's make it practical. What strategies from this wisdom literature can we begin to apply to our business leadership today?

Hannah Stolze: ([15:44](#))

This is what I love the most because I'm a logistician, right? At the end of the day, I want to know how to get stuff to people. That's what we do in supply chain management. This is what struck me out of Proverbs 31. I mean, everybody's going to have to go read Proverbs 31:10-31 now. In this passage, this excellent woman shows up and she is sourcing raw materials, she is transforming them, manufacturing products, and she's selling them in the marketplace. The passage touches on her employees, touches on how she gives to the poor. So she even has a philanthropy strategy. She's diversifying. I did a lot of work initially I do applied research with Fortune 500 companies and we were working on some areas of Green, Lean, and Global, that was the initial research project.

Hannah Stolze: ([16:36](#))

The different companies were talking about how they're being good environmental stewards, how lean actually creates quality and dignifies the worker. I was listening to these different strategies they were talking about, and I was like, "Man, sound really, really biblical. All of these practices seem like things we should be doing if we love God and people. It seems to really line up with the Word of God. I don't think I've ever heard it taught on in the church." So what I did is I went back to Proverbs, because Proverbs was all about civic life, day-to-day life. And as I dug into Proverbs with that mindset, I started to realize that Proverbs has a lot of really practical insights, not just for our spiritual life, like I said it initially, but actually for how we do work. Read Proverbs 20 to 22, it talks so much about pricing. Like when somebody walks up to your stall at the market, like don't tip the scales. That's pricing. Whole Foods got in trouble for that recently. They repented and fixed it. But companies do that today.

Hannah Stolze: ([17:35](#))

I started realizing, "Man, there's so much in this passage that actually aligns with what we know to be best practice in business today." If you look at Proverbs 31, you see she has a whole supply chain model. She has a supply chain orientation. She understands supply and demand. She has a quality product. I love this because it is so practical. The linen, so linen is one of the hardest to manufacture textiles in the world. And so she's making linen. She's making a really high quality product. She's dyeing it in crimson and in purple, which are the hardest to source dyes in the world. So she's like the Louis Vuitton 3,000 years ago with the product she's putting in the marketplace. She's a really high quality.

Hannah Stolze: ([18:18](#))

And then you think about she's interacting with people in a way that benefits the poor and needy. She's in agriculture. She's buying fields. She's definitely got this stakeholder mindset. In the passage, there's so many different people that are blessed by her business. And then finally, we see that it's long term,



right? The blessings and promises of God throughout the Old Testament are very rarely fulfilled in the generation they're given. So that's a hard one because we usually think when Proverbs talks like, "Do this, and you'll be blessed," We think, "I'll be blessed on Tuesday. If I do this today, and it's Wednesday, I'll be blessed on Thursday or Friday."

Hannah Stolze: ([18:59](#))

And when you look at the promises to Abraham and David, it was generations until some of those blessings were received. And so, when we have that mindset in business, it moves us from just having a quarterly three-month mindset to thinking, "What's the impact on the next generation of workers? What's the impact of our product on the future of availability around the world." So Proverbs is, if nothing else, super practical, and the exciting thing is it's really practical and actually makes successful companies around the world more profitable today as well.

Jeff Hoffmeyer: ([19:35](#))

Hi, I'm Jeff Hoffmeyer, Vice President of Advancement here at Denver Institute for Faith & Work. I'd like to invite you to become a part of our new monthly partner community. Whether it's a monthly commitment of \$25, \$50, or any amount, your generosity will support Denver Institute's ongoing efforts to help men and women love God, their neighbors, and society through their daily work, including this podcast. To say thank you, as a monthly partner, you'll receive a welcome box, you'll have exclusive access to private digital content, personalized vocational coaching, and discounts for Denver Institute content and experiences. To become a monthly partner, simply visit denverinstitute.org/give or see the show notes in today's episode. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Joanna Meyer: ([20:32](#))

That's so fascinating. My ears picked up when you started talking about textile manufacturing and high-end fabrics, because I think of one of my biblical heroes, Lydia, who also was an entrepreneur selling luxury fabrics. Just powerful to think of the unique opportunities, even though we're talking metaphorically in Proverbs, just about that model of women involved in high-end commerce using their business skills for kingdom good. It's really fun to think about.

Hannah Stolze: ([20:58](#))

It is really fun. I think so many of the passages in the Bible that are personified through male examples or through male protagonists, the men get to own those personalities. We should just equally own awesome women in business like Lydia and Proverbs 31.

Joanna Meyer: ([21:16](#))

Yeah. I think part of it is that we approach scripture with new eyes and think more deeply about the stories that are right there under our noses, of stories of women at work. I'm going to deviate a little bit from our conversation to say that Hannah just signed on as one of our plenary speakers for this fall's



Women Work & Calling event, which will be Saturday, October 8th in person here in Denver and live online. And so, if this conversation of a deeper, practically-oriented conversation for Christian women about work [inaudible 00:21:45], you will want to be part of that conversation. So such a treat to look forward to hearing more from you there, Hannah.

Hannah Stolze: ([21:50](#))

Thank you. I'm so excited about it.

Joanna Meyer: ([21:52](#))

Yeah, it's awesome. Okay, so I want to put on my economic thinking cap and, to be honest, economics was the one class I did not enjoy in college. It does not resonate with my brain. I'm not made for that. But I do know about Milton Friedman, and Milton Friedman created one of the most dominant economic theories of the 20th century when he argued that a business's primary responsibility is to create value for its shareholders. You argue that Proverbs challenges businesses to wrestle with a deeper relationship to profit. Tell us what you mean by that.

Hannah Stolze: ([22:25](#))

Yeah. Businesses impact a lot more people than just shareholders, and part of Milton's argument, and credit to Milton, I call him Milton, apparently, part of his argument, Dr. Friedman, is that companies are going to do good by their customers and their suppliers because they don't want them to go away, because if they did, then it would rob their shareholders. So by providing profit to shareholders, it'll correct all the wrongs. What we've seen, certainly over the years from Enron and all of the different corporate scandals that we've seen, is that maximizing shareholder wealth alone... So shareholders are like your stockholders, the people that have invested and are going to get an ROI every time you get bigger profit. What we've found is that companies were actually cutting corners and could churn through customers, they could churn through suppliers and maximize shareholder wealth while actually disadvantaging their employees, their customers. Maybe their customers don't catch on and they're pivoting to another bad product that's not working in the marketplace, or they're disadvantage their suppliers.

Hannah Stolze: ([23:35](#))

The shareholders can still be really, really wealthy, and a company can do a lot of really bad things in the meantime. I think the argument when you look at scripture, like the practicality of Proverbs 20 to 22 with the pricing and how practical that is, don't change the price tag when you see someone rich coming past you when you're putting price tags on your products, part of the practicality in Proverbs is really, first, a call throughout scripture to be sacrificial in our love for other people. And that's the whole concept of gleaning, the whole concept of [inaudible 00:24:09], which I'll hopefully really jump into a little bit in October, so I won't talk about it a ton now. But there is this call to care for the poor and the needy, and we see it show up in Proverbs 31.



Hannah Stolze: ([24:21](#))

Actually, in Proverbs 31, if you think about a poem, like an acoustic poem, which it is, it's a 21-verse poem, the climax of a poem is in the middle, right? So you're build out to this great point, and then you taper off to the end. The central point in that poem is the fact that she does so well in the work she has done that she's able to reach out her hands to the poor and the needy. And it's really central to this idea. And then when we get to the Book of Isaiah, because we're allowed to read the whole Bible in the scope of translating any scripture, and when we get to the Book of Isaiah and Jeremiah and we think about why were those 300 years where it felt like God's presence was gone?

Hannah Stolze: ([25:00](#))

It says a couple of things about why God's presence left the temple. They fell out of love with God and stopped worshiping. They stopped going into the temple and sacrificing, but they stopped taking care of the poor and the needy. And that was a part of God's presence leaving the temple and the nation of Israel. So when I think about the Old Testament and what Jesus has repaired in the work that He did for us is that what should be primary to our wealth and blessing, if God gives us wealth and blessing and blessing in lots of different ways, is how that blessing doesn't just bless us, but blesses the community that we're in, the relationships we're in, and then, hopefully, if it's got that side to side effect, the whole world.

Hannah Stolze: ([25:42](#))

So when we read the Old Testament, I do think that we have a responsibility to stewardship, and Matthew 25 is the best example of this. That's my finish to this answer. But Matthew 25 is the best example of this. I love it. If you read all three parables together, it starts off with the bridesmaids who have enough oil. So they have enough resources for their lamps to burn all night. Then it moves into the talents, right? So the two servants that are good and faithful are the ones that have an ROI. They're profitable in the work. They take the master's talents and they have more. And then the servant that's cast out is the one that doesn't have any return on investment. He just buries it. He doesn't do anything with what God's given him.

Hannah Stolze: ([26:22](#))

We could stop there and say, "Well, see, if we want to be faithful we just need to have profitability. Milton Friedman's right." But then there's this last parable that Jesus tells, and that very last parable, He says He is coming back and He is going to separate out the sheep and the goats. And what will differentiate them isn't how wealthy they are, isn't the ROI, it's actually whether they took care of the poor, whether they clothe the naked, they fed the hungry, they provided medical care to those who needed it and shelter. And so, at the end of the day, we are responsible to steward money and to be profitable. That's the promise we make to shareholders. What gets us into the kingdom of heaven, what Jesus is going to come back and reward, I think is what we do with it and not just how much we have.



Joanna Meyer: ([27:02](#))

One thing I really appreciate in your scholarship is that it combines biblical wisdom, business research, as well as stories of people who are doing this well. Would you tell us a couple stories of people that you feel like exemplify wise business leadership?

Hannah Stolze: ([27:22](#))

Yeah. I love stories, and I love business examples that kind of... This is one of the fun moments for me where I'm like, "Man, we get natural revelation. We look at the mountains and we think God is amazing." But we can also look at really cool things that happen in business and be like, "Wow, look at how God created the world." This really cool thing actually reflects God's heart for humanity. And so, I think there's lots of business examples like that, from both Christian-led organizations with a Christian CEO and secular companies as well.

Hannah Stolze: ([27:52](#))

And so, I'll give you two secular examples and one Christian one, because they're fun. So my one secular example, I guess... You could say it's secular, I think he's still inspired by biblical practices, is The Container Store. I love The Container Store because retail is low level when you think about people who work in stores and the employees that work in most retail spaces. It's not high skill. And because of that, it's really high turnover.

Hannah Stolze: ([28:19](#))

Kip Kindell, who is the founder of The Container Store, totally secular business model as far as you can tell, said, "How do we really love our employees well? How do we keep that employee churn? Because every time you bring employee in, you have to spend a lot of money training them." So he said, "Well, let's train them a lot and really socialize and really get them indoctrinated into The Container Store mindset. And then let's give them good benefits. Let's make their hours great." During the recession, he lowered all of the C-suite salaries and they didn't lay anybody off in 2008. They have the lowest turnover of any store in the retail industry and for a really long time were the number one workplace in all of the US and had really, really amazing profit margins.

Hannah Stolze: ([29:03](#))

So you look at a company like this, the principle is one that we should all live, it's the great commandment, right? Or the second one, the almost greatest commandment. The greatest is to love God, and the other one is to love people. And by doing that, we fulfill the whole law. Sometimes we think, "Well, you can't love people in business. Business is dog eat dog and competitive." This is such a great example of a company that said, "No, we're going to love people. We're going to spend more time getting to know them, building relationships." And it actually made them lots more money than their competition.



Hannah Stolze: ([29:32](#))

Another example is really just in having transparency and integrity. I love examples of when companies get it wrong and then do well in their bounce back, which we call repentance. And so, I talk a little bit about Chipotle. Think about it this way, as Christians, when we share the gospel with somebody, when somebody asks like, "Why are you different?" we share our testimony, right? We share how God caught our attention. You think about Paul on the road to Damascus and how God rescued him when he was out there killing Christians, right? And so, sometimes we think in business that business reputation or brand reputation, brand loyalty is going to be built from telling this amazing story and then hiding everything that's not good or that you're bad at or all the mistakes.

Hannah Stolze: ([30:20](#))

The Chipotle example, and I've done a lot of research in this area, actually, looking at the spillover effect of negative news and when companies do get it wrong, and they did, they had some health problems. They had a lot of people get listeria and all kinds of different food poisoning, basically, from their really fresh, healthier food. Chipotle made a choice to fix it. They shut all their stores and they said, "We need to re-look at how we're training our employees. We need to look at our systems and processes." And so, they took a step back, even though shutting your stores means you have zero profit. If your stores are shut, you have no revenue.

Hannah Stolze: ([30:54](#))

So they shut their stores down. They retrained their employees, and they create new systems and then they reopened. The interesting thing is, companies when they get it wrong and they own it, their brand loyalty is actually higher after a bad incident than before. So you think about that, you think about Paul's story or like my story and how Jesus came into my life, it's made more powerful by the fact that I'm imperfect, but God makes us perfect. And so, when we own the fact that we make mistakes and we repent and then we change, it actually builds out like better brand, better reputation, and deeper relationships in the business case with your customers than before. So I love that.

Hannah Stolze: ([31:34](#))

And the last example I'll give you, didn't really ask me for three but I'll just give you three, the last example that I really love is Tom's of Maine. Tom's of Maine, if you're not familiar, they are mostly organic healthcare products, like toothpaste and deodorant. Tom and his wife realized that a lot of the personal hygiene kind of products out there had a lot of chemicals in them, they were really bad for you, and so they started just by wanting to create a really, really high quality product. They looked at, "How do we create a high quality product in ways that are super sustainable, environmentally friendly?"



Hannah Stolze: [\(32:13\)](#)

So they did all the things, right, that we really love in the greatest brands. He grew the company to millions and millions of dollars, thousands of employees, and when he hit the pinnacle of his career, he was like, "Okay, now I've achieved all of these great things..." And he had this mindset that we can go back to that business for kingdom work, he's like, "So now I'll get out of the business space. I'm going to go to Harvard and get a MDiv. I'm going to go study divinity. I'll be a pastor now. Because I've made all this money, I can move on and do more holy things."

Hannah Stolze: [\(32:46\)](#)

And so, he got to Harvard and he had a professor at Harvard that said, "Why would you want to be a pastor?" He's like, "The average pastor in America is like 80 to 100 people in their church. You show up every day and have thousands of people that are being impacted by your business strategy. If you want to be a pastor, go back to Tom's of Maine and disciple and pastor those people." I love it because, actually, when he went back to Tom's of Maine, I mean, I think he had a lot of strategies in place already, it was quality product, sustainable, really was long-term oriented, but what he did is he saw the stakeholders differently. He saw the stakeholders as people that God loves and that he could love and that he could pastor and disciple. And I think that's such an amazing example.

Hannah Stolze: [\(33:28\)](#)

Tom's of Maine eventually did get bought out by Colgate, but when Colgate bought it, they bought it because of its brand, because of the reputation of the products, and they kept the culture of that business unit the same because it was so powerful, which is really cool. It's a really cool example of how a Christian mindset can have long-term impact.

Joanna Meyer: [\(33:48\)](#)

I was not familiar with the Tom's of Maine story at all. And what fascinates me about that is that you had a ministry leader that was willing to disciple someone in their sphere of influence for their work. It just reminds us that as we think of walking with God in all of life, we need our ministry leaders to be teaching us, really, how to take the gospel and biblical principles into sectors that may be even outside of their expertise. So that's really, really encouraging to hear.

Joanna Meyer: [\(34:17\)](#)

If there are people that are curious to learn more about this, maybe they're intrigued by the concepts that you've been sharing, how would you encourage them to get started in learning more about biblically-based, wisdom-based business?

Hannah Stolze: [\(34:33\)](#)

Well, the first thing I would always say is read your Bible. It's the best book ever. I'm sure that there's lots of different people out there with lots of ideas on this. Some of it's right, and some of it's wrong, and the



Word of God never is. So love the Bible. It's like the Sunday school answer. I wrote a book on this called Wisdom-Based Business, so I think that could be a resource to you, it's from this perspective. And I have some resources on my website if you wanted to look at some of the work that I've done. I think there's a lot of other contributors in this field that are thinking through what does this look like, examples like Bill Pollard at ServiceMaster and some of David Miller's work out of Princeton. There's some really, really good, great thinkers out there writing on this.

Hannah Stolze: ([35:23](#))

So there are a lot of resources. This is one of the things that we do through the Center of Faith & Innovation at Wheaton College actually, is looking at what are the resources out there and how can we compile them for people who really want to learn more?

Joanna Meyer: ([35:36](#))

We will provide a ton of links in our show notes. I'd also invite our listeners to join us at Business for the Common Good. That's Denver Institute's annual event for business leaders where we talk about these themes in depth for a day, we highlight practitioners, and it's amazing. I often say that I've gained new heroes of the faith through watching the example of these business leaders. That'll be Friday, March 3rd, here in the Denver Metro area, which is really fun.

Joanna Meyer: ([35:58](#))

So as we're wrapping up our conversation, I always like to give our guests the final word and the charge to our listeners towards greater godliness and influence in their work. I'm wondering if you would speak more broadly to our audience from the things that you've learned not just to lead businesses, but in all of our work, how can we live and work with more wisdom?

Hannah Stolze: ([36:17](#))

Such a great question. This is really exciting because for a lot of years, I thought that my Monday to Friday was to create resources, was to generate money to support the church, to support serving, and serving was where the holy work was done, the nonprofit work, the things that we do as volunteers and all of that. If you can catch hold of one thing from this talk, I hope it's that we can actually serve God every minute of every day of our life, if we catch hold of the fact that God calls us to something really simple, to love Him and to love people. When we think about calling, yeah, He calls us to different careers and He gives us different skill sets and talents in what it looks like to serve Him. But being in full-time ministry doesn't mean that you just work for a nonprofit or a church. You can be in full-time ministry in the marketplace. And when we catch a hold of that, we get to serve God, I think, more purposefully with every day of our lives, and it's not compartmentalized.



Hannah Stolze: ([37:21](#))

I don't know about you, but I want to be the same person everywhere I am. I don't want to be a different person in the marketplace or in the classroom or working with companies or at church on Sunday. I want to express the same love, the same language, the same heart everywhere I am, and I want all of it to bless God. I want all of it to honor God. I think when we really read scripture, we see that God calls us to that. He is excited about not just whether we taught Sunday school, but also whether we really coached somebody at work or provided a really good product that met the needs of a customer or made a supply transaction that really blessed our suppliers. We can use so much more of our lives to serve God and to advance the kingdom of heaven than I think I ever even imagined.

Joanna Meyer: ([38:09](#))

What a beautiful thought, that God's kingdom and His work through us is bigger than we can possibly imagine. Hannah, thanks for joining us today. What a privilege to learn from you. I am excited to keep learning from you this fall at Women Work & Calling. We will provide a ton of links in our show notes to the various resources that you've talked about in the conversation. Thanks.

Hannah Stolze: ([38:28](#))

Thanks, Joanna. It's great to be here.

Joanna Meyer: ([38:34](#))

What a thought-provoking conversation with Hannah Stolze. In our show notes, we will link to an abundance of resources. The first is we'll link to Hannah's book, *Wisdom-Based Business*, also Wheaton college's center for Faith & Innovation, and Hannah Stolze's personal website. We'll also link to a course in The Faith & Work Classroom, where we have free course related to business, including theology of business, the purpose of business, and taking your soul to work. And finally save your date for two Denver Institute's events. The first is happening this fall. It's Women Working & Calling, which will be Saturday, October 8th, here in Denver and worldwide online. We'll be having ticket sales happening August 1st. And then finally, *Business for the Common Good* will be happening Friday, March 3rd in Downtown Denver. We look forward to seeing you at both. I'm praying that God brings wisdom to your work, whatever form it takes this week.

Joanna Meyer: ([39:29](#))

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