



Helen Young Hayes:

I really believe that business has a higher purpose and that higher purpose is to create jobs, to create employment, to create income, to create wealth, and to create dignity.

Joanna Meyer:

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:

Welcome to the Faith and Work Podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, the Director of Public Engagement at Denver Institute for Faith and Work. And welcome to the fourth in a five-part series we're doing, exploring historic virtues of the Christian faith that have relevance for our lives and work today. This podcast series is produced in conjunction with an e-book we released this fall, called *Virtue and Vice at Work: Ancient Wisdom for our Modern Age*, and that explores vices of the Christian faith that were as relevant in the fourth and fifth centuries. Those desert fathers that were monks, wrestled with some of the same challenges related to their work that we do today. It's a fascinating read, and I'll provide a link information for you at the end of today's episode.

Today our theme is justice, and that's a term you may hear in modern life a lot as we talk about issues of injustice or social justice, but how do we look at it from a biblical perspective? In its simplest form, I think of justice as being a right relationship with God, with others as individuals, but also with our community and all of creation at large. There's a sense of living the way in which God intends us to live. You see that peppered throughout scripture, from the earliest pages of Genesis, through the lives of the Israelites, through Christ public ministry and the life of the early church, we see justice being a key value that governs how God wants us to live. You see it in foundational principles like the 10 Commandments. I love this verse from Genesis 18, in which God talks about calling Abraham and the way in which he wanted Abraham to live. And this is what he said. He said, "For I've chosen him that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord."

And this is how they would do that, "By doing righteousness and justice so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he had promised him." Clearly living a just life and that our entire household and community would embody justice in the way that we engage the created world is fundamental to the Christian faith. But the question is how do we do that, especially in the pluralistic environment that we're living in. Our guest today, Helen Young Hayes, embodies this sense of working for justice through her calling. I can't wait for you to hear from her.



A little bit about Helen. Helen leads Activate Work. She's the CEO of an organization whose mission is to connect diverse qualified talent to leading employers through rigorous skills, training, community resources and professional and life skills coaching. They directly address issues of economic injustice through job creation and support for people looking for meaningful work. She's also a veteran of 20 years of the financial services industry. Helen previously worked as a fund manager for Janus Capital, where she managed approximately \$50 billion in assets, truly amazing influence. And she's also the author and executive sponsor of the Colorado Inclusive Economy Movement, which is a CEO-led initiative that's using business to build equity and economic opportunity through job creation. Helen has a lot to say, so welcome to the podcast, Helen Young Hayes.

Well, Helen Young Hayes, welcome to the Faith and Work Podcast. What a privilege to be with you.

Helen Young Hayes:

Well, thanks for having me.

Joanna Meyer:

So fun. Well, I wanted to talk a little bit about your professional background because you've had a really fascinating career. We talked in the introduction about you being a fund manager for Janus, but you took a number of years out of work to take care of your kids, and then you came storming back into the workforce with this focus on job creation and equity. What was it about economic equity that motivated you back into work?

Helen Young Hayes:

Right. Well, I have to say that there wasn't an abrupt shift in my values and in my passions, which motivated me to launch Activate Work. I'd say it was really more of a continuation of calling that I had found in my early 20s, when my husband and I were first married. We had been in a small group with a couple of other young Ivy League couples and we read Richard Foster's book, Money, Sex and Power.

That book gave us an understanding of how we are as Christians to live out our faith in these areas of money, sex, and power. And in the teaching on money, there was always the instruction that God wants us to care deeply about the health and the thriving of people who are experiencing poverty. And so for us, that looked like obedience in the form of tithing and giving and enabling individuals to have access to basic needs, food, clothing, and shelter, to education and to other opportunities. We had always determined that caring for the poor in a visible way would be one of the enduring family values that we had. But what that looked like was philanthropy. And then as I began to evolve in my understanding of what God was calling me to do, I realized that what he was calling me to do was to shift from being a donor to a doer and to shift from being an enabler to actually running ministries that would help launch people to economic freedom.



And the catalyst for me though was in 2015 when I had just completed a study of the book of Esther and this time around Mordecai's words to her, "and who knows, but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this." Those words really just leaped off the page and grabbed me by my collar and wouldn't let me go. And so day after day after day, these words are in me and hounding me and calling me. And so those days turned into weeks and I realized that that was the Lord talking to me. And he was asking me what would I do with this royal position that I had been so blessed with for such a time as this.

Joanna Meyer:

So fascinating. And what was it about job creation that grabbed you?

Helen Young Hayes:

I knew that my such a time as this would have to deal with helping people move from economic struggle to economic thriving because we are called to love and care for the poor in ways that are, I believe supposed to be transformative. Over the years, I have known many heads of nonprofits and ministries that serve people who are experiencing poverty. And the whole experience of poverty has been so frustrating for me to observe because the experience of poverty can be a life sentence for so many people.

When I would ask my friends who are leading efforts to move people out of poverty, "Well, why can't they just get a great job?" My friends would tell me, "Well, I don't have those resources. I don't have those connections. I don't have friends in high places or owners of businesses that I can actually catalyze employment with." And so it was like, wow, I can be the nexus of job seekers and jobs, given my relationship with CEOs and with business owners and my desire to connect those transformative self-sufficiency jobs to individuals who simply need the connection with those opportunities.

Joanna Meyer:

And it's very hard to change your life if you don't have safe, reliable housing in a good job. Those are just fundamental. So I wonder if you could help our listeners better understand the challenges that low wage earners or underemployed people face. What keeps people from finding good jobs?

Helen Young Hayes:

There are a number of things that keep people from finding good jobs. And I have to admit and acknowledge that one of the things that keeps people from finding and succeeding in the work place is skills. So when we have differential rates of high school attainment and post-secondary attainment, that lack of skills can keep people in poverty and keep people in low wage, low skill jobs. So there is a foundational aspect to skill creation that we need to remediate.



Secondly, though, there is also the reality of individuals who have experienced poverty or who are living in low wage earning families, the pressure to begin contributing to the livelihood of a family early on and sometimes at the expense of the ability to develop the higher level skills that would then translate into economic freedom and full time full benefit jobs. So there is the reality of the experience of life that can place a much higher priority on the need to just get basic needs met, food, clothing, and shelter, and not able to address some of the other of the other hierarchy of needs that those of us can attain when we have more margins.

So there is the reality of just the lifestyle of needing to contribute to family wages immediately rather than deferring that earning potential so that you can acquire the skills and training. Additionally, there is the lack of social capital. And so it's estimated that about 60% of jobs are gotten by someone you know. That social capital is an important piece to employment, and one of the social aspects of communities that are maybe low wage earners or BIPOC communities is that they have smaller networks of individuals who can connect them with economic opportunities. So there is that lack of social capital as well.

And then we could also talk about the very real existence of racism and bias that occurs in hiring practices. For example, a white-sounding name on a resume, on an identical resume, we'll get a call back or an interview 50% more often than a black-sounding name. What are we going to do with that reality? We need to understand and address those barriers that hinder the full employment of all of our neighbors.

Joanna Meyer:

Remind us, for those of our listeners that aren't familiar with the expression BIPOC, B-I-P-O-C. What does that stand for?

Helen Young Hayes:

That is an acronym for black, indigenous, and people of color.

Joanna Meyer:

Cool. That's awesome. Yeah, so there's some real social issues that keep people from getting the employment that they need. I wondered, because you worked on the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, you work with job seekers and you also work with executives, how do they experience consequences? Well, you see the labor shortages in our daily lives. You may go out to dinner or go to your local coffee shop and feel like there aren't enough baristas available to serve you or at your local store you see that they're understaffed. But how are you seeing this mismatch in people and job opportunities affect employers?



Helen Young Hayes:

We have an extreme shortage of skilled talent, not only in Colorado but also in the US. So since the pandemic, we've had a massive loss of jobs in the low wage, low skill sectors that are being automated away, being impacted by AI, and also being impacted by remote work trends. So we're seeing the rapid evaporation of low skill, low wage jobs. We are seeing at the same time an acceleration in the demand for high skill jobs.

What that has led to is a mismatch of the skills and talents of individuals who want to work and who might not be able to find sustaining work in some of these jobs that have been obsoleted away. And so employers I think are grappling with the shortage of skilled talent and need to do a couple of things to adjust to this reality. One of them is employers should innovate their recruiting and hiring practices to make them more expansive and inclusive.

Many of the HR practices that have been around certainly since the eighties and nineties have been intended to produce an efficient screening process. And the goal was to efficiently screen people out. That saves time. And I'll give a personal example, one that I'm not proud of, but it is true. When I was managing director of investments at Janus Henderson, the asset management firm that I worked at, I was involved in and responsible for adding to and recruiting team members. These are research analysts that we would recruit from some of the finest universities in the world. If we had 12 openings in a year and I had a thousand applicants, how am I going to screen out 990 resumes? And so what we ended up doing more for efficiency's sake was we would apply at and recruit from three schools, Harvard, Yale, and Stanford. Yes, Harvard, Yale, and Stanford.

And then even within those three universities, we would look for a certain GPA. And that was how I got to from a thousand applicants to 50 applicants really quickly because we really didn't have one, a goal of equity and inclusion and two, we were pressed for time and we didn't have a staff of talent acquisition professionals who could help us. We were just running money and at the same time hiring our analysts. So what I'm trying to say is that that's the extreme example of how you can sacrifice equity and inclusion and expansive hiring efforts at the expense of or in the name of efficiency. I've been there, I've done that.

But today, when we're looking for skilled talent in a very competitive market, one of the things that we need to do is we need to throw out those old hiring practices that automatically exclude potentially qualified candidates from our candidate pool. Some easy examples of this are get rid of the four year college degree requirement. That should be just thrown out. And there is almost no instance where you need to use a four-year college degree as a screening mechanism.

If you also think about the reality that Latinos in Colorado graduate from a four-year college degree institution at half the rates of white and they are 26% of our population, then you are automatically



discarding without even looking at talent, a large percentage of our talent pool. So one, get rid of those things that exclude people. I call them irrelevant credentials rather than relevant skills and experiencing competencies. This involves rewriting your job descriptions so that you're actually screening for the skills that one needs to perform the job.

Joanna Meyer:

So I hear you say it's not that you want to give someone a free ride or hire someone that isn't qualified. It's just you're changing what we see as the qualifications for a role.

Helen Young Hayes:

That's right. That's absolutely right. The other area where employers should be able to adjust their screening and recruiting practices is understanding where and how bias shows up in our selection processes. So for example, I mentioned a white sounding name on a resume compared to a black sounding name. If you just automatically stripped out the names of the resumes that you look at, you are going to look at a resume with less gender bias and less ethnic and racial bias than you normally would. I think that educating anyone who's looking at resumes as to the many forms of bias, I've seen lists of as long as 21 different forms of bias.

So we have bias that occurs when we ask a leading question and we're expecting an answer, if we get the answer that confirms something in our mind that might be irrelevant. Or let's say I ran on the cross country team in college. I'm going to be predisposed to like people who are runners, for example, that might tell me I think something about them. And so there are ways that bias can show up in the hiring process, and we need to be aware of the subjectivity of our hiring so that we're not screening out people who might be really qualified for the job.

Joanna Meyer:

Something as simple as a person's name being unfamiliar to you and seems to be difficult to pronounce, you may think oh, it's going to take extra effort for me to work with this person. I'll lean towards someone who might seem more familiar and I assume is easier to work with, which may or may not be true.

I want to back up a little bit and ask you to tell us more specifically about what you do through Activate Work and then we'll talk also about Colorado Inclusive Economy, what that movement is doing. Give us a picture of how you're engaging these issues of brokenness in the system from two very different ends of the employment spectrum.



Helen Young Hayes:

In March of 2016, after about eight months of research and analysis, I launched Activate Work to help Coloradans achieve economic freedom through the dignity of work. What I wanted to do was identify individuals who possess and demonstrate work ethic, initiative, follow through, and coachability. And I wanted to connect them with full time, full benefit career path jobs because an entry level job that is dead end and low skill and low wage is going to leave someone in the working poor category forever.

So what I wanted to do was disrupt the cycle and put people on a path towards economic mobility. And we can only do that through career path opportunities. And so what I was looking for was individuals who possessed the skills and the desire to transform their lives through the dignity of work, and they had simply lacked the opportunity. What we do in addition to connecting job seekers with jobs, and those are life giving, full-time, full benefit career path opportunities, we also coach them.

We prepare them for success. After each hire is made, we coach them for 12 months so that they can master the life skills, professional skills, personal financial skills, and socio-emotional skills that are really highly identified with and predictors of long-term career success. So we are looking to equip individuals for success, knowing also that is what our employers want, long term, retain engaged employees.

Our coaching is intended to be the way that we serve our employers by delivering to them great talent, and that's how we serve the community, by equipping individuals to achieve their fullest potential. So that's what we started doing at Activate work six and a half years ago. Two years ago, we launched our tuition-free IT training program. That is a life changer for us and I believe to my knowledge, it is the single most elegant solution for economic mobility that exists in the state of Colorado.

Joanna Meyer:

Elegance. I love that.

Helen Young Hayes:

So what we do with our tuition-free IT training is we are equipping individuals with the technical industry skills and credentials that help meet this acute need for skilled talent that we have. Interestingly, there's a 1.2 million person IT talent shortage in the US. 1.2 million person shortage.

Joanna Meyer:

Wow, that's a lot of jobs.



Helen Young Hayes:

That's a lot of jobs. And at the rate that we're graduating four year college graduates in computer science, it would take us 22 years to fill the gap. So we have got to fill the gap with new sources of talent. And my mission by launching our IT training program is to activate the individuals, the talent that we have in our community that's hidden in plain sight. So these are individuals who might not ever think about going to college or who might have attempted a year of college and then because of the expense dropped out.

And so we are providing an alternative education and training program for individuals so that they gain those 21st century digital skills for the economy of today that will not be obsoleted away by technology. This will help bulletproof them for the economy of tomorrow as well. And by the way, IT jobs have roughly twice the average salaries of other private sector jobs. These are incredibly lucrative jobs and we are both equipping the IT employers and technology employers and everyone needs IT. With the skill talent that they need that is heretofore untapped in our economy and in our community. So that's why I say it's just the most elegant solution for economic mobility that I know of. It's a win for industry, it's a win for individuals, and it's a win for our community.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Hi, I'm Jeff Hoffmeyer, Vice President of Advancement here at Denver Institute for Faith and Work. And I would 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](https://denverinstitute.org/give) or see the show notes in today's episode. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Joanna Meyer:

Okay, tell me about the other end of the spectrum. You founded recently, in the last couple years, Colorado Inclusive Economy, which is a movement of executives addressing issues of economic adjustment. Tell us more about what you're doing.

Helen Young Hayes:

During March and April of 2020, when the pandemic shut all of us down, I had time on my hands to start thinking some deep thoughts. And I know that all of us were really evaluating what was happening and we were trying to predict what was going to happen. So I studied economics, I loved data, and I love numbers. So I looked at past economic shocks and catastrophic events just to see what happens to the





communities of people that we serve at Activate Work. I wanted to see specifically how low wage earners and communities of color have fared during economic booms and busts.

And of course, no surprise, people of color get hit hardest first and they recover slowest, if ever, from economic shocks. Now during catastrophic events like Hurricane Katrina, for example, people of color also get hit inordinately hard with outcomes that are quite inequitable in measures of health and death and all sorts of holistic measures of wellbeing, not just economics. So my heart was broken by this, and I was thinking about this global pandemic and the suffering that we were all about to experience full on. And I found myself wanting to change the narrative for when we recover, because I knew that we would recover at some point, and I did not want to see us rush back to business as usual and leave behind communities of color once again. So I decided to launch, and actually it really was a calling. God put in me this desire to launch a movement of racial equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The Colorado Inclusive Economy is a movement that calls CEOs and other leaders of the community to help build the most inclusive economy in the nation through building multicultural, racially diverse and equitable workplaces. An interesting and tragic fact is that Colorado's the 12th most prosperous state in the nation, but we rank 37th in terms of racial inclusivity of our economy, meaning we do not share the prosperity of our state with black and brown communities.

This has persisted for decades in our state. We can live in the right neighborhoods, we can shop in the right neighborhoods, we can work in the right neighborhoods and insulate ourselves from this dramatic inequity that is persistent in our state. And because we don't have a lot of overt racial conflict, we can imagine that in the lack of conflict, everyone must be doing well because Colorado is doing well. That's not the case.

So I wanted to call CEOs to build multicultural inclusive organizations, and in so doing build an inclusive economy. And the reason we are calling CEOs is that CEOs have been largely absent from DEI efforts over the last 25 or 30 years. And whether you call it EEOC compliant, whether you call it CSR, ESG, DEI, Jedi, whatever you want call it, CEOs have largely been delegating the responsibility to people in HR and have viewed it as a check the box activity. This is not a check the box activity. This is something that I believe is our moral imperative, to really try to reduce the inequity that we have in our community and in our nation. And one of the most powerful means that we can combat inequity is through the power of business. I really believe that business has a higher purpose and that higher purpose is to create jobs, to create employment, to create income, to create wealth, and to create dignity.

There's so many benefits to work, and I believe that that is one of the gifts of business, which is that we can bless people with dignity and self-sufficiency and thriving. And so I knew I wanted to call CEOs and business leaders to engage in co-creating a state that doesn't exist today, a state that works for all people. This is a CEO-led movement, and it's really unique because our CEOs roll up their sleeves together and join in communities of practice. They bring along their head DEI and HR champions.



Those who are leading the organization are involved in personal transformation and corporate transformation. And those who are the tacticians who are practicing what the leaders are tasking them with, they're all on the same journey of transformation. And so we have completed our first two years of operation. We now have 134 CEOs. We have chancellors of universities, we have leaders of government departments. It is a multi-sector, cross-industry effort to build a Colorado of racial inclusivity. And I'm so excited and proud of it and it really feels like holy work.

Joanna Meyer:

Yes, I love cheering from the sidelines as I see what you're doing. And I want to explore what you just said about this feeling like holy work, because in both of your forms of work, you serve a diverse population. Not everyone you work with is a Christian. Yet for you, this work is an expression of who God has made you to be and what he's called you to do. How does faith drive what you're doing?

Helen Young Hayes:

I'm really blessed to be able to do something that is not a cause for me, but it's a calling. And this is not my profession, this is my passion. I would be doing this for no money and basically I am doing it for no money. Can we edit that out? But I would be doing this regardless, and I intend to be doing this for the rest of my life. And I'll tell you why. It's because I really feel that for me, what has clicked into place is a lot of the calling of Christ to us as his disciples that I had previously in my earlier life been uncomfortable with.

So when I talked about my evolution from donor to doer and from enabler to practitioner, I have to say that for me, I've had to wrestle with some of the teaching of Christ that really challenges us to love others. What does that look like? Who is our neighbor? How do we love others? And I have been especially convicted over the years by the very way in which Jesus identifies himself with those who are poor, naked, imprisoned, hungry. And if we look at the statistics, who are people who experience poverty in our nation and in our state, who are the people who are imprisoned? We need to get curious about this and understand that if we have an opportunity to clothe someone, to equip someone with a life-transforming career or skills, technical training and opportunity, second chance hiring, if we can do that, we are actually really impacting directly.

In some mysterious, spiritual way we're directly impacting Christ. And so I really think a lot about that now. And I realize that what he's called me to do in Activate Work through transformative careers and then also by sparking a movement, is it's the way that I am expressing my love and gratitude to him through tangibly impacting the lives of others.



Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, I think it revolves around the theme we're talking about today, about the virtue of justice, that if justice is a right ordering of our relationships with God and with each other, with our community and the environment, you're really restoring right relationships between people living out their God given identity, and also them being able to engage the economy in a way that is fair, that has opportunity that allows them to flourish and thrive, that really is the work of justice. How would you define justice from a biblical perspective?

Helen Young Hayes:

I would view justice in two ways. One, I believe that justice is about repairing that which is broken, that which has historically harmed people. And so I believe that at the heart of justice, we must first understand and we must first become educated. I hadn't understood the depth of the inhumane treatment of blacks in the South, and I grew up in Mississippi, but I hadn't understood the depths of it and what occurred in the '40s and '50s. My family moved there in 1965, and we were an incredibly segregated community. But the heart and the heart of what happened has really been brought alive to me through reading this book, the Plight of Asian American Immigrants and reading The Making of Asian America by Erica Lee. And so I believe that in order to move forward, we do have to understand where we've come from. We have to understand the harm that has occurred, and then we need to be a repairer of walls to go back to the Old Testament fundamentals.

But for me, justice is wedded to repairing what's broken, to making right what was wrong, and then to actively and creatively use ways to help people not be imprisoned by race, for example, or socioeconomic status, but to really see them live out a flourishing life. And in so doing, I believe that we will honor the Lord, that we'll give him glory, that we will really show people what the heart and the nature of Jesus is like.

Joanna Meyer:

So Helen, tell me a little bit more about how you see justice reflected in scripture.

Helen Young Hayes:

I think that one of the best examples of justice for me has been the parable of the Good Samaritan. If we were to boil down what the Lord instructs us to do, is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. And then of course, he follows up with who is our neighbor, and then how are we to love our neighbor? And I love now, and I'm embracing the example of the Good Samaritan, but I haven't always been comfortable with the Good Samaritan. But I see that as a great example of justice, because the Good Samaritan saw a need and he saw the need across racial lines. He saw the need across ethnic lines. He saw the need where one could have easily not



seen the need, chosen to not see the need or chosen to stay in your lane so that conveniently, you just never ever see that need.

Yet what the Good Samaritan did was crossed all those lines, went across to the other side and started caring for his neighbor, her neighbor. And then the way that he cared for this neighbor I also have found really instructive because what he did in one, caring for immediate needs, but two, in the promise of returning to me what the Good Samaritan was promising is, I want to see you restored to wholeness and I'll come back and check and make sure that that is happening.

So there was the promise of returning and seeing someone brought to restoration. I feel that that is a great example of justice, which is it's not a one time thing, it's not something that happens when you give some money to someone who is on the side of the street. But it is something about seeing need where you might not normally see it, crossing all sorts of lines, socioeconomic lines, racial lines, and then also not simply being a moment in time, but understanding the context and then wanting to see the person brought to wholeness.

Joanna Meyer:

So I could see or imagine some of our listeners bristling at words like justice or diversity, equity and inclusion, because they think it sounds like it's a liberal social agenda. How would you respond to them and how would you respond to that from a biblical or Christian perspective?

Helen Young Hayes:

Well, I'm smiling because one could easily come to that conclusion or that thought.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, let's acknowledge it. That suspicion is understandable based on what you might see in the world.

Helen Young Hayes:

Absolutely. And I love this question because sometimes I think that we can add artificial descriptions of ourselves to ourselves, and we might label ourselves as one party or another. I might call myself an Ivy League graduate or whatever, and we can add all sorts of labels. But as followers of Christ-

Joanna Meyer:

You're a coastal elite, Helen.



Helen Young Hayes:

That's right. I'm a coastal elite. That's right. But I think that we are in Christ and that is all we need to know. The scripture and the Spirit have given us everything that we need for life and for godliness. And so anything else is really information. But what we have is the true wisdom from scripture. And I would just say that talk about an uncomfortable liberal-sounding agenda, when in Mark chapter 20, Jesus is instructing the wealthy young ruler to go and sell all of his possessions and give them all away to the poor. And I'm thinking, wow, you know what? This sounds a whole lot like socialism to me.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah. Or the Old Testament principles who think about the year of Jubilee that debts are forgiven, that people are allowed to be able to return and have their economic consequences removed. I think that sounds totally socialist.

Helen Young Hayes:

Right? And so I guess I just have to say that we need to not label things, but we just need to follow the teaching of Christ. And when God is himself instructing a wealthy young ruler, and I have wealth, I don't have youth anymore, but I'll at least admit that I possess wealth. But when he asks us would we be willing to part with our earthly possessions to ensure that people who don't have enough have enough? And then when we understand that the person that doesn't have enough is the one that Jesus identifies with, then I say, you know what? Let's not label it as liberal or conservative or progressive or whatever. Let's just look at the teaching of Christ and do what it says.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, the Kingdom of Heaven will be a diverse, inclusive place that's right for people that follow Christ, I should say. That's okay. So a couple last questions and we'll wrap up. I wondered, for people in our audience who may not be in a senior leadership role at the organization, folks that may see themselves in the middle or are early in their careers, how can they engage in economic justice?

Helen Young Hayes:

Wow, that's so great. I think there are many ways that we're called to usher in the kingdom and the flourishing for others, regardless of whether we're the CEO or whether we're mid-level managers or whether we're a subject matter expert. I think that one of the most important and powerful things that we can do is to be an ally and a friend. I think of one of the young women that we placed in a very, very white financial institution. She was the only person of color on her floor.



Joanna Meyer:

Wow. That would be intimidating.

Helen Young Hayes:

That would be really intimidating. And she was already a really quiet, introverted individual. And so in my coaching and mentoring of her, I taught her how to develop social capital in a couple of small steps. So looking at everyone in her department in the company directory and looking at what they did and then looking them up on LinkedIn and seeing where they went to school, what they had done, and just understanding enough about them to spark up conversations. That was scary for her, and so we just challenged her to start a conversation with someone that you don't know and just ask them a couple questions about themselves.

The other thing that I asked her to do was to observe what people did at lunch and to ask if she could join people. If they were going out to lunch, ask if she could join them. If they were eating in the cafeteria, then bring your lunch and sit beside them and say, "May I join you?" All these things were really scary and hard for her, but I think what it might have been like for her, if she had a coworker who one, was curious about what it would be like to experience that work environment as her, and then to love her as they love themselves or treat her as they would want to be treated. And that would be those gestures of friendship and inclusion and curiosity and welcome.

So I think that that is one of the most basic things that we can do. We can get curious about people, we can try to connect with them, we can include them, and we can build upon that base of common friendship. We can then build mentorship, for example. I'm a big believer in peer mentors and also in mentors who are at a higher level, who can come alongside and teach someone, look, so here's the pathway to the advancement and I'm going to be your champion and I'm going to make sure that you get in front of all the right committees so that you can get promoted.

So I think that those ways of encouraging individuals, championing them, volunteering them for stuff, that's powerful. And then just working to look for ways to build training and development opportunities for all. And to even help guide them in conversations where they might need a little courage, for example. Or they might need an ally in the office. So there are many, many ways that we can champion individuals and become their allies.

Joanna Meyer:

Helen, I'd love to give you the final word to our audience, kind of a charge to our listeners. You've presented a vision of what it looks like to create practical solutions to economic injustice and invited people in leadership to really do that. You've modeled for folks in other areas of an organization how



they can do that relationally. Would you offer just a final word of why would we want to do this? Why is God inviting us to care about justice?

Helen Young Hayes:

I'll give you one selfish reason that I do what I do, which is that it just brings me so much joy. I really know that when I'm helping move people toward their fullest potential and I'm helping make this world a place of grace and redemption, it makes me really happy. And so that's my selfish reason, and that's why I would invite people to do this. But I believe that God is calling us in however much time we have on this earth to spend our time enhancing the lives of others.

I think that that is how we store up treasures for ourselves that will not rust and decay. I am humbled that the Lord would use me to co-labor with him in his mighty and great work. And it's a privilege, it's an honor, and it's just electrifying to really feel like I've turned the key to being that much closer to the heart of God and to be his ambassador on this earth.

Joanna Meyer:

What a gift to our community. Thanks for the gift of your story and your friendship, and may you excel still more. If you liked this podcast, we encourage you to share with others. How about grabbing a screenshot of this episode and posting it to your social media? Invite more people to be part of this thought-provoking conversation. And if you'd like to get access to the ebook, I mentioned, *Virtue and Vice at Work, Ancient Wisdom for a Modern Age*, you can find a link to purchase and download that ebook in today's show notes. Thanks for joining us today, guys. I look forward to talking to you again in two weeks.

Joanna Meyer:

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