



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.

Hi, and welcome to the Faith and Work Podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, Denver Institute's Director of Public Engagement and the founder of Women, Work and Calling, and I'm excited to spend today's episode catching up with Denver Institute's CEO, Ross Chapman. Hi, Ross.

Ross Chapman:

Hey, it's great to be here.

Joanna Meyer:

It's so good to see you. If you're a frequent listener to the podcast, you may remember that we spoke to Ross in September when he had just accepted the role of CEO and was in the middle of moving his family to Colorado and navigating a leadership transition. But over the last six months, Ross has conducted a listening tour. He's talked to the organization's key stakeholders, leaders in our community, and even just outside observers to gain a fresh perspective on the role that Denver Institute can play in our community. The findings of this tour have been instrumental in shaping our vision for the future of the organization, which we'll hear more about today, a conversation that'll lead us through the pages of scripture and the ivy clad campus of Harvard University.

Ross Chapman:

Hey.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, we're getting smarter around here, so let's not wait any longer to meet our guest Ross, it's great to see you. Thanks for being with us today.

Ross Chapman:

Well, it's an honor to join the Faith and Work Podcast. Obviously, we're excited about what we're doing here at Denver Institute through it and all the great people that have been a part of it, so it feels a little bit humbling to be part of such a great group of distinguished guests. So thanks for letting me join today. I'm excited.



Joanna Meyer:

You're right up there with Andy Crouch, Jamie Sherman, some more.

Ross Chapman:

Well at least in terms of being a guest on this podcast.

Joanna Meyer:

Before we start our topic today, I just would love to hear how your transition to Colorado has been going. What are you enjoying? What is surprising you about being in the Rocky Mountain West?

Ross Chapman:

Well, it's hard to believe it's been six months. A lot has happened, but it's gone by very quickly, and it's been a really just as smooth the transition as we could have hoped for. Yeah, our boys love school. We like the neighborhood we're in, and my favorite thing is still getting to see the mountains every day. They look different throughout the day based on the way the sun's hitting them or if there's clouds, and that's kind of just cool. It's a unique thing, so I don't think I'll ever get over that. That's really exciting. And then just lots of things to do. There's great places to eat, great coffee shops to visit, lots of activities to go do, and it's just been really fun to just consume and love the city for a while.

Joanna Meyer:

You guys are doing a great job just jumping in and getting to know the town. I know that you love to work at local coffee shops. Have you found a favorite yet?

Ross Chapman:

I have a few. I don't know if I could say have a favorite, but on my way to the office, I like to stop at Monk and Mongoose, which is really fantastic. I've enjoyed Sweet Bloom, which obviously Monk and Mongoose, they actually sell the beans. I've really enjoyed Mango Tree.

Joanna Meyer:

I like Mango Tree too, except there's never a seat. Everybody else likes Mango Tree.

Ross Chapman:

Yeah, you kind of get it to go. But yes, it's been fun to just explore a bunch of them, so it's been delight to check them all out.



Joanna Meyer:

So fun. Okay. Since we last talked, you have been very, very busy. You submitted your final project to complete your doctorate in faith work, economics and vocation, right?

Ross Chapman:

Yes.

Joanna Meyer:

That's a mouthful.

Ross Chapman:

Yes, it is.

Joanna Meyer:

In Fuller Seminary, you're putting your finishing touches on a book that's going to come out later this year with inner varsity press called Faithful Work in the Daily Grind with God and For Others.

Ross Chapman:

Yes, written with Ryan Teflowski.

Joanna Meyer:

So fun. And you conducted a listening tour, so you have not been sitting around since you arrived. Tell us a little bit more about the listening tour.

Ross Chapman:

Yeah, the listening tour was priority number one, just to come and listen and understand what's been going on, understand Denver, understand Denver Institute, the front range. And then there's kind of these two conversations, wider conversations you might say that are happening kind of within the church. One would be the faith and work conversation, and one would be kind of this idea of how do we see our cities transformed, how do we work together to see the transformation of our cities? And I was just excited to explore both of those as well-being kind of, that's been my passion. That's what my doctoral project actually focused on, is kind of the convergence or the confluence of those two things. That's a Denver word I've learned, confluence.



Joanna Meyer:

Yes. It's because we live at the confluence of rivers here in the West.

Ross Chapman:

That's what we're shooting for, the confluence of these two conversations. So very fitting to be here in Denver doing that. But yeah, I wanted to do that strategically. So those are kind of the four areas I listened in. I got a chance to hear from just under 200 people, 198. That's amazing. Which was really a blitz. It was a lot of meetings and a lot of listening and a lot of input, and it was really cool to hear. But yeah, business leaders, pastors, leaders in these two conversations, local nonprofit leaders, our fellows who've gone through the 52 80 fellowship, the alumni, and of course our staff and our board and volunteers, and it's just been an incredible encouragement to hear what they think about it. And then also they had some challenges.

Joanna Meyer:

I love that you listened to fans and not fans.

Ross Chapman:

Yeah, of course. Yeah. You got to get the well-rounded view.

Joanna Meyer:

So fun. What stood out to you specifically from these conversations?

Ross Chapman:

Well, one thing that stood out was we have a lot of great fans of Denver Institute, and my takeaway from that was they've really benefited from the content that Denver Institute has created over the years and the convening. And it was cool just to hear, Hey, I met some of these great friends or people that ended up being a mentor for me through something at Denver Institute was hosting. Or somebody would jump on and listen to the Faith and Work podcast or the classroom or maybe check out a blog or something we've written. And that would've been a really big source of encouragement for them, and that was really, really cool to see. And then I think there was this sort of underlying hope of what is Denver Institute going to do next? And I think that's a great question, not just for Denver Institute, but anybody who's kind of working in that faith and work space. It's kind of like, what's the next thing? So that was a big takeaway. One of my favorite things I learned about Denver was what does it mean to be an organization that's focused on people's daily work in the city of play?



Joanna Meyer:

Oh yeah. I don't think we've cracked that nut yet.

Ross Chapman:

No, I think it's just a great question.

Joanna Meyer:

I think you could talk to every pastor in town and they would say, we still struggle with that.

Ross Chapman:

Yeah. Well, and that's something I've noticed coming from the outside. People are gone on Fridays, don't get to work super early on Monday because they're enjoying the mountains and they should, right? I think that's great. But it is an interesting question. And I'd say another one that sticks out for me is just the difference between a bigger city and a smaller city. I've lived in some big cities, Chicago, Charlotte, Indianapolis, and now Denver, but I've also lived in Evansville and Evansville is now a 10th the size of Indianapolis. And when people say they love Denver or Chicago or Charlotte, they generally mean they love what the city does for them, how they benefit from the city, all the great things that they can go do and the great restaurants that they can enjoy or the place they get to live. And when people say they love Evansville, they might mean that, but they also probably mean I'm committed to this place and I'm going to contribute to its wellbeing.

And it was just this kind of difference between contributor consumer. And I'm obviously overstating to make the point because there's plenty of great contributors in Denver and in the other big cities and there's plenty of consumers in small cities. But I think it's a difference in mentality. When you say, I love Denver, what do you mean by that? Do you mean that you love what Denver does for you, or do you mean I'm committed to this place and I want to see it flourish? CS Lewis defined love by saying that it's sacrificially choosing for another's highest good. Are we doing that for Denver? We're doing that for our own city where we're listening from today, and do we think of that when we say, yeah, I love living here, or I love this city. What does that mean? So that was, and a really cool question that somebody posed was, "Hey, we're in the city of play. What does it mean to be this organization that's about everybody's daily work and how it contributes to the good of their industry, their workplace, their city?"

Joanna Meyer:

My family has been in the metro area for 30 plus years, which is amazing, even though I left for a season and came back. And I often find as I watch peers, especially when I was in my thirties, when life was fun and adventurous and in the city when someone would arrive, you really couldn't count on them being



very invested in town for at least two or three years because they were going to go explore every opportunity the saint had for them. And it makes sense because Colorado's an extraordinary state, but it does reflect that shift from consumer to contributor. It's a real thing.

Ross Chapman:

Yeah, that was good. The listening tour, I have some kind of summary things that I learned. I mentioned like people really had a lot of nice things to say about Denver Institute. I think that came from their passion for the mission, just seeing people get a chance to think about how their daily work is an opportunity to join God and his mission, serving God and neighbor and society and their daily work. And then also just confidence in the organization. So that was really some fun takeaways from the tour. There are plenty more. I've written them all down so I don't forget them all, but it was a joy. It really was to hear from people.

Joanna Meyer:

What do you see Denver Institute's role play playing in the community?

Ross Chapman:

Well, that's been something that I've thought about a lot. Don't have any one sentence answers necessarily to that, but I have heard from a lot of different leaders. I think Denver Institute has done a great job convening people together to have important conversations, and we've obviously focused on people's work lives. And I think that's one of the reasons that we have the opportunity to be more of a convening organization in a way, because we're not convening around a politicized thing where we're convening around something people actually experience every single day and they really want to integrate their faith with their daily life and work is where we spend the majority of our waking hours.

And so getting a chance to continue to do that and lean in that I think is a big opportunity. I think it'd be fun to explore how do we mobilize people in certain workplaces or industries to solve some kind of brokenness in that industry? You could expand that out and say, what would it look like for us to see leaders from all different sectors coming together to solve one particular issue in the city? Or at least to begin a plan and to start making those connections and start to work together on that. And so I think there's a lot of opportunity that we can have to play still in Denver, and I think there's a lot of people who are excited to see what that could look like.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah. One thing I've appreciated in working with you over the last six months is the collaborative spirit that you bring to any conversation, whether it's internally here at the organization and within our community. It's just part of your DNA because of your professional background. And I think that'll be a



wonderful gift to our city. You also have a bias towards action. And so I anticipate in the future that will move and build on the great intellectual found and spiritual foundation that we have here, but move towards greater action and service in our city. So it'll be fun to see how that plays out. Still early days, but I think that's what you can anticipate in the coming years.

Ross Chapman:

Yeah, I really hope that we definitely want to have a bias toward action, but that action is usually what we want to see is that's being lived out by the people we're interacting with. Not necessarily what is Denver Institute going to solve, but what are the people connected to Denver Institute going to do together or how are they going out and making a difference or contributing to their city in a way that serves its wellbeing? And so I think one of our roles is really animating imagination and envisioning what does it look like to integrate my faith with my everyday work in a way that really does benefit the place that God has me right now, Denver or whatever city that is.

Joanna Meyer:

That is. Let's just say that again, listeners, you are the real heroes in this process. We may just be guides and champions for you along the process, but you're the ones that we really celebrate in this conversation.

Ross Chapman:

And yeah, I would say even if you're listening right now, you might be one of our future guests because we want to know how you're actually living this out. What does this look like? Have you solved something that you saw that was broken in your workplace or your city and you started doing something about it? Those are the stories that we want to tell.

Joanna Meyer:

I love it. So I alluded to this earlier, but one of the hallmarks of your career has been an emphasis on the wellbeing of cities and their people, which I anticipate will continue to be a focus here at the Institute. Why is the flourishing of city such a passion for you?

Ross Chapman:

Oh, that's a good question, Jo. Well, I think the number one reason is because it's really important to God. His completed project for the reason He created is a city coming down out of heaven. And if that's the case, then God really does love cities. And I think that's the number one reason I'm passionate about it. I've also lived in a bunch of cities and I love just being around a bunch of different people who are



enjoying similar things, whether it's a restaurant or a game or whatever it is, it's you get kind of the best and worst of humanity in cities.

And it's incredible to think about the potential of what people can do together in one place. And of course, you can look at history historically speaking, we live in the time where more people live in cities than people who don't live in cities, and it can't reverse. And by 2050, it's like 70 plus percent of people around the world will live in cities. And so if you don't like cities, that's okay. But there is a trend to recognize historically and kind of the movement of what God's doing. The end of the story is new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. And so that's the main reason I'm passionate about cities, and I just, I've learned to enjoy living in them and contributing to them and being a citizen of those cities that's contributing to them in some way.

Joanna Meyer:

And while there are powerful distinctions between large metro areas and small communities in Nebraska, the principles of what makes a community thrive biblically are the same anywhere. And so it's fun to think about how we scale it based on where you live.

Ross Chapman:

Yeah, it really is God's vision for what He intended. This idea of shalom, I like to say that Shalom is life to the full for every life, and that's going to take place in a city.

Joanna Meyer:

Shalom is life to the full for every life. That's a phrase I think our listeners could think about as they drive around today or walk around just what would that mean? What does fullness of life look like in this place for that person that you see?

Ross Chapman:

Yeah, it's right. And it's right out of John 10:10, right? Jesus said he came to give life to the full.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah.

Ross Chapman:

He came to bring peace. And that's the same word, Shalom. So there's this big concept that people talk about a lot, Shalom, but I think that's a simple way to remember it. Life to the full for every life. What does life to the full?



Joanna Meyer:

I love it. So one of the passages of scripture that we have been rooting these conversations in since you arrived as Isaiah 65, it's a passage that illustrates what God's heavenly city will be like. And in just a moment, and I'll read together a few verses from it, but before we do, give us a little bit of biblical context for this passage about why it could be meaningful for our listeners today.

Ross Chapman:

So this comes at the end of Isaiah's long book, and it is really a description of the new Jerusalem and the new heavens. And so it's kind of this climactic expression and vision of what our deepest hope is as God's people. This is what it's going to look like. This is what we really long for God to do. And I would say why it's important for our listeners is because God's kind of built this into humanity's desire. So he wired us for life to the full. We aren't experiencing it because we rebel and we decide we know better. But God has this grand plan of redemption to restore all things. And what that looks like is described here in Isaiah 65, and that's why it's such a cool passage to spend time with. And Joe and I have a great friend, Eric Swanson. He's the person who kind of put me onto this passage, studied it.

I love putting in the name of the city where I live instead of Jerusalem, or when it says the city, just put in your city's name and think this is what God's doing in your city right now. And I was doing some reading on this passage, and it starts out by saying that he's going to create, but the Hebrew of it is, it's an action verb that's happening now. Present action. He's creating this. He's already doing it. So are we joining him in it or are we watching him do it? Are we hoping he'll do it? But the reality is this is what he's doing. This is the thing that he's creating in every city right now.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Hi, I'm Jeff Hoffmeyer, Vice President of Advancement here at Denver Institute for Faith and Work. And 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:

It just dawned on me that I think we're in a unique season of American life in which we're asking what does it mean to be a good citizen? And some of those answers can be very politically charged. I love that scripture invites us to something that is available to anyone who follows Christ. And that's what we'll see



and see in these verses. So let's read it. We're going to cut it in half. So listeners, you'll be hearing Isaiah 65, 17 through 23, and then we're going to reflect on it a little bit so.

Ross Chapman:

Awesome.

:See, I will create new heavens in a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and it's people, a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people. The sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in that no more. Never again will there be an infant who lives, but a few days or an old man who does not live out his ears. The one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child. The one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered a cursed."

Joanna Meyer:

"They will build houses and dwell in them. They will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree so will be the days of my people, my chosen ones will enjoy the work of their hands, will long enjoy the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune for they will be a people. Blessed by the Lord they and their descendants with them before they call. I will answer while they are yet speaking, I will hear the wolf and the lamb shall graze together. The lion shall eat straw like the ox and dust shall be the serpents food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountains, says the Lord."

You know what I love about these verses is that they highlight tangible ways that God's rule and goodness shape a community. There's health and longevity, stable housing, abundant food. People's work feels purposeful and residents of any age experience emotional health and joy. Did I miss any?

Ross Chapman:

Yeah, well I think that's exactly it. And for the listeners out there, it's hard to pull some of those things out like stable housing when it's poetic. But if you take the time to open up God's word and kind of think about them, you'll start to see them. But yes, exactly, Jo, those were right. I'd add that the city's fully reconciled to God. He answers them before they call. And there's no violence. There's reconciliation between and among humanity and with creation, there's specific passages in there about the animals, and it is a beautiful vision. People do their work and they benefit from it instead of someone else. You can just imagine the pain in your work now, the thing that you want to create or get done or accomplish, and how hard it is in this city, not so hard. And you can get the thing done and you can benefit and see its fruit.



So yeah, there's a lot there to look at and to consider, does our city reflect this? In what ways does it or does it not reflect people living long lives and being mentally healthy? It says the people are delight and they're a joy. People love to visit the city. They can't believe that people are so happy all the time. That kind of place, the most vulnerable are protected, they're nurtured and supported. They have whole family situations, just goes on and on and on. Yeah, it paints this amazing picture that's tangible and concrete and something that we can actually relate to in our day-to-day life in the city we live in.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, I think the theologian Carl Bart used the metaphor of starting each day with scripture in one hand and the newspaper in the others. Did I get the theologian right?

Ross Chapman:

I think you did.

Joanna Meyer:

I think it's Bart. But you could take each of these six or seven areas and map them onto any major metropolitan area in the United States and see that we have tension points around all of them. So let's talk a little bit more about these concepts, because one of the things I find amazing and makes me feel, well, I can't say we are very smart. I would say the Lord is very smart because Harvard University has done a study on human flourishing. It's part of their institute for quantitative, quantitative social science. They did the human flourishing program and they discovered that these attributes from Isaiah 65 are still true today. So tell us a little bit about the Human Flourishing Project.

Ross Chapman:

Well, it was started by a guy named Dr. Tyler VanderWeele, and his research was to basically define what is human flourishing? What do people say about their life satisfaction? How much on a scale of one to 10, would they say I have physical and mental health, or I have meaning and purpose? And he kind of came up with these six categories. He started with five and they've kind of added a six one on financial /material stability. But those six are, happiness and life satisfaction, physical and mental health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, close social relationships. And then finally, financial material stability. And basically you're saying if those six things are high on your list, you're experiencing a flourishing life. And I just think it's interesting to align those six domains with Isaiah's 65, and again, credit to Eric Swanson for helping us think about this, who kind of actually laid them out for us and said, "Hey, these things kind of look like they overlap."

And it's not a one-to-one, it doesn't say in Isaiah 65 physical and mental health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue. But if you go down and start to look at what is Isaiah trying to communicate in this



poetic description of this new city coming down out of heaven, that's going to happen in Revelation 21. What does that look like? They align pretty well with these six domains. And so that was pretty cool to see. And so depending on what context you're in, if you're at church, you might talk about Isaiah 65. What does it mean for people to have life to the full? Well, here's what it looks like. Isaiah 65, this is what's happening in the city life to the full for every life. But if you're at work and you're not really in a Christian context at all, you might say, "Hey, human flourishing kind of looks like this and are we doing things that help people in these six areas experience the flourishing that they could actually have?"

Harvard goes on to say in their research, there's only four pathways to these six domains. And those four pathways are your family, your work, your educational experiences, and your religious community. So if we're talking about how people experience human, how they will experience human flourishing, it's pretty important to recognize there's only four of them. Well, we better do well on those four things. And so we all come from a family of some kind. And so depending on your family leads to happiness and life satisfaction, physical mental health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and know on and on and on. And you can kind of put that on a scale. How high would I rank those domains based on what I'm experiencing in my family?

Well, the same can be done in your work life, and same can be done based on your education and how your education impacts those six domains and then your religious community. And I think what I'd want our listeners to take away on the Faith and Work Podcast is that work is one of the four. Yeah. That makes what you do every day have a little bit more significance because it is really an opportunity to help people experience flourishing a little bit more. And it could be your coworkers, it could be your customers, your clients, your boss, your board members, your stakeholders, whatever that looks like. But there are people that you're interacting with every day. You're contributing to their flourishing or lack of flourishing based on how you're doing your work and what kind of work you're doing. And I just think that gives us a lot of meaning and purpose in our work if we can start to make some of those connections. So how does your work contribute to somebody's physical or mental health or their character and virtue or their financial material stability? How is it helping them build close social relationships and experiencing life satisfaction and happiness?

Joanna Meyer:

This is where we start to transition from this conversation being theoretical to being very practical. And I think it's easy to hear these concepts and think, "Joanna, I don't know how in the world I would even begin to apply that in my daily work." And that's where one, we acknowledge our listeners as the true subject matter experts, their uniquenesses in your industry and role that only about, and so we just want to acknowledge that. But also this is where the discipleship happens, is that there is room for incredible Godly influence in any role, but it comes through sinking deeply and to really look at your scope of influence, what you've been entrusted with and the unique dynamics of that organization. Or I think about education. You might be a principal, you might be a classroom teacher, you might be an



educational resource specialists teaching kids how to read and very different scope of influence in all of those settings. But you could sit down and say, what does it look like for these values? To the degree that I can influence them to me to be really working on them in the context of my work. So scope of influence and deep discipleship and consideration to say practically, how do we live this out? And I think there's room in almost any role to consider these virtues.

Ross Chapman:

I totally agree. It's kind of like taking that city scorecard you could say that Isaiah 65 lays out for us, and you could say, "Does my work have the ability or opportunity to impact any of these?" So it could be the Harvard domains or it could be some of these pass some of these verses in Isaiah 65. Education, children are valued, protected, and nurtured, building character and virtue in kids, helping them find meaning and purpose. It's not just classroom material, that content memory that we're going for. You're doing a lot more if you're an educator, you have a lot of opportunity to really impact all these different domains, really.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah.

Ross Chapman:

And so yeah, I think you're right. One thing I think that's helpful too is to recognize how deeply people are not experiencing these things too. The people that you're around at your work, or is there stable housing across the city where you live? Is there access to quality food across the city where you live? If that's going to be true in the heavenly city that we're going to experience in the end, how do we help people experience it right now a little bit more?

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah.

Ross Chapman:

Because that's kind of what God's asked us to do. He's asked us to join in on His mission to do that, to redeem and restore all things. And so I think if we don't have a clear picture of the pervasiveness of the brokenness, we see we're going to lack the imagination needed to say, I can do something to help people experiencing this kind of flourishing or this kind of life to the full, just we won't have the tools to imagine it quite as well as we could if we don't see where the brokenness really is.



Joanna Meyer:

I was thinking about someone who may be in a position of business leadership who's listening, and as we drive around to any major metropolitan area, but Denver and Portland and other parts in California, you see homelessness as a major issue. And so you think, "Oh, affordable housing," which is a huge part of that conversation. But really anymore, the conversation around affordable housing is extending into the lower middle class and middle class. So if you're a business owner and you have younger millennial employees who also have school debt, which is increasing affordable housing is a real issue for them. And that plays out the minute you sit down to have salary negotiations with your younger employees. And so you realize like, oh, becoming a subject matter expert, just allowing God to disciple us in the practicalities of flourishing and our job really makes you think differently about the dynamics of how that plays out and works. So it's real.

Ross Chapman:

Yeah, I mean you're kind of suggesting, Jo, that we have our customers and our stakeholders. We also have our employees and our coworkers, and if you're in business leadership, you kind of have an opportunity to impact all those and you're impacting their financial material stability. You might be impacting their happiness and life satisfaction, but maybe without recognizing as much, you may also be helping them with meaning and purpose and close social relationships. And just to take all of that in and say, "Hey, what has God given me to steward and be responsible for?" It's quite a lot.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, it's really fun. It's a place for great imagination and great discipleship. We learn to understand and love God and neighbor better as we press into some of these things, which I think is really exciting.

Ross Chapman:

It is really exciting.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, and we wanted to highlight before we go that it's easy to look at these virtues and think, well, the solution to these problems is to found a non-profit. And you know we are a nonprofit, so we are a big fan of the sector, but that's not what I want our listeners to hear. How would you respond when I say that?

Ross Chapman:

Well, I think it's great advice in case listeners aren't aware, the private sector is the fuel and the engine for all of the sectors. So there's public, social, and private. Private is what generates tax dollars to fund the public sector, and it also generates philanthropic dollars to support the social sector. And so I would



say if you're thinking about a nonprofit and solving a problem through a non-profit, it may be the right choice but think twice because maybe you can solve it through the private sector. Maybe there's a way that you can create a business that really does solve what you're hoping to solve. And if you're not starting something, then think about the industry that you're in and what issue does it touch? Is it affordable housing? If it's affordable housing, it could be directly through building homes, but it could also be mental health.

It could be it social relationships, social capital is really important. If you're at a workplace that has a lot of social capital, how can you extend that to somebody who doesn't have it to help them get the right connections and the right knowledge to be able to take a step towards home ownership? So it could just be reflecting on how deeply does my industry touch all of these different potential ways people experience life to the fullest? Scott intended it and think about maybe there's a partner or maybe there's just a way that you can direct your products or the way that you communicate about them to meet some of those needs.

Joanna Meyer:

I love it. So you're actually saying, and I'll apologize for the pun before I even say it. Business can be done for the common good.

Ross Chapman:

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Joanna Meyer:

So before we wrap up, we always give our guests a chance to offer a bit of a charge or an encouragement to our listeners. And let's stick with that theme of every everyday work. What would you offer as a final thought for our listeners on how they can help a community flourish through their work?

Ross Chapman:

Well, I would say the first step is to become a student and an expert of your city. If you don't start by knowing what the needs are, you're either going to create a solution that wasn't needed or you're going to duplicate one. And so I would just say start by becoming a student of your city. You can do that by going online and doing a demographic study on your city. You could do that by identifying 10 non-profit leaders you want to meet with over the next year and just learn what issue are they solving. You could sit down with your local church pastor and ask what needs do you see in the community that I could be engaging with? And until you know those, you're not going to know how to connect it to your daily work. I like the story of Nehemiah. I think we all kind of need a Nehemiah moment before we kind of launch into pursuing the common good or the flourishing of our city.



Because what Nehemiah did was he asked for a report of the city. He said, "Tell me about the people and tell me about the state of the city". And he gets the report back, and he doesn't immediately go do something. He actually takes time to absorb what he heard, reflect on it, and when he did, he wept. He knew that it didn't align with God's vision for the city that he knew, and that bothered him enough to grieve his spirit. And I think we need to pause and do a little bit more of that. And then he confessed his ownership in that problem. He said, "I'm part of this city. I'm part of the reason this city is the way it is." And he kind of confessed on behalf of God's people in that first chapter of Nehemiah. And then he made a plan and he did something. And I think that's such a great model. It's kind of listen, weep, own it, and then make a plan. And I think until you understand some of the things going on in your community that really grieve your heart, it's going to be harder to have that imagination and passion and that sticktuitiveness that you need to continue engaging your daily work in the flourishing of your community. So that's my encouragement to start there.

Joanna Meyer:

So thanks listeners for joining us today. A couple of call to actions for you calls to action. We will link to the Harvard Human Flourishing Program in our show notes. It's really an intriguing place to go. We will also link to a free course in the faith and work classroom on whole life calling. It introduces this idea of flourishing that flows from our daily work, but also the idea of steward stewarding our whole life for God's purposes. And then we will put together a couple thoughts and links on how do you exegete your city too. So more to come. Thanks for joining us today, Ross.

Ross Chapman:

It was great. Thanks, Jo.

Joanna Meyer:

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