



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, the director of public engagement at the Denver Institute for Faith and Work. And today is a very special day because we are celebrating the launch of a new podcast. Teach Us to Pray will be led by Jeff Hoffmeyer, our VP of Advancement, and today is our launch day. So welcome Jeff. I'm excited to hear about your new project.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Yeah, thanks so much. I'm excited about it too, and glad just to talk a little bit about it and to launch this new podcast.

Joanna Meyer:

Yes. So the purposes of our episode today are to introduce you to the podcast, help you know a little bit more about it, and then on the back end of this episode, you'll have a chance to listen to the debut episode as well. So let's just jump right in. Hoff, tell us a little bit about the name.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Yeah, because the name basically explains the concept and why even as a faith and work organization, we would launch a new podcast on prayer. So the podcast is called Teach Us to Pray. It comes from this line in the Gospel of Luke, just before Jesus shares the Lord's prayer in that gospel, we mostly know the Lord's prayer from Matthew. It's a slightly different version. It's a little bit longer than the version in Luke, but the version in Luke is preceded by this unnamed disciple saying to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray the way John," meaning John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray. And I've just always been struck by that line, "Teach us to pray." It's not really even a question, it's a request. You could even say it's almost a demand of Jesus, but I've thought for a long time, what if that request of Jesus is actually the primary request of a disciple?

Meaning if we consistently say that to the Lord, Lord teach us to pray, that could be the very heart of our own growth as followers of Jesus. It could be really the very foundation of our own discipleship, meaning if we learn to pray well and we just consistently stay in that and it's frustrating and there's so much to learn, but I really think that's the way God forms us. And of course it looks different, it's varied, but prayer is really the beating heart of discipleship. So I wanted to start a new podcast based on that.

And the second part of that is I actually think God's response to that request, teach us to pray is the whole of scripture. So that's really God's answer. It's not simply the Lord's prayer. And it's also not simply all of the prayers we find in the Bible. And of course we have 150 Psalms and there's prayers found throughout the Bible, but really every passage in its own way, every verse of scripture is a response to



that request and scripture becomes the guide for our prayer. So the concept of the podcast is simple. I'll share one brief verse of scripture or a couple verses. I'll talk about those verses a little bit. And then I'll guide our listeners in actually some active prayer, some guided prayer. And each episode will be short, but that's basically the concept and the title.

Joanna Meyer:

That's pretty cool. And I love, as you talk about guiding listeners through prayer that really comes through your own personal and professional experience. You're a trained pastor, you're familiar with helping facilitate prayer. How is your own personal experience with prayer informing the podcast?

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Yeah. For one, for the whole of my Christian life, which gosh, several decades now, I became a Christian when I was in junior high. I've been frustrated by prayer and I think a lot of our listeners probably can relate to that. It's a hard thing, particularly that element of prayer when we try and listen to what God's saying. I mean, it's pretty easy for us just to do the talking, right? But that listening dimension can be so frustrating. And I don't know what your experience is, Joanna, but when I try and listen to God, there's this jumble of voices. My mind starts racing. I'm thinking about my to-do list or what's going on in my family, or I mean any number of things that are just blocking that attempt of mine to listen to God. So by and large, it's been frustrating, but I found it's a frustration that's worth just sticking in and continuing to try.

And that's even why that line teach us to pray, to say that repeatedly to God and to stay in the difficulty of it and not so much to get better at it as if this is some kind of professional development thing, which it's not, but just to stay in that relationship and to stay in the conversation, which of course that's what prayer is, and some conversations are difficult and it is hard to really listen well, even just to a person you're sitting across a table from having coffee. So it makes sense that this conversation with an unseen God would also be difficult. But yeah, that's been my experience, a lot of frustration which has then been punctuated by profound moments of awareness of the nearness of God. And of course God is always near, but sometimes in prayer we can become acutely aware of just how near God is. And to be honest, I can count those moments on two hands if not on one hand in my lifetime. But they've been profound enough that it just leaves me hungry for more. And that's part of the reason that I stay in the frustration.

Joanna Meyer:

Gosh, I have so much to learn in this area. Right before we hit record, Hoff and I were talking about just personal habits and things we like to do, and he asked, "How do you read as much as you do?" And I actually think it's one, it's how God's wired me, and it's also an area of significant, not dysfunction, but has the potential to be really bad in my life because I love new content, both high and low. I'm thinking



about Ted Lasso socks, and I'm also thinking about whatever we're reading for that week for staff meeting some piece of theology about faith work and culture.

But what's hard, and I hope that there are listeners out there that may relate to this, is this massive flow of content that is coming through our lives on a daily basis. If you like learning and like taking content, it can be an overwhelming flood that if you don't manage it can have a disastrous effect on your life. I'm at that point where I'm like, "I got to make some better choices about the level of content flowing through." But prayer is an antidote to that. Prayer is also hard in that environment that we live in the information age because it's distinctly stepping away from digital information and connecting to the internal relationship and information of God. So this is going to be a wonderful learning experience for our community.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Yeah, well, just to affirm that, I mean others have said we're living in the age of distraction, which is probably one of the best names for our current cultural moment. And you're right, prayer is a square peg in a round hole in that kind of setting, which as you said, makes it all the more important. And I think ultimately it can be part of what guides us through all that content and helps us sift through it.

Joanna Meyer:

Okay, so why are you applying it to work? And here's my suspicion is that prayer is actually something people probably do in their workday in the sense of if you have a panic moment, you may throw up a prayer or maybe pray in the car on the way to work, but you're taking it a step farther. Why are you applying this experience and these skills to our work and how are you doing it?

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Yeah, absolutely. And then no surprise to you, Joanna, we both work at Denver Institute for Faith and Work. You and I have drank that Kool-Aid in the good sense. It's a good Kool-Aid, we actually believe work should be a primary place for us to practice our faith. So of course, prayer must be a part of that. A lot of people I talk to when I talk about how they integrated their faith with their work, they do talk about what you just said, like praying at the beginning of their day, praying in those moments of crisis. Those are both moments we should pray. But I wonder about what our work would look like and how it would be transformed if we tried to approach that insistence of the Apostle Paul to pray without ceasing, which of course doesn't mean there's this steady stream of prayer for eight or 10 hours a day, but every moment of our work is in some measure an opportunity for conversation with God.

And that could be before a meeting, during a meeting. And again, it's not always active or conscious, but I think as we're guided in prayer by scripture, which again is the focus of the podcast, those verses of scripture give us handholds to hold onto throughout that workday. And that can be this primary place then of transformation that transforms how we are in work, how we relate to coworkers and clients and



customers. And then ultimately of course, this is the goal for us at Denver Institute is formation and then for others, how might that transform our cities, our communities, if more and more people are engaging in this practice of prayer at work and in work.

Joanna Meyer:

I love it. How do some of the skills or frameworks that you learned as a pastor about prayer and how it relates to scripture, how do they inform the structure of this podcast?

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

In some ways, it's working against almost the habits of prayer that are prevalent in a lot of churches, including churches I've served. At church, we pray during that hour of worship and as well we should. But again, one of the pillars for us at Denver Institute is breaking down this divide between the sacred and the secular. So in my mind, some of those more religious settings, like that hour of worship on Sunday, really the design is to propel us into a week full of prayer. So I've been a pastor in a more liturgical tradition. So we would have prayers of adoration and confession and Thanksgiving and supplication that's using that A-C-T-S, ACTS acronym for prayer. But I would always encourage the people I was leading in worship that, for example, the prayer of confession that's meant to be learned on Sunday morning and applied throughout the week.

So 30 seconds of confession on Sunday is not enough. We actually need a daily rhythm of that. So part of that is just taking out what we're doing on that "holy moment" on Sunday and applying it to much more mundane moments throughout the week. And so that's bringing the sacred into the secular and is actually breaking down that wall. And a great example of this, and a lot of our listeners would be familiar with Brother Lawrence, a 17th century dishwasher in a monastery in France. Brother Lawrence wrote this book called *Practicing the Presence of God* and actually was able to pray in his work as a dishwasher and wrote this really profound book on prayer coming out of that. But if dishwashing can be sacred, then so too can any moment in our work lives and every moment of our lives. So it's really breaking down that wall, and I'm hoping this podcast can be a small part of that for our listeners.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, I've been reflecting on Matthew 11: 28-30, which talks about, "Those who are weary and burden coming to the Lord and they'll find rest." But the way that that rest comes is so surprising to me because he talks about Christ taking his yoke upon us. A yoke is an instrument of work. I often look at those passages and think like, "Oh, prayer is for rest and escape, and yet Christ invites us into his work with him and that rest is experienced as we experience his yoke in our lives." And I go, "Oh, work can be a wonderful place of intimacy with the Lord, presence and shared." Christ carries the heavier burden, but we step under the burden of his work with him. And so learning to translate that relationship with God into work is challenging. So I think this model you're presenting us will be incredibly powerful.



Jeff Hoffmeyer:

I think prayer at work, but also prayer is work, and we need to realize because prayer is hard, it is something we actually need to work at and be intentional about and set aside time for and learn from others. In that way, it's of course joyful work, but it's serious work and it does take effort.

Joanna Meyer:

So you're kicking off the podcast with one of the most familiar passages of scripture for many Christians, Psalm 23. And I'm wondering why you chose to start there.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

And not only familiar to Christians, non-Christians, if they know any verses of the Bible, it's probably Psalm 23 or at least that would be on a very short list. It's often read out loud at funerals and memorial services, and most people have that experience. And as a pastor, I've led those memorial services and I've seen just the blank faces on the stairs of people who are in a sanctuary, don't want to be in a sanctuary, don't like church and all of that, but they hear Psalm 23 and so they know it from that context. I really think Psalm 23, it's not a poem to die by. It's a prayer to live by, so it's well and good that it's read, and I would love for it to be read at my memorial service, but really I would love for that prayer to shape the whole of my life.

And in some ways, I probably should have started the podcast off with a different passage of scripture because part of the point I'm trying to make is that every portion of scripture can guide us in prayer and not just a classic place like Psalm 23, but it's such a rich, of course, poem. I think David can stand toe to toe with Shakespeare and Browning and Robert Frost, but it's a profound prayer that really I think can shape our lives. And part of it, and this is the last thing I'll say about why start with Psalm 23, is the Psalm starts off really talking about God. David says, "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures." So David's talking about God, and then in verse four, he makes this turn and starts talking to the Good Shepherd.

And I just love that as a metaphor for our lives because in my life, there's so much talk about God and Joanna, even in our work at Denver Institute, I mean, how much talking about God do we do, like a lot and hopefully it's helpful, but really what the Lord wants is for us to start talking to him. And David makes that shift in Psalm 23, and I would love for this podcast to be a small part of our listeners making that shift of not just being those who talk about God, but who are deep in conversation talking to God, listening to God. That's the shift I long for in my life. And again, I think as you and I and our listeners make that shift, that's what enables transformation more and more not just in ourselves but in our world.



Joanna Meyer:

I love it. So this podcast will have a slightly different frequency and format than the standard Faith and Work Podcast. So tell us one practically, how often are listeners going to hear it? Where can they find... Well, I'll talk a little bit more about where they can find it, but also how can they engage it?

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Yeah. And I'm hoping for once a week, give or take like four episodes a month. They're going to be short episodes, eight to 10 minutes. These are meant to be something you can listen to on your commute to work or while you're folding laundry or out for a walk with your dog like doing some... in fact, it's almost better to maybe do it in the heart of an activity you regularly do because that's going to enable that place. It actually makes your car a sacred space for us in the middle of I-25 in Denver or your laundry room, a sacred space. So it's meant to kind of capture those mundane places in our lives and make them places of hopefully connection with the holy. So they're short episodes and again, they end in guided prayer. So I'm hoping this is not simply a listening experience. This actually is an experience of praying and listening to God.

Joanna Meyer:

I love it. And just a second, we're going to connect to the first episode, but before we do, a couple like just nuts and bolts details for our listeners. For the first four episodes of the podcast, we will have them running concurrently in their own stream. You can find it on any of your podcasting players you'll just want to be looking for, Teach Us to Pray. Look for Denver Institute and Jeff Hoffmeyer to make sure you find the correct podcast by that name. But we also will be running it on the Faith and Work Podcast room. So for the next, not four episodes, but interspersed with our regular pacing of every other week of Faith and Work Podcast episodes, you'll get the first four episodes weekly of Teach Us to Pray.

They'll drop on Mondays and also on the [denverinstitute.org](http://denverinstitute.org) website under the podcasts tab, you can find all of the podcast episodes there. So there are a number of ways that you can access it. After the fourth week, we will officially, or the fourth episode of Teach Us to Pray, we'll officially launch it onto its own stream independent of Faith and Work. But for the next few weeks, you'll have a chance to hear them both, which I think is really exciting. So please make sure you go to your internet player and subscribe to Teach Us to Pray as well. Okay, so Jeff, final question. What's your dream for the podcast and what would happen in our listeners' lives?

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Yeah, well, I knew you were going to ask this question because you told me you were going to. I mean, can a podcast change the world? No and yes, I mean because prayer can change the world, so I would hope this would shape for our listeners their experience of prayer, even how they think about it. Prayer is



conversation, that means it's widely varied and in scripture, again, we see all kinds of different forms of prayer, just like you and I, Joanna, we're in conversation a lot.

Some of our conversations take on a different shape, and that's the same with conversation with God. So I think one is just a change in conception about what prayer is, and then also, this is really important, a change in how we understand what the Bible is because again, I think one of the primary ways we should understand the Bible may be the primary way is an answer to that request, "Lord, teach us to pray," and God hands us these 66 books, and if we read the Bible, not just as a place where we can get information about the church or Israel or the story of Jesus, but as that primary source for how we can be guided in prayer, I think that changes how we view scripture and that's really going to lead to a transformed life.

Joanna Meyer:

Jeff, it is a thrill to now say we have a family of podcasts at Denver Institute for Faith and Work. It's amazing, and thank you for both your passion and your leadership on this project. Well, here we go you guys, Teach Us to Pray.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Hi, welcome to Teach us to Pray, a podcast of Denver Institute for Faith and Work. I'm your host, Jeff Hoffmeyer. What if the primary thing Jesus longs to teach us disciples is actually how to pray? Jesus gives his disciples the Lord's prayer after a disciple asks him, "Lord, teach us to pray." What if that request is actually the primary request of a follower of Jesus? In this podcast, we'll let scripture guide us in how to pray in the midst of our real lives.

Welcome to the first episode of Teach Us to Pray. It's the guiding contention of this podcast that actually all of scripture is a guide to prayer, that every page really is an answer to that central request of a disciple, "Lord, teach us to pray." Of course, though some places in the Bible are more obviously guides to prayer and no section more so than the Psalms. So I'm starting this podcast with a Psalm, but not just any Psalm, actually the most beloved of them all, Psalm 23, and not just any verse of Psalm 23, but the most important verse in that Psalm verse four, here it is. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me." If there's one central promise in scripture, it's this, God's repeated promise, "I am with you."

David now turns that promise, the promise that is lived out in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, who is a manual God with us, David turns that promise into a prayer, "Thou," David says. We don't use that King James word anymore. It sounds overly formal to us, which is unfortunate because in old English, there were actually two words for the second person singular, you and thou. You was actually used in more formal situations when you were communicating with an acquaintance. Thou was saved for communicating with those friends and family members that we dearly love. If you open your Bible to Psalm 23 and put your finger on that word thou in verse four, you'll notice your finger is in the very middle of the Psalm. That's because that word, that word of intimacy and nearness and promise, it's



actually the beating heart of this poem of David's, this prayer, and it is both, Psalm 23, it's both a poem and a prayer.

As a poem, it does have structure and imagery and rhythm. One of the best things the King James translators did in their translation of Psalm 23, including this line from verse four, is they used iambic pentameter. Now you know iambic pentameter even if you don't think you do. You know it from Shakespeare, "But soft. What light from yonder window breaks," that line from Romeo looking up to Juliet, da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, each of those da-DUMs is an iam. You line up five of them together and you have iambic pentameter. Coolio, God rest his soul knew this, which is why he chose this line from Psalm 23 to start off his magisterial Gangster's Paradise. "Even though I walked through the valley of the shadow of death," da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, iambic pentameter.

But Psalm 23 of course is not merely a poem, it's a prayer, and it is at this moment with this word, this word thou, that the poem becomes a prayer. Up until verse four, David has been talking about God in the third person. "The Lord is my shepherd. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me besides still waters. He restores my soul." But in verse four, David stops talking about the shepherd and starts talking to the shepherd and no wonder that he does so in that moment, recalling some dark and difficult time.

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou. Thou art with me." Let's turn then as we'll do in every episode of this podcast to pray and let's pray this line, this promise, this word thou, let's let that word guide us in prayer. And so wherever you find yourself, I'd ask you to pray with me and I'll offer some words out loud and I'll offer some silence in between so that you can engage your heart in prayer wherever you are, whether you're walking the dog or in the car or folding laundry, let's turn now to pray to the good shepherd.

Lord, teach us to pray. Lord Jesus, good shepherd, we turn to you and boldly use that word, that word of nearness and intimacy, thou. And today, Lord, we are mindful of this longing for our lives to make that turn from poem to prayer for our lives are poetic with a certain structure and rhythm, but we make this turn today, Lord, with David, this turn from simply talking about you to talking to you from third person to second.

Thou, thou art with me. We make this turn, Lord aware of some dark valley, some valley of the shadow of death in our lives, in our work, in a relationship with someone we love or some darker broken thing in our world. Whatever that thing is, whatever marker of the valley of the shadow of death, we take a moment to think on it, knowing you are thinking with us. And we boldly claim focusing on this darkness, this brokenness, this injustice, this difficulty that thou art with me, thou Lord and thou alone, to thou be the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. Teach Us to pray is a podcast of Denver Institute for Faith and Work. For more resources of this kind on a whole life discipleship or to give, visit [denverinstitute.org](http://denverinstitute.org). Until next time, keep praying, keep asking, "Lord, teach us to pray."