



**Jon Coleman:**

Sometimes these positions we overlook have some of the greatest opportunities for impact you can imagine.

**Joanna Meyer:**

You're listening to the Faith & Work Podcast where we explore what it means to serve God, neighbor and society through our daily work. Hi, and welcome to the Faith & Work Podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, Denver Institute's Director of Public Engagement and founder of Women, Work, & Calling, and I'm joined today by Ross Chapman, our CEO. Hello, sir.

**Ross Chapman:**

Hey Joanna. How's it going? So glad to be back on the podcast with you.

**Joanna Meyer:**

It's so fun. It's going really well. But I have a question to ask you, Ross, at Denver Institute, we often talk about the idea of calling being broad, that we live our whole life with God, we live with him in all of life. And I have heard there's been a new role recently added to this broad umbrella of calling that of daddy caddy. Tell us a little bit about that.

**Ross Chapman:**

Yeah. So my oldest son started doing some golf lessons and part of the lessons is on Fridays he actually does a competes and has to shoot from 25 yards out and parents have to be the caddy. So Candace and I were going back and forth on who was going to go on that late Friday afternoon and be the caddy. And I was like, well, I have to do it because then I would be the daddy caddy and it's a great calling and super fun. I know nothing about playing golf and so I can give my nine year old absolutely zero input on what he should or shouldn't do and he just gets to figure it out and I just get to be cheering him on, lugging the clubs around and helping him see the angles and it's just really fun. So that's like a really fun, joyous part of my calling as father. Yes.

**Joanna Meyer:**

I just love saying daddy caddy.

**Ross Chapman:**

Daddy caddy.



**Joanna Meyer:**

It's awesome.

**Ross Chapman:**

Me too. All the other daddy caddies out there, do your calling with great joy and passion.

**Joanna Meyer:**

And what our listeners won't hear is that Catherine Sandgren, our producer, who's an occasional host of the podcast with me, is becoming a steward, a keeper of the bees this weekend. She's entering the hobby of beekeeping. The bees arrived this weekend. So we are thrilled. And I would say that's another expression on this broad umbrella of calling. You are the keeper of the bees.

**Ross Chapman:**

That's right, yes. A great example of the vocation of God's people, but then living out those vocations where he has placed us. So pretty fun.

**Joanna Meyer:**

Yeah, that's really fun. So today's one of those days where I'm just itching to talk to our guests. We'll be hearing from Jon Coleman of Sovereign's Capital. It's a faith-driven investing company. That may be familiar to some of our listeners. We've talked to Henry Kaestner, Sovereign's Capital's founder in a previous episode, but prior to joining Sovereign's, Jon has had a long and winding career. He's worked at some of the biggest name corporations you'll be familiar with. He's Ivy League educated and he's had a front row seat to see some of the challenges and opportunities that people in those roles have had. Those experiences led him to write HBR's Guide to Crafting Your Purpose, and that's the topic that we'll explore with him today. I'm Jon is a fascinating and also engaging speaker, so I'm excited to hear more about his journey. Ross, will you tell us a little bit more about Jon?

**Ross Chapman:**

Jon Coleman is a managing partner at Sovereign's Capital in private equity, public equity and venture capital. He has prior experience at McKinsey & Company, Invesco and Bridgewater Associates, and he is a frequent contributor to Harvard Business Review. Jon and his work have been featured in Forbes, the Washington Post and New York Times, and many other outlets. He is the host of the Faith-Driven Investor podcast, which you should totally check out. And as Joanna mentioned, he authored HBR's Guide to Crafting Your Purpose and he's the son of a rodeo cowboy. We are so privileged to have you, Jon. Thanks for joining us.



**Jon Coleman:**

Yeah. Thank you all so much for having me on Ross and Joanna.

**Ross Chapman:**

Yeah. Let's start right there. Give us a little bit on the rodeo cowboy story. What does that mean?

**Jon Coleman:**

So he was infinitely cooler than me, grew up in the panhandle, Florida agricultural areas, and when he was in high school, probably about 15 or 16, he started a rodeo. I think child safety laws were a little more lax back then, and he was primarily a bull rider and a saddle bronc rider, which were two of the roughest of the events in rodeo. And my mom made him quit when I was born, so that was a short-lived career, only a few years, but it was also the only thing she ever banned me from doing. So unfortunately I could go to the rodeo and check it out. I was never allowed to participate and I have to admit, I'm not sure I was tough enough to participate, so maybe I ended up in the right career.

**Ross Chapman:**

Yeah. I think it's worked out for you just fine. And kudos to your mom saying no to your dad and you, keeping you safe. That's really cool. Well, you've actually gone on to live a very fun life, many different roles, investor, author, father, manager, many more things. Can you just give us a little bit of your journey professionally and spiritually if you're willing to share?

**Jon Coleman:**

Yeah, happy to. I'll weave them together. In terms of the spiritual side. I grew up in a Christian home. I was raised in Columbus, Georgia primarily, which is a mid-sized town, South of Atlanta. I was born in Florida and I always grew up around the church, in the church. I remember getting saved at a lock-in, if you guys ever remember church lock-in in fourth grade, the spirit has moved at many a lock-in.

So I grew up with it and in some ways my journey is that experience by a lot of kids who grew up in a Christian home, went away for college and never really rebelled or fell away or didn't consider myself a Christian, probably didn't go to church as much, sought things out a bit, but very quickly came back and my journey on the spiritual side consistently has been one of just trying to build a greater understanding of what my faith means and then how to integrate that into my life, especially as work sprang up. I've always considered myself a Christian personally. I've been involved in churches and small groups, but the way to build that into my career, to build that into my life has always been a little unclear to me because I've worked at big mainstream firms and so it's



only recently since I've joined Sovereign's Capital and explicitly faith-driven firm that I feel like I've really begun to flourish in that area.

In high school and college, I didn't really know what I wanted to be. I wish I could plot out a really well-planned journey for you guys professionally. When I graduated college, I thought I'd be a journalist or an academic, honestly. And I moved to DC and took a summer think tank job, decided I wanted to try out the private sector, bounced into a quantitative energy trading hedge fund effectively right after that, which is an unusual career transition. The truth is, they were just the first people to offer me a job and I needed an apartment. I was losing my apartment on a Saturday and I got the call from this hedge fund on a Friday night and I told him I could start in a week, which I figured would give me enough time to find a place on Craigslist. And that started my private sector journey.

I did that for about a year and realized that I was the world's worst quantitative energy hedge fund trader. I went to McKinsey & Company, a consulting firm, did a few years of graduate school in business and public policy, and it was really after school that I started to narrow in on this focus on investing long-term. Went to McKinsey for a couple of years to live abroad, did Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia and England a little bit while I was there. And then spent nine years at a big multinational investment manager called Invesco before two and a half years ago, transitioning to where I am now, Sovereign's Capital, a small faith-driven investment firm as you mentioned.

**Ross Chapman:**

A follow up question, you said you grew up in church and really trying to connect your faith to what you were doing every day was challenging and now you really have a chance to align that you feel like now with your role Sovereign's capital. Of course, we've got a bunch of people listening in who are wondering about that same question, how do I connect my day-to-day work to anything that God cares about or does he care about it? And I think it'd be fun just to hear a little bit more of how you... What was that struggle like for you? I know I grew up in church and I always felt like maybe I should go work in a church, do nonprofit things or whatever, and I ended up actually feeling like that's what I should do clearly.

But that's a big challenge that Denver Institute wants to exist to help people navigate that. So if you wouldn't mind just sharing a little bit more of what was your experience with that? Did you hear messages like that in church have said, I got to pick these things to make a difference for God and how did you navigate that in roles where that was harder?



**Jon Coleman:**

Growing up, I was always pretty decent at writing and public speaking. So everybody in the south encourages you to either be a pastor or a politician if you're good at those things. And I used to joke, I was way too moral to be a politician and not moral enough to be a pastor, so I had to find something in between. I struggled on a couple of fronts with this idea of faith and work, Ross. I think on the one side there is this tension that you mentioned if you grow up in the Christian faith of if I'm doing something other than directly carrying out the great commission every day where I'm spreading the gospel, where I'm a pastor, a missionary, et cetera, am I really living the highest and best use of human life?

And the only way to do that in that explicit way is ministry. Some ministry profession. On the other side, it was, once I chose my private sector career, how do I live my faith in that arena in a way that's appropriate, in a way that my firm or my colleagues will tolerate. In a way that's constructive to spreading the gospel or living out the great commandments in that space? And what does that look like day to day. On the profession side, it's been a lifelong process of clarification. I really do think that almost any profession can be a mission field now. Jesus didn't necessarily command everyone to go out and do the same thing. The world wouldn't function very well if that were the case. And I think that some people genuinely are called to building businesses, to being lawyers, to being politicians, despite my jokes earlier, to working at nonprofits and that all of that is needed.

And the question for each of those professions is not whether that is a type of ministry, but how you can live a type of ministry within that field. If you've been called to that field, if that's what you're good at, if that's where you can bring value to the world, how do you live out your deeply held faith principles and live out the great commission in that particular field? As I came to believe that, and it's been a process of believing that more fully over time. You tell yourself when you choose this path that that's the case. But even if you understand that intellectually, it still takes some time, I think, to feel it in your heart. It's been trying to figure out what does that look like day to day? I did the short energy hedge fund stint, which was smaller, but then I ended up in big mainstream firms like McKinsey and Invesco, which were both huge organizations.

And when I was younger, the question was how overt should I be about my faith in the workplace? I'm bottom of the totem pole. Am I going to get fired for some of this? What's appropriate with my colleagues? I genuinely struggled with, should I make anyone feel uncomfortable, et cetera. And then as I got older in positions of responsibility, it was like, "Oh my gosh, I don't want someone to feel compelled to agree with me on something like they have to say something," which obviously wouldn't be aligned with our faith either. And I think aligned with this book *Crafting Your Purpose*, what I realized was there are a lot of opportunities for ministry indeed, in the way that we live our lives at work that aren't necessarily overtly sharing your faith. Although I think there's a role for that. And I think all of us should just be transparent about who we are.



And that's where I ended up. If people asked me, "Hey, why do you lead this way or Why do you do this?" I'd tell them, "My faith was the foundation of that." I've written about that publicly, so it's not a huge secret in different books and things. And I always felt I wanted to be open about that without forcing anyone into a position where they felt uncomfortable that they had to be compelled to do something. At the same time, we can live out loving God and loving our neighbor in almost everything that we do. Treating everything at work as an act of service, really leaning into relationships with people and offering them counsel, even spiritual counsel when it's appropriate, changing the way we speak to people, not adhering to cultures that are negative for people, trying to encourage human flourishing on our teams and in the workplace.

And I had a pastor friend who told me... He's been both a pastor at a church and in a company, and he used to joke, "Jon, when I was a pastor full-time, I'd get people a few hours a week and they paid me to be there. And now that I'm working within a company, I get people 50 hours a week and we paid them." And there is this cool opportunity to be in the place people spend the majority of their time when you're in a company. And that's just such a fruitful mission field from my point of view.

**Ross Chapman:**

We also want to spend some time talking about Crafting Your Purpose. And it might be surprising to see that Harvard Business Review would be interested in a topic like this, people who've clearly got purpose behind what they're doing. Because if you're reading that, you're probably pretty ambitious and intentional. So what surprised you about the response from that audience and even Harvard Business Review saying, "Yes, we want, we want to do this with you, we want you to write about purpose?"

**Jon Coleman:**

First, I'd start off by saying all the traditional markers of success that we hold up in society, whether that's power, whether that's position within a company, whether it's money, especially, those markers of success, have almost no correlation with feelings of meaning or purpose. There are other things like engagement, autonomy, the feeling that you have, the ability to make a difference, that correlate to purpose. But things that we typically use to measure success like financial success really don't correlate to purpose at all. So I started writing for Harvard Business Review on this topic more than a decade ago now. Two of my classmates in 2008 at Harvard Business School were looking at the world around us. It was melting down during the financial crisis. And we said, "Man, how could it happen that so many people that graduated from this school we are at and other schools, it caused this financial crisis and seemed to be so empty of meaning and engagement and allowed their leadership to fail in this way?"

We want to paint a picture for next generation leadership. So we tried to write this book, *Passion and Purpose* at the time had purpose in the title where we talked about trends in



next generation leadership. And the one thing that kept coming up was this idea of a desire for purpose and meaning at work. At least our generation that had lived through the dot-com bust, the terrorist attacks of nine 11, the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, the financial crisis, knew that everything was temporary, knew that nothing could be counted on and wanted to find real meaning in the work that they were doing. Unfortunately, as we look at the world around us, we are living through a crisis of purpose. So if you look at almost any of the measures, whether it's with wealthy successful people or poor people, they're all the same. And in fact, wealthy, successful societies and people sometimes perform worse. Stats on engagement, meaning happiness, are all dropping through the floor.

So if you look at Gallup surveys, for example, on anger and loneliness, they're at the highest levels they've ever been at, and they were already trending that way pre-COVID. So it's not a COVID impact. If you look at stats on engagement at work, one of the recent Gallup surveys said only about 15% of people globally one five feel a strong sense of engagement at work. And small percentages, 20 or 30% of people often feel that they have some strong sense of purpose in their life. So the vast majority of people really don't feel a strong sense of purpose in any part of their life, and especially at work, which has just been collapsing. We see this in stats on things like depression and mental illness amongst teenagers now, as well as people who are a little bit older and there are multivariate causes of that with social media, et cetera.

But I think all of this points us to, even as society's gotten richer, even as we've gotten safer, feelings of purpose and meaning have declined, probably not incidentally at the same time that religious focus has declined. I think those two are actually correlated. So as I've written about this for HBR, it's been a no-brainer to continue to write about this topic and culture because it's one of the biggest pain points that people even successful people feel every single day is this idea that my work doesn't mean anything. I made a boatload of money, I built a successful company. But at the end of the day, I think it feels like it means nothing. And trying to help people recover that sense of meaning and live the fulfillment and flourishing that that can provide has been a real mission for me in my writing.

**Joanna Meyer:**

Definitely. I've observed experiences that you described either people moving from job to job and wondering how do I string together a career that feels meaningful? Or I was walking through the halls at one of the top consulting firms nationally a couple of weeks ago with a friend who works there, and I thought, these are very successful driven people. You could just feel it in the air, and they're working in a job that will chew them up over the next few years in the dream that they'll reach a certain standard of living at the end of the road. But that doesn't mean that they're going to feel purposeful about their work that they're doing. So I'm so thankful for you writing on this topic.



One of the things that I really appreciated about the book is that you challenge a number of myths about purpose, which echo common misunderstandings that we often talk about as it relates to calling here at Denver Institute. How do you think we get purpose wrong? And I'm saying that in marks.

**Jon Coleman:**

I think at a very base level, we have this almost Hollywood vision of purpose that we bought into, which is very romantic on the screen and very unromantic in the war of day-to-day life. There's this concept of the hero's journey in decent fiction writing where someone's walking wrong, they're in a boring job. Think of Neo in the Matrix, or Ray on Tatooine or Luke Skywalker on Tatooine, and they're living a humdrum existence. And then suddenly out of nowhere, they're hit by this life cause, it comes to get them. And they set off on this journey that's heroic and inspiring, and they finally found this one thing to give them a sense of meaning in life. And it's cool to watch that on screen. I like those stories too.

But unfortunately, we've internalized that idea for our real lives. And the problem is, apart from faith, which we can come back to, I think I do want to segregate here, this idea of purpose in Christ and purpose from a biblical perspective, and then the very practical idea of I got to live feeling like my life means something every day. Both of those are important, I think. Even though there is a biblical view of this that I'll talk about, I'm talking about the practical day-to-day at work sense of purpose.

And the truth is that most of us don't have this pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. We don't have this neo in the matrix moment. There's not some singular thing that comes to define our life. So in that hero's journey that causes us to ask, how do I find my purpose? I think there are three fundamental flaws that we embrace. One is the idea that purpose is something that we find rather than something that we make. And this is really the central tenet of the book, *Crafting Your Purpose*. In the common culture, we view purpose as something that we're on a search for, that if we can just point in the right direction, that will find and it will overwhelm us.

And the reality is that in a marriage, in a job, as a parent, in your day-to-day life, working in the community, you have to intentionally live in a way that endows your work and your life with meaning every single day. And most of us, the pressure is on us to create that meaning, to focus on it, to see it, to discern it in the work that we do. And it's not something that we just find and it's a reason, Joanna, you mentioned these successful professionals. You go through life and I've talked to so many people about meaning. There are people in professions you'd think were incredibly purposeful, cancer doctors, teachers who are absolutely miserable because they're not really endowing that work with meaning. They're not learning to see it, they're not crafting it. And there are people in jobs that look like they would be hard and meaningless, bus drivers, cashiers who are some of the most pleasant, purpose filled, meaning oriented people that you'll meet.





So I think that first myth is that purpose is something you find. I think you can build it into almost anything that you do. The second myth for me is that purpose is stable over time. That question, how do I find my purpose? This idea of Neo in the Matrix, finding this one key purpose. The reality is that for each of us, purpose changes over time. It was different when I was a teenager, when I was a college student, now that I'm a dad, when I'm a grandparent, when I switch jobs, we go through these changes and it's really learning to embrace those periods of change and to find new senses of purpose in those periods of transition that I think is important. And then the third is this idea that purpose is singular. How do I find my purpose singular, one thing? And instead, most of us really need a web of purpose in our lives.

I think we're each surrounded by dozens or hundreds of opportunities for purpose and meaning in our professional and personal lives every day. And the beautiful thing about that is when we've got this tapestry of meaning all around us, one of those threads of purpose, breaking isn't the end of the world if you put all of your eggs in one basket, if that basket drops, everything's over. If your job is your whole life, if a relationship is your whole life, and again, hold God aside for a moment, if that job or that relationship goes away, you feel like you have nothing to live for anymore. And instead, if you can learn to find A, a permanent source of purpose again, which we could come back to you in Christ, which doesn't go away, as well as a tapestry of multiple sources of purpose around you, I think that's a better way to live meaningfully. So those are the three myths of purpose in the way that I would address them differently.

**Jeff Hoffmeyer:**

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

**Ross Chapman:**

Those are very, very helpful for people to think about this idea of purpose when I think I've experienced just a lot of, I have to go find my purpose in my work. And I like to challenge people that actually think you've been given a purpose already and your job is to connect your work to it and bring that sense of meaning and purpose as to it. So I think the idea of taking that a step further and saying, you have to craft that, you have to build that, but you're not building from nothing is your point. I think if you're in Christ,



you have a mission that is you're doing no matter where you are, no matter what aspect of your life. So I think your book is a great encouragement to say you can build off of this foundation.

So give us some examples of how people might go about discovering that purpose. Maybe if you could think about your role at Invesco or McKinsey or wherever somewhere else was that wasn't maybe quite as obvious as your role at Sovereign's feels, maybe. What would it have looked like for you to build on that purpose that you have in Christ? Or we could say the vocation of God's people in those roles where it was harder, what were some good, practical ways you found yourself doing that or you would encourage others to do?

**Jon Coleman:**

Yeah. What's funny about all of this, Ross is operating from a point of view of my Christian faith that faith has actually given me a foundation for this topic of purpose that makes my life a lot easier. I go and talk to groups about hey, we should love our neighbor and serve others, and work isn't the end all. And money isn't something that you should worship and your personal relationships and family and people are like, "Oh my gosh, this is genius. How did you come up with this stuff?" And I'm like, "Well, there was a guy who talked about this once that it might been that's right."

I have a little four-part framework, and again, I use frameworks I think in frameworks because in business what I think they help with is not being comprehensive about everything. They're not determinative, but they give us a place to start. They give us a few simple rules that allow us to start this journey and then we can flesh it out. I think about crafting purpose at work specifically in four ways that I talk about in the book, and I'll try and illustrate that a bit with what I do, what I have done in the past at my own work. The first of those is to craft your work. And this is the concept in the management literature of job crafting, which I think you all have talked about here before.

There were some brilliant Yale researchers who first coined the term, the initial study or one of the initial studies, they actually followed hospital janitors, for example. I don't know if you, y'all have talked about that. And they asked, "What makes some of these janitors happy and engaged and what makes them unengaged?" And it was little things like the engaged ones would view themselves as part of the care team. They would switch around artwork on the walls of long-term patients to give them some sense of beauty and the work that they were doing. They would go home and experiment with different cleaning fluids to see which would be less irritating to their patients. They didn't think of themselves as janitors. They thought of themselves as a care team, just like the nurses and dockers for these people. In a job, part of this is just about crafting your work to be fulfilling to you, to be engaging, to be fun. That is an important thing, and part of it is capturing this sense of meaning.



So when I was a team leader at Invesco, for example, in my last job, and this would be true of almost any team I led, one of the things I got the greatest sense of meaning out of which will connect to something else I'll talk about was this idea of helping other people succeed, of being a team leader who could lift up others, who could help them find a sense of meaning at work, who could help them flourish. So I over-index towards conversations with the team members towards helping them find the right roles for themselves towards trying to be flexible about flipping people around to things that I either thought would challenge them and make them better or fit better with their skillsets if they needed a little boost at that time. And also helping them just think through, as a counselor, how can I make my life comprehensively better?

That was a part of my job, but what I found was I could delegate some other elements of my job and lean into that maybe two times as much as I thought I could and really take it from a typical managerial perspective to something that was more deeply counseling, which for my personality type was really positive. It crafted it to be something better for me. It was something I was a little bit better at, so it helped others, but I changed my job profile a bit to focus on those things where meaning was greatest. The second example I would say is to make work a craft. This old concept of craftsmanship, like being a carpenter, another guy did that incidentally, or making shoes or something where generations of family members would practice this craft.

And I feel like a lot of people at work have lost that sense, especially in white collar jobs where you're making spreadsheets or you're running numbers, you're putting out reports. It's easy to feel like it's monotonous, and I feel like we each need to pick something, two or three things in our work to just be maniacally obsessed about getting perfect at. You're never perfect, but progress over perfection. But when I was an analyst, it was like my job to build these models, and I said, if I'm going to have to build these stupid models, these things are going to be a work of art. The formulas are going to be elegant, they're going to be as short as they can be. I'm going to put in macros.

So the clients almost can't mess up using this Excel sheet. They're going to be interactive. I was very careful about font selection and size and colors and everything linked to each other. And I really wanted to make it not only functional, but beautiful, and that Excel sheet was my opportunity for art and craft in the job for a while. And I probably stayed up too late sometimes working on these things. And again, it's not for everybody, but finding things like that where I said, "This is my job and I can be the best in the world at making these things beautiful and functional and useful on an ongoing basis." And in every job we have that opportunity.

The third thing I'd get people to focus on, so crafter work, make work of craft, is to invest in positive relationships. So if you look at all the research on meaning and happiness, the number one determinant of meaning and happiness is the depth and breadth of positive relationships. Martin Seligman wrote about this out of the University of Pennsylvania, the oldest longitudinal study in the world, the Harvard grant study, the primary finding



after 80 or 90 years, one of the researchers who was quoted in the Atlantic summarizing the study, they said, "What would you summarize the whole Harvard grant study, which was this long study of hundreds of people over decades?" He said that, "Happiness is love. That nothing matters more to happiness throughout your life than positive relationships." And unfortunately, people forget that at work, we start to view our colleagues as competitors, as nuisances, as people who demand things. And instead, what we can focus on is cultivating positive relationships.

And then the final thing I think we can do is to serve others, to focus on service. And I really think in almost any job, we have dozens of opportunities for service every day. At Invesco, for example, or McKinsey would've been the same thing. I worked with consultants, vendors, partners, and instead of treating them like garbage or ordering them around, I had the opportunity to serve them to say, "How can I make your life better as you're making mine life better? How can I treat you better like human being?" My colleagues, community service where we'd go out and build habitat houses together, even though that's a more obvious example. Clients obviously for any business, that's a focus. So I think identifying those opportunities for service is the fourth opportunity to really endow our work with a sense of purpose broadly.

**Ross Chapman:**

That was so fun. Joanna, you're probably thinking this, but I was, as you were talking about those four, at least three of them really correlate well with three of our five guiding principles. One of them is create good work, others embrace relationships, and the other one was to serve others sacrificially. So that was really, really good to hear that.

**Jon Coleman:**

What did I miss? What are the other two?

**Ross Chapman:**

Well, we have think theologically.

**Joanna Meyer:**

Think theologically and you've been doing that.

**Ross Chapman:**

Yeah. You're doing that definitely. And then seek deep spiritual health. Yeah, man, that was really great. Just I want to encourage people to read the book. I think you've given us



some great highlights. I'm sure there's more to grab on there as well. So thanks for sharing that.

**Joanna Meyer:**

Yeah. And I love that you mentioned Excel, like I cheered when you did, because I think in any work, there are opportunities for subject matter expertise that we don't honor in the faith community. It's easy to think there're overtly spiritual things that earn your check marks with the Lord or pleasing to the Lord. And yet there's just the mastery of the craft of a beautifully written Excel spreadsheet or a deep knowledge of years and years and years of working with an industry that only happened by faithful engagement in that area. So thanks for giving us a practical example of that.

**Jon Coleman:**

Can I one quick example that I have your folks could Google?

**Joanna Meyer:**

Yes. Please do.

**Jon Coleman:**

There's a guy named Curtis Jenkins. So I opened the whole book with this example, and I've talked to this guy. He's amazing. There's a great viral video clip of this, but I think it perfectly encapsulates what you're talking about. So Curtis was a bus driver in the Dallas School District since been promoted because of what I'm about to describe and having impact in a totally different way. School bus driver is a wicked hard job. And at base, your job is to pick people up at point A, drop him at point B and keep everybody alive and try not to go crazy in the process. I mean, it is a very challenging job.

You watch this video of Curtis, and again, he started thinking of his job not just as bus driver, but as one of the essential caretakers for these kids and the essential adults in their lives. When I talked to him, he said, "I'm the first adult these kids see when they leave their house, and I'm the last adult that they see before they go home." I don't know what their school environment is. I don't know what their home environment is like, but I know that I have an opportunity at the most critical points in their day to make a positive difference in their lives.

So he assigned every kid on the bus a job. Some were presidents, some were administrative assistants, police officers. He would learn all their names, he'd learn what they were interested in, and throughout the year, he'd give them little gifts. One girl wrote a little book, she wanted to be a writer, and he got a picture of the book that she made printed on a t-shirt with stuff about her being an author on the t-shirt and gave it to her.



And he just found every single way he could to not just be the bus driver, but to say, "I've got a group of kids who come from different backgrounds for an hour a day, sometimes more. How can I be a positive change in the lives of those kids?" And that you wouldn't think about bus driver as subject matter expertise, but could you imagine if every school bus driver in America was oriented that way, our kids would be radically transformed. So there's this, and forget every Ken America, he's transformed hundreds, and hundreds of lives. So I think, Joanna, to your point, sometimes these positions we overlook have some of the greatest opportunities for impact you can imagine.

**Joanna Meyer:**

It's seeing the image of God in every person in the context of your job.

**Ross Chapman:**

Yeah, that's good. Hey, Jon, we've probably got some people in some leadership roles listening in, what does it look like for them to take this idea of purpose and have that translate down into the culture of their team or their company?

**Jon Coleman:**

Such a great question, and it's hard. I tell people sometimes talking about this subject, people get a little overwhelmed. It's like faith driven investing. They say, "If I can't make all my investments faith driven, why should I even start?" And I'm like, "Just get started. Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good." So I think it's taking steps every day. My big advice to people is not to stop with creating a purpose for your company. So ever since Simon Sinek wrote that book, Start With Why probably 15, 16 years ago now, people care about the why you do what you do as much as what you do. And companies have come up with these purpose statements. Unfortunately, those purpose statements have often been inauthentic to the way that people actually live in the company or they've stopped there. They think putting a logo or a slogan on the wall or on people's desktop screens gives them purpose and it doesn't.

So as a leader, what I think your job is not to just define the purpose of the company, the mission, although that's important, you have to point people towards something as a north star. It's then to create an environment for people where each person can live with purpose. It's not just the purpose of the company, it's how every individual person experiences that. What does that look like? I think a lot of that is empowerment. So it's, are you command and control, ordering everybody to do exactly what you want them to do? Are you empowering your team and their teams and their teams to allow people to job craft, to do things in a different way, to try and shift around responsibilities in a way that makes sense for the personalities and capabilities on their team so that people can be in a job that's fitted to them as much as possible? We all have to make a profit. We all have to survive tomorrow for people to be employed.



B, are you actively managing that environment to promote the types of values that give people a positive sense of purpose? It is very hard to express love of neighbor and a company where it's cutthroat, where everybody's competing against each other all the time, where you bring people in, I experienced at one job that will remain nameless, and they literally said, "Okay. There are six of you." It was an interview. They brought us in and they said, "There are six of you in the interview. One gets out. You have to debate each other for who's going to make it go." It was like-

**Joanna Meyer:**

It's like the Hunger Games.

**Jon Coleman:**

Yeah. It was Hunger Games. This is the world of hedge funds. Creating an environment like that where people feel at each other's throats makes it very difficult. But how can you create an environment that allows people to collaborate, to lean into one another, to serve one another and rewards them? We used to have one very simple value on my team at Invesco was the team success is the individual success, and the individual success is the team success. It meant that if anyone was on our team, was behind, then we as a team had failed. That we were responsible as a group for picking those folks up. Now, everybody had to perform. We moved people out sometimes if they weren't capable of what they were doing, but it was a failure on us if we allowed that to persist without addressing it, and people felt alienated.

So finding ways in which to do that, to set good work-life boundaries in your company so that people can experience purpose at home, they can start families, they can adhere to their religious traditions. Joanna, in some consulting firms, investment banks, investment firms like ours, that tends to be overlooked, let's say. And then this ability to have people talk about their most deeply held values at work too, is one thing we talk about at Sovereign's. We encourage chaplaincy, for example, in all of our companies, which is a mental health tool and a spiritual tool, allowing people to really deal with their problems. So again, I'm rambling a bit, but it's more than just giving a sense of direction or mission. It's how you convert that mission to an individualized sense of purpose and then allow people to execute on this framework I'm describing so that you have a purposeful culture and not just the purpose as an organization.

**Joanna Meyer:**

What stands out to me is that this isn't a formulaic approach to management or to shaping your life. It really is something that evolves over time and probably happens in conversation with others. So it's an invitation for our community to find people that you can talk through some of these concepts with, fellow managers or fellow entrepreneurs to figure out what does this look like translated into your unique context? Jon, I would love



to give you the last word. I always think our guests are the heroes of these conversations, and so you're the expert. I wonder if you would think of one thing that you would encourage our listeners to do to pursue more purposeful faith driven lives.

**Jon Coleman:**

I would say two things. One is you have to be anchored in your own spiritual practices, your relationship with God. And the second is you have to be anchored in a positive Christian community. The anchoring in your spiritual practices, often when I feel I'm off track, it's because my prayer life is suffering. It's because I'm not slowing down and taking the time to really reflect. I'm just going through the motions. It's because I'm not reading scripture or devotionals. And that to me is a solitary task, at least for part of it, and that it's just you and God. It's the most important relationship in your life, and it's you carving out the time to show God that's meaningful and to develop your knowledge of and relationship with him in a significant way and in a busy life that's easy to lose.

The second, which I think is also easy to fall into, especially if you're in a big mainstream company, if you've got a busy life. I travel a lot. If you're traveling, is how do you do that in community? How do you surround yourself with people who will hold you accountable to the values of your faith, who will encourage you on your journey, who will pray for you, which I think matters a lot. Even if you don't know they're praying for you, it matters a lot. And who can encourage you in darker times? This is where I feel just like I'm in a little bubble now at Sovereign's, like it is just off the charts. Because everybody I work with is wired that way. They're praying for me. They're leaning into my life. They're definitely holding me accountable. I wish they'd stopped sometimes.

And it's just such a unique environment, maybe like you experience in a ministry. My encouragement to people in mainstream companies is find those people, whether you're talking to them on the phone, whether you see them at work a couple of times a week in your company, outside your company, mentor in small groups, just make sure you're living in community with people who have insight into your life, who can encourage you and hold you accountable to the principles of your faith and who possess a wisdom in areas of their spiritual lives that can be of value to you.

**Joanna Meyer:**

Jon, it's always a gift to get to know people, even if it's for a brief window of time through these conversations. Thanks for the leadership that you provide through your writing, through your life, and just the example you're setting as you're navigating some of these questions of purpose yourself.

**Jon Coleman:**





Well, thank you all so much and thank you for the work you do. I think it's remarkably meaningful and you're helping tens of thousands of people around the world, and I'm really grateful for what you all are doing.

**Ross Chapman:**

Hey, just a few ways you can continue learning in this conversation in the show notes, we're going to link to Jon's book, HBR's Guide to Crafting Your Purpose. Be sure to grab that and check it out. It'll be very helpful. And we're also going to link to a free course at the Faith & Work classroom called Why We Work, and we created this in partnership with Christianity Today, and explores ways that we can have a faithful presence in our work in communities through the stories of Christians just living it out every day. People like Curtis Jenkins that was mentioned in Jon's conversation, and so if you go to the show notes, you can grab a link to watch that video on how a bus driver created community through his daily work. So all that's worth checking out. Thanks for joining us.

**Joanna Meyer:**

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