



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 the founder of Women, Work, and Calling, and I am joined today by Brian Gray, our VP of Formation and Director of the 5280 Fellowship. Hi, Brian.

Brian Gray:

Hey, Jo. Good to be with you hanging out for this conversation.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah. Today's a fun day because we get to interview a couple of Fellowship alumni, two of your favorite people, so we'll hear more about them in a moment. We could see the fruit of your good work. So I'm wondering, Brian, if you have ever worked for a bad boss and what impact their leadership had on your performance?

Brian Gray:

I've never had a bad boss until the two CEOs at Denver Institute. That's where it really got dicey for me. No, I've actually-

Joanna Meyer:

They are terrible.

Brian Gray:

They're horrible humans. Too bad they're good friends. But, no-

Joanna Meyer:

How has the organization survived?

Brian Gray:

You'd never guess we'd make it. No, the truth is I've actually been pretty well-benefited. I've only had one example in working for a bad boss. But as we're going to be talking today about a redemptive view and redemptive practices and management, I think one of the only redeeming qualities is that this is a person who was pretty... He was a mess as a leader, but was actually pretty laissez-faire, hands off in management. And so it was more sins of omission than sins of commission against me in terms of the



influence. And so I kind of just did my own thing and didn't have a lot of direct report or feedback responsibilities to them, even though it was really tough. Other than that, I've been pretty well-benefited by my managers.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, I remember, I haven't worked directly for a bad manager, a bad boss, but I have seen the fruit of that organizationally and culturally. I think of folks that had fiery tempers that they didn't know how to manage or just were hyper-competitive interorganizationally and the dynamics that had. So I've seen the fruit of bad leadership, bad management, which is one of the things we're talking about today. We're talking about the holy work of management by talking to folks that are both managers and who have been managers in their career. Listener, I want you to take a moment and think about the best manager you've ever worked for. What qualities or practices made them so effective?

In the previous episode, Ross Chapman and Jeff Hoffmeyer examined the results from Gallup's recent State of the Global Workforce Survey, and two key findings stood out. The first was that more than 60% of today's employees are disengaged from their jobs, and the second finding was that managers play a critical role in employee engagement. Now, that may not be a surprise if you've ever worked for a bad boss or seen one in action, but here's what surprised me is that Gallup estimates that the impact due to this disengagement costs the global economy 8.8 trillion US dollars, or that accounts for almost 10% of the global GDP, just a jaw dropping find.

In some ways that can seem like an obvious statement, but if it's so obvious, why aren't we getting better as managers? In the years that I've worked at Denver Institute, I've become convinced that management really is holy work and that how we help employees work productively, how we help them collaborate and help them live out their God-given giftedness is an expression of the creation mandate that we see in Genesis 1 where God entrusts all of creation, everything it contains, to humankind to be cared for and for its potential to be developed. So management really matters to God, which is why today we'll explore the art of management and being managed through the lived experience of two of our 5280 Fellowship alumni. Brian, would you introduce us to our guests?

Brian Gray:

Well, today we're joined by two guests who more than anything are friends, people I really enjoy and are former 5280 Fellows with the Fellowship here at the Denver Institute. First is Betsy. She serves as a senior executive overseeing operations for a major healthcare provider where she's risen through the ranks of the organization and currently has 11 direct reports with a division of about 700 plus employees underneath her. And Bobby serves as a senior librarian for a major urban library district, and he's a frontline manager to 11 other staff who are in turn direct client-facing and also working with other employees. So, Betsy and Bobby, thanks so much for joining us and for sharing the conversation today.



Bobby Erskine:

Yeah, thank you.

Betsy Zasowski:

Thanks for having us, Brian.

Brian Gray:

Let's start. Why don't we start, Betsy, with you? Briefly tell us a little bit about what you do. What responsibilities do you have in your current management role? And then, Bobby, same question for you.

Betsy Zasowski:

Great. So I oversee the operations of multiple healthcare facilities. So that means operations day in, day out of the clinical care of patients, the compliance portion, so making sure that all of these facilities are compliant and accredited by the state and any other bodies, and then obviously the P&L components, so the financial success of these entities. But really, I'm just in the people business, building relationships with physicians and the people that I work with, and patients. So yeah, mostly just managing people.

Brian Gray:

Great. Bobby?

Bobby Erskine:

Yeah. I supervise a team of professional librarians. So that involves hiring, coaching, all the performance evaluations, just ongoing things like that. And our team of librarians, actually, pretty unique in our role in the library world is we have some static service points, but we also rove through the stacks. Working at a large library, we find people all over the building who need help. So my librarians are tasked with that as well as some other things like programming and what we call reader's advisory.

Yeah. And then my team also... So we oversee all the circulating collections at our library, which, it's over a quarter million items, so we're constantly working with those. Yeah. And I'm serving with a team of other supervisors, a leadership team that tries to make good decisions for daily operations at our library.

Brian Gray:

You forgot, though, telling kids not to run and consistently saying, "Shh!" at people in a really harsh, aggravated way, right?



Bobby Erskine:

We keep it positive. We say, "Walk, please," not, "Do not run." And we say-

Brian Gray:

Oh, good.

Bobby Erskine:

... "This is a space for everyone," not, "Please lower your voice." So we find ways around it.

Brian Gray:

[inaudible 00:07:04]-

Bobby Erskine:

My shushing is pretty good.

Joanna Meyer:

I can tell you've actually had to work on this. That's amazing.

Bobby Erskine:

It's true. It's true.

Joanna Meyer:

Okay. You both hold these significant leadership roles, but before you were leaders, you had to be led. And so I'm wondering, how did some of your early experiences of being managed shape the way that you manage now? Bobby, let's start with you.

Bobby Erskine:

In my work and career, I mean, I've had leaders. I wouldn't say that they've been the greatest leaders. I haven't had terrible bosses, though, either. So specifically in this role, I was serving under this role that I'm in now, I saw it as basically doing the same things I did as a librarian except I had to schedule people. So that was basically it. I never had bosses that really engaged much in my professional development. I got things done. If expectations were set, I hit them.



So my bosses and managers never really did too much interaction with me. There wasn't much engagement there. So that was kind of hard coming into this role in a career field. I will say my church experience has actually been the prime formation of my leadership and how I lead and had really engaged leaders there, leaders that taught me both how to challenge folks into more but doing that through a lens of caring, that you could actually love people by calling them to more by having harder conversations. So that was mostly through church that I experienced that.

Betsy Zasowski:

That's really great. I think for me, I've just been so blessed to have some really incredible people manage and lead me throughout my career. But I think similar as Bobby, I think mine started at a young age from my dad. So my father does many things, but he's also a pastor and a counselor, et cetera. And so I think that from a very young age, my dad was like... If there was conflict or if something didn't go quite right, he would stop us and he would say, "Okay guys, let's stop. Tell me what's going on here. What is driving this behavior?" And so he kind of helped us be aware of the emotions that were involved surrounding conflict. And I think as a leader, managing conflict is probably... The biggest thing that we do is just navigating personalities and trying to accomplish goals for the greater good of the company. And so I think foundationally, his formation in me really set me up to be successful at a very young age.

I started managing people I think when I was 20 or 21 years old, which is what has put me in this position today. But my first boss, who conveniently is sitting two doors down from me today and is one of my dearest friends, she really was just the perfect emulation of what a servant leader looks like. It would be Friday afternoon and she could tell that, it's my first job, she could tell that I wanted to go home. And so she would cover for me so that I could go do something with my friends. Or she always put herself in the position where she took the hardest responsibility, gave me all the praise, but took all of the criticism if I messed up and really demonstrated what it's like to be that servant leader. And I think I have learned more from her, whether it's in that capacity as my formal manager or really now as a colleague and a peer of mine and then a dear friend.

Joanna Meyer:

What were some of the biggest challenges as you begin to emerge into these leadership roles that you had to overcome?

Betsy Zasowski:

Age and then lack of experience. I think as a new leader coming in, you have to establish yourself. And I think when you're young, you also are not the subject matter expert. So it was kind of like I had to overcome the obstacle of, "Okay, you're managing people your parents' age, number one, and they are all treating you like their kid, but then you also may not be the subject matter expert in the room." And so learning how you can win people over and demonstrating to them that you can help them, even



though you may not know all of the answers, I think those were probably the biggest hurdles that I had to experience. And then just, I think it's all about influence and gaining friends and gaining followers, just showing them that you can support them.

Bobby Erskine:

Yeah, I resonate with a lot of that, Betsy. Yeah. The age gap was really pretty large for me as well, people who were 30, 40 years deeper in their career than I was that I'm having to manage. So that was definitely a challenge. Interpersonal conflicts. I discovered quickly I was pretty darn good at managing books and things, but, all of a sudden, you throw people with emotions and personalities and things like that. It was an entirely different experience than I was used to. And I'm more of an introvert. I didn't come into management moving towards conflict, so that was really hard to even have a clue what to do when I had two 60-year-old women who were fighting with one another, pulling them into a room. I was barely a parent at that time too, so I was gleaning whatever I could from parenting and probably inappropriately moving it into the management world. So those were big ones.

Yeah. Building equity. Building equity with my staff, that influence even that Betsy was talking about, it took a long time. I was good at the frontline type jobs, but to actually step into these other roles... I mean, that was most of my job. I had to make that mental transition from, "I'm worried about books and the public," to, "I need to care for my staff and advocate for them and come up with systems and plans and projects that are going to move us forward." And then lastly, who to trust. Coming in feeling pretty incompetent, like, "Who are going to be my key folks that I would go to for help?" Who gave me accurate information? Who wasn't just following rumors and things like that? Yeah. That took a while. Yeah. Initially, those were the really complicated things.

Brian Gray:

I think you're both pointing to something that should be pretty common to most of our listeners in their experience, either being managed or managing themselves, and that's that whatever your formal training or formal education to become enough of an expert to be in a field has been, that oftentimes doesn't include management craft or excellence. Now, maybe in a business degree this might be different, but in library science I don't know how much time is dedicated to teaching people to manage people. Or in my world, originally in heart research in my master's work and then turning around and managing graduate students and running a lab or getting my MDiv as a pastor and then managing staff, these were never a part of my education or formal training. And so you actually end up managing by learning, by doing, and by emulating and correcting from the management you've received. I just think that's a really common tension. So it's good that you've named it.

Let's talk a bit about, I'd be curious either of your perspectives, just thinking a bit Christianly about managing or thinking through some ideas that are a part of our biblical belief that applies. So, Joanna



earlier mentioned the idea of management being holy work, and then there's a real sacredness in the way that we can go about this. So I'm going to start with the idea that every one of our employees is an image bearer of God, everyone is made in the image and likeness of God. And that's a human statement. That's not a Christian statement. So all humans are made in this image and likeness. And then they're conferred a certain dignity because of that. I'm curious, this is an idea that we talk about in the Fellowship, I'm curious how the idea of managing image bearers, how do you connect those dots? And what do you do when an employee is really difficult or unlikeable, even if they bear the image of God?

Bobby Erskine:

I was reading. Andy Crouch has a new book out, and one of the stories he tells in that is literally going around an airport looking at people and naming them in his head as an image bearer, like going, "Image bearer. Image bearer. Image bearer," all across the board, whoever he saw. He talks about, it's like 200 people that he did this to in the period of probably 15 minutes or something like that. So that's a practice that I've started to do, even looking out my window at all the people on the street. And then I started to, in light of your question, thinking about it that way. And that kind of shifts. If I can keep that at the forefront of my mind, I just react differently to people.

And a lot of that, for me, it's like that we're all relational beings, like being made in the image of God, there's a relational piece of that. So whether I'm talking to somebody from the public who comes in, whether I'm talking to a fellow supervisor or manager, whether I'm talking to somebody on my staff, realizing that there's always that relational component. And am I encouraging healthy relationships or am I discouraging healthy relationships by how I'm going about the way I talk to them, what I'm bringing to them? Thinking of it through that lens.

And when I think about that relational piece, I'm realizing too there's relationships they have outside of work. There's relationships with families, with boyfriends, with whoever else it might be, and that all is part of who they are when they're coming into work as well. So even to your question as far as the difficult folks, it's showing a lot of compassion for precipitating factors that I know that they're walking in with. And then I fall back, too, on this sense of who would I be if I didn't know Jesus? How terrible of an employee would I probably be? And that usually puts me into a little bit more of that softer space of seeing this other person as just another relational being who's trying to navigate the world the best they can with whatever they've been presented with throughout their life or that day.

Joanna Meyer:

Bobby, I have a friend who's a librarian in the area, and when I think of libraries, I tend to think of them as peaceful places where you can go to learn and relax and discover new books. And she was sharing how stressful frontline library work is these days, that it's in the cross-hairs of a lot of the social tensions we feel as the country becomes more divided, that issues of homelessness and drug use often show up



at the library because it's an open public space. And so I just realized listening to her, I had a lot more compassion for librarians and realized the work of management is not only the books but it's the people and the clients and it is as complex as all of the social problems we're facing today. Would you say that's true?

Bobby Erskine:

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. I usually describe it as like a microcosm of everything going on in the city. So if you were to look over local news for the city and you see all the different headlines, typically that's at the library as well. And like you said, it's one of the few public places people can go anymore where you don't have to buy anything. You don't have to state your purpose when you're walking in. You can just come in and be, which is a really important tenet of librarianship in public libraries, but it makes it really complicated. And yeah, that idea of the library as this really peaceful, calm place, it can be, it really can be, but striking that balance when you're dealing with so many different populations and people and personalities, yeah, it can also be pretty chaotic. And yeah, there's a lot of trauma coming into the library and happening in the library.

Joanna Meyer:

Betsy, what does recognizing image bearing in your setting look like?

Betsy Zasowski:

I think for me, it's kind of similar to what Bobby said, but really trying to think of each colleague or employee really as a person, assuming best intent, and then just remembering that maybe they don't have the skills to deal with certain things in certain ways, and assuming and giving the benefit of the doubt to them in those scenarios, that everyone has their purpose and their place. And maybe my very reason of being a manager in this role is to help teach them some of those skills and how to better work with colleagues or interact with difficult personalities or difficult customers. I think that's a really interesting thing to think about as a manager and a leader is that we only see a portion of how we impact them, and that's really through the length of time in which they're employed with us, but we don't really see the full scope of what that maybe one instance or that journey of coaching or that relationship for that short period of time looks like over the span of their lifetime.

And so really trying to be mindful that... I would love to equip people to be better employees because that's what they're supposed to do, that fine line of grace and truth and just being honest but kind, but then also knowing that likely as they learn these skills and how to better deal with conflict and to be respectful and to give benefit of the doubt and to lead others like Jesus would lead, that's also going to set them up to be more successful in their personal lives, which we don't know the impact of and we don't see that, but I do believe that once we let go and they leave our span of control, obviously they're





in God's control. And what can he do with those things that we have taught them? I think that that helps me try to deal with difficult or unlikeable people in a better or easier way.

Joanna Meyer:

That's powerful. Having a long view of your employee's career. Long after they're done working for you, they'll still be an employee, probably.

Betsy Zasowski:

To go along with that it's also important to remember that we are their dinnertime conversation. So we are not only impacting them, but we are impacting their families. And so how I treat them today, even if it's a tough conversation, they need to know that they're not a bad person because they made a mistake. Their value is not held in what they do or how they perform. And this is a crazy concept for people to understand, especially those who are not Christians, but it's like you are more than what you accomplish today. And when they take that home, of course they're not going to be happy if they had a tough conversation with their boss, but, hopefully, how you deliver that conversation and how you handle that conversation then can also impact those people sitting around the table.

Brian Gray:

That's a great insight. I really appreciate that.

Joanna Meyer:

I love that. The second theological concept about management we wanted to explore is the idea that we're living in a fallen world that's in the process of being redeemed, and that affects our understanding of just the process of human behavior at work. So the idea that sin is both an interpersonal dynamic in a team as well as affecting systems or the structures in which we work. Where do you see brokenness show up in your work? And I'm not asking you to talk badly about your employer, but just in general, how do you see brokenness play out in your context?

Bobby Erskine:

I think most relevantly to me right now is anytime you have a really large organization, the amount of work that needs to go into creating structures of good communication and care just gets much, much more complicated. So I think that's a lot of what I struggle with, and I kind of see the struggle. Being a middle manager, hearing things from the top, and then also hearing things from my employees, I'm trying to figure out what to do with those.

I mean, to name the brokenness directly, I would say that there's just so much anxiety and fear. The size of an organization, I think, it ends up with some dysfunction as far as communication, as far as us versus



them with management staff and administration versus folks in the frontline. I think this was really highlighted and polarized even further during the pandemic. There's a lot of different things as far as who can work from home and who can't work from home, reporting around that. But there's this idea of, all of a sudden, frontline folks not feeling understood or cared for by administration and the folks that are making the decisions. So that powerlessness can definitely lead to some of that anxiety. So being in the middle of that and trying to navigate that is a lot of my work.

I think the other thing I would identify, too, is the library is very purpose-driven, for lack of a better phrase. And most of the people who are there, there's not a lot of money in librarianship, so you're there for the purpose. You have some sort of reason to believe that this work is meaningful. So I don't struggle as much helping people see their work as meaningful. But in picking at that a little bit, when things don't go their way, when things don't happen the way they want them to, that can spike anxiety as well. There's almost so much engagement that when things don't go the way you want them to, it really affects you and impacts you. And that Betsy was speaking to, that identity piece comes up like, "Well, if this isn't going the way I want it to, then what's my identity? If I'm not able to do what I thought I was going to do in my work, who am I?" and feeling a bit powerless over that. Yeah, just navigating the center of that is difficult.

Betsy Zasowski:

I think sin and brokenness shows up everywhere in everything that we do. I mean, every interaction, I think, gosh, I speak for myself, is I'm leading a group of people. If I don't understand my true brokenness, that I am blind and completely biased to see how I'm impacting and influencing others. And so I think it has to be on our radar first and foremost when we're thinking about that as leaders.

But I think I'll just go back. I work in healthcare, so people feel like they have a purpose. I think I can resonate certainly with Bobby in terms of the disconnect and the discord that they often feel between what they're being asked to do and what they feel is important. But really, I think the thing that I see the most day in and day out is really this question of value. People wanting to know that they are important and this sin, the brokenness of the world, that they want to make a difference. And I think that manifests itself in a hundred different ways, a thousand different ways, likely. But I just feel like that people do not know how they contribute to the bigger picture nine times out of 10, and it's our job to show them, paint the picture of what that looks like, and then also remind them of who they are and what they were created to do and be.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Hi, I'm Jeff Hoffmeyer, Vice President of Advancement here at Denver Institute for Faith & 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



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Joanna Meyer:

So one of the skills that is part of the 5280 Fellowship is learning how to see redemptive potential where you work or seeing those areas of strain or brokenness or an area that just isn't the way God intends it to be, and knowing how to engage it in the actual skills and practices of your workplace. And I'm wondering where you have seen opportunities for redemptive influence in the way that you manage?

Betsy Zasowski:

Thanks for asking, Joanna. Gosh, what isn't redemptive in the work that we do? I feel like I've said it a thousand times in different ways, but I mean, I think that it's so important that we remember that God has created all things for his good, and that really means all things. And so I think as a leader in managing what we do every day, I mean, that's in the people interactions, that's how we talk to our patients, that's me recognizing how I fail as a leader and owning that to my team. I think that's one of the most powerful ways as a leader that you can own brokenness is when we say, "I was short with you in that meeting and that was inappropriate," or, "I made a decision that I thought was a great decision because of X, Y, and Z, and it blew up in my face and I need to ask for apology because you took the fallout of that and you took the brunt of that."

And I think that we start to see that people then become okay with this owning their own brokenness and really recognizing where they are weak and learning to lean on others to say, "Okay, I'm not good at this, but could you help me do that?" And I think that as we work collectively, we start to see as we treat people a certain way... Again, I'm all about people and how we treat them and how we manage them and how that really ultimately cultivates this culture where people want to do the right thing. And obviously, in healthcare, that's the most important thing is we've got to make sure that our patients are safe. But how do we create cultures where people want to work and people feel empowered to do what is right and to say when something feels wrong? I think that that's what redemption looks like for me. And sometimes we learn that through the mistakes that we make, but I think it's really exciting to see how God can work through people to accomplish that task of redemption.

Bobby Erskine:

Yeah. I think there's a few thoughts that come to mind. One is when I'm thinking about the redemptive potential, I'm getting more and more comfortable with the long slow work of God and, like Betsy was referring to earlier, not knowing quite how this stuff plays out, not only in other avenues of life and their



relationships at home and their relationships outside of work. I think, Brian, we talked about in the Fellowship the book called *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*. I always think about the patient ferment. What does that actually mean? What are the small but powerful things that we do that we might not be able to see the fruition of right now? But what does that come to later, those really small pieces-

Betsy Zasowski:

That's good.

Bobby Erskine:

... as it moves through. So that comes to mind, that long slow work. Also, I keep bumping into writers who talk about, with Timothy Keller's passing, that idea, his quote about, "We're more broken than we can ever imagine, but we're also," something to the effect of, "more love than we could ever hope."

I've been reading some Henri Nouwen and talking about just how we have to acknowledge our brokenness and awaken to our belovedness. If I can bring as much of a glimpse of that as I can to my management where I'm showing people that, yeah, we are going to screw up, we're going to make mistakes. Betsy, you touched on this really well too. And that's okay. We can learn from those. We'll move forward from those. I don't work in a life and death workplace, so nobody died because of what we did. That's okay. But then also, how do you feel so secure that I care for you, that I want what's best for you, that I want to see you grow, that I want to see you live into fuller potential? Those are the avenues where I'm trying to reflect that into my work.

Brian Gray:

Both of you, your thoughts, those are pretty profound. Just for the interest of those listening, we'll link to a document by de Chardin, who's the author of this little piece, *Trust in the Slow Work of God*, which is a nice, careful, honest reminder of those little things added up over time.

Let me ask one more question just to thinking Christianly about management, and we'll close with one or two practical leadership journey questions. So, Betsy mentioned earlier the idea of a boss who represented real servant leadership to her. And the life of Christ in his incarnation points to this deep servant leadership, a leadership from beside, behind as opposed to over. And I'm curious, a two part question, in what ways has anything about the way of Christ with people inspired you? But then, particularly, you work in secular environments, we're not confused about this, how is it that you've navigated leading as a Christian in a secular space with very diverse and pluralistic beliefs? Betsy, we'll start with you.

Betsy Zasowski:



So I think for me, the attribute that I cling to the most of Christ and how he led is that he was honest and sometimes brutally so, yet he did it in a kind of way that was not scary to people. I mean, it was the perfect compliment of truth and grace. And so I think that I try in everything that I do to emulate that. We can't just look past people's mistakes in the workplace, just like Jesus can't look past our sin and has to call to that, but we can do it in a way where we love them through it and help them navigate that situation. I think as a manager, tough conversations are probably the thing that we do the most and the least, but I think that really helps me navigate through those.

To your second question about working in a secular workplace, the diverse workforce, I try to do it in a way that isn't loud but just being who you are and demonstrating by actions and just how you care for your team, how you interact with people, every person from the janitor at the facility to the highest person, really showing them that respect and that dignity that God has created each of us with. And I think through that you have conversations and things develop and then people ask questions about your faith and what has made you be the way that you are? And why do you lead the way that you do? I think that that provides a profound opportunity to share who I am and what I believe in a way that is authentic. And honestly, generally speaking, they're the ones who are initiating that conversation, not me. But it's hard. There's no lies here.

Bobby Erskine:

Yeah. I think the thing that I've been trying to move into in the last five or six years, and this comes out of some of the work that I've done just around... There's a theory called Bowen Family Systems Theory. I think you had Steve Cuss on the podcast or a different thing. Yeah. Go listen to that if you want the full explanation. But, basically, when you apply it to Jesus, it talks about him being a non-anxious presence.

So in my workplace, how do I be that non-anxious presence that's not so swayed by the crowd, so swayed by the needs or wanting to be liked, wanting to be respected in that way? So not skewing on that end of the spectrum, but also not just being this dictator who comes in and says, "Well, this is what's right, this is what's wrong." And at the same time, trying to have that connection. It's super hard, but that is my image of Jesus and then also how that reflects in there. Is that non-anxious present? Can I come in with my beliefs and gifts and share those and also stay connected to folks who are very different from me who might have different beliefs? So that's how I come into it.

As far as the diverse workforce, I need that. I have just learned I need to be proximate to many people who are very different from me and have different worldviews from me, mainly because I can be really judgmental and I can create these caricatures of what these different populations' identities are like. And then when I'm actually working alongside them, hearing stories, connecting with them, it makes it a lot harder to create this false image of these people. So that's a lot of it for me.



Luckily, I think I work in a workplace... With the library, we have mission, we have values, those sort of things. On their face, they overlap a lot with kingdom values that I see in my own beliefs. Value around dignity for everybody, being welcoming, trusting that people want to grow and learn and be curious, those sort of things. So I feel really fortunate that there's a lot of overlap there. And yeah, libraries are a lightning rod for a lot of things right now. I think part of that is the way that libraries move into things, and I think a lot of that is the way certain populations within the culture are just really fearful of different things that libraries provide.

But in that, I haven't hit that point yet where I'm just like, "Nah, I just can't participate in this thing." It hasn't gotten to that part yet. But I'm always navigating that. I had a coffee with a colleague this morning who's a deep follower of Jesus, and yeah, we talked through some of that stuff. And he is hitting some things where he is like, "I don't know what to do with this particular program. I don't know what I can participate in." So there's always reflection there on how that works. But for me, it's just staying proximate to diverse groups of people is key to my own health and growth with Jesus.

Brian Gray:

That's great. We're going to close, let's go Bobby first and then Betsy, with two quick questions, more about the leader or the manager's journey. I'm curious if there's one thing you'd point to as you look back at your career that has most helped you to grow in the skills or the craft of management? What's one thing you did, anything you read, how you learned?

Bobby Erskine:

Yeah. For me, a lot of it goes back to... I had just mentioned Bowen Family Systems theory. Umbrella over that is just I needed to work on myself. I need to be very self-aware, and I just wasn't for a lot of years. So in the last five, six years through a program called Faith Walking that's out of Houston, that uses some of the Bowen system to help navigate you through looking at your own formation... So I know coming into a manager position, I have so many years of being formed by leaders, by my parents, by my family, all of those sort of things. I had to start to untangle some of that to understand why I was reacting to others in certain ways. If I truly want to be a relational leader and to be able to connect with people, I need to understand how my relationships have worked and not worked. So that has probably been the most formative piece going into management is I had to understand myself, and that's continual process. So that was pretty helpful for me.

Betsy Zasowski:

I think for me, honestly, this is a tough thing to say because it's not particularly practical, but just making mistakes I think is what formed me and changed me the most. I think learning from leaders that you do not want to be like and do not want to emulate I think really helped me at a young age to say, "I'm going to do anything I can to not behave that way." But like Bobby said, I really think the self-awareness



component is really important. And so whether that's doing a 360 with people that you work with. We do surveys, employee satisfaction surveys. I think the first one that I did, I just got ripped to shreds.

It was one of those things where it was so painful to read. And the person I spoke about earlier, my mentor and dear friend, said to me, "Betsy, I need you to look at the feedback and I need you to ask yourself, could this ever be true about you? Have you ever demonstrated this quality? And what can you glean from this as this constructive criticism? And maybe it was harsh or mean the way that it was said, but how do you take that and use it to be better so that next time when you are in that situation, you do not do the same thing?" And so I think that was really formational for me, getting the bandaid ripped off and just hearing the critical feedback about the way I behave and how I think I'm acting isn't necessarily translating to how they see me. And so how do I then tailor my approach to better accomplish the goal?

Joanna Meyer:

Okay. As we wrap up our podcast, we always give our guests a chance to have the final word. It's an opportunity to preach to our listeners a little bit. And so I would love to give the two of you the final word. If you were going to exhort us or encourage us for being either led or managing, depending on our roles, what word of encouragement would you have for our listeners? Bobby, let's start with you.

Bobby Erskine:

I think one of my guiding principles I had to figure out when I moved into managing was I just say, "People over projects." I know if I invest in people and I care about people, the projects will get done, but my call and my workplace right now is to care for those people. So always reminding myself of that.

Betsy Zasowski:

That's so good that I don't even know what to say to respond to that. I feel like it can't be said any better. But I completely agree. I tend to be very task-driven, and it's really hard for me to focus on the person. And so I think I've had to totally shift my gauge. I think the interesting part is I've recognized and realized that if I focus and take care of that person, whether in a personal, professional growth mindset, they take care of 90% of your problems. For the last year, I've just been focusing on hiring the right people. We joke and say we need to have the right people in the right seats, making the right decisions. And I just really truly believe that because they're going to take care of 90% of our problems if we just hire good people and we take care of them.

Joanna Meyer:

Well, Betsy and Bobby, I love seeing your leadership grow. I think the positions that you hold are a reflection of how God is at work through you and your skills as managers. So thanks for the gift of



sharing your insight with us. And I love seeing the fruit too of the 5280 Fellowship that it's had in your own life and leadership. So, thank you.

Listeners, thanks for joining us today. We will link in today's show notes to two of the resources that were in today's discussion. The first is the poem from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who is a Catholic scholar and theologian. He wrote a short poem, *Trust in the Slow Work of God*, which we will link to in today's show notes. We'll also link to Steve Cuss's resources on managing leadership anxiety. We actually have a course on that in the Faith & Work classroom that's pretty amazing, and Steve's grown to be a national expert in that area.

And finally, if you're looking for something to do in the next couple of weeks, we have our next gathering of the Professional Women's Network here in Denver, Thursday evening, August 24th at Platt Park Church. It's a great way to connect with other Christian women who are passionate about their work and begin building your relational network in town. Thanks for joining us today. I pray that you have a fruitful week.

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