

Transcript for the podcast “Worthy: Celebrating the Value of Women.”

Hosts: Elyse Fitzpatrick and Eric Schumacher

Episode 32 — Guest: Joanna Meyer

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Elyse Fitzpatrick 0:06

Welcome to Worthy, a Christian podcast that celebrates the value of women. Each week, we'll bring you conversations with women and men on the value of women in the church, home, and society. We won't always agree on everything, but we do agree that God is glorious, the Bible is true, and women are valuable. And respectful conversation on this topic is essential in our day.

Hi there, and welcome to the Worthy podcast. My name is Elyse Fitzpatrick, and I'm here today with my co-author, friend, and co-belligerent- I don't even know what that word means, but it sounds good.

Eric Schumacher 1:20

I'm gonna look it up one of these days. I think it's a compliment.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 1:24

I think it is- Eric Schumacher. And so we're glad to be back with you this week. And we have a special guest with us today, Joanna Meyer. Joanna, let me tell you a little bit about her and then we're going to welcome her in, Joanna serves as Denver Institute's director of events and spons- sponsorships, and oversees the Women & Vocation initiative. So now you know why she's on our podcast today. Prior to coming to the Institute, Joanna worked in global telecom, nonprofit consulting, and campus ministry with Cru. And I'll just shove a little something in here to say I am so thankful for Cru and the work that has been done with my grandchildren with Cru. In addition to her work at the Denver Institute, Joanna is associate faculty at Denver Seminary and teaches sewing at Fancy Tiger Crafts. Well, we're gonna probably talk about that. And she's a third generation Coloradan. She appreciates both the state's in- innovative culture (well, since I'm in California, I think we're probably on the same wavelength) and also cowboy, cowboy roots, which is not so much. We have some-

Eric Schumacher 2:47

But I'm a Cowboys fan.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 2:50

Oh. Okay. She has an MA in social entrepreneurship from Bakke Graduate University and graduate, graduated magna cum laude from the University of Colorado Boulder. So she's an underachiever, and we always like to have underachievers on with us. So welcome, Joanna.

Joanna Meyer 3:13

Thanks for having me on the podcast.

Eric Schumacher 3:15

Yeah, there were a lot of big words in that introduction.

Joanna Meyer 3:18

Yeah, there was, there's big words, and I was having problems with them. I was going why, why, I'm not sure how to say that word. It's funny when I introduce guests at events, and I ask them, how would you

like to be introduced, often they're like, please don't, please don't read my bio. Just tell them what I do and invite me on stage. It's a hard thing to do to figure out how to introduce people.

Eric Schumacher 3:18
Yeah.

Joanna Meyer 3:36
Yes.

Eric Schumacher 3:37
And, and you're the author of a book. Your book-

Joanna Meyer 3:40
An e-book. Yes.

Eric Schumacher 3:41
Well and, tell us the title of that.

Joanna Meyer 3:43
It's Called Together: A Biblical Look At Gender in the Workplace.

Eric Schumacher 3:46
Yes. And since I am, I prepare so far in advance for these podcasts, I read that this morning.

Joanna Meyer 3:54
I'm really glad you did. Thank you.

Eric Schumacher 3:56
Um, it is really, really good

Elyse Fitzpatrick 4:00
Say the title again.

Joanna Meyer 4:02
Called Together: A Biblical Look at Gender in the Workplace. And I can tell you as we get talking about the Women & Vocation Initiative a little bit about the roots and why we felt like we needed to do some writing on that. But I'd be happy to share it. It's easily shareable. So I'll give you a digital download if podcast listeners would like to read it.

Eric Schumacher 4:18
Okay. Yeah, we will, we'll figure out where to point people for that and put it in the show notes. And I-I read it this morning and was like, this is really good.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 4:27
Wait a minute. Wait, wait, wait. You read a whole book this morning?

Joanna Meyer 4:31
It's an e-book. It's short.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 4:32

I mean how short?

Eric Schumacher 4:33

How long is it?

Joanna Meyer 4:35

It's maybe like 20, 25 pages. It's very readable.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 4:38

Okay. Okay.

Eric Schumacher 4:38

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, that's what I do every day. I mean,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 4:41

Is read a whole book every day?

Eric Schumacher 4:42

I read a whole book every day. Yeah. But I found it to make its case clear and easily, easily understood and very, very practical. And I'm going to post on my social stuff about how I think every pastor should read it because-

Joanna Meyer 5:01

Oh, that makes my heart glad.

Eric Schumacher 5:03

Yeah, it is, it's really good. And so yeah, do that. But we need to get to letting Joanna talk about herself. So we are glad that you're here, Joanna. And just tell us, first of all, a little bit about yourself and maybe your spiritual journey. And how did you end up at the Denver Institute for Faith & Work? And what is that?

Joanna Meyer 5:26

Yeah, so I grew up in a church from a pastor's kid. Faith has been a consistent part of my life through the years, and was heavily involved with, as a college student with Cru, the campus ministry. And that was such a formative experience in my life. I ended up going overseas for a couple of years with Cru after college, and I thought, oh, this will be a temporary season in my life. I had this vision of being a high school social studies teacher. And when people talk to me, they're always like, I can see that because I just love to learn and teach. And that theme of social studies is something that's always been a part of my life. I've always been fascinated by history's big events and how it shapes the individual lives, how people interact with their circumstances. And for me as a Christian, understanding the history of the church, and the key role it's played in, in key moments of, especially Western history has been fascinating to me.

So I thought for sure social studies was in my future, and then had a wonderful experience overseas with Cru and thought, oh, I think I can spend a few years developing college students, you know, when I'm 40, I thought I wouldn't want to be hauling around a college campus with a backpack on. But in my mid

20s, the thought of investing in younger, younger adults was really intriguing. So that initial two- three-year commitment became 12 years of campus ministry, which was so rich and formative in my life. But by the end of that journey, I remember thinking that the work we were doing was good, but it just wasn't quite enough. Because we had such a singular focus on evangelism and discipleship that I was seeing students learn how to walk with God, they knew how to communicate the gospel, but when they graduated from college, I didn't feel like we had well prepared them for adult life and what it looked like to engage the world. I didn't feel like we had a robust enough vision for the significance of their daily work. And so I just had this itching, especially with my interest in social studies. I just had this vision of a gospel that was just bigger than evangelism and discipleship. And when I say that, it doesn't diminish those two things at all.

Eric Schumacher 7:22

Yep.

Joanna Meyer 7:23

It expands them to the vision that as believers, not only do we walk with God, but we live the redemptive power of the gospel out in the way that we engage the created world. And so I knew I was itching to do something else, I just couldn't figure out how to earn a living doing it. And I remember having conversations. Does that sound like many listeners probably?

Eric Schumacher 7:41

Probably.

Joanna Meyer 7:41

I remember having conversations with a friend who, a wise older friend. I was like, is there something that's like, the movement of God in the world and social studies? Can't I get paid to do that? And at that point in time, I didn't. And now I can look at my life and say, calling, to quote one of my colleagues, calling is often discerned in the rearview mirror.

Eric Schumacher 8:01

Hmm.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 8:01

Interesting.

Joanna Meyer 8:02

So at that time, I didn't necessarily know what was, God was working in my life. But I knew that I needed to employ, to be employed. And I wanted a taste of more conventional work. And so I jumped into the corporate sector. And I spent about four years doing organizational and leadership development in telecom. And that was when I was [inaudible], but I never thought of how the Lord would work through that experience. And yet he really put tracks in place in my life through working in the corporate sector that are being fulfilled now.

So in that setting, I just was captivated by the potential, the available resources and the human potential that could be used to be shaping communities. But a lot of business leaders just didn't, they don't have the time to be thinking about how to leverage their assets for social good, you know. The bottom line and daily operations dominate. And so I was thinking, surely there can be someone who has helped come alongside business leaders to help them steward the resources that they have. And so that drove

me into a master's program where I did, got a degree in social entrepreneurship that was thinking about those very things of what does it look like to use the mechanism of business to create social good and develop communities. And as part of that, I got that education. I got a, it was a master's at a Christian business school. And so naturally, they made us take a theology of work class. And that was just like a lightning bolt experience for me and provided that intellectual and theological framework for thinking about how the gospel engages the world through work. And it was like my hair was lit on fire. I started teaching about it at my local church. I was talking about it in the Denver area. And meanwhile, I still wasn't, I was gainfully employed, but boy I was hustling. I was freelancing and consulting and doing everything possible to keep the boat afloat.

And it was during that season at the Denver Institute for Faith and Work was founded, and my boss Jeff Haanen hired me just to manage events for him. And at that stage, it was name tags and catering and making sure enough chairs were set up. But he looked at me and said, I don't, I don't think I could not hire you. I know that I will need you for a job down the road, and at the moment it's setting up chairs and managing name tags. And so I took a gamble, and that, that role has grown over the last six or seven years. And I was so touched yesterday. I found out I'm getting, not a promotion because we're a small team. We're pretty flat. There's not very far to go. We're like a team of high-hitting directors that lead together. But my job title's getting changed to something. We're still wordsmithing it, but it'll be something along the lines of Director of Ideas and Engagement.

Eric Schumacher 10:25

Oh wow.

Joanna Meyer 10:25

And my boss said, and said, you are a thought leader. Extraordinary. Like we need to, we need to adjust some of your responsibilities and give you a title that reflects what you're actually doing. And I think back to my love for social studies and how God is working through the people of Christ in the world. And I just think, Lord, like all of these weird patchwork quilt pieces of my vocational life have come together at this moment in what I'm doing. And it gives me goosebumps to think about it because I never could have dreamed my, you know, 30 year old self could never have dreamed that this job would exist. And I couldn't do it had I not done some of those random things along the way.

Eric Schumacher 11:00

Hmm.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 11:01

Isn't it interesting how the Lord leads us through our lives in, as you said, random ways. And you wouldn't think, oh, this will connect with this, which will connect with this. And you don't see it until, as you said, in the rearview mirror. And then you see vocation. You say, oh, yeah, this is what he was doing.

Joanna Meyer 11:21

Yeah. Often we're waiting. We're waiting for God to announce, this is what I want you to do. And sometimes he really just says, trust me in the randomness of what you're seeing in front of you. Be strategic, make good choices, but trust me when the pieces don't fit together, because looking back, you'll begin to see some of those dominant themes that are part of how I have made you be in the world.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 11:39

Yeah, and the randomness and even in the mundane. You know, how, God, how are you going to use this? I'm working at a global telecom. How are you going to use this very thing to actually bring me to the place that you want me to be? So it's even in the mundane, you know. I mean, getting up and going to work in a global telecom. You know, is God gonna use that? Does God even care about that?

Joanna Meyer 12:08

Yeah, he does. I now know he does. He cares about that greatly.

Eric Schumacher 12:11

Yeah. So you oversee the Women & Vocation Initiative. What is that?

Joanna Meyer 12:18

Yeah. So, it fits under the umbrella of the broader programming of Denver Institute for Faith & Work, which is a local chapter, independent, but part of a growing national and international conversation about, how does God work through the daily, daily work of his people? And the Women & Vocation Initiative started on a very snowy night a few years ago in Denver. It was one of those kind of semi-blizzardy nights where you did not want to leave the house. And we had hosted our first conversation around women, work, and calling. And 250 women came out. It's the kind- I mean, we're Colorado girls, so you know, snow doesn't bother us. But it was the kind of night where you really did not want to leave the house. And all of a sudden, 250 women are there. And as I look back at pictures from that night, the movers and shakers of the faith community in Denver were in the room because nobody was having that conversation.

You know, if you think about conversations about integrating the Christian faith in our work beyond just the evangelism or putting a Jesus fish on your business card, a really thoughtful, rote, theologically informed, robust conversation at work is pretty rare in most churches, and a conversation for women about work is virtually non-existent. If you think about most women's ministry, it revolves around beautiful things like personal walk with God, relationships with friends, marriage, family, and things like that. But very rarely does it talk about a woman's call to, to life outside of those relationships. And so that evening, we realized that women were absolutely hungry to be part of that conversation.

And as the two of you know, like, I got a hold of your ear and said, now, you need to be, you need to be talking about women and work. Because I think most women experience significant what I call churn in their lives, because we have a desire to steward our gifts in a variety of ways. You know, not every woman longs for marriage and family, but many do. And so we have that commitment in our minds. And yet we have these gifts. We want to see, we want to see our talents and our passions used for God's glory in the world. And we don't always know how to integrate those. And so as we saw the hunger for women to talk about it and the absolute gap in most teaching around work, it became a plank of our programming at Denver Institute.

And for a number of years now, we've been pushing hard to help women get a theological foundation for thinking about work. We want to shine the light on the examples of Christian women that are absolute leaders in industry and in culture. So often, the people that we put on platforms are amazing women of God, but they're in a very unique context. They're serving within-

Eric Schumacher 14:56

Sure.

Joanna Meyer 14:56

- a church context, they're social media influencers, they're leading parachurches or women's ministries. And I want women to see the examples of Christian women who are, are noteworthy. And so in church history, that's women like a Dorothy Day or a Hannah More, who was a leading author and poet and abolitionist. I want them to think about Sojourner Truth as a woman of faith. But I also want them to know names, and these aren't names you're going to know, but I want 'em to know Nancy Duarte, who's one of the world's leading communication expert, and is a passionate woman of faith and integrates her faith in the way she runs her business. I want them to know Donna Harris, who's a venture capitalist who has a vision for God using entrepreneurial ventures to chase communities. And I want them to know filmmaker, Mary Beth Minnis. I want those to be women that we see that are invited on that platform to share a vision of how God's working through them to be shaping our world for him.

And as you saw in the e-book, part of that conversation is inviting Christian men into the conversation of, what does it look like to partner well? You know, theologically, in Scripture, we see men and women invited to be co-laboring in the stewardship of the earth. We see that example even in the early church and throughout church history of men and women working together, and that's a place we really struggle. And it's understandably complicated for many Christian men as they think about the tension of the #MeToo movement or sensitivity about wanting to honor their wives. They don't always know how to move, move ahead in partnering well with women. And so that e-book I wrote kind of addresses that. Like, what does it look like holistically to make a way for women to be using their gifts in the world so we can recover that vision of the blessed alliance.

Eric Schumacher 16:32

So could you just maybe explain a few examples of what hurdles women face in the workplace, particularly how, what you were just saying about Christian men sometimes not knowing how to include them, work with them, that sort of thing? And what are some practical things that can be done to overcome those hurdles?

Joanna Meyer 16:57

Yeah, definitely. Would it help for me to give you a little theological tidbit, and then I'll jump into some practical ramifications.

Eric Schumacher 17:03

Yeah. Yeah.

Joanna Meyer 17:03

Okay, so, so, when we talk about women in work, one of the key things we draw from is, one, the realization that work is woven throughout Scripture, and that it's a vital expression of God's work in the world. So you look at Genesis and those early chapters where the creation mandate is given to both men and women. And it includes the words, "Be fruitful and multiply." But it doesn't stop there. And that's so, so important for women to realize. Like I think a lot of times, I've noticed that we're quick to pull out individual little tidbits, a verse, and say, this is God's plan for women. We almost use it like a bat that we hit people over the head with. Um, and that phrase, be fruitful and multiply, I had a man respond to me on twitter one time, and it was a really thoughtful, nuanced post, and all he put in the verse was, be fruitful and multiply. He just pasted that. And I thought,

Eric Schumacher 17:12

As if that doesn't apply to men equally,

Joanna Meyer 17:56

Yeah, and to be honest, it exists within the larger context of God's calling for men and women of developing the Earth's create- the potential of creation, stewarding its welfare, and filling it. And that al- that means definitely biologically filling it. But it means the development of culture and creation. I would recommend Andy Crouch's book Culture Making is a wonderful, a wonderful development of this concept. And so I would argue for women, and for pastors that are working with women, just realizing that when we hear those, that phrase, be fruitful and multiply, we tend to think of one thing, and that is our biological reproduction. And so being able to see a broader view of what multiplication and fruitfulness looks like is essential. So, starts foundationally in the instructions given to men and women.

I think it also flows from the example of something like a Proverbs 31 woman where we see this very integrated view of calling-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 18:49

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer 18:50

Where the woman in Proverbs 31 can be intimidating because of her excellence. But you look at those words, and you think they're given, as you refer to in the book, but they're given as the pinnacle of wisdom. It's the final closing words of the book of Proverbs. And so it's not just an instruction to women, it's a model of biblical productivity for both men and women. And so you see the woman in Proverbs 31 living a very integrated life, which was reflective of Old Testament culture. In fact, it was reflective of culture all the way up through the Industrial Revolution, that women and men co-labored in an agricultural operation, the household management, if they were in a trade maybe they would be working in that together and maintaining a household. But there wasn't this clear separation of home life-working life. And so in Proverbs 31, you see a woman who's engaged in the economic welfare of her family and her community.

Eric Schumacher 19:39

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer 19:40

And so you see this integrated vision of like, oh, no, like a woman isn't only looking after her kids. She's certainly valuing marriage at home. But she's actively engaged in being productive with the resources that she has to care for her loved ones and her community. And so you get that and go, okay, women and work is a, is a theme in Scripture. And then you see the redemptive work on Christ, of Christ on the cross and you think, oh, not only is he making individuals new, but he's making all things new, which means every corner of creation. I love that quote from Abraham Kuyper where he talks about, there's not a square inch of creation that Christ doesn't claim and say, "mine." That means that every believer needs to be thinking about their unique slice of that, their inch of creation and say, what does it look like for Christ to be redeeming things that have been distorted by and broken by sin here. And so for us at Denver Institute, that's an invitation we take when Christ says he's making all things new. We take that seriously. All things means all things. And so it's an invitation for believers, both men and women alike to press into the things that are distorted and broken in our world.

Which means that a tech executive has a huge stewardship of people and resources and moral decisions related to how he develops technology, or she develops technology, for the good of our world. So that's my theological framework, and women are invited into that.

Eric Schumacher 21:00

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer 21:02

And so here's where it gets sticky is figuring out, how does this play out in the real, the real life, and we're just seeing that in so many ways. A few very relevant current examples. You know, the #MeToo movement has revealed such brokenness in the world. Whatever, you know, you think about the movement itself, the sin that it has revealed is so significant. And it just reminds us that as Christians we often haven't had the wisdom and willingness you know, to know how to engage those issues. And one of the challenges- I was just reading a report in the Harvard Business Review in the last couple years, and it said within a, within a year, and then eventually, two years after the #MeToo wave really crested, men are still deeply confused about how to respond this issue, and fearful. It's not unusual for a man, Christian or not, to say, I'm afraid that a woman will accuse me of inappropriate behavior, and that it will cost me my career. And so the data is showing that men are responding from that concern, and whether they realize it or not, they're systematic, systematically disadvantaging women in the workplace, because they're afraid of what might happen. And so, you know, academic research, the data is showing that simple things like, I'm hesitant to meet alone with a woman, I'm not willing to include women on travel opportunities, or I might not hire a woman for a job because I don't feel like she could be, out of my own concern, I don't feel like I could fully engage with her in our team in the workplace. And so I don't in any way want to imply that the concern is not merited. There's definitely work to be done, and what does it look like to work together better, but we have to understand in protecting ourselves, Christian men need to understand that it's not God honoring if it disadvantages the women's opportunities that you're working with. And the data is just showing that that's happening, both in believers and non-believers alike.

An invitation that I would like to have is, you know, as Christians, we have the Spirit of God in us. If anybody has the power to be changing the way society works

Eric Schumacher 23:06

Yeah

Joanna Meyer 23:06

And be a model of healthy, collaborative relationships, we should be able to do that. And unfortunately, I don't think the church is leading in this area in the way that Christian business leaders are engaging the issue. So that's a real one. I think, oh man, there's so many. Simple things like the under-representation of women in corporate boards and C-suite executive roles. That takes time to change, for women to grow through organizations to have that kind of leadership. But we have to be willing to look at the reasons why women aren't, aren't invited to those places. And even the data is amazing, because organizations that have women in senior leadership positions on their boards, they have less ethical violations, and they outperform organizations that don't have women in those roles, financially. And so it's just this beautiful picture. The data reinforces this idea that men and women are called to work together. But seeing that change is, is significant.

I think the final one that stands out is, in this moment of the pandemic we're really seeing women struggle with the balance of work, work and home commitments. You know, as home and childcare and education have all crashed into the tiny spaces of our homes we're seeing that be a significant struggle for women to be able to keep up with work. Man, men are not, the data's showing that men are not feeling that same pressure. Although men are feeling pressure in this season, it's not to the degree that women are. And for women that are, this is a social justice issue for members of the church. Women that are in working class jobs, when, when schools aren't fully open, it's almost impossible for them to work because they need the free childcare that a school would provide. And so they're in a huge bind of needing to work financially because they're in lower income jobs and not having anyone to care for their kids.

And so, you look at that and you think, oh, you know, as Christians we can speak into that. When we say we're pro-life and pro-family-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 25:05

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer 25:05

Our, our engagement needs to go on, beyond maybe some of our traditional understanding of that issue to say, like, oh, there's a way for us to come alongside women who are getting kind of crushed in the wheels of the system to see if we can, we can offer the love of Christ to them in this moment.

That I think is really helpful, is to sit down and ask yourself, how much of what I think about gender roles is shaped by my community of faith,

Eric Schumacher 25:31

Uh-huh

Joanna Meyer 25:32

And how much of it is shaped by scripture itself? And I don't mean, and I'll be real clear here, I don't mean these, like very hard grooves of the complementarian-egalitarian conversation, because you guys have so faithfully engaged that. But one of the consequences of that conversation is it's a bit of a rabbit hole where our thinking about women has fallen down this deep, deep, deep, deep, twisting rabbit hole. And we don't even see beyond that. We just keep beating ourselves over the club, head with a club because we have differing views. And I want to say like, when we stand before God in judgment, is he going to look at me and say- oh, but I, God, I have maintained my, the purity of my theology about gender roles. Or, God, I have co-labored with the women that you put in my life for your glory in the world. Or, I have been an advocate for the full expression of the gifts of your people.

Eric Schumacher 26:25

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer 26:25

That's, I think, what is going to bring God glory. And it's so important. And you, I mean, I think as you were bringing up Christ, we do not see Christ of, you know, celebrating a certain vision of marriage and family, and-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 26:38

Right.

Joanna Meyer 26:38

Like even, I think it's in Matthew 11 where a member of the crowd calls out, blessed be the womb that bore you. And he said, no, you know, blessed are those who walk faithfully with me. I'm paraphrasing horribly here. But my pastor at my church in Denver, I go to Fellowship Denver, and my good friend Hunter Beaumont is single. And so he and I have some interesting conversations about that as singles in our mid-40s. And he says Joanna, like, you need to really think about this. Like, Christ did not turn around when that woman said, blessed be, blessed be for your mother for bearing you. He does not affirm that. And so we just have to be careful that we don't assume values on Scripture that maybe aren't there. And-

Eric Schumacher 27:16

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer 27:16

By saying that, I want to be so careful. I am in no way devaluing the investment and value of the family unit. We simply have to put it in the broader context in a healthy way of how God is calling people.

Eric Schumacher 27:31

So let's say that there's a church, just, we're just gonna have a hypothetical church out there. And most of that church is families with kids, married couples with kids,

Joanna Meyer 27:49

That's the story of my life.

Eric Schumacher 27:50

And I don't know. I don't know your life.

Joanna Meyer 27:54

It is. It is.

Eric Schumacher 27:53

And, and so what you feel, and what you see, and what you hear talked about, because the pastor's trying to apply it to his congregation, is to speak to the women primarily as wives and mothers, speaks a lot to family. And there's a woman in there going, I have these gifts and these passions, and I want to be out there in the world using them to the glory of God. What would you, how would you counsel the leadership of that church to, to lead that flock? And, because, I think it's not just a matter of how do they help her, but we want to shape a culture so that she and everyone else can be helped.

Joanna Meyer 27:54

Yeah. So I think a couple thoughts. One is- having a, taking that step to think through what's cultural and what's biblical. And even looking at recent church history, I think is really important. That's like, before you even make a plan for what you're going to do, sit and examine your assumptions. Because I think so much of, of church culture in America - it's important to acknowledge in America, white church culture, this has not been the African American church experience-

Elyse Fitzpatrick 29:23

White church culture in America.

Joanna Meyer 29:25

Yeah, you know, a side note, a friend, a dear friend of mine had come to one of our women's events, and who's, she's black and she brought her mom, and she said, you know, this is a good event, Joanna, but you need to realize like, this just, this has not been my mom's experience at all. Like the questions that you're wrestling with, as a black woman, she never had this luxury of having angst about her calling. She just had to, in whatever job society would allow her to do.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 29:47

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer 29:48

And that was so helpful for me to realize, like, oh, maybe my assumptions about what the ideal look like just aren't, they're cultural not biblical. So really spending some time to think about, and starting with a theology of work that's not defined by gender. Just looking at like, what, what is God calling his people to? And how does, how does family fit in within that context in a way that is affirming and supportive and allowing to grow but not idolatrous, to be honest about that. So really doing the hard work theologically is the starting point. And then I would ask, like, is it actual- is it a genuine, hundred percent heart motivation by church leadership of saying, is this an issue, is this- I hate to say this, because I might sound like a flaming liberal, but is this a justice issue? The, the stewardship and support of women living, fully living our gifts in the world. We have to sit with that like,

Elyse Fitzpatrick 30:47

Yeah.

Joanna Meyer 30:47

Does it please God, the way that we're treating women? So we have to be willing to sit with that. And then I would say it's creating a context where you are helping women gain vocational imagination. Which sounds like, it sounds like just a bunch of words, but realizing like, are you sparking women's vision through the sermon illustrations that you do? If the only way you're, as a pastor, you're talking to women is in the context of marriage and family, you are falling down as a pastor. I, to be honest, like picture me in the pews. I'm 46. Single. Have- I always call myself the accidental career woman because, you know, at 21 I thought I was going to be married and have kids. I have a career because I have to sup- one, because it's my stewardship and my gifts, and I have a vision for it, but if you'd ask me that 15 years ago, I'd be like, I work because I have to, to pay my bills. So if you are going to be- if you're going to say you're going to disciple people in your congregation, you can, you can't be teaching content and using examples that only addresses people in one life stage.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 31:49

Amen.

Joanna Meyer 31:50

And a robust theology of work extends to death. It, you know, people that retired, are retired, still fall under God's vision for a productive life. It looks different in that season. But just because you're retired doesn't mean you escape work. And so it's not just a gender issue. It's a, it's an all-encompassing vision of how God's people work, and then really thinking about, if this is true, how do I contextualize that for all the people in my congregation? So I think it's, it's teaching that from the pulpit and having vivid

examples of women, not just, not just Mary and Martha, but having a vision. You know, and I write that in the e-book. I'm like, you know, when we don't, we're not- I think as male pastors you have to work extra hard to think about women and their needs. And so if the only people that you're drawing from is your wife, or maybe some married women that are in your circle, or in the same life stage, you may have a really curtailed vision. And so it's expanding the types of sources and the things that you're thinking about.

Like if you have- peek at Sheryl Sandberg's book Lean In. You know, for a season that was the dominant message towards women and what it looked like to use their gifts in the world. And I mean, as you're a pastor the gospel, one of your goals is responding to the distortion of the world. And so if a primary message that women in your congregation are getting outside of church is someone like Sheryl Sandberg, the Facebook executive's book Lean In, take a peek at it. Inform yourself to know what that message is. Like, don't just react and, to me too, like spend some time looking at it and really say like, what's happening here, and what is a biblical, not a knee jerk cultural reaction, but a biblical response to the issues that are here. So getting good examples.

And then I would say inviting women in a, into a conversation about work. I can give you the example of my good friend Kate, who's a few years younger than me. I met her at the park the other day over lunch, and we chased her kids around, and we're talking about her career plans. And she's a classic MOP. You know, she has mothers of preschoolers, she's a mother of preschoolers. And her cultural background is that she grew up in a very, very large family, was homeschooled and raised in the faith, and had a wonderful home environment. But she said, I just felt for a long time that this is not, that matching the way I was raised is not how God made me to be. And so she goes, having a conversation with you that presented a broad view of work and calling gave me the freedom and the courage to seek what God would actually have me do, not just replicate the family that I was growing up with. And she just looked at me, and she said, Joanna, that has been a life changing journey. And this is what's kicker, is she said, it has revealed legalisms in my own journey of faith, and my husband, and it has improved our marriage because we are operating in grace, and sometimes the expectations that I had for him about his career were shaped more by my family than my, than what the Bible would have it. So she goes, as we have identified some of these false idols in our lives and been able to grow through them, we found freedom and grace, and we're healthier than we've ever been. And so she's still heavily focused on home, but she's pursuing some outside venture as, she's a creative, so she's pursuing opportunities there.

And I think, that's the gift that you give women when you have these robust conversations. And who knows, who knows what life changer you might have in your congregation that, that God needs for his kingdom purposes in the world. And by not painting a big picture of his calling, you're stunting your imagination. You'll limit what God might do through her simply because you don't paint that broad picture of God's call for women.

Eric Schumacher 35:31

That's great.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:32

And it's such a squandering of gifts.

Joanna Meyer 35:34

Yeah.

Eric Schumacher 35:35

Yeah.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:35

You know, I mean, not and, not even just gifts that could be used in the local congregation, but gifts that God has given for the stewardship of the world. And, yeah, I'm so glad to hear what you have to say.

Joanna Meyer 35:54

Can I give you a quote?

Elyse Fitzpatrick 35:55

Sure.

Eric Schumacher 35:56

Yeah, go for it.

Joanna Meyer 35:56

Okay. Two books that, two books that I reco- would recommend for thinking about faith and work. One is Os Guinness's book *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 36:04

Yes, yes. So good.

Joanna Meyer 36:04

Like, a must read.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 36:05

So good. Must read.

Joanna Meyer 36:05

I love it. And then Tim Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf's book *Every Good Endeavor* are both wonderfully theologically rich works to get you thinking about this. But here's a quote from Os Guinness. He says, "Grand Christian movements will rise and fall, grand campaigns will be mounted, and grand coalitions assembled, but all together such coordinated efforts will never match the influence of untold numbers of followers of Christ living out their callings faithfully across the vastness and complexity of modern society."

Elyse Fitzpatrick 36:07

Amen, that's really beautiful.

Joanna Meyer 36:22

That's the gospel life. And so for pastors and church, I'd be like, how are you mobilizing people to that end?

Eric Schumacher 36:41

That's great.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 36:42

If you could accomplish anything through your vocation- and I'm really glad you're talking about calling, vocation. I think that's something that the reformers had picked up in, in response to the medieval church. Luther is a great champion of vocation and office, what is your office,

Joanna Meyer 37:05

Totally.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 37:06

But, you know, what, at the end, at the end, what are you hoping that you're going to accomplish, Joanna?

Joanna Meyer 37:14

Yeah, yeah. Well, you know, what's fun is I pulled that quote from John Calvin for you guys, knowing that you were kind of from a reformed tradition, I thought it might bless you to hear a little Calvin. But here's something Calvin says about calling. He says, "All the gifts we possess have been bestowed by God and entrusted to us on condition that they be distributed for our neighbor's benefit."

Elyse Fitzpatrick 37:34

Good. Can you, I'm sorry, would you say it again?

Joanna Meyer 37:37

Yes. This is Calvin talking about, about calling. And he says, "All the gifts we possess have been bestowed by God and entrusted to us on condition that they be distributed for our neighbor's benefit."

Elyse Fitzpatrick 37:48

Yes.

Eric Schumacher 37:48

That is good.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 37:49

For our neighbor's benefit.

Joanna Meyer 37:51

Yeah. So I'm going to be honest with you guys. And so I'm going to give you an answer of, this is what I'm wrestling with. And then I'm also going to give you in my most hopeful moments how I think this will play out in my life. So I think the honest answer is, it's, this question is just kicking my butt right now. Because I just never imagined that I would be in my mid-40s and be single. And so it is one of those things where I go, oh, wow, God, help me believe that you're good. And you know, we've had some conversations- Melanie Penn, who was one of your early guests has become a friend. You didn't realize that-

Eric Schumacher 38:41

Oh, good!

Joanna Meyer 38:23

friends would be formed through the podcast. She and I both have been on a health journey real, that has permanently ended fertility for both of us. And goodness, at 46 I wasn't expecting the stork to be dropping a package on my porch anytime soon. But as a Christian woman to sit with that and just realize like, oh, one of the creative purposes in my biology will not be fulfilled in my life. I won't be a mom in the natural way is, it is soul-wrenching. And so I'm just wrestling with that as like, Lord, like what does it look like to keep hope alive in, in that you could allow me to be a mother through, through being a step mom or adoption or fostering? I don't know how that will play out in my life. But that's a question I'm wrestling with. So in my dark moments, when you asked me, you know, how I think, I pray for God to fulfill my calling, it flows right through those hard questions.

In my lighter moment, lighter moments, I, using that philosophy of calling being discerned in the rearview mirror, I just know God has made me to help people have a big view of the gospel and his redemptive work in the world. And so, in this season, working at Denver Institute for Faith & Work, that means I get to call people out to a vision of the gospel in very amazing, crazy, relevant ways. You know, like, I think our calling is as big as the needs of the world. And so I get to come alongside people and paint a picture of that, which I can't believe I get paid to do that. But I know that there may, it may be a day where I do something completely different. And so, you know, if there's a day where I am a middle manager at the cable TV company here in Denver, that passion will still be the same. I will be looking for areas of brokenness and beauty in the world. And I'll be thinking about, how do I steward the gift so that people on my team, to bring more beauty and more healing through our work in cable TV. And so I know that regardless of what position I'm in, I can live out, with that vision for the world. And so I hope that to be true of my life,

Eric Schumacher 40:35

you've been listening to the Worthy podcast with our special guest, Joanna Meyer. And we're gonna ask her one more question. And you can hear the answer to that question on our Patreon page, where we have a community of supporters who are helping us be able to produce this podcast and make it available to our listeners. So what can the church do to help women think about vocation in ways that maybe the church hasn't been, and to to equip women to pursue their, you know, God's calling on their life? And I anticipate we might have you back some time because I think you've probably got more things to share,

Joanna Meyer 41:18

Oh, any day.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 41:18

That would be my guess.

Joanna Meyer 41:19

Any day. I'm passionate. You know, GK Chesterton said that as Christians we should start every day with the Bible in one hand and then, and the paper in the, newspaper in the other. And so I love that vision of, what does it look like to take those timeless themes of Scripture and what we see in the Harvard Business Review? Like, what does it look like to bring those together. So, to have thoughtful conversations about stewarding the gifts of the women in our world is so life giving to me, so I would love to do that.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 41:46

Thank you, Joanna.

Eric Schumacher 41:48

Yeah, thank you.

Elyse Fitzpatrick 41:50

Well, friends, that's our time together today. So glad that you joined us. Would you please help us and rate and review and subscribe to our podcast if you, if you agree with what we're doing to try to have respectful conversations about the value of women? Please help us get the word out. And don't forget, you can always become a Patreon supporter. So thanks for being with us today. Lord bless you. Be well