

- Dustin Moody: Hello, and welcome to the Faith and Work podcast, where we explore our every day work in God's world. The Faith and Work podcast is produced and hosted by Denver Institute for Faith and Work. I'm Dustin Moody, our direction of communications. And I'm joined today by Joanna Meyer. Joanna serves as our director of events and sponsorships. She also leads our women and vocation initiative.
- Dustin Moody: How's it going, Joanna?
- Joanna Meyers: Hey, Dustin. It is going great. I feel like it's such a privilege to sit here and talk to you about this topic.
- Dustin Moody: Why is that?
- Joanna Meyers: Oh my goodness, I am so passionate about this topic of women vocation, because I feel like it's an under-developed conversation in the church today. You know, this podcast exists to broaden and enliven the conversation on faith and work, but the reality is, if the conversation around faith and work is just emerging, the conversation around women faith and work is almost non-existent.
- Joanna Meyers: I feel like women in the church need a broader, biblically based framework to guide the decisions that they make about stewarding their gifts in the world. So, it's exciting for me to be able to interact with more women about the unique calling that God has for their lives.
- Dustin Moody: What are some of those aspects of the unique calling, particularly the unique challenges that women face with regard to work, with regard to being homemakers? What are the different ways that women have to juggle those ideas?
- Joanna Meyers: I think one of the biggest challenges, Dustin, is that so much of the teaching that we have around women in the church is closely tied to marriage and family. And that is such an important thing, we cannot deny that it's close to the heart of women and men alike. But the reality is, that's not a broad enough picture of God's call for women. If you look at scripture, from the very beginning in Genesis, you see men and women called together for the good of creating, for stewarding it, for developing the natural resources that are there, and yes, the ability to be fruitful and multiply applies to both me and women in the care and creation of a family. But it certainly isn't the full picture of what God has for women, that call to be stewarding the Earth. It applies to both genders.
- Joanna Meyers: Often, as women, we don't have a big enough vision for the scope of what God's call for us is. As a result, a lot of women experience what I call 'churn.' It's that kind of internal gnawing that happens when women are wrestling with questions that actually men wrestle with too. But women experience them in

unique ways. Some of those questions are things like, "Does it really matter what I'm doing?" Sometimes women in the workplace who, in their faith, feel very isolated, they may even feel isolated in their faith community, say things like, "I just don't know any other women than me who are ambitious about my work." Some women may feel guilty for being passionate about a career. Or, if a woman's at home, they may feel like no one recognizes the value of the ways that they serve so sacrificially in their neighborhood and through their family.

Joanna Meyers: Lots of women struggle with the work/life balance, that sense that, "I don't think I'm going to be able to hold it all together." So, helping women have a broader framework for understanding the powerful call God has to them, and also a community of women that come alongside to encourage them in that journey is vital. So we're excited to be helping to spearhead that conversation in our city.

Dustin Moody: Joanna, where have we missed the idea from what's in scripture to what's culturally placed on women with regard to work and home life? What have we gotten wrong over the last couple of years?

Joanna Meyers: This is a powerful question, Dustin, because I think it gets to the root of some of the tension that we feel around gender roles. Part of it is that we haven't acknowledged the great gulf that exists between cultural perceptions within a church of gender roles, and what scripture actually says. If you look at scripture, you see men and women working together in this beautiful alliance. All throughout scripture, you see this unique partnerships between men and women.

Joanna Meyers: You see that also throughout human history, all the way up to the Industrial Revolution. You saw men and women working together in the care of the home, or a home-based business, or if they were in the trades, they'd be laboring together. Maybe the husband was the cobbler and the wife was supporting him in the work of the shop. But there's a sense of being united in the common task.

Joanna Meyers: But if you look at history, the Industrial Revolution is a unique point in history, in that it's the first time that you saw men leaving the home and going to work, and women staying home, being able to care for families. At that point in human history, we begin to see these gender roles dividing in a very distinct way, and we start seeing some spiritualization, some layers, being put on top of that, that there was something that was difficult and bad about being out in the world, and that was a man's territory, being in the public sphere. And a woman's responsibilities were in the private sphere, in the care of the home, that it was a safer, warmer environment. There was this glorification of the domestic life and the role that the women played in the family.

Joanna Meyers: You begin to see, culturally, these two very separate spheres of influence developing. I'm sad to say that, I think a lot of our views about gender in the

church have come from some of these cultural movements rather than scripture. So, the Woman and Vocation initiative seeks not to eliminate the value of the home in any way, but to frame it in the broader context of what God has for women. And I love that broader context, because it allows us as women to be coming alongside of each other and exploring think unique ways that God is leading in our lives, the unique ways we're stewarding our gifts, instead of developing to the camps of women who work in a certain way, or other women who work at home. It really helps have a more generous conversation with each other. I'm just passionate about creating an environment for that conversation to happen.

- Dustin Moody: How has that environment or that conversation evolved just over the past couple of years?
- Joanna Meyers: One of the things that we've done is, we've realized that we need to have broad gatherings, where women in any stage of life are coming together. Some of the language that we use in this conversation is, helping women fully steward their gifts over the full scope of their lives.
- Joanna Meyers: So, it's realizing that a woman in any stage of life has a unique calling in a way that she'll live that out in her life situation, in her life stage, and gifts. It's helping women come together and to celebrate the uniqueness of each woman's situation and call. But also, we want oftentimes provide some specialize conversation to serve certain women who may need a little bit of encouragement or community. So we've done things like building the Professional Woman's Network, which is a quarterly gathering of women who are celebrating each other's role in the corporate sector, and also providing some encouragement leadership coaching community to help women not feel so alone in those roles.
- Joanna Meyers: It's so fun. I can't wait. In two weeks, we're going to have our annual Woman Work and Calling event, which will be part of that broader conversation. Then we'll look forward to, in November when our quarterly gatherings for women ...
- Dustin Moody: Speaking of Women Work and Calling, we are recording this at the end of September. Our annual event is coming up on October 13th. One of our past speakers was Katelyn Beaty, former editor at Christianity Today. She's an author. What were some of the things that she was talking about at the event?
- Joanna Meyers: Katelyn is a unique voice in this conversation around women and work. She was formerly the managing editor at Christianity Today, the print magazine. She also is the author of a book called The Woman's Place. We'll include in our show notes references to help you find her writing. But she addressed a topic of the time, the book, Lean In, by Sheryl Sandberg, and took us a step further. She goes, "How do we go beyond what Sheryl Sandberg was saying and really have a broad biblical view of God's call for women?"

- Joanna Meyers: She was talking about, how do we look at work in general? How do women find their place in a biblical model of work? What does that mean for how we think about our work, whether it's in the home, in retirement, in the corporate sector, in the local public school classroom? How do we think about our work? How do we come together as women to really support each other in the unique ways that God is leading us in that work?
- Dustin Moody: We're going to listen to a couple minutes of Katelyn's presentation from a couple years ago. Then Joanna and I will sort of just continue this conversation and unpack Katelyn's presentation of it.
- Katelyn: I should put together a reading list, because I've already mentioned several books. Another wonderful book on work is from Timothy Keller and Kathryn Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*, it came out a few years ago. A really rich, wonderful theology of work. And they talk about the curse of work.
- Katelyn: Because of the nature of God's creation, we need work for our happiness. And because of God's intentions for our work, to contribute to the flourishing of the world, we have glimpses of what we could accomplish. But because of the fall of the human race, our work is also profoundly frustrating, never as fruitful as we want, and often complete failure.
- Katelyn: I believe that all humans face the brokenness of their daily work. And yet, I also believe that Christian women in particular wrestle with different and sometimes conflicting messages about work for women, that we are at risk on missing out on the goodness of work, because of these messages. We're missing out on the original intentions for work because of these messages.
- Katelyn: As we just heard, we receive a lot of different messages, kind of explicit and implicit, about work as women. Some of them align with the biblical account and the Christian account of work. And some of them depart from the biblical account of work. It's helpful to step back and look at some of those messages to see what is true and what is false, so that we can move forward in a Kingdom-oriented way.
- Katelyn: I had to get a woman in a pants suit, the power suit, in here, and you kind of alluded to some of this in what you said. Because of the advancements that women have made in the workforce and in education in the past hundred years ... I just want to stop and say, we are in a really unique cultural moment, in terms of women entering the workforce. We read every year about more and more women attaining leadership positions in business and becoming CEOs, and mentorship programs that help women get there, specific programs that really help women adjust to the challenges of the workforce. I would generally say that the advancements for women in the past hundred years are a good thing, for a lot of women.

Katelyn: I also think, though, that some of the advancements and some of the ideology around those advancements can obscure the nature and the purpose of our work. If aspects of the feminist movement have, I would say, made work in men's image. We have this understanding of work as about getting more power, or promoting yourself, asking for a pay raise, trying to get the corner office, trying to get higher positions of leadership. And that this is kind of the career path that we just assume everyone should be on.

Katelyn: Aspects of the feminist movement have encouraged women to essentially be like men in that same pursuit. One of the lies that we receive is really, work is about gaining power, your own power. Women feel disempowered in many spheres of society. They feel like they don't have a seat at the table. So, work becomes a place where they can assume a seat at the table, or they can try to assume a seat at the table.

Katelyn: Now, I would say power in and of itself is not inherently bad. The ability to have your voice heard, to make meaningful changes, to provide for yourself financially, these things aren't inherently bad. Power, though, was always meant to be used for the sake of others. It's not just about accumulating more power for yourself. But it's ultimately, how are you going to use your power for the good of others? How are you going to pour our power for the good of others?

Katelyn: I'm sure many of you have heard Lean In and Sheryl Sandberg? Yes. I appreciated a lot of aspects of Sheryl Sandberg's book and approach I think it's helpful for a certain segment in women in a kind of corporate sphere, in terms of, how do you build a mentoring relationship? How do you ask for flexible time off or maternity leave? I think all of these things are practical, as far as they go. But I think one huge gaping hole in the Lean In phenomenon, and what it represents, is the sense that you're only working for yourself. You're not necessarily working on behalf of others.

Katelyn: This is one of the quotes from Lean In that I think kind of epitomizes this. Sheryl Sandberg writes, "Taking risks, choosing growth, challenging yourselves and asking for promotions are all important elements of managing a career." She says one of her favorite quotes comes from the author, Alice Walker, who observed, "The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any. Do not wait for power to be offered." She's saying essentially, if you have access to power, gain it for yourself. Get what is there for you.

Katelyn: I think this is okay, as far as it goes, but it's missing a really fundamental aspect of why we work. Going back to that image of the [Sadakim 00:14:28]. When we work and when we use our gifts and our talents for good purposes, we do find self-fulfillment. We do find a sense of joy and self-satisfaction. But it's not just about ourselves. Work is never just about ourselves. That would be one lie that I think we absorb from modern culture.

- Katelyn: Does this resonate with things that you've heard? Okay. We can have a discussion about this afterwards, too. I think, because of women's new opportunities that have been given to women to not only participate in the workforce, but to gain positions of leadership and influence in the workforce, we tend to think that work that's done behind closed doors, without pay, without praise, is somehow less valuable. We all, to some extent, feel that tension of working inside the home and outside the home. I think, as Christians, even while we advocate for women who do feel called to a career, or do feel called to higher positions of leadership in an organization, we need to find language that honors the work that's done inside the home, that is so often unseen, but is so crucial.
- Katelyn: I think of my friends who are raising young children at home, and it is really hard work! They're ... even just the sheer physical labor of raising and taking care of young children just astounds me. And yet, what a valuable way to spend your time and your energies, to care for this little image bearer, to raise up an image bearer, to know God and to love God and to know about he world.
- Katelyn: We need language, I think, in the church to honor that kind of work. Thankfully, there is, even in mainstream culture, there is this new conversation around care-taking. Ann-Marie Slaughter wrote the Atlantic cover story, Why Women Still Can't Have it All. She was a woman who had a very prestigious job, a government job, and also had two boys at home who just needed a lot of special attention, and decided to leave her job to be at home. I think so many of her colleagues said, "What are you doing? How could you do this?" The language that she has really tried to resurrect is the language of care-taking.
- Katelyn: Our work place is, places where care-taking is honored and valued and where space is made for that way of spending your time and that kind of choice that's given to us.
- Katelyn: We've already covered some of this, but I would say, and when I say, "Lies the church tells," I realize that "the church" is a huge term. The church is really made up of very specific local Christian communities and not all churches are the same. We have this rule at Christianity Today that, if we got an article pitch where the writer was like, "The church does this, and the church is bad at this," we wouldn't publish it, because you can't meaningfully talk about the whole church, especially from a global perspective.
- Katelyn: When I say, "the church," I mean specific Christian communities where there are specific cultural norms that I think we absorb as women. One of those messages is that work, professional work, is at best, spiritually neutral, and at worst, spiritually dangerous. You kind of alluded to this, thinking that if I'm going to be a Christian on a mission in the world, I have to be a pastor or a missionary, or I have to do something very explicitly spiritual to make it count.

- Katelyn: This is basically called the Sunday to Monday gap. I know it's what the Denver Institute and many other faith and work organizations are trying to address. Many Christian communities think of the Christian life as if it's divided between spiritual activities on one hand, and secular activities, everything else, on the other hand, and we work from this hierarchy of importance. The spiritual activities are the most important. And everything else is kind of ... just there. It's what you do during the week.
- Katelyn: But, think about how much time you spend working. That's a huge aspect of your life. And if Jesus is Lord of all of life, and the Christian tradition claims to speak into all dimensions of life, that's a huge part of life that we're not speaking into. I think some of us probably sense that, if we're working as an accountant or a doctor or, especially in the corporate sphere, business people really get the short end of the stick in a lot of Christian communities, because we don't have a theology of creating wealth or resources. We're afraid of that. We don't know what to do with it unless you use your resources and just give it all back to the church, then it's fine.
- Katelyn: I think some of us walk around with a sense of, "I don't know if I'm evangelizing anybody in my work. Can people tell that I'm a Christian in the way that I work? I can't remember the last time I shared faith with someone in my workplace. Does good accounting really matter?"
- Katelyn: We walk around with this hierarchy. And unfortunately, the reason that the Faith and Work movement has arisen as a parachurch movement is because many local churches operate from that hierarchy. I think we have to contend with that lie.
- Katelyn: The other lie, I would say, in my local community, the Chicago suburbs, most of my aged peers are married and have children. They are blessed and honored in the church that I go to. My church speaks very high word to the calling of motherhood. I think that's good. I hope that you heard in the previous lie that I think a high calling should be given to motherhood, and a high esteem should be given to motherhood. But I think Christian cultures, many of them have reacted to mainstream culture in equal and opportunity proportion. So we sense that the value of motherhood or home management is kind of under attack, or it's devalued in mainstream culture. And in many places of mainstream culture, it is. So we want to protect and preserve this really high call.
- Katelyn: But I think we can err in equal and opposite proportion. The language of, motherhood is your highest calling, that's a value judgment. If it's your highest, everything else is sort of secondary. I will say, as a single person, when I hear messages like that, I struggle, because I think, okay, I'm not a mom. And I don't know if I will be one. Does that mean that my life lived before God is second

best or Plan B? I think we have to honor think gift and the calling of motherhood without creating a value judgment or sort of, this is better than the other.

Dustin Moody: So, Joanna, as we heard Katelyn talk about, she mentioned how we get the role and purpose of work wrong. Obviously, this isn't something that's unique to women, but in general, how can we as believers rethink the purpose of work? What are we missing there?

Joanna Meyers: What stands out to me about Katelyn's presentation is how she presents work as a good, that it's something that God has made that is woven into our identity. We're made in His image and we're made to be like God, who works. So you see this picture of work being a very beautiful good thing.

Joanna Meyers: We also see that work is something that is offered in service. It's a worshipful act that we give back to the Lord. It's also something that we give to our community. It just stands out to me that work is very much a way of being in the world. It's not limited to a specific role or paycheck that we have, but it's the way that we engage creation, the things that we make of it. The way that we care for our neighbors, the creativity and the productivity that are part of how God has made us to be.

Joanna Meyers: So the more we understand work as part of the holistic expression of faith, a way overview engaging God's good creation, we see that there's great energy in creativity that comes with examining the role that work will play in our lives.

Dustin Moody: How might that reframing or rethinking of work be unique for women as opposed to men?

Joanna Meyers: As I think about this conversation for women, I realize that, I would say I want to be very careful in saying that every woman's journey is a little bit different. We want to be careful in acknowledging the great diversity of situations that women are in, their experiences and attitudes towards work.

Joanna Meyers: But I realize that women need to feel the freedom to just roll with the ebbs and flows that are natural in our own journey. I love this quote from the author and filmmaker, Carolyn McCulley. She said, "If we're going to imply that God has a divine purpose for all women, then it must be applicable to all women at all times, no matter their training, circumstances, life stage, gifting, or personal history. So, when we developed this broad call of God's for women to work, all of a sudden, it becomes freeing, because we can say, instead of, "Are you choosing to work in X way or Y way, are you working inside or outside the home?" It stops being that question. The question that we start asking instead is, "How are you stewarding your gifts? How are you responding to the unique responsibilities or opportunities that are in front you?"



- Joanna Meyers: We really can celebrate the unique roles that women will play over the course of their lives. Somebody to think of who embodies this for me is my mom, who is in retirement now. She worked for 30 years as a nurse in a hospital setting. I worried about her when she retired. I just thought she might be at loose ends of not knowing how to use her time. Yet, she has this beautiful sense of God asking her to be a helper.
- Joanna Meyers: So she starts every day saying, "Lord, what would you have me do today?" And she takes that literally. She observes what the needs are around her and responds. I can't tell you the number of times my mom has been available to help people in her neighborhood, to be able to help me as the needs arise in my life. Part of it's that she's available and she's watchful for how God's working. I think for women, we need to be more mindful of calling through our lives. We realize there may be a season where we're fully engaged and productive in a workplace setting. Or there might be another season where we're juggling part-time work and care at home, or even a season where we are full-time at home, chasing around pre-schoolers. There isn't a greater or lesser value to any of those choices. It's a question of stewarding, what is the right use of your gifts for a certain situation?
- Dustin Moody: Yeah. That's awesome. We talk at Denver Institute at different seasons of life and work. It seems like Katelyn's discussion about non-paid work may apply more to women than men. You mentioned your mom and my guess is, she's probably not drawing a paycheck from all the people she's helping.
- Joanna Meyers: She is not.
- Dustin Moody: But that's her job, that's her calling. That's her gifting right now. Obviously, we want to be careful and not paint with too broad of brush, we want to be sensitive to making generalizations, but in general, how can we affirm the work that women do that may look different than receiving a paycheck? Whether it's a mom or a care taker or a volunteer, those things are still valuable. Those things are still cultivating God's creation. Those things are still being an active part in the ways that God is working around us.
- Dustin Moody: How do we affirm that better?
- Joanna Meyers: I guess I would say two things to that. One is, acknowledging that we're starting to see such a shift in gender roles, that you'll have stay-at-home dads. If you happen to be a stay-at-home dad that's listening today, we're proud of you. We love the choice that you're making. We want to be careful that we don't exclude either men or women in some of the choices to step in a care-taking role.
- Joanna Meyers: I do think culturally that women still tend to fill that role. This is a question also that exists outside the faith community. Ann Marie Slaughter, who is an author and a journalist, has done a lot of research in that. She wrote an article for the

Atlantic in the last few years that was ground-breaking. She said, "Maybe women can have it all." Because for a season of her life, she stepped away from a very high-flying career to care for her teenagers. By the world's standards, she stepped away from the ideal of what a woman should aspire to, of power and influence, to be in a care-taking role.

Joanna Meyers: It left a lot of people scratching heads, but as she shared the factors that went into the decision, you saw that it wasn't always as clear cut, the choice that a woman would make, career over care-taking responsibilities.

Joanna Meyers: That being said, one thing I would want to affirm is that, I think we underestimate the powerful influence stay-at-home parents have in their communities. We don't articulate what that influence is enough. In some ways, that's my call. If you're a stay-at-home parent, a mother or a father, that you would look around you and say, "Lord, how would you have me steward the unique places of influence that I have here?" It might be something like, deeply engaging at your child's school, serving on the PTA. I have a friend that's a stay-at-home mother and she and her husband together said, "We're going to improve the quality of parties at our kid's school."

Joanna Meyers: For them, that was part of creating a safe, life-giving environment in their community, to make school parties more fun. But they saw every point of influence. And I realize so much of what happens in our communities might not happen if we didn't have people that had available time to engage in what's going on on a daily basis. Often, that comes through people that are at home. It's elevating and affirming, the broad influence that people who are care-taking have.

Dustin Moody: Yeah. We are just scratching the surface with this conversation today. And there's far more that we can get into, and we will down the road on this podcast. But Joanna, if someone had one step to take, one thing to do as a result of this discussion, what would you say to them?

Joanna Meyers: I couldn't agree with you more, Dustin, because we're just touching the very tip of the iceberg on this conversation. One thing I would say is, everybody's experience of how they consider their calling and their work is different. Starting this conversation from a point of learning is critical. If what we had said today hasn't connected with your unique situation, chances are we haven't met you yet, and we would love to know about your unique journey.

Joanna Meyers: But my challenge for our listeners would be to start learning. On our show notes, we'll include a list of books that we have found fascinating, that have expanded our thinking. I'd encourage you to check out one of those books. I'd also encourage you to just let your curiosity run. Spend some time with the women in your life and ask them about their journey. If you have a mom that's in her 60s or 70s, ask her about the opportunities that were available to her at

her stage of life, and what choices that she made, how the world of work played in her life, developed over the years.

Joanna Meyers: Sit down with a bunch of your girlfriends and just grab some snacks, coffee, or a glass of wine, and just talk about this. What's shaped your views of work? What is shaping the way that you look at work now? Then spend some time observing in your community. Look and see where are you seeing folks that maybe aren't getting a paycheck, showing great influence in our community? What is their unique service and the opportunity that they have to give back.

Joanna Meyers: Whether it's reading, interacting, watching, develop that attitude of a learner.

Dustin Moody: One of the ways that you can continue learning, if this has peaked your interest, is by visiting [scatter.org](http://scatter.org). We are rolling out a new online learning platform that we have with Katelyn Beaty. If her presentation today was of interest to you, take a look at [scatter.org](http://scatter.org) and find some ways to take that learning to the next step.

Dustin Moody: If you've enjoyed this podcast, we'd love for you to subscribe. We'd love for you to leave a review, and we'd love for you to share with a friend. So, Joanna, any final words?

Joanna Meyers: If you want to keep learning about what Denver Institute is doing in the area of women, I would encourage you to go to [DenverInstitute.org/women](http://DenverInstitute.org/women). You'll see various blog posts, upcoming events, opportunities for you to get involved. We would love to see you, whether it's over the airwaves or through one of our events.

Dustin Moody: Joanna, I'm looking forward to continuing this conversation and continuing to learn later on.

Joanna Meyers: Thanks.

Dustin Moody: Thanks.

Joanna Meyers: Bye, everyone.