



Joanna Meyer: [00:02](#) Hey, friends. This is the Faith and Work Podcast where we explore everyday work in God's world. This podcast is produced and hosted by the Denver Institute for Faith and Work, I'm Joanna Meyer, the Director of Events and Sponsorships at Denver Institute and I'm joined today by Brian Gray, who is our COO and Director of the 5280 Fellowship. How's it going, Brian?

Brian Gray: [00:21](#) It's good to be with you on this internet.

Joanna Meyer: [00:23](#) Awesome. Okay, so we have an amazing show today with one of our favorite people, as our staff was talking about, who we wanted to have in town to explore some of these issues of wholeheartedness and how we relate to work. Our guest today is Chuck DeGroat and he was our number one person that we wanted to talk about. So, I'm excited. He's going to get a chance to talk to our podcast listeners. So, tell us a little bit more about Chuck, Brian.

Brian Gray: [00:42](#) Yeah. So, Chuck is currently a Professor of Counseling and Christian Spirituality, Western Theological Seminary out in the great and the beautiful Holland, Michigan. Previous to that was the co-founder and Senior Fellow at the Newbigin House of Studies in San Francisco. So, combined 20 years of counseling and spiritual direction pastoral ministry, tell us a little bit of the nature of your work today. The types of things you occupy yourself with.

Chuck DeGroat: [01:08](#) Sure. Well, first I didn't know this was going to be on the internet, I thought this was going like shortwave or AM radio or something.

Brian Gray: [01:15](#) We do a lot of Ham Radio work.

Chuck DeGroat: [01:16](#) Ham Radio?

Brian Gray: [01:17](#) Yeah.

Chuck DeGroat: [01:17](#) Okay.

Brian Gray: [01:18](#) We're big in the Philippines with the Ham Radio.

Chuck DeGroat: [01:19](#) Okay. So, it's going on the internet. So, I'll be careful about what I say.

Brian Gray: [01:22](#) Do.



Chuck DeGroat: [01:23](#) But yeah, a little bit about my workout there. I transitioned from San Francisco to Holland, five years, five and a half years ago. My title is Professor of Pastoral Care and Christian Spirituality. But I'm involved in shaping the next generation of pastors out there. I continue my work with Newbigin House part-time, but I get a chance to write and speak and I'm excited to shape the next generation of pastors because I feel like the kind of culture and environment that they will be ministering in is very different than where we were 25 years ago when I went through seminary. So, those are fun conversations.

Joanna Meyer: [02:02](#) Yeah, I had the benefit of experiencing Chuck's wisdom and expertise firsthand as we walked through a difficult church situation, and you brought such kindness and insight and wisdom to the process that it made it so much easier. So, I can attest to Chuck's skill.

Joanna Meyer: [02:16](#) So, we're going to jump right in with our question today. I hear from people so often in life that they feel like they're being pulled in 1,000 directions. In your book called Wholeheartedness, which we'll be talking about throughout today's podcast, you shared a quote from a woman named Brigid Schulte, she says, "This is how it feels to live my life, scattered, fragmented and exhausted. I am always doing more than one thing at a time and I feel I can never do any one particularly well." I think that just sums up both men and women alike the way that we're approaching daily life. So, I wanted to ask you a little bit more about, why do you think people are living such overwhelmed, fragmented lives?

Chuck DeGroat: [02:55](#) Oh, wow. That's a big question. Well, let me tell you first a little bit about where that comes from and maybe that will help me. I first started thinking about some of this when I was in San Francisco when I was hearing that very thing. So, when I came upon that quote that you just read from Schulte's book Overwhelmed, I thought, wow, that just says it perfectly. That's what folks in the Bay Area are experiencing and then I realize, so, you know the Bay Area, Brian. I mean, but then I'm traveling all over the place and I'm hearing this in other spaces as well. Like, I'm hearing it from suburban folks and rural folks, I'm hearing it from pastors, and I'm hearing it from stay at home moms.

Chuck DeGroat: [03:38](#) So, that's when I began to hear it as like a common lived experience. It just shows up on the radar wherever you go. Now, what was the question? Why are people-



Joanna Meyer: [03:50](#) Yeah, why do you think people are experiencing this and what role does work in particular play into this feeling of fragmentation?

Chuck DeGroat: [03:56](#) Yeah. That was one of the things I wrestled with even as I wrote it, and I'm not entirely sure that this is a brand new phenomenon. I'm not entirely sure that we can blame this on Twitter or Facebook or social media. Some of the research I did in the book kind of show that there are different manifestations of this life of fragmentation and busyness. I think even back to the early centuries of the church, and when the monks went away from the city into the desert and they'd realize right away that they brought themselves with all of their stuff into the desert, and they talk about how scattered and fragmented they felt. That's language that St. Augustine uses. He talks about the scattered self.

Chuck DeGroat: [04:38](#) So, I think that this idea of feeling scattered is kind of a symptom of, in the Christian tradition, what we call the fall. And this idea that somehow, some way we're looking for life somewhere else. That we were made for union and communion, and instead of falling back into that union and communion, we look for it elsewhere and we climb the ladder only to realize as Thomas Merton said that we've propped it up against the wrong wall. That that's not the solution.

Brian Gray: [05:11](#) You hear the stories of a lot of folks, and not just pastors, what are some of the ways, and Jo, I'd be curious your thoughts as well. How are we hearing this from people particularly in regards to their work? Like, how is this showing and manifesting itself? Is it quantity of hours, is it the volume of pressures that people are under, is it all my direct report and their expectations, is it our own interior expectations about work and what we're supposed to accomplish, our understanding of ourselves?

Chuck DeGroat: [05:38](#) All of that I think is involved. Like, if you just looked at it purely statistically, and I don't have the stats in front of me, but we are like highest on, I think it's like the amount of vacation time offered and lowest on the amount of vacation time we take. Things like that. We don't take the vacation that we're offered. We don't take care of ourselves. Brene Brown often talks about this current cohort in her researches, is like the most obese, most addicted, most overworked, overwhelmed in debt cohort in American history. Things like that. So, we're not taking care of ourselves very well.



Chuck DeGroat: [06:19](#) So, I think there, yeah, there are a number of factors and there are higher expectations I think with how globalized we are and how we project our identities out there on to Twitter and Facebook and other social media. There's more comparison nowadays than ever before. So, we're always wondering if we measure up. I mean, it's the age old story, but it's more complicated now because of media and our interconnectedness.

Joanna Meyer: [06:45](#) Yeah, I was thinking about the author Ann-Marie Slaughter has written a lot about this conversation, can women really have it all, and she's come to the conclusion maybe we can't have it all. She weighs in on some of those issues like, you can't do a good job at everything all at the same time. And so I think that tension is very real. For women you can use an external measure or a sense of what you should be, and you'll always end up on the losing end of that and that measuring tool.

Chuck DeGroat: [07:10](#) Well, and we're living at sort of the tail end of a generation that was fed on this diet of kids just need a boost of self esteem. Like, the parenting philosophy switched on a dime like 40 years ago, and it went from don't ever tell your kids that they're worth anything. Don't hold them, and don't hug them, and don't kiss them, [crosstalk 00:07:33] to like on a dime, hold them kiss them, love them, tell them that they can do anything that they want to do, become anything that they want to be, and the reality is that it's taken like 30 or 40 years for us to discover that we can't ... like I can't be an NFL quarterback. Like I was going to go into the Navy and be a pilot, but I couldn't because my vision. Like, we have limitations, and we should have known this from Genesis 3, that we're limited.

Chuck DeGroat: [07:59](#) So now we're moving in a new direction. We're talking about, instead of self esteem, we're talking about self compassion. Now, I'm the product of a generation that was grown in the soil of self esteem. And so just think about what that does on the interior. How there is this sense of, if I'm not that, if I haven't become that, if I'm not as good as him, or as perfect as her, or as smart, or as well educated, or as rich have I become everything that I was supposed to become? And so we play these narratives in our head and we've got more anxiety, more depression, more self critique. Psychologists are telling us that shame is on the rise, and so we used to live in a kind of a guilt oriented world and now we live in a much more shame oriented world. It's not that I've done bad things, it's that I am deficient to my core.



Chuck DeGroat: [08:56](#) That's the living reality even of people who seem to be successful. I get a window into this in my work. I'll sit with people who have wealth, have education, have status, and when they sit with me they tell me, I feel like I don't deserve any of it. I feel deficient. I feel worthless. That's just the inner reality that we're living with and dealing with.

Brian Gray: [09:20](#) You differentiated guilt as doing and shame as an essence of something about my being, my value. And you connected back interestingly to this idea of limitations, or even calling, I'll talk about the limitations of calling with people. That we should embrace our limits. This is a journey that I'm on right now. Embracing my limits as gifts. It's horrible and wonderful. That language immediately bristles people and they don't want to accept their own limitations, and the results of that are busyness, exhaustion, and living the divided life. This is a tagline to the title of your book Wholeheartedness.

Brian Gray: [10:03](#) Can you link for us the ideas of this busyness, exhaustion. This kind of frenetic pace. I heard you describing that as being kind of driven by comparison and public life, and this idea of the interior dividedness. The absence of all harden ness. Just link those for us.

Chuck DeGroat: [10:21](#) Well, I mean, our story, if you're a Christian, begins with union and communion, and that's what we're made for. Jesus says, "Abide in me and I'll abide in you." So, we're made for this intimate union and communion and yet we live so externalized. I think that's what I see happening in people's lives, and that's only ramped up now that we've got more options for externalization, and more like contingent and virtual identities out there in cyberspace that I can be this person here and that person there and I need to be this Chuck to my wife and that Chuck to my kids, and this person on my social media feed, and who am I at my core?

Chuck DeGroat: [10:59](#) So, We've lost a fundamental connection to who we are at our core. I think that that's, to get to the tagline, that's kind of where we're going with that is, when you lose connection to your, what I would call your true self, that anchor, that grounding self, you live out of these other masks, these other personas, these other false selves. When you're living out of your false selves, you can't be healthy. You're always spinning. You're always on, as people describe to me, the hamster wheel. You're spinning, spinning, spinning, going, going, going, and you'll never ever find fulfillment.



Chuck DeGroat: [11:36](#) So, I love the way you talk about calling as a kind of limiting process.

Brian Gray: [11:40](#) It's beautiful.

Chuck DeGroat: [11:40](#) Because people want options. They want choice. And I want to be able to say, "No, you'd be a horrible salesperson."

Brian Gray: [11:46](#) Yeah, and that should be freedom.

Chuck DeGroat: [11:49](#) Right. Yes.

Brian Gray: [11:49](#) Yeah. So helpful. You talked about false self, give us a couple of other, like a couple of really concrete tangible examples of the way a false selves manifests within people. Maybe particularly within their work life.

Chuck DeGroat: [12:03](#) I'll give you an example from my own story. I transitioned into my job now as a faculty member at a seminary. Now, I've got a PhD from like a third or fifth or 10th tier PhD program that's like an online for credit program, sitting alongside people from Duke and Harvard and Notre Dame, and Princeton and all these great places. And so when I came on faculty as a junior faculty member, I had this sense of, well, how am I going to be home? How am I going to show up? I wish I would have said, well, just show up Chuck, but I was, at times I was funny, Chuck, so I was living out of the false self a funny Chuck, and that became exhausting after a while because I'm just not that funny. Then I tried to put on the academic hat. Maybe I'll just wait my turn to say something really, really smart. It's like wait for that zinger of, "Oh, if I think about that ontologically then we could."

Chuck DeGroat: [13:00](#) Then I just said, it's stupid. Then I kind of went into like silent, avoid, and check. Like, I just won't say anything and I'll just be the fly on the wall at the meetings. I was just deeply unsatisfied. So, maybe three or four years ago, I began asking the question, like, "Who are you and how are you showing up in the space?" There was still so much of my identity that was tied to the work that I was doing in San Francisco. Like one of the things I said to a friend the other day is, I still hadn't landed on the ground in Holland, Michigan, and said, I'm going to be myself here in this space, in this place, at this cemetery. I was still trying to be too many personas in too many different places. In a sense it was a conscious choice to say, I'm going to show up in this space. It'll be okay, and maybe I'll seem kind of silly or weird, or maybe I'll



be exposed for having a division PhD, but whatever, I'll risk vulnerability instead of hiding behind these masks.

Joanna Meyer: [13:57](#) I'm curious to know, as people are in these situations where they're adopting fall selves as they're pushing themselves beyond healthy limits, often you think, "Oh, if I could just cut some time into my schedule, if I could just rest, that will solve all my problems." I don't think a vacation solves these deeper issues.

Chuck DeGroat: [14:13](#) That's great. So back in the day, remember the Franklin Planner.

Joanna Meyer: [14:17](#) Yeah.

Chuck DeGroat: [14:18](#) [crosstalk 00:14:18] used to say like, if I just get the Franklin Planner and update that every year. We talk about things like work life balance. I don't know. I don't see those things maybe quite as helpful. I mean, nothing against Franklin Planners and apps and helpful new male programs, your phone and things like that, maybe they're beneficial, but I do think that then you're looking for an exterior answer to an interior problem when this is really something about your interior, about where you are in union with God. So, I think that if we don't tackle that first, and that's the work of counseling maybe even more so spiritual direction, all the other things will be band aids. Yeah. I could say more about that, but maybe we'll get there.

Brian Gray: [15:11](#) Even rest as a band aid.

Joanna Meyer: [15:13](#) Yeah. Well, I love this quote from David Whyte. He says, "The antidote for exhaustion is not rest." It's part of it. That sense of breathing room and space definitely helps, but it can't be the whole thing.

Brian Gray: [15:24](#) Give us the larger story behind that.

Chuck DeGroat: [15:26](#) I love when he says that because when I think of rest in that sense, I think of like the guy who's like TGIF, Thank God it's Friday, and comes home and chugs beer all Saturday and Sunday and goes back to work on Monday hung over and that. He didn't really rest. So, the story. This is a great story.

Chuck DeGroat: [15:44](#) I was introduced to David Whyte, this philosopher poet named David Whyte and his work by a woman, a therapist from around these parts named Sharon Harris. It was in a time of my life where I was five years into ministry and I was exhausted, and I



was feeling pulled in 1,000 different directions. And I think Sharon could just see and she said, "I want you to listen to David Whyte." So she handed me the CD, kids CDs are [inaudible 00:16:12] I need to describe them to all the-

Brian Gray: [16:13](#) It's like an eight track but it's flatter-

Chuck DeGroat: [16:16](#) That's right.

Brian Gray: [16:17](#) ... and round.

Chuck DeGroat: [16:18](#) So, she handed me a CD and I duplicated it, probably illegally, and I listened and I was overwhelmed, but I was most overwhelmed when he got to the part where he was talking about his own work in a nonprofit. He's working in this nonprofit and got to a point where he was so exhausted and he so lost a sense of who he was that he walked into a room one day and said, "Has anyone seen David?"

Joanna Meyer: [16:42](#) Oh, no.

Chuck DeGroat: [16:43](#) And he realized he was talking about himself. So, he had his usual night that evening planned with brother David Steindl Rast where they'd normally drink wine and read [inaudible 00:16:52] together. But as the story goes, he says, this was not a night to read [inaudible 00:17:00]. I was at the end of my rope and brother David Steindl Rast sat down and they'd poured their glass of wine and he said, "Tell me about exhaustion." And brother David Steindl Rast says, "The antidote to exhaustion is not necessarily rest." And I paused, and he's like, "It's not necessarily rest. The antidote to exhaustion is wholeheartedness."

Chuck DeGroat: [17:20](#) I remember hearing that, I was on my way to preach somewhere and I literally like drove off the side of the road and stopped and started bawling. I didn't know, I think I was around 33 years old at the time and I didn't have a clue what he was talking about but I knew it was significant. Had no idea that it would turn into a book, but I knew that there was something in this that wasn't a band aid and it was something that I'll probably be chewing on for probably a decade or two or three decades. He's saying that there's something more. It's not necessarily about this thing that we get. This app that we manage, or this Franklin Planner that we put dates in, but there's something more that has to happen within. There's an



inner integrity. There's an alignment that happens in our souls. There's a, Jesus calls it, purity of heart.

Chuck DeGroat: [18:08](#) Kierkegaard says, "Purity of heart is to will one thing." It's becoming centered and single minded and single hearted in a world that says, you've got to be here and here and here and here and here all at the same time and all in the same place. That's a choice that is risky to make in this time when everyone wants us to be connected all the time. "How come you didn't get back to my text right away?" Or, "How come you didn't retweet my tweet?" Things like this.

Brian Gray: [18:37](#) Give me an example of the internal narrative that might happen if a person is really living a more wholehearted life, and yet they still run into these types of external factors that would call upon these false selves and these counter narratives that they've grown up with. So, what might they say if they are more grounded, centered, if they're remembering union and communion with Christ as the primary aspect of their spirituality. What are they hearing when the boss demands more, when the project is too late and their performance is on the line, when they miss-communicate? What would the internal narrative be like to be wholehearted right then?

Chuck DeGroat: [19:13](#) So, I'm going to connect this with a practice. I like to practice contemplative prayer, some people call centering prayer and there are different versions of this.

Brian Gray: [19:20](#) Define it a little bit for us.

Chuck DeGroat: [19:22](#) So, short version is, at least for me in my own practice, 20 minutes every morning. Sometimes twice a day, but that's a time to hone in on, simply be present to breathe to be quiet. When I say quiet, no music on in the background, and to simply be present to God. That's maybe the simplest way of putting it. People use a prayer word or a phrase or something like be still or Jesus or come Lord Jesus, to sort of anchor them so that when their thoughts go in a different direction, they use the prayer word to come back and to simply be present.

Chuck DeGroat: [19:59](#) Sometimes practitioners of contemplative prayer talk about becoming the mountain in the midst of the world's weather. You become the mountain that you're anchored in the midst of the storms of life. I think the inner experience is something like that. Of being the mountain and seeing the weather coming and saying, that's just the weather. That confrontation by my boss is



just a weather it's coming, but I'm the mountain. I'm stable, I'm secure. I'm living in union and communion in my true self because there's this, it's not just a thought. This is not trying to override like negative thoughts with positive thoughts. So, this is not the power of positive thinking. This is about experiencing silence in such a way over time that you experience real neurobiological change. Where you actually groove new neural pathways. Old pathways die, new pathways grow so much so that when these things come, you see them coming from a mile away, you're not reactive, you're reflective.

Brian Gray: [21:01](#) That's good.

Chuck DeGroat: [21:01](#) So, yeah, the storm is coming, here comes. I felt this before, I've been here before. Here we go. Now I can make a choice in the midst of this rather than simply reacting. That's maybe the quickest and shortest take I can give you on what that process looks like from the inside out.

Joanna Meyer: [21:18](#) So, are you saying that you could actually step into your work, a person could step into their workplace in the morning and practice centering prayer right in the middle of their office in their cube or in their corner office, so you can practice centering prayer?

Chuck DeGroat: [21:29](#) I mean, that may be more difficult for some because I think practices and different spaces look different, and maybe it's something that you'd need to ask permission for. People have done this that I've worked with. They have actually done this. Others have found that they have to do before they show up at work. But what I'm saying is that if this is integrated into your life, and this can be tricky. Particularly if people have a lot of demands on them, and the kids awake at four o'clock in the morning. I've got two high school daughters now who'll sleep in the noon if they're allowed to. But if you've got kids waking up at 4:00 AM, it's harder to find that 20 minutes of silence.

Chuck DeGroat: [22:11](#) So, I tell people, it's a choice you have to make. People come to me and say, "Well, I just don't have time to do it." Then find time because you find time ... Look at your stats, your screen time stats on your iPhone-

Brian Gray: [22:23](#) Which is now a new app.

Chuck DeGroat: [22:25](#) ... you find time ... Right. Which is now a new-



Brian Gray: [22:25](#) New function.

Chuck DeGroat: [22:26](#) ... a new function. You find time to scroll through Twitter and Facebook for like three hours a day, or to watch your favorite shows on Netflix. So find time for this. It is really a transformational practice.

Brian Gray: [22:40](#) Yeah, one of the things, as you were talking, one of the things that we've found because [inaudible 00:22:45] your questions both great and some of us might hear that as a bit ridiculous as are thinking about their own workplaces, if you just tell HR it's meditation, they'll let it go, but if it's centering prayer-

Joanna Meyer: [22:57](#) In an open office space [crosstalk 00:22:59], but you could sit for five minutes in your car before you come to the office.

Brian Gray: [23:03](#) I'm wondering about, this is exactly where I'm going, I'm wondering about the ideas of ways to bridge a contemplative prayer life which might happen in the seclusion of our home, or privacy, or a less distracted place. And then carry, whether it's this phrase of come Lord Jesus, or this phrase that brings us back in contemplative prayer. Connecting that to breath prayers, which you can carry into the workplace, which can be a 32nd moment of re centering before we walk into a meeting, where our ideas will be confronted, where our sense of defensiveness might rise up, where we're going to be viewed as Junior for this reason or that reason.

Chuck DeGroat: [23:39](#) I mean, I do think this is the future. I think 50 years from now, this will be the norm. Look at Google, and with massage, [crosstalk 00:23:47].

Joanna Meyer: [23:48](#) We have pods.

Chuck DeGroat: [23:49](#) Yeah, pods. Like their space is being created for these kinds of things. I was telling you before we went on with this that, when I wrote Wholeheartedness, CEOs were reaching out to me saying, "I want to find ways to do this in my practice." I remember speaking out at the University of San Francisco law school when I was still living out there and one of the law professors comes running up to me after my talk, and I think that he's going to attack my Christianity or something, and he says, "We are teaching mindfulness to our students right now so that there were [crosstalk 00:24:20]."



Joanna Meyer: [24:20](#) That's the buzzword.

Chuck DeGroat: [24:21](#) Right. So, that's the buzzword. Or maybe you've seen the show Billions, I think it's on HBO or Showtime. Billions, where the main character practices mindfulness, practices meditation every morning and has a therapist on site that they go to. I think these will be practices that 20, 30, 50 years from now people will be engaged in. What I want to say is, well, wait a second, we started this. This comes out of our tradition. So, practices of silence and solitude and breathing and anchoring have been secularized and I'm okay with that. I use something called the Calm app that is a sort of anchoring mindfulness app in conjunction with my own contemplative practices. But what I want to say, by all means, just do it. Even if you have to ask your CEO for permission, or your boss for permission. "This will make me a more productive team member if I'm just a bit more centered. So can I have 20 minutes to practice this every morning?"

Joanna Meyer: [25:23](#) Yeah. Or call it mindfulness practice. [crosstalk 00:25:26]

Chuck DeGroat: [25:25](#) Call mindfulness. Yeah.

Joanna Meyer: [25:27](#) What strikes me is fascinating about this is that, the tension that we're describing is nothing new. I mean, one of the reasons why I'd recommend Chuck's book is it's packed with just beautiful quotes, and poetry, and tidbits that catch your mind. We have a quote from a 17th century Presbyterian clergyman named Jones [inaudible 00:25:44], who's saying the same thing. He said, "There are some men and women who have lived 40 or 50 years in the world and scarcely have spent one hours discourse with their hearts in all that time." And I think that's not a modern problem. It's the human nature is to crowd our lives with stuff and that's be centered in Christ.

Joanna Meyer: [26:00](#) How do you seen practically some of these practices of mindfulness or wholeheartedness change a person's actual dynamic in how they approach life or how they approach their work?

Chuck DeGroat: [26:10](#) That's a good question. So, when I wrote this book I wanted to make the last three chapters practice based in a sense.

Brian Gray: [26:20](#) And they are. People really do need ... we'll commend this, and we'll put a link to it in our show notes at the very bottom, but this is a book, I read it, it read me. And those final three



chapters were so tangible, you can practice this, it's in a gray box. Go do this right now. Stop reading my words. Practice this.

Chuck DeGroat: [26:37](#) In a sense one is like more like spiritual practices. One is more like psychological ways of envisioning these practices from a model called internal family systems and [inaudible 00:26:50] like collegial practices of centering, of wholeheartedness. The question is, how do they make a difference or?

Joanna Meyer: [26:59](#) Yeah. Have you seen it actually change a person's life in real ways?

Chuck DeGroat: [27:02](#) Well, so, here's the problem. I used to be a traditional therapist and when people came into my office I'd say like, "Tell me about your mother." We'd spend three years together at \$125 an hour doing counseling and now, I'm finding that moving ... How do I don't want to say this? Instead of going to the past immediately, what would it look like to stay in the present and to ask, how are you experiencing life right now? And how my practices be a doorway for you to health, to paying attention to what's going on inside of you so that we can talk about things that happened in your past. So, if something's happening in the present, it might trigger something that connects to when you were seven or eight, I'm happy to talk about that. But let's focus on becoming a more present person.

Chuck DeGroat: [27:51](#) What I'm finding is, I was working with a pastor not too long ago who was experiencing panic and anxiety symptoms. We might have gone back when I was doing this kind of work 10 years ago to say, let's talk about anxiety in your family, and let's kind of do a family constellation. Let's talk about mom and dad. I have no problem with doing that kind of work, but all we did was I said, "I want to talk about these things, but I want to encourage you to be more present. It feels like you're being pulled in 1,000 different directions. I want you to live in a more present way in your life and in your ministry because I suspect that your parishioners feel this and sense this. So, I'm going to teach you some basic practices to get more present." He started doing this regularly, and in particularly he started doing this before he preached on Sunday mornings.

Chuck DeGroat: [28:39](#) Then our sessions begin to tail off and so I tracked him down and I said, "Well, what's going on? And he said, "I feel so different as a result of doing this." He was doing it very faithfully and very consistently. He's got a lot of enneagram one energy so he was like-



Brian Gray: [28:52](#) Lord have mercy.

Chuck DeGroat: [28:53](#) ... righteous. He is a righteous practitioner of contemplative practices. But what I found was that, that's what he needed to become more present and then people who knew him got in touch with me and said, "Well, what did you do with him? Do that thing with." I was like, "I literally gave him some practices to do." That was it. So, it's not-

Brian Gray: [29:15](#) Because it was the right thing to do, he did it.

Chuck DeGroat: [29:17](#) Maybe he was at a place where he was ready for it. And maybe there are other pathways that other people need to take, but I'm finding that, going through the pathway of the present moment. Now, I'm going to sound like Eckhart Tolle. Is that how you say his name?

Joanna Meyer: [29:31](#) Yeah. Oprah's friend, yeah.

Chuck DeGroat: [29:33](#) But through the doorway of the present moment, I actually think is a deeply Christian, deeply incarnational reality.

Joanna Meyer: [29:40](#) Yeah. Where is Jesus in all this?

Brian Gray: [29:43](#) I don't know, Joanna, where is Jesus? I think Jesus [crosstalk 00:29:47]

Chuck DeGroat: [29:49](#) He is in my heart. I think Jesus is right at the center of this because I think that Jesus coming to us was radical, but then Jesus goes and the disciples freak out, they're like, "What is he doing?" But he sends His Spirit to come even closer to us. Like the whole mission of Jesus is to come closer, and it says to restore us from the inside out. So, Jesus is present by the Spirit living and dwelling within us. St. Augustine says, "God is more near to me than I am to myself." Which I think is absolutely ... the word actually in the Latin is God is more intimate to me that I have to myself. So, Jesus is right here and present to love us and to care for us. It's that we've gone away.

Brian Gray: [30:30](#) I have a, maybe a final question and it's the opposite of this thing we've been talking on. What are some of the deformative practices that keep people from being mindful, present? I'm thinking of boundaries around, particularly for our interest, boundaries around work. Keeping it in its natural place to be



whole people. What are some of the practices that we might want to be suspect of digitally or with our time?

Chuck DeGroat: [30:58](#)

How much time do we have?

Brian Gray: [31:00](#)

45 minutes.

Chuck DeGroat: [31:01](#)

Yeah, I mean, we could go in so many directions with this, but I think, let's just take the digital, the social media piece for one, because I think so many people are connected nowadays. I think that rather than trying to define the magic bullet, like, rather than trying to say, well, let's set these boundaries around your work, and you can leave 10 minutes earlier and work 10 hours less or something like that. I want to say, where are you investing your time? Let's just sort of map out, I'll do this with people sometimes, let's just sort of map out, where you're investing your time. You say you don't have enough time.

Chuck DeGroat: [31:37](#)

My daughters, by the way do this all the time. Like, "I just don't have enough time dad. Feels like the weekend is over." And I'm like, "It's Friday night." So, where are you investing your time? I think what I'm finding more and more of today, and again, to go back to our earlier conversation. I don't want to make this that thing. Like, we're experiencing this differently now than we did before because of this social media thing. But I do think that it's introduced a more complicated dynamic for us. I'll give you a quick story.

Chuck DeGroat: [32:08](#)

So, when I was talking to and doing this with last week said, what I'm finding is that as he sort of mapped his life in these ways, because of social media and other intrusions, the 30 minute car drive he has to work is not silent. We found out that he was like in five different spaces. So I like to ask people, where are you? The Genesis 3 question, where are you? So you're like, where are you?

Chuck DeGroat: [32:34](#)

I'm holding a conversation with my wife that we just had a fight before I went to work. I'm on Twitter checking my likes as I'm driving, I'm thinking about my calendar. So, I'm checking my calendar in between social ... Then I come up with a social media post tonight. I'm trying to listen to NPR in the background. We figured like, he was in five different spaces, and I'm anticipating a really hard conversation with my boss today. So, we were able to sort of map out where he is viz a viz the Genesis 3 and to say, what would it look like for you to be right here and right now? Just present in your car, and what do you



need in that space? We decided that he needs silence in that space. So, he's been cultivating silence on his 30 minute car ride.

Brian Gray: [33:17](#)

Perfect.

Chuck DeGroat: [33:17](#)

It's painful, really, really painful because he wants to pick up his phone, he wants to turn on the radio. This is what we all want to do.

Brian Gray: [33:23](#)

He wants to listen to this podcast right now.

Chuck DeGroat: [33:25](#)

Right. Because they form us in particular kinds of ways as you noted, and actually they form us neurobiologically these patterns. So, he's made some simple choices to interrogate ways in which he's been formed and they're starting to work.

Brian Gray: [33:41](#)

Love that phrase, to interrogate the ways in which we've been formed. That is a practice we should all be carrying into our commute, into our workplace, back out of our workplaces as we examine our home. I love that.

Joanna Meyer: [33:54](#)

Yeah, as you're describing the five conversations that gentleman was in, I realize that every single one has some kind of negative emotion associated with anxiety, self comparisons, fear, anger, we live that way in our lives. It's like an electrical current running through our bodies all the time if we're not able to unplug from it and move towards greater integration wholeheartedly.

Chuck DeGroat: [34:15](#)

Imagine that you don't have enough time even to pay attention to those different feelings. So, those are five different feelings, and if you don't have any space to name those feelings, then, where do they go and what do you do with them? So, I'm on the flight out here today and sorry to say everyone, not to be depressing, but I'm an enneagram four. I started feeling a deep loneliness inside of me.

Chuck DeGroat: [34:38](#)

Well, I was afforded two and a half hours on a plane to be present and I chose not to distract myself with other things and I just attended to that emotion. I didn't fix it, but in paying attention to it, it doesn't have now the capacity to dig in and come out as anger on the other side. That's the help in these kinds of interrogations, if we want to call them that.



Joanna Meyer: [35:04](#) We are just scratching the surface in this conversation about wholeheartedness. One thing we like to do at the end of our podcasts is ask the folks around the table what their takeaway will be based on our conversation today. So, I would love to hear from the three of us what our takeaways, and also for our listeners, I want to know what your takeaway is. I would hope that you will take an action point from our conversation today. So, Brian, what's your takeaway from today's conversation?

Brian Gray: [35:30](#) Twofold. The first is, you need to buy Chuck's book, Wholeheartedness.

Joanna Meyer: [35:36](#) Amen. Amen. Amen.

Brian Gray: [35:36](#) Yeah. And I mean that like, Chuck only paid me, what? \$1 per copy that we can sell through our link. No, that was a joke there. I really resonated with that phrase at the very end to interrogate, or let's soften the word, to ask the questions why about some of the ways that we've been ... Why am I doing this? Why am I experiencing that? I think that reflected upon life is more deeply worth living. That's the takeaway I want to commend anyone else. Is just start reflecting upon the life you're living in that way.

Joanna Meyer: [36:10](#) Chuck, how about you? What are you chewing on as a result of our conversation?

Chuck DeGroat: [36:13](#) Yeah, it reminds me again of the need for reflection, silence of space. I think that's fresh to me just because I literally just got off of a plane an hour or so ago. But you think that since I wrote a book like this, I practice all of these things so well and so faithfully. And if you'd ask my wife or my daughters or my co-workers, you know that that's not the case. So, I think there are reminders, conversations like this are reminders for me, but the space today of just sitting there and feeling like, what is that lump in my throat? What is that ache in my chest? And having the chance to actually sit with that today was a needed reminder that there's always more going on inside, just give yourself the space and time to pay attention.

Joanna Meyer: [37:01](#) Yeah, I was struck by our end conversation about the five different conversations a person could be in at the same time and realize, and that's true probably for most of us. And just being thoughtful of how many conversations are going around in your head and that you're engaged in. What does it look like to have a moment of stillness. It doesn't have to be massive



Joanna Meyer: [37:33](#) So, thank you for listening. Chuck, thanks for being part of our conversation. I hope all of you would choose to get Chuck's book and I'm going to wrap up our podcast with a couple of thoughts. One is that, this is the reflection of something we're passionate about here at Denver Institute for Faith and Work is that we want to live lives that are integrated where faith is vibrantly woven through our daily work. That our work matters to God. Part of that is that God shapes our souls through our work. The conversation we've had today is a reflection of that passion we have for pursuing deep spiritual health in the context of our daily lives, and work is a fundamental part of that.

Joanna Meyer: [38:08](#) So, I pray that you've been encouraged by today's conversation. If you like the podcast, please subscribe and leave a review. If you have suggestions about who you'd like to have on as a guest, what topics you'd like for us to cover, we would love to hear them. Please tell a friend. This is a conversation that we want to have beyond our normal circle of friends here in Denver and would love to invite you to be part of that. So, thanks for listening in, thanks to Chuck and Brian and Dustin Moody, our recording engineer, for today's conversation.