



Joanna Meyer:

You're listening to The Faith & Work Podcast, where we explore what it means to serve God, neighbor, and society through our daily work.

Ross Chapman:

Welcome to The Faith & Work Podcast. My name is Ross Chapman. I serve as the CEO of Denver Institute, and I'm joined today by one of my teammates, Brian Gray. He is the VP of Formation and the Director of the 5280 Fellowship, and we're so excited to be together today because we get to interview one of our good friends, Dave Runyon, and I'll tell you more about Dave in just a second. Today is actually the final episode in a three-part series exploring the future of Denver Institute. We're celebrating the launch of a five-year strategic plan that we call the For Campaign, and we're also excited to just share a little bit more about that with you today. This is the final one in the three-part series. If you haven't caught the previous two episodes, I'd love for you to go back and check those out.

The first one really explored how we want to be for the individual worker. And, when I say we, I don't just mean the team here at Denver Institute, I mean all Christians everywhere who follow Jesus, how we want to be for work and the worker. And the second episode explored how we want to be for the local church and supporting them in ways that they are looking to disciple their people for all of life, especially their daily work. We had a great episode with two pastors who are really trying to figure that out. I encourage you to check it out. In this episode, we're going to discuss some ways that we want to be, and help you be, more for your city in your daily work.



Let me introduce our guest, Dave Runyon, leads Work Well, which is a new nonprofit that equips mission-driven companies with practical tools that bring about meaningful change for their employees and their communities. He provides employers with insights into the needs of their employees and tools that make a tangible difference for people both inside and outside of their organizations. Prior to his work with Work Well, he started a neighboring movement. Many of you might be familiar with that. He co-authored a book called *The Art of Neighboring* that has now spread to over 2,500 churches across the country. It's really cool work.

He was also the founder of City Unite, which is a very like-minded nonprofit in terms of seeing the whole church of the city work for the good of the city, and he speaks locally and nationally, encouraging leaders to collaborate for the good of their cities. And he also leads something here in Colorado called The Colorado Prayer Lunch, which brings together marketplace leaders, government leaders, nonprofit leaders, and anyone else in the city who wants to come together and learn about the city and just pray for the city and work together. He has also been a pastor.

Dave, thanks for joining us on The Faith & Work Podcast. We're so glad to have you. Hey, could you just walk us through some of your journey, your vocational career? What does that look like? What have you been involved in?

Dave Runyon:

Yeah, you bet. First of all, it's good to be here with two friends, longtime friends.

Brian Gray:

Old friends.



Dave Runyon:

I've known both of you for well over 10 years, I think, which is crazy to think about. So thanks for having me on. I am a Colorado kid. I have been here since I was six years old. I grew up here in the Denver metro area. Most of my formative years were down in Littleton. I went to high school right outside of Boulder, did college at Colorado State University where I came out as a high school teacher. I fell in love with coaching baseball. I was in college and then got sucked into secondary education and then fell in love with teaching history.

Ross Chapman:

Wow.

Dave Runyon:

Did you even know that?

Jeff Meyer:

No, I did not.

Dave Runyon:

... about my story?

Ross Chapman:

No idea about that.



Brian Gray:

I did not know you were a history teacher.

Dave Runyon:

You did not?

Brian Gray:

I knew you were a coach prime devotee based on pedigree of the education.

Dave Runyon:

That's not true either. So I'm a CSU guy. I'm a Rammies.

Brian Gray:

Of course.

Dave Runyon:

So we've known each other for a long time, and you're just learning stuff about me. So I was very content as a high school teacher and baseball coach and thought that that was what I was going to do forever. And then I just got sucked backwards into vocational ministry. I was going to this church where I was hoping to meet my future spouse, which I did evidently, this large attractational church here in the Denver metro area back in the late '90s. Met my wife, became friends with the lead pastor. He got sick. He asked eight other people to preach for him, and none of them said yes or couldn't. And then I was dumb enough to say, "Oh yeah, I can do that." And it was one of those vocational turning



points in my life. I remember sitting there in the front row. The largest group I had talked to was 30 high school kids at this point, and there's like 1,800 people in the room.

Brian Gray:

It was just 2000 at that point.

Dave Runyon:

Exactly. I remember sitting there and just going, "God, I need you to show up. I do not have this. I don't have this." And I got up there, and I preached, I think it was preaching. I was so nervous, it's a blur of what happened. And a couple months later, this will tell you a little bit about the church ethos. A couple months later they came back and said, "Hey, would you like to be our teaching pastor?"

Ross Chapman:

Oh, wow.

Dave Runyon:

Now at that time I think I was engaged and trying to figure out, I knew doing something else might be helpful to make a little bit more money down the road to have a family and all that kind of stuff. And so I jumped at the job to go to work at this church and to be a teaching pastor. I started to go backwards and take some seminary classes, and it was a wild, wild ride. And I worked at two great churches in the Denver Metro area for 10 years, and I had a love-hate relationship with being a full-time vocational pastor. I was an angsty pastor. I was always wrestling with, why aren't churches working together, and why are we always doing stuff in silos, and why do we spend so much time on this one hour every week? And all those different things.



And so during that time, a few things happened to me that changed the trajectory of my life and what I'm doing now. One of them is that I remember up at Foothills Community Church in Nevada, I got to know a lot of the leaders and was fully involved in the entire church, even though I wasn't the lead pastor at that time. But I knew this guy, Wes, who owned a trailer company. At this time, he probably had, I don't know, over 50 employees. I remember walking by the children's ministry, and I saw Wes in there, and he was doing puppet shows in the children's ministry. I just thought to myself, what an amazing, like look at this guy. He's so passionate about kids. Here he is as this business owner, and he's just dialed in in our children's ministry.

And so I asked him a few weeks later, I'm like, "Man, how did you get so passionate about children's ministry?" And he was like, "Oh, I'm not." And I was like, "What?" I was like, "How did you end up here?" He was like, "Oh, I got involved in the church, and I went through the members class, and you guys gave me this spiritual gifts test." And all of a sudden, as he said it, I realized, oh no, I am totally complicit in this. Basically what had happened is he took a spiritual gifts test. We probably had openings in the children's ministry, and we just jammed him in to wherever there was an opening.

Brian Gray:

Oh, no.

Dave Runyon:

Here's this guy. So here I am as a pastor. I'm trying to figure out, how do I want to leverage this hour a week I have with most people? And here's this guy who's working with 60-something employees for 50 hours a week, and I have pigeonholed him. Now listen, if he was passionate about children's ministry, it would have been great to have him serving, but he wasn't. I was working in this system, I



was running this system that had just pigeonholed this guy with all this huge network and all of these gifts into something he wasn't even passionate about so that we could keep the thing going. And no one had ever asked him and said, "What do you think God wants to do with your company?"

And I remember we just started going out to lunch, and we just became friends, and he started to invite me, I started to go to his place of work. I know that's something that you're passionate about, Ross, is encouraging faith leaders go meet people where they are in their workplace. I affirm that. It's one of the best things we can do. And so I just started to do that with him. He's like, "Hey, listen, we're having this end-of-the-year banquet. Why don't you come speak on servant leadership?" And he just started to slowly invite me in to dream with him about his company.

We started to do an employee volunteer program, where he started to think of himself, I'm the local missions pastor of my company and started to mobilize people out into the city. And then we started to get in towards creative hiring and working with people coming out of nonprofits in the city. It's just one thing. Then he's like, "Hey Dave, this guy's going through a divorce on my team. Can you just go out and have a drink with him and spend time together?" And Wes was such a gift to me because here I am as this pastor and trying to figure out, what does God want me to do with this role? And Wes just opened up my eyes, opened up my world into the private sector and into the power of working with business leaders in helping them to connect the dots between their faith and their work.

Ross Chapman:

Well, so you went from pastor to doing this thing with businesses.



Dave Runyon:

Yep.

Ross Chapman:

Was there anything else in between that you want to talk about?

Dave Runyon:

Sure. I did get a huge heart for the city and for helping faith leaders work together. So while I was a pastor, I started bringing together different faith leaders and just to say, "What would it look like for us to stack hands around the same thing in the city?" And so as I was doing that, that led me to government leaders, because one of the things that we learned as pastors, we didn't know our city very well, so we just were like, there's this great leader who just passed away in the last few years and his name is Ray Bakke and he had written a book called *The Theology as Big as the City*, and I just stole this little play out of his playbook. And the playbook was like invite civic leaders in and ask them where they feel stuck, ask them where they see the biggest pain points in your city, and that's where you'll know the most potential is to leverage for kingdom impact in your community.

And so I started doing that. I started putting together rooms of faith leaders and government leaders, and I was doing all that was a pastor and then Wes and another business owner helped me financially fulfill this dream of starting to do that full-time. And so 2010, I started doing small things for their companies. They freed me up to go and to give me margin and space to pursue some of the needs of our city and to bring leaders together around those needs.





Ross Chapman:

That is really great. I also know you wrote this book called *The Art of Neighboring*. Where did that fit into this journey that you've been on? You had this pastor role, helping church leaders work together for the good of the city, connecting with public sector leaders, but you're also having this journey with Wes and his business. Where did this idea of helping Christians love their neighbors better come from?

Brian Gray:

It's because you were the best neighbor that anyone had ever known.

Dave Runyon:

Oh, no. I was an awful neighbor, Brian. I was so busy doing all this other stuff with the church and serving out different nonprofit boards that I wasn't engaged in my neighborhood. And then one of those community conversations, we had a bunch of faith leaders in the room with the Mayor of Arvada at that time, and we were saying, okay, if you could wave a magic wand and change something in our city, if you were going to tap into the sleeping giant that's sitting in all these churches, what should we do? And he just said, "If you have the biggest impact in our community, you should start a neighboring movement." And he said that with not understanding the irony of our mayor telling a bunch of pastors like, "Hey, you guys should do the most basic thing in the Bible. It would really help our city."

And so it was a huge moment for me personally of starting to evaluate how had I built and oriented and engineered my world as a pastor to a place where I was doing all these other things, all these other loving your neighbor type things and to do it in a way where I excused myself from thinking that



God meant my actual neighbors. So that was a big aha moment with our mayor right there and for a lot of us in the room. And so that sent me down this path. My friend Jay Pathak and I wrote this book called *The Art of Neighboring*. We thought we're going to write this book and our moms are going to put it on their bookshelf and tell people that their kids wrote a book because it's so simple.

It's like, hey, Christians should learn the first names of their neighbors and use their names when they see them and then be a part of throwing good parties. That's pretty much the whole book. So all the listeners, I just saved you the time from actually purchasing the book right there. And it was so simple though that it got traction in so many different cities. That's how you and I started to connect Ross, you were in Evansville doing all this great city work, and then you came across the neighboring stuff.

Ross Chapman:

We had to bring the author in. It was funny because you actually came in right after our mayor had spoken to the pastors and basically said something similar, which was this would be a great thing for Christians to do in our city is love their neighbor. Talked about how some of the most difficult conversations they were getting in their office was just between two neighbors arguing over their fence line and they needed the city to come and use city resources to figure out how they're going to solve this problem. He's like, could you just teach them to learn to love each other? That would save us a lot of energy and time and resources.

Dave Runyon:

Did you ever find out if they were Christians? Those are two neighbors that were fighting over for you.

Ross Chapman:



No, I didn't have the courage to ask them.

Dave Runyon:

Over theology.

Brian Gray:

[inaudible 00:14:00].

Dave Runyon:

Exactly.

Brian Gray:

Mercy.

Ross Chapman:

Perhaps.

Dave Runyon:

Exactly.

Brian Gray:



But Dave, the great thing about you are in your humility. I mean, you're talking about the simpleness of the practice, but so many times we'll talk about what's the life of faith look like? And we assume, I'm a former pastor as well. We assume it would seem in our preaching that people don't know that they should love their neighbor. So we preach on you should love your neighbor as opposed to how should you, you should know their names, you should use their names in a conversation. You should throw amazing parties because Jesus was a part of amazing parties. So those are actually how strategies, tactics, if you will, of actually being known for love in a place. So I actually think it's elegantly simple and it's really critical because most people don't actually make the move to those type of things, it's as plain as the nose on your face.

Dave Runyon:

And I think what you're speaking to there, Brian, is something that I still think about even when it comes to work, is that there's great power in demonstrating the gospel. So oftentimes when we think about the gospel, we kind of default into proclaiming the gospel. That's really important as well. But when the church has been at its best historically is when it's been proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel at the same time. And I know you and I have a mentor, Eric Swanson, who has banged this drum for a long time, had a huge impact on both of our lives, Ross, and that's where I got that from. And so I think as we start to think about giving people purpose and calling and vision for their work, I think this idea of demonstrating the gospel is really, really important. And I think our posture is really important in the workplace. In here, we're not saying, hey, everybody should go put, like fish on their business card.

Ross Chapman:



Right. No, we're not saying that.

Dave Runyon:

I don't know if God tells you to do that, then you should. But that's not the only way to be thinking and connecting the dots in your faith and your work in your everyday life. And I think that just simply living out and being a loving person, building teams where there's a sense of belonging, where just liking the people that you work with and the people that you work for is a, that's kingdom work.

Brian Gray:

Top 10% of the population would be able to answer that way, only top 10%.

Dave Runyon:

Totally. And it makes a massive difference in the way people live their lives, right? It's like if you like the people that you work with and if you like the person you work for, it literally changes your life. By the way, that's like the lowest common denominator of culture. Everybody talks about work culture and all that kind of stuff. Just being, and you can feel it if you go into a place of business or a restaurant and you can tell that there's these people actually like each other.

Ross Chapman:

That's true.

Dave Runyon:



It's lights out. It makes the whole experience better. And so I think even just something that small is helping Christians understand that when you're a part of creating a DNA and environment like that at your place of work, that that's God's work right there. That's a big, big deal. That's a huge win. And so that's why I get really passionate about what happens in the workplace.

Ross Chapman:

Well, I'm glad you said all that. We have these common passions for our city and people being able to experience life as God intended it. And we're saying one of the best ways for that to happen in any city is through people's work lives. And I'm excited to just continue leaning into that conversation with you, Dave, because you've had church leadership experience, you've helped churches work together for the good of their city. You're now working with businesses to help them think about how they work for the good of the city. Tell us more about how you see work influencing the city.

Dave Runyon:

Yeah. Well, and I'll tell you a little bit about how I got here in a pragmatic way. So I started off bringing these faith leaders together, and then we all realized we didn't really know our city well enough. And so then we invited local government leaders, like your city manager, your local council person, your assistant city manager, your police chief into the room. So we invited them in the room to help us identify the needs of the city. Then I realized if all you have is faith and government leaders in the room, which by the way, I was one of you can tend to move really slow.

Brian Gray:



There's no money.

Dave Runyon:

No, there's no, yeah. You need money.

Ross Chapman:

Lots of ideas.

Dave Runyon:

If you need some-

Brian Gray:

We need strategy.

Dave Runyon:

And you need to execute. By the way, there's a reason for that. I think for both faith and government leaders, there's this sense of going, okay, this money's coming from somewhere else. So as a government leader, you're like, this is taxpayer money and I want to be responsible with this. And so we have a tendency, we set up a committee for this or committee, we feel like we want to hear from everyone and wanting to make sure everyone hears this say, and it can slow down the process. And the same thing happens with the church a lot of times. It's like you feel like, okay, this is other people's money and so we can lean towards committees, which I get and I understand it, and I've been in that ecosystem, I totally understand it. But we needed some accelerant in the room. And so these small and medium-sized business owners, they just do whatever they want.



They just wake up one day. Sometimes they're like the detriment of the organization. It's like a new mission or vision every day, but they move so fast. And so we started inviting these business leaders into the room and they just helped us start pouring gas on the fire. And they just said, hey, you don't have to wait to do this. We can do this tomorrow and we'll help you. We'll raise some funds to be able to go after some of these initiatives. And they just pushed us to do things in a more timely manner, which was beautiful. And so having all three of them in the room, there's some beauty in that. But I was the last one to come into the room for me was bringing in the private sector in these business leaders. And the more I've leaned into that, the more latent potential that I see. Because when the business sector gets involved, the things, and to be really honest, the other two don't exist without the private sector. The private sector does feel, like if the private sector is not rolling, there's no tax money and there's no tide money.

Ross Chapman:

That's right.

Dave Runyon:

And so being with them and helping envision them to be part of something bigger than themselves was something that was just a gift. And I just keep coming in touch with, and I still love the nonprofit sector, but I do believe this, we need more nonprofits that think like businesses, and we need more businesses that think nonprofits.

Brian Gray:

Good word.





Dave Runyon:

We need them to be thinking and dreaming about what am I going to do with what I have to make an impact for the common good? And how much is enough is a big question I like to ask a lot of business owners, what does it look like to settle that in your own soul? And then what do you want to do with the rest? What do you want to do with the rest to go out and to be able to execute on whatever God's putting on your heart? And so one of the best things I see happening is just these friendships between nonprofits and companies, like just deep friendships, long-term friendships between a company and a nonprofit in our community over and over and over again. I just see the fruit that comes out of that and the synergies that come out of that.

So if you're listening to this, if you're in a position of leadership as a business owner, I just encourage you to start thinking about what are the things that keep you up at night? What are the things that make you angry maybe? What are the things that you're passionate about? And to go out and just start, take time to have a cup of coffee, have a lunch, have a meal with the executive director of a nonprofit, and to just see what happens next, follow the breadcrumbs because I've seen this over and over again. When people are willing to do that, when they take time to do that, sometimes really, really potent things can come out the other end.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Hi, I'm Jeff Meyer, Vice President of Advancement here at Denver Institute for Faith & Work. And I'd like to invite you to become a part of our new monthly partner community. Whether it's a monthly commitment of \$25, \$50, or any amount, your generosity will support Denver Institute's ongoing efforts to help men and women love God, their neighbors and society through their daily work, including this podcast. To say thank you, as a monthly partner, you'll receive a welcome box. You'll



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Ross Chapman:

Brian, tell us your, you've been working at Denver Institute for a long time, helping people think about their work lives and how it can do all the things that Dave just talked about. We've decided at Denver Institute, we want to be in this dialogue of helping for-profit, nonprofit, church leaders, nonprofit leaders, kind of all work together to see our city to be different or better, and we want that in a bunch of different cities. What excites you about that conversation and what do you see in terms of strategy that might be fun to try?

Brian Gray:

Yeah, I think that in a different set of words, the way what Dave was describing is the idea of holding two things together in tension means they both have to get emphasis, and that's doing good and doing well. So doing well is where most successful companies fiscally doing well. If they exist, they've been doing well. If you don't do well financially, if you don't have a profit, you cease to exist, the end of the conversation. But the idea of also doing good and broadening the bottom line from merely fiscal to attending to needs for employees, thinking about social issues in the city, being profitable with goods and services that create a better life for those who engage them, this is, I think can be a really uniquely Christian way to think about things.



So grab a couple of ideas that Dave talked about at the end. Partnering with a nonprofit, a business, there's an overlap between the desires and needs of certain nonprofits in your city and certainly employers and businesses. And that's meaningful employment, retaining talented workforce, creating a more diverse workforce inside of a company because more diverse organizations thrive. So you've got a place where you've got aligned opportunities. So strategically, tactically, not only just go be friends or develop a deep friendship between a nonprofit and business, I've heard you say this before, but actually you're going to create opportunities where you're going to have some shared problems you can work on.

If you'd like to see the working poor be upskilled in their talents and then be able to earn a better quality of life through their jobs, there are tons. If that's your issue in the nonprofit space, we care about that at Denver Institute. Then you go find, there's businesses galore that are dreaming it up because they want to capture and retain talented, loyal folks over time. So now you're starting to do good and do well. So I think in terms of these strategy pieces, find common issues and work on them together. So establish your common ground and then be co-belligerent, get after them and fight after the same thing in the same direction. I think there's tons of opportunity around that.

Employee care would be another huge one. I mean, the sheer business costs of turning over employees are really, can be significantly hindering to the bottom line. So if you create a better workforce culture, if you create a place you mentioned where people want to be friends, but if they are loyal, because why would I ever leave and look anywhere else because it's so enjoyable to work here. You're actually driving profits in your business. Sure, you're doing good. You're caring for people, you're helping employees flourish. You are driving profits, you are eliminating the turnover cost of employees. So I just say that there's all kinds of, this social space between business and the nonprofit sector have shared agendas and there's plenty that you can get after. And that's a unique opportunity



for Christians to think Christianly about running businesses and for those of us who care about these social issues, to think businessly, if you will, about how to attend to them.

Dave Runyon:

Yeah, no, I love that Brian, and I've been a huge fan of the institute over the last 10 years, and I'm really excited about the direction things are heading. I know that you and Ross and Joanna, the whole team here is spending a lot of time thinking about what specific issues do we want to mobilize people around? How do we bring these people of good faith together to stack hands on real issues in our community? And I'm incredibly excited to see how that plays out and I'm in for it. Whatever that looks like, I'm all about it. And so it's going to be fun to watch. It's going to be fun to watch as the right issues arise. And then how can we get the right people at the table? And at the same time, I want to say this, so I think it's incredible when kingdom business owners start coming together and thinking about issues together in our city.

And I do want to reiterate something you said it's important that we also do this at home before we take it on the road. So I've organized employee volunteer projects for companies, and I remember one time I had a CFO out there and we were working on a Habitat for Humanity build and a frontline worker sitting there and the CFO was like, "Isn't this incredible? Look at this. This is just amazing." And the guy who works as a mechanic goes, "This is amazing, but also I think I could qualify to live in this house." And it was this oh, oh moment of like, okay, here we are out here doing a service project, giving ourselves little pats on the back for doing the Habitat house build, but had not kept up with wages inside the actual company to make sure that the people there were living in a sustainable way.

And I know that's really hard to do, but I want to just encourage business owners like don't just go do all the cool community impact stuff that you hear from Ross and Brian and other leaders and I. Also



think through first of what's going on in my staff, what's going on all the way up and down the organization that I'm a part of, and are we creating a culture that reflects the values that we have? And so I think doing those, thinking about internal things is really, really important. And also getting involved and getting focused on the needs of the city is important as well. And just having those intention and being able to do both without leaving one of the other behind, I think is a really big deal.

Ross Chapman:

This is really great. I mean, I think there's lot to hang onto here if you're a business owner or if you're working in a for-profit space, one of the reasons I'm passionate about this is the work I was doing in Indiana was a lot of similar work to what you were doing, Dave. We had some public sector leaders, but mostly nonprofit and church leaders that were coming together around the needs of the city. And it just always kind of come back to the idea of what about Monday through Friday work and the Christians doing that work? What if we could kind of mobilize all that into one effort? And now I just think we got a chance to do that at Denver Institute a little more. We can lean in on that and say, hey, there might be issues in the city. For example, housing is one in Denver that's been talked about a lot since I moved here 11 months ago.

And there are several for-profit industries that impact housing. And I think just dream about what's possible. If Christians in those places start to see their work, the ways you guys have talked about just now putting in the category of ministry, not saying ministry is over here, at church.

Dave Runyon:

Inside the company.

Ross Chapman:



Right. It's inside the company and it's outside the company in terms of the impact it could have on other people. But if we define ministry as what the thing that I can give philanthropy dollars to, or I think I can give one hour of my week to, that's not going to move the needle very quickly. So I just think the capacity and potential of that is just thrilling and super exciting and it's fun to talk about it with you guys who are passionate about it. Working out ideas practically. Brian, you're going to be leading some new stuff we're doing at Denver Institute in this space and working alongside Dave as much as we can. So this is really good to hear some really practical things, but just imagine that capacity for what that could mean for cities here in the front range, but anywhere really. If you're listening. Your city, what does that look like for people to wake up and say, hey, this is something I can contribute because this is what I spend the majority of my time doing and it should count for the people around me in my city.

Brian Gray:

It takes some creativity and imagination and not just business as usual. So Dave mentioned Wes, mutual friend, and Wes and some other nonprofits in our city are thinking a lot about the idea that I don't know that we've talked about on the podcast, but it's called the Cliff Effect, which is a real simple level. If you make up to a certain amount of money, you still qualify for certain government support around housing, medicine, et cetera. And if a really benevolent employer wants to start paying their employees more, they might pay them more so that they stop qualifying for those and have a lower quality of life or have expenses now that exceed their income. And so if you start to think creatively as a business owner saying, okay, are there ways that we can help offset through legal broadened creative employee benefits around housing issues, around transportation issues, around educational access.



Ross Chapman:

Childcare.

Brian Gray:

Around childcare. So these are the types of things that end up on the expense side of the ledger. And so instead of merely, let's pay our employees more, yes, and let's listen to them and say, what are the real needs that you're facing? And instead of, hey, look, we're going to throw a little bit more money into the 401K matching, if people can't access that because they can't offset their transportation costs, get them a light rail pass because they work with you, take off some expense as a benefit that would be on there, that in essence, helps the revenue side. So there's just got to be ways that people think creatively about attending to employee care and in that attending on a one by one by one basis significant social barriers that people have to flourish in their town.

Dave Runyon:

And that all rests on, are you willing to be curious? Do you have genuine concern? And are you curious about what's going on with the people who you lead and are your upper and middle level managers the same way? And I think that, just slowing down to do that makes all the difference. And I think the first thing that we need to be just reiterating to people over and over again is what you do at work counts. It counts. And that was the turning point for me was going, oh, yes, I want people to use their gifts and to serve in a local church. That's incredible, but not at the expense of saying that that's the end game. What we do at work is real ministry, it's real kingdom stuff. And I think we need to be talking about that over and over and over again.



And the more that we're able to communicate that and give people a vision for that, the more good things are going to happen in our cities. I'm working on a new project now with a group of people that is just trying to help business owners do, and I'll put this in the show notes, like a little menu, but here's a little menu of best practices. If you're just want some ideas of what it might look like to start having an impact, a mission-driven impact in your company, here's just six or seven things that we've seen work in other places, and maybe it's intentional hiring or maybe it's an employee benevolence funnel. But these are just small things that you can start introducing into the culture of your company that make a big difference. And they start to, so easy to keep all this stuff in our head and not to drive it into the DNA of the places that we work.

And so one of the things that I'm really passionate about in this next season and really passionate about working with the institute on is just providing very simple, basic tools that help people in positions of authority and companies create the kind of culture that they aspire to have. And just close that the distance between the things that we're actually doing and the things that we to aspire to do.

Brian Gray:

And for those, majority of people actually who are probably listening to our podcast, are asking the question, well, "What's my level of agency on some of these creative ideas if I'm not a business owner?" And the reality is that every single business is looking for solutions people and not problems people. Problem people are a dime a dozen. Anyone can complain, anyone can point out, well, yeah, but people aren't paid enough or et cetera, et cetera. But knowing this list that you're talking about, Dave, these are things that you can advocate for bringing into an organizational culture, even if it's





not your company to run because you want to create a place where employees thrive and where the bottom line is attended to. Well, they're really practical at different levels of agency in that company.

Ross Chapman:

Yeah. I'm thinking about the book that you wrote, Dave, the Art of Neighboring, and it was this charge to love your actual neighbors you live by and work is a great way to love your neighbor practically.

Dave Runyon:

That's right.

Ross Chapman:

And we often overlook it.

Dave Runyon:

Half your waking hours. That's right. A lot more time around in proximity to the people you work with than you do, now, I don't want to undercut the message of the neighboring stuff, but I want to say this. You spend a lot more time with the people you're working with than you do rubbing shoulders with the people that you live around. And so I'm a fan of both. What you do in your front yard counts. What you do at work counts.

Ross Chapman:

Absolutely.

Dave Runyon:



And here's the trick though, is it's real easy to get into a place where you just go, eh, I'm just doing a lot of good stuff. I'm just kind of a good person, and I'm just loving my neighbor all the time. That's a great way to find a loophole and get out of doing the thing that Jesus said matters most. And I think that's what I did for a lot of my life. Even as a pastor, I had figured out a loophole and to not actually knowing my neighbor's names and to not really empowering people and envisioning them with a strong sense and a theology of work.

Ross Chapman:

That's right. Well, Dave, give us, just as we wrap up here, what excites you right now in this conversation? What's something that you're like, this gives me hope that we're moving in a good direction? What's a fun story, a good story you can share with us?

Dave Runyon:

Yeah. Well, man, I've got a group of friends that we're coming together to do this thing called Work Well, and we're just starting to connect the dots between people who are mission-driven in leadership with their companies and these nonprofits who are in our city and who are trying to help people rebuild lives. I think intentional or second chance or fair chance hiring, however you want to say it, I think it's the graduate level of The Faith & Work conversation. And I think when you hire somebody who is on the margins, when you hire somebody who, and you're looking not at their resume or their qualifications as much as you're looking at character and desire and skills, and when you give people a chance like that, the retention goes through, by the way, and it can be super messy at the same time, but man, when it goes good, it is lights out. You've got somebody for life. You're not just changing that person's life, you're changing their entire family.



Ross Chapman:

Generationally.

Dave Runyon:

Generationally. And it's the only thing that we can do that I can see that sustainably it ejects people from one season of life into another and into sustainability. And I think that's what all of us want. There's just this amazing empowering, dignity, opportunity that every employer has if they'll think creatively about hiring. And so I'm really, really passionate and excited about seeing a movement of second chance or intentional hiring companies in our city, and to see how that's going to lift up the working poor in our city and to close that gap.

Ross Chapman:

That's awesome. Thanks for being with us, Dave. If that's something that your company or you would like to learn more about, definitely check out the resources. We'll attach the notes.

Dave Runyon:

We'll throw a link up in the show notes and you can go and just say, hey, here's the best practices. And if you want to talk more about the intentional hiring stuff, especially if you're around the Denver Metro area, but in general, we're happy to connect with anybody, but we'll throw a link in the show notes for Work Well.

Ross Chapman:

Thanks, Dave, Brian.



Joanna Meyer:

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