Joanna Meyer:

You are listening to the Faith and Work Podcast where we explore what it means to serve God, neighbor and society through our daily works.

Hi and welcome to the Faith and Work podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, Denver Institute's Director of Public Engagement and founder of Women, Work and Calling, and I'm joined today by Abby Worland, our Vice President of Operations and Finance. Hi, Abby.

Abby Worland:

Hi, Jo. Glad to be here today.

Joanna Meyer:

It's fun to get to see you. You have been hard at work designing and running the For Campaign, which is Denver Institute's five-year strategic plan and funding project, and this campaign has required a ton of work behind the scenes. I'm wondering what has been a highlight of running that for you?

Abby Worland:

Yes, it has been a great and very busy last few months and I know you said I'm designing and running the For Campaign, very much, it's been a team effort. Every single member of our team has had a lot to do with the For Campaign. I think a personal highlight for me is we redid our website as part of the For Campaign and I learned so much about the backend of websites and the number of people and design that goes into it and I just have a much greater respect for all of that work that goes on behind the scenes for programmers, designers, developers, all of that. And I just have a greater respect for the work that they do to make every website you go to functional and beautiful. And that has been a real highlight and a really great learning experience for me.

Joanna Meyer:

That's awesome. If our listeners have not gone to denverinstitute.org, I'd encourage you to do it because it's a monumental improvement from what we were working with before.

So listeners, I'm wondering if you have ever worn a pair of Reeboks, I have fond memories of wearing some of their classic athletic shoes as a young adult and now you're seeing them come back. They're kind of hot as vintage models. If you've seen their new nano trainers, they are incredible, these multicolored shoes. But have you ever wondered how those styles make it onto a retailer's shelves? It's the work of an expert merchandiser like today's guest, Jasmine Bellamy. She describes herself as a customer-centric, product obsessed, data-driven executive merchant, but that just reflects a fraction of who she is. Jasmine combines consumer interest and her knowledge of trends as she manages both product life cycles, everything from ideation to performance analysis, but she is so much more. Jasmine describes herself as a practitioner of love. She's had a fascinating history shaping internal conversations around cultural formation, often known as DEI in the life of Reebok and has so much more to offer in today's conversation. It's going to be an amazing conversation, so I can't wait for you to hear it.

Will you tell us a little bit more about Jasmine, Abby?

Abby Worland:

Jasmine Bellamy has shaped design, manufacturing and product placement decisions at a lot of top brands that you're probably familiar with. Reebok, Gap, Kmart and Taylor Loft and many more. In her role at Reebok, Jasmine leads courageous conversations, an innovative and relationally driven approach to shaping their corporate culture. And Sports Illustrated recently named her one of the 100 most influential Black women in sports. Jasmine is also the founder of Love 101 Ministries and she's finishing a doctorate in global leadership at Fuller Seminary and her degree there is focused on redemptive imagination in the marketplace. We are really excited to talk to her today and to welcome her to our annual event, Women, Working and Calling next Saturday where she will be one of the keynote speakers.

This is the first time we've had somebody working in merchandising on the podcast. So two part question. We'd love to know what exactly is merchandising, how would you define that and how did you get into that work?

Jasmine Bellamy:

First I want to say thank you for the wonderful invitation to be here and the warm welcome. If I think about my background, I literally started out working as a sales associate in a Macy's when I was growing up as a kid. And I remember working on the floor and moving product around and saying, who is making all of these decisions? And that's really what led me first to pursue a career as a buyer. And so that's kind of what led me there was just being on the floor, loving the experience of working with product and wanting to know who was the wizard behind the curtain.

And in terms of how I got there over time, I started through some internship programs and really started in an executive training program in the earlier part of my career and really have just grown through the industry over the past 30 years.

In terms of what we do, if you think about anytime you go shopping in your favorite retailer and you see the product that you want to buy and you want to find it in your size and in the color that you like and that it's in the newest print, how it's merchandise, if you saw it in a magazine or if you saw it at the window when you came in, those are all the decisions my team makes. So there's a lot of analytics in it in terms of what is the right quantity that you need to be able to drive. I have P and L responsibilities, so driving the top line and the bottom line, it's not just going to a fashion show and picking pretty things, but it is understanding what consumers have liked historically and what do we think they would like next. So there is some risk, but there is a lot of historical analysis in the process as well.

Joanna Meyer:

So one of the things that fascinates me about the work that you do, Jasmine, is that you're not just a merchandiser, you are a theologian. And so I wanted to hear a little bit more about that, about both the role that your faith plays in your work, but also the journey towards a more integrated perspective of how your faith is really speaking to your work.

Jasmine Bellamy:

It has shaped how I live and therefore it has shaped how I work. So I'm sure we will get to this, but for me theologically, I am rooted in love and because I am rooted in love, how I show up as a leader, I show up as love even in that work. And funny true story, literally today I was talking to somebody from my team and it was an aside, a personal experience going to a store and it was a tough situation. She knew it was going to be challenging and she said, "I just started channeling you." And she was like, "I just kept saying, okay, let me channel Jasmine." And she's like, and it turned out to be such a good experience because she has watched me lead with love and she knew she needed to show up into this tight, difficult, stressful situation with love and it turned and produced a really wonderful outcome.

And so what it looks like for me is I come to work courageous, I come to work knowing myself really well. So a part of that theological work for me is a lot of introspection, a lot of self-examination and an openness to others, seeing people as the Imago Dei and what does it look like to honor them. So I just operate in very much from that space of faith and it just really just kind of impacts the posture of how I live and love and work. And so it's not something I can separate. It's definitely about coming to work fully integrated as my full self.

Abby Worland:

That's great. I think every industry is its own type of crucible that has unique pressures that shape the organizations and the people that work in those industries. And I just be curious in merchandising, how have you seen that industry shape the individuals within the industry?

Jasmine Bellamy:

It's funny, when I first started my career, I realized how much you learned or how you grew was based on whoever was training you. Retail is not typically, or merchandising in particular, is not typically a field where there are a lot of MBAs. It is very much from a... They're all generally BAs or BS or something like that, but they're not typically MBAs in advanced degrees in that space. So you very much learn from those who are training you. When I came in as an executive trainee, it was who is the assistant buyer who I'm modeling, I'm learning from them. Who's the buyer that I work for, I am learning and modeling from them. That is typically how the industry kind of goes over time.

Part of the reason why I went to business school to get my MBA was I wanted to break that mold. I wanted to be able to see past blind spots. I wanted to see my business more holistically, not just from a function or categorical lens. I wanted to understand business more dynamically and I always bought the approach as a marketer to the role. So understanding consumer insights, understanding the competitive industry and the competitive landscape and how does that then inform how I work?

I think the interesting piece to it is that retail typically, is you're shaped by whoever you work for, and I was very deliberate about expanding how I saw myself as a leader and how I bought my talents and capabilities to the marketplace.

Joanna Meyer:

Do you find that people carry themselves differently depending on the level of luxury or price point of the companies they typically represent? Tell me a little bit more about a type of goods that you're merchandising and how it affects the culture of an organization.

Jasmine Bellamy:

So a lot of my background has been in the apparel world and very much from as high end as working at Bloomingdale's to working at Kmart, right? I've run the gamut, and now I'm even on the footwear side of the world, which is a completely different universe than the apparel world that I've been in. And I remember even the pecking order of having been at Lord & Taylor at the time and going to Bloomingdale's felt like it was an elevation. But there are roles that people will not give me because I've not worked in a high end couture brand. It doesn't matter how good of a merchant I am, and I am an excellent one, they won't have a conversation with me because my pedigree doesn't have other designers on it. So there are those nuances in the industry as well.

But I personally believe if you are a good merchant, if you are strategic, if you have good product sense, if you are attuned to your customer, you can do it anywhere. But there is this thought process in the industry that you should come from the exact thing that you are now going to in the next role. And I just don't believe it is so. And it's partly because I've moved around in so many different worlds, but I have a fundamental skillset that is as a strong merchant, and so I can move from a Gap to a Reebok and buy footwear and bring all the same tools with me and transform the business wherever I happen to go.

Joanna Meyer:

So fun. I wish we had more time. I want to ask about some of the colors that you guys are sporting on Reebok shoes this season. I was on the website this week preparing and I was like, oh man, look at these colors. They're amazing. So I know there's a science and an art behind that.

Jasmine Bellamy:

Yeah, yes.

Joanna Meyer:

So I wanted to ask about your degree, it's in redemptive imagination for the marketplace, and we talk about that idea of having imagination for our work a lot at Denver Institute. And I wonder, I'm going to give you a two part question. The first is just asking if you could amplify that concept of redemptive imagination for our work. What is it? And then I want to ask specifically kind of how it applies. So I'll ask you that first question, what is it? And then I'll give you the application in the second.

Jasmine Bellamy:

I want to clarify that I'm not looking just at the retail industry. And this idea of redemptive imagination really came out of this spirit that I posture as a joyful disruptor, that I got to a place and realized that the model of business, the marketplace in general, is based on a set of values that came out of a particular context and a time in our history as a world, not even just a nation. And so if we're not mindful of what those values were, then we might hit our heads against a wall when it doesn't operate the way we might want it to. And so part of being a joyful disruptor is disrupting the status quo and saying there's an opportunity for a whole new model. There's a whole new way of being, a whole new way of being in the marketplace that will also lead to flourishing.

And so as we already discussed, I operate with love. Well, the marketplace was really based on fear and it wasn't based on the Imago Dei, it was based on objectification. And so for me, the redemptive imagination is that those are not life giving values. And so what would it look like if we imagined a new system that was based on love in human flourishing? How might we do business differently? How would we set up the whole game to be different if we imagined something different?

And so the redemptive imagination for me is about redemption. It's this being able to transform context and be able to come to a different outcome than the outcome that we have and really the audacity to imagine it and actually put it in a practice and live it out. So that's really what the journey will be about and it's looking at the systems that we have. It's interdisciplinary work for sure, looking at what it is to be human and what is it to be human at work, but that's really about just approaching with a whole new lens with a different outcome, so to speak, as our goal.

Joanna Meyer:

I'm guessing that you show up in corporate spaces in a different way than the average executive. I'm just wondering how people respond when you start using this language of love in a business setting.

Jasmine Bellamy:

I do show up differently, but I think what... It's funny, because I show up with love, a lot of times people will ask me, do I use the word love? And I'm like, "Yeah, exactly." But more so it's that I am being love. So I don't have to run around using the word love. I am treating people with love, whether that's I am honoring a person and celebrating them, whether it's I am seeing someone and whether it's I put... It's funny, just today I was like, I have two brand new assistants and I'm like, I need to get on their calendars. The fact that I think I should, right? Somebody else might say, well, you don't have time for that, but it's because I want to know their stories and because I'll know their stories, I'll be able to understand their developmental path on my team.

It's also making sure that I am open to listen, that I'm growing and I'm not walking into a space as the authority, but that I am posturing a space where voices are being heard and I'm noticing when someone's silent and not sharing and I invite them into the conversation and that I know that I'll be smarter based on what they tell me and what they bring into the conversation. And so it's more of that.

It also looks like not tolerating fear. I've named fear before. This behavior is trying to dominate and it's trying to cultivate fear. And I'm not here for that. So I also push back as well. But the goal always really is that if our potential is unleashed, that the outcomes for the company will also be unleashed and fear, while we use it, it is not the thing that is going to encourage people to really be their fullest selves. And so I see them is a big piece. I listen to them, I'm open to be changed by them and I share myself with them. And so that's the posture really, that has become characteristic, I would say, of how I lead in any given organization.

Abby Worland:

That's so interesting. I love my job, but if I were to leave my job, I would want to come work for you to think about somebody who shows up with that sort of posture. And that's a really different posture from a lot of people that are in the workplace. And I think that sort of posture comes from a deep connection with the Lord. And I just love to hear what are some of the actual practices or routines or things that you do that help you stay grounded as a leader in your faith that help you maintain a posture like that in your work?

Jasmine Bellamy:

Yeah, that's one of my favorite questions. One, I actually just recently wrote on Rest, Sabbath and Play. So those are good places to speak to what my practices look like. So from a rest perspective, I have a retreat practice, so I take time for retreat every quarter because that ability to be able to be still, to unplug, to become centered, to be open, to spend a longer period of time or extended period of time with God is really, really critical for me to be able to understand the path forward. But what it looks like on a daily basis, I have at least an hour silence and solitude practice on a daily basis where I'll wake up earlier than I need to just to sit. And sometimes it can often look like writing that could come from it. It could look like listening to worship music as a part of it. But a lot of the time it's just sitting and being open and being responsive to the stirring of the Holy Spirit.

And for me, it is in the morning as I'm waking up because it is the time where I'm most unguarded. And so I can see what spirit is up to just by what am I dreaming about. And so I can transition from the sleep to the wakeness by asking the question of what is it that you are showing me in this dream?

And just sitting with an open posture. And so sometimes all of a sudden a scripture will come and then I'll go to that scripture and I can sit in that whole chapter and like, "Oh my goodness."

It's interesting because when I was writing that piece, it wasn't till after I finished it that the next morning I had one of the most profound moments with God. And I remember just articulating after that that this time in silence, in solitude, and being led through the scripture, this is the truest, most realest, vulnerable thing that I know, and it is the most life-giving thing for me. And so it's those kinds of practices that really allow me to be grounded and centered in God so that I can move with God in everything that I'm doing. So that's pretty much just what it kind of looks like on a daily basis.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Hi, I'm Jeff Hoffmeyer, Vice President of Advancement here at Denver Institute for Faith and 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 have exclusive access to private digital content, personalized vocational coaching, and discounts for Denver Institute content and experiences. To become a monthly partner, simply visit denverinstitute.org/give or see the show notes in today's episode. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Joanna Meyer:

As you talk about to quote St. Thérèse of Lisieux, that your vocation is love or that you're a practitioner of love, my two-parter is like, how in the heck did you begin to experience God in that way? And the second is like, okay, so what does that mean in your daily work? So let's just start there. As I talk to you, I think Jasmine experiences God's love in a way that's deeper and richer than I experienced his love in my own life. So how did that happen?

Jasmine Bellamy:

So the funny thing is, someone asked me one day if I had actually thought about love, essentially, I'm kind of paraphrasing, but from God's point of view and what would that look like to live it? And I remember, and this was only 2018, and I remember saying, how is it that I've been in church my whole life and no one has ever asked me that question, and I've never thought about that question? And from there, I became committed to essentially being a student of love. What would it look like if I started writing down all the things? And so literally I wrote down every scripture that had the word love in it, and I just started to write and study. And then I got this wider view of what love looks like beyond God is love and the love chapter, it became much more in depth, and I could connect the dots together where there could be a scripture that doesn't actually use the word love, but it's all the characteristics of love. And I just started connecting all the dots.

And from there I realized for me, I was practicing love in my life. I call it my Love Practice. And I actually thought I had invented that phrase, although in the study realized that Bell Hooks said it before me, that Erich Fromm from said it before her, and I had no idea. So I also knew that I was onto something because it just came up in me. It was because at the time, I was also cultivating a yoga practice and a meditation practice. And so I put practice in conjunction with love because I realized it was the same kind of discipline, a coming back to it, a beginning again, but I realized it had a greater complexity because in a yoga practice and in a meditation practice, it's just me and myself, whether it's on the mat or on the cushion, but a love practice practices this dance with self, with God, with others, and that makes it entirely more complex.

And so that same kind of grace of beginning again and putting into practice, and part of the mantra of Love 101 is love is a practice, what we practice, we become that it is this rhythm of doing it and coming back to it again and again, and that self-examination to be able to hold myself accountable to say, how did I do? And where might I find an invitation from God to go a little further or a little deeper? And knowing that when that opportunity comes around with the cyclical nature of how life is, that I get to come back to that thing again, but as a different me and I then actually grow because now I'm not responding to it the same way I did before. So the call to love from my own life turned me into a student of love, which led me to the practice of love.

Abby Worland:

Thinking that love, we have a small vision of what love could be like. Love doesn't have to be soft, it doesn't have to be passive, it doesn't have to be quiet. That love is powerful, and I think that's a good reminder for us all.

Jasmine Bellamy:

I would just say it's a both and, right? It can be those things. It can be gentle. Gentle is definitely the word. And sometimes silence is better. So it's a both and, but it's not to your point, we just don't have an expansive enough view of what love is.

Abby Worland:

Yeah, such a good reminder. In our introduction, we mentioned that Sports Illustrated named you one of the 100 most influential women and Black women in sports. And so first of all, congratulations, that's a huge honor, and I want to talk a little bit about the fact that that honor flows both from your professional expertise and accomplishments, but also from the role you've played in different corporations shaping their approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion. And so tell us a little bit about how you think about DEI or diversity, equity and inclusion and your approach to that.

Jasmine Bellamy:

Yeah, thank you for that question. So I was asked to lead change management around United Against Racism. So the company was committed to becoming anti-racist. And when I was invited to do that, I was also in seminary at the time, and it was after the murder of George Floyd. And there was a moment of convergence, is what one of my classmates described it, in that I knew that this problem of racism was ultimately a spiritual problem. And because I knew it was a spiritual problem, it required a spiritual response. And as I sat with the complexity of that, it allowed me to see, well, what are the obstacles? What is the opposition? What really is at work? And so, one, understanding that oftentimes there is distance, and so proximity becomes really important. How can I get closer to you as a human to actually see you as a human and not the stereotype of you that I have in my head, and that I can do that and learn through hearing your story and the power of narrative?

I often refer to Thich Nhat Hanh in this particular instance because Thich Nhat Hanh actually was the person that Dr. King recommended to be the Nobel Peace Prize winner after he won it. And I mean, he's an amazing human. He passed a couple years ago, but he had this question of how do I love my enemy? And he said, you love your enemy by understanding them, and once you understand them, they cease becoming your enemy. And so that became such a bridge for me on how to do this difficult work, that if we could focus more on understanding and understanding coming again by being open, by listening, by proximity, then in and of itself, we're going to start making that bridge to no longer being enemies. And that really became the baseline of how I did the work, but also understanding some really core values or pillars, a pillar of one community that we're all here together, that as a company, we had to see ourselves as a community of people, that in that we also had to understand or be open to change.

And the change meaning that we invite each other to grow and change. And so the willingness to be able to be changed by another became really important. And also the power of conversation and that we would be committed to it. And that would be, I would say, the pillars of how I've done the work. And when I started out courageous conversations, I planned for six and they were six because they were modules kind of going alongside the intellectual DEI training. And that's the other piece. I knew it wasn't an intellectual thing, that this is an inside job. I honestly don't even use the words or the acronym DEI as much anymore because I do see it as intercultural formation. It's how we are formed to understand each other. And if we really look at it through a biblical lens, God's view is for diversity.

And so to me it's about how do we form that in us because we are raised to think about ourselves as the center of the world. And so it becomes a practice on how I can start to expand my worldview and see again others as the Imago Dei, not just myself. And so those are, I would say, the pillars of how I approach it. And every decision gets formed by that. I am very clear about the spirit of dominance and domination and control in the narrative, particularly of the United States. And that is the antithesis of freedom. And so again, I'm also looking at what allows me to be free and you to be free in the way you see, speak, grow opportunities? And so anything that interferes with that is an obstacle or a system to be transformed. And so those are the kind of, I would say, the biblical worldview that shapes my philosophy of DEI.

Abby Worland:

You mentioned one of them being the power of conversation and that idea of courageous conversations. Could you tell us a little bit more about what those actually are and how they accompany, you said the more academic intellectual trainings, you have those alongside, could you talk to us about what a courageous conversation looks like between a group of employees?

Jasmine Bellamy:

Yeah. The beauty is I've taken them outside of my company and I actually also take them out on the road to different conferences, which has been super, super fun. So if I gave you a view of how, I just did literally a 10-minute version of one so people could get a taste of it the other day, but they look like check-ins in the beginning, ultimately, where are we, how are we doing, to get a sense of how the humans who are showing up are? I start with a survey where you can see a word cloud of people typing in the words of where they are, and it allows you to acknowledge what is in the room with you that is unsaid. So they usually start with a check-in of some sort.

At times, if I'm "teaching" on a topic, I've used a particular video that would engage us visually to look at unconscious bias at work. And so we might start with showing the video and getting people to just kind of sit at it, and then I'll take another survey. And how do you feel now that you've seen this, and be able to get feedback and then use that as an opportunity to open up in the conversation. And what generally happens, and I'll say this, a courageous conversation started out virtually, it started out during the pandemic, but they also happen live and in person, which is great. The power of using the surveys is it does give a bit of anonymity so people can be really honest about what's going on with them, but it also holds us all accountable when we see the words on the screen that says where people are.

But usually after we've had those kinds of engagements, particularly in the virtual sense or the virtual platform, the comment section goes bananas. People are typing and I mean there's times it has felt like I was buried underneath all of the words. They were coming so quickly. And people usually would jump on camera because something that was said resonated with them and they wanted to share. The beauty of courageous conversations has been you have all of these people from diverse backgrounds, diverse cultural context in one conversation on a particular topic. And so when people start sharing stories, your eyes are being opened because you're hearing something that is not your experience, but it is now allowing you to expand and grow. So you might have a parent who's wrestling with something with their young adult, and then you might have the young adult in the room who is struggling with something with their parent. And when they share their experience in that space, both of them have now seen the other in a different way and in a more compassionate way because they've had this real exchange.

And so usually they're very organic. They're very organic because it really is driven by what people bring on their hearts, and that's what kind of further continues the conversation. But it is a container. It is very much a container where we are holding people in love in a space where we are very mindful of the fragility in it. I will tell you that people at work have called it therapy. They've called it church. They've used that kind of language to explain how deep it goes, but the beauty of it really is that we can hold this space that is open that is without judgment and be able to be changed by another by hearing their story and cultivating the empathy. And the beauty of it is that certain things start to come out over time.

So again, I started out with the intention of having six, and I'm up to number 24, so we've never stopped. And to be honest, it's the community that said, this is about who we are and we're not stopping. And they change over time. So now they're not about unconscious bias. They're about what might be going on in our community, what might it look like to be a conscious and courageous leader? What would it look like to create behaviors in our community that our life giving for all of us so that we can actually put into practice the things that we all agree and align on?

Joanna Meyer:

I wanted to ask a little bit about just the discomfort that can come from engaging these conversations from my point of reference so you know my context, I was talking to a loved one who had used the phrase "At war against," fill in the blank. It feels like the world is at war against white men, or it feels like the world is at war against Black men. Even you can fill in that blank with almost any category, but I think there is that sense of people feeling beleaguered that they can't show up and find their way through this cultural moment, and that reflects a wide diverse range of people that feel that level of discomfort. And I just wondered what it looks like to be able to hear that real pain and help people, whether it's real or perceived or... It's complex, but how do you help people begin to move through that? I'm guessing faith informs that leadership and guiding people through.

Jasmine Bellamy:

Yeah, I think, one, it's by... I mean, that's the reason why we open with a check-in, to be able to name what it is that I'm feeling and it be welcomed in that space. And going back to what I said earlier about love being the most durable power is that love is not scared about any of those feelings. Love is at home actually in all of those feelings and all of the concerns and all the things we're thinking and our fears of change and all of that, love sits right there. Love is not going anywhere. So that is very much... We are very... I am a contemplative, so I can sit and hold that space and acknowledge and hear and respond to the heart of what is coming from someone and also letting them know it's okay and being able to hear them. Because so much, I use this framework of love, and the L in it corresponds to listen, deeply listen.

And so it's oftentimes we're either silencing people and we're not acknowledging. I'll also add that from a DEI perspective, I am not about just celebrating cultural moments 'cause that might expose us to culture, but it doesn't invite us to transform that intercultural formation that I was talking about. So I am also very mindful of my approach that it is everybody in the conversation. It is about taking people from the margins into the center and not decentering anyone.

And one of my favorite notes that I received from someone regarding courageous conversations came from a white man who told me how grateful he was for me bringing courageous conversations to work and that his eyes are opened and that every single conversation wakes him up. That's what can happen when we're willing to have and not be afraid of tough conversations. Someone asked me recently, and I just told them, don't take the bait on fear. That to me is the big piece, not taking the bait on fear, not being afraid that change is somehow going to disenfranchise you, but to really look through the lens of every human being the image bearer of God.

Abby Worland:

Don't take the bait on fear. I like that. Thank you. We're going to switch gears a little bit because I don't want to miss the opportunity to ask you about this before we close out, but next week you're going to be the opening speaker at our annual Women, Working and Calling event, which is our event really focused on a vocational discipleship for women, and what does it mean to show up as Christians in public life? And so I would love to hear from you, thinking about your role as a Christian woman in executive corporate leadership, what are some of the unique challenges or opportunities that your gender has brought to your professional experience?

Jasmine Bellamy:

Yeah, I mean, I'll put gender and race into that conversation, that to me, there's a superpower of coming to life as a Black woman. I mean, there's just our cultural context has shaped us in a way to look for the flourishing of all in a way that I just don't think everybody is postured through. So there's a superpower in that for me. And so I bring that everywhere I go. And there are real challenges. Will men try to dismiss me at times? Yeah. But love makes me courageous and I can name those things and I can also still operate with discernment and wisdom through those challenges as well, and be an advocate for myself and use my agency to speak through those challenging things. But I think that who I am as a love practitioner, as a womanist, all of those things shape how I move through the space, and it is going to be different. And actually I think that's the beauty in it.

And so to me, it's much more... Just like I said don't take the bait on fear, I don't get stuck in the US versus them, but I am aware of the challenges that show up and I have no problem naming it and then offering bridges to get somewhere else. So I'm not dismissive when the challenges come or I don't go on attack when the challenges come. I name them and I use them as an invitation to move forward in a different way. I just don't allow people to... I don't allow them to use their perceived power to diminish me, and I'm just very vocal about saying that.

Joanna Meyer:

Well, Jasmine, it is a gift to learn with you. Before we hit record, I spent some time doing event prep work with you, and I've just been sitting here listening to you and thinking, I think I'll be a different person for knowing you and having had a chance to interact with you this fall. I think it gives us a little glimpse of the goodness that will be coming when you speak at Women, Working and Calling in a couple of weeks. So thanks just for your leadership, for your vision. Thanks for modeling the Practice of Love through our daily work, and I cannot wait to get some time with you on November 4th.

Thanks for listening today to the Faith and Work Podcast. Quick action points. If you have not gotten your ticket for Women, Work and Calling yet, what is keeping you? Online viewers can listen too? We have virtual discussion groups available for you and nine host sites nationwide, so there are amazing opportunities to get involved. Heck, we may be sold out by the time you hear this, but if you haven't gotten it yet, we're probably on the verge of selling out. So get those tickets. You can get them at womenworkingandcalling.com and in our show notes too, we'll be linking to Love 101 Ministries and Jasmine's podcast, The Call to Love Experience, so you can continue to keep learning with her. Thanks for joining us today. I can't wait to talk to you again in a couple of weeks. Bye.

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