



Joanna Meyer:

You're listening to the Faith and Work podcast, where we explore ways to serve God and others and our daily work to bring life and hope to workplaces and cities. Hi, and welcome to the Faith and Work podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, your host, and I'm joined today by Jeff Hoffmeyer, host of our sister podcast, Teach Us to Pray, and Denver Institute's Vice President of Advancement, and celebrating your new title, Jeff, theologian in residence.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Woo-hoo.

Joanna Meyer:

That's awesome.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Thanks, Joe.

Joanna Meyer:

Tell us, what does a theologian in residence do?

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Well, to be determined, we'll find out, but theology is one of my favorite things. I've studied it, have a PhD in theology, and theology is what Denver does. We get good theology in the hands of the people so God can transform their lives. I'm a part of our team doing that by doing some writing and speaking and teaching and all kinds of fun things.

Joanna Meyer:

If you've ever listened to Teach Us to Pray, you know that Jeff has an amazing ability to take theology and translate it into very practical lived experiences. I'm excited for you to be in this role. In today's episode, we're starting a two-part series, bringing you some greatest hits from last fall's Women, Work and Calling



Conference. One of our session themes was on men and women working together, and it was amazing. We'll dig into this podcast, but you'll hear the first half of it today and the second half of it in the next two weeks, and it is truly a fascinating conversation. Jeff, I'm wondering, as a man, why does this topic of men and women at work matter to you?

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Well, first of all, I'm so excited for our listeners to the Faith and Work Podcast to hear what was an astounding session at Women, Work and Calling in 2023, and we're breaking up in two parts, but so much good content in just this session alone. I'm really glad that our listeners can hear. I've been in Women, Work and Calling the event three times now and every time I've loved it, and for a few different reasons. One is simply as a disciple of Jesus, I've learned so many important things. A lot of following Jesus, it's not gendered, it doesn't have to do whether you're a man or a woman. Apart from all of those important issues that the event tackles, I've grown in my ability to follow Jesus through the things that are said in that room. That's part of it.

Then of course, a big part of it is the really important women in my life, first and foremost, my wife, and then we have two children, one of whom is my daughter. My wife, Heather, is a physician. She's also the president of the board at her private medical company. She's facing a lot of really important leadership challenges. Part of everything that we do for Women, Work and Calling and your leadership, Joe, it informs me on how to support, care for those women in my life. My daughter, Eleanor, she's just graduated from college and is looking at her own career.

A lot of the times when I'm listening at the event or listening, reading what Women, Work and Calling is putting out, I'm listening through that lens of how can I support these important women in my life? Then finally, it's about the women that I get to work with, one of whom is you. Right here on our recording studio is Catherine Sandgren, who's also on our team. We also have Pamela and Abby. We have an amazing small, yet mighty team at Denver Institute, and it's almost equal men and women. I'm always listening and particularly through this session, how can I better support the women that I work for? How can I be their advocates? How can I come alongside them? A lot of important material in this session about how I can do that.

Joanna Meyer:

At Women, Work and Calling, we're very clear to communicate that women's empowerment is not an end unto itself. Women, Word and Calling exists to fill a critical discipleship gap for Christian women that there's not a lot



of resources equipping women for influence in public life. The reality is God designed men and women to work together. We always want men to be welcome in that conversation. If you're listening and you're a guy, we'd love to have you join us Friday, November 1st at this year's event. I think you'd enjoy it. You would feel like it's a safe place as a man to come and learn, and it's just a wonderful conversation, which is what motivated me to share the content from last year's event on the podcast. Because whether you are a man or a woman, I think this session has value to you. The theme was better together, how men and women collaborate at work. Let me orient you to what you'll hear in this part one of the broadcast. You'll hear three voices in the conversation.

The first is Rebecca Johnson. Rebecca is a member of our advisory council for Women, Work and Calling and has worked in the corporate and nonprofit sector and as a consultant. She really has a specialty in helping men and women collaborate. Then you'll hear Sarah Evers. Sarah is, she started her career in campus ministry and then went on to work at the VOCA Center in New York City where she's a corporate consultant, helping people think about the intersection of faith and work. Finally, you'll hear Darius Wise, Darius is the president and CEO of Red Rocks Credit Union and a former board member of the Denver Institute. The conversation starts with a short presentation from Rebecca and then it transitions into a group discussion with Sarah, Darius and Rebecca. As you're listening to this clip, I want you to be thinking about the biblical model of male, female collaboration that Rebecca shares. Think about ways that it has become strained and then anticipate hearing about the unique and shared challenges both men and women bring to our interactions together. Hoff, and I'll see you on the other side of this audio clip, but enjoy listening.

Rebecca Johnson:

Let's begin with a look at some numbers about the workplace. In the Anatomy of Work global index for 2023, the software company Asana provides some data and those slides might be ready to come up right about now. Here we go. 55% of workers at collaborative organizations report revenue growth over the past three years, which by the way, have not been the easiest three years in the world's history, let's just say. That's almost double that of weak collaborators. 79% of workers at collaborative organizations feel well-prepared to respond to challenges. That's four times higher than non-collaborators or weak collaborators. Now, get this, 92% of workers say that collaborative organizations say their work has value. We want our work to have value, and that's versus 50% of weak collaborators. Then 87% of workers at companies with clear connected goals say that their organization is well-prepared to meet customer expectations.



That's more than double those without collaboration. These numbers point us to some confidence statements we can make. The first one is that collaboration is good for our work. The second is that collaboration is good for our flourishing. We know that collaboration can be complicated by gender dynamics in the workplace. As we talk about gender dynamics, and Joanna briefly acknowledged, they're hard sometimes. There are biases embedded in our culture and in our minds and there are very real realities of things like discrimination and harassment. I just want to name that here. If that is your experience, give you room to breathe and know that you're not alone, but also, recognize that's not going to be the focus of our session today. We hope to offer a more inspiring picture of what can be. This echoes some of the things that Tracy Matthews was saying just recently when she talked about the big story. We want to look at some themes from scripture that trace the storyline from dysfunction to function to flourishing.

Dysfunction refers to the impairment of a system. It happens when something is not working as it was designed, and we see this going all the way back to Eden in the Book of Genesis. Joanna Meyer, in her book, *Women, Work and Calling*, which we've heard about today, begins with the goodness of God's creation. This includes Adam and Eve as bearers of God's image together. Dr. Sandra Richter, chair of biblical studies at Westmont College says that we miss the radical nature of Adam and Eve standing shoulder to shoulder when we are not aware of the social context of that Hebrew scripture. Of all the creation narratives from various cultures in the ancient world, we find none other like Genesis 1 and 2. These chapters offer us a bold picture of belonging in a collaborative partnership. Not only are Adam and Eve equally created to bear the image of God, but they are given joint stewardship over the created world.

This is a picture of God's design for our humanity, transcending marriage and including all of us. Those who are single are just as much a part of this collaboration, and flourishing is where we want to be, but the story takes a twist and dysfunction sets. In your Bible, you likely see a heading added by translators at the top of Genesis 3 and it says, the fall. This is the part of the story when creation is disrupted by temptation that leads Adam and Eve both to make choices contrary to the design of flourishing that God had in mind. In the pages of scripture that followed this twist, the dysfunction is marked by shame and deception, by hard labor and striving by a long list of harmful behaviors that are then matched by a long list of religious laws that were impossible to keep in their entirety.

The poet Catherine Bond says, "We are shards, a shattered mirror of God. The laws established to guard against dysfunction make us all the more aware of our shortcomings." How do we move from this dysfunction into



function so that things are at least working at the baseline of what was intended? As we fast-forward through the scriptures, we read the laws and the prophets and the battles and all the ways that people were trying to find to function in a dysfunctional world. We see breakthroughs and setbacks. We are aware of the presence of God in the dysfunction through a flood, through a burning bush, as the walls of Jericho crumble, as the lions keep their mouth shut in the den, and even all the way to an angel visitation announcing a very scandalous pregnancy. We see God in these and so many other stories and in the raw honesty of the Psalms. If we keep fast-forwarding, and by the time we arrive at Romans in the New Testament, we see this in chapter 8 and verse 3, borrowing from the message translation.

God didn't deal with the dysfunction as something remote and unimportant. In Jesus, God personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code could never have done that, weakened as it was by fractured human nature. That shattered mirror. Jesus summed up the law code in a simple, but not easy words. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. This love continues to repair the dysfunction and carries us forward on the journey and allows us to work together as siblings. There's a Greek word in the New Testament used more than 130 times that calls us siblings. It's often translated brothers and sisters. That means we're family, which means we fight like family sometimes, but we're family.

As we move from dysfunction to function, the shattered mirror is reassembled as a mosaic and we can see again our reflection of the image of God. We long to move toward flourishing, which is a word we've already heard many times today. Flourishing is more than function. Flourishing is healthy and thriving and vigorous. It's what Jesus talks about in John 10:10 when he says, "I am come that you might have life and have it abundantly." The idea of flourishing returns us to the story of Eden before it was disrupted by dysfunction. The story on day six of creation when Adam Eve stood eye-to-eye, heart-to-heart, shoulder-to-shoulder. This story brings us to the Hebrew word shalom. I want to read for you briefly what Neal Plantinga, the former president of Calvin Theological Seminary says about shalom, and then we'll move into the interview to explore what it looks like in real life.

Shalom is the webbing together of God, humans and all creation, injustice, fulfillment, and delight. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or ceasefire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means universal, flourishing, wholeness and delight. A rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied, and natural gifts fruitfully employed. A state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as the creator and savior



opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. We are creatures in whom God delights. We are women and men as siblings, bearers of the image of God together. We want to go forward now in a conversation with Darius Wise and Sarah Evers. I want to invite them to the stage. We are on the way, we are on the path, and we want to learn from the wisdom they bring from their experiences. Please, join me in welcoming Darius and Sarah.

Parker Inabnet:

Hi, my name is Parker Inabnet. As a financial advisor with I Am Financial, I'm enriched by Denver Institute's programming and content, including this podcast. I love Denver Institute's mission to prepare people to serve God and others in their daily work so that workplaces and cities are transformed. I know my monthly donation gives the organization I love reliable support, plus I get great benefits like free or reduced admission to events and access to digital content. To become a monthly partner, please visit the give page at denverinstitute.org.

Rebecca Johnson:

I want to start with a snapshot from each of you about what you bring to your voice in this conversation. Sarah, could we start with you?

Sarah Evers:

Is that the ladies first approach?

Rebecca Johnson:

Yes.

Sarah Evers:

I grew up wondering why God made me female. He imbued me with leadership gifts and a strength that I didn't see honored in my faith community. I really wrestled, did God make a mistake when he gave me this DNA? Wouldn't I have had greater impact for the kingdom if he had made me a man? Because in my faith tradition that I grew up in, it wasn't appropriate for me to become a church leader. The only option for me as I saw it growing up was that I would then go into campus ministry. I went into campus ministry so I could work with the college women and have an influence for Christ there. I was part of a campus ministry that began to wrestle



with what does that look like? What opportunities are there for women? Then I was in leadership when they began to drop the associate title for women who were in leadership and suddenly, I could be a full-fledged leader, not simply an associate leader.

After wrestling with who am I, why did God make me as I am, how do I live out these gifts in an organization that wasn't quite sure what to do with me and then realized how they could employ me. I then ended up leaving that organization and launching a consulting firm. Now, I'm in business with two men and I am fully convinced that the Lord made me female for a reason. Part of what I do now is try to show up and the fullness of who I am, recognizing that it matters, my gender matters, the fact that I am a woman is central to who God made me to be and how I'm supposed to express his image to represent, to represent him in this world.

Rebecca Johnson:

Thank you.

Darius Wise:

I don't know how you follow that. I'm Darius. No, I'm kidding. No, it's a couple of things. First, I pastored for 17 years before becoming president and CEO of Red Rocks Credit Union. I was recruited into the industry by a dear friend at that time and mentor and over a series of about five years stepped into the role of president and CEO of the fine institution that I get to lead. A little bit about our organization, we're about 330 million in assets. Context for this environment, our board, our governing board is 60% female. Our staff is 65% female. My executive team is 70% women.

I get the privilege of leading and being led by lots of incredible women on a daily basis. That gives you context for me being here. I'm the father of two beautiful girls and two beautiful boys, one who's almost going off to college, one of my girls. I'm the husband of Chajay, my wife who is here of 20 years. I've got three sisters. I'm the youngest of three sisters. If you wonder why I am here, now you know why I'm here and I can speak to the voice of what it means to be nurtured by, led by and have the privilege of leading other godly strong women.

Rebecca Johnson:

Well, thank you. I am so grateful to have met you through this experience, Darius. I want to jump right into our conversation, which I know could last forever because there's so much ground to explore. Let's tackle a tough



question right off the top, which is where do we see women and men struggling to show up in collaboration?

Sarah, I'll let you take the hard question first.

Darius Wise:

Thank you.

Sarah Evers:

There are certain archetypes in literature that I think we play into all too often. I have worked with women who struggle with the damsel and distress when they're in the boardroom, who give up control or wait for someone to rescue them before they stand up or sit up straight and use that spine that God has given them to speak, to fulfill their Esther moment. If they are in that room, they're in that room for such a time as this, and this is their opportunity to speak. I've watched women wrestle with the damsel in distress. I sometimes fight with that myself, waiting for someone else to take the more difficult tasks so that I don't have to do the hard work. I also think we can swing really far into this overly strong lady boss, or hashtag girl boss, or hashtag whatever you want boss role where we then can communicate disrespect to other people around us or disrespect to people who might not agree with our perspective.

I have a mentor who once said that you only hit balance when you swing from one extreme to the other. Those are two of the extremes that I see when I work with women, especially rising women in the workplace. I also see that especially some of the younger women, have a hard time speaking in statements, something as clear as they will end their sentence with that upward intonation, which in the United States indicates a question. Sometimes I work with women so that they start to work on their intonation patterns and end it in a statement so it's a sentence, so people don't think they're doubting what they're saying. I also encourage women to stop apologizing or adding parenthetical statements before they communicate their ideas. I will sometimes say thank you for your patience when I'm running late, instead of I'm so sorry I'm late.

If we can retrain our brains to stop apologizing for taking up space, we're able to show up in the fullness of who God made us to be. In the Garden, God made man and woman to partner together to collaborate and that's the full expression of the godhead male and female. For me to come in and to stop apologizing in my femaleness and to be ready to participate and lean in for the moment that God has me there, that's part of what we're called to. Then just one more little thing, I think we need to take up space. Regardless of your stature, we need to take up space in the Zoom room. We need to fill that box. When we're in the physical room, we need to sit at



the table and throw our shoulders back and be ready and prepared to engage. I think those are a few opportunities that some women have, not all, but especially in the US and the women I'm working with as they rise in leadership, that's where some women have room to grow.

Rebecca Johnson:

Thank you. Darius, go it.

Darius Wise:

Can you call on me first next time?

Rebecca Johnson:

Yes.

Darius Wise:

I'm kidding. Here's my observation and I want to invite you into a small little secret. I don't think that there's much of a difference between how I've seen women show up differently and struggle in collaboration in men, and here's why. Because I think it's all rooted in the same sin tendency in nature, masking. Here's where I see women and men struggle with showing up in collaboration, masking, which is rooted in authenticity, which is rooted at the end of the day, in fear. The reality is, both men and women are weird. We're all weird, we're all afraid and we all show up posing. When we show up that way, most often than not, we're typically asking ourselves the question, here I am, one of the few men in a room of 300 or so women, plus those who are watching online. When I walked in this room, I asked myself, who do I think you need me to be? Rather than, how can I serve this group of people? This body of women and men. One is focused on me, the other is focused on the task at hand.

This isn't a new phenomenon. Jeremiah is having this really cool conversation with God when he's starting to move into his realm of calling. Jeremiah 1 and 5, write the verse down. He says, "This conversation goes really simply." God says, "Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you. I ordained you to be." For Jeremiah, that to be was a prophet to the nations. The fact of the matter is, all of us have a to be. The question that we have to answer when we walk into spaces and before we walk into spaces is who has God called me to be and how do I show up authentically as that person in whatever space that I'm in, authentically and unapologetically



as that person? That, for me, has been one of the spaces where I've watched both men and women struggle in collaborating most oftentimes is rooted in authenticity and fear.

Rebecca Johnson:

Thank you. I think one of the lessons we can take from the call to authenticity is the learning to embrace the other who does show up authentically. That's part of the work in collaboration is not just how we show up, but how we receive those who are showing up in ways that may be new and different, and even awkward, if we haven't been practicing for a while. Sometimes when women do that, by the way, we are thought of as being too strong or we feel like imposters. We're trying to show up authentically, but we've learned a different way for so long that when we do show up in our authenticity, let me get that right. When we show up authentically, we can feel like we're posing or imposters and there's a tension there. I'm going to actually give this to Darius first because he asked for it. If you would speak to that, if you would speak to how do we navigate that tension of showing up authentically when it's then interpreted where we have this voice in our head telling us we don't deserve to show up that way?

Darius Wise:

I think there's so much work. I think transformation happens in the context of circles, which I mean, it happens in the context of community. When we are wrestling with that tension of showing up authentically versus inauthentically, I think it's really important. I have a phrase that I use, like find your people, who is coaching you, who's investing in you, who do you have in your life that's a little bit further ahead of you that may or may not be in that room, but they know the room? I think one of the ways that we learn to show up authentically is we've got people in our lives that are able to see us and call us when they see the mask. That's a really vulnerable place to live. The truth of the matter is, all of us need that person in our lives who can speak truth as it relates to when they see us showing up inauthentically. For me, it's mentors, it's my spouse. My spouse does a very good job at this, but there are people in my life that can call me into my true identity versus my mask identity.

Rebecca Johnson:

Sarah, I'll give you a chance to add something there if you'd like to do that.



Sarah Evers:

Few people get it right the first time. Those of us who grew up with a fixed mindset, we will try something, we'll take a risk, and when we fail, we write it off. It's done, I'm done, I give up. I can't take it here or I'm just who I am and they're all wrong for not embracing me as I fully am. When I embrace a growth mindset, I can embrace an iterative approach and I can play and experiment with different ways to communicate. I'm not saying that we have to be somebody that we're not, but we do need to be aware of our impact and influence. The way that we communicate, how that lands on people.

When we have good people in our lives who give us feedback, we can trust that, we can moderate, we can modulate our voice. I had a client who spoke at a level 10, a passion level 10 every single time, and she was at the top of her division. Every time she met with her staff, they felt like everything was in chaos, everything was a fire, all priorities had to change, and it was just chaotic. As we started to work together and she recognized her level 10 or sometimes level 11 conversation, we started talking about creating those checks and balances and she invited her team to check in with her, "Hey, how are you feeling about this? Is this level 10?" She said, "Oh, no. I'm like a two on this. I don't really care about it."

Nobody in the room knew she didn't care because she communicated at a level 10. It wasn't that they were in the wrong, they were reacting to how they experienced her. She just needed to learn to modulate, to turn that dial on her communication, not stop being who she is, not show up less, but provide those check-ins on what she cares about, how much she cares about. Suddenly, the chaos in her department started to dissipate as her team members began to have courage to ask, to speak up against that passion. Where are you in this? She began to recognize the looks on their faces when she spoke with too much passion. She is a passionate woman, that's why they've done so well. For her to be able to excel still more meant modulating, meant asking for feedback, receiving it, and moving forward.

Darius Wise:

Can I add something to that really quickly? I think for most of us, and quite honestly, all of us struggle with this concept of limiting beliefs versus liberating truth. I'll speak for myself. I'm an African American man leading in a predominantly white space, whether male or female, predominantly white space who didn't have industry-related experience walking into the rooms that I was in. The boardrooms that I walked into were predominantly white. Another component of diversity is age, so predominantly white and older. I walk into



rooms and the limiting beliefs that were flooding my mind five years ago when I walked into those rooms was, I'm not enough. I'm not smart enough. My skillset doesn't transfer into this space. For me, one of the ways that I responded to that at times, and for all of us, I love what you said, Sarah, it's this iterative approach.

Anybody in the room always get it right? Please, don't raise your hand. No one in the room always gets it right. I would take this iterative approach to showing up as an imposter the way that I think you need me to show up or want me to show up versus showing up in my authentic self. Some of those liberating truths I had to use to combat just like all of you in this room, the limiting belief. The liberating truth to I'm not enough is I'm more than enough. I am more than capable to step into this role. I'm more than capable to handle this assignment. I'm more than capable to do X, Y, and Z. I think for most of us, the difference, Rebecca, between showing up as the imposter versus showing up in our authentic selves is what we choose to believe. What you focus on, you empower. If we're focusing on the limiting belief, that's what we empower in our lives and that's typically how we show up. If we're focusing on the liberating truth, then we tend to function more authentically.

Joanna Meyer:

Well, we are back after the end of that first half of the Better Together audio clip from Women, Work and Calling's annual event. Jeff, I would love to know, how have you seen male, female collaboration at its best and what were the benefits to organizations that master that?

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Well, one of the cool things about the session at Women, Work and Calling and our listeners are now getting to hear it, is collaboration between a man and a woman is being modeled in the moment by Sarah and Darius.

Joanna Meyer:

They did a great job.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

They have such a really strong rapport, respect for one another. Sarah is not afraid to interject and Darius is welcoming that. They're complimenting each other. That's just an aside, but that's one of the neat things about our listeners getting to hear this session from Women, Work and Calling. To be honest, Joe, and I don't think



you're going to be surprised by this, the best environment for collaboration between men and women that I've been a part of is at Denver Institute.

Joanna Meyer:

Oh, that's awesome.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

It's on our team, and I think we have an amazing team. Again, balance between men and women. I've thought about, well, why is it so strong? Of course, we have plenty of room to grow in this area. As a man, I'm listening to this session again wondering how can I do better in my work at Denver Institute with my female colleagues? Certainly, plenty of room for us to grow. In terms of I think why we do well at Denver Institute on our staff team, it has to do with structure. We have a lot of structure for our shared life together, our work together, both our shared spiritual life together and then how we go about our work. In my career as a pastor and now on a leadership team and nonprofit, a lot of my job is about meetings. My wife is always laughing at me because she hates meetings. I tend to actually love meetings. I love being with people and doing that shared work. Our structure for meetings is really strong.

Of course, that's a whole another topic, but I think it allows for really great collaboration independent of gender, but also not your irrespective of gender as well. The image that comes to mind often when I'm thinking about structure or boundaries is that of a playground. Back when my kids were little, I loved playgrounds that had really good fences around them because then my kids felt free to play. They knew that they were safe. As a dad, I knew my kids were safe. I knew they weren't going to go running out into the street. There is that element of protection and structure which enables freedom. I think that's what we have at Denver Institute in terms of the structured life we have around how we do our work together, and that structure enables freedom and joy. It enables each of us to be fully who we are in the moment and in the work we're doing. That's the best that I've seen.

Joanna Meyer:

I know, Jeff, that you often are watching the dynamics in a meeting, and before a meeting is over, if anything needs to be said to clear their air or to acknowledge someone's contribution or make something right, you kind of police the meeting in the best possible way. I, as a woman, have been the benefactor of the way that you've



done that. Because a couple of times, like if a conversation went a little bit sideways, you pull it together and make sure that we're right and the woman's voice is heard. You do a beautiful job of that.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Well, that's really encouraging to hear. Joanna, as I've said, attending Women, Work and Calling has been really important to me, and I've learned so much about really viewing the workplace and how I work through the eyes of women. I just want to ask you directly, what would you want men to understand about women's experiences at work?

Joanna Meyer:

I would want them to know that there isn't a formula to figuring this out, rather it's a process of learning and curiosity. That would be the biggest thing I would stress for men is to start by getting curious about the experience of your female colleagues or family members. It could be your direct reports or the clients that you serve. One caution that I would have for male listeners is just to be aware that so many of the structures, especially in the workplace that we encounter, have been shaped according to male planning and often, haven't included women in the process. It may feel normal to us because it's what we're used to, but it actually is what I jokingly call default male because it was envisioned and created by men without women's perspective at the table.

It often works for men without considering, actually, does this reflect women's perspective? Is it the best functioning environment for both genders to thrive? A book that's helped me understand this is *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Built for Men*, by Dana Criado Perez. She just highlights ways in society and workplaces that when systems are often designed by men without female impact, they're functional, but they aren't really designed to help both men and women thrive. In a way to get curious is just to ask gentle questions, like if you're out for coffee or driving somewhere with a colleague to a meeting, questions like, hey, what are some things that might be challenging for you as a woman at work? Or, who have been the most formative forces in your life as a female professional?

Just begin to ask those general questions just to learn more. Or you could ask, what do you wish our workplace had more of or was different in to help you thrive as a woman? Curiosity is the first point. The second is just a reminder of something both Sarah and Darius highlighted, the contrast between our imposter selves and our authentic selves. Often, women will feel pressured to act a certain way, or if a workplace isn't quite designed for



her to thrive, she'll often apologize simply for being a woman in that space. Sarah highlighted it when she talks about women that would qualify their statements. Women may subtly apologize for what she has to say, diminish the strength of her words or provide excessive context. I'm raising my hand on this one because I do all three of those.

It's reflective of women not feeling comfortable and confident in that workplace. Beginning to identify that and you can gently offer feedback to people. Not in a way to shame a woman, but to just say, hey, what you have to say really matters. I want you to say that with clarity because we need to hear it. You don't have to qualify your statement. Just helping women see moments that they may be diminishing themselves is a great way towards drawing out confidence. We're coming to the end of part one of this podcast. As a call to action, I'd like to offer a couple of next steps. One would be to show curiosity by your colleagues, whether you're a woman or a man, you can begin to ask some of those gentle questions to learn more about their experience. If you happen to be a man who's listening, who would you like to get to know? Who's like an easy woman in your context that you can begin to ask some of those gentle questions of?

Then a very practical tool to help you learn more is our Women, Work and Calling book called, *Women Work and Calling: Step Into Your Place in God's World*. It's written for a female audience, but I hear from my male readers that it's been a great learning tool. That may be a wonderful place to begin to satisfy some of that curiosity about this topic. Thanks for joining us today. We'll see you in our next episode for part two of this conversation. If you've enjoyed this episode of the Faith and Work podcast, please subscribe, leave a review, or share it with a friend. The Faith and Work podcast is produced by Denver Institute. We believe that when Christians work faithfully, the world will taste the hope and life that Jesus provides. To learn more or to make a financial contribution, visit denverinstitute.org.