



Joanna Meyer:

You are 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 your host, Joanna Meyer. I'm joined today by Jeff Hoffmeyer, host of our sister podcast, Teaches to Pray, and Denver Institute's VP of Advancement and our new theologian in residence. Hi Jeff.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Hi Jo. So glad to be back for part two of this really important episode.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah. This episode addresses common challenges that men and women face as they work together. It is audio content from Last Fall's Women Work and Calling event, and I am excited for you to hear this ongoing conversation.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Yeah. So Jo, let me lead off here. What dynamics have you observed that make today's episode so important and relevant?

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah. One thing I appreciated about this second half of the audio content is that we get a chance to hear some questions from the audience and you'll see that they raise very normal questions about male-female collaboration, things related to how do we have healthy boundaries and move past some of the fear that may come or suspicion of each other to really truly collaborate in a thoughtful way with integrity.

We'll also have an opportunity to talk about ways that women can show up more effectively in meetings. I think it is really powerful. We'll talk about that later. It's a thought-provoking episode. So before we turn to the audio, I want to remind you of what you'll be hearing. This is a brief recap of part one and then what we'll hear in part two. In part one, we were introduced to some of these biblical themes of male-female collaboration, and we talked about some of the unique challenges men and women face to fully show up at work.



You'll be hearing in this episode from three voices you'll hear the facilitator Rebecca Johnson, who's a member of the Women Work and Calling advisory committee and a really thoughtful leader in this space. And then our panelists, our Darius Wise, the CEO and president of Red Rocks Credit Union and Sarah Evers, who is a consultant with a specialty in leadership development who's worked extensively with high-level women leading in the corporate sector.

And what we want you to be listening to in this clip, I want you to listen for the practical principles that can guide male-female collaboration, as well as some common perceptions and challenges that can get in the way of our interactions together at work. So just anticipate that in this audio clip you'll also have a chance to hear questions from the audience and we'll see you on the other side with our own reflections.

Rebecca Johnson:

The topic of boundaries is where we're going to go next, and when we talk about women and men working together, we sometimes have concerns about romantic relationships or there are sport or recreational activities that one gender prefers over the other. And so we find ourselves on the outside of conversations because we weren't on the golf course or we weren't at the whatever it might be, and so we recognize that there are different spheres of life that we operate in and we recognize the need for healthy boundaries, but we also recognize that we have some boundary ways of operating that can hinder collaboration. I want to hear from you both on this and Sarah, I will give you first take on this one.

Sarah Evers:

Okay. Boundaries identify where I stop and somebody else begins. Boundaries in and of themselves are neither good nor bad, but I think a boundary life, living with boundaries can lead to health better than a boundary-less life can because when I draw healthy boundaries, I protect myself from somebody overstepping and over maybe building an addition on my house when it's on my property, and that healthy boundary prevents me from pulling building permits on their property.

When you work with somebody, or if you yourself, have boundaries that are way too high, it can limit collaboration. I think boundaries are helpful when they can be like picket fences. When you're working with somebody who's healthy, then you can talk to each other over that picket fence. But when you're working in an unhealthy environment or with somebody who is unhealthy, that boundary might be like a castle wall that is preventing anybody from having real conversation or they may have destroyed that boundary at all and are



running into your property, building on your house, vacuuming your carpet, which might be helpful, but they also might be breaking all the glass in your house.

So boundaries when they're enacted in healthy ways are very helpful. I have worked with people who have ultra-high boundaries that have precluded me from being involved in conversations that I need to be in. Or they have had conversations about things that I haven't been invited into or have happened away from my presence perhaps on the golf course or somewhere else. I think those are the moments when we need to lean into that winter season. Hillary mentioned that when she was in the chair up here. She talked about how she had a supervisor who didn't recognize the contribution that she could make, and it felt like a long winter season.

Winter doesn't always look that great on east coast of the US. It looks barren, it looks lonely, it looks isolating. It looks cold and covered in ice. But what's happening during that winter season? Without a restorative winter season, where healing takes place, where renewal takes place, then you can't have that powerful spring where the leaves and the buds and the new life and the vibrant colors come to life. That spring is necessitated or is birthed out of a powerful winter.

So if you find yourself in a season where somebody else's boundaries are preventing you from bringing your full contribution, that's where we as women need to run to Jesus and say, this feels like a winter and I am cold and lonely and I am left outside Jesus, open the door for me or Jesus, cover me Holy Spirit, comfort me like a blanket and let me wait this out with hopeful, perseverance so that when spring comes, I can step into the vibrant fullness of who you've made me to be.

Darius Wise:

So good. Yeah. Yeah. if you're going to bring the clap, you got to bring it. Yeah. I think the only thing I would add is alongside running to Jesus, I think there's also a place if that boundary feels like it is preventing you from moving forward, there's also a need to run to that person and communicate that reality that the boundary feels limiting, unnecessarily limiting to you.

I think that the other thing I would add to boundaries is boundaries are really about for me, protecting my values and the people I love. And not having boundaries, I love the way you said that, is very dangerous. And so being sure that those boundaries are communicated with grace and humility and that there's a space for open dialogue around how those boundaries are practiced and implemented, I think are critically important as well. And so, just being sure that as we think about boundaries, we're thinking about them with that lens. Open



communication, honesty, transparency is critical as it relates to implementing and communicating those boundaries.

Sarah Evers:

Darius, tag me in. Tag me in Darius.

Darius Wise:

You're it. You're it.

Sarah Evers:

I want to tag in on this, too. A lot of the organizations are moving towards having ambassadors for people who are underrepresented in the executive room or in the boardroom. I think this is where if you feel like you're left out of a specific room, you need to find your ambassador or your ally or your advocate, someone who will get to know you, what you have to bring to the table, and can bring your name up for projects and initiatives, places where you can thrive and you can shine and you can step out of the winter and move into spring.

One of the core components of the leadership academies that our firm creates are these executive interviews where we take rising rock stars and rising superstars and have them interview senior leaders in their organization. These twenty-minute interviews aren't simply so that the rising star can learn about managing complex systems, understanding increased scopes of responsibility, how to manage and increase P&L. It's also so that these executives can get to know these rising stars and can become an advocate, an ally, and an ambassador when they're in that executive room.

Rebecca Johnson:

There's so much here. I love this and I'm watching the clock and realizing that we could go on and on. So I'm going to give you a chance to arm wrestle who gets to answer this last question? Just kidding.

Darius Wise:

She would win, no way.



Rebecca Johnson:

But I actually do want to call out when there is a rapport between men and women. I want to call out what Sarah just did where she said, wait, Darius tag me in. I want to say something. And she just jumped right into the conversation. And I love just the role modeling that took place in that moment as well when there's a space that's open and you have that freedom in the collaboration. So thank you for modeling that.

Parker Nabnet:

Hi, my name is Parker Nabnet. 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 givepage@denverinstitute.org.

Rebecca Johnson:

As we talk about collaboration, we know that it happens in a cultural context. There are a room full of people here in Denver. There are nine sites across the country and reaching to Puerto Rico, and then 22 countries around the world today. So collaboration looks different wherever we are, and we cannot begin to represent all of that, but I do feel like you both have some wisdom from your own backstory and your own context that maybe gives a highlight of something from your context. So Darius, you're ready to go. I can tell.

Darius Wise:

Well, here's what I'm going to do. We're going to tag team this. Okay, we got this.

Sarah Evers:

I'm ready. Let's go.

Darius Wise:

Let's do it very concisely. I pastored in a predominantly Black context. In Atlanta, large church pastored in a predominantly white church in Denver. When we moved to Denver, we were planning to plant a church. Black



church is very, very different than white church. No way. Okay. Predominantly Black church, charismatic, kind of think Pentecostal. We had assigned runners in that church during expressions of worship. The white expression of church that we intentionally chose when we moved to Denver because if we were going to pastor in an environment that was 67% Caucasian, we needed to understand white culture and we chose that.

And here's the background of why we chose that. The context for why we chose that. We were curious. We knew that curiosity for us was the foundation of engaging in diverse environments. We wanted to remain curious about different cultures, different expressions, and different people. And our lives were made so much better because we chose to make ourselves a little bit uncomfortable by being in an environment that was different than what we were used to. And so, my advice around collaboration, if you're not approaching collaboration with curiosity, you're cutting yourself off from the true effectiveness of collaboration.

Sarah Evers:

Okay. Amen. I think leading with curiosity is a way to question and understand in a way that doesn't put people on edge. When we ask why questions about people, we build walls. Why is an awesome question to ask when you're understanding processes. Why is a terrible question to ask when it comes to people and why they do what they do. As soon as somebody says, why'd you do that? We all of a sudden feel like we have to defend ourselves. So those walls, those boundaries, get really, really high.

So when we can move towards people with curiosity, instead of accusation, we're able to enter a space where we can collaborate. The word collaborate is from the two Latin words meaning together and work. And if I go in ready to accuse, instead of ready to be curious, all of a sudden I'm not together. I'm ready to work. I'm going to take everybody out when I'm working as opposed to working together and evening the playing field.

I've got another thought. The other thing is that our organizational values aren't lived out when we simply hold up aspirational thoughts. So your organizational values are defined by the worst behavior tolerated in the room. It's not the aspirational word that we put up on the walls in the hallway. So when we can get curious about the bad behavior in the room when we collaborate, which means we ask questions without accusation, then we're able to understand where people are coming from, and what might be prompting certain behaviors or certain boundaries or reasons why we may or may not be invited into the room.

Research has shown that the presence of a woman can elevate the behavior in a room. Men can change their behavior with the presence of a woman. That is why co-ed dorms smell better than dorms that are all male-



Darius Wise:

Amen.

Sarah Evers:

The presence of a woman can elevate the behavior of a man in the room. So I think there's an opportunity, there's a stewardship, that we women have to come in with an attitude of curiosity and collaboration to be able to elevate the conversation and to bring people into this Eden space where we bring the fullness of who we are. Men bring the fullness of who they are, and we can build something for the kingdom together.

Darius Wise:

I'm going to make you really nervous, Rebecca. It is impossible to bring that version of yourself... Going back to your first question that you asked around where do I see women and men? I spoke to both women and men, but I want to speak to women specifically, as it relates to showing up in collaboration in a way that's not helpful, being overly deferential. I watch women far too often be overly deferential to men, and it's not helpful.

I've got a team member and she would qualify every statement that she made with an apology. Hey, I'm really sorry to interrupt or forgive me for making this statement. And I stopped her one day. We were in a one-on-one, and I said, "Hey, you minimize credibility every time you apologize before you make a statement. You're in this room because you're of value. Irrespective of your gender, we value your presence in this room, so speak with confidence."

Rebecca Johnson:

And therein lies, I think the tension we talked to earlier where that I'm not enough, is really coming through as apologizing. And then we have the tension of women who come up and show up boldly. And that's actually the first question that I have selected for the Q&A that you all have contributed to. So we're going to press right into that Darius, and I'm going to put this one toward you. Here it is quoted, as a female leader, I have found and I have been told that I am being emotional when I disagree, or when I am being straightforward, like my male counterparts, they don't receive it well. How best can a female leader work with men without being shut down by being too vulnerable and honest, AKA emotional, or removing emotion and being straightforward, which feels kind of emasculating? So that's that tension again.



Darius Wise:

Yeah, that's a great question. I think my response to you, and thank you for asking it. It took courage to ask that is there's a couple things. Keep showing up the way that you're showing up, and I spoke to this earlier, because that's who you are. That's your authentic self. If you're showing up with courage and boldness and tenacity and grit and strength, then be you. There is a requirement for all of us. Scripture says become all things to all men or women, that I might win some.

There is a requirement to adjust who we are in appropriate ways to win some. But you should never have to change who you are to please someone else. And so there's a tension. Andy Stanley talks about problems to solve versus tensions to manage. This is a tension to manage. And so, this is where I would say invite the Holy Spirit into that process and ask how. Because there is no pinpoint answer for when and how... It's a a tension to manage, and that tension is going to cause growth. And a part of managing that tension is having someone else in the room, as I mentioned earlier, that can see you. You don't see yourself.

Because we don't see ourselves fully and clearly. I can think I'm showing up. Remember Sarah talked about the person who communicated at a 10. That person doesn't see themselves clearly. And so having people in our lives that can say, "Hey, I know you didn't mean this this way, but here's how that came across." I think that's another way to manage that tension. Thoughts?

Sarah Evers:

Yes. Yeah. Yes, ahead. I agree.

Rebecca Johnson:

Okay. Yeah. And I think a nuance on that is that sometimes we're dealing with stereotypes, and so we can't always change the person across the table. The only person we have responsibility for is ourselves. And it may press us into discernment with the help of those, we invite along on the journey to understand if that's a place where we can really thrive or flourish.

Sarah Evers:

Yes, you can quit.



Darius Wise:

I was going to say that.

Sarah Evers:

If you're in a bad situation, the holy response isn't always to gut it out and to suffer. Sometimes you can leave if it's a bad situation. We need someone to say that sometimes. Sometimes we don't acknowledge the permission we give ourselves. So if you're in that situation, you need permission. Give yourself permission to leave if it's a bad spot.

Darius Wise:

I came home from a... I was in a role for quite a period of time, and I come home like most of us do, who have spouses, and I complain, complain, complain, complain, complain. My wife looked at me one day and she said, "Quit." And I was like, "You weren't supposed to say that. You're supposed to let me complain." I love that you can quit. You don't have to subject yourself to abusive environments because you feel like it's the right thing to do. Quit. Love that. Way to go.

Sarah Evers:

So we're talking about calling. So if you feel like you're called to your field, there are other places that are probably good in that field, too. And if you are in full-time, Christian ministry, there are other Christian ministries. We don't have to put up with bad behavior. And I think sometimes we think, well, God's not happy with me, or God put me here and God has a lesson for me, so I'm going to suffer for Jesus. And there is character that's developed in that. Scripture says perseverance is developed in that, but God loves us and it's okay.

Darius Wise:

Very true.

Sarah Evers:

And He's going to love you if you gut it out and bless you for that. And He's going to love you if you leave it.



Darius Wise:

We're going to get to four more questions. We got this. Let's do it.

Sarah Evers:

Speed round.

Darius Wise:

I know.

Rebecca Johnson:

Oh yeah. None of these are speed round questions. That's a problem. But I do have one that we haven't touched on yet, and I'm going to let you both think and then decide how you want to approach responding. How do we navigate age differences and power dynamics, especially older men and younger women? And I heard the hum in our room here. I don't know if it happened in the satellite sites, but I just want you to know there was just this hmmmmm.

Sarah Evers:

So I worked in that kind of environment for a while. As a young woman with leadership gifts, I was given the opportunity to step into leadership early. I remember one day sitting at the table, realizing that I was the only woman at the table. There were seven men at the table. Two of those men were old enough to be my grandfather, and all of them were married. All of them had children. At that time, I was unmarried and un-mommed. I wasn't a mom yet.

Darius Wise:

That's a new word.

Sarah Evers:

I had a mom, but I was not a mom-



Darius Wise:

Unmanned-

Sarah Evers:

Mom. So I would sit at that table and I would begin to shrink as the meeting went on. And I wondered what experience, what expertise, what credibility, what authority can I bring to this conversation when they've had lifetimes, more experience for me? Thankfully, that room of men, those seven men asked how they could be supportive of me as I stepped into leadership, because I saw myself as a little girl with pigtails. And as a mentor guided me, she told me, "Sarah, in your mind, you need to see yourself growing up from that little girl in pigtails into the fullness of womanhood so that you can walk into that room."

I recognized part of my stewardship of that leadership position was to represent the women and men who weren't in the room, who didn't look like the old white men in the room. And so there were days when I knew I had big meetings where I would put on and put off.

Like scripture tells us I would put on the armor of God not to fight the men or to fight for my space in the room, but to fight the principalities and the thoughts in my head that wanted to hold me down. I would think about about what I was wearing strategically. What belt of truth was I going to put on so that I could actually physically touch a belt when I knew I had a truth I need to speak? What was I going to wear to represent the breastplate of righteousness so that I could stand up and I could wear white and show the wounds of their insensitive comments without being angry and defensive and the angry woman in the room? How could I show up with humility so they could see the pain that their insensitivity brought? I saw you move that mic. You want to say something?

Darius Wise:

I was just going to say, you're preaching. That's all I was going to say.

Sarah Evers:

I'm making space. You want to say something?



The other thing I'm thinking about is I would wear a certain... I would always wear pink so that I could remember the women who weren't in the room, but I also was specific with a perfume that I would wear so that when my pulse raced, I didn't care if they smelled it. It was for me to remember that I am the aroma of Christ in that room. So whether I needed to sniff it so I could find my words or my pulse was racing so that it would heat up. But I needed to remember this was my stewardship moment, my Esther moment, for such a time as this. For some reason, I was the only woman in the room and I could not shrink back from that. I needed to use my words and not let my lack of experience compared to them silence me.

Joanna Meyer:

So I hope you enjoyed the second half of this audio from the Women Work and Calling event. Jeff, I would love to know your thoughts on boundaries. That was one of the themes that was addressed in this audio clip. They can be helpful or harmful. So I'm wondering, how do we maintain integrity in male-female interactions?

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Yeah, Joanna, I'm going to turn this question right back towards you, and I want to hear your thoughts on this as well. That word boundaries is used a lot. It's a complicated thing. I think one thing that I've noticed and continue to grow in and learn in is that I need to check in on boundaries often. In fact, way more than I do or way more even than I think I should. So I'm trying to develop that muscle more and more. And by checking in, just asking my female colleagues like, "Hey, how was that meeting for you? Or How are you feeling about that interaction that just happened?" Or-

Joanna Meyer:

You're great at that.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

It could also be checking in on my own actions. So Joanna, this about me, highly relational person. I'm a hugger. I might even check in with a female colleague about, "Hey, was how I was in that room appropriate or do you have feedback for me?" And then just constantly telling my female colleagues, I want feedback. I need feedback. Always an open door, even if I don't ask for it to give me feedback. So just check in on some of those boundaries. I do this with my spouse all the time, too. I'll talk about an interaction I had at work or some



dynamic that may include that element of male-female, and she's not afraid just to tell me what I need to hear. So I'm definitely growing in this area. And what Sarah and Darius had to say was an encouragement that I needed to be doing that all the more. But that's what I think. But yeah, share what you think about this question, too, Joanna.

Joanna Meyer:

I think there's an element because of being Christians, there's an awareness of wanting to have integrity in our interactions between men and women. And I actually think there might be a little heightened awareness of potential sexual tension that can exist there, which can be a very God-honoring thing. We want to be mindful of danger and emphasizing integrity, but what we often don't consider are the consequences of the boundaries we set. There may be good things that come, but if we're not careful, boundaries can become habits, and that's very different.

So this is what I've found in my faith circles that I run in that men will often default into relating to men that can be just in their interpersonal relationships, but in professional settings, it's a lot easier to relate to men. You don't have to have the same boundaries. And so what becomes just a default pattern of like, I'm going to go play basketball with the guys, for example, actually becomes a well-worn groove on our relationships. And so, it's not as natural to relate to or include women. And pretty soon, you find men and women operating in very separate spheres instead of having that hard-won collaboration that we see in scripture. And so that would be a challenge that I would have to our listeners of saying like, Hey, have you defaulted into relational patterns that keep you from seeing and engaging members of the opposite sex?

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Yeah, really, really well said. Joanna and both encouraging and convicting for me. There was so much in this second half of this episode. So I just want to ask you, what were your key takeaways?

Joanna Meyer:

Gosh, I think as we were reflecting on this, we both loved what Sarah Evers had to say about the armor of God. It was so powerful to realize that there are tangible, physical metaphors that you can create to help build confidence in difficult situations. I thought the way that they brought up some of the concerns about power dynamics were really fascinating. That was a question that came from the audience. And it was wild because



when it was read from the stage, you just hear this low ohhhh, go through the room because people were like, oh, we're going to go there. But were, I was wondering if you have any thoughts about that.

Do you remember that part of the audio where they were talking about, look, what do you do if you have a man who's in a more powerful position and is older than a younger woman who might be working?

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Yeah, there really was a hush that came over.

Joanna Meyer:

It was wild.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

So that moment you're describing about where Sarah goes into how she prepared for meetings both that day at the event and then listening to this session again, for some reason became really emotional for me. And I'm just actually trying to track that down. This session was good, and then it got really good at the end as the audience started asking those questions. And I think this is really the last moment where Sarah gets into that kind of preparation for meeting and what she was doing, specifically with her clothing. I think it was a holy moment. Darius even says, "You're preaching." She really was preaching. I'm even getting chills thinking about it now as we're recording this episode. So I think part of it is who Sarah is, in herself, her confidence that she has something important to say and that the women and the men in that room really needed to hear it.

So part of that just made it a holy moment. I think for me, again, as I said at the outset of both of these episodes for this podcast, I'm always thinking about the most important women in my life. And specifically, I think in that last moment I was thinking about my daughter, who's 21. She's graduated from college. She's about to step into the next phase of her learning and her career.

And I think just wanting this desperately for her, that she can speak truth and the world needs to hear the truth that she has to say, and she can put on this breastplate of righteousness and even the wounds that she's experienced as a woman. Men need to see those wounds and know what those wounds are. And then, that aroma of Christ thing, oh my goodness. Just for me as a follower of Jesus, to realize that I'm called to be the



aroma of a Christ and to have some tangible way to recognize that, it was just so good. And I'm glad our listeners have gotten to hear that.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah. As we think about a call to action from today's episode, I think whether you're a man or a woman, you probably have had a meeting that you've had to show up for that you feel like you're kind of armoring up. So I don't want to imply that it is only women that feel that way in meetings, but I do think for women who might be showing up in largely male spaces, there's an added challenge or an added need to armor up when you don't feel like you are heavily represented in that space, or you may not feel like you're heard in the same way. And so, a challenge for our male listeners would be just thinking about how can you create a more welcoming table at meetings? If you do see a gender imbalance, what might be steps that you could take that might allow a woman to feel like she doesn't have to armor up quite so much.

And for the women that are listening, I would love for you to re-listen to that section of the audio and just reflect on what does it look like to bring in those God-given attributes and resources that we have to speak with strength and confidence.

So we're wrapping up our two part series on men and women collaborating at work. I want you to save the date. I know it's early, but save Friday, November 1st on your calendars for this year's annual Women Work and Calling event. Whether you join us in person or if you're listening all over the US and the world, we'll be live-streaming this event. And so we challenge you to consider being a host site. We'll have more information available in the coming weeks. If you're interested in gathering viewers to be part of the event outside of Colorado, there's great tools to help you do that.

And finally, don't forget about our book *Women Work and Calling Step Into Your Place in God's World*.

Thanks for joining us for this two part episode, and I would love to know what you think of what we've talked about so you can always email your feedback to podcast@denverinstitute.org.

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