



Joanna Meyer:

You are listening to the Faith and Work Podcast where we explore ways to serve God and others in our daily work to bring life and hope to workplaces and cities. Hi, welcome to the Faith and Work podcast. I'm your host, Joanna Meyer, and I'm joined today by Denver Institute, CEO Ross Chapman. Hey, Ross.

Ross Chapman:

Hey, Joanna. It's great to be on the podcast today. It's a fun episode.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, it's been a busy couple of weeks here at the Denver Institute. We survived the largest snowstorm in the last few years here in Denver. So I'm looking at 17 inches of snow and actually a beautifully sunny day here in Aurora, Colorado. How did your family come through the storm Ross?

Ross Chapman:

Oh, we did fine. Three boys, all excited that they didn't have school, two parents wondering how we were going to get any work done, but it was a joy. We were all here together and that's a wonderful gift.

Joanna Meyer:

I've met a few friends that have said that it's really hard on snow days on the parents. We have had a big couple weeks at Denver Institute because last week was our annual business event called Business for the Common Good. We had almost 250 regional business and civic leaders together for a day of exploring a Christian vision of the common good through our work. And Ross. I would love your thoughts on it. How'd the day go for you?

Ross Chapman:

Oh, it was a really fun day. It was great to see people there, see some familiar faces. This is my second business with a common good, so it was just kind of fun to see it from beginning to end. Planning takes a lot of work and we also tried to incorporate some new ideas, just trying to give people more chance to connect with each other, build relationships and connections and then also, okay, we're hearing these good ideas, let's work together



during the event to try to apply it to our city needs and things that we see in our own workplaces that could be addressed with a redemptive lens. And I just thought it was a blast. I enjoyed it so much.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, one of our prayers was that we would see practical action flow out of what we heard at the event, and I think we're seeing glimmers of that in some really exciting ways. So I look forward to seeing those ideas unfold over the next few months. I'm excited too about where we're going with the podcast over the coming months. Last election cycle, it was really heavy on our hearts at the Denver Institute, so we wanted to be having conversations about faith and public life as it relates to politics. So we hosted an event called The Politics of Neighborly Love, and over the last few years we have featured some folks who can speak thoughtfully to faith in public life and we wanted to continue that pattern with this election cycle.

And so today is the first of a number of episodes that we'll sprinkle throughout the year in which we talk to people who are deeply involved and passionate about a godly presence in politics and public life as a whole. And so today we're talking to Michael Wear, the president and CEO of the Center for Christianity and Public Life. He is one of the most powerful thinkers about what Christian discipleship and political engagement looks like and it's a convicting conversation. And so I'm excited to share it with you. Ross, tell me a little bit about what you're looking forward to in this conversation.

Ross Chapman:

Well, yeah, I think what's interesting about politics is it's both kind of like an industry where people do work, but it's also something that impacts all of us because we live in a country where we all get to vote. We all get to engage in the political process, but it also, it comes into our workplaces, it comes into our church lives. It's in conversation with family members and it is also in the things we watch on TV and the things we read on social media. So it's a place of work, but it's also in the air we breathe. And so we feel like this is a really important conversation to have and Michael Wear is going to be an awesome conversation to kind of get us started in this because such a good thinker he is, had real-life experience working in politics and has done just such a great job of reflecting on how is politics forming us and how should we as people who are formed in Christ enter into political conversation and activities.

So yeah, you're going to hear that he had time working in the White House and also was deeply formed by Dallas Willard, who we love as a person who leads in spiritual formation thought work. So if you could just find a



person who had both of those things to kick us off, that would be wonderful. And we found that person. It's Michael Wear. It's going to be awesome.

Joanna Meyer:

Yeah, it's a powerful conversation about how our inner discipleship affects us long before we ever enter the voting booth. So Ross lead us off by reading us a little bit of Michael Wear's bio.

Ross Chapman:

Michael Wear is the founder, president and CEO of the Center for Christianity and Public Life, which is a nonpartisan nonprofit institution whose mission is to contend for the credibility of Christian resources in public life. For over a decade, he's been a trusted advisor for matters of faith in public life, including as a White House and presidential campaign staffer. He's the author of the Spirit of our Politics, Spiritual Formation and the Renovation of Public Life, which we're talking about today, as well as the author of Reclaiming Hope, Lessons Learned in the Obama White House and the Future of Faith in America. He also writes for the Atlantic, the New York Times, the Washington Post and Christianity today, and we are so excited to have him on the Faith and Work Podcast today. Michael, congrats on the launch of the Center for Christianity and Public Life. Can you tell us just a little bit more about it?

Michael Wear:

Yeah, sure. Well, it's really good to really to be with you. The Center for Christianity Public Life is a new nonprofit with the mission to contend for the credibility of Christian resources in public life for the public good. And we advance that mission through two complementary streams of work. That of spiritual formation or Christian civic formation, and that takes the shape of an ecosystem of cohorts that specific groups of people. So we have a young professionals network. We just announced a high school program, a five day civics program for high school students. We run a public life fellowship program for accomplished, established Christian civic leaders, and we do retreats for civic leaders and elected officials. And then the other stream is that of public imagination and that basically takes the shape of a research think tank and there we explain Christianity to the public and advance Christian resources for the good of the public, the spirit of our politics.

My book is a part of that work. We also have an annual summit in the fall in DC. We're very close to announcing the dates for that. It will be in early October I'll say, and would love for folks to join us in DC for that. And so that



is our work. Interestingly for this conversation and what I describe in the book, and maybe we'll talk about this, is I view our work very much as a sort of extension of the faith and work movement, and I very much think there's a lot to learn from and a lot to implement in the faith and politics public life space that is not all that dissimilar from the institution building we've seen as part of the faith and work movement. And so I'm really thrilled for this conversation.

Joanna Meyer:

I love that you mentioned that because been talking about what does a faith and work organization have to do with politics. And really when you start talking about public life and the common good, you realize that politics is woven through the operations of business. I think of our business leaders that think deeply about the legislation happening at a state and national level or public educators that care if bonds pass to support what they do. So there's a deep overlap in this theme of the common good. I know that is a theme that weaves deeply into your life and having watched your growth over the last few years, it's been amazing to see how God has uniquely shaped you for this moment in both spiritual and national history. And I'm just wondering if you could share a bit about your personal journey, both in a spiritual sense and how it weaves in with politics.

Michael Wear:

Yeah, so I became a Christian. I gave my life to Jesus when I was 15 after reading Romans. And up until that point, I had been pretty indifferent at times, antagonistic towards faith. When I became a Christian, I thought, well, now I need to become a pastor, go to seminary, become a pastor. I just wanted to do the most Christian thing that I could think of. And very thankfully a pastor in my life said, Michael, there are Christians who aren't pastors. And I thought that's a really keen observation and thank goodness for that. Now I was interested in civics. My grandfather served in World War II, came back, was not a very political person, but was involved in the community. I think I got the civic bug from him. And after I sort of processed some of these vocational questions, I decided pretty early on the vocational question of what does it mean to be faithful in and with public things was something that I could articulate it as a seventeen-year-old or so that led me to DC where I pursued my university studies and ended up having a number of opportunities and run-ins.

That eventually led to me working in the White House for three and a half years. And I worked in the office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships where I was helping to work with nonprofit leaders, religious ministries that were serving those in need. And it was an incredible time in my life, an incredible honor to serve.



Basically when I left working in a government role proper, I basically served for 10 years as a consultant helping Christian ministries and leaders navigate public issues and helping mainstream organizations that wanted to partner with the faith community. And it was both flowing from my experiences at the White House and in national politics and then also coming alongside and seeing from a different perspective, sort of the challenges facing churches, facing Christian ministries that we started exploring, launching the nonprofit where I currently serve. But it's been an incredible ride and we're building something that we feel really strongly about. I have a wonderful team of partners including my board, but also our amazing staff, including my chief of Staff, Phoebe Meyer. But we're still in the early stages. We're very much a startup still.

Joanna Meyer:

Phoebe is a friend of mine, so I love that you mentioned her. We'll just give her a little shout out for the amazing work and leadership that she provides.

Michael Wear:

Yes. That's so cool.

Joanna Meyer:

Okay, we got to hear about, Ross will kill me if I didn't ask about Dallas Willard, I know that there is a person from a discipleship perspective that has been hugely formational in your life, and that's Dallas Willard. Tell us how he creeps into your work.

Michael Wear:

Yeah, well, we all say, and I'll forget it if I don't mention now, he has a little lovely little book. I think it's God in the Marketplace. It's a very small book, but it's basically a lecture he gave to a faith and work organization.

Ross Chapman:

Fantastic.



Michael Wear:

Dallas passed about a decade ago. He was a philosopher. He taught at the University of Southern California for about 50 years. For a time he was chair of the philosophy department. He was also a Christian author, teacher, pastor of various stages of his life. And I came across Dallas my first weeks in the White House. My first meeting in the White House was with a mutual friend of ours, I think Gary Haugen, at International Justice Mission. And Gary was my first external meeting when I started the White House. And after that meeting, Gary sent a book to my office that was a 300 page philosophical tome. I was working 16 hours a day. I thought, this is almost an insult. Why is he sending me this book that I couldn't possibly pick up? And also, he's the CEO, what is he doing reading?

I just didn't know anything about it. My pastor back home, the same one who told me Michael, there are Christians who aren't pastors, rarely wrote publicly, but published a quick little blog post recommending this book, Dallas Willard's, the Divine Conspiracy. And so I thought, well, if my pastor back home and Gary Haugen are telling me I need to read this book, I need to pick it up. And it was like a second spiritual awakening in my life. That book is so dear to me.

Ross Chapman:

So yeah, thanks for sharing a little bit about them and why that was so important for this book. And I think important for Christians as they think about how politics shapes them rather than us shaping politics.

Michael Wear:

One of the unfortunate things that has developed is this idea that spiritual formation is what you do on retreat. That spiritual formation is what you do when you are able to carve out some time and rent a cabin in the woods. But that is not the vision for a spiritual formation that Willard had or Foster or St. Teresa. That is not. But for some reason, and I think there are reasons, these kinds of things have been quarantined into what super spiritual people do, but everyone has a spiritual formation. There's no getting around it. So this is a common human question, and it's also at the very center of what Jesus is doing in the world and what his call to us is about. About putting on the character of Christ.



Ross Chapman:

Right on.

Michael Wear:

Yeah, I think that is one of the corrections. So in other words, I am trying in this book, one of the things I'm seeking to do is to bring the sort of the audience, the readership, those who care about spiritual formation into contact with sort of the Christian living current events, readership, and they never should have been separated.

Ross Chapman:

That's right.

Joanna Meyer:

I want to read a quote from the book. You say that, "we cannot separate the kind of politics we have from the kind of people that we are," and I think that flows exactly from the sentiment you just described. I'm wondering if we could get your thoughts on this political moment. It seems like the last four years have just flown by. A pandemic will do that. But I'm wondering both nationally and more specifically the way the faith community, I want to hear more about how the faith community views our role in public life. Because you talk about that in the book. You're like, Hey, we've had some ways of framing our engagement that haven't been helpful. So at this moment, how would you describe maybe how you see the faith community engage in politics?

Michael Wear:

Yeah, I think for a long time, Christianity has been viewed in relation to politics as something that is either useless or something to be used. And I think that this is widely held and is not just non-Christians who view it this way. There's a lot that I could say here. I alluded a bit earlier, I think if we start with politics in our diagnosis, particularly sort of this era of politics, I think we can actually miss quite a bit. And so in the book I sort of start with this idea that Willard had around the disappearance of moral knowledge, which actually has a much longer trail than Obama Trump, Biden, whatever. So it has massive implications for it. And I do think we need to think about our conception of the gospel. Willard in the Divine Conspiracy talked about this idea of the gospels of sin management and what that might have to do with our view of politics in life in the kingdom.



I also talk about our political context and there are a number of sort of terms I introduce or share. One of them is political sectarianism, which is a framework that was advanced in 2020 to try to define and describe the particular kind of polarization we have today. The social scientists who advanced it said that political sectarianism is a toxic cocktail made up of three primary ingredients, the tendency of aversion, which is the tendency to dislike and distrust those who are politically different. The tendency of othering, to sort of place outside of the human community, those that you disagree with politically. And then what I call a displaced moralization, which is the elevation of political disagreement to the level of iniquity or sin or pure sort of contestations of good and evil.

This logic, this sort of air of our politics has disastrous impacts for self-governance. And the social scientists described that it also, and I think we're just becoming a lot more familiar and aware of this, political dysfunction never stays contained to politics. That is the nature of politics. Particularly in democratic representative, the state of our politics is a reflection of the state of our souls. This is the beauty and the weakness of democracy. Try as we might, our democracy can't quite get around the kind of people we are entirely. And so that is what we're facing. I don't mean to suggest that there are structural changes that would facilitate I think a better contribution sort of citizen contribution to politics and we should pursue those. This book is suggesting that even structural improvements have to emerge from a kind of people who can sustain them, who can will them, and that cries out for formation. And that's the subject of this book.

Ross Chapman:

A quote we also liked Michael, is that the crisis is not that we're politically homeless, but that we thought we could make our home in politics at all. And I think that gets to what you're saying in terms of we have politics ends up invading more of our lives than just sort of this thing over there that we vote for once every two years, four years, however often you vote, but it becomes something we talk about, something that we start to draw boundaries around who we like don't like, but you kind of make the case in this book, why are we trying to make our home in politics? And that led you to, I think this conversation about our inner life and who are we supposed to be as Christians. Can you just talk a little bit maybe. Is this a natural human tendency? How did we get to this point? And that might lead you into conversation about views of the gospel that might lead us in those directions.



Michael Wear:

Yeah, so T.S Eliot wrote that the folly of the sort of great human endeavor has been to try to create a system so perfect that people no longer have to be good.

Ross Chapman:

Yes.

Michael Wear:

And I do think this is a primary sort of political conceit. Look, there are a lot of ways to describe how our politics got here. In the book, I refer to American National Election Studies has been tracking trust in government. And trust in government is at an all time low. There was I think a Gallup survey that came out in the last few months that suggested that a plurality of Americans believe that politicians, people run for elected office and serve an elected office for self-interest.

When I'm speaking with civic philanthropy and civic leaders, I don't quite think that they have fully grasped the problem. The problem is not that there are some bad apples, the problem is that a large section of the American public no longer even have the imagination for public service being about service. So there's a story you could tell about Watergate and the Lewinsky scandal. There's a story about lapses in our politics. There's a story that Charles Taylor and Carl Truman and Alistair McIntyre are telling. And to an extent Dallas Willard is talking about sort of crisis of authority, a rise of individualism, rise of a therapeutic culture, sort of Philip Reed. So there are all these sort of philosophical developments that have led us to this point. And then I'd say there's a technological story around just the pervasiveness and sophistication of political media and tools that have ever greater ability to reach into ever more personal aspects of people's lives.

And then just finally, there's of course a theological. There's a theological story here. I refer in the book, well, actually let me say it this way, I coin a new term in the book that is derivative of and drawing on the term that moral therapeutic deism. And moral therapeutic deism was developed by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundqvist. They had interviewed thousands of American teenagers in the early two thousands and they used moral therapeutic deism. Moral therapeutic deism was the term to describe this sort of life outlook that had developed and basically moral therapeutic deism, it can be Christian, it can just be vaguely like deist or sort of vaguely religious, but basically there is a God. He does exist, but he primarily exists to affirm your moral



goodness and he'll be there in a crisis perhaps. But other than that, he doesn't want to and will not interfere with your life.

Political therapeutic deism, again, doesn't necessarily have to be Christian. Sometimes it will use Christian language in terms primarily because that's sort of the cultural background. But political therapeutic deism refers to sort of God exists to provide supplement or ideas about God exists to provide supplemental support for one's political views. And so the kinds of beliefs that constitute political therapeutic deism are things like one, God is on my political party's side. Two, my views on political issues are a leading indicator that I am a true Christian. Three, my actions in politics are justified in light of God's general approval of my politics. Four, I do not understand how other Christians could vote for my candidate's opponent. Five, it is clear and obvious to me which political issues are most important to God. I don't know if any of those beliefs sounded sort of familiar to you.

Ross Chapman:

Very convicting, Michael, your book was very convincing.

Michael Wear:

But this is another way to think about how we got to this point, which is to put it more succinctly and directly, political idolatry.

Parker I.:

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](https://denverinstitute.org)

Joanna Meyer:

You actually talk about how as people that can often be partisan-minded, they've taken the gospel and distorted it to fit either end of the political spectrum. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit more about that. What are the two ends of the spectrum and how have they distorted the gospel?



Michael Wear:

Yeah, so I introduced the two terms, the fixer gospel and the toolbox gospel. The fixer gospel basically refers to this idea, Willard called it barcode faith, which is basically the idea that Jesus primarily exists and essentially exists to take care of the sin problem and to provide a way to the afterlife. John Orpard called this the gospel of the minimal entrance requirements to heaven, and I call it the fixer gospel because I'm Italian and I've watched too many gangster movies. And you'll watch these movies and generally the fixer is the guy, no one even cares what the fixer's name is.

The fixer exists because the protagonist in the movie, something happened in someone's living room, someone's dead lying on the carpet and the fixer is called in to take care of it. The whole point of the fixer is, I don't care what you have to do, just take care of this problem and then I never want to hear from you again. That is the fixer gospel. We could talk more about that. The toolbox gospel is you can take out the tools, use them, and then put them away and then never see them again until they're convenient to you. And we see these things on the right and on the left and in the middle.

And these are just conceptions of the gospel, which importantly, and Willard was very clear about this, God can use many things that are not the most important things to be said, these are not sort of condemnations what they are not, what neither the toolbox gospel or the fixer gospel will do is naturally lead to discipleship. The natural outcome of these gospels is not learning to live your life as Jesus would live your life if he were you. And that offers a significant challenge, not just to, or even primarily to our politics, but to the church, to our lives.

Ross Chapman:

Yeah, I think I'm just really grateful for the way that you articulate those. You do a good job explaining them even in greater detail in the book. And it doesn't lead to discipleship, but it actually leads away from being made more like Christ, which is our goal in discipleship. So yeah, it actually goes in the opposite direction when you don't have a full picture and you start kind of letting that form you in not just your political thinking but your whole life, the way you view work, the way you view your neighborhood, the way you view. And it's just reflecting on the moralization. And then I'm going to ask a question about how we actually practically do something about the political sectarianism, but just thinking about that, there's a lot of moral certainty that gets expressed, and I think it's related to the fixer and the toolbox gospel without any real moral knowledge being applied in individuals lives.



And it's just like a strange paradox that that would be true. And you offer some things towards the back of the book, the means by which we might do something with a stronger political vision and a real intention to do something about it. And I loved what you articulated. You had three things. You said fellowship, service and confession as parallel things in the toxic cocktail of political sectarianism. Can you just elaborate and remind us what those three things were and why these three things are the practices we might want to go after as people who follow Jesus?

Michael Wear:

Yeah. So GK Chesterton wrote, he said, what we suffer from today is humility in the wrong place. Modesty has moved from the organ of ambition. Modesty has settled upon the organ of conviction where it was never meant to be. A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth. This has been exactly reversed. Nowadays, the part of a man that a man does assert is exactly the part he ought not to assert himself. And so again, the political crisis is a crisis of discipleship. And the crisis of discipleship in my view is one of a cratering, confidence of knowledge and the authority of knowledge. Who has it?? what authority does knowledge bring with it? And how does knowledge orient our lives.

In the book, so I describe political sectarianism, the book, I offer a range of spiritual disciplines and practices. Many of them tried and true over millennia. Others I sort of call 21st century spiritual disciplines that I'm trying to get at particular maladies of the day. But you raise fellowship, service, and confession. And I offer these in particular as counters to the aversion, othering and moralization we have. Just a couple of things I just want to say about practices. I think sometimes, especially those that have honor roll student types and sort of accomplishment minded people, I think sometimes people can hear about practices and they go, oh gosh, another list of things I need to do to be like okay with God. And that is not what we're talking about here. Practices are means by which in discernment with the Holy Spirit, seeking to understand what.

So think about the kind of person that you become when politics is in the room with you. Does aversion come to mind? Do you have the tendency to dislike or distrust opposed people who are politically different? Do you have the tendency to elevate political policy disagreements to the level of iniquity, sin?

You might want to rid yourself of those kinds of tendencies. And there are disciplines that we can put into practice that amount to off the spot, off the mark training that can help to reorient our hearts and our dispositions in partnership with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit so that we can become the kind of people who



will not respond to political disagreement with the cultivation of anger in our hearts. We can become the kind of people who do not go to politics to act out resentments that we have against other people. We can become those kinds of people, but it doesn't just happen. Willard said, grace is not opposed to effort but earning.

But Jesus requires our participation. And so yeah, what I will say is I find silence and solitude to be essential disciplines for this time in our history and technological environment. Silence and solitude, even just for relatively brief periods of time, can remind us that we are more than just the sum, an amalgamation of the various inputs that we receive from technology and media and people's opinions and all of this stuff vying for our attention. Silence and solitude, you actually can start to recognize that you're more than that, that you have a soul. And gosh, do we need a politics and a public life right now that recognizes that we have souls and that the people we're encountering have souls?

Ross Chapman:

I love this answer. And I just wanted to point out too, this political sectarianism that you talk about, the aversion, the othering, the moralizing. We actually encounter this in our own churches, in our workplaces, in our neighbors. These are the things that we actually encounter on a day-to-day basis. And you've given us three ideas here. Fellowship, service, confession, which if I were just summarizing, fellowship is I'm willing to hang out with you, I can be with you. Services, I can do something for your good, that might cost me something. And confession is being willing to say, I don't know. I'm not going to make this a moral issue, moralize it. I have humility to say, I want to learn, I want to grow.

I can understand what you're saying. And just being on the Faith and Work podcast, I just wanted to point out maybe the primary way you can practice those is with your co-workers, your clients, the people that you're around most of the time to say, Hey, what would it look like for me to start living out these disciplines a little bit more and trying to redeem and bring a healing to this toxic cocktail?

Michael Wear:

Yeah. No, I think that's right. And as we noted earlier, our workplaces are not void of politics and political iterations and those kinds of things. And so we realize our lives are not as segmented off as we sometimes act like they are and to think that they are. I once spoke at a church in New York and after the event there was a reception and this woman comes up to me, lovely woman, she goes, "I'm just so glad you're there in DC seeking to follow the Lord and be faithful. It must be so difficult. Politics is so corrupting, there must be so many



compromises." And I start to get the sense that she's glad I'm trying to be faithful, but I wonder if she thinks it's possible to be successful at that. And we had a lovely conversation for 10, 15 minutes, and I asked her, what brought you to New York?

It was clear that she wasn't a native. And she goes, oh, I work on Wall Street. And you just go, well, so maybe these questions of faithfulness are, again, not so segmented off. I like to say, and I work with, again, we have a young professionals community. We work with established civic leaders and politics is not uniquely challenging to faithfulness. Politics has unique challenges to faithfulness, but the question is, and you all know this better than anything, the question of faithfulness is for all of life. And I think public school teachers have quite a lot to contend with when it comes to faithfulness. I think folks who run businesses have quite a lot to contend with when it comes to faithfulness. And so these are questions that we can ask together and seek answers together and also realize that some of the particular questions that you're asking, I may not be exempt from those questions as well.

Joanna Meyer:

Michael, I have a final question for you before we wrap up. The fruit of this discipleship around politics shows up in the posture we adopt publicly. And you actually have a chapter of the book that addresses it called The Allure of Gentleness Christian Politics as Loving Service. And my jaw dropped. Even before I read the words of that chapter, just the title alone grabbed me because it was such a different posture than I've often heard in my own life and in the Christians around me. For a couple of reasons. One is just that it's not motivated by fear. I think of a conversation with a loved one who said. Last election cycle she said, "I'm looking for a street fighter." And I thought, oh, that doesn't sound Christ-like at all. What's going on inside that you feel like you need a street fighter in your candidate, but also it's really counterintuitive.

I think we see politics as something to be fought and won instead of something that we show up as a gentle-serving posture. And I wonder if you could just unpack that a little bit, both why is this so counterintuitive and what does it really look like to have a public posture of gentleness? I think that's very poignant for this election cycle.

Michael Wear:

Yeah. So at base level, it's a question of what do we have confidence in? I had the opportunity to speak to over a hundred congressional staffers a few weeks ago, and I spoke to them about this very thing. I thought, why not



take it to write to the most difficult audience perhaps? And I spoke to them about, in this particular context, the two high esteem we have for what anger can do for us and what we can do with anger. And folks who are working in politics, this is a very difficult conversation because they are subject to the norms of politics in really direct ways. And so it's a pastoral sort of thing to talk through with folks. Here's what I've been surprised with is how beholding so many who don't have any political responsibility outside of being a citizen, how beholden so many have made themselves to the toxic logic of our politics, right? It's a really interesting thing for, I mean, I don't know exactly who you were speaking to. Maybe she was a city council person. Maybe she was-

Joanna Meyer:

Ordinary voter.

Michael Wear:

Exactly. Very interesting thing that the woman at the grocery store that you come across thinks she needs a street fighter. That is the sort of political. I'm honestly still trying to understand what pressures people are feeling in their lives that make them unable to imagine in their own lives. So this isn't about what politicians are doing. This is about what you are doing. What is it about your life that makes you think that you need anger when politics is in the room with you?

And again, there's a rich Christian tradition around these conversations. There's a scriptural admonition to be slow to anger, the testimony of saints over millennia. Augustine says even legitimate reasons for anger. You should be cautious about letting those inside the doors of your heart because once admitted, they will fester. And to paraphrase Augustine, you think that you are cultivating anger, but really anger is cultivating you. The easiest people to manipulate in our politics are those who are angry. Because they'll follow that anger wherever you point to. But Christians, so write this, this is the very crux of the book. This is the very crux of I think, the crisis, which is people will say, yeah, Jesus, that love your enemy stuff. In my personal life, yeah, I'll try and do that. That's fine. In politics, that's ludicrous.

What are you even talking about? That's not what politics is for. Yeah, I am trying to work on anger in my own personal life, but of course I should be angry about politics. If you're not angry, you're not paying attention, right? As if anger is the best response that we could offer to injustice or to things going wrong, show me the scriptural citation for that.



I think the cultivation of love, I think the cultivation of willing the good for those suffering in justice, I think that's a more productive response. I could point to scripture that would back that up, but the thing is, we don't think Christian knowledge holds up in politics. And the argument of the book is this is a political crisis. Yes. But it is fundamentally a discipleship crisis because the same person who doesn't think that the way of Jesus holds up in politics, I promise you that that logic does not stay quarantined to politics. It reaches other areas of their life. And so it's the business owner who's at the end of the year doing taxes and knows, look, I don't know if we're going to make it, if I don't just mess around with the numbers a little bit. And everyone in my sector, I know my competitors are doing it, so I'm not really worse than anybody else.

And I'm hiring a lot of people. Doesn't the Lord want us to provide jobs for people and be creators? There is a creation mandate, and so the pressure is on and there are tools of the trade that I can use that'll just get me by, and then my business will do great things for the Lord. And that's how our life operates, and I need to be wary of that in my life. We need to be wary about these places in our life where we do not think Jesus is up to the task. Gentleness is a fruit of the spirit. So at what area of our life does the spirit of God subject itself to another spirit?

Joanna Meyer:

So convicting Michael, I think we just need to sit with that. There's no easy way to wrap this up because what you're talking about is, as Willard would say, a renovation of the heart. This is not an easy process. And I think if anything, I would hope that our listeners, I say this pointing the finger at myself as I say this, that I would hope that our listeners would pause and consider their starting point.

What is your heart posture when it comes to politics? Of who are you trusting in? What have you believed is the solution to your need at this moment? And if it's anything other than Jesus, we're probably starting or finding solutions in the wrong place, and politics will not satisfy that for us. You have a habit in your own podcast that I just love and it caught me as I listened because the words resonated in a fresh way with me. And that is that tying it back together with your love for Dallas Willard. You often and the podcast with Willard's paraphrase of the Lord's prayer, and it's just the most fundamental expression of what it looks like to come to the Lord with our needs. And so I think it's a beautiful way to close our podcast today. So I wonder if you would offer a little liturgical moment and read us Willard's paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer.



Michael Wear:

I'd love to. Yeah. And so this is how we Close The Morning five, which is a podcast we run Mondays through Thursdays that offers prayer and scripture surrounding and covering the news of the day. So it's a five, seven minute podcast during the week, and the podcast is called Where We Are. Let's close with Willard's version of the Lord's Prayer. Dear Father, always near us, may your name be treasured and loved. May your rule be completed in us, may your will be done here on Earth in just the way it is done in heaven. Give us today the things we need today, and forgive us our sins and impositions on you as we forgive all who in any way offend us. Please don't put us through trials, but deliver us from everything bad. Because you are the one in charge, you have all the power and the glory to is all yours forever, which is just the way we want it.

Joanna Meyer:

Amen. Michael Wear, thanks for your leadership, your wisdom and the institutional friendship that we're forming as we get to know you.

Michael Wear:

So good to be with you. Thank you.

Joanna Meyer:

What a powerful conversation with Michael Wear. In our show notes today, we will link to his book *The Spirit of our Politics*, as well as two Dallas Willard books, *The Divine Conspiracy* and *Renovation of the Heart*. And finally, we had produced a video series that we had mentioned called *The Politics of Neighborly Love*, and we'll link to that too. That was from the 2016 election, but the conversation is equally as powerful today. So plenty of opportunities to learn and act on our conversation today. 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.