

## 220331 Steve Cuss\_V1 mixdown.mp3

**Narrator** [00:00:04] Welcome to Engage 360. Denver Seminaries podcast. Join us as we explore the redemptive power of the Gospel and the life-changing truth of Scripture at work in our culture today.

**Don Payne** [00:00:16] Hey, friends, welcome again to Denver Seminary and Engage 360. We are really glad that you're with us. My name is Don Payne. I'm privileged to be your host. Before we get underway today, let me ask you something that I probably should do more often, but don't do so. It doesn't become too stale and old, but it would be great if you are a regular listener or even an occasional listener and find anything of benefit with the really remarkable guests that we are privileged to have on engaged 360. We would love it if you would take just a moment and go to your podcast platform. However you listen to us and give us a rating or a review because I know everybody says that, but it actually does help expand listenership and exposure and really is a help to us. So please, please take a moment to do that. If you don't mind well, as we get underway with today's episode, we're going to talk a little bit about leadership. Now, if you listen to leaders who bear significant responsibility in any arena, any kind of organization, or if you are one you've certainly heard about the pressures of leadership, the loneliness of leadership, the struggles and difficulties of leadership. In fact, you may have heard about those so much that it can almost make you wonder why anyone would ever lead. All right. Well, our guest today has done a deep dive, a really deep dive into one common and troublesome dimension of leadership, which is anxiety. Now, frankly, in the leadership literature I've surveyed, I've not seen that theme arise very often. But when I saw the title of the book that our guest authored, I immediately could resonate with that. Leaders may talk a lot about being transformational in their settings. But from both our guests experience and his research, he's offered some resources that can genuinely transform the leader. So Steve Case is the author of a recent book called Managing Leadership, Anxiety, Yours and Theirs. Steve is the founder of a website called Capable Life Support Me. That's WW Dot Capable Life Dot Me Me, which is an online community designed to help you as a leader, function as a calm, aware, present human in the workplace and in home. Steve has served in a variety of pastoral roles for 26 years. The majority of those as a lead pastor and he is also strategic partner with Compassion International, with Leadership Network and with MRGO Alliance. Steve, welcome to the podcast.

**Steve Cuss** [00:03:04] Don, thank you so much. I am a huge fan of Denver Seminary, as you know, my wife being a graduate, so it's a real honor to be with you.

**Don Payne** [00:03:12] Well, it's great to have you with us. Steve grew up in Perth in Western Australia, and after moving to the U.S. for theological studies, he married his wife, Lisa, whom he referred to. They have two sons and a daughter. And when Steve's not working, I'm told you can find him in trout streams

**Steve Cuss** [00:03:31] or

**Don Payne** [00:03:32] trying to play a guitar that he can't out of cannot afford at a music store. You may want to tell us a little bit about that, Steve.

**Steve Cuss** [00:03:40] Yes, it's probably not particularly pertinent to our topic of anxiety, except I do believe music is an incredible gift from God to diffuse anxiety. But I have my taste in guitars exceeds my budget. I'm constantly on the hunt for the next guitar.

**Don Payne** [00:04:01] Okay. And the trout fishing? Yes. Avid trout fisher.

**Steve Cuss** [00:04:06] Yeah, I'm not very good at it. I'd say it's I've never loved a hobby more than I'm bad at.

**Don Payne** [00:04:13] OK, that's well put.

**Steve Cuss** [00:04:15] Yeah. But boy, it's quite an art form, and I do think Trout are beautiful. I took a I took a lesson very early and it was like an 18 year old kid teaching trout fishing. And, you know, here in my middle age and I'm like, What do you know about trout fishing? Because, you know, he's been fly fishing since he's like six. And at one point I just said to him, Why do you trout fish? Why do you fly fish? And he said he said trout only know how to live in beautiful places. And I thought that was quite profound. And that's a good enough reason to go.

**Don Payne** [00:04:47] Oh yeah, it is. One of my sons is obsessed with fly fishing and is trying to get me into it. So I'm I'm going to get into it just for the sake of spending time with him.

**Steve Cuss** [00:04:56] And it's the reason to do it. Yeah, yeah, it is.

**Don Payne** [00:04:59] Steve, let's talk about leadership and leadership. Anxiety I. Love the title of your book and the the creative, I guess it's creative, this angle that you've taken on, looking at the anxieties in leadership. Maybe tell us a little bit first about how you came to give so much attention to this. What's the story behind this?

**Steve Cuss** [00:05:23] Yeah, I think it took me a while because I'm a six foot three Aussie deep voice white guy, and it took me a while to realize that I'm actually quite an anxious person. I think I'm one of those leaders that pretty Type-A and mission driven, others focused and I think took a while to realize, Oh man, underneath all of that is a fairly sensitive soul. I cut my teeth on all of this in my early 20s when I was a hospital chaplain. I did all units of clinical pastoral education, and it just so happens that the head chaplain was trained in bone theory by Murray Bone, by the founder of Volunteer. So if any of your listeners have ever read System Serial Edwin Freedman, those people my my supervisor, George and Ed Freedman were friends. They went to class together on the bone, and I was given this theory that helped me make sense of the way I am, the way people are. And it became an incredible gift in chaplaincy to notice anxiety. First of all, notice it in me when I would walk into a room where somebody was dying, I'd get anxious. I'd I'd be worried that I didn't know what to say or didn't know what to do. And if I wasn't careful, my anxiety would like infect my ability to see what the family required. I was operating out of my needs subconsciously instead of focusing on them and systems theory really teaches you how to pay attention to yourself. And then once you've done that for a while, teaches you how to pay attention to what's going on between people, the dynamics between people and and so that's really what the book is formed on. I took it out of chaplaincy. I did some work in graduate school and then I noticed, Oh man, this really helps in ministry. And for me personally, never more than inwardly posturing. I really I loved being a lead pastor and I struggled with it at the same time. It was always very intense for me.

**Don Payne** [00:07:23] You know, when you talk about leadership anxiety, Steve, give us maybe some anecdotal or some images of that. What are, whether it's pastoral or other forms of leadership? You kind of started down this trail, but unfold that for us a little bit

more. What are the kinds of circumstances situations that tend to prompt this anxiety that so many leaders struggle with?

**Steve Cuss** [00:07:50] Yeah. If we if we just talk about, for example, the role of the lead pastor or a preacher, you know, you've got a man or a woman on stage is very vulnerable preaching. I actually think it's more vulnerable to singing because because any good sermon, in my opinion, is quite personal is obviously centered around scripture. Yeah, that is scripture. But it's still you personally interacting with it. So you're offering yourself, that's a vulnerable thing to do. And I just find tremendous anxiety in my life on the pressure like I used to operate for years under the belief that every sermon I've preached had to be the best sermon. That would just be one very simple example of anxiety. And so then I get off the stage and I need a pat on the head for my wife. You know, whether whether the sermon actually went well or not didn't really matter. It was all about how I perceived it. Then you could look at, for example, criticism which every leader faces. If you are, if you have any pastoral skill at all, you're intuitive with people that typically makes you pretty sensitive to people you want to please them or you, you want to be well with them. And so when people are frustrated at you or maybe they've painted you with a picture, that's not true, you end up scurrying around trying to please them. That would be an example of the anxieties that we all carry these assumptions and these beliefs just under the surface, and we operate out of that. We're not aware of them. And I think that's really what leads to a lot of burnout in leaders and pastors is is unaddressed chronic anxiety.

**Don Payne** [00:09:30] Yeah. And it seems like there's a cumulative effect to that, at least in my own experience, it comes in. And maybe this is what contributes toward that sense of burnout is just these slowly accumulating layers of anxiety and the fatigue that comes from all of that where, you know, at some point I think leaders leaders come to to believe that the the effect of this anxiety is outweighing whatever sense of calling. Or are positive benefits that I'm experiencing in my leadership role? It just gets to be, you know, too much the aggregate of all that anxiety.

**Steve Cuss** [00:10:14] I think that's right. I think it is the aggregate of it. And I also like my wife's, the trauma therapist. I've learned so much from her and she studied Dr. Kurt Thompson, psychiatrist Kristin Back. Dr. Thompson, he says that the shame messages a negative message takes three seconds to embed in your psyche and a positive message takes 60 to 90 seconds to embed. And I do think just leadership by definition, particularly COVID era leadership, is the art of managing people's expectations. Managing your own expectations of yourself. And sometimes like this cumulative effect, what's going on is people's assumptions and expectations about you kind of breed or or collude with your own assumptions and expectations about yourselves. And it becomes this like unholy monster. Almost like I remember in Lord of the Rings, you'd watch these monsters. They'd be bred from the deep and they'd come up out of the ground of these terrible things. Yeah, that's the way I see chronic anxiety. It's contagious. We catch it from each other. It's different from any other kind of anxiety, and we catch it when we adopt each other's assumptions. So even just your average pastor, if you have a first time guests coming to your church, they know you as pastor before they know you as a human being, right? Which is to say they carry all these assumptions about who you are. In today's day and age, I got to say, Don, I think some of the exposing of the fraud and the hypocrisy, I think it's necessary in some of these articles we're seeing about famous church leaders. But boy, that makes it hard for your local pastor who's actually faithfully serving and as a person, a man or woman of integrity that people do trust us because we're pastor. And that's an assumption that they're making an assumption about us. And if you kept that assumption, you catch that anxiety.

**Don Payne** [00:12:16] One thing, one word that's coming to mind is identity, our sense of identity, our sense of who we are. And as you're you're talking about that, Steve. What I'm what I'm kind of putting together in my mind is this equation between these messages and assumptions that keep coming our way as leaders and how our identity is forming. Our self identity is forming. And these messages and these anxieties seem to contribute toward this, this sense of identity that we can't differentiate from, you know, who we really are from who we're afraid we might be or who we're afraid people may think we are the eyes that make any sense.

**Steve Cuss** [00:13:01] It does. I think that's exactly right. I I was surprised to discover after 10 years of ministry and before I became a lead pastor, I was doing pretty extensive crisis work. I was hospice work and trauma chaplaincy. And then in Las Vegas, they did crisis intervention and one of the most under-resourced cities in the world. I mean, my ministry was no picnic. But then I stepped into lead posturing and suddenly my life kind of unraveled my internal life. I was really surprised as I man, I'm not managing the pressure of lead posturing, and here I am as a suburban lead pastor, you would think that would be a easier job than trauma chaplains. Yeah, but for me, it was way harder, and I think I think you hit the nail on the head. It was an identity issue. Suddenly, the well-being of the church and the reputation of church was exactly inexplicably linked to my well-being and my reputation. So that actually set me on a journey. One of the things that's really important to me in the book was I wanted to treat anxiety theologically because I don't see us doing that enough. And what I came to discover is every human being operates out of five core false needs that if we don't get them, we we then get chronically anxious. And it's fascinating to me. Don, I'll them briefly, it's control perfection, always knowing the answer, always being there for people and approval control perfection, always knowing the answer, always been there to people and approval. And we don't all have all five, but we all have some of the five. Me is the last three. Like, if you put me in a meeting and Jim asks Sally a question, if I'm in that meeting, I feel compelled to answer Jim's question, even though he didn't ask me. There's something weird in me that has to have the answer. So then if you put me in a chaplaincy situation and [00:15:02]somebody is dying and a loved one like screams at me, how can God allow this to happen in the moment, rather than recognizing that this person is simply venting their anger and their shock? What's going on is my chronic anxiety is telling me, you have to answer that question. Hmm. Even though they're not really asking a logical question at that moment, also being there for people, I have this need in my life that if somebody is hurting, I feel compelled to be there for them. You know, some of our listeners, like Raging Perfectionists, for example, say they lived through COVID and even though they had never done it before, they suspected themselves to lead perfectly through this unprecedented time. And as I started it theologically, what I discovered is, okay, these five core attributes, these are actually the five distinctives of Jesus. This is why we worship Jesus as God, because Jesus is in control and he's perfect and he knows everything and he's there for everybody, and he gives it that approval. And so I think theologically what's going on is we as humans, we are trying to stand on self-righteousness rather than fold our life into Christ. I don't say that in any way to make people feel guilty, she said as an invitation that if you can notice your chronic anxiety, it's an incredible invitation to relax into the supremacy of Christ and that God is perfect so you can do it well enough and so on. [84.2s]

**Don Payne** [00:16:26] [00:16:26]Yeah. Well, you're naming what is very commonly called a messiah complex, and I'm not sure if that's that's how you frame it, but that's that's what comes to my mind. Yeah, this this need, this need wherever it comes from to kind of be

what we assume Jesus is or would be in a situation and the pressure of that is sometimes pulverizing. [22.6s]

**Steve Cuss** [00:16:50] [00:16:50]Yes. Yes. I think this is why pastors burn out, not because of workload, but because of unaddressed chronic false needs. And particularly if we're people pleasers, then all our needs are wrapped up in all people's expectations. And that's madness. [17.8s]

**Don Payne** [00:17:09] [00:17:09]Oh yeah. And it was speaking specifically of pastors, and I know there are versions of this that take place in many leadership situations. But you know, if a person is in a pastoral form of ministry and you don't have an answer and you're not there and you can't solve a problem, the message that we internalize and sometimes the message that people will say to us is, What good are you, right? I mean, for crying out loud, you're the pastor. You're supposed. You know, you're supposed to right, you're supposed to be there, you're supposed to be able to do something and and then in a culture like ours, at least many Western cultures which are fix it cultures. I mean, we're accustomed, we're kind of engineering cultures, we know how do we know how to fix things, we know how to make things that will fix things. So a person who isn't able to do much, what good are they? [52.7s]

**Steve Cuss** [00:18:03] [00:18:03]Right? I mean, this is where Eugene Peterson is such a guest. The late Eugene Peterson, where his old challenge was the pastor's job is to attend to God, tend to yourself and attend to your people. I think particularly for young pastors, you have to make the decision very early on. Am I going to be like God's representative, like the example? Or am I simply going to be a human being who was trained and educated and they look very different to me. So I have a college degree in Bible and preaching, and then I have a master of divinity from an excellent seminary. I was very well trained. And that is why I can open the Bible and make meaning on lots of people. At the moment that people start seeing me as closer to God because of that, I think we're all in trouble. Because from God's point of view, he used to say I'm closer to God than, for example, the man who's volunteering in the nursery changing diapers. The difference between he and I as I was trained in the Bible, but I think the problem is when you go into ministry training, you feel this pressure to be some kind of a model Christian, some kind of a, you know, the one that can explain everything. But the moment you explain a mystery, you've lost the mystery. So I think if pastors can be humanized in front of their people and then coach their people to expect them to be human sized, I think that's the way to flourish and thrive and help your people relax as well. And you know, I do that. I share my mistakes very openly from the pulpit. I share my doubts very openly not to then traumatize my congregation with my doubt, but to invite their out out in the open rather than feeling like they have to hide it. I think in a lot of churches, it's a big problem. You know, the pastor gets on stage. He never seems to question like you. You read your Bible and you don't get it, that your pastor always seems to get it. And so you think, Well, there's something wrong with me. Right, right. But let pastors, if you get up and say, I don't, I don't get this, I guess. And I spent 15 hours this week reading experts on it. I still don't get it. That's much more helpful, I think. [137.3s]

**Don Payne** [00:20:21] [00:20:21]Do you find, Steve, that many leaders are resistant to owning or admitting this anxiety that is that is an undercurrent in their lives? [12.8s]

**Steve Cuss** [00:20:35] [00:20:35]I have found a very welcoming audience to my message. I found almost no resistance. What I had noticed when I've done a lot of work in Asian cultures and some of my Asian sisters and brothers, like right now I'm in a Zoom group

and there's pastors in India and Thailand and Hong Kong and Malaysia. Obviously, each of those are different cultures. But what they have in common is they say, Oh, this is really good. But in our culture, there's all this pressure and there's honor, shame and. Mm-Hmm. So what I find is people then struggle to translate it. I'm working right now with a denomination that probably can't name, but the amount of pressure that the pastors receive from their congregants to be superhuman, to be the one that has the answer. And I think somebody has to go first. And so when I'm teaching, I go first. I teach very frankly about my own vulnerabilities and mistakes in my anxiety. And that disarms my the people I teach. And typically I'm teaching faith leaders. And the person that went first for me was Fredrick Detener, I when I was a chaplain and I started going into doubt, Cedric Detener was way ahead of his time, writing very openly about doubt and fear and being human, and that gave me permission to try it. All I can tell you, this is how I've led for six years at my church. I don't say it to be some kind of moral leader. I don't I don't know that I'm a moral leader and a lot of ways, but I certainly conditioned my church to expect nothing more and nothing less than a human being. Mm-Hmm. The pulpit. Mm-Hmm. And so my goal was just to be hungry, too hungry for Jesus. Not the example of a Jesus follower. And of course, I hope people hear what I'm saying. My private life, I think, must be congruent with my public reputation. I think they ought not be secret habits and destructive things. I'm not talking about those kinds of human experience, walking about the pressure we feel to be example. I think I don't think God called us to that. [129.4s]

**Don Payne** [00:22:46] [00:22:46] Stephen, I love how just a few moments ago you headed down the trail of kind of a theological analysis of this when you were talking about, you know, who Jesus is and how we kind of mistake ourselves for Jesus. And I'd love to push a little bit further down that lane, that theological lane, you said even a little earlier. I think that we we often try to analyze and deal with anxiety in other than theological ways. So let's let's think about the gospel, the gospel of, you know, the grace of God through Jesus Christ that, you know, most evangelical Christians are going to embrace. But but I wonder often whether that gospel has actually soaked into or penetrated our operational lives in. Right? You know, things that we have operationalize the gospel, even though we may proclaim it. Very well and very clearly, it's not always operationalized in our ways of being. And I'd love to hear you talk a little more about that. You know, how does the gospel itself actually form the or give give, give the resources or constitute a counter measure to this anxiety? [88.2s]

**Steve Cuss** [00:24:16] [00:24:16] I think you're absolutely right that the challenge in the Western culture is we really do believe we can read and think our way to change. And I do believe that discipleship in the Bible as we embody and walk away to change. So I think you're totally right about how it's not embodied. Kasey Keller Tim tell us why she says that, you know, the gospel or our life. It's a bit like a vending machine where God's put the coin in. So we have the gospel in us, but someone needs to smack us on the side for it to lodge deep. I think that's a good way to talk about it. I think the gift of chronic anxiety and I guess we should be careful when you're done. Chronic anxiety is just one of many types of anxiety. And so, so when I talk about [50.2s] chronic anxiety, I'm not talking about anxiety that requires psychiatric medicine or I'm not in that trauma, for example. Those are all different. The chronic anxiety is a clinical form of anxiety that is purely built on assumptions and false leads. That's what makes it. And now I think we had the gospel. So I would I'd be heartbroken if somebody who maybe struggles with an anxiety disorder, whether they're really helped by medication, I'd be heartbroken if they heard me and thought I was talking about their situation. I'm really talking about when you make an assumption about yourself, when you make an assumption about another person or they put an assumption on you and you carry it. Now, now where in my field? And so chronic anxiety gets to be almost like

a tornado warning, like it becomes the early detection system that you're unintentionally living for yourself rather than standing on the goodness of God. And and you know, one simple way that I do it is my performance anxiety around preaching if somebody criticizes me because one of my assumptions is that if you just. If you're just a newbie, you'd like me, so therefore, if you don't like me, my assumption is I must keep meeting with you to win you over. OK. It's crazy. Like that's the path to create. First of all, I'm just feeding the problem because some people don't like me because I'm Pastor has nothing to do with me as a human. They they had painted it onto me, an assumption that's not true, that if I adopt their assumption now I'm operating out of a false self. I must have you like me for me to be okay. And the opposite is the gospel. It's much more relaxing. I think it's done. I remember it wasn't long into lead posturing, reading the words of Jesus where he talked about his burden and his yoke, and how light and easy it was. And I remember having this visceral reaction saying, that's a lie. Like, that's not true. I'm in ministry and I'm not feeling that light and easy burden at all. And that's when I realized, Oh man, Jesus offers free freedom and peace. And the very gospel I'm proclaiming I'm not experiencing for myself. And that really was kind of the the turning point in my journey to go deeper into this chronic anxiety. And what I discovered is, Oh, I'm I'm living out of all my reactivity. I'm just reacting to expectations and assumptions rather than being rooted in the approval that God gives me.

**Don Payne** [00:27:43] I love what you said just a moment ago about relaxing. And I don't I'm not sure that I had ever put together the terms gospel and relax. But the way you're describing this, Steve, it sounds like the gospel once it's or as it becomes to becomes really internalized in our lives. Increasingly, we relax.

**Steve Cuss** [00:28:07] I really think we do, and I've had some people accuse me of saying that we should be lazy. You know, well, what about mission people who say, How would we ever be missionaries? And I'm like, Have you studied historical mission? Like a lot of those people were some of the most relaxed in the gospel. A couple of years ago, I have a podcast, and I interviewed Gregory Boyle, Catholic priest who lives in the heart of Compton, Los Angeles. He has the single largest gang recovery ministry in the world. You can't meet a more relaxed human being. And Father Boyle has gone to more underage funerals than anyone could fathom from gun gun violence. He lives in a risky area, and he's completely relaxed in Christ. Huh. So I think the assumption that we have to somehow operate out of an anxiety to follow Jesus. Oh, it's crazy. The other thing I would say Don, as I study chronic anxiety, it's fascinating to study Jesus himself and in the garden of Gethsemane. He was clinically in what's known as acute anxiety, and acute anxiety is life and death. I mean, our version of it would be when you're on the interstate and you think you're going to run into the back of another car. Yeah, well, Jesus is facing the cross. He knows what's coming. He's an acute anxiety. But then not many hours later, he's in front of the cross. Pilot, he's completely calm. It's unbelievable. And it's because he is in this the way we're talking about his relaxed into the grace of God. And that doesn't mean that he wasn't in pain, but he was connected to the father. I find it stunning and a great invitation for me to to enjoy the good that I proclaim. And it is a challenge in ministry. I think ministries actually a bit of a hazard to my soul health.

**Don Payne** [00:30:03] Hmm. That's a really inviting message, Steve, just a that's a that's a beckoning message. Yeah. For so many of us for whom, you know, I wonder and you know, I can place myself in this as easily as I could play somebody else. You know, I wonder for how many of us is the kind of anxiety you're talking about has become so familiar. And so, so much a part of our way of being that we don't know how to lead

otherwise. And as as distressing and crushing as it is, it's all we know. And it's normative for us.

**Steve Cuss** [00:30:45] It's such a poignant insight you have there, John, that that would be the number one. We're not going to do workshops for organizations. That's generally the most common response is that what do you mean? I don't have to live this way. And so I I do believe anxiety has a gospel. I think it's really helpful if a gospel like, you know, obviously you're at a seminary. That's where I first learned the Pax Romana. And it was profound for me what I remember in the Middle East. What do you mean? Gospel is in the church word. What do you mean? It's actually an empire word that that the authors of scripture stole from the Roman Empire. It's an incredibly it's a move of moxie, that's for sure. And so that helped me to realize, okay. And then there's all these gospels. And, you know, we talk about false gospels all the time. What I'm interested in is let's look at the false gospel of chronic anxiety. It's a gospel is nothing more than a promise and a path like, Hey, if you want this thing, walk this path. Then chronic anxiety has the gospel. It says if you want your life to be well, then worry more. Then when that's critical to that, then you know, let your inner critic condemn you feel like that's the gospel and anxiety. What's fascinating to me is the Gospel of Christ is the only gospel where the God pays and the human benefits. Every other folk gospel with his Roman Empire, the Egyptian system. Quite frankly, the American dream is a gospel where you have to pay for your benefit. And then, of course, if we really want to get delicate, there's a lot of minority culture that pays just some people to benefit and honor. And in the American dream. Mm hmm. And then what's interesting in chronic anxiety is that's how, you know, it's a false gospel because I'm always paying and it's never delivering on its promise. So chronic anxiety tells me that person doesn't like you. Why don't you worry more so you can be at peace? But I never get peace that Christ gospel like when crises. Look, I died, so you don't have to win everybody over anymore. You don't have to live that mad life. I actually feel physically the relaxation of grace in my body.

**Don Payne** [00:33:11] Oh yeah.

**Steve Cuss** [00:33:12] And it is palpable. And that's when you realize that's when you realize I don't have to live this way. That is a path that leads to peace and freedom.

**Don Payne** [00:33:24] I hope listeners, even as they hear you, say that, Steve, begin to feel some of that coming over them. What a great gift. I'm so appreciative of the work you've done and the work you're doing in this, and I want to just encourage listeners, whether you are leaders or consider yourself leaders or know somebody who is. Encourage them to listen to Steve comments. This is portable into many, many leadership arenas. Steve, your book again and managing leadership, anxiety and your website tell us just a little bit more about your website and the resources available there.

**Steve Cuss** [00:34:09] Yeah, yeah. Thanks for asking about it. So in our church, I've been teaching this in a one year class for 10 years. We're now on our 10th season of students because this way of living, this way of considering and thinking, you have to embody it, you have to, you have to practice, you have to try some things on. You have to notice your behaviors and the behaviors in your groups, and these will take time. So the book was born out of a class that I think by the time I wrote the book, I've been teaching the class six or seven years. And so last year we thought, Well, could we make this class online? Could we all the elements in our class, which is content coaching peer groups and time and self assessment would be like the five elements. So we give you content, we teach concepts you're not talking about. We teach that we put you in a peer group where you can discuss.



We have a trained coach. We let it kind of like tea and in hot water, we let it steep. And then we teach you how to assess what's going on. So and think about the way you think. So capable. Asked me, is the online version of what we do in our church. And we launched a January of 2021 and I'm I've been thrilled with the response. We have 500 or so members from 15 countries. And it's a series of 10 minute videos, just little short concepts and tools. And then there's self-assessments when you fill one out of emails itself to you, so you can you can sign up with your staff. A lot of people are doing that now. We're a whole organizational sign up and everyone brings their self assessments to their meetings and they talk about what they're learning. We do monthly zooms with coaches. We have all kinds of resources and it's it's what's known as systems theory. So we get into family of origin. And how do you dissolve criticism? How do you notice anxiety spreading in a group that there's tools and systems theory of how to dissolve resistance? So like the classic situation of a young pastor in a traditional church, that's resisting change. We have a whole module on how your best efforts are often adding resistance instead of dissolving it, stuff like that. So that's capable atop me. As of the recording now, it's twenty eight dollars a month. We try to make it extremely affordable and yeah, people sign up and they participate, and it's a lot of fun.

**Don Payne** [00:36:35] That's great. Well, I hope, I hope you get a lot of traffic out of this because this is the kind of thing that it needs to have tentacles into lots of sectors of the church. And then the broader culture, for that matter. So I'm just really, really grateful for all that you're you're doing for that, Steve. Steve, coz has been our guest today on Engage 360 and Steve. We're just really grateful for you, for your work and for your time. Thanks so much for being with us.

**Steve Cuss** [00:37:05] Yeah, thanks. There was a delightful conversation. Thanks for having me on.

**Don Payne** [00:37:08] You know what? I think also the Andrea wayIn, who is behind the production of all these conversations that just invest lots and lots of effort in regret it. And we're grateful as well for all the time. You spend listeners tuning in with us and hope you'll be back with us again very soon for another conversation. This is Engage 360 from Denver Seminary. Thanks. And we'll talk to you again soon. Take care!