

Engage360 Episode 126 | The Power of a Mentorship-Focused Life; Russell Verhey

[00:00:00] **Intro:** Welcome to Engage360, Denver Seminary's 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.

[00:00:17] **Don Payne:** Welcome again, friends, to Engage 360 at Denver Seminary. Really glad you've chosen to spend a little more time with us. My name is Don Payne, your host. And in this episode, we have another alumni spotlight. As we've done in some of our other conversations with alumni, we really enjoy highlighting the creative or unusual vocational pathways along which God often leads us.

And in this episode, this conversation, you'll get exposed to what I think is a remarkable example of how a seminary education can be used in a setting you might never expect. I find it inspiring, even expansive to my own thinking to see how our Lord shows up in all kinds of settings through our graduates.

So, I knew Russell Verhey as a student, and then recently ran into him again at a memorial service and as he and I were catching up he told me a bit about his journey since graduation. I was amazed and encouraged and impressed at where the Lord has taken him and how the Lord is using him. Russell, it's good to have you here.

[00:01:22] **Russell Verhey:** So good to be here Don, thank you.

[00:01:24] **Don Payne:** Russell graduated with an MA in leadership from Denver Seminary in 2007. As you've heard from some of our other alumni Russell was particularly impacted by his experience in the mentoring program. And I've been fascinated to see how he has drawn upon that part of his Denver Seminary education, particularly in his current role.

Russell, why don't you just tell us a little bit about yourself, introduce yourself, and then I want to hear more about your history with mentoring, even prior to seminary. And then, of course, in your time at Denver Seminary. But give us a bit of the backstory of Russell Verhey.

[00:01:59] **Russell Verhey:** Yeah, thank you so much for having me on today. It is truly a privilege, and I just hope for our listeners this will be a time of encouragement for them. Just as I've spent time with leaders and individuals, even as soon as yesterday, in a mentoring conversation. What I see and observe so many people just need a word of encouragement. Just being able to take time to listen and I hope that will translate virtually today.

[00:02:21] **Don Payne:** I'm very confident it will.

[00:02:23] **Russell Verhey:** You're catching me at a good time. Talking about milestones and seasons of life, I just turned the corner on 50. So, we're celebrating half a century. My wife and I are coming up on almost 30 years of marriage. My kiddos just excited as we're looking at empty nest stage with all my kids growing up and moving out and stretching their wings. And as I tell my kids often, it is really tough raising parents in this day. And so, they're doing a great job. And so, it's a good time just as a reflective season of just celebrating a number of decades and just to be able to step back into where I was as a student and that mindset as a student during Denver Seminary and even

beforehand. But one thing I'm just, I feel just enriched on today is mentoring has really been part of my story really for a lifetime.

And just to see that continue today and just hope that it'll inspire some others as well.

[00:03:18] **Don Payne:** Yeah. Put some flesh on that for us in terms of how that has been so significant for you even prior to seminary.

[00:03:24] **Russell Verhey:** Yeah, thank you. I think just the beginning point really starts just as a point of faith for me.

Faith really became real for me just as a young guy. I got to experience that going up to a camp if you imagine like some folk's stories just being able to be in a setting like that where you're outside of your normal context demographic and you're at a place where it's just really set aside just for, you know, faith can come alive in an adventure context where you're doing crazy things in a camp setting.

But what happened to me during those early teenage years is that I experienced a love from people that I had never quite experienced in a way that just something about that environment I just felt valued, cared for, listened to in a way that I came out of that as a young guy where faith came alive for me, but really in a message that's been a lifelong message that's just, I want to love people in the way that I have felt loved. And that fire for me, whereas, you know, faith maybe comes and grows, waivers at times, but that message has really remained true for me where I look for those opportunities almost on a daily basis. And so that really came alive around 13, 14 years old.

So, stepping into that high school season, my experience around that, something really remarkable happened, which I've now see is uncommon, is that in the environment that I had growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, I had some folks that just maybe they saw my ignorance. Maybe they saw my raw enthusiasm,

[00:04:54] **Don Payne:** Took pity on you?

[00:04:55] **Russell Verhey:** Something like that. I just, I remember at 16 years old, I had a man that came up to me in the foyer of the church and just said, hey, I want to find out what makes you tick. Be at my house for breakfast at 6:30. And it was an invitation and what over those next 5 or 10 years, it just, it seemed like I just you know, call it favor of God, just opened door, I just had folks that came and approached me in a sincere invitation where I just felt welcomed into their life. And whether that was at waffle house, whether that was over a meal, whether it was just working alongside them building a fence, where there was a form of an impartation, if you will, that happened as a young buck. And somehow that life message of, hey, I want to love in the way I've been loved, I think began, you know, just to form a new message to me in my twenties where I want to mentor and invest in the way others have mentored into me.

And that began shaping something that I just had an awareness to that just, it was almost a mindset, if you will, of looking for those opportunities, because it was where my life was enriched and transformed, but I was looking for that and I found just such deep significance during that time as a young guy.

[00:06:08] **Don Payne:** What I don't hear very often is how those roots of mentoring go that far back in a person's life. And that's sad. I mean, it's understandable because given the transience and the fragmentation of many Western cultures, like the U S, mentoring relationships are not as organically embedded into social networks as they were maybe generations ago or even centuries ago.

So, a lot of people will think of mentoring as something kind of new, recent fad, but it really goes way, way back and we're trying hard now to recover it. We have to be so much more intentional about it. So, it's interesting to see how that marked your journey so early on. Which is kind of a rare gift, a rare privilege to have that as such an integral part of your story.

[00:07:01] **Russell Verhey:** Very much so. And I think just even as you and I are talking about this, Don, today not that we have to principalize that, but just being aware of don't underestimate the power of invitation. That we don't have to have it all figured out. We don't have to have some program that has to be totally vetted out, but just the power of an invitation, just to be able to take a ride with somebody, whether it's getting ice cream or just being able to go just spend a little time and just ask a few meaningful questions.

That really in the simplest sense is what was transformative to me, of just getting to know somebody's story just by somebody showing a little bit of intentionality and the significance of an invitation.

[00:07:40] **Don Payne:** That's a great way to put it. The power of invitation. What then brought you to Denver Seminary? And how did that mentoring history of your kind of fold into your experience here?

[00:07:48] **Russell Verhey:** Yeah, I mean, I grew up in Atlanta and something really significant happened during my late twenties. At the time my kids were young. I was running a business that I would probably very clearly say it was running me at the time. That I just, I felt like, in a sense, I felt a little bit lost.

And even with all the support structures of mentoring and just having a church community around me, that just, I felt like there were so many demands on me as a young man that I just didn't even have a filtration system of where to say no. And part of that I would just even say in a genuine sense, it broke my heart.

And what I mean by that is that the realization that at 29 years old, that was really a marker for a season of life that is just what broke my heart is that suddenly I realized one day that, my wife and my kids really were getting second best. They were getting the dregs and everyone else was getting my best.

My business, my church life, even discipling other people, everyone was getting my very best. And somehow something was just out of sync in that. And I felt really kind of lost in terms of how do I recalibrate this season of my life? And that for me was in many ways, a very prayerful season of like, you know, a desperate season of, Oh God, help me.

And part of what came from that season was we were skiing out west and coming to Colorado and just a deep sense that there's an opportunity here for us. And we took a big step of faith and moved to Colorado with really just a step of faith of wanting to reset some of these priorities, seeking him

first before all the other stuff in the world, you know, being able to invest in my family that they don't feel like they're getting second best on everything just to recalibrate my life.

And it was at that time we had just moved here, and just very specifically, I was coming back from a business trip from Chicago to Colorado Springs, and it was just like an awakening inside of me. I was just like, yeah, I've had all these mentors and I've had people invest in me, but I just had this deep sense at 30 years old that this is the most developmental season of my life.

I mean, yes, I've maybe gone to school, or I've had some folks invest in me, but I am giving out a lot more than I'm getting vested back into. And if I don't have some sort of a way to continue to grow and develop, I'm going to be poured out.

[00:10:15] **Don Payne:** Yeah, that, and you just end up recycling yourself. That's all we do.

[00:10:20] **Russell Verhey:** Yeah, exactly. Exactly. And so, there was something in that, that created the catalyst for me that says that I need a formal structure for my growth and development. And that's when I started exploring what would it look like to go and maybe get a master's level education and that's what the door opened for when I stepped in literally on campus at Denver Seminary. And I just happened to connect with the dean of the school at the time, Dr. Steve Young. And he looked at me and he did something, and we'll just call it reverse psychology, that's just, it just worked.

And he looked at me and he goes, Russell, you do not need to come to Denver Seminary to be a leader. You are already a leader. And I was just like alright, that's validating. That feels good. I'm running a business. I've got all these initiatives all that. He's like, but if you want to grow in a cognitive confidence on how God has already gifted you then this is a place for you, and it'll help you. And I was like that line was, I was in.

[00:11:19] **Don Payne:** Yeah, that was the gotcha line.

[00:11:20] **Russell Verhey:** That was the gotcha line. And that's what started just a huge shift for me of like, I am a hundred percent vested into stepping into Denver seminary.

And I'll just add another nuance to this is that in my private prayer time, as I was preparing to come, I was like, God, really, what do you want from me as I step into Denver seminary? Is this about becoming a smarter sinner? No, it isn't about, is it about getting a piece of paper? Not really.

What motivated me just was in a private prayer time is that I just had this deep sense that you're going to make relationships that are going to last a lifetime. And you also need to learn how to read and write, Russell.

[00:12:00] **Don Payne:** You make money, but you can't read and write.

[00:12:02] **Russell Verhey:** I can't read and write. So just like this is going to help equip you so you could be a more effective communicator in your leadership. And that was a deep sense of that's what I was looking for. Every classroom experience, every time I interacted with an instructor, it's like I'm looking for those relationships that God wanted to build for a lifetime. And also, how do I need to grow and develop as an effective communicator that will influence my leadership?

And that was a grid for me personally that I was kind of looking for in every classroom, every instructor, every student experience.

[00:12:36] **Don Payne:** Okay. Well, now you stepped into the seminary at a time when our mentoring program was still in its early years. And was already by that time a really central part of the curriculum for every degree program. So, with that history of mentoring that you had in your own life, your own formation, then you step into like a formalized part of a curriculum, mentoring part of a curriculum. What was that like for you?

[00:13:04] **Russell Verhey:** Yeah, well, first of all, it showed the value of what the seminary is trying to build into. It wasn't just, you know, academic for academic sakes. It wasn't just theology for that. It was relationally infused and that was something that was a distinctive for me with Denver Seminary where, you know, it is a holistic process for me.

And so, I sensed that walking into it, but the program around it provided some structure that was really helpful for me. Like I wasn't thinking about necessarily, let me have a contract, if you will. And just even thinking about a contract, not from a hardline black and white standpoint, but like, really, like, how do I want to grow and develop?

How do I put words to this in a way that would be supportive in a structure that a mentor can come alongside formal or informal? That can help guide that towards something that I've declared and have some ownership in. And that was really distinctive for me just to be able to have even just the awareness of, you know, my sense of commitment, if you will, stepping into my growth and development.

And just even from my backstory, a few moments ago, I was prime. I mean, I was ready to go in terms of just like, I'm aware of some lacking and that helped provide some framework for me. Cause if I don't grow in these areas, it's going to have some cost, if you will. So, I was very motivated.

[00:14:24] **Don Payne:** Well, I know that while you were in seminary, you continued to be active in the business world.

[00:14:28] **Russell Verhey:** Yeah.

[00:14:28] **Don Payne:** So, I don't know how many years it took you to finish your degree. I assume you were going part time, much of that season, because you were still actively in the business world.

[00:14:36] **Russell Verhey:** Yeah, I was bivocational for sure. So, I was truly in that entrepreneurial space where I was still running my business. There were some things we were resetting in my business that allowed me to work maybe, we might say, you know, smarter, not harder that just, I mean, it was a true recalibration of my life, but also my work life rhythms coming into school. So, the fact is I still ran my business while I was going to school. And just from a timeline standpoint, I started January 2003, and I finished 2007 just in that pace and timeframe. So yes.

[00:15:11] **Don Payne:** Yeah. So, what were some of the big takeaways or transformational moments or, while you were in the seminary years in the mentoring process here how was that formational for you through your mentors, through those learning contracts or any aspect of it?

[00:15:29] **Russell Verhey:** I think it just gave me some awareness because at the same time we were still engaged in some ministry activities outside. Our family was leading a father son, father daughter retreat ministry where we would go and invite dads to bring their kids into these epic adventure environments and be able to facilitate these experiences, which were pretty cool. And you know, just how to be able to do that. And so, you know, as we continue just exploring, just like, what does God have for us?

And just having a space to be able to, you know, talk to a mentor, just to have a place that I felt safe. It was confidential and also provided some healthy pushback as well, being able to go through that process. But so, I was thinking about mentoring in a way that was different than before.

Maybe it was more organic or just intuitive or like, hey, if I like this person, we'd hang out kind of thing. But I was thinking about it more intentionally. And part of the, as I was getting towards maybe the finish of my seminary season, there's a couple of things that really came to mind that helped me in just my own leader development.

And one of those things that actually came out of my studies here was just a model that I would say there's probably not a month that goes by that I don't refer to this model that came out of my studies at Denver Seminary. And one of that was just the awareness of, I'll just call it a discernment model.

When somebody says, hey, I want help, or I want mentoring. What are they really saying when they say that and how do I align to that or not? And one of that, just a very simple criteria, a framework that just, I mean, I wrote up in 2007 that it actually provided a guidepost for me as I later took that on to some other work was, you know, is somebody just reaching out because one, they just want a friend, they just want a friend.

And you know, there's nothing wrong with that, but just like, hey, I just want to connect at a friend level. And then beyond that, it's just, they're starting to ask some questions where it's just like, there's some information they need to be able to step into that.

Do they need a teacher? Do they need a teacher to be able to just get the information they need so that they can feel confident in their work? And then as they move forward, that, you know, that maybe lands on where that specific mentor, like, Hey, I need some help in my marriage or fathering or running a business or something specific about how they want to grow and develop to where a mentor who may have some knowledge and expertise in that area can be a thought partner, if you will, along the way.

And then that fourth area is one that has now shaped my vocation for the last decade, is in the area of coaching. And I would distinguish mentoring from coaching, where somebody just comes and goes, I know what I'm supposed to do. I feel like I'm equipped to do it, but I'm just stuck, and I just need help moving forward in that and taking on just having a coach who is a partner for them.

And then finally, there's a fifth element. And this is an element that certainly I think my mentor at Denver Seminary helped me put some language to, is just a spiritual director. That's different than a friend, it's different than a teacher, a mentor, and a coach, is a spiritual director because there's just seasons of our life, whether it's a season of loss, whether it's a time of grief, a sense of disillusionment, call it the dark night of soul.

We just need somebody who can truly just walk with us in a spiritual sense and that's that directorship. But that framework helped give me some language to something when somebody says hey Russell. I need some help with that, you know can we spend some time together? What are they really asking for?

And maybe more importantly, what's my part to play in that? Do I have time to commit to a friendship? Do I feel a sense that I'm really the best spiritual director? And there may be somebody to refer to that person that may be better equipped than me, and that was actually really empowering to say who I am and also who I'm not in a way that I don't necessarily have to be, you know, not that it's a savior complex, but just some awareness.

How am I gifting? How do I feel called into this relationship and who may be better equipped to be able to support this person and their growth and development?

[00:19:39] **Don Payne:** Yeah, that's really helpful, Russell, because I think mentoring takes so many different forms and that paradigm that you develop gives a lot of latitude for knowing what kind of mentoring we need to seek out or engage in different junctures in our lives. And from a mentor's perspective, it relieves a lot of the pressure to feel like you've got to be everything for everybody.

[00:19:59] **Russell Verhey:** That's a good word because oftentimes when we think about, somebody might listen to this and go, hey, sign me up. I need a mentor. Where do I find one or how do I become a mentor? And oftentimes what stalemates that whole process is they can get overwhelmed. One, just like, you know, I don't have what it takes, or I don't have anything to offer. Whatever that internal narrative thought process that keeps folks from even just having an invitation to be able to just have a framework to be able to think through that. So.

[00:20:27] **Don Payne:** Yeah, well, I appreciate the way you talked about knowing what to ask for, just having some clarity and some kind of a framework to help you know what to ask for when you might be approaching somebody to help you either get unstuck or navigate a tough transition or whatever the challenge may be.

[00:20:40] **Russell Verhey:** Yeah. And so, my time at Denver Seminary, I would say, and I just want to speak to this for whether students that are here that just need some encouragement or those that are considering where they're at, or even coming out of seminary that what Denver Seminary did for me is it created an environment, a space for me to think through these things. And so just like the paradigm that I've described, that's something that came through the studies and that literally has become a framework that I refer to for the last 10, 15 years as I'm helping guide and direct and develop programming and just even to have the discernment, who do I connect with and where do I engage with them?

[00:21:18] **Don Payne:** Yeah. Well, speaking of the last 10 to 15 years, when you and I ran into each other again a couple of months ago, you brought me up to speed on what those last 10, 15 years have been like. And I was fascinated to hear about what you're doing currently and how you're making use of everything you've learned and experienced in mentoring. Tell us something about that.

[00:21:36] **Russell Verhey:** You bet. Well, let me come back to just that transition point. If I was to look at my career over 25 years, I mean, first 15 years as a true entrepreneur since, and first, you know, for me that 2010, 11 timeframe, there was a lot going on with the economy that affected my

business, but ultimately it landed in a way of a solid textbook clinical midlife crisis. I had my oh God moment in the back of my warehouse just like, wow, I mean, I just, I was at a complete loss, and that transition point for me was significant to where one, there was no way I was going to come out of that alone without some help.

And that's where that reactivated being able to lean into some friends, some mentors, and coaches just to help me navigate a season where, gosh, Don, I just felt lost. Really lost. And just trying to think my way out of that box or even in some ways, pray myself out of that box, it just, I mean, I was really stuck. And that was probably about a 15-month journey for me.

So, it wasn't an overnight thing, and it wasn't some seminar that I went to. It was just a series of folks that just came alongside me during that season. And what came out of that, it's a fun story to tell because I just had this deep sense that I don't want to just necessarily be running projects the rest of my life, like in my business. I really want to invest into individuals, I want to invest in leaders. And I just had this, it was like an awakening for me. And that awakening just, you know, it's one to have a passion. But then all of a sudden, just, you know, I had this wonderful gift where a CEO one day, April 2012, handed me a check and said, you're going to be my coach. And I've got other friends that I think you can help as well. It was just something like, I mean, I couldn't even have scripted the thing. And that literally opened the door for the next five years where I got to coach executive leaders and CEOs in a forum type environment where that was my vocational work.

And so, building on a lifetime of work that shifted from a passion into a vocation to be able to help folks in the marketplace live out their kingdom purposes, live out their sense of calling in a marketplace context. And so, just as I put that in the perspective of how that lives out, I mean, I've had the opportunity, the privilege, it's just sobering to think about. I mean, the last 10, 12 years, I've coached probably 400 leaders of organizations, literally globally. And some of the folks that I get to work with is with Center for Creative Leadership, another group called FMI. And then two years ago, I got hired into UC Health, which is our healthcare system here in Colorado.

And I got brought in as an organizational development consultant. And I would have never said yes to that opportunity, if it wasn't for this little thing called a pandemic, which kind of shut down everything and caused us to do some revisiting on just the realities of what we can do and should do and so on.

And all of a sudden, a recruiter reached out to me and I'm like, I think you got the wrong guy. I don't have a healthcare background, but still the opportunity to be able to come in and work in a larger sense of an organization of 30, 000 plus people to be able to help shape leaders within that system.

[00:24:48] **Don Payne:** How are you doing that?

[00:24:50] **Russell Verhey:** That's a great question. First of all, just to be able to come in to just understand what's happening that has already been in place, but then to be able to just see where there's opportunities to come partner with a team who's already doing some really good work.

But one of the things that happened that was just really interesting, how doors open for me just, I mean, literally within the first month or two is they had some ideas around mentorship, and knowing, just from my background and studies and research, most mentorship programs within organizations fail pretty fast.

[00:25:24] **Don Payne:** Yeah, I've seen that as well.

[00:25:25] **Russell Verhey:** Because it's like, we like the idea of it, but how does that actually live out? It just feels forced. It feels canned and it just falls flat. And so here I had this opportunity to come shape this at a system level. And so, some ideas came just through seeing and observing the opportunity.

And I think the need was right. I think it's important just to identify, I don't know if what we're doing today maybe would have worked five years ago in the same way, but coming out of pandemic, there was just a longing for connection beyond a virtual experience. And so, bringing what we call today mentor circles together is something that's really important.

And the structure of that, Don, is that the executive sponsors that, and then we have a room full of directors. And those directors is where I get to facilitate. I get to invest into them in a competency-based learning on a monthly basis where we're focused, almost like going back to our Denver seminary contract based, like we're focused on competency-based experience. And that's thematic over each month. And then those directors meet in what we call manager circles where that director has four or five or six managers they meet with. And they scale down those competency-based conversations into their mentor circles.

And what's fascinating is this has been going on now for some 18 months. And what was really kind of a cool factor even six months ago is we started that on the clinical side. And what started with about 9 or 10 directors in the room, suddenly I look around six months later, there's 20 directors in the room.

And now we have all these managers scaled under this, all in the clinical side of the house. So, it's telling me it's meeting a need. There's a relational need that's being met. And then what happened in addition to that is the operation side, which is the complete different side of the house from a healthcare standpoint, they said, hey, we want to get in on that. And then, so this chief operating officer said, hey, let's do this. So, we partnered up and put the structure together for all the operational directors and basically did a similar version of that. So now we're seeing that happen on the clinical side and now it's going out throughout the operational side.

And the joy for me is I get to hear ripples effects all the way down, you know, at the staff level, you know, and the leads and charge nurses, where there's a ripple effect happening. And because the executive sponsors it, we're living that out conversationally. You know, in a director model I'm doing less teaching and more facilitating, if you will, and then that gets scaled down and it's just a cool factor.

[00:27:58] **Don Payne:** No kidding.

[00:27:59] **Russell Verhey:** So, it's a lot of fun and I have good time with it. But that's happening within the marketplace. And that really, I think Don, just to kind of pull this together, tied to my story, is I come from an entrepreneurial background, and I would say part of that mentoring awareness even stepping into Denver Seminary, I've just had a call to the marketplace for my whole life and I've just had a deep sense.

I know I have a pastoral heart, but I have a call to the marketplace. How that lives out is always interesting to explore, but just to be able to see that live out in some really unique creative ways today, so.

[00:28:34] **Don Payne:** Yeah, that is what excites me no end to see how the Lord has kind of pulled that thread through so much of your journey, and now is expanding, extrapolating that out at an unprecedented level in the University of Colorado Health System, your experience and all that you bring to that is now touching how many thousands of employees within the UC health system. And apparently with the potential even to expand that even broader within the system?

[00:29:07] **Russell Verhey:** Yeah, it sure can. There's what works as my dad used to say. And so, if the thing's working, it continues to open up. And it's really a place of privilege, and just even where does it end? Where does fruit really end and to be able to see stories where people are maybe taking learnings and they're taking it back to their families or their kids or their friendships, you know, whenever we talk about mentoring, it's a holistic process. It doesn't just start and stop in a conference room.

And I think that's the part that gets me excited just to see where do these ideas, I mean, ideas transcend our physical space and time and calendars. And I think that's the biblical ideas around when this stuff lands on good soil, you know, seeds that are just vetted in God's principles are going to expand out and all the way back to that calling, just being able to love people and mentor people and care for them and invest into them and the way that I've been to be able to have that opportunity, it yields fruit and it, and what's great about it, yeah, it's fun to talk about big systems and programs that have reach and impacting thousands and put metrics to it and we can do all that, but what gives me great joy is that everyday life on life exchange with, you know, a few people, regardless of whatever position they're at. And just that opportunity to be able to serve people.

[00:30:26] **Don Payne:** Yeah, love it. Hey, what advice would you give somebody who is considering going to seminary? They may not know for sure whether they have a calling into a particular realm, you know, the church or a ministry organization. They may, like you, have a heart for the marketplace, but aren't sure where seminary would fit into that, how that would relate to it. What advice would you give to people who are musing about all that?

[00:30:53] **Russell Verhey:** Yeah. It's a really good question, and I think if I was sitting across the table, you know, sharing a cup of coffee maybe at Waffle House with somebody exploring that question, what comes to mind where I might just slide the book across to them, and I think about Ephesians 4:1, and it says, live your life worthy of the calling you've received. It's not something your mom told you to do, it's maybe not even what your pastor told you to do, but when you really get quiet, what is the thing that God is inviting you to do, and how are you partnering with Him? And there's a leadership element in that, where He is going to lead you, and part of the thing about leadership and just even self-leadership around that is that there are things just as we even see like in the account of Timothy where there's a growth element.

We don't just suddenly arrive, and we have it all figured out. It just doesn't work that way. We're always growing and maturing because right after that Ephesians 4 passage, it talks about unity, building up and it's a process of maturity and we're growing. And I think just to answer your question is that if you feel called to something, you know, that it's going to require some faith.

But it's also going to require some growth and development and thinking about how can a structure like Denver Seminary help equip you for the work that you're called to do. And for me, very much my story. I don't know if I would necessarily be where I am today without Denver Seminary's structure of just being able to give me an environment where I could learn and grow and develop.

It's not necessarily for everyone. But where the sense that I had just the visions that I just felt and a sense of where I was heading. I needed some structure to be able to grow and develop and it isn't just, you know, curriculum based but it's the relational environment that allowed me to thrive during the season that I was here.

[00:32:41] **Don Payne:** Yeah. Well, you certainly made the most of it. I recall that from when you were here and certainly can see that today and in all of the pages that have unfold in the subsequent chapters in your journey. What a joy. Russell, thanks.

[00:32:55] **Russell Verhey:** Yeah, thank you. What a privilege to be able to just reconnect with you and hopefully this has been an encouragement.

[00:33:00] **Don Payne:** Well, I hope your story will be as encouraging to a lot of listeners as it has been to me and to others who know you around here. Russell Verhey, one of our grads and proud and grateful to see how the Lord has used Denver Seminary as some part of your journey.

[00:33:15] **Russell Verhey:** You bet.

[00:33:16] **Don Payne:** Friends, we're grateful that you've chosen to spend some time with us. If you get the chance, please leave us a rating or review wherever you listen to podcasts. And please send any questions or comments to us at our email address, which is Podcast@DenverSeminary.Edu. Our website, DenverSeminary.edu, has plenty of other resources you can explore, such as events, degree programs, and also more episodes of Engage 360, including full episode transcripts. We're really grateful for your interest, for your support, and for your prayers. Until next time, may the Lord bless you. Take care, friends.