

Engage360 Episode 134 | Faith and Ministry in the Online Space; Asia Nicholson

Intro: [00:00:00] 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.

Tim Koller: Hi, friends. Welcome to Engage360, Denver Seminary's podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Tim Koller. Thank you for joining us for today's conversation. With us today is Asia Nicholson, a seminary student here at Denver Seminary, but she's also got a very unique way of expressing the work that God has given to her. And so, Asia, thank you for joining to have a conversation about what God is up to in and through you.

Asia Nicholson: Yeah, thank you for having me. I'm really excited.

Tim Koller: So much fun. So, I would be very curious to hear from you as you have gone into this ministry journey and you're studying at Denver Seminary. Can you give us a little bit of a background of how you came to be at Denver Seminary, and doing the work you're doing at First Baptist Church of Glenarden, and as teacher? Just tell us a little bit about, a little bit about who you are.

Asia Nicholson: So, I am a lot of things right now. I'm a middle school, or sixth grade English teacher. And I also serve as a Ministry Director for College Connection at my church where the demographic is college students. I'm a student. I serve on the Student Leadership Board at Denver Seminary as well. I [00:01:30] am learning lots of things all the time and posting them on, online. And the, one of the ways that I started, or just kind of got interested in, you know, seminary in general was honestly through my local church. And I served under Joshua Jenkins. He's my, he's the young adult pastor. And so, he's my direct, someone I'm submitted under. And so, every time I would FaceTime him, because he mentors me, I'll be like, what are you reading? And he'd tell me all these things that he was reading. And he knew that I was really into just like learning more about the Lord. And I more, more than just like a devotional aspect, I was interested in like the academic side of it. And I was like, well, where was he born exactly? Like, and what was the, where was the geography? Like, were there rocks around him? And so, he would start to show me the books and I would start ordering the books he was reading. And so, at one point he was like, girl, why aren't you in seminary? And I was like, well, I've already got a master's degree in film. And I, I need to start like fully getting like, into my actual career, what I'm trying to do.

And I knew I wanted to teach things; I just didn't know how I wanted to do that. And so, I kind of was doing like 48-hour film festivals and I was doing freelance work, which was fun, and I enjoyed it, but I had this like burden to explain complicated things in a really simple way, I didn't care what I was talking about. I was like, it could be [00:03:00] anything. I will read it for you, and I'll explain it for you. And so eventually I, I applied around March of 2022. And I got in and I was like, "Oh." And then I told my parents, I said, "Hey, so I know I just graduated with a master's degree, but guess what?" And they're like, "Well, you're paying for it." And as I started learning more in church, I would just find ways to then put it online because I felt like, why not? And I had a theater background, and I was like, well, I feel like I'm not afraid to look kind of like silly online. So, I might as well talk about the Lord, but in a way that makes people feel like, "Oh, so I'm not strange for having a question or laughing at the Bible." Like there are certain jokes and like, there's satire, you know what I mean? Like there's irony in there that's meant to make you go, ah, that's so funny. And so, I wanted people to feel comfortable with that, especially as a young adult. Yeah, so that's kind of my, my, my, like driving, like burden is to help people feel comfortable feeling so personal and so close and so familiar with the Creator of the Universe. I think sometimes we're afraid to feel, you know, it's like, well, don't get too familiar. And it's like, well, I mean, he knows my inward parts. Does he not, surely,

I can call him Dad and giggle with them from time to time. So, I just really [00:04:30] enjoy talking about the Lord in a way that's like so casual sometimes.

Tim Koller: You do such a great job of being able to communicate both your love and relationship that you have with Jesus, as well as, you get into some really interesting things on social media where you're inviting people in to understand some ideas that some people would say, "Oh, they really can't understand that unless into seminary and they start doing all of this." But like you said earlier, your love of taking complex things and making them simple is something that really is a unique thing about your presence in the social media space. I'm curious as you've been doing that now for some time, what are of the things that you're learning about how to communicate that well in that digital space?

Asia Nicholson: I think, so right now I'm actually, it's so interesting that I'm doing this now for, I usually observe a Lent like the Lenten season because it's a good way to kind of reset early/mid-year for me, and so I usually take time off Instagram. And so, I think what I'm learning, now that I'm like just kind of pausing a little bit, is how I can take more time to consider where other people might be with their relationship with the Lord, and not assume that because I have a rack of followers, that they all agree with me on the same [00:06:00] things or that they all disagree with me on the same things. And so, if I wouldn't say these things to them in person, as like, a fellow image bearer, because sometimes my followers aren't even Christian, they just like the stuff that I posted, they just think I'm funny.

Tim Koller: And you are funny.

Asia Nicholson: Yeah, I try. My middle schoolers think so too. And so, like really genuinely trying to be considerate of my Instagram isn't where it starts. It's the outpour of what I'm doing and what I'm learning at my local church. And so, I'm also under like, I'm submitted to authority in real life. And I also have accountability partners. I have a pastor. I have like, I value the local church and something that my mentor, who got me like into the seminary, like, who was like, "Girl, you need to go," he started telling me, because someone came up to me at church and they told me that they were a follower. Like, they follow me. They love my content. And then they offered me a chance to serve with them, but they didn't know that I was already serving. And so I was, I was like, I was like, "Oh man, I can't believe this happened. How could they not know that I serve?" And he said, "Well, do you talk about it?"

Like on your Instagram? Or are you just kind of talking, you know, like about, you know, your Instagram or about school or something?" And I was like, "What do you mean?" And he was like, "Well, I mean, you [00:07:30] do serve at a local church. Like your Instagram was an outpour of the service you already do. And so, you need to consider now that you have more followers, what you're starting to value more out loud versus my own voice." And so, I thought that that was interesting, and it was really helpful because I'm, I love the local church. I'm always going to serve the local church and I want to now pause and take time to think about, okay, how is the Lord inviting me? To not have my own voice, but to literally take what I'm learning amongst a community of people and to kind of share the same ideologies in a way where I'm not the only one being platformed in a way. Where, you know what I mean?

And so, I think I'm just learning that it's not sustainable if I don't also honor the reality of the fact that I am literally in the exact same position as everyone else. I just have more followers maybe. And so just being cognizant of that, like, how often do I share that I partake in communion? Like, am I

publicizing that, or am I just publicizing like conferences I'm speaking at? Am I publicizing like our ministry events, or am I just publicizing like my things that I'm doing? And it's like, I want to make it very clear that like the local church is so important and that's the only reason that my [00:09:00] platform makes any sense because I'm in my local church. They're like, "Oh yeah, Asia, hey." You know what I mean? They're like, yeah, okay, go break down the table and then come back so we can take this thing. You know? So that's, that's kind of something that I'm learning.

Tim Koller: That's so fun. In Esau McCaulley's book, Dr. McCaulley has this line where he's talking about "How far to the promised land?" And he's saying that as he writes a memoir, he's not just writing a memoir where he is trying to celebrate him, but to actually recognize the community that him and formed him. And so, as you're talking, I'm getting the sense of this awareness of the community, the recognition of the community in your local church. curious in the digital space, you also are forming a community. And like you said, are people who are following who aren't followers of Jesus. And yet the things you're doing, I mean, your, your Instagram handle is @basiathabiblenerd. I saying that right, Basia?

Asia Nicholson: Yeah. You are. Yeah.

Tim Koller: So, as you do this work, I mean, the heart of Christian leadership is the formation of a community. And so, you are out leading in this digital space. And I'm curious, as you've been doing this now, what is the driving force for you, not just in publishing content, but this formation of a community? You're doing giveaways. I'm just curious how you are seeing the formation of a community in that space?

Asia Nicholson: I think [00:10:30] I've only just recently, literally in the past two years, started being intentionally aware of how I was forming that community. I used to be really, really irresponsible with my platform a couple years ago. Once again, I had someone from my church text me and they said, "Call me." And I was like, "Hello!"

And I was like really riled up about some stuff that was happening, and they were like, "You wouldn't say this to these people in person." And I was like, "Yeah?" And they were like, "So don't say it online." And so I think that as I'm also being formed, I have to be more, I have to be slower to even like post certain things or to say, or to consider how I'm breaking something down because I'm like, I don't know how they're going to take this and then share it to someone else, simply off of the fact that I'm seen as a trusted source and because I'm vetted by people who are trusted sources.

And so, I'm noticing that it, a lot of what I say is getting picked up a little quicker, which makes me go, oh, let me like, even the jokes I make, there are certain jokes that I, I refuse to kind of make because I don't think it'll translate well. And I'm just, it's kind of scary and it keeps me, I think the fear of it is, is less of a like anxiousness, but a fear of like the Lord in the sense that I, I don't want to take lightly that I have been given a level of influence. [00:12:00]

But I also am thankful that I have been because I get the opportunity to share the Gospel in such a, just kind of practical way. But I've just noticed that. I don't know, it kind of goes back to just how I'm learning or what I'm learning about sharing it and that even in the digital space, it doesn't stop there because with the giveaway even, people are donating to me to give away and so I have to be integral in receiving the donation and then, you know what I mean?

Like, it literally, doesn't just start with the platform. I'm still being formed in my personal life with how I talk to my friends, even how I treat my students at work. Some people at my job recognize me from following me before I even started working at the school. So, I was like, oh man, I, you know, like, now I really gotta be like, who I say I am,

right? So, I think that it's really interesting because typically with platforms you are, the person remains recognizable only on the platform. Like typically with like people with large platforms, they can go about their day sometimes. And it's like, yeah, okay. I follow them. I've noticed, especially if I'm in like a local church setting, I'm like, I'll walk about and I might, I might even have like, I might be snippy about something and then I'll see someone or someone will stare at me and be like, do I follow you?

And I'm like, oh my gosh, suddenly I'm humbled and held accountable for my attitude. And [00:13:30] yeah, like I'm just thankful that I have a community to keep me accountable, and a mentor and a spiritual father and mother and friends who are like, I don't care what, how many followers you have. I asked you to pray for me and you didn't.

Or I told you to stop watching that show because it makes you act a certain way. Or I told you to, we have Bible study at this time or to send out this email and you didn't do it, but you posted video. And so now we have to sit down and talk about this and so it, I'm trying to, I'm now in this transition of, that's not the main thing, but it is a sub-skill of the actual main thing, which is like my quiet time and

when I'm serving in real life because you know, Jesus is not like, "Nice job on the followers Asia," you know? He's like, "Girl. Did you just, are you serving, like are you hanging with people like, to show them my love?" So that's just kind of how I'm noticing that's formed. And that's what I want people to know, which is why I want to be more intentional about telling people that I go to a church, you know what I mean?

Tim Koller: That's so good. And I will say that is a, I'm hearing a lot about discipline and integrity, but then also the [00:15:00] humility to submit yourself to a community where they can hold you accountable. And few years ago, I was an elder of a church, and we flew a young man who had a large following out to our area. And they came out to Denver and we're having these conversations. And some of the people who were following them chose to come and actually sit in on some of these open community sessions that we were having. And because the individual is not connected to a larger community, they are going in more errant ways. They don't have speak in and correct them. And our church was, in essence, trying to see if they needed some type of covering. And it was very discouraging, and it could have been the altitude, but this individual, with people who are crying about the grief they've experienced, were incredibly callous. So, I look at their platform, and I remember the in-person interaction, it was difficult because they weren't being responsible with the and they could have been altitude and had a headache, could have been a bad day. I look at what you're doing, being part of this ministry and holding yourself accountable to being in that community, and now you're actually leading out of the overflow quiet time and those disciplines so that you can shape and serve this community so well. And you do some fun things. You invite people to give questions and for you to be able to create some content, to [00:16:30] answer questions from your community. I'd be curious for our listeners on the podcast, what are some of the questions that the people following you have about, about Jesus, about the Bible, about faith, any of those things?

Asia Nicholson: I get a lot of, so I have a lot of tattoos. And a lot of, I got them, I always tell people I got them when I was a Christian. And I have a, I'm open with a lot of like just my upbringing and how I wasn't explicitly raised Christian. My parents were just kind of like, go, you're, I'm leaving you unto the Lord. And I feel like that was a good choice, looking where I ended up. And so, I always say that's the best parenting method because, hey. And so, I get a lot of questions about, I want to get a tattoo, or I want to get a piercing. What will the Lord think about that? And typically for that, I always answer, if it is going to cost you how you treat another image bearer, if they were like a close image bearer, your accountability partner, if it were to cost you or risk you sinning against them or suddenly building a bridge between you two, I don't think it's worth it. If you feel like suddenly, it's all you're gonna start desiring, I wouldn't get it. If you're gonna spend too much money, something practical, I also wouldn't get it. I don't think, I always say [00:18:00] now, I probably wouldn't get as many as I have now. I'm about to turn 27, but I was like 22, 23 when I got these. So, I was like young and had a bunch of money to spend.

So, yeah. Yeah. Little stuff like that that I'll just kind of be like, yeah, you know, I just, consider all your options first, like maybe get a temp tattoo or something just to get the itch out. I get a lot of questions about music, and how, how does music play into our relationship with the Lord? Or is the Lord telling me to stop listening to this or, a frequent one is yoga or just little stuff that people will kind of want to ask but may be fearful of asking. Typically, I noticed it's a fear of me saying something against it or disagreeing with them. And just to put it out there, I hate disagreeing with people. It makes me want to cry every time I have to, especially when they're Christian. I just, I do not like disagreeing with like my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

It makes me so sad because I'm like, no, we need to be on the same page about everything. And so, I, usually, I'm just, the gist of the question is typically, will God still love me? At the root of it, will God still love me if I do this? Or will I still be considered a believer if I do this? And I know that there's been harsh language against Christians, or even people [00:19:30] Christian-adjacent. The term non-believer, it sounds a little harsh, because they're believing in something. This is not Jesus. So, I just say non-Christian, because it just sounds a bit like, like a gut punch for me a little bit, but I noticed that, typically, if I'm asked that question, it's because they've been told in the past, that's the only thing separating you from the love of Christ, your tattoos, your yoga, your something.

And so, I'll try to give my opinion or give a scenario, but also, I tend to challenge Christians who want to grow in their faith to consider that it might not be something that we need to do. And so that also, it's kind of like a double-edged sword because I'm not really giving you an answer that you may want to hear. 'Cause I'm telling you as a Christian, there's just something, there is no alternative for like, there is no alternative to not sinning. I mean, just, we can't do it. We shouldn't do it. It's one of those things, but then also I think that there is such thing as personal conviction, and there is a such thing as in your community, if this would cause you or your brother to stumble, then it would be a sin against them, but it wouldn't be a sin against my community.

And so, it's those types of questions where I'm still trying to figure out how to answer them too, because I have the same questions. But surprisingly little about the Bible. But more about how it's lived out. [00:21:00] So no one's really asking me any deep exegesis questions. When they do, it's really deep. They're like, tell me about the Nephilim and Genesis. I'm like, I don't, uh-uh, don't ask me nothing about that. I don't know. Like, it's never anything that I do know. But when they do ask questions, it's like, how do you feel about this Christian leader who did this? Or how do you feel about when the Lord said this if I do this? So, I like those questions. I try not to have the mask too much cause I get, I'm like, oh no, I'm so tired and I'm gonna cry. And so, yeah. Mm-Hmm.

Tim Koller: But what I hear in that is that you're on this journey of learning and you're bringing people on the journey so that they can learn along with you. There's not this arrogance permeating the platform where you've got everything figured out. I love that you have this inquisitive spirit where you're, you're inviting people to say, you don't have to have it all figured out, but you can still have a relationship with God. And here's what going to look like. And here's what commitment to a community looks like. There are some really beautiful elements of the Christian faith that are showing up in that space. And I'm curious, you know, at Denver Seminary, we talk about engaging the needs of the world with the power of the Gospel and life changing truth of Scripture. And curious, as you think about your work in social media, as about your work leading this community of people, what world need do you find yourself meeting as you do this work?

Asia Nicholson: That's a good question. I think just a, [00:22:30] a safe space to ask the Lord a question, honestly. There was, I took a, I took a Christian doctrine class last semester, and it was talking about how we can ask the Lord a question and, the Lord can be, it was a word that started with an A, I forget the word. But they were talking about how you can, you don't have to feel so afraid to ask the Creator of the World about the world he created.

And I think that right now we need, it's obvious we need the Lord, like we need his salvation, we need his, that's like a given. And I honestly think everyone knows that. Our souls were created to need the Lord. I think, right now, something that I do notice that I am kind of hitting on consistently is, breaking down the complicated idea that the Creator of the Universe, despite the evil that's happening, does love you, and does see you, and is not distracted by anything that's gonna keep him from seeing anything that you're going through, or listening to your question. I'm reading a book right now, it's called, it's Charles Spurgeon, it's The Power of Prayer in a Believer's Life. [00:24:00] And he is talking about how, he referenced Romans 8:32, and in so many words, he was basically saying how if the Lord heard me when I was a sinner, and if he did something for me, in so many words, if Christ died when we were sinners. Hello? And if he heard me then, if now I'm justified, why suddenly would he just stop hearing me? Like, why would he be like, okay, that's enough out of you. There's no way. And so, I think that right now people need to be reminded of, there's a severe lack of, of, of acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit and the role of just the Christian life and the power that we literally are given and are able to utilize by being justified by Christ.

And I think that, and when I was reading that, I was just thinking about how so often, not even just by worrying, but just how thoughtless I can be about how the Lord is mindful of me, and how he literally loves me. Like, like, that's it. Like, he literally loves me. And then, as the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. And internalizing that and then going about my day with that awareness and that truth that Jesus loves me. And I want people to [00:25:30] know that, yeah, Jesus loves you. That's it. Like that, that, that's all I have to say. And, and I just, I just, I just, people need to know that God is mindful of them. You can ask him, "Hey, do you love me?"

And he will answer you. Especially he is mindful of non-Christians, like, I just, we have such this only-child syndrome, Christians. And we're like, always wanting God's attention only on us. And then you've got broken people, people hurting people who don't know if the Lord loves them. People who are just like severely broken and are and are grasping for something. But we're like, oh, but there's a promise for me on this side of Zion. And it's like, if you don't be quiet and start praying that the Lord reveal himself to your neighbor, who does not know the Lord, who is suffering needlessly.

And if we could just like get out of the way so that the Lord can go for the one, like if we could dig the path for the one as the 99. In order for the Lord to chase after the one, I just think we'd have less ones, and we'd just have a rack of 99. And, and it just, I have, I, yeah, I have a deep, deep love for

non-Christians, and people who are, who are just on the cusp. Because it's so obvious [00:27:00] that they want Jesus. And I'm like, oh, if oh could just sit with you for 10 minutes. And so that's what I think I am able to do with my platform is to let people know that Jesus loves them by showing them, hey, I am a Christian. I'm in seminary. It looks like I know all these things, but I also have severe road rage.

And also, I just repented 30 times on my way up the steps. So, like, we're literally all at the same foot of the altar. And I think that, something that I remember just like meditating on in prayer is that the "success," if I could say that, of how my Instagram will be helpful is not allowing, or is by living as a sacrifice, not in a self, like, like in a detrimental way, like in the sense where I'm harming myself, but in a way that's like, this is what I'm also afraid of. This is what I wrestle with. This is how I'm learning to go to the Lord about it. And not even offering solutions, but just letting people know that this should be public discourse. Like Christianity should not be so secretive where no one knows how to pray about sin, or we're not talking about repentance daily or being a posture of, of repentance.

My pastor, Pastor [00:28:30] Jenkins, he is always, he has this constant thread. It's his main theology, which I really appreciate, other than like discipleship, is a lifestyle of repentance. And the fact is if we go into the day, knowing we're going to need to repent, it's much easier to repent. Like, and, yeah, I said a lot, but that's, that's kind of what I'm trying to be, just maintain consistency with, is just letting people know that the Lord loves our nasty selves. Like that's literally the point. You know, he's not caught off guard. Yeah. Yeah, he's all like, "When did you do this?" you know?

Tim Koller: It's so good. couple years ago, I was sitting in a training and mentoring summative experience. So, the final experience in training and mentoring, and I got to meet my mentee. I got to meet my students' other mentor who had been walking with them, and his name was Will Cunningham. And I still remember this line because it was so beautiful. But he said about writing, "Good writers are giving us windows into old truths." And I feel like a about creatives, and you're a creative. And I think at our best, we're all, to some degree, creatives. So, we're really good creatives, we're giving new windows into old truths. And so, as you think about your work, one of the things I've loved seeing has been you are taking things as you're going through [00:30:00] classes, and you're, you're giving this little snippet of a really big idea. I mean, it might, it might have been a 90-minute lecture, hmm. you're distilling it down to this little reel on Instagram, giving us a window into this truth. And so, I'm, I'm curious. How are you seeing your experience as you're going through seminary equipping you to be in that digital space?

Asia Nicholson: Mm-hmm.. I love Seminary. It's like, every time I read a book, I'm like, ah, yes, I'm supposed to be I find that the questions that I have, as complicated as they are, are also basic questions that I also have. And I remember what I, I, I was reading, I think, I'm in Hebrew now. Oof, I'm loving it, I say with tears streaming down my face. And something that I remember, every time I read a commentary on a Hebrew text or something, I'm always trying to think about, there's like one side of my brain that's trying to think about how I'm going to apply it in my life, and then there's another side that's like, okay, how am I going to explain this to someone?

If this comes up in conversation for some reason, I'm like, okay. How am I prepared to explain it? And so, I'm, I spend a lot of time when I'm studying and when I'm watching my lectures and I [00:31:30] like that the lectures are mostly conversational in the sense that I know when the lecturer is offering their perspective and I know when the lecture is rooted in tradition and how the Christian faith has remained sturdy and consistent and plausible for so many centuries. And so, I'm trying to now also find my place as like, am I, cause right now there's half people who know me as like

creative, artsy, Asia, and then there's another half of people who are like scholar, teacher. And so, I'm like, okay, how am I figuring out how to blend these two?

And then also maintain this, this, like, centeredness of who has the Lord called me to serve, and how do I take both parts of that, that academic part that I'm learning in Denver Seminary, and then, like, my theatre background that I also know, and to implement those two. And so, I think Denver is helping me to find my own language about the Lord in a way that's not accidentally heretical. I keep trying to tell people heresy is always on accident. Like no one tries to be a heretic. It's just like, oh, that wasn't right. And so, I'm, I'm trying to now, I'm, I'm watching, a lot of, when I'm watching [00:33:00] lectures, I'm watching also just their mannerisms. I'm watching how they're saying certain things, or I'm listening to how they're saying certain things.

I'm looking at their work. I'm looking at if they go to church, like what if they serve because I'm like, hey, we are talking about serving here. Where do you serve? Like, and so I'm looking at what that looks like. And then I'm also allowing for, my mentor who's at in the Wheaton College program to tell me what he's learning about pastoring. So now. I'm learning from him, what the Lord is saying to him. And then I'm like, okay, so I'm like, it's like deductive reasoning. So, I'm like, okay, so this is what I'm learning in Denver Seminary. This is what my mentor is teaching me. And then this is what also the Lord is trying to get me to understand.

And so, it's really helped me with just like balance and forming a language about complicated things. My favorite class that I'm so happy exists is, other than the Mentoring Formation, was the Pastoral Counseling class. I literally considered like majoring in, I was like, I've never considered this until Dr. Bleeker was my professor. Once again, an angel on earth and as well as Debra Anderson. Like the, [00:34:30] the, the weight of those classes, it was so formational. Hello. Like in my life and the fact that there was so much emphasis on formation as a human being was so important for me to start my seminary experience because I tend to be very, like, academic focus.

Like, I'm, I'm very, I don't know how we feel about Enneagrams. I'm an Enneagram One. And so, I have a tendency to do, to be very just like, what is right? What is wrong? I don't care about anything else in the middle. I don't, if I hurt your feelings in the process, sorry, but this is what it is, which is so funny that I have all these followers and I'm like, oh, I'm so afraid of if everyone knew, like. And so, Denver Seminary, those two classes specifically were like, this is how you are, you turn into a really smart, not mean Christian, like, that, the basics and I was like, wow, you have to like love one another who do and like these basic, basic truths that you're just talking about

That I love. And I always know when a class is going to be formational, when I, when I kind of reject it at first and I'm like, well, why do I have to take this class? This has nothing to do with like deep exegesis. And I'm like, it's like literally about Jesus. It was those two classes and, and [00:36:00] my formational classes, you know, for the rest of my seminary experience, I'm so excited about them, and I can't wait to see how I'm, I have this vision of myself of like this, this really kind old lady in a cottage and like drinking tea and just like counseling women and everyone and like these lots of children, like, and I'm like, that starts now,

in how I treat myself, my peers, children, animals, like, and, and, that class really was like the genesis of how I saw the rest of my seminary experience. Like, what good is it if I know a bunch of stuff, if I'm like mean to people who I'm trying to teach it to, or if I'm condescending, or if I'm like so busy? That Skye Jethani book *With*, we read that at my local church and then we had to read it for Mentoring Formation.

I was like, maybe I'm trying to, maybe I'm not learning something if I'm going to read it twice. And it's like, I have to commune with the Lord first. Like my purpose is to be with God, is to commune with him. I was created to need him. I was, it's good that I need him. And so that's, that's how Denver Seminary is really just helping me to, to, to phrase these things and to think about them differently. And I often go to the bibliographies for no reason other than just to be like, well, what did I say about this? Am I [00:37:30] like off a little bit here? Like, surely that was right, right? And then I'll just like, go on. I'm like, down a rabbit hole. Mm-Hmm.

Tim Koller: One of the beautiful things that you're highlighting for us is the connection that you have at First Baptist, but the faithfulness and that formation you're talking about, like what you want to be across your lifetime begins now. And at the same time, I think about how in the 1980s, Pastor Jenkins at First Baptist Church Glenarden, he becomes senior pastor of a very congregation. his faithfulness over a lifetime now merited the beautiful work that FBCG does, and his son is your mentor.

so, the legacy of faithfulness is so beautiful to be able to see. So, thank you for sharing all of that, that richness of that community that you are blessed to be part of, and they're blessed to have you part of. And so, I've asked you a ton of questions and your brain for quite a while and curious, what's one question that I have not asked you that you wish I had?

Asia Nicholson: Something that I've been, I'm always interested in thinking about is how my, like, identity as a [00:39:00] suburban Black person will affect, or what's the word? Rocket? Promote? How people receive the Gospel. And not just that, but like I said before, I have tattoos and specifically my, my Instagram name is, I use a colloquialism spelling the word the, I use T-H-A because I'm, I typically reject standard English norms, as like a form of

Tim Koller: As a sixth-grade English teacher.

Asia Nicholson: Yeah, yeah, I know, yeah, don't tell my students. And I do that because there are certain videos that I have where I'll be using my, what I call "Teacher Voice," and I'll talk, you know, I'll talk like this I'll be explaining something really complicated and then because I'm from the D.M.V., proudly from P.G. County, I'll put on my P.G. County like accent a little bit and it'll, I was like, ah, this is so funny. And then, they both get the same response, but from different types of people.

And so, I, I've learned to blend, again, both, because I am a teacher. And so, I leave room for that, for them. When, when it's time to buckle down, I say, ok, we're using Standard English. When you're done, you can switch to A.A.V.E. with me. But I said, but for now, we're using Standard. And so, I, once I, I, I, I'm just [00:40:30] always curious of what that, what that will look like, or I wonder how that's received because it's so fun to do.

And I'm like, ooh, they'll never know how this video is going to sound and I don't know. I just, I'm always wondering, like, it never seems to be a problem. I think because I, I have the, I have all of the kind of check marks to a lot of people, or rather, as a Christian, because of my stances on, let's say, sexual ethics, or life, like in terms of birth, or even just basic things.

I can seem and I can appear to be on one side. And so, I can check all the boxes to be like one of the good ones, but then I'll say something, and I'll show my tattoos and then I'll say, whoa, that was super white. And then it'd be like, whoa, no, you know? And so, it's really interesting how that, how that works.

And I have no problem with it, but I'm also just, I'm always curious about how that will look. Or for like, my like, academic career, because I am very intentional about inputting like little pieces of, on my, on my discussion board sometimes, I'll put, I'll use [00:42:00] slang after I like do this whole like exegesis thing, and I'm like, period girl, and I'll just misspell things like, just to like loosen everybody up.

I'm like, come on, we're talking about God here, like, what do you think? He's like confused about my slang? And, yeah, so. Yeah!

Tim Koller: I love it. I love it because you are able to see. The purpose of what you're doing and you're willing to express yourself into wherever you are based on that So the values that are driving what you're doing are just so beautiful. And so, as we close up our conversation, if people want to learn more about your unique ministry that you're doing, where should they go to learn more?

Asia Nicholson: Instagram. That's where I always am. I have a little link tree there too where it's like, about me. And it gives you the whole actual spiel of how I started and all that stuff. And my, and it's pronounced Bay-ja. I'm so glad you pronounced it right. Everyone, sometimes people think it's B-Asia or Bay-see-uh?

And I'm like, huh? So, it's Basia, B-A-S-I-A, the, T-H-A, Bible Nerd. And yeah, that, that came on a whim as well. It was almost Basia's Bible, but I was like, I think people are gonna think that I'm trying to add to scripture, and I don't even want any parts of that. And so, I was like, let me just keep it that way.

Tim Koller: Very wise. [00:43:30] Very wise. Yeah. so, appreciate you making time to have the conversation today. And thank you for the ministry that you're doing. Thank you for being a creative person who is opening up new windows into old truths to get the Gospel out to people who may not have heard the Good News of Jesus. So, thank you so much for everything that you're doing. And thank you for joining us on the podcast today.

Asia Nicholson: Yes, of course. Thank you for having me.

Tim Koller: Absolutely. Well, 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 podcast@denverseminary.edu. In addition, visit denverseminary.edu for more information and resources about Denver Seminary, such as events, degree programs, and other episodes of Engage360, including full transcripts. We're grateful for your interest, support, and prayers until next time. May the Lord bless you.