

[00:00:16] **Dr. Tim Koller:** Hi, friends. Welcome to Engage360, Denver Seminary's podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Timothy Koller. Thank you for joining us for today's conversation. Today we are discussing the book *Faithful Work in the Daily Grind with God and for Others* with Ross Chapman and Ryan Tafilowski, and I am so delighted to have them together. These two individuals have written this book that I have found absolutely delightful, and they've been working together for quite some time. And as our getting ready for the podcast conversations unfolded, I thought it would be more fun to have them introduce one another than for me to tell you about them. So, Ross, can you please introduce Dr. Ryan Tafilowski?

[00:00:55] **Ross Chapman:** I would be so glad to. Yes, Dr. Ryan Tafilowski around Denver Institute is affectionately called "Taff." So, if we can refer to him on this podcast that way that would be great, and keep his ego from getting too big because he has a Systematic Theology Ph.D., from a very amazing university, like not even in the U.S. So that was probably pretty challenging to get into and do hard work there. So, he has the theological credibility we would want him to have in this conversation. And as the coauthor of this book that we, we did together. But even more importantly, Ryan, Taff, if we'd like, I met in the interview process for coming on board at Denver Institute and was just welcomed warmly and humorously and felt great encouragement. He had great questions, and he was serving as our Theologian in Residence, and had done a great job creating some wonderful content that is still used pervasively in programming here at Denver Institute, and is an all-around fun person to be around. So, I am privileged to be his coauthor on this book.

[00:02:10] **Dr. Tim Koller:** Wonderful. Thank you. And I'm privileged that I get to serve on the faculty at Denver Seminary with Dr. Ryan Tafilowski, or Taff, as we are referring to him today. And Taff, could you please tell us about Ross?

[00:02:22] **Ryan Tafilowski:** Yeah, so Ross Chapman is the Executive Director of the Denver Institute for Faith and Work, where he oversees an organization. If you all don't know about the Denver Institute for Faith and Work, you need to know about them. They're doing amazing work in our city, across all kinds of industries where they convene people through their content and through the 5280 Fellowship. There are big events like Business for the Common Good and Women Working Calling. So, Ross oversees all of that, a tremendous thinker and thought leader in our city, with lots of backgrounds in that kind of work, especially an amazing vision for the renewal of Denver and the role that the Church can play in that. So really amazing work that Ross is doing over there. He just recently completed a Doctorate at Fuller Theological Seminary, and is really pretentious, insists on being called Dr. Chapman, even by people who know him really well. So, I found that kind of weird and off-putting. Ross, amazing guy, fun fact, he's a fan of the Indiana Pacers, which is just adorable.

[00:03:33] **Ross Chapman:** Oh yes. Adorable.

[00:03:36] **Ryan Tafilowski:** I work alongside Ross at Denver Institute, and we collaborated on this book, which was just an amazing experience for me. So, I'm grateful to be here.

[00:03:44] **Dr. Tim Koller:** Thank you both for engaging in that introduction. It's delightful to know both of you and I just so appreciate that you enjoy one another and can have the humor that you have together. So, thanks for blessing us with that. As we start talking about this book, I first would like to say again that I really enjoyed this. I teach leadership here at Denver Seminary. And so, to go

into this content that is written to an audience that is not just for the pastor or the theologian, this is written for anyone who's looking to follow Jesus and to have a better understanding and a better foundation for how they're approaching that work. So, can you tell us a little bit about who you've intended this audience to be and why you felt it necessary to write this text?

[00:04:30] **Ross Chapman:** Well, I can start with that. You know, really the audience is exactly what you said: anyone who really wants to follow Jesus, because the hope of the book is to reframe that what we do every day with the majority of our time is maybe the primary place we really need to work out what does it mean to follow Jesus here at work? What does it mean to join him in his mission right where he's put me, at least for the time being, maybe it's not the perfect job, maybe it's not the perfect fit, maybe it is, but either way you're joining him in his work and he's already there. And so, you know, the book is really intended to help people who want to follow Jesus who have maybe marginalized in their own life, the thing they spend so much time doing in terms of what they think is spiritual or of spiritual value or really counts for kingdom work. And so, we wanted to just say, hey, what is the biblical vision for work and how does that apply to what you actually do with your time? And this would apply to people who get paid to do the thing with the majority of their time or don't. So that would include parents who are not getting paid but are spending a lot of time working at home. It would include people who have retired from paid work. I like how you said that Tim. Just, it's anybody who wants to seriously follow Jesus.

[00:05:59] **Ryan Tafilowski:** Yeah, I would only add to that, some theological background. It didn't really come through in the book because nobody wants to read about this hyper-technical theological stuff. But I would just say it is rooted really deeply in a Reformation vision of the Christian life. One of the great contributions, in my view anyway, of the 16th century Reformation movement is that they really wanted to emphasize the priesthood of all believers as a central doctrine. And the idea is that of course, there's a place for professional clergy, right? I'm a pastor. Ross has worked in ministry as well. And there are things that pastors do that are unique and sacred. But the reformers really wanted to emphasize that God is reconciling all things to himself through the work of ordinary people working their ordinary jobs. So, they really wanted to collapse that distinction between work that "matters" and work that does not. And of course, that doesn't mean that every job can be a kingdom job, right? The earliest Christians are really clear about this. Like, you shouldn't work as a prostitute, or a pimp, or a chariot driver, or whatever. But most any kind of work, God can use to achieve his purposes in the world. And so, that sort of vision is undergirding what we're doing in the book, is, you know, what does the call of discipleship mean if you're an accountant, or a nurse, or you work in retail, or whatever? Is it possible that God is at work there? And we think so. We think the Bible thinks so.

[00:07:24] **Dr. Tim Koller:** That's beautiful. And I think the invitation that I got going through this text was that there is a holy imagination or a divine imagination that is available to us in the work that God has given to us right now in this season, that the work of the Holy Spirit is not some future activity that someday we might get into sacred work, but the availability of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit right now can equip us to engage our work differently. And so, we sometimes have in our culture this sacred and secular divide. And it seems like part of your work is seeking to help us understand the sacred in the ordinary, perhaps. So as you've been wrestling with this and having people engage in this work through Denver Institute for Faith and Work, or Ryan, through your teaching here at the Seminary, or just the personal counsel that you guys have, I'm curious, how do you see those walls being broken down between the sacred and the secular? How should we better understand the sacred in the ordinary?

[00:08:27] **Ryan Tafilowski:** I'm happy to start here, Ross. Here's what I'll say about that. I think the sacred/secular divide is in some cases necessary and helpful, and in other cases unnecessary and unhelpful. Now, I do think, for example, there are sacred things that happen, for example, in the assembled body of Christ in worship, that doesn't happen anywhere else. So, I don't think it's helpful to say "there's no sacred/secular divide. Everything is sacred." I think there's a sense in which that's not true, but I also think there's a profound sense in which that dichotomy is really, really unhelpful. And that's what we're trying to break down in the book. And I have yet to come across anyone who thinks about it better than Martin Luther. Who in the 16th century developed this theology of vocation according to what he called "the Masks of God." And what he meant was, you know, I think we've probably all heard, you know, you gotta be out there and you've got to be like Jesus in the workplace. And that's true. I think Luther would agree with that.

I had a youth pastor who always used to say, we got to go out there and be Jesus with skin on, which sounds good. But then if you stop and think about that for like two seconds, doesn't make any sense. Jesus has skin, right? He was a human. Now I'm not even sure what my youth pastor meant, but I think what he was trying to get at was, we have to find a way to sort of incarnate God's life in the world. And Luther would say that's true, but you've got the order inverted, right? So, Luther says, when you fulfill your vocation faithfully, it's not that you are wearing a God mask, it's not like you're putting on a Jesus mask and showing people Jesus, that kind of language is very common and evangelicalism. Luther says, actually no, the order is that when you do your vocation faithfully, God is wearing your face as a mask.

Meaning that God is administering his good creation through the work of people who do what they're meant to do. Even if their work is unglamorous, or toilsome, right? It is the main way that God looks after his creation. This can be true of just about any job, right? My kids are young. We're just about out of diapers. We've got one who's still hanging on. And it's hard to see what spiritual value there is in changing diapers. And I don't know how many tens of thousands of diapers I've changed in the last five years. But Luther would say, you're not just changing diapers. That is God sustaining the life of these children. Through your work and that vision really can be applied to just about anything. Luther says a baker is not just baking bread. They are God giving daily bread to people who need it. And so that massive God vocation kind of helps to see, yeah, I'm not doing sacred work in the sense that maybe I'm not a professional cleric, but God is nevertheless using my work to meet the needs of my neighbor.

[00:11:23] **Dr. Tim Koller:** That's so beautiful. Ross, I'm curious, as you have worked with individuals in a variety of industries, how does the kind of thing Ryan is talking about help those individuals in their work? How does it help them connect to their Christian faith and the vocation they're in or how do you see that interacting?

[00:11:45] **Ross Chapman:** Well, it's a great question and I'd say it's really the reason I'm doing the work that I'm doing today. I think it's why Denver Institute exists. When someone finally realizes a thing that I spend so much time doing that I've come to care about a lot, and tried to really do well, and dominates my thoughts, God actually cares about it, or that he could use it to sustain someone else, to provide his provision to someone else, to extend his mercy and love and grace and care, the relief of suffering to someone else. And that is like something he really wants me to do. It's pleasing to him. That changes everything. We were just, I just talked with a couple of people in the last few weeks as an example. One lady who's leading a foundation here in the city, she said, you know, when I started engaging with some of the stuff Denver Institute was doing, I finally learned that God loves work, and it changed my life.

It changed my entire perspective about how I'm spending my time and what matters, I guess. I was with another person last week who was doing some work with us here in the office and was just asking, so what do you guys do exactly? And I just kind of communicated, we want people to have hope for Monday. We want people to wake up and recognize, hey, you're joining what God's doing in your workplace and what you're actually doing is creating something that he values because it brings it a little bit more making things right into the world that he created. And I just said, you know, the thing that you're doing here with us is valuable to him and is actually really a good thing and is important for his mission. And you could just see, he had never thought of it. He'd been in church a long time, and it was, you know, I don't want to project too much onto him, but I think that you could have said like, that was an emotional moment, to have that realization right there in the conversation. And I think that's hope for the thing that I do so much of, actually the father cares about it, wants me to do a good job at it.

Luther also said, God doesn't need your good works, but your neighbor does. And the way that you actually do those good works that he set out for us to do, according to Ephesians 2:10, before the creation of the world, is primarily through your everyday work. I mean, it happens in your neighborhood, it happens with your kids, it happens, you know, in every context of your life, but work is a big part of your waking hours. And so, how dare we just limit ourselves to say, oh, work is, you know, not part of that somehow. That's like the majority of our time. Of course, God wants to use that for his making-things-right project in the world. So that's like the big epiphany that we want people to have. You know, and sometimes it takes hearing it multiple times, but just say, God loves work. God loves the thing that I do. I can direct this somehow towards his purposes in the world. I can, you know, bring the sacred into the ordinary by doing my work with competence, with love, with compassion, with great care. And I can see it that way.

[00:15:13] **Dr. Tim Koller:** That's a beautiful thing for us to grab onto because it can be that many of us go through our week, and we feel the toilsome nature of the work and it can be dissatisfying and it can be discouraging, and it can be difficult. And yet there is an opportunity in the midst of it to live out the Christian life in such a way as to invite people into this life with Christ that transforms all of our week, not just this Sunday morning experience or when I'm at Bible study, but it can transform the way I engage my work. But it requires a bit of a theological shift. And you talk about this in the book, of moving from like a twofold gospel of fall and redemption, to a fourfold approach, a deeper understanding of the breadth of scripture. So, I'm curious, Ryan, as you've been doing this theological work for some time, you know, studying at prestigious institutions so that you can be prepared to equip students very well through Denver Seminary's programs. I'm curious, how does moving from that twofold understanding to the fourfold understanding change the way that we approach this conversation?

[00:16:22] **Ryan Tafilowski:** Yeah, so one of the things we argue in the book, and this is really common in lots of good work that is being done in the faith and workspace. There's lots of theological material that's being produced, really over the last couple decades and has proved a really fruitful area for research. One of the things we try to argue is that the story of the Gospel is, at the very least, a fourfold drama, four-act play, rather than a two-act play. And it has been characteristic of evangelicalism, at least historically, in lots of dominant expressions, to think of the gospel as basically, you've got a problem, right, and you're in trouble, which is true, right? I want to make clear that that is part of the gospel, right? There's bad news, and Jesus died, so now that your problem is solved, and you can live with him forever when you die. And that's not untrue, but it's only the middle two chapters of a four-chapter story, right? So that story actually, that two-chapter story, really only makes sense if it's put in that broader story. And so, we're trying to sort of cast a broader vision where we think hard about creation. And I want to make clear we can't sort of get

back to Eden on our own technique. We can't simply reproduce that, we can't just read Genesis, want to be like, oh, let's work just like that because of the little problem that the Christian tradition calls sin, which has twisted the very nature of reality.

It's distorted things badly. Things are out of joint. We cannot work like work was done in the garden. But we do get a blueprint there. And we learn important things like, number one, not only does God value work, like Ross was saying, God himself works. Now, if you want to learn more about this, you'll have to ask one of our many esteemed experts here at the seminary. You could talk to Dr. Hess about this. But if you read other ancient cosmologies, the gods don't work. They create humans so that humans work as slaves. And the vision you get in Genesis 1 is absolutely crazy in the ancient Near East. It's a god who works himself, and then creates humans not to be slaves, but to be creative partners with him. Totally, totally novel understanding of work in the ancient world. And so that's in chapter one, right? We know that work predates the Fall. It's been distorted by sin. It's being redeemed by Jesus. And then we try to argue for more attention to chapter four, which is eschatology, last things, new heavens, and the new earth.

Where, you know, here, I don't want to speculate too much. We don't know a whole lot about what that looks like. You know, the apostle Paul says that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor can any heart imagine. So, I don't want to sort of over-realize God's future, which is going to blow our minds. But the glimpses we do get in the scriptures do seem to indicate an embodied existence where there is culture and common life and work, right? Humans do things. They collaborate with one another. I remember asking my grandmother who worked in an electronics factory, I was badgering her when I was about 10. Grandma, what are we going to do in heaven? And she said, well, I don't know. And that's the correct answer, but I would not take that answer.

So, I kept pressing her and I said, what are we going to do? And she said, we're going to sing praise songs. And I said forever? And she said, yeah, forever. And this was the early 90s, so I was picturing "Lord, I lift your name on high" with all the hand movements on a loop for eternity. And I thought, what's going on downstairs? It can't be worse than this, right? But that's actually not the New Testament's vision. The New Testament's vision is a new heaven and a new earth and embodied existence. And we don't know exactly what it looks like, but we do know that humans are going to be tasked with that mandate, which we were given in Genesis 2. We're going to do all that image-bearers were meant to do, but without the conditions of sin. And so, by telling that broader story, we hope that someone can see there is more to the Christian life than just saying the Jesus prayer, right? And going to be with Jesus when you die, that actually there's this whole grand story and an adventure where humans have a really important part to play.

[00:20:33] **Dr. Tim Koller:** That's beautiful, and I appreciate it in your text. One of the things that you did so well is you named specific areas that are impacted by the fall that that sin has impacted, and then how redemption plays a role in each of those areas. So, sin impacts this, but redemption looks like this. So, you mentioned first redemption with God, then redemption in our lives, redemption with one another, redemption of systems and structures, and then redemption of the created world. So, the work that we do in those who are following Jesus can be participating in this work of redemption. And you quote from 2 Corinthians 5, and I appreciate how much scripture you've woven throughout the text, but "He who knew no sin became sin so that we could become the righteousness of God."

And so, as you've wrestled with this different way of thinking about our work as more than just fall and redemption, that there's creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. Ross, in your book, you are talking about not just the fall and how it impacts work, but then how redemption provides this

opportunity in our work. So, in the book, you give us five ways of redemption. There's redemption with God, redemption in our lives, redemption with one another, redemption of systems and structures, and redemption of the created order. And so how do these things inform the work of the plumber and the teacher?

[00:28:05] **Ross Chapman:** This is a great question. I actually think this is one of the most important parts of the book, because it really does give a blueprint in a way, or at least the right questions that you could be asking inside your workplace. So, what does it look like in your workplace to help others be reconciled to God? Now, this might be the most common way that people in the theologically evangelical camp would think of how they integrate their faith in their work. Like, I just need to share my faith when I get the chance. Or that's really the only reason I got there. So that can go too far because we're saying, actually, there's four other questions you can ask that are also participating in that redemptive work in your workplace, you know, your reconciliation with God in your own life, recognizing your everyday work is a primary discipleship arena. God is using it to shape you. It is forming you. Is it forming you in the way towards Christ or away from Christ? And what can you implement in your own work rhythms that would help you look more and more like Jesus? And then if you go to, how is my workplace a place where I can help my coworkers, customers actually like each other better, love one another better, be reconciled to one another?

This is a very popular work topic. We have a whole thing called H. R. departments that help with this aspect of work. But as an individual worker, whatever your role is, you can be thinking, how can I represent God? Who is the perfect union, Father, Son, and Spirit, perfect relationship. How can I be a person who is going after the loneliness I see in workplaces, the isolation I see in workplaces, and just being a person who's willing to make those relationships and connections? And then I think the systems and structures one is the one that challenges me the most, because I think it's learning to recognize the water that you swim in. It's also learning to recognize the most fruitful thing you can do may not actually produce the fruit you hope for because it's in a system and a structure that is broken. This is where the reality of the fall of chapter two comes into play, I think in ways that we often don't consider or think about. But maybe it's policies. Maybe it's the way the work happens. It's procedures. It's, you know, the ethos of the workplace culture that you're in. You know, how do you make it look more and more like a vision of that city, or what heaven might be like, or what does flourishing mean in that workplace?

And then the last one is, is related to the created world. So, is your workplace connected to leveraging the resources of the planet? Is it, and probably all of our workplaces in some way touch this, because we work in a building, or we work in our house, and that was made from the things God gave us. So how are we taking care of those? How are we stewarding those things? So that's a great way to just ask yourself these five questions, you know? These are all ways that I can integrate my faith right into my everyday work that actually brings more and more towards kind of that reconciliation of all things right into my everyday world. It makes your faith more practical; it makes it more alive; it makes it more active; it makes it more constant, rather than sort of relegating it to Sunday morning, Tuesday night Bible study, volunteering at a nonprofit, writing a check to a thing that you care about. Actually, this is like you are strategically placed.

You are already there. In fact, you may be the only agent of redemption in that workplace. And so, stay there and be that that would be my encouragement. And if you think about God's people in Israel, when they are sent to Babylon, and Jeremiah, you know, God says through the prophet Jeremiah, hey, I have, I'm the person who sent you here into exile, and I want you to pray for the Shalom, or the prosperity, the flourishing, of the city where you're going.

And it is like the antithesis of Jerusalem. The holy city, the place where the great king lives. That's not the case anymore for them. And so now they have to live in Babylon, and I think it's intentional that Peter, when he writes 1 Peter, opens and closes his book writing to the exiles, speaking about Babylon. And he's reminding the Christians of his day, you also are in exile. You also live in Babylon. Like really every city is Babylon. And so, what does the command say in Jeremiah 29? It says to have families. There's family work to do, you know, plant vineyards. Build houses, put your roots down here in the economic and cultural realities of the place where you are, but continue to be my distinct people, continue to be about the things that I'm about, where I am sending you, because as that place prospers, so will you, and so you are, as an exile currently right now following Jesus, you have the idea that you want the place where you are to flourish.

To do it distinctly, to think about these five areas that you can bring redemption to. And the vision that God gives in Revelation 21 is a new city coming down out of heaven, and it's called Jerusalem. The city of flourishing, the city of Shalom. And while we don't know for sure, it's going to be, you know, what kind of city that looks like or what heaven really is, as Ryan was saying earlier, we do know that there is this movement towards the goal of creation being this city vision. And so, in a city, there's a whole lot of work required. There's a whole lot of labor that has to happen to end up creating the kind of flourishing, the life to the full that Jesus wants us to have. And, you know, the whole idea in the book is, you get to participate with God in this every day. What an amazing privilege to be doing the most important work right where you are with the tasks and responsibilities before you that day.

[00:34:33] **Dr. Tim Koller:** It's a beautiful invitation, and I hope that as we reflect on what you're offering to us, it gives us opportunity to reengage the work God has placed in our lives for this season in a very different way. And some of us carry around some amount of anxiety about calling, that we have this idea that here is the one thing that God has called me to do. And if I miss it, I missed it, I, my whole life is just down the drain. And y'all do such a great job of helping us to understand that there's a calling to Christ that is the first calling, and then there may be this second calling that gives us direction in different seasons of life. And I find that to be really helpful. And I also found that your articulation of that eschatological vision, that end times vision of Revelation 21, offers to us the ability to be in the midst of the work, but not be caught up in the work by creating idolatry or overwork. And you actually say there will be a state of rest, unhurried, non-anxious rest. The kind of rest that comes when one is fully free, fully known, and fully alive. That rest is also available today. And so for that person who's feeling overwhelmed, overworked, they, that idea of having rest in the midst of the work, that seems foreign. Or to that person that is worried that they missed that call. How would you speak to that person?

[00:36:12] **Ryan Tafilowski:** I'll let Ross speak more fully to the Sabbath and the Bible's vision of Sabbath rest and say that this is, we badly, badly need to recover this. One of the many pathologies of work in our culture is a sort of frenetic overwork that is matched by frenetic recreation. So, especially, you know, we're all in Colorado, which is a sort of work hard, play hard kind of culture. And you'll talk to people and it's like, how was your weekend? And I'm exhausted hearing them describe their weekend. And then we're back at work, right? And that is not the Bible's vision for rest. I can let Ross speak to that a little more fully.

The second thing is, I think that point on vocation is really vital pastorally. I've been around people, as you say, Tim, who carry around a lot of anxiety around this, and I've seen it at both ends of the career. I've sat with 20-somethings who are just out of college, and they're desperate to find that one thing that they were "made to do." And they're really worried that if they don't find it, they're going to squander their life. And then I've also conversely been sitting with people at the end of their

working lives who look back and say, man, was I really supposed to do that? What was that for? Did I just spend 30, 40 years just kind of aimlessly working? What was it all for? And I'm not saying those are not important questions, but I think it's important to say, I sometimes call it the Inigo Montoya Rule. I don't know if anyone is familiar out there with *The Princess Bride*, which is the most glorious movie of my childhood, but there's a villain character who keeps saying the word "inconceivable." He keeps saying it over and over and over to describe things that are not inconceivable because they are, in fact, happening. And Inigo Montoya, who's one of the characters, says, you keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means, right? And sometimes we misuse that word vocation. Biblically, it does not mean what you think it means, right?

We tend to use this word to talk, a fancy way of talking about career, or the thing I'm meant to do. It's not how the Bible ever uses that word. The Bible uses the word vocation to call people into union and communion with Jesus Christ. And to call them to be a particular kind of person before they are ever called to do a particular thing. And this is very, very important, right? Anyone who is in Christ, that is their primary calling. And you can be conformed to the image of Jesus, even if, and perhaps especially if, you're in work that you don't find personally satisfying or fulfilling. So, I would just want to clarify some thinking around that, that calling is a theological term and it usually denotes God calling people to himself. And then work is downstream from that.

[00:39:11] **Ross Chapman:** I would just add, you know, God set out a vision for work and rest in the very beginning by himself being a worker, then taking the time to delight in his work, which we sometimes miss that part, it's very clear. He took time to delight in the work that he called very good and good and then rested. Certainly, theologically speaking, God does not need rest. He's omnipotent. So, I think he was setting an example to say, this is how I made humanity. This is how I made creation, in fact. And so there is a rhythm of six days of work and one day of rest. So, we don't need to debate, like, how, like, which day it is necessarily. But the fact is, we are not made to work constantly. And when we do, things go badly. And when we end up resting much and not working, things go badly. They go badly internally, and we are not as fruitful and productive as we could be. And that's a vision that we need to wrestle with. So, there is rest from work and there is rest in work.

And the rest in work is what Ryan's talking about. If you have your identity and purpose firmly rooted in Christ union with him, you can enter that rest right now. You can go to your job that is frenetic. That is crazy. That workplace is nuts. The culture is weird and things you don't agree with. And you can go in with complete rest. Because you are safely in Christ and he is with you, he is there present in the place where you are because you are there and he's in you and you're taking him there. And that should give us comfort. That should give us a sense of peace. And we can then bring that peace, that reconciliation to the places we are. So that's what I think the writer of Hebrews is getting at when he's sort of exegeting Psalm 95. It's a beautiful passage, choose to enter that rest today. It's available to you because you are in Christ. And I think that's a message we badly need to hear.

[00:41:30] **Dr. Tim Koller:** That's wonderful. As you're talking, it was reminding me of the work of two researchers, Bolman and Deal, in a book called *Reframing Organizations* that's on its sixth revision at this point, but they talk about in their book that there are these four approaches to organizational life. One is a structural frame. The second is a human resource frame. The third is a political frame. And the fourth is the symbolic frame. And they have many, many chapters. How will they unpack that? But one of the things that really impacted me when I read that book some years ago was, they said the political frame of an organization is a reality.

It's not a matter of if you have politics. It's a matter of what kind of politics you have. So, what I'm imagining is you're describing this life in organizations is there's this frenetic stream, this busy flowing stream, and we're able to sit to the side of it and not be caught up in it. And I found your chapter on politicization and polarization in society impacting our work, I found that really fascinating. Because the, it wasn't what I was expecting when I went into faithful work, you know, you're talking about in the daily grind with God and for others. And then there's this chapter in the middle on polarization. And you're quoting from 1 Peter 2, from 1 Thessalonians. You're giving us Reinhold Niebuhr's approach to this. Why is it important for us to understand the work of faith in the midst of a polarized society?

[00:42:58] **Ryan Tafilowski:** How long do we have? Let me just say a couple of things at the start. Ross spoke a little bit to the way that sin has estranged and alienated systems and structures. And you don't exactly have to be a professional theologian to recognize the way that sin has done this to our political structures. I don't know if y'all have heard that it is an election year, but it's an election year. I think we'd all agree it's not going so great out there. You know, writing a generation ago, the missiologist Lesslie Newbigin in the 1960s predicted what he called "the rise of the political religions." And what he said is, as traditional religious affiliation declines, he predicted that it would, and indeed it has. He says that impulse towards transcendence isn't going to be extinguished, it's going to be rechanneled. And so, people are now looking away from institutionalized religion, and they are channeling those religious energies into a number of things, including politics, and I would argue work as well.

And we're suddenly looking at politics to be a source of transcendence, which in the Christian faith, it plainly cannot be. But where this impacts work is depending on the kind of work that you do. And maybe I'm not the best person to talk about this because I'm a pastor and a seminary professor. So, like I can go like a week without meaningfully engaging with a non-Christian, which is not a great situation. So let me be clear on that. But most of us who work out there in the marketplace are trying to contend with pluralism on the ground, right? You're with people in your workplace, probably who think differently than you, or at least have the potential to, and all of our industries are also bound up in these political tensions.

And so, the task of discipleship becomes, how do I negotiate a workplace where people have different values than I do, right, where I'm within a structure that I cannot change, I'm in a system that curbs my possibilities professionally, what now, right? And you mentioned Reinhold Niebuhr. I find his work really helpful in this respect. He's affiliated with a group of theologians who developed a movement that came to be called Christian Realism, which basically says sometimes Christian faith requires us to do the best we can do under less-than-ideal circumstances. And I would argue that the life of work for most of us creates less than ideal circumstances, right?

Where actually all these grand visions of new creation and partnering with God and as valuable as that is, sometimes it's just not workable. Sometimes we cannot do it. What if we don't have any agency in work? What if we're in, what if we're a middle manager in a corporation where we don't have any discretion over policy or anything like this, what now? And Christian realism, I think helps us to make our peace with better, not best. Right? And it gives us some vocabulary to think in degrees, that what do you do if you're working inside an industry that you can actually live out this vision? Can you do it better? Probably. Is it possible to do a less good job or a better job? I find this to be a really helpful ethic too, for thinking about politics, which is related to public life, like work is. What am I supposed to do in a situation like this where I have these two choices, basically, and voting for one is going to violate some of my principles as a Christian and voting to the other is going

to violate others. So, what now? All right. I think it's just a way of naming the tensions that are just involved with being a person in the world, following Jesus in a world broken by sin.

[00:46:48] **Dr. Tim Koller:** It's so helpful. I think we get this idea that, if I'm experiencing some level of tension, I'm not really in my calling and I'm not really able to rest in the Lord because I somehow missed something. But there's this tension, regardless of the industry that we're in, where we're going to have to rely on the grace of God. And we're going to have to operate with faith. I think in our modern era, we sometimes try to get so cognitive in these things that we avoid needing to have faith. We're not going to be able, this side of heaven, to fully understand these things. And I'm so thankful that your book is inviting us into this faithful work, that we are relying on the faithfulness of the Lord, and we can rest comforted, knowing Ephesians, that he has prepared the way, that we can walk in him. And so, thank you both for the work that you've done to lay out a path. I also appreciate the brevity of your text, that you have been concise, because I can see in this that there's a lot more that the two of you could have written into this, but you gave us a concise text. So, I just want to encourage our listeners, if you've appreciated this conversation, to go pick up the book, *Faithful Work* by Ross Chapman and Ryan Tafilowski. It is a worthwhile read. So, to the both of you, thank you for joining us here on Engage360.

[00:48:14] **Ross Chapman:** Glad to be here. It's fun.

[00:48:17] **Dr. Tim Koller:** 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 at 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.