



Russell Moore: ([00:03](#))

I would define courage as moving forward in trust. In spite of fear.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:12](#))

You're listening to the Faith & Work Podcast where we explore what it means to serve God, neighbor, and society through our daily work. Hi, and welcome to the faith and work podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, the director of public engagement here at Denver Institute. And I'm joined today by Dustin Moody, our director of communications. Hi, Dustin.

Dustin Moody: ([00:34](#))

Hi, Joanna.

Joanna Meyer: ([00:35](#))

Today we're talking about a topic that many of our listeners can probably relate to, having courage in our work. And I'm wondering if, Dustin, would be willing to share examples of situations that have created fear for you in the workplace. And don't worry, I'll share a couple of my own.

Dustin Moody: ([00:50](#))

Yeah. So there's a couple that I think of when I think of fear in the workplace. One is always living up to my own expectations for my work and living up to the expectations of my colleagues and peers and bosses, and always feeling like there's a gap that I'm trying to get to. But honestly, one fear that kind of sticks with me and it wasn't actually in the workplace, it was a fear from being out of the workplace.

Dustin Moody: ([01:15](#))

And I shared this in different ways earlier on the podcast, but there was a season of life right after I moved to Denver to come out to help a church plan in Nevada [inaudible 00:01:24] Fellowship. And the job situation that I had constructed before moving from Florida didn't pan out. And I spent seven months on what affectionately call is fun employment, kind of unemployed enjoying the city of Denver living off some savings, but really not investing or contributing to workplace.

Dustin Moody: ([01:43](#))

And that was a tough seven months. And there was a lot of fear around... This was back in 2014. The job market was not what it was today. A lot of fear around what will happen, what will I do? But also fears around who does this say that I am. What's my identity in this season? I think there's a lot to unpack in today's podcast.

Joanna Meyer: ([02:05](#))

Oh. So much. So much. Thanks for your honesty. I think about moments like that, too. And even sometimes operating in areas of our giftedness can still be places of great fear in our lives. I think anytime I'm having to talk in public for about half an hour or an hour or even an entire afternoon, before



I have to speak, everything in me wants to physically run in the opposite direction. Even if I'm completely confident of what I have to talk about, that sense of very real fear around performance is definitely there in my work.

Joanna Meyer: ([02:34](#))

I think our topic today is powerful. When you think about it, the workplace can be one of the most anxiety-producing areas of our lives. I think about situations like dealing with transitions related to job loss, what you were describing in the unknown. It could be facing our own limitations and failures. This is something that I know a lot of executives and entrepreneurs encounter, where they just are asking themselves, do what it takes to lead this company where it needs to go?

Joanna Meyer: ([03:02](#))

I think of moral courage, too. There are numerous situations in the workplace where it might be unethical behavior or taking a stand to lead in a positive direction will cause you to go against the prevailing headwinds within your company. So many examples of fear. Which is why I'm excited about today's topic. We're going to be talking to Dr. Russell Moore who is a national leader. He's been a public theologian for years. And has really modeled courage and also written about it in his new book, *Courage to Stand*. Dustin, can you tell us a little bit more about our guest?

Dustin Moody: ([03:34](#))

Absolutely. Dr. Russell Moore is the public theologian at Christianity Today. And he's the director of CT's public theology project. Dr. Moore is the author of several books, including the *Courage to Stand* onward and *The Storm-Tossed Family*. Prior to joining Christianity Today, he served as president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention from 2013 to 2021. He's a native of Mississippi, and he and his wife, Maria, are the parents of five sons. Dr. Moore, welcome to the Faith & Work Podcast. Thanks for joining us today.

Russell Moore: ([04:05](#))

Oh, it's great to be with you. Thanks for having me.

Dustin Moody: ([04:07](#))

So before we get started, we know that you're an avid music listener, a music fan. I'm curious, what's on your playlist these days.

Russell Moore: ([04:15](#))

Well, I have a lot of the usual stuff that I always have, but there's also a couple of new things. There's an artist I've become familiar with Marc Scibilia who has a new single out called *Dressed For The Weather*. But somehow, I came across him and started listening to his older stuff as well. And it's really good, especially a song called *Summer Clothes*. Whenever I find a new piece of music, I tend to listen to it over and over and over again. And my wife said... Because it's about a guy who finds his ex-wife or



ex-girlfriend or something's summer clothes in the closet. And living in Buffalo is trying to find a way to get it to her. And my wife's, "Are you trying to tell me something?" I said, "No, I just liked this song."

Russell Moore: ([05:09](#))

So that's one that I've been listening to quite a bit. And then there's another. Oh, what is his name? Zane Campbell, I believe. I came across him in an article and he just had such a funny attitude that I thought I would've to his stuff. And it's really addicting. Post Mortem Bar and stuff like that is really good.

Dustin Moody: ([05:36](#))

I so appreciate how wide your tastes in music is. I've gotten a lot of recommendations from hearing you talk on your podcast as well. So at Denver Institute, we like to think of ourselves as doing public theology. So we were really excited to hear about your transition to Christianity Today and the public theology project there. Tell us a little bit more about what you'll be doing there and some of the dreams and goals for that project.

Russell Moore: ([06:01](#))

Well, really two things. The first is producing content related to public theology. So in terms of articles, in terms of a column, the relaunch of the Signpost Podcast, and modeling what it means to, not just process what's going on, but how to deal with polarization and with difficult conversations.

Russell Moore: ([06:26](#))

And then the second aspect of it will be in terms of coalitions. I think that God is doing something new among evangelical Christians right now. And it really calls for the same sort of moment that evangelical Christianity had in 1947 after World War II where Billy Graham and Carl Henry and others said we really want a forward-looking, joyful, theologically-informed evangelical Christianity. I think we have just such a moment now.

Joanna Meyer: ([06:56](#))

So Dr. Moore, when I saw the title of your new book, the Courage to Stand, I thought if anyone is qualified to write about this topic, it would be you. Because you really have led courageously in your life as a public leader. You've challenged Christians and denominations to move beyond what have often been common issues of concern of religious liberty or issues of life and public policy to address some of those hot-button issues like race or the history of abuse within the church. And I'm wondering, how did your personal experience inform writing this book?

Russell Moore: ([07:30](#))

Well, I wrote the book as I do most of the things I write, not because I was qualified to write it, but because I was unqualified to write it, and because it's something that I was grappling with. So very similar to... I wrote Adopted for Life after my wife and I had gone through an adoption process where I



was the reluctant one at the beginning. And I had all sorts of fears and questions and misconceptions. So I was writing that book to someone who was in the same situation that I was in at that time.

Russell Moore: [\(08:00\)](#)

And *Courage to Stand* was really written out of a sense of a lack of courage and a need for courage, not just for myself, but with many of the people that I was talking to everyday about all sorts of things, from work, to parenting, to church, and whatever. I found that, a lot of the time, what was happening was not a clarity problem. It wasn't that they didn't know what to do necessarily, or what was right or wrong. It was a courage problem that, the ability to not know how I can do it.

Russell Moore: [\(08:38\)](#)

And so that's... Often when I am trying to think through how to do something, the best way for me to work through it is by writing about it and sort of processing. And so that's really what was going on there.

Dustin Moody: [\(08:55\)](#)

Dr. Moore, I'd love to talk a little bit more about courage specifically as you kind of situated in your book. And he stressed that real biblical courage differs from how the world defines courage. And I'd love to read two quick quotes from the beginning of the book. You write, "The way of courage as defined by the gospel is not the pagan virtue of steeliness or fearlessness. Much less, our ambient culture is picture of winning and displaying or strengthened swagger."

Dustin Moody: [\(09:18\)](#)

Later you write, "What it means to stand for Christ is not, it turns out, to evacuate our internal lives of all fear or to humiliate our enemies with inconvertible winning, but instead to live out our lives the very drama of the cross." So from the perspective of a writer in your book, how would you define courage?

Russell Moore: [\(09:36\)](#)

I would define courage as moving forward in trust in spite of fear. And so it's not just that I would say the presence of fear does not mean an absence of courage. It's also that fear, I think, is often necessary and even revelatory. So if you think about, for instance the shepherds in Luke two. I grew up in the old King James version of this and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid.

Russell Moore: [\(10:12\)](#)

Well, that fear, this actually is a necessary stage toward receiving revelation. Or when Simon Peter is walking on the water and starts to sink beneath the water, there's an initial confidence, but that confidence isn't where he gets the revelation. It's when he realizes, I can't do this. Lord, save me. And he's pulled up. So I think that that's an essential part of courage.

Russell Moore: [\(10:40\)](#)



So, sometimes I think when people get scared, they start to think, well, this means that God's absent, or it means that I'm doing the wrong thing. When actually, many times the fear that's there is a sign of God's presence and a sign that something new is happening in your life. And I think that's a pattern we see throughout the scriptures.

Joanna Meyer: ([11:04](#))

Do you know you may have saved me hundreds of dollars of therapy appointments with [crosstalk 00:11:10]. Because I deal with anxiety related to work every day. And one of the things that you dropped in the book is that the goal isn't eliminating fear, but learning how to do fear the right way. What in the world does that mean? And what does dealing with fear in a healthy way look like?

Russell Moore: ([11:27](#))

Well, I think people have different vulnerabilities and different ways of dealing with fear. So I think there are some people that when they start to get scared, the way that they respond is with kind of immobilization. There's a sort of numbness that comes upon them. And so sometimes when someone comes to me and says, I just don't have any passion, there are all sorts of reasons why that would be the case. But in some cases, it's because they're afraid and they don't know what to do with the fear. Some people respond that way.

Russell Moore: ([12:04](#))

And then some people respond with this sense of pretending in order to keep the fear away and in different ways. For some people, that's sort of an argumentative, I'm going to appear to be really tough. And then for some people, it's sort of I'm going to perform my way out of this. And so I'm afraid in the way that I'm going to keep the fear away is by excelling at everything to the point of exhaustion.

Russell Moore: ([12:37](#))

I came across a concept, not long ago, that really made sense to me, called... It was in the context of thinking about church sexual abuse or ministry sexual abuse, but I think it actually applies much more broadly than that. And that's the concept of betrayal blindness. Which is, when a child is being abused or neglected, the idea that a parent could be an abuser or something wrong with the parent is too much for a child to bear. And so often what children will do is to find a way to excuse their parents and to place the blame on themselves. There's something wrong with me. Or if only I could do better, then I would take this weight off of my parents and they would approve of me.

Russell Moore: ([13:28](#))

I think there's something like that that sometimes goes on with people in terms of their work, or even just in terms of the way that they view God. Which is to say if I just... These patterns that they learned, if I'm just indisputable, excellent, then I'm not going to be afraid. But that never works, because the people who are indisputably excellent then have imposter syndrome and everything else. So they never get to that point where they can say this has settled. So there's a different way, I think, to deal with fear.



Dustin Moody: ([14:06](#))

Dr. Moore, it seems like a lot of these avenues for dealing with fear also result in some shame that we all bear, whether you're performing or whether you're avoiding. You situate shame as the fear of judgment and the courage to stand, but also as kind of central to the process of becoming courageous. From our work at Denver Institute, we know that the workplace can be a huge source of shame for a lot of people, whether that's failing to meet quotas or keeping up with colleagues or not hitting performance goals.

Dustin Moody: ([14:40](#))

So I'm curious, you say that the way out of shame is not by going around it, but going through it. What does that mean and how do we apply it in the workplace for areas of shame that we might be carrying?

Russell Moore: ([14:52](#))

Well, if you think biblically, in Genesis three, when Adam and Eve hide in the garden, they're naked and they're ashamed and they hear the voice of God and they want to hide from God. I think that the way that the Bible undoes shame is not by saying there's nothing to feel judged about, it's to say, where are you judged and by whom?

Russell Moore: ([15:17](#))

And so the understanding that we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that we give an account to Christ, tends to reorder our lives in a way that can keep us from constantly looking for other judges. Which is what we constantly are doing, is to say who's the audience that I'm seeking to please? Nobody can please everybody. And so you have to say, which audience is it that I'm trying to please at this moment. And that can be impossible to do and exhausting.

Russell Moore: ([15:51](#))

And also, it can be largely imaginary. I was talking to someone just the other day, whose job had been eliminated and he didn't have a job. And I was talking to him and I said, "I'll bet that one of the things that's going through your mind right now is this fear that everyone's looking at you as a failure." I said, "And let me tell you, from the outside, no one's thinking. That's not the way anybody is looking at this. Even if there were, there would be ways to address it, but that's not the way that it's being viewed."

Russell Moore: ([16:27](#))

And I think that he thought that because that's a natural way that we respond. And sometimes even in situations that aren't as big and life-changing as but you had a certain goal that you were supposed to meet and you didn't need it. And there's a sense not just of, well, this didn't work out and I didn't do as well as I should have done and I'll do something better. Sometimes we respond with, oh, I've been exposed as a fraud. No. you didn't make your quota this month. Those are two very different things.

Joanna Meyer: ([17:01](#))



How has the cross central to dealing with fear?

Russell Moore: ([17:06](#))

Well, I think one of the ways that we... One of the false ways that people tend to deal with fear is by trying to imagine all sorts of positive aspects and to say I am going to meet my quota this month, and I'm going to imagine myself meeting that quota, and I'm going to do it. That doesn't tend to work. Instead, what tends to work is to say, what's the worst thing that could happen here. And once you get to the worst possible scenario, then asking, can I survive that? Can I deal with that? Yes. Okay. So I don't have this just unnamed fear out there. I recognize I have a fear that I can name and I can actually face.

Russell Moore: ([18:00](#))

When it comes to the cross, the worst thing that can possibly happen to us, for those of us who are followers of Christ, has already happened. Because we're United to Christ. And I no longer live, Jesus Christ now lives in me, Christ and in crucified. So the worst possible thing that can happen to me has happened. And the best possible thing that can happen to me has happened, because the resurrection from the dead has already happened in the person of Jesus Christ. We will experience it fully later, but his life is our life and we're hidden in him.

Russell Moore: ([18:36](#))

So what that tends to do is to put things in the right priority. Because if you don't have that, if you don't recognize that you've already been through the worst, then you're going to fear all sorts of things. And if you don't recognize the joy that is awaiting you in something that's already accomplished, then you're going to try to find that sort of ultimate joy in all kinds of things. Some people it's their family, some people it's their work, but any time that any even good thing is turned ultimate, apart from God, it does not just that it disappoints us, ultimately in the end, it's that we start to change. And we can't even succeed at what we're trying to do because these things don't, they can't bear the weight of all of those expectations.

Russell Moore: ([19:36](#))

So if you reorder those joys and those fears, I think the way that we do that is centered on the cross.

Joanna Meyer: ([19:46](#))

Dr. Moore, earlier you had referred to how polarized life is, and that in your work as a public theologian, you'll be hoping to help people learn how to engage that. And as I think about, for so many Christians to follow crisis, to step into conflict and be at times against culture. That's not a great way to describe it, because we don't have a hostile attitude towards culture, but it means going against the cultural norms a lot of times. And that inherently means stepping into the fear of what other people think of us, or what you described in the book as the fear of man. As a Christian, how does scripture equip us for that daily tension of feeling like we're going against the grain of mainstream culture?



Russell Moore: ([20:29](#))

Well, I think that there's a way to exaggerate the way that we're out of step with the culture around us, which sometimes is made into one thing. When in reality, we're inhabiting kind of multiple cultures at one time. And there's a sort of resentment and paranoia toward outside cultures that actually can then be self-fulfilling, because we adopt this posture of resentment, and quarrelsomeness, and defensiveness, and all of those things.

Russell Moore: ([21:07](#))

Rather than, I think if we look at the way that Jesus encounters people, there are a couple of moments where we see Jesus angry, but only a couple of moments. There's the cleansing of the temple. There's the encountering of the fig tree that has not yielded fruit. That's about it. In most cases, what we have is Jesus able to figure out when to completely ignore a controversy. And often he does that. He doesn't even address it, he moves on.

Russell Moore: ([21:41](#))

In other places, he reframes the controversy and says, that's not really the question, this is really the question. And sometimes he addresses the question head on. He's able to know what's the way to do this. So it's sometimes confusing to people when they read Proverbs and there's, answer a fool according to his folly and answer not a fool according to his folly, right together. And you think, well, which one? Well, it's both of them, but in different contexts. Jesus knows how to do that. We often don't, but I think that's what we should aspire to, is that sense of, I think, where there's a sense of confidence in Christ, that's going to bring less defensiveness in terms of the way that other people view me.

Russell Moore: ([22:33](#))

Because sometimes when even... One of the things I find is that often there's far less hostility than we imagine there is from the people around us who don't get what it is that we believe. I'm on college campuses all the time and other places. And sometimes there'll be someone who comes up and is really hostile. But usually, that somebody who has had some sort of bad experience with Christians and they're speaking really not to me, they're speaking to a pastor who disappointed them or parents who were religious, those sorts of situations, often what you find is that there are people who are genuinely intrigued. How can you believe that a dead person came back to life? Those sorts of things.

Russell Moore: ([23:25](#))

And so I think that if you take back this sense of being in bondage to what people think about then you're actually free to have kindness and curiosity with people. Because sometimes you have people who they really care what the outside world thinks about them. And so they're wanting to take certain aspects of the hard task of carrying the cross away. But then you have other people who they really care about what the people back behind them on their own side think about them. And so that causes them to be kind of theatrically quarrelsome with the people on the outside.



Russell Moore: ([24:10](#))

Both of those people are actually doing the same thing. They're not dealing with people as people, they're dealing with some audience. And so being freed from that actually enables you to have conviction and to not see it as an existential threat when people disagree with you.

Jeff Haanen: ([24:31](#))

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Jeff Haanen: ([24:53](#))

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Joanna Meyer: ([25:17](#))

Can I ask you to just... This is a lighter question and then give it back to Dustin for a serious question. But, Dr. Moore, do you ever just lose it in public settings? I think about myself on Twitter and I have moments where I think, "Delete that post. That was so inappropriate." How in the world do you hold yourself back when you just want to be sassy?

Russell Moore: ([25:36](#))

Yeah, there are moments, but those moments are almost never in terms of the unbelieving world. I was at my kid's school one time for like a career day. And one of the students stood up and said, "How do you deal with this hostile media culture and with someone like an Anderson Cooper or a Jake Tapper? And I said, Anderson Cooper and Jake Tapper are great." I've never had a bad experience with them. I can't think of any time that I've ever had a bad experience with sort of the secular media. Where you find often those moments where you have to, as you say, keep from being sassy are almost always within a church context. So that's where it really is often more difficult.

Dustin Moody: ([26:36](#))

Dr. Moore, I appreciate the distinction you made around anger and that we only see Jesus angry a few times scripture. More often than not, I've heard from people using those few instances of anger to justify indignation over lots of things, like the layout of the seats in the sanctuary. Completely hypothetically. So I think it's helpful to understand what is justifiable anger in the things that we're feeling as we're dealing with cultural forces.

Dustin Moody: ([27:03](#))



And I'd love to quote another section from the book that I think kind of talks to this. You say, "We want, if not applause, and at least not rejection and insecurity. We want to find safety in the herd and we just choose different herds. The problem is that much of what is actually defined as courage in scripture. The bridling of passions, kindness, humility is seen as timidity. While many who feel themselves courageous because they tell it like it are really just seeking to be part of the protective tribes, even when those tribes are boisterous and angry.

Dustin Moody: ([27:33](#))

To follow the way of Christ is to stand for things that matter. And those things are not just the right side on issues or the right side on doctrines, but conformity with Christ in terms of the affection, the experiential lived reality of living with Christ. A lot of things of what we're hearing from, particularly our leaders who work in a business setting, are sort of two challenges they're facing right now.

Dustin Moody: ([27:54](#))

One is how are they navigating tensions within their own organizations that are very different culturally very different experiences, very different backgrounds or conversely. They're getting a lot of pressure from their organizations or from their teams to address cultural issues outside of their companies that may have very little to do with their product or service. How would you encourage people in those settings to navigate what we're all experiencing right now?

Russell Moore: ([28:21](#))

Well, I think in the first part, a great deal of that is knowing people and starting to learn different sorts of personality responses. People are often bringing into a workplace, they're bringing everything that has happened in their lives and everything that has happened that morning. And so if you can learn to have a sense of compassion for that and a curiosity to say, well, when this person reacts this way, this is actually what it means. It's not necessarily a personal response to me, it's the way this person starts to grapple with that.

Russell Moore: ([29:09](#))

I had to learn that with... I know somebody who just the way that he words everything, I think he's about to say something bad. Because he'll say things like, "I'm just going to go ahead and say this. I'm just going to say it. I appreciate you. I'm grateful for you." And then he stopped. And I'm waiting for but. But... He does this when he wants to say. And so I have to learn that so that I'm not 10-step and, "Okay, what are you really getting at?" I think you have to do that with people.

Russell Moore: ([29:50](#))

But when it comes to the sort of outside pressures, when it comes to convictions, I think follow the pattern that you see, for instance, in the Book of Daniel, which doesn't start out with the lion's den. It starts out with Daniel who is able to work in a context of very, very different from his own. But it isn't causing him to personally sin being in the Babylonian court. Then he gets to a point where there's



something where he's negotiating. Well, how about this? How about we have a period of time where we eat only vegetables and then you how it happens.

Russell Moore: [\(30:36\)](#)

And then there's a moment where he's called upon to worship a Nebuchadnezzar and can't it by conviction. You have to know how to differentiate between those three things. And I think sometimes there are people who assume everything is the first part of Daniel one. So whatever it is that I'm asked to do, I'm just going to do. And there's some people who immediately think everything is defiance. It actually takes a great deal more wisdom than that.

Russell Moore: [\(31:09\)](#)

So there are going to be some things that are the equivalent of Jesus saying to Simon Peter, do we owe the temple tax? No. So we won't defend them. We'll pay the temple tax. Well, why? Because it wasn't causing him to personally sin, and he was saying, this isn't actually what my mission is. So we're going forward. That's a very different thing than Jesus, for instance, being asked to accommodate a temple court that is keeping the margins from worship of God and is changing and altering the way that people approach the holiness of God. Those are very different things. He's able to have wisdom to differentiate between those.

Russell Moore: [\(31:54\)](#)

And I think we have to do that as well. We're not always going to get it right. And there are going to be all sorts of times where you're going to look back and you say, I think I could have more accommodating in that instance, or I think I was too accommodating and really gave up some conviction. Well, you're going to do that. And you'll learn from it and do better the next time.

Joanna Meyer: [\(32:19\)](#)

Dr. Moore, there was just a passing reference in the book to the challenges that younger generations will fit in living courageously, because they are defining themselves as individuals in light of their relationship to the community. And I think that's probably true for anyone, regardless of age, but especially for younger folks, that sense of belonging to the group and being able to take a stand is really difficult. What wisdom would you have for people that are wrestling with who they are as individuals in relationship to their community when it comes to living courageously?

Russell Moore: [\(32:55\)](#)

Well, I think a part of it is again looking at oneself and seeing which direction am I tending to heir. And so if I'm somebody for whom kind of being absorbed into a community is what I do, and I sort of go along with that, then I have to constantly be watching that and working on that. And if I'm somebody who has a tendency to be individual-focused and not concerned with the community, then I need to really focus on that. And it can go in either way. Because the biblical pattern is distinctiveness for the sake of community and within the community and a community that is forming and shaping the individual.



Russell Moore: ([33:50](#))

And so it's one body, many members. That actually applies not just to the church, it shows you something about the dynamic of the whole universe. That and I think we have to constantly keep in mind to say who am I? So there are going to be some people that I'm going to say, for instance, you really shouldn't be on social media. Because, for you, your particular point of temptation is to kind of treat social media the way a politician does the daily tracking polls to say how am I doing? So you should step back from that.

Russell Moore: ([34:27](#))

Someone else, it might not be a problem at all. And they may have a different set of problems. So you have to sort of know yourself and have people in your life who know you enough to tell you where your particular weak points are.

Joanna Meyer: ([34:42](#))

That challenges my thinking, because often as I've thought about what it looks like to follow Christ, I think courage automatically means standing alone, but understanding the vital world, that community plays in how we live as individuals is really challenging. I have to think about that a little bit more. Dustin, what were you going to ask?

Dustin Moody: ([35:00](#))

Well, I was just going to follow up and kind of keep talking about this idea of aloneness relative to courage. Because, Dr. Moore, you suggest in the book that courageous action almost always creates isolation. And I'm wondering what examples from scripture can we use to see that and support that?

Russell Moore: ([35:15](#))

Well, I would just qualify that a little bit and say it almost always creates isolation for a time. It doesn't create isolation as a permanent sort of reality. So think of, for instance, the image of Elijah. You have somebody who is shaped and formed by a community. He's coming out of the 12 tribes that God has put together, this new people in reality that God had put together, back starting with Abraham. Those are his people. And yet he finds himself alone in the desert, in the wilderness. And one of the things that Elijah says is, "Here I am. And I'm all alone. And they're wanting to kill me." And God's response to him is to say, there are 7,000 that you don't know about. And then he starts pointing him to a future community, to Elisha and to others.

Russell Moore: ([36:14](#))

So I think that sometimes there's going to be a feeling of aloneness, but what usually comes out of that is an even stronger community, just sometimes in ways that you didn't understand and get before. So I think about this, I think I mentioned this in the book. I would sometimes, when I was preaching, if I wanted to say, take a shot at American individualism, I would quote the old Tom T. Hall song, Me and



Jesus got our own thing goin' We don't need anybody to tell us what it's all about, until I was doing ministry in a homeless shelter. And there was a worship service. And they said tonight we're going to allow them pick their own hymns. And that means we're going to be singing Me in Jesus. I'm like, really?

Russell Moore: ([37:04](#))

And sure enough they did. But what I realized, I listened to it in an entirely different way there. Who I was listening to at that moment were people who didn't have anybody. Their families rejected them. Their peer roots had rejected them. And what they were singing is, "In spite of all of Jesus loves me. This I know for the Bible tells me." So that's what they meant by that. And so I stopped approaching that song that way. I was reading it in the wrong way, in a different context.

Russell Moore: ([37:37](#))

So sometimes it creates this sense of a perceived aloneness, but it never really is. If you're following Christ, then you're really not alone. You're surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. And also you're never meant to be permanently alone. There's there's a new... When Peter says to Jesus, "We've left everything to follow you." And Jesus says, no one who has left father or mother, brother or sister, houses or lands will not receive a thousandfold in the age to come and now, just often in ways that we don't expect and see.

Joanna Meyer: ([38:20](#))

I've been thinking about having the courage to stop. So when I think about what makes a great novel or a great movie, we have this dramatic story arc that always leads to completion. The story always ends at a certain point. Hopefully in a good way, but there are times where the most courageous thing can be to stop what we're doing. And I of wondered, how have you navigated that? I know there's situations in your life where you've been passionately continuing on and saying like, "I'm going forward, this is what God has for me." And there are times where you've been like, "Nope, the most courageous thing for me is to not continue." For our listeners who might miss spot like that, how do you discern when is the right moment to stop?

Russell Moore: ([39:01](#))

Well, I think that there's a great little book that I hand out to people all the time by Seth Godin called The Dip, that talks about the fact that often people, when they start meeting resistance that always comes with any sort of change they give up. When, instead, what people need to do is to press through that moment of resistance and get to the other side. And that's often what I would counsel people who are saying, should I leave what it is that I'm doing that doesn't? That doesn't mean, though, that somebody needs to continue doing whatever they're doing in the same way.

Russell Moore: ([39:45](#))

Sometimes you're going to have a moment of realization to say, I actually am only going to be able to do what God called me to do in a different way and in a different place. And I think sometimes it's very



difficult to discern that on your own. I think almost in every case, it's very difficult to discern that on your own. So if you start seeking out the council of people that to be wise and you know, first of all, have your best interest at heart, they don't have a stake in it, but also who you've seen with wisdom in other ways, and seek their counsel and to say, what should I do?

Russell Moore: ([40:30](#))

I've had a moment like where, for a long time, I said I don't want to kind of waste the calling that God's given to me and give up on something that I'm going to regret and look back and say, I regret this. Then there came a moment where I realized if I keep doing things the way that I'm doing them right now, I'm going to waste the calling that God has given to me. Because I'm not going to be able to carry it out because I'm having to do all of these other things that really... That's not what God called me to do. It's toxic. And I can't change it. And so if I can't change it, then I need to carry out God's call somewhere else.

Russell Moore: ([41:18](#))

So I would say takes some time. If you're in a situation where you're starting to say does God have a change for me? Take some time in evaluating that. Sometimes you don't have a choice. You have to say, I have to go right now. And when you do, ask God, say, if you want me to leave, start me that desire. And when you find yourself starting to become more excited about the things you could be doing in another place than what you're doing there, then it might be that God is calling you to another place. But then you have to seek the counsel of people on the outside to say whether or not that's the case.

Russell Moore: ([41:59](#))

Now, what I would say is, everybody is going to face these moments of transition. Even if you stay in the same job from the time you're 19 until you retire, there are going to be these moments of transition. And one of the things that I think contributes to fear, especially when it comes to vocation and work, is the sense that I have to have clarity on what it is I am going to before I can go through this time of transition. And that's never the case. That's never the case.

Russell Moore: ([42:37](#))

I mentioned the friend that had lost his job. And he said to me, I think that if God were speaking audibly to me today, he would say... And he said something, I don't remember what it was. And I just said, Hmm, I think if God were speaking audibly to you today, he might say anything. Because often he doesn't. He doesn't answer Elijah for a long time. And there's the way the Bible puts it, the sound of thinness silence. Sometimes that sense of silence and that sense of not knowing where you're going, that's exactly it.

Russell Moore: ([43:20](#))

In making a big decision in my life, I was talking to a friend and I said, "I feel like I'm kind of about to be led out of Egypt, but I don't know where I'm going." And she said something along the lines of what Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Are you a teacher in Israel and you do not know these things." And she said, "that's literally the way that it was in coming through the Red Sea." And that's the way God always



works. That's that's right. So I think that sometimes people scared when they look at that and they don't know exactly what the next step but that's what God's trying to do.

Dustin Moody: ([44:04](#))

Dr. Moore, before we wrap up, I want to just kind of close our conversation a bit and talk a little bit more about this paradox that you write about, of ambiguity and clarity, or glory and disdain woven through the lives of difficult figures. And you already talked about Elijah. Ultimately, we see that in Christ as well. How does the paradox of the cross provide each of us the courage to stand?

Russell Moore: ([44:31](#))

Well, it helps us with the sense of, we have these longings that God has put within us. And often we think that those longings are going to be fulfilled by going at them directly. And that's just not the way that God has designed the world and has designed us. You long for glory, and you should, but you don't get glory by going for glory. You go by glory by the way of humility and humiliation. And you don't get power by going for power. You get real power through the way of weakness. That's just the way that God works. It's meant to not make sense to you.

Russell Moore: ([45:24](#))

So if you have the sermon on the mount just sort of crocheted on the wall and it's very familiar to you, then you're really not getting the force of it. The people who are gathered there, hearing Jesus saying this, it would have sounded crazy. Because, by every standard, it is. Blessed are you when people spit in your face. Well, how's that? Well, it's because there's just this different of side down reality that Jesus creates.

Joanna Meyer: ([45:55](#))

Gosh. That's such a challenge for so many business leaders who are in situations where conventional business wisdom is suggesting something the opposite that's own their own self effort and promotion and vying for power and... Yeah. Such a challenging thought.

Russell Moore: ([46:11](#))

Well, a friend of mine, Yuval Levin, has written this fantastic book of, A Time to Build. And one of the things that he talks about that I think is really relevant for people who are in business is the idea of narrowing down what it is that you're actually hoping for. So rather than this limitless sense of, I want power, and fame, and whatever, it is that you want to refocus that to a retirement party.

Russell Moore: ([46:44](#))

If you go to a retirement party and you see somebody who has really lived faithfully, and you hear the people who are standing up and speaking of them, it is rarely about the way that they achieved statistical competency. I know those things are important, that's not the reason people come in from all over the country to go to somebody's retirement party. It's because of other aspects of character that were going on at the same time.



Russell Moore: ([47:18](#))

And so narrowing down that focus, actually, I think helps people to be more effective. It's the same way that there was a psychologist I heard one time that said you can tell how your child is doing based upon whether your child wants to be famous. Because people who want to be famous, it's usually a self-protective thing because they want the kindness and approval of strangers in advance. He said, but if you have somebody who's healthier, they don't need the approval of strangers because they have the approval of people that they love, and that they're actually connected to, and they actually know.

Russell Moore: ([48:02](#))

I think the same thing is true in terms of business and work. And often the people who even are high achievers in all those objective ways are only high achievers in those ways because that wasn't the main thing for them.

Joanna Meyer: ([48:19](#))

Wow. Wow. So much to take away from this. I think this will be a cripple listen for me of just taking notes and thinking I know there's practical application all over the place for my own life and leadership. Dr. Moore, I was wondering if we could give you the final word if you'd be willing to go back to your pastoral roots and offer a charge to our listeners towards more courageous living.

Russell Moore: ([48:44](#))

Well, I would just say you're probably a more courageous and resilient than you think you are. The poet, David Whyte, says that courage is something that only looking backward does it look like courage. At the moment, it often looks and feels like fear. And so you're probably more courageous than you actually think you are.

Russell Moore: ([49:07](#))

And if you're at the point where you're saying, I don't know to do and I'm scared, that doesn't mean that there's something wrong with you. It means that this is an opportunity to really hear from God in a new way. And to really seek conformity with Christ in a new way. And so take that moment, and rather than trying to resolve it at the moment, take that moment to learn how to pray and to seek and to knock. And there's somebody on the other side of that door.

Joanna Meyer: ([49:41](#))

Can I get an amen? What an amazing conversation with Dr. Russell Moore. Thanks so much to Dr. Moore for his time. If this concept of public theology that we were referred to early in the cast intrigues you, check out our show notes today. We have a free download called At Work With God for the world. And it is exactly that, a challenge to be living with God in our daily work to be part of God's kingdom purposes in the world.



Joanna Meyer: ([50:07](#))

It's a preview of some of the information that you get exposed to in our 5280 Fellowship, which is a nine-month intensive discipleship program for emerging leaders, focused on themes of faith, work, and culture, but really, it's relevant to anyone. And so we encourage you to check out the show notes and download that today.

Joanna Meyer: ([50:24](#))

Thanks again for being part of this critical conversation. We encourage you to share it with others. This is a conversation that has lasting life impact, and we want to share it with more. So please encourage your friends to listen. And thanks for joining us today.

Joanna Meyer: ([50:40](#))

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