

EXCERPT



***Working from the Inside Out***  
*A Brief Guide to Inner Work That Transforms Our Outer World*

December 12, 2023 | \$18, 176 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0331-2

For too many of us, work seems tedious, painful, or meaningless. And we don't know what to do about it. Jeff Haanen offers a way out of disintegration and shows work can become a way to love God, serve our neighbors, and demonstrate the gospel to the world. Living from the inside out can change our work and heal our world.

## Influencing Our Work and Our World

The gospel is what God has done. Culture is where we find ourselves. And vocation is our response to God in the here and now.

### FIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Gospel, culture, and vocation build the concrete foundation of an integrated life for our emotions, minds, relationships, jobs, and involvement in society. Faith lived out in our working lives is built around five principles: seek deep spiritual health, think theologically, embrace relationships, create good work, and serve others sacrificially.

**Seek deep spiritual health.** Deep spiritual and emotional health is core to being fully human. In the midst of our widespread anxiety, depression, and mental health crisis, those who seek deep spiritual health decide to take the interior journey and open the shadows of their souls to the healing touch of God.

Because Christ called his disciples to “come follow me” and enter the kingdom of God, core to the life of faith is listening and submitting to the Holy Spirit, practicing the classic spiritual disciplines, and doing our work in a redemptive manner.

**Think theologically.** C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Weight of Glory*, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else.”

Thinking theologically means seeing everything from agriculture to artificial intelligence to astronomy to abject failure in light of the core teachings of Christian faith. This moves faith into a space of open conversation and public witness because it's top-of-mind for the actual work we do. Rather than evangelism tactics that “change the topic” to Jesus around the office water cooler, the biblical story naturally forms the way we understand our careers, our coworkers, our companies, and our industries.

As stewards of the mysteries of Christ, Christians seek to understand how Scripture, the historic church, and the gospel of grace influence our work and cultural engagement.

**Embrace relationships.** In contrast to the social isolation and loneliness in our culture, God himself is loving relationship—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the incarnation, Jesus drew physically near (John 1:14), giving us a vision of how relationships are central to our lives. In-person, around-the-table, laughing-and-crying relationships are what humans long for. We were designed for relationship.

And yet, relational work is hard work. It means growing in self-awareness, navigating the personality traits of others, and continually giving and forgiving. In particular, relationships with coworkers, clients, and bosses are continually some of the greatest stressors of our working life.

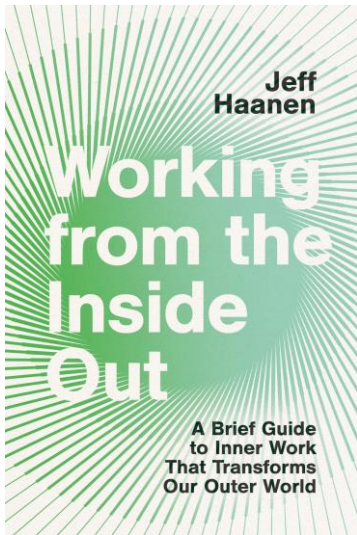


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*“Working from the Inside Out is accessible and profound at the same time, as Jeff Haanen puts flesh on theory, pairing his insights about spiritual formation and our need for wholeness with real-life narratives. It’s also theologically astute while keeping a foot on the ground—as Haanen is clear-eyed about the varied realities and challenges that different kinds of workers face.”*

It’s through daily participation in the divine relationship of the Trinity that we find the strength to extend that life to others (1 Peter 1:4). Those who choose to embrace relationships see people as an end in themselves, not a means. They embrace healthy friendships, cultivate institutional strength by commitment to their organization’s core mission, and care about others in practical ways out of a commitment to neighbor love.

The doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation lead us to deeply value face-to-face conversations, long-term friendships, and redemptive relationships between individuals, organizations, and churches.

**Create good work.** God worked for six days and rested for one. We were created in his image, and minimally that means that we, too, are made to be creators and workers (Genesis 1–2).

Christian faith invites us to see our lives and work in light of God’s good creation, the resurrection of Christ, and a new heaven and a new earth. The physical world that we change, shape, and form through our work has inherent value because God made it and will one day, mysteriously, redeem it (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Those who adopt this vision for work spread healthy motives for their work, grow in professional competence, and experience deep coherence between their work and their faith.

Embracing God’s creation and the hope of the resurrection, the integrated faith values Spirit-filled labor, a commitment to craftsmanship, and projects that serve as a sign and foretaste of God’s coming kingdom.

**Serve others sacrificially.** In a cultural context of growing economic disparities, hyper-partisanship, and a secularizing environment, those who serve others sacrificially bring their faith to their work through acts of compassion and justice. They give generously of their resources, work to heal the divisions in society, and address big issues ranging from poverty and addiction to opportunity for low-income communities. Rather than triumphantly conquering culture, Christians see sacrificial love as the central way we reflect faith to an unbelieving world.

To be a Christian is to embrace a call to costly discipleship, high levels of commitment, acts of sacrificial service, and courageous public witness. Christians heed the call to biblical justice and serve the needs of the poor and marginalized in our work and communities.

As Christians are the body of Christ for the life of the world, we press into contemporary problems, adopt an interdisciplinary perspective in addressing complex and systemic issues, and pursue shalom in all areas of society.

#### EVERY CORNER

Seek deep spiritual health, think theologically, embrace relationships, create good work, and serve other sacrificially—this is a vision of holistic discipleship that influences our work and our world.



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**Jeff Haanen** is a writer and entrepreneur. He founded Denver Institute for Faith and Work, a community of conveners, teachers, and learners offering experiences and educational resources on the gospel, work, and community renewal. He writes on faith, finance, work, business, and culture. Jeff writes for *Christianity Today* and *Comment* magazine, and is the author of *An Uncommon Guide to Retirement: Finding God's Purpose for the Next Season of Life*.

Dallas Willard once wrote in his book *The Great Omission*, "The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as 'Christians' will become disciples—students, apprentices, practitioners—of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence." I've always been inspired by such statements. Yet "every corner of human existence" has always felt intimidating to me. I'm the kind of person who can't even do this every moment of a single day—or hour.

And yet, I do believe it's possible. Knowing what Jesus knows about each of us, would he have intended otherwise? I've come to believe that a vibrant, whole life can actually be lived out in the reality of our lives, even in the most everyday of activities.

The idea of this book is to give us a place to start this journey of living in relationship with God in all areas of life. First, we need to focus not on the world's problems but on our own hearts and minds, seeking deep spiritual and emotional health and theological truth. Second, we allow inner transformation to impact our core relationships and our work. And finally, our work and relationships influence our cities and the big issues in our culture. God is healing the world first through our interior life, second through our exterior life, and third through our civic life.

The beginning of the journey starts not with external markers of impact but in the depths of the human heart. Jesus said, "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart" (Luke 6:43-45). Can we—deeply, truly—become good in the recesses of our souls?

The journey of living and working from the inside out starts with each of us being willing to take step one, which for me is by far the hardest: seek deep spiritual health.

—adapted from chapter two, "From the Inside Out"



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