



## EP296\_Vince Vitale

**Lisa Nichols** 00:03

Chromosomes, little strands of nucleic acids and proteins are the fundamental genetic instructions that tell us who we are at birth. Most people are born with 46 chromosomes. But each year in the United States, about 6000 people are born with an extra chromosome, making them a person with Down syndrome. If you've ever encountered someone with Down syndrome, you know that they are some of the kindest, most joyful people you will ever meet. They truly have something extra.

My name is Lisa Nichols and I have spent the last 24 years as both the CEO of technology partners and as the mother to Ally. Ally has something extra in every sense of the word. I have been blessed to be by her side as she impacts everyone, she meets. Through these two important roles as CEO and mother to Ally, I have witnessed countless life lessons that have fundamentally changed the way I look at the world. While you may not have an extra chromosome, every leader has something extra that defines who you are.

Join me as I explore this something extra in leaders from all walks of life and discover how that difference in each of them has made a difference in their companies, their families, their communities and in themselves. If you'd liked this episode today, please go to Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen and leave us a five-star rating.

**Lisa Nichols** 01:35

I'm excited to have Vince Vitale on the show today. Vince is an author, podcast host, Executive Director of Kardia, and faculty scholar at The CEO Forum. Well, Vince Vitale, it is so good to have you on the Something Extra Podcast today, my friend. Thank you so much for making the time. I've been really excited about our conversation.

**Vince Vitale** 01:58

Oh, me too. It's a real pleasure. Thanks so much for having me.

**Lisa Nichols** 02:02

Yes. Well, I always love to tell our listeners how, they always want to know, how do you get connected to the people that you have on and you and I know one other through an organization that we both love, and that is The CEO Forum. And we can talk a little bit more about that. But you, you and your wife both are involved in the forum. And I think I may be met Jo at the executive women's retreat. Maybe met her before I met you, but.

**Vince Vitale** 02:34

I think that's right. She loved she loved that time together.

**Lisa Nichols** 02:37

It was great. It was great. And I was telling you we kind of were talking about in a sidebar conversation. I was thinking about this year for The Forum is its 30th anniversary.

**Vince Vitale** 02:47

And I know I'm, I'm so looking forward to it coming with some friends and my wife, it's gonna be fantastic.

**Lisa Nichols** 02:53

Yes, it you know, like, not such a great place, Sea Island. They could have done a little better. But we'll be celebrating in October. I got some great lineup of speakers and that I'm really excited to hear from but I was telling you and I did not realize this and I didn't put two and two together until I started preparing for this episode. And Technology Partners, we will be celebrating our 30th year in St. Louis at the Four Seasons in September.

**Vince Vitale** 03:26

Oh, that's fantastic.

**Lisa Nichols 03:28**

30 years, 30 years.

**Vince Vitale 03:30**

So glad it didn't fall on the same weekend.

**Lisa Nichols 03:33**

I am really glad, too. That would have been awful, we would, we would have had a hard choice to make. But, you know, we've got so much I've got pages and pages of notes here of things, I want to talk to you about. I just know that the things we're going to talk about I'm really hoping and praying that they help our listeners. But before we get into a lot of and I really want you to take me back to your childhood where did you grow up and then we'll I will talk about other things.

**Vince Vitale 04:00**

Sure. I grew up in New Jersey that's sort of ingrained in you when you're from Jersey you know, just kind of comes out after your name Vince Vitale from New Jersey. Great Italian American name that I was I was given Vincent Rafael Vitale Jr. And so, I came from an Italian American family. And, you know, my, I, you know, as I reflect on my childhood to things that stand out, you know, my parents weren't really afforded the opportunity to go to college, but they were really hard workers. And so, those winds up being two of the really high values in my, in my household prioritizing education, because my parents didn't have that chance. And so, they really stressed that they wanted that for me and for my brother, and then and also hard, hard work. My, my dad used to just have this little mantra, 100%, And he would he would just say it you know, from the sideline of a soccer game or something, and all he had to do was say that one word and I would just kick into gear, right? You know, especially in sports, just give it everything I absolutely had to the point that now, on my birthday, I'll often get social media posts from people I haven't seen in decades, or spoken to in decades. And they'll just write 100% on my social media platforms, because it's even so vivid for them, like my dad just instilling this from, for me from a young age.

**Lisa Nichols 05:29**

I love that. 100%. So, when he said that you're like, given everything you got, and you watched him do that, I'm sure. Well, I was gonna ask you about sports. I presume that you did play sports, because we'll talk about this. But you went on and played soccer and hockey in university and then even at Oxford. Did you? What sports did you play as a little guy?

**Vince Vitale 05:55**

I played pretty much everything as a little guy. You know, baseball, basketball, soccer, didn't really have, have the size for football or basketball for that matter, but I tried. But I loved sports is a hugely formative part of my experience in my childhood, but just my development, you know, as a person, as well played through college, got to play for a few more years in graduate school, when I was over in England. I boxed for, for three years as a graduate student over at Oxford, and then I met my wife, Jo, and we got engaged, and she said it was time to take up golf. So, that was the end of the boxing career.

**Lisa Nichols 06:37**

That's hilarious. What about pickleball? Have you picked up pickleball? Because that's a topic these days.

**Vince Vitale 06:43**

You're so right. So, everyone, everyone in my church is playing pickleball. So, I'm sort of being, being forced into pickleball. But it's really fun. Pickleball and a bit of tennis as well, which and I'm not very good at this. I was actually the other day, I was watching YouTube videos on like proper tennis swings. And now you can you can learn anything, just watch the YouTube video. Unfortunately, it's a bit harder when I get out on the court. But I do I love, love, love sports. One of my struggles, now as I, as I am in middle age, trying to figure out which sports I can play without getting injured.

**Lisa Nichols 07:16**

Exactly, I hear. Oh, my goodness. Well, let's, let's back up just a little bit, because you kind of talked about playing soccer. But you know, you got a BA in philosophy at Princeton. Princeton is one of the eight Ivy League schools, I mean, Vince, that's amazing that your parents didn't have that opportunity. But they wanted to make sure that you and your brother, were educated really well, and you played soccer for Princeton. So, you are a scholar, athlete, my friend, you don't get to go to Princeton without being a scholar. And then you played sports as well.

**Vince Vitale 07:54**

I guess so. You know, I guess I mean, I'm very, very thankful for that looking back, and it's sort of amazing to reflect on it, and to realize that, you know, the ability to take that path actually had a lot more to do with my parents encouragement than even what they could sort of practically helped me with, you know, they didn't have the education to kind of come alongside me after a certain point. And, you know, helped me with my math homework, or helped me with my, with my science homework. And it's always sort of struck me that, if you look at my sort of background and upbringing, it just wouldn't have been the obvious place to wind up at a university like Princeton, but I think it did teach me a lot about how much kind of the issues of the heart and just the encouragement of where your motivation comes from, goes a lot further than even some of the practical resources around you in terms of where you wind up.

**Lisa Nichols 08:46**

Well said. Well, in that 100%, giving 100%, you know, that your dad instilled in you. So, let me ask you this. What was the precipice for studying philosophy? Was there a certain person in your life who inspired you? Because let me just say, my husband, Greg, his maternal grandfather, granddaddy Joe, never made it past eighth grade Vince. But he read all the time, and especially philosophy, and he and Greg would sit and have these philosophical discussions. I really do believe that Greg's grandfather is the one that really inspired him, but did you have somebody that inspired you?

**Vince Vitale 09:30**

You know, it's a really interesting question I've often reflected on, on why I wound up I actually went into college knowing I wanted to study philosophy, but I had never taken a philosophy class in my life. But I just I just sort of knew that's how my mind worked that I asked kind of deep, big questions about life and so not sure you know where that came from. I think that was kind of more of a God given wiring. But I would say that my, my parents, really welcomed my questions from a young age, even if they didn't have, you know, comprehensive answers to my questions. There's something about, you know, just not having your questions dismissed or pushed away. But they really encouraged me to ask those types of questions. And so, I think that just ingrained a curiosity that then, you know, lead into what I studied. And I think also my parents, they really encouraged me to study where my passions were, as opposed to what they had done, or what they thought would be would be useful. And I'm really thankful for that as well.

**Lisa Nichols 10:32**

Another good parenting lesson there, I think. Let me ask you this. Because I know that when you went into Princeton, you were a skeptic. But can you share your journey from skeptic to evangelist?

**Vince Vitale 10:48**

Oh wow, it's Sure, I'd love to. So, I played soccer at the university. And I had two teammates who were they were a year older than me. And they invited me to a meeting of Athletes in Action, which it turns out was a Christian community on campus. But I had no idea what I was being invited to, I just knew it had, you know, athlete in the title, and I was being invited by my teammates. And so, I went along, we walked in a few minutes late to this gathering of students. And I walked into this group of students, sort of with their eyes closed, singing their hearts out to this invisible God. And I had never experienced anything like that I found it very disorienting. Because these were, you know, successful Princeton students. They were scholar athletes, you know, what, what need would they have for to depend on a kind of wishful thought, like God, this was kind of the mindset, you know, that that I was in, and I started to listen to even some of the lyrics of the songs.

**Vince Vitale 11:54**

And my philosophy of life up until this point, was all about winning. It was all about being the best being better than other people beating other people being at the top of the food chain. And here were these students, athletes, people who seem to be like me, but they were singing to God precisely because they were proclaiming that he was better than them. And that was why they actually wanted to follow him. So, it was just a very disorienting experience for me. And I remember walking out that evening, and it may be the first sort of sincere prayer that that I prayed. I would sort of call it an agnostics prayer. And I just remember saying, God, I don't know if I'm talking to anyone. But, but if I am, I'd like to know about it. And there's sort of a longer story of journeying with that community, and then helping me through a lot of the hard philosophical questions that I had to journey through for things to make their way from my head to my heart. But that was that was the starting point for my journey.

**Lisa Nichols 13:00**

And I think I read something, or maybe I made this up. I could have made it up? I don't know, because I read a lot. But I feel like, I feel like one of your friend's kind of challenged you to read the Bible to start reading the Bible. Is that right?

**Vince Vitale 13:17**

No, you're absolutely, absolutely right. One of those soccer teammates, and so I was only half interested, but you know, kind of always up for a challenge. And I started to read through, and I found myself, really two things. One, I found myself very drawn to the person of Jesus, the way that he treated people, the way that he cared for such a diversity of people. And then as I kept reading, in particular, I got into a book called Acts of the Apostles. And it's a book that sort of recount some of the early history of the earliest Christian believers. And all over that book, I started finding words like reasoned, debated, confirmed, explained, you know, even proved at times, there were all these sorts of intellectual words about the fact that they were thinking about the faith and coming to certain conclusions, and then sharing that faith with others in a rational way. And that sort of blew my conception of blind faith. I thought it was just a sort of emotional thing you have it or you don't you take a blind leap, or you don't and I was already a philosopher, I was studying philosophy. I wasn't willing to park my brain at the door. But now I'm reading through the Bible, after this challenge from my teammate, and I was sort of forced to come to the conclusion this doesn't sound like a God who's asking me to leave my brain behind, but asking me to actually love Him and follow Him in part through using my mind well, so that that was the next step for me. And that kind of opened up the possibility of Oh, I could pursue this journey with Integrity.

**Lisa Nichols 15:00**

I love that. I love that. Well, you went on, you know, went on and went to Oxford. I'm presuming this. I don't want to presume. But what inspired you to do that? I'm thinking, I'm thinking the apologetics route, maybe part of that. But what inspired you to go to Oxford?

**Vince Vitale 15:00**

Absolutely. So, you know, I already had that kind of wiring for philosophy, not knowing where that came from very different from what my parents did or what my background was. But, but then, when faith became a sort of living, living, dynamic thing in my life, it was like all of a sudden, it made sense, why would have that philosophical wiring. And I think it was like a kind of a kindness of God to sort of put me on that path before I even knew Him in any sort of significant way. So, I did go to, to Oxford to study more philosophy and theology. And it was just such a part of my own life and what was in my heart, I wanted to understand more, this God that I felt I had come into contact with, and was becoming a part not just with my abstract thinking, but of my day-to-day life. And so, I continued to study the deep questions around Him. And in large part, what I do today is helping people with their questions, their deep questions of life. And so, in some ways, playing the part for others that those two teammates played for me at the start of my journey.

**Lisa Nichols 16:26**

Well, thank you, you just set me up. That was the perfect segue. Thank you, Vince. I want to get into some of these deep questions. While you were doing research at Oxford, you developed a new response to the problem of evil. And this is discussed in your book *Non-Identity Theodicy: A Grace-Based Response to the Problem of Evil*. Can you unpack this for a little bit, Vince? And maybe touch on some of the core concepts?

**Vince Vitale 17:02**

Oh, sure. Sure, you know, it was probably one of the first questions that I got asked after I got serious about my Christian faith was by my aunt, my aunt Regina. And she detailed some of the suffering in her son's life, my cousin Charles, and after she was done speaking about that, and, and asking, you know, why would a good, powerful loving God allow this to happen? I was sort of immature and overzealous and started to spout some of my sort of abstract philosophical explanations for why God might allow suffering in the world. And my aunt listened very patiently, graciously. And then she turned to me. And she said, but Vince, that doesn't speak to me as a mother. And it was it you know, it wasn't a harsh response. It was a caring response, and a really significant response in my life.

**Vince Vitale 17:59**

And so, as I discerned what topic to treat, in my PhD work, I wanted something that connected with my story. I wanted something that was a question that real people have, not just philosophers in there, in their ivory towers, and a question that that's not going away? Not a question that was sort of, you know, in vogue for a few years, but a few years from now, nobody will have that question anymore. And I think I always have my aunt Regina, in the back of my mind as well. So, I wanted to think about what the approaches to that question could be that were personal in nature, and that could give hope. And that could be focused on you know, love for the individual and not just abstract ideas. So, that was the starting point.

**Lisa Nichols 18:44**

Very good, very good. Well, I know that you have a strong interest in reconciliation, leadership and the theology of work, as well as the intersection of faith and sport. And I would love to just do a quick debrief of each of these areas.

And then when we get to leadership with may say that one for last, because I've got some other questions for you on leadership. But let's just start with reconciliation. What have you learned about reconciliation, Vince?

**Vince Vitale 19:09**

Oh, wow. How significant it is, and how bad I was at it. But how beautiful it is. You know, it's hard. It's hard reconciliation is really hard work. But it's so beautiful and so redemptive. When, when you take that step and, and, and some of the sort of worldly wisdom out there is really not helpful. Time heals all wounds, really. Well, it's been love means never having to say I'm sorry. You know, I mean, I hear these phrases, right? They're common phrases, but there are some of the biggest lies that are out there. And so, we tend to just sweep under, under the carpet, the conflicts in our lives, and I mean, from the perspective of just marriage, friendship, but also leadership, I found actually, you know, pursuing reconciliation. And, you know, there's sort of a Christian framework for, for reconciliation, which is, in a sense, the ball is always in your court. And so there, there are different passages in in the Bible, some of which say, if someone has something against you, go to them and work it through. But it also says, if, if you have something against someone else, go and work it through. And I realized at some point that that actually, my, my instincts are opposite on both counts. If somebody has something against me, I'm like, well, you know, you're the one who has the problem. So, you should come and talk to me about it. But if I, if I have some, something against someone else, I think, Well, you're the one who's in the wrong. So, you should know that and you should come need me talk to me.

**Lisa Nichols 20:54**

Ask for forgiveness, right?

**Vince Vitale 20:55**

Exactly. So, it's really challenging to me that actually, my faith tradition challenges me with the opposite approach, a more intentional approach and approach where the ball's in my court to go to others and seek reconciliation. And I've come now to the point where, you know, I've done that so many times, that conflict is always painful, but there's also now a sense, even within it of hopefulness. Maybe even expectancy, because so many times I've seen a conflict actually be able to be reconciled. And then on the other side of reconciliation, you find the relationship is even stronger than had the conflict not happened in the first place, which I think is a beautiful thing.

**Lisa Nichols 21:44**

Agreed, you know, and Vince, sometimes. I love that what you said the ball is always in your court. You because sometimes you try to reconcile, and it doesn't mean just because you try that it always works. In fact, you know, we are to live at peace with all men, as much as it depends on us, right? We're only responsible for us, we cannot be responsible for the response to the other person, right?

**Vince Vitale 22:14**

That's absolutely right. And, you know, sometimes we, sometimes we feel that, you know, we're 2% in the wrong and someone else's 98% in the wrong but you know, I had I had a friend who used to say, you are 100% responsible for your 2%. And it's, it's amazing how when you start with that attitude, you often wind up realizing it's a lot closer to 50 50, then man, I thought when I got started on the process.

**Lisa Nichols 22:45**

Right, right, that is so good. Well, let me ask you this. Let's talk about and then we'll talk about the theology of work. Let's talk about leadership a little bit. And this is funny to me, because sometimes, we even see like people sometimes in their role, you kind of need to understand what good looks like, sometimes we don't even really understand what good looks like, Vince. So, tell me, in your mind. And from your studies in that what does good leadership look like?

**Vince Vitale 23:22**

Sure, a big question. And I feel like I've gone on a real perspective, my own thoughts on that question, because, you know, I shared a little bit about my sort of childhood and some of the things that were deeply ingrained in me. And some of those were wonderful, wonderful things, you know, there's both the good and the bad. But I realized, you know, reflecting on my childhood, that with competitive sports being so formative, and that kind of bleeding out into the rest of life, you know, good life, good leadership, was always about being the best. Being better than other people, beating others, life was about sort of amassing trophies and winning at all costs. And, you know, the interesting thing is that that philosophy of life can sometimes lead to you winding up in leadership positions, because, you know, you work harder, you give you give that 100% you work harder than the people around you, and, and maybe better, as well.



**Vince Vitale 24:20**

But I don't actually think that sets you up to be a good leader, because at the root of this sort of win at all costs approach to life is a preferencing of oneself over others. And, you know, that's something that I didn't have the maturity to reflect on until much later in life. My approach was always I need to do better than the next guy, I need to win and he needs to lose, lose, I need to have the most trophies. But I do think if you draw out the trajectory of that mindset, and sort of heart attitude, it can lead to some places that you don't want to be this sort of intense focus on the self and, you know, my accomplishments, my achievements can naturally lead to a selfishness a pride, a narcissism, you know, some of the qualities that are actually the opposite of, of a good leader.

**Vince Vitale 25:16**

So, I feel like I've learned at times the hard way, sometimes through failure, you know what good leadership can actually look like. And I actually think in some ways, it's, it's the opposite of what I've spoken, and what was deeply ingrained in me, and that it's actually about putting others before yourself. And even as I was reflecting on, on this podcast, I just started to think about the word leader. And it's, sort of interesting, even the word points to this definitionally, it's not possible to be a leader, unless there are people you are leading, you can't be a leader on your own. When we call someone a leader, we actually define that person in relation to others. So, quite to the contrary of being a leader by winning out over others or being in power over others, it's only those who follow who actually have the power to make a leader, a leader. And that's just so different from the way that I used to think about leadership, which was all about being self-made, self-reliant, self-assured all this focus on the self. And I just wonder if even by definition, a leader has to be other reliant, other centered and really, therefore, an act of, of service.

**Vince Vitale 26:33**

And so, I've realized, and I'm continuing to realize that there was sort of this inconsistency in my view of leadership, where, you know, Lisa, if you asked me, who are the greatest leaders, you know, to ever live. I would list a bunch of people who are characterized by loving, selfless, sacrificial service of others. But then, if I took an honest look at how I was trying to achieve leadership, it was actually much more focused on myself and actually winning out over other people beating, other people being better than other people. So, there was really a sort of reorientation that had to happen in my understanding of leadership, and I'm really thankful for it.

**Lisa Nichols 27:18**

What if it's about leading others to be their best self?

**Vince Vitale 27:22**

Absolutely, absolutely.

**Lisa Nichols 27:24**

You know, us being better than other people, leading others to be the best version of themselves.

**Vince Vitale 27:30**

I think that's, that's absolutely right. You know, this idea of valuing others, above yourself, so that the focus actually being on leading others to be their best selves, and sort of you become your best self in the process, right? But almost when you finally get your eyes off of yourself and, and focused on, on someone else, and some of these themes are so deeply ingrained, you know. I have a three and a five-year-old. So, I'm struggling with this at the moment, as they just begin to enter into even a sporting context, like my three-year-old did his first little soccer team, and he's three years old, but we get in the car. I mean, I put them in the car seat, and he goes, we're gonna win. I'm gonna beat them. And it's at least, I love sports. And I continue to love sports. And I continue to love competition. But it's worth reflecting deeply on and I'm having to as a parent now, okay, do I want that to be my three-year-old primary motivation for, you know, working? You know, it starts out as sports and you kind of symbolically train for work later in life? Do I want his primary motivation to be I want to beat others, you know, interesting, even choice of, of terminology there. So, this is this is real life, for me. I'm like wrestling with what this looks like in the context of trying to set the trajectory in part for my children.

**Lisa Nichols 28:56**

Sure. I, I love it. Because I was going to, I was going to ask you, I know, you probably know Dr. Tim Irwin, you know, with CEO Forum. And I was going to ask you, Vince, about what you've seen those derails leaders. And I think what we just talked about a lot of that where it's all about you, that's when the leader starts to believe the press that they see. You know, and, and, yeah, Dr. Irwin talks about, that sometimes they those leaders that get derailed are the leaders that kind of put themselves above and even above authority, even above standard operating procedures. Well, I can, I can bend the rules here, cuz I'm the leader, you know, and then it's just it's a terrible slippery slope. Well, let me ask you this, do you have a favorite leadership quote?

**Vince Vitale 29:50**

Oh, well, there's one that I applied to leadership, but you know, at least and I've been thinking about lately and it is it's by Annie Dillard, the author, and, and she says "the way you live your days is, of course the way you live your life." And I just found that very challenging. Because, you know, there are some ways that I want to be remembered at the end of my life. And I hope my children will say dad was this sort of person. And it's easy for me to kind of identify those things abstractly. But then if I kind of hone in and, and say, How do I spend my days? How do I live my days, what do I value in my days? What is the distribution of my time and my money and my emotion and my energy in the context of day to day? And boy that really needs to align with how I'm hoping to live my life. It's not possible to not serve people day to day and somehow, at the end of your life, wind up having lived a life of service. So, you know, I'm finding that very challenging at the moment applying that quote to leadership and almost wanting to kind of, you know, list out say, what are the things that I want to characterize my life at the end of life? And then saying, are those true of my average day? And if not, what sort of very concrete tangible goals do I need to set to make sure those are disciplined parts of my day to day?

**Lisa Nichols 31:17**

You know, Vince, I'm just thinking, and I'm, I'm thinking it, and so I'm gonna say it out loud. Thinking it, so I might as well say it out loud, but I'm thinking about you talking about your children. You have got an amazing role model, in Rick Lytle, Dr. Rick Lytle, you're here because he has been so intentional with his parenting and I was just thinking you've got a wonderful role model right there in Dr. Rick Lytle, who leads The CEO Forum. I'm going to ask you one other question, and then we'll take a quick break. And we'll get into some other things. But, you know, can you because I know that the theology of work is something that's really of interest to you what I, I can surmise, I can say what I think that you mean by that, but I would rather hear it from you would, what does that mean that the theology of work?

**Vince Vitale 32:11**

So partly, I think that is thinking about the value of our work from a faith perspective. And in my case, from a Christian perspective, because sometimes we, we think of work as this kind of hard thing that we need to do, because we live in a sort of broken world, but you know, thank God, it's Friday, you know, we get, we finally get to Friday, and then we don't need to work for two days, isn't that wonderful, and rested is a great thing. You know, I affirm, I affirm that, but thinking through the value, and even the sanctity, that work is sacred. Interestingly, actually, in the Old Testament, the word for work, and the word for worship and the word for service, are all the same word, avodah. And so, there's sort of this alignment between our work and that which should be worship full sort of an act of gratitude for what we've received, and that which would, which should serve others as well.

**Vince Vitale 33:05**

And so, I found it, I find it very encouraging, that even from a biblical perspective. There was work before the fall, before any brokenness entered the world, God created people and told them to work the garden that he created. And then, you know, Jesus spent probably about 18 years in a most of his adult life in a secular profession, carpentry and then only three years in what we today call, you know. Full time ministry, which is probably a sort of misnomer, because all of our work can be ministry. And then interestingly, even, even thinking towards heaven, you know, if you actually look at what the Bible has to say, we have a very misconceived notion of heaven as where, you know, we're just going to sing all the time. And if we don't have very good voices, we get kind of depressed by that. But it actually says, we're going to reign with Christ that there's going to be like dominion over this earth, but the earth redeemed and, and a kind of new creation. But it says very explicitly, that there's going to be work in the context of Heaven work that is truly fully fulfilling, you know, almost like the distinction between work and play will sort of break down and we'll just have such a joy in our work. So, work was created in the beginning. It's supposed to be part of our service, and even our worship today. And it's something that's supposed to stick with us, you know, for all eternity. I just find that very encouraging as I work to think actually, this is something which is not just temporary and transient and something I have to do because I happen to live in a world which is broken over in a variety of ways. No, this is part of my, who I am who God made me to be. And it's, it's reading towards an eternal significance that will continue beyond this life as well.

**Lisa Nichols 34:53**

So good, Vince, that's so good. We you know, as you were talking, I was thinking about John Beckett. You probably know John, and his book Loving Mondays. Loving Mondays and it's not just that TGIF. Absolutely. He's like, learn to love Mondays, because that is where, you know, we can truly have influence and impact and not that we don't with our families, we need to be there too. But it just made me think of John. Well, okay, I said, I was gonna ask you one more. And then we'll take a break, but I'm gonna ask you one more.

**Vince Vitale** 35:31

Great.

**Lisa Nichols** 35:32

Let's talk about faith in sports. So, I think you have traveled with Athletes in Action to four different continents. I mean, there may be listeners, and I don't know a lot, I've heard of Athletes in Action a lot, Vince, but I don't know a lot about it. Can you tell our listeners a little bit more about Athletes in Action, then I promise we're going to take a quick break.

**Vince Vitale** 35:55

Sure. No, these are amazing experiences. You know, it was the community that that first journeyed with me on my journey to faith, but then they put together sports teams that that play in particular in the summers and will go to different countries. So, I was playing soccer for the university during the year, but then in the summer, I could join this Athletes in Action team. And we would go to different countries around the world, usually for about three weeks at a time, play against their professional teams. And it's amazing how, you know, once you've spent 90 minutes on a field competing with one another, there's like a level of trust and bonding, you know, before the game, there would have been no sort of avenues for communication. After it, it was sort of tell us who you are and what you're about and what's important to you? So, we would go and have a meal together and be able to share our perspectives on life. Then on the off days, we would do different service projects and camps for kids and different things. So, it was just a really, a really formative time in my life. And you know, I hadn't thought about this before the podcast, but maybe even part of where that relationship between, you know, work and leadership and service came to the fore in my life.

**Lisa Nichols** 37:02

Very good. Well, we're gonna take a quick break and we'll be back with Vince Vitale on this Something Extra Podcast.

**AD** 37:09

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**Lisa Nichols** 37:39

Welcome back everyone to the Something Extra Podcast with my friend Vince. So, Vince, this is crazy to me. I mean, you have been able to speak about your Christian faith to so many different universities, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, UC Berkeley, Westpoint, many others. You've also spoken at some very well-known iconic organizations like Google and Amazon and Facebook. I want to ask you, how did these opportunities come about? And what topics did you address when you spoke at these places? And are there any that are particularly ones that maybe stand out to you that you can tell us a little bit about?

**Vince Vitale** 38:23

Sure, it's been such a privilege to speak in these different contexts. And, you know, it often might be a person of faith in that context, who wants to create a space for a dialogue between different worldviews? Oftentimes, there might be a situation where you're actually hearing different perspectives on a deep question of life at the same time, which I just think is so healthy and refreshing, in particular, in our culture, which seems to be characterized by such division, and by not disagreeing well. We're just, I think we're not good at disagreement as a culture. So that's something that I'm really passionate about. And actually, that's one of the topics that recently I've been speaking in these types of venues about, what does it look like to disagree well? And people are really engaged on that topic. Because whether it's in the context of political divisions, or racial divisions, or divisions in your company, or divisions in your family, people are really struggling, I think, in the context of the sort of narratives and approaches to disagreement in our current culture to figure out just what, what does that look like when you, when you feel yourself emotionally intensely disagreeing with someone? What has to happen in the moments between feeling those emotions, and then something useful, actually coming out of your mouth? Like what's the approach that actually has to happen in the brain and in the heart so that's, that's one, you know, topic.

**Vince Vitale** 39:53

Another topic that have been speaking on recently is how to deal with anxiety and sort of the burdens of it which is just relevant to anyone, regardless of what worldview or faith perspective, you may or may not be coming from. But different ways of seeing the world give different answers. And I don't think that they're, they're all the same. So that creates, you know, fantastic opportunity for dialogue as well. So, you know, oftentimes the, the invitation might come from somebody who just has a heart to, to bring into even the workplace, like meaningful conversations, so that



people feel like they can bring their whole selves to work, even if there is disagreement, and then actually disagree well, in a way that actually promotes unity and collaboration, rather than waiting to divisiveness and, and polarization. So, that's the that's a bit about the approach that my wife Joe and I take as we head into these venues.

**Lisa Nichols 40:51**

Well, that's, I mean, you're talking about subjects to your point that everyone deals with. And here's one that everyone deals with. And, and we'd love for you to camp out here a little bit than she broke you, you wrote a book, you've written several books, but one of the books that you wrote is why suffering? And how do you approach this topic of suffering? Because I hear that a lot, you know, how can there be, you know, the existence of God and then allowing people to, you know, the pain and the suffering that comes along with just being human, right?

**Vince Vitale 41:33**

Yes, yes. It's a perennial question, one of the most difficult questions because it's both difficult intellectually, but it's also very difficult at the heart level, for, for every person really, who either has dealt with suffering, or is dealing with it or will, at some point, and we talked a bit about how I got into, into this topic in the first place. You know, I think, as I approach this topic, you know, at the outset, it's, it's helpful for me to approach it with humility, and recognize that I'm not going to wind up with a perfect answer. Maybe one day in the context of eternity, I'll understand more. But if I am talking about the reasons of an infinite God, His ways are going to be higher than my ways, the world that he created, how it has ensued, what he allows and doesn't allow, and, and yet, at the same time, you know, from like, my Christian perspective, I believe in a God who wants us to know Him in some substantial way, in a relational way. So, I also have this kind of expectation that I can understand something of who God is, and why perhaps he acts the way that he does. So, finding that balance there between not expecting that I'm going to have a perfect answer. But also pursuing understanding as part of my, you know, pursuit of understanding who God is.

**Vince Vitale 43:02**

The other thing, which is, you know, really significant to me, on this question, from the perspective of the Christian tradition, is to have a God who knows suffering, in a very concrete way acquainted with, you know, not, not in an abstract sense. But I remember once my, one of my very good friends was going through something very difficult. And I remember at the time he was, he was not a Christian, not a person of faith, but he, he said to me, I need a counselor, who has been through what I'm going through. And I thought that was such a profound statement. And I sort of shared with him that one of the nomenclatures, for Jesus, and in the Bible is wonderful counselor. And he's only wonderful because he really has been through the depths of, of suffering that we experience in this life. And in the context of, of my research, PhD research, many approaches to this question. But I'll just share for a couple minutes.

**Vince Vitale 44:10**

One approach, which oftentimes, people have not thought of, but I think is significant and had been significant in my life, which is that when we think about the suffering in the world, we, we tend to picture ourselves and the people that we love, in this world with all that suffering, then we picture ourselves and the people that we love in a very different world, with far less suffering or no suffering. And we think to ourselves, well, why wouldn't God create me and the people that I love in that very different world that doesn't have that suffering? But we tend not to ask the question, would it still be you and me and the people that we love if God had allowed to exist that very different world that we think we wish He had allowed to exist. And that's kind of an abstract thought. But it became very concrete for my wife, Jo and I, when we had a miscarriage, which we experienced very intensely, the grief of that. And not too long afterward, Jo was pregnant again. And at some point, in that process, we realized that our now three-year-old, JJ, literally couldn't have existed. Had we not miscarried our daughter prior to him, because Jo still would have been pregnant with her when she conceived JJ.

**Vince Vitale 45:46**

So now from, from the context of my understanding of reality, as a Christian, I think of my family as this family of five. And Jonathan's middle name is Lucien to point back to our daughter, Luka's name, who we lost in that miscarriage. And there's this kind of amazing redemption, that he only exists because of, in a sense, the sacrifice that she made. But we have this hope to a future life where we really think that all, all five of us could be together again, and I think, Wow, that's incredible. I mean, that is no longer abstract that is like very concrete to the, to the way I think about my family and the gratitude that I have, you know, for my son, and the way that these events have unfolded. And so, you know, even going back to my aunt Regina, who I spoke about earlier, who was speaking about the suffering in, in her son's life, you know, he had a variety of disabilities in, in his life. You know, and some of and some of them were genetic in, in nature as well. And again, it you know, it, it raises that question, would the people that we love have existed, if God instead allowed to exist in this very different world, that in our heads, we think we want him to have allowed to exist? And could it be the case that God actually chose each of us and each of the people that we love, and the world that would allow for the circumstances that would bring them into existence because he saw value in them?

And because he desired to love them, and invite each of them into relationship with Himself. So that's, that's one approach, which has been very significant to me and very sort of personal to our family life as well.

**Lisa Nichols 47:42**

Well, my head is spinning here. Vince. I can tell I just love, I love the way you think, you know, asking these really deep, hard questions. I think it's really something that we sometimes shy away from. But I think it's really good to have some discourse and to talk about, you're very, you know, you're very passionate about apologetics. And, you know, I would love for you to just talk a little bit about that. And, you know, this statement you and apologetics comes from the word apologia. Which means defense? Talk about this statement a little bit, you say, apologetics, in the absence of evangelism is an exercise without.

**Vince Vitale 48:47**

And so, you know, as I think about apologetics, I guess what I'm getting at there is I feel like it needs to be Invitational you can think of defense in in a very combative way, where you're talking about ideas rather than people. And I feel like in the context of apologetics is one word which is used for this idea of really just taking people's questions seriously. It's really the way that I went on my journey to faith and the way that I was journeyed with by this community that first invited me into their community into journeying together and so you know, apologia that, that Greek word sometimes kind of, you know, just makes people feel like this idea. This discipline is kind of detached and disconnected. You know, I we actually my wife and I, we think about apologetics as really a ministry of reconciliation. So, it's really interesting that you focused in that theme at a couple of points in this in this podcast. And so oftentimes when we when we think about this, people think about helping people to reconcile to God In a kind of vertical way.

**Vince Vitale 50:02**

We think about it in a holistic way where there is that reconciliation vertically. But there's also this reconciliation that needs to take place horizontally, person to person between people, groups within society. And then there's also a reconciliation that needs to take place internally, as well. And, so many of the questions that we get today are all about some feeling of fracturing or brokenness within the self. And so, the way that I understand you know, what we're doing when we do apologetics is really inviting people into a reconciled life, and inviting them into that in a holistic way where you can be reconciled and your identity within yourself with the people around you and your neighbors and community, but also to God.

**Lisa Nichols 50:47**

So good. I'm gonna be thinking about that reconciliation within yourself, horizontally and vertically. It's really kind of a 360. Well, you and Jo have your own podcast. Mine's called something extra. You're just called Ask Away. I can only surmise what it's about. But you guys basically probably take people's questions and just do deep dives on them, I would imagine.

**Vince Vitale 51:12**

Exactly, right. We do. People send in their deep questions of life, and we don't have all the answers, but we have a conversation about their, about their question. We love that the podcast prompts us to be thinking deeply. And so, it's my, my wife, Jo and I on the podcast, and she's from England. So, she has a much nicer accent than mine. So, if you have not enjoyed mine, don't be put off, or British accent is, is worth listening to.

**Lisa Nichols 51:39**

From New Jersey. Vince from New Jersey.

**Vince Vitale 51:40**

That's right. I know like a guy from a guy from Jersey. You know, marries an English rose with a British accent. I never win the vote for who has the nicest accent contest. But the, the podcast is the idea behind the podcast is really that every question is a gift. Every question has a true answer. We may not have the perfect answer, but every question has a true answer. And from my perspective, from our perspective, all truth is in some way grounded in who God is. And so, we just deal with people's questions. And we welcome any and every question, we receive them as a gift and trust that that will lead us towards truth, and therefore towards God as well.

**Lisa Nichols 52:25**

It's so good. It's so good. Well, I hope our listeners go out and check that podcast out, put it in your favorites and tune into Jo and Vince. So, I've got a little lightning round for you here. And then we'll talk about something extra. So, what do you guys do for fun? I know you do sports, like soccer.

**Vince Vitale** 52:45

I surf. Surfing is the thing that rests me and refreshes me most. We're living in the Bay Area in California now. So, it's the first time I've actually gotten to live somewhere where I can do that just about weekly. So about once a week I get to go out and surf and I'm really thankful for that. And it's a, it's a, it's a great sport as my you know, ACL repaired knee and like torn ankles, you know, get older, surfing is actually pretty low impact. So, I hope to do it for a long time, at least to do it long enough that when my three- and five-year-old are old enough, we can do it together.

**Lisa Nichols** 53:19

Yes, for sure. What about a morning routine? Do you have a morning routine?

**Vince Vitale** 53:25

I have a three and a five-year-old. So, morning routine is not as consistent as I, as I would like it to be but time, time with the boys usually helping them learn in some sort of way, in the morning. And then you know, I'll spend, spend time my, my church is a small, small church and we're all on the same reading plan, which is actually really cool. So, we actually like all read the same thing every day. And then as you're just interacting in relationship you find like your, your conversations go deeper and revolve around some important, important themes. So, that the significant part somewhere early, early in the day. And then I often try to get over to the YMCA. And I have found in this last season they have they have some good sort of open workspaces. And I'll often even just work over there, I find that if I'm working in walking distance of exercise, it's actually really healthy for me. And when I start to kind of hit the wall a bit, even if it's just like 10-15 minutes, I'll go do some exercise, come back to work. I actually find I get more work done. But then at the end of the day, I've also gotten my cholesterol in a little bit better place. So that's been helpful.

**Lisa Nichols** 54:37

You've lowered your LDL. So, oh my goodness. That is so true. And Greg and I often talk about that, you know, I'll like take a walk. You know, I'm just like, okay, I'm just gonna break it up a minute. I'm gonna take a walk. And you think it's kind of an oxymoron. This because you think oh, if I go exercise, I'm going to be more tired but it does kind of give you, you know, that extra oomph, I think you know, to go another round. So, I love that. So, what's next for you? Do you have another book in the works?

**Vince Vitale** 55:11

My wife and I are working on a book. We call it The Spiritual Discipline of Conversation.

**Lisa Nichols** 55:22

Vince, that's awesome.

**Vince Vitale** 55:22

If I asked, when I ask most people about the disciplines in their life, a conversation doesn't normally make the list. But it's actually such a significant part of life. And such a significant part of how we interact with others, and how we build relationships. And there's actually a lot of highly practical, practical, tangible, realistic goals that we can set and sort of even preparation that we can do for a much higher percentage of our conversations to wind up in just these meaningful areas of life, rather than just shooting the breeze. And there's all sorts of benefits that come from that. So, that's something we're working on at the moment.

**Lisa Nichols** 56:01

I love it. And it's gonna be so good for your boys for JJ and Raphael, that's gonna be so good for them, you know?

**Vince Vitale** 56:07

It's not gonna be good for us, though, because then they'll be able to read like, hey, in chapter seven, you said that you should respond to that situation in this way. But Dad, you don't usually respond that way. There's got to be some inbuilt accountability as well.

**Lisa Nichols** 56:19

For sure. Well, Vince is called something extra. What do you believe? Is this something extra every leader needs?

**Vince Vitale** 56:26

You know, I was I was trying to almost like, sum up the variety of directions that my thoughts were going, as I was thinking about us recording this, this podcast, and I guess if, if I, if I had to almost pick a word, I would pick humility. I think humility is so significant for leadership. Often, I think, you know, it's a misunderstood word, you know, humility is not thinking less of yourself, but in a sense of thinking of yourself less. And not just talking about yourself, you know, less but, but it's, it's actually valuing others above yourself. And, you know, that's maybe an easy thing to talk about

abstractly. But I find it's, it's really a difficult thing to live out and put into practice. I've been making a list of, of sentences that in my experience, humble people regularly say, and I have four main sentences on this on this list, and it's, I don't know. I was wrong. I need help. And will you forgive me? And those are all quite vulnerable sentences, which are willing to be transparent, willing to show weakness. And in that sense, they're typically not what we associate with leaders, because leaders are supposed to not show vulnerability, or weakness, you know, so we're told, but I think those four sentences are true of every finite, fallible human person. Every human person, there's a lot we don't know, there's a lot that we get wrong. There are many times we need help. And there are times where we need to say to people, you know, Will you forgive me?

**Vince Vitale** 58:09

And so, I've almost been using these four sentences as a kind of barometer in my own life, are those sentences coming out of my mouth regularly? Or am I sort of fighting not to have to say them at every turn. And I think the beautiful thing in the context of leadership is that when you actually start to say these things, and believe them in your heart, then I think it just promotes trust, and safety, and a sort of dynamic collaboration across teams, and across communities. So, you know, in some ways, even, even that childhood, extreme competition in sports, for all the good of it, you know, was also maybe this negative side where you can't show weakness or not knowing or not being able to do and I've kind of, you know, swung in another direction, that actually there's real strength in being able to admit weakness, and therefore, meet your need for need for other people, and therefore earn their trust and therefore be able to work with them well.

**Lisa Nichols** 59:13

This has been so good, Vince, thank you so, so much. I have seriously, absolutely loved every minute of this time with you. And I just know that our listeners are going to be helped. And I'm excited. I, I just want to spend more time with you and Jo. So, we'll see each other at the annual forum in October at least but thank you so much, my friend for making the time to be on the show today.

**Vince Vitale** 59:44

Thank you. These have been wonderful topics to think through. I feel like I've learned a lot from just the process. So, truly, thank you for the invitation.

**Announcer** 59:51

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