

Announcer: Welcome to the to Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. A podcast all about leadership, change and personal growth. The goal, to help you lead like never before. In your church or in your business. And now, your host, Carey Nieuwhof.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well hey everybody and welcome to episode 229 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well this is fun to have Larry Osborne back on the podcast but what's really fun is that a couple weeks ago I spent, well the better part of three days with him in San Diego and a handful of other leaders and it was incredible.

Carey Nieuwhof: I've taught with Larry before, we've spoken at the same conferences, I've interviewed him for this podcast but it was the most time we've ever spent together and you know what's really nice, it's nice when your respect for somebody grows after you spend time with them, not diminishing. I have pages of notes from things that Larry said over those three days and others obviously in the room that were so great.

Carey Nieuwhof: I want to share one with you before we jump in to today's episode that isn't covered by this interview, which I think you're gonna love. But Larry, we were talking about developing senior leaders and he's been at this for decades now and he said "you know where a lot of leaders struggle?" He says, and this is true in business, it's true in church, he said "We end up with vice presidents or executive pastors or ministry directors." But he says "What every church needs is at least one co-pilot."

Carey Nieuwhof: And he used the analogy of a trans atlantic flight. "So if you're flying you Europe, guess what there are four co-pilots in the cockpit, in the flight deck and if the main pilot goes out, guess what, someone else can fly the plane." And I don't know, that was just so clarifying because when you think through your team, here's the question I ask is do I have a co-pilot and if not, what's it going to take to get it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Not just someone who can run their division or department or whatever but who can fly the plane. Isn't that helpful? I found that incredible. There's so much more and you're gonna get a lot of wisdom in this interview and one of the most curious things is like Larry, why do you never use an alarm clock? He's gonna talk about that as well. So welcome to the podcast, I'm glad you guys are here this week. I think you're gonna find this super helpful.

Carey Nieuwhof: If you want to share it, please do. Take a screen shot on Instagram and share it or I talked to so many of you on the road this fall who said "Hey, every time there's an episode my staff gets it." So share via social email, however you do that, thank you for doing that and thanks for leaving ratings and reviews as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well guys, you know what, I want to talk to you about the future 'cause 2019 is almost here and strong leadership requires a strong engagement strategy, so what are you doing about engagement because engagement just isn't about

Sunday, there are seven days a week and a lot of churches behave like you only have one opportunity. Well that requires a mobile strategy, a giving strategy and an engagement strategy and that's where Pushpay can help.

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Carey Nieuwhof: I really believe that. So right now there's a special offer for listeners of this podcast. Go to Pushpay.com/carey, that's Pushpay.com/carey and you can sign up to talk to a rep who has a special offer for my listeners. No obligation, just a chance to talk to an expert in church technology. Check them out, Pushpay.com/carey.

Carey Nieuwhof: And also, speaking about 2019 and how about your budget year, if you're a senior or executive pastor your trying to figure out how to fund your next big growth project, here's something that doesn't come along very often. Savings, okay, like massive savings. So let's say you're trying to hire a new youth pastor or children's pastor or maybe you've got a building project.

Carey Nieuwhof: Remodel Health is a new technology solution offering unique health insurance benefits platforms that's saving most churches 30 to 50% on their health insurance costs while giving better benefits to employees. On average, they help most churches free up between 60 to \$100,000 per year to repurpose toward projects that can help you do more in your ministry.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Well, and you guys are smart, you know that nothing is free, this show's professionally produced, we have show notes, transcripts, and Pushpay and Remodel Health help bring that to you for free, which is my commitment to you. So thanks guys for helping us out with that and thank you for checking them out.

Carey Nieuwhof: In the meantime I'm gonna dive into my interview with Larry Osborne. For those of you who are meeting him for the first time, Larry is an incredible, you know he spends a lot of time being a mentor these days to a lot of great leaders. I just, I love his heart.

Carey Nieuwhof: He is the lead pastor at North Coast Church in Vista, California north of San Diego. They've grown to over 12,000 on a weekend. He is the author of many books like Lead Like a Shepherd, which is what we're going to talk about today. Sticky Church, Sticky Teams, Sticky Leaders and so much more. So here's my conversation with Larry Osbourne.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well it is just fantastic to have Larry Osborne back to the podcast, Larry thanks for joining us today.

Larry Osborne: Thank you, I'm glad to be with you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, well you've been at this for a while, how many years in ministry for you now? Like in leadership?

Larry Osborne: Oh gee, over 40 in vocational ministry and I've been at North Coast Church 38 years.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's incredible. Man, I mean there's not a lot of stories like that and you got a lot of energy, I mean we've had the chance to hang out at events that we've taught at together and you have a lot of energy man. Like you're going strong and I think that kind of is the end game and so I'd love to start just by saying or asking you this question, what's keeping you fresh and alive this far into vocational ministry?

Larry Osborne: Well, partly I started when I was four years old.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, your only 44 that's right, we all forgot that.

Larry Osborne: You know I think one of the things is simply I was in my early 30s and I decided I was not gonna red line my life. That I was not going to live at full RPM and then find myself exhausted, needing a sabbatical to recharge and then see if I could go through that cycle again. That was an important watershed moment really for me.

Larry Osborne: When I decided you know what, I have a role to play during my lifetime, the kingdom of God is gonna go on when I'm gone and it will even go on if I don't accomplish everything every day that is in front of me. I think there is a work ethic sometimes in ministry that can be lazy, we all know that but there's another side of the coin that says I have to seize every opportunity and there's a difference between what I have the potential to do and what I have the calling to do.

Larry Osborne: One of the really goofy things, even way back then, a lot of research on sleep, I decided to never have a meeting until 9:00 am in the morning so that I would never use an alarm clock. And the only time I ever use one is when I travel and I don't know whether I'm gonna wake up at 5:30, or I don't know if it's gonna be a weird time where I need to sleep until 7:30, and it's been fascinating for me to

see the research that's been done in the last five, 10 years on the importance of sleep and that was just a thought of mine.

Larry Osborne: If I would quit thinking everything rises and falls on my effort, do my best and take a nap, and if I could believe that God would give sleep to the righteous and I didn't really need an alarm clock, that that might play itself out on the back end and that's really where I feel now. I've never had a sabbatical 'cause I wanted to live so I don't need one. I'm not saying shame on those who have one or turn it down if you get one, but I thought how can I teach the executives and big L leaders in my church how to have a margin to balance life if I can't have it in ministry.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. So no alarm clock for 30 years. Like you wake up when you wake up.

Larry Osborne: Yeah. I mean I'll have one if I have a 4:30 flight, you know, your internal clock won't catch you but nope. This morning was wow, I woke up early and got going. Two mornings ago I was exhausted, I got a couple medical things I'm taking some antihistamines for and it just makes you a little extra tired and I looked and it was 7:45 which is, well that's crazy. So I just said the mornings are gonna be mine and then I'll go. So I work a lot of hours but I'm not exhausted hours.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. That's really good, and do you have a regular rhythm for a rest day? Like is that a Friday, a Saturday, a Monday, a Wednesday?

Larry Osborne: I have a rhythm for rest. Most of the people who write about the importance of rigid systems have happen to be on a Meyers Briggs, a J and more of a type A personality in every part of their life of course it leaks into their spirituality and for me I'm a Meyers-Briggs P, the classic entrepreneurial mindset so what I find refreshment in is windows of freedom and I don't know whether that relaxation's gonna be on Monday or Friday but if I schedule it for Friday it's not relaxation.

Larry Osborne: It's oh crud, now it's another checkpoint. I'm big on judging the fruit, not the watering schedule and I think one of the things that happens to us in ministry is we look at everybody else's watering schedule and try to copy it but it's a recipe for their personality, for their background, for their spouse, for their children, so if the fruit is good I say just keep your goofy watering schedule and if the fruit sucks well then Google watering schedule and follow it.

Larry Osborne: So when it comes to the disciplines, rhythms and all that, that's really what I try to be. I'm a fruit inspector and when the fruits no good I need to try a different watering schedule but I'm much more about the fruit than the watering schedule and I was raised to worry and angst over the watering schedule.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's an interesting perspective Larry because I look at when I'm producing my best stuff and its not prescriptive, it's descriptive, so for me that can look like an

11:00 am bike ride when everyone's like aren't you supposed to be at work? Well am I working, am I not working? Yes. Sort of.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm relaxing and often I find in those moments it's like I'm on mile 17 and then all of a sudden it's like ah ha, got it. And it was worth that thought and then I'd finish up my ride and I'd go back to work but I could tell some other person to try that, it would be a disaster for them.

Larry Osborne: Absolutely. We are so quick to give people our watering schedule.

Carey Nieuwhof: How did you give yourself permission to live that way? Particularly when you were what, in your 30s when you started this?

Larry Osborne: Yeah I was probably about mid 30s. A couple of things had happened. As a youth pastor I had the largest youth ministry in the two churches that I served and they were large churches. I started really young so I had a lot of success in my early 20s then I came to North Coast Church and in the first three years we grew by one person.

Larry Osborne: So suddenly I realized I wasn't quite as cool as I thought I was or as gifted as I thought I was, I went through a lot of depression. In the spiritual level the Lord helped me to understand that the same mental math that was making me depressed was the mental math that would have made me arrogant had I had the success I'd previously had or I'd dreamed of.

Larry Osborne: And so that put me in a right place to really grasp that my job is to prepare the horse for battle, it's His job to decide whether I win or lose. And then I feel like a little bit I started on third base or at least second base in my life. I don't have a father wound like so many guys, especially in ministry struggle with. My dad who is still alive and healthy and mom are heroes of mine.

Larry Osborne: I never felt I was more loved when I was a basketball player. I scored a lot of points or I scored no points, I was loved as his son, so that made it easy to have that kind of Jesus for me to understand. And then I had a mentor who poured into me concepts like you have nothing to prove and no one to impress and kind of all those things came together.

Larry Osborne: I had succeeded, now I'm having failure, so where am I finding my identity and then I had a great place to start. No father wound and a mentor who kept saying "Larry you have nothing to prove and no one to impress." And I've tried to pass that on.

Carey Nieuwhof: Did you get weird looks from either your board, staff, colleagues who are like "What?" That's still a little bit counter intuitive today but go back 30 years and probably you were the outlier.

Larry Osborne: I was very much the outlier. I still probably am in the outlier today but there's nothing like 13,000 people in your church to cause people to not call you an outlier. So the sad thing is when we had 150 and had grown by one in three years no one listened and then when you start hitting multiple thousands or write a few books, then people pay you to tell them. It's like "Dude I used to tell you this for free."

Carey Nieuwhof: There's a lot of truth in that.

Larry Osborne: Yeah it's kind of the sad part is there's a lot of wisdom out there that's not yet backed up by big numbers and we don't listen.

Carey Nieuwhof: There's a lot of truth in that too. This has come up a few times when we've gotten together and talked and I just want to drill down, you mentioned the father wound, that you don't have one and you said it just a few minutes ago and I think I've heard you say it before, that it seems like there's a lot of pastors who have some kind of father wound.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now is that just like hey, 38.9% of the population has a father wound and we're equally distributed in the church for that or do you think that there is a disproportionate number? I'm just curious, I mean you work with a lot of church leaders, do you think, no that there's a higher number of people with a father wound in ministry?

Larry Osborne: No I don't think the number is higher, I just think there's a lot of especially men obviously that have that. I think sometimes we live in our little echo chamber and we think that ministry is particularly hard because we've never had a real job.

Larry Osborne: We think all kinds of things about ministry but you get ... My brother was a high ranking cop, I think number four in the food chain in the third largest department in the world and being a cop was uniquely difficult.

Larry Osborne: Being in the trades, trying to live the Christian life when other people are fudging on all kinds of things is particularly difficult. Being in a bureaucratic institution, everything's difficult since page three of my bible but I do think there's an awful lot of father wounds out there where men don't really think that they're okay and we suddenly believe we're okay when we hit certain performance levels and that's death because we cannot control the outcomes.

Larry Osborne: We could be Samson and have ruled successfully for 18 years and everybody wants to read our books about how to be a great judge and then it all falls in and suddenly everybody realizes the truth, or we could be Joshua, a great man of God who sends an appropriate, small, little army to Ai and loses not because he didn't pray, not because he didn't seek the Lord for strategy because and idiot named Aiken had taken a few devoted things and hid them under his tent.

We preach that there's an unseen realm but I don't think we believe it. We think everything is cause and effect.

Carey Nieuwhof: No I think your right, I meet a lot of entrepreneurs, a lot of business leaders and yeah, there's a father wound there, too. And again this isn't a counseling session, you're not a ... well maybe, you are a trained counselor. What are some signs for those who are listening?

Carey Nieuwhof: 'Cause I have a great dad like you do, but we all have wounds from our childhood and that was a period, process of discovery for me in my 30s, 40s, and even through to today, what are some signs that maybe you gotta look a little deeper if you're a leader who's saying "I don't know whether I have one or not." What would you advise them to look for?

Larry Osborne: I think probably one of the most common things that I find is an insatiable appetite for more and more success and every time we get there we feel empty. We're living Ecclesiastes and so I look at people, like are you kidding me? You only enjoy the journey, you've never been able to grab any of the brass rings that were in front of you and to enjoy it?

Larry Osborne: What is that about? What internal message is telling you, you're still not good enough? Some day I want to write a book called The Things We Preach But Don't Believe. One of them would be grace, another would be the body of Christ. Another would be our identity in Christ but I think that's probably one of the most important symbols because I don't think being hyper competitive is a sign of a father wound or goofed up spirituality.

Larry Osborne: I think God made some of us that way but you could be hyper competitive and at the end of the day go "I played my best, I lost, you're better than me." And that's healthy. Man until that last whistle blew or the horn went off, whatever it was, I was gonna give it all and do everything I can, it's over now, you won, congratulations.

Larry Osborne: And there's those people who win a bunch but when they finally do lose, which happens to all of us, have no ability to put their arms around it and go "Well that's really okay." So that to me would probably be the pre-eminent thing. Those with strong father wounds obviously know that. They probably have a debate in their head going on and their dad's still living there rent free, between their ears.

Carey Nieuwhof: Thank you for that. That is helpful and clarifying I think for a lot of leaders. You do interact with a lot of young leaders, you're a mentor to some of our mutual friends, which I think is incredible. When you look at what young leaders are facing today, how is it different or even is it different than a previous generation when they started out?

Larry Osborne: I don't think it's all that different. Sometimes the clothes are different but you take the clothes off, the body, the skeleton, the internal organs are exactly the same and there's a tendency for every generation to think it's incredibly unique and so we have a lot of generational talk.

Larry Osborne: One of my favorites is when people talk about millennials being highly entitled. I go "Really? Have you ever met a Baby Boomer?" It's like its human nature. Did you ever talk to a builder when they thought their pension was gonna be maybe shut down a little bit because they were promised more than the government could really pay them or the organization?

Larry Osborne: We are entitled beings from the first few pages of scripture. So it takes on a different format in each and every cultural situation and maybe there's a greater emphasis on something in each and every timeframe but I don't think the struggles are all that different.

Larry Osborne: We live in this little bubble and we only read about the past and we only dream about the future and we think today is like "Whoa, that's all of life." There's nothing new under the sun someone once said and God said "Print it, that's good."

Carey Nieuwhof: What are some of the repeating patterns that you hear from young leaders if you're like "Man these are two or three that everybody seems to be struggling with." What are you seeing?

Larry Osborne: Well I think high performance leaders tend to never be satisfied. Over and over, and again that goes back to the father wound. I think there's a lot of leaders at all levels. Those who don't necessarily have this incredible resume, they're faithful but it's been a tough slog.

Larry Osborne: Many times I find in those situations that they still live in a little echo chamber, that's always been a problem. I could describe the problems we face as leaders this way. If you're a little L, medium L or you've been a big L leader, if you're a leader you probably can solve lots of problems yourself, that's why you became a leader.

Larry Osborne: And then when you hit little bit harder ones you tend to move outside of yourself to your team, those that are closest to and there's some wisdom there and we all know that pure isolation puts a lid on you. And when we outgrow those insights most of us have a tribe that we're comfortable with.

Larry Osborne: It could be a denomination, it could be a theological construct, it could be all kinds of things but there's an identifiable tribe, we go "Oh that's where the answers are." But what I discovered is the answers to life's toughest problems are not found with me, my team or my tribe.

Larry Osborne: They're found outside my tribe. People that are not restricted by my paradigms don't necessarily see the world as I see it with the same boundaries and I find that lots and lots of leaders hit a ceiling in their family, hit a ceiling in their health, hit a ceiling in their preaching and their leadership skill set because they never get outside of their tribe.

Larry Osborne: And they think that there's no wisdom out here and then that becomes the end. I find that over and over. Let me give you an example. I think it's really well known we did the first video venues that became multi-sites. In the early years it was amazing to me how many people came by North Coast Church to see what we were doing.

Larry Osborne: And other churches had quickly adopted it and did it as well or far better than we were doing it. But nowadays here's what I find people doing left and right. They go "Oh I visited one, I read a book on it, I'm gonna go launch my own." And then they struggle with "Well why did that fail?" And I said "Well, 'cause you tried to do it yourself moron."

Larry Osborne: You're too arrogant to ask for advice and I find that is a very common struggle, all the more so in a day and age of the internet, Google and at your finger. I love it, I tell my wife I live in a library with a librarian at hand. How cool is that? But that means I have a tendency to research everything myself and think I've got it solved when all of the answers to the counter intuitive and tough stuff are found outside in networking and hanging around people who don't see the world like I see it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you give me an example of currently in your life, people outside your tribe, outside your family, outside your theological background that you're learning from and listening to?

Larry Osborne: Absolutely. One of the things I continue to do but I'm gonna go back early days. Let me step back. I started teaching bible studies in my teens and was in vocational ministry very young and that means all of my education, all of my experience is in vocational ministry.

Larry Osborne: Well when I became a pastor I started taking out businessmen in my church, a banker, a developer, a builder, all kinds of people and I would say "Would you Disciple me?" And they'd look at me like "What?" And I didn't always use that word but I would pick their brain about their field and they were so used to a pastor taking them out to lunch to either ask for money or to teach them how to share their faith or read their bible.

Larry Osborne: And I'm a 28 year old punk kid, it's like really some 45, 50 year old guy's gonna listen to me? So I would go out and I would say "Well why'd you buy that property? How do you just make these decisions? How do you hire people? Why do you hire them? How do you think through finances?"

Larry Osborne: All of that and I got a P.h.D. in leadership and some of these guys and gals had a great walk with Jesus and some of them had a horrible walk with Jesus and some didn't even have a walk with Jesus. But they had things I could learn and now the back side of that is people come to me for all those kinds of things.

Larry Osborne: I actually do some business consulting of all the weird things and where did that come from? Well it came from me getting outside of my theological tribe and just asking people that had great fruit in an area, "Hey how are you watering that tree?" 'Cause when my plumbing's broke, I don't really care whether you have a fish on your truck, I care whether or not you know how to fix the pipes.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. And those are great examples. Do you read outside your field? Do you listen like in terms of podcast audio books or talks? Do you listen in an interdisciplinary way as well?

Larry Osborne: Yeah everybody learns differently and I learn from 30,000 feet, that's just the way I see life and then dive down when I have an interest, so one thing I do every day is I have a Google News set up uniquely for all kinds of areas.

Larry Osborne: From entertainment to know what's going on there, to medical, to finance, to sports, you name it. And I read at 30,000 feet every morning, this potpourri of things that I set up and then just figure out "Huh, what do I want to take a deep dive into?"

Larry Osborne: And it could be law and just really weird, eclectic sort of things and it gets me outside of my natural zone. I found long ago that what you read in most books first shows up in articles or blogs. So I try to catch it first and then I keep my eye open, "Oh there's that book I read about three years ago on fill in the blank."

Carey Nieuwhof: You strike me not only in this interview but in the time we spent together as a really curious person. Often the more you've led the more you know, particularly with success, I find a lot of people become less curious. How do you maintain and cultivate your curiosity?

Larry Osborne: Well I think in one sense everybody should cultivate it but some of us are just wired to be more curious. That's what's life giving to us and I really can't tell you. I sat down and figured out something, curiosity is life giving to me.

Larry Osborne: Probably as I look back on my life, my wife and I were talking about it, about every five to 10 years, I find some new area I just want to learn about. Architecture for a little while and then I loved some stuff on design and gardening and then I had a friend who owned a winery and oh, okay, what about that and I just, I find life in that but I'm not sure everybody that had that watering schedule would find life in it.

Larry Osborne: What I do know is all of us need to get outside of our natural comfort zone and the problem is, here's one of the unique things when you asked earlier about a

younger generation. One problem they have that we didn't have in the past is we have so much ability to choose our echo chamber now that everybody lives in an echo chamber. I don't think that was this true in the past.

Carey Nieuwhof: You mean a self selected community.

Larry Osborne: A self selected community. We used to be restricted by our geography, that's how we saw the world. Then there was a short time of monolithic media with just a few networks and everybody experienced the same thing.

Larry Osborne: And now we choose what world we're gonna live in. There's no news, I choose to live in the Fox world or the MSNBC world or the CNN world and nobody really is, musical it's the same thing.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah there's no common denominator in music anymore, no.

Larry Osborne: Oh you're a youth pastor, what's youth music? Well it depends on what youth you're talking to. And so I do think we have to work harder today to get outside of our echo chamber than we ever did in the past.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah its true, even when I started in the 90s in ministry, I mean your community was really determined by denominational lines and geographic lines. That was it because any outside, I mean even consumption of content was usually a purchase or a trip.

Carey Nieuwhof: So you were buying a CD, a cassette tape, there was no internet to speak of other than some really primitive email but your right, we all have our own curated communities and all of us do now, but that can become very self selecting and very self affirming and dangerously narrow.

Larry Osborne: And that's where you definitely will hit a lid again, not just in your ministry leadership but in your marriage, your life and every area when you live there. And by the way one of the ways I know its so strong for the culture but also in ministry is for whatever reasons the Lord has allowed me to speak to all kinds tribes.

Larry Osborne: So I can be at both ends of the spectrum two days apart on certain theological issues but here is what I have learned. Whatever group I'm with there's a few code words I need to have thrown out within the first eight sentences or their arms will remain crossed and they're different code words but groups are suspicious of somebody that's not them until I've thrown those code words out, then those arms are uncrossed and the notes start being taken. It is the most bizarre thing but it shows me how strong that echo chamber is. The belief there's no truth outside of those who sink it like us.

Carey Nieuwhof: So in other words you're proving your street cred, you're like "Yeah I get you." And then they're like "Oh okay, we'll listen to you."

Larry Osborne: Yeah, totally. You know this is gonna be more Proverbs than Romans with one group and then suddenly like "Oh okay, he's theological and I can be practical." With another group it's a statement about the work of the spirit and just making sure that's really clear, and "Oh okay." But here's the tragedy is that so many people won't listen until you've said the secret code. Like really, really.

Carey Nieuwhof: And culturally that seems to be intensifying not weakening.

Larry Osborne: I couldn't agree with you more, absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, your latest book, Lead Like a Shepherd is out and it's published by Next, they've done some great leadership material and I was really intrigued by the title because most people, there's a huge debate which I'm sure you've seen in all of its forms about Shepherd versus CEO and what's wrong with leadership and it rages online and you lead a very large church, 13,000 people, how many locations now Larry?

Larry Osborne: We only count our local ones. The others were pulpit supplies so locally I think it's six.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah but that's a lot of campuses. You have a lot of locations, you're an influential church and most people would say "Well with a church that size what do you mean Shepherd? How do you Lead Like a Shepherd?" Most people think church of 150 people I do all the pastoral care that's what a Shepherd means. Tell us why you wrote the book and what's behind it.

Larry Osborne: Well, being a Shepherd doesn't mean your taking care of every individual lamb. It means your making sure that every lamb is taken care of and the CEO mindset when it goes too far says "Well I'm gonna let someone else think about Shepherding."

Larry Osborne: 'Cause obviously once your church is a certain size you can't council, you can't marry, you can't bury, or if you do you're gonna be buried and your not gonna be married. But what I believe is very important is that we never lose the heart that we are making sure these things are done.

Larry Osborne: We have to pass them off to someone else. That might mean nothing more than walking around and checking to make sure it's done. If I'm a CEO who's only getting the reports from everybody else that the Shepherding's done rather than go and testing it myself I lost my Shepherd's heart. I need to go and find out is this really being done.

Larry Osborne: I have a series of little sayings on the white board in my office and one is "Never let the clerks tell you how the food tastes." And so no, I'm not marrying you unless you're my friend and I'm burying you unless you're in my life group or you're my friend but if I know you I'll show up at the funeral and what I am

doing, and we try to do and think we do really well at North Coast is we've created systems to make sure people are Shepherded.

Larry Osborne: We haven't thrown up our hands and said "Well it's just too hard." Somewhere around 300 to 450, people quit counting faces and start counting numbers and I think at that point is when you hit the watershed moment where you make the decision, are we going to insist that people are Shepherded or are we gonna go "Well it's too hard so now we're just gonna count how many show up." 'Cause numbers lie.

Carey Nieuwhof: How so?

Larry Osborne: Well you can grow by 300 people in over a year and go "Wow that was really wonderful." But what if you really grew by 450 and lost 150? You see you can never know about the one that wanders off if all your doing is counting numbers 'cause you count them out and you go "Well there's 101 instead of 100, that's good."

Carey Nieuwhof: But you don't know who you've lost.

Larry Osborne: You don't know who you lost, and again you can't know everybody but here's what blows my mind. Almost every church knows to the penny who gave what. And I'm going if you're counting to the penny all the money that was given to you, but you're telling me you can't count to the face the sheep that are mostly coming you've just told me something very important about your heart and your church and that is that money's more important than people. 'Cause whatever you have to pay for accountants and systems or whatever, you can solve those things for the money but you haven't paid the same price for the people.

Carey Nieuwhof: So with 13,000 people, and I know you write about this Sticky Team, Sticky Church.

Larry Osborne: Sticky Fingers, Sticky buns, everything.

Carey Nieuwhof: You know pretty much who those 13,000 people are?

Larry Osborne: Yeah, well nowadays it's easy. It was much harder in the past but one of the things we do is we have a ... October's our benchmark so we take adult attendance average in October and then in October how many people are in our sermon based life groups, lecture lab model.

Larry Osborne: So it's not sign ups but show ups, but what we do with those groups is we have 90 some percent of our attendance in them and we do real time attendance. You can do that in a group. Now that meant we had to staff for it, so I personally and Chris Brown our other senior pastor, we don't even have a full-time assistant, but our life group system has four or five full-time assistants 'cause we

put our money and our energy in what's most important and that's we need to know who's there.

Larry Osborne: So we have real time attendance there, you have real time attendance probably in every church in your Sunday school type of programs. You have real time ability with your giving, well that's probably a 75 to 80% quick look at who's here, who's not here. But I'm shocked how many churches, outside of giving, they have no real record of anything that they keep or look at.

Carey Nieuwhof: You said something really interesting that 85% of all churches are sub 200 and when I talk to a lot of those leaders they're like "Okay well let's double that." Let's say there's 4 or 500 people or 700 people 'cause 13,000 seems impossible to most leaders.

Carey Nieuwhof: But you said something that really I think would be challenging for a lot of leaders, you said "Hey, I'm not gonna do your wedding, I'm not gonna do your funeral unless you're my friend or in your life group."

Carey Nieuwhof: How did you come to draw those arbitrary lines and then how did you get people to accept that because it's a very similar thing for me too at Connexus and people basically know, okay, yeah he just doesn't do funerals, he doesn't do a whole lot of weddings, but it seems arbitrary, and it almost seems un-pastoral.

Larry Osborne: Well one of the problems I think is people draw those lines way too early like you said. I did not draw those lines when North Coast was 350 people, when it was 400.

Larry Osborne: I had to draw those lines when we had to have a Saturday night service because weddings are planned way in advance generally and I don't know whether I'm on that week or somebody else is on that week, so that was a pretty easy one.

Larry Osborne: At some point I realized that I was becoming a counselor so I went to the board and was able to use their cover and our board requested that we not meet with anybody more than one time as an air traffic controller to help guide them where they need to be, and that solved it but to this day, pretty much anybody can meet with me if they're willing to wait for that window in my schedule.

Larry Osborne: They're told it's one time, I know Chris Brown's assistant has a phrase that is "Well you can either get help or you can get Chris, which do you want? If you really want Chris you can wait out all these weeks and get it but we've got the help for you right now." But again, we've put together systems where people really get help. Not walls where they can't get to us and there is a difference.

Carey Nieuwhof: I spent some time as an amateur counselor too and I realized man I am in so far beyond my pay grade on this stuff and I cannot fix your marriage and I did not train for this and eventually I just started explaining to people when we were 6, 800, 900, 1,000 people it's like "Look, I'm not gonna be able to help you.

Carey Nieuwhof: I didn't go to school for that, I don't have the training, I don't have the gifting, would you like someone who can help?" And that's really good but walk me through in a really granular way because there's that bubble where, and I think we're past it now at Connexus, but that awkward thing where I'm gonna do your wedding but I'm gonna say no here. And that does, if you have half a heart, that's a hard one. How did you navigate that?

Larry Osborne: Well, let me start with this. There is a difference between saying "I can Shepherd you." And saying "You can't get to me." Those are two different things. One is a wall and the other is "I will help you get Shepherded." So let's say I'm a Shepherd and I've got 80 sheep.

Larry Osborne: If one of them gets really sick and I take that lamb to the vet I haven't neglected my Shepherding but if I build a wall and none of the sheep can get to me, I have neglected it. So that word picture I think is really important to grasp. Too often we build a wall so people can't get to us to "protect" ourselves instead of saying "No, I'm going to put you first but I'm gonna get you to a vet instead of me."

Larry Osborne: There's a process in which you are ... in the early days I would meet with people and before the board said "Only one time." I might meet with you twice, I might pick up the phone to help set up an appointment with someone else but now I was going from five meetings with you trying to duct tape and spit your marriage together, hold it together, to two or three.

Larry Osborne: So it's not a sudden whack and boom, everything changes, it's a process and at the heart, most people are gonna understand that I'm taking you to the vet. I am making sure you're taken care of. If I meet you after church and you need some help, in fact I just did it this morning.

Larry Osborne: I went into to one of the other pastors I'd gone to and I asked specifically, "Were you able to get ahold of so and so?" I didn't just write their name down, give it to somebody and not follow up. When that sat pastor called, they said "Larry asked me to call you." Well that took 10 minutes of my time and a little thing on my checklist of to do to make sure it was done.

Larry Osborne: But it creates an aura and a DNA around here that people matter. Now, the other part of it granularly is this, you've gotta get to the point where some people are such selfish pigs you're gonna let them go. Because some people will never understand that the flock is important and that they aren't the center of the universe and my mentor taught me early on, he called it divine subtraction. He said "Larry if you've lost a Christian selfish pig and they're going to another church why are you feeling bad?"

Carey Nieuwhof: What are some signs that they're a selfish pig and not just a needy person Larry?

Larry Osborne: Yeah when somebody that doesn't know Jesus that's a whole different thing but if you're a consumer sitting there thinking "Well all power is in the person who

speaks on the platform." Then you don't really want help, you want me and there is a difference.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. And they're not interested in getting better, they're interested in getting you.

Larry Osborne: Absolutely. Yeah I hold your hand and take you to the vet and then you squirm out and say, post on Facebook that "Hey he didn't care." Like really, okay.

Carey Nieuwhof: In Lead Like a Shepherd you talk about the professionalization of the clergy. Can you talk about that?

Larry Osborne: Well the difference between a hired hand and a Shepherd according to Jesus is a Shepherd puts the needs of the sheep first. In the case of Jesus, literally laying down his life for them whereas the hireling runs at the first sign of trouble. And I think to many of us have treated ministry as a career.

Larry Osborne: I'm not against moving, I'm not against going to another place because your family or you are too beaten up but I think too many of us leave too quickly because we think it's about me. We preach it's about the sheep but all our decisions are it's about me. It's about a bigger platform, it's about better opportunities, my gifts.

Larry Osborne: When the heart of the Shepherd says "What do the sheep need?" And if I'm not willing to take care of the sheep God gave me, I have no idea why I should expect him to give me other sheep and that was part of the problem in my early days at North Coast. I saw the sheep that I had as tools to use to get the sheep I wanted to get.

Larry Osborne: So I wanted to motivate them to be out sharing their faith more, to be more missional, but at the core, it really wasn't about Jesus. It was about helping me build a ministry that I thought God called me to do. And I could sense it when at one point I was tempted to go somewhere else purely because it was a better platform and I wasn't being fully appreciated here.

Larry Osborne: Like I just wish more of us would lay down our career dreams and again, not all of us, not all moving's bad, but if we would lay down our career dreams, that's nothing compared to laying down his life for us.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you walk us through 'cause I think we've all had those moments. You've been at North Coast for how many years now? 30?

Larry Osborne: Just hit my 38th anniversary.

Carey Nieuwhof: 38 years, 38 years, 23, I feel like a newbie where I am with these people but you mentioned feel unappreciated. Man, I think anybody who's stuck around for more than 10 minutes goes through those seasons where they feel

unappreciated. What does that look like for you and then how have you gotten through it?

Larry Osborne: You know there's a theological grid I think we have to go back to. You know Romans talks about the renewing of our mind, that's how we get transformed and we've gotta decide its one more of those things we preach but don't believe, servant leadership. If I'm truly gonna be a servant, then that means I'm gonna be taken advantage of.

Larry Osborne: Now I can't go to the point that it's hurting my marriage, it's hurting my kids and all that, that's where I draw the line. I can't go to the point where every selfish pig is driving me to an early grave, but if I'm really a servant leader, when score is kept I will have given more than I got and I don't think most of us think that's okay.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay I don't want to lose that. We will have given more than we got. That is the definition of service over the long haul.

Larry Osborne: Absolutely. The other's just pretending. Yeah when people realize I'm one of the lead pastors here and I help setting up or taking down table and they'll go "Oh what a wonderful heart Larry has." That's really different than when somebody walks up and orders me around. "Hey move that table over here." It's like "Hey dude, don't you know I'm Larry, I'm pretending to be a servant here, don't treat me like one."

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh I don't know why a whole bunch of light bulbs went on when you said that but that was extremely helpful that at the end of the day, there are some relationships where you just give more than you're gonna get and that is the nature of servant hood.

Larry Osborne: Yeah and they can't be ... Again, you can't live there with everything. It would be self-

Carey Nieuwhof: You could be a doormat I mean but yeah, fundamentally it's not gonna be this massive ego rush and reward that we all sinfully think it will be.

Larry Osborne: Yeah. I mean Paul was not appreciated by the churches he planted. Read through the emotion of second Corinthians or Galatians or whatever and Jesus was hardly appreciated by the people he came to serve.

Larry Osborne: If all but one of the apostles died a martyr why am I so crushed that somebody posted a mean thing on Facebook? Or left our church and took their money right in the middle of a building campaign? Like really? Really? Are you serious?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah you have a chapter in the book, and they're short chapters, willingness to be misunderstood, that's part of this isn't it?

Larry Osborne: Absolutely. I always tell people that one of your leadership lids is your ability to deal with frustration and they always think I mean the internal frustration of leadership. I go "No, that's not what I mean.

Larry Osborne: I mean people being frustrated at you 'cause they don't understand. That's part of what leadership is and if you need everybody's approval and you can't live with people not understanding, you can't live with people talking behind your back to some degree your not ready to lead."

Larry Osborne: I like what Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, "Don't listen to every word that people say about you because you know that you too have said some rather unkind things about others." Hey, just let it go, do your job.

Carey Nieuwhof: You've also got a no complaining rule. Do you want to unpack that for us?

Larry Osborne: Yeah well the whole book, Lead Like a Shepherd is built on two passages. First Peter five, Shepherd the flock among you and how it's done and then the 23rd Psalm which was the strongest along with Jesus' image that his early readers would have had of a Shepherd and one of the things he says is to do it willingly, okay.

Larry Osborne: Not under compulsion and not just "for money" right? And Jesus, here's the thing, we don't have to lead. I think that's part of the thing. If I'm complaining a lot, like what am I complaining for? Leadership is a voluntary choice in the body of Christ. If anyone wants to set up my right or left hand, here's the path to get there. Not everyone should want to set at my right or left hand.

Larry Osborne: Timothy I'm leaving you here in Ephesus to take care of these churches and kind of help get them straightened out. If anyone desires to be an overseer here's what they must do. And we've turned it into everyone should aspire to leadership. I always just tell people I don't have to be a leader. What I do have to do is use my gifts.

Larry Osborne: I would teach the bible and disciple people somehow, somewhere, but I could leave vocational ministry in a heartbeat and Jesus wouldn't be disappointed. He called me to ministry like he's called every saint. In fact at North Coast we don't even use the phrase called into ministry in light of vocational ministry.

Larry Osborne: 'Cause everybody's called into ministry. Vocational is just one option and it is no higher calling than being a plumber for Jesus. We're all on the front lines and so I say, listen if you hate it, quit. Do something else. If you can't find something else better than you should quit complaining 'cause you've got the best of all possible jobs.

Carey Nieuwhof: We do complain a lot in ministry don't we?

Larry Osborne: Yeah its human nature, everybody complains. But the more we've been out in the market place the more we would realize that it goes back to Genesis chapter three, it's not unique to vocational ministry.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. A lot of unhappy lawyers, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, nurses, doctors.

Larry Osborne: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Larry Osborne: There are weeds in every garden. Big weeds.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, your very, very true. What would you ... I think we've answered this, I was gonna say, what would you say to the skeptical CEO who would say "Shepherding doesn't apply to me." You know, that CEO type leader. It's like "Yeah, thank you but isn't it all systems and if my systems are good, people are cared for." Any word to that person?

Larry Osborne: It's a both and. You've gotta speak to the person who says "It's all about personally Shepherding." And they're down on leadership and what they don't understand is the reason the new testament doesn't write about leadership is it was written to a non-mobile culture in which churches were house churches.

Larry Osborne: I don't know a lot about house churches but I do know this, they didn't have a governing board and you didn't need a lot of leadership skill. You needed chaplain skills, Shepherding skills, et cetera. It was only with the rise of the automobile and churches becoming 2, 3, 400 that we suddenly started to need leadership skills and that's why until recent history there wasn't much emphasis on that for pastors.

Larry Osborne: But I think we swung the pendulum at times too far because we decided that it's all about leadership and that leadership at it's core isn't leading into Shepherding. It's just leading into bigger. And that would be like a company that says "No, our goal is to sell our widgets but not to have satisfied customers."

Larry Osborne: I go "Dude you might grow for a little while but it's all gonna implode." And that's what happens to churches. They treat people as things and just want to get them in the front door, in the business world it's a transactional type of business.

Larry Osborne: It's the real estate agent who treats everybody as a one time sale instead of realizing no, what's really important is multiple sales from the same people. And in our case, the CEO leadership should create systems so that the back door is slammed shut. Not so my church gets bigger, but so that I can disciple people.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, your right, I mean ultimately if your Samsung or Apple or Tesla or whoever you decided or your software's a service company, at the end of the day you're interacting with people and if the phone isn't working, if it's catching on fire in your pocket or the battery's draining in two hours, at the end of the day you're still dealing with people. Their hopes and their dreams and their frustrations.

Larry Osborne: And your success is gonna be found in retaining them. And in ministry it's not about reaching people, it's retaining them. Now, after a while I want to send them off obviously but, for instance when I wrote Sticky Church some people misunderstood.

Larry Osborne: It's about closing the back door to get bigger and I always said "No, it's about closing the back door so that in a day and age where everybody leaves when they don't like something I've got them stuck and therefore I can disciple them." I want to slam the back door shut so I can disciple you with hard truths not so the church gets bigger.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right. And again the whole premise under that, if I remember correctly, it's been a year or two since I reread the book but it's based on relationship right? That the stickiness is not sound doctrine, the stickiness is well, I really don't like that Larry Osborne, but I'll tell you my best friend is here and our neighbors are here and now what am I gonna do?

Larry Osborne: Absolutely 'cause people stay even in the sickest churches because of friendship. So that's why we work so hard on friendship here. Slam the back door and then we can say hard things that we couldn't have said otherwise 'cause everybody'd go running to the next church.

Carey Nieuwhof: Larry you've got a lot of wisdom. You've shared so much with leaders over the years and continue to do so, but just so, you know, I think we all end up thinking "Well Larry doesn't really have any problems." So here's a question for you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Of all the things you write about or teach on, what's a hard one for you to apply? It's like you know how when you're teaching something and you're like "Yeah and this is just a continual issue." You talked about emptiness for example earlier, so I'll go first.

Carey Nieuwhof: My new book Didn't See it Coming last section's on emptiness and a lot of that is like yeah a tremendous success, and at the end I catch myself feeling empty almost all the time and now I know what to do, it's a call back but I don't know whether that's ever gonna go away or that kind of thing. So what would you say for you has been an ongoing challenge and how are you tackling it?

Larry Osborne: My biblical hero outside of Jesus is Barnabus. When I played basketball I was a point guard which is about winning and distributing. Anybody who has read my stuff or knows me, I'm all about lifting up young eagles and giving away, we

were one of the first churches in the country sharing the pulpit and stuff like that. And I think what people don't realize is that its still the hardest thing to do.

Carey Nieuwhof: Really?

Larry Osborne: At the end of the day, as easy as it "might look" or from afar it might sound, I still have to go home and feel sad sometimes that someone else was picked first or I'm no longer the one who has the spotlight on me at this particular point or issue or system or whatever.

Larry Osborne: I love to lift someone up. Recently I helped a guy named Mark Clark wrote a great book called The Problem of God and I helped Mark with some connections and all kinds of stuff on his book and you know my books have sold fairly well but when his book takes off like crazy like it did, there's a mixture of like "Oh, huh, he's actually selling his book better than my book is selling right now."

Larry Osborne: And then human nature steps in and that was a tiny thing. That took me seconds to get over. But it's real easy to help people as long as you're on top but when you've helped them up and now they're on top, I would be a liar to say that doesn't create a sense of angst and that's when I have to go look in the mirror and say "Jesus this is everything I dreamed of and everything you called me to." And get over it. But that unquestionably has always been the hardest thing when what I'm trying to do actually works.

Carey Nieuwhof: Why do you keep doing it?

Larry Osborne: Because that's what Jesus said to do and I think he birthed that in my heart theologically. I think he birthed it in me when he made me from the womb just who I am but I also had an interesting experience in high school.

Larry Osborne: I played on one of the top teams in California and I also played on a team where I was the super star and we were one in 17 or 18. On the top team I came off the bench, on the other team I was a super star and at the end of those days I decided which was best. I'd rather be a little cog in a winner than the star of a loser.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. And you know there's a season in life too and Mark's a good personal friend actually, he texted me right before we got started on this interview, where, how old's Mark, 38 maybe. I'm just picking on him 'cause he's a friend and we both know him and he's a super guy and I'm so excited about Problem of God and he's working on a new book as you know.

Carey Nieuwhof: But there comes that strange point where you're not the young guy anymore and where you realize okay, now I have this platform and it's my job to help other leaders as well. And that's a lesson that I think you mentioned you've been doing that from the very beginning. It's easier when you cultivate that earlier isn't it?

Larry Osborne: Absolutely and I cultivated it early because when I was just starting out the people that I looked up to, who wrote the books or had the bigger church or whatever, none of them were available when I was 28, 29, 30, church of 150, growing by a third person a year.

Larry Osborne: They all look at you down their nose and want nothing to do with you. And then when began to have some success and I no longer needed them they were inviting me to come to their conference. And that birthed in me a desire. I wanted to be what I wanted others to be for me and they weren't and so to this day, my assistant knows if a pastor calls, I don't care if it's a church of 80 or 8,000, they'll get through and that's really what birthed it.

Larry Osborne: I could not get help when I needed it and then when I no longer needed it as much everybody was wanting to be my friend. And so I just said "Lord I want to be different." And one thing I try to do with the guys that are in their 30s and very early 40s that I work with now, is to get them to not put up walls and to say "Well you appreciate my accessibility, will you pay that forward please? We need to change our celebrity culture."

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't want to say a whole lot more because I think that was so good. I'd kind of like just to park it there. Larry as we wrap up is there anything else you want to share?

Larry Osborne: Nope.

Carey Nieuwhof: I know, I know, I'm just like I think I'm out of questions and I know we're gonna do this again but sometimes you just need to leave it and I'm gonna leave it. Larry the book, your latest book, you've written a lot. It's called Lead Like a Shepherd, the secret to leading well. I just appreciate you so much. Your guidance, your leadership, your friendship. Thanks for being with us today.

Larry Osborne: Thank you so much for the opportunity.

Carey Nieuwhof: So rich and I honestly have about 500 questions to ask him next time he's on the show. It's funny, you know every once in a while you think, "Okay am I gonna have a guest back on? What am I gonna ask him about this time? "

Carey Nieuwhof: 'cause several hundred episodes in, some people are on three or four and honestly just spending those days with Larry Osborne a few weeks ago one on one I literally have episodes worth of questions for him. So you're gonna hear from him again.

Carey Nieuwhof: Make sure you check everything out in the show notes, you can find it at CareyNieuwhof.com/episode229 and check out Remodelhealth.com/carey and Pushpay.com/carey. I really think if you check those guys out now 2019's gonna be a lot better. You're gonna see cost savings on health care and you're gonna see giving go up, that's a pretty cool combination.

Carey Nieuwhof: 'Cause I know guys, this is budget time, right? True story, so go to those now, Pushpay.com/carey and Remodelhealth.com/carey and check out the savings that are there for you as podcast listeners. Hey we are back next week with a fresh episode, let me tell you what is coming up. I'm pretty excited about the lineup that we've got.

Carey Nieuwhof: So this guy had a huge impact on me, years ago we talk about it, Pete Scazzero is gonna be my guest and he's gonna talk about honestly and rawly why so many leaders are so emotionally immature and how to tell whether that's you. Here's an excerpt.

Pete Scazzero: We're so unaware of how much of that comes from family scripts with the conditional love and yet we're preaching grace but really we're living a law and we actually end up giving that to people around us and why are they feeling a heavy yoke from my leadership versus a freedom 'cause I'm sitting in a meeting and I'm driving this vision but that drivenness is not coming out of a deep place with Jesus, it's coming out of my own unresolved trauma and family of origin. Stuff that I haven't thought about and people in the room can feel uncomfortable but hey I'm the leader and I'm gifted so they're gonna follow. They work for me but you can feel it in the room.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well that's next week guys and coming up in, well before the end of the year, we have Daniel Pink, Jon Thompson, Christine Birch and a whole lot of others. John Van Pay, he is the lead pastor of the fastest growing church last year in America and so much more. Plus an incredible 2019 coming for you too. Hey thanks so much for listening, I really do hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer: You've been listening to the Carey Nieuwhof leadership podcast. Join us next time for more insights on leadership, change and personal growth to help you lead like never before.