

Announcer: Welcome to the 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 234 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well, we've had an incredible month so far and today, as promised last week, we are doing a deep dive into small town church, because guess what, a lot of people live in the cities, but small towns church is dying. But it doesn't have to.

Carey Nieuwhof: There are unique issues that impact small church. This is true for small businesses, this is true for churches that are maybe in an urban center that are branching out into smaller cities and smaller towns. Donnie Griggs has really done a lot of time thinking and actually leading in a small church context.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think you're going to absolutely love today's episode. We've got a lot more coming up, including, yes, we are releasing an episode next Tuesday, which is Christmas Day. Yeah, I promise you, my staff will be off opening gifts with their families, I'm not making people work. But as you know, this stuff is all automated. But then it's going to be there. If you've got a Christmas drive or you are going to go for a run or something like that, it's there for you because we ship every Tuesday. We just worked ahead a little bit, that's all.

Carey Nieuwhof: Anyway, hey, I want to tell you about a couple of things I think can really help you get an edge into 2019. As a pastor, I understand the grind. I know you are laser-focused on Christmas right now. But you've got to start thinking about Easter. Some of you may be feeling a bit behind, you don't even know the direction you're going to start the new year, here's some help. Check out a new movement called the Red Letter Challenge.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't use that word lightly, I think this thing has the potential to be a movement. It's a 40-day turnkey church campaign that will give your church, I think, results and ultimately help produce more effective disciples. It's targeted on the red letters in the Bible and getting your people into Jesus teaching and applying it into their everyday life.

Carey Nieuwhof: Churches that have used the Red Letter Challenge have seen small groups grow by an average of 40% even in large congregations, which if you lead a large church, you know how hard that is. Here's what one pastor said about his congregation's experience with the Red Letter Challenge. He said, this is the most dynamic, exciting, challenging and for lack of a better word, coolest 40-day resource I've ever seen. Our church couldn't get enough of it and even after the challenge, the church is still putting the five principles of the Red Letter Challenge into practice. The Red Letter Challenge has been a game-changer for us.

Carey Nieuwhof: The nice thing about this, everything's done for you small group materials, study guides, videos, sermon manuscripts. Even if you want to adapt it to your own, at least you've got a baseline. There's a kids curriculum, even a graphics package. It's done for you, it's turnkey.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right now you can go to [RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey](https://RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey) C-A-R-E-Y to see the church packages ready to go for you and you will save 10% to 40%. The packages can start, if you're a small church, with as little as 10 copies, like basically run a group through it or a thousand copies or more. I mean it's customizable, it's scalable. If you have any questions, quantities, you want more information, go to [RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey](https://RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey). They'd be happy to help you and get the new year started with a bang.

Carey Nieuwhof: Speaking of 2019, I have said this over and over again, and I just believe it, what is your mobile strategy? I know for us, as we started to take digital giving seriously and digital engagement seriously, it changed everything for our church. Surprisingly, you would think, Okay, well, if we're talking to people every day, that's going to decrease weekend attendance. Actually if you do it right, it will increase weekend attendance, plus you start showing up in people's lives day after day.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, who can help you with that, Pushpay. Pushpay is a mobile strategy, a giving strategy and an engagement strategy all in one. They're the leader at keeping the church at the cutting-edge of technology and they have a huge heart for the church. Last year in giving alone they helped 7,000 churches process billions of dollars in generosity. They can help you too.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right now there is a special offer for listeners of this podcast. Go to [Pushpay.com/Carey](https://Pushpay.com/Carey). You can sign up to talk to a representative, who's got a special offer for listeners of this podcast. No obligation, but you can figure out talking to someone whether this is going to work for you or not. Make sure you check out [PushPay.com/Carey](https://PushPay.com/Carey).

Carey Nieuwhof: In the meantime, my conversation with Donnie Griggs. He is the lead pastor of One Harbor Church, a multi-location church and the author of *Small Town Jesus*, a great book. He is a great thinker. We dive into something that's really close to my heart as we see things really not getting better in small towns, but maybe that can change. Here we go. Well, Donnie, welcome to the podcast. I'm glad to have you.

Donnie Griggs: Yeah, man. This is a huge privilege. Thanks for having me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Have you only done small town ministry? Is that your background?

Donnie Griggs: I'm born and raised in the small town that I'm in right now. I lived in a small town in Texas for a while. Then I worked at a church in Southern California for five years, that definitely doesn't count. Small town was like LA.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, that's not a small town.

Donnie Griggs: No, definitely not. But it's funny those big cities they feel like a bunch of little towns together. It's got those dynamics but then ultimately I've been back here for about nine and a half years.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, that's great and back to the town you grew up in?

Donnie Griggs: Yup.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now when you say small town, how small?

Donnie Griggs: That's a good question. Our town is 9,000-ish. That's technically a small town, but sometimes you get into it with people because they think, no my town is really small because 100 people and that's true It's smaller. We've got a lot of smaller towns. There's a little island near us called Davis and lot of the people there, their last name is Davis. I know a guy whose name is Davis Davis from Davis. That's really small, ours is not that small. Small compared to most...

Carey Nieuwhof: Davis Davis from Davis. That's like a Simpsons episode, that's awesome. You have multiple locations at One Harbor Church, the church you planted?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah. We have four locations now and we're kinda looking to continue on that journey. Our region feels like that's a sustainable method of multiplication. A lot of these little towns, it's going to be a real challenge to multiply a sustainable way. Starts getting autonomous, so multi-sites working for right now.

Carey Nieuwhof: Isn't that interesting. Those towns again, just so that we orient listeners, we're going to have principles that apply, I think to mid-sized churches to larger churches looking to plant in smaller locations and even I think to a certain extent for any business leaders listening who want to be interested in small towns, but how small are the other towns that you guys are in?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah. I mean some of them were around a couple of thousand 2,000 to 3,000-

Carey Nieuwhof: That's almost a village level, right?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah. But it's funny, it's all context I mean that feels big to some other little town. I mean but each of these little towns, they're big enough to have their own identity, they have their own feel, they have their own rhythms and their own sort of prejudices and stuff. I mean we're the big, ugly city, because we have a Walmart. It's just interesting how it's all about context and perspective and all the rest. But there's a lot of little towns like that all across our region that we hope God gives us the chance to start something in.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you think that churches and small towns are they at the risk of going extinct?

Donnie Griggs: That's a good question. I think a couple of things. One, I think there's certain, like there's a phrase in the marines get "run to the sound of the guns" and that's because we run away from gun firing up towards it. I think about things like poverty, addiction, racism, depression and suicide things like that are just rampant in small towns. I mean some of the statistics are way higher than in urban centers.

Donnie Griggs: Small town pastors and churches who aren't running at these things and trying to make an impact with these things, I feel like are definitely at risk of dying of irrelevance. I think that's a huge challenge. Just making church about being a nice person and going to heaven when you die is almost guaranteed irrelevance.

Donnie Griggs: And I'd say the other real challenge we've got is that seminaries and networks and the nominations that they don't start to cast a compelling vision for small town ministry for the next generation. We will go irrelevant It'll go extinct because there'll be no new generation of leaders leaning in.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's interesting, I didn't say anything but at the very beginning you said every small town has its own prejudices and you just mentioned racism. What do you mean by that? Because I mean that's a very real issue in large and small cities. Is there anything particular about small towns that makes that different?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah I lived in Los Angeles. Actually I lived in a suburb of Los Angeles for a while that had a high Korean population. The McDonald's sign was in Korean out front, felt like you were in Korea. And In urban contexts like that, multiculturalism is forced upon you, you're outright just ridiculous if you haven't embraced it. But in small towns and rural context, you have to go out of your way to find racial diversity.

Donnie Griggs: And it doesn't even seem like people on either side really want it. In our area it feels like people are quite okay with white church, black church, we could all just get along just fine like that and never actually have anything different. And in smaller communities you don't have this melting pot dynamic that forces racial diversity on you which leaves you to really remain in these sort of long held prejudices I think longer without them being checked.

Donnie Griggs: We have to keep saying again and again over years, hey, it's on earth as it is in heaven. In heaven we don't see this racial diversity that we see on earth. We have to keep reminding people this is important It's a thing because the culture we live in isn't doing that to us in a small town like-

Carey Nieuwhof: Sorry. I think you meant just to be clear that in heaven there will be racial diversity. I think you said that there won't be but you're saying there will be.

Donnie Griggs: There won't be this division we see on Sunday.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh! The division that's what I missed, thank you, the division. Yeah. Gotcha.

Donnie Griggs: Like absolute racial diversity in heaven. That's our paradigm for what ministry here we should seek to pursue and in small towns it's just not on anyone's radar like in a big city and kind of you're forced to have-

Carey Nieuwhof: How does that work in a small town like do you find you have to push hard against prejudice at a deeper level? Is it possible to create a multi-ethnic multi-generational church in a small town?

Donnie Griggs: I think it is. I think it requires a long view of...basically I don't think we'll change that kind of culture. I think there's as a 10 year, 20 year kind of thing, you just chip away, chip away, chip away at it. We're nine and a half years in and we are starting to see a lot more racial diversity, which has been awesome. We're really thankful for that. But I think too there's a lot of complexity to this because I think a lot of times what people mean by racial diversity is "a non-white person joining a white church".

Donnie Griggs: That's not really biblical diversity and there's just all kinds of challenges to this that aren't going to go away overnight, but they're not going to go away at all in a small town if we're not really faithfully making a big deal about it. I think you just have to kind of set your sights on this is going to take some time.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, just because it's an audio podcast, I mean, you're a Caucasian guy like I am. How do you create? How have you approached that over the last nine years where you're running maybe counter to the culture in a really, really small town?

Donnie Griggs: Talking about it, is countercultural. I think too, trying to bridge divides in our community just relationally, whether that ever leads to Sunday morning or not, doesn't matter.

Carey Nieuwhof: Who's at your dinner table who's in your backyard?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah. Who are your friends? And I think too, like just having a realistic approach I'm not thinking that realistically, healthy necessarily looks like 50% white or 50% black because our town is mostly white. I think we're faithfully reaching our community there should be at least a portion of that kind of diversity. And I think we need it. We need diversity. We get to see different aspects of who God is from people who are different than us.

Donnie Griggs: And I think it's not the kind of classic majority culture in approach of everyone needs me. That isn't true, isn't Godly, isn't healthy. We need each other and so it's trying to even get to the point where you go man this is not about some sort of political statement or publicity stunt. This is us genuinely saying we need each other, we care about people different than us and we want to do life together, we want to do church together.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. I really appreciate you clarifying that. I just wanted to be clear about what we're talking about. What's interesting in Canada where I live, which is maybe 10% of the audience for this podcast, but I feel like we are 10 years, 15 years ahead slash behind the United States. And what's really concerning me, I live in the most populous province. I'm an hour north of Toronto and you go into small town Ontario and I mean 20,000 people, 25,000 people, 15,000 people.

Carey Nieuwhof: Our provinces state is littered with towns like that. It is very common now not to find a life giving church in those towns and increasingly in the hamlets in the villages, maybe no church. And are you seeing that yet in the US in some areas where the church the light has been snuffed out on the candle or where you would say, hey, there's no real witness left in this community or not quite yet?

Donnie Griggs: I think there are definitely parts of the country that are feeling that. Don Carson, another great Canadian, he said a few years ago, one generation will believe the gospel, the next generation assumes it and then the next generation will deny it. And we're starting to see a denial of the gospel. In small town America, which 50 years ago people would have thought unthinkable. That's what happens in cities, not in small towns, but we've systematically pull it out of small towns.

Donnie Griggs: You focus on cities for good reasons, but it's now created a real void. And New England ... I was just on a call with a friend of mine who leads a church in rural Wyoming. You're talking 65 miles to the closest place with another gas station and no churches anywhere. I'm seeing that it happened in places like Texas even in our area in North Carolina, there are parts of eastern North Carolina where I'm at, where there are buildings, but there are no churches. You might have one guy who goes to ... Shows up one Sunday every couple of months. But I mean no one even comes to that, more and more we're losing I think we're getting where you are. We're losing gospel witness in small town America, which again, would have been something that no one could've conceived 50 years ago.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, I know like there are so many communities in Canada where you've got good schools, you've got baseball diamonds, hockey rinks, soccer pitches and no life giving church or basically no church left. They're dropping like flies and it's just astounding. Now one of the challenges is how do you motivate young leaders because everybody's attracted to cities. What is it 70, 80% of the population I'm making up stats right now, lives in urban centers or near urban centers. How do you even motivate young leaders to go work in a small town and serve there?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah. I think there's a couple angles I try to take. I think the first thing is to help them see like unhelpful idolatry. That comes, I think a lot of times guys basically are motivated by like, I want to go make much of Jesus, but there has to be really like a boutique coffee shop, in America there's got to be a target for my wife to go shopping in and I want the most twitter followers possible and those are like the three unsaid, like, these three things have to be in place.

Donnie Griggs: Good coffee, target and lots of twitter followers for me to go, which is just a bizarre mix of criteria. Hitting those things and saying, hey, that those aren't actually helpful, those aren't biblical, those are really unhelpful. But I think too we haven't told stories of God doing big things in small towns so people don't know about it.

Donnie Griggs: We haven't helped establish a theological grid for this. Like Jesus was born in a small town. Jesus did big things in small towns. Jesus sent his disciples to small towns. I mean we haven't talked about that. We haven't showed people, shown new leaders that the massive need and so a lot of people still have a very idealic, simplistic view of small towns that is far from reality. They're riddled with everything from human trafficking to suicides to depression to addiction.

Donnie Griggs: I mean, I read a statistic when I was writing my book, that kids in rural America were 80% more likely in eighth grade to be a heroin addict than if they were in a big city. I mean, it's insane I've done two funerals in the last few weeks. We're not talking about how much we need the Gospel in small towns across America in North America, around the world. And so the lack of theological clarity, the lack of missional clarity and then just idolatry that comes with urban centric ministry sometimes unfortunately I think those things are working against us.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is it a little bit, I don't know if you've read Hillbilly Elegy or not but is there more of that? Like that was all about what the Appalachians and that area Tennessee, Kentucky, Is that more characteristic of small town America today than maybe most people realize?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah, absolutely. I love that book. I think in America, I don't know if it got to Canada, but there was a show in the fifties, the Andy Griffith Show.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh yeah. I think most people know that. I sure did. I watched it.

Donnie Griggs: It's actually based on a small town in North Carolina and you got Barney Fife, the deputy carrying a bullet in his shirt because he never needed it. And ironically that town is now one of the leading towns in the country per capita for crime. The town of-

Carey Nieuwhof: There's actually a Mayberry.

Donnie Griggs: Well, yeah, like the town it was based on is now one of the per capita one of the leading towns in the country on crime and addiction. And that's what's happened. We thought small town America was fine and so we focused on areas that we knew weren't okay. And we were retreated essentially from small towns and we flooded into the suburbs for a decade or so and then we flooded into the cities for the last couple of decades. And historically now there's been 50 or 60 years since people took rural ministry seriously. And we can see the ramifications for that.

Carey Nieuwhof: What are seminaries not teaching graduates about small town ministry?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah, I think kind of going back to that thing I said a minute ago. They're not giving them a theological grade for this. They're not showing them the missional, like necessity of this. I mean those two things are powerful when you're considering calling, should everybody go to a small town, No, but certainly some of us should, I mean Jesus said the field is the world and that includes small places and big places and so I think all that we're really putting in front of quite often, all that we're putting in front of a seminary student is urban centric material and we're taking them to the conferences in big cities. They're hearing from pastors, from big cities, everything-

Carey Nieuwhof: Who lead big churches. I mean that's who gets invited to speak.

Donnie Griggs: We have tons of followers on twitter and all of this is communicating subconsciously or consciously, hey, this is what's important. And so I think we're not putting this forward as a valid thing. The reality is that a lot of these kids are going to go ... Their denomination or their network is not going to send them to Manhattan to plant their first church. They're going to end up in the middle of nowhere, North Carolina or Canada and they're going to be cutting their teeth, so to speak on something, but their sights are set on more and-

Carey Nieuwhof: You know what, that's a really good point. I'm sorry. I don't mean to interrupt, but you're right, you have these ideas that you're going to plant this mega church and blah blah blah, but you're going to end up somewhere in rural America, rural North America, serving in a small church, probably in a small city or a small town.

Donnie Griggs: Right. And the whole time you're there, you can't wait to leave and everybody can feel that. These people aren't big enough for you, they're not good enough for you, you're made for more even you're like quest to be successful can really so often just be, the quest to get recognized it's not like I care about these people, it's I care about that thing one day and these people are part of me getting to that thing one day. And so these people become a stepping stone instead of being people who are made in God's image. We have massive problems. Only Jesus can solve and deserve to be taken seriously.

Carey Nieuwhof: How did you get a heart for this?

Donnie Griggs: I was born and raised in this little town and then I left like most people who leave small towns I thought I'm never coming back usually the people who can get out, get out and don't come back. Very long story short, I ended up back here with my wife some nine years later visiting. And just felt like all my friends were going to hell as quick as possible. And there felt like there was this massive need for something different, something that will aggressively take people who have given up on Christianity, who thought church will never be relevant for

them or hooked on all kinds of narcotics or whatever actually take them seriously.

Donnie Griggs: And God just broke our heart and that's the long story short. And so we ended up back here and I felt benched for a season. I'm like, God took me from LA to this. He must be done with me, which I meet lots of guys who feel like that. I felt like I was wasting my life, I felt guilty that I wasn't in a big urban center. I dealt with all these conflicting feelings for the first year or so, and I just looked around me and I thought "God is at work. He's saving people, He's changing people, He's doing something and this is worth giving my life to you."

Donnie Griggs: And then I just started considering all the other little towns out there who needed what we were doing and one thing led to another and then this just grew to try to help encourage and equip other pastors.

Carey Nieuwhof: One of the things I think people are afraid of in a small town, and listen, I live in a rural municipality, I mean I go to the grocery store, I run into people I know I've lived here for over 20 years. I mean I get the dynamic, but a lot of people say, well, I'm moving into a fishbowl. I don't want to live in a fishbowl. I don't want people to know my business. It's, ironic actually because I think what you say is true, people want to be known, they want to be famous, but they don't want to be known like in the fishbowl sense that everybody's, smelling what you're barbecuing for dinner. They don't want that kind of knowledge. Why do you call small towns fishbowls and why do you think so many people are afraid of that? Or do you think people are afraid of it?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah. Well, I think you brought up a good point there. People want to be known of they don't want to be known. That's just human nature. You want everybody to like you at a distance. If they get close they'll find out who you really are. But small towns they are like fishbowl, I feel like it's like it's living in one, like a long episode of Cheers. It was just like American show about this bar where everybody knew your name they knew everything about you, they knew all your business. That's how it feels.

Donnie Griggs: I cannot go to the store, any store without running into bunches of people that I know and that can either drive you crazy or you can embrace it. It can either work really negatively or it can work really positively and so you're not going get away from that in a small town. I just encourage people to wrap their arms around it and leverage it for the Gospel and you've got to be mindful of which I think you should act like this anywhere you go. I think in a city you should care just as much about people and things.

Donnie Griggs: But I think in a small town, for example, like a restaurant, if I go and write a terrible review on TripAdvisor, I mean everyone's going to know it's me and they're like, he was just here. We know exactly where that is. If I mouth off to some waitress when she's related to half the town, if I start getting speeding ticket after speeding ticket, I mean the whole town is going to know by the end of the night that I got a speeding ticket. It can really work against you.

Donnie Griggs: You've got to watch out for that. But man, we've just seen the contrary be true. We've seen like words spread about how good Jesus is and what Jesus is doing. We see this spread like wildfire in this little town. People talk and I think that can be a good thing. I don't think it has to be a bad thing, you know yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: How do you handle that dynamic for you and your family to have your privacy? Like does it ever bother you that you can't go to the grocery store without it taking twice as long as maybe it could?

Donnie Griggs: It did at first and I'm from here, but I had been gone so long. I was used to the LA sort of in and out culture where nobody knew you and you could just be anonymous everywhere you went. But I mean in a good way it really forces you to slow down, which I think is helpful and good. I mean we fight for moments of privacy but we don't try to create a life of privacy. That's not going to be realistic, but we can find moments we need date night where it can just be us and we have to be creative with that. I mean, I've had more than one date night where someone pulled up a chair and just said, pastor, my marriage is falling apart. I'm clearly on a date-

Carey Nieuwhof: [Mine is now too thank you for interrupting date night.

Donnie Griggs: I was like, my marriage is now at stake, it's just us don't pull up a chair. We've had to get creative with that stuff, but we've learned to only fight for moments of it. Not to try to demand a lot more than that because and this is the privilege of being a missionary. I mean if you went to some village in Papua New Guinea or something, everybody would know you there, if you read the gospels everywhere, Jesus ... He never got any sleep.

Donnie Griggs: He never got a break anywhere. He was full of interruptions and he embraced those interruptions and I just think that there's a selfishness and especially in the West that we've adopted as normal, that you have to let go of a lot of that in a small town.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. And to the extent that you're comfortable talking about it, how has your family adjusted to that?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah, I think we're learning as we go. I'm nervous for my kids. I mean, we lead a very large church for a town our size, which means that everywhere we go, they're not just going to know me, they're going to know my wife, they're not just going to know my wife, they are going to know my kids and my kids are just kids they're not church planners, they're just kids and-

Carey Nieuwhof: They're not perfect and-

Donnie Griggs: Really not. And so we're just trying to be careful with that dynamic, that we don't fall into ... I think the easy trap is to kind of look like you've got it all

together all the time. In small towns people want their pastor to have it all together all the time. And we've had to resist that-

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you think that pressure is more intense in small towns?

Donnie Griggs: I do. I think the ideal that is in most people's mind when they think of the pastor is "he's just got it together". I know this because over nine years in, every time I tell a story about me sinning on Sunday morning, people will come up to me and say, please don't do that. It makes us uncomfortable. It's not helpful. People don't need to know that about you. And-

Carey Nieuwhof: Really?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah, every single time I tell an embarrassing story that makes me look bad, I'll get that kind of feedback-

Carey Nieuwhof: Like your self deprecating story and you're not dropping like, stuff that you would tell your counselor. You're telling them things like, give me an example.

Donnie Griggs: Just being honest about my own struggle with greed or my own struggle with wanting everyone to like me or anything. Just any time that like I preach a sermon and say, hey, this sin is not just something you deal with or people out there, deal with it. This is something I deal with. I want everyone to like me. This is how it's affected me this is the things that makes me want to do, you know, like, just being candid and honest and putting myself off the stage or on the floor in the room.

Donnie Griggs: I'm just like, you. I'm a total wreck who Jesus, and in many respects it makes people uncomfortable. Because the idea in small town America is you got it together and basically you spend your time praying, reading the Bible and going from house to house greeting all of us and eating pie this is what's been taught as normal but man, it puts you on the pedestal, not Jesus. And we've had to fight a lot against that.

Carey Nieuwhof: How do you do that? How do you fight against that?

Donnie Griggs: Just being a real person. Not trying to be me all the time. I'm the chaplain for our fire department or EMS and funny story, when I showed up the first time on a fire call, nobody knew who I was yet it was a really bad fire fatality, 5:30 in the morning and one of the firefighters saw me taking a picture because the chief had asked me to and he gave me the middle finger, I'm guessing across the border that means the same thing?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah it does yeah I understand.

Donnie Griggs: I mean, it was a big one. It was like a Bald Eagle and everyone's shouting, people who knew me, shout out don't do that it's the pastor it was a great little

moment because it gave me a chance to say, hey, you don't be different on me. I won't be different. I'm going to be the real me. You be the real you and my hope for me and you is in a real Jesus who already knows all of us. My soul is ever before him. He knows my thoughts before they even come into my head. And so, to continually be real and being authentic. I think that's really cool and hip in a big city. I think it freaks people out in a small town.

Carey Nieuwhof: How many people come to your church on a weekend? Typical Service?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah, across the four locations somewhere between like 1600 or 1800.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's incredible and at your main like the campus that you're at, you'd get in a town of 9,000, you'd get?

Donnie Griggs: Between 800 and 1000.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's crazy. Do they think that's nuts?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah, I think that's nuts. I mean it is amazing.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's great after nine years. Wow. I got to ask you a question. Is there a suspicion among those who maybe quite haven't embraced your mission yet Like what is that church doing here? It doesn't belong here It's too big. I mean, I've been on your website. It's too slick. Do get that kind of pushback?

Donnie Griggs: We have. I mean the rumors, no matter what you do, you're going to get lots of rumors in a small town.

Carey Nieuwhof: Walk us through some of the rumors. Just out of curiosity.

Donnie Griggs: Man. I don't even know.

Carey Nieuwhof: We've had our share over the years maybe this is just therapy on my part.

Donnie Griggs: The classic one - somebody told somebody sometime that we require members to show us their tax documents, how much they made so we can compare it to their giving. And I mean I hear this, this is nine years of me hearing this rumor. I mean, people post it-

Carey Nieuwhof: Really?

Donnie Griggs: It's insane. I mean I could probably go to jail for that. I mean, that sounds crazy. We would never ever ask that. Another one I heard a few months ago is that I use the church's finances to go on vacations. I think that's like fraud or something that's definitely not allowed. And then someone told my wife recently at the gym, they said that they heard our pastors were into wife swapping which is what it is. I mean, where on Earth are people getting this?

- Donnie Griggs: But this is the stuff we hear. We hear the most bizarre, like you can't even figure out where they would even begin to come up with that, that stuff happens, I was going to say too man, I think when people say that we're being too slick or whatever, I do kind of lean in and listen, because it's so easy to see what's working somewhere else and just copy paste it that there's a chance we have missed it here and there on the culture and we have tried to be a little too slick or whatever. I want to hear what's really going on in criticism like that but I mean no matter what you do, you're going to get it.
- Carey Nieuwhof: What parts of sort of the protestant evangelical attractional model work in a small town? Like what are some practices that you say, Yep this totally works and then I want you to walk through some things that you're like, yeah, and we couldn't do that. We tried, it didn't work or we just dismissed it. What translates and what doesn't?
- Donnie Griggs: I mean I've learned a ton from Larry Osborne. He's been a huge help to us. I mean he gets practical on things like seats and parking spaces and kids entry space I mean that's just transferable anywhere If you don't have that, you can't grow up. I mean, God can't physically put anyone else in the building. Those types of things, contextualization really thinking through how do we do this in a way that feels authentic and real and that is huge in small towns. We try to use the phrase authentic excellence.
- Donnie Griggs: We want things to be done well, we want them done in a way that just feels like authentic which will not be unique to us by any stretch. But I think when you push past that and you get into things that are more sort of like showy, automatically you start eliminating, you eliminate the people who need to be there. You can keep people who are like, I wish I was at church in Atlanta or New York or wherever and now I get to be every Sunday.
- Donnie Griggs: That's not really the audience you're going for, you're going for the people who don't know Jesus. And we've had to be careful with lighting and we've had to be ... I mean, if I rolled in with a bunch of lasers and fog I mean, it'd be it, it'd be over like people would leave instantly. Video is a bit of a tricky one. We're multi site, but we do videos sparingly at those locations.
- Donnie Griggs: I mean a couple of our locations, haven't had a video of me maybe once a year. We raise up live preachers just because it's just a little too much for people to get their heads around. These guys the small town industry would disagree with me. But I mean, that's a challenge here. People don't want you to big time, they don't want you to come across like, you're so big, you can't actually be here in person, that is really frowned upon. So anything that kind of gets into that, we have to steer clear from.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Anything else that by just drilling down a bit more that comes across a showy or showboating or too big town?

Donnie Griggs: I mean, I can't really talk about like social media, people don't care. They could care less. I mean, I'm thankful to be on this podcast, but people at my church are never going to listen to this. They mostly do not have the internet, they don't care. They don't know what twitter is, they could care less and so those types of things, if I name drop or I'm going to go speak at this thing or whatever. I've just learned people are just turned off by that even if I'm trying to say, hey, pray for me. They're like, oh, you're getting on a plane again.

Donnie Griggs: Fancy guy with the planes. That's just not their life. They don't just fly everywhere. And it's just thinking through some of those dynamics that are really like popular and even I think seen as valuable lots of other places here. People are just like, why are you leaving? They just can't comprehend it and when we dealt with this, every time I left town, no one came to church so I just stopped telling him I was leaving town just so they'd showed up.

Donnie Griggs: And then it was awkward to leave. They want to build a church all around you and you have to fight against it all the time.

Carey Nieuwhof: You mean they want to kind of just keep you in a box or?

Donnie Griggs: They want to want to put you on a pedestal. That's what they want. They want you to be their pastor. They want you to deal with all their problems. They want you to be there nonstop all the time. They want you to be Jesus. And that's another whole challenge is the fight to build away from yourself in a culture that wants to build towards you.

Donnie Griggs: And you've got this wicked heart that wants people to build towards you. You've got this heart that wants people to bow down towards you. Because we're sinners and it's exceptionally challenging. Well I think in a big city, people can be like, it's not all about you. In a small town people are like, hey, it can be all about you if you want it to be.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's fascinating. What makes, when you're hiring, when you're adding team members or if you're advising other people, what do you think, Donnie, makes for qualifications that create a great small town pastor?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah. Well, I'll kind of extended pastor or a leader. I think people who love that small town, you can't get away from that. People need to feel like you love where they live because a lot of these people love where they live. I love where I live there's a book about our town and my mom's on the cover with my granddad. I love this place. If you came in here and were negative about it, you'd put me off and I'd never come back. Leaders who love your small town, leaders, I think who love this church that they're going to be a part of, they're not trying to change everything all the time.

Donnie Griggs: I think too, like you'll get leaders or pastors, we've gotten folks who come through who had passed ministry experience and our context is so unique in

small towns are so unique. That they have to be really teachable. I know guys who do sort of ministry, that's very sort of fundamentalistic, very narrow.

Donnie Griggs: And even thinking no one would go to that church. Well, they go to New York City and they get 300 people because out of the millions and millions of people, there are 300 people who want to go to that church. Well, if you show up in our town and do something very narrow, no one's coming, maybe one person in the whole region wants what you got. Someone who's teachable I think as I said earlier, people who don't see ministry in the town as a stepping stone to something more, I mean, those are things that I think are ... I mean there's more ... Those are like I've got to love the town I've got like love this church and appreciate it and I see guys coming in like with replants and they want to change everything overnight.

Donnie Griggs: You think, gosh, this church is 150 years old, you've got to slow down a little bit and then again, the stepping stone thing, which just feels like all they're thinking about is how quick can I get out of here. No one's going to open up and trust you.

Carey Nieuwhof: What is the pace of change like in a small town?

Donnie Griggs: I use 10 years. Every time I think about us doing something that's going to change anything. I think probably it would take us 10 years that's kind of like our default language. My friends up in New England say their vision for their area is 100 years. You've got to think slower. But I would marry that with you don't want slow to be because you're sloppy or because you're lazy. Again, kind of appealing to Larry Osborne's wisdom on this. I mean, I think just creating a culture where you can try stuff all the time is really helpful.

Donnie Griggs: Some things happen quicker than I thought they would, but most things we just kind of put our head down and think 10 years from now will look up and maybe there'll be something to look over our shoulder and be thankful for. And that's what we're seeing. We're seeing almost 10 years in. We're like man, we feel like lots of people really get the Gospel where before they just tried harder and did better everyday and it was just morality and we're thankful for that. We're seeing areas of addiction and things like that. We're seeing change begin to happen, but it just takes a long time.

Carey Nieuwhof: What have you changed that would be different from ... Like you planted this church so you weren't doing a transition, but did you have to start with a lighter version of what you wanted to do? Not dumbed down, that's not the word I'm looking for, but just like, okay, this is my ultimate vision for the church is x, but we're going to have to start here and work toward that, or did you just go for it from day one because it was a plant?

Donnie Griggs: I just went for it, but I didn't know what I was going for. I had no idea that it was going to be anything. I mean I thought the whole thing would fail and I was

pretty certain it would and we would go back to California with our tail between our legs. And so that kinda gives us like this feeling of I had just this immense pessimism about the whole thing and found myself surprised along the way that anything was happening until about a year and a half in when I finally looked around and was like, wow, God is at work, and then I began to go, okay, well if God's at work then what can happen?

Donnie Griggs: And that's where the dreaming began to happen. Before that, I was probably the most pessimistic person about the whole thing. I had no idea that anything significant, anything of any value could happen because again, everything I thought was that's what happens in big cities. That's not what happens in little towns. I actually had someone say one time at a conference I was at, someone said, actually from the stage it sort of you guys are in small towns. God bless you, but let's be honest, what God's doing, he's doing in the cities.

Donnie Griggs: And that's how the sermon began. That's what I had believed and I went to conferences so I can be part of the big stuff God was doing and I went home to lead a church where I didn't feel like anything would ever happen. And it was along the way that I began to get a vision for more as I saw that God was at work.

Carey Nieuwhof: What are some of the things you're doing that are, that have resonated?

Donnie Griggs: I mean, this will sound weird that this is different, we hear people all the time say he just preached through the Bible and we've never heard that. We talked about the gospel every week and people, I mean, one lady came up to me and she said, "Did you say Jesus love me just because he loves me?" And I was like, "Yeah. So the Bible says in John 3:16, God loves you." It was pretty simple and she was weeping. She said, "I've been to church for 37 years every Sunday and Wednesday and no one's ever told me that." I didn't realize how countercultural gospel can be in a culture of church going people.

Carey Nieuwhof: In a non life giving church then what is church about?

Donnie Griggs: I think it can be about being nice. I think it can be a bit of a political rally. I've been to church services in our small town where they literally play Fox News from the front.

Carey Nieuwhof: Seriously?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah. I think it's a place to hide until God gets us out of this hell hole that we're living in. This is what I think church can really become, for many this is what it is for lots of these folks. And so actually saying, man, the Gospel is true. It's good news, not good advice and these things we take for granted, and that we've heard at conferences in cities and all the rest, it's just people don't know this and there's a purpose for why I'm here, that God, out of 7 billion people on planet earth put me here right now because he wanted to. He predetermined

exact times and places Acts 17 says and he wants me here and gave me the spirit that raised Jesus from the dead and he wants to do something through me.

Donnie Griggs: He gave me gifts I can leverage. I mean all of that stuff that most people just never considered. People go to church, they're just trying to be nice and go to heaven when they die, they're not really believing the gospel for themselves or others or using their life to do anything about it. And that's for the people who already go to church. And then there's just heaps and heaps of people more and more in the south, small towns like mine, across the country even if just don't go to church at all.

Donnie Griggs: I had a friend tell me recently, I invited them to eastern. They were like, why It's just bunnies. They didn't know that Easter was us celebrating Jesus rose from the dead. I mean, that's in my town with church buildings everywhere. It feels like the Middle East, you know, it doesn't feel like small town America, but it is.

Carey Nieuwhof: How do you cast vision in a small church? Are there any differences from how you do it in other churches are small town church? You've got a big church in a small town. Hear what I'm saying.

Donnie Griggs: I think there's some similarities and we have a big God and we have big problems. I think you nuance that when you get into like one of the problems we face and how does this big God solve those problems. I think sometimes what I hear is guys casting vision and you can tell whenever we think about this town. They're thinking about something bigger. They seem unaware of what's actually going on. I think that's a challenge with casting vision. I think the other thing that I was saying earlier is, it's really possible for a big vision in a small town to lead to a really big head, can lead to like this ego, like through the roof and in a small town, there's a sense of which they want that, Matthew 23, Jesus he condemns the Pharisees that they want to go everywhere and they loved that everyone knows them and greets them. They loved this and I just never saw this until recently.

Donnie Griggs: That is totally possible in a small town. Everywhere I go, people know who I am and they greet me and there's a sense of respect and in many circles, I mean, it feels odd to even talk like this, but it's true. I mean, I've gotten influence that I don't deserve that I never expected. I mean it's just immense. The influence and the opportunity I have to make to make an influence in our community, but it's a slippery slope to begin to love that. It's not a bad thing everybody knows who I am. It's a bad thing for me to start to love that. And I think that's the challenge, is being in a small town, if you start casting a big vision, I think people will rally around that. You've got to watch out you don't get a big head in the process, which I think is way more possible in a small town than in a big city.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's counterintuitive, rings true and it's very perceptive and honest on your part I appreciate that. You have gone multisite in small towns, which a decade ago was unthinkable. I'm sure a lot of people would still think, no, you can't

really do that, but you've met with some effectiveness in that. Talk to us about why you went multisite and what that looks like.

Donnie Griggs: We had people just driving in from further and further away an hour and a half an hour, sometimes two hours in each direction. And I just, I didn't want to build this mega center that would be unsustainable longterm. I didn't want to get to the place where we couldn't afford the light bill. We had such a huge building and I didn't like the fact that we weren't really helping the people who needed help in these little towns. I mean, we were becoming a place for Christians to come and have a good time, but we weren't really ... There were people who needed to come who we're never going to make that kind of drive. And so-

Carey Nieuwhof: You were consolidating the existing market at your church, right? Already Christian, thank goodness there's a Walmart in my city here we go we're going to go shopping.

Donnie Griggs: Exactly. And kind of in addition to that, there's the challenge of in small towns you don't get these, don't get lots of building opportunities. There's not like lots of buildings. We were facing real size dynamics we were going have to go, just get ourselves into a big old pile of debt, to do something that I didn't think we should do in the first place. And so that forced us into thinking through multisite. But how we do it feels different than a lot of the ways that it gets portrayed, when you say multisite, people think a certain thing we don't have personally, we don't have like a franchise type model where it feels like a Starbucks. We've had to turn the volume up on things like contextualization.

Donnie Griggs: We give tons of autonomy at the site level. We have this Bible verse in mind in revelation where John sees diversity, but he hears unity. That's kind of our heart. We can look a little different, but we want to sound the same. But man these towns are so nuance that it really requires that level of kind of cultural knowledge to do church in a way that makes sense there. And that's kind of been the biggest challenge I think with the multisite thing.

Carey Nieuwhof: What would you say your model is? Just some of the things that you're like, yeah, here's, here are three or four cornerstones of how we do multisite.

Donnie Griggs: High view of relationship across the leadership team. A real shared sense of like we, it's not a higher people in and kind of thing. It's a bring people through kind of things. Most of our guys, we brought them through, we've taken them from the ground up. They were just working regular jobs and now they're leading sites and they're elders or pastors at these locations. That thing has been really helpful for us. That sense of brotherhood again, contextualization has been a big one for us to really think through every single one of these things and just think how can we do church the way that makes the most sense.

Donnie Griggs: Paul says in second Corinthians 6, he doesn't want anyone to be able to find fault with his ministry he doesn't have any obstacles. And we've had to remove

all the obstacles so they get to the one sort of obstacle, the rock of offense Jesus. But up until then, we want to make it feel as comfortable as we possibly can. I think a high view of community, so really fighting for a sense of local community, on the ground whether that's missional communities or community groups, it looks different in every site, but that needs to really feel like it's happy.

Donnie Griggs: Church is not just a meeting, it's a community. Because, in small towns what you get is churches are a meeting and then a lot of these buildings have what they call a fellowship hall, which is where they eat potato salad when somebody dies they don't see fellowship, we have to say actually community is a massive part of Christianity. It's a massive part of local church. I think with that, like we want there to be consistent and excellent contextualized gospel preaching.

Donnie Griggs: So that the people don't have people preaching over their heads. They're preaching to their hearts we're thinking about the people actually in the room. That's a problem. I see a lot guys are preaching in such a way that you can tell they think their seminary professor is in the room, he's not there, he's not grading this Tim Keller is not in the room, you're not on stage at your favorite conference. These are the people who God is putting the room and we want to preach to those people. And so those are just some of the things we really try to fight for.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's so grounded, I'm curious about how you develop and spot leaders. I mean to lead a church your size over four locations. That takes some skill and ability and talent and I think in a lot of small villages, small towns, you haven't got a high percentage of university educated people, they tend to go to the cities and like you say, a lot of people leave small towns and I think employers would find that a little more challenging. How do you do that in the church?

Donnie Griggs: I heard a pastor one time talking about I mean he used the phrase "shoulder tapping". And it just resonated with what we've been doing since the beginning. We are just looking around going, oh, that guy... He keeps showing up, he's reliable, let's give him something to do and sort of one thing leads to another. We have a real value that we want to bring people through starting from the inside. Every time there's a hole in our staff, we don't always think about it doesn't cross our mind to like send out for resumes or whatever.

Donnie Griggs: It would be so hard for someone to come from the outside into this, but that has got to be the absolute worst case scenario. And we think that, if there's a hole here that there's a solid chance that God's put here who he wants to fill that hole, we just have to recognize them and develop them raise them up and then you release them.

Donnie Griggs: And so that conviction is always driving us that we'll wait until the very last second to hire someone because we're hoping for it to be someone from us. And it just has always been, it's always been, God just always comes through in that way. And then we have to have like a systematic approach to developing

leaders because church our size and it just won't happen by accident. And every year I do a leadership cohorts, nine month thing and all the elders get together and we get to pull things together and I want this guy and I want this guy and we get to like throw all these names in the hat and then we sort of comb that list down to what's manageable. 12 to 15 guys. And then I spent the next nine months really pouring into them.

Donnie Griggs: They read times, they write lots of essays, we talk about all kinds of stuff. I get to know their families if they're married or they have kids or whatever and getting into their life and doctrine. And then over that nine months we kind of get to figure out man this is a fit or not. And then a lot of those guys end up being our elders. I mean, all of our elders have been through this process. We've got 16 elders, will probably be at 20 hours by the end of the year. All of them, all of these elder pastor, that's a synonymous term for us.

Donnie Griggs: All of them had been through this, have come through this isn't the most fruitful thing for us, but it's got to be intention.

Carey Nieuwhof: How have you figured all this out?

Donnie Griggs: Don't know it's just-

Carey Nieuwhof: Real time learning, Donny.

Donnie Griggs: Yeah. Just little by little.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's pretty amazing. What do you think the potential for One Harbor is? When you look ahead five, 10 years. Do you think, foresight's wow. We're very fortunate to have that. Do you think you could be in more towns and villages? What do you think?

Donnie Griggs: I think that ... My biggest prayer every day is God, keep us faithful, keep us humble and keep us hopeful. So I try to pray every day. I mean that for me. Firstly, God, keep me humble, keeping Faithful, keep me hopeful. Keep me from stumbling, I think if that happens, I think that God can and will use us to do more, it may be that there's lots of people, Bible colleges ready to run into these little towns across our region, but I don't think so.

Donnie Griggs: And I've told our town go ahead and just go ahead and deal with the calvaries not riding in. It's up to us. This is on us, this is our region, it's our backyard. And if this is going to happen, I think it's on us until God surprises us from every angle. I think we need to reproduce another ten or so times across our region to effectively, multiply the Gospel and I mean that's going to take 10 to 20 years. And then the goal would be to plant multiplying churches who continue to do the same. I also think we've got a massive opportunity to deal what the addiction in our area I go to sometimes between one and three overdoses a day.

Donnie Griggs: It is shocking how much addiction is all around us and all around small towns like ours and we can't turn a blind eye to that. Part of being the church is seeing that the town's problems are the churches problems. And so now we're dreaming and asking God to give a strategy and give us a plan. We need to help people get to rehab and we need to help people get back from rehab. There's so many levels and layers to this and it feels insurmountable, we've had two funerals in the last couple of weeks. I mean it's just, it's nonstop. But we think that if we stay humble and we stay faithful, we stay hopeful that God will use us to make a difference there too.

Carey Nieuwhof: I want you to speak a word of encouragement or advice for leaders who are in a small town heading into a small town thinking maybe they're not hopeful, maybe they're not looking into the future. What would you tell a leader trying to make it work in a small context?

Donnie Griggs: Yeah, I would say that we need to try to get into the Bible and theology that will lift your head. God is sovereign. He is the God of Heaven and earth and like I said in Acts 17, He predetermined where you and I were going to live or when we were going to live there. You could of had us born in anytime in history, anywhere in the whole wide world and you are right now where you are because He wants you there. One of my favorite missionaries is Jim Elliot. He said, wherever you're at, be all there and it may be that God will move you and your family to a place with great coffee and a Target, but he hasn't. Right now where you are has big problems that only Jesus can solve and he put you there he put the spirit that rose Jesus from the dead inside of you.

Donnie Griggs: And he wants you to do something about those problems around you. And I would encourage you to not be isolated, to not give into idolatry that would cause you to feel like you've been benched or cause you to want to be drafted to the major leagues of big city ministry and I would charge you to consider how you can make much of the Gospel in a way that's relevant to the people all around you because they need it. They need the Gospel and God put you there to give it to them.

Carey Nieuwhof: You wrote a book a couple of years ago and I think it's fantastic because you self published it, but it doesn't look like a self published book. If you guys are wondering, you did a great job of that. It's called Small Town Jesus. Tell us a little bit about that and I just want to encourage leaders to pick it up. It's available on Amazon, correct?

Donnie Griggs: Yup. Its available on Amazon. You can get it printed and on Kindle. The premise of the book is taking the Gospel seriously in seemingly unimportant places. It's some of the stuff we've talked about on this call, why should we do small town ministry and then how should we do small town ministry, that's kind of how the book lays itself out. And so the heart behind it was to, you know, convince us theologically and missionally and philosophically of why this is important. And then try to share some of my best learnings and help pastors deal with the challenges of small town ministry, whether they're from there or not, but my

goal was to try to help encourage and equip people to make much of Jesus wherever they are.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's a good book, you guys, if you're in that context, you should definitely pick it up. Donny knows what he's talking about. Where can people, if they want to find more tell us a website for your church and then where can they find you online?

Donnie Griggs: For the church you can go to [oneharborchurch.com](http://oneharborchurch.com) harbor, spelled H-A-R-B-O-R.

Carey Nieuwhof: Not the British spelling.

Donnie Griggs: [oneharborchurch.com](http://oneharborchurch.com). And then you can also go to [smalltownJesus.com](http://smalltownJesus.com). There's a lot of blogs on their podcasts, lots of videos from me and some others all kinds of like ... I'm building an army of pastors and leaders different regions and you can check on there and see who's in your area and get up, with them. I mean there's just tons and tons of resources on there for you. And then also, I'm on social media as much as I can. Twitter is a good place to find.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, we'll link all to that in the show notes. Do you sleep Donnie? This seems incredible. My goodness.

Donnie Griggs: I'm trying to do more of that.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm so glad you freed up some time to build into leaders today. Just thank you. Thank you for what you do. Thanks for your faithfulness. Thanks for your humility and thank you for your willingness to serve.

Donnie Griggs: Thanks for the opportunity to talk about it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I think this has so many applications and I know some of you listen from the business space, but as I said in a previous episode, I really think it makes a big difference when not only church leaders listen to the business community, but business leaders are increasingly learning from church leaders. There's a lot of application points. By the way, we also have full transcripts of this interview, so if you're a reader and you want to go deeper or you want to share it with your staff or pull some quotes out, head on over to the show notes. Just [careynieuwhof.com/episode234](http://careynieuwhof.com/episode234) Everything is there for you for free and the reason it's there for you for free is because of great partners with this podcast and we vet them and we make sure that we believe in them. Make sure if you haven't checked out Red Letter Challenge, head on over to [redletterchallenge/carey](http://redletterchallenge/carey).

Carey Nieuwhof: Check out what they can do for you and also Pushpay. Get a mobile strategy that works. All right, headed over to [pushpay.com](http://pushpay.com) forward slash Carey, C-AR-E-Y as well and we just want to partner you with people and companies and

organizations and causes that can make a big, big difference in your life. Well next week. Yes it is Christmas. We are back. At some point you're going to want to pop in the earbuds and listen to John Van Pay because he is the leader of outreaches, fastest growing church in America and he's kind of cracked the code on being home five nights a week. He's found margin and he's learned how to say no, which is a very rare combination. Rapidly growing church, like fastest in the nation and your home five nights a week. Dude, how do you do it? Here's an excerpt.

John Van Pay:

I'll never forget the day that I walked into my home and my wife who was standing in the kitchen with a few suitcases packed. And my first instinct was like, Oh, where are we going, you're surprising me with the trip. It's not our anniversary. We going to mountains or the beach and she looked at me in the eye and she said, "It's over. I'm moving back home to Houston. You're a great pastor, but you're simply not home enough to be a good daddy and a good husband."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Not a bad episode to play over Christmas week, isn't it. As you're like answering email on your phone and your family's mad at you. That's what we're going to do. And guys, if you subscribe, you get this automatically delivered to your devices every Tuesday whenever we release an episode and we're moving towards six episodes a month, especially in 2019.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We just want to bring you more content, help you lead like never before, you know the drill. If this has helped you, would you share it on social or maybe email it or text the link to a friend and if you'd be so kind, take a moment to leave a rating and review on iTunes or Spotify or Stitcher or wherever you listen to your podcast. It's available everywhere. And again, we got show notes for every episode. Head on over to [careynieuwhof.com](http://careynieuwhof.com) the easiest way even on the googles, just google the name of the guest and this week it was Donnie Griggs and my name or an approximation of it. And you'll find it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Guys, I'm praying for you and cheering for you as you head into Christmas, both personally and also vocationally. So hope it's a really good restful season, a great time at your church or whatever you happen to be doing. Thanks so much for listening and I 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.