

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 238 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof. And I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before. Well, I want to start off with just a huge thank you. Thank you to all of you. We here pretty much every day. And every time we're on the road from so many of you, who just say thank you for the podcast. I'm glad it's making a difference in your life. It's an absolute delight to do this with you week after week, after week. And so many of you have shared, so many of you tell your friends, so many of you discuss this with your team and so many of you leave ratings and reviews.

Carey Nieuwhof: I just wanted to start by saying thank you. That's all makes a big difference. It's noticed, grateful for you. And today we have another amazing episode. Well, I think if you're a regular listener, particularly for all of you who are subscribers, and of course, subscribing is free. I think you know that really close to my heart is this idea about the personal journey of leadership. Yeah, you know you got all kinds of skills, and we bring you lots of that on this podcast. But again, and again, I'm going to come back to the personal side. Like what's happening in your life because if things are starting to fall apart, or you're going through a tough time, it's really hard to lead. It's really hard to live honestly, sometimes.

Carey Nieuwhof: And I got to tell you, Lysa TerKeurst is somebody who inspires literally millions of people a day. This is crazy. You're going to hear this theme on the podcast this year, but she has six to eight million people a day, access her content. Just think about that for a moment. But the last three years of her life have been just upside down. Diagnosed with two very serious in some cases, life threatening illnesses, and went through a breakdown in her marriage, and fortunately, a reconciliation in her marriage.

Carey Nieuwhof: In fact, the day after we recorded this interview, she renewed her vows with her husband Art. She showed me via video, their house was all set up for the ceremony, and you're going to hear a whole lot more about it. She's got a brand new book called, It's Not Supposed to Be This Way. It's a fantastic book. So even if you're a leader who's not used to reading books like this, maybe you stick to your lane or whatever, I would encourage you pick it up. It's already a New York Times bestseller. There's a really good reason for it. First of all, she's a brilliant writer. I read this as a writer, and I'm like, okay, I'm in kindergarten. She's just brilliant at communicating a message.

Carey Nieuwhof: And secondly, it's a message of help and hope. I'm going to be handing it out to a lot of people going through a difficult time. So I think you're really going to enjoy that thrilled to have Lysa on the podcast today. It's powerful interview. And I want to talk to you about what's changing in leadership. So a decade ago, you kind of went to conferences, because you'd get fresh ideas, top speakers,

anything else you can think of. Think about how much things have changed. Now, you can download anything anywhere, anytime and I get that. And so some of you are saying, why would I ever go to a conference again. But you know what, I think the number one need that so many pastors have is they need to connect with peers they trust, with coaches, with mentors and develop some friendships. Isolation is a huge thing and even discuss content.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, that is the idea behind reThink Leadership 2019. It's a premier leadership event. It's held concurrently with the orange conference happens in early May. May 1st through 3rd in Atlanta, Georgia. You will hear brand new Ted-style talks, interviews from world class leaders. We got some usual suspects I'm going to be there hosting along with John Acuff and Brad Lomenick. We've also got some folks, you're going to love to hear from. Nona Jones from Facebook is going to be there this year. Dharius Daniels is coming, and so many more. We're going to unveil the whole speaker lineup soon.

Carey Nieuwhof: This is an event that's exclusively for lead pastors, executive pastors and campus pastors. And it's an event at which you'll get some content for sure. But we limit it, like 15 minute talks. That's it. And then what do you get? Access and connection. It's a small event on purpose. You get to talk to many of the leaders they're usually in a green room. Not at this event. They're there to answer your questions. The breakouts are limited to 15 minutes. In fact, we don't even call them breakouts we call them affinity conversations. 15 minutes of content and then your questions. So I think you're going to love it. People who have been there rave about it and it sells out every year.

Carey Nieuwhof: So go to rethinkleadership.com and get your tickets now while you can still get the best rates. It's May 1st through 3rd 2019 at the John C. Maxwell Leadership Center at 12 Stone church. That's rethinkleadership.com hurry before it's too late. And I know it's early in the new year, you're probably juggling a lot of stuff. So I got a gift for you. I've got for you for free the exact calendar I use to maximize my impact and my leadership. I get this question all the time - had it on the Facebook Live. How do you get it all done? Podcast, blogging, church, speaking, travel, family. I'll show you how. I'm giving away the fixed calendar template I use for free, and I've included some free videos to show you how I use it.

Carey Nieuwhof: So go to thehighimpactleader.com for a limited time you can download this resource for free right now. Well, without much further ado, here is my conversation with New York Times bestselling author, President and Founder of proverbs 31 Ministry, Lysa TerKeurst. Powerful story.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, Lysa, welcome to the podcast. I'm so grateful you joined us today.

Lysa TerKeurst: Thank you so much. It's an honor to be with you Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Well, we're going to talk a lot about your new book today because I'm blown away by it. To be honest with you. It's called It's Not Supposed to Be This Way. And I told you, I pretty much destroyed my copy. So it's dogeared and marked up. It's an amazing book for anyone-

Lysa TerKeurst: Thank you ...

Carey Nieuwhof: But I want to ... Yeah, go ahead.

Lysa TerKeurst: I was just going to say that's probably the greatest compliment you can give to an author. Is that the pages are well marked and dogeared and underlined. That's a blessing for me to hear. So thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I want to go back and talk to you about why you started Proverbs 31 Ministries. And I mean, it's a huge movement for those who may not be aware of it. And I think particularly guys do not understand how big these ministries really are. But I'd love to know your heart behind starting it. And some of the backstory there behind Proverbs 31.

Lysa TerKeurst: Well, actually, it was the idea of a friend of mine. And she invited me to help her because she knew that my career experience was in marketing. And so I told her, as long as I never have to say anything or do anything up front, then I'll help you with all the behind the scenes stuff. So I just had my first baby and I was eager to invest some of that passion, that work passion into some kind of endeavor. Well, what's really funny about the whole situation is at that point, I'm not sure that I was even a Christian. I knew what it meant to follow the rules of God and try to be a good person. But I did not understand what it meant to have a relationship with the Lord. But you'll be happy to know that after being involved with Proverbs 31 for 25 years now, I have a very good relationship with the Lord now, and I am saved so that's good. That would be really-

Carey Nieuwhof: That is good news. You worked out your salvation somewhere in the midst of that.

Lysa TerKeurst: But I think what was so amazing of the Lord is to take the least likely person to be involved to the ministry called Proverbs 31 and to allow me to become associated with the ministry from the very beginning. And yes, I helped build the ministry for sure. And I've been president of the ministry for very, very long time. But if you were to ask me, who is someone that would be a great testimonial for your ministry, I would be the one to raise my hand and say me. Because being around other Godly women, there's something beautiful and biblical about that. And so through being involved with Proverbs 31, I learned how to raise a Godly family. I learned how to study the Bible. I learned how to pray, I learned how to pursue your faith with great intentionality and amazing passion. I learned how to fall in love with Jesus. So this has been a unique experience that I've benefited as much as I've given for sure.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah and we have a variety people listening. Obviously, a lot of Christians, people who are in professional ministry, but also a lot of business leaders who may not be as familiar with it. So I'd love to know the idea behind Proverbs 31. I know, it's almost axiomatic in the church. But just so for people who may not know it. And then give us a size of like, the scope of the ministry because I think people have no idea just how influential this thing that God has had you build has become.

Lysa TerKeurst: Thank you. Well, Proverbs 31 our mission is to eradicate biblical poverty, which sounds like a big fancy term, and it is a big assignment. But what I mean by that is, a lot of people have physical access to the Bible, but they don't have personal access to the Bible. So I want to meet women right where they're at, in their everyday practical aspects of their life, and then bring biblical truth to those places. So that I know, inspiration, plus information, plus personal application equals life transformation. That's a lot of Asians and of course, I'm a communicator. So I love things that rhyme, right?

Carey Nieuwhof: So do I.

Lysa TerKeurst: But I do see those aspects of we can get inspiration from a lot of places, and we can get information in our social media, technology driven society from a lot of places. But unless we help people and for me, my assignment is to help, specifically women have practical application that's where transformation happens. And I know that when we impact a woman's life, we impact her entire family. We impact her connection with her husband. So in some ways, we probably even influence and impact him as well.

Lysa TerKeurst: So it's our unique way of fulfilling a very big assignment. But mostly, we're passionate about teaching the Bible and we do that through many strategic initiatives. And we do it around the clock so that no matter what time of day, the woman wants to have biblical help, or insight or advice about something. She has access to us, we have initiatives to go out first thing in the morning, mid morning, afternoon, in the afternoon, evening, and right before bed.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, wow. So those are what emails or are they just like, on your social or how does that work? How do you get access?

Lysa TerKeurst: So all of those ways. Through email promotions, through our social media, but one of my favorite initiatives we have is called First Five. It's an app that we just started a couple of years ago. We have over 2 million users for our app. But it's the premise behind the app is to give your first five minutes of the day to studying God's word because it will change your perspective and how you face things throughout the day. We're very strategic, in how we use those five minutes. So we give people an opportunity to understand one verse from one chapter from one book, in the Bible each day. So if you stick with us for about four years, in just five minutes of the day will teach you all the way through the Bible.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's pretty cool. Now, how many people would like interact with your content in I don't know, a day, a week, a month, a year? Like, it's a fairly significant ministry.

Lysa TerKeurst: Yeah, I would say if you added up all of the many ways that we reach out to women on a daily basis it's somewhere between 6 to 8 million women every day.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's incredible. 6 to 8 million a day. I mean, that is ... and again, I've had friends we talked about that before we started recording, who like got featured on your show. And they were just blown away by the response that they got, and the emotional response. So I mean, from a leadership perspective, and an influence perspective. That's amazing. And anything else you want to share about Proverbs 31 before we dive into your story in the book, because I want to spend a lot of time there.

Lysa TerKeurst: Thank you. Yeah, I think sometimes people here Proverbs 31, and they roll their eyes and think the perfect woman. But I think it only takes you interacting with any of the teaching that we do, or what we put on social media, or even what we teach in person. I think just a minute in touching something that we present. I think people quickly realize it's not at all about being perfect. It's truly about being perfectly surrendered to the Lord and letting go of the notion of trying to be perfect. But truly walking in obedience to the biblical model of what God says to do in situations. So I think that people would be surprised at how much we lead the way where our imperfections meet God's great mercy and His beautiful way of leading us. It reduces people's feelings of intimidation immediately.

Carey Nieuwhof: And I'm glad you nuanced it that way, because I think when people read Proverbs 31, and if you're not familiar with that passage, it describes a wife who ... How would you say it? It's very virtuous, or has certain qualities and attributes that are admirable, and in many ways, it holds up a standard that seems impossible for most people, male or female, to be honest with you. It's just like, Wow, really, you do all those things, all that? And so it seems like Proverbs 31 is almost this impossible standard of perfection.

Carey Nieuwhof: But I love the way you nuance it to say, no, we were tackling it from a whole other perspective or angle. Now, one of the things I loved about what you said, and this is a good entry way into your story over the last few years, but in your new book, It's Not Supposed To Be This Way. You say we humans are addicted to outcomes. How does that show up? I mean, as a driven, ambitious entrepreneurial church leader slash leader that own me. I'm like, Okay, I'm going to stop reading right now. But what do you mean by we're addicted to outcomes? And especially in the Christian world we seem to be addicted to that. What do you mean by that? And let's explore that for a little bit.

Lysa TerKeurst: Well, we're very attached to the way we assume that our life should go. And as a Christian, even if life starts to not go the way that we think it should, we're very good at doing God pep rallies in our life. Where we just go, Okay, well, this doesn't at all look like I thought it would, but I know God would work eventual good from this. And that is true and that is amazing. It's a good biblical principle. The problem is, then we like to start to craft the script and the story of the good that God should surely make from this hard situation that we're facing. And then we start trying to hold God accountable to the good that we assumed He should do.

Lysa TerKeurst: And where that gets us in trouble is, we serve a very creative God who always does have a good plan. But we have to make peace in our heart, we serve a good God who does have eventual good in mind. But we do serve a good God who along the way to get to that eventual good, he will allow hurt in our life. And sometimes that feels very confusing when our faith and our feelings come in conflict. So we start to find ourselves getting very suspicious when God deviates from our script, from our assumptions. And from what we thought the outcome would be in various scenarios in our life. And Carey I say this, not with a pointed finger at anyone else but as a personal admission, I know we do this because I do it all the time. And I've certainly done it quite a bit in the past three years.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, do you want tell us to the extent and you're very open and honest in the bug. But it's been an unprecedented last year years for you. So for people who may not be familiar with the story can you let us know what you have been going through over these last three years?

Lysa TerKeurst: Absolutely, and when I say it in the short format of a podcast, it can sound void of the deep anguish that has been wrapped and woven throughout the very hard moments and days and months and years that this has been. But for the sake of time, I'll list off just some of the things that I've faced and had to really wrestle through. The biggest of which I would say is my husband and I, we've always had a very close relationship. We've been wonderful friends, and in different seasons, ministry partners.

Lysa TerKeurst: But three years ago, I found out that he was having an affair and it shook me to my absolute core. Devastated me beyond what I could even express to people. And it rattled what I assumed was the path and the legacy that my husband and I had built together. From that there was a lot of emotional turmoil. And about six months into that situation, my colon twisted. I wound up having to be admitted to the hospital and spent 15 days in ICU. I Had to have emergency surgery, most of my colon removed. It was definitely a situation where the doctors spent many days telling my family, they didn't think I would survive.

Carey Nieuwhof: It was life threatening.

Lysa TerKeurst: It was definitely life threatening, for sure. But here's the miracle from that story. And I do tell this in the book, but how I knew something was wrong with me. I woke up on a Monday morning, and I was in an excruciating pain. And so my family rushed me to the hospital, they started running tests, and the doctors kept saying that we can't find anything wrong with you, but they could see how much pain I was in. So they admitted me to the hospital to run further tests. And as the week went on, I got worse and worse and worse.

Lysa TerKeurst: So I was in excruciating pain. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, I was even on a morphine pump. And even that really didn't even take the edge off the pain. So it was pretty daunting because I kept thinking to myself, God you can do anything. And yet in this situation, you're choosing not to take away my pain. If my child were in this much pain, I would surely give them that gift if I could. And you could, you could take away the pain. And the fact that you're not just makes me very skeptical. And isn't that right there where we have a crisis in our faith or trust in God, when his promises start to seem doubtful, not for the world at large, but doubtful for us personally. And his timing seems questionable. And when his lack of intervention seems hurtful. This is complicated.

Lysa TerKeurst: But Friday morning, a surgeon came in my room and said, so we ran one last test today, and we finally figured out what's happening with you. Your colon has twisted and ripped away from the abdominal wall. It's cut the blood flow off inside of you. We have to rush you into emergency surgery, or you will not live. And then he said, one more thing he's like Lysa I know that you have been crying out to God to take away your pain. But I personally am very thankful God didn't answer that prayer. Because if God would have taken away the pain, we wouldn't have kept running tests, we would have sent you home, your colon would have ruptured and you would have died.

Lysa TerKeurst: I remember right before the anesthesia took over as I was being wheeled down the hallway. You know, it's like, I don't know if I'm going to wake up from the surgery or not, because a lot of damage had been done. And the doctors weren't sure. But I remember having this thought, God loves me too much to answer my prayer at any other time than the right time and in any other way than the right way. And that's true, not just of our physical pain, but any pain, emotional, spiritual, whatever we're going through. So it really helped me understand how to trust God more.

Carey Nieuwhof: I actually have all those pages marked. It's first of all, just a staggering story. But one of the best examples I've ever read or heard of where there's a direct connection between pain and its purpose in the immediate, because you're right. If you had just woken up and felt better and that had continued, we wouldn't be having this conversation. So an affair in the marriage of your husband of how many years had you and Art been married that time?

Lysa TerKeurst: At that time we had been married 21, 22 years. Over 20 years. And it was just so unexpected. I mean, if you would have brought all of our friends and family over and lined all the couples up in a line and said, Who do you think will walk through infidelity in the next couple of years? I don't think they would have picked me and Art. And so something I always feared, because I've heard it happening to other people. We had friends that had walked through this certainly being in ministry, I heard many, many stories. But I felt like I had done, that we had done all the right things. And we want life to be as predictable as a math equation, right?

Lysa TerKeurst: Two plus two should equal four, right? And so if you do the date nights, and you go to the conferences, and you go to church as a family, and you eat dinner together, and you pray together, and all of that. You feel almost like, okay, we've done everything, right. We should have a right outcome. Now, please hear me. No, marriage is perfect and we certainly didn't do everything right. But I felt like building block foundation of a great relationship. And yeah, it was complicated when it fell apart.

Carey Nieuwhof: So I want to come back to that. But I mean, so there was the infidelity, the problem with your colon, which was life threatening, and excruciating. But that wasn't it, there was something else that happened too in your life in the last three years.

Lysa TerKeurst: Yeah, so I kept it private, for 18 months, what Art and I were walking through, because I didn't want to invite the weight of public opinion into our very private pain. But after 18 months, it appeared as if things were not going to get better between us. We were pursuing reconciliation. And then there were some other choices that were made that were outside of my desire for reconciliation. And so then the rumor mill started. So the story was going to be told either through the rumor mill or, I could get out in front of the story and just let people know what was happening.

Lysa TerKeurst: So in June 2017, I posted a blog letting people know that I didn't think that we were going to make it; asking for prayer. And that was the worst day of my entire life. I can't even express to you the depth of pain and sorrow that I felt that day. So that was in June, then I took some time off because I just needed to heal. And so since I had extra time, I thought, well, let me just go make all the doctor appointments for all the stuff you're supposed to do. But when you're busy traveling, you don't always do all those appointments.

Lysa TerKeurst: So one of those appointments was for a mammogram and I was not due for mammogram. I had so many clear tests that I could have put it off another year. But I went ahead and did it because I had time to do it. And that mammogram came back with some concerning but not overly alarming results. So they wanted me to go back and do a second test. And then they wanted me to go in for a biopsy. And then in September 2017, I was diagnosed with breast cancer-

Carey Nieuwhof: Unbelievable.

Lysa TerKeurst: Which one just seemed like, impossible.

Carey Nieuwhof: Did it seem cruel?

Lysa TerKeurst: Yeah, honestly. I mean, it was complicated. It was very complicated. I was just, I think, and I think all of my friends walking through this journey with me, just were left a little speechless. It was unexpected, and we couldn't understand it. So I remember after that, I was like, okay, Lord, you really, you're going to have a lot of people really angry with you about this one. Because, I mean, it just seemed like hurt upon hurt. Devastation upon devastation. But I remember, there was a moment where I had to make the decision to process this through faith.

Lysa TerKeurst: And so I remember sitting there thinking, Okay, if I process this with my feelings, it's too much. I really do feel like I'm living Job's story. And I know Job's story when we read it in the Bible turns out, okay. But my story does not feel like it's going to turn out okay. And it's in those middle moments where things can get very, very complicated when we're trying to process it. And I'm an over processor anyways. I don't know if you've ever studied the Enneagram, but I'm a one on the Enneagram. Overthink everything.

Lysa TerKeurst: And so I remember overthinking this for sure. But I decided I have to make God and His goodness, the starting place as I process this, because if I don't, I feel like I could go to a very dark place where God does seem suspicious to me.

Carey Nieuwhof: How did ... Okay. I got to ask you about that. Like, how did you catch yourself and get to that place? Because I think I've met and I'm sure you've met so many people who have gone through less, but they went to that dark place. Our ministry is filled with people who went to that dark place. And some of them come back, some of them don't. Sometimes you meet people on the way back. Sometimes you just meet them one day in everyday life. And they're like, oh, let me tell you what I used to believe. How did you catch yourself in that moment?

Lysa TerKeurst: Well, when somebody's in that dark place, I think people's tendency is to start trying to explain away what's happening for God, right? It's like, let me put a bumper sticker statement on it. Let me give you just the right Bible verse. And people feel a lot of pressure to say the right thing to help you get out of the darkness that you're in. And what I would say is, God doesn't want to be explained away. He wants to be invited in. And so if you have a friend that's in that dark place, the very best thing you can do is just go sit with them and do what the Bible says. Weep with them when they weep, rejoice with them when they rejoice. But your presence, if you know the Lord, your presence will be a gift that they need in that moment.

Lysa TerKeurst: Your preaching in that moment will probably not be seen as much as a gift. And so I didn't need people preaching at me. There was nothing someone could say, to bring me back. I just had to be surrounded by friends who would, I could say to them, and I lead the conversation. Do you think that God's mad at me? Very understandable question, and they say back. No, he's definitely not mad at you. Do you think that God has forgotten me? And they would just simply say, nope, he has not forgotten you. I would say, Do you think it's ever going to get better? And they would say, absolutely, it's going to get better.

Lysa TerKeurst: You see, they didn't have these big things where they explained what God was doing. They just reminded me who God was, he is faithful. But they didn't even say that. They just answered my questions according to the faithfulness that they had in God. Because sometimes when your faith is slipping, you just need to be able to be surrounded by people. You can go stand on their faith. When you feel like you can't really figure out your own. So asking those simple questions and having them give me back faith filled answers, not messages, not sermons but faith filled answers. Made a big difference to me.

Lysa TerKeurst: So with me, I started with what I knew to be true. I knew God was good. This didn't feel good at all. So where could some evidence of goodness be found? Well, my marriage falling apart again, in June 2017, after I thought we were about to go through reconciliation. I thought we were about to renew our vows. We've been going through this a really long time, right? But then everything fell apart again. But that forced me to go have a doctor appointment that allowed the doctors to find cancer. The doctor said, they found it soon enough to where with surgery, my prognosis looked very, very good. And in the end, they were able to do the surgery and now I'm cancer free.

Lysa TerKeurst: And I would have never gotten such a good prognosis without an early diagnosis. I wouldn't have gotten the early diagnosis without my marriage falling apart again. So you tell me my marriage falling apart again? Was it the worst thing that ever happened? Or did God take that terrible situation and use it for good because He is good. And so you see, it's like all in how we train our brain to process things from the vantage point that God is good. We just have to sit and find the goodness of God, even in some of these practical aspects. Did I want to have cancer? No. Did I want my marriage to fall apart? No. Did I want to have the devastation of all these events, plus having to step aside in ministry and take a season off? No, I didn't want any of that. But was God good in those lonely, painful, horrific moments? 100% he was.

Carey Nieuwhof: You describe things so well, in the book. You're a brilliant writer. And I can't help but think that there must have been a moment where you thought, this is the opposite of what I've given my life to. I'm supposed to be the Proverbs 31 wife. And here I am, with my marriage falling apart. My husband who walked out on me, did you have that moment and how did you process that?

Lysa TerKeurst: I love this question because I think a lot of people would assume and I probably even had this thought too that Lysa you being president of Proverbs 31 Ministries sort of set you up for this kind of attack. You were set up for this kind of attack. So man, being in ministry is really hard, because the enemy went after your family, which was based on the ministry that you do. The most hurtful thing for the enemy to do. But we have to remember God saw that I was going to walk through this before He ever called me to be in this ministry.

Lysa TerKeurst: So I think of it a little bit differently. I think what a gracious, good, loving God that we serve. That He put me in this ministry all those years ago, knowing what I would eventually walk through. So that I would be surrounded by people in ministry and teachings and preachings and backstage access to people who can help me and all of that stuff. God is so good. God doesn't need my marriage to stay intact to make him credible for ministry. You see what I'm saying?

Carey Nieuwhof: I do.

Lysa TerKeurst: God placed me in ministry, knowing what I would eventually walk through. But not just for my sake, I believe it's because he heard the cries of so many people. And he knew they would drown in their own tears, if not for seeing a glimmer of hope in my tears. So God didn't cause this but he did allow it. And yeah, I would have never been brave enough to choose to this journey. I would have never, ever done it on my own. So God allowed it though. And I really feel like God has not cursed me with this. He has entrusted me with this. So even though I would not never, ever want anyone to have to walk through this, I will be a faithful steward of even this. And so when my husband which is a whole another aspect, because, wow, I mean, a lot of people want to say that I'm courageous for giving him a second chance, a third chance, a fourth chance, a fifth chance, because the past three years, it's not been a straight line toward redemption. It has been a horrifically messy, brutal situation.

Lysa TerKeurst: But I'm not really the only courageous one here. My husband has come back. And I would think after all that he chose, it would be so hard to come back. So you want to talk about courage that takes courage. It takes courage to surrender to the Lord after all the choices that he's made. It takes courage to look at our friends and our family in the face and say, I'm sorry, it takes courage to go through therapy and counseling and to surrender yourself to the healing process. It takes courage to be a man of redemption. So, yeah, he's pretty courageous.

Carey Nieuwhof: Lysa, that's just incredible to hear you process that. I don't think guys process their emotions particularly well. That has been a journey for me. But one of the things as I read the book, and I mean, I've followed your story too. I read that blog post the day that you came out with it. And there'd be so many leaders and I know there's leaders who are listening with way fewer difficulties, then ventured over the last few years. Who would say, but Lysa, I feel so much shame over whatever that is. I just, I'm terrified. Did you have to grapple with

shame or humiliation? Like, how did that part of the journey unfold for you? Or was that an issue?

Lysa TerKeurst: Yeah, I mean, for sure. I liked being the Bible teacher in a situation. I liked and was so thankful for my books doing well, being a New York Times bestselling author. I liked being president of Proverbs 31 Ministries. I didn't like being the broken girl with the broken body and broken emotions and broken marriage. And so yeah, I don't know if I would necessarily have said I'm dealing with shame. But yeah, there was definitely threads of that woven through what I was deal ... I was just dealing with utter heartbreak. And just disillusionment, extreme disappointment, of just not understanding, the layers and the impact of what I was having to walk through. It's just crazy.

Lysa TerKeurst: So yeah, for sure. And certainly probably even more painful than my dealing with the shame or the uncertainty. It was watching my kids all process that too, because they have and still do respect their dad as the spiritual leader of our family. I mean, in 2016, three of our five kids got married. And it was at the beginning of 2016 that I found out Art was having the affair. So it was a year of extreme highs and extreme lows. And our family was processing that all together. It was brutal, it was hard. And yeah, I think we all had to deal with elements of shame, but certainly Art's had to deal with it too. And he probably I've told people, I would rather carry the weight of a cancer diagnosis, than carry the weight of shame.

Lysa TerKeurst: So watching him having to process his own shame. And in him having to come face with what he did was brutal. But that's why in the very beginning of the book I talk about when your life gets broken. And whether you are the one who got hurt, or the one who caused the hurt. Sometimes you've got broken pieces, you can glue them back together, God's light can shine through the brokenness, we all sing Kumbaya and we love that. That's awesome, right? But sometimes you look around and the brokenness either that's been thrust on you or that you yourself caused. Sometimes the brokenness there's not broken pieces, you look around and it's a shattering of your life that there's nothing but dust. You can't glue dust.

Lysa TerKeurst: So I wrote in the book about feeling that way. Feeling like my life is nothing but dust now and I don't know what to do. You can't glue dust and it's so hopeless feeling ... Yeah I guess it's a shame in that too. But out of all the ingredients in the world, that God chose to make his favorite creation mankind. In Genesis 2, we find God choosing dust, and he picks up the dust and from nothing, he breathes life into something. So dust doesn't mean an end. Dust is often what must be present for the brand new to begin. So I say that for anyone listening who's dealing with shame, either shame because of choices you've made or shame because somebody else's choices has made you feel so less than.

Lysa TerKeurst: I just say, listen to my story with great hope and know that shame is Satan signature. He's the one that wants you locked in shame. Our God speaks a

language of freedom. The first words that ever spoke to man was, you are free. After breathed into that dust and he made new life. The first words that the enemy spoke in reciting what God said, if you look at Genesis 3, when the enemy is talking to Eve, and then he goes to quote God. He quotes God's first three words as you must not very interesting right? So you see, the enemy is a, you must not enemy but our God, you are free. Now he gives us restrictions for our protection. But I just speak that into someone's soul today. Dust does not signify your end. It's often what must be present for the brand new to begin.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, man, this is so rich Lysa, and thank you. Your book really speaks to me. I know it's speaking to probably eventually millions of people. But I want to go back to something you write about and something you hinted out already in this interview. And you said particularly the day you posted that blog in July, or whenever it was of 2017 the gossip. And you had friends who came and sat with you? And then you had friends who didn't. They did the opposite. Do you want to tell us about that? And because I think we've all had it to one extent or another, or participated, unfortunately, to one extent or another. What was that like?

Lysa TerKeurst: Well, first of all, I want to say, I have great compassion for the friends that didn't come sit with me. Great, compassion, because I understand that they were processing, personalizing the hurt of what I was going through in their own lives, and projecting some of their own fears into the situation. So I really don't hold those people accountable that and I don't hold them guilty for things that were said. They were hurtful or mean, or rude, or whatever. There's a whole list of words we could use, because it's what they did or didn't do. As hurtful as it may have been to me. I have such great compassion on them because they were processing their own fear. They ... I don't believe any of them wanted to do the wrong thing. I think maybe some of them were protecting themselves because they were afraid that this might shine light on some choices they were making, that was that were very hurtful. Or they simply didn't know what to say. Or they this opened up an arena of fear in their hearts.

Lysa TerKeurst: So I just want to say all of that, because, yes, some people said some really hurtful things and did some really hurtful things. But boy, I have a lot of compassion on them because, they were just dealing with their own stuff, and dealing with your own stuff is hard. But the people who did come and sit with me, they did one of the best things that friends could do. They prayed more words over me than they spoke to me or spoke about me. And everybody needs friends in their life, that are that committed, and that really believe in the power of prayer.

Lysa TerKeurst: I think as Christians, we all know, it's like, oh, yeah, we're supposed to pray for people. But a lot of times, we just find ourselves saying, Oh yeah, man, I'll pray for you. And then if we do pray for him, it's like, okay, God, you need to fix this, and this and this. And we make a list of suggestions to God, right? When in reality, I think God just wants us to open our heart and say, God, just help me

love them where they're at. And God help us link arms with them so they can be strong enough and courageous enough to trade their will, for your will.

Lysa TerKeurst: And this process, as hard as messy as it gets. I'm going to keep bringing them a casserole, I'm going to keep going to put gas in their car, I'm going to keep popping in to watch their kids, and I am going to pray more words for them, then I speak to them or about them. And man, those are terrific friends to have.

Carey Nieuwhof: How did you handle the critics? I mean, did you read some of those blog posts or the posts on social or do you just ignore that? Like, how do you not let that bring you down?

Lysa TerKeurst: Well, they can't bring you down if they don't have access to you. And so I didn't read them. So I'm still operating in this Pollyanna view. It's like, man, this is pretty amazing. Not a lot of people said too much ugly stuff. But I also don't Google my name. I don't go shopping for pain. You know what I mean?

Carey Nieuwhof: That's great. Shopping for pain.

Lysa TerKeurst: Yeah, I just-

Carey Nieuwhof: Never heard anyone say that.

Lysa TerKeurst: I mean, so, you know, I'm sure that some stuff exists. I was pretty thankful, though. I mean, my staff was really good about keeping me off the computer. So they would print really kind things that people said. And when people had hard questions, they were willing to have the hard conversations. So it wasn't like everybody was ignoring it. But some people just out of their own desire for writing a headline and an article that creates traction for their platform. They have their own motivations and reasons but they have to answer to God for that. But fear only has as much access to affect us as we give it access to our heart. So I just chose to not give it access to my heart.

Carey Nieuwhof: Its good advice. You raised a really helpful distinction between things and I don't know whether I got the terminology quite right. But in my notes, personal, private and secret. And you said in the book that there are details you're going to share, and there are some things you're just not and some things you'll never share. I think that's a really good distinction, particularly in a social media age where people sometimes share nothing, or they share everything inappropriately seems to be a little bit on the polls. Can you walk us through personal, private and secret and I thought those are really helpful distinctions.

Lysa TerKeurst: Yeah, so if we're going to be thought leaders, the very best place for us to start is to lead our own thoughts first, right? And so I think it's really important when you go through something hard to understand that if you're an authentic person, I think you feel compelled to not keep things secret. But you have to remember, there's a big difference between secrecy and privacy. Secrecy is

keeping things hidden, so that the sin behind it can be perpetuated. Privacy is not keeping things hidden for the sake of secrecy, but keeping things hidden for the sake of healing.

Lysa TerKeurst: So I chose to be private with some of the details because I wanted to leave God room to move. And I wanted my kids to be able to read about this 10 years from now, and not be horrified by some of the details. And I recognized that while the name Lysa TerKeurst in some people's minds might be a brand. It's never been a brand to me, it's my personal identity. It's my personal legacy. It's my personal assignment. And so I never wanted the details of our story to go out and satisfy people's curiosity. And that they get so bloated with the junk food of curious details that they missed the nourishment of the beautiful God lessons woven throughout this story.

Lysa TerKeurst: So I chose to let the story simply be the bare bones backdrop of this story, of this book, of this message. So that the real story God's lessons could be front and center and people could get nourished for their own life in the lessons that God taught and the biblical teaching. So it was important for me to tell enough of the story though, so that people can identify with the depth of hurt. No one will be able to put this book down and go well, Lysa has never experienced hurt, like I've experienced, hurt.

Lysa TerKeurst: So they negate the teaching. I think when you know somebody has experienced the depth of pain that rivals your own pain, even if the circumstances are different. It makes what they say their teaching and their advice more believable, and trustworthy. So it was a delicate road to walk for sure. I do think it's important, though, again, talking about how courageous Art has been in walking his path of redemption. He read every word of this book and he had the opportunity to change anything he wanted to change. And yet, even things that were hard for him to admit he left them in the book. And again, I just think that's pretty miraculous.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, you lead a major ministry, as we've already said. You have a staff of 60, 68 million people a day who access your content. Yet you took a break. I want to know, how did you know when to step back and how did you know you're ready to step in? Because I think that's a hard line to find in leadership. There are leaders who are leading who should have stepped back and then there are some who have stepped back who should be in. How did you figure out that line for you?

Lysa TerKeurst: Yeah, I wish so much it was like a formula that I could give someday. And I wish I felt like I did it perfectly. I don't know that I did Carey. Situations like this, they're not really like, here's the formula. So lets, you know, this is the time frame, I wish the Bible was that specific, right? But it's not. And so for me, this became not so much a problem to solve, but attention to manage. There were still some things that my team needed from me, even during the sabbatical that I did what I could. So instead of it being like, this big planned out timeframe, it

was a day by day initiative. I did get wise people around me, and I let them speak truth into me. I didn't step back into doing ministry until those people around me who were wise, who I trusted, who were daily invested in seeing me and interacting with me ... It was a group decision, for sure.

Lysa TerKeurst: But I think were, some of us get in trouble as leaders, we're so used to being the one to tell other people what to do. It's hard for us to step into a situation where we let other people boss us around a little bit. You know what I'm saying? And so not that people around me were bossy, they weren't. But I had to humble myself and let them reflect to me, what was good and I'm thankful I did that. But again, I don't necessarily look at what I did is as the perfect model.

Carey Nieuwhof: So you talk in the book about keeping lines of communication open in your marriage, but their husbands who have porn addictions, listening, some wives, too, wives who are having an affair, leaders who are having an emotional affair. I just write about one again this morning with someone at work, or they're hiding in drug or gambling addiction, they're terrified to tell anybody. Any advice?

Lysa TerKeurst: Well, first of all, I just want to say it's more prevalent than you think. You're going to feel utterly alone in your dysfunction, you're going to feel utterly alone, like you're the only person that's ever made this choice. And so you're going to feel like, there's no help for someone who should have made different choices, who made these choices. There's so many things that the enemy is going to try to attack you with. But I would A, number one, get a Christian counselor who is trained in your exact issue and get them on board A-S-A-P. And let that counselor help you navigate what's really going on, what some good options are for health and for pursuing healing. Who needs to be told what and when and start there.

Lysa TerKeurst: Start by bringing that darkness into some kind of light. They're trained to help you. And so as crazy as it sounds, when I started going through this, I didn't tell a lot of people, but I did get the help of two trained Christian counselors that were tremendous. One of those counselors had a very specific degree in helping people navigate the exact issues that we were walking through. And so that was chosen with great intentionality. But please, start doing your research and find that person that trained Christian counselor who can help you.

Carey Nieuwhof: I want to talk a little bit as we wrap up today, Lysa about your writing if you're willing, and your ministry. You have a really deep personal connection with your audience and an incredibly loyal audience. Can you tell us what are some keys to doing that over the years? Like, how to know what to share with your audience what not to. There's a lot of people listening who are saying that's they're trying to connect authentically with an audience. But I think you're one of the best at it. So can you share a little bit about what you've learned in that area?

Lysa TerKeurst: Thank you Carey. Your words are so kind. So whenever I set out to communicate a message, whether it's in the written form or the spoken form, I don't start with what I want to say that's a tempting place to start. I start by paying attention to questions people are asking and problems people are having that they're searching for a solution for. And the reason I start there is because that's my definition of a felt need. A felt need is a problem that someone is having or question they're asking. And so whenever I write something, I don't want people to go, Oh, I should read that one day. I want my books to feel so urgent and top of Mind topically to people that they go, Oh, I have to read that book today.

Lysa TerKeurst: And the only way to do it is if they feel the need for your message. And the only way for them to feel the need for the message is for you to tap into that problem that they're having, that question that they're asking and provide a solution or an answer to it. You don't have to provide the ultimate solutions and answers. But if you just get people a little further down the path, then that's very, very helpful. So where my audience felt needs match my felt needs. A problem I'm having, a question I'm asking. That's where that beautiful connection happens. So and I would also say one more thing, too, I think a lot of people set out to write a book and they make their topic so broad, so that they can write enough words about the book. But I challenge people writing messages make your topic very narrow, so that your message can become the go-to book for that one specific topic.

Lysa TerKeurst: So for example, it's not supposed to be this way, the one word, that entire message is built around is disappointment, because I don't want my book to be put in big, tall stacks of every other book written for a Christian audience, a Christian perspective. I want my book to be the go-to resource for this topic and so that's the best advice I would give.

Carey Nieuwhof: How do you figure out what your audience is struggling with?

Lysa TerKeurst: I pay attention. So I'll kind of feel God stirring a problem in my life that needs to be addressed, or question I have that I'm looking for an answer for. And then I start paying attention to social media, comments, blog, comments, conversation I have around a dinner table, coffee shop conversations, I pay attention. So my first six months process in writing a book is not writing at all it's listening.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good and that's where you get your top content and your blog content as well. How do you see like, when you because you do some blogging, you do a lot of speaking, and you also write books. So how do your different media interrelate in your mind?

Lysa TerKeurst: Well, a lot of my content starts on Instagram, because that's what I carry around on my phone. So I'll have an idea and I'll write something a little and I'll test it out on Instagram and if I see that helps people I pay attention to that. But all of my ministry communication starts in the written form first, because that's where I feel like God is uniquely gifted me to process my thoughts the best in

the written form. And then it spills over into other medium, other ways of getting the message out.

Carey Nieuwhof: More than a few preachers listening. I want you to advise preachers. You've sat through a lot of sermons. You go to great church with a fantastic preacher. But I want you to think about the wider church. If there was some way that communicators could better connect with the congregations they serve. What would you advise us to do?

Lysa TerKeurst: I would say make it one of your goals that every single person in the audience if they were walking out of the audience and filling out a survey, answering the question, what is your message about? Make it your goal that 90% of those people write the exact same answer. That's very difficult to do. But it takes intentionality. When you get up to communicate, tell people exactly what you're trying to accomplish. Their time is so valuable. So tell them I bet X percentage of you are dealing with this issue. Today, we're going to tackle this issue. I'm going to unpack this issue 360 degrees all the way around. I am going to give you biblical references. I'm going to give you personal examples. I'll give you a personal mission of how I struggle with this issue.

Lysa TerKeurst: But today, the issue we're tackling is this. And if you can move this forward in your life, your life is going to get better because of A, B and C. But again, what we're tackling today is this, I promise you, if you'll do that, with great intentionality. People will leave they will feel like it was a great investment of their time. Everybody will know how to answer that question. What was that message about? And that's the only way if it's done with great intentionality. And people get this sense of momentum from your message, then you have a greater opportunity to unleash the power of conversation, because everybody wants to talk about something great they just heard or read. And the only way for you to unleash the power of conversation get more people at your church and interested in your ministry is that they know exactly what you preached about last Sunday.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, it would be great if we got a chance to do this again, because I feel like I now have 1000 questions I still want to ask you but we're pushing an hour,

Lysa TerKeurst: That's much better than you saying okay. Well now that I'm effectively bored to tears. Let's wrap it up.

Carey Nieuwhof: No there's so much, honestly they said there's so much leadership. I wanted to share the story of the book which by the way, you should read it. And I'll just say something to male readers you're probably like I'm not going to read Proverbs 31 one book, you need to buy this book. Or you need to steal it off your wife's nightstand and read it. It's really good and you're a brilliant writer. I mean, just so good at your craft, which would be where I want to take it next time and talk about leadership and all these things communication. But and we can cut this part out if you're not comfortable with it. But you told me something really

special that's going to happen tomorrow. The day after we recorded this and you give a little update at the very end of the book saying, Hey this is where Art and I are at as this thing goes to press. But do you want to update us? Are you comfortable with that telling us what's happening tomorrow when we record this?

Lysa TerKeurst: Yeah, sure thing. So on July 4th of this year after years of counseling and therapy and a lot of hard work on Art's part and a lot of hard work on my part, July 4th Art asked if I would consider renewing our vows and marrying him all over again. And I said yes. And so tomorrow December the 11th, we will be doing just that.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's amazing. You showed me your living room it's all set up. And you're going to renew your vows tomorrow, which is great. This'll air in January, but I just want you to know I am so excited to hear that story of redemption. That's amazing Lysa.

Lysa TerKeurst: Me to as someone who's lived this story, walked this story, resisted this story, crawled through this story, to have this moment of redemption. This second chance at a lifetime commitment with Art. It's something I'll never ever take for granted. I'm so thankful.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's great. Well, people are going to want to connect with you. What's easiest way Lysa?

Lysa TerKeurst: So my favorite place to connect is on Instagram. Absolutely, you can just go to @LysaTerKeurst on Instagram. My name is all kind of complicated. So L-Y-S-A-T-E-R-K-E-U-R-S-T. But you can also find me on Facebook. You can find me through the Proverbs 31 website or on the pages of my book. It's Not Supposed To Be This Way.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's great Lysa, thank you so much. I so appreciate it.

Lysa TerKeurst: Thank you Carey. It's been a joy to be with you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, that was a powerful conversation. Lysa, thank you so much. If you want more including transcripts maybe there's a particular area you want to go back and just search or find or zero in on or discuss with your team. Head on over to the show notes. You'll find them at careynieuwhof.com/episode238 or just go to leadlikeneverbefore.com. That's the easy one to go to. Type in Lysa TerKeurst in the and it's Lysa with a Y TerKeurst in the search window and you'll find the show notes there.

Carey Nieuwhof: We got everything for you. Everything we talked about, all the links to everything. Including links to rethink leadership which you are going to want to get to before it sells out. It is a premier leadership event for senior pastors, campus pastors and executive pastors only, happening in Atlanta May 1st

through 3rd. Got a powerful lineup this year but even better than the lineup. A chance to really drill down on what's going on leadership, to get your questions answered and so much more. Register before it's too late. Get the best rates at rethinkleadership.com and remember I got something free for you right now. So while you're at it, head on over to thehighimpactleader.com and let's get you 2019 sorted out before it gets away on you.

Carey Nieuwhof: We're back next week with a brand new episode. Of course, In fact we've got six month now and coming up we've got Ian Morgan Cron. He is the Enneagram guy who wrote the powerful book *The Road Back To You* with Suzanne Stabile, Gary Chapman, Frank Bealer, Rich Birch, Jud Wilhite, John Ortberg, Annie F. Downs and so many more. But next week it's Jon Gordon. Jon trains with professional sports teams and consults with fortune 500 companies. And he was one of the leaders on positive thinking. But it didn't always go that way.

Carey Nieuwhof: In fact, when he was 29, his wife said, I love you. But I'm leaving you because I can't stand you because you're so negative. Do you ever do that? You just dump on your spouse when you get home. Yeah, not a good idea. He tells that story. And we talked about how to handle the negative voices in your head, negativity in your organization and how to stay positive. Here's an excerpt.

Jon Gordon: And I asked them does negativity come from you? And they said, yeah. Really? Who would ever choose to have a negative thought? Would you ever choose a negative thought? No one would ever choose one. So it's not coming from you. It's coming from the enemy. It's coming from a spiritual place. It's a spiritual battle. And once you understand that, you can armor yourself with the truth, these positive words that help you overcome the lies that come in all the time.

Carey Nieuwhof: So that's next week on the podcast. You get that automatically for free. If you subscribe. If you haven't done that yet, maybe you're a brand new listener, just hit subscribe. I only ever listen to the podcast I subscribe to. And I subscribe to dozens. So hopefully, if this is helpful, you can do that for free. Thank you for getting the word out for sharing on social. And hey, for those of you who have listened to the very end, a lot of people say, Hey, where can I connect with you on social? You know, where? You can connect with me best. Well, I'm on Facebook, Twitter, I'm on all the major channels. But you know where I actually hang out - Instagram and particularly on Insta stories have a lot of fun there.

Carey Nieuwhof: So look me up there, you'll see sort of a narrative of what happens every day in my life and we can connect even more. Hey, thanks so much for listening, guys. I really appreciate it. We are back with a fresh episode next Tuesday. And I 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.

