

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 240 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof. I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. So hey, wherever this finds you, whether you are in a gym somewhere on a treadmill, on your bike, cooking dinner, on a drive, on a run, on a walk, whatever. Welcome. Glad you're here. That's how I listen to my podcast. Pretty much anytime I'm doing sort of brainless, mindless work, I try to engage my mind. So love that you have subscribed, love that you're listening. Thank you so much today you will not be disappointed because my guest is Annie F. Downs. She is a bestselling author and a speaker with a massive audience. So we're getting a little bit controversial and maybe this will make some of you a little bit sensitive. Okay? I'm just warning you, but here's the truth, especially guys, guys, guess what?

Carey Nieuwhof: There are a lot of women who lead, who have much bigger audiences than we do. Okay? And the question is, are you okay with that? Because a couple weeks ago we heard from Lysa TerKeurst who has 6 to 8 million people accessing her content every single day. In fact, Lysa and I are going to get together later this spring and I'm going to open up my notebook and learn how she does that. Annie F. Downs has like 5 million downloads on her podcast, That Sounds Fun, last year alone. And so I'm trying to crack this code. I'm trying to be a student rather than be a teacher, I'm trying to be a student. And Annie taught us, me, a lot in this interview. So in this interview she shares the secrets of reaching a large audience and connecting with a growing tribe. But keeping it personal, man, it's a fascinating conversation. I think you're going to love it.

Carey Nieuwhof: And the goal is not to reach large audiences per se, it's just to help a lot of people and serve a lot of people and this is what they do extremely well. And Annie also talks about how women approach leadership. It is fascinating. Absolutely fascinating. I think you're going to love it. So anyway, that's up today. Also guys and women, question for you. How's the year going for you so far? The answer might be, you know what? It feels an awful lot like all the other years. And if that is the case, probably you're in the place where your ambition exceeds your current capacity. That is where most leaders find themselves. And yeah, he had all these new year's resolutions. You're gonna crush your goals. Best year ever. But what the problem is, and this is why most resolutions fail. In fact, 92% of all new year's resolutions fail.

Carey Nieuwhof: It fails because you have an intention, but you have no strategy. Well my lack of strategy 13 years ago led me squarely into burnout. And on the other side, I thought to myself by the grace of God never again, and in the process of recovery, I worked really hard, like thousands of dollars invested in coaches, counselors, lots of time reflecting, created a new system for myself that I thought, okay, I think this is going to prevent me from burnout, which for 13

years it has, but what I didn't realize is it would make me so much more productive. In fact the High Impact Leader system is what I now call it, but using that approach with a fixed calendar and managing time, energy and priorities has helped me write four bestselling books. Like I always wanted to write a book, never had time. Be a better dad, be a better husband, be a better friend, actually develop some hobbies.

Carey Nieuwhof: And at the same time write a blog, hold down a full time job, speak travel around the world and do something like this podcast sometimes even twice a week. Like, how do you do that? And stay sane? I'm going to show you. And the goal is not that you would write books and launch a podcast, it's just like when you like to be home with your kids, when you're supposed to be home, when you like to have a day off, when you like to not be in crisis mode all the time or overwhelmed? That's what the High Impact Leader is all about. And this week we have the High Impact Leader available with all kinds of new bonuses. And at the best price you will find it in 2019. Price is going up soon. I would love for you to head on over to thehighimpactleader.com.

Carey Nieuwhof: Check it out for yourself. We've got some very time limited incentives. In fact the price is going up January 31st. So this is your last chance to get it at what I think is a pretty incredible price and we've helped thousands of leaders through the High Impact Leader system. And we could spend the rest of this podcast just telling stories about people who said, man, I got my life and leadership back. So head on over and check that out. And in the meantime this was a fun, fascinating, and awesome conversation with author, speaker, and extraordinary human being. Annie F. Downs.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well Annie, this is fun, Annie F. Downs welcome to the podcast. So what does F. stand for? Fancy?

Annie F. Downs: Oh yeah. We'll go fancy because it's like a really complicated Swiss middle name that is not fun to deal with. So it has silent letters, that's sort of crazy. But yeah-

Carey Nieuwhof: That's pretty cool though when you have an unpredictable middle name.

Annie F. Downs: You know why it's so funny because there's another Annie Downs who is a very famous quilter and so-

Carey Nieuwhof: I missed that one. I don't know how I missed that Annie.

Annie F. Downs: I know it's sad. So she kind of owns the internet a little bit unfortunately for me. And so-

Carey Nieuwhof: There is a quilter who owns your name?

Annie F. Downs: Yeah. And so I've had to, that's why we do the Annie F. everywhere is because we're like, we've got to separate from the quilter.

Carey Nieuwhof: I've never thought of you as a quilter for the record, just so you know.

Annie F. Downs: Oh my God.

Carey Nieuwhof: Welcome to the podcast.

Annie F. Downs: Oh, thanks for having me. It's such an honor. I would never put myself in the category of worthy of being your guest as a listener So I'm very happy.

Carey Nieuwhof: Absolutely, thanks we've done a mic flip. You and I've spent the whole day recording, so I'm on your podcast. This one will probably air a little bit later, but I kicked off 2019 with you, which was awesome. I know a ton of listeners know you, a lot of leaders know you, but for the three listeners who don't, can you give us the quick bio?

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, sure. I am an author, a speaker, a podcaster. I'm based in Nashville. I have a couple of books that I've written some, 100 Days to Brave and Remember God are the two most recent. The best sellers that people kind of know of and I've heard of around travel and speak at conferences, events and churches. At least for the first half of 2019. I've been traveling pretty solid. I'm doing two to three weekends a month since the fall of 2012. And so I'm taking the back half of 2019 off to rest and to be home and just to kind of recalibrate a little bit and see - Am I still doing and what I'm called to do and what does that look like and you can't really make big decisions when you're not resting. And so it was time to take a little ... Annie knows the scripture says every seven years let the fields rest. Right? And so it felt like this is the time.

Carey Nieuwhof: Isn't that interesting because you and I met on the road in Seattle and I was on a marathon, like we've known, I've known of you for many years. But we actually were in the same room at the same time at an event in Seattle.

Annie F. Downs: Because I chased you down, Carey, that's why. I sat at the back and watched you speak and then I said. "I have got to meet you and share all of our friends."

Carey Nieuwhof: We do have all the same friends, Annie, and I want to ask you, best of the road and I'm not a complainer, but I understand there is like when I'm off the road, my inner circle goes like, you're so happy, aren't you? I'm like, yes, and so it's an incredible privilege, but what are the highs and the lows of the road for you? Because a lot of people, if you're not on the road all the time, you don't get it.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, that's right. The highs for me are the people I get to meet. The friends who are listeners to my podcast. It's called, That Sounds Fun. So the people who listen to my podcast or who read my books that show up places that I am speaking just because they want to connect and they feel like were friends. That is such a highlight to me when people stop me in airports or restaurants. It makes me incredibly happy that they would even consider that worthy of their time and that I'm someone they want to talk to. So that's my favorite part is the

people I get to meet. And what I will miss the most this fall is I have to go six months without meeting anyone out on the road that I love looking forward to.

Annie F. Downs: I really dislike what I miss when I'm gone, but I'm an enneagram seven. And so like I'm always, FOMO is like something I have to fight all the time. But I've missed a lot of weddings. I've missed a lot of birthday parties, I've missed a lot of weekend activities over last seven years of travel and that's really hard to miss really important events and other people's lives that I would never miss except that I was booked to be in Seattle a year and a half before I was there.

Carey Nieuwhof: Exactly. Because you make these decisions a year or two, like I'm booked into 2022, not fully, but a couple of the big, big blocks are booked two years out, particularly if it's international and like you look at it, the calendar looks empty and then you realize, oh, you're missing so and so's graduation or it can be very ... You wouldn't have difficulty with this because you're the most fun person in the world, but it is hard to keep up those real life friendships in your own community, in your own neighborhood because often when you get off the road, you're tired, right?

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, that's right. And we kinda my girlfriends, I'm single and so I also don't come home to anyone and so that probably is a little different for me than you in that my friendships have to maintain because that is my family. When I'm not in a serious dating relationship and since I'm not married, there isn't this priority main person I come home to. And so my community of friends become that family for me. But and their children. I mean, I love kids and I don't have any. And so their kids, I mean, the thing that's changed the most has been instead of my social circle being wide, it is narrow and deeper because if I'm only home for three days, I'm only going to see maybe two or three friends versus seeing 15 friends if I'm home for a whole week.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. And for me it's tough for my wife, I thought it would be easier when our kids left home because we're empty nesters, it's actually been harder because my wife is now in an empty house for three, four, five days sometimes. And then when I come home she's ready to go out and I'm like, I'm not leaving the driveway. Like I am sitting here in my backyard, in my cocoon and not moving. I'm not eating at a restaurant. So. Yeah. But that's true. So okay. We talked about this before and I thought it'd be a fun subject of conversation. So true confession, I've become a little bit of a student of what I would call the female mafia. Okay. So the female tribe.

Annie F. Downs: I like it. I love that I'm included in this. I think it's so fun.

Carey Nieuwhof: You are, you are, I mean, I think, so here's my theory, you and I talked about this a little bit in advance and I was talking to Ann Voskamp about this recently, but I think a lot of male leaders, myself included, really had no idea and I'm just trying to be a student of this, of how influential some leaders like yourself, like Ann Voskamp, Lysa TerKeurst, Shelley Giglio, Rachel Cruz, Rachel Hollis.

Carey Nieuwhof: I mean the list could go on and on. Those names are fairly well known in church world, but I think the vast majority of male leaders have no idea how big those tribes are, how loyal those tribes are or how motivated to action those tribes are. So I just go around now with my notebook open and I'm like, I want to learn. Talk to us a little bit about that. What do you think a male leaders might be missing when they look at that and go, oh yeah, so like your podcast last year. You just shared with me, if I can share it, you shared it with your listeners. 5 million downloads in 2018, like that's insane. That's a giant podcast and most guys, they don't lead at that level. They don't have that kind of influence. So help me understand what's going on there in the wonderful little mafia of your podcast.

Annie F. Downs: Well, I think there's an interesting starting conversation is that when you think across the male pastors that I know who've written on books with leadership in the title, you can probably come up ... You and I could list off 10 men who are wise in the leadership realm and you write books with that in the title. When it comes to women. I think the only people using leadership and the title was probably Jenni Catron.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh yeah.

Annie F. Downs: Right.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. And I could include Jenni with that, but it's funny because she's more in the other space in where Tony Morgan would be, where I would be, that kind of thing. Yeah.

Annie F. Downs: Right. So I think that's really interesting because the rest of us are actually teaching women how to lead. We're just not calling it that. And so we're saying, we are leading with different questions and we're leading with different needs. But what we are teaching is how to lead. We're just not saying here's this, here's your top 10 leadership tips for women because a lot of times for women, they are not seen as leaders as often as men because they're stay at home moms or their nurses or, and this is being, I mean, again, you and I are both going to do massive generalizations, but if you look across the scope of Christian culture, Jenni Catron's writing on leadership and calling it that and there's 15 other of us that are writing on leadership but not calling it that, because we are going, hey, you're a mom with four kids at home and you are leading them. I'm just going to show up with a podcast with two women that you like or with me and a male musician that you like and we're going to talk to you about what it looks like to lead, but we're not going to put the pressure on you to be a leader. We're just gonna talk to you about leading.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is that intentional? Like this is really interesting. Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I just want to understand. Tell me more about that.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, it's really intentional for me. I am surprisingly strategic for it's like I'm fun. Probably people are more surprised that I have strategy behind what I do versus like she had Santa Claus on her podcast. What a yahoo that was hilarious and it is hilarious. It's an excellent episode and Santa was great, but there is strategy to everything I do and my strategy. I mean, the sentence that we have up in the office that we share with our employees that we talk about the most is Annie is your friend you get coffee with and sometimes you talk about the Bible. And so everything I do revolves around that sentence and my lead is Annie is your friend. And so once I have, and this is what the female mafia as you call it, what the lady Mafia is doing is what we are doing, which is honest.

Annie F. Downs: We are not being dishonest or deceitful. What is honest is we're saying to these women, Hey, we're literally just like you. We are just like you. I'm living my life. I got to do my laundry too. I gotta get my oil change too. And Man, I didn't plan to be single in my 30s either. And I'm busy too, just like you guys who are moms and I'm just like you. Here's something that I've learned and here's a book. And then they go like, man, this person is just like me. And it seems to me, correct me if I'm wrong Carey. It seems to me that men want to listen to men, they want to be like, and women want to listen to women they think they are already like.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh wow. Wow.

Annie F. Downs: Right? Is that what you're seeing men do?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yes. Yeah, I was just letting your mic drop for a moment.

Annie F. Downs: That's why I love Bob Goff but-

Carey Nieuwhof: That was profound. You're right.

Annie F. Downs: I think what people love about Bob Goff is he has managed to make every man go. I can be like Bob, I can be like Bob.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Bob has this weird thing where and I mean that in the most complimentary way where he lives in impossible life. Like you spend 10 minutes with Bob in person or online and you're like, oh my gosh, you just flew to Mars saved in the entire continent of Africa and now you're hanging out in a parade in your neighborhood.

Annie F. Downs: That's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: But somehow you made me think that's possible and you're just like me. It's the weirdest thing. It's the weirdest thing with Bob.

Annie F. Downs: And that's one of the reasons he's a crossover from male and female.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, and I wonder if that's a little bit like my style, like it Didn't See It Coming, right? It's like, oh my gosh, are we all in this together?

Annie F. Downs: Oh man. When you said the thing about like the 11 as we talked about on my show when we talked the 11 places of lower level burnout, I was like, Carey gets me. He gets me that it's not this like massive explosion of a life. It's this slow burn, falling apart.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is it the male pride or this idea that I've got it all together and I'm the expert and therefore you need to sit at my feet. Like it's fascinating because the loyalty of the female tribe is like incredible. I have a friend, I won't name names, but he'd sold a number of books, guy, had sold a bunch of books, like, well into the best seller category. And then there was a very well-known women's ministry that I won't name that featured him and said, hey, you should go and buy x guy's book. And he sold like 20,000 copies in a month. And he's like, there's no guy I know what that power like, it's unbelievable. And so I'm just really interested when you think about audience engagement, like your writing style is so personal and so narrative and so like we're having a cup of coffee with Annie. And then every 5 or 10 pages, this pearl drops in the middle of a longer narrative. Talk to me about the bond that you have with your audience.

Annie F. Downs: It feels very real to me. I think that's where it has to start is if the author, the podcaster or the speaker is trying to create a tribe, they will not connect with that tribe. If you are trying to make friends, you will build a tribe that is bigger than you would ever dream, right? Because that's all I am really you and I have talked about this. It's not about numbers, it's about connection and I genuinely, I set out to write books and create shows on the podcast and speak to an audience in a way that says, Annie actually feels like we're friends. Like when people walk up to me at the airport and they go, I know this is crazy, but I feel like we're best friends and I go, I do actually do too. I asked, I feel like we're friends. The fact that you would even walk up to me is a friendship moved to me. So I'm in.

Annie F. Downs: I find that that breeds loyalty in women and in men actually and you and I have joked that you're infiltrating and trying to learn how women do ministry and I'm infiltrating to learn how men do it because I think it's so interesting and I so value strong leadership from men and women and I just. And I think dudes are awesome. I like hanging out with guys all the time. I eat lunch, I have an office at my local church where I attend and I go to lunch once a week with like five guys that are all married and we go and we sit and we talk about sports and life and whatever. I just think they're really fun to be around. But the way that men do ministry is very different than how women do ministry and the strongest families in a church or in a home. I think have a male leadership father voice and a female leadership mother voice. I mean God is both of us, right? The full reflection of God is in both of us and so we need our audiences for lack of a better word. I use friends a lot more. Our audience's needs to feel like they are

hearing from a father and a mother. And so I want to understand how fathers do it and I want to be the mother voice.

Carey Nieuwhof: What do you admire in male leadership? When you look at male leadership as a practice today. You would say you guys keep doing this.

Annie F. Downs: Keep expanding your reach in a way that your congregation, your family feels protected. When I see pastors kind of put their arms around their congregation and say, Hey, I've been, I went ahead of you there and I'm here to tell you how we're going to survive this or do this hard thing is coming our way and I am going to be there with you. I think the protective, part of the male personality and the male leadership is - women cannot do that in that way.

Carey Nieuwhof: Really?

Annie F. Downs: It is a uniquely gifted. Yeah. We can protect people. I mean we have mama bear ness in us, but there is a difference when a man ... And we're seeing this in the sexual abuse movement, it is, women want men to stand up for us. Even the most feminist, strongest women are saying, why are the men not speaking out against the men, you go.

Annie F. Downs: Why do you care? Why do you care? You say that the women voices are the one that matters, and yet you want men to stand up for you because if you ask me in our heart of hearts, there is a protection that comes from a male that God put in man that is not in women and it's different and we want men to stand up for us but it doesn't mean we're weak, just means we want to be protected in a way that is uniquely masculine way. And it is the way that God demonstrates in his warrior nest, and Jesus returning as a warrior. I would say I am a warrior in a lot of ways. I have a warrior heart, but I am not a masculine warrior. And that's a different thing. And so that's one of the ways I see men leading.

Annie F. Downs: I feel like what I'm seeing, and I'm in a really, honestly, I don't use this word lightly. I'm going to really blessed unique situation that I'm surrounded by male leaders at my local church that I want to be like. I mean, there are so pastor Kevin Queen, I mean Chris Nichols, some of these guys here, Drew Powell, I can keep going. I'm going to leave somebody out if I keep going back, I just, I could not be more honored to lead along with them as we on the teaching team here at Cross Point. But I watch them and I go, okay, they are in private who they are in public. And I think that's amazing. So that's male and female. But I think it's amazing to see men being intentional to be who they are in private and public.

Annie F. Downs: And I love seeing men who figure out how to have healthy friendships with women. But who's closest tribe are ... I like when they have really good dude friendships too. So I think it's both are important. I don't think we need to live in a world where men and women can't be friends. I think that, I would be so sad if I couldn't be friends with dudes. I think y'all are so much fun but I can't be friends with y'all. Like y'all can be friends with each other. And the same is true

in reverse my guy friends aren't ever going to be the same as my female friends. And so having both to me is really important because I want mother and father voices in my life. Even as just peer mentors. I want mother and father voices.

Carey Nieuwhof: Any thoughts because you raised it, like having lunch. Any thoughts on the Billy Graham rule not to put anything on Billy Graham, God bless him but like that idea that men should not meet alone with a woman period without a third person present. All of that. Do you think that's too restrictive? Do you think that's wise? What are your thoughts on that?

Annie F. Downs: I think the fruit of Billy Graham's life shows us that he had some stuff, almost everything right? I could never question the fruit of the life of him. I have decided for, so I'm in an interesting spot too because I'm single so there isn't a husband for me to consider, but there are a lot of wives for me to consider. And so I don't have a relationship, by relationship, I mean friendship. I don't have a friendship with a man who's married, who's my friendship with the wife is not as trying to be equal to. I'm really intentional about that of like if me and him see each other every day at the office, then she and I are going to choose to see each other too and we're going to ... Because I think to get really spiritual. I think the enemy wants to screw us all up all the time and while I am never one who's going to sign up for an affair or even think that would ever even happen, that's ridiculous to think that it's not possible. And so I mean I don't do one on one lunches with married men, but that's more because if a single guy's in the restaurant and he wants to date me, he thinks I'm taken, but I don't want that to happen.

Annie F. Downs: It's the perception I don't want to be sitting at a meal with a married guy and miss out on a chance with a single guy who's actually going to end up with me.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's funny.

Annie F. Downs: What a waste of a meal. So, no, but I do, I mean I'm fine with group stuff with married men, but I personally, I mean I'll ride in a car with one. I don't have if we're all going somewhere and me and a married guy ended up in the car together and we're going 15 miles. I'm fine with that. I feel like we all are ... but you know what? And I'll tell you that the other truth is the minute something smells off to me, the minute that I'm having feelings I don't like or the minute I'm sensing feelings that he has or that we're connecting too much. I run, sometimes with communication sometimes without.

Annie F. Downs: I don't run as it never speak to him again, but I go, we are not gonna-

Carey Nieuwhof: You put back a little bit.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. How do you say that if you feel something's off?

Annie F. Downs: The one time I said something I just said, man, I just made it a joke. Okay, we're spending a ton of time together. You are keeping me from finding a husband. Get out of here something silly like that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. It's not like you have a really awkward conversation was.

Annie F. Downs: No, no, no, no, no. I haven't had like a, I need to sit down with you and your wife. Like, hey, have you thought of anybody to set me up with yet because I'm ready to be dating somebody and not hanging out with yahoos like you and your friends like just trying to play it off and then I just back away.

Annie F. Downs: But I do the same, I mean you've probably done that with women. I do the same thing with single guys where I go like, Hey, if we're not going to date, we're not going to talk this much. So, or if we are going to date, let's go and then we go one way or other. But I just think there's always a point where you know. And you and I've talked before, the little yeses that are in those spots. And in those moments I am not perfect at it but I know when I'm making a little yes that should be a no.

Annie F. Downs: And those little yeses have one more text message or one meal that we probably shouldn't be doing or just one little, like one too far. And you're saying big yeses real quick. And I have watched churches and families and yeah, a handful of really important people lose a lot because they said a big yes, it didn't feel big to them anymore. And I'm just, I'm going to do my very, very best. I want to stay in this game until the very end. And that's the end of me. Not the end of four years.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, yeah. You at 80, God willing, you want it to be fresh, alive and celebrating the whole deal.

Annie F. Downs: That's right, and I still want to be podcasting and so, and I've made a lot of mistakes already and we'll make more going forward. But I think Billy Graham to circle all the way back for you, I think Billy Graham knew himself the best and so we can trust that he knew himself and he made rules for himself that remind us that everyone needs to know their line. And I've never had an attraction to a married man that I did not express to someone to say, Hey, this weird thing happened. And usually it's my counselor or my mentor and I go, hey, this weird moment happened. I'm not gonna do anything with it. I'm walking away. But I'm saying out loud that this one time my heart jumped and I'm running and I didn't man, I just don't want to ... I don't ever want to ruin the fun I'm having and the ministry I'm having because I can't walk away.

Carey Nieuwhof: And does that make it lose power when you say it out loud?

Annie F. Downs: Oh yeah. That's the thing, right? Because as long as it's a secret, it can do something. As soon as people know, they watch you. If you and the guy are in the same place. If it's a student pastor at a summer camp and I'm speaking or if

it's a waiter at a restaurant and he has a ring on like once you say it out loud, everybody's watching. So what are you going to do then? You're going to like publicly be an idiot? No.

Carey Nieuwhof: You put yourself in jail, right? Yeah.

Annie F. Downs: My pride won't let me publicly be an idiot. I can privately be an idiot for a long time. So yeah, I try to try because I want to be friends with married guys and I don't want to ruin it and so I have to draw a really high fence so that I can stay in the field.

Carey Nieuwhof: What are some things you see male leaders do that you wish we would stop doing? And I know this is like big generalizations, but it's a fascinating conversation. I'm sure there's things that you look at and like what is with that?

Annie F. Downs: I think a lot of times when male pastors will ask me or one of my friends to come in and speak to their women because they're like, I just need you to say things I can't say. I'm always like. I mean, did you try like, are you sure? Like, I mean, I'm happy for you to pay me to do that, but I bet they would listen to you. So a lot of times I think, yeah, bring me in, it's my job, bring me in, but don't bring me in because you think you don't have something to say to them or they won't listen to you because they'd rather listen to us then listened to just you or just me. They'd rather hear both of our opinions. So bring me in and let me do my part. But you do your part too.

Annie F. Downs: I also get bothered, and this doesn't happen as much in adult realm as it does in student ministry and in college ministry, but when we split up men and women and we talk to the men about pornography and the women about eating disorders because I'm like that he's watching porn women and who's having an eating disorder, that seventh grade kid who nobody knows and he's like a football player and he's still really struggling.

Annie F. Downs: And so I just think we gotta quit acting like certain sins are gender bias versus they're all gender role. And when you, and this, but I mean when iPhones and smartphones are available to everyone, no matter whether you're male or female, pornography is going to chase you. And so we have to say to women, this is not a male sin, this is a sin, like this is not a male temptation. This is a temptation and say the same as a young man about body image and about these things that we have historically labeled as a female only because what it does when we tell young men or grown men, when we say that an eating disorder is something that only women struggle with or we say certain mental health disorders are only for women that not only do they feel shamed for struggling, they feel double shame because they're struggling and it's a female sin. So then how could they tell their youth pastor who keeps saying that all the girls have body image issues? How can they say, well, I'm cutting myself too? And then they go, I can't because that means I'm this or that or the other. It means I'm all these labels that go with having a feminine sin.

Annie F. Downs: And the same is true for women who struggle with more masculine, historically masculine sins of like, well, not only can I not confess that I have been reading books that are pornographic or looking at video, that's pornographic. My youth pastor is also going to be shocked because I'm not a dude or, I mean, you would not believe how much this is a conversation in women ministry right now. I mean, I sat with some women in the summer of 18, and they said, we need to tell you the biggest things we're seeing and you tell us where, if you're seeing it everywhere else. And it was comparison which is super normal for women and it was pornography. And they're like, what do we do? We didn't know until we asked you anonymously. And that's what people said. And then you go like, yeah, everyone's talking about it. And so that's some things I see male leaders could step. It's not even that I think male leaders are doing it wrong. It's will you step into this and believe that you can teach on pornography on a Sunday morning and everyone in the room needs to hear it?

Carey Nieuwhof: Right. Annie, I think that's a really good challenge because I think some of our assumptions about what people struggle with are 5, 10, 15, 30 years out of date and welcome to 2019.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah. That's right. I think it's very fair that in 1975, the chance of a female having a playboy magazine under her mattress was very much lower.

Carey Nieuwhof: You are talking slim single digits, at the most.

Annie F. Downs: Totally. I mean just look at the difference though Carey as well and Jamie Ivy writes about this in her book that just came out last year, but 40 years ago you had to go find it. Today it is chasing us. So men and women and so it's just, yeah, there's a little of-

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. And women are bored in their marriages just like men are and women are frustrated just like men are. And I think it's that easy access thing that opens it up. And I know every time I touch on that in my teaching at our church, like we just hear, please say more about that. Please say more about that. Like people want you to go there, they want you to talk about it.

Annie F. Downs: They really do.

Carey Nieuwhof: But it's uncomfortable as a communicator.

Annie F. Downs: It's terrible. t's awful. It's an awful weird thing to talk about. Yeah, it's terrible.

Carey Nieuwhof: It is.

Annie F. Downs: But if you don't say to men and women and it feels weird because you're sitting in a Sunday morning room surrounded by people that are all different than you. And you go like, oh, I don't want to anybody to say this while I'm sitting next to a guy or while I'm sitting around these people I don't really know. And then you

go like, man, I care more about your freedom than I do about your comfort. So we got to get people set free from this.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Okay. So I want to talk a little bit because I've had a conversation with a number of leaders and I just want to see, and you can totally agree, disagree. And we're not going to solve the whole issue of women in leadership, women in ministry.

Annie F. Downs: We might.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. You go ahead because that'd be great. I know we've got different people with different views listening, both male and female. However, I think it is fair to say that women have not been empowered to lead always in the church. That would be a fair statement that we could agree to. But it seems to me that a lot of women have looked outside of the church for leadership as a result, like definitely inside. So and so is my pastor. So and so is our staff, this is my church. This is my tribe. But when you think about the quote female mafia, which I should stop using that term-

Annie F. Downs: I like it. I'm kind of into it?

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you really? Okay. And didn't seem to mind it either, but anyway.

Annie F. Downs: I'll be in a club with them.

Carey Nieuwhof: But you look at the tremendous influence, the tremendous audience. I mean, Lysa TerKeurst told me on this podcast that she gets 6 to 8 million people who access her content daily, which is insane. That's insane. Like, those are crazy numbers. I mean, I'm not sure the NFL has that.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, right.

Carey Nieuwhof: To a certain extent. I don't know what their stats are, but like that you're up there when that is your thing. And so I'm wondering if not having much of a voice in the church that this has created that whole thing out there that is happening on the internet through books, through conferences, through events. Can you comment on that a little bit? I'd just love to get your take on that.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, I mean I think that's true in my story as I didn't see a lot of females leading and the church but my mom was a lawyer and so I saw her leading out of our home all the time and leading in our home with my dad as well. But I knew she was a powerful woman in a business sense, but I didn't see any ... And even coming into this job I've been doing this full time for eight years, nine years, and have been in Nashville pursuing this since 2008, so 11 years. And I remember there was a time when Jenny Allen and I were at a meal with a bunch of other women at the table and Christine Cain said to us do y'all know any female pastors? And at the time I was like, I mean, this is probably eight years ago.

Annie F. Downs: I was like, I don't really know any that are named pastor per se. And Jenny was like, yeah, I don't know at this point in my life. And Christine says, "raise your hand at this table if you're a female pastor." And all the other women raised their hands and me and Jenny were like, "oh, oh, okay." I mean, Jenny had more experience than I did, but it was very new to me. So even growing up a Christian and growing up in the church, I didn't know female pastors until I was a proper adult. And so it's just such a different experience now because even in the last 10 years, the conversation in the church has changed so drastically about where women should be and how they should lead and what it looks like to lead and they're going to be a lot of women who tell you a lot of different answers.

Annie F. Downs: But what I stand by and we've talked about is, the father voice and the mother voice that is what I keep going back to is that we are both made in the image of God and so there is a place in the church and in fact it's a little bit of a privileged thing to say, but I kinda don't care for titles and don't care what the title is. If there's a woman, if there's a mother voice in the church. Okay. If she's the pastor's wife, that's great. If she is on staff, that's great. If she's an Annie, like I'm neither of those things. I'm not the pastor's wife, I'm not on staff. I'm on the teaching team. And so there is a mothering voice in our community, even though I'm not a mother by birthing children, I am a mother by how I disciple and lead and strategically take care of others. And so to me, the question of white women leadership looks like in the church it's so complicated because of Paul.

Annie F. Downs: It's also complicated because of Lydia and how she brought the scripture to the Romans. Right? So it just is all ... I think a lot of times God trusts us to use our brains. And I'll tell you, Carey there are times where I know I'm out of place and I don't know if I'm out of place stepping out of place because of my gender or just because I'm stepping into leadership that isn't mine or because I have some unrepentanced sin that means I shouldn't be right in a leadership spot. But I know in my gut-

Carey Nieuwhof: Join a long line of men. I mean come on.

Annie F. Downs: Sure, sure, right? So I know there are moments where I go, yeah, I'm not supposed to lead right here and I would never automatically go, because I'm a girl, I'm like there are times where I'm not supposed to lead and I need to listen too. And there are times where Chris, again, Christine Cain said to me once, their invitation is your permission, so if they invite you to stand there and be their lead there, that's your permission to do it. And so there are times even here at Cross Point where I will throw in an opinion where I go, you invited me to be on the teaching team, so I'm going to say a thing here. You don't have to listen to me, my opinion doesn't have to be the right opinion, but I'm going to say an opinion because your invitation is my permission to be Annie. And so does that kinda answer the question?

Carey Nieuwhof: No, that's really helpful and I'll just say to listeners, because I think if you're hyper conservative, and I mean I consider myself somewhat conservative, but if you're like super conservatives and the super liberals will be saying, I can't believe you guys are actually having this conversation. One from the perspective, of course women aren't in leadership and the other from this is 2019, what do you mean women are not in leadership? Like, so I get the two poles, but there's a lot of people in the middle and I think John Maxwell gave us a really helpful definition of leadership when he said leadership is influence and I'm just fascinated by the influence that you have that all the women that we've named have. Your good friend Rachel Cruz.

Carey Nieuwhof: You look at how she's leading a Dave Ramsey and these are women who don't have as yet a position so to speak in the church. And I think in part, I mean you do, you're on staff at Cross Point. And I'm not saying Christine Caine preaches at churches every weekend. Ann Voskamp does et cetera, et cetera. Not every weekend, but you know what I mean, but I'm just saying sometimes when you don't make a place, leaders just find a place. And-

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, that's right. Right. As a part of the teaching team not an actual staff member, but as a teaching team, it genuinely, women will find a place to lead if they feel called to lead. We want to do as the church is go, we honor that call in you and we will help you find the right place. And that right place is different for everybody seasonally and is different. I mean I'll have different seasons of what this looks like. This is it won't look like this forever and it hasn't looked like this forever, but the thing we can do for men and women is go, we see leadership and use a desire in you. We honor that. So here's is how it works, and here's what you should study and here's what you should read. And just because you feel called doesn't mean you get to lead out next week. It means you start doing the David thing of like you're anointed. Okay, well go back to the sheep because you've got some time, care for the people who are right in front of you and believe that the anointing is on you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and I consider myself as a student of your tribe, of the women who are leading in the church but also outside of the church. And honestly, my notebook is open because I think I have so much to learn and I think you're leading brilliantly.

Annie F. Downs: I'm sure trying Carey. I just want to make sure in my leadership and again I don't consider it leadership very often. I just think I am making friends with anyone who wants to be friends with me. I'll be friends with them if it's through the podcast or through books or on stages, whatever it is, I'll be friends. But if especially for people who don't believe what we believe, I think when people fall in love with the people of God, they will fall in love with God and so I want to be the friend they fall in love with so that at some point my leadership walks them toward the reason we do any of this. Right? Like I don't need a position. I just want people to know that Jesus is what makes all this okay. Jesus is what this is all about. Jesus is who is powerful when I'm powerless, and he's steps

when I can't. And so my leadership, even though I rarely term it that, is a leadership that says I am just like you, I just have figured out this one answer that I really want to tell you about. But it may take you a little bit of time of listening before you believe me, but we'll just keep trying because I'm just going to keep telling you the same story.

Carey Nieuwhof: Any other notes from that field where, because your audience is so highly engaged, anything else that you find. Because I mean there are pastors trying to connect with their congregation, there's business leaders trying to connect with clients, there's marketers trying to connect with a market. I mean there's so many people listening to this episode who are like, yeah, what I'm trying to do is connection. And so as a student of what you're doing, anything else that you would say, hey, when I do this, it works really well, or when I do this gong show doesn't work.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, and you and I talked about this a little bit, but if you do it for the money, it will be a short term. You will get exactly what you're getting paid for, which is money in the bank. You will not make friends. That's not how you make friends. That's not how you make connection. If you are doing this for the money, you will get money. If you are doing this for connection, you will get connection and money. So it's up to you. And so for me, that's what I've learned is I've made some decisions where I thought I have to do this for the bottom line and sometimes that's still the right thing and you said not like firing someone or making a hard business decision, but going like, do I talk about this product or do I talk about this person. And if you're doing it because you're trying to get somewhere or get something, you might get there and get something, but it's going to be short term. And I'm trying to marathon here.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, you don't end up feeling good about that either. At the end of the day, if you ever, and we've all done that once or twice or more but-

Annie F. Downs: You have to, right? Like you have to give yourself permission for this to be messy. We, after church yesterday, we just, a couple of us sat around and went like, well some of that was great and some of that was messy and this is what we do. Like it's going to be a little bit messy. And that's how I feel about this as well as that leadership sometimes just looks a little bit messy, but I am learning that if you do it because you want to connect and that if you do it because you go like God has put something in me that I want to share and I genuinely believe it matters. People will believe you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Which is interesting. You must get this too. I hear from young leaders all the time, like how do I build a platform? And yeah. Okay. You have the same reaction. I'm like, that was the wrong question.

Annie F. Downs: Do you want to build a platform? You need to literally go buy some wood and some nails and do it in your backyard. Okay.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's my new answer.

Annie F. Downs: Yes, you can have it that if you want a platform, I can tell you exactly how to build one at a Home Depot, because what we are doing is kingdom work. This isn't platform building.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. I find that the people who end up with platforms, we're really setting out to build a platform and the people who were setting out to. I'm not saying there's no exceptions to that, but the people who we weren't setting out like I never thought the podcast would become this. I didn't think this many people would show up on the blog or buy my books or any of that, like this was not in my brain as to a life plan, but here we are in the process of trying to help a lot of leaders. Just a lot of leaders showed up and next thing you know. But if you're mentoring a younger woman, a younger man in leadership, what are some tips you would give them to say, here's some things you should do? Here's some things to avoid.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, for starters, I would say, make your private life public to somebody you shouldn't have secrets. Not from everybody. The world that need to know your secrets, but your mentor does. Your pastor does some leadership does. Pastor Kevin and I sat down today, he popped into my office and I said, Hey, I'm just having a hard time in this one area and I just want to say it to you. And he went, Oh man, I get it and let me pray. And so I don't need the whole world to know that, but I need people to know that. So if you have a private life that is so private nobody knows, it's gonna come out. I mean, we see it all the time, right? Like, light always shows up in the darkness. And so your secrets aren't gonna stay secret.

Annie F. Downs: You get to decide when they come out and how they come out or other people will which is unfortunate. So that's one thing I often tell people, especially if they want to do a job like yours or mine, is I say, okay, you better have your private life in order to the best of your ability. We're all allowed to be human, but to the best ability to have your private life and order.

Carey Nieuwhof: But your wife shouldn't be surprised or I'm married but she should never be surprised by what she sees you say in public. And it shouldn't be like, wow, I'm really enjoying the gap right now, Carey. Thank you.

Annie F. Downs: Do you know my three best friends from childhood, we have a rule that they cannot learn something from a book or from a stage that I have not already told them.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh Wow.

Annie F. Downs: And that happened after three books were out before I'm at eight now. So the first three, then there was this conversation of like, Hey, we're tired of reading things that we didn't know, but you're letting the world know it before you're

telling us. And I thought that is a good correction spot. And so now I, we go through, they don't learn things and books and so yeah, we found that to be important for our friendship, that they didn't want to learn things in books. And I said, okay. So we shan't. So that's another thing I would say is have your people in place and some that Shelley Giglio taught me that has really impacted me is she said plan for success. We always plan for failure, but what do you do if this goes really well?

Annie F. Downs: Have you thought ahead of what if you do have a lot of people start following the work you're doing, are you prepared for that in some way? I don't think you can be prepared fully but there is some, can you prepare for success? And Shelley walking me through that kind of went like, oh yeah, I do need to think through what happens if the Today Show calls and asked me to come talk about this one topic, I put my book, am I willing to go do that?

Carey Nieuwhof: And what's that gonna feel like? Right?

Annie F. Downs: Right, right. And then a thing that I see a little bit in our world for men and women, I see it a lot in the women's space because I am in a lot of those like mafia meetings, there will be a lot of us at the backstage is if you are there because you are trying to climb people, you will have a short term experience.

Annie F. Downs: If you are there to give to people. One of the last questions I'd like to ask when I'm with my friends is there anything I can do for you? What can I do for you? Because I experienced it. Those people who asked me that I feel like they genuinely care about me. And so I took that and started asking people that because I want people to feel like I genuinely care. So what can I do for you? Like is there anything I can do to help you?

Carey Nieuwhof: I love that. When you see social climbing, because I think we all have a picture in our head of what that is. So you're in the green room, someone's climbing or whatever. Somebody's trying to use your platform. Can you just articulate how you have seen that and what are the triggers that rub you the wrong way? Just so that we can all get a better sense of when we see that in the mirror?

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, right. Because that's the problem is everyone else in the green room knows it's you accept you usually. And so that's the problem. I'm always like, how did they not know that we're all watching this? Like don't go talk to Tim Tebow and not ask me who I am, like don't walk to meet with Tim Tebow unless you have a Florida Gators hat on and then please walk by me to Tim Tebow because I didn't want to talk to you anyway. But to me so one of the big things that stands out to me, it is. So we'll make up a person's name, Sarah. Sarah is a brand new speaker and she's got her first book out with a traditional publishing gig and she walks in the room and she doesn't even see the people who are putting the food on the table and you can see she's looking past the people or she sits down next to someone's assistant and doesn't speak to them.

Annie F. Downs: But then when that person sits down, she speaks to that person. You see those little clues that go like ... I had a Christian musician one time, Carey, I had gotten nominated for a K-LOVE Award and so I was at the K-LOVE Awards. And I'm doing the step and repeat where you take the picture for Getty Images and the photographer says to the Christian musician hey, she needs to take a picture. He goes, oh, did you want a picture with me? And I was like I mean, yeah, sure. And then the Getty Image guy jumps in and is like the photographer image guy. The photographer jumps in and is like, oh, she's nominated. And the musician says, oh, are you somebody? And I was like, okay, I can't be more offended for humans, not even for myself, for humans.

Annie F. Downs: That that would be your question. Right? So it's even things like that that you go, like, the problem is once you realized that I was somebody, as you categorize people, your treatment of me changed and so I don't think we're done here. I think no matter and that Christian musician has never been on my podcast and won't because I'm like no you don't do this, right. I'm not into that. And so to me that's the big things is who did they see? Do I see everybody in the room? And we all have limited time. So we can't say hi to every single person in a green room or every single person at a gas station or whatever. But I mean, what are the clues you see? What jumps out to you?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, a lot of that resonates. I would say wandering eyes, which I have to watch because people who are climbing will gravitate toward the most when Andy Stanley walks in the room or the A list keynoter and you're talking to somebody who's not going to be on the platform. Are you just looking to get out of that conversation? Are you really willing to be there? Little things like, are you willing to clean up your own mess? Like if you've eaten lunch, like will you just throw that stuff in the garbage, please?

Annie F. Downs: Just throw your trash in the garbage in a green room and everyone will like you, like that it's full stop. Just throw your garbage away.

Carey Nieuwhof: No stuff like that, right? And not be the diva. And it's weird because I think people, we're fascinated with fame again, back to we all carry our phones in our pocket now. Not only is that a porn thing, but it makes everybody believe, because the internet is flat, right? Like a guy working out of his basement can get millions of downloads and you just start a podcast and all of a sudden it's like boom, there we are. And so that does happen from time to time. But I would say if you're listening going, oh, I hope this happens one day because fame is now, like I think in the 50s it was like 2% of the population wanted to be famous. Now it's like half the population wants to be famous. It's crazy.

Annie F. Downs: I do want to be clear that I've been the person in the green room who wanted to talk to the famous person too-

Carey Nieuwhof: Me too.

Annie F. Downs: I know that feeling.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's an instinct.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah. Yesterday at church I was in a conversation with someone and someone else I wanted to talk to more was walking behind the person and I had to say to myself, stay right here. What if this is the most important conversation God gives you today?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's my brain talk.

Annie F. Downs: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm like, focus, focus, focus, focus.

Annie F. Downs: Yes. Same, same, same. So I can be her too, but I can also sniff her out in a green room or him out in a green room and be like, yeah, if you walk by my assistant and you don't even look like she's a human because you're hurrying to me, then I probably already know who you are.

Carey Nieuwhof: And here here's a tip. The assistant is often more powerful than the leader.

Annie F. Downs: Amen to that. Listen, if you get my assistant on your team, then you've got me on your ... I don't have a choice.

Carey Nieuwhof: Exactly.

Annie F. Downs: The next thing I know a thing pops up, on like, iCal that you're scheduled for a podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof: How do you think I got in here, Annie come on?

Annie F. Downs: No way, I said to her, I can't believe we just got to meet Carey Nieuwhof. That's so cool.

Carey Nieuwhof: It was both ways.

Annie F. Downs: You know what's so funny is just probably people in that room that were like, oh Annie, she's a climber. She looked right past me to Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof: I was in that room. Well, I might've done the same thing. But I think that's the thing you and remembering names which I have to really work at. You meet a certain number of people like remembering names, really important and then I always look at-

Annie F. Downs: People remind you how they met you. Someone at church did that to me yesterday. She said, "Hey, I'm so and so remember we met at blah blah blah."

I'm like, "you are such a gift because yes, I exactly remember that. When you tell me how I met you." That's so kind.

Carey Nieuwhof: Or they say, "Hey my name is Trevor. We met a few years ago at such and such a conference and you sent me an email once or whatever." And you never, you don't under ... I don't, I don't want to get too meta here, but I always said I'd always be the guy who answers every email personally I would always be. And then eventually you get so much email or so many people come in, you're like, oh, that's how it happened. So that's very helpful. But I would also say the other thing that I've learned, and this is a word for anyone who goes to conferences or that because you think this is my once in a lifetime opportunity to meet x, and in the last few years I've just started to let those go.

Annie F. Downs: Yes Carey. That's such good wisdom.

Carey Nieuwhof: So it's not like, oh, it's going to be a surgical strike. Like I've got two minutes here with Annie F. Downs. Not the quilter, but this one from Nashville.

Annie F. Downs: She's Australian she is harder to get to anyway.

Carey Nieuwhof: So I'm like, Okay God, I'm in the middle of a conversation right now with somebody from wherever. I'm just going to finish that conversation. And if the other person leaves the room, but you want me to meet that person that's okay. And that'll happen some other time.

Annie F. Downs: So that is how I live with Reba McEntire. I'm dying to be friends with Reba McEntire and we're in the same town all the time. And I always have to say to myself, worst case scenario, we're both going to heaven. So worst case scenario, I have eternity. So anyone who's dying to meet you or me, worst case scenario, we're are you going to be together forever and we're not gonna have any signing lines. You're going to have unlimited time because we are not going to be the star of any show, but that's such great advice Carey, let like it is just like a binge eating where you would say, I have to eat this right now because I may never get this meal again. Yes you will. Yes you will.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Annie F. Downs: You do not have to act like that. And so the same is true when you meet an influencer or a leader that has changed your life that much. It may be the only time you are in the same room who knows, but you do not have to worry. We're not scarcity where abundance believers and we just need to believe in God, God has got a lot for us and the conversation you are in will give you more than two minutes with a person who is an influencer. I think. Now we are going to live this out because probably me and Oprah are going to be in the same room and I'm like in a conversation with-

Carey Nieuwhof: There are exceptions with me. And you're like, get out of the way Carey. Oprah is here.

Annie F. Downs: I was just shoving. I was just shoving people to get to you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Excuse me, you're blocking me.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah. For any names just know we're going to skip right by on each other.

Carey Nieuwhof: Podcasting. Tell me a little bit about what you're learning about podcasting. We have a lot of podcasters listening. People who wanna launch one. You are so conversational and so natural in your style and delivery. Do you have a filter for like what gets in or what doesn't? is it literally. What if it sounds fun?

Annie F. Downs: So people wise, I only have guests on that are my current friends or people I want to be friends with. That's our line. And so if it's someone that, because probably like you and a lot of our listeners who have podcasts, we have people mail us books and say, can we be on the show? Can we be on the show? And I look at all of them and the conversation kind of goes like, yeah, there's a limited number of dates, right? Like, I mean I've got 52 weeks out of the year and we do two shows a week, so I can have 104 people on my show and that's if we have no repeats and we usually have some repeats people love. There's a couple of my guests that people love and I have back.

Carey Nieuwhof: Three, four, five times.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah. And so to me that's kind of my line. Is this my actual friend? And is this someone that if it's not my friend, is it someone I'm a fan of enough that I can trust that if my listeners go into their catalog of work, I know enough of them. So a great example is Corey Asbury. Corey Asbury and I were not friends before we did the show, but I adored him and loved his music and had been a listener of his music for a decade. So we became friends through the show and are now good buds. But we didn't know each other before, but I knew that I could trust his catalog of work. So I was happy to have him on even though we weren't already friends at a time. So that's how I pick guests. As far as content, I usually just like you and I have done today, I usually just let the conversation do what it would do if we were having coffee, what would come up, what do we talk about? And there are times where things get incredibly personal and I've had one guest call back and go, hey, I loved having that conversation with you, but that middle four minutes I don't think I want public. And I said, okay. I mean this is their choice to. This isn't just my choice.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's a rule on, I mean, I told you that at the beginning too of this interview.

Annie F. Downs: I love that. When you said that, I said I'm going to start saying that to people in mine.

Carey Nieuwhof: I had an a listener, honestly, at an a lister. I won't name his name, but I mean everybody listening I think would know who he is. One of the top speakers in the world. We did a whole 45 minute interview and he came to me afterwards and he goes what, I don't think I'm okay with that, and he was very happy to give the interview, but he said that got too personal. So I texted him the next morning and I said, how are you feeling now? He's like, do you mind? We just never aired the whole thing. It was destroyed, gone.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, that's right. That's why you have ... And again, this fits in that same category of climbers like honestly, who cares? That is a kingdom move, a friendship move. So we get another interview and you work it out and it's totally fine and friendship mattered more to you than what you would have gained from those 45 minutes.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I don't want them to come back more than I want to headline or to embarrass somebody or don't get me wrong. What he said was not inappropriate. It was just personal. It was more like over coffee.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, that's right. And so that's what has to, especially because so many of my guests are my actual real life friends. We kind of do a little pre talk of like, hey, or do you want me to bring that up and can I talk about that and are you okay? And they'll tell me yes or no. And I honor that because again, I want them to want to come back. I want them to feel we had a baseball player one when the Atlanta Braves game on named Dansby Swanson. And what I wanted is exactly is a lot of what ended up happening. I wanted our people to decide Dansby Swanson is my major league player next year. He is a friend of That Sounds Fun. He is a friend of Annie Downs, so he's a friend of mine and Dansby would call me after games and go, well, people yelled, That Sounds Fun at me the entire game again today.

Annie F. Downs: And I'm like, good. That means you...

Carey Nieuwhof: That's amazing.

Annie F. Downs: You actually have fans who aren't proud of you for baseball, but actually love the man you are because that's who they've gotten to know on the show. And so that's what I want is I want to create, I want my friends who are sitting across from me who were recording with me to be. I mean my favorite thing in real life is my friends become friends with my friends. I want this group to meet this group and like each other, I want this group to meet this group and like each other and that's literally all I do with my podcast is I want one of my friends to meet all my friends that are listening and I want them to like each other. And so that's all I'm trying to do is introduce a new friend to my listeners.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now. Okay. Again, I hope leaders listening are realizing that you just got a leadership lesson. Did you hear it? It will be a bullet point on my blog with like five things I blah blah blah blah blah. But that was a huge leadership lesson and

so my little male leadership brain goes, I love it Annie. How does that scale? I feel like you have 10,000 friends. Like how do you keep ... And the guy leading a growing organization, growing company, growing church is like, how does that work at 10 locations?

Annie F. Downs: Yeah. That is a thing. I mean that's what we're in those conversations right now. That's part of what the back half of 2019 going a little quiet and the traveling side is. How does this scale authentically? Not buying listeners, but how do we scale and Annie still be authentically Annie and that's what we're trying to figure it out. But I have some great models who do it for me. Jimmy Fallon does it beautifully.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. He does that, you are right.

Annie F. Downs: He's very authentic with his guests, you know that he loves them. Jimmy Fallon is the normal guy who got an incredible gig and he's never forgotten it. And so but he scaled it and so I watch him. He's who I modeling what I do after Alec Baldwin and these names I'm going to say are not in the church. And so let me just do a preface of...

Carey Nieuwhof: Totally fine on this podcast. We have lots of guests.

Annie F. Downs: So Alec Baldwin is another one that I watched really closely because every interview he does feels like you are sitting in on a conversation with two really close friends-

Carey Nieuwhof: You listening to his podcast too. Here's The Thing.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, Here's The Thing. And he has a TV show now on ABC that I watch.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh really? I didn't know that.

Annie F. Downs: It is an interview show, it's him and in a quiet room. It's just the two of them facing each other. It's so old school and it's still brilliant. He's brilliant.

Carey Nieuwhof: See, I want my podcast first 10 seconds to sound like his, over Miles Davis. He has that opening music. And then I'm Alec Baldwin, and you are listening, and here is-

Annie F. Downs: That's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: I haven't got that voice like, it's so good.

Annie F. Downs: You should do it. So I have some models who have scaled it beautifully. I think Candace Cameron Bure has scaled how to be a faith person in mainstream really beautifully. I think Kathy Lee Gifford has done it really beautifully and so I'm watching these people and going like, I mean, this sounds crazy, but I want to

scale to that. I'm not trying ... That's what I'm going after. How do I do that and still be Annie the whole way through is what we're trying to. And there are times we have people on the show that didn't work and you go, well we tried and that was it. We get a lot more nos than we get yeses have asked that we make of people that aren't already friends of mine. And we tried to get a couple of country artists on to do some Christmas stuff in the winter and they all said no. And I'm like, okay, I'll try again next Christmas.

Carey Nieuwhof: We've got a hit list for 2019, 2020. That's pretty ambitious because again, it's the same thing. I got a stack of books here and requests the whole deal and I got my filter. Longtime listeners will know this from a mutual friend, Jon Acuff another Nashvillian..

Annie F. Downs: I adore that guy.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's like the friendship tests, like could we be friends or are we friends? For me and Jon told me this one day in a green room when I wasn't looking past him to find someone else. Are you kidding, Acuff's a blast. But anyway, he said to me, just do it if it interests you. So that's why I have the weirdest subjects. Like because I'm actually interested. And it was a very helpful filter because I look at stuff and I go, it's not bad, it's just not that interesting to me. So we're not going to do it right now.

Annie F. Downs: It would be interesting to someone else. And someone else will really enjoy it, not my story. I don't think that's. And there's another really, I mean there's a bunch of women who are doing great podcast, but like Jamie Ivey comes to mind because she only has women on and I go like, live your life girl. I love it. She'll have her husband and she wants George W. Bush and other than that, it's only men. I mean, sorry, it's only women. And so I go like, yeah, she has some different filters than I have, but her audience that is loyal to her loves her filter she's picked. And if I started having people because they were famous or known, but they weren't interesting to me and we couldn't tell a fun story and they weren't somebody that felt like a friend, my people would sniff that out and they'd be done with me. And I care more about honoring the friendship and the trust they've given me than I do about getting some name on it because podcasts come and go so quickly too. It's the right we make them.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah they do.

Annie F. Downs: I hope you love this one and hope you feel like we're friends because if you don't, I got another one in three days, you gonna be all right.

Carey Nieuwhof: But your example of Fallon as a guy, there is something he's done because how long has he been around now is a close to two decades.

Annie F. Downs: Probably.

Carey Nieuwhof: From SNL at the very beginning. He has that persona of the little guy who like, oh my goodness, can you actually believe I'm hosting The Tonight Show? And yet so insanely skilled coming up with these incredible creative gigs every week, like five times a week.

Annie F. Downs: Having incredible writers. But it's the writers knowing him and knowing what he loves like it's brilliant Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof: It really is.

Annie F. Downs: He's like Seth Godin to me where he is doing gospel behavior that we can mimic even if he maybe doesn't believe everything we believe. He treats people in a gospel way of like the person sitting on this couch really matters and I'm going to convince all of y'all he really matters because I'm looking at him in the eye and I go, yeah, that's what Jesus would do right there too.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, it is. And Seth Godin is another great example of somebody who, I mean, I don't know him personally. I've got his book. I follow him. I listen, I read, but somebody else who has scaled what he does in a very big way without really, like, his voice hasn't changed in 15 years.

Annie F. Downs: Right, right. So he and I know each other from about 10 years ago. I was in a really small intensive group that he led and I got picked to be in it and he still, I mean there were 12 of us, Carey, you just won't believe this story. I'll make it fast, but there were 12 of us at his table in his office for a week and we weren't allowed to have our phones or computers. It was pen and paper and we couldn't take notes because he said, you remember more when you don't take notes. He said, when's the last time you took a note on a first date? He's like, you don't because you just remember. And so he didn't let us take any notes. It was amazing. He was amazing. So we don't keep up every day, but when I have a book come out, I send it to him.

Annie F. Downs: If something happens that I want his opinion on and he'll just write back one sentence on an email and I go, he did not labor over this. He just said, I see you, I care about you. Hope you're doing. And sometimes the title of the email be wow. And then I'll open it and it'll say, great book, Seth. That's it. You just go like, man, that took you six seconds and I feel so seen.

Carey Nieuwhof: It meant the world to me.

Annie F. Downs: Yes, it meant the world to me. And so then you go like, okay, that's gospel like that reminds me of Jesus. And so how can I do that in a scalable way? How can I do that in an authentic to Annie way? And so I'm watching those people. That's what I'm watching. There are people who are doing it and I want to figure out how.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well the next time you're on, we will debrief with you about what you learned in the second half of 2019 about how to scale this. And I think the principles are so good. This is going to be an ongoing theme to podcast listeners. As I try to figure out what is happening in this incredible world of influence, like you look at your influence, but you combine the list of women leaders that we've all named who maybe don't call themselves leaders but are. And you look at that tribe and most men couldn't imagine living with that much influence.

Annie F. Downs: Look at The Gathering, right? I mean, have a million women watching the same teachers on the same weekend. When does that happen with men?

Carey Nieuwhof: No, it doesn't.

Annie F. Downs: It doesn't. It is extraordinary. And I think there's some spiritual something we don't know that God's doing that is other worldly that we're going like, okay, we're at If Gathering particularly there's other conferences that do it as well. But If Gathering, you go, yeah, something's happened here that God is doing that man or woman couldn't have put together. This is a supernatural. But it is interesting to go like, okay, half a million women across the world gathered together in their homes only a couple of thousand come to Texas where we do the event. The rest of them are gathering in their homes and churches. And it's a big event for them because they have this opportunity to gather and hear teachers that they really respect and love and then talk to their own community about it. And it's working, so it is something interesting to watch.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh gosh, this could be a two hour podcast.

Annie F. Downs: I know I'm sorry getting to stuff like that.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, no, no, no, no. This is like-

Annie F. Downs: Downs, you talk so much.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, you should see all the questions that are not asked in my head.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah good.

Carey Nieuwhof: I wanna talk about your book, but I want to talk because definitely people need to read it. It's called Remember God, you have a bunch of books but you should definitely pick that up. And what's so fascinating. I feel like it reads like your journal.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, it is. I mean in my heart, I'm a storyteller and so there will come a time when I write a novel, but a lot of my books like Remember God, Looking For Lovely. They all have a novelist, kind of author behind them so it's especially with, Remember God, the chapters aren't titled. It's going to go into a year of my life. It starts in the December of one year and goes to January of the next -

14 months worth of time. And so yeah, it does read my journal because it really is my voice and it's me telling the story of discovering whether God was really kind or not.

Carey Nieuwhof: And what's interesting is you said when you were talking about the book that you wrote it, you started writing it without knowing how the story ended.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah. It was terrifying. I was like, this is not how you do books, everybody. Because with all my other books you kind of outlined the whole thing on your wall of your office or at your house and you kind of go, okay, here's where it starts and here's where it ends and I just got to sit down and write it. You just got to eat the elephant one bite at a time, bite by bite, but with, Remember God, I started and I knew when I was starting it that I was only about able to write about six months ahead of where I was actually living. I knew that. I knew that I was writing at the beginning of a story and I was only about six months into the story and so eventually as we got toward the last two months of the book, I was almost living it as I was writing it, which was incredibly painful and not how you're supposed to do it, but it felt like, and my agent and my editor and I were walking this together, my pastor was walking with me, a voice pastor in my life because our pastor left and the middle of the book.

Annie F. Downs: But yeah, that's how it went down. And then I had about seven months between when I finished it and when it actually came out for me to make sure I felt good about the way it was written to have my editor step in and my agent step in and beautifully go like, Hey, you said too much there, back that down. Hey, you didn't say enough there. Yeah, and so that book self published would have been a real bad story without an editor. But I had an editor. I luckily had-

Carey Nieuwhof: But you have good people around you.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah, they got you.

Carey Nieuwhof: It is a little like Lysa TerKeurst, who is just on this podcast a little while ago, her last book, which talks almost in real time about the last three years of her life, the almost disillusion of her marriage discovery of infidelity there on bit harder for a half of her husband to major life threatening health crises. And she's like the ink is barely dry as she's finishing this.

Annie F. Downs: It was incredible to watch.

Carey Nieuwhof: Just to to loop this thought one of the other guests on this podcast so far this year is Jonathan Pokluda who is at The Porch in Texas largest young adult-

Annie F. Downs: He is on my show January, I love that guy.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh cool, he said something in the interview that really stuck with me where he had had a battle with porn. He had largely been victorious in that, but had

clicked on a hashtag on Instagram that was inappropriate and had done that before preaching. So he got up and he opened his message by saying, hey guys, I just need you to know. So rather than telling someone, he told everybody, this has been a bit of a struggle for me. I clicked on a hashtag just like in the last 24 hours I ought not to. And I thought I'd better tell you guys that before I go into my message and here I am in my message, which struck me as like, whoa. And he said the line of people after he finished speaking going, oh my goodness, thank you. Thank you for naming that. Do how real that is in my life? And so what I'm seeing in you, what I saw in Lysa or what I'm seeing in Lysa, what I'm hearing from JP is not an inappropriate instant vulnerability, but I just say male, female leadership way more vulnerability than most leaders are comfortable with.

Annie F. Downs: Wow. Thank you. And it does feel like, well, that's friendship to me, right? I'm going to tell the truth to my friends.

Carey Nieuwhof: Friendship is vulnerability.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah. Yeah. And so to me, I write things and I go, well of course I would say that if we were sitting at the table having coffee and Annie's your friend, you get coffee with and sometimes you talk about the Bible. So I would say all that at a coffee with a friend. And then I hand it to my editor and she goes, yeah, I would let you say all that. And then she goes, I wouldn't want you to say all that when we don't know how many people are going to buy this book, right? And so there's a line that you have to be careful of, but there is a vulnerability is a word that people I feel like using Christian to more than they use elsewhere right now.

Annie F. Downs: But there is this sense of if you are up close with your own pain and you're willing to talk about it, people will trust you. And so be honest with yourself about your up-close pain and people will believe you. That's what JP did right? That's what he did for his congregation is he said, I'm up close with pain. I am up close with sin and I'm up close with repentance. And so I'm just here to tell you I'm up close to it. I'm human too. And then they go, I love that guy, he's human. I can tell him what's human about me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Which is interesting. Now I'm not suggesting for those of us who are speaking on a weekend near you that you had to get up there and say, here are all my unresolved personal issues.

Annie F. Downs: Amen to that.

Carey Nieuwhof: That that's not where this is going. But I think the lesson for me is even as vulnerable as Didn't See It Coming was, I haven't exhausted that and you probably have an exhausted it. And again, when you look at the massive size of the audience that is gathering around that female tribe, I think listeners or

leaders pay attention and maybe you're not being vulnerable enough. Maybe you're not being real enough.

Annie F. Downs: Maybe you're not being friendly enough.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, because that's what friends and maybe guys and their friendship. Like I have a few friendships like that where it's like, oh my gosh, blah, blah blah, but we're always we're the people who wear war paint or the people who dress up in uniforms and we don't let anyone really see us. But that I think of Danielle Strickland. She could also be in the tribe incredibly influential. One of the most memorable talks I've heard in the last decade is her talk about I see you. Does anybody really see you? Right? So you're helping me grow as a leader and learn as a leader and as a friend.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah. Thank you. I feel the exact thing about you, your work and your friendship helps me a lot. I'm grateful to get to be a student of yours as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, anything else you want to share before we wrap up today?

Annie F. Downs: I think you're doing really good work. I'm honored to be on the planet at the same time as you. I think we're really lucky to be here right now.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I hope we get to do more things together in the future. Annie and people are gonna-

Annie F. Downs: Come to Nashville and you go to eat lunch with all my friends and nobody tells me until I see the picture on Instagram, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof: Speaking of that we will talk, because I'm there in few weeks so lets connect.

Annie F. Downs: Okay, great.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Totally.

Annie F. Downs: Next time you take our teaching team out. I saw the picture next day. I was like, okay, everyone, why didn't, I said I know Carey as well? What was that about? It very helpful that day to them. I know that our church staff really benefited so greatly from getting time with you.

Carey Nieuwhof: They're incredible. I learned so much that night. I'm a student with my notebook open.

Annie F. Downs: Drew Powell said he cracked the code. He said...

Carey Nieuwhof: He did, yeah, he's the guy who came up with the foyer or foyer moved.

Annie F. Downs: That's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: I was like of course. That's what happened.

Annie F. Downs: He has not let us forget it. He said, Carey Nieuwhof said I cracked the code.

Carey Nieuwhof: He did.

Annie F. Downs: He needs to get a tattoo of it and just show it to people instead of bragging about it constantly.

Carey Nieuwhof: We'll link to that, that blog post blew up. I don't know what happened to that one about the charismatic churches.

Annie F. Downs: I thought it was really well written.

Carey Nieuwhof: And we'll be recording some podcasts on that which will play at some point in 2019 when I'm in Nashville. Yeah. We're going to talk about cracking that code and all that stuff and why attractional church is struggling and why we're moving onto a new era in the church. I'm glad you're part of that. And one thing you need to know too, and I said to you about that on your podcast, but the way I've seen you write and the way I've heard you talk about the church really honors the Church, which is great. So this is not like a tribe that's trying to be disloyal. These are all people who love the local church.

Annie F. Downs: I love the local church, hope of the world. I mean it is the answer is going to be found when people meet Jesus and love their local church. I just am so sure of it.

Carey Nieuwhof: So if people want to find Annie F. Downs online.

Annie F. Downs: I'm embarrassingly easy to find because it's just Annie F Downs everywhere. It's silly how easy it is to find me. So anywhere you need to find me blah, blah, fancy, whatever you want to say. My middle name is, but Annie F. Downs all over the place. That's where you find me and my podcast. I'm on the Relevant Podcast. Got Books. I'll show up on stages until July and then I'll just be a virtual friend for the rest of the year.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's great. So your podcast is called. That Sounds Fun. That's always one of the top podcasts, well in the world and in Christian circles. And your latest book is called Remember God.

Annie F. Downs: Yeah. thank you Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof: Annie, Thank you for being with us today.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, if you love that, there's actually a little bit more. First of all, there's more in the show notes so you can head on over there and go to careynieuwhof.com/episode240. But we will also link in the show notes to an

episode that I did for Annie on her podcast. That Sounds Fun. And Man, we got into it. It was a blast. We talked about whether women and men burnout differently and it was fascinating. We'll link to that or you can just subscribe to her podcast. It's worth listening to. It's called That Sounds Fun and hey guys, we're going to come back to this whole female tribe thing and be students.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay, so I really enjoyed the conversation. If you're a transcript person or you want to drill down a little bit more, again, we have those in the show notes and just a reminder, we've only got a few more days where you can get the High Impact Leader at current pricing. Then the price goes up January 31 is the last day, so don't wait head on over to thehighimpactleader.com. Crush your 2019. Not because you said you would, but because you got a new system that's going to work for you. Not only in 2019 but in 2020, 2021, 2022. The High Impact Leader is a productivity system. Really it's a life management system. It's easy to do like the units, 10 units that are 10 minutes. I mean, it's easy to understand, but when you apply it, game changing, changed my life, so I want to share that with you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Head on over to thehighimpactleader.com. It is open now at current pricing we have all kinds of bonuses and if you, I know a lot of you have said, I want to do this for my team. We have for a very limited time this available for your entire team at discounted rates, including personal coaching sessions like for limited group by me. All right, so that's only there for a very short time. Head on over to thehighimpactleader.com. Guys, we are back next week with a fresh episode on Tuesday. I'm going to have a conversation because I got so excited about this when I finally read the book late to the party on the Enneagram, I immediately messaged Ian Morgan Cron's team and he's on the podcast next week. We had a great conversation about understanding the Enneagram, using your number to boost self-awareness, spiritual growth, and actually reduce conflict at work and at home. Here's an excerpt.

Ian Morgan Cron: Yeah. Well, that's because fives hate to appear incompetent or unprepared.

Carey Nieuwhof: There you go. Bingo.

Ian Morgan Cron: But and ones do for different reasons, for a different underlying motivation. That's the key, right? So you can see similarities there. This is why those underlying motivations are so important to dig up. Right?

Carey Nieuwhof: So that is next Tuesday again, subscribers. You get that automatically in free. Thank you so much for listening 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.

