

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 251 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well, last week we had the one and only Gary Chapman and I'll tell you that was a fantastic episode. It's been a good year so far and I am really looking forward to today's episode and next week's episode so this is a little bit of like a part one, part two. I spent some time in January at Cross Point Church in Nashville.

Carey Nieuwhof:

If you are connected in the church world you probably have heard of Cross Point. And so, one of the things they've navigated over the last couple of years is a big transition in leadership. Their founding pastor, Pete Wilson, stepped back in 2016 and then Kevin Queen, who will be my guest next week, was brought in as their new lead pastor. And that is an incredible story. You're gonna love that story. I sit down for over an hour with Kevin Queen, that will be on next Tuesday's show.

Carey Nieuwhof:

However, I also sat down with a couple of their senior leadership team. Drew Powell and Matt Warren are on this interview. And it was actually at a dinner with some of the guys from Cross Point, their executive leadership team, back last year where we were having this conversation about how attractional church, which is the model my church has been in and their church was in, is probably past peak, why it's changing and what's next for weekend services. What I did was I sat down with Drew.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Drew is the guy you'll hear who came up with the idea of the foyer having moved. One of the reasons church is different now than it was a decade ago is because of the explosion of the internet. And I wrote a blog post after that dinner called Why Attractional Church Is Past Peak and Why Charismatic Churches Are on the Rise. We'll link to that in the show notes. Anyway, that blog post blew up not only with tens of thousands of leaders who read it but all the conversation that happened around it so what I wanted to do was do a deeper dive.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so Drew and Matt and I sit down and have a conversation about what is changing in church world, what's changing in our culture, what's next for weekend services. And I think whether you're in the church space, you'll find this really fascinating but, also, even if you're in the business space, man, life is not what it used to be. And the internet is changing everything so I think you're gonna really enjoy it. And one of the things I like about this conversation is that we don't resolve everything.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

This is just like we are processing this in real time. I think there's a moment in this interview where I think it was Matt who goes, "We're actually talking about this live in front of people, right?" And I'm like, "Yeah, that's exactly what we're doing." I hope you find this helpful. I love conversations like this and I'm really excited to bring it to you. And while we're on the subject of church, do you know Easter is almost here? And so the question is how are you going to tell your community about it?

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

I know you've got your services planned but getting the word out there, well, how do you do that? And you know what? It's not too late to talk to the people at Pro Media Fire. They can help get everything from your video bumper for Easter prepared to your social media presence to graphics that you can share online. It's a creative team for a monthly flat rate, way less than you would pay a staff member and they're basically on demand. It's incredible. You get a graphic designer and animator, a video editor for less than the cost of one staff hire.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

And they can make your sermon series graphics, your social ads, bumpers, whatever media needs your church has, and it's not too late for Easter. Head on over to promediafire.com/carey, C-A-R-E-Y. This is the last month for the media bundle launch special for 40% off and that's available because you listened to this podcast. That's promediafire.com/carey. They would love to hear from you and why not do that right now because Easter is almost here. And speaking of almost here, hey, if you are thinking about doing a better job with your sermons heading into it, this is a great time to take advantage of The Art of Better Preaching.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

It's a course that Mark Clark and I put together and it has now helped over a thousand leaders learn how to preach better sermons. You can learn more at The Art of Better Preaching. It's an on-demand course you can do on your own time on any device, any connected device. And we give you like a workbook. I think there's 11 videos. And Mark and I have very different styles, which makes it actually exciting because it's not like one size fits all. Our job is not to help you imitate our voice, it's to help you develop yours.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Head on over to theartofbetterpreaching.com and check that out while you can. We would love to help you preach better sermons this year. And in the meantime, why don't we jump into my conversation with Matt Warren and Drew Powell from Cross Point Church in Nashville. I hope you love this as much as I did because I sure loved this conversation. Here we go. Well guys, welcome to the podcast, it's good to reconvene. What? It was a few months ago we had dinner together here in Nashville.

[Drew:](#)

Yeah, that's right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

And that sounded really exciting you said it.

[Drew Powell:](#) That's right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) That's right.

[Matt Warren:](#) That's right, we did.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) We did. Give us a brief intro into who you are and what you do at Cross Point.

[Matt Warren:](#) What if we cross it up? Let me introduce this guy for a second. Is that cool? Is that weird?

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah, it's great.

[Drew Powell:](#) I don't know if we have time for you. That's the whole podcast in itself.

[Matt Warren:](#) It is. It is. Man, I love working with Drew Powell. Drew Powell is our creative arts pastor. He might be the most self-aware leader that I've ever worked with.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Oh, wow.

[Matt Warren:](#) He's fantastic. He leads a team of about 25 creatives so our communications department, music worship production department, art department. And so he's got the biggest team on our staff so it's a big job.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah and you're in Nashville, lots of creatives.

[Matt Warren:](#) Yeah. Yeah. And he does it with finesse, with care, with a pastor's heart. And in addition to leading a great team really well, he's an incredible communicator so he hosts, he's on our teaching team. When he teaches, we get some of the most feedback we get on any message from the stuff Drew comes up with. It's really fantastic.

[Drew Powell:](#) Wow, this is great.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) There you go. That was better than a self-introduction.

[Matt Warren:](#) Well, you're not getting a raise this year so...

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) If you could introduce Matt.

[Drew Powell:](#) Hey everybody, this is Matt.

[Drew Powell:](#) No. What you need to know about Matt is he's got really great hair. It's unfortunate this is audio only because the hair is on point. Now, Matt's my boss. He's the executive director here at Cross Point, he is the big dog ... one of the big dogs on the management team and, I might get this wrong, but overseeing innovation and leadership development. He leads me and my team creative but

he also leads all the ministry's teams so Matt's got a really, really big job here, a great leader. Enneagram eight, I realize I'm on a podcast with two eights.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah, I'm an eight too.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah. And I'm a seven, so-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Oh, so you could just go off and throw a party right now?

[Drew Powell:](#) Right. I'm just trying to have a good time. I can tell you who's not gonna be in control of this podcast and it will be me. I love working for Matt, it's been fun.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Well, Hey, I know there's a lot of listeners who would be familiar with Cross Point but you guys have been here for many, many years, through a big leadership transition that we are talking about on another podcast with your new pastor Kevin Queen. But give us the brief thumbnail of Cross Point.

[Drew Powell:](#) I defer to you on it. You've been here a lot longer than I have.

[Matt Warren:](#) Sure. My wife and I moved to Nashville in '04. We found Cross Point, then it was about a two or three year old church at that point. We met at an elementary school in a cafeteria. We had never been in a set up tear down church before but we walked in and day one, "This is home." Worship was not really great but we felt welcomed and the teaching was really great. And so after about a three or four months search of a church in Nashville, and we went to a lot of really great churches, we knew as soon as the service wrapped this is our church. My wife and I joined a small group and the rest is kinda history. I was a touring musician at the time.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Were you?

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) What'd you play? Who'd you play with?

[Matt Warren:](#) Guitar. I was on this really not great band called The Turning but it brought us to Nashville.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Like so many others who came to Nashville to make it big.

[Matt Warren:](#) Absolutely. And so eventually, um, some people on staff found out that, oh that guy knows about music and sound, we should get him to help us with this or that. And so as we moved from set up tear down church into our first full time experience church, they brought me in to help with sound stuff and band stuff. And eventually the road paired down, which was awesome, and I came on staff full time in 2010. And so it's been eight years, initially music director. But back to Cross Point was the church grew super fast in those days and it was exciting.

[Matt Warren:](#) I'd never been a part of something that was so up and to the right as Cross Point in those early days. Everything we tried worked scarily. Internally we knew, okay God has incredible favor on this place and it's really fun to watch but we also knew there was this gaff tape and zip ties mentality where if people knew behind the curtain-

[Drew Powell:](#) Those smoke and mirrors.

[Matt Warren:](#) -how things were actually put together sometimes or the weekend experience or our sets or how multisite eventually came about, we always we're pretty scrappy to get that stuff done. And, man, it was really fun. Drew came on staff in the early winter of '16, is that correct?

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah. It's almost three years to the date right now.

[Matt Warren:](#) And got here at an ordained time.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah, because that was big year of transition at Cross Point.

[Matt Warren:](#) Absolutely.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) The founding pastor stepped back, Pete Wilson.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah. It was about nine months after I was here. But the same thing you were describing to me what drew me here to Cross Point, I was a lead pastor from Florida. It was almost just the posture of the church, like just the culture of the church, the posture. We say everyone's welcome, nobody's perfect, anything's possible. That mentality and that posture towards our city and towards people was something that I really wanted to jump in and be a part of.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) You don't hear that every day where you go from being a lead pastor to be in more of an associate role.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah, I took a demotion. No, for me, it was just I knew that God had called me to be more in the creative space. And then also what drew me here was a love for the city. We had lived here before already and we just feel like God is doing something very special here in Nashville and so I loved that. I just have a passion for this city. But then also just wanted to link arms with a great team, like be on a team that I felt like we were just really moving in a great direction. So, yeah, it was a big jump but I love it. And I get to help Kevin and serve him and speak a few times a year and five or six times a year is a lot better than 40 times a year so I'm happy to trade that.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) I'm down to like ... I think I hit just under 30 last year. It still feels like a lot.

[Drew Powell:](#) Kevin asks me every time I speak, "What do you feel? How do you feel?" I just say, "I'm really glad I don't have to do that again next week."

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) That's good. Well, we want to focus on attractional church and how it's changing, maybe, the peaking of or the morphing of or ... I wouldn't say the death of because I think there's so many lessons we've learned along the way. But in many ways Cross Point over the years, especially say a decade ago, was the poster child for attractional church. I mean, there were thousands of us who looked to Cross Point for leadership and you were at the heart of it. Tell us what attractional church has been and why don't we just start there. Like when you were in the set up tear down days, and I'm sure you were doing that and Florida as well, so talk about that.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah, that's good. Well, I would just say from just a more general perspective when I think of attractional church. And I'm glad we're giving it a definition because it may mean a lot of different things to different people.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Oh, yeah. I get that all the time, "What do you mean by attractional church?"

[Drew Powell:](#) What do you mean by that?

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) It's actually hard to define?

[Drew Powell:](#) It is. It is and there's a sense of which we always wanna be attractional, right? Like this is not what you said-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) What's the opposite? Unattractional church?

[Drew Powell:](#) Right, right, exactly. We don't wanna do that.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Horrible church.

[Drew Powell:](#) But in this context, I think we're talking about just the movement that happened. Like you said, maybe 15 to 20 years ago was more seeker focus, more focus on the outsiders, maybe even how you program was more towards the smaller percentage of people coming in than your core people and so very guest focused, higher production. I think when we started bringing in some pop culture and some things into our services, really trying to attract and identify with people coming in that had no context for church or Christianity and stuff. How would you say it as far as the Cross Point context?

[Matt Warren:](#) That sums it up pretty good. When Cross Point started, I remember our original values that we stated, "Hey, this is our vision. If we do this, we're healthy," and it needs to be balanced in evangelism, discipleship and community. And we knew no church is perfectly balanced in those things but I think when we hit our stride under the attractional banner, evangelism was probably the highest value of those three.

[Matt Warren:](#) Probably, a little bit over discipleship and probably in competition a little higher than community would be. And one way we talk about it is attractional is not

just the program, it's actually the posture. It's kind of a little bit more encompassing than what you do and your 60 minutes on the platform.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) I'll bounce this off you guys but as I've been challenged by readers, because I've written on this in that post really, over the last 10 and this is the Drew that gave me the foyer move thing.

[Drew Powell:](#) Man, I get so much grief for that around here. It's amazing.

[Matt Warren:](#) He's a code cracker.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah. I've cracked the code.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) That post went crazy, like it really did. We'll link to it in the show notes.

[Drew Powell:](#) I'm glad I could really boost your career and influence with that code cracking, therefore the code cracking.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) But it was about why charismatic churches are growing and attractional churches are past peak, so we'll link to that in the show notes. But it really ... That post for me and we've written more about it since then was ... Because we're in the same thing. We've been in attractional church that is going ... I was saying at breakfast with a friend of mine this morning, one of the gifts God gave me is I can smell death. It's like, "Over there in the corner, that thing's dying." And everyone's like, "No, it's alive." It's like, "No, I think it's dying."

[Drew Powell:](#) Wow.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) And a few years ago we had also flagged this isn't what it used to be. So when I think of attractional church, I just wanna bounce this off so I'm not looking for affirmation, I'm looking for true reaction. But it emerged out of that whole seeker movement of the 80s and 90s, whether it was seeker sensitive, seeker targeted, and that had its moment. And then there was another generation of leaders that came along that said, "Yes, and now what do we do with that?"

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) It was this idea of we gotta design the service with the guest in mind, the communication with the guest in mind and, again, lots of criticism about, well, you've watered down the gospel. Well, some people did but, no, attractional church doesn't mean you're watering down the Gospel. You're singing songs but not too many songs so you don't get lost in this three hours set in like, "When is this gonna be over?" It was like you have the guest in mind, your music tends to be ... because I think churches, they really struggle with mediocrity so it was better musicians.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) If you're gonna do the songs, do them well. Take some pop culture into it for a while. Drama gave way to just fun moments when hosting to some cultural references, whether that was video or whether that was a song off the radio or

Spotify or something you see often with Taylor Swift or whatever you happen to do. But there was that and then that, again, I think the sands are shifting. And even what's really fascinating now is ...

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

I don't know how many attractational churches there would be in America but tens of thousands who are in that model at one level or another and hundreds who are leaders in that field who are now going, "Yeah, we're becoming something else," or we're ... And it's not like, "Oh, yeah, all of a sudden we're Christian." No, no, no, no. That's not it at all. It's just like the way we did it isn't the way we're doing it because it's not connecting the way it was. Is that fair and is that what attractational churches to you or how else would you nuance it?

[Drew Powell:](#)

I think that it was great. I would agree with all that and I feel like ... I've been doing this for about 15 to 20 years and just sitting in a room just dissecting every element of what you do towards that person that may be skeptical or an outsider or whatever. And so you're just focusing everything from the songs you would sing and how you would open up. Whatever it was, was so focused on that outsider, that person that may not know. And so, to me, I thought you summed that up well.

[Matt Warren:](#)

Absolutely. We just kind of talk about center of the target a lot when we we're talking about environments, experience and program. And so there was an assumptive nature to that center of the target. And, for me, we would kind of name it. I would say, "Drew just remember," and this is a couple of years ago so this is kind of pre our switch. I would say, "There is a girl who loves Jesus, who wants her boyfriend to love Jesus and he's a skeptic."

[Matt Warren:](#)

We gotta make sure that guy coming in with his arms crossed has a good experience, understands what we're saying about the gospel and can connect with something in the service whether it's a top 40 song we do that he heard on the radio. And the next time he hears it on the radio he may think, "Oh, yeah, that church I went to did that and that was kinda cool." And so we lived under that center of the target with that clear picture of who our guests could be and we programmed too.

[Drew Powell:](#)

That's funny, I did the same thing when I was preaching, as Malcolm. When I would write a sermon I would write to Malcolm because Malcolm was a marine and a very smart guy. He was not gonna take anything at face value. Like if you said something from the Bible, "Prove it to me," that type of thing. And so I would even write my messages to Malcolm, like what is Malcolm gonna say about this, just to help me keep my focus on that person.

[Drew Powell:](#)

And it's such a minority of your church though. I mean, that's some of what we're gonna talk about. That's the challenge. Malcolm didn't show up most weekends so I'm preaching to Malcolm, well, Malcolm is not here today.

[Matt Warren:](#)

But the whole time we're working under that kind of guideline, I've got a tension to my spirit. Worship is just a pathway for me to connect to God. I'm an eight so I don't get emotional very often. I don't let people see it but when I do, music is almost always at the centerpiece of that emotion for me. I connect to God through songs. And so instead of building a worship culture for seven or eight years, we're building a music culture.

[Matt Warren:](#)

It's like, "Hey, we're not gonna dive too deep into worship because that could offend that boyfriend that's coming with that girlfriend or he's not gonna understand it." So as much as I'm loving being a part of this team and all the things that are going up into the right, my tension was, "But, man, I really wish people could experience what I experience when I hear worship songs and when I sing worship songs." And we have a lid on that experience for our church so what are we missing by not taking a step past that target?

[Drew Powell:](#)

And the transformation that happens in the presence of God when...

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Well, it's that awkward tension too of public singing is just about dead in our culture. The only place you do it, really, is in a church. Even look at the national anthem, unless you're in a particularly patriotic moment there's a lot of awkwardness where people are not...

[Drew Powell:](#)

interesting.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

They don't really wanna sing out loud. And I think you're right, part of the attractional church, maybe even eight or nine years ago, was this the singing it's not worship and it's something to be endured more than enjoyed. And it created a lot of awkwardness too, didn't it? Where Christians didn't really want to engage, hands raised were like, "Put them down." You don't wanna offend, what you guy's name?

[Drew Powell:](#)

Malcolm, yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Malcolm.

[Drew Powell:](#)

You don't wanna offend Malcolm and it was a challenge at the time when I started as a worship leader. It was like, "Man, I felt God calling me to do this, to like invite people into his presence and to lead worship." And then even for our worship leaders and our staff so it became a challenge. I was like, "Man, I just feel like I'm just singing songs." Like that's not what I felt called to do, I feel called to pastor this church and to help them grow in their worship.

[Drew Powell:](#)

And I think that was part of the challenge as well but we were so hyper-focused, like let's make sure we don't offend, let's make sure we don't say anything that they don't understand. And I think we just got really laser focus, you said it a minute ago. I think that is what the attractional church is, it is just a focus and an emphasis on a certain personality or a certain type.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) The way we were talking about it right now, and I include myself in this, because our church was exactly where your churches have been as well. It almost sounds like we're saying it was a failure but the reality is it produced great fruits.

[Drew Powell:](#) That's right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Let's talk about that, what was the best parts of attractional church? What worked?

[Matt Warren:](#) Because there was an awkwardness of public singing and then Nashville has become a really big culture center so we say you're a unicorn. "You're from Nashville? Oh, wow. We didn't know people actually that were from the city." Everybody moves to Nashville so it's not your typical southern Bible Belt City. It is on some levels but not everybody has a church perspective or a church background and understands what they're walking into. Again, attractional is not just your program it's your posture.

[Matt Warren:](#) But we're gonna talk about some programming things in this. And so the winds sometimes were ... It's like, "Okay, we're gonna do an Avicii cover song to open the program. And you see these girls in their 20s and 30s and the boyfriends, they drag with them and they're like, "Oh yeah, this song's great." And so you see them connecting to an element in the program. And then you get up and do, I don't know, a Bethel worship song and they're like, "Oh, that's cool, but I don't know it. I've never heard that song before," so it's a moment of connection.

[Matt Warren:](#) We leveraged culture and connected church to that for them, essentially. And so, it won when we were able to intersect that cultural moment and leverage it to teach the Gospel to these people ... so, absolutely, attractional worked. Cross Point grew tremendously through the season where we focused on that. And again, with our balance of discipleship, evangelism and community, the evangelism thing worked. We were seeing tons of baptisms, tons of salvation so it was easy to look at the metrics and say, "Yeah, this is working," and yet for some of us it still felt a little bit fractured. I mean, what were some of the better parts you may remember?

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah. I know I would say that too. Just right on the nose is growth. If you're good at attractional church, you're gonna attract people and your church is gonna grow because you're gonna have a bigger church. People will do that well so that's what you're saying. Yeah, and I think the other thing is, I know the church that I grew up in. The difference in why I was so attracted to the attractional church when I first started too was there was a much more external focus. It helped us as churches focus on the people that weren't in the room.

[Drew Powell:](#) The church I grew up, it was very internal and, just be honest, our church didn't grow a whole lot. It remained a small church and so it felt very much more like a club and a close knit thing. And there was advantages of that as well. There's

parts of that we loved but it helped our church change our thinking as to why we exist as the church more globally. And so I think what you're saying about the focus on evangelism, I know in my context, that really helped. It helped us to think about the people who weren't there and that was a really valuable thing that we wanna keep. In whatever model we have, we're gonna make sure we keep that at the forefront.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah. And I think I'm glad you're raising that because evangelism really was a big focus. I think the church was very insular. A lot of churches took their eyes off of themselves and the needs of their members and put it on the community and that was good. Would you say looking back on it, and this is an open honest question, like here we are 10, 15 years later, some of the people that were reached under attractional church are still following Jesus wholeheartedly?

[Matt Warren:](#) Great question. I would say some are and some might not be.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yep.

[Drew Powell:](#) Absolutely.

[Drew Powell:](#) And I think it'd probably depend on the health of that particular church and how well they're able to put people into a discipleship or even a simulation type funnel to help them grow. What I saw is, mostly churches we're really strong in one area and not the other so the ones that were way into attractional. And maybe it just was a matter of bandwidth and energy and all those things, end up being really good at reaching them but then ended up struggling a little bit in more of the discipleship or community.

[Drew Powell:](#) And that's one thing, again, that attracted me about Cross Point and this is something that we still try to wrestle with. No where near accomplishing it but it was like, "Man, what would it look like to be a church that was able to balance those three things of community, evangelism and discipleship and not just reach people." And then a few months down the road or years down the road they fall away. And so I don't have any science on that but I would imagine it's probably true.

[Matt Warren:](#) And, honestly, we would get emails occasionally complaining, "I can't believe you guys did a Foo Fighters song. What kind of church would do this?" And Drew for the-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) So some of the unchurched people emailing you that?

[Drew & Matt Warren:](#) No, no, no.

[Matt Warren:](#) And then Drew would get those emails sometimes and be like, "Oh man, how do I answer this?"

[Drew Powell:](#) I'd just forward them to you.

[Matt Warren:](#) Yeah. And I'd respond as Drew back to those people. But I think it would be something along the lines of like when Paul said, "To the Greek I became a Greek and to the Roman I became..." We do what we can to reach people for the Gospel even if it's not our preference. And so, going back to my attention of I wanted a worship culture but I'm really creating a music and top 40 culture sometimes was that, well you know what, it's not about my preference. I really do wanna help this church, connect to people who are lost and looking for hope, the hope of Jesus so I let those preferences go to the wayside for a season.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) And I think what surprised me, you guys are in the Nashville context we're in the north of Toronto context, but I think one of the things that shocked me the most, looking back on it now, is there were absolute genuine, first of all, growth yes, yes, yes, but real conversions, people's lives who have been changed forever.

[Drew Powell:](#) Right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Like they're not only gonna be in heaven but they're living very differently in this life, which is great. And you can't ... I am somebody who ... and then the other thing, I want this question before we move on to what's changing. Were some of those people or a meaningful percentage of those people truly unchurched? In our case it was 60%, that we would see over half of the people who walked through the door self-identify, we're not labeling them.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) They have to check one of four boxes and it was like I never attend church, once or twice a year, once a month or every week. If it was, I never attend church or once or twice a year, we counted them as unchurched and that was over half. And so we saw those people, they just kept coming and they said we would never go to another church. What was your experience of that with attractational church?

[Drew Powell:](#) That was true for me, in Florida at least. I would say de-churched would probably be more accurate than unchurched.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Sure. I mean if you're in the Bible Belt, you're gonna get de-churched as much as unchurched.

[Drew Powell:](#) That was the majority of our growth when we adopted an attractational church model. It was people coming in and say, "Man, this is nothing like the church I grew up in." They weren't coming emotionally neutral to church, they had some feelings towards church. What we were able to do is say, "Hey, no it is different." Or like you were saying, "We can identify with where you're at."

We're not completely irrelevant to what you're experiencing or what you're listening to or whatever it might be.”

[Drew Powell:](#)

And so I would say ... Again, I don't have the stats but majority of the growth that we saw was people coming and saying this is a lot different than my grandma's church.

[Matt Warren:](#)

I wouldn't change that. That's right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Right. Well, and one of the critiques of charismatic churches as they've risen over the last five years or so as, “Well, you're just recycling Christians.” Which in conversations with people who have led some of those leading churches, they would say, no, that's not entirely true. On the other hand, a growing church is a rare bird these days, period. And if it's taking millennials who would've been out of church and bringing them back in, I'll sign up for that all day long.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

But I think a lot of the heart around this table and those leaders listening to this podcast we wanna reach the unchurched. But a few years ago you started to sense something was shifting. Let's move there. What made you restless? You've talked a little bit about, “Okay, I wanna worship but I don't have an outlet for that. I still have a heart for the outsider.” But, so, what started to shift?

[Matt Warren:](#)

You mentioned our transition earlier and so ... Drew and I, three years ago, were in completely different roles at Cross Point here and so really the deck was essentially cleared.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Because Pete Wilson resigned.

[Matt Warren:](#)

Yeah, and we lost...

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

What was that? The summer of 2016?

[Drew Powell:](#)

September of '16.

[Matt Warren:](#)

September of '16 and we also lost two other executives in that transition so three of the four senior leaders of our organization were gone-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Wow. Which was almost a recipe for death for any church.

[Matt Warren:](#)

Yeah, any organization.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Oh, yeah. Let's expand it here a little bit.

[Matt Warren:](#)

Absolutely.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Think about it, the C-Suite empties in most companies.

[Drew Powell:](#) Matt freshened up his resume for sure. We had to.

[Matt Warren:](#) We sharpened each other's resumes, yeah. And so I think we were ... Honestly at that point, I was two months into my first transition where I said, "You know what? I feel like God's calling me out of leading the music team and there's this open operations role so, yeah I'll go lead operations."

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) That's pretty logical, music to operations.

[Matt Warren:](#) Yeah, right, let's do that. And so I was in this awkward space for about two months, I was essentially doing a new job. Drew had a different boss at that time and when the C-Suite, as we said, cleared out we had this blank slate. And we knew, okay, now's not the time to reinvent the wheel, we need to gather our church and love on them. Let's be who we are in this season. And, for us, that's typically let's go serve, so let's do a big citywide serving initiative.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Which has been part of your culture all along-

[Matt Warren:](#) Absolutely.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) -from day one.

[Matt Warren:](#) That's one of the first things we do.

[Drew Powell:](#) It was a get back to the basics moment, like this is what we do, let's go serve. Yeah.

[Matt Warren:](#) But it would have felt disingenuous to be like super celebratory in that season so the idea of kicking off every service with a super hot top 40 cover was like, "Okay, that's not reality to where we are. We're in a mourning season right now."

[Drew Powell:](#) I was gonna say the same thing, man. I think that's so good. I think we just changed a lot too. We got to a more desperate place. We got to a more like, "Man." Like you were saying earlier everything was kinda up to the right and now here's one of the first moments in our history where things are not looking great.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Right, because people left.

[Drew Powell:](#) People left, yeah. A lot of people left and it was a definitely a make or break moment for us so our posture of even desperation had changed. And I think that was a big part of what we started to see even shift in us like we just kinda said. And I think part of that, obviously, it's such a huge challenge to go through a transition like that. Looking back, there is a gift side of it which is most organizations our size don't get a chance to hit a reset button a little bit.

[Drew Powell:](#) Like to have a conversation of, "Okay, well, things are changing whether we like it or not, let's talk about the future." Because I think a lead pastor or a founding pastor, it's really hard to once you've fallen in love with something, especially model, to make that shift. Even as we're praying about looking for who our next senior leader's gonna be, it did kinda give us a bit of a built-in reset button a little bit to really evaluate. Because I think we had to do a lot of soul searching anyway of like who are we really?

[Drew Powell:](#) Such a great charismatic senior leader like Pete, and so we were able to really think, man, what is the special sauce of our church and all those different things. And so in doing that, it almost gave us ... It didn't feel like it at the time looking back. It was a gift to be able to soul search a little bit and say, "Where do...?" I know we had a lot of these conversations like, "Where do we think the future of the Church is going?"

[Matt Warren:](#) Well, and Drew brought that and I say he was fresh perspective. He's nine months on the job at that point, right?

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Not knowing any of this was going down when you said yes?

[Drew Powell:](#) No, absolutely.

[Matt Warren:](#) And so he's the one that said, "Hey, I think I'm seeing a couple of steps ahead and it could be this." And so what was tough for me in that season is I had left the occupation of music director for the church but we still had influence and relational influence to lead in that space. But we had this playbook that had worked for 16 years. Well, let's not change the playbook. This is working. Even in a transition, it could still work. But Drew just said, "Hey, let's just rethink this, let's pray through this and look forward down the road."

[Matt Warren:](#) And so he kinda was the first person that said without senior leadership, let's do this as a team, with the rest of our transitional leadership team. And we started looking under the hood and that was a season of really evaluating the playbook.

[Drew Powell:](#) Well and I think some of that's probably just was birthed out of our fear of, man, we just didn't wanna be the church that was stuck in a model. The culture was passing us by and a lot of it was just seeing my friends and it wasn't anything that I felt like I was ahead of the curve on. I appreciate you saying that but it was us. We were talking about this and I was just seeing my friends either leave the church or they were leaving attractional 'churches' like ours and going to more Anglican style or really getting back to ancient roots and history.

[Drew Powell:](#) And they were just wanting a deeper or a more authentic experience and it wasn't about comfortable auditoriums and lights and smoke and haze and stuff. They just wanted something almost a little more gritty and just like, "Give me the truth, tell it to me straight," type of stuff. I'm watching this happen and just

thinking, "Man, I don't want Cross Point to look back 10 years from now and be like, wow, we missed the cultural change and the trends that were happening."

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Had things started to shift or had the restlessness began before the leadership transition?

[Matt Warren:](#) I think so.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Because I remember you saying that at dinner.

[Matt Warren:](#) I was in a much different seat but I think we could sense a change and it was this year over year growth in attendance and giving and everything else had kinda plateaued. The metrics were bearing out that something was different in that season, even nine months before a transition.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Right, so you started to know but you hadn't really started adjusting the model yet. You just kinda knew. It was that, "Something isn't the same here but we don't know what it is."

[Drew Powell:](#) We weren't seeing the same results and the same success that we had in the past. We could either put our head in the sand and keep running the playbook or with or without transition, we were gonna have to face, "Okay, it's not working."

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) And that's a sigmoid curve, right? Like if you look at that, it's hard to do on an audio podcast but, basically, most things they go up into the right for a little while if you're looking at a big hill but then they cap off and then they start to decline. And maybe you were right at the top of the hill and so the next three years unchecked unchanged you would have seen decline or a more flat line. Whereas, wise leaders ... And this is the hard part to get into because nothing succeeds like success until it doesn't.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Right? But it's before you crust and get to that top, where things level off, that's when you introduced the change. And maybe it's a disruptive change that actually creates a lack of momentum for a season, a short season. You might have some people leave or going, "This isn't how we do church. Where's the opener? Come on, what's up with that?" But, then, it leads you into another period of growth and effectiveness. And the culture had been changing too.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) It's really hard to do production in a city like Nashville, this is the music center of America really.

[Matt Warren:](#) But when you look out and you see, “Oh, the song we're about to play, that guy wrote...”

[Drew Powell:](#) The artist doesn't wanna come and hear a Karaoke version of their song at the church they attend.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) And I guess that happens, doesn't it?

[Matt Warren:](#) Or that's the guy that played bass on that record or that's the guy that produced this track. You just see it everywhere.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Then talk about that. Most of us don't live there but like how do you ... As a musician yourself, how do you navigate that tension?

[Matt Warren:](#) I'll say it this way, moving to Nashville you don't get star struck very often. There was a Sunday where a former Titans football coach was in the service and Phil Keaggy was in the service. Phil Keaggy, if you don't know, is one of the world's greatest guitar players. And I'm onstage and I'm barely proficient at this instrument and-

[Drew Powell:](#) Power chords.

[Matt Warren:](#) -and I'm more nervous that Jeff Fisher is in the audience and Phil Keaggy.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) What happened to my band? What happened to my band again?

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah, exactly.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Why didn't it work?

[Matt Warren:](#) But what's great about the creative community in Nashville is it is incredibly supportive. So if you move here for music or a creative endeavor, it is a very supportive city so you rarely feel criticism or somebody downplaying your dreams. It's a really supportive community.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) But you can't ... Here's what I'm thinking as an outsider to Nashville, you can't dazzle.

[Drew Powell:](#) They've seen everything.

[Matt Warren:](#) Not very easily.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) They've seen it all.

[Drew Powell:](#) And they sniff it out too, that's the thing especially with authenticity. And I think the challenge with Nashville is the excellence still has to be high. It just can't look like you're trying too hard.

[Matt Warren:](#) That's exactly right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Oh, okay. Drill down on that a little more.

[Drew Powell:](#) You're gonna expect excellence in the city but I think just they're coming in. And if you've been on the road all week long, the last thing you wanna do is come in on a Sunday and see what you experienced on Friday night on a tour. That's not what they're looking for but at the same time, there's still a high threshold for quality and excellence. And so you still wanna bring your best. And, of course, we do that as just an act of worship anyway but as far as they're concerned it's gotta be strong.

[Drew Powell:](#) They don't want the quality to be poor but it can't look like you're trying too hard or forcing it. Again, and that was some of the issues. It was even doing some of the cover songs and stuff that we did like Matt said. Yeah, it's really hard to pull those moments off when your audience is the tough critics and so, I don't know.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Here's a question I'm asking myself, I'm just curious. Why do you think it worked for that 10 or 15 years because that wasn't bad? It actually was a very effective way of being the church in that season.

[Drew Powell:](#) Can I make a really bold statement?

[Matt Warren:](#) I'm so nervous right now.

[Drew Powell:](#) Matt might fire me for this so we can edit this out. I don't know ... And, again, I could be wrong on this, that's my disclaimer. I don't know that that part of it is what worked.

[Matt Warren:](#) Absolutely.

[Drew Powell:](#) I don't know that and that's just the most honest thing I can say. I think the quality was great but I think we had a senior leader that was an elite communicator. I think the way we served our community, the way we loved our community, I think that worked. That was the attractional part. People came in and really felt welcome. I don't know ... And, again, you can correct me on this Matt.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) No, that's interesting.

[Drew Powell:](#) I don't know that that part of our music culture and that top 40 and that stuff was what was drawing people.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Was the attractional somewhere else? Interesting.

[Matt Warren:](#) Yes, he's a million percent correct. Honestly, there was a season, probably two or three years before the attendance plateau, that attractional programming could have actually hindered more growth. And so-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Okay, tell us about that.

[Drew Powell:](#) This is fun, we have never talked about this.

[Matt Warren:](#) No, this is new territory.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) This is why we do this. I haven't thought about it at this level.

[Matt Warren:](#) Drew talked about friends that had left the church, not necessarily Cross Point but church in general. I had some of those friends too in the music business and everything else and sometimes it was a little bit like, "Oh man, I know they think what we just did on the platform was lame." And so I would say, "Man, Cross Point is so big in programming in a way that if I just moved to Nashville right now, I'd be skeptical and I don't know that I would make this my home church ... if I started right now."

[Matt Warren:](#) But because I started at the beginning when it wasn't these things, I'm in and it had my heart. But if I'd just moved here I don't think I would choose this church because of that. It feels a little bit too...

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Showy.

[Drew Powell:](#) If we're practically speaking, we just saw a lot of people come in before the message and leave right when it was over, even if we had music at the end.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah, there is something about the sermon, the word of God, proclaimed, that is ultimately attractive. Okay, here's the theory and this could be totally wrong. I just want to bounce it off you guys.

[Drew Powell:](#) It's your podcasts, you can say whatever you want.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) That's right. That's right. That's right, I'm the guy has to deal with the fallout.

[Drew Powell:](#) Right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Do you think this has anything to do, because I'm just thinking through the timing. I haven't really had this long conversation about this before either, which is why podcasting is so fun and real and raw. But if you look at the rise of attractional church in, say, the late 90s to maybe it peaked five years ago. Let's just say it hit its peak in '14, '15 or whatever that happened to be, do you think scarcity played a role in it?

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) All of us have our phones here so if you think about how access to information, communication and music has evolved in the last decade, it was much scarcer 10 years ago than it is today. And even it was like, oh, everyone had a phone a decade ago but only certain people had a smart phone. And if you look at what was available because of internet speeds. And, remember long before LTE there was 3G and then there was the edge network, I don't know that was in America, but it was terrible. Mobile friendly websites is like only six years old and we forget that.

[Drew Powell:](#) Well, I do think ... I didn't mean interrupt you but I think you're onto something there because the church got so good at not just producing these moments so we just got really good at attractional programming but then we got really good at broadcasting them.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yes.

[Drew Powell:](#) And this is part of our dinner conversation. And so when it first started, it was, "Man, you got to come to my church and check this out and see what they do and they do this different." It was whatever the gag was week, you had to come check it out. But then we started broadcasting it and we put on our social media and churches just got a lot better at getting that out there so now you didn't have to show up to a building to see what they were all about. You saw the gimmick or the gag before it happened or you could stay at home and watch it.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Or you saw it before because you guys did it two months ago and now we're doing it at our church this month.

[Drew Powell:](#) Right, right ... and there was a lot of hype. And if you remember in our marketing it was like, "Oh you can't miss this weekend because there will be something which is just gonna blow your mind."

[Matt Warren:](#) "Don't be late."

[Drew Powell:](#) "Don't be late." Because that was our marketing and we did really good. But then, yeah, we started broadcasting, we started putting that stuff online and it's just like anything else. People these days, they go online to shop around before they show up anywhere and so now they're getting there.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Have we moved on culturally to the point where nothing blows our mind anymore and nothing seems rare? I was thinking about that today. I've got a rental vehicle ... And this is me just thinking in real time. But I've got a rental vehicle and I can't get my music on the SUV I'm driving because it doesn't have apple car player or whatever. And then I have to listen to music someone else programmed. And I thought, "I wonder ..." If you look at Spotify and you look at what radio used to do.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) I remember as a kid you'd have to listen to songs you didn't like or else you had to get up and change the station. And sometimes a song you didn't like the first four times you heard it became your favorite song of that summer. Whereas today, I don't think anyone sits through a song four times if they don't like it. They just next, next, next, next, next and I think it's stultifying.

[Matt Warren:](#) That's good.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) I think it's killing our... so I wonder ... Culture was more curious a decade ago, the culture was less cynical, we were less bombarded by information. We were less marketed to than we are now and the news cycle has even gone absolutely crazy, bananas, over the last few years.

[Matt Warren:](#) I think in everything there's a law of diminishing marginal utility, the more you use it the less exciting it becomes or the scarcer it becomes.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yes.

[Drew Powell:](#) Did you steal that phrase from me?

[Matt Warren:](#) I did.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) That's good.

[Drew Powell:](#) We talked about that in our one-on-one.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Can you repeat that? That's really good.

[Matt Warren:](#) The law of diminishing marginal utility. One thing as-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) And define that again, so it means...

[Matt Warren:](#) The more you use something, it's an economic term. The more you use it, for us, it had less return.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah, bingo.

[Matt Warren:](#) So a less return every single time. And so as a staffer, your job on Monday you review the program, see what the other hot churches did and then feel bad about what you did because it wasn't as good as what they did.

[Drew Powell:](#) Right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Right.

[Matt Warren:](#) And our attendees aren't doing that but then we're thinking of, "Okay, we have to one up what we did last week."

[Drew Powell:](#) Oh man, you're making me break out and sweat thinking about that.

[Matt Warren:](#) That was part of our culture of like we can do that better-

[Drew Powell:](#) How can we top that?

[Matt Warren:](#) -and then we can top it and there'll be dancers and there'll be this and there'll be that. And before you know it, it's circus soleil with a Ted Talk. Right?

[Drew Powell:](#) Right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) That's right.

[Matt Warren:](#) And it stopped wowing years ago, but we're still pouring every resource we have into this moment that we think is gonna leverage the day-

[Drew Powell:](#) And novelty wore off.

[Matt Warren:](#) -and it stopped impressing people.

[Drew Powell:](#) It's kinda good Matt.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) And we're doing this for the first time, right? It's funny you're taking me back to when I was lead pastor and I remember that moment where I finally had to call our team together and say, "Guys, every Sunday cannot be better than the last Sunday.

[Drew Powell:](#) Right, right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) We've moved ourselves to a cliff that we're only gonna fall off of and if our hype ... And, again, this was all new. Nobody had had social media before, nobody had been in that space and we kinda got to this place where we're like, "What have we done to ourselves?"

[Drew Powell:](#) And I think it made ... Again, a lot of this season I was in a smaller church and so I was that guy that would go on and be like, "Man, did you see what North Point did? I didn't even know that was possible. And they did this and pulled this off."

[Drew Powell:](#) And as a pastor I'm thinking, how do I take my church ...? I can't duplicate this to my Church of 300. I don't know but that was the bar and I'm like, "Okay, now what am I gonna do?"

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Listen, one of my takeaways is if Cross Point is worried about, were we lame in this song, what does that do for everyone else listening because we're in Nashville?

[Drew Powell:](#) I know ... You are your toughest critic.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Well, you know what's fun about having this conversation now is we're not 90 years old in the retirement home sitting on the front porch going, "Where did it all go horribly wrong?"

[Drew Powell:](#) Right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Because mid-course correction ... And, again, I assume best intentions and it was something ... And I won't say it won't even work, that's utilitarian language. It was a season where we saw God move-

[Drew Powell:](#) That's right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) -in many cases. We didn't get it right but in many cases, in a really powerful way, an authentic life change happened. But now we're in a shifting season.

[Matt Warren:](#) And so almost in spite of us God moved, right?

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yes. He has a history of that.

[Matt Warren:](#) We were talking about this conversation and, again, we talk about this all the time. We would say we're still attractational, right? We want to appeal to guests, we just think what they're attracted to is different.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Bingo, okay. Yeah because the arguments, sometimes online when I write about this stuff, it immediately goes to, "Just preach the word of God and everything will be great and don't worry about the outsiders."

[Matt Warren:](#) Does that work on Facebook?

[Matt Warren:](#) No. You can put the most compelling statement out there and it doesn't draw people to the heart of Jesus. You can pound the table or you can pound the pulpit and do that but I don't know that that wins people's hearts. The Holy Spirit does that work but I think we can set the environment for that.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Before we go to where things are moving or where we wonder whether they're moving or what we're in the middle of, what are the parts of attractational that you don't wanna lose.

[Matt Warren:](#) Can I tell a story?

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Sure.

[Matt Warren:](#) It will be pretty fun, I think. You're the seven, you can tell me afterwards if it was fun or not.

[Drew Powell:](#) That was a terrible story, never tell it again.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Actually, he left the room so he's gone.

[Drew Powell:](#) This is my opportunity to take a break.

[Matt Warren:](#) We have this kind of foundational story in Cross Point of our history of almost why we became attractational in posture. It had to do with one of our founding leaders working at another church. They had been praying ... This guy was a student pastor and they'd been praying for some kids from the high school to come to their youth group, praying all semester to get these two boys. "Man, if we could win these two boys to Jesus then we could change the school."

[Matt Warren:](#) Well, Lo and behold, on a Sunday night these two boys the youth group had been praying for showed up in ball caps. The elder bee-lines to those boys and says, "If you don't take those ball caps off, you gotta get out of this church." And in that moment that foundational leader said, "You know what, I'm never gonna be a part of a church that has those kinds of rules and that kind of posture towards anybody." And that was completely shaping.

[Matt Warren:](#) I had an experience like that on the road where we were touring and playing at a small Baptist Church in rural Tennessee. They asked us to do Sunday night worship and then like a disciple now conference through the first part of the week. And so we were just doing some hymns and then acoustic guitar, which meant the drummer and the bass player sat out.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Not in Sunday night service, you just sit there.

[Matt Warren:](#) You just sit there. But they were in a ball cap and we're the invited artists. And an elder comes up and says, "You better take those ball caps off in this church." And I'm fine, I know that's a cultural thing, but if those weren't the guys on my team and those were kids that came from the community to experience that, they're never coming back. And so from an attractational standpoint, I never wanna lose the environment that says everybody is welcome, period.

[Matt Warren:](#) We've had people come in and we've got it written on our walls, "Everyone's welcome." Grab a campus pastor and say, "Man, my life is kinda messed up." Point to the sign and say, "Is that true? Am I really welcome here?" And we can say, "Yeah, absolutely you are." If that's attractational, then, we're gonna do that till the day we die.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah, me too. What else are you keeping?

[Drew Powell:](#) I was gonna say something very similar to that. I was gonna say posture. We talk posture a lot, like your vision, your mission and all that kind of stuff. But, man, are our posture towards the community to continue to be an attractational church in that way I think you're line that you just ... I try to quote you all the time and misquote it but we're still an attractational church. We'd like to think we're an

attractional church still. We just feel like that target of what attracts people is moving and we wanna just do a better job like you were saying earlier.

[Drew Powell:](#)

Some of the wisest leaders were able to finger to the wind and see where the culture is going and be able to move with it. And so we've got some ideas of where that might be going but I think, more than anything, we wanna make sure that we're still a place that is postured with grace and love and mercy towards community and towards our city.

[Matt Warren:](#)

And it doesn't mean we've run completely off the rails when it comes to language we use in the program or the songs we pick. Drew and I have this conversation a lot of just make sure the first couple of rungs on the ladder are there. There was a season in Cross Point's history we would say, "Hey, you know that song, that's aloof in its theology and guests won't understand it. Let's not do it because they won't get it." "Okay, but it's a really beautiful song." "But, no, they won't get it."

[Matt Warren:](#)

Fast forward to now where we say, "Let's do that song." Let's just take 60 seconds before the song starts to say, "Hey, if you're new to church, we're gonna sing about the Holy Spirit. Here's what that means for me. If you wanna join us, sing along." And so we just put the first couple of rungs on the ladder. Drew did this incredible teaching a couple of months ago about anxiety, worry and depression incredibly honest conversation.

[Matt Warren:](#)

And the takeaway, and I don't wanna synthesize your entire 30 minutes which was brilliant down to one thing. But he says, "We win when we worship." I was like, "Oh man, that's an amazing takeaway for your struggling with anxiety."

[Drew Powell:](#)

And you're this incredible woman who's like, "Man, I love that talk. I struggle with that. What's worship? Will you tell me what that is?" And as simple as I thought I had made it, the email came through. And she had emailed me and just said, "Hey, I love that idea. What's worship?" And I'm like, "Whoa, okay." And that's what Matt talks, rungs on the ladder, all the time. And we're still in these conversations by the way like...

[Matt Warren:](#)

Not figured out. No.

[Drew Powell:](#)

The first couple of weekends of the year we're still talking about how do we make this successful if we know we're going to have guests and how do we really ... So this is still part of our regular conversation. I just left a meeting this morning where we were talking about that. We we're programming and making sure that we're aware that guests are in the room and we wanna not shy away. Because I think even as a worship leader there was times where I almost felt like I had to apologize for leading worship. Now we don't feel that as much but we do want to disciple and we want to give them the 'why' behind what we're singing.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Would you still write messages with Malcolm in mind or whoever you have in mind? I feel like I do. Just literally having finished a big hard series the other day but I would resonate with what you said, that what Malcolm is interested in has changed.

[Drew Powell:](#) Right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) And what Malcolm wants to hear is different than it was five years ago. And that goes, maybe this is a good segway, to what I wrote about in the blog post that came out of our dinner a few months ago that the foyer, or the foyer depending on where you are, has moved.

[Drew Powell:](#) The Narthex.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) The Narthex has moved.

[Drew Powell:](#) The vestibule.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) That doesn't have that same ring.

[Drew Powell:](#) No, no, you're right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) But this idea was that our worship services were the foyer, that this is where people showed up and every Sunday is someone's first Sunday. We still have that on a decor on our wall, every Sunday is somebody's first Sunday. We're fortunate to be a church like that, you're fortunate to be a church like that where that has always been true. But I think this idea, because of what we said earlier with the explosion of smartphones and technology and being bombarded, have you ever been to a restaurant in the last five years you haven't checked out online first? Of course, not. Especially date night.

[Drew Powell:](#) Right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) If you're going out on date night it's not like, "Well, I have no idea." What are the Yelp reviews? What's Google saying about this?

[Matt Warren:](#) And then ask two or three friends in addition to Yelp-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Exactly.

[Matt Warren:](#) "What do you think?"

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) What did you think, was it good? Can you explain that for people who ever read the posts by what you meant when the foyer moved?

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah, I think the best way to explain it is as a story. I met a lady and this is last weekend. Her name was Darlene. She came in and I was talking to someone. I

could see her eyeing me from across the lobby little ways. I knew that she wanted to have a conversation so when I finished my conversation and looked away and she approached me. And she went on to say that she has been attending Cross Point online for three years and it was her first Sunday to walk into the lobby. And you could tell her voice was nervous.

[Drew Powell:](#)

She was shaking little bit and she had seen me preach, she had seen Kevin, so she was saying that, "Man, I feel like I know you guys so well." And it was her first and she lives miles from the church. She's not out of town or outside but she's been watching us from a distance for three years before she had the courage to step into our lobby. And so, for us, our parking lots, our lobbies, our environments are still so important but it's just not the first impression anymore. People are watching.

[Drew Powell:](#)

And some of our best pastors we have on our staff right now are our online chat hosts that are talking with people and making them feel welcomed online. One of our camera operators, she works every single weekend and we just hold her story a couple weeks ago in church, she was struggling with some alcohol issues and some depression and stuff like that and church kid. And, again, she Googled not even looking for Cross Point, none of that. She just went on searching, "I need to find some hope," found us, watched it online, met someone in the chat.

[Drew Powell:](#)

The person in the chat invited her to come. That person met her in the lobby so she knew someone the first time she was there and she got baptized and she's working on camera every week. And so those are the things that we're trying to... We're talking about the lobby moving. It's no longer come and see or come check my church and hopefully you'll meet someone and they'll welcome you in. Now it's I wanna see if what I've been watching for three years is really true when I show up there.

[Drew Powell:](#)

Are they who they say they are? Are they gonna welcome me in? Is this ...? And so I think, for us, we're trying to figure out what that looks like. What does that look like moving forward to know that people are checking us out long before they ever show up to our campuses. And if we don't focus on that, we're gonna miss hundreds of thousands of people in our communities that are checking us out and scoping us out. We're never going to have the opportunity to actually get our arms around them if we don't engage them well in the new lobby, in the new foyer which is online.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

And does that also mean that when they get here, they're ready to go a little bit faster maybe than they were five years ago or 10 years ago?

[Matt Warren:](#)

I think so.

[Drew Powell:](#)

Probably so, yeah.

[Matt Warren:](#)

I think so.

[Drew Powell:](#) Someone this last weekend showed up for the first time and came to the first service and was serving the guest experience for the second service.

[Matt Warren:](#) Oh, okay. That's fast.

[Drew Powell:](#) Now that's not that common but it just shows that once people are ready to ... It is the try before you buy it. Once you've checked it out and you're ready and you show up, there's a little bit more faster integration time into the life of the church.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah, that's funny. This is a terrible illustration but when you're buying a car, something you do every ... not every year but every few years, I've always enjoyed that because I like cars. But, anyway, you're at the mercy of the salesperson in the brochure. And now, the last few vehicles we purchased over the last decade, I know more about that model usually than the sales person. And I'm like, "Well, that trim doesn't come with this." And they're like, "What?" I'm like, "Right".

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) But that's what we're talking about. And if they haven't even been to your site, because we've got leaders listening who don't have the resources of your church or can access all that, but I promise you they've Googled the questions they're asking. They have searched every essential oil that can help them or whatever they happen to be into in the moment. And now they're coming and going, "Can you lead me?" The line we use at our church all the time is I think people show up now looking for Jesus and shame on us if they show up and only find us.

[Drew Powell:](#) Wow.

[Matt Warren:](#) That's so good.

[Drew Powell:](#) It's profound.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Because I don't want them to show up and say, "Well, we got a fun experience." No, no, no, they were looking for God. At some level of, would you agree if you walk into a church in Nashville in 2019 you're at some level looking for God-

[Matt Warren:](#) Absolutely. I was always-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) -with a girl who's looking for God?

[Drew Powell:](#) Absolutely.

[Matt Warren:](#) I was always the conscientious objector. One of my things I would say back in when I was in the programming and music world was no one accidentally showed up here and thought, "Oh, I thought this was a nightclub." They're gonna talk about this. They know they're coming to the church.

[Drew Powell:](#) Right.

[Matt Warren:](#) We can be a Jesus church. We can say that. We can talk about the Holy Spirit in prayer and revival and communion because even if they don't have context for it, they're not gonna be surprised by it because they came to a church. One other thing I was thinking in addition to the lobby shifting, if somebody may not have the resources to broadcast their service, something simple we did probably about four or five years ago was we put speakers on the outside of the building aimed at the parking lot.

[Matt Warren:](#) Initially it was like, "Let's start the experience as soon as somebody enters a parking lot so they're hearing music and worship and everything else. A very similar story, there was a lady who came for six weeks and rolled down the window. Her anxiety was so high that she couldn't enter the building but she came to church six weeks in a row in the parking lot and listened to everything we sang and said before she got the courage to come in the building.

[Matt Warren:](#) So if you can't go to broadcast right now, you can figure out a way to put some speakers on the outside of the building and there might be someone who that's the new foyer for them. You can find your version of that.

[Drew Powell:](#) And I think that's so good Matt because I would also encourage ... I think if the foyer or the lobby is changing then, in a lot of ways, the decor needs to change as well. And so in a culture now where creating content is easier than ever before, even looking at what we're doing with podcasting and all this different things, I think broadcasting a high quality live experience can be tough. You gotta have the cameras, the camera operators, you've got the live mix, all this stuff. But even for us, we're dreaming and experimenting with different kinds of content.

[Drew Powell:](#) So, for us, it's important that even our website that we're wanting to rebuild and some of the stuff we're launching it's not people looking for a church, it's people go on the Internet looking for a solution to what they need.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Right. They're not looking for a church. They're looking here. I think you're right.

[Drew Powell:](#) And so what they don't necessarily need is a re-broadcast of what happened on Sunday, they're not quite ready for that yet. But if we could be the first place they see that's giving helpful content on how to be a better parent, how to beat that addiction and how to ... broken marriages. I would encourage, we have the ability now to create content so much easier that you don't have to broadcast. Even though we have the ability, we're actually changing or shifting our model to even concept we're gonna put out.

[Drew Powell:](#) In the next year or so, it's gonna be way more felt. People don't care what the name of your last series was as much as they care, does this actually meet a practical need in my life. And if they can find that first and we can give them the

right algorithms, just like every other, and there's of youtube and everything else, we can leverage these tools. That one video leads in the next video and the next video and we can follow it down the trail that at some point they're gonna show up and find a real community.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Okay, so I've gotta play the role of the leader who's listing going. Wait a minute, that sounds very attractional to me.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah, it is. It is, I would agree. It's just goes back to what Matt said. It's just we feel like they're looking for something different and it's not the show and....

[Matt Warren:](#) Nobody is looking for 'wow' anymore. If they're truly lost, they're looking for 'how' not 'wow'.

[Drew Powell:](#) That's good. Did you just make that up?

[Matt Warren:](#) I did.

[Drew Powell:](#) That's strong.

[Matt Warren:](#) They can get 'wow' anywhere.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah, exactly. Now, I think that's so true. When people do finally have the courage to show up, they wanna know a couple of things. Do these people really believe what they're talking about?

[Matt Warren:](#) Yes.

[Drew Powell:](#) Because I think one part of the attractional church that has maybe done us a little bit of a disservice is if you don't build a worship culture and you don't build a bit of an intensity and, really, a heart for the lost or heart for the city and the way to dig it then, potentially, people are showing up with real needs and real problems thinking, "Is this possibly the solution to what I have? I don't know yet." And if they see a bunch of people that don't look like they actually believe what they're doing, then, they're gonna be like, "Well, then, I don't think this is the answer or the solution."

[Drew Powell:](#) When they show up, they need to see people that are bought in, that are like, "No, this has worked for us. Here's a story of how it's worked and this is why we feel like you should belong to this community as well."

[Matt Warren:](#) So good.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) I know this can be a little bit hard to put into words but I know the shift you're talking about, we've been undergoing it for the last three or four years that Connexus as well. But, let's start with music. What is different about music at

Cross Point today than five years ago? Because when you commit you're largely the same-

[Drew Powell:](#) Largely the same.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) -but it's different so what is that?

[Matt Warren:](#) Okay, so there was a season when it came to even how we produced a live moment. We would say, "Okay, this is a really cool acoustic electric guitar, drums and bass version of this song. What would this worship song sound like if Taylor Swift produced this song?" We would say, okay, and again this is a season ago now and we can pick on ourselves a little bit because we were there.

[Drew Powell:](#) It was us.

[Matt Warren:](#) It was us. That's right. And so we would say, "Let's reimagine how Imagine Dragons would cover this Chris Tomlin song or let's see how Taylor Swift would play this Bethel song. And so we would come up with these original or different interpretations of it. And then we spent a lot of time and resource on that to engage a different segment of culture. When you turn on the radio, you don't hear songs that sound like Acoustic Guitar, Electric Guitar, Bass and drums.

[Drew Powell:](#) No you don't.

[Matt Warren:](#) That's not how music sounds on the radio. Again, going back to being really worried about that guest, what came off the platform sounded really anequetated production wise. So several years ago-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) We will come back to that because most church leaders are like, "What?" But I totally resonate with that.

[Matt Warren:](#) Basically, now, I think we are incredibly comfortable with a way more authentic experience to what Drew said earlier. It's, it's excellent because there's a standard of excellence that we have for our city, it's an act of worship. But we would do songs now that we would probably never do three years ago. Some spiritual topics, again, going maybe towards the Holy Spirit or towards prayer, they'd be like, "That's pretty confusing three years ago." Now we're like, "Well, let's just put the rungs in the ladder and we'll get them there."

[Drew Powell:](#) A couple of things I would add to that that we've started to shift in our culture is more emphasis on a worship pastor at a location, so a multisite location. Again, this might not apply to everyone but when you're just an attractational music and you're just performing, then, you can have just a song leader. You just have quality song leader up there with excellence. We've really tried to increase just the emphasis we have on someone, a consistent leader, in front of a group of people that is pastoring them in worship.

[Matt Warren:](#) It's a spiritual intensity.

[Drew Powell:](#) The spiritual intensity and we don't want song leaders as much as because before we can ... Again, where naturally you just contract a song leader, you've seeing these three songs and you're done now we want someone whose heart is invested in that community that really wants to see them grow. That's one way. I would say also just building space and margin into sets that we didn't normally do. Now we do have some limitations still with broadcasts and timing and stuff like that.

[Matt Warren:](#) It's still a 60 minute program. It's not like we went from 18 minutes of worship to 40 minutes of worship. It's still 18 or 22 minutes.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) But those 18 minutes, they feel like they breathe more, that they have more space.

[Matt Warren:](#) That's the goal, goal.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) They have more a sense of awe or wonder or a mood to them than, maybe, just 18 highly programmed high energy minutes.

[Drew Powell:](#) Right, right, and we can do that. We can make it feel that way and we can actually budget in some margin to just see what God wants to do. And then, another thing I would say, there's just even more freedom. I know for me, I'm one of the stage hosts but there's been times at our 5:30 service recently, and it happens probably once a month, where I'll get up and just say ... And I feel totally supported by pastor Kevin, he's saying, "Go, go, go."

[Matt Warren:](#) I'll get up and say, "I don't know that we're done singing that song yet," or, "I think we should go back into the song." We never would have done that before. We just stuck to the plan, don't deviate from the plan. But creating a little sense of flow, like a little sense of, "Hey, if we need to go back into something, repeat a chorus or if we don't feel like the Holy Spirit is done working in this moment, we're not gonna feel like we're forced to rush through this moment." We're gonna pause and just live in it a little longer and that freedom has been helpful.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Can I go back just, and this is just a slight little rabbit trail before we keep moving on to other aspects of the service. But you hit on a big issue which could be its own podcast, which is that church music does not sound like any other music out there today. And what you mean by that, Rich Birch the first guy to really tip me off to this, a friend of mine unSeminary. He just said...

[Matt Warren:](#) Fantastic guy.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah, Rich is a super guy, a super thinker, but it was about a decade ago. He was like, "The guitar has disappeared from music that's produced today anywhere. It's basically tracks and a really hot vocal that's about all you got. But church

music is bass and drums and guitar, and we say we're contemporary but that sounds like, I don't know, 15 years ago- “

[Matt Warren:](#) Exactly right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) -to anybody who's listening to what's out on Spotify. How are you straddling that tension?

[Matt Warren:](#) These guys, Drew could probably speak a little more clearly to it but there's a little gift of Nashville and it's country music. And even maybe on the records if it sounds really produced and tracky when that artists goes and tours that song, it's almost always with a band with drums, guitar, bass, and keys.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Sure.

[Matt Warren:](#) The music that is exported out of Nashville at least looks like what we're doing on our platform. It may sound a little bit different. Country music is kinda true to its roots most of the time when it comes to how those are produced. Now pop songs, that's a completely different animal and you're exactly right. We experimented with that. We had a season where if there's a T-Pain.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Or you're doing Avicii.

[Matt Warren:](#) Yeah. If there's a T-Pain rap for the bridge for eight bars, we'd find a rapper and put them on stage because every pop artists would have a rap bridge. And so it's like, “Well that's what music sounds like, let's see if it works here.” And we found out it probably didn't but we gave it a shot. We were willing to fail.

[Drew Powell:](#) And that was the point behind it. This is what people are listening to in their cars and so when they come in, if they're listening to rap they should have rap at church also. The one thing I try to coach my team on a little bit, because they're all ... I mean, the team's are incredible. They all know what's hip and cool and whatever and I'm getting to be the old guy in the room now so style and preference and all that stuff.

[Matt Warren:](#) Because you're 30.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah, exactly. Exactly. I've peaked here. But sound and preference of is always going to change and adapt and mold, whatever. To me, it's always going back to engagement. That is the one thing that we have different in the church that ... I think in pop or country or whatever it's about the hook or it's about whatever. And that's still true, I think, in the church but if people aren't singing and engaging, it doesn't matter what the style is. You're missing the point and so...

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) What is moving you toward more singing and engaging, like engagement now in your style?

[Drew Powell:](#) Man, that's a great question. I don't know, I think it's always about the choice of songs that we're looking for. I mean, honestly, it's about accessibility. Again, all the way down to, practically, are these words moving too fast? Is this is melody too hard to sing? Is it out of the range? And these are the things, the music team does a really good job of exploring all those things.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) But you're using guitar, drums, bass, keys?

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah, absolutely and some varieties. We've gone through a phase where we're using a lot of tracks on the stuff but even this last weekend I loved it. The team programmed a moment that was just acapella, just voices. It almost felt really swampy, really acoustic.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Swampy, that's new.

[Drew Powell:](#) And that was a really special moment in the room. It was cool, just voices.

[Matt Warren:](#) It was.

[Drew Powell:](#) Are you gonna write swampy down? You wanna remember that.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah, swampy. I like that word.

[Drew Powell:](#) That's a whole new word.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) It's like really swampy.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) That's great. That's music, which is helpful, what about other things like hosting and preaching? And we have a separate episode with your lead pastor, Kevin Queen, coming up but-

[Matt Warren:](#) Well, you always have to acknowledge the guest. If you don't expect them, they're not gonna respond. Even back and out to the parking lot, you're never gonna find a reserve for senior pastor parking space at a Cross Point campus. It's like we start with the guest in mind. Volunteers, you park half a mile away these spaces are for our guests and you come in and signage is just super clear. You've got to make sure that like people know where to go when they don't know where to go.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) All that's the same.

[Matt Warren:](#) Absolutely, clear next steps. And then when you get to the auditorium, most of the time, probably nine out of 10 Sundays, we'll start with a higher energy opener. It doesn't mean that the entire set is just like four on the floor going hard after it.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Is that music off the radio so to speak or is it just a worship song that tends to be higher?

[Matt Warren:](#) Worship song.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) So you're not doing a lot of covers anymore?

[Matt Warren:](#) No, we did one on Sunday which is funny in light of this podcast, but it's January so we are more guest aware than we will be in March.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) This is like I'm going back to the gym and going to church.

[Drew Powell:](#) We wanted to give a nod to pop culture a little bit this weekend because we have a higher ... But I don't know that we've done a cover in months.

[Matt Warren:](#) Five or six months. It feels like it's been a while. it's not that it's out of the toolbox completely, It's just not the go-to tool.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) You're using it strategically and it's not automatic.

[Matt Warren:](#) But when we get to hosting, without fail it is just part of our language. We say if you're a guest today, we've got an info center. We wanna meet and say thanks for coming today. We wanna hear your story. We wanna put a gift in your hand as our way of saying thanks for being here today. And without fail if we miss that moment of the service, I'm pretty upset because that's just so important that we expect guests and we're prepared for guests.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah. We're pretty laser focused depending on the season. We try to get with whatever season the church is in so we'll go through high intensity group's season. And so we really try to declutter to the stage so there's only really .. We try to have about one announcement that we're talking or moving people to. And then we've really adopted a lot of the Story Brand Donald Miller stuff so we're big on hero language.

[Drew Powell:](#) We're not asking people to come and be a part of stuff we're doing because we think it's cool and whatever. It's this is meeting a need for you, you're the hero character of the story. And so we run every announcement, everything we do, every series, everything through a Story Brand filter to make sure that we're targeting-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Do you do more prayer in the service than you used to?

[Matt Warren:](#) That's a change for us.

[Drew Powell:](#) It is.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Tell us about that.

[Drew Powell:](#) Well, I think a lot of it's driven by Pastor Kevin, he's a man of prayer.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) He actually is.

[Drew Powell:](#) He really is.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) We spent a few days together in San Diego and it's amazing just to really get to know him.

[Drew Powell:](#) Yeah, you don't have to spend much time with him to know that that is his passion and he lives it out. And so that's gonna naturally trickle down into our culture but I think even our campus pastors. One thing that Pastor Kevin since he has been here has really raised just the value and spiritual intensity of our campus pastors. And so they're looking more through the lens of it's still I gotta run a manage my campus but also how do I pastor people and how do I look for opportunities to pray? Even the stories we're telling, the wins were telling now, is more about people and individuals and opportunities we had to pray. And so-

[Matt Warren:](#) And it's not a battle we get right all the time.

[Drew Powell:](#) No, no, no.

[Matt Warren:](#) Very recently we were burdened with the idea of telling a story of someone who experienced healing through prayer, which in our context is that's pretty odd for me. I didn't grow up in a church where someone experienced healing through prayer. We would pray for somebody's healing but I don't think, growing up, we ever expected that to actually happen.

[Drew Powell:](#) That's why it didn't, by the way.

[Matt Warren:](#) That's the word. That's exactly right. Drew and I and Kevin and another guy on our programming seem we're going back like, "Man, this story is really important because this happened. How do we tell this and not come across as the weird church?" And I think now we're just becoming ... We're trusting God's anointing on Kevin. He is completely authentic to that personally and so it doesn't come across as Benny Hinn and I apologize for saying something like that. But it's like-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) But I know what you mean. That that is who he is which is a difference. Not that people didn't pray before or whatever but I think there is a heightened need for and interest in the spiritual disciplines.

[Drew Powell:](#) That's right?

[Matt Warren:](#) Growing up and the churches and, again, the reason I think church is tilted towards attraction in the first place is as a kid growing up in a Baptist church, it's we did communion and there was prayer and there were fifth Sunday sings. And

no one ever told us why these things matter, we just did them. Our reaction as church leaders in the 90s and early 2000s was we're gonna do things that are really low hanging fruit. People can get this the first time they come in.

[Matt Warren:](#)

And so we sacrificed those rituals and some of those religious things. I think now we just gotta put the meaning back in some of those moments and it's not taboo.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Do you do communion from time to time?

[Drew Powell:](#)

We do, absolutely. And we've also ... Another thing we do that's changed is baptisms used to be more like events several times a year and now it's part of our culture every week. And most campuses have a baptismal al in their lobbies and people are getting baptized more regularly, not just an event. We still do that but those kinds of spiritual disciplines and practices are a little more evident and we're telling more stories than ever.

[Drew Powell:](#)

Even part of attractional, it's less of come and see how cool we are, come see this thing on stage but almost come and see ... It's the woman at the well stuff. Come see what Jesus has done for me. And they're telling their own story of how they've experienced healing or whatever and so we're able to just point to Jesus and not look at what we're doing.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Well, what's so just exciting to hear is it was less than three years ago where you had that big transition and almost all your senior leaders left and a lot of other people left as well. But I remember last time I connected with you guys, he had just had a record Sunday in attendance. The people are being drawn here and finding God. We could, if we had more time, I think we're doing a lunch soon but we can talk about groups is up.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

This isn't just people showing up on the weekend. Groups is up, baptism is up, prayer is up. You guys, and we'll probably talk about this in the other episode, but every Tuesday at 11:00 AM you do an hour of prayer with staff which is really neat. Now, a lot of leaders listening are going, "uh-oh, what do I do?" If you had advice for leaders who are listening and they're like, "I feel like I'm stuck in five years ago or I knew this was broken but I didn't know how to fix it, now what do I do," any suggestions for them?

[Matt Warren:](#)

I would say a caveat that I would want to have as someone who is listening to this podcast and on their side is don't wear Saul's armor. You have a unique calling to your community and what connects there is not necessarily what connects in Nashville. So know who you are and know who God's made you to be. And if you feel a sense of change, something Kevin said that ... The very first conversation I had with him on the phone, the first pre-interview conversation, he said, "Hey, what's the prayer life like at your church?"

[Matt Warren:](#)

And kind of defeated I had to say, "It's pretty infantile, I'm not sure." And he said, "Okay, that's fine." And his prayer always is, "God teach me how to pray," so I think the best thing you can do if you wanna start a culture that wants to return to God's presence and his power. It's, "God, just teach me how to pray and will you teach me how to teach other people how to pray?" And so it can be really simple, a really simple start.

[Drew Powell:](#)

Yeah, I think I totally agree with what you said. That's profound, Matt. I feel like-

[Drew Powell:](#)

Mic drop there. But now the leader is finding how has God wired you to lead. We talk about all the time the comparison trap of you're not meant to be, name your favorite preacher. That's not who you're meant to be. And then I would take it even a step further, what is your niche in your city? Really pray through. There's things as a church that will never be as good at as some of the other churches in our city. But because we're seeing increased unity ... I mean, we're getting ready to go into 30 days of prayer and fasting with over 300 churches in our city.

[Drew Powell:](#)

I know it's amazing so as a unity is starting to come together, we're able to say "No, I'm friends with Matt Smallbone over at Church of the City and this is what they're really great at. And you would probably really love his church if you'd go there." And it just helps free us to know this is what we're gonna be great at. We got a lot of great churches in the city and we can just own our little piece of the pie and know that we're contributing to the bigger kingdom.

[Drew Powell:](#)

I would encourage leaders to really discover what your strength is, what that looks like for you. Don't try to duplicate but then also really hone in on what has God called you to do in your context where you're at.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Yeah. If I could add one thing to that, to leaders who are listening, I would say really be true to who God has called you to be. I think in the same way that maybe it was easy to get caught up in what every other church was doing a few years ago, it's pretty easy to get caught up in what other preachers are doing or to just try to download a template and think, "This is gonna fix all my problems." I'm preaching this weekend at our church and I'm going into new territory.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

And there's a little bit of vulnerability with that as well, but it's where my heart's at, it's the work that God is doing in my life. And there was an interesting ... We do attract a lot of unchurched people and we have ... it's almost like the equivalent of the state police. The provincial police have their headquarters, literally 10 minutes from my house in a city where one of our locations is. And the guy who's trained to be the chief lie detector guy in the entire province of 11 million people showed up at our church, not a believer.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

And so he's an expert in pathology, he can tell if you're lying, and he gets in on the biggest cases in the country to try to figure out whether this guy actually killed her or whether he's telling the truth so it's fascinating. And he wasn't a

Christian when he came and it was one of the best compliments I think I ever got on my preaching. And what he said, and I've confirmed it now, he's in my small group ... But, anyway, what he said was, "I don't know whether," pointing to the screen because I was on the screen at that location. He says, "I don't know whether I believe what that guy believes but I can 100% tell you that he believes it."

[Drew Powell:](#) Wow, that's huge.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) And I thought, "Okay, mission accomplished."

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Because I don't always get it right but I think when you bring that conviction and when you bring that authenticity into what you're doing, whether you're a worship leader or whether you're a preacher or whether you're a host or whatever you're doing, I think that is what people are hungering after. There's so much fake, there's so much spin. There's so much like just a cacophony of influences out there that they're looking for the real thing. And if you can bring that, which we have in Jesus, we really do.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) The last question and this is, again, a big one. The whole charismatic, have you guys become more expressive over the last few years or you would say, "Nah, if you showed up on a Sunday it's pretty much the way it was five years ago."

[Drew Powell:](#) That's a good question. I feel like our worship culture is growing in expression. I think we're feeling and I think it's the old analogy of the ship. You gotta turn it slow, right? And if you can turn it fast, you make everyone sick. And so it's turning slow but we're feeling and seeing just a lot of more engagement in our worship service expressing that way. And I would just say even an emphasis on miracles and prayer. Like when we pray, unlike you when you grew up, we actually believe that God's gonna ...

[Drew Powell:](#) We believe that God is gonna work and do miracles. We believe that the prayer is the most powerful force on the planet so there's an expectation when we pray. And so, yeah, I would say there is a little bit more of an emphasis. I don't know that if you visited Cross Point five years ago and then you came in today that, externally, you would see tons of change. I do hear people say that it feels a little different when it comes to how we respond but I think we're still so new into this that I think what God's doing is He's still shaping our hearts internally.

[Drew Powell:](#) He's still growing us in how to pray and Kevin has been leading us as a staff and so we're seeing that seep out into the church but ... Do you agree?

[Matt Warren:](#) That's totally good. Yeah, I love it. One way I can express it is I talked to a guy on Sunday. He programs lights for some of the biggest artists, not in Nashville but in the world literally. He's an incredible lighting programmer. He's not here all the time because of his work takes him to France and Canada and South America and everywhere. I was like, "Hey, so what did you think? Are you

enjoying what we're doing?" He was like, "Yeah, man, it's still really feels the same and it still is really different."

[Matt Warren:](#)

People can't quite put their thumb on it but if you felt comfortable here five years ago, you feel comfortable here now and I think it's the right kind of different and the right kind of better. No criticism on the past because I was here and I was a part of it and I loved it. And God used that season and I think he's really shaping and using this season, absolutely. It's different and it's better.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

No, that's well said. And it is a very similar story that Connexus. It's very recognizable but something shifted. And I think that's a good thing because our culture is different than it was five years ago. And I think people are more tired, people are more hungry, people are more longing to really meet Christ.

[Drew Powell:](#)

That's right, more desperate.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

They're more desperate, that's a good thing. Anything else you guys wanna share before we wrap up? This is good. And then I want to know where people can go to find Cross Point or our conversation in real time, so more resources. This is it.

[Drew Powell:](#)

Yeah. I just wanna say a 90 day disclaimer on anything we said to be completely false.

[Matt Warren:](#)

I think in talking about attractional, it's a horse you can fall off on both sides. That you can just miss this going way too far to the right or way too far to the left and it goes back to calling. You just gotta lean into God. For us, the secret sauce in the season of transition was desperation. And if you don't start with desperation first, if you turn something really fast ... A leader that came in, in our transition, to help us sort things out said, "Hey, if you wanna steer fast, steer a small boat."

[Matt Warren:](#)

If you wanna turn something this big, you kinda gotta do it a little bit slower. If you wanna work on the ship, you gotta do it in the harbor not out in the ocean. So if you wanna tinker with what God's calling you to do, I would just say desperation first before you go attack the model.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

That's a good word because I think the mistake would be implementing some of this hoping it would 'work'.

[Matt Warren:](#)

This is not a formula.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

It's not formula, it's like, "Where is God moving in now and how can I respond?"

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

So crosspoint.tv, just follow along more.

[Drew Powell:](#)

I can give him Matt's personal cell phone too if you wanna call him directly.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Please do. Please do that. Well guys, thank you so much. Matt, Drew, this has been amazing.

[Drew Powell:](#) An honor.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Thank you ... so thank you.

[Drew Powell:](#) It's so fun, love it.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Well that was Cross Point's Creative director, Drew Powell and Executive Director Matt Warren. Next episode, we are back with Kevin Queen, the lead pastor, and man. Kevin is a different kind of dude in the best possible way. This guy loves Jesus, studies revival and has not only led Cross Point to a point where they recovered from losing their founder but have gone way beyond that in very little time. It's a fascinating story. Well, here's an excerpt from my conversation with Kevin Queen which will go live next Tuesday

[Kevin Queen:](#) For me, it means that I will wait on God because I don't wanna pry a door open. I'd rather pray a door open.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Oh yeah.

[Kevin Queen:](#) Right? Because once the door opens ... I mean, really, when starting in a position like this I can't imagine not having the story and starting a position because then every weekend is an audition. Every weekend I've gotta impress somebody, every weekend I wonder, "Well what do you think about that?" But there's such ... how do you come into a difficult situation like this? There's amazing staff, amazing people but even I've got enough insecurity that if I didn't know that I was at the place on the planet that God had called me, I think the battle in my mind would keep me from effectiveness, right?

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Well, I think you're gonna love it. And remember Easter is right around the corner so head on over to promediafire.com/carey to take advantage of some incredible savings and get the message out there before Easter happens. And if you wanna improve your preaching, head on over to theartofbetterpreaching.com and see what Mark Clark and I have got for you there. Well, I wanna thank everybody who's left a rating and reviews, thank you guys.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Man, I've been on the road a lot this year, looking forward to doing more speaking. We'll say more about that a little bit later on. Yeah, there's some new opportunities opening up which I'm really excited about. And for your encouragement, for your feedback, for your ratings, reviews, comments, engagement on social, all I can say is thank you. We had the very best week ever on the podcast just a couple of weeks ago and that's in terms of downloads and listens. I just want to say thank you so much guys. You are the best.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

So whether you are working out in the car, cooking dinner, on the treadmill, on your bike or just on a hike in the woods, 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.