

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 258 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof. I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well, one of the things I really appreciate about podcasting and everything it brings is it gives you unlimited possibility. We get to talk about things that not everybody talks about. We get to do a deep dive into subjects, and this one's a lot heavier than normal. Today we're gonna talk about suicide in leadership. I'm sitting down with a longtime friend, Rusty George, who leads a large church of over 5,000 people. One of his campus pastors took his own life a few months ago.

Carey Nieuwhof: This is a growing problem in America. Suicide rates are on the rise and it touches, oh man, just so many of our lives. And how do you handle that as a leader? How do you handle that as a friend? What do you need to do if you suspect that someone may be suicidal? And then, how do you lead an organization through the death of one of its key leaders? We talk about all of that and so much more. Rusty, in my opinion, is just so helpful with it, so thoughtful with it. I think you're gonna want this. You definitely want to keep this one. Just a reminder too, if you want to share this with your team, we have transcripts available. So, I'll let you know where the show notes are right now.

Carey Nieuwhof: You can go to careynieuwhof.com/episode258 or just go to leadlikeneverbefore.com and you can toggle on to the search bar and search Rusty George, and he's been on a few times, but it will be easy to find this and you'll get the transcripts. So, if you're going through that, if you wanna prepare your staff for that, what Rusty has to say is so, so helpful. Anyway, that's coming up now. We get to talk about a lot of things on this podcast and so coming up, I've got a lot of great guests and I'm really excited about as well. We've got stuff on YouTube and growing your video platform. Horst Schulze is back. Les McKeown, Nona Jones, Mike Hyatt, Ruth Haley Barton, Margaret Feinberg, Ken Coleman. Oh my goodness. The list is incredible.

Carey Nieuwhof: We are really excited about 2019. Thanks for making it a great year so far. And hey, speaking of great things, next month I am going to be at the Pushpay Summit in Dallas. It's the third week in May. May 22nd through 23rd, I will be keynoting along with Patrick Lencioni, Nona Jones. And it's not your typical church conference. In fact, business leaders are welcome. Pushpay is fantastic at leading discussions about the tactics and strategic steps that set your church or organization up for success and leadership communications technology and Finance. So, I sat with Troy Pollock, he's one of the VPs at Pushpay, and I asked him, "You've got a pretty cool lineup for this event. What are you most excited about for this year's summit?"

Troy Pollock: I'm most excited about the lineup of speakers. In addition to yourself, we've got some great communicators that are gonna be with us. You mentioned Patrick Lencioni. He's written 11 bestselling books. His writings have greatly improved the church. I talk to a lot of people like you, and man, they're just consuming his content left and right. We also have Nona Jones with us. She was at our last summit, and she was probably the highest rated speaker that we had. She is with Facebook and leading the church as well too with her husband and she just has such a fresh perspective of how to leverage social in a new way so you can maximize social.

Troy Pollock: And then we got some really cool, exciting guests come in. We're going to have Bobby Gruenewald come in with us. We're going to have Clay Scroggins who is a frequent communicator on your podcast. They're gonna end with, "Hey, where's the church going and how do we leverage technology to make sure that we're staying on the cutting edge of the church?" For me, I'm most excited about the content that we're gonna hear from the communicators themselves.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can I add one more? Is it true that Cheryl Bachelder is gonna be there as well?

Troy Pollock: That is true. Cheryl Bachelder, yes. She's absolutely brilliant.

Carey Nieuwhof: She is brilliant. Former CEO of Popeyes. So, it's going to be a fun time.

Troy Pollock: Incredible turnaround story there at Popeyes. So, a lot of wisdom to share with the audience as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm super excited about the practicality that we are gonna be talking about. Now, we have a deal for you, which is great. Because you're a listener of this podcast, you don't get the early bird rate, you get a lot better than that. If you use the coupon code: CAREYN at registration, you will bring the cost down from \$159 per person to \$89 per person. Head on over to Pushpay.com/summit. That's pushpay.com/summit to learn more, and to register, use the coupon code: CAREYN, C-A-R-E-Y-N, and you'll be off to the races. Hope to see you in Dallas May 22nd and May 23rd. Well, listen, without much further ado, why don't we get into this meaningful, powerful, and I hope at the end of the day, healing and helpful conversation with real life church lead pastor, Rusty George. Rusty, welcome back to the podcast. It's good to have you.

Rusty George: Thank you. It's an honor to be here. I always enjoy hanging out with you.

Carey Nieuwhof: You're getting up there. It's just like your third time, is it?

Rusty George: I think it is. That's the hat trick, right?

Carey Nieuwhof: That is the hat trick. That's right. Yeah, and the last time you were on, we were talking about this before we hit record. The big insight was 'cause we were talking about relationships and how do you handle that when your trust has

been betrayed. Just share one more time what you shared last time that I've never forgotten about who should trust or how you should trust?

Rusty George: Well, and it's a great piece of insight I got from Dr. John Walker of Blessing Ranch, who's helped out countless pastors. He just said there's a big difference between trusting and entrusting. He referenced a time where Jesus is dealing with his disciples, and a whole crowd of people. And John made this observation about him. The Apostle John that is. He says, "Jesus did not entrust himself to any man for he knew the hearts of men." The impact that John Walker said was he trusted people with the task, with the mission and those kinds of things, but he entrusted his heart, he entrusted his empty himself to his father.

Rusty George: That was a key moment for me, and I think it has been for a lot of leaders from what they've said and understanding who really owns our heart. That we deal with people. They're here for a reason, a season or a lifetime, but not forever. And we just have to hold them loosely and hold on tight to Christ.

Carey Nieuwhof: Mic drop. Okay. Thanks for the interview today, Rusty. I really appreciate it. That was good. No, that really has stuck with me and that was paradigm shifting and so helpful. 'Cause I think we've all wrestled at different points with heartbreak and what happens when a relationship doesn't go the way you hoped it would or someone you led into that inner circle just ... it doesn't work out the way you hoped it would. That was super helpful. But Rusty, we're going to talk about your new book, "Justice, Mercy, Humility." But you had an incident happen, a really tragic one actually that has shown up a lot in church circles. It shows up in companies all the time as well, sadly.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know whether it's on the rise or not, but it's certainly just a staple of the human condition. You had someone who was a longtime friend of yours, like going back decades, I think to college. Someone who was the campus pastor of your broadcast remain location at your very large church take his own life. And you've been dealing with that over the last month or two. So, can you just tell us what happened and how it unfolded that you lost your friend and campus pastor Jim Howard?

Rusty George: Well, exactly Carey, it has been a very difficult time, and certainly the most difficult thing I've dealt with in ministry and personally in my life in that yes, Jim was a friend for 20 plus years, and we knew each other from long ago, and he came on our staff about three years ago and was really doing a fantastic job. He's no stranger to the north point world and to rethink leadership and orange and has done so much with all of that. Over the time that Jim was with us, he would talk openly and honestly about some mental health struggles that he had, about medication that he would take, and even about a history of having been abused as a child. He just was very open with this and very open about a divorce he went through many years ago and just some of the struggles that he had had.

Rusty George: I think what began to happen over the past few months was he began to walk down some of those paths again. Of course, hindsight's 20/20, and after the fact, you begin to hear people say things like, "Well, he just wasn't the same over the past few months." Or I noticed a difference in him, or I noticed he would talk about going off of his medication from time to time. We look back, and we see a decline and work performance and maybe a bit of a disengagement, but we just thought stress-related, 'cause you don't ever expect this thing to happen. There was a series of events that happened and he was dealing with some serious personal issues.

Rusty George: We were talking to him about that, and he decided to resign, which was a little strange to us that he would just walk away. But we said, "Okay, well, let's figure out exactly how we can help you get healthy and get ready for whatever the Lord has ready for you next. And unfortunately, we really didn't get that opportunity because the next day he took his life.

Carey Nieuwhof: So, he resigned on one day and then took his life the next.

Rusty George: He did. He resigned on a Tuesday, and then we got the call from his wife. That next afternoon, we went over to his house, and he had ended his life, and we sat outside with his wife while the police were called. If you've ever had to deal with anything like that, you know just how unprepared you are, how there's so much you want to say, but you don't know what to say. So you say nothing. You sit there with her, you help with the police and the people that come to assist. And then, eventually they let us into the house, and we had to wait for the coroner and all of that.

Rusty George: It's a very difficult season. And then, because his family, his extended family all live in Kentucky, and he's out here in California, I have to call his mom and tell her what's happened and his twin sister and his best friend from back there. They all had the same reaction. They were just utterly shocked. But then, they could recall moments where he would talk about it a few months ago. And as we begin to put the puzzle together, you can see him beginning to think about this and process this over a series of months leading up to this moment. I don't know if there's anything we could have done because, as many counselors will tell you, you get to a place where you get into the suicide tunnel, you see it as the only way out. There is no other option.

Rusty George: I think about what are our friend, Dr. John Walker said to me. He said, "You know what? We can influence people's behavior. We can't control them, and they're going to do what they want to do." I think the natural reaction for any leader, and I would just say this to every church leader out there, is your reaction is going to be to take the blame. You will feel responsible. This was on my watch. How did I let this happen? He was my friend. But there's only so much blame you can take. At the end of the day, people do what they're going to do and what they wanna do. And now, you have to quickly shift into, how do we help those who've been hurt by this?

Carey Nieuwhof: No, I appreciate that. I'm so sorry, Rusty, and if any of the listeners happen to know Rusty personally, you're the kind of leader who've I've always seen is very empathetic, very relational. You're very strategic and structural as well, but not that stereotypical cold hearted large church, large business person who doesn't have time for people. That's not your vibe. That's not what you are. But I'm glad you raised it because that's where a lot of people almost immediately go. I know we've got lots of leaders who are listening who had either a suicide in their own family or in their church or in their organization or company. One of the questions that people inevitably ask themselves is, is there anything I could've done to prevent this? How have you processed that personally?

Rusty George: Well, as any leader would, I've processed it a lot, I've thought about it a lot. I would encourage you on a few things if you have to go through this, and I pray you don't, is, don't process this alone. It's in our silence. It's in our mind in the middle of the night that we come up with some of the worst decisions, and the worst reasons for things. We did a few things right through this situation that I would happily tell other churches if they happen to go through this. In fact, just the other day I saw a news report that this has happened at a church in Florida, and we're reaching out to them right now as to how we can help them through this as other churches have helped us out through this. Everything in your leadership psyche is going to say burry it, don't talk about it, move on.

Rusty George: You can come up with all kinds of scriptural reasons to do that. You know what? The mission matters more. We're here to seek and save that which is lost, and we can over spiritualize all of this. And in that moment, sitting in his house, I'm literally thinking, "All right, how do we get beyond this? How do we not talk about this? How do we not deal with this?" "Cause it's too painful to talk about. But there's something that your church needs to go through in order to get to the other side. As Rick Warren said after the loss of his son through suicide, he said, "We don't go around grief. We don't get over grief. We go through grief." I think that that can come off as a little trite if you're not in it, but in the middle of it, you think, "Yeah, I've got to walk right through this."

Rusty George: And so we decided we're going to embrace this. We called the paper first 'cause we knew they'd get the information. This was on a Wednesday. We have church on Thursday night, it's our first service of the weekend. So, we called the newspaper, and we said, "You're already hearing reports of an incident at such and such address. We wanna tell you exactly what happened and give you all the information that you need to know, but we're asking if you would hold this story until after we could at least have one service with our congregation on Thursday night. And they said, "Absolutely."

Rusty George: We prepared to Facebook statement that we put out on Thursday evening, once service had been handled. This was one of the more difficult things I've ever done. I preached the message that I was scheduled to preach that weekend because it was part four in our series, and I know there are people coming that don't even know this individual, but they're coming for this series, so I have to

provide it. So, I teach the material, we put it up online, we tell people if they want to access it, they can. But then, for the final 10 minutes of our Thursday night service, I just said, "Here's what has happened, and on Sunday we're going to talk about it extensively. If you have wrestled with this, if you have friends that have wrestled with this, if you just want to grieve or process, by all means come back on Sunday."

Rusty George: We had grief counselors provided that night and on Sunday after all of our services. When we told our staff on Thursday morning, we had grief counselors around the room. We told them, "Don't leave. Don't go back to business as usual. Talk about this with somebody else." I think by us embracing it and talking about it, and then when I spoke on that Sunday, I took 25 minutes to answer questions that people I knew were asking, how could a pastor do this? How come we didn't know? What did we miss? But then I took time to talk about this subject to anybody who might be considering it. Three things I wish I could have said to Jim before he made this choice and walk through some of those things and where God is in all of this. And then directed them to nights of prayer and counseling and resources provided.

Rusty George: By doing some of those things, by getting the message out on Facebook, by getting the message out to our local news affiliates, by even emailing other pastors in town to tell them, "You're gonna be hearing about this, I want you to hear the story from me as to what happened", minimizes the gossip and the problem that people have with over sensationalizing these issues. I tried to just get out in front of it as much as possible. What has happened is, first of all, your people are proud of you for doing that, but second of all, you begin to help out a lot of people that think, "Nobody else knows what I'm going through. And if a pastor was wrestling with this, maybe I'm not alone." And we get a chance to help people through the process.

Carey Nieuwhof: What was that Sunday like at your church?

Rusty George: It was surreal. It was like doing a funeral four times. It was yet also the most Holy Spirit led experience I think I've ever had. People said, "I'm praying for you", and I knew they were because the energy, and the ability to sustain that energy throughout the rest of the day was unlike anything I'd ever experienced. It was that sweetness of walking through the valley of the shadow of death and knowing that I'm being led. It was a unifying time for our staff. It was a horrible time. We cried a lot of tears, but it was one of those moments that we look back, and it's going to be a defining moment, I think, not just for us, but for our community as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: What were some of the questions people asked in those first few days or maybe that Sunday?

Rusty George: Well, I think everybody wants to know who to blame, who's at fault. They all want to share part of that blame. Even when I called his family members, they

all said, "I should have said something. He said something to me I should have known." The other questions are, how could a pastor do this? How could a Christian do this? The big question everybody wants to know is, is this the unpardonable sin? They want to know, is he in hell? I had a whole five, 10 minutes prepared to talk about that because I do not believe this is the unpardonable sin. I think-

Carey Nieuwhof: You wrote a blog on it, and we'll link to that in the show notes.

Rusty George: I did. You look back at even Saul, King Saul taking his own life, but Samuel saying, "I'll see you again." Or, "You'll be with me tomorrow." I think we can pretty much put the dots together on that one. But I think people want to know, is this the unpardonable sin? And I was prepared to talk about it, but I had a grief counselor say I wouldn't share that publicly and from stage because people sometimes are looking for a reason to give into this idea.

Carey Nieuwhof: Interesting. In other words, they didn't want you to do it because they were afraid it would give permission to somebody on the edge.

Rusty George: Exactly. And this grief counselor, which was very wise, he said, nine times out of 10 when somebody asks me that question, they're not looking for a theological answer, they're looking for a reason to be able to go through with this.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. Never thought of that.

Rusty George: I hadn't either. And so, I thought, "Okay, then I won't do that." I'll put it out there in blog form, if people just need the material and need to ... 'cause some people wanted to know. People came up to me crying saying, "Is Jim in heaven?" The moment I saw his wife after we got the call, and we showed up at the house, she asked me, "Is Jim with Jesus?" That's what people want to know. And I said, "Absolutely. Absolutely." We posted the blog, and we got some haters that came out and said things, and it was ridiculous. But I think that you have to get that information out there in a way that you can talk with them and engage with them in a way that's helpful and not hurtful.

Carey Nieuwhof: I know people can read the blog post, but what are some reasons you would say that isn't the unpardonable sin or an unpardonable sin?

Rusty George: I think we have to look at the totality of our life and not just our last act. We can't just sum everything up in the final moment. I think we have to recognize that for many people in that state, they don't even see this as a real choice. In fact, they tell you to stop using the phrase, "chose to commit suicide" because that phraseology means that you think you had a choice in that moment, which many times it's a mental health issue, and they see no other way out. And you even think about the way that the enemy lies to us. It's not even the lies of, you're awful, you're horrible, you should end your life. It's the lies of, aren't you

tired? Aren't you exhausted? Don't you just want this to be over? Don't you just want to be with Jesus?

Rusty George: So, you think about all that tied into it, I'm not sure if you can sum up a person's life based upon whether or not they died by suicide or not, but whether or not they had Jesus as their lord and Savior. And we see that in his life. When you think about the people that actually had suicidal tendencies, Elijah wanted to die, Moses wanted to die. They all cried out for God to take their life.

Carey Nieuwhof: Jonah was done.

Rusty George: Jonah was done. And we don't even have a good conclusion to that story. We don't know what happened. He's just bitter underneath that tree. Right?

Carey Nieuwhof: Sign for he never learned anything.

Rusty George: That's right. No learning and no hugging.

Carey Nieuwhof: No hugging, no learning.

Rusty George: That's right. I go back to King Saul and where we see him and up, I think you can show that this is not the unpardonable sin. It is a sin, but no worse than any other.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I wrote about it very briefly and didn't see it coming. I'm not somebody who has a lot of suicidal thoughts, but when I burned out in 2006, probably in August of that summer, that was the darkest period of my life to date. And when the pain of just whatever you're going through gets that dark, there is a very perverse logic. And I know that that was present in my life where I just thought the only way through this is out of this. I thank God I didn't own any weapons, still don't. I thank God that I didn't act on those impulses, but it can get pretty dark at times. And if there's somebody listening right now who is struggling with that, I know what I would say. What would you say to them?

Rusty George: I would say you're not alone. We all have those moments. You may think that yours is at a different level, that no one knows what you feel like. And the answer is there is somebody else that knows. The quicker you get that secret out into the open and talk to somebody about it, the easier it will be to find healing. What is it that James tells us? Confess your sins to each other so that you might be healed. This might not even be in sin state yet, but it's our secrets that make us sick. So, the quicker we can get those out and talk to somebody about these things, the quicker you realize you're not alone. I would tell you, in your book, you describe it so well through burnout, but for those of us that maybe we haven't even reached that level, if you have anything in your past like a history of abuse, where you've been abused, you're more susceptible to this.

Rusty George: If you have a history of mental health issues, you're more susceptible to this. If you have a history of addiction to alcohol to pornography, you're more susceptible to this, and all you're waiting for is an accelerant. Whether it's an affair, whether it's a series of bad choices at work that you're not succeeding anymore or a series of criticisms. That's just the accelerant to that kindling that you've put together or has been put together in your life. And then quickly you move into this thing of, no one else knows how I feel. Everybody would be better off if I'm gone.

Rusty George: As church leaders, and we just see this far too often, we just assume that somebody else will pick it up from me, and they'll be better off without it. I can tell you what we're walking through, just the sheer carnage of it all of people that have been devastated by this decision, from children wondering how could the guy that I looked up to do this, to people that he counseled out of taking their lives into asking where is all this now for me? It is not easier without you. We need you here. We need you healed though.

Carey Nieuwhof: I know for me, if I look back on it now with a little more objectivity. I don't think you have any objectivity when you're in the valley. But for me, I look at it, a lot of it with self pity, feeling sorry for yourself. I'd been through a lot of counseling, and there was no immediate trauma. I was just working through some stuff. I think a lot of it was fatigue. You never make good decisions when you're tired. I'd run hard for a decade, so burnout's not fun. It was a very dark place, and it led me into that place. But I would say I felt like it was confession without forgiveness, which in many ways I wonder is a definition of hell. It's like, suddenly, I've seen what I've done or who I am, but there's no way out.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think one of the things that was almost impossible for me to believe, and I'm sharing this just in case anybody's listening who feels this way right now is that would ever get better. I don't know, it was the weirdest, and most perverse thing because I still remember exactly where I was 10 minutes from my current home pulling off the highway and thinking for the first time in a few months, "Carey, this is all in your head. Wait a minute, there's actually nothing wrong. You have a wife who loves you, two boys who love you, a church that loves you, and there's really nothing wrong. This is all in your head." And that was maybe the beginning of the turnaround and hey, maybe there is something wrong. Maybe you've done something that you really regret. But there is forgiveness on the other side of confession, and self pity is not from God. Self loathing is not from God.

Carey Nieuwhof: I had no idea that the next decade in a bit would have so much life in it or that life was even possible, but I just needed to hang on long enough to see that happen.

Rusty George: Well, that's so well said. When you're in that dark pit, you just can't imagine there'd ever be sunlight again. You can't imagine there'd ever be anything good next. But, if the Bible is testimony to anything, it's that God uses broken people.

Just read through the Old Testament and the horrific things that people have done and said. These are the people we would cover up and hide from and not talk about. And yet, God redeemed their lives in such great ways. The Apostle Paul certainly is one of those that we could track and through all that.

Carey Nieuwhof: I remember another moment for me that summer was a friend ... I had lots of friends come over to pray, lay hands on me, the whole deal. Incredibly supportive wife, small group. But there was just one day in particular, and it was a kind of day, I got up every day, but I was lying on the living room floor, midday. It was like one of those days. And my friend called, and he just .., it was a short call. He just said, "Carey, I know you don't believe this today, but the sun will shine again." 13 years later, I'm like, "Yup, I still remember that conversation." And sometimes maybe that's what you need to hear today. The sun will shine again.

Carey Nieuwhof: Anyway, and we'll-

Rusty George: Even in Canada.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, even maybe in the summer. Yeah, It's been a bit of a bleak winter. Yeah, for sure. Do people grieve differently, Rusty, than otherwise when suicide is involved? You've done a lot of funerals. How's it different?

Rusty George: I think so because we're so mad. We're just angry. We're angry that we didn't get a chance to help, we're angry that we didn't fix it before it happened. We're angry that there were things in this person's life we didn't know about. We feel betrayed. We have unanswered questions. It's just so much different than when somebody passes away peacefully in their sleep or even dies by cancer or something like that. We get that last moment. We get to say goodbye. We get, even sometimes to know a reason why. It's in those questions that it becomes so, so difficult. One of the toughest funerals I ever did was for a murder suicide in our community where a guy took his family's life and then his own.

Rusty George: And just a sidebar about the statistics about suicide. Worldwide, it's going down, but in America it's up by 30%. It's typically men in their middle ages. It's the whole 40 to 55 range of, we've climbed the ladder only to realize it's against the wrong wall, now what do we do? This was a guy that had some mental health issues. I remember doing that funeral, and there was so much anger about this individual, and the murder involved there. I think there are some elements of that in as suicide as well of, you're grieving the loss of your friend, but you're mad at your friend because he killed your friend.

Rusty George: It's all this convoluted, all the stages of grief rolled into one. I think we just process it differently and then it comes out in different places. And then, there's moment you begin to grieve the friend you thought you had and maybe they weren't who you thought they were. It's such a reckless thing. I know you and I've talked about grief before, and it comes out in the weirdest of places. And

certainly for pastors, you've got to shoulder all this. You're trying to care for the spouse, you're trying to care for the family, then you're trying to care for your staff and for your church and you're the voice piece for your community because they all want to talk about it. How do you grieve and when do you grieve?

Rusty George: And oftentimes, it's at the wrong time and you breakdown in front of people or you yell at somebody on a flight like you did. You do these crazy things and you think, "Where's that coming from?" It's grief, and you've got to find a way to process it. You got to talk to somebody, otherwise it'll eat you away.

Carey Nieuwhof: I want to get to that in just a moment because that was one of my questions for you is, how are you processing that grief? But you just touched on so much and I thought that was so helpful. All the contradictory, strange emotions that people feel around a suicide. I think part of that is, as you were talking, and I'm not an expert, I don't pretend to be an expert at all, but as someone who's had a season in my life where that was a thought, it is so amazingly logical to the person struggling and so completely illogical at the same time to everybody else. It's just this weird paradox because if anybody, I'm just in a totally different place, later would say, "I'm thinking of ending my life." I would be like, "That is just so illogical." But when you're in the grips, it feels so logical. So, it seems so illogical to everybody left behind. How do you minister to them?

Carey Nieuwhof: And then I'm going to get to, how do you go through it as a pastor? What were some things that you have been doing over these last weeks and I guess it's about a month, a month and a bit since Jim took his life to help people process this, just wide range of emotions and feelings?

Rusty George: I think it starts with the immediate family. He didn't have any children, but his wife he left behind. It's a matter of making sure she's cared for, taken care of to the extent that she needs it. We made sure that somebody was with her at all times for the first few days. Her parents flew in from out of town. We helped get them from the airport to her place, cleaning up their house that they were living in. Just kind of taking care of his belongings. What does she want to do with those? Helping answer some of the questions for-

Carey Nieuwhof: Right down to cleaning up the scene and organizing the house?

Rusty George: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. Rusty.

Rusty George: I did. And that's a very surreal moment, Carey, to go out in the backyard and hose off a patio. You do it because you don't want her to see it, but then you live with it. It's part of you from then on.

Carey Nieuwhof: You've got that memory now.

Rusty George: Yeah. And so, I don't think there's anything that can prepare you for that, but you do everything you can to take care of her. And then, you move to the staff. What do we do to take care of them? And we got a great piece of advice from ... there's a church about two hours from us, an hour and a half from us in Orange County where their lead pastor took his life about six months ago, and they called, and they said, "Here's a few ideas. Churches will call and say, "How can we help?" And you don't know what to say. So just say, "Would you bring our staff lunch someday?"

Rusty George: That goes so far with your staff because they feel like they're cared for by other churches in the community. So, we started doing that. And one of the first churches to do that was that church an hour and a half away. They came up, they brought lunch, they brought Chick-Filet, so you knew it was honored by God.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's good lunch.

Rusty George: Absolutely. And then, they brought enough staff members, they could have somebody at every table to sit with our staff and just talk about it. 'Cause you think about it, how many people have walked through this? Not many. But when you sit across from somebody who has, there's this sense of, "Oh yeah, you've been there." So, you do that and then you take care of the church. You're open, you're honest, you open up your doors for people to talk to you. And what happens quickly is people then want to care for you. And now, I have people taking me out for coffee going, "I'm just wanting to check up on you." That's hard for us to receive that

Carey Nieuwhof: I was going to say, that is not easy, is it?

Rusty George: No. Because you think, "Oh, I'm fine. Let's move on." Let people take care of you. That is the way they show they care. It's a great way to teach people how to shepherd others. But then the final piece is how to take care of your community. We got an idea from this church in Inland hills, and about the same time we got a phone call from Kay Warren. I would just tell you that Rick and Kay Warren have been so generous to us. Kay called us up and she said, "How can I help?" And she said, "I'd be willing to come up and talk to your staff or your community in any way you want." And I said, "Well, that would be great. Let's do both." So, she's coming up here in the next few weeks to just speak to our staff, but also speak on behalf of her and Rick and our church to our community, and just open that up for anybody in the community to come in and listen and find help and resources.

Rusty George: It's a fine line because there are some people that have moved on. They didn't know him that well. They're back in their lives. And you don't want to keep harping on it, but on the other hand, you want to help as much as you can. So, I think that you have that pastors intuition of when to do the right thing. But those are a few ideas we've picked up on as we've gone.

Carey Nieuwhof: So good. Now, what about you? 'Cause you and I've talked about this in the last a month or two, and it's hard. Isn't it? Do you mind walking us through that?

Rusty George: I think the first thing you got to do is you've got to take your own advice. What do we tell people when they go through a devastating loss? Make sure you sleep, make sure you eat, make sure you talk to people. I started taking the Larry Osborne advise that we heard on your podcast. I started not setting an alarm clock.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. I've been doing that. That's my big takeaway from Larry's last interview. When I'm not needed, I'm not setting an alarm clock, and it's kind of fascinating. Thank you, Larry.

Rusty George: It is. everything Larry says is fascinating.

Carey Nieuwhof: How has that helped you? Yeah, I know he's fascinating guy. How's that helped you not setting an alarm clock?

Rusty George: Well, my body gets the rest that it needs. I'm not pushing it. I don't get up early just to say I got up early because geniuses get up before six or whatever it is we've learned. I get the rest that I need. I exercise. I take time for obviously my family. But little things like taking the dogs for a walk with my wife, that's incredibly life giving to me. Watching a TV show and laughing, hanging out with friends. One of the big things our grief counselors said to us was, talk about the things you miss about Jim. It's therapeutic. One of the hardest days for me is Saturday. And it's because Jim and I both love college basketball.

Rusty George: He and I would text each other all day Saturday about different college basketball games. And so, I'm watching these games, and I'm thinking, "Oh, I got to ..." because you just have this instinct, but talk about that with people. I found myself talking to my kids about it. And they didn't even ask, but I said, "I miss Jim today, and here's why." Just speaking that, getting that out there, because what we pushed down is what's going to come up and hurt us eventually.

Carey Nieuwhof: You and I've talked about this since Jim's death, but how has, 'cause grief doesn't just show up in tears, particularly in guys. I don't want to speak for women, but I know in my life it's shown up in different forms. But how does grief show up for you? How do you know, like, "Oh, I thought it was this, but I'm probably just grieving?"

Rusty George: I get really tired. I lose vision for what's next. I can't see six months down the road. I'm not excited about baptisms or Easter or the things that I would normally get excited about. I laugh less. I dread the next morning because sometimes the toughest moment is right when you wake up because you wake up and you don't remember, and then about 30 seconds after you wake up, you do. And then, you pick up that baggage again. I've read some great stuff.

kaywarren.com on her website, she's got great resources. I've listened to a lot of songs that just walk you through it and just leaned into it, just to try to go through it rather than, get over it, which in the past I would just say, "Oh, move on. You're tougher than this." And I'm realizing I'm not.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think that's interesting. "Cause I know there've been tears for you as well, but just to close the loop on that, I was talking to you, you and I do a call every month together, Rusty. I was telling you as this news broke that two years ago, 2017 was a very tough year for me. I lost a family member to sudden death, a chair of our elder board died, and I did about six funerals in six months, which is highly unusual for me because I don't do a lot of funerals. So, if I'm doing them, it means the person was very close to me. There were a variety of other things that happened. There was a still birth that was just really tragic that that was related family. I found myself grieving a lot in obviously through tears, but it showed up as fatigue.

Carey Nieuwhof: I remember one day lying on the couch and saying to my wife, "I've had enough sleep. I'm eating properly, I'm exercising. I'm just exhausted. What's wrong? Am I 90?" And then I googled it and I realized, oh, profound fatigue is a sign of grief. And then we had a family vacation a month after a really tragic funeral and I'm flying bulkhead to Europe, so it's a long flight. I've got my noise canceling, also known as people canceling headphones on. But there's these two guys who clearly, if you fly a lot, you know what I'm talking about. They don't know each other, but they're making conversation. This is a seven hour flight, eight hour flight, and they just keep talking. But it's at the frequency that makes it through my noise canceling headphones, and this sounds absolutely ridiculous to say it out loud, but it was getting on my nerves. And I said to Tony, my wife, "These guys, will they ever be quiet?"

Carey Nieuwhof: And she's like, "What is your problem? There's nothing wrong with these guys. They're just having fun." And finally, I just snapped. I looked between the seats and I just said to those guys, "Would you keep it down?" They didn't say a word for the next six hours on that flight, but I'm like, oh my gosh, I look back on that and I'm like, okay, that was grief. That was fairly out of character for me. It just shows up. And I think particularly as guys, and again, I won't speak for all of humanity, but I know as a guy, we say, "I'm fine." There was no presenting problem that day. I'm going on vacation, but that's how it would show up.

Carey Nieuwhof: I learned from one of my spiritual mentors a long time ago that ministry, and I would say life is a series of ungrieved losses. It's a series of losses. And if you don't grieve them, they sneak up on you.

Rusty George: Right. I think it's Emily Dickinson that said, "There's a time for sweeping up the heart and putting love away." I think about that process of sweeping up the heart of just collecting the thoughts, the stories, the memories, and you will eventually put it on a shelf, but you gotta go through the process first. I think

probably 15 years ago, I would've just fast track that. And now, as I'm getting older, I realize I've got to do the work.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. So, is there anything else you're doing to process your grief as a leader and friend?

Rusty George: I think those are the main things. I'm trying to eat healthy. I'm trying to sleep. I would just say, listen to your wife. She knows when you are not on. My wife is quick to tell me when there's something bothering me and I'll try to talk her out of it, but she knows better. But just listened to those around you, and don't be the one that says, "I'm gonna go down with this ship." Take your time and do what you need to do to get healthy. If that means taking some vacation or talking to a counselor or skipping out on work one afternoon to go watch a movie, do what you need to do because at the end of the day, if you're not healthy, then the organization is unhealthy.

Carey Nieuwhof: How do you know that you processed it?

Rusty George: I think you're able to look back with more smiles, more laughter, more happiness. You reflect more on the things you appreciate about that person. One of the exercises we were given was to write out, "I forgive you. I am sorry for, and I'm thankful for" and what that person's life, and getting to the place where you're more thankful than you are angry. And you appreciate what that person has done and you put it on the shelf and you move on.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know if this helpful for you, and then I wanna move onto a couple of other things, but I think this has been a very helpful conversation, Rusty, so thank you. I think you're helping a lot of leaders today, and a lot of people dealing with the aftermath of whatever they're dealing with in their community, but I've seen grief operate in my life now, particularly post burnout that I'm way more sensitive to it. I think of it in waves and the waves in the moment, if they're really close to you are minute by minute. It's almost like an earthquake. It's like the after effects are happening second by second, minute by minute, and then it's maybe every hour you feel this little surge and then maybe it's a few times a day and then it's like once or twice every day, and then it's like every few days, and then eventually it becomes like once a month or once every few weeks or once every other month.

Carey Nieuwhof: And then you realize, you know what? I think I'm moving to the other side and I think we're through it. I think you're right, your grief moves into a more healed direction. That's not the right term, but you know what I mean?

Rusty George: Absolutely. It's like a thunder storm as it rolls through. It starts off quick and it slowly just dissipates over time and the sun does come out again.

Carey Nieuwhof: It does. Well, you got a new book. I'll tell you, I don't wanna leave without touching on that. You've written a lot lately, and Justice, Mercy Humility is your

latest book. I love that you talk about, because you do not strike me as somebody like this at all, but you say you're a recovering pharisee. So, tell us what that means. Because if you don't go to church, this is why you don't like church, I promise you. People like Rusty used to be. Sorry, or I used to be.

Rusty George: Absolutely. I would just once again, quote Larry Osborne who says, "Becoming a pharisee is a lot like going to eat dinner at Denny's. You don't intend to go there, you just end up there." I don't know if you have Denny's in Canada, but for those of us ...

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, we do.

Rusty George: No one wants to go there. There's just nothing else open.

Carey Nieuwhof: Pray for us.

Rusty George: Yeah, so you just end up there. For me, I grew up in the church and I just assumed, and our church was very, very focused on keeping the rules and being there every time the doors were open. I wore a suit and carried a 50 pound Bible as a child. I thought that's what you do. And so, I'll give you a great, for instance, I went to church camp one year and somebody got up and talked about the dangers of rock music and how it's the devil's music. And they handed out a little flyer.

Rusty George: Yeah. They hand out this little pamphlet and they walked through all your favorite bands and how they're all worshipping Satan and how all these songs are directed towards Satan.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh. Like KISS' Kings in Satan's service, you got that flyer too?

Rusty George: Absolutely. And all the backwards masking by Queen and the Beatles and everything. So, what do I do with that? Do I file it away and say, "Okay, something to think about." Or do I pray for those bands? No. I just take it to school and start condemning people that are listening to that music 'cause that's what Jesus would want me to do. So, I didn't have a lot of friends through a season of my life in junior high.

Carey Nieuwhof: Most popular kid.

Rusty George: Now I laugh because my playlist is filled with those bands that I used to rail against people about when I was in school. So, I took that into my college years. I took that even my first few years of ministry because I thought my mission was to turn people into rule keepers. I just came across a few people in my life that were so grace filled because they had truly experienced grace. I think a lot about that setting where a woman comes into dump that perfume on Jesus' feet and I believe they're at the House of Simon. And he says, "How could you do this?"

And Jesus says, "You don't understand it because she knows the depths of which she's sinned."

Rusty George: I think he's saying to Simon, "And you don't understand how much of a sinner you are as well." I think I hadn't fully grasp how much of a sinner I was, even as a pharisee. Once I grabbed a hold of that and I got just an idea of God's grace, it changed everything. And the book really comes from a message I heard from just an incredible pastor and a mentor of mine named Mike Breaux. He talked about this verse, Micah 6:8, which simply says, "Act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." He just made this comment in his message. He said, following Jesus, it's not always easy, but it's not complicated. That's so brilliant.

Rusty George: He just boil it down to justice, mercy and humility, which I know are ... we love the teachings of Andy Stanley, and he's whittled it down to Jesus gave us one command, which was to love people the way he loved us. But for those of us that need to kind of flesh that out a little bit, I think Micah did it 400 years before Jesus, when he said, act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly. That's what it really means.

Carey Nieuwhof: I've been thinking about this a lot. Whenever there's a behavior, whether that is you love to argue with people or you have an addiction, whether that is to porn or alcohol or drugs or any behavior you have, even hanging onto your cynical attitude, there's reward in it. People don't do repeated behaviors that are unrewarded. What is the reward of being a Pharisee? What is the reward of being, and by that we mean soft, righteous, judgmental, superior, arrogant. What do you think the reward is? Because you are not alone in the church and you are not alone. A lot of people don't go to church because they're like, "I keep running into that and I can't stand it." What is the reward for being so self righteous?

Rusty George: I think there's two things. One, people encourage you and you get the people that come out of the woodwork and say, "Man, way to let them have it. Great job." Think about social media. If you rail against something, people are coming.

Carey Nieuwhof: I got so many likes on that angry post.

Rusty George: Exactly. We know various pastors we could mention who are just angry at the stage in their life. Every time I hear him talk, I think is there no love of God in you anymore? And they're just against everything, and they've got enough followers that just keep them propped up on that. But then, I think the other thing is it helps us keep score. If we have a really strong rule book, then we can quickly see when somebody is out of bounds and how we're in bounds, and it makes us feel really good about ourselves because we know we're playing the game the right way and they're often left field. They don't know what they're doing and so we can clearly say, "I'm doing it right and they're doing it wrong."

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, it's funny, Andy, in his new book, Andy Stanley, Irresistible, has that chapter. I told him it's one of my favorite chapters he ever wrote where he says he's a recovering pharisee as well. That there is a reward to self righteousness. I think that public affirmation, you can always find people to cheer you on. And then there is that feeling of superiority. One of my counselors calls it comparagance.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's, you're always comparing yourself against someone else. Like, I'm thinner than, taller than, my car is newer than, cleaner than, that was a better sermon than. And it's like, oh, it's so like, wow, if you watch for that, I don't know how to root that out of my life, but I would love that gone. But it is just so natural in this life that it shows up in the religious sphere as well. How did you break out of that, Rusty? Was it just like you woke up one day and went, "Pharisee be gone." What happened?

Rusty George: Yeah, there is a magic spell that you cast and you get out of it. I think in some ways we all continue to wrestle with it. It's funny you mentioned the whole, I'm better than. I've had those moments on stage where I'm teaching. And I think this message is not very good, but then I think, "Well, I know it's better than so." It's just this is sick thing inside of me. That's the way that we self talk ourselves into existence. But I think for a lot of us that you have to come face to face with the grace of God. I'll tell you, one thing that really helped me was, when Mike Breaux came to work at our church in Kentucky, when I worked there, he came and took over as the lead pastor, and I was working with young adults.

Rusty George: He had a passion for lost people I'd never seen. He cared about lost people. He knew lost people. He made that infectious amongst all of us. I came to this realization, I didn't know anybody who didn't know Jesus. Everybody in my life was a Christian. And so, I went to a guy on our staff, a mutual friend of ours, Mark White, and I said to him, "Hey, you seem to have a passion for lost people. I don't. Help me understand this." And he said, "Well, it's real simple. You need to pray every day for 30 days that God would give you his heart for lost people because that's a prayer God always says yes to." I thought, okay, I can do that. I think it was by day four I was a wreck.

Rusty George: I'd see people on the street, and I just start weeping, thinking about their eternal destiny or what they were carrying that I couldn't tell or that they were living with and I couldn't see. And that is a prayer God always says yes to. I found myself having to go back and pray it many times because you slowly get out of that and become a pharisee again. But getting back into that idea of seeing people the way God sees them, I think is just, I think it's merciful and I think it brings about a humility that we would've never found on our own.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, and I think you're right. I'm not sure your heart gets softer or more supple, just naturally like with the passage of time. My heart always, without care and maintenance, it always gets harder.

Rusty George: Well, that's the cynicism side of things that you write about and that we've talked about that you just ... that's our self defense of getting more cynical, more boundaries, more nos. No more access to my life, and then we end up becoming jaded and we don't love people.

Carey Nieuwhof: What do you think the average Christian misses, and I know this is a big question, you wrote hundreds of pages on it, but what do you think, broadly speaking, the average Christian or person misses about justice, mercy and humility?

Rusty George: I think we assume justice is something that's only legal and we think, I'm not a judge, I'm not a lawyer. I can't really do that or that's what people are doing on the other side of the world. And I have sponsored a child or I'm a freedom partner with international justice mission, so that's enough. But justice is more about standing up for those who can't stand up for themselves, which may very well be somebody in your office place. It may be your neighbor, it may be carrying somebody's weight or burden they cannot carry on their own. And then mercy is basically always being there for that person.

Rusty George: I think we miss it with the justice thing cause we just assume that's in somebody else's lane and we'll stay out of it. I think humility is a close second because we just assume that if we're self deprecating enough or if we talk bad about ourselves enough, then we're humble. But that's just another form of arrogance because we're constantly thinking of ourselves.

Carey Nieuwhof: Talk about that. Yeah, because a lot of people will, even if they don't say it publicly, they feel horrible about themselves.

Rusty George: Well, we do, and social media obviously assist in that because we constantly see what others are doing and what we're not doing. That's the worst time for a pastor to look at social media on a Sunday afternoon. 'Cause you could have a great Sunday and then you see somebody else's church baptized 20,000 and you think, "Oh my goodness, I'm terrible." What happens is, humility is found, and I love how CS Lewis says that, "Humility is not found in thinking less of ourselves, but thinking of ourselves less often." If we could somehow shift our attention, and I don't know if you're watching this show on NBC called New Amsterdam, it's another medical drama.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, I haven't seen it.

Rusty George: It's another medical drama and it's good, but the profound thing about it is the way this guy takes over the hospital. He goes into every meeting with this question, "How can I help?" His mentality is, is you already know the answers, so let me just assist you in making this happen. It's leadership 101. But think about that in your day to day life. If I were to go home instead of here's what I want to eat, here's where I want to go, here's what I want to do. But instead of, "Hey, how can I help?" If you walk into a conference room and instead of, here's

my agenda and what we gotta get accomplished, how can I help? And even if you just walk into a coffee shop, instead of, I'm in a hurry. My schedule matters most. How could I race to the back of the line? How could I give up my time for somebody else, buy somebody else's coffee, whatever it is, how can I help? Boy, just think if all the Christians did that, boy, the act of humility in that would be huge.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. And there's that challenge to always think of others as better than yourself. I just need to tape that to my glasses. I'll be better off down the road. Okay, you quote Miroslav Volf in the book, which I'm fascinated by his thoughts on justice and think he has an awful lot of good to say about those of us in the West who have opinions about justice. What do you think through the eyes of Volf, like or Volf, I should say that's the correct pronunciation. What are we missing about justice?

Rusty George: Well, I think what he brings up is often our justice ends where our disagreement with somebody begins. And so, if I don't subscribe to your values or maybe even your religion or your thoughts about God, well, then justice is going to cease. Yet, Jesus doesn't give us a limitation on that, and certainly Micah does not give us a limitation on that. And you think about how Israel was to be blessed to be a blessing. It wasn't just for those who thought like them. There was this idea of it's got to extend even beyond my beliefs. I think about a girl that I know who went to the Bible College I went to in Joplin, Missouri, Ozark Christian College. They had a devastating tornado blow through their town about seven or eight years ago. There was a mosque that was destroyed. She decided to help raise money to rebuild this mosque.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Rusty George: Now, think about that. That's overwhelming for many of us to think, why would I do that? Because I'm assisting another contrary religion to what it is that I believe and contrary beliefs. But she saw justice as not having a boundary. I think what, what Volf was getting at there is this idea of let justice move even beyond the boundaries in which we tend to put up. And we tend to box ourselves in way too much. I am just amazed at the outpouring of just the gratitude people had in that community for what she did.

Carey Nieuwhof: Rusty, anything else you want to share before we go today?

Rusty George: Well, I would say a couple things. One, if you're a church leader out there and you are wrestling with suicide on your staff in your community and you just want to talk to somebody, we're here to help. Just email me rgeorge@reallifechurch.org. Please, let's walk through this together. We want to assist and let you learn some of the things that we learned, some of which was the hard way, and if anybody wants a copy of the book, justicemercyhumidity.com, pastorrustygeorge.com. There's materials in there for pastors. There's free messages you can get four weeks off of writing

messages. Just take mine, call, I don't even care. And a small group questions at the end of the book and just tons of resources we want to give you if you want to check it out.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's awesome. Rusty, as always, so grateful for you. Thank you.

Rusty George: Thank you my brother. I appreciate it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I want to be really sensitive to what a lot of you are going through. I don't think too many of us listening to this podcast would not know someone who has been impacted by suicide or ourselves have been impacted by that. Rusty, thank you for helping so many leaders through that. Again, there are transcripts, so if you really want to go back and look at something rather than just trying to guess where it is in the episode, head on over to the show notes. Go to careynieuwhof.com/episode258, and you will find everything there and you can download the transcripts for free. Share them with your team. Thank you for everybody who leaves ratings and reviews. So encouraged by that. I want to thank Josh128 who left a review recently and he said, "As a husband, new dad, this podcast has been so helpful and how I lead in all areas of my life.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now, he's been a reader for a while. He says, "But recently just found the podcast." So, he started in February with episode 242, thanks Josh. You've now gone back and listened to episodes one through 37, you're going to catch up on all of them. Some of the best conversations about the marriage of family and ministry in those early episodes, it's been great for me as a new dad. Thanks Carey for continuing to pour into leaders in all areas of life. Hey Josh, thank you. And then MS State fan, what does that? Missouri, Mississippi? I'm going to get a hate mail if I get that wrong. Anyway, it said, "I just recently discovered this podcast. I'm so enjoying listening to these conversations. As a small business entrepreneur and CEO, I actually find far more relevance and application for my life in the marketplace than even to my walk as a Christian. Highly recommend to anyone leading small or medium size organizations."

Carey Nieuwhof: Hey, thanks so much. Sorry for butchering your team. I'm not a sports guy. That's one of the things in ... I follow the Blue Jays, which is not very exciting, when the Leafs win the Stanley Cup here in Toronto, I will watch the final game. I'm sure. But it's one of those things I gave up, so I can do this and write books and all that. You know how that goes. Anyway, also, I'm not very athletic. Thank you for the ratings and reviews. They mean a ton. I read them all, and I so appreciate you. Hey, speaking of the blog I write, if you have never signed up for that or even gone beyond the podcast to see what else is out there, surprisingly, even though we're at 8 million downloads, more people actually read what I write than listen to this podcast, even though the podcast seems to be the thing that everybody's talking about.

Carey Nieuwhof: So, if you want to explore that, I write leadership tips. I email people multiple times a week with insights, new thoughts and things that I do hope help you

lead like never before. Head on over to leadlikeneverbefore.com. You'll see a little input dialogue box. Just give us your email and you will be automatically on the inside. I would love for that. And don't forget the Pushpay Summit. We have an incredible rate for you. Because you're a podcast listener, gets you benefits. Rather than paying \$159 per person, you can come to the Pushpay Summit, May 22nd, 23rd in Dallas for \$89 per person. Here's what you need to do. Head on over to pushpay.com/summit to learn more and to register. I can't wait to see you there. That's pushpay.com/summit. Use the Coupon Code: CAREYN. In the meantime, guys, I'm so grateful for listening.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, I guess we do have an episode next week, right? So, why don't we tease that one out before we're gone. It's a great conversation with Andrew Stanley. Yes, Andrew Stanley, the comedian, son of Andy and Sandra Stanley, and I loved our conversation. So, listen, and here's a snippet.

Andrew Stanley: It went okay. I was so nervous that I couldn't remember it afterwards. I blacked out, but I had the recording and heard that I got at least a couple of little laughs in there. The thing was that I thought, okay, my jokes were good, but my delivery was bad, like I need to do better. I thought, okay, these jokes, I can work on. So, I kept wanting to do better. So, I kept signing up for that open mic every two or three weeks and did that about six times, I think before I started to get asked to do other stuff around Atlanta because it was going well.

Andrew Stanley: I started going to some other open mics and meeting other comedians and getting booked on shows and doing that for several months and then started getting opportunities to do stuff at church, which I never wanted to do. I never wanted it to be on stage at church. People ask me my whole life if that's what I was gonna end up doing. I always said, "Absolutely not." But this was a fun way to even explore that. So, it kind of spiraled out of control from there.

Carey Nieuwhof: I do a deep dive with Andrew about the details of standup delivery, how to memorize a routine, how you write a routine, what's funny, what's not funny and so much more. I just love nerding out on that stuff. And yeah, we're all over the map on this. Also, future guests include Ruth Haley Barton, Mike Hyatt, Nona Jones, founder of the Ritz-Carlton Horst Schulze, Les McKeown from Predictable Success. Sean Cannell from YouTube. Wow, it's a killer lineup in the next month or two. And thank you subscribers. You get that for free. Thanks for sharing. I'm looking forward to next week, and I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

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