

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. Now, your host, Carey Nieuwhof.

Carey: Well, hey everybody. Welcome to episode 267 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well, I love being on the road, and I've had a chance to meet a lot of you, hundreds of you, maybe even more than that over the last few months just on the road, and run into so many of you who listen. I just want to thank you for your feedback. Thank you for your encouragement. Man, you guys are amazing, and it's fun, because anytime I meet a podcast listener, we have a couple of minutes together. I ask like a kid, "What would you change? What would you do? What would you do differently?"

Carey: What I keep hearing is you love the eclectic format. You love that it isn't the same every episode. Man, I run into binge listeners. You guys, some of you who just discovered the podcast are like, "Yup, I went back and in two months listened to all the episodes." I'm like, "You are better than me. I'll tell you that," but hey, it's wonderful. So, thanks. Your feedback, your interaction online and in person is amazing.

Carey: By the way, you can find me on the socials. On every platform, I'm just my full name Carey Nieuwhof, which is so easy to spell, but obviously you have the spelling in front of you on your device listening to this podcast, or on Twitter, I'm Cnieuwhof. Some guy took Carey Nieuwhof like a hundred years ago, and I can't get it back. Anyway, Cnieuwhof on Twitter, Carey Nieuwhof on Instagram and Facebook. Would love to connect with you there. If this episode or other episodes are helpful, take a screenshot and share it with your friends. Just thank you. Thanks for making this so awesome.

Carey: Speaking of fun guests, my guest today is Margaret Feinberg. Her work has been featured in such varying places as you would say today, The Washington Post, PBS, CNN, The Los Angeles Times. Her books have sold over a million copies. She speaks at conferences all over the world. Christianity Today has named her as one of 50 women most shaping culture in church today. We talk about all that and a whole lot more in today's episode. I'll tell you, it was a really life-giving conversation. I think you're going to love it.

Carey: If you ever want to create content, so many of you are creating content, you're going to love today's episode. Speaking of creating content, I read a stat recently that I just found hard to believe, a lot of the stuff you see in the internet, how reliable is it? I don't know, but something like 75% of Millennials and Gen-Z would tell you that their number one career choice is to become a YouTuber. I'm like, "Really?"

Carey: Video is where it's at. We had an episode recently with Sean Kennel where we shared YouTube secrets, how to get started, and everything. It also means that if you're not really taking social and video seriously, what are you doing? Here's a reality for a lot of churches and for a lot of businesses, you're trying to figure out exactly how to do that, and it's hard to figure out how to do that. If you need some fire for your content on social including video, why haven't you checked out Pro Media Fire?

- Carey: Listeners of this podcast are going to receive 10% off plans for life at promediafire.com/carey, C-A-R-E-Y. That's promediafire.com/carey. They are basically like a virtual staff member for you. For a very reasonable monthly fee, you get all your social done. They will create bumpers, videos. It's just amazing. Check it out at promediafire.com/carey. Also, summer's here, right? So, you know what that means. I know for those of you in church leadership, and even for those of you who run companies it's like, "Yeah, you know what? People are just gone."
- Carey: How do you train people when people are all over the place? They're at the lake. They're on vacation. They're not out. It's almost impossible to get people in a room. Fortunately, for training, you don't have to do that anymore. TrainedUp by ServeHQ can equip your volunteers and leaders for the fall season without calling summer meetings. You can train your people on the go. With TrainedUp, you can get needed training for your volunteers and leaders without scheduling more meetings. You can get your people ready to go before fall season starts without running into scheduling conflicts where it's like, "This person can make it this day, and this person can't."
- Carey: You can create your training once, and then let people get up to speed on their own schedule, and you can see who did the training and who did. That's really critical when it comes to visioning, and also when it comes to safety and security. Then you can spend your time in meaningful life on life conversations instead of just using that in person time to give them new information. You can reuse standard training in multiple ministry areas, or on multiple campuses with zero extra effort.
- Carey: TrainedUp is the fastest, and the easiest way to get your people trained and ready to serve period. You can try it for free for 14 days at their website. Just go to servehq.church. That's servehq.church. I want to thank our partners. These are organizations that we believe in, we have confidence in, and are making so many people's lives better. They're the reason frankly, we can do this for free week after week, after week. Thank you to our partners for that. Thank you to all of you. You guys are incredibly supportive of our partners.
- Carey: That's what we try to do. We try to match you up with services and groups that can make a difference in your life and in your leadership. So, hey without further ado, I am excited to bring you my conversation with Margaret Feinberg. Margaret, welcome to the podcast.
- Margaret: Thank you, Carey. I have so much joy just being here today.
- Carey: Yeah, you got a brand new podcast, right called, The Joycast.
- Margaret: I do. It is been so fun. I feel like I'm the little nimble crawler figuring out how to do it.
- Carey: Why did you get into podcasting? What made you launch it?
- Margaret: I had a friend by the name of Jonathan Merritt, and he kept after me. He just said, "You have got to do this." I thought, "Okay, what is sustainable? What is delightful? What
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feeds my soul?" Because I believe that it's out of that place that we're able to feed other people's souls more. So, I developed the Joycast. It's described as the hap- hap- happiest half hour of your week. We keep it short and sweet, usually about 26, 27 minutes. Sometimes I share what I'm seeing and the search for joy, and the discovery of it, and I have guest on. In this first season, we're describing discovering joy around the table.

Carey: Oh, that's cool. That's neat. It's fun where you live in a world where you can just have an idea and say, "Well, let's do it." Right? Isn't that neat?

Margaret: It's amazing. Then to tap into where maybe you're struggling, or the things that you're discovering, and be able to engage, and also not to share what you're discovering, but find other people. I've had all kinds of guests from Christine Caine, to Annie Downs, just a long list of guests. We're talking about, how do you encounter the Holy Spirit around the table, or how do you encounter suffering around the table? What happens when you're the one who pulls up the chair to the table in your suffering, or what if it's someone else? How do you respond well? How do you encounter shame around the table?

Margaret: I had an incredible conversation with Michele Cushatt about post cancer for her. There is shame eating around the table, because the food she can't control putting in her mouth, and swallowing. We don't think about that a lot, but I think a lot of times as leaders, as we become more aware and more sensitive, we learn to accommodate. When you come over to my house now, I always have straws in case someone struggles to eat. It's just one more way to drink better out of a glass and more easily. Just providing real practical simple ways that we can love people more deeply all around the table and in our every day life.

Carey: That's really awesome. I'm glad you got into it. A few years back, you started writing. How long have you been writing? When was your first book? Was that 15 years ago? It was a while.

Margaret: Yeah, it was. It was almost 20 years ago. I think I started writing-

Carey: 20?

Margaret: I know.

Carey: You're not that old.

Margaret: Thank you. Keep telling everyone that.

Carey: Yup. Yeah. No, but you're not. I mean, you got started very young, and you're one of those rare birds. Everyone says, "Oh, you're a published author." I have. I've written four books, but you need to sell a lot of books to actually have that as a vocation. You've sold over, is it a million now cumulatively?

Margaret: Yes. Yeah.

Carey: Different books?

Margaret: Yup, over a million.

Carey: Which is exceptional. When did you know that this is what I want to do with my life? Were you a little girl? Were you in school? Did you stumble into it backwards? How did that happen?

Margaret: It's funny you look back. I remember I went to, there was a little book fair, and I was probably an eighth grader. They said, "You need to write a book." So, I went home and I wrote a 127-page book. I come to the class, and my mom typed it up-

Carey: In eighth grade?

Margaret: Eighth grade, yeah. Everybody comes to class, and they come in, and they've got four pieces of paper folded over and stapled. I put mine as like, "Poof!" It had that sense of, "Something is different about this one than maybe all of the rest." It wasn't until I was a senior in college. I'd been a religion major at Wake Forest University. That senior year I thought, you know what I really want to do? I want to write. I got an internship, a little magazine down in Lake Mary, Florida, and called, Christian Retailing. I interned with a guy by the name of Cameron Strang.

Carey: So, connect the dots for anyone who doesn't know who that might be.

Margaret: Yeah. He was a sophomore in college at the time. He said, "One day, I'm going to start a publishing company that's going to go after this generation, and we're going to publish books, and we're going to have a website." Few years later, he founded Relevant Media Group. That is good old Cameron. He has been a longtime friend, and advocate, and he was the one who actually published my first book. I'm forever grateful to him.

Carey: Isn't that fascinating? It was a what publication you met him at?

Margaret: Yeah, it was called, Christian Retailing. It was this tiny publication that would serve the Christian retailers in our nation back when there were more of them, many more of them.

Carey: Yeah, 15, 20 years ago there are a lot more Christian retailers period than there are now. It was an industry publication that the two of you met. That must have been some good copy back then.

Margaret: It was. It was just for me, I was amazed, because I got introduced to the publishing industry, and it was actually during the internship I realized that people who work for publishing houses and magazines really don't get a right. They edit everybody else's

writing, and I wanted to write. After that internship, I had a short stint of being a terrible missionary. Then moved into my parents.

Carey: Did you go? Where did you go to?

Margaret: I did. I went to Honduras. I discovered me espaniol es terrible'. I was robbed by knife point. I just kept having all of these terrible things happen. I went to the longtime missionaries of the nation and I just said, "Is this normal?" They said, "No, go home."

Carey: You're really bad at it. So, yeah if this is happening, you need to leave. Okay.

Margaret: I flunked out. I moved back into my parents'. I went on my little library in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. I checked out all nine books on writing. It said, "97% of writers never make it." I said, "Perfect. That's for me."

Carey: Wow, but that's true, 97% of writers don't. Even having published a book, I do a variety of things, and I suppose I could live off my writing income, but it would be a very meager existence. It would be like, "All right honey, we're having beans again tonight."

Margaret: In our tent.

Carey: I get it. What was your eighth grade 127-page book about? Do you remember?

Margaret: Yeah. Actually, it was a fiction based on our life. As a young kid, I actually grew up on a boat in the Caribbean. It told adventures probably based on real life in eighth grade of those adventures living and growing up in a boat.

Carey: How did that happen that you were raised on a boat in the Caribbean?

Margaret: I have a-

Carey: Okay, where's ... Yeah.

Margaret: We're all over the place. I have a remarkable parents who are very free-spirited. They were actually in the surfing industry and made surfboards, and at a surf shop down in Cocoa Beach, Florida. One day, they were sitting and saw a sailboat and thought, "We should buy a small one of those and go to the Bahamas." I was two, and they thrust me into swimming lessons, and then we started sailing to the Bahamas for months at a time. Sometimes, for instance instead of going to third grade, we just lived on the boat all year. I would send in my homeschool homework every six months. It was a little sketchy back then, and just lived this life learning.

Margaret: I remember as eight years old, my birthday, I went out and speared my first lobster. So, love fishing, love conking, love beaches, love the Caribbean. That's a huge part of my growing up years.

Carey: I'm always fascinated about the things in a childhood that shape us as adults for better or for worse. That's a really unusual story. I don't think I've met anybody who grew up in the Caribbean on a sailboat from the age of two. When you look back on that, in what ways did that shape you do you think now?

Margaret: I think it had both incredibly positive, and incredibly challenging. Part of it was we were primarily at remote islands. So, there would be times that I wouldn't see another child for six or eight weeks. The la-

Carey: Were you an only child at the time for a longtime?

Margaret: I was an only child, yup.

Carey: Only child. No siblings?

Margaret: Yup. So, it was just mom, dad, and I. That isolation, I think it definitely took a heavy social toll. There's still times that I walk in a room, and I can't read it. I don't have the EQ that other people have, because I'd never really developed those basic foundational skills. I remember going to third grade after we just, or fourth grade, we'd just been boat schooled. I went to the school, and I played a game called, "kick ball." I remember standing in the field watching these children run around, and kick a ball, and thinking, "Why are they doing this? This is so silly."

Margaret: There's so much more fun that we'd be climbing trees, we could be searching for coconuts. Learning to integrate again was really challenging. On the other side of the spectrum, I think that being a third culture kid, which is really what it is, if you grow up in a different culture and then are thrust into another one, it makes you incredibly adaptable. I think it makes you curious. I think it makes you want to learn. I think it gives you an openness of discovery that is a lifelong gift, and has really shaped me, and equipped me to be a writer, and to be a passionate pursuer of God. In the books I write, et cetera. They're often a little bit different in the topic.

Carey: Yeah, I was going to say it's a little, you have very, from the outside looking in, it seems eclectic interests, and curiosities, and angles on things.

Margaret: Yeah, it's all tied from me spiritually into this hunger to know, and explore, and help others discover the wonder of God and His word. That is incredibly broad, but if you look at maybe the religious landscape and what is available, I'm the one who's thinking, "What if we took it from this angle? What if we took this perspective?" Then bringing those ideas to light, and hopefully give people vocabulary for their faith, and imagery for their faith that maybe they didn't have, but that is sticky, and is able to become a portal, or a small gift box through which God can speak to people.

Carey: I'm curious, a couple weeks ago I was talking to Brian Houston. He was interviewing me for his TV show on Hillsong Channel. One of the things he raised in the interview, and I'm going back to your childhood, and your third grade experience was he said, "You know, what shaped you for better or worse as your childhood?" I talked about moving a

lot before my 10th birthday, and that once I hit 10, I never really fit in. Brian said, "I had a similar experience." I can't remember the exact amount, but I think it was like, he moved seven times in a small window.

Carey: He said, "I always felt like I was in the outside looking in." My question for you as I talk to leaders whether you're reading biographies, whether it was Churchill, or whoever, or I talked to a lot of leaders who have ended up making a big contribution with their lives like you have, like Brian Houston has. Often those are kids who didn't feel like they fully fit in in elementary school or high school. Do you see a correlation between that?

Margaret: I think there is. I think there is this struggle. I think there's a struggle both within and without. I've talked to many people for instance from the Chicago suburbs, and they complain ruthlessly about the suburbs, and that that very much conformist cut and paste, and cut and paste over and over again existence that is so homogenous. Yet, for the outsider, I remember growing up and aching to live in a tract home where all the houses matched.

Margaret: Even today, if you come to my closet all of my hangers are the same, because I learned as a young kid, the one thing I could control in a world that was constantly changing was my hangers. All of my hangers still match, and so there is that craving for fitting in.

Carey: Gosh, so do mine. Maybe there's a deep, profound. I've had that thing. It's so weird. It's like, "Talk to my wife, Margaret." Yeah, have you met Toni?

Margaret: Yes.

Carey: Yes, we were at that dinner together. Yeah, absolutely. So, you met her. Whether it was plastic hangers in the early days, or now they're all I don't know, velour or whatever. I don't know what they are, but they have to match, or I freak out. I don't know what that is. That's so funny.

Margaret: It's true. I get the wood ones from IKEA currently. I buy a lot of them, fill up your closet. They're fantastic.

Carey: That's the best. That's interesting that you had that experience. How did you cope with that? Did you end up back on the mainland once you hit high school, or it was like, "Nope, the boat 'till you were 20."

Margaret: No, fourth grade is when we moved back. We got off the boat, but then my parents, we moved from Florida to the mountains of North Carolina. We lived off the grid. We had all of our own well, grew all of our own food, lived that kind of lifestyle that people are now living back in the 80s, and spent about five years there. Then one day, my parents woke up and said, "We want to be ski instructors for real. Not on the East Coast to Cataloochee, North Carolina but in Colorado. We all packed into a car, being the three of us and a dog, took a vote when we got to Denver who wanted to go to Aspen or Steamboat.

Margaret: We'd never been to Steamboat before. So we went right on the place side unseen and were ski bums for the winter. At the end of the winter, I said, "Mom and dad, I love it here. Can we stay?" They said, "Yes." I grew up largely from junior high on in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Carey: Man, oh man. That's such a fascinating pedigree. Again, part of that that shapes your identity, right, and the way you see the world.

Margaret: It does. It's interesting now I look back and I say, "Man, that really helped me for what I do today." Being flexible in different cultures, and even not just around the world. Those are obvious, but even in United States, the cultural shifts between a South Carolina and a Utah are profound, and learning to navigate that, and handle that well. Also, loving life on the road. That hunger that they gave me for travel and discoveries, I take great joy in the places that I get to travel, and speak, and explore, and learn from, and see the beauty of what God is doing, and all these churches in our country and around the world. It feeds my soul.

Carey: One of the things I remember talking to you and your husband, I think it was in, when we were speaking at the same event in Hawaii, we had tacked on some extra days to ... I mean, it was the first time I'd ever been in Hawaii. We're going to stay there for a little while. You said something really interesting about your travel rule that I've never forgotten, because you're on the road a lot, right? In many years typically, how many days would you be on the road?

Margaret: It can vary. We've cut down a lot. We used to do a couple hundred a year. Now, we pretty much limit it to about maybe, some opportunity about 70 or 80. We really tried to trim that down.

Carey: Right, which for most people still sounds like a crazy amount on the road. We had a rule early on where you said, "No, if we go to speak somewhere or engage an audience that is work and we do our holiday, our vacation, our pleasure stuff later." Do you want to explain a little bit behind that, because I think that this all goes into self-awareness and what works for people, but I think it's really interesting that you're that much a student of yourself. Why is that still your rule? Why did you make that your rule?

Margaret: Logic would say if you're going somewhere, and maybe an event is covering your travel, surely it's less expensive to tag on some few days either before or after. The problem that we've discovered in our own lives is either way, whether we do it on the front end or the backend, or either partially and maybe vacation mode, but already starting to low-grade internally gear up for work mode, or we're coming out of work mode, and in transitional time to get into vacation mode eats up our time and days.

Margaret: We keep those separate as much as humanly possible. It has worked really well for us to have that clear sense, and really programming our body. I know for me, I know a lot of people struggle to get on vacation quickly. I have trained my body that okay if it's vacation, I'll start thinking about it, dreaming about it, getting it in my body, preparing

for that even as the stress builds obviously whenever really from work, there's always that extra load.

Carey: Oh, yeah.

Margaret: Trying to at least mentally get myself in a state to say, "No, this is vacation. This is when you're going to rest and rejuvenate so that I get in that mode quicker." As a result, usually, our ideal vacations are seven days or less often by day-

Carey: Really?

Margaret: Yeah.

Carey: So short.

Margaret: They are. Unless we're going on the other side of the world, and we start eating up huge amount of travel days. Yeah, then we're going to boost that up, but yeah seven to eight is good. By that time, we're completely rest, we rejuvenated and we'd rather, we'd honestly, here's the trick, we'd rather take two one weeks, than one two week.

Carey: Tell me why.

Margaret: Because there's a sense of anticipation and looking at our large yearlong calendar of marking out various points where we know that we are going to come away to a lonely place, or a beautiful place, or a yummy place and rest for a while.

Carey: See, and that's interesting, because a navigating working life is so difficult for so many leaders these days, because there's almost no such thing as the office anymore. Work is in your pocket. Work is on your laptop. It's on your iPad. I'm curious, I want to talk to you about disciplines, and rhythms as a writer, and what works for you, and what doesn't. I wanted to drill down a little bit more on this work rest thing, because you are the first person I heard say that, and you're exactly right. You nailed my logic. It's like, "Well, I'm getting a little bit of money to speak here, and the flights are covered, so doesn't it make sense, because it's cheaper just to tack on a week on my own dime while I'm here, or maybe it was four days, but we all have difficulty navigating that.

Carey: How long did it take you to figure out that, for you and your husband, it was a much better move to make the break? Is there some pain underneath that? Was it just one of those moments? How long did it take you to figure out that that was a good rhythm for you guys?

Margaret: I think it took a few years. It took up saving a lot of frequent flyer miles so that we could afford to make the vacation a vacation.

Carey: Yeah, exactly. Right.

Margaret: After three, or four, or five years, I think we went on several tag-ons, and we realized we came home empty and not full. I thought, "Wow, what did we do? We saved money, but we had no gain in the deep recesses of the soul, and the spirit, and the body." I think that was why we do it. Now, I'm so proud. My husband has an amazing life this year, and last year he did it too, but this year I jumped on board. We have a huge, in his office, a huge yearlong calendar. We sat down, and we mapped out for the entire year. Every whisk away weekend, we have one per quarter, and that's simply going to a nearby hotel and just enjoying each other.

Margaret: We mapped out our date nights for the entire year, and we mapped out the vacations that we knew that we were going to take and we obviously leave space for more. It has been so life-giving. There's give, and there's flex, and if something comes up, we move it and we bump up, but we're conscious of it. For instance, two weeks ago we missed our whisk away, and so now we're going to have one next Sunday night. Just go and rest, and unplug, and get out of the house, because when we're in the house, all I see is everything to do.

Margaret: I see what needs to be cleaned, fixed, put together, but when I'm somewhere else, I don't see any of it. I'm relaxing with.

Carey: I think for a lot of people in today's culture, home is also place of work, not just clean the garage, mow the lawn, but I got that chapter to finish, or I could do five more emails. When you're on true vacations, the way you take them now, you're a writer. When are you ever done? You're a podcaster, you're writing all the time, are you completely unplugged? Do you do an hour a day? What is the rhythm that you have so that you feel you're completely rested and refueled?

Margaret: Yeah, we recently got back from a week long vacation, and I took one day midway through, and I work for about two and a half hours. I answered only emergency emails, which probably took less than 10 minutes a day, and that was it.

Carey: So, that's it, emergency emails 10 minutes a day. You turn your phone off, or what do you do? Leave it in the hotel?

Margaret: Leave in the hotel room. It's amazing. That thing, I call or like adult cocaine binky, you know what we think we needed so much?

Carey: Cocaine binky.

Margaret: It's amazing when you leave it behind. The whole world goes on. It's fantastic.

Carey: Okay. No, that's good on rhythms and rest. While we're there, what other disciplines and habits do you have that really help you do what you do? Because so many people listen to this podcast whether you're in the church, whether you're in a company. You're in the world of leadership, which is often the world of intangibles. Yeah, there are some metrics here and there, but at the end of the day, when are you really done? When are you done leading people? When are you done leading yourself? What have you done

enough? What are some rhythms, disciplines, and habits that keep you healthy as a human being and follower of Jesus?

Margaret: I would say number one, not everything is for sale. In other words, in this life of leadership, and especially if people are plugged into a church or some sort of ministry, you can make it so that you're always having to everything you discover from God, you share with others. That's really tempting as a writer, podcaster, et cetera. I have things that I keep forever just between me and God. There's something so healthy and so rich. There's some jewels, I love you, that's for us. That's just drawn a real healthy boundary for me, and I think kept me out of the, "I must read the bible to get something, to produce something," because that's just not a healthy pattern.

Margaret: For me, I'm more interested in getting those treasures for me, and then discerning, "Okay, no, this is right. This is for others, or this isn't the vain that I know that I'm supposed to write, or researching of course. Keeping things to myself has been really healthy.

Carey: Obviously, I'm not going to ask you to tell me what they are, because that would ruin it, or to give me an example. What I'm trying to say, it's interesting, I tried to read one or two books a year. There's a ton of stuff I read that I never write about, talk about. It all shapes you, but just delightful books. Do you know what I mean? Books that are truly for enjoyment. I'm never going to preach this. I'm pulling examples from my own life. My bible reading plan almost every year made a change last year for the last 20 some odd years, has been the bible in one year.

Carey: Because I'm not going to preach on Joel anytime soon, or I just finished Leviticus, which strangely I really enjoyed as a lawyer, former attorney. I really, really enjoyed Leviticus, because it's full of laws, but I'm not preaching Leviticus anytime soon. I'm not blogging. I'm not writing about it. It's just stuff for me. Even my barbecue habit, which I do Instagram about. I get messages all the time from people who are like, "Dude, you should get them to sponsor you."

Carey: I'm like, "No, that's sacred." I don't want a sponsor. Even if they offered it to me, I'd rather go buy my own charcoal, because that's something I do, because I really enjoy it for me. Are you talking about that stuff?

Margaret: I think I'm talking initially more just personal stuff with me and God, just some incredibly rich-

Carey: Insights.

Margaret: ... beautiful, breathtaking, but I can't tell you what they are.

Carey: I won't ask. That's good. Not everything is for sale. That's a really interesting idea.

Margaret: Yeah, and I think that is. Then from that spiritual perspective like you, there are things that are just, they're just my life. They're my friends. If you notice on Instagram, et

cetera, we put some things, but most of my relationships, most of my vacations, most of my things you'll never see a photo of, you'll never know that I went. I think that's a healthy place to be.

Carey: What does a day look like for you as a writer? I know there's a difference between when you're under deadline and when you're not, but can you walk us through what your life as a writer, content creator is like?

Margaret: Yeah, ideally I think people think writer's write all the time. The truth is, is that in today's world, 95% of your time is usually spent marketing. Whatever expression of that that is. I only get about 5% of my time to write. In my devotional life and in my spiritual life, I love to mix things up. Whatever that time or space is, there will be months that I will engage in it differently. I may dive into a particular book of the bible, a passage. I may practice gratitude. I may spend time reading particular authors, and just go through seasons of that.

Margaret: This most recent season began with a book recommended by Curt Thompson, who's a wonderful author of *Anatomy of the Soul*. He said, "You should read *Into The Silence* by Michael Laird." It's about centering in silent prayer, and creating time each day growing just by a minute, starting with a minute, adding a minute each day of just breathing in the name of Jesus, and exhaling the name Jesus. No performance, no asking, no anything except for the soul purpose of being with Christ.

Carey: Wow.

Margaret: This simple practice has profoundly impacted my life over the last few months of just sitting in silence with Christ, because I have a tendency to want to earn, or perform, or accomplish, and in simply being that that head rested against the shoulder of Christ, finding an inner stillness, an inner peace that is then starting to transform outwardly other areas of my life.

Carey: That's really helpful from a spiritual. Your devotional time, do you that in the morning, in the evening, what works for you?

Margaret: I usually do it in the morning. Lately, I've been coupling it with reading of a gospel. Then making daily affirmations every day that are rooted in scripture, and that those proclamations that I am called, and equipped, and empowered. I end them with a line that says, "I am on the offensive team for Christ today." Because I think so often, we end up playing defensive, and I want to be on the offensive team.

Carey: Isn't that interesting, Craig Groeschel told us on a previous episode, he does daily affirmations as well. I think he's taught on that. Is that something new for you, daily affirmations? You've done them for years?

Margaret: No. I've done them in the past, and then I started again this year. Just a fresh. I was in a dark period, struggling, I think just in a dark season, and realized I had a friend who intercepted and said, "Margaret, somewhere along the way, you have made agreements

that are simply not true." I remember spending about two days, and repenting and saying, "God, I'm so sorry. I don't want to live this way. I want to live in alignment with who you are, and your plan, and your hope, and your vision, and all of you that I can possibly have."

Margaret: Literally, within two days, I felt that that weight and that darkness lift and just began proclaiming in word, "This is who I am in Christ," and also recognizing, thanks to my friend Curt Thompson that those affirmations are not enough, but that they have to be experienced in community. So, it's one thing to say, "I'm called and empowered," but it is another thing to look at you Carey and say, "You are called, and empowered, and equipped for this moment in time the very things that you are doing with the gifts you have."

Margaret: We start in that kind of a conversation and leaving that out in community. That's where even deeper transformation takes place.

Carey: How do you do that in community? Is that small group? Is that what you and your husband life? What do you do?

Margaret: That's with our friends here. We surround ourselves of wide variety of friends, and backgrounds, and belief systems, and all of those things. I'm very intentional about asking questions that help open up the door for God to move. Sometimes, sitting around and taking time for each of us just to say the incredible things that we see in each other, or asking the simple question, "Where have you seen the Holy Spirit work in your life recently?" Man, it is amazing how those simple questions will blow the top off a conversation.

Carey: That's great. So, that's spiritual. Take us through some other disciplines, habits, routines, that are helping you these days.

Margaret: Yeah. I think a lot of times at the end of the day, making a list, very simple practice so I know what I'm supposed to tackle, and what the priorities are the next day. I know that if I'm speaking and perhaps traveling on a Friday, I will try to take off at least a half day or more on Thursday, so that by the time that I reach that audience, I am refreshed, and I am in a place where I can serve them out of a place of strength and fullness rather than out of exhaustion and weakness. Because I spent a lot of years doing that, and I don't want to do that anymore.

Carey: Hence, is that one of the reasons 200 days on the road down to about 70?

Margaret: Yes. Let's do less and do it far better.

Carey: Any other disciplines? What about when you're in a writing season, how do you handle that then? Then I want to talk about marketing, because that's fascinating that 95% of your time is marketing, 5% is writing.

Margaret: Everybody I believe has a creative window. Even if you don't consider yourself creative, you are creating. Whether you are making architectural designs, or whether you are building spreadsheets, it does not matter. So, I believe that every person has a certain rhythm to their creativity. For me, my strongest days are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday if I've had a weekend off. I may write for 12 or 14 hours on a Monday, 12 hours on a Tuesday, 10 on a Wednesday. Honestly by Thursday, I'm no good anymore. I may be able to write three or four hours, but then I shift the size of my brain into the editing mode.

Margaret: Then on the last day of the week, I'll do more administrative task oriented. I coordinate maximize my creative writing time for my creative peak time to get the most out of it, and I can be the most efficient.

Carey: That's fascinating. So, 14, you can do up to 14 hours of writing a day.

Margaret: When I write, I feel the holy hum of God's presence.

Carey: Really? So, you're in your zone. You're doing what you are created to do. Is that research and write, study and write, or is that, "No, I'm doing multiple chapters here."

Margaret: There may be a little bit of research in there. It depends on the type of the book. The more recent books that I've done require an enormous amount of research. Even that, I'll work through and I may have a word goal in order to identify it. I'm going to clear a thousand or 1,500 or maybe even 2,000 words today. Then the next day, I may stair-step that, that word count downward, but it's very focused, it's very intentional. I will optimize my eating. I will optimize my athletic, or my exercise patterns to produce the very most and best creative energy that I can possibly have for those days.

Carey: I know everybody's different, but what does that look like for you? Do you avoid certain foods? Do you exercise before you write? The reason I want to ask, I'm fascinated by this having burned out 13 years ago, I've got my own system and rhythm. I couldn't agree more that there is such a connection between the mind, and the spirit, and the body, and the ability to produce like as I've said to my team for years, I get paid to think and paid to create. There are a day, I can be in a fog. If I don't take care of myself, I'm going to fog, and I'm not producing, or I'm producing far below the level that God has made me capable of producing.

Carey: I'm really curious about what are those exact rhythms. I think a lot of the time, leaders I talk to, they're unaware that there is such a connection between it's just, go, go, go but it's not, so drill down. Okay.

Margaret: Yeah. So, I'll be intentional on Sunday and really try to sabbath that as much as possible. Rest, minimize energy, expenditure. If I do go shopping, shop for healthy foods, high protein, lots of vegetables, try to cut out the sugar and the carbs that are going to cause the crashes and the emotional, et cetera. In the morning on Monday, I'll take time to pray and reflect, but then I will probably dive right into writing. I will not allow myself to open up my inbox, or look at my phone. I will focus all of my attention on writing.

Margaret: Then as I dive into it, I'll have healthy snacks nearby. When I hit that moment maybe even morning or afternoon where I'm feeling a little bit stuck, I go for a walk. Walk really stirs my creativity, or I'll go for a swim, and it's the repetitive nature of the laps. Again, that spurs, it helps me get the breakthrough and the time to think through where I'm stuck in the idea or the concept. Then repeat that again, possibly go for another walk in late afternoon, and then just tuck in, zeroed in, and write until 8:00, 9:00, 10:00, 11:00 at night.

Margaret: Then I also make sure that the places that I write and the places that I edit are physically different. I never write and edit in the same place, because I want that creative space to be pure just for being creative, and the other side of the brain to be pure just for looking for how to strengthen and make better.

Carey: Is that different places in the house or?

Margaret: Yup, absolutely. So, the couch a lot of times in the living room, which my husband is not crazy about, because I have an office, and all the different things and a variety in my living room incredible view. So, I write in there, but then often when I edit, I also have a chair in our bedroom that I love to sit in, and I'll edit there. Then when I do administrative, I'll usually go downstairs on the treadmill and do that there.

Carey: That's really interesting. Has this been a gradual process of self-awareness over these last two decades?

Margaret: Yeah, it has been. Just recognizing that when you prime a place, you're suddenly constantly communicating to your body and your brain. This is where I do this. This is where my primetime for this is. When you just enter in that space, especially the vacation we talked about earlier, you're pre-priming for peak performance.

Carey: When you say you have a word count, because everybody is a little bit different. I talked to a lot of writers. Sometimes I'll say I need a thousand words, or I need a thousand good words, and you know what I mean, right?

Margaret: Yes.

Carey: A thousand words is different than a thousand good words. Tell us about the range of what you think you can produce, because I'm thinking about aspiring authors, or even people who create content. They're like, "My contract is for 55,000 words with my publisher." You think, "Well, that's impossible," but you bite that 500 to a thousand words at a time or 1,500. Maybe on a peak day, I might be able to produce 3,000 good words, but that would be an exceptional day. You've sold a lot of books. You've written a lot of words. What are you learning about what you are capable of producing in a day?

Margaret: Yeah, let's back that up from the start about that contract you're going to sign that says 55,000 words. I'm going to be bold and say, "Let's trim that down to 40 to 45,000." Most people do not have time, space, or energy doing the 55,000 word book. Maybe one of the authors who has that, but the first thing you do is you trim that down. I think that

the length of books overall is going to get shorter just because of the limited time and resource of people.

Carey: What is your most recent book, is it 40?

Margaret: 40,000 words, yup, right on the mark. I aim for that, and that's where we ended up. Then you've got to think, "Okay, when is my deadline? How many months do I have? How many words per day, or per week is actually better do I need to produce?"

Carey: Sure.

Margaret: So, then give myself six to eight weeks before the deadline in order to have people let at least 20 readers go through and make comments and strengthen your manuscript. You back it up, and that becomes your timetable or your schedule.

Carey: You reverse engineer.

Margaret: Yes.

Carey: Yeah. Is it typically a thousand words for you, 1,200 words? Where does it even up?

Margaret: If it's a heavy research book, I will aim for a thousand words a day. If it is a light research book, I'll probably aim for maybe 1,500, a peak performance day just like you said is 3,000. I am less concerned with good words, I'll just be honest. I'm more interested in getting the clay on the paper, and then we can reform, we can format, we can edit. It's going to take 50 drafts anyway to make a great. No matter where you start, good old [MMI 00:43:41], every first draft is a poopy draft. Let's start there, and let's make it great, but I find too many writers get stuck in trying to form that perfect sense. It takes forever, and you can speed it up if you'd get it on the paper and you work it.

Carey: That's what Jon Acuff whose been a frequent guest on this podcast would say, don't edit it all in the first draft. Just get it out on the paper. Don't worry. Editing is a separate thing. Even if it's junk, even if it's not logical, just get it written. You would agree?

Margaret: Oh, I would. I've coached a lot of writers over the years. We even have an online course called, Write Brilliant, and we're even looking at having a live event this summer. What we find is that if you can get somebody free from all of the junk in their head, and in that place of just getting the words on the paper, in six months or a year, they've got a book written. It's awesome.

Carey: Really? Do you get junk in your head when you're writing?

Margaret: Oh, absolutely. This is no good. No one wants to read this. Nobody cares about what you care about. This isn't going to connect. You're all alone in this. Oh, the enemy has a hay day.

Carey: How do you get through that?

Margaret: Yeah, I think a lot of it is pushing that to the side and saying, "No, the truth is, is I believe that I'm called and created to do this." I'm going to develop this message. Regardless of the response, regardless of the people who throw flowers, and the people who throw stones, I'm going to walk in faithfulness to this, and the faithfulness to God. That commitment to do that is important. Even in the last book, Taste and See, it was brutal. It was hard. Part of it was just, that was just a hard book to write.

Carey: Why was that one so difficult for you?

Margaret: Yeah, Taste and See, discovering God among butchers, bakers, and fresh food makers.

Carey: Talk about a unique angle that I remember we were at dinner a couple years ago, a year ago, probably two years ago now when you were describing the book and I'm like, "Never even thought about, yes." It was brilliant, but talk about what it is and why that one was so difficult.

Margaret: I went on an unusual journey and identified six foods in the bible. I went out and found the people who plant, process, and procure them. Then interviewed them, opening up a scripture and asking, "How do you read these passages that mention these foods not as theologians, but in light of what you do every day?" Their answers changed the way that I read the bible forever. Carey, time and time again, I found myself asking, "How have I studied the scriptures? How did I grew up in the church? How have I listed so many podcast and nobody has told me these things?

Margaret: That became the foundation for the Taste and Study book and bible study. It was incredibly difficult, because as a writer, you've got to think several different components. Number one, you need to identify foods in the bible or wish there is enough mentions and enough text to even have the possibility of something insightful, and not just some random throw away, you made that up, yay, yay, pat you on the head, that sounded good.

Carey: The little metaphor that became an entire sermon series that had nothing to do with the original metaphor, I know nothing about that, but continue. Yeah.

Margaret: Exactly. So, to pick the right foods, then you have to go find the people. Now, this is its own challenge, because I don't know fig farmers. I don't know butchers. I don't know these people. So, waking up every day and praying and saying, "God, I think I've been assigned this by you, and I'm going to trust you, and make this a walk of faith." Then going and asking everybody, "Do you know a fig farmer? Do you know a fig farmer?" Nobody is a fig farmer by the way, and now there's 17 listers who are going to write you and I'm like, "Where were you? Where were you when I was writing this book? But walking in faith.

Margaret: Then finding rabbit trails of somebody that has a friend who has a fig farmer, knows a fig farmer. Then maybe talking to them on the phone, flying and finding these people. Each

of these people had to have some sort of worldview that did not clash, but was relatable to the project I was trying to write. They didn't necessarily have to be Christian's perspective. They had to be interesting. They had to have some sort of personality. If you ask people questions and they're yes, no, or they don't have insightful, you don't have the right person. I went to four-

Carey: So, an interesting fig farmer.

Margaret: Yes. I went to-

Carey: You went to four?

Margaret: ... four dairy farmers, and there is no dairy chapter in the book. One of them got flooded. One of them was super political. There were just various reasons and it just ... So, you'd go on trips and you'd be like, "I forgot my-" Nope, didn't get it. Didn't get it.

Carey: Oh, wow.

Margaret: So, then you have that. Then really identifying what is the discoveries that perhaps myself and other people never heard before about these foods at a granular level that opens up the text. Then lining that up with a takeaway that is truly transformative. I wrote a book about going to the beach every weekend book. It was a lot. It was a heavy investment, and it was hard.

Carey: Where do you get an idea like that from? What makes you curious enough about that to say, "I think I got a book idea."

Margaret: Ten years ago, I wrote a book called, *Scouting The Divine*, my search for God among wine woe and wild honey. I actually went and picked grapes in the Napa Valley. I spent time with a farmer, a beekeeper, and a shepherd. Again, did the same process of opening up the scripture, and just had this incredible ... It changed the way I read the bible forever. When I was done, I had people walk up to me and say, "Why did you not spend time with an olive grower? I was like, "Well, because I didn't have enough time, budget, but I was like, "One day, I'm going to do that."

Margaret: I've set on this idea for ten years waiting for the right time. Sure enough, I ended up going fishing in the Galilee, finding a premier fig farmer, making Matzo with a Yale professor. In under 18 minutes, the kosher way, fishing in the Galilee, bringing in all of harvest in Croatia, going 410 feet down into a salt mine in order to unlock these rich food imagery. It was so much fun. It was so rich, but seeing people respond, and engage, and not just in the food in the biblical discoveries, but to transform the way that they're spending time around the table, man, it is powerful.

Carey: I understand that. It sounds to some degree in a parallel way, like people who visit the Holy Land, which I have never done, but every preacher I know whose gone there says, "I will never teach those stories the same way again." You can't if you actually saw what happened. It wasn't written for a suburban context next to Walmart. It applies, but the

original context is so much different. In a more broad sense Margaret, where do your ideas for your books come from? Because a lot of people say, "I don't even have an idea for a book," or next week's message, where do your ideas come from?

Margaret: I usually have a lot of ideas. It's a pretty steady stream, and they are all amazing at 3:00 AM. They are the most brilliant things you've ever heard.

Carey: You're waking up, best idea ever. Number one New York Times, right?

Margaret: Yeah, wake up the next morning I'm like, "Nope, nope, nope." I usually sit on an idea for at least three days before I start to let it shake out. I usually sit on an idea for two years or more and think about it, and just pay attention, and where does it resonate, and where is that keep coming up? Do I hear, it's a ping. You hear this, almost like when you have a wine glass, and you go around in a circle like when you're a kid, and you heard that sound. That's what I listen for. When I hear that reverberating not just in my own life, in my own spirit, but in our culture and my relationships. I say, "Okay, let's start to fill that out, and what's there. Is there enough substance, and really should there be a blog post, or a podcast, or is this really a book?" I take a lot of time to allow it to germinate and grow.

Carey: Is blogging for you, has that been over the years a way of testing ideas, sifting ideas?

Margaret: Blogging has been an amazing resource for that, but it's so much faster and easier now with social media. You can engage, throw out an idea, take it from another angle the next day, a different angle the next day, and your audience isn't getting tired. They're actually engaging more. I have found-

Carey: How do you do that?

Margaret: Ask questions. Easy. I post on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, "What do you think about this? How do you do this? What does this look like?" Recently, I've been thinking about just thought life and asking people, "Which of these three negative thoughts do you wrestle with most?" Then four days later another, "So, which of these three?" I'm starting to identify, which ones, other ones that are hitting most keenly, and sorting through. People love to give you their opinion. It's one of their favorite past times.

Carey: Yeah, I get what you're doing. I will test your bottom lines, and I don't do this nearly enough, but I should. Twitter is really interesting for engagement. You can do it some extent on Facebook. Instagram is a different bird. It's my favorite platform, but you see how many likes, how many retweets. You think you're brilliant, and you get three likes and two retweets, and you're like, "Well, that didn't resonate."

Margaret: All the time. I'm like, "This is the smartest, cleverest, but whoa, whoa."

Carey: I know, and blog post too, right? You think, "Oh, I work so hard on this. I spent six hours on this post." Nothing. Cricket.

Margaret: Then you do a throwaway. People, you're like, "What just blew up? What just happened?"

Carey: That never goes away, does it? At least not so far?

Margaret: No. Our audiences are always, and the people who are engaging are always growing. They're always shifting. They're alive. These are real people. The way that they think and respond, and it also challenges I think us, not just in how they respond, but the medium through which we're using. We always have to think about the medium. The question asked on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook are probably going to be different the way that they're framed, the shortness, the length, the build up in Instagram, to kind of getting to that moment where you ask the question, they're very different mediums.

Carey: Also, in terms of your ability to assess your idea, even though you've written a number of books, you've sold over a million copies, the ability to assess what is really going to connect with people, and what isn't that still trial and error.

Margaret: It is still trial and error. At the end of the day, as a writer who works with, we do do self-publishing as well, but who works with traditional publishers at the end of the day, they are the kingpins. They are the ones who have the yay and the nay say. So, listening and trusting, and trusting that even if they buy into an idea and then they come back and say, "Well, the sales team said to listen to that," and to trust that to be a humble writer, to be always ready for feedback, always ready for. I know when I write a manuscript before it ever goes to the publisher, I've had with liberal scholars and conservative scholars read it, I've had people of all different ages, all different denomination, all different backgrounds, people who don't know God.

Margaret: All the spectrum read it, because I want to know what is hitting and resonating with them, but I also want to know what's bothering them. Because what I find time and time again is the things that make people the most angry, the things that you're going to get all the hate metaphor, if you would have edited two words, nobody would have written a thing. Usually-

Carey: Really?

Margaret: Yes, usually the things that people go way off for, it's one or two words, and you would have said the same idea without that. That's for me why the readers are so important. Now obviously, if you're going and grabbing a highly controversial topic by the ears, that's a different...

Carey: Yeah, but you're saying, you said something and you shouldn't have used that word, you used another one, and all of a sudden the unnecessary, and I think it's good to be misunderstood as a communicator sometimes, and to some extent it's inevitable, but often, it's useless. That's a really good word. Let's talk about marketing Margaret. You say you spend the majority of your time marketing these days. What do you mean by that?

Margaret: Yeah, I think there's a variety. I think part of it is social media engagement, paying attention, thinking strategically about how to introduce a product, remind people of a product in creative and innovative ways that isn't just simply, "Hey, go buy my book," but really learning to live in a way that 90% of what you do is a gift, and you're really serving and loving your audience. Only 5 to 10% is in that genre. I think it's really important constantly creating content for those various mediums including podcasting, which I'm now thoroughly enjoying, and have the best time with the Joycast.

Margaret: Really looking for ways to partner strategically, connecting with speaking events, connecting with other authors. A lot of that is under the umbrella of marketing. That is a word that by my nature I cringe from like most writers, which is normal. Most writers do not want to market. It's icky. It feels icky.

Carey: I produce this amazing work, it should be self-evident that you need to go and get it, correct? That's where most of us are. That's where we live.

Margaret: 100%, yes. Absolutely, but that is just not the reality.

Carey: That'll look that way.

Margaret: So, learning to engage in marketing that are true to you. At the end of the day, in the Write Brilliant course, we have this philosophy that we believe in an audience centric content-driven approach. In other words, at the core of what you do, you are to serve and love your audience. When you develop content that does that, it is so much easier to speak loudly and boldly about what you've written, and when the content is really serving them. So, thinking audience first, we are so specific about clearly identifying your audience, that person naming them, knowing what they do, their free times, everything about them. So that when you sit at a page, you're not looking in an empty screen, or an empty sheet of paper, you are looking at a person, because that is a real person that you are communicating with. These kinds of things are really helpful.

Carey: Do you have an avatar for the person who's going to buy your book? What I mean by that is like a target. That's what they call it off in marketing or social media world, but who's your avatar? Do you have an avatar?

Margaret: Yes.

Carey: How do you know who that is? What kind of research? How do you figure out? I guess the bigger question Margaret is, how do you know what your audience wants? I think a lot of the time, content creators just guess. How did you figure that out?

Margaret: Yeah, I started to think about who are the people who I see coming up to me at a book table? Who are the people who are emailing? Who are the people who are responding in social media, and paying incredibly close attention? What I discovered is that most of the people who are doing that are the people who are just like the people already in my real life. I have an avatar by the name of Susan. Honestly, I take vacations with Susan. I

travel with Susan. I have lunches with Susan. I go for walks with Susan. I live my every day life with all of these Susans.

Margaret: I have a second avatar named Tim. I go to dinner with my husband with Tim. I hang-out with Tim's family. I babysit Tim's boys. I spend my free time with Tim and Susan's. So, it becomes very easy to have every day conversations where the same ideas, the same struggles, the same points of connection and conflict are happening that you begin to say, "Okay, pretty clearly, that is who I am serving and I am loving through my writing."

Carey: That's good to know. So, really you have Tim, you have Susan, but really you're thinking, "Oh, this is for Matt," or, "This is for Amy." Right? I have those conversations when I'm writing content all the time. Sometimes, what a real life Matt or Amy might've said to me makes it into a book. Disguised, but you do that too?

Margaret: Oh, all the time. All my friends are in my books. Also, this is best and my very best friends will all say, they read my book when it comes out and they go, "We didn't have any idea about any of that."

Carey: Really?

Margaret: Yeah. It's not that I don't tell people, it's that I take so long to think about things. I'm not telling you to hold something back from you. There are days my husband will ask me, "How are you?" I struggle to find the words, because it takes me a while to know and really cognitively think about it.

Carey: Have you done your Enneagram? Do you know what it is?

Margaret: Number seven.

Carey: Oh, you're a seven. Okay. I was going to say that sounds very five-ish. I'm married to a five. It's like all these parts of you unknown, but you're a seven, so it's wild, fun, free.

Margaret: Why do you think Taste and See book was so fun? All those adventures, all those people, all that food? That was like an Enneagram seven's dreamland.

Carey: Absolutely. Anything else about marketing? When you sell a million books, and that there's not that many people who can say they have done that, what looking back on it, and I don't want to go back to 20 years ago, because it's a different world totally, but what are some inflection points where you're like, "Yeah, pay attention to this, and you will serve your audience better. Pay attention to that, and you will probably sell a few more books, or get your message out there."

Margaret: I think one of the key starts in the very writing, and back to your avatar question that you must identify, what are the key struggles of your audience? What are you going to help them discover? Give them practical tools to do that. That is the key, because then you are not just producing something about you, because often writers sit down and the

thing they love to write about is themselves. The only problem is if you write for yourself, you are the only one who's going to read your book.

Margaret: You've got to write a book that serves other people and helps them in practical ways. Then the marketing flows out of that. Then I can say, "Hey, when you pick up the Taste and See book, not only are you going to have all these incredible biblical discoveries, devotional discoveries, you're going to read the bible different. At the end of every chapter, there are activities you can do around your own tables involving these foods, which are going to cause spiritual awakening and transformation in your life and the life of your families.

Margaret: There are recipes, if you love cooking that you can try out, and actually taste these foods that were describing from the bible. There are resources in the back that can help you read different, think more differently about what you buy, what you consume, cut down on food waste. When I describe those things, I guess you could put that under the umbrella of marketing, but really what I'm trying to do is just serve you, and the things that you love, the ways that you love, and give you ways to incredible barbecue sauce recipe.

Carey: That's great, Margaret. What I hear you saying, and this is fun, it's like, understand your audience, understand what they're struggling with, and help them. Help them.

Margaret: Yup, and love them. It's more than help. Helping is loving, but I think at the end of the day, writing is an active self-sacrifice. When you do it really well, you will love them so much that you cannot help but help them in the way that they can hear and receive help. Not something you do to them, something you do for them. Two different worlds.

Carey: When it comes to your new book, what's your greatest hope when people read it?

Margaret: I hope that they will read it, that they will number one, never read the bible the same way again, because now they see those foods on a granular level. Once you start to look for food in the bible, it pops, and it sizzles on almost every page. Those who have wrestled with the conflicts regarding food, whether that'd be eating disorder, yo-yo diets, whether that being at a young age that maybe you're controlled by food, that all of a sudden, you will awaken to God's redemptive purposes through food.

Margaret: When you sit down to a table, you will gather around, and you will not just eat the food as some fuel or some commodity, but you will receive it as the gift of God. When you gather around those tables, you will take moments to prepare. When people come over, maybe they say, "What can you bring?" The next time you say, "You know, I don't need you to bring anything except your prayers and the expectation that God is going to show up at a profound way." That sometime in that conversation whether it'd be with somebody on the spectrum of faith or maybe far, far away, that you will slip in a question that asks, "What is the divine, or God, or maybe if they are the Holy Spirit doing in your life recently."

Margaret: Create that space where you sense God just His chair at the table, just opening up a banquet in that place, because I think that when we sit down at a table, we long for so much more than the food on the table. We long to know, and to be known, to love, and to be loved, to enter that place where we can be vulnerable in all shames carries away and that you and I can become the people who not only experience that, but we create that everywhere we go.

Carey: I want to ask you, because it's not an automatic progression, but there are speakers who become writers, and then there are writers who become speakers. You do both. Not everyone who is a great writer is a great speaker. Not everyone who's a great speaker becomes a great writer. You seem to have pretty easy fluidity between both. You do a lot of speaking and a lot of writing. Is writing your first love and speaking became a second, or how has that played out in your life?

Margaret: Writing was the first love. Then once I wrote, they invited me to speak, and I'd speak. Over the years have just really worked at it, and tried to hone the craft of effective communication. Our speaking coaches, I still am learning it every event. I'll sit in other speakers and say, "Hey, here's my notes. If you see anything I can improve, please." Because I always want to grow and get stronger at that. I now feel the pleasure of speaking. I'd say they're equal in the joy that they both bring.

Carey: That's fun. I enjoy both. Tell us about that journey. You hired speaking coaches. You get lots of feedback. It's not an automatic thing day one that just because you can write, you can speak. What were some early mistakes you made? Yeah, I know.

Margaret: Oh, I don't know what language I'm allowed to use on your podcast.

Carey: There are kids listening. It's crazy man, but I know what you mean, right?

Margaret: You may have to edit this out. I once spoke at an event. There were a lot of military people there. I didn't know it at the time. Everything is just totally fubar. I didn't know what fubar meant.

Carey: I don't actually know what it means, so.

Margaret: Yup. I'm going to have you Google that afterwards, and that is something that you should never ever say at a ministry-based event.

Carey: Oh, okay. All right. I'll add that to my list of banned words. Now, I'm curious, yeah.

Margaret: Yup. I can do this all there. So, there was an another event, and I said something funny. Everybody laughed. About 20 seconds later, a whole another wave of laughter came from one section of the room. I didn't know who or what, and so I just totally went, "Those are the small ones," not realizing that those were the people who were deaf who were being translated to.

Carey: Oh my gosh, Margaret.

Margaret: So, mortified. I know. That's so bad.

Carey: That's a fun moment. How do you recover from that stuff? How did you say, why did you not just say, "Okay, I'm not a speaker. I'm going to get back into my writing den, and I'm just going to write for the rest of my life."

Margaret: Yeah, I think I would have if people were not gracious enough to invite me back, and to give me the opportunity to improve, and to keep trying, and making mistakes, and stumbling. I think it was the grace of others who have helped me continue on this path.

Carey: That's amazing. What about delivery, what have you learned about? Because obviously, content's not an issue. You're writing books, you're speaking on your books, so you've got ideas, you've got content, you've got substance. The challenge I imagine would be to convert that into a palatable thing that you can then deliver. Were you natural at public speaking, or has it really been a skill that you've honed?

Margaret: I think I did debate team and did a lot of public speaking growing up. So, that provided a solid foundation, but more recently really working on total inflection, volume, loud versus quiet, working and whispering into my talk and my presentation, really learning to use the stage. The whole stage as far as the lighting will allow, really paying attention to the room itself, how the architecture is going to fight against you, or with you as a speaker, and also how the television screens.

Margaret: If they're using video on the screens, what does that look like? How strong are the people using that equipment? Can they follow you if you're walking fast? Where are the dead zones in the light? What is the audience used to, and how far can you push that? As well as breaking that invisible line with the stage and going down onto the floor, finding out if there's enough lighting to go in and interact with the audience. So really almost like in writing how you have all these different literate devices, developing a longer, deeper reserve of communication devices for giving those presentations.

Margaret: Some of them were great, and some of them I go, "Well, that didn't work. We're going to hone that. We're going to retry that in different way." Is that what you do?

Carey: Yeah. You know what, yeah, I pay attention to all that stuff. Literally, that's like a checklist in my head. Inflection, I see it in multiple dimensions. There's louder and softer, and then there's higher and lower. Everything in between, I don't know how to draw that out in 3D, but it's the way you use your voice when you're communicating. Of course, as you know, when you're on the states, if you're in normal conversation like this, you're at one level. When I'm on a platform, I'm at twice the level, but it sounds like you're at this level, which is really weird. It's just the weirdest thing.

Carey: All that about trying to break the invisible wall and where are the lighting zones, and how good is the sound guy? Is he going to make you too hot, or are you going to have to yell and lose your voice an hour into the event? All of that stuff. Yeah, I get that. What

helps you the most? Because there's a lot of butting communicators too, and writing is very difficult, communication is very difficult in a public form. What are couple things looking back on it that you really said, "Man, that was breakthrough. When I figured this out, it moved me to another level."

Margaret: I think for me, learning to work that stage really move me. I used to be a pretty stationary or move only eight feet across. Now, if it's a 40-foot stage and there's lighting, I'm covering every square inch of that baby. The stage really helped break me out of my boxy, more boxy communication style. Now, I also recognize there are certain, if I'm in a church with a big ole pulpit and it's anchored down, there's not a whole lot of place to fly. So, you have to always adapt to where the room is, but the stage and learning what is possible there and creating spaces in the stage where certain stories are told, and then you go back to that space, that's a lot of fun. It becomes freedom, and it becomes delight, and it becomes more playful.

Carey: Do you memorize your talk, or do you have notes, or how do you do that?

Margaret: Yeah, I would say I ingest it. Memorize is very rote and recited, but ingesting is this concept, this deep belief that resides inside. The words may often sound alike or they may flare off in a creative way, but I know where I'm going. I know what I want to accomplish, and I know where I want to bring that audience, but a lot of that is done before I ever get to the event. Talking to the host, finding out what their goals are, meeting it, and saying, "I want to knock it out to the park for you. Tell me what you want to it. You want a response time, would you want it to look like this, or this, or what is your community used to? How far can we push it?" So, those conversations are epic and crucial.

Carey: Do you do a pre-event call then with the host?

Margaret: I do, and create the time. When I go somewhere and I'm invited, I am there as a servant. I am a guest, and it is a privilege. Coming into that place with that attitude of just, "I'm here to serve," but without the right communication I may miss it, and I may miss what would have been so easy to provide and to serve in that community and see God work.

Carey: So good. Margaret, anything else you want to share while we're together?

Margaret: I am so grateful for you, Carey. I'm grateful for all of the leaders out there who listen to you and learn from you. You bring such brilliance, and such wisdom, and such blessing in what you do. I don't know how often, I know you hear it, but I hope you hear it behind you. There is a wall of books, and in that wall if you turned around, you would see the richness and the depth, and the insight, and the work. That is you, and that is what you display each and every day. It is stunning, and we are so thankful for you.

Carey: Oh, Margaret. I don't know what to say. You made me very emotional. Thank you. You are a gift to the church and to the world. I want to thank you for what you do. Thanks for being such an encouragement behind the scenes, and now on this podcast as well.

Where can people find you? Where can they connect with you? What's the easiest place?

Margaret: Yeah, go to margaretfeinberg.com. You can also visit the Joycast on iTunes, Spotify, and all your favorite podcast distributing islands in the planet and the universe. We're also on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter at MA Feinberg. I hope you will enjoy the fun and the fresh, and the random, and all the questions that I ask, doing little research from you as you engage.

Carey: We linked all that in the show notes. Margaret, thank you so much. What a gift this has been.

Margaret: Thank you, Carey.

Carey: Margaret, that was so kind. I love the ending to that interview. She was just so affirming. That's one of the best things. Sometimes, I get this question all the time, "What are some of the top leaders, writers, thinkers, speakers really like?" I am so glad to report that 99% of the time the answer is, better than you think. Every once in a while, you run into the opposite, but Margaret is just a jam, and we've had some time together on the road, and her writing is just brilliant and comes from a totally different stream than mine, which is one of the things that makes this life so interesting. Make sure you can check her out at margaretfeinberg.com.

Carey: Of course, we have show notes, and we have transcripts, and we have all of that. You can find it at careynieuwhof.com/episode/267. If you enjoyed this episode, please share it on social. Thank you for all of you who leave ratings, and reviews, and tell your friends because once again this podcast continues to grow, and we love being able to serve leaders that way. Thank you again to our partners. If you are looking for a summer training solution, do not miss the 14-day free trial with TrainedUp.

Carey: Go to their website at ServeHQ.church, and for 14 days you can try it for free and train your teams when they're on vacation this summer. You don't have to worry about getting people in a room. What are you doing about social? Hopefully, you're doing this, you're heading over to Pro Media Fire. If you go to promediafire.com/carey, C-A-R-E-Y, you will get 10% off your plans forever. That's for life, just because you listen to this podcast. So, make sure you check those guys out.

Carey: Hey, we are back real soon with a fresh episode. Next week, we get together with a guy that will be remembered for generations. His name is Luis Palau, one of the greatest Evangelist of our generation. This guy, I'll tell you, it's incredible, he's had a fantastic ministry. Next week, we dive into his friendship with Billy Graham, how Evangelism has changed, how he's adapted to that change. Honestly, at 84, he has, as he shared publicly, stage 4 lung cancer. He is more alive at 84 than most 24 year olds I know.

Carey: One of the rare interviews I've done where we both ended in tears. It was just powerful. Here's a short excerpt from the next episode.

Luis: Mr. Graham was praying, and I could hear his voice was muffled, so I sinned against the Lord. I'd opened my eyes to see what was going on. Mr. Graham was spread eagle on the floor, on the carpeting of his hotel, praying his heart out for this Evangelist he never met before. He probably never saw him again, and he asked the Lord open doors for him, "Lord, anoint him with a spirit." He poured out his heart, and I thought, "This is amazing." I still breakdown when I tell you the story, just event-

Carey: Yeah, that's-

Luis: Yeah, to see Mr. Graham flat out on his face. When he finished, the guy got up and said, "Oh, thank you. Thank you." Billy hugged him inevitably. When he walked out, I was so shaken by seeing Mr. Graham flat on his face for this fellow. I don't know what stupid question I asked, but Mr. Graham said, "Luis, I read in 1 Peter, humble yourselves before the mighty heaven of God that in due time, He may lift you up." He said, "The theologians have the theories of that verse, but I take it to heart, humble yourself. The more we humble ourselves, the Lord will open doors."

Carey: So, that is next week on the podcast. If you subscribe, you get it automatically for free. I only ever listen to the podcast I subscribe to. So, if you're new to this, just hit subscribe. It's free. Coming up, we got some amazing stuff. We have, who have we got? Dave and Ann Wilson talk honestly about marriage. Jenni Catron is back. Ken Coleman, the legendary interviewer. Kevin Jennings is back. Ron Kitchens, a CEO in Michigan who shares his story in a really powerful way. Chris Norton. If you don't know that name, I'm pretty sure he's got a New York Times best-selling book coming out this summer. He's been all over Good Morning America, has a powerful story.

Carey: Ian Cron is back. Ron Edmondson, David Kinnaman, John Townsend, so many more, and Max Lucado, did I mention he's coming back to the podcast in the next few months? All of these and so much more. You get that for free when you subscribe. Guys, thank you so much for making this such a rich experience. I appreciate you. I'm in your corner. I'm cheering for you, and I hope our time together today helps 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.