

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: Hey everybody and welcome to episode 272 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before and I got to tell you, I'm excited to have my good friend Kevin Jennings back on the podcast. He is all things digital and marketing and this time around, we are going to talk about how to build an authentic personal platform that ain't about you. Yup, and how to gain traction online and the power of focus and strategic quitting. It's going to be a great episode. I'm so excited you've joined us. Kevin is the founder and CEO of Junction 32. He does online media for companies, would love to help you with that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Also, he has worked with such greats as Oprah Winfrey, Tony Robbins, Dave Ramsey and Reggie Joiner and we've had the privilege of working together too, Kevin and I. He's a young entrepreneur, love this guy, so glad to have him back on the episode. I want to thank all of you who are tuning in for the first time, welcome. We are so glad that you're here. If you're a regular listener, you've found this helpful and you haven't left a rating or review yet, man, that would mean so much to us and thank you for sharing on social. We are having the best months we have ever had on the podcast and that's because of you guys. Thank you guys too for diving in on some partners that we bring to you every month.

Carey Nieuwhof: I got some exciting news for you, actually a bunch of exciting news in this episode. The team at ServeHQ has built TrainedUp and if you're a regular listener, you know about TrainedUp and that's really to make volunteer and leader training even easier with simple online courses. Tens of thousands of leaders have used TrainedUp, it's the easiest way to get your people ready to serve but ServeHQ saw another challenge that ministry leaders face, which is effective digital communication. You may have a great training platform but how do you communicate with people in the every day, whether that's volunteer teams, parents of kids, safe communications with student themselves, how do you do that?

Carey Nieuwhof: ServeHQ is introducing HuddleUp. HuddleUp is here to make it easier for ministry leaders to communicate effectively with volunteers, parents and students. Right now it's in private beta, aren't you glad you listen to this podcast because we share stuff like this. Here's how it works and I'm going to give you an opportunity to get in. HuddleUp brings all your digital ministry communication into one space, so with HuddleUp you can send weekly video updates by email or text, create online discussions to foster community throughout the week, send text alerts for last minute information.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's kind of like Slack, WhatsApp or GroupMe but it's safe for adults and students to use together because all messages are saved forever and everything, you'll appreciate this if you're in church leadership, is auditable by church

administrators for accountability. If anyone ever does anything inappropriate, there's a record. If anyone says something inappropriate that happened, there's a record. The best part, HuddleUp works alongside TrainedUp so you can train and communicate with your people all in one space. You can use HuddleUp year round and use TrainedUp whenever you need to get training done.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now, as I said, they're in private beta for a few more weeks but you podcast listener can sign up to get early access or be the first to hear when it launches publicly. Go to servehq.church to join the wait list, and remember as always, you can try TrainedUp for free for 14 days at servehq.church. Now, something else is really exciting that's happening this fall, Andy Stanley is back on the road in four cities. If you live near Seattle, Phoenix, Kansas City or Austin, you are not going to want to miss the Irresistible tour. The tour picks up where the book left off, and it's one day with Andy Stanley.

Carey Nieuwhof: Andy is going to be talking about the best kept secret of Christian apologetics, a fresh approach to creating an enduring faith for the next generation, the new why that answers just about everything and how to apply Irresistible, his latest book, to your everyday life. Andy's been on the podcast several times before. Last time we talked about Irresistible, you probably have questions, you probably want to bring your team and if you're serious about understanding the next generation, you'll want to register today. Go to irresistibletour.com and because you're a podcast listener, use the coupon code, Carey19, that's C-A-R-E-Y-1-9. You'll get \$20 off the admission price, the regular price, simply by using the coupon code Carey19 at irresistibletour.com. Well, without further ado, let's dive into my conversation with Junction 32's Kevin Jennings. Kevin, welcome back to the podcast.

Kevin Jennings: It is a pleasure to be here with you my friend. Thank you so much. Any time I spend with you is a joy, that's for sure.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's how I feel too. We always hang out and the time flies and we learn a lot, at least I learn a lot from you. You've been on the show before and in that time we talked about our work together through rethink where you were the guy who got this podcast started almost five years ago and helped us get to number one on iTunes and helped this guy who still works out of his basement to gain an audience. It was a great interview and we'll link to that in the show notes, but I want to drill a little bit deeper on platform building with you today and personal branding. What is wrong with how people are doing personal branding and platform building today? Why don't we just start there? What's faulty about it?

Kevin Jennings: I think the challenge is one it's all about them. I think that's probably the number one problem in it all kind of flows from there. Thanks to you and many others, I've gotten heavy into the Enneagram. I too was a little late to the party.

Carey Nieuwhof: What are you? I'm curious.

Kevin Jennings: I'm a two wing three.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. I thought there has to be a little bit of three.

Kevin Jennings: Yes, that's right, two wing three. With that being said, I don't want to make this all Enneagram, but the people who are drawn to want to build a platform and want to scale their influence, those who do it with joy and desire... Listen to me, my wife is very influential but she does it reluctantly. She's a two wing one. She wants to stay to herself and just help people. She has the heart of a philanthropist. Those individuals are threes, they're eights. They're individuals who either are completely content challenging the status quo, like throw your darts at me, bring it on, I don't care. Or they are those who are just desiring this warming, love, affirmation, adoration.

Kevin Jennings: What happens naturally, and I think I could put myself in that boat as a person who struggles with this and that is making sure it never becomes about us and how do we do that. That's one issue. I think the other big thing is we don't know ourselves. That's a big challenge because that means if you don't know who you are and you start to scale a facade of who you are, you're in big trouble because you look up and you're like you feel you can build your own prison. Truthfully, you can build your own prison and you're miserable because the whole world sees you in a way that you are not. Maybe you didn't do it on purpose. I've seen people sincerely who did not know they did that to themselves and then they're miserable.

Kevin Jennings: Now there are those who've done it on purpose and then they're still miserable because they say, I have enough money where I want to be me. I want to do what I want. Now the world's like, but that's not who you are to us. You are this person. Look at Michael Jordan, Michael Jordan played into it for a long time in his career, be like Mike, I want to inspire all the kids. He latched onto a marketing and branding campaign that did not represent who he was. I just challenge anyone to go find me an inspirational talk from Michael Jordan for kids. You might find one or two, but go on YouTube, you're not going to find hundreds of them because that's not who he is.

Carey Nieuwhof: Interesting, so you're saying... I didn't know that about Michael Jordan's story, that that was kind of a branding thing. It would be good for you at this point to be about charity but that wasn't him.

Kevin Jennings: Kids looked up to him. He wasn't necessarily at the time a bad role model. He played into it, be like Mike had a nice ring to it. Weiden + Kennedy, the renown ad agency in Portland, Oregon, who's Nike's agency of record for decades, jumped right on it, built a fantastic campaign. But Michael Jordan had a gambling problem and he gambled... But he didn't care, he was rich. He would gamble and...

Carey Nieuwhof: You can certainly lose a million if you're that rich.

Kevin Jennings: He would gamble in Atlantic city, be out till 3, 4, 5AM, be at the game on time and still dominate. I'm saying this to say that I think for some people that's an anomaly to say he did not make any decisions that imploded his life in that journey. Some of us build lives and build a facade that we can't keep up because it's not who we really are. Self awareness is also a big issue in the platform building space from my experience.

Carey Nieuwhof: How does that happen? Because I think you're right, you can end up building a public persona, whether you're leading a company or a church of a hundred, real small business or even you're trying to be one way to your friends or you're building this brand on Instagram or social or blogging or YouTube or wherever you happen to be. How does that happen to somebody?

Kevin Jennings: I think it's twofold. I don't think it always starts out negatively. Obviously, there are a lot of people who I've seen who get into this space of building their own brand online, building an audience who come from very painful pasts and they've been in places where they didn't matter. They felt like they were neglected and they thought they were picked over or ignored, and so they are meeting needs that only God can fill through an audience. That leads to some dangerous places over time because, well, who cares what my kids think?

Kevin Jennings: Who cares what my wife thinks? My audience thinks I'm awesome and I'm going to lean into the people whose love I can measure through likes, and that leads to some dangerous places. The question I ask people is like, why do you want to do this? Seriously, what's going to make you do this when no one's paying attention? Now once again, I worked for Dave Ramsey, I worked for Tony Robbins, I worked with Carey Nieuwhof, you all are strong eights. Opposition to you all actually is kind of affirming in this weird way, like let's bring it on, let's go get them.

Carey Nieuwhof: Just like bring it on, what do you got?

Kevin Jennings: Exactly. Yes, you all might be impacted by negativity like any other human being would, but negative comments in some ways are almost a spark that you're doing something right. Yep. That's right. You're uncomfortable. That's what I'm hoping. I'm trying to change the world.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know whether I get this right all the time and I'm sure I don't, but the nice thing about what's happened so far is I feel like it get to roll out of bed every morning and just be me, which is-

Kevin Jennings: It's beautiful.

Carey Nieuwhof: So liberating because I'm not worried about reinventing the wheel. I'm not worried about, I got to do this because I'm supposed to. It's like, actually I'm not going to blog today so I'm just not going to do it. Or yeah, I'm going to write something and I don't know whether it's going to help people or not or, yeah,

that wasn't the best intro in the world, but it was a good one. There's a tremendous power and freedom, I guess, not even power but a freedom in being able to be yourself as opposed to trying to imitate other people. Sometimes that arises out of a wound. Does it happen sometimes because people feel, well, if I'm going to be successful I need to be X or I need to be Y OR they're imitating? What are some of the reasons?

Kevin Jennings: Yes, so their habits too. Sometimes people are so strategic, they actually undermine their own mission. I'm a strategist, so saying that out loud feels a little weird. But it's true in the sense that if I take the Carey Nieuwhof playbook and I literally dissect everything you've done, and I'm all about modeling Tony Robbins teaches people to model, learn from the greats, success has clues, all that stuff. But I can't be Carey. So if I go from writing deep philosophical content and everything's very metaphorical in my nature, my writing style, and I go to a, what I feel you do a very good job of, prescription style writing, three ways, seven ways.

Kevin Jennings: You are naturally one that likes to decode into a system or method, if that's not who I am, it may not work for me. What happens is the more you try to literally follow some of the blueprint to the point where you are stripping out any ounce of who you are, it hurts you. Once again, eights and threes, people who are... they do that most often. If I'm just being transparent, because they're so driven to be successful. It's I'll do anything.

Carey Nieuwhof: We would be the people who are most tempted to imitate something that we're not.

Kevin Jennings: Exactly, because your growth driven. If you're growth driven and your success driven, then you're like, well what did they do that worked? Tell me, give me the plan. Let me strip out what I want for it and I'm going to go use it. Sometimes that means neglecting our own gut for the sake of building the audience, for the sake of... Even the mission, everyone who's listening to this podcast has a desire to reach more people. Even audiences that's disproportionately represented that community of people saying, we want to... Yes, Kevin, we're making a transformation of the people who come to our church, the people we serve with our business love our products, but we want more of them. We're not satisfied.

Kevin Jennings: We're not content with that, we think God has more for us and we want to go get it. What that leads to at times is what did they do that worked for them? And I'll just slap that strategy on. We'll give it a go. If it works, now whatever we did that may not have like who we are, we're stuck because now we know what's driving attendance. We know what's driving sales and we don't want to walk away from the strategy that got us here no matter how weird it feels to us. We are David in Saul's armor but we're winning the fight, so let's just keep the armor on.

Carey Nieuwhof: Isn't that interesting? I don't want this to become too meta, but you and I have got quite a bit of experience together and have partnered together so often. When you look back on like when we were launching the podcast and the blog and books and things like that, what are some junctures... Because I've never, I don't want to say I've gotten it perfect, I don't think I've gotten a perfect, but I've never really felt that pressure. I've never felt the pressure to... because even like monetization, do you remember how long we waited on the podcast?

Kevin Jennings: I do.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's like, let's just build trust. Let's not worry about that. The money will take care of itself one day and we'll be able to pay the bills at some point. We're just going to build a rapport with... I guess you could either look back on our experience together and say, well, what are the parts we got right or what are some things that you can do to avoid getting into that ditch where you become somebody you're not, whether that's minor or major?

Kevin Jennings: I didn't do this with you because you are a very mature person and you already had so many experiences in ministry that already taught you a lot that I know that there was nothing for me to do there, but I did try to come alongside from the very beginning and say, hey Carey, let's just capture your vision. Let's capture it on paper.

Carey Nieuwhof: You did that so well.

Kevin Jennings: I remember I have a document of us and you writing down, hey, this is what I want to do. I remember I asked you what do you want the podcast to be remembered for when it's done? I remember your answer and it was, it's a fantastic leadership library. Anyone can come to this podcast. You said I also want to be known for having the conversations that we have backstage in the open. That was a litmus test for if my conversations with guests aren't honest and real, then I don't want to have them. Two, if it doesn't turn into something that can become a library for leadership where I can come to cherry pick based on my challenges, I don't want to do it.

Kevin Jennings: I feel like that's the goal. The goal's like now let's catch up before the audience shows up. Because at some point if you start to stray from this, I have a litmus to come back and say, this is what you said you wanted. I think in some part we have to capture down what is our heart, what is our mission before that happens? Now that played itself out in a lot of ways. Like I said, I think some parts are great because you created resources for those who were like you, which is I'm a minister so I know the challenges. There was empathy that didn't have to be taught or to be reminded of. But there were a couple of junctures where could have strayed and we didn't.

Kevin Jennings: I remember you saying no to people wanting to advertise, that was turning money down. I remember a couple of opportunities where you just said, "Kevin,

that's not helpful enough." I don't know how much you agonized, if everyone knew how much you agonized over the three takeaways on podcast show notes, they would be like, wow, Carey really cares about me. You care about the takeaways. I remember the tweets, "Kevin, these tweets that we're selecting, not helpful enough, that's not helpful enough." I'm like, that's not what leaders need. I think there's a little bit of that has to be baked into it of am I being helpful and what we're doing there.

Kevin Jennings: There were things you made some decisions on along the way that showed we were on track, and then what I tried to do on my end was just reiterate that a lot. So you knew that there was someone else on the team who felt the same way, thought the same way and was trying to make sure it got baked into what we did. Trying to be generous, trying to do the Starbucks giveaways, how do we make sure that generosity is what flows from this? Dave Ramsey taught me that a good brand is a generous brand and I felt like that was something I always thought with you. Okay, let's be generous. Let's try our best to be generous with your insights and your experiences, but also with the money as it comes in to give back to the community.

Kevin Jennings: Luckily, that's who you are naturally so it wasn't, I don't think I was pushing you in a direction but for some of my clients, it's not as natural. I get it. If you're mom or dad stressed straight A's with obsession, even when you're 45 years old, the winning component of it, am I winning in the back of your mind, can sometimes still be louder than is this right. Do I feel good about this? It can be I just want to do well, and this is more than that. People talk about Kanye West all the time, I use him as an example because he's been as authentic as one could be his entire career, for better or for worse.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's him.

Kevin Jennings: That's who he is. What that means for him is when he goes out in public, if he turned someone down for an autograph, I guarantee you they're not saying, I can't believe he did it. They're saying, oh, that's so Kanye. That's pretty crazy to say, but I think a lot of leaders, they're introverted, they're so great on stage, and everyone thinks that you want to hang out with them when you're done. Carey, we're all going out, we're going to watch the game on Sunday night. You want to come? Absolutely not. Leave me alone.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm going to bed actually, that's my plan, I can tell you.

Kevin Jennings: Get me out of here. Exactly. That's a big part of it for me.

Carey Nieuwhof: There's such a wealth there. First of all, just to get that out of the way, I agree. This started to break my way when I was in my mid-40s, where there was a wider audience and a bigger audience. It was after I burned out. If that had happened when I was in my 20s or 30s, I think it would've been a very different journey. I think God beat a lot of that stuff out of me early in my leadership. If

you do it for long enough when nobody shows up, it prepares you for when people actually show up. It helps you figure out what you really are like and what you're not liking. Then the second thing you said, and I'm glad you went there like man, so you think of bringing in a personal branding strategist or strategists like you who's going to help me with, okay, well how do you get this message out there? You're right.

Carey Nieuwhof: Those first, not only few meetings, but months, you just listened. You had just come over from Ramsey, you had left Dave Ramsey's organization on great terms. Came over started working with me and a few other people, and you were like, I want to become a student of you. I want to figure out what makes you tick. I want to figure out what message you have inside you, that you want to get out into the world. When I look back on that, it's like you just had your ... I still remember the first time you heard me speak. You sat in the back with a couple of your friends, and you just took notes. You were a voracious student and you're like, okay, this is it. Rather than saying, hey man, I don't care what you're doing, I got this great thing that can gain you 10,000 Instagram followers tomorrow. I think often in the branding world, we think that that is what branding people do. But you started from a very, very different place.

Kevin Jennings: I tried to, because I really believe that if we scale what's within you, then when you're doing a south by southwest, the people walk out of the room and then they go and connect with you online. That's the guy I just encountered, how great. There's continuity, there's consistency and there's trust built because of it. Glass door, I don't know if would know what glass door is. Glass door is an online service where employees, both current and former can rate and review a company. The reality is if your glass door can tell a story about what's really happening.

Kevin Jennings: Now yes, people might leave a review, might be disgruntled. But just because they're saying it in a negative way does not mean there's not any truth to what they're saying. My job is, you know what, if you're tough on people in your heart and your... Like Dave Ramsey said, I tell people that his love language is tough love. But that's who he really is. So when he's on the radio, when he's getting hard on somebody, that's how he was with me and anybody else in the team meeting. It's tough love. He can scale that because who he actually is like that's who that guy is. He's tough love but he's a-

Carey Nieuwhof: He'll be all over the credit card guy who's phoning in too right, like what are you doing with those things? Rip it up, like tear it up.

Kevin Jennings: Exactly that's who he actually is. So for him he gets real comfortable, because I've scaled to the point of 6 million radio listeners weekly who I actually am. So this is who I am. Take it or leave it. I think that's a really big gift.

Carey Nieuwhof: This is almost, I don't want it to become a therapy session, but for the young leaders listening, can you get out there and get too big too soon? How does that happen?

Kevin Jennings: Well, I think absolutely. I think that's why I hope people, anyone listening saying anyone who calls himself an influencer online, that's just weird. That's just a weird thing because-

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm an influencer.

Kevin Jennings: I'm an influencer well I'm an influencer, who's not an influencer? So the reality, I think that's a weird thing. So that means to me, you have an audience and somehow, and it's due to fame or some kind of socialite life, and that's weird. It's weird because now you are famous for being with other people you have influenced because of some kind of status in society that has nothing to do with your character. At that point you have to keep up appearances to keep your job, which is tough. But with that being said, for the young leader listening, I will say this one, embrace your evolution. Matter of fact, that's how you're going to actually keep your audience, is how vulnerable you are in your own evolution and development. I think about this with marriage.

Kevin Jennings: One of the things I learned early with my wife was, I didn't want to read too many books that she wasn't reading too. The books are overly influencing my thinking, and her books were influencing her thinking. We can be on different wavelengths and never know it, until like seven years when the books and their methodology or thought have taken hold of our hearts. We're like, how'd you get here? How did I get here? I don't know. I was reading this Sci-Fi book that changed my life it said that, and I'm reading another book about intentional living and so it takes us down this really weird path. I think share what you're reading with your audience.

Kevin Jennings: Let them grow with you, embrace your own evolution, and own that part of who you are and say, "Hey, I'm going to evolve. I'm going to change. This is a part of it." I think that's a big win. The second thing I think is we need to get as much perspective on who we are as possible. That's why I advocate for personality assessments, especially for young people in their 20s and 30s. I'm only 34 so I'm speaking to my people when I say this, because we have to expedite our self-awareness. Because we don't necessarily know the needs behind the deeds yet. We haven't figured out that one time that dad didn't give me a hug, turned into this weird desire for the whole world.

Carey Nieuwhof: I didn't get enough followers today, none of the people liked my picture.

Kevin Jennings: But it happens. It happens and we don't know it. If you know it, you can monitor it. So that's a part of it, and also having a great community around you. You need people around you who will tell you take that post down. You did that for likes, you didn't do it for the right reasons. My wife is very good at that with me.

I don't post a lot on social media, I'm working on that. But the reality I think is anything I'm doing in public and private, if she sees me doing it for the affirmation of others, she's quick to say, "That's not who you are don't do that."

Kevin Jennings: I have some guys of mine, I told a guy recently a friend of mine I said, "Hey, you know what? I understand why clients want to take advantage of me. I would do the same thing if I were in their shoes". He said, "No you wouldn't. That's not who you are. You would never do that to them. You would never ask for more than you're paying for. Matter of fact, you're likely to ask for less than you're paying for." I said, you're right, that's not who I am. Why did I say that? Why did I feel like I had to justify someone's behavior? I think for many young leaders, we have to get clear on who we are, and be okay with that. Then it's okay to broadcast our evolution.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think that is such a great insight, Kevin. This idea that if you're authentic, if you're real, not to use overused words, but you will change and you will grow with your audience. You think about Brené Brown, one of the biggest names in leadership today. What is she known for? If Brené Brown ends up in a very different place five years from now, nobody will be shocked. Or even Oprah, who you've worked with. Very transparent about what's going on in her life, what's making her happy, what's not making her happy. Her journey with her weight. She's been very public about that.

Carey Nieuwhof: If you allow people to appropriately see the real you, not in, hey I just got back from my therapist and this is what we covered today. You might want to do that with your inner circle for a little while until you've digested in a bit. But you know, this idea of, of not having and even, you think about that on social too, with face filters and I got to retouch this and I got to make myself look a certain way. Why don't you be you? That'd be great. Why do you not post on social personally?

Kevin Jennings: Well I'm working on it. I think for me, I've always been a person who thinks a lot about the future and always thinking about ... So for me, trying to think I'm in the present, try to be as present as I can be. I know sometimes the people who do very well on social media, they are people who are aware that there's actually an audience that they serve as well. So I think about how they bring their audience with them they're inviting their moment. I really do respect that. I mean, John Gibbs does a fantastic job with this. John keeps a note of just random ideas, random thoughts. He recognizes that there's a community that connects with him. He's also bringing them into these environments with him. He's thoughtful about keeping them engaged in appropriately appropriate ways. I forget they're there.

Kevin Jennings: I'm thinking, you know what, I'm here with Carey, and that's all that matters. I actually had to change my process. I had to hire somebody. I've hired a full time media producer who actually follows me around with video stuff and photos. She works with me and started in January. Because I know I don't think about it.

I'm trying to be as fully engaged in the moment as I can be. My clients ask that of me. I want to make sure things get captured. I want to share and help people who aren't in the room. So I'm now paying someone to think about that for me, and that's okay too. You have to do what you have to do to get the progress you need to get in that area. Because I do value the ability, I mean I follow people who influence me every day. I want to have that opportunity to do that with other people. For me it was an investment though.

Carey Nieuwhof: Isn't that interesting? So how do you make a personal brand that's about you without making it about you?

Kevin Jennings: This is the question I love answering and I know this wasn't on the list, so I'm excited we're going here. When I first started working with Orange, the number one question I got from every ministry leader and pastor was, I don't want a platform because it's not about me. It's about God. I don't want a platform. The reality is people trust people. So get over it, because people trust people. How do I know about God? Someone told me about Him. The Bible is pretty clear about faith comes from hearing. There's a reality, someone said something to me. They introduced me to this opportunity to perceive love, and connect with the King of kings. So let's start there.

Kevin Jennings: The second thing is you build a platform it's not about you by intentionally saying, okay, what are the core tenants of my message? What are the principles that go beyond who I am and what I personally have to say? Then what I'm going to do is I'm going to bake in things that allow me to lift up others. When your platform is done, you should be a platform where you're standing on the bottom, holding up millions of people. Not a platform where you're standing up on a stage. The platform you're building is one where you become a pillar for people to climb on top of you, and get a leg up because of the platform you created. Not for you to stand on the stage.

Kevin Jennings: It was a reverse pyramid, an inverse pyramid, more than it is a stage you're building for everyone else. With Carey as an example, because we all know his story, the podcast being interview driven was key. You could have easily shared some of your thoughts audibly. You speak. It'll probably would have drove speaking engagements more quickly. Actually people heard you. If you had, you know, Kevin's going to be my host and I'm going to be the thought leader here. By the way, you got plenty to share. Your blog was already proving you had insight to give, but by making it about everyone else's stories, the growth of the platform meant every week a new leader, whether you know them or you do not know about them, is being lifted.

Carey Nieuwhof: That was a very intentional decision that... No, I remember we talked about it because most people were saying, well, just share, maybe do a podcast version of what you're writing. I just thought I'm having these fascinating conversations I wish everybody could hear, and I want to get them out there and I don't know, I'll run this by you. But to me there's two heroes in every episode. Number one,

I want to make sure that the guest gets their message out. So that showing a little restraint, making sure that I give you plenty of opportunity to get out of you what is in you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Then secondly, I want to do it through the lens of is this going to be helpful to the leaders who are listening? I know you're in the real world, you've got real problems, you're on your run, on your commute. You're cooking dinner, you're in the backyard listening to this thing at 1.5x. But even though it's free to you, I want you to say I learned something today. This helped me solve a problem. This made me a better person. This made me a better dad, husband, Christ follower. It made me a better entrepreneur. It gave me courage. Every episode will have a slightly different goal, but I want it to be helpful. Is that the kind of thing you're talking about?

Kevin Jennings: Absolutely. What do you want the platform, the message to do for people after you're done? When you're dead, like you're gone. Google and YouTube are now how people discover you and you are not there. What do you want? Well, if that's the case, then we need to build that in. But I think we have a chance to build things in, in a way that elevate everyone else. I think you can be strategic and systematic about how you do that. I mean, Dave Ramsey be strategic, bringing on other authors and speakers who can succeed him whenever he decides to stop. I think obviously you're doing it through your podcast. You can do social media. I don't want to complicate this.

Kevin Jennings: I just want to say how intentional are you being about what you're trying to say, and can you intentionally find a way to lift others up in your process? Build in some mechanism that happens to do that on a regular basis. Over time you'll look up and some people will still feel it's about you, but that's because I'm choosing you as my guide. CareyNieuwhof.com has to be about Carey to a certain extent, because he's really selling himself to all of us as a guide and say, is Carey equipped? Does he have the experiences? Does he have the empathy? Does he even care about people like me enough to know and say he's qualified to be my guide? He's qualified.

Carey Nieuwhof: What's changing in marketing as we speak? How is the ground shifting? What's new? What's different?

Kevin Jennings: Okay, so I'm going to let everybody in on what's going to hit you probably in seven years. I'm being very transparent. It's accessible to you as a leader to implement these tools now, but most of you won't feel any pressure to do it for about seven years. One is marketing automation. You say Kevin's been gone for a while. Yeah but still, how much of what you do is a team member logging into your email system, typing up that week's email and pressing send.

Kevin Jennings: Everything is becoming automated in marketing. You can automate across multiple channels, automated text message, an email. You can now dynamically change your website's content. So once I joined Carey's newsletter and I put in

my information, it puts a tracker on my computer, not as creepy as it sounds. Then I get there it says, "Hey Kevin, welcome back." We are now in an era where personalization and customization are incredibly important. The longer-

Carey Nieuwhof: So you personalize and customize while you automate. Is that it?

Kevin Jennings: You do both. So one big tool that's coming up like a chat bot. Big things coming on where when you get someone's website up, instead of it being saying, hey, go to this form, you say, talk to our chat bot. Talk to talk to leader bot on Carey's website and leader bot says hey-

Carey Nieuwhof: We actually have that when we do courses, we have a chat bot. It's a handoff between AI and then a real person who, if AI can't answer the question, a real person jumps in. is that what you're talking about?

Kevin Jennings: I am. The reality though is most people can do that on your content sites, right?

Carey Nieuwhof: Tell me how, this is new to me?

Kevin Jennings: So I come to careynieuwhof.com, and it says, what brought you here today? What leadership challenge are you facing? You might give me a couple of prompts. Look for a couple of key words, maybe are you struggling to get sleep? You've programmed the bot start to get me to the blog post that I need most. Because at the end of the day, your job, like Google is to get me to the thing that's most helpful, the fastest.

Carey Nieuwhof: All that's automating quickly?

Kevin Jennings: It's becoming faster and faster because of the reality, is the data we're able to gather on people over time, through relationship, through Facebook, social media, obviously our website traffic, etcetera. We have the ability to serve them at a breakneck speed. People now value immediacy, personalization, contextualization more than free. They'll pay for this if you... they'll pay for this period because that's what people are paying for right now.

Kevin Jennings: There's always going to be a free option, but everyone's paying more money for contextualization, immediacy, customization. Tony Robbins always told us, the person who gets paid the most money is the person who solves problems the best, the fastest. I will pay. Yes, I could put peppermint essential oils in my forehead when I have headaches, but be patient. Or I could take Ibuprofen and I'm going to be good in 15 minutes.

Carey Nieuwhof: You're going to buy that Ibuprofen.

Kevin Jennings: It is what it is, and so I think there's a reality of us as leaders saying, how do we automate this? Now for the church in particular, this is really critical because of

online Church. You have a person who might be watching your sermon at midnight, and what's there to greet them? Nothing. If something is there to greet them, it's actually all the cool sermon titles that are catchy, but they're in chronological order. But how about this? What would happen and I'm saying this to everybody out here, what would happen if I got to your site, if it said, Kevin, what are the three things or what area of life are you mostly looking for God to move in the next 12 months in your life? It was your health, your finances, your marriage, your parenting, your career, your connection with Him, etc. I click that button and you shoot me to a page that has that content. Because what happens is your contents are organized by the month of the year. I'm not a Christian. Maybe I am a Christian. Last week's sermon was called, never give up. I'm like, what's that about?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, nobody knows.

Kevin Jennings: No one knows.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, we'll be back with more of my interview with Kevin Jennings in just a minute, but I want to tell you about something I'm really excited about this fall. I'll be in three of the cities of the 15 cities that the Orange Tour is going to be on this fall. If you've never been to Orange Tour, man, don't miss a great opportunity to train your entire team; senior leaders, staff and volunteers in how to reach the next generation. The theme this year in the 15 cities we're in is about everything being personal and you're like, what in a digital age? So I sat down with Reggie Joiner. He is the founder and CEO of Orange. Reggie honestly is one of the most personal and relational leaders I know. So I asked him what does personal mean, and why the Orange Tour this fall. Here's what he had to say.

Reggie Joiner: Sure. It's the reason our organization makes 15 cities a priority in a given year. Because we think physical presence says something that digital presence doesn't say. We think when you're face to face with people, and you spend the time actually going to them and put them on your schedule, it makes a different kind of impact in their life. We think discipleship, for example, with kids and teenagers happens when we recruit leaders to show up every week. Because when a kid sees that a leader makes them a priority on their calendar, and their physical presence actually happens in their life, they create a different kind of relational model. I think there's an element of discipleship that's life to life, heart to heart, face to face. I think that's true when it comes to networking with leaders and talking about what we can do to change the culture of our churches.

Carey Nieuwhof: It would be absolutely amazing to have you join us this fall on Orange Tour. Orange tour is going to be in 15 cities. I will be in three of them. So if you're wondering, people always ask which ones are you going to be at? I'll be at Irvine, California, just outside of Los Angeles in September. Along with Phoenix, Arizona. Then later in October, Austin, Texas, one of my favorite cities. So I'll be at three of them, but you can go to any of the 15, and you can see the entire list

at Orangetour.org just go to Orangetour.org and if you use the coupon code Carey at checkout, you will get the best rate that you possibly can get off the super early bird.

Carey Nieuwhof: Nobody else can get that rate. You can because you listen to this podcast. So use the coupon code Carey, go to Orangetour.org who's speaking this fall? Jon Acuff, Kristen Ivy, Sam Collier, Kara Powell, Joseph Sojourner, Reggie Joiner, myself and many, many more. I'm so excited for that. I will be in Irvine, Phoenix and Austin. You can go to any one of the 15 cities Orangetour.org use the coupon code Carey, and hope to see you there. Now back to my conversation with Kevin Jennings.

Kevin Jennings: Or maybe the sermon was called back to life or back to the future. Some cool, catchy movie reference. What happens though is I don't know what it's about. But what would happen if when it goes online, it's retitled. See for the church it's called back to the future. They love the cool title. There the congregation they want the interesting catchy titles. But for my friend, they want to know, it's called why Christ resurrect, and how the resurrection of Christ changed your life. Or maybe it's something even more direct and it's the foundation of the Christian faith. Because the reality is on Google every day someone searching, what's the meaning of life?

Kevin Jennings: You guys should search this up and look it up because Google has, they make some of this public. How many times per day someone searches what's the meaning of life? The reality is this, they're going to Google. I want to make sure, how can a church website be organized topically? Because if I search about leadership, even if your church had a blog Carey, you come up before the Church. Because of how you've written what you've written. You've written it for discovery. You've written it in a way that the keywords are designed to be found. The church is not doing that. So the reality is who is going to show up when someone searches what's the meaning of life is a random blogger not at Church.

Carey Nieuwhof: You're right. No, that's exactly it. You know how I find my content now because I'm 600 posts into my blog or whatever. I Google it. It's like I Google my name in the subject, because it's way easier than navigating my blog because I can't find stuff. There's too much there.

Kevin Jennings: The chat bot is one example. Could be a welcome committee and says hey-

Carey Nieuwhof: That technology is available like as of right now?

Kevin Jennings: As of right now, it's already available, and it's affordable. Obviously, a lot of you are in the B2B and the B2C, especially the B2B marketing world so business to business, they're already there because they have to compete. It's really competitive in that space and so there are no Churches using it. I've not found one church using this yet. Because I'm trying to give away a secret sauce and

advantage, because you don't have to do it today, right? But there are great Churches out there, there are great coming out there that are helping Churches do some of this. I met a guy recently where you know, hey, we want to help people set up appointments to come by our church and be a new visitor, and we take them on a welcome experience.

Kevin Jennings: Okay, maybe it's what you want to have your bot do is help people's schedule first time visits. Maybe you want to get them to the sermon, it's going to be the most helpful for them. Maybe you want to offer them someone who can pray for them. You do with it what you want, use your imagination. But the reality is everyone's not on your site on Sunday between 9:00 AM and 1:00. The other thing is just, do you have a button on your church during live services that says, would you like someone to pray for you? Is there a button where someone could just click a button and they call a number or?

Carey Nieuwhof: Or you have to go to blank church slash events slash prayer teams slash pray now, which nobody will ever find in a million years.

Kevin Jennings: Exactly. So the reality is for all us are saying, that's what technology can enable. But I think automation is key because I could technically say, all right, hey, Kevin came to our page and told us that the thing he wants to know or wants the most help with right now in his life is his health. He wants to know what God has to say about his health. So once that happens, hide everything else, make it go away. Put me on an email sequence where I get automated emails from the church once a week for the next 12 weeks about nothing but what God has said about health. It might be, here's a sermon that came out three years ago. Did you check this message? Here's an article that we found we think is really helpful. I mean, you just be a resource because that's how you build trust. The church is trying to position themselves in the lives of those who come or in the community of saying, we are a guide. Well a guide to what? A guide to Christ. I think it's a big deal. It's a big deal.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's so good. We've talked about this on this podcast before in different episodes, but nobody is better at producing content that is immediately forgotten and never referred to again than the Church. We do that and I mean it's really hard. Sometimes you do something that's really great that you pour dozens of hours into, and that's true of any content creator. That's true for podcasters who are listening, writers who are listening and a lot of us, and we talked about personality type at the beginning, but people ask me, what's your favorite message? What's your favorite book? The answer is the next one, because we're like that. We're wired that way, right? It's like, wow what I did last year, insignificant. Well no it helped a lot of people then, it could help a lot of people in the future, but we don't think that way.

Kevin Jennings: Indeed. The other thing I just want to put out there, its technology that's been out for a long time, but Churches are not using it, but eventually will be forced to, and that is a membership site. Kevin, no we have membership site. They can

go in and manage their giving. No, no, no, no, I'm talking about a content membership site. Like the one you would subscribe to if you want to join some leadership program behind the scenes and you get all this content. Why does that matter?

Carey Nieuwhof: It's like 1999 month and you're in the membership site or how does that work? Or is it free?

Kevin Jennings: It's free. But usually that's for the Church. It actually lets them connect the needs, the content consumption with an individual. Because now there's a username and a password. They can log and say, "Kevin has watched a lot of sermons recently, consumed a lot of content about marriage. I wonder what that means is going on at home with him and Leah. We should probably just be prompted business behavior to actually give him a call and check on him, before he shows up and says, we're about to get a divorce can you solve this for us?" But right now it's all anonymous. You say well Kevin what does it matter? Well we can customize it. We can customize the experience. We can say to them, you are seen. In a world with online Church, I don't know if we have an option, but guess who does that really well? Every business you go on a website of.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah because you're looking for shoes, the next thing you're on Instagram and there they are.

Kevin Jennings: Amazon, your logs on Amazon you don't log out, you get back in everything you look at they're saying "Hey guys, take some notes on Carey, take some notes on Kevin. Make some notes on Kevin, make some notes on Carey." So when we log in we're like, I feel so known here. They know exactly what I like. Well the church can't say that? What the hell?

Carey Nieuwhof: It's like your Netflix algorithm. Because here you're right. Some people are going to push back and go, Kevin, that is so creepy. It violates my privacy. I'm going to go live on a mountain and unplug right off the grid. But everybody else is doing it. You're saying, well, why not do it for good, not just for money?

Kevin Jennings: Here's a challenge for all the leaders listening for both entrepreneurs and church leaders, pastors, etc. This is the experience that everyone in society is now accustomed to and expecting, and that's why I said its coming. It's coming because the consumer in you that you cannot separate from the believer in you, already expect someone to treat you like they know you when they meet you. How dare they send me this message? I've been going to this church for 15 years, five years, and they didn't know. So you expect me to know this about you?

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, people leave church over that. They're like, I was sick. I was in the hospital for a month. Nobody knew. Nobody came to visit me. Nobody called. I'm gone. You're saying, now, listen, I have a lot of empathy for that because you can't know everybody who goes to your church and sometimes pastors just miss it.

But you're saying artificial intelligence and technology can help you fill in those gaps?

Kevin Jennings: Absolutely. That the reality is, I don't know if we're going to have a choice as we move forward.

Carey Nieuwhof: This is inevitable.

Kevin Jennings: It's inevitable. I have a lot of passion obviously for pastors. My grandfather was a pastor, I have a place in my heart for them and as I'm listening to even talking out loud, it's a reality that people can cherry pick their pastor. I can attribute my teaching. I get online right now and Steven Furtick, Carey Nieuwhof, Andy Stanley, TD Jakes in my iPod. I can cherry pick preaching. So for every pastor who feels like they're preaching is their unique ability, and it's the one thing they do better than anyone in the whole wide world, I'm not calling you a liar. What I am saying is you've a lot of competition in that regard. I heard someone tell me recently, "Well Kevin we have Bible teaching here? We teach the Bible here."

Kevin Jennings: I'm like, hey, I'm not saying you don't. What I am saying is, if that is the only distinguishing factor that means my needs will always go unmet. You're putting a lot of pressure on the Holy Spirit to tell you what message to preach this week, because you're relying solely on the Holy Spirit to guide you what Kevin needs right now, when I could tell you. I could just raise my hand and say I want this, I need this. You tell me and you go about your business and you can design a unique experience with your marketing, and your websites that truly allow you to meet people at their point of need.

Kevin Jennings: That's why Google's winning. A search engine is someone putting in a need and then someone answering the need with as much precision as possible. That's how we win. I think for every leader, that's why you have to build a personal platform. Because someone wants to trust the person leading it before they trust the organization. It's not about you. But you are the leader, and at some point I'm going to evaluate my ability to trust the organization, not God necessarily, but this organization based on who is at the helm.

Carey Nieuwhof: Isn't that fascinating? You know, because as you're sharing all this, I'm thinking about even I have a couple of Alexas in the house but I'm sure I've got 10% of its capacity activated, maybe 1%. But it's like Alexa, what's traffic like between here and Detroit? Within a second I'm like, it's four hours and 12 minutes with a little bit of buildup in the Toronto area, if you take route x and route y. I'm like, really? How do you know that so fast? The days of like scrolling through all the o's in Google, to find on page number 10 there's the piece. Nobody makes it to page two anymore. It's like if you're not on page one-

Kevin Jennings: I don't make it to link five on page one?

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't either. I'm like I just trust whatever is number one, I'm just going to go there and that's the authority which is not always wise, but it's true. Anything else that's like coming down the pike that we need to be aware of? This is so helpful gosh.

Kevin Jennings: Well I think the key thing with so they call the chat bot stuff like conversational marketing, this thing of like... That's one thing you want to study. But I know I said it, I said it a moment ago dynamic web experiences. The fact that you can scale what someone encounters on the web person to person. I think that's absolutely important to recognize personalization is the future. Mass customization, they talk to call it, right. This idea of customizing at scale is possible. I think you can get a lot of that there. The other part I think for a lot of people just it's very simple. We're just trying to get enough insights to treat different people differently.

Kevin Jennings: No one is surprised when I say that, of course, right yeah. Are you prepared to treat different people differently? If you're not, you have to start the process of doing that. Technology enables that. So whether that's through online content that's covering a variety of topics in-house index through Google for search engines. Then you obviously have converse marketing through chat bots, and then they're calling that personalization through website the dynamic websites. Those are going to be huge for everyone coming up soon. How well you keep that information and store it, in some kind of system, where you get to know and learn your members over time, your customers over time is really key.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I've been thinking about that from time to time. Most people who listen to this podcast right now, you and me, Kevin, we both have Instagram. We have Facebook. We have Twitter. We have Netflix like just name some big ones we're on Amazon. We have Amazon Prime. Okay so there's five big ones. But the reality is, we think we're on the same platform, but we're not. Because my Instagram looks completely different than your Instagram. Your Facebook feed looks totally different than my Facebook feed. Your Netflix if I go sit in your family room and turn on your Netflix, or sit on your tablet and look at your Netflix, it looks totally different than mine. Because the algorithms have moved it into different places and our individual choices have made it completely different.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think we still have in the church space and the business space, this idea that one size fits all when it doesn't. So what would you say, because I get it, you are a church of over a thousand, or a business that's into the seven figures, and you're like, okay, well I'll get that chat bot or I'll do this or I'll do that. Or I'll hire a programmer or we'll create a staffing position. But what would you say for the startup, what would you say for the solopreneur, the small church pastor or the church plant or who's like, dude, you have no idea how small our budget is. Are we just out to lunch on this? How does that happen for smaller organizations?

Kevin Jennings: Well, first good question. The first thing is the tools are getting cheaper. So when I'm talking about Hubspot for H-U-B-S-P-O-T creates a free CRM system, you could put information in because it's not built for Churches well, it's built for businesses. Well, MailChimp an email marketing system that offers automated email sequences. It's free up to 2000 users, 2000 people in your email list. So first of all, I would just check to say, is it really a money thing? Because there's a lot of free tools out there. I want to put that out there first. The second thing I would say is start with empathy. Most Churches, the challenge I see now when it comes to communications, even on a small level, is you think this matters to everyone.

Kevin Jennings: You think the only way to get it out there is spray and pray. You trying to have this hose turn around in a circle just spraying everybody like know about this event. But if you're honest, who is the event created for? Who is going to really come? Who is ministering to, in a very personal way? It's just 15 people in the Church. Well, I mean if you're okay with 15 people attending then that's okay. Personally invite the 15 and move on. What I think the reality I would say is segmentation is what I would say to them. You have to decide in advance what the message you're speaking about, not necessarily from the pulpit, but like the message of that event, the message of that initiative.

Kevin Jennings: Who are you trying to reach within your congregation and outside of it? Target those individuals. So, for example, my wife, when our school wants to, my daughter's preschool wants to reach my wife. Email is secondary to an app that sends a notification straight from the teachers. Their goal is saying we're just trying to find the most accurate and effective way to reach Mrs. Jennings. That's it. Like everything else doesn't matter. So if you are a church who still use a bulletin, I am not anti-bulletin. If your congregation reads bulletins, you keep bulletins. If they do not read bulletins, save the money tomorrow. That's the thing. We're holding on to it because one to ask for it not because actually effective.

Kevin Jennings: Who are you trying to reach? What do they read? What do they check? If that's the case, change to reach them. So you can do less and still be more effective, because you've chosen the two or three approaches that you can actually do. Now you might say, "Kevin, we don't have anyone who knows how to do that. Where do we find them?" I will say there's sites like Fiverr and that's F-I-V-E-R-R. There's Upwork, U-P-W-O-R-K. There are tools where you can find people who can just do that thing for you at an affordable rate so you can get it done. We have no money. Okay now you're talking about is there a volunteer we can find that can be trained to do it? We'll be patient with you.

Kevin Jennings: We'll even pay for the training, and when it's done we'll write a recommendation letter you can add to your résumé. We will help you get this new skill for your job. That's fantastic too. I think the reality resourcefulness will be key, but we have to start with empathy. When you know where you can reach, who you're trying to communicate with you do it differently. If Carey

wants to reach me quickly and I want to reach Carey, we go straight to text. Because Carey knows me and I know Carey, so relationship predicates that ability to empathize.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think you used a really good example with the preschool for your daughter. The last thing Leah, your wife wants to do is like sort through well in seventh grade today, in fifth grade today, in third grade. I want to know about my daughter, would you please not spam me? I want to know about my daughter. One day when she's in kindergarten, we will talk about kindergarten and in first grade we'll do first grade.

Kevin Jennings: It's true. We rarely get a communication that's not relevant to us.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right and if it's an all school thing, like the school will be closed well that is still relevant to preschoolers.

Kevin Jennings: Indeed, yes sir it is.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's so funny because I think you're right. We expect it in every other area of our life, but when it comes to a startup or church or that kind of thing, we're like, no, we'll just broadcast and hope it reaches everybody. You've been thinking a lot. Anything else on marketing? Because I want to shift gears to focus, but I want to make sure that we have exhausted that.

Kevin Jennings: I feel great about that. I'll close with some things about personal branding, but let's, let's jump on, let's pivot.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay well we're doing branding, go ahead on personal branding or you want to leave leave till the end?

Kevin Jennings: I'll talk about it now. I hope you understand that a strategy for as a leader, especially a pastor, for building a personal brand where it does not compete with the church is one, you tell the stories of the people. You let the church tell the stories of all the events and happenings. That's one opportunity. Say how well am I telling the stories of my team? Especially that. Because the church is going to want to highlight that people got baptized, and that's great it really is I mean, it's amazing. Usually you can say, let me look at all these fantastic people who serve here every week through my personal social media accounts.

Kevin Jennings: So that you start to see that they are people who think about you when you're not here. That they are people who work on your behalf to create what you create. That's a branding technique that's going on for a long time. It's the reason why they tell you that your eggs are cage free, grass fed. Because they want you to feel and believe that there was extra benefits and care given to the part you are about to consume that make it superior to others. When you don't tell that story of the late night meeting from the team, the volunteers cutting

out whatever for decorations, you actually make me think it just magically happens. Those stories actually add value and you can tell those stories.

Carey Nieuwhof: You should do that as a person, like as a church leader or have the organization do it?

Kevin Jennings: Well I think it's valuable to do as a pastor in a Church. You can find balance. But I think as a leader, you can do that and just, and you're celebrating all who are doing great work. But we also know what gets rewarded gets repeated. So there's a lot of people now, volunteers who want to do a great job of that. The second thing is, I've noticed with my other podcast, I'm a part of with Launch University, we all get stopped about our own teams listening to the podcast. Why? Because they get to hear what the CEO is thinking. They get to hear what their leader's thinking they get to here...

Kevin Jennings: So when you share your thoughts on social media, your team gets a pulse on your inner thoughts at scale. So now you don't have to wait till staff meeting to say, hey, I read a great book you should all read it. The whole team sees you're reading this book, you're quoting it in social media, you're benefiting from it. Now they get to benefit from what you're learning. Or they also understand where your wave length's at. That's a powerful thing from a leadership perspective as well. Then the last thing that's really big is, you get to have the community evolve with you.

Kevin Jennings: Once again, talked about this earlier with my wife and I did that book reading example. But imagine if Carey shares just a little bit of the things he's reading on social media. Well, it might turn to a sermon six months from now, eight months from now. What he's actually done though, he's actually primed our hearts to hear a message about that. The organization can lag and it's okay if it lags. We as a community, the podcasts, we can hear when Carey is thinking about sleep and thinks about these through his blog and through his podcast. We're not surprised when [inaudible 01:04:14] didn't see it coming. You primed our hearts for that message.

Carey Nieuwhof: It amazes me sharing what I share mostly on Insta stories these days. But you know, my fascination with barbecue, going for a bike ride. People are like, even at our Church, they're like, you were out on the roads this week. That's awesome. Was that you that I passed? That kind of personal connection goes a long way. It's kind of, I always think it's what used to happen at grade school. Where it's like, what'd you have for dinner last night? Macaroni? What did you have for dinner last night?

Kevin Jennings: You've also demonstrated the principles. Because Carey can tell us to be high impact leaders, but we also can work out this morning or yesterday in the snow on a bike, right? So he's showing us there's actually action that has to take place. This is how you create the rhythm. This is what you actually do this, hey, I start my meal on the big green egg in the morning. I leave, go run my activity for

the day. I come back. You're giving us color into the principles. We can say, of course Carey can do that. His church is doing this. He already has this business. It's going like this. Well now it's, I see how it happens.

Carey Nieuwhof: They're taking them behind the scenes.

Kevin Jennings: That allows you actually to learn at a deeper level from what you're doing.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well that's like our mutual friend Jon Acuff is taking us into the writing of a book and this is how I prep for a speech and that kind of stuff, which is just brilliant. Jon does such a great job of that.

Kevin Jennings: I just encourage leaders to think separate of just what the platform means for your influence outside of the Church. Think about what it does for you within the context of your Church, for the people you serve, for the people you lead, and for those who watch online. Especially once again, those who will never get a chance to run into you at a grocery store, who follow what your church is doing to be able to put heart and other things behind what they experience on your ministry online or on a Sunday and say, "Wow, this man or this woman, this is how they try to live that out in their daily life." I think it's a big deal to do that. I just encourage you it has immediate benefits in your leadership, and yes, it eventually will allow you to scale your influence as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: How do you know if you've crossed the line where it's all about you?

Kevin Jennings: Well, I probably said this in the last podcast, I can't remember right now. But first I was given something by a gentleman named Van Beard who I just love. It's called the 60-20-20 rule. If I brought this up before, I apologize.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't recall it. I know Van.

Kevin Jennings: It's called the 60-20-20 rule. It's something he kind of refined based on Gary V's, models of things, infant philosophies. But Van calls it the relational equity model. That means 60% of your posts are about other people, causes, places. 20% are behind the scenes a day in the life who you are personally. Then only 20% of your posts can be about pitching, pushing you to do something you want to do, whether it be read your book, go to the Church, come to an event, and you have that litmus test. But what that means for you is, the more you want to talk about yourself, you have to talk about others at a higher clip. It's a guardrail. So that's one thing as an actual action step. But I'm being very transparent.

Kevin Jennings: The number one challenge I see from people who actually end up turning it all about them, it's everyone who's around them is on the payroll. That's the bigger piece. Social media's a kind of a symptom piece, a kind of a manifestation of what's already happening in the heart. If everyone around you works for you, you're in trouble. Because you're putting yourself in a situation as a leader

where me challenging Carey, means my kids may not eat if he fires me. At some point in my mind I can convince myself, not saying it's always true. I can convince myself that it's a him or me situation. If it's between me checking Carey and losing influence and getting fired, or me taking care of my kids, I'm going to be quiet. I think it's really important for you to have some advisors who aren't on the payroll. They can be your buddies.

Carey Nieuwhof: What do you mean by advisors? You mean like a board or it can mean friends?

Kevin Jennings: It can be a board, it can be friends. That's the thing I think is important you to find. It can be a board and you got a personal advisory board. So Carey has that in place. It can be a couple of key friends you check in with. It could be someone who you actually say to one of your friends, "Hey, here's one thing. Every time I get really on this kick about talking about myself too much, if I go through 20 posts on social media about me, I pay you \$5." It goes into a jar. You just have to make mechanisms and say, I have someone who's helping me police. Someone who's more incentivized to see me be healthy than they are to see me win with my influence.

Kevin Jennings: Because I think, and I think the leaders who I've seen who have healthy support systems, it's much easier to bring that back to a safe place. For those that don't, we're in trouble. The other thing I would say is once again, what can you do within the context of how you share your influence, and grow it that naturally will force you to serve someone else? You might say, what do you mean Kevin? All my ideas are brilliant. They're designed to help everybody. No, no I hear you. What I'm saying is how are you giving your influence away? Carey has me on the podcast right now, you could argue that I'm worthy or not of the opportunity.

Kevin Jennings: But the reality is he spends a significant portion of his influence capital for lack of a better phrase, giving it away by letting other people come on this podcast, promote their books, promote themselves, share their stories, introduce their Church, talk about their ministry experiences. What I'm I doing to give my influence away? God did not give me influence for me. If that's not a part of the rhythm of what you do, and I say, I must sell my special project, the rhythm. Every week I give influence away in this unique, simple way. If you're not doing that, I believe you're personally in trouble. That's something I think a lot about, tell people gauge that.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's so good. That's so good, Kevin. Okay, before we go focus. You've been thinking a lot about focus lately. Tell me what's behind that.

Kevin Jennings: I read a book by Seth Godin 10 years ago called The Dip and I reread it about a month ago at the recommendation of our mutual friend, Mr. Brian Miles. The opening of the whole book he says, "Vince Lombardi told us that winners never quit and quitters never win, and that's complete garbage." I think it's true. Strategic quitters win every day strategic quitters, Carey Nieuwhof I use your example because we all know you so please I'm not trying to pick on you. But I

think you understand one of your best books before Didn't See It Coming, was a book called Parenting Beyond Your Capacity. The market told you we love you were the parenting guy. Keep talking about it. Go Carey, go parenting. You just talk about parenting we will buy it, man. You just go, you just talk about it. You say that's not what I feel I quit. Not stop not [inaudible 01:12:12] I flat out stopped. I'm just out of the game not doing it anymore.

Carey Nieuwhof: That book sold over 100,000 copies. I'm like, yeah, I don't speak on it anymore. It's funny.

Kevin Jennings: That's called strategic quitting. We understand this concept well because we understand the value of pruning a bush and allowing other limbs to get the nutrients it needs to flourish at a higher level. Every branch we cut's not dead. Some of them just are taking energy from the vines and the things we need to grow the fastest and we have to let something go. For me, this has been very big because most of what... I got to where I am in my career by saying yes a lot. A lot of yes, yes, yes.

Kevin Jennings: Maybe we just like that we hustle our way to this moment, right? I was willing to do what it took. I work all night. I work all weekend. I would take on five projects. I would go learn a new skill. Then you have kids or something happens in your life where you recognize your capacity can no longer be stretched by just working longer hours. There's a permanent reduction in your time. The answer now has to be no. But guess who found that out earlier?

Carey Nieuwhof: Who?

Kevin Jennings: Everybody we look up to in society. Beyonce was a full time singer at 16 years old already on television. LeBron James was practicing basketball full time at 12 to be inundated by 18 years old. Find anyone you admire in society, they locked in on their thing as soon as they found it, and they cut everything else off.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, they're not hanging out till 3:00 AM Friday night partying with friends. They're like, I want to be on TV when I'm 16.

Kevin Jennings: Exactly. I'm not saying live no social life. But what I am saying is you're the one who's pushing four initiatives forward at one time. Why don't you just do one? Unfortunately there is a cost, and I think for me in particular, I'm guilty. I've always followed a lot of my interests to develop myself, and learn new things. The reality is I'm the one inviting the distractions, preventing me from having an impact at a higher level.

Carey Nieuwhof: So what are you focusing on right now?

Kevin Jennings: Well, there's a couple of things. I think one, I'm really locked in on being a better husband and a better dad. Once again, I think for leaders who are listening, it's easy to play where the scoreboards clear. Put a point on the board send me

where the score is clear. I'm working really hard on that. I have to really thank our friend Brian Mouse who's mentoring me right now. He's helped me create a way to create a scoreboard out of that. That's been huge for me. I recognize I've not been intentional in that area, I've been drifting towards success, not designing a way to success. I think it's very important, and my question is about the idea of drifting, designing, or driving.

Kevin Jennings: The problem is we're just driven. We're so driven that we're not designing intentionally. So we get to, as you say Carey, we get to a place we don't even want to be by being driven blindly. We're not designing with intentionality, so it's a big deal. So that's one thing. The other thing is, in my business I've had to own where I add value. I love marketing only because I love the opportunity for someone to discover something that makes their life better. If you said, "Kevin, we'll pay you a million dollars to sell cigarettes." I wouldn't do it. But it's not just from this deep sense of integrity. It's also like I only want to sell stuff I believe in. I'm here to help people discover things that make them better. That's one thing.

Carey Nieuwhof: That is you.

Kevin Jennings: I'd own that and also say, and I love what knowledge has done for my life. I like working with authors and speakers because I've been transformed by content. As I said in my last, the last time I was on the podcast, like I was raised by a single mom. We lived in section eight housing for a while. Life was not always perfect for us. The reality was books and experiences and people intersected in my life that gave me a leg up. I want to work with people that are doing something similar for those of this generation. I had to own that. I am not just interested but I'm really good at personal branding.

Kevin Jennings: I am good at helping someone uncover and lock in on what God created them to do. Then helping them scale their influence, to end drive results for an organization to make that sustainable. Sustainability is a big deal for me. I think that I had to own it and say that's who I am. You might say, "Kevin duh, when you were on the podcast last time, you were talking about Tony Robbins and Dave Ramsey, how did you not know that?" I thought I was just a marketer. See, I thought it was about marketing products and what God has helped me-

Kevin Jennings: I'm in the people business. I have to sort of for me it's been, what needs to go? Immediately, what needs to get cut off? I think for all of us, one last thing here, I promise Carey I'll be quiet. This matters for one thing I never knew about before until I read Seth Godin's book, and it's the idea that we have to be the best in the world. You must say, "Kevin whoa, why bring competition into this? This is about mission, not competition." I say I agree with you. But our minds as human beings only have the capacity to remember two to three options. If I asked you all right now to pause and name every shoe brand you can think about. Just everyone. Okay, let's go. Nike, Adidas, Puma. Come on, let's see.

Kevin Jennings: We're going to start to get really short. New Balance okay great keep going. Kevin you don't know enough shoe brands like I do, you stopped at 10. Good for you. I stopped at four. There are thousands. We only remember four to 10 right? What does that mean? That means our ability to be the best at what we do, and carve out our space and be true to who God created us to be in the body of Christ, actually is where we get our impact. Our ability to be true to who we are and be self-aware enough to own our unique space. We can build on that ability. I can be the best thumb in the body of Christ that God has ever created. With that comes impact with that comes a difference. So I think for all of us strategic quitting is required. I mean Steve Jobs put iPods out of business.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, he did. Invented them and then shut them down.

Kevin Jennings: The iPhone, put iPods out of business. He killed his top revenue product on his own. I think for each of us strategic quitting matters, because it frees us up to do what we're really called to do, and do it at the highest level, which that's how we get noticed. So that people can actually benefit from what we have to offer. Not selfish and for our claim, but we can't even get noticed by those we want to serve when we don't lock in. Guys it's no surprise that Carey Nieuwhof got on your radar when he told me and others privately, I'm only talking about leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof: Just to clarify that, because people will be like, well actually I'd never think about it, but that is the book that has sold the most hands down of four I've written. It would be a really smart career move to like, okay, we're all about this and I'm proud of the book. Reggie and I, I think we wrote a really good product. It's helped a lot of people over 100,000 parents. That's great. But I was finding as I was speaking back to where we started, that my kids were getting older. They were younger when I did it, and Reggie is that unique, my coauthor, Reggie Joiner, really unique guy.

Carey Nieuwhof: In that he's older than me, but he lives in the world of family and parenting and kids. When I hang out with Reggie he'll stop and like, oh, how old is she, and what's her name and play with the kid. I'm like, that's great you got a kid. We're just different. My kids are in their 20s now. I was finding a few years ago that the further I got away from writing that book in that moment in time and continued to evolve, that my stories were all eight years old, seven years old. That I wasn't really renewing the content well. I had lots of opportunity. But I just finally a few years ago said to my team, that's it. That was my last parenting event.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm not doing anymore, period. I'm done. Because my content well on leadership just kept filling up, up, up, up, up. But what's really cool, and this is the full circle is I get to be me. I don't have this persona where it's like, gosh, I need to do another parenting post. Well this is just like version 872 of the same thing I've said. No, I'll have new leadership stuff tomorrow. I'm working on my next book, book number five, but it is coming from who I am and who I think I

will be in five years from now. So that's easy. I get to roll out of bed and be me. But that did involve a point in time where I'm like, I don't care what they're paying, I don't care what they're doing, I'm not going to do it anymore.

Kevin Jennings: That's it. So I encourage all of us to say like, what do we need to be strategically quitting? Because there is something. I mean there is something in your life or more importantly for your organization. There is a cost associated with having that person or two people on your team work on that initiative that no one cares about that doesn't support the main focus of the organization. You are actually preventing the main thing from being as good as it can be, and getting it noticed by those it's intended to serve, by siphoning off energy or mental space to things that don't matter.

Kevin Jennings: Once again, as a leader, you're creative. You're probably bringing a thousand ideas to the table out every day. Which means you need checks and balances to even keep you focused. That's all right and there's nothing negative about that, I think it's just owning it and saying that's the path to success. I help my clients through all the time, but obviously right now you can hear my voice. I'm very locked in on doing that for myself as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good Kevin. You know, if I can add one more thing, it would be if you strategically quit the right things, like even that, I'll give you a very recent example. So we just finished a parenting series at our Church. We had talked about this for a year, and there was a little bit of pressure and I won't name names. Its like, "Come on, you should do this. You wrote the book." I'm like, "No I'm not going to do it." I've done three versions of it over the years. I'm just not in a place where I want to do it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Jeff Brody, my successor, delivered it. I watched him do, because there's always like, okay, if I had to do something, it'd be this one message. I watched him do it and he did a better job than I did. Because his stories are fresher. His passion was deeper for that, and he really crushed it. If you're hanging onto something that you should strategically quit, you are robbing other people of the opportunity to get even better than you would have been in that moment.

Kevin Jennings: Oh my gosh, yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you agree with that? I'm precarious now.

Kevin Jennings: Because I think about the body of Christ and I keep saying, if we are a part of a body, when I am in your place, in the body, I'm robbing me of feeling the joy of what it means to do what I do naturally, and I'm robbing you the joy of the pleasure of being in your purpose. So we have to acknowledge that trying to be everything as leaders is robbing our team of feeling purpose in the mission. Getting out of everybody's way to be me. I'd own what God said to me very clearly, and it's revealed to me, and I'm not one to say that a lot, but it's true in

this case, "Kevin, your whole life you thought you weren't good enough, because you felt you had to be the hands and feet.

Kevin Jennings: You thought only hands and feet get things done. But I created you to be a heart, a mind and a mouth do it." I had to own that I wanted to be something I was not. That's been playing itself out over the past year of my life pretty clearly. I just encourage anyone else, like it's okay to quit, like it's okay to quit. Whatever that looks like, you know what it looks like. I hope we're not going to lead to a lot of resignation letters on next week.

Carey Nieuwhof: Everyone's unemployed Kevin holy cow what happened?

Kevin Jennings: A lot of resignation letters going into Churches.

Carey Nieuwhof: Tens of thousands of unemployed leaders great.

Kevin Jennings: They're going to blame some guy named Kevin Jennings for this, but I think it's a reality that you know what it is. So for those who ... Carey I want to offer one more gift to your community.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, please do.

Kevin Jennings: So for those who do know there's time to build their personal brand. They know that you need to invest in your influence online. You need to steward that well. I've created a resource I'm going to give to you it's called a personal brand blueprint, a personal brand blueprint. You just text it directly on your phone. Text the word blueprint to 444999. So 444999 text the word blueprint on your phones. If you are at the gym, you can still get it right now. Obviously you can still go to kevinbjennings.com/carey. I'll have both resources from both podcast episodes on the same landing page. You kind of get all the library resources I'm building for all the people who listen to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast there. So kevinbjennings.com/carey. Or just text the word blueprint to 444999.

Carey Nieuwhof: Kevin, you're the real deal. I love your friendship. I love working with you, and I love how you build into other leaders. It's just cool to see you sort of come into this moment in your own life, where you're getting more focused, you're helping more people and thanks for helping our leaders today. I really appreciate it.

Kevin Jennings: It's a pleasure. I'm a fan of the podcast and it's been cool to play any role in this story. For those who are listening sincerely Carey believes in you, I believe in you and we prayed for this day a long time ago, so it's really cool to see it come to fruition the way it is with everyone who's listening and hopefully benefiting from it in their leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well till next time, Kevin, thanks buddy.

Kevin Jennings: See you buddy.

Carey Nieuwhof: Man, it's so good to have Kevin back on the show. I learn so much from him every time we get together, and I hope you did too. If you want more information you can get everything we talked about including all the links at careyNieuwhof.com/episode 272 where you can even find transcripts and show notes and all that stuff. For those of you who prefer to read or want to supplement or share with your team, thank you so much for sharing this episode with social leaving ratings and reviews. We really appreciate it. We are back real soon with a fresh episode.

Carey Nieuwhof: I know we have a lot of corporate listeners listening, a lot of you who work in the marketplace and you're going to love, well, I think we're all going to love an amazing story next time we get together on the podcast next week. Ron Kitchens is going to be my guest. He grew up very poor, became one of the greatest employers in all of Western Michigan. He has a powerful story about the role that leadership played in his life, and how to sustain economic growth through great people, not in spite of them but through them. Here's an excerpt from that episode.

Ron Kitchens: Our organization's on this journey, we were just named last year by Outside magazine as the best place to work in America. Wall Street Journal named us their top 30 places to work in America. So in lots of those. But it's because everyone is authentic and vulnerable. We all know the bad things about me everybody knew already. I was the only one who wasn't acknowledging them. Once you get past that, the level of freedom to operate is just, it's amazing,

Carey Nieuwhof: Wonderful story with Ron Kitchens. He's somebody who's literally created tens of thousands of jobs, so grounded, so down to earth. Voted one of the best workplaces in America Wall Street Journal. I think you're going to love that episode. Again, subscribers, you get it for free. So just make sure that you subscribe. Do that wherever you get your podcast. In the meantime, three things I'd love for you to be a part of. First of all, if you haven't yet checked out huddle up are trained up, you can go to servehq.church. Make sure you get on the waiting list for huddle up, and you can try and trained up for free for 14 days.

Carey Nieuwhof: Then Andy Stanley is on the Irresistible Tour in Seattle, Phoenix, Kansas City, and Austin. So you can head on over to Irresistibltour.com get in before it's too late. Use the coupon code Carey19 to save a little bit of money there. Then I'll be joining Reggie Joiner, Jon Acuff and others for the Orange Tour. They are in 15 cities I'm going to be at a handful of them. You can go to Orangetour.org to see the entire list and use the coupon code, Carey, C-A-R-E-Y and you can get the best rate there as well. Thank you to our partners for bringing you this show for free. We are so excited.

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Carey Nieuwhof: We got some great guests coming up in the next few months, including, well, guess who's back? Ian Morgan Cron is back on a double podcast episode. I've got the owner of the best bakery in America coming on. Ron Edmondson is back. Sam Collier, and Chris Norton, who's got a major book release telling his life story in just a few weeks. He'll be on Good Morning America that day, and pretty much every media outlet, and gave me a powerful interview about his life. So much more coming up. So excited. Thank you so much guys, and thank you so much for listening. 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.