

Announcer: Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. A podcast all about leadership, change and personal growth. The goal? To help you lead the like never before in your church or in your business. And now your host, Carey Nieuwhof.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well hey everybody, and welcome to episode 283 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Thank you so much for listening guys. We are at 9 million downloads. That's crazy, and approaching our fifth anniversary as well, and we got some fun stuff for you. So hang on, I'll tell you about it next time we get together here on the podcast, but yeah, watch it. There is some fun giveaways to mark five years coming down the pipe for you, as well as a lot of great episodes. Thank you so much for taking the time not just to listen, but to tell other people. I've shared podcasts I care about all the time, and one of the easiest ways to do it is to post it to social, take a screenshot, link to it. You can also text your friends episodes. Did you know that in most podcast apps, particularly Overcast which is what I use, you can actually, if there is a part you really want someone to hear, you can share the episode at the current time. Yeah, all that fun stuff. So thanks for doing that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Thank you for the ratings and reviews as well. I read every single one of them. We are well over a 1,000 now on iTunes and beyond, so just thank you. You guys are the best. We are bringing you a conversation that I think is fascinating on so many different levels. First of all, if you're in the church world, succession is a major issue, secondly, if you're in the business world, succession is a major issue. There is this thing called founder syndrome, and what happens is those of us, aka people like me and probably a lot of you, start things, but then the question is, well what happens when we don't run them anymore? And it's not going particularly well in corporate. Something like 90% of all businesses started by their founder never make it to the second generation, there's no succession plan and the church is not far behind on that. So I was fascinated to get to know Lee Kricher and Jason Howard over the last few years, and what I think you're going to really appreciate about this is not only have they done a leadership transition with Lee handing it off to Jason, but they've done a model change as well. The way Lee lead the church is different than the way Jason is leading the church, and it's just fascinating. I sat down with both of them in Pittsburgh at Amplify Church and had a great conversation with them.

Carey Nieuwhof: Speaking of which, by the way, if you want to know a little bit more, Jason, Lee, myself, Toni, Sam, my wife Toni, Sam Collier and others are going to be speaking at the Future Forward Conference. I'm so excited to be there live October 1st and 2nd, and if you're looking to transition your church to reach the next generation, you don't want to miss it. It is for church leaders and members who are fully committed to engage the next generation. World's changing pretty fast, so Toni and I, as I said, are going to be speaking there, Sam Collier, Lee, and Jason, and we're talking about leadership succession, also world changing women in ministry, digital messaging, community, how do you do that in a

disconnected world, leveraging creativity to elevate impact, kid's ministry, adult ministry, and bring your key leaders because you can plan out your next season of ministry. It's the third of three Future Forward conferences. You don't want to miss it. If you head on over right now to futureforwardchurches.com/theconference you can register. Tickets are just \$79, but if you bring your group, they drop that to \$59 per person if you bring five or more. So go to Future Forward Churches and then /theconference, and you'll find everything there, and we will do a lot of this live, and dig into a lot of details at the Future Forward Conference.

Carey Nieuwhof: Also, the Irresistible Tour is partnering with the Orange Tour, and I'm going to be in three cities this fall. I'm so excited to be there. The Irresistible Tour is Andy Stanley doing an in person one day event to rediscover faith that is irresistible. Now, Andy is going to be in four different cities. September 12th in Seattle, September 19th in Phoenix, October 17th in Kansas City, and you can also find him October 21st in Austin, and I will be at that stop as well. So you can register at irresistibletour.com and use the code Carey19. Carey 19, you get \$20 off the regular price. See, it's kind of fun, when you listen to this podcast we try to get you all the best deals. Then also, you know Pro Media Fire has been a partner of this podcast for a while now, but here's the real question, does it actually work? So we went into the field and talked to one of their users. This is Tim Schmidt, he's the lead pastor of Journey Church in Rochester, New York, and I sat down with Tim and I asked him this simple question. Where have you seen the most traction online since changing your media approach with Pro Media Fire?

Tim Schmidt: I look at like that, my job is to have, is to come up with a message, but what I wasn't good at was realizing how to communicate that message in a contemporary means. So it'd be kind of like having a awesome message and putting on a cassette tape. You wouldn't do that, because no matter how good the message is, the mechanism to communicate it causes it to be lost, and I did not realize how much I didn't know about what's happening in current trends and current technology, and on current culture, that you need people who are on top of that who know how to, the message is yours, but know how to take that message and package it or communicate it in a way that people will actually listen to it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, if that would help you as well, you can get custom graphic design and video from Pro Media Fire, you get 10% off your plans for life if you go to promediafire.com/carey. That's promediafire.com/carey, and well, you can see the same kind of results Tim and many, many other leaders have.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, without further ado, let's jump into my, I find very powerful and at times very emotional and real conversation with Amplify Church's funder, Lee Kricher and the successor and new lead pastor, Jason Howard.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well Lee and Jason, welcome to the podcast. Here we are at Amplify Church with the founding pastor of Amplify, Lee Kricher, and the new lead pastor, Jason Howard. Glad you guys are with us.

Jason Howard: Thanks so much, Carey, it's such an honor to be on here. It's amazing.

Lee Kricher: Definitely honored to be with you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, it's great to have you back, Lee. It's great to have you for the first time, Jason.

Jason Howard: Thanks, man.

Carey Nieuwhof: I got to tell you, one of the reasons I was excited about having this conversation is I think this is one of the conversations we need to have in the church over the next decade. I'm pretty comfortable saying that succession is a crisis.

Jason Howard: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's a crisis in the church, it's a crisis I think in a lot of businesses. We were talking at lunch today about, I don't know where I pulled this figure out of the year, but something like 90% of first generation businesses die with the founder.

Jason Howard: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: We interviewed Marc Serrao for this podcast, owner of Oakmont Bakery. He's got a succession plan in place, but that'd be a classic example of a wildly successful business that just one day slumps, closes its doors, and it's like, "Oh, remember when the Oakmont bakery used to be the thing?" And that's what's happening in the church today, is people in your situation, Jason, are having to wait a long time to take over, and then they don't get a healthy church, they get a thriving dying church where there's conflict or gong show stories from behind the scenes, and you guys are how many weeks now on the other side of succession?

Jason Howard: I think six.

Carey Nieuwhof: Six.

Lee Kricher: Just about six weeks.

Jason Howard: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: So I know this sounds probably a little bit early to leave any long-term conclusions, but I'm three and a half years, almost four years on the other side

of our succession, and I just thought it would be a great opportunity for us to sit down and talk about what led up to that succession, how it went, how it felt, and what you guys are thinking about as we're in this moment right now. So I'd love to start with a thumbnail of both of your backgrounds in ministry. So just quickly. Why don't we start with you, Jason?

Jason Howard: Yeah, sure. So I grew up going to church. My parents always took me there, but I think that when I was in high school I was at youth group because I was forced to be there by my dad. So I was not there by choice, I was there by force. Worship was happening at church, and I sensed the presence of God, and I could not deny that I sensed something that was real, and that was powerful, that was love, and to be honest, I don't really remember any messages that I heard being preached growing up in church or-

Carey Nieuwhof: So disappointing to all of us.

Jason Howard: No, I didn't-

Carey Nieuwhof: And you do now too.

Jason Howard: And I'm a preacher so.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, I know, I know. But I don't remember anything.

Jason Howard: Yeah, exactly, but I will never be able to forget the sense of God's presence, and so I think I was around 15, maybe 16 years old, and I mean, it just captured my heart, and it just stole me. From that moment forward I was all in.

Carey Nieuwhof: You were a worshiper, right? Are you a musician?

Jason Howard: Yeah, I mean, as a kid I did music and was a musician, and so I kind of had this encounter with God during worship, and not long after that my youth pastor said, "Hey, you sing and play instruments." I was like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." He was like, "Why don't you start leading worship like next week." I had no clue what I was doing, and it was terrible, but he put me in charge of the worship team as a 16 year old, and then I knew that that's what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. So ended up going to Bible College at Hillsong. Now, this was before Hillsong kind of had the profile that it has today, but they were-

Carey Nieuwhof: You went to Australia.

Jason Howard: I went to Australia, yeah, but they were really, even back then I realized that they were like really equipping people to lead church, and obviously with what they were doing with worship and creative arts, they were just, they were in territory that no one was in. So it was in the late '90s that I went out there, and not long after being back from Australia I was just serving in a local church. I

came back home, I started serving in a local church. Had really learned at Hillsong that the name of the game is serve and be faithful, and so I was doing that. That's when Lee called me up and had this great endeavor in front of him to revitalize the church that had really gone downhill.

Carey Nieuwhof: And this is in the early 2000s?

Jason Howard: The early 2000s.

Carey Nieuwhof: Mid 2000s?

Jason Howard: Yeah, 2003, he called me, and the church was in really bad shape. He had founded it but left many years earlier, and things had slid downhill and he called me and he said, "Hey, it's possible I might be coming back taking over this church, but it's on life support and we've got to shock it back into life." And I'm like, "Oh my gosh. That sounds like a terrible idea." This is going to be really hard, really, really hard, but he said that his vision was to create a church where people who weren't going to church would find Jesus. I didn't see any examples of that in Pittsburgh, which is where I'm from at the time, not that I knew of, and I thought, the one thing that I want to spend my life doing is introducing people to Jesus. So if we're going to create a place where people who don't know Jesus are going to find Jesus, I'm all in on that. So I bought in and that was in 2003, and Lee put me in a charge of a lot of different things over the years, so I..

Carey Nieuwhof: Where did you start? What was your entry level?

Jason Howard: Youth pastor, which was funny because I went to school for worship leadership and Lee said, "You should never expect to lead worship at this church." Because he was going to be the worship leader, and he had a really specific vision for music and for worship, and so he was going to lead worship, and he said, "But I need someone to lead youth." And I'm thinking I don't preach, I don't know how to lead youth, I know how to sing, but I learned to be faithful and whatever doors your leaders encourage you to go through, I was like, "I'm going to do it out of respect for Lee's leadership in my life." So I started at youth.

Carey Nieuwhof: And now you're running the whole thing.

Jason Howard: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: There you go. All right, Lee, a little bit of a thumbnail. I know you've been on this show before, but just give us the nutshell, because it's very rare that a founder starts something, leaves, and then comes back.

Lee Kricher: Yeah, I came to Christ a similar time in my life as Jason did, and actually founded the church in which we're sitting for this interview.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Lee Kricher: And it started as a home bible study, and served there for about 15 years as the founding pastor. Had a very difficult time at home with my marriage, which God has healed thankfully and we've been married for almost 45 years now, but at the time had to leave the ministry, and at that time I entered into the world of human resources, and particularly leadership development, and then ended up working for two of the great consulting firms in the world that focus on change leadership and executive coaching. So learned a lot about change leadership, learned a lot about succession, and so when in 2003 my wife and I, while we were in Atlanta we were attending Andy Stanley's church, North Point, and we got a call, "Would you consider coming back to this church that you founded?" And while I initially said no, I felt that it was something that God was tapping me on the shoulder to do. So that's when I came back, and I called Jason and said, "Hey, let's go change the world together." And we were able to do that. But clearly I went into it with a keen eye on change leadership and a keen eye on succession.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and that was, so the church had shrunk down to, it was about a 1,000 when you left, is that right?

Lee Kricher: Yeah, so it was right about a 1,000.

Carey Nieuwhof: And you left in 19?

Lee Kricher: 1990.

Carey Nieuwhof: And then you come back 13 years later in 2003, it's down to?

Lee Kricher: Down to about a 150 people.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Lee Kricher: But far more alarming than just the declining attendance was the escalating age. So the average age of the church was well over 50. Almost 20 years older than the average age of the surrounding community we were called to serve. So we had to dramatically start to reach young adults and young people if we were going to be a multigenerational church.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and today when you handed it off, Amplify is how many people?

Lee Kricher: Yeah, we've grown to about 2,000 people and the average age being just about exactly 35, which would be the average age of the community we serve and in around Pittsburgh.

Carey Nieuwhof: And you have two locations, right?

Lee Kricher: Yeah, two locations. Jason led the City Campus, which has been the fastest growing location, and it was a great place for him to kind of prove his medal as a leader.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now, when did you start, because succession is kind of, I think, one of the big issues in the next decade. You said you came back with succession in mind. So with a 150 people, like who wants a church of a 150 people that's in decline and probably closed in a month? But you knew if this was going to be successful, that that was something you'd have to think about. So talk to us about that.

Lee Kricher: Well, I knew that first, I didn't expect the church to stay in the situation it was at.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right, you anticipated growth.

Lee Kricher: I did expect that we were going to make a difference in our city, but I also knew, like I talked to one pastor at one point who had said, "My job is to serve in my church until I die, and then it's God's problem after that."

Carey Nieuwhof: And that was his philosophy of succession.

Lee Kricher: That was his philosophy, and this was a non-denominational church by far.

Carey Nieuwhof: I wish I could say I hadn't heard that before but I've heard that before.

Lee Kricher: And it's for a non-denominational church particularly. I just feel that that's irresponsible. So you're saying I'll serve God in my time and then whatever happens after that, too bad.

Carey Nieuwhof: Doesn't matter.

Lee Kricher: Now, you can't guarantee what will happen after you're gone, but you can sure do like David did for Solomon, he didn't build the temple but he set him up for success in every possible way.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Lee Kricher: So in those early days, first we changed our bylaws because our bylaws called for a congregational vote every time there's a change of pastor, and in our non-denominational church, every time there's a change of pastor, it was a complete earthquake, and those who voted no felt compelled that since God didn't lead them to vote for this person, that person probably shouldn't be there. So many of them left, and so we just changed out bylaws to say it's the senior pastor's responsibility to name at first an emergency successor, and at age 50 that's way not too early to name an emergency successor. I don't think it's too early even at Jason's age.

Carey Nieuwhof: So and emergent successor or emergency successor?

Lee Kricher: Emergency.

Carey Nieuwhof: Emergency. So you're saying as if you had a health problem, or your plane doesn't land, or whatever.

Lee Kricher: Exactly.

Jason Howard: We have to have that at all times now according to our bylaws.

Lee Kricher: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh okay.

Jason Howard: So there's still an emergency successor.

Carey Nieuwhof: So even now that you ... And how old are you, Jason?

Jason Howard: 38.

Carey Nieuwhof: 38. So at 38, you've got an emergency successor.

Jason Howard: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Lee Kricher: And then as time goes on, that person could change, but it's just something that the board completely approves, but at the moment of the change, that person automatically steps in. So my responsibility is to name the successor, but then also prepare that person so that person has the DNA of the church, the heart of the church, the people know them, and at the moment, whether it's planned or unplanned, that person steps right in.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right. Jason, and I'd love your take on this. When did it first occur to you? Was that on hiring that you might be the successor one day or when did that happen?

Jason Howard: No, not at all. I mean, I didn't see myself as a preacher, I did not see myself as a Senior Pastor of course. I mean, I didn't even have context. To me back then the Senior Pastor was some old guy. There wasn't even a context today where you see a lot of younger guys leading churches. So I was not at all interested in that. So it was no long. I think maybe it was two or three years into it that Lee said, "Hey. I'm going to name a successor and the board is going to have to approve it, and I want to name you as my planned successor."

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Jason Howard: And I thought, "I don't want to do that." That was my first reaction. I don't see myself doing that.

Carey Nieuwhof: And you're how old at this point? 30?

Jason Howard: No, I was 20, not even 25 probably.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh wow.

Jason Howard: Yeah. So I'm like, I want to sing, I want to lead worship, I want to do creative stuff, I don't see myself in that role. But again, I had been taught something, and I really want to blame Hillsong for this, but I had been taught there that we are servants, and we are here to faithfully serve, and so I was in a crisis because here is my leader, who I'm called to serve, who is asking me to step into something that I'm not comfortable stepping into, and I've got a crisis, and I'm going to listen to what I want to do or am I going to listen to the voice of I'm going to faithfully serve in whatever capacity I'm asked. Honestly, we had this conversation and finally, and I don't know, a few months later, Lee is like, "Listen. I got a board meeting. I'm going to propose you as this successor. I'd sure like to know whether or not you're in line with this."

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Jason Howard: And I said, "Well yeah, you can propose me as the successor to the board." Which I mean, there wasn't really a question that the board would approve it, but I was like, "Yeah, you can, but the reason why I'm saying yes is because I believe that I'm here first to serve."

Carey Nieuwhof: Lee, what did you see in Jason?

Lee Kricher: Well, first I need to correct something Jason said a little earlier, that I didn't let him sing. He was a worship leader.

Jason Howard: Oh yeah, I was singing.

Lee Kricher: Every week, but I was-

Jason Howard: I was singing, yeah.

Lee Kricher: I called him the assistant worship director. I felt like I needed to make sure we had a worship service that was an elevating experience for people who were Christ followers, but also was a very safe experience, or at least a wondrous experience for people who weren't Christ followers. So I wanted to make sure to kind of create a mode of worship here that was unlike what we were used to.

But he was singing pretty regularly. So when he finally got the title of worship director, then I said, "Okay, it's time for you to speak."

Jason Howard: Yeah.

Lee Kricher: And he said, "I'm not going to speak." And I said, "Well, here is your first date that you're going to have a weekend message." And so I just saw in him that God had put leadership strengths in him, and leadership gifts in him that needed to be pulled out and encouraged, and I am a big believer in raising up the next generation and tapping people on the shoulder, even before they seem to be ready and giving them opportunities to grow, and that's one reason our church, that the average age came down, because we gave a lot of young leaders opportunities to do things that they didn't see themselves doing.

Carey Nieuwhof: And you write about that in your book For The Next Generation.

Lee Kricher: Yeah, for the next generation.

Carey Nieuwhof: Where you talk about dropping the age of the people on the platform, and putting people in before they're ready. So did you in your mind have like a 15 year development process or how did that work?

Lee Kricher: I probably had a range of time, because I felt like ... I think we all are on assignment from God to some degree, and I felt like I had this assignment from God to turn the truth around and hand it off to the next generation.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Lee Kricher: But I didn't have a sense of what that timing would be, and so I started back at age 50, and I probably was thinking about age, somewhere between 63 and 67, somewhere around there, but 67 was where I landed on, and that's kind of a part of our story why I'm about to turn 65 and Jason is already Senior Pastor.

Carey Nieuwhof: So you went a little early, you were a little early. Yeah. You two, I think what's really interesting to me is succession really is happening on two different tiers. So one is leader to leader, in other words, the next generation has to take over in the senior pastor role, senior leader role, and again, this is an issue in business, but it's also a model, and in many ways Lee, the church you started in 1976.

Lee Kricher: Summer of '76 was the first bible study, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: So in 1976 was a different model than when you came back in 2003, and you transitioned to more of an attractional church in the North Point model, but that's not your style really.

Lee Kricher: No, not really.

Carey Nieuwhof: So you have been over the last few years, I think even transitioning the model of church and the approach to church. Do you want to talk about the difference in styles? Because this, it's almost, I would think of it as a double succession. It's renewal of the model or a changeover in the model, and a changeover in the leader, which is really difficult to negotiate at the same time.

Jason Howard: Yeah, I mean, I think. So one of the things that Lee did, obviously we said, "All right, we're going to do this succession." We solidified it, the board approved it, and it was an ambiguous sort of timeline, but one of the things that Lee did as the years went on is he started really releasing me to make a lot more decisions, and he gave me a lot more authority, and while it wasn't until six weeks ago that we actually did the formal title change, in the ramp up he, and this is incredibly gracious on his hand, but gave me an incredible amount of influence and authority, and that kept growing year, after year, after year. The truth is that, I guess for me personally, I have a hard time with the concept of model in general.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay.

Jason Howard: I think that model basically says okay, here's this machine. If you build it this way you'll get this result, and there's a lot of good things to learn from that, and there are systems that are effective and we should always be open to learning from that, but I think that for me, it was really hard for me to say, okay, I'm going to take a model and I'm just going to implement a model, because I felt like there was a specific grace on my life and on the people's lives who were on this journey with me, that we were called and gifted in grace to do certain things because God had given us the ability to do those things, and then it was important for us to play to those strengths. I also think that sometimes, if somebody comes to church and it feels like oh, they're doing it this way because they're supposed to do it this way. It can reek of inauthenticity. Oh well, I'm preaching this way because Andy preaches this way, or doing this system because someone else told me to do this system, and I think that that's not a winning strategy to reach the next generation.

Jason Howard: I think that what is the winning strategy is to say all right, I'm going to lean into the things that God's called me to do. I'm going to be who God's called me to be and we're going to be who God's called us to be, and at the heart of it all, we're going to care about people meeting Jesus.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Jason Howard: And at the heart of it all, we're going to make sure that we're loving people well, and we're connecting people with Jesus well, and we're going to do that the best way that we have the ability to do it. So I guess it was a little bit of a different thinking, and maybe that's a generational change, right? Maybe that's

a millennial thing, I don't really know, but I think that Lee institutes some really great systems in 2003 that really helped us to turn this ship around, but I think that if we were going to stay relevant to reaching the next generations to come, we had to not be tied to the model. We had to think hey, what's it going to take for us to be great at what we do, and introduce as many people as we possibly can to Jesus, and how are we going to create an environment where people can come and meet Jesus in? So everything is always up for negotiation and for consideration.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and I appreciate what you're saying about the model, but I think what I'm driving at is your styles are very different.

Jason Howard: Yeah, for sure.

Carey Nieuwhof: The way that you approach church is not like oh yeah, I'm just running the same play that you are.

Jason Howard: Yeah. I think that that's kind of to the point, is that Lee is and has been graced to do things a very specific way. God has given him personality, and talent, and giftings, and a way to communicate, and a way to lead, and I've been graced differently. I've been given a different personality with a different way of communicating, a different way of seeing things, and a different way of interacting with people, and the greatest thing that we could do is make sure that Lee was free to do what he was called to do and make sure that Jason was free to do what he was called to do.

Carey Nieuwhof: But what's fascinating to me in this, and this is one of the reasons I was really excited to have the conversation, is normally what would happen is that the leadership change would happen, and then the model, style, approach, would happen after. In other words, this is the way Lee did it, Jason is the new leader, so worship is going to get ... I mean, I remember one meeting we had here, because we've known each other, and Lee was leading here at the Pittsburgh East location, you were leading the-

Carey Nieuwhof: City church Downtown, and I remember one of the conversations we had in the greenroom, if I can say this.

Jason Howard: Yeah, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: But is no jumping. I mean, you can have a lot of things at Pittsburgh East, but no worship leader is allowed to jump on stage, and that just refers to the style of music that you guys had down in the City Campus, but it was a real, it was a style clash, not clash, but just it was different. One of these things is not like the other, and that was happening for how many years before the leadership transition happened?

Jason Howard: Probably five.

Lee Kricher: Yeah, and we had a couple turning points. One was when Jason, I turned him loose, or he was turned loose to do the City Campus, but the assignment was do it exactly like the Pittsburgh East campus.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right, so that was your initial plan.

Lee Kricher: Yeah, that was my initial plan, that he should not just adopt the leadership that I was gracing him with, but he should also adopt my style, of course.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, of course.

Lee Kricher: I'm an awesome leader.

Carey Nieuwhof: You have the best style ever, right?

Lee Kricher: And I'm a conversational Andy Stanley preacher, or a teacher, and he is more of a Louie Giglio, Judah Smith type preacher something, however you would think about. A couple sticking points we had is I said, "Nobody will walk into any of our campuses and see people jumping, and I don't want any talk back." Those were our two things.

Carey Nieuwhof: All right. So no shout-outs-

Jason Howard: No amens.

Carey Nieuwhof: From the front row, no amens, no like, yeah.

Lee Kricher: No talk backs. If someone says, "Amen." You tap them on the shoulder. Part of that's-

Carey Nieuwhof: Stand there with your hands in the pockets please.

Lee Kricher: Part of that's me, I could pass out \$20 bills and you wouldn't hear an amen in a service, because it's just not, I don't evoke it for whatever reason, and Jason does by just reading a passage. But at any rate, at that point I had to say, "Okay, is he?" It's kind of like Saul saying to David, "Here's the armor you're supposed to wear." And I said, "Am I going to demand that he take on my style or is it possible that God has raised up a leader for the future of our church who has a different style than me, even though he has the same heart, the same passion for our vision, the same desire to reach people far from god." And I turned him loose. I said, "Okay. In the City Campus, do what you believe God has called you to do." And that campus began to grow pretty dramatically, and that really made me pause and say good. Okay, well when this transition to him as Senior Pastor across the whole church takes place.

Lee Kricher: Then we're talking about a leadership style change, and my philosophy, and we can talk about our tense moments when we decided what timing it would be, but once we decided on the time, that last year and a half to two years before the handoff, I just said, "Jason, let's talk about everything you believe the church should be and let me initiate the changes with my trust level in the organization so you don't have to come in and start from scratch."

Carey Nieuwhof: How did you get to that place? I mean, what's interesting to me, Lee, is I'm not sure every leader in your shoes would have given Jason the amount of latitude that you gave him. It would be like, "No. This is the mission, this is the strategy, these are the values, you run the playbook, and if you want to change it after I'm gone, that's great." How did you develop, like how did you come to that place? Because that's an intellectual journey, I'm sure it's a spiritual journey, but it's also an emotional journey. We just kind of let go and go, "I'm not going to control this guy."

Lee Kricher: Well, I think, I've talked to friends who named a successor and they had an assessment center with multiple people who were a part of it, and they kind of chose between the person who rose among the others. In this case, I just had this conviction that Jason was the guy. So then it didn't start to say, "If Jason is the guy he's going to do X, Y, and Z." It was more a question of since Jason is the guy, what do we need to do to get him and the congregation ready for this amazing future, and it's going to look different than it would under me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Jason, did you ever worry that you were being disloyal?

Jason Howard: Yeah, a lot, and I think that there were a few times throughout the journey where I had a real, real, real crisis because I felt strongly that I need to make a shift or make a change, and I was very concerned about how willing Lee would be to go along with that. I really wrestled, like I am here to serve, I'm not here to demand my right or demand my way. I'm here to be faithful, I'm here to honor, and so how do I have these conversations where I feel like Lee, we need to be doing X, Y, and Z. How do I have that conversation and not be disloyal? But I think that for me, I really had to start to have some faith that if God had graced me to lead this church, that he would have given me the insight to lead it well.

Jason Howard: While we were in this season of Lee is still the Senior Pastor, he's raising me up, while we're in this season, I can't shy away from the things that I believe are right, and I have to embrace the fact that god's called me to do this. And the reality is that Lee is going to see things a certain way because of the generation that he's from, and the history that he's from, and I'm going to see things differently because I'm a different generation, and actually I think one of the best things that we can do is let the generations come together and hash some of this stuff out. So for me to be able to have a conversation with Lee and to say, "Lee, you can't tie our hands behind our back when it comes to worship." I can't put a rule on these worship leaders to say your feet must not leave the ground.

We can't have that rule, right? We're just going to inhibit the whole thing, and to have that conversation sometimes is really hard.

Jason Howard: I was really scared to have those conversations. Sometimes Lee wasn't super thrilled that I initiated these conversations, but I think at the end of the day, the thing that kept everything working was that Lee has had an incredible amount of respect for me, and I pray that over the years that I've shown that I had that respect back to him. So while we might have disagreements about whether or not we're jumping, about whether or not we're saying amen, or about whether or not we're, you know, whatever. While we might have some disagreements about that, the thing that reigns supreme is that we're going to respect each other and love each other through the process, and that's why we were always able to come to terms with how we were going to make decisions and how we were going to move forward.

Jason Howard: The other thing that I'd just like to add to that though is that while me and Lee had some disagreements behind the scenes about how to do things, and what decisions to make, we made a decision a long time ago, I mean, probably right after he named me as the successor, we made a decision a long time ago that we would always present a united front to the staff, to any member of Amplify Church, to everyone. We would always present a united front, and if there was issues that he and I were working out, people did not know.

Carey Nieuwhof: How did you have those conversations? How did you and, you realized that you were going in a more charismatic expression with more exuberant worship, preaching over teaching, that whole sort of generational shift that seems to be happening more widely? Yeah, I mean, one easy route would've been just to do it and hope nobody noticed, and you didn't get fired, right? But you were having these-

Jason Howard: That's disloyal.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that is another form of disloyalty. So how did you have those? Did you seek permission, did you seek forgiveness? What did that look like?

Lee Kricher: I think we had a pretty regular schedule of getting together, and especially if there was an issue that I had with Jason or he had with me, we made it a habit to not sit on it for a week or two, but we would get together, and we had what I would call intense fellowship. Often at Oakmont Bakery.

Carey Nieuwhof: At Oakmont Bakery.

Lee Kricher: Over lunch, and we would talk through things. I always had in mind, Jason is somebody who God is raising up as a key leader, so I have to be listening here. We had one particular time, it was a Christmas service where I went to the Christmas service at the City Campus, and we were going to do the same service at the Pittsburgh East campus, and I gave feedback to Jason about here's all the

things that need to change, and it was, to me it was just putting a list together. To Jason it was something that he took pretty personally, and it was kind of her perhaps questioning his leadership, and it really was not intended that way, but it was intense enough that it was at that time that I said, "Okay, we're going to get a couple coaches in here." And we got Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird who William Vanderbloemen.

Carey Nieuwhof: So William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird.

Lee Kricher: And Warren Bird. Between them they had written, together they had written the book Next about succession, and I said, "Let's get two of the great thinkers about this and really work through what this transition is supposed to look like or could look like." And I think that was the spark for it.

Jason Howard: Yeah, I mean. For Lee to say, "Here are the things I didn't like about the Christmas service." Obviously he always had the right to do that. I guess for me it felt like an indictment on where I was taking the church.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Jason Howard: And it felt like you don't really like where I'm going, and I think that that tension is going to exist, because he's not going to see things from the same perspective that I'm going to, but that's why you have to do generational transition. But yeah, it was also sort of personal because I felt like oh my gosh, does that mean he doesn't believe in me? Because it seems like he doesn't believe in where I'm taking things, and if he doesn't really believe in where I see things going over the next few years, probably not a good idea to spend the next couple of years trying to do this.

Carey Nieuwhof: Give you the keys.

Jason Howard: Yeah, exactly. But again, I think that because there was always mutual respect for each other, we were able to work through some of that stuff, and yeah, bringing in some people to help was good, and it provoked some conversations that were necessary.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, so you reached out to William and to Warren. How did having a third party help?

Lee Kricher: Well, Tim Stevens is who we started with who is one of the coaches from Vanderbloemen, and he came in, he's gone through a lot of transitions and had some good insights. He interviewed our board of directors, he interviewed our staff, he visited both of our campuses, he spent time with my wife Linda and I, with Jason and his wife AJ, and he ended up, in dialogue and with a report that said, "You guys are in good shape as a church to be able to change. You've learned to change, and Jason is ready as a leader, and kind of the bottom line of

his report is you may want to consider moving up your succession plan, because if you want to you can, you could do it."

Carey Nieuwhof: Right. So you had had, when did this report come in? Couple years before you.

Lee Kricher: It had been a couple years ago.

Jason Howard: Two and a half years ago.

Carey Nieuwhof: So rather than four or five years down the road, they were like two or three years down the road.

Lee Kricher: Yeah, so we would've said the spring of 2021 is what I had in mind, compared to the spring of 2019, and so that was our biggest ... We had a month of conflict, and I call it the dinner.

Jason Howard: The dinner.

Lee Kricher: My wife and I took out Jason and AJ for dinner, and at that dinner I wanted to understand why his response to the Vanderbloemen report, which said you could move it up if you wanted to, why his response wasn't, "We shouldn't move this up. I need you to stay in your role, Pastor Lee." Instead, he said, "Sounds good to me." And I needed to know, what do you want? More money, more power, more influence, more what? And really he was just ready to spread this wings, but I wasn't ready to set a date at that time. So we had a pretty intense time. I don't know if Jason will ever go back to that particular restaurant.

Jason Howard: Probably not. It was pretty ugly.

Carey Nieuwhof: What happened?

Jason Howard: Well, I think-

Carey Nieuwhof: To the extent that you can share.

Jason Howard: So I think one of the things that happened is when we originally said the succession, like Lee said, "Okay, you're going to take over." We didn't set a very clear timeline.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, okay.

Jason Howard: So he was saying, "Oh, probably around 10 years." Back then, and so when we had Vanderbloemen come in, it was like year 11, and I felt like I can't push Lee on the timeline, I can't be like, "We need to do, you need to tell me." Because I

felt like I don't want to be the reason why Lee steps out of ministry because he's supposed to step out.

Carey Nieuwhof: You didn't want to push him out.

Jason Howard: I didn't feel like it was my right to do that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Jason Howard: So I was scared to have that conversation, and so but yet on the inside, I felt a little frustrated because I felt like the church is clearly going through transition, because I've gotten a lot more authority, so things are looking a certain way under Jason's leadership. It's very obvious to the average person who comes to Amplify that there's sort of Jason's way of doing things and then Lee's way of doing things. There wasn't ugliness about that, but there was-

Carey Nieuwhof: But it was different, the two-

Jason Howard: Yeah, the two campuses were two different churches.

Carey Nieuwhof: It was like two different churches. Yeah.

Jason Howard: And there was this ambiguity, and I feel like this isn't good for the organization, and at the same time, I felt like this isn't going to be good for our ability to reach people because we don't have a very clear sense of identity around who are we, and so Vanderbloemen came in, and I'm like, "I'm not going to talk about the timeline." And then I'm like, "Well, let's just see what the consultants say." So the consultants come back and they basically say there are two main reasons why successions fail, and I think this was really helpful and insightful, and I think they're totally right about it. There are two main reasons. First, the young guy is not going to stick around because he's angsty, he feels like he's got a call, he feels like he's got anointing on his life, he wants to go do it, and we've seen that countless times where the younger leaders don't stay in the churches, they go plant another church.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Jason Howard: Right? And the second reason is because the older guy doesn't want to let go, and those are the reasons why it doesn't work, and it's like yeah. I mean, those are the issues. Those are the main problems. So they come back with this report, they basically say.

Carey Nieuwhof: The older guy you mean the anointed Senior Pastor.

Jason Howard: The anointed senior, yes, right.

Jason Howard: The anointed one. The crown wearer.

Lee Kricher: Exactly.

Jason Howard: Yeah. So they come back and basically they say, "These are the two main issues that would cause this to fail, and you're still talking four more years." I was surprised to learn through this process that Lee was thinking it was still going to be four years. So I found that out when we had the consultants here. Like oh, he still wants four more years, I didn't realize that. So then after the report came out, I said, "Lee, I think we need to talk about moving the date up." He didn't react super well to that.

Carey Nieuwhof: What did that feel like when you heard that?

Lee Kricher: I kind of felt like it went from me being a 100% in charge of the process to Jason wanting to be a part of the process, as opposed to just receiving the handoff at the appropriate time.

Carey Nieuwhof: You know what? Was it that you would just warn it, like you were able to call the shot and then it shifted to, well maybe I can't call the shot.

Lee Kricher: Well, it wasn't so much maybe I can't, because even our coach had said, "Jason is super loyal. He'll wait as long as you need to." From at least everything he could tell, and I really felt that that was the case. It did just get me to be thinking, you know what? And then I think one good thing about the outcome was the question was, how excited are you about the next season of your life in ministry? Because that's very often where a succession fails. That the Senior Pastor feels like they're losing something, and they feel like I'm not excited about what's next. I'm going to hold on as long as I possibly can.

Carey Nieuwhof: Best days are behind me, not ahead of me, so what am I stepping into?

Lee Kricher: So our season of tension was really about a month long, and then we wrestled through a very clear and detailed timeline, and to be truthful, after that happened almost two years ago, I just was a total piece through this entire timeline.

Jason Howard: And I was too.

Lee Kricher: And Jason was too, and I said during that time, just let's see what you step into, but also this is what God is calling me to step into, and that's the Future Forward Churches, which became a calling on my life to say hey, I'm getting all these churches calling and saying, "You have one foot in the grave as a church." How do we reach to the next generation and engage them more effectively? So we've had two conferences, we'll have our third this fall. So I'm stepping into something that Jason has been completely supportive of, while I've been

completely supportive of him to continue to build this amazing church which is a key part of my legacy.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'd love to before we move there to go back into that month, because I think there's an awful lot in a month, and for you guys that was 30 days-ish, but I think for a lot of churches that's felt like the last five years or the next decade, where there is all this ambiguity, and as somebody who's gone through it, I think I have a little bit of appreciation, Lee, for maybe some of the emotions that were going. It's a really tough decision to make. I went at 50 out of the lead role of the church that I started, and I remember, there was just so much uncertainty, and I really felt like it was, there was God definitely at the heart of it and at the mix, and I don't look back for a second on that decision as mistake, but you're going from that weird place where you do really call all the shots to the points where at a certain point this is out of your hands and you're not the leader anymore, and what if, and what if, and what about me. So can you tell us a little bit more about what you in particular were feeling or thinking during that window?

Lee Kricher: Well at the time I was about 63 and I thought I was very young, 63, and now I'm about to turn 65 and I'm a very young 65, so I thought. I have so much left in the tank, and so much more to give. So why would I let go? But I think that was a hard thing, and then also to say, "Okay, Jason, I need specifics. Why is this so important to you to do it at age 38 instead of age 40? What's this driving passion?" And at some point I think the turning point for me was saying, I don't need to have a specific answer to that because Jason wasn't giving me an answer to that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Lee Kricher: It wasn't about money, it wasn't about power, it was about what I felt like when I started this church, and what I felt like when I came back to revitalize it. God was saying, he used that word, spread your wings and go do something amazing, and that, when I understood that Jason had that same feeling right now, it got me over the emotional part of what are you thinking about, you know?

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Lee Kricher: And it got me to the place to say, okay, what's God really calling me to do next? I'd spend the next years, couple years getting Jason completely ready, and then I'll be ready for my next step, and I just had a lot of prayer that went into it, but it's funny, I just came to a place of peace.

Carey Nieuwhof: Jason, I'd love to unpack what you were thinking or feeling, because I've talked to a lot of young leaders too, it's not easy being in your seat, waiting, watching to see what Lee is going to do. Your future is kind of hanging in the balance. So what are you feeling in that moment?

Jason Howard: Yeah, I mean, I think that for me waiting was something that I had decided that I was going to do many years early. I mean, we are sort of 11 years into it at this point, and I had made a decision many years earlier that while I might personally want to lead a church, the best thing that I, because I eventually got there, like not at first, but eventually got to the place where I was like yeah, god's called me to do this, right? So I had made a decision somewhere in there that it was going to be better for the church as a whole if we stayed together in this. In other words, if I'm called to lead a church, I could go off and decide to go start a church, right? I could go do that, but it would be better for the kingdom overall if I stay with Lee over this journey, because then the church will be able to grow from strength to strength. So when we got to this place of oh my gosh, it's four more years, I don't know if I can hang on, I think that I really had to wrestle through why do I feel like it has to be sooner than that, and at the same time, I'm like, we could do it right now. I'm ready to go right now, you know?

Jason Howard: So even waiting two more years was still sort of like in a sense a compromise. It was us coming to an agreement on that. But I felt like it was really hard for me to understand why I felt like we couldn't wait that long, but at the same time, I do believe that it came down to the sense of there's a bit of ambiguity in the church, there's a bit of a lack of momentum because we clearly, you have empowered me with so much leadership that I've made a lot of decisions that have started to really morph the church in a different direction, and I felt like we were kind of in this gray zone, and I just felt, I thought it's not great for the church to stay in this gray zone for that long. At the same time, I feel like there are mountains that need to be conquered, and there's new territory that we need to take, and there are new campuses that we need to start, and it's not in Lee's heart to do that, it's in my heart to do that, but the reason why it's in my heart to do that it's because God graced me for the next season. So I'm like, we got to get on with it. There are too many people who don't know Jesus. We got to get on with it.

Carey Nieuwhof: I imagine that the sense of time, I'm just listening to you guys, if you were to go into your brain, Jason, and your brain, Lee, in that window where nothing was certain. Am I going to go on four years, two years? Everything probably felt amplified, probably, pardon the pun. Sorry. Didn't mean that. But Lee, to you it probably felt like this is going to fly by. I'm going to be out of here before I blink, and to you two years might have felt like 20, you know?

Lee Kricher: Four years definitely would've felt like 20.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Jason Howard: Well and I guess I wasn't even counting it four years, I was more counting it 15 years.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, yeah.

Jason Howard: It's like you're asking me to serve for 15 years, which is a really, really long time. I have served for 11. It's like, I've got to live my life. I've got to do what I'm called to do. That's kind of how I felt.

Carey Nieuwhof: And there's a lot of next gen leaders who are in that zone right now.

Jason Howard: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: That feel like they've been waiting forever, and there are some church planners who are like, "Yeah, I was going to be the successor but I wasn't going to stick around forever." So that's interesting.

Lee Kricher: Yeah, and I think for the senior leaders who are thinking about it right now, I mean, I just heard it the other day about a 75 year old who the board approached him about a successor, and he said, "No, I don't want to even talk about it." And they.

Carey Nieuwhof: At 75.

Lee Kricher: And the board let him go, and then he went down the street and started a new church and took half the people away, and to have that kind of ending. We had, we were talking a little earlier Jason and the staff at a night of gratitude for me and my wife after our years of ministry, and how many pastors ever get to that? How many pastors wish they would've left two years earlier or a year earlier and avoided some kind of implosion, or to the place where they were asked to leave. So to me, and especially being a big believer in next generation leadership, I got to the place of accelerating the timetable from what I'd initially thought, and I'm really glad we did.

Carey Nieuwhof: Not trying to pick at a scab, but to the extent you can talk about that dinner, what happened at that dinner? Because it is, right? You're sitting in that moment, whether it's in a dinner, in a office, wherever it happens to be, where you're like okay, I got to say some things here and it was, well, is it going to be four years of two years, because that is the awkward conversation, boards, senior leadership teams, staff, don't want to have.

Jason Howard: Well, it wasn't even two years at that point.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay, sure.

Jason Howard: It was is it going to be four years?

Carey Nieuwhof: Right. Is it going to be four years?

Jason Howard: Is it going to be four ... Because I'm saying that it can't be.

Lee Kricher: And it was kind of like a year and a half or three and a half at that point, but.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, but it's like, is it going to be longer or shorter?

Jason Howard: And the dinner was probably the third, like Lee and I had had the conversation privately, and a couple times I think already, and it didn't go so well. The one conversation the vice president of our board was in the conversation as well, so it was the three of us. Then it was like all right, well let's just go to dinner, we'll hammer this thing out.

Carey Nieuwhof: Were your spouses there?

Jason Howard: Yeah, it was the four of us.

Lee Kricher: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh wow.

Jason Howard: In a pretty nice restaurant.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Lee Kricher: Yeah. And so yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay.

Jason Howard: I think-

Carey Nieuwhof: No [crosstalk 00:54:22].

Lee Kricher: That was emotional. I obviously, I was more emotional than I typically am, and of course our poor wives are there saying, "What is this about?"

Carey Nieuwhof: They're watching the grenade go off, right?

Lee Kricher: Yes.

Jason Howard: And I think-

Lee Kricher: Jason is under fire. I'm saying, "Well then why? Is it this? Is it this? Is it this?" And he was just being either respectfully quiet or something else.

Jason Howard: Lee was really, really angry because I think he felt maybe I was ... I can't speak for how he felt. I know he was really angry, and I-

Lee Kricher: I had feelings of anger. I wouldn't say I was angry.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's a good distinction there Lee.

Jason Howard: Not sure of the difference, on the receiving end there's no difference. But I think that for me it was really hard, how do I articulate what I'm feeling and how do I articulate what I'm feeling in a way that's not somehow dishonoring or disloyal, because maybe this whole thing is dishonoring. I don't even know, and I don't want to set that precedent for my ministry, that it started out of a place of dishonor, you know what I mean?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Jason Howard: So I think that I didn't really know what to say. I didn't really know how to articulate what I was feeling. Lee was clearly angry, he was clearly upset, and I think that it was not a productive conversation because I didn't really know how to say what I needed to say, and I think that Lee definitely was jumping to some conclusions about what my motivation was behind not wanting the timeline to be so long, and so it just wasn't productive.

Lee Kricher: I would say for the young guy to be able to say, to try to answer that as much as he can, because in the absence of an explanation, we tend to put in one, and Andy Stanley always says, "Choose trust over suspicion." And that-

Carey Nieuwhof: But it gets hard sometimes.

Lee Kricher: That particular night I was choosing suspicion over trust, and of course, actually I got over it pretty quickly because that was a catalyst to say okay, when I typically in my life, when I react that strongly is because God is speaking to me, and I need to really listen. So pretty quickly we got through that, and then put a timetable together and made sure to get our wives out for a nice peaceful wonderful dinner.

Carey Nieuwhof: We want to be friends again.

Jason Howard: We had many great dinners.

Lee Kricher: We've had many great since then.

Jason Howard: Many great.

Lee Kricher: Without drama.

Jason Howard: Yeah, exactly, exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: Would you say you had mixed emotions around that time?

Lee Kricher: That would be a understatement of the year.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, okay. Fair enough. But I want to get into the head of those of us who started things, because there's a lot of founders listening right now.

Lee Kricher: Yeah, well this-

Carey Nieuwhof: And I think back on my own emotions, extremely mixed, extremely mixed.

Lee Kricher: These are, this is a church that I gave my life for, I rearranged my life to come back to, get it to the place where it is, and so don't push. Yeah, that was kind of my feeling. You don't have the right to push, but really it wasn't pushing, it was just saying, we've always talked to each other about how we feel and I'm telling you, and it was one of those moments where I said, "Actually, I really don't want to know how you feel at this point." So I think there was this feeling of whether it'd be loss of power, loss of authority, a feeling of being disrespected, you can label it a whole lot of things, but it was an emotion that I had to work through because it wasn't healthy, and I've seen people take that emotion and say, "Get out of here." And then all of a sudden they're left standing with nobody to hand off to, or they swallow it up and they end up with a bitter ending. So it's one of those things that when you go through issues, there are times in life you just have to hear from God and get his peace about something, and I did, and I had to.

Jason Howard: And I think one of the most, I think maybe it might have been the next morning, he called, and I was very scared when I saw his number pop up.

Carey Nieuwhof: Come up on the phone.

Jason Howard: Yeah, I was like, "Oh my god."

Jason Howard: I was like, "I don't think I want to answer this." But like, I can't not. Maybe the next day, maybe a few days later, I don't remember, but at some point he basically said to me that he made the decision to say maybe God is saying something through Jason, and I think that was a big turning point.

Lee Kricher: And my wife Linda on the way home that night said, "You owe Jason an apology, but you especially owe his wife AJ an apology to make her sit there for that." And I think you got texted apologies that night.

Jason Howard: Oh I think we, yeah, I think we got texted apologies that night, yes. But as far as moving on the issue, I think that that was a big deal, and so I think that it's very, very difficult to think is God saying something to me from Lee, and for Lee to say, "Is God maybe saying something to me through Jason." It's really hard, but I think that if you don't have that willingness to work with each other, probably succession is not going to work out.

Lee Kricher: And I think if you have a leader who isn't ready after this amount of time to step in and can honestly tell you, maybe that's not supposed to be your successor anyway. A healthy strong congregation needs a healthy strong leader.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm so glad you guys have talked about that moment, because I think that is one of the issues, and it takes me back, like I've got sort of a two face succession thing. One was stepping out of the lead role, which was a summer prayer for me in 2015, and as much as my emotions were mixed, it was like yeah, this is the right thing to do, and I don't want to say it wasn't that hard, but it wasn't that hard. But what's interesting is I'm still carrying the weight of the teaching load, and so more recent, and I said I was going to do that for three to five years.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, now we're in that timeframe, and so about a year ago I had a conversation with my successor Jeff about that, and I was in, I always find I get into mixed emotions at times where I'm not exactly sure, and I'm a verbal processor, so I'm like, I want to do this, I don't want to do this, I want to do this, I don't want to do this. All right, I hear mixed things coming out of my mouth, so do the other people around me, and I remember we had a couple of meetings where it was well, if you really want to release some of this communication burden, that means we're probably going to have to do a search, and there was part of me that as soon as that was out of someone else's mouth it was like, well no, I'm going ... But then I felt all that ambivalence inside, and so we had a couple of meetings about that, and then I eventually had to get to the stage, and it was a little bit difficult, and I think there might have been some tears on my part, and then I'm like, well of course that's right. That's exactly what we have to do, you know?

Carey Nieuwhof: If you really, and we haven't done that yet, but of ... It was just me letting go, going of course that needs to happen, but that can be a very emotionally complex time, because after 24 years it would mean like, oh yeah, I guess I'm not always going to be the guy.

Lee Kricher: And that's especially when there's people on the congregation who are saying, "We want to hear from you. We love you. We are here because of you." Et cetera. So you have a lot of support, whether it's board members, staff members, congregation members, who would've said to me, "Stay as long as you possibly can."

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Lee Kricher: And so those voices don't help you to make that more timely decision.

Jason Howard: And in my end, I mean, there are voices, especially from younger people saying, "When are you going to be the guy up there?"

Lee Kricher: Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: And what it taking so long?

Jason Howard: What is taking so long? And that's not easy to navigate.

Carey Nieuwhof: No.

Jason Howard: Because you kind of feel like well, I have this base of support, I could just go do something with them.

Lee Kricher: And his people aren't, the people talking to him aren't talking to me.

Jason Howard: That's right.

Lee Kricher: And the people talking to me aren't talking to him.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right, that's right.

Lee Kricher: So you think that you're hearing the whole council.

Carey Nieuwhof: Everybody says I should stay.

Lee Kricher: Yeah, exactly. Everybody.

Carey Nieuwhof: Everyone says it's time for you to move on, right? Oh, that's so funny.

Lee Kricher: Right, and we'll be talking about it at the conference coming up.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, at the Future Forward.

Lee Kricher: [crosstalk 01:02:48] Answering some questions.

Jason Howard: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Your emotions. You want to talk about that?

Jason Howard: My emotions today or?

Carey Nieuwhof: How about in process, and then we'll get to today. Yeah.

Jason Howard: In process. I think that my emotions were really scared, but not scared to lead the church, scared to navigate the difficult conversations that were necessary to have with Lee, and I am not a verbal processor. I need to sit and think on it by myself in isolation for like a couple days to figure out what I even am trying to say. You know what I mean?

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Jason Howard: And that's even how I message prep. Lock me away from everybody for like two days, you know? So I think that it was, I was very scared to have these conversations, and I, like I said, I did not want to be dishonoring, and I had this burden and this fire that I could not shake, so had to wrestle that down. I had to figure out how do I handle these emotions of I've got to move on with what god's called me to do, and at the same time I cannot dishonor Lee, and at the same time, it's not my right to push him out. How do I process all of that? And to be honest, that was almost impossible for me to figure that out. I had maybe one or two people who were totally confidential who I was able to talk about that with them, and that got me to the point where I was able in a very scared way to say, "Lee, here is really where I'm at and this is really what I need." But once we were able to have those conversations it resulted in peace.

Jason Howard: So there were so many times since and over the last two years where I was able to say, "Lee, do you know what? I don't like how we've been doing this. We need to do it that way." And those conversations were so easy, and he would, a lot of times he would say, "Okay, great, go for it." But there were other times where he would say, "Well, here is the other side, or here is the other angle." Or, "You need to think about this fallout." Or, "You need to think about how this is going to roll out." And I'm so thankful for those conversations, because I became a better leader as a result of those conversations, and honestly I became a better communicator because I had to figure out how do I actually say what I'm trying to say here, and Lee forced me to have to articulate those things, and that's been great for me.

Lee Kricher: Yeah, because in a conversation I'm fine that he needs two days to think about it, but I'm expecting an answer within 30 seconds. [crosstalk 01:05:12]

Carey Nieuwhof: You're verbal. You're quick on your feet kind of thing.

Lee Kricher: Exactly.

Jason Howard: He's very decisive, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you, once you had that difficult dinner conversation you work through it, did it get easier after that?

Jason Howard: It was a million times easier because I think that what, and actually after that conversation about Christmas, which was probably six or eight months before the dinner, about we didn't like how Christmas went.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Jason Howard: Every time that we had one of those really difficult conversations, things did get easier, because I think that every time that we went through sort of that hellish moment, we did come out on the other end with much deeper understanding of each other, and much more respect and trust for each other, because after the

difficult conversation, Lee actually heard me, and he decided to hear me, and he decided to listen to what I was saying, and on the other end, I think Lee felt like Jason actually told me what he was really thinking.

Lee Kricher: Exactly, and neither of us went out to get troops to support our point of view.

Jason Howard: Right.

Lee Kricher: Ever.

Jason Howard: Ever. United front, and to be honest, we're talking about this conversation, I doubt that our staff know that that conversation happened even today. I don't think people know that that dinner happened.

Lee Kricher: They've never seen me angry.

Carey Nieuwhof: Speaking of processing, how, and we don't need names because obviously they're not going to mean anything and it's inappropriate, but you said you had one or two people that you could process this with. How about you, Lee? Who is your sounding board? It's a little, is it a little bit bigger than just spouses in this case?

Lee Kricher: Yeah, I mean, your spouse helps you keep an even keel. My spouse helped me to keep an even keel but.

Carey Nieuwhof: Linda is great.

Lee Kricher: I had a good friend who had gone through this process a few years earlier here in Pittsburgh, and I talked to him quite a bit about the emotions that he had going through it, and they're never identical, but he definitely could relate to what I was going through. It just helps to be able to talk to somebody, and he probably leaned a little bit more on my side, quote, unquote. But just to be able to talk through it, you say, "Yeah, thanks for that." But you know what? We need to figure this out, Jason and I need to figure this out. So it was probably someone who had gone through a succession themselves that was relatively successful that really helped me.

Jason Howard: We had two other really major advocates that helped us through the very difficult waters that we went through. One was Linda, Lee's wife, because when Lee got sort of emotional and was all upset about it, Linda asked to spend some time just with me, and Linda was able to help me because she wasn't, she didn't carry the ... She didn't carry the same stuff that Lee carried, and so she was able to basically sit down with me and say, "Jason, just help me understand exactly what you're trying to say here, and let me just try to navigate this peace process a little bit."

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Jason Howard: And she was a huge advocate to help me to articulate what I'm feeling. She obviously understood what Lee was feeling, and she was able to bring us both to the table.

Lee Kricher: Was Linda nice to you then?

Jason Howard: Absolutely she was nice to me.

Lee Kricher: She's going to be in big trouble now that I know that [crosstalk 01:08:38].

Jason Howard: The other person is Mark, who was the vice president of our board of directors because Mark loves Lee passionately, Mark loves me passionately, but above that, Mark has a vested interest in the church.

Carey Nieuwhof: He loves his church.

Jason Howard: He was really coming at it from the standpoint of what is better for the church, and so he was able to help us through that too, and I was able to call Mark and say, "Mark, here is how I feel." And he was able to help me process through that. Lee was doing that as well with Mark, and so Mark was a good advocate. But we really kept that circle very tight, because we knew that neither Lee nor Mark, or Linda nor Mark were going to go share this with other people.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, yeah. That's good. What were some of the good things you did, because I think from everything I can see, and we're six weeks into it, but this has been a fairly healthy succession, and it appears to be in the initial stages going well, what were some keys to success that you said, "Okay. If you're thinking about this, pay attention to these two or three things." What are some things you did well?

Jason Howard: I think that we first decided that Lee and I were each going to be loyal to each other, and that we were going to respect each other, and champion each other. I want to make sure that Lee has the opportunity to do everything that god's called him to do, and I really always felt like Lee felt that way about me. I think that that has been the thing that has kept us together. It's the personal relationship between me and Lee.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Jason Howard: Where it's commitment, it's loyalty, it's loyalty to each other, but it's loyalty to each other for the sake of the mission.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Jason Howard: And I would also just say, and there are probably a bunch of young leaders out there who are frustrated with where they are. I would just say to them, stay. And obviously there are going to be some exceptions to that and some unhealthy dynamics that probably shouldn't stay, but your number one role is not to have the platform that you want for yourself. Your number one role is to serve.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, that's good.

Jason Howard: The way of Jesus is the way of service, and if we can serve people, we will look like Jesus, and that is what makes the church powerful and effective. So it's not about what can I do to build my platform, it is not about what can I do to make sure I'm walking in my calling. That's not the question. The question is how can I serve people so that people experience Jesus, and if you need the spotlight in order to feel like you are doing what you're supposed to do, you're probably not ready to lead.

Carey Nieuwhof: Good practices.

Lee Kricher: Yeah, I do think that once we set a timetable to say okay, what changes do you want to make, and what are the things that we need to change, and not just stylistically, but staffing, and other things, so that you can't hit the ground running when the handoff takes place, and by the last few months he was leading staff meetings, leading board meetings. Jason was taking care of those things with me present and supportive, but there ... Yeah, but it was already happening.

Carey Nieuwhof: So the succession was beginning long before it happened.

Lee Kricher: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: And the model changed too, or whatever you want to call it. Style, approach, changed. At first, you kind of had what was ever happening Downtown and at the City Campus, which was Jason's deal, the next gen deal, and then you were running things at Amplify Pittsburgh East the way you wanted to run it, but then eventually, and I'm just sharing what I observed, is some of Jason's style and approach started to show up at Pittsburgh East too.

Lee Kricher: Yeah, because how healthy is it to have a shock that happens from one Sunday to another or something like that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right, right.

Lee Kricher: We were able to make that transition, and I actually was at peace about even the stylistic changes, it's just a part of the process.

Carey Nieuwhof: You also said something earlier in the interview that you said you cashed in some chips. There were some changes that needed to be made, and you said, "I got a lot of change in my pocket. So I'm going to do these things." Can you give us an example or two that you're comfortable sharing?

Lee Kricher: I think as we looked at the order of service to some degree. The number of times Jason was speaking compared to me, because people would've said, "Okay, at least in your last year, we want to hear you every week if we're not going to be hearing you a lot in the future." And we actually shifted to where we were about 50/50 here at the Pittsburgh East campus. So there were a number of things that we were doing like that. Can you think of any other specific examples? I think staffing, I would say okay, how do you want our staff to be structured?

Jason Howard: Yeah. I mean, there were a lot of things over the years where Lee would say to me, "Hey, you feel really strongly about this, so I'm going to leverage my trust for the sake of this change so that you don't have to." And he consistently did that. I can't think of one or two really great examples off the top of my head, but that conversation was sort of always happening, and Lee really did everything in his power to make sure that I was set up for success, and that if there were major things that I really wanted to change. He said, "Let me take the brunt of making that change so that you don't have to have fallout when you do it."

Lee Kricher: I was Senior Pastor over all our campuses, but also I was the campus pastor for Pittsburgh East, and so Jason was saying, "When I move into that role, I want to serve as Senior Pastor but I want to have a campus pastor at every campus." And so I thought, well you could just do what I'm doing, that was my first thought, but then let's find out who the campus pastor for Pittsburgh East should be, because I want to get them rolling while I'm the Senior Pastor, so they can be one of the bridges that helps to strengthen the congregation's sense of stability during the change, and that's what we did.

Jason Howard: To be honest, I think we're having a little bit of a hard time coming up with specific examples because I think that by the time that we actually made changes and decisions, it's hard for both of us to discern whose idea it was. Because I think that we came to so much, like we worked things out between us that by the time we actually did something it's like, wait, was that Lee's idea or it that Jason's? The whole thing about the Lead Pastor, I didn't realize until just this moment. Oh yeah, I guess that was my idea, because by the time we did it, we were so much on.

Lee Kricher: In sync.

Jason Howard: In sync with each other.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and it feels like almost as much a posture.

Jason Howard: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: As it was a series of decisions.

Jason Howard: Yep.

Carey Nieuwhof: When it came to the actual succession itself, what were that moment, what you did on Good Friday, and that was the service where the handoff continued, so if you had to look at the date on the calendar, that's when it was. What were some things that worked really well for you guys?

Lee Kricher: Well it was a time when all our campuses would come together. It's a very moving communion service, and we thought everybody is in one room, and such a great time to do the handoff. So I just talked about the commissioning of Moses to Joshua, even though Moses was about to die, and that's not the reason I was doing it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right, right. I'm not quite yet about to die.

Lee Kricher: Just honored Jason for what he had been doing, and Linda and I prayed for Jason and AJ, and commissioned him to become Senior Pastor and said, "He's about to now do his first message as Senior Pastor." And then I dropped the mic.

Carey Nieuwhof: What did that feel like in that moment to you?

Lee Kricher: Great.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Lee Kricher: Again, and I think something for senior pastors to think about, how many times do you see guys in their 60s or 70s who it ends badly? Don't leave too late. If you feel like you're leaving a little early, leave a little early and there's such a good feeling about saying okay, I fulfilled my assignment.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Yeah, I agree. Any other things on the actual succession itself?

Jason Howard: I mean, the Good Friday thing was really nice. I mean, Lee and Linda both had some really awesome things to say about us, but it was kind of understated. I mean, it was five minutes long, that's about it, and it was kind of, in a lot of ways it almost felt a little anticlimactic, because we've been talking about it, and working through it, and it wasn't a surprise to anybody, but it was a really beautiful moment, and yeah, it was beautiful, it was exciting.

Lee Kricher: And in the Easter Sunday we did a tag team.

Jason Howard: Tag team.

Lee Kricher: To kind of visually demonstrate it. So I did the first half of the message and then Jason did the second half.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh that's great, that's great.

Jason Howard: That was fun.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now, again, we're six weeks into it, so it's early, early days, but this is where it goes bad too, because this is where I've seen, like you're still at Amplify Church, and you still live in the neighborhood, and this is where people like you and me take sticks of dynamite and blow up people's lives. So what are some ways this could go wrong? What are you trying to avoid doing? What do you think some important landmines are to avoid right now?

Lee Kricher: Well, I have an open invitation for the rest of my life as the founding pastor to all board meetings and all staff meetings, and since the changeover I haven't been to one. If Jason invites me for some reason, we'll talk about it and I'll consider coming. I just feel this way if I am in any way besides in a role of a cheerleader and a coach, then I am undermining my own legacy.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Lee Kricher: And to me a healthy strong leader in Jason, taking the church into the next generation and the next phase, next season of ministry, that to me is so much more honoring than me going and saying, "Oh, what things about Jason do you not like? Let's talk about it." That's so [crosstalk 01:18:42].

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you say that again? If I am not, then I'm undermining my own legacy, if I'm not.

Lee Kricher: I'm undermining my own legacy if I'm not there in the primary roles of cheerleader and coach.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Lee Kricher: I'm not there as visionary, I'm not there as director, I'm not there as strategist. I'm there as cheerleader and coach.

Carey Nieuwhof: So good.

Jason Howard: And that's the best gift that Lee could give to me at this point too because I have to be able to come in and be decisive, and make decisions, and say, "Here's who we are, here's where we're going, here's what's coming up." We announced that we're starting three new campuses, and here's what's ahead. I can't have

this pressure and this weight that I've got Lee, who has a ton of influence and a ton of love from a lot of people, I can't have this pressure and weight thinking oh, he's going around behind my back undermining the things that I'm trying to move everyone towards. He truly has been very hands off the last six weeks, and of course if we're having an issue or whatever, I've got such an open opportunity to call him and be like, "Hey, what do you think about this?" Or we had a couple recent staff changes, and last week we were together, and I'm telling him sort of the details of what happened, and honestly Lee is nothing but supportive, and encouraging, and give me some advice if I'm asking for it, but he's not meddling.

Lee Kricher: And our relationship is such. I went to North Point for two years before I came here, and I always, I tease about the fact that I wore a WW, one of those bracelets, what would Andy do? And I knew enough by just by being a part of the church to know that in my early time, after all these years, Jason knows exactly what I would do and he almost doesn't need to call, but if he does, of course, I'll talk it through, but there be no mystery as to, because we've lived life together.

Jason Howard: Yeah, for [crosstalk 01:20:34].

Carey Nieuwhof: What does it feel like, Lee, to just sit in a chair of a church you founded and not be the Senior Leader?

Lee Kricher: I love coming to church and enjoying, and we're doing, at least through this summer, we're doing a let Jason get his momentum rolling and I'm not speaking at all this summer. And there's something about that that is freeing and is really freeing me to get excited about, I'm going back to school for my doctorate, and I'm getting ready for Future Forward, and these other things that I'm looking forward to, I can invest more into and just come and enjoy church.

Carey Nieuwhof: Jason, what does it feel like for you?

Jason Howard: Well, I think that, I've preached with Lee sitting in the second row for a lot of years, and that was really difficult and intimidating for a [inaudible 01:21:24].

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, yeah.

Jason Howard: But he's shown such, so much support and he has such been a cheerleader, especially over the last few months, that I'm just glad he's there, and I feel free to preach and say what I believe I'm supposed to say and do what I'm supposed to do, and I feel free to do that, and I know the things that Lee wouldn't have chosen to do that I've chosen to do, but he's there supporting, and that makes me feel great.

Lee Kricher: And I know in some cases that the recommendation is just disappear for six months or a year, or forever, it's better, and if you're going to be a contrarian, then it is better.

Jason Howard: Yeah.

Lee Kricher: But for me to be sitting there, and the people who are wondering about the change saying, "Lee is here."

Jason Howard: It sends a big, big message.

Lee Kricher: I'm here too.

Carey Nieuwhof: Did you guys feel a shift in weight, Jason?

Jason Howard: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Did you feel the weight of leadership? We talk about it all the time.

Jason Howard: It was so much. Like this was so long anticipated, you know what I mean? We've been talking about this for I guess.

Carey Nieuwhof: 15 years.

Jason Howard: 15 years, yeah. So it's been so long anticipated that I just kind of felt like I'm going to step into this thing, and it's like, it's nothing. I stepped into it and things inside of my own internal perspective shifted immediately, and I am very surprised by it. I think that all of a sudden some things immediately changed inside of me. One was I had more clarity about things inside of our church that were holding back momentum than I've ever had before, and more confidence and guts to say, "We are not going to keep doing that." And it's not things that like Lee, it's not changing Lee's things, it's just more I see down through the layers more clearly than I've ever seen before, and it's like oh my gosh, that has to change, that has to change, that has to change, and it's not major systemic changes, it's more like that person is not performing right, or this ministry isn't doing what it needs to be doing, or this thing is a little bit out of alignment and we're going to deal with that right now, because I have no tolerance for waiting for another five years to try and get the things in order.

Lee Kricher: And in most of those cases they weren't things that I had initiated, they were things that-

Jason Howard: No, they were things I did.

Lee Kricher: He had recommended, and so now he's working on it, and for me, I just thought I can't believe I get to start my next season of life completely, two years earlier, with two more healthy, strong, amazing years.

Carey Nieuwhof: And what are you doing?

Lee Kricher: Well, like I said, I'm going back for my doctorate, but then also we've got this Future Forward Conference coming up that you spoke at last year and you'll get to speak at this year.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'll be a part of. I'm privileged to be back at it again this fall.

Lee Kricher: I'm excited. Awesome wife will be here.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Lee Kricher: And Sam Collier will be here, and I think it's just this idea of how can leaders fully engage the next generation, and that includes the whole story of succession, which Jason and I will take questions on and talk about at the conference.

Carey Nieuwhof: [crosstalk 01:24:21] This fall, right?

Lee Kricher: Yeah. So we're ramping up, October 1st and 2nd right here.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's going to be great. Anything else you guys want to share before we wrap up?

Jason Howard: I think that succession is really hard, but it is absolutely worth it, and it requires laying down yourself for the sake of somebody else, but isn't that exactly the Gospel and isn't that the whole message of Jesus? Lay down yourself for somebody else? And succession requires that on all fronts by all people involved, and that is, that's the way of Jesus, and let's do it, because it's going to make the church stronger over the generations, and let's not have to start from the ground up with every generation. Let's build on the ceiling that other people have. Let's build on the ceilings that other people have left behind, because that will make the church much more effective and strong as we move into the future.

Carey Nieuwhof: Lee, final word?

Lee Kricher: Yeah. Don't wait too long. It's better, we have a friend who is, a week before the succession was going to take place, slid a piece of paper to the successor to sign with all these agreements, and the person couldn't sign it, and so they called the whole thing off, and I thought wow, don't wait too long. I kept saying to Jason, "I got that piece of paper ready."

Lee Kricher: But finally after Good Friday, he knew there was no paper, but you know what? God's got such amazing things for you in every season of life, don't think about what you're going to lose, think about what you're going to gain.

Jason Howard: So good. That's so good.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good. So if they want to come to Future Forward, what's the website?

Lee Kricher: It's futureforwardchurches.com.

Carey Nieuwhof: And you're doing a little event too.

Jason Howard: Yeah, we are. We've got Amplify Conference coming up in November after Future Forward. Future Forward is for church leaders, Amplify Conference is for anybody to come.

Lee Kricher: People.

Jason Howard: And experience Jesus. Yeah. Levi and Jennie Lusko, Chad Veach is coming. It's going to be a really awesome time here in Pittsburgh. November, second week of November. So you can find out more at amplifychurch.com.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's awesome. Guys, thank you so much.

Jason Howard: Thanks Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof: I know you've helped a lot of churches. I think this conversation maybe has helped bump the needle in a lot of churches. Thank you.

Jason Howard: Thank you, Carey.

Lee Kricher: Thank you, good friend.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well that one was rich and that one was real, and if you want more, you can find out more in the show notes, CareyNieuwhof.com/episode283, we have transcripts. Although this one will not be on YouTube, also we're popping up a number of episodes on YouTube these days. You can find that under my name on YouTube. So you can just search for that, and if you found this conversation helpful, we are going to be in Pittsburgh at Amplify Church, October 1st through 2nd, and by we, I mean me, my wife Toni, the two people who were in this interview, Lee and Jason are going to be there. We're doing a whole event together, and you can register now at futureforwardchurches.com/theconference, and you get group rate, so make sure you check that out. Future Forward Churches, that's October 1st and 2nd. I will be there live. Also make sure you don't miss Andy Stanley, he's going to four cities this fall for the Irresistible Tour. I will be joining him for the tour stop in

Austin. It's happening in Seattle, Phoenix, Kansas City, and also Austin. So you can go to irresistibletour.com, use the coupon code Carey19, get \$20 off the regular price. And of course, thank you so much to Pro Media Fire, a partner of this podcast, for helping so many churches with custom graphic design and video. You can go to ProMediaFire.com/Carey to learn more there.

Carey Nieuwhof: Hey, in a couple days we're back with a fresh episode, and this time I sit down with another Pittsburghian, is that we say? Pittsburghian? I guess so. Marc Serrao, and he's somebody I met through Lee and Jason, and he runs one of the best bakeries and the most successful bakeries in America. When we opened up his brand new bakery, the food is so good it created traffic jams. People lined up for miles to get in. I'm not kidding. He's got this, like most bakeries are tiny, he's broken all the rules on bakeries and had a thriving business in this town in the middle of nowhere outside of Pittsburgh, and literally has a national reputation. We talk all about it. So here's an excerpt from Thursday's episode.

Marc Serrao: Not too long after that, I said, I'm working, I'm looking at the books, and I said to my wife, "I'm nervous about this. We got to pay this bills." And I'm, so she said, "Well, I guess we better write a bigger check to the church." And we did, and that became our regular pattern of giving, and we never really struggled any. I don't remember after that ever really struggling financially paying our bills. So over the years, we made some pretty bold moves when the church was struggling and really needed our help. We helped, but God blessed us a lot more than I think we've blessed the church.

Carey Nieuwhof: So Marc will tell you how you get a world class bakery with huge lines in a village of 6,000 people by breaking all the rules. If you subscribe to this podcast you get it absolutely free. Guys, thank you so much. We have the fifth anniversary coming up. Nine million downloads. It's insane, and yeah, five years. So we're going to celebrate. We got some fun stuff, and I'll tell you about that real soon. In the meantime, thanks so much for listening and I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

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