

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

Carey Nieuwhof: Hey everybody and welcome to episode 290 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof. I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. We made it through the five-year mark. That was a fun week last week. Congratulations to all the winners as we stack your library. One of the things I really enjoy doing is interacting with leaders, interacting with listeners. I'm on the road a ton this fall. I'll tell you about an event where we can connect in Pittsburgh in just a few minutes.

Carey Nieuwhof: One of the things I love to do is answer questions. You always have questions. You have some great questions. Starting in October, a few episodes from now, we are going to be adding a bonus to this podcast. At the end, we're doing something that we're calling #askCarey. You can go on any social channel, whether that's Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and just use #askCarey. Obviously, Twitter is pretty easy for that so is Instagram.

Carey Nieuwhof: Me and my team will be searching for questions that you ask, and I will select one on every episode to answer. That will be at the end of the podcast. That starts on October, #askCarey, so jump on your social media today and start firing your leadership questions my way and we will start taking them on every episode starting in a few weeks. #askCarey on any social platform. We'd love to hear what's on your brain. I'll do my best to tackle your questions.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay, speaking of being on the road and interacting with you, what are you doing October 1st and 2nd? If you're trying to transition a church, the Future Forward Conference has helped hundreds of churches do that over the last few years. I will be at Future Forward Conference along with Sam Collier, Lee Kricher, Jason Howard, my wife will be there, Toni. She'll be speaking along with many others. It's for church leaders and church members. You can bring your whole team who are committed to fully engage the next generation in a rapidly changing world.

Carey Nieuwhof: Going to cover a lot of subjects. This is the third of three Future Forward Conferences. You don't want to miss it. What you can do is head on over to [futureforwardchurches.com/theconference](http://futureforwardchurches.com/theconference) to register. Individual tickets are \$79, but the price plummets to \$59, if you bring a group of five or more. Join me in Pittsburgh October 1st and 2nd for the Future Forward Conference. Pro Media Fire has been a partner of this podcast for a while. I'm so excited that they have just launched Pro WebFire.

Carey Nieuwhof: What I know, because most organizations are not large with millions of dollars in budget, most churches and organizations are small. Pro WebFire is going to help you in so many ways. Here's how it works.

Carey Nieuwhof: The first step is a strategy session tailored for your church's online expansion plan. They'll sit down and say, "Okay, what do you want to accomplish?" Then, second, the team after they've heard from you will build you a new custom website. This is what's so fun about it, because rather than, "Oh, here's our templates, which one do you like?" They're actually going to consult with you. It's totally custom. Then, the Pro WebFire team will update the website weekly for you. They'll manage your digital outreach campaign. They'll even create a weekly podcast. It's a brand new partnership that's almost like having staff except for fraction of the price.

Carey Nieuwhof: They also include, just so you know, ongoing consultations with digital outreach experts and new custom website every three years. It's included with your monthly plan. You know how you know, "We spent so much money in our website." Then, you don't have that money for another five years. Anyway, things move fast. I think Pro WebFire is going to change the game for a lot of churches, so we have a special for you.

Carey Nieuwhof: If you head on over to [prowebfire.com](http://prowebfire.com) you will receive a free custom website build for the plan you choose by using the discount code Carey2019, C-A-R-E-Y 2-0-1-9. Use that as your coupon code. Head on over to [prowebfire.com](http://prowebfire.com), you will get a free custom website build in association with the plan that you choose and act now because the special goes away at the end of this month, [prowebfire.com](http://prowebfire.com) use the coupon code Carey2019.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm really excited to have today's guest back on the podcast. Max Lucado is one of the bestselling authors of this generation, period. He's written approximately 12 million books. No, that's over a hundred though. Max and I got together a couple years ago on this podcast. We had such a great time. It was so good. We'll link to that in the show notes.

Carey Nieuwhof: We're talking about the season of life he's in, what he's learning, some of his rhythms and disciplines. I love picking the brains of people who have accomplished so much with their lives. We've never really met in person. Max has quickly become a friend. You're going to love this conversation with bestselling author, pastor, leader, Max Lucado.

Carey Nieuwhof: Max, welcome back to the podcast.

Max Lucado: It's great. It's great. I think you're the best at this. You really are. You make it painless.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know about that. I enjoy it a lot.

Max Lucado: Do you?

Carey Nieuwhof: I feel like we've only spent ... I think we spent a couple hours together including the interview last time. You just have very natural way about you that makes you ... I feel like I've known you for years. Do you get that a lot?

Max Lucado: People often ask like in a church service or if they've been reading my books. A lot of times they'll start the conversation. "Do you mind if I call you Max? I feel like you're a Max." I don't fit the pastor or reverend or even the minister. I take that. That makes me feel good. I'm happy about that. Yeah. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's great. I'm really glad in some great insights. I was saying to you, and we'll link to it in the show notes. One of the things I've shared with a lot of leaders, just personally in my dialogue with them is your comment when you're going through a stressful time in leadership about being counseled that you needed to do something that had no consequences. You took up golf just as, "Okay, if I blow it on the golf course, it doesn't really matter," right?

Max Lucado: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: That was just huge. What difference has that made in your life?

Max Lucado: I think I tend to be competitive. I like goal setting and to impose that upon ministry is not always a good fit, because the challenge in church work is goal setting and competition. I'm not sure either one of those really causes us to lean into the Holy Spirit. I would tend to take that mindset and impose it upon the church or impose it upon my projects and I could become ruthless.

Max Lucado: What my doctor suggested that I do and this has been over 20 years. He said, "You need something that is competitive, but that has no consequence to it. That if you succeed, great, feel good for the day. If you blow it, that's okay, your wife is not going to ask anyway." I found that many of the guys that I know and gals that I know who are wired like that need that type of outlet, where we can just go crazy at something.

Max Lucado: I've got some friends who do the wall climbing thing. I know you're into biking. I did biking seriously for many years and competitively, or at least to set a goal or entered in events. It took care of it. It seems to lift that desire. It quenches that thirst for me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. It's funny because I don't know if we talked about this last time or not, but when I took up cycling, I have lots of friends who do that and we're in an ideal area, like literally people ...

Max Lucado: You are.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Max Lucado: You are. Wow.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's beautiful here for that. They wanted me to start riding in pelotons and with group rides. I don't know. I didn't think about it, but I just decided I was not going to do that early on. It was later, like years later, that I'm like, "I know why, I'm doing this for me. If I make it competitive then it starts to feel like I got to keep up with these guys, I got to be in better shape." My little Strava bio is riding for fun beats the gym, that's it. That's all it says.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. I have 98 followers on Strava and it's amazing, because you have so many followers elsewhere. It's like, "No, this is great, this is my little corner of the world where I get to be by myself," and golf has been that for you, hasn't it?

Max Lucado: It has been. It has been. You strike me as the guy who's always on the cutting edge of technology. Weren't you early on and early ... Are you an early adapter in podcast and social media? Am I picking that up right?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Early, yeah.

Max Lucado: You said Strava and that's something I've never heard off and it didn't surprise me. You strike me as a kind of guy who's out there doing things at most ...

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, I've been on Strava for a while. It's funny because the first three, like I was on Instagram. I think I joined that in 2010 when there was a Histogram, like I don't know whether anyone remembers that, but Histogram and Instagram were competitors and nobody knew who's going to win. I was on both and then Histogram just, I think it lasted three months, but Instagram has become what it is today. I remember when there were only two filters on Instagram.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. I tend to jump on early and I spend too much money on technology.

Max Lucado: That's all right. No, that's good. We need people like you. You remind me of Michael Hyatt. You probably know Michael.

Carey Nieuwhof: I do know Mike. Yeah.

Max Lucado: I can remember, oh my goodness, maybe 2013, 2012 and I got a phone call from Michael. He said Lucado, "I see you're not even on Twitter." I said, "What?" He said, "You need to be on Twitter." I had no clue what Twitter was. I've always admired people like you and Michael who bring the rest of us along. It's not that we don't want to do it, it's just we don't pay attention, we're clueless.

Carey Nieuwhof: I try to surround myself with a lot of younger people and younger leaders. They'll be pointing out where I'm rather archaic. Although, if I took you upstairs at my place, of my home theater system. I never thought I'd get there. It's a time thing. I've got a good theater system. A lot of people have better, but like

there are too many remotes and I know I can put them all on one, but I just do not have the time or the energy to bother.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now, when my 27-year-old comes home, he's a computer engineer, I'll say, "Can you fix that?" I'm becoming the stereotypical old man with the blinking VCR or the blinking microwave clock, right, anyway.

Max Lucado: Heads up. When you get to be old like me, it's very easy to surround yourself with younger people.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's great. Actually, this isn't in the script Max, but we were talking before we started recording. You're going off on a golf vacation with some friends, right? You're going up to Oregon for a few days.

Max Lucado: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Let's talk about friendships. I didn't plan on going there. Those can be really, really hard for leaders. What's been your journey when it comes to surrounding yourself with people? Because it's been a battle for me too, like I think for a lot of us, like developing and sustaining close meaningful friendships. What's that been like for you?

Max Lucado: I would say that I have desired to have more close friends than I've ever had. I've always had a couple, two or three. I have never had a friendship with somebody who is not a part of my church world and my ministry world. I thought that would be nice, but I just don't have ... I either have not made or don't have the margin to sustain a friendship that's outside of the ministry and the church world. I've never felt like I lack, I've never felt lonely.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Max Lucado: I think that my good friend Steve Green who has represented me in publishing since 1986.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is that Hobby Lobby Steve?

Max Lucado: No, it's just like him. Yeah, there's a Steve Green Hobby Lobby, there's a Steve Green the singer, and then there's the Steve Green who is really, really a great champion of authors, the best agent a person could have. He and I have been friends since college.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Max Lucado: He's a very, very dear friend. In fact, just before this interview he and I were talking about something. Now, he's serving as an executive kind of an interim

executive pastor during some transition in our church. Golf has been the place where I have been able to build some friendships outside of ministry. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. That's good and so you're heading off with some friends for a few days, which is good and wonderful. Last time we talked, Max, you were still carrying for a season the lead pastor role at your church, but that's changed. You want to bring us up-to-date on that and how that's going? You're doing something really interesting with your campuses as well.

Max Lucado: Yeah. Yeah. The broad stroke, I came to this church in 1988 and I served as senior pastor until 2008. We brought Randy Frazee here. Randy did a great job and served us well for almost a decade. Then, he moved to Kansas City and I step back in at the age of 64, well, almost 64. Thinking, "Okay, maybe I've got another 10 years in me and I'll be senior pastor." Carey, after about a year I thought, "I don't think I have 10 years in me to do this."

Max Lucado: I went to the leaders and I said, "I know I said that I could be counted on for another 7 to 10 years," because I think that's a good vision time for me at least to cast a vision and implement it. It takes me about 7 or 10 years. I said, "I'm sorry. I think our best play right now is to take the campuses that we have and turn them into churches." We're a seven-campus multisite. They're healthy campuses. All of them were, well, nearly all of them were paying their own way, but those that weren't could with a little bit of challenge.

Max Lucado: They had good leaders on the campus. I said, I think we could ... We called William Vanderbloemen, who a lot have come to really admire.

Carey Nieuwhof: Me too.

Max Lucado: He came over to San Antonio. I can't endorse him enough. He came over and spent two or three days with us. He said, "You've got two options. You can either go out and find a person who's got the dynamic teaching ability, to be the teaching pastor for seven campuses. Or, you might see this as an opportunity to take those campuses and spin them off into independence."

Max Lucado: We prayed about it, as a leadership team, we talked about it. We weigh the pros and cons. It really made sense for us to ... We just couldn't see the value of bringing in a dynamic communicator. We're concerned that that communicator might not be able to garner the trust needed to lead a multi-site that's 60 miles away.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Max Lucado: What was happening too is that the leaders on those campuses, who had been campus pastors now for some of them seven or eight years. They were saying, "Hey, we know how to do this. We know our area. We know our region." One of them is in another town 70 or 80 miles away. All of them live if not in another

town, they're across town. They basically said to us, "You know we're ready. We're ready to be a church." We said, "Okay. That's the way it's supposed to be anyway. This is a little sooner than we thought, but we're ready." Between my realization that at the age of 64, 65 I'm not ready to sign up for another 10-year stent. Then, their realization that we'd like to take a shot at this.

Max Lucado: We worked out about a 12-month plan. We announced it to the church in September of 2018. We made our goal to implement the change beginning in September of 2019. As of September 1, 2019, two of those campuses will be standalone, independent congregations. We'll still be sharing some central services, like IT and comm arts, and things that make financial sense. They'll basically be buying those services from the main campus. At some point, they'll may want to do that on their own.

Max Lucado: As far as determining what is preached, what the strategy is when you're ready to start another church, what's your focus? It's their plan. Lord-willing, we'll have a third campus step into the independent arena some time in 2020, maybe as early as Easter, but somewhere between Easter and September. Then, we have a couple of them that are probably just going to stay in this multi-site model with the main campus for the foreseeable future. We're not quite sure what's going to happen there.

Max Lucado: It's been a great adventure. I think, it's been a right thing to us to walk through. It's had a few more challenges than we thought. For example, while we have a blessing of some great properties, real estate, around the city, we all owned it together, right? We all owned it together. We had to figure out a way to divest that property.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Max Lucado: Which would have been easy, except we also have some debt. Everybody wants to own the property, right?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Max Lucado: Who wants to start up a church with some debt? We have some really bright folks that were able to come up with a good formula to figure that out. It was really a working of the Lord, I think, that that came about relatively simply. I groaned at trying to figure that out.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Max Lucado: The people who did figure it out did so. We got everything all set up and in motion. Forgive me for taking so long to answer that question, but it's been a big deal. I do think that as ministers my age or of my generation, as we get older and we've been a part of multi-site models and been a primary teacher, then

others will be wrestling with what's next. What's next with our multi-site? I think that's going to be a question many people are asking.

Carey Nieuwhof: You look at what Matt Chandler's done in spinning his churches off. I was on a private call with James Emery White from Mecklenburg in Charlotte and they've done the same thing and that will be on the podcast, I think, later this year or next year where we'll do an interview about it.

Carey Nieuwhof: I appreciate what you said too. If you don't mind going there, I love to ... because I think succession is the other big issue, which you are handling, I think, quite well. You said, "Yeah, I'm going to do this for 10 to 15 years," and then you realized a year into it, "Wait a minute, that isn't there." Max, I'm familiar with that feeling. That happened to me not at 63 but at 50 where I thought, "I don't know."

Max Lucado: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you talk about that? It's not like you're sitting around playing golf all day. You're telling me, and we'll get to it, you're writing more books. You're writing a whole new children's series of books. You're not idle. What was that inside you?

Max Lucado: Man, that is a great question. We need you to write a book on going numb.

Carey Nieuwhof: Hey, how about I do that, Max? How about I turn that into the publisher this week? Yeah.

Max Lucado: How about that? How about that?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. That's my next book 2020. Yeah.

Max Lucado: That's great. It's such a relevant issue. The word picture I used with our leaders was I put the ladle in the bucket and I just hear a scrapping sound. It's just not there. My initial response was denial, like what do you mean it's not there? You got to do this. Come on, it's in there somewhere. Maybe I'm not praying enough. Maybe I'm not trying hard enough, but it wasn't there.

Max Lucado: Here's how I knew it wasn't there and I'd be curious to know how you knew and how you responded. I came to resent my staff.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Max Lucado: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Max Lucado: I came to relish. Hey, there's a good little word play. Do you relish or resent?

Carey Nieuwhof: That is good.

Max Lucado: I came to relish and always have. My alone time, my study time, my preparation time, I've always love that. I can't see ever stopping that. I'm just sad to admit this, but it's just a fact. When I would get a text or a call or an email from, I don't know, the comm arts guy, we have a great comm arts team. They'd say, "Hey, we need to know what you think about this hire or this acquisition or this decision." My initial thought would be, "Figure that out on your own. Come on, you guys are growing up, figure that out on your own."

Max Lucado: When I was in my younger years, when I was ... I think, I had more in the tank. Or, maybe it's just a better call, my call was better suited. I would say, "Yeah, let's sit down, let's talk it out. Let's make sure this lines up with our overall vision. Let's work together. Thanks for calling me. Yeah, let's meet for coffee." It wasn't there. It wasn't happening. It just wasn't happening.

Max Lucado: My response was, "I want to study, I want to preach. I don't want to mess with these decisions," even significant decisions. To me, I thought, "I cannot. I need to be honest." I gave it a good year, Carey. It's not like this was a bad week.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Max Lucado: I gave it a good year and it just wasn't happening. I said, "You know that's okay, that's okay." Again, I refer to William Vanderbloemen in his book. He talks about the average retirement age for pastors is 64, and that's how old I was. That just gave me permission. I just needed to hear that, because I've heard these stories of guys that I've idolized, like Swindoll, David Jeremiah, Charles Stanley, these guys are cranking it out in their 80s. I'm thinking, "Now, that's what I need to be doing. Maybe so. Maybe I don't have an explanation for that."

Max Lucado: The vast majority of us, something happens in our mid 60s we need to re-evaluate. That's what happened, I re-evaluate.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm really glad and thanks for opening up like that, because I think it's an important conversation. Burnout, that can happen. I think you put the ladle in the bucket as you say and everything is empty, like you're scraping the bottom everywhere. You don't want to write a book. You don't want to go golfing. That's burnout.

Carey Nieuwhof: I would have a very similar experience to you, where even in my late 40s pushing two decades into senior church leadership. I probably have another five years in my tank, so I could have gone, "I'm 54 now, one more year, maybe." I was getting more irritated and frustrated with day-to-day, the running of the church. There's nothing wrong our church. We have a great church. We have great staff. What used to energize me started to drain me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Again, you think, "I'm having a bad day or whatever." Then, you realize, "Wait a minute, that's one area of my life. There are other things that are really energizing me." I wonder if that is a shift in assignment a sign that you need to pay attention to. I think you're right, you can push through that on a temporary basis.

Carey Nieuwhof: The other thing that got really fuzzy for me, Max, I don't know if this happened for you. If you ask a 39-year-old Carey what does the future church look like, our church, I had a very clear answer. If you ask 49-year-old Carey what does connect us look like a decade down the road. It would be like, "More, bigger." My vision just started to move into other areas. I wonder if that's a sign from God that it's time to move on.

Max Lucado: I think that is exactly. I think you're reading that correctly. I think we do need to pay attention to what is giving us energy.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Max Lucado: There's a great story. You remember Pete Sampras, the tennis guy?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, yeah.

Max Lucado: Pete Sampras. I read an article about him after he retired from tennis. He said that he always had a practice before he'd go out for a tennis match, he'd be in the locker room or wherever he was getting dressed, lace up his tennis shoes and he would take both hands and slap the floor. That was his way of saying, "Okay, it's time," slap the floor. He said, "I always told myself, if you quit slapping, it's time to retire." He said, "I found myself and I wasn't slapping. I wasn't slapping."

Max Lucado: What is it that makes a person slap? There's, I think, a good question. Let's not assume that what causes us to slap in our 20s is going to cause us to slap in our 60s. Now, I'm still slapping. I like this little metaphor we got going here. I'm still slapping when it comes to creating books, message creating. I get pumped. I really do genuinely get excited. I was not slapping the floor when it came to where does the church need to go? Where does the church need to go? I can relate.

Max Lucado: We need to forgive ourselves that. That's okay. That's okay.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Max Lucado: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: In fact, it might actually be disobedient or wrong to hang on in a position to which you're not called anymore.

Max Lucado: There you go.

Carey Nieuwhof: I have tremendous energy for these conversations with leaders. I have tremendous energy for writing. You know writing a book isn't easy but I love it. I'll sign up for books six tomorrow, right, as hard as it is. It's good.

Max Lucado: There's therapy for that by the way.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. That's right, 3,042 books and he says. Yeah. No, I think that's very clarifying. I think often, we can phrase it in such a binary way as, "I'm called to this, I'm called for life." Or, yeah, your calling this for life but your assignment might change.

Max Lucado: I read a good quote from ... No, actually, I was reading a book by Robert Morris, the pastor at Gateway in the Dallas area. The God I Never Knew, it's a book on the Holy Spirit. He pointed out that the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives us don't all come upon our day of conversion and they don't all come for life.

Max Lucado: I'm probably the last person hearing this who hasn't already realized that.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, I am because you knew it before me. Go ahead.

Max Lucado: It made me pause. I thought, "Yeah. I feel like the Lord has blessed me with some abilities that I didn't have back in my 20s and 30s that I've realized and I don't know if they're going to stay around forever." If the Holy Spirit truly is the ultimate gift giver, if he truly is the one masterminding the church, and he plays as Carey in a church, plays as Max in a church and he says, "I give you this gift use to glorify God and edify the church. You use that and now I'm going to give you this gift. I want you to be aware of this and then give you this ability and the strength and this capacity." You hear what I'm saying?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, I do.

Max Lucado: I think part of walking in step with the spirit is being open to the idea that he's going to give us new interest and new capacities. Again, we're not talking about am I going to stay a Christian? Am I going to be faithful? My love for Christ, that still believe in the gospel. It's how I'm going to use my strengths. Just one other little thought on this. I'm very sympathetic with guys like you and guys like me who find ourselves with the ladle at the bottom of the bucket or unable to slap the floor, but we don't have another source of income, practically speaking.

Max Lucado: I write books and so a debt pressure wasn't there. I'm sympathetic to anybody who could be hearing this broadcast saying, "Yeah, that was easy for you, Lucado, but I don't have a plan B and I got to pay for my ... I got tuition coming up." You might have some thoughts on that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, it is interesting, and it wasn't, I haven't sold quite as many books as you have, Max, but I'm kidding. Not even close. There was a pay cut involved, but I did have some other income, not enough that my future was guaranteed. I still had to work to provide for my family. We had two kids in university, four years ago. They were in very expensive programs. We were definitely contributing in a massive way to that. I can just say God provided. I know that sounds like the most cliché answer in the world. When I jumped in, in this little hobby of doing podcasts and everything kind of took off.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now, I'm not worrying about money day-to-day. I think that is one of those things. There's a danger ... Stephen Mansfield, we talked about different books. I think that's his name. It'll be right in the show notes, wrote a book called 10 Signs of a Leadership Crash. This is like, "Why do, not just pastors but bankers and executives, like why are all these moral failures and they make terrible decisions and they destroy their lives? Why do they do that?" One of the signs is staying in a leadership position out of season.

Carey Nieuwhof: He had done some research and discovered that sometimes, it's like six months too long. You start to get bored. You start to make bad decisions. I think, that could happen. You have to think about, what happens to me? What happens to the church? Or, what happens to the company or the organization if I stay too long? I think, it's a really important conversation, Max, and you've added some layers to it. Thanks for your transparency on that.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think what I would do is try to investigate as much as possible, "Okay, if it's not this then what? Is it that I go and work retail? Or, do I start something? Or, do I take my skills and do something else? Because I don't think you can just use the church or your company as a self-serving mechanism." Does that make sense?

Max Lucado: I do know some pastors who went through a season of exhaustion and then they got into a different career. I'm thinking of one good friend of mine, who got into sales and enjoyed a great kind of second chapter career. Now that he's retired from selling computer equipment, he is a part of a church startup and having the time of his life.

Max Lucado: Kind of that initial calling is back and he's able to use it. He's just wiser with it. I guess, I'm saying that to say that just stepping away doesn't mean that you're abandoning a call. It may mean just taking a break from it and it'll come in another, maybe another expression down the line.

Carey Nieuwhof: Looking back over your decades in leadership, what would you say ... and it's been a good conversation so far. What would be some of the other major challenges? If you had a couple that you're like, "Wow, yeah, this one showed up, or this was a season that I didn't know how I'd get through." What were some of the challenges you faced in leadership over the decades?

Max Lucado: I would be certainly more careful in staff building and staff investing. I've already acknowledged that my favorite thing is sermon preparation and sermon presentation. There are some folks, some good friends of yours and mine, they love building a team. Their dream day is one coffee after another, one visit after another, one planning session after another. I certainly admired those folks.

Max Lucado: For me, that was always a challenge. I felt like I didn't succeed in that area as well. What I would do differently, when I came to the church in 1988, we were a three-person staff. One was an evangelism focus. One was a youth focus. Then, we began hiring, worship, education, kind of building out a team like that. I should have hired a right-hand man or right-hand woman. I should have gone immediately to a great executive pastor. That's what I should have done.

Max Lucado: Somebody who could really help me build that team. Looking back, I think, I would like to have done that. I think that would have spared me some sleepless nights and spared our staff some, because as I look back, I didn't have that go-to person. Everybody was, there was Max and then there was 10 of us. Everything was right. Everybody was reporting to Max, it was a terrible organizational structure. That could have been a lifesaver for me.

Carey Nieuwhof: What did that do to you when you didn't have that right-hand person?

Max Lucado: I come out of a small church background and at the time, our affiliation was with a denomination that is primarily smaller churches. I didn't have a place to go. My world wasn't quite big enough, Carey. Some people are going to find this hard to believe, but I didn't attend conferences. I wasn't listening to podcasts. I kind of had a small world of churches that were our size and even smaller, four, 500 people.

Max Lucado: I didn't have a model. I did not have a model, somebody I could look at and say, "Oh, here's what you do when you get to be 800. Oh, here's what you do when you get to be 1000. Here's what you do when you get to be 1500." I was still leading the church at the site when we got to be, I don't know, 1500, 2000 people. I was still trying to do everything like I did when we were four and 500 people.

Max Lucado: I was making myself available to everyone on staff. I was still trying to meet with anybody in the church who wanted to meet with me. I had no clue how to redefine myself. Is that the right word?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, yeah.

Max Lucado: Reinvent myself, maybe. I do think that we have to at different levels of growth, reinvent ourselves and I just ... I wish I could have done it better. Again, it's one of those things you look back and you say, you did the best with what you knew at the time. God was gracious and the church was still happy and growing. It was taking its toll on me. I think when we first had one of our earlier podcast, I

shared the battle I had with insomnia like in my late 30s and it got really serious. That is a gray cloud I wish upon nobody, that insomnia. Then, just the stress of overcommitment. It took a toll on our family.

Max Lucado: My wife spiraled into a season of depression. I think it's because she had three small children and one of whom was in diapers and her husband was on the road all the time. It was a challenging season for our family and it took its toll on us.

Carey Nieuwhof: What are some of the best decisions you've made?

Max Lucado: Yeah. You have such great questions, by the way. Just tell me if I get too long winded on this.

Carey Nieuwhof: This is great, Max. I love it. You're so transparent. It makes it so refreshing. You get to meet the man behind the books that everybody's read and the messages that we've heard.

Max Lucado: I was 38 years old, I'd been at Oak Hills at our church, I came here at the age of 33. At the age of 38, I got a serious case of arrogance. I went to our elder board with a list of, I think, it was five things we needed to change to become a relevant church. I'm 33, most of our elder board at that time we're in their mid-50s, early 60s. They took me under their wing, they liked me.

Max Lucado: Here I come swaggering in with this list of things, everything that had to do, Carey, from ... I can't even recall the list right now. I wanted to change our worship style. I wanted to change the name of our church. I wanted to change our view, our understanding of the role of women in the church assembly. I had about five hot button issues. I thought I'm so smart. I've got it all figured out. I had a list and I came in and I sat down with that elder board on a Wednesday night. I said, "Here's what we should do."

Max Lucado: Much to their credit, seven or eight guys, seven or eight men, they didn't kick me out of the room. Much to their credit they said, "We're going to think about this and pray about this." I can't remember, I want to say they said, "Let's take two weeks or so." They brought me back in on the given date and they said, "You know, Max, we've talked about this. We've all talked with each other. Some of us have talked to you, but we've come to a unanimous agreement. These are good ideas, but not yet."

Max Lucado: That was their statement. I can still remember them saying, "These are good ideas, but not yet." That was really, I think, looking back pretty wise, they had their finger on the pulse of the church. I took personal offense at it. I just said and I gotten a huff, I got angry. At the same time that was happening, I had been given an invitation to move to another city and take a role at a different church, had actually gone and interviewed at another church. Not that I had not told them and so I thought, "Okay. That's my sign right there."

Max Lucado: The next day, I had lunch with a friend here in San Antonio, Texas, who at the time was a pastor of a church. He and I met on a once a month basis. We met for a hamburger. I expressed my frustration to him. He and I were about the same age. I just knew he was going to be very sympathetic to me. I told him how the church didn't appreciate me and how I have outgrown this church, I need to move on. Who knows what language I used.

Max Lucado: He was not sympathetic with me. Here's what he said. He said, "Max, do they still let you preach the gospel at that church?" I said, "What do you mean? Do they let me?" He said, "Can you talk about Jesus and the death, burial and resurrection of Christ? Can you talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit and the promise of heaven?" I said, "Yeah, I could do that. I mean, I could do that every day. They love me to do that." He said, "You stay at that church, until you cannot preach the gospel. You stay where you are. All these are secondary issues you're talking about. The primary issue is the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. As long as you can preach the gospel, then you just learn to agree, to agree to disagree about a few things."

Max Lucado: I took that as a word of knowledge from him. I went home and I told my wife, I said, "Honey, we're staying here. We're just going to stay here." I am so glad I did. I am so glad. It's just been wonderful. I love this church. I love the privilege to spend mine, to stay in one place for a long time. I'm so glad I did not leave. That's the best decision I made. That's always been my rule. If they ever tell me, I can't preach about Jesus, which I mean, the earth is going to collapse before they do that. I know these folks.

Max Lucado: It could happen at some church somewhere. I would leave if they told me I couldn't preach the gospel. I think the rest of it I can put up with. You know what? Each one of those things, by the way, has happened. All of those things I suggested, over time, we've gradually transitioned into them. We didn't split the church. We didn't drive people away. It was not a big thing of controversy. They did their job. They shepherded a young pastor through a rebellious time.

Carey Nieuwhof: What are some of the fruits of, well, 31 years in the same place?

Max Lucado: One of the fruits is that it forces me to preach on topics that I have never preached on. I sat down about two years ago, when I was going through this transition. I knew I was going to stay on as a teaching pastor, even though we're transitioning the churches to independence. I thought, "Okay, I could get a fresh shot at creating some sermon series. Are there any big topics I've never preached on?"

Max Lucado: I had never really preached on last days, last dates. I had never tackled some of the topics that some of my guy friends and gals they jump at. I never preached on the book of Daniel or the book of Revelation. I put a series of sermons together on the book of Daniel and I love doing that. I learned a lot. I had never preached an extended sermon series on the Holy Spirit.

Max Lucado: How could you preach for 30 years and neglect preaching on one of the members of the Trinity, but I had, and so I'm starting that in September, about a-13 week, 12-week series on the Holy Spirit. That's a benefit is that it forces me to go into areas that I had not gone into. Then, a second benefit is just the season of legacy, of being respected. Of being respected in the sense that I can stand before our church, without any apology. They know everything about me. Try to disclose the mistakes that I've made. It's a pastoral role that I think has comes through years and seasons.

Max Lucado: They love my wife. They know my kids. My daughter is often invited to speak at our church, two of my three daughters have been invited. That's beautiful. I would say that those two things, one is the opportunity to and the challenge of preaching on topics I've never preached on. Then, number two, just the sweetness of a respected legacy.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's so rich. Switching gears a little bit, getting ready for this interview. I don't know how I got there. I clicked on your website and saw a really interesting set of guidelines for how you book your speaking. You have a very unusual process. Unusual, unique from what I've seen, process where you really set your calendar only a year in advance and kind of all at once. Can you talk about what that is and then why you structure it that way?

Max Lucado: Yeah. If somebody says, "Will you come and speak at our conference or event?" I'll say, my response is, "I make those decisions in August of the year prior." For example, for the schedule, making the schedule for 2020, I made the decisions in August of 2019. That meant that I collected speaking requests since August of or September of 2018. I sit down with the stack of requests and make decisions. The reason I don't do that until August is because we put our church preaching calendar together in August of the year prior.

Max Lucado: I put my publishing calendar together in August of the year prior. From my way of thinking, my priority has always been the church. I wanted to honor the church and put priority there first. Then, second publishing. For me, that includes a pretty extensive blocking of calendar time for writing and editing and then marketing and traveling for new books. Once I have the church calendar, I know what the church is expecting of me. Once I know what the publisher is requesting of me, then what's whatever time is left over, I will say, "Okay, I'll accept that speaking invitation."

Max Lucado: It's with any policy, I've made exceptions if some ... I've got a great friend who's, we were in college together and he asked me, I said, "I really need to know earlier." I said, "Okay, sure." I told him no. I'm just teasing. I mean, there's always exceptions, it's not hard fast, but it's pretty ... it sure allows me better control over the management of my time.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, that's really good to know. What have you learned about saying no? I asked a lot of guests that.

- Max Lucado: You're learning. Yeah.
- Carey Nieuwhof: What are you learning about saying no? What's helped you? Do you still struggle with it?
- Max Lucado: I still struggle with it. I still feel bad, especially good friends, if I have to tell them no. I've really learned to listen. I've tried to learn to read the expression on my wife's face because she'll never ... she doesn't come right out and say, "You're doing too much," but I can sense it. Saying no to speaking or to travel is really a good yes to her.
- Max Lucado: Her love language is quality time, she really likes just to hang out. For the year 2020, I was really proud to show her the calendar and say, "Honey, here's a large block of weeks, that I said no to everything, just so we can figure out something fun to do." That's a benefit that comes with being semi-retired or at least I don't have church leadership roles, so I have flexibility. Saying no is still hard, but it's gotten easier.
- Max Lucado: Then also, I've learned that when I say no to some people, they act disappointed, but they've got plan B. I might be their plan B, for all I know. Very well, it could be.
- Carey Nieuwhof: That's so true.
- Max Lucado: Yeah. Who am I to say that I was their first choice? I might be choice number 10. They've got it all figured out. It doesn't bother me like it used to.
- Carey Nieuwhof: That's good to know. You have another book coming out of on all things happiness. I'd love to talk about that a little bit. Many people wouldn't exactly describe our culture today as a happy culture. Most people, have you ever, I don't know that you've ever done this, but you kind of just scan the faces of people at an airport or in public or at the grocery store. People don't really look happy.
- Max Lucado: They don't, do they?
- Carey Nieuwhof: No, they don't.
- Max Lucado: Have you noticed that? Do you see that when you look....
- Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, I also know my default face is not happy. My wife's like, "You got to smile," I'm like, "Okay, okay," apparently, I always look upset. I'm part of the problem. Talk about why you wrote about happiness.
- Max Lucado: You're right. What we see, what we suspect intuitively is really born out empirically because research, so Cambridge got some fascinating research on

happiness. My favorite piece was one that said that only one in three Americans describe themselves as happy. Only one in three. That, to me, I would have guessed one out of two, I would have thought maybe half. One out of three would say that there ... would not describe themselves as happy.

Max Lucado: I also was impressed with the fact that happiness really helps us be better people and unhappiness really takes its toll on us. Healthy marriages have a higher rate of happiness. Unhealthy people earn less money, they have more health issues. I was reading those statistics, Carey, about the same time that I was preaching a sermon series at our church based on the one and other verses in the New Testament. The "serve one another, love one another, help one another." I came up with the idea of calling that sermon series 100 Happy People.

Max Lucado: My challenge to the church was, instead of, "Let's just the study these scriptures, let's put them to use and keep a journal." We created a nice little journal that people could use. I said, "For the next 40 days, take these verses, put them to use in your everyday life and see if you don't make 100 people happy." My hunch, I told them, "My hunch is, there will be a boomerang effect and you'll be happy as you make other people happy." It worked. It was really a lot of fun.

Max Lucado: I preached the sermon series and then I came across this research and I thought, "I'm going to take that sermon series and I'm going to try to marry it to this research and talk about how happiness happens." The big idea is simply that really happiness happens when we give it away, when we give it away. I know that's not news to any of us but it's ... we forget it, we forget it. It's kind of a refresher course on happiness, that doing good always does good for the doer, it always does.

Max Lucado: That there's a wonderful research that shows how people who give things away, who are benevolent, who are kind, who make other people, who are others-centered, are truly the happiest people. That could mean that the reason we're so happy ... we're so unhappy, is simply because our society has gotten so selfish and me-focused. All we need to do is shift our mindset and we'll begin to score higher on the happiness test.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think that's a fascinating correlation between what you read in statistically and what you're seeing in scripture. I've heard of preach and perhaps I've even preached this, that God isn't interested in your happiness. You hear versions of he wants your holiness, he wants joy, the difference between joy and happiness. What are your thoughts on that? Does God actually care whether we're happy? Is it the pursuit of happiness?

Max Lucado: Yeah, I know, and I've had a few conversations like that. I really land on the side that happiness is a virtue. I don't parse as tightly as some people do the difference between joy and happiness. If they want to, that's fine. I think

happiness is that deep-seated contentment, that sense that the lines have truly fallen for me in pleasant places. I've got a great God I serve. I've got a great future ahead of me. I think happiness is just that natural byproduct of living in communion with the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

Max Lucado: I sense that they're happy. I really do. I sense that there's a happy communion between the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. That's a happy comment to me. When the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus, not as a hawk or an eagle, but as a dove. When Jesus introduces the Holy Spirit, as a friend, a comforter, an advocate, here's somebody you can count on to be with you. I see a sense of harmony in the Trinity and a community that's pleasant and it's peaceful.

Max Lucado: I think that there's something to be said about seeing happiness as a virtue that we should aspire and not something that we should apologize for. I do not see that holiness is in competition with happiness. I think that holiness creates a happiness and it creates a sense of, okay, good, good. It's unholiness that creates guilt and anger and bitterness and gets us off the path. Practicing these beautiful disciplines that are part of the holy life leads to a level of happiness that I think can be contagious.

Carey Nieuwhof: I pick it up whenever we have a conversation, I pick up a piece in the happiness that kind of is contagious, Max. You mentioned selfishness and self-focus. Any other thoughts on why most people like two-thirds of Americans are not happy?

Max Lucado: I think there's a subtle yet very decided upon strategy from the marketing companies to create a sense of unhappiness, so that we'll buy their products. I have had a bald spot for well over a decade. I know from this angle, you can't see it but if you're standing behind me, you would think that I'm wearing some type of little hat on the back of my head. For most of those years, I didn't know that was a bad thing. Until about three or four years ago, I saw a commercial telling me that my bald spot needs to be fixed.

Max Lucado: The goal of that commercial was to convince Lucado to purchase some of its product to fix my bald spot. All of a sudden, I was self-conscious about a bald spot that my wife had never complained about and that to be honest, I had only spotted once when I was in a convenience store and the security camera happened to be focused on my bald spot and I looked up. There in the monitor was some guy with a bald spot and I said, "That's me." I was happy even to live with it, I laughed about it. I thought, but look at what was happening. This commercial, these series of commercials come along and I can envision these people sitting in an office on Madison Avenue saying, "We've got to convince people like Lucado that that bald spot is doing damage to their life or he won't buy my product."

Max Lucado: You take that strategy and you extend it, you extrapolate it over 10,000 different, everything from skincare to weight loss to the size of pants, to pants,

to cars we drive. There's a multibillion-dollar industry out to convince us that our bald spots are bad. To do that, they've got to convince us that we're unhappy. That's kind of a convoluted way of answering your question. Everywhere I look, somebody's trying to make me unhappy, everywhere I look, so that I'll buy their product. I think that we need to understand that there's a strategy toward happiness that says, "You don't have to listen to those people anymore."

Max Lucado: You can get other-focused, you can be kind to your neighbor, you can forgive the people who have offended you, you can serve one another, love one another, greet one another, encourage one another. Put that to use and see if that doesn't counterbalance this deluge of messages that we have to face on a regular basis.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you think social media has made that better or worse?

Max Lucado: You know what I'm going to say?

Carey Nieuwhof: I do. I had to ask though.

Max Lucado: It's just horrible. It's just horrible. It's just horrible. Oh, my goodness. Yeah, I actually, somebody told me the other day that Instagram is thinking about removing the number of followers for the likes.

Carey Nieuwhof: Number of likes. Yeah. They've done that in Canada. Actually, I lost the number of likes. It just says, Max Lucado and others if you like something.

Max Lucado: What do you think of that?

Carey Nieuwhof: It's really interesting. I think it's made me ... it probably it's been about a month, it happened to my wife's account months ago. Then, you know how these algorithm things, they just update your software without your permission and boom, next thing you know, mine are gone. I think it probably has made me less anxious. It probably has made me, if I follow Lewis House or I follow Andy or yourself. Are you on Instagram? I don't ...

Max Lucado: I am. I am. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. I got to follow you then. We'll link to that in the show notes, by the way. It's not like, "I got 600 likes and somebody else got 60,000 or whatever." As somebody who shares what I have online, it made it a little bit harder, but you can actually, if you have a business account, you can click in to see whether anyone engaged with it, whether anyone liked it.

Carey Nieuwhof: You can still get those numbers. They're not readily apparent, but it's probably a better move because I can get the data, my team can get the data we need to

reach the audience we want. I'm not seeing it every time I scroll through to see what my friends are doing. I would say, in the end, I was not a fan of it, but I'd say now a month into it, two months into it, yeah, I think it's probably better.

Max Lucado: Yeah, yeah. The fiendish part of displaying the number of likes is that we do compare ourselves. There's a tendency.

Carey Nieuwhof: For sure.

Max Lucado: I follow like Beth Moore.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Max Lucado: Christine Caine. I mean, I see 60,000 likes or 80,000 likes, I think, what did they say that I didn't say? My mind goes into this.

Carey Nieuwhof: Mine, too.

Max Lucado: Into this comparison thing. That's not healthy. It's not healthy in any form of ministry. I think, that if we do that, how much more does ... and we're supposed to be mature and spiritual. How much more does a middle-schooler who's really ... their world really depends upon being accepted and liked and they just can't bless her little hearts, there's no way she's going to say something that 100 people are going to like. It creates this reinforcement of insecurity. That really does take happiness away from people.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think it does. Do you find when it comes to social that you're also competing against yourself? It's like, "When I put it this way, it got 1,000 likes. When I put it this way it got 100 likes."

Max Lucado: Yeah, yeah. By the way, I like social media as a ministry tool. I really do. I think that there is a tendency to try to crash something in a clever way that is probably not healthy.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. No. I appreciate that. Yeah. I was just reading this question. I thought, "Yes, I do want to ask this." I love how you tied listening into happiness. It's not just about speaking. When I read that, I mean, if you look at the political landscape and the social media landscape, it's almost all about speaking today. Here's what you should believe. This is what I have to say. How is listening a key to happiness?

Max Lucado: I have a friend here at our church, he one day came up to me, he's a leader in our church, and he said, "I've got a great title for a book on leadership." I'll throw this out there so you can write it, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. Go ahead.

Max Lucado: He said, "It ought to be called leading by listening in a world full of speaking." I like that. I do, I do. I think listening honors people. You're honoring me today by the way you're listening to me. I can tell that you genuinely care. This isn't just an interview for you. You're curious. You're a curious person. You're unselfish enough to really stop and listen to what people say. That's a rare commodity in this day and age.

Max Lucado: The ministry of Jesus had some elements of listening to it that I think are really inspiring. When he healed the woman who had the issue of blood for 12 years, remember, he was on the way to heal the daughter of Jairus, the synagogue leader. She threaded away through the crowd. She was ostracized by the community, but she touched the hem of his garment. He felt the healing go out of her and he stopped everything and He said, "Who touched me?" She came forward. I can't recall the translation, Carey, but I tell about it in the book.

Max Lucado: One of the translations has it like this. She came forward and she told him the whole story. She told him the whole story. Imagine, here's Jesus. He's on his way to heal a young girl who's dying. The most important man in the town wants him to hurry up. He's got to throng a mob of people surely trying to usher him along. He's got moving. He is not moving until this woman who has been marginalized by society has had a chance to tell her whole story. It's a beautiful picture.

Max Lucado: There is a wonderful ministry that comes. I have done just enough counseling to teach me the value of being a good listener, and helping people just let them test things as they talk. I think listening is a great act of service. It really is. I talk about that in the book. There's something wonderful that happens to me. I'm a happier person if I don't feel like I have to have a quick and ready response to every question that surfaces.

Max Lucado: Sometimes, I'm listening because I honestly don't have a word of wisdom yet. I'm waiting for the Lord to tell me. I've made the mistake of speaking prematurely and living to regret it. If I just listen to the problem or listen to the question or just interact on those how to do you feel, how does that make you feel level, then inevitably, something good happens.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think that's so good. Listening is becoming a lost art. It's a discipline, I've talked about this on the podcast before, for me to really let the guest shine and just to keep my interventions to minimum. Guests seem to so appreciate it because if you ...

Max Lucado: You do a great job. You do, honestly. I mean, I'm really not just saying that. Sometimes, I'm on interviews and I feel like they're trying to steer things in a certain direction. That's fine, especially on popular talk shows, secular talk shows. That's fine. I love talking to you and to others that have your skillset because you communicate a sense of, I genuinely want to know your story. I genuinely want to know your story.

Max Lucado: In our day and age, that means closing the laptop or turning off the television or putting the smart device away, so we're not distracted, right? That sends a message too, if we make people a priority in that.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think that's becoming more and more of a skill, is to silence your devices, to put them away, to put them in your bag or in your pocket and just look at someone in the eye and listen. Thank you. I appreciate that. The book is called How Happiness Happens. I need to ask you, because I don't think we've covered this last time. How do you title your books? Because that's always a debate, right?

Max Lucado: It is really hard, isn't it?

Carey Nieuwhof: I know.

Max Lucado: It is really hard. Yeah. Sometimes, a title will make itself obvious as I'm writing it. Most of the time, it does not. I write my books a year in advance, and so I have finished the book for 12 months from now. It's in the hands of the publisher. We've edited it. We've gone through everything. We were in the final stages and we still couldn't land on a title. We still could not.

Carey Nieuwhof: For this book or for the new one?

Max Lucado: For the new one, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. 2020?

Max Lucado: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Max Lucado: 2020. At a meeting with the publisher, we call it a brand leadership team. We were way down the pike, way down the pike and I just couldn't land on a title. We had so many different ones. We had a prayer session. We did. We did pray. I said, "We got to pray about it and seek the Lord and see if we can land on a title." I would have liked to say that one was downloaded that day in that very meeting and we all got it. Actually, it took still another two or three weeks.

Max Lucado: On rare occasion, I've had a title that I said, "This is it. We're not going in a different direction because it is so clear that this is what I'm trying to communicate." About four out of five times, I've said, "This is what I want to do to," the publisher, "But do you have a better idea?" Of those occasions, probably, 50% of the time they'll say, "No. You've got a great idea. This works." About 50%, they'll say, "We're going to take this to focus groups. We're going to test it and see how it's received." We end up landing on something eventually.

Carey Nieuwhof: You have a favorite title in all the books? Just for the pure title, not the content but you're like, "Oh, that was a good one."

Max Lucado: When God Whispers Your Name. When God Whispers Your Name. I think my books, we've talked about this before. I like to write books for people who don't like to read books. My target audience is probably not the pastoral leadership team that you speak to. You really work with people who love books. My goal is to write a book for the person who doesn't like a book, but they see that title and they say, "Oh, God would whisper my name?" There's a hope even in the title, hope even in the title.

Max Lucado: I'm happy with happy, that sounded funny. I'm happy with How Happiness Happens. I like that title. I think the word happiness is a good word, which leads me to my theory on titles. You need one strong word. You need one strong word. Happiness is a good word. I wrote a book called Anxious for Nothing two years ago, and the word anxiety is a buzz word today. Then to counterbalance Anxious for Nothing, which we recognize as a Bible phrase out of Philippians four. The people that I write for probably would just say, "Anxious for Nothing. Oh, I like that." That's what I'm looking for.

Max Lucado: I'm looking for a strong word that has a promise that's quietly embedded within it. Sometimes, I've succeeded and sometimes we haven't.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good. The one before this was Unshakable Hope.

Max Lucado: Unshakable Hope. The word was hope. My 2020 book is called You Were Never Alone. There's a promise right there, a promise. I want the title to say enough about the book that I'm onus, but to be intriguing enough that they flick it on Amazon or open it up or pull it off the shelf wherever they're doing their shopping. That's my little marketing lesson.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, that's great. I'm fascinated. Titling is sometimes more difficult than writing book like actually making the call.

Max Lucado: Before the interview, you shared with me your book title, but you said it's ... I think you said, "This is our working title."

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. The working title is Numb, How to Thrive When you're Overwhelmed, Underperforming, Dreaming of Escape and Ending Everyday by Numbing Out. It's quite a phrase, but ...

Max Lucado: It's quite a phrase, but those are working these days. When I first got into writing, the idea was a short subtitle. Now, you'll see on my books, we've got longer subtitles. They give a little more message about the book.

Carey Nieuwhof: Finding Lasting Joy in A World of Comparison, Disappointment, And Unmet Expectations, that's the subtitle.

Max Lucado: Yeah. That's the influence of my marketing team right there.

Carey Nieuwhof: There you go.

Max Lucado: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. That was Lysa TerKeurst. Kudos to Lysa who helped me figure that one out and her new team as we wrote it together. Max, anything else as we wrap up once again? Just so refreshing.

Max Lucado: You make it painless. You really do. Thank you. I'm very honored and may God bless you and continue to strengthen you and lead you into just an exciting new season of revelation and understanding and impact.

Carey Nieuwhof: Likewise to you, too. I'm excited for you. Do tell people, you're going to write some more kids' books. Is that true?

Max Lucado: Yeah, I love kids' books. My new kids' book, this will be a 2020 book, it's called Where Did My Giggle Go? The opening line is, "I woke up this morning with a frown on my face. I looked for my smile. I looked for it all over the place. I looked high, I looked low, I looked out of the snow, but I could not find it. Where did my giggle go?" I love that kind of writing. It's kind of the Dr. Seuss engagement fun. I'm going to do a whole series of books called The Giggle Series. I'm really pumped about those.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's great. That's going to be a lot of fun. Again, as we said last time, you are special. It has just become this incredible book that you didn't want to write because you were at the end of your contract and isn't it funny, the things God uses. To find you online, the easiest places are? Where's a good website?

Max Lucado: Yeah. Look for wanted posters, our parole officers, maxlucado.com is the best place.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right. Yeah. Then, you are on Instagram. Is it just Max Lucado?

Max Lucado: I am, I am. Yes, yes. I'm on Twitter. I'm on Facebook. I'm in there. I'm in there. I may not, but I'm doing.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm going to follow you on Instagram today. Max?

Max Lucado: Hey, bud.

Carey Nieuwhof: Thank you so much.

Max Lucado: All the very best. Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's so warm and so wonderful. One of my favorite things is I get to meet a lot of leaders, a lot of leaders that frankly, a lot of people don't get to meet. So often, not always but so often, they're exactly what you hope they would be, or better. Max fits into the or better. High expectations always exceeded. Everything we talked about is in the show notes, including transcripts. You'll see the video for what we have too on our YouTube channel. We are building a little archive there, so head on over the YouTube, search Carey Nieuwhof and you'll find ... yeah, an increasing, a growing number of leadership podcasts there.

Carey Nieuwhof: Remember, if you're on the road this year, anywhere near Pittsburgh, drop by The Future Forward Conference. I am going to be there October 1st and 2nd. You can go to [futureforwardchurches.com/theconference](http://futureforwardchurches.com/theconference) to register. You get a discount when you bring your group, and you should bring your team. Also, Pro WebFire. They're special of a free custom website. All that stuff expires at the end of September, so head on over to [prowebfire.com/carey2019](http://prowebfire.com/carey2019) where ... yeah, you can get that free website if you act now.

Carey Nieuwhof: We are back in just a couple of days. Subscribers, you know that. You get this stuff for free, delivered automatically to wherever you listen to your podcast and whatever platform you listen to them. You're going to be grateful for this one. I sat down with New York Times Bestselling author David Platt. We go all over the place. We talk about why all the objections to Christianity on like hell, suffering, eternity, and all the hard questions haven't led to his deconversion, even though he's really engaged them, and what needs to change among people to really impact the world. It's fascinating conversation. Here's an excerpt.

David Platt: When I read atheist scholars talking about good and evil in the world and how we are products of our DNA, and we just dance through its music, I think, that's the last thing I'm going to say to a girl who's been traffic like this. "I'm sorry, your DNA, his DNA is just dancing to it. In the end, it's all going to be ... it's not going to matter. You just had a bad luck." That's not true. There's justice that will reign in the end. There's a good God who wants his love to be and hope to be made known about among ... in that little girl's life, and I want to be a part of making that good news known to her.

David Platt: Anyway, I go down that road. I go down a road of Buddhism, I try harder and harder and do better. I mean, I'm talking to people on these mountains and their hope is that their next life is going to be better because they burn enough candles in this life line. I don't see that which is true or good and I believe Jesus is true and he is inadvertently good.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's happening in just a couple of days when Episode 291 drops. Hey, subscribers, thank you so much for being so faithful to this podcast. If this has helped you, please share it with people around you. We want to get more interactive. So, starting in October, I will be taking your questions around this point of the podcast or the end of the podcast with a new feature we're calling

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#askCarey. Go on to the socials, ask your question, use the #askCarey. Me and my team will comb social media, pick up all the questions and I will do my best to answer as many as I can, one per episode.

Carey Nieuwhof: Make sure you ask those questions now. We are getting ready to record even as we speak for the October episodes. Guys, thank you so much for listening. Thanks for being so generous. Hope to see you on the road this fall. In the meantime, 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.