

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

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, hey everybody, and welcome to episode 292 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well, a guest, who has been here more than a few times, is back today, Clay Scroggins. He's a good friend, a great thinker, and, really, a next gen leader, and, today, Clay is going to talk about something that is very close to my heart, which is just distraction.

Carey Nieuwhof: He just wrote a book about it. I actually just finished a book, that has a lot to do with that. It'll come out a year from now, but it is about turning down the noise, so you can get healthy. I think this is going to be super helpful. Clay is, these days, the lead pastor of Buckhead Church, one of the North Point churches in Atlanta, and he's done some ...

Carey Nieuwhof: We're going to tell you about it later in the show, but he's done some incredible interviews, with people like Sheryl Sandberg, and Bob Goff, and Dave Ramsey, that I'm going to give you access to in a little bit, but, anyway, Clay, great to have you back on the podcast. If he's new to you, you're going to love him. If you know him, as many of you probably do, I think you're going to be so glad to hear what he has to say about distraction.

Carey Nieuwhof: Hey, the fall is here, just in a couple of weeks. I would love for you to join me, October 1st and 2nd, in Pittsburgh. A lot of you are trying to transition a church, or maybe you're trying to transition a business. Next generation succession is a major issue. I'm spending more and more of my time working with leaders on it, helping people solve problems in that area.

Carey Nieuwhof: Having gone through it myself at Connexus Church. Now, I'm the founding pastor. It used to be the lead pastor. It doesn't always go well. It's gone well in our case. It's also gone fairly well, so far, at Amplify Church, which is hosting the Future Forward Conference, and, if you can get yourself to Pittsburgh, October 1st and 2nd, you will not be disappointed.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'll be speaking at the Future Forward Conference, along with Lee Kricher, Sam Collier, Jason Howard. My wife, Toni, will be there, and we're going to talk about, well, digital messaging for new generation. Building genuine community, leveraging creativity, world-changing women in ministry, elevate your church's impact, and, we're also doing kids, and student ministry, and much more. Bring your key leaders, so that you can get ready for your next reason of church ministry, and transition, so head on over to futureforwardchurches.com/theconference, to register. Individual tickets are one price, but the price goes down, if you register a group, so that's futureforwardchurches.com/theconference.

Carey Nieuwhof: Also, a lot of you are getting into budget season. How would you actually like to free up anywhere from tens of thousands, to perhaps hundreds of thousands of dollars? How can you do that? By saving on healthcare. You already have healthcare in your budget, and this is particularly for US churches, and faith-based, or not-for-profit organizations, and that can be a huge line item on your budget.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, what if, instead of taking a group plan, you could use Remodel Health, to help you rethink how you can customize health plans for each employee? Give them, in many cases, most cases, better benefits, and save a whack of money while doing it, so, so far, listeners of this podcast have plowed \$625,000 back into their ministries. That's how much they've saved, just from this podcast alone.

Carey Nieuwhof: Remodel Health is a startup company. \$7.2 million is what they've save faith-based and not-for-profit organizations so far. Simply by giving better benefits, or the same benefits to your members, and saving cost, so, if you want to know more, and why wouldn't you? Head on over to remodelhealth.com/carey, C-A-R-E-Y, today, and you can download their church buyer's guide for free. That's remodelhealth.com/carey, and start saving money today.

Carey Nieuwhof: Hey guys. I am so thankful for you, and for everything you do. If this episode helps you, would you share it on social? You can find me, @careynieuwhof on Instagram, @cnieuwhof on Facebook and Twitter, and, of course, everything we are talking about is in the show notes, which you can find at careynieuwhof.com/episode292, and, without further ado, my conversation with Clay Scroggins.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, it is exciting to be in the same room with Clay Scroggins. Clay, welcome back. You are a frequent flyer. All your bonus points are stacked up now.

Clay Scroggins: I can't wait to use them.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know. What do you get for being a regular guest on this podcast?

Clay Scroggins: Well, you get access to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast, which is what most people can have, as well. I don't know. I get time with you. That's the gift.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you know what? Here. You're the first frequent flyer-

Clay Scroggins: You get some-

Carey Nieuwhof: You get a bag of chips.

Clay Scroggins: A bag of Crisp 'N Tasty.

Carey Nieuwhof: A bag of chips.

Clay Scroggins: Thank you, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof: There you go.

Clay Scroggins: You are kind.

Carey Nieuwhof: All this can be yours too, people, so, Clay, it's great to have you back on the podcast.

Clay Scroggins: Great to be here. Carey, we're sitting face to face right now.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, how about that?

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, which is awesome. My wife listens to podcasts a lot. She was listening to this parenting one the other day. Talking about parenting teenage boys, and how, teenage boys, if you want to have a conversation with them, that is fairly substantial, and you know it's coming, that you shouldn't sit face to face, because most boys, even a lot of men, don't have the ability to sit face to face, and have a real conversation, and make eye contact.

Carey Nieuwhof: That is very true. I heard that years ago, so my kids are in their 20s now, but, when they were entering into those middle school, high school years, that's why I think a lot of dads, and, for me, this was true, the car was the best thing.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, the car. Exactly. Yeah, that's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: The car, because they're sitting in the backseat, or beside you. If you have any eye contact at all, it's through the rear view mirror, and-

Clay Scroggins: That's right, so you can just look forward, and not have to stare into the eyes of your father, and talk.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm a repository of all kinds of useless information, but do you know that was actually Freud's theory of psychotherapy? When you see the cartoon version of the patient lying down on the couch-

Clay Scroggins: That's why.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and then the therapist is in the chair, looking off into the distance. The theory was that you would be able to say a lot more, be a whole lot more honest, by not looking at someone ... Think I learned that from Jordan Peterson, but, anyway, psychotherapy changed.

Clay Scroggins: Okay. Well, I'm going to open up my soul, staring into your eyes.

Carey Nieuwhof: This just got really interesting, really fast. That's a good place to start, but it is interesting, because, normally, well, you and I have done a bunch of in-persons. Last time you were on, it was an in-person recording as well. I'm doing more and more of those, as time goes on, but it's interesting, because, normally, my interviews are digital, and I was saying I interviewed Ron Edmondson the other night, who'll be on at some point, on the podcast, and, as we were walking away from it, I said, "Real life is so much better," because one of the things you're going to hear in this podcast, because it's normal, human conversation, is what you might call over-talking.

Carey Nieuwhof: That you and I are going to talk at the same time, which won't last long, but maybe three, or four seconds, or that kind of thing, where you're saying something, I'm saying. That's very normal conversation. In a digital conversation, and we're going to talk about distraction, and noise, and the digital age we're in, but, in digital conversation, that never works out well. You can do it on a landline. If you're actually on a landline, you can do it, but, if you're on a cellphone, you always feel like you're cutting the other person off, because there's about a one second delay.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, latency.

Carey Nieuwhof: Latency, so you just did it. You jumped in, while I was still talking, but it was very natural. On Skype, because that's digital, that would have been really weird, so ...

Clay Scroggins: John, the follower of Jesus, whom he loved, the apostle, John, he says in, I think it's 2 John, verse 12, the only chapter. He says, "Though I write you now with pen and ink, I long to be with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete," and I think that's what he's saying. That this, the pen and the paper, that's the technology that we have, but I long to be with you face to face, because that's when our joy is going to be complete. That's the most real form of communication, which, of course, makes total sense, so maybe you can tell people, in the future, "Hey, though I'm with you now on Skype, I long to be with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete."

Carey Nieuwhof: There you go. "Hey, honey, even though we're FaceTiming, I can't wait to get home tonight."

Clay Scroggins: Yes. That's right, so that we both can be complete.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Clay Scroggins: That's a beautiful love note.

Carey Nieuwhof: It is something that's really, human beings have always had technology, but your latest book, tell us what it's called. How to Lead?

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, it's called How to Lead in a World of Distraction: Four Simple Habits for Turning Down the Noise.

Carey Nieuwhof: You're still in your 30s, but-

Clay Scroggins: Just turned 39.

Carey Nieuwhof: 39?

Clay Scroggins: Last year of my 30s.

Carey Nieuwhof: There you go. You've watched technology explode, and you're one of those people, who are becoming rarer and rarer breeds, who are not digital natives.

Clay Scroggins: Correct.

Carey Nieuwhof: How have you seen technology really start to ... You're leading a really big church. You're most recently at Buckhead Church, so switched to leading Buckhead Church, which is a church of how many people?

Clay Scroggins: Maybe 9,000 on a Sunday.

Carey Nieuwhof: 9,000 on a Sunday. Small church.

Clay Scroggins: Small church. It's our youngest church. Our most in-town church.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, the most urban, so it's one of the churches-

Clay Scroggins: Very urban.

Carey Nieuwhof: That make up North Point, and 9,000 people on a Sunday morning, which is huge, and you're a leader, in your 30s, trying to lead at that level, and you've got a million distractions at once.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Tell us about the challenges you experienced, when you're trying to lead.

Clay Scroggins: Well, I'll tell you just one quick personal anecdotal story about distraction, that it was heartbreaking, and sad, but then, it turned. Now, I can laugh at it, but, last summer, we're on a family trip. My in-laws, who live in Texas, they came into town. They wanted to come visit us, and, instead of coming to Atlanta, they said, "Hey, we've done Atlanta a bunch of times, because, obviously, y'all live there. Let's go to Chattanooga." Great little town on the South, good for kids. A lot of kids activities.

Clay Scroggins: We have five little kids, between, my wife and I do, and so we go to Chattanooga. I had to leave work on, I think it was a Wednesday night. I needed to go back to work on Thursday, and I had some work I had to do on Friday, so I was just going to go up for the evening, have dinner with the in-laws, help my wife get everybody settled in, and then I was going to go back to work early the next morning, and, when I pull up to this house, it was like a VRBO kind of situation.

Clay Scroggins: The owner of the house was standing in the driveway, just to welcome. Say, "Hey, here's where everything is." I was the first one to arrive. There were storm clouds, super stormy. I had like seven emails that I needed to finish, that I was, through self-control, not doing while I was driving, because that's unhealthy, dangerous, and illegal, and it was about to storm. 30 seconds later, my wife pulls up with our five kids. They're jumping out. Two minutes later, the in-laws pull up from the airport, so it was like a scene out of a movie.

Clay Scroggins: Just it went from quiet to hectic in 60 seconds, and I am so prone to distraction, and I go inside, help figure it out. Get everybody settled. I think two of our kids had found their dartboard, and were throwing darts at each other, which I quickly put out that fire, before someone got sent to the hospital.

Carey Nieuwhof: Siblings are awesome.

Clay Scroggins: Exactly, or lost an eye. Helped the bathe the youngest kid, set up a Pack 'n Play in record time. If you want to talk about being a parent, setting up a Pack 'n Play is the ultimate test to parenting, because it's so tricky to set the thing up. Got everybody else settled in, put everybody to bed, had dinner with the in-laws, go to bed. Wake up the next morning, 5:00 AM, go to the shower, and I think where did I put my car keys? I thought, huh, I think I left them in the car. Probably not a big deal. Feels like a safe neighborhood. Feels fine. I don't know. Go downstairs, dressed, ready to go work. Walk out, into the driveway, and my car is gone.

Carey Nieuwhof: Brilliant!

Clay Scroggins: In the middle of all the distractions, I left my keys in the car, and my car was-

Carey Nieuwhof: Stolen?

Clay Scroggins: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you call that stolen? This guy left me an invitation, unlocked, with the keys in the ignition.

Clay Scroggins: Exactly. I'm glad you bring that up, because I really, for the next ... These stages of grief, the first one is denial, the second one is blame, anger and blame, and

you blame others, but you also blame yourself, and there is a lot of like, "Oh my gosh! I am an idiot. I thought I was."

Carey Nieuwhof: This confirms.

Clay Scroggins: This confirms.

Carey Nieuwhof: This confirms my idiocy.

Clay Scroggins: I am a moron, and, fortunately, the police officer was super kind, and I said the same thing to him. I'm like, "Can I even claim this on insurance? How does this even work? I left the car open, and the keys in the car," and he taught me the laws of-

Carey Nieuwhof: With milk and cookies, please, take. Please, enjoy.

Clay Scroggins: And a note, that said, "Enjoy. You're going to love it." You, as an attorney, you would know this, but he said you can basically about hand your car keys to someone else, and, if they go into your car, that's breaking and entering, because that's your personal property, and so, he said, "As soon as they opened the door, and went in your car, they're stealing your car," so, anyway, the police ended up finding it a week later. I had to do some, there were some repairs."

Carey Nieuwhof: Was it trashed?

Clay Scroggins: It definitely wasn't in good shape, but it was not trashed. It's in working shape now. It's doing great, but, anyway, I bring that up, just to say there are so many ... Yes, to your point. Our world is more distracted today, than ever before. We have never lived in a more distracted day and age, than the one we're in now, and the amount of distractions in life, they're endless.

Clay Scroggins: Of course, social media is, that's probably the biggest change that we've experience in life. The cellphone, obviously. Walking around with a computer in our pocket, but the busyness of life. The work, food, schedule, time, everything. There are so many distractions, and the book's not really about the distractions. The book is about what is the distraction keeping us from? That's the fear that I have for myself, that the distraction ... I use the illustration of white noise. I sleep with ... Do you sleep with a noise machine?

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't, actually. I'm very blessed.

Clay Scroggins: Still and silence.

Carey Nieuwhof: I can fall asleep in the middle of a podcast interview. No, I'm kidding. I actually did fall asleep once. This is a story at Connexus, that still makes the rounds from

time to time, but we were doing an interview, years ago. This is probably pushing a decade ago. A staff member-

Clay Scroggins: Like a job interview?

Carey Nieuwhof: Job interview.

Clay Scroggins: Okay.

Carey Nieuwhof: We were meeting at a restaurant, in the US. It was someone we were looking at bringing out, and, apparently, I fell asleep in the booth, during the job interview.

Clay Scroggins: In the job interview?

Carey Nieuwhof: Mm-hmm (affirmative). We didn't hire that person. Exactly. That is exactly the reaction that story gets, and it's like, well, I'd spoken during the day. It was 11 o'clock at night. It was past my bedtime. I fell asleep, but no, not usually white noise.

Clay Scroggins: Okay. Not a noise machine.

Carey Nieuwhof: I know people who have to have fans, you know?

Clay Scroggins: Yeah. Do you know what's interesting? I do this now. I've asked, whenever I'm in front of an audience, talking about this topic, I'll just pull the crowd. Say, "Hey, how many of you use some sort of white noise, any kind of form of it, whether it's the-"

Carey Nieuwhof: There's an app, that will mimic anything.

Clay Scroggins: There's an app. Any noise, or, even people use the radio, people turn on the news, or whatever, and every audience I have been in front of in the last couple of months, talking about this topic, there is someone in the audience who uses, they turn on The Office, that just perpetually runs in the background, while the sleep.

Carey Nieuwhof: The show, The Office?

Clay Scroggins: The show, The Office, yeah. I don't know what that's about. Anyway-

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, you would expect to meet one of those people in your life.

Clay Scroggins: Exactly, not one-

Carey Nieuwhof: Mm-hmm, but one in every crowd.

Clay Scroggins: Exactly. There's one in every crowd. What I'm learning though, is that noise, the distraction, it is a, in the same way that white noise masks stuff, it masks the noises we don't want to hear, that's why we use white noise, because it keeps, like right now, there are sound blocking, sound masking devices in this room, or not devices, but these materials.

Carey Nieuwhof: These blankets.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, they're trying to keep that noise from coming in, and keep this noise from going out, and that's the same thing that white noise does, and that's what distractions really do. That's the danger of them, is that they mask the stuff that's really going on inside of us, and what I've learned in my own life, I've seen it in ... Everything, every one is on some kind of drug, and everything can be a drug, and we all keep our fingers on the dial of noise, and, whenever we feel something that we don't want to feel, we're tempted to turn the noise up, and it's easier to do that now, than it's ever been before.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's like Blaise Pascal, one of my ... I think it was him. One of my favorite quotes. "Man's chief problem is his inability to sit quietly, alone, in his room." Is that what you're driving at?

Clay Scroggins: I think that is more impossible now, than it has ever been before, because there are so many opportunities, and I love the song, Car Radio, by Twenty-One Pilots. Twenty-One Pilots has their finger on the pulse of the next generation, maybe more than most bands, I would say, but there's a song called Car Radio, where the guy, the lead singer's just talking about how, "My car radio got stolen, and, now, I'm driving around in silence, and all of these fears are about to kill me. They're driving me crazy now." And it's not that those fears weren't there.

Clay Scroggins: The whole song is about, basically, that the car radio was masking those fears. It was allowing him to not have to pay attention to those fears. The car radio gets gone, and, now, all of a sudden, so I think the reason why we can't sit in silence, sit in a room, alone, and do nothing, is, because we are so distracted, we don't want to feel what those feelings are telling us, and that hurts, and that's hard. That's difficult.

Carey Nieuwhof: How've you experienced that? I'm so glad you're writing this book, and bringing this message, because I teach on time management, energy management, solitude versus isolation, et cetera, but it's not really fair, because I'm in my 50s, my kids are grown. I have a pretty quiet house, and I don't mind sitting alone, quietly, in my room. In fact, that's where a lot of my strength comes from these days, but you're in the thick of it. Your kids range in age, range from 18 months.

Clay Scroggins: We have our oldest is 10, our youngest is 18 months, so 10, 8, 6, 4, 18 months.

Carey Nieuwhof: You are in the thick of it.

Clay Scroggins: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: And, you're leading at a very high level, in a very complex job, and all of that, so talk about how this has become personal for you. Were you saying you're running away from stuff that you needed to deal with?

Clay Scroggins: Definitely, and I don't say this to comfort myself, though, it does comfort myself, but it's not just me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, no.

Clay Scroggins: Everyone's doing it.

Carey Nieuwhof: 100%.

Clay Scroggins: But I never ... I guess that's, probably, you should write about things that you're dealing with. I know your burnout, Didn't See it Coming. The reason why it was so great, is because it was anchored in your own story, of your own burnout. I thought identity was something you worked on, when you were younger, and then it got established, and then you'd just live out of it. That life, at that point, just flows from you, and I just have been, over the last year, there's been more pressure in my job, and we've talked about this on your podcast, but, because of the changing landscape of the church world, we don't know what to do with it.

Clay Scroggins: We don't know, and, honestly, it's freaking us out, because church is changing. Church hasn't really changed that much in a couple thousand years. We gather together, we sing some songs, somebody preaches, and we talk about it with each other, and we pray for each other, and we share needs, and help each other out, but, now, because of the internet, obviously, things are changing, so that's changed our church so much. It's just created an additional pressure, because the uncertainty brings pressure. Uncertainty brings fear, and so I've been feeling all of that, so I had this situation, Carey, that I was sitting ... You're friends with my boss. His name is Lane Jones. He's a wonderful person.

Carey Nieuwhof: I love Lane.

Clay Scroggins: Great boss, and we had a meeting on a Tuesday, where it was maybe the worries, the concerns, the pressure I was feeling showed up on some dashboards, in some numbers, and I start internalizing all of that, and I was feeling a lot. At the time, I didn't know what I was feeling. I just knew I didn't like it, and I wasn't feeling good. I-

Carey Nieuwhof: You saw some numbers you didn't like.

Clay Scroggins: Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: No leader has ever faced that before.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah. What is that? Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, I get it, so you're seeing some numbers you don't like.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, and I'm going to move the chips.

Carey Nieuwhof: Pardon me, yeah. Well, you know, a lot of people want those chips.

Clay Scroggins: No, I'm not giving them away.

Carey Nieuwhof: Don't take them for granted.

Clay Scroggins: No, I'm not giving them away.

Carey Nieuwhof: Don't take them for granted.

Clay Scroggins: I'm just going to move them.

Carey Nieuwhof: Not everyone gets them.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, and I'm an uber positive person.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, you are, 100%.

Clay Scroggins: By major, so I have a bad day at work about three times a year, so my wife would say this, and so, when I have a bad day at work, she stops everything. Like, "Hey, let's talk. Are you okay?" She's just so used to going, "Hey, how's work?" "It was awesome. We had some great meetings today," and that's normal, so, Tuesday, bad day at work, Wednesday, bad day at work, Thursday, still feeling crummy, going, like, "I've got to figure this out," so I reach out to my boss, and I say, "Hey, I need to talk, because I'm about to roll into the weekend. I would love to get, work through this before the weekend happens," so we meet together, on Thursday afternoon, at about two o'clock, and, immediately, we start arguing about how the meeting went.

Carey Nieuwhof: Really? You and your boss start to disagree?

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, because I'm attaching meaning to the numbers, to the meeting. I'm attaching motivation to it. He's going, "I don't know why you're attaching that." He's seeing it differently. He's disagreeing. It was a very healthy conversation. I feel this emotion start coming up in me, which everyone has felt before, and everyone's had that experience too, where you look at the emotion, you're like, "No, not now. Back down."

Carey Nieuwhof: Be polite.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, come on, and, usually, the emotion obeys, and it's like okay, cool, but later. I would love to, I just want to ... This is what I'm learning. Your emotions are messengers. They're trying to tell you something. That's the whole point of them, so, when you're feeling lonely, it's trying to say something to you. When you're feeling anger, it's got a message for you. When you're feeling anger, it's got a message for you. When you're feeling jealousy, it's trying to tell you something, so, at the time though, I didn't want to pay attention to that, and I'm sitting in front of my boss, and I just lose it. The emotions were basically like, "Oh, no. We're coming out now," and so they just came out in the form of sobbing.

Carey Nieuwhof: You start to sob.

Clay Scroggins: I just start to sob, which I am not against crying at work. I've just never done it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Clay Scroggins: I've cried at a story of something great, that happened in somebody's life.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Baptism cries are different, than I'm crying in front of my boss, in a meeting.

Clay Scroggins: I was so embarrassed, and then you have that awkward, because you're a pastor, you get this, but you've sat with hundreds of people that have cried, and you never know what to do. You're like, "Do I stop, and let you deal with this? Do I hand you a tissue? Do I make a joke, and try to make you laugh? Do I encourage you?" He was doing all that, and I was like, "This is so awkward. He's doing what I've had to do 100 times, or gotten to do," and so I just was hating the moment, and I finally said, "Hey," and, of course, he keeps saying numerous times, he's like, "Are you okay?" It was a real tricky thing, because I'm like, "Well, clearly, I'm not."

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Wouldn't be I'm great, I'm great.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, which is what I said at first. Like, "No, I'm fine," but I know I'm not.

Carey Nieuwhof: Classic guy response.

Clay Scroggins: Exactly, like, "Yeah, I'm fine," and then I'm like, "Well, no, I'm not fine. Look at me," but the problem is I didn't know what it was. I was like, "I don't know where this is coming from, I don't know what this is," and so he ... Then, this is probably where I hit rock bottom, in this moment. Is my boss, who is a pastor, looks at me, who is a pastor, and says, "Could I pray for you?" I said, "No."

Carey Nieuwhof: Do not cover this up with prayer.

Clay Scroggins: Well, I was just-

Carey Nieuwhof: Why did you say no?

Clay Scroggins: Because I was like, "I don't want you to do that right now. I need to leave. That's what I need, and I know you're doing that." He was obviously very genuine in doing that, but I was like, "I've got to go. I need to get out of here. I don't need," so I just said, "Listen, what would be best, if we could just reschedule this, talk about this next week. That would be best," so he was like, "Sure, whatever you need."

Clay Scroggins: Then, I walk out of the building, and I see like three staff members, that have questions about stuff, and I'm like, "I can't talk right now," and, of course, they're like, "What in the world is going on?" I get in the car, driving home, and the emotion is continuing to pour out. There was a lot going on in my life then too, as well. Obviously, a lack of margin, when we're running in the red. Running a hot engine. That's also worth paying attention ... That's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: You're in the red zone, you're tired.

Clay Scroggins: All of that was happening, so I'm driving home, one of those you can hardly see kind of moments, and I had about an hour. About 30 minute drive home, and then I sat in the driveway for about 30 minutes, and I'm just trying to ... Like what is this? I think that moment of solitude was really healthy for me, and I started realizing that I am feeling like a failure, and I've rarely felt like a failure in my life, and then I was wrestling with, well, am I a failure?

Clay Scroggins: At first, I was trying to argue with myself. No, you're not a failure. Doing the whole Stuart Smalley from Saturday Night Live thing. "You're good enough, you're smart enough. Doggone it. People like you," that kind of thing, which I'm like that's not really helpful, honestly. I don't want to trick myself into thinking that I'm winning, when I'm not. The truth, at the time, might have been, I might have been failing.

Clay Scroggins: I don't know, and then, I don't want to, also, just go, "Well, I'm never going to put myself out there again." The whole Teddy Roosevelt quote, about putting yourself in the arena. I love that idea, and so I was really torn, and, in that moment, I really experienced, I feel like, that real communication from God, where I feel like God's saying, "Hey, whether you're winning, or whether you're losing, that's kind of irrelevant right now. The truth is you're loved, and that matters," and then I cry more, because I'm like, "Oh my gosh! He loves me." Then John Mark McMillan starts singing, "He loves you."

Clay Scroggins: Anyway, so that, for me, was probably the most clear example of this lately, for me, is that there was this stuff going on inside of me, that I needed to pay

attention to, and it had nothing to do with the numbers. It was all about something happening in me, but there's so much distraction around. I was just turning it up louder, and louder. Busyness, progress, success, certainty, the appearance of stuff, and I was missing something that was really happening inside of me.

Carey Nieuwhof: We will be right back in a minute, with more of the interview with Clay Scroggins, but it's an exciting day. Today is actually release day for Clay's new book, *How to Lead in a World of Distraction*. It's uber practical. It's helping leaders how to turn down the noise on a regular basis, and you can get that anywhere books are sold, and, of course, Amazon, et cetera, but I want to tell you about some bonuses that you may not know about, so what you can get today are accompanying video teaching resources, that Clay has provided to set up the discussion, because this is probably not just an individual read.

Carey Nieuwhof: This is something you can read with small groups, with staff teams, so Clay's got some bonuses for you. Video resources that you can get. When you order the book, you'll get Clay's video interviews, discussing leading in a world of distraction, with such leaders, like Sheryl Sandberg, from Facebook, Bob Goff, Dave Ramsey. Plus, if you order 10, or more, you can also get a study guide to accompany the book. Plus, three other videos of Clay teaching through the concepts in the book, and, if you've got a big team, you want to grab 50, or more books, for your entire team, or staff, you'll get all this, plus, get this, Clay will Skype into one of your staff meetings, to give a talk about the book, and do a Q&A.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now, I want to ask Clay, what happens if you buy 1,000 books? This is my proposal. If you buy 10,000, let's say 10,000, because, otherwise, I'm going to have to do this, he'll probably come to your backyard, and grill on a Big Green Egg. I don't know. Is that true, Clay? Anyway, these bonuses are available for a very limited time, so you want to head on over there right now, so go to clayscroggins.com. You will get these bonuses.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm kind of kidding about the Big Green Egg, but you will get bonus videos, and then you buy 50 or more books, you get Clay. He will Skype into one of your staff meetings, give a talk about the book, do a Q&A. Pretty cool deal. Those are the free resources right now, during the launch window for *How to Lead in a World of Distraction*, and, now, back to my conversation with Clay, who didn't know I said the part about the Big Green Egg. Let's pick up the conversation where we left off.

Carey Nieuwhof: So, this had been building for a while?

Clay Scroggins: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow! Okay. I don't want to turn this into a therapy session, but this is really interesting. First of all, I think almost all leaders have been there. Secondly, and I

don't want to turn this into gender stereotypes, but I think, as a rule, women are better at understanding, and processing their emotions, than men are, because men have two dominant moods, happy, angry.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, that's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: Happy, angry. You're angry three days a year, so that's not too bad. What made you sit up? Are there things you could have done before that, that would have made you more sensitive to the fact that there's a little storm brewing? There are some clouds in the distance.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, and here's what's, probably, the worst part of the whole problem, to me, is what you lose, when you miss out on what's really going on inside of you. That it makes you, on the positive side, you're a better leader, when you are growing emotionally, when you're becoming a more emotionally healthy person. You're just a better leader. Daniel Goleman's work, that he's done, on Emotional Intelligence, is phenomenal.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, it's seminal.

Clay Scroggins: Primal Leadership, chapter one, alone, is just remarkable literature, in my opinion, but it's also research based. Hey, great leaders are emotionally healthy people, and, if you want to become a better leader, you've got to become more emotionally healthy, so you don't have to be, no one's ever going to be emotionally perfect, but you need to be, I love the way Sean Seay says it, that you need to be trending toward emotional health. Are you more emotionally healthy today, than you were yesterday?

Clay Scroggins: Turning up the noise, turning up the distraction, and masking what's really going on inside of you is dangerous, because it produces a worse you. It produces a version of you that is not capable of connecting well with others, empathizing well with others, regulating your own emotions well. In that moment, I had zero regulation of my emotion, because I was just done, so yes, it caused me to look back, and go, "Okay. What are the things that I need to be doing, that I'm not doing, to become a more emotionally healthy person?" That's really what, for me, the four simple habits of turning down the noise are.

Carey Nieuwhof: I want to get into those habits in a minute, but just for clarification purposes, emotional health is a big buzzword right now.

Clay Scroggins: Sure. Emotional intelligence. EQ.

Carey Nieuwhof: A lot of work out there. Emotional intelligence, emotional health. How is what you described a problem in emotional health? Because we've all been there, right?

Clay Scroggins: Yeah.

- Carey Nieuwhof: It's like these emotions sneak up on us. How, just to connect the dots, how is that a sign of emotional ill health?
- Clay Scroggins: Well, because there was something that was happening, that I was not aware of, and so, at the very baseline level, emotional health is being emotionally aware. At the very least, it's knowing what you're feeling. The next level would be getting underneath it, and knowing why you're feeling it, but, at the very simple level, I did not even know what I was feeling, and the problem was I would be sitting in meetings, and then people, naturally, when I started realizing, waking up to it, people, over the next couple of months, would say, "You know, this makes sense. I've kind of noticed it. You've been kind of ... Feels like you've just been a little," I like the word "turnt" lately.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.
- Clay Scroggins: Cranked on the inside. You seem more dissatisfied. You seem quicker to be upset. You seem a little more on edge.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Right, because it doesn't always show up.
- Clay Scroggins: No.
- Carey Nieuwhof: As I'm bawling in my boss' office, or crying on the way home.
- Clay Scroggins: Exactly.
- Carey Nieuwhof: What are some other signs?
- Clay Scroggins: You start leaking. I-
- Carey Nieuwhof: Leaking, that's a great phase.
- Clay Scroggins: Debbie Causey runs all of our care stuff, and I had the same conversation with her, going, "Hey, how can we pay better attention to this?" I love her answer. She says, "When you start seeing people give a dollar response to a 50 cent situation, that's when you know there's something happening there," and that's what I started seeing in myself. I started getting worked up about, so Andy Stanley called me at five o'clock on a Thursday, to tell me there was something that was coming up on Sunday, that he was curious about, or he was frustrated about, and that ruined my weekend. That's not his problem. That's my problem.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Right. Disproportionate reaction.
- Clay Scroggins: Completely. I gave a dollar response, to a 50 cent situation. I should have paid attention to it. I shouldn't have been disconnected, or detached to it. I should

have listened to him. I should have addressed his frustration, but that should not ruin my weekend.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that 10 minute phone call should have been resolved at the end of the 10 minutes, as opposed to-

Clay Scroggins: Exactly, it lingering for 48 hours.

Carey Nieuwhof: All day Friday. You're like, "Jenny, I'm so frustrated."

Clay Scroggins: Right, and, of course, she's annoyed by it, and she's going, "I think you need to process that with some other people." So I think the overreaction to stuff, the losing our patience. My ability to, this is another big learning for me. Is my inability, in that season, to reframe things positively. That is an indicator a lot of times.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good.

Clay Scroggins: Especially, and it's all depending upon your wiring, on how good you are at doing that, how quickly you do that, but, in the past, I was so quick to reframe something as positive, and it was just taking me a lot longer to do that. It was taking me minutes, instead of seconds, and then hours, instead of minutes, and then days, instead of moments, to go, "Wait a second, here's really what's going on. Let me reframe that." So I think there's 100, and they're all unique to each one of us, but being able to pay attention to those, and know, "Okay, am I masking something? Is there something going on, that I'm not paying attention to?"

Clay Scroggins: We've all seen it. You've seen it in other people. That's the problem, is it's easier to see in other people, but you've seen where other people are. You know, there's something going on inside of you, but you're just working more, or you're just working out more, or you're just shopping more, or you're just on social media more.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right, so you're turning up the noise.

Clay Scroggins: You're turning it up, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: So that you don't have to pay attention. Can I say, just for clarification? I love how you say, "To positively reframe it." Do you think, sometimes, it's a question of even accurately framing it? For example-

Clay Scroggins: That's a great point.

Carey Nieuwhof: Andy's 10 minute phone call with you, or whatever it was, which is, I always think of it, say it was a 3 out of 10 on the Richter scale. Wasn't a big deal. It was a little tremor.

Clay Scroggins: Right, but it was not nothing. It was something.

Carey Nieuwhof: Don't do this. It's enough for Andy to call you on a Thursday, when Friday's your day off, Saturday's an off day, and then Sunday's the big day, but not even accurately. You should treat a 3 out of 10 like a 3 out of 10. Not like a 9 out of 10, or 12 out of 10, or, conversely, a 1 out of 10.

Clay Scroggins: A 1 out of 10.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, it's just Andy. I'm done.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, everything's good, everything's cool.

Carey Nieuwhof: Everything's cool, so what, Andy, right? No. Andy's upset.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah. You're exactly right.

Carey Nieuwhof: You should engage that.

Clay Scroggins: That's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: At a level.

Clay Scroggins: You can't just positively reframe it. That's a great point. You do need to accurately reframe it. You need to say no. That was something, I need to pay attention to it, but then, I've learned this from Pete Scazzero, but learning how to differentiate yourself. Learning how to go, "Hey, I can be connected to him, I can be connected to her, but I don't have to be controlled by her, or controlled by him. I am my own person enough, to where I can reframe, and continue to move."

Carey Nieuwhof: Which is hard, on a whole other level. We have a lot of senior leaders listening, but we also have a lot of other leaders listening, and, if you're not the CEO, if you're not the lead pastor, Andy's a big figure. He cast a big weight. I love Andy. He's been on the show before. I'm sure he'll be on it again. He is, in many ways, our big boss, but he throws a huge shadow, and it takes a lot of security, to work with, or to work for, or alongside a high capacity leader like that.

Clay Scroggins: I agree.

Carey Nieuwhof: Has that been part of the journey for you, learning to get secure?

Clay Scroggins: Definitely, and I think my ... I guess my concern, for myself, over the last six months, was I was hoping I would be getting better at that, and not worse at it, so that was really another thing that caused me to pay attention, was why am I, as, in my late 30s, having a harder time with this, than ever before? It was-

Carey Nieuwhof: That's really interesting.

Clay Scroggins: It's the noise. It was the busyness, the distractions. It was everything else I was turning up. There is this regular maintenance of your soul, that so many people have written about, and talked about, and covered, but I was covering up. I was denying, or avoiding, or not doing some of those regular opportunities of maintenance, that we all should be doing, and those are really what ... There's 100 habits we could be doing, but I tried to write about four of them, because these were the ones that were most important to me.

Carey Nieuwhof: These were the things you were neglecting, or hadn't developed?

Clay Scroggins: Correct, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Why don't we go into those habits?

Clay Scroggins: Well, I'll just real quickly, these are not new. They're not ... None of these are rocket science. Hopefully, there's probably one of these that you're naturally doing, and there's probably a couple of them that you're naturally avoiding, based on your temperament, but learning to get quiet on a regular basis is harder for some people than it is for others.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is that hard for you?

Clay Scroggins: 100%.

Carey Nieuwhof: You are an extrovert, you light a room.

Clay Scroggins: Flaming yellow.

Carey Nieuwhof: What is your Enneagram?

Clay Scroggins: Seven.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, of course, you're seven. Everything's fun.

Clay Scroggins: Everything's fun, all the time.

Carey Nieuwhof: Everything is fun, all the time. 100%.

Clay Scroggins: When I was single, this is the great thing about the way life, the natural progression of life, but, when I was in my early 20s, single, or even mid 20s, I was never alone, never. I had people. It was a party. I was looking for the next party all the time. Sevens stack up fun things to do, and they're constantly planning, the future, what's the fun going to look like? That is 100% me, so that one's really difficult for me, to learn to get quiet. Because I'm a morning person though, I've got a great opportunity to do that, if I want it.

Carey Nieuwhof: It is pretty quiet at 4:30.

Clay Scroggins: Yes, it is.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think we've texted each other before 5:00 AM at times, which is-

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, and that was probably me trying to avoid the quietness, the silence. Going, "Who could I talk to? Carey's up. He's awake."

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm up. That's what all my friends say. "Carey's up, he'll take my text."

Clay Scroggins: Getting quiet is one. Speaking to yourself is another one. That one's the one that I'm learning to do, probably more than any other, but it is amazing how talking, that conversation you have with yourself, it's the longest running conversation of the day. You talk to yourself, more than anyone else, and learning how to do that appropriately, effectively, in a helpful way is so important. I think it's what, it's the power of memorizing scripture.

Clay Scroggins: Memorizing scripture is a form of self-talk, reminding yourself, that, "God, you are strong, you are courageous." Excuse me. "You are strong, and I can be courageous, because of you." Learning to tell yourself that is powerful. I think, when, the first few centuries, we recited creeds together, as the church. That's a form of self-talk. Speaking to the soul.

Carey Nieuwhof: It reminds you, it anchors you into reality.

Clay Scroggins: Exactly. Finding your why? This is not easy to do. This sometimes takes help from others, but getting underneath your stuff, and going, "Why am I doing that? Why is that there?" There's always something underneath. If you're-

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you give me an example? Why am I what?

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, so, for me, it was filling up the calendar. And I knew, if somebody were to ask me, "Hey, how's your calendar?" Of course, I hate it, when other people wear busyness as a badge, but, in my mind, I do. In my mind, I'm thinking I'm pretty busy, and there's something to that, and so, getting underneath that, asking myself some self-regulating questions, as to why am I saying yes to this? That simple exercise has helped me so much in my own personal life.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's so true, because your calendar, that's kind of your deal. And, a lot of times, we don't take responsibility for it.

Clay Scroggins: We like to think that somebody else is making our calendar busy, but the truth is I'm saying yes to this stuff, and so my ... I work with Megan Gross. She helps me at work, as an administrative assistant, and she is fantastic about ... She's basically asked me, "What are those self-regulating questions that you want to ask? I'll help you ask those." And, so one of them is simply, "Why am I saying yes to this?" That question, alone, is really ... I know that's broad, and general, but, what it does, is it forces me to say, "Just to answer the question, why am I saying yes to this?" Well-

Carey Nieuwhof: What's under that?

Clay Scroggins: I feel like I owe this person. Sometimes, that happens. They did a favor for me. They're asking something of me. Now, I feel like I owe it to them. Okay. Just, at least, say it. Then, if that's a good answer, or not, that's fine, but you need to at least answer it. I'm saying yes to this, because I'm afraid, if I don't, I'm going to miss out on something in the future. I'm saying yes to this, because I feel like I have to. I'm saying yes to ...

Clay Scroggins: Another question, that's been helpful for me, "Is there anyone else that can do this?" It's real simple, but it's helpful, and so, whenever a request comes in at work, I'm trying to ask the question, "Is there anyone else that can handle this?" Not in an avoidance kind of way, but in an empowering, I want to give other people as many opportunities as possible kind of way.

Clay Scroggins: Those questions help us clarify what is underneath, and, if you can teach yourself that habit, it really allows you to quiet the distractions, quiet the noise, and figure out what are those things inside of you saying?

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you ask those questions out loud?

Clay Scroggins: I don't. I assume you could.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm just curious.

Clay Scroggins: I have not thought to do that.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, just, because it's funny, saying yes, saying no is a big issue, in my world these days, and I have elevated that to team discussion, where I'm like why would I say yes to this? What would the reason be? What would the pros, what would the cons be?

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, and people weigh in too. Are you actually having a group discussion?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. We're actually having a real conversation.

Clay Scroggins: That's fantastic!

Carey Nieuwhof: At home, sometimes, with Toni, with my team, and it's really interesting, because, getting another perspective, it's like, sometimes I realize, "I don't need to say yes to this. I really don't." But, if I was left to my own little world, I would. I just said yes to something this week, and someone asked me to do a blurb on their book, and my staff is going off for the weekend. I've got a lot of stuff I need to accomplish. I'm going on holiday in a couple of weeks and, "Why did I say yes?" If we had a dollar, for every leader listening to this podcast, saying, "Why did I say yes to this?" Man, we would be able to buy everyone a bag of chips. It'd be that big. Okay, so that's good.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, absolutely. Greg McKeown, Essentialism, that is such a great resource. He gets so practical in that book. There's a chapter on how do you actually say no? Which was so helpful for me, and I felt so dumb at first, being like, "Why is that so helpful? Why don't I know how to do that?" I don't. I do not, and so, reading that chapter, I was eating it up, going, "Please, tell me, how do you say no to something?"

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you walk us through that? That is a big issue for a lot of leaders. What are some of your filters, and what have you learned? What did you used to say yes to, that you now say to?

Clay Scroggins: I used to say yes to every random breakfast, or lunch. I learned from you, in what is your workshop called?

Carey Nieuwhof: The High Impact Leader.

Clay Scroggins: The High Impact Leader, you talk about saving your best time, when you're at your best, for the most important activities that you have, the most important things. And so there was, I have not eliminated, but I have definitely, I'm doing less. I say random. They're not. The people aren't random. These people are precious sons and daughters of God, but they're not strategic in what I'm trying to do.

Carey Nieuwhof: You're not filling up Monday to Thursday with breakfast meetings.

Clay Scroggins: Breakfast, exactly, which I-

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, because you're a morning person.

Clay Scroggins: And I need to save that time, to do those important tasks, that would make that time the most effective use, so I would just say breakfasts and lunches. Those, but there are definitely, there are situations, where I would be prone to jump in,

and fix, whether it's there are some situations that I would have called a crisis, in the past, that it's not actually a crisis.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you give me an example? That is a big issue for a lot of leaders. Just pull one out of the air.

Clay Scroggins: Someone calls, and needs to meet, because they've got a difficult relational situation. And, of course, you ask the important questions-

Carey Nieuwhof: We're breaking up, or we're going under.

Clay Scroggins: Exactly. Yeah, and you've got to ask the questions, "Is there a life or death situation? No, there's not. Well, then this is going to ... Could I introduce you to somebody, who could really help you?" I've watched Andy do that. Andy does this remarkably well.

Carey Nieuwhof: He's a master.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, he really is, and I've learned I make myself feel guilty, when I watch him do it, because I think, "Why can't I do that as well as he can?" We're wired so differently, and so, for me, it's just I think it's harder, because of my wiring. I think, in his wiring, it's probably a little bit easier, but what I've learned from him is he categorically says no to things, and that's actually very helpful.

Clay Scroggins: That, if you can make yourself say, like we're doing right now. We're categorically eliminating certain things from the calendar, and that's helpful, because, then, the next, it's easier to do, when it's not a person. It's easy to do, when it's a category, but, when the situation comes up, and it is a person, or it is a specific situation, to know that you've categorically said no to. I've had to say no to any travel that's going to cause me to be away for more than one night.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's a category.

Clay Scroggins: That's a category, so-

Carey Nieuwhof: If I invite you to my three day event, I'm automatically out.

Clay Scroggins: Exactly, which, if you invited me to your three day event, that would be so hard, because I'd be like, "Oh my gosh, but it's Carey. I love Carey. That's going to be so much fun. We're going to have a great time."

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, but then you and I have a conversation, about I can do your event, as long as I can fly in before my talk, and fly out right after. Fly out. Fly in before the dinner, fly out after, right?

Clay Scroggins: We're in Dallas, Texas, right now, doing this conversation, and I flew in this morning. Left at 6:00 AM, which is unbelievably early, that the flight leaves at 6:00 AM. Land this evening, at 10:00 PM, so that ...

Carey Nieuwhof: You're going to be home with your family.

Clay Scroggins: Tomorrow morning, I'll be right back in the school routine, helping out, which is super helpful, so I went through three of them, though, if I can just cover this last one real quick.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, let's go to number four.

Clay Scroggins: Getting quiet, speaking to yourself, finding your why, and then pressing pause. It's the one that I like. I probably haven't ... This one's pretty easy for me. As driven, and ambitious, and wanting to make the most of this life as I am, I can press pause pretty easily.

Carey Nieuwhof: You love fun.

Clay Scroggins: I love fun.

Carey Nieuwhof: You love time off.

Clay Scroggins: I love the weekend, I love leisure, and all that is just so important. One of the things I've learned, that is helpful about it, is it's the sabbath, it's sabbatical. It's learning to press pause on life, and it's such a spiritual exercise, because it teaches us that, "Hey, the work's going to get done without you, and you're going to be okay without it." And both of those things are really important, because I feel like it puts us in our proper position, to know that life doesn't depend on us.

Clay Scroggins: This is, at work, we talk about this a lot, but everybody's replaceable, and we try to say, if we were to lose that person, whatever, which is true. People are wonderful, and they're important, and they're special, and they're unique, but, if somebody moves out of a role, the earth just fills in. It's amazing how that works.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yes. Like, if you and I die tonight-

Clay Scroggins: It would take about a week, maybe not even a week. Maybe a couple of days.

Carey Nieuwhof: What was that guy's name again? What was, what was ...

Clay Scroggins: What was his name again? People just pick stuff up-

Carey Nieuwhof: That's my wife. She's like, "What was his name, my first husband? I can't remember."

Clay Scroggins: That's right. This new one's way better.

Carey Nieuwhof: I know, better looking, richer, the whole deal.

Clay Scroggins: I just think, learning that, really, it's a key to humility. It's being in touch with our humanity, and it's such a healthy thing to do, but it's the power of turning down the noise. It keeps those emotions regulated. It keeps you aware of them. It allows you to stay empathetic towards others. I think it is the key to leadership, and that's the big idea of this book, is that great leaders turn down the noise low enough, and long enough, to be ruthlessly curious of their emotions.

Clay Scroggins: That's what great leaders do, and so, if you want to be a great leader, if I want to be a great leader, I have to turn down the noise low enough, and long enough, to be ruthlessly curious of what's really going on, and, if I don't, it's to my detriment, and, if I do, I will be a better leader.

Carey Nieuwhof: Number four, pausing, is easy for you, of your list. That's, by far, the most difficult for me to do.

Clay Scroggins: Why is that?

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know. That's a really good question. I'm good at asking why? I think I have to ask why? To that. The easy answer is I love what I do. Probably, if there's a deep fear under my life, Dr. Scroggins, you actually are a doctor, it would be a fear that I'm lazy, and a fear that I'm not accomplishing enough, and I've talked to my wife about that, and, of course, when you say those out loud-

Clay Scroggins: You're like, "That doesn't sound good."

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm the last person that any of my friends would ever call lazy, and what is the significance then, with your life? Come on. What is behind that?

Clay Scroggins: When is it going to be enough?

Carey Nieuwhof: Exactly. If more is your standard, you have a problem, because there's no end to more, but I want to ask-

Clay Scroggins: Carey, that gave me goosebumps, that you just answered that question so honestly, because that's ... I don't know why that even makes me tear up, to think about how, I don't think most people can do that, and that's very admirable, that you can.

Carey Nieuwhof: I've spent a lot of time on your first three questions, over the last 20 years, and they're really good questions, Clay. They're really good questions, and you only get to grow, and I think the ancients did call this sanctification. We're all works in progress. What I want to know is, when you felt you were failing, on that bad week, where you're crying, or Andy's calling you Thursday, at five o'clock, did you still press pause?

Clay Scroggins: I think the activity of it I probably did, but my struggle is learning how to do that mentally.

Carey Nieuwhof: What I do, is I would work Friday, and then I would work Saturday, and I would overcompensate for that, and I think that's a tendency among a lot of leaders, and I'm just curious. I'm always envious of people who push pause well.

Clay Scroggins: I think I push pause on activity, but I think there's, I have such a ... My fear would be there's fears at home, that my kids would think their dad was too distant, or too, I don't know. Whatever those fears are. Those are stronger, but-

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and five kids. That's a good argument.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, or that my wife would be frustrated at me, because I'm ... That one's pretty strong as well, but I have a harder time pressing pause mentally. Those mental loops, to calm those, that is really difficult for me, so I will let that rattle around for the whole weekend, and that's probably the pressing pause, for me. Is going, "I'm going to set that aside. I'm not going to avoid it, but I'm just going to wait, and I'm going to deal with that on..." in our case, Sunday morning. That's probably the harder part for me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, on your good weeks, normally, do you still play the mental loop game? I hear that from a lot of leaders. Just like, "The reason I can't sleep at night, is because I'm just doing the endless replay in my head. I'm off on Saturday, but I'm staring off, into the distance. I'm home, but I'm not really home. I'm there, but I'm not really there." What do you find, with shutting down the mental noise?

Clay Scroggins: As far as how to do that, or, even, is that a thing for me?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, is it easy for you, and then how do you do it?

Clay Scroggins: No. I just think, what I'm trying to help people do, what I'm trying to do myself, is the way, here's what we're prone to do. Is we're prone to turn up the distractions, and avoid those loops, those mental loops of, "Well, why does he feel that way?" All those quiet conversations, imaginary conversations we have in our head. "Well, why isn't he pleased about this, or why isn't she into this, or why is she frustrated about that, or why did she say what she said, or he said what he did?"

Clay Scroggins: It's we turn up the distractions, and we binge on Netflix, or we just dive deeper into, we just keep scrolling our thumb on Twitter, or we just work more, or we workout more, or we eat more, or whatever it may be. Learning to identify that noise, to turn it down, to address the stuff head on, and to go, "Why am I so concerned that she's frustrated about that, or that he's frustrated about that? I've got to get underneath it."

Clay Scroggins: That's the finding why, the self-taught, the speaking to myself is going, "Hey, well, what if he is upset? So what? Is that the worst thing in the world?" No. Okay. Well, then address the frustration, whatever, and then let's move on. So I'm not saying, necessarily, press pause on those loops. Don't turn the distraction up so loud, that you're-

Carey Nieuwhof: That you ignore it.

Clay Scroggins: That you're ignoring it, and you're avoiding it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is there a middle ground in this then? In other words, you turn the noise up, you avoid it, or you just, I think Daniel Goleman calls it rumination, where, if you've read Emotional Intelligence, it's just that loop plays over, and over, and over again. "Maybe I could have done this with Andy. Maybe Andy's wrong, maybe Andy's right. Maybe I'm in trouble. Maybe I'm going to lose my job. Maybe this, maybe that." You just almost catastrophize in your mind. You ruminate, but it doesn't produce anything. It's that middle ground, where, the noise, you're just going to bury it, and the really smart thing to do would be to talk to yourself, to-

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, address it.

Carey Nieuwhof: To address it. Exactly what you say. That's helpful.

Clay Scroggins: Maybe addressing it is the middle ground. Maybe that's it, because I think the ... Letting it ruminate, the rumination, that's not healthy either, and that's why we hate the solitude. That's why we don't like getting quiet, because that's when those voices are loud enough, when the car stereo gets stolen. That's when those fears are loudest, but, instead, addressing the fears.

Clay Scroggins: Loneliness, I feel like I have tried to work through. We all face loneliness in different ways, and we all meet, we try to match it in different ways. Some of us, it's amazing how loneliness drives people into isolation, sometimes, which is bizarre, and then, sometimes, loneliness causes us to be with people all the time, and never alone, and we respond differently to it, but to understand that, hey, Jesus faced loneliness head on, on the cross.

Clay Scroggins: In that moment, when he says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He was experiencing the deepest loneliness that we could imagine. That the Father had actually distanced himself from him, and he took on that loneliness, so that we would never have to be alone, and, in that moment, won for us the

fact that God is with us forever, and so, even though I think loneliness is a dangerous emotion, because it lies to us, and says we need to do something it, and the truth is we might just need to be okay with it.

Clay Scroggins: Go, "Hey, loneliness, I'm not. I don't have to be lonely, because I'm never really alone, but, yet, at the same time, I was designed and wired for relationship, so I do need to be with people, but I don't need to be with people all the time. I need to be comfortable with myself as well." So, I guess what I'm hoping people will do is learn to turn down the noise low enough, and long enough, to address those. To be ruthless and curious of, okay, lonely, why am I feeling lonely? What does God say about this? What would he want me to do with this loneliness?

Clay Scroggins: Insignificance, your question of, "When is enough, enough?" Just to be able to get under that, and go, "Okay. I've got my own blog, that has millions of clicks. I've got a podcast. I'm getting to speak at South by Southwest. When is it going to be enough? What's going to be the thing?"

Carey Nieuwhof: It's interesting, because I think there is a cognitive dissonance, when that plays under the surface. When you're not really paying attention to it. It drives me in an unhealthy way, but I think I'm at the point in my life where, when I actually pull that up, and say that out loud, I'm like, "Yeah, you know what? I can just go, have a relaxing day with my wife, and I can actually unplug." But it's the unaddressed, unconfessed.

Clay Scroggins: Unaddressed, and unconfessed. Put that in a sermon.

Carey Nieuwhof: There you go. Clay, other practices, that have really helped you? You're growing in this area, and what are some practices that leaders can embrace? I know there you've got a couple of stories you want to tell too.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, the ... I would, those four practices are the ones that I'm working on, but there's bunches. I really think any spiritual disciplines, in and of themselves, they are practices of turning down the noise.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, they are.

Clay Scroggins: Prayer is, mindfulness is such a big buzzword right now, in culture. I feel like mindfulness is a way that we prepare ourselves, to pray, it's a way that we get ourselves in a state, where we can pray. I feel like we are, prayer. That's one of the dangers of distraction, is prayer has become harder than it's ever been before. How many people can just sit there, and pray for five minutes, 10 minutes?

Carey Nieuwhof: For real.

Clay Scroggins: It is really difficult these days, especially, because I think social media, our phones, it's rewiring our brain in a way, but I think reading the Bible is really a

form of self-talk. It's speaking to ourselves, it's letting God speak to ourselves. Even hospitality is a form of turning down the noise. I think it's a way to go, "I'm going to worry about my needs for the next couple of hours. I'm going to worry about this person's needs for the next couple of hours." And that process, I think it allows us to ... It takes the spotlight off of our own stuff, and puts them on somebody else's, which is the most therapeutic thing that could happen to our own stuff sometimes.

Clay Scroggins: I would say fasting. That's the essence of fasting is, "I'm going to turn down my need for food, and, instead, focus that on something else." Or whatever you fast from. For me, I did a month fast from social media, and it was remarkable. I couldn't believe how much I loved what it did for me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Tell us about that.

Clay Scroggins: Well, it taught me, number one, that I'm not addicted to social media. That was good to know.

Carey Nieuwhof: It was pretty easy to give up.

Clay Scroggins: It was.

Carey Nieuwhof: It took like a few hours.

Clay Scroggins: Yeah. What I learned was I am addicted to my phone though. That's the danger, because I think, in the past, I would have said I think I might be addicted to Instagram, or Twitter, whatever, and I'm not, because I gave it up pretty easily, but it didn't slow down my phone usage. I just found other things to do, like I checked the weather incessantly during that month. Like is it going to rain today?

Carey Nieuwhof: Look, Jenny, it went up one degree. Look at that.

Clay Scroggins: Exactly. Listen to what the humidity is today.

Carey Nieuwhof: How about that?

Clay Scroggins: I think, at first, I was frustrated about that, and then I finally decided to be okay. I reframed it positively, and I thought, do you know what? That's good, that I know that now. Now, that's not everything. What is that line from Tommy Boy, when he's in the elevator with Dan Aykroyd, Chris Farley? He says, Dan Aykroyd looks at him, he goes, "You smell a little bit like pine tree perfume kid." No. He said, "You smell a little bit like a pine tree," and he says, "It's actually air freshener," and Dan Aykroyd says, "Great, step one; identifying it. Step two is washing it off." So, if step one is being aware that you're addicted to the phone.

Step two is actually doing something about it, but you've got to ... You can't get to step two, without getting to step one, so I did learn something.

Clay Scroggins: I probably also learned that, that feeling, that drive in you, that I've got to post, and I've got to. If I'm not, I'm taking steps backwards, and I'm not moving my life forward. That's just good to be aware of, and I wouldn't have been aware of it, if I hadn't turned it off. So there were just things, things that I just wouldn't have learned, if I hadn't done it, but that's the whole point of fasting-

Carey Nieuwhof: It's interesting, because, I started the conversation this way, it would be very easy, to say, if we only got rid of our phones, then all of this stuff goes away. It's this, what you're talking about is so much deeper.

Clay Scroggins: You would find something else to distract you. You would, I think. I think-

Carey Nieuwhof: When I was writing Didn't See It Coming, and I was talking about some of these problems as well, I thought about the world we grew up in, which is, I'm a few years older than you, but pre-social media. And everybody knew a kid, who had a dad, who worked a 12 hour day, came home, went into the garage, worked on his '68 Camaro, which was never done. Just so he could avoid his family.

Clay Scroggins: Everybody knew a mom, who stayed after a church, talking to everybody that was at church, until it was too ... Until they were having to close the building down, and then came home, and started getting lunch ready, or working on her own thing, or getting, doing activities in the community, or whatever. Same thing.

Carey Nieuwhof: Avoiding whatever they needed to address.

Clay Scroggins: Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's a human problem. Not just a technology problem.

Clay Scroggins: I think so, and that's what tricky, Carey. Has technology made it more difficult, or less? I don't ...

Carey Nieuwhof: It's not going away.

Clay Scroggins: It's not, and it probably is more difficult now, but, to your point, it's always been there. There's always been, if we want to cover up, if we want to mask, if we want to avoid, we're going to find something.

Carey Nieuwhof: What's the cost of not turning down the noise?

Clay Scroggins: I think this is what motivates me most. I think, from a personal standpoint, you miss the best you. You lose out on becoming a better version of you. The thing

that is standing in between you now, and a better you, is whatever emotional disturbance that you're feeling, that you're not paying attention to, and so, if you would pay attention to that, work through it, process it, address it, confess it, you would get better.

Clay Scroggins: I would say the ability to care for others. You can't care for others well, if you're not caring for yourself. Especially if you're in the pastoral world. Any customer service type industry, where you're having to care for the needs of others, we all know that. It's the starving baker. It's the one who's always making bread for somebody else, but is not feeding themselves as well, so taking care of your soul, sometimes, feels selfish, but, of course, it's not. It's putting the oxygen mask on first, so you can care for others.

Clay Scroggins: Casey Graham, mutual friend of ours. I went to his staff ... He took his whole staff to Cancún, to an all inclusive, and invited me, to come do a session. I get there, and he's like, "Thank you so much for saying yes to this." I'm like, "Casey, I've never said no, to being invited to an all inclusive."

Carey Nieuwhof: All inclusive, with you.

Clay Scroggins: With you, just so you know.

Carey Nieuwhof: Was that the one he hired the dude from Semisonic, to do a private concert?

Clay Scroggins: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm messaging him on that.

Clay Scroggins: It was remarkable.

Carey Nieuwhof: Seriously, you didn't just run into these guys. Semisonic and Tonic.

Clay Scroggins: He planned it all. It was remarkable.

Carey Nieuwhof: He's crazy.

Clay Scroggins: He did a talk for his staff, that was so good, and his line was, "Personal growth is not just personal." Which I thought what a great line, and he's so right.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's great.

Clay Scroggins: Personal growth is growth for your spouse, and for your kids, and for your coworkers, and your boss. Any growth of you is going to be growth for somebody else, and so, learning to care for others well requires you to grow personally. I would say being able to have a vision for your life, it is so hard to

not let everyone else control our career, when you need to be controlling your ...

Clay Scroggins: Yeah, God's controlling your career. Yes. Move that just a second to the side. You need to decide what is your vision? What is God's vision for your own life? Don't let your boss tell you what his or her vision is for your life, without asking yourself, and asking your heavenly father, "What is your vision for my life? What should my vision for my life be?"

Clay Scroggins: If you don't turn down the noise, you can't answer that question, I don't think. And then I think, lastly, learning to hear from God, I think is at stake. I don't, I think ... What I've learned about noise, is that God rarely yells over the noise. He seems like the kind of God that's not going to compete with our noise.

Carey Nieuwhof: You know, I don't disagree with you, but that is a really fascinating insight.

Clay Scroggins: It just feels like, if you want to turn it up, and just be distracted, he's patient enough to let you-

Carey Nieuwhof: He's going to let you.

Clay Scroggins: Until he's not, and then there comes a moment, that we've all seen in other peoples' lives, where your spouse blows up, and says, "I done with this." Your boss says, "Enough's enough. You've lost your job."

Carey Nieuwhof: Or you implode.

Clay Scroggins: You implode, and lose your job, or your bank account is empty, because your distractions are so expensive. Your kids say, "Enough's enough. I'm done." There are those moments, where the noise gets so loud, and then, all of a sudden, there's perfect silence.

Carey Nieuwhof: Then you're going to have some quiet.

Clay Scroggins: Then you have the forced solitude and, you usually in those moments, I've experienced it in my own life, I've experienced it with other people, certainly, in the world, in the industry that we're in, it's in those moments, that you do often hear from God clearly. But you don't have to wait till then. You can do it now. You can turn it down now, so that's what I think is at stake. Is he's got something he wants for you. He's got something that he wants to say, something he wants to do, something he wants you to know. Why not turn it down, and listen? I think it'll make you ... It will certainly make you a better leader, but I think it'll just make you a better person.

Carey Nieuwhof: Anything else you want to share with us, Clay?

Clay Scroggins: I think that's it. I've got an assessment, that people can take.

Carey Nieuwhof: Great.

Clay Scroggins: I would love for people to take that. If you go to HowToLeadOnline.com, HowToLead.com, there is a simple distraction assessment, that will allow you to figure out just how distracted you are. It might be something worth doing with your team, to let them have some conversations around, "Well, how distracted are you? I'll tell you how distracted I am, but you've got to share first." And then it'll, I think, just, hopefully, there are some ideas, and things you can try, on how to turn the noise down, but it's just a resource that we've created, to try to help people figure this out.

Carey Nieuwhof: The book is called?

Clay Scroggins: How to Lead in a World of Distraction.

Carey Nieuwhof: Awesome, and, probably, it's out by the time this thing airs.

Clay Scroggins: Hopefully. That would be great.

Carey Nieuwhof: Clay-

Clay Scroggins: Thank you. You were about to say thank you. Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof: I appreciate you, and, next time, who knows? When you're back, maybe two bags of chips, like this-

Clay Scroggins: Two bags, a two bagger. This podcast's a two bagger.

Carey Nieuwhof: This could get really lucrative, you know that, Clay?

Clay Scroggins: That's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's awesome. Thank you.

Clay Scroggins: Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, it's always fun, to get together with Clay Scroggins, and so helpful. Guys, you can get the show notes, including transcripts for this conversation, at careynieuwhof.com/episode292. Sometimes, we do video. We don't have this one on video, because I recorded it live, backstage, but you can get our archive, of a growing number of guests, on YouTube. Just search for Carey Nieuwhof, or the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. You'll find lots of episodes there, with people like Nona Jones from Facebook, Michael Hyatt, Max Lucado is coming

up. He will be there. Christy Wright, Sam Collier, Ken Coleman, Kevin Jennings, Sean Cannell, Les McKeown,

Carey Nieuwhof: All on Facebook, and that's a fun part, about being able to do this for so long, is we just have so much fun creating a leadership archive for you, and, of course, if you subscribe, you get it all for free, so, coming up, we've got some really, really cool guests, and the next episode I'm back with a mutual friend of Clay and mine, Jeff Henderson. He's the lead pastor of Gwinnett Church, and he has a powerful book on business, and why most organizations are narcissistic, and how to get out of that. Here's an excerpt from my conversation with Jeff Henderson.

Jeff Henderson: Well, you've got to have great customer service. If you take, again, my former life in the quick service restaurant, customer service is, "The fries are cold. I'm sorry. Here's a coupon for-

Carey Nieuwhof: Free fries, that, hopefully, will be warm.

Jeff Henderson: That's right. Customer engagement is, "Dana, congratulations on your engagement. Congratulations, from your friends at Home Depot." And, when I talk to big brands about this, the pushback they get is they'll say, "Jeff, I totally agree with that, but how do I do that for everyone?" That's why I love what our mutual friend, Andy Stanley says, "Do for one what you wish you could do for everyone." But it's not just one person. When you do that for Dana, that kind of customer engagement, engaging with them in their world, she tells other people about you. That's what we're trying to do here. We're trying to get Dana to talk more about Home Depot, than Home Depot talk about Home Depot.

Carey Nieuwhof: That is happening next week, on the podcast, as we move into October. In the meantime, make sure you check out the good things happening at Remodel Health. Go to remodelhealth.com/carey, and get their church buyer's guide, and put some more money back into your mission.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's free savings, and better benefits for your staff, and then don't miss out on the Future Forward Conference. It's coming up, well, real soon, like next week. October 1st through 2nd, in the awesome city of Pittsburgh. I'm going to be there, along with Sam Collier, Lee Kricher, and many others. Go to futureforwardchurches.com/theconference, and get in, before it is literally too late.

Carey Nieuwhof: Hey, thanks so much for listening guys. Wherever this finds you, I am so grateful for you. If this helped you, leave a rating, or review on iTunes, or wherever you get your podcast, and, in the meantime, I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

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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.