

**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:** Well, hey everybody, and welcome to episode 302 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Today's episode is brought to you by Pro Media Fire and Red Letter Challenge. We also have an Ask Carey at the end. Tony's got a question, he wants to know, "If you could give yourself a bit of advice to your 15 to 20 year old self, what would it be?" I get asked that question a lot. Going to give you my most common answer, but then one that I rarely give, so that's right at the end of the podcast.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** My guest today on this episode, our guest, is Steve Green. He's the president of Hobby Lobby. Hobby Lobby's a fascinating, fascinating story. I love stories of things that start out really small. If you know a little bit about Hobby Lobby, you know that it started in the Green family garage, back almost 50 years ago, which is crazy. Steve is founder David Green's son. He became the president of Hobby Lobby in 2004, and he has helped the family business grow to more than, well, next year 900 stores in almost all of the states over 37,000 employees.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** We talk about all that, and we also, I love counterintuitive stories, so Steve and I talk about why their retail chains are growing, when everybody else's are declining. It's fascinating, I mean so many places are just shattering. Malls are spattering, and chains that have been iconic are collapsing, and these guys are growing. What story with that? Why do they pay their employees way above minimum wage, and how do they make that profitable? We talk about all that stuff.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Steve is also the chairman of the board for Museum of the Bible, which the Green family had a major hand in building. He's also an author and wow, I've got to tell you, it's going to be a great conversation. If you're an entrepreneur or a church leader, I think you're going to absolutely love today's episode.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Also guys, if you subscribe you get things absolutely free. We have had just a crazy amount of amazing guests lately. Gordon MacDonald, oh my goodness, episode 297. I keep hearing from you guys pretty much everyday on that. That's one of those for the books. If you haven't listened to that one yet, go back. Coming up we've got Rebekah Lyons, Chris Lema, Carlos Whittaker. We recorded this for those of you who follow Carlos before he went through the most recent episode with his daughter, which we continue to pray for. John Ortberg is back, we've got Jasmine Star from Instagram and well, wait till you hear the 2020 lineup. It's going to be spectacular.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** If you subscribe you get this all for free, and I'm just so glad to have you guys along in the journey. Thank you for sharing, thanks for talking about this podcast with your friends. We had an all-time record October, best month ever in the

history of the podcast. Guess why? That's because of you guys. Thank you so much for standing with our partners too.

Carey Nieuwhof: A lot of you are starting to use Pro Media Fire and I'm so excited. Here's the challenge, right, and you're thinking about staffing next year and you're like, "Well, we've got to do better on media." You're like, "We can't really afford a staff person," have you checked out Pro Media Fire and Pro WebFire?

Carey Nieuwhof: Here's what they want to do, they want to work with 20 churches next year for their 2020 growth program. They want to provide a custom plan to help ignite growth in your church with strategies that include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, a new church website, custom graphics and videos, all that is packaged up in this growth plan.

Carey Nieuwhof: Few requirements, first of all you've got to be prepared for growth and have systems in place. You must be willing to make a monthly financial investment through 2020. Then in return you get a discount of up to 30% for normal services. Then just share a little bit about your experience in 2020.

Carey Nieuwhof: If you are a church ready for growth, and you just need help reaching more people, you can apply online. Only 20 churches will be accepted, and you've only got a couple more weeks to applications and December 1st. Go to [ProMediaFire.com/2020](http://ProMediaFire.com/2020) and they'd love to help you out.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now as a pastor, I also know the grind, every single week I'm doing that right now. You've got to prepare a message plus all the other stuff you've got going on. Sometimes it's a really good idea to get some messages that are done for you, and a turnkey program that's done for you. One that over 60,000 people have benefited from so far, it's called the Red Letter Challenge. It takes the teachings of Jesus, which in many Bibles are in red letters, and turns it into a preaching program, small group Bible study. Now there's a kids program and so much more. Large churches have used it, small churches have used it. Churches see growth in small groups by an average of 40%, it results in increased weekend attendance. It's really good for those of you who are reaching a significant amount of unchurched people. Almost everybody is interested in Jesus.

Carey Nieuwhof: I say that because even if they don't necessarily have faith, they're like, "You know what, I'd like to know more about love, more about teachings, more about peace." It's incredible how universally people are attracted to the message of Jesus. What you can do if you're interested in this turnkey campaign for your church, go to [RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey](http://RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey). You'll also find some discounts up to 40% off. You can start with as few as 10 copies of the Red Letter Challenge or if you're a large church, you can get 1,000 or more. Just head on over to [RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey](http://RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey).

Carey Nieuwhof: Well I'm excited to dive into my conversation with Steve Green. Remember to hang on to the end for Ask Carey. In the meantime, my interview with Steve Green, who is the president of Hobby Lobby.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well Steve, welcome to the podcast, it's good to have you.

Steve Green: Thanks for having me, man, look forward to it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Since 2004, you've been the president of Hobby Lobby, but I want to go back to origins. I'm always fascinated in origins story. Hobby Lobby, is it the largest privately held arts and crafts store?

Steve Green: Arts and crafts retail, yup.

Carey Nieuwhof: Thank you, in the world, not just America, but the world. It didn't start out that way, did it?

Steve Green: Nope. It actually started in a 300 square foot room, and prior to that, my dad was doing some manufacturing when I was seven, my brother was nine. We started our business career gluing frames together for seven since the frame is a seven and a nine year older. Then it was in 1972 when he rented the 600 square foot space, the back 300 square foot he put in the manufacturing. In the front 300 square foot was for a small retail store that he called Hobby Lobby. That's how we got started.

Carey Nieuwhof: Your dad, he didn't come right out of the gate being an entrepreneur, he was working for someone else?

Steve Green: He was working at a general merchandise company called TG&Y, which is no longer around. He started his career at McClellan's a five-and-dime store in Altus, Oklahoma. Went to TG&Y, and then while he was working for TG&Y, started the manufacturing and then eventually opened the retail store.

Carey Nieuwhof: I mean it's fairly public knowledge you guys are on the Forbes list along your family is along with Richard Branson and people like that.

Steve Green: Right.

Carey Nieuwhof: It was a pretty modest upbringing, is it not?

Steve Green: Yeah, my dad when he left TG&Y he was making \$26,000 a year. At that time there would have been maybe an upper middle class income. To go off onto this venture it was a risk, and they took a half a cut in pay. \$13,000 is what he was earning, which would be lower income, lower middle income. It was a sacrifice for dad and my mom and the family, but the business did well as he was able to

give full-time to it. It started growing and did well, though there was ups and downs.

Carey Nieuwhof: I spent a couple of days with your family, and we hope to have your dad on the podcast one day. I don't want you to speak for him, but why as you remember it did he decide he was going to step out on his own? He obviously wasn't hurting what he was doing.

Steve Green: Yeah, he was doing good, he loved retail, was doing well there, but he just had the bug to do his own business. When he started the manufacturing just that entrepreneurial spirit that he had and saw an opportunity first there. There was a design trend of decorating walls with collage of small frames, and so he saw that opportunity and took it. Was doing well there when the opportunity for the retail, which is really his heart.

Steve Green: We still do some manufacturing, that business is still a part of Hobby Lobby. Retail was what his background was, what his love was and he saw that opportunity and made that jump and the risk. It's worked out well for him.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Now, second generation, which is what you are.

Steve Green: Right.

Carey Nieuwhof: You didn't start the business, you're the son of the man, woman who started the business. It doesn't always go well, there's all kinds of stories about alcoholism or affluence or drug abuse or all those things. I mean the headlines are filled with stories like that in the past and in the present. Talk about that journey for you, what is it like? Sometimes people of high achieving parents, do you think it's a blessing? Sometimes it can feel like pressure. How did you process that?

Steve Green: When I was in high school, I remember one of my teachers, which was a coach making a comment. Joking about how that our family when the ash trays filled up, we would sell our car and buy a new one as if we were affluent. You look back and you don't see that it was being all that affluent. When I graduated high school, we had eight stores. Now that's good, but it was not to the degree or the pressure it was today. We were still struggling at the time. As a matter of fact, a few years after I graduated and was working full-time in the business, my father thought we were going to go out of business, because of the struggles in the economy.

Steve Green: It was still early on in the business, there was a lot of growth. A lot of hard work that my dad had to get it to the eight stores that there were when I started working full-time. It was still just a startup.

Carey Nieuwhof: It was a small midsize business, right?

Steve Green: Yup. It was good, we had eight stores, it was nice, but it obviously has continued to grow and expand. For me it was just, I knew I wanted to go to the business, work there when I was in high school in the summers and on weekends. Since I graduated out of high school, that's what I started doing.

Carey Nieuwhof: How did you know or why did you decide that's what you want to do?

Steve Green: Well I knew that's what I wanted to do and I remember sitting in the auditorium when I was a senior in high school, contemplating going to college. Thinking, "Okay, I can go to four years of college and then go into the business." I remember thinking, "Will I be further ahead if I were to go ahead and start working as soon as I graduated? Or go to college for four years and then start working in the business?" I remember thinking and making the decision in that auditorium, "I think I'll just go ahead and go work in the business," because I knew that's what I wanted to do. I figured on the job training would be as good as what I could learn in the college course.

Steve Green: I just told dad, I said, I was ready to go to work when I graduated and he gave me a job. Been working there ever since.

Carey Nieuwhof: Great. Now where did he start you?

Steve Green: I started with, the title was called liaison. What he wanted me to do is, he wanted me to travel to the stores that we had at the time, every other week. Kind of like what a supervisor, what he knew as supervisor did at the company he came from. He didn't give me a title of supervisor, because I'm sitting there communicating with the managers that had been in retail longer than I had been living. It was just a liaison.

Steve Green: I was the communication between the corporate office and the stores, I'd let them know what was going on. Ask them what were the struggles, how can we help and it was just a coordination, a communication between the store and the corporate office. I started out traveling on road, visiting all stores.

Carey Nieuwhof: What did you learn in those days, those first few lessons?

Steve Green: I think that there's a lot to learn. I think early on it's one of those that to really do run a business well, you have to be willing to make the hard decisions that... A store manager, if he isn't willing to really build a good organization, and he has people that are not doing their job and is not willing to let them go, work with them and try to help them all they can. Not willing to let them go, that makes them have to work extra hard.

Steve Green: They have to build a good organization to be a good store manager. They may be good people, they may be hard workers, but if they're not building the organization, it's going to be hard for them to manage a store. Those are some

of the lessons, main lessons, but those are some of the key lessons or one of them that you learn early on.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, so how many stores do you have now?

Steve Green: 850 is what we started the year with, and we'll be close to 900. There's a few stores that may wind up moving to next year, but we'll be close to 900 by the end of the year.

Carey Nieuwhof: My goodness, so that's what I want to talk to you about for a moment, because you're president of the Hobby Lobby. You're making a lot of those day to day calls on whether you're expanding. I mean one of the stories in the last 15 years has been the decline of retail. It started really slowly, and now it seems to be falling off a cliff if you visited any malls recently. It's getting harder and harder all the time. Amazon's changed the game, the internet has changed the game. You're opening stores. If I remember I put this in my notes, 54 new stores last year and 65-ish for 2019, is that accurate?

Steve Green: Right, and some of those 65 are moving off to next year based on permitting and construction.

Carey Nieuwhof: True.

Steve Green: We're still yet to be determined how many we'll actually get to open this year. Yeah, there's really two events over the last 20 years or so that has changed retail, digital and delivery. The digital world has changed. My brother put in a Christian bookstore, selling a lot of music and Christian books. Those worlds have been changed by the digital age. People are not buying CDs like they used to or books like they used to.

Steve Green: We were experiencing that in the model stores, and are still trying to find out what is the right model. There's many bookstores that are closing.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, I mean whole chains have shut down, right?

Steve Green: Yeah, so secular bookstores, Christian bookstores alike, because that's a changing world. For the rest of retail, the delivery model is what has created a bit of a disruption there. Where the malls are struggling, because a lot of people are just going online and having products delivered to their home.

Steve Green: Our industry in the arts and crafts business is not as impacted by that delivery or the digital to some degree in both. The digital world impacted the model stores, the Christian bookstores where are crafts stores. We're catering to the creative mind and they like to come in and touch and feel and see.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay.

Steve Green: If they just need another eight by 10 canvas, they can order it and we have a digital or a delivery online service where people can buy our products. A lot of the creative mind is getting out and being inspired, and so we're not as impacted. Our online is growing at a faster percent than our brick and mortar, but it's still a small percent in comparison to some other industries where it's a significant impact. We're fortunate in that case, that is not as disruptive, but those two factors have been a big disruptor in the retail space.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh for sure. I mean do you see that changing in the next five years or seven years? Or you're going to continue your expansion plan?

Steve Green: I think we will continue our expansion plan. We've looked at the 48 contiguous states, which is where we're looking. We're not looking at Alaska, Hawaii or another country.

Carey Nieuwhof: International.

Steve Green: Yeah, so and we've determined there's about 1,400 stores that we could put in. I had the real estate guys tell me, if they could put in every store they would like, tell me every location and we've identified about 1,400 total. We're going to be close to 900 by the end of the year, so we will continue to expand that footprint as well as maximizing the online opportunity as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's incredible, when almost everybody else is retreating, you're advancing. Do you have a parallel in other companies that you're studying or industries that you're studying or fields you're studying, where they're opening brick and mortar? Or are you a unicorn in that?

Steve Green: Yeah, I'm sure there are some other industries, but the industries that I have looked at are more contracting.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Steve Green: Not just in retail, but you look at newspapers, people get their news differently than the local paper. You look at universities with the online option in universities or maybe more brick and mortar than is what is necessary. Of course, we talk about bookstores, so each industry is a little bit different, but we just happen to be not as impacted as much as others.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's really interesting. I'm not trying to beat a dead horse, but are there other sub explanations other than creatives love to see and touch and feel? I mean there's grace for sure, there's a blessing on it, but can you think of other factors that might be at play?

Steve Green: That's the one that comes to mind. I'm sure there are other factors, but the only thing that I can come up with is, we are catering to the creative mind. Again, our

industry, there's changes in our industry and that could be a factor. What comes prominent to my mind is just the type of product that we sell.

Carey Nieuwhof: It is roughly a \$5 billion company?

Steve Green: We did \$5 billion last year, and right at the \$5 billion for 2018.

Carey Nieuwhof: Which is exceptional, and the internet tells you all kinds of things, but in some of my research, you pay well above minimum wage, is that true?

Steve Green: We do. Several years ago, because we could afford it, we elected to start our starting our employees at a higher than the minimum wage. I believe what we started was at \$9, and then the next year we went to \$10 and then to \$11. Right now we're at \$15.70 is where we start our full-time employees, part-time a little less than that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Isn't that almost double minimum wage?

Steve Green: It's just a little more double than minimum wage, and it's one, we do that. I remember dad years ago when we started this was most excited about being able to do that. We do it because we can, one. There is a time in our history we couldn't have afforded that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Sure. This is not startup advice.

Steve Green: Yeah, but because we had, we're getting to a position of being profitable enough, that we wanted to be able to help our employees. It really is a win-win situation. It is good for our employee, but it's also good for us, because it attracts that better employee. We have more people that are willing to work and are able to work for that. We win by having committed employees, and obviously it's a win for them because they're starting at it at a much higher rate than they could in many places.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, it seems counterintuitive that you're advancing when everyone else is retreating in terms of bricks and mortar retail. You're paying more in an economy where a lot of people are paying less or you're getting less product. It's fascinating. Say more about that, because it seems to be the reverse of everything else that's happening in the economy.

Steve Green: Yeah, and I thought about that before. I'm sitting here thinking, when dad went into this business, could he have foreseen that? Of course not. There's no way that he would have foreseen that, and we've even talked about the local paper in Oklahoma City, where our corporate offices are that has sold. 20 years before the digital age, we would never have imagined that newspapers would be less of a factor than what they are today. There's no way to have guessed that, and the only conclusion I come up with is that God knows that. Was directing dad for his

purposes, and has blessed the business. We happen to be in a business that has some stability.

Steve Green: Same thing with recession, it has been said that the craft industry is recession proof. I don't know that it's recession proof, but we don't ride the waves of the high and the low economies, it's more-

Carey Nieuwhof: How interesting.

Steve Green: ... steady.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's not like real estate or...

Steve Green: Yeah. High ticket items are going to ride the wave, economies down.

Carey Nieuwhof: The boat dealer, yeah you're going to feel that one.

Steve Green: Boats and cars, yeah. Our industry in some cases there's maybe a variety of reasons, but if the economy is off, people may start making a gift or making a second income by making jewelry or whatever. For a variety of reasons potentially our industry just doesn't peak at high and doesn't tank in low economies. Again, just another intriguing factor of our industry that I don't know that dad would have known any or thought through all of that. Happen to be the industry that I believe God led him to.

Carey Nieuwhof: How many employees do you have now?

Steve Green: We're about 41,000 employees in the company.

Carey Nieuwhof: You pay them well, double minimum wage and you move up from there. What are some other keys to motivating a workforce?

Steve Green: Well, I think that as we build a good organization, you obviously have to treat employees as you would want to be treated. Being fair and kind and obviously paying them a wage that is good, but we obviously know that we need to provide good benefits and care for our employees. We have chaplains for example at our corporate office. There's about 6,000 employees on our campus in Oklahoma City, which is where...

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, it's massive.

Steve Green: Yeah, about 10 million square feet there, and people can while they're on the clock go and have a discussion. Many times people have challenges that they're dealing with in life, because life creates challenges. Kids or marriage or finances, and it's easy to say leave your troubles at home when you come to work, but

that just isn't realistic. If we can help an employee through our chaplains to help their life be in better order, then they become a better employee.

Steve Green: It's easier for the 6,000 that are on the campus to have that access, but even in the stores where you have access to call the corporate office and have a discussion with one of our chaplains. There's those kinds of things that hopefully our employees realize that we care about them when their life is good, then they make better employees.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know why, but over the last few months I've had numerous discussions with CEOs of publicly traded companies, who talk about the pressure of every 90 days. I was talking to one the other day who runs a multi billion dollar company out of New York. He was the chief technology officer, and he was talking about taking the company private. He said, "If we can get off a publicly traded company, we can live beyond 90 days." He's in the retail industry in clothing, and he just said, "We're struggling at such a deep level."

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm going to make an assumption here that money is not the bottom line of the business. What would you say your bottom line is?

Steve Green: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: If it was, you wouldn't be paying double minimum wage.

Steve Green: Yeah. Well obviously what has developed in our business first it was a matter of surviving.

Carey Nieuwhof: Sure.

Steve Green: We're here, we've got to survive, but as we have become profitable, the ministry side of our business developed in our giving and even through chaplains and what we're able to do. It really made it that much more real that this is a ministry. We're here to, one, be an example in the business community of what a Christian business should be like, though we failed to do that regularly because we're imperfect. That's what we strive to do, and then it is exciting to be able to support ministries around the world and locally that ultimately point people to what we believe is the answer.

Steve Green: We believe that there's only two things in life that are going to be eternal. That is man's soul and God's word. God's word says it's going to last forever and our souls are forever. When we can invest in that, that is what brings purpose to us going to work. It makes it exciting to be the best that we can be.

Carey Nieuwhof: I almost got the sense hanging out for a couple of days at Hobby Lobby headquarters and spending a lot of time with your father. That, the business is really important. Margins are important, people are important, great customer

service is important. It almost felt like it's become a means to an end and that there's a greater end. Is that fair or is that a mis-characterization?

Steve Green: No, it is, and that has become more real as we have been able to do more in the way of ministry. I want to make our business, and I want to get to 1400 stores as soon as we can. That means I'm making that much more money.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Steve Green: The more money we make, the more we can give away. We're giving away half of our profits, and if I can make more profits, that's more that we can give away. Our family who have been on the payroll for really since we started increasing our minimum, we've not had an increase in pay for many years.

Carey Nieuwhof: You haven't had a raise?

Steve Green: We haven't had a raise in years, and so we're not here to make more money. We're here to do more so that we can be a greater impact for good in our world.

Carey Nieuwhof: How do you draw that line? How do you know, "Okay, you know what, I'm fine, I don't need anymore,"? Obviously your company is dealing in the billions, so we're not talking about can we afford gas or bread. People would just be, "Well I need a better jet, or I need a better house or I need a lake house or 12 houses." Where is that line for you?

Steve Green: Well not that anybody should feel too sorry for us for not having a raise, we're making a good living. It's fine. We just don't need anymore, and so we got nice homes, nice cars. We're doing fine, and we don't need a bigger yacht or a bigger plane, and don't have yachts or planes. The company has planes, so it's just a matter of saying, we're good and our real drive is to say, "How can we do more for God and His kingdom?" That's what drives us.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I'm going to jump down a little bit in my questions. Bill Gates, been listening to him talk recently and Warren Buffet how they're giving pledge. It encourages wealthy people to give away the majority of their wealth. So far 204 signatures online again in my research, you guys signed that pledge or?

Steve Green: We did. It's one of those that, that's what we're doing.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's what you're doing?

Steve Green: Because we are giving away half of our profits, it's one of those and some of those may be as they pass away they're going to give half of it away, I'm not sure. Everybody may do that a little bit differently. We actually started in the 90s increasing our giving to a point where we were giving half of our profits. We

continue to do that to this day and it is exciting to be able to do that, and we love doing that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Bill Gates said, it's actually really hard to get people to sign on.

Steve Green: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: He said, number one, it involves death at least in some of the interviews I've listened to him give, I haven't talked to him personally about it obviously. He was saying, it's really hard for these billionaires or multi millionaires to think, "Oh one day I'm not going to be here." They're the bomb, they're the source of everything. Then it's like, really half, like half? Then he went on to say that he's approaching it very much like and in his case it's often malaria or engineering away disease or that sort of thing. It's very healthcare related or sustainable living related.

Carey Nieuwhof: He says, rather than just giving money to a charity, he's trying to approach it with the same innovation he took to Microsoft. They're looking for organizations, we're going to fund research that will actually create a cure for X or a cure for Y. Or we're going to experiment with vaccines to see what we can do. He's trying to apply the mind he put software to investing, which I thought was really interesting. Then you too or Hobby Lobby headquarters, which really is something to see when you fly over on the way into Oklahoma City. You realize this is just vast, 10 million square feet is crazy.

Carey Nieuwhof: You've invested in some major projects. Do you want to tell us about what you're trying to fund, because it's pretty inspiring?

Steve Green: Well we got started on a journey, it's almost 10 years ago now, that journey we would not have imagined being on. We feel like God put us on that journey and that is to build a Bible museum. It was originally looked at to be in Dallas, a group that wanted to put one in Dallas asked for help. Through a series of events it wound up being in DC, we opened 2017, and has been an exciting journey for us that is about a book that we love. That has been a guiding principle for our family, for our business. To invite people to consider this book for their own lives is what we want to do.

Steve Green: The purpose of the museum is to invite all people to engage with the Bible. We just want them to come in, we're being neutral, we're just telling you its history, its impact and its narrative. We want people to leave there being inspired and say, "I want to know this book a little bit better." It has been an exciting journey that primarily my wife and I have been the point people for the family in facilitating that.

Steve Green: As a matter of fact, my last eight, nine years have been more involved in the Bible Museum than has been even at Hobby Lobby, I'm giving up some responsibilities there. It's just been an exciting journey, because this is a book

that's changed our world. It's had a greater impact than practically any other book or any other event in history. LIFE Magazine as a matter of fact in the year 2000 came out with a publication, that hundred most important events of a millennium. Number one was Gutenberg prints the Bible.

Steve Green: For 1,000 years from the year 1000 to 2000 they say that it was Gutenberg who printed the Bible. It wasn't the Gutenberg Press, it was Gutenberg prints the Bible.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right, Gutenberg prints the Bible.

Steve Green: I don't know that we know to the degree that it's impacted our world, we just want people to know that. We point them to it, and hopefully inspire them to get to know the book better.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay, I toured it when it was still under raw construction. I mean you could fall off a scaffolding kind of construction, so I haven't seen the final product. I've seen pictures of it, lots of friends who have been through and even in its raw form, who's pretty awe inspiring. Usually I think you'll hear this right, sometimes when churches do something, it can be a bit Mickey Mouse sometimes. You think Museum of the Bible, okay, go into a library, see a bunch of books. This is not what you did. Can you describe the scope and the scale of the project?

Steve Green: Yeah, we did a survey, the primary question is, if we build it will they come? Is there an interest in a Bible museum in America anymore? The survey showed overwhelmingly there was 80% acceptance of the concept. They liked the idea, and the gentleman that did the survey said, "You have a winning concept on your hands." I said, I was thinking later, "That's great, a restaurant is a winning concept and they go out of business all day long."

Carey Nieuwhof: Yes, people do need to eat.

Steve Green: Yeah, it's not just that we have a winning concept, but it still needs to be done well. It needs to be done with excellence. We were engaging some of the leading design firms in the country that work with Disney that have built presidential libraries, to help us tell this book's story in an engaging way. One of the comments that we get often is that it exceeded our expectation. I kind of discount that because I don't know if their expectations were too high on a Bible museum.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Steve Green: We have really done the best job that we could in trying to make this story of this book come alive. It is an incredible story to be told, and so we wanted to do it with excellence. The museum itself is 430,000 square feet, and we literally scratched the surface of this book story, because there is no building that can

contain this book's story. Example I use is, we have a corner that talks about biblical art. I could fill the museum with biblical art.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well that's Europe, Europe is biblical art.

Steve Green: Exactly. Half the museums are half full of biblical art.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Steve Green: We literally are scratching the surface. This is an incredible book that has an incredible story, and it has been exciting to be a part of telling that story in the museum.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is the budget for the museum like how much you spent on constructing, is that public knowledge or?

Steve Green: It's been out there, we spent about \$500 million is what the cost of the building and the renovation of the building. I could argue that the artifacts in the building are priceless, some of them are one of a kinds. The construction of the building itself is...

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you talk about the artifacts? You and your wife Jackie, you only started collecting privately, what about a decade ago?

Steve Green: It was 2009 our first, so we're coming up on our 10th anniversary of our first acquisition. When we first bought it, we were looking at giving to this group that wanted to put a Bible museum in. We thought we would help them out, but as our collection grew, we kind of took the responsibility to make sure that the dream became a reality.

Carey Nieuwhof: What was the first piece?

Steve Green: It was called Richard Roll, which was a translation of the book of Psalms into English. The gentleman by the name Richard Roll did it for nuns. They wanted to be able to read the Psalms in English. They didn't know Latin, which is what it was in. This predates Wycliffe by about 40 years.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh really?

Steve Green: Who is understood to be...

Carey Nieuwhof: 15th century or?

Steve Green: Yeah. It's like Wycliffe is understood to be the first to translate the scripture into English. This is at least the book of Psalms that predates Wycliffe, and so that we acquired it in auction.

Carey Nieuwhof: Where do you find these things?

Steve Green: Well, some of these guys that wanted to put a museum in, they were in that space, they knew the auction houses, the dealers, the collectors. We started with some of the auction houses and they started calling around asking. Also, the economy we're struggling in 2008, 2009 and that presented some opportunities. As an example, Cambridge was struggling with some of the endowment.

Carey Nieuwhof: The university, yeah.

Steve Green: The university in England, and so they decided to sell one of their artifacts. It's a key artifact that we have in our collection today, because they had studied them, sitting in the shelf and they needed...

Carey Nieuwhof: What was it, a book or?

Steve Green: It was called the Codex Climaci Rescriptus, and it's called Rescriptus because it was rewritten on. The underlying text is scripture in much of this document, and so we're using multispectral imaging to pull out that underlying text, so that we can better understand what was written. It is scripture in Aramaic, which is interesting.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh that's unusual.

Steve Green: This would be the language, closest language to what Jesus even spoken in His home, and this is the largest portion of scripture known in Aramaic, but it's in the underlying text.

Carey Nieuwhof: You've got to go through the presenting text to find it?

Steve Green: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: You must have historians who just love what you've collected.

Steve Green: We have engaged with some of the world leading scholars and in their fields. It's a large time period, the history of the Bible, and so you have expertise in different areas. We've engaged with many experts around the world to help us in the collection and doing research and study. This Codex Climaci Rescriptus for example was new scanning technology at Oxford that was being developed. That was scanned there, and then taken back to scholars at Cambridge, where it came from to help do translation of that work. There's been a great...

Carey Nieuwhof: You're funding this? Oxford and Cambridge can't fund it, but you are?

Steve Green: Well, so we acquired it and then we funded the research on that. We have had thousands that have come alongside us in this museum project.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh sure.

Steve Green: To help support the museum. The day it started, we were the ones that got it started.

Carey Nieuwhof: You are also a big supporter of Bible translation.

Steve Green: We are. One of the stories we tell in the museum is the story of illuminations, which is what the group of Bible studies have been coming together for about eight years now I believe, once a month in the Dallas airport. They come together to strategize how to finalize the translation of the Bible into every language in the world.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow!

Steve Green: That would have been 100, 200 years off in the future, but through the collaborative effort of coming together and saying, "Let's make sure that we're not duplicating efforts. How can we do this job faster and better?" With new technology that is being developed, they have a new target date, and that is the year 2033. That is in most of our life times something that's never happened in the history of the world. A book in every language. There is no close second.

Steve Green: In the museum we have a space where there is a book on a shelf that represents every language of the world. There's about 6,000, and it shows those that have adequate scripture. It shows those that have a working progress, and those that haven't even began. If they finish the job, it will be in the year 2033, a full bookshelf of completed Bibles.

Carey Nieuwhof: In 2000 years to the year, right, after the resurrection of Jesus?

Steve Green: Yup.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow!

Steve Green: It's an incredible thought that in our day and in it is just one of many examples that come to my mind of thinking, "God is up to something in our day." That being an example.

Carey Nieuwhof: You look at the news and come to the opposite conclusion. One of the reasons I'm so glad you're talking about this and you're sharing all of this publicly is, I think in a lot of cases, Steve, Christians have an ambivalent relationship with money. It's either making money is terrible, you're a horrible human being or

yeah, I am making money and it's all for me. Or I'll give my 10% and thank you, there You go God, but please don't take my 90.

Carey Nieuwhof: What I saw in those days and with some of the people who were in the room, was a transformative way of thinking about the money that God entrusts us with. Talk to us about that, from the want-to-preneur or the entrepreneur who's starting out and is just beyond making payroll and starting to see a little bit like maybe we can buy a car or pay cash for something. To people who are sitting on significant assets, because there's a growing number of business leaders. Even to speak to the attitude that we have about our money, can you talk about that a little bit?

Steve Green: Well my grandmother had a favorite line that she would often quote to her kids. My dad is one of six, and she would give the line, "Only one life soon will pass. Only what's done for Christ will last." In the history of Hobby Lobby, I can remember for many years it was just a matter of surviving and being profitable. Growing the business and being at a point of being able to know you survived. Even 10, 15 years into the business there's a point of question whether we would survive.

Steve Green: As we continue to grow and kind of became profitable to a greater extent, that's when a ministry side of the business really developed. I looked at our giving at the time and it was really... Personally our lives we were taught to, my parents practiced tithing of our income and we did that. I remember looking at the businesses and wonder if we're tithing on the income of the business. When I calculated I looked at several years, we weren't, it was kind of short.

Steve Green: It was about the same time that we came across the ministry that the family was excited about and had a five year plan to accelerate our giving. Dad talks later about that, and he was the one that came up with a plan. My brother and he both came up with the same concept. He remembers thinking afterwards, he just kind of chuckled, "We won't be able to do that. There's no way," but we did meet that five year goal. We did increase our giving to the point, and then today to the point where, as I said we're giving half of our profits away.

Steve Green: Then I calculated all those years that we were deficient, we made up for it pretty quickly, and to a point where we're exceeding that. It really is a driving factor to say, "Boy, I want to be as profitable as I can." While there are not many businesses it gets to the point of being profitable, because they're just driving to stay alive. The Christian bookstore is one of those and it is not as profitable. It's struggling because of the disruption in that industry, the digital disruption. It's a matter of just surviving. For Hobby Lobby, God has blessed it to a point where we are able to do that. We've been blessed.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you talk about how you decide what to give to? Problems like that scale, I mean if you're giving couple of hundred dollars a year, and you've got a kids' fundraiser down the road. You've got your local church if you're part of church,

and then you've got your friend who's doing a run for cancer. Often even if you're giving a couple hundred, a couple thousand away, you feel hammered from all sides, everybody's asking for money. I can only imagine when you're on a Forbes list that you get asked from time to time. How do you decide?

Steve Green: I don't know how many, we get thousands of requests every year. We do as a family, come together once a month and discuss a few that get through filter that make their way to the family. We decide if we want to give after some discussion or not. It started with this one ministry that we had this five year plan, and then there's been a couple of others. There's about five or six that we give significantly to, that we really felt like God was wanting us to be a part of these. Kind of the 80/20 rule. There's about 80% we're giving is in six or seven ministries that we support. Then there's a variety of others that we will give to, and it's the family coming together once a month. Presentation is made here, here's a ministry and here's the need and the request. We take a vote and decide if we give to them or not.

Steve Green: Again, most of them are in a few ministries or a few others, but 99% of the time we actually have to say no. In some cases we're saying no to some great ministries, but that's why we do it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Are there criteria that if the six or seven that you're investing in the majority in, are there certain parallels or similarities?

Steve Green: A lot of it is Bible connected.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's close to your heart.

Steve Green: It's Bible translation, it is Bible distribution, it's the Bible Museum. That is our heart and so a lot of it focuses on the Bible.

Carey Nieuwhof: Have you guys had any stake in YouVersion over the years?

Steve Green: My brother has connected with Bobby Gruenewald. Bobby early on was calling him because of the Christian bookstore. He was having to get rights to the different translations, and Mart had the relationship, so he calls Mart up. We have been supporters of YouVersion for years and helped facilitate. That's a story that we tell in the Bible Museum as well. We have a world map that shows up, that shows people that are downloading the app or opening the app all across the world. It's an impressive thought to think, this book right now is being engaged with somewhere in the world more than any other book. Again, there's not a close second there either.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and I think you have the original iPhone, is that true?

Steve Green: We do.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you talk about that?

Steve Green: Bobby Gruenewald is on our board at the museum.

Carey Nieuwhof: Bobby's been a previous guest we'll link to his episode.

Steve Green: Yeah, great guy, and he as we were building the museum after we opened, he had the idea. I wonder if that first iPhone is available, because it was a 19 year old kid that the idea came up. He needed a 19 year old kid to build the app. He downloaded it on his own phone, he calls this, kid I'm not a kid anymore, and said, "Do you happen to have that phone you..."

Carey Nieuwhof: Is it sitting in your mom's basement by any chance?

Steve Green: Some drawer somewhere, he pulls it out and sends it to Bobby. That phone-

Carey Nieuwhof: That is the phone.

Steve Green: ... is on display at the museum, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's pretty cool, yeah. Clearly money creates like an ambivalent relationship with family in all of us. What really got me is that, it is a means to an end. You chose an end, it's often very scripture focused and getting the gospel out there. As a Christian myself, it clarified some things for me. What would your advice be to business leaders who maybe feel that ambivalence around money?

Steve Green: Well I think the lesson that has really been a driving force for our family, is the idea that God owns it all. From a Christian perspective, it's easy to say this is God's business. The question is, how does that work its way out in the business? There has been some questions we struggle with even in our estate planning and closing our stores on Sunday. We only open 66 hours in a week.

Carey Nieuwhof: You and Chick-fil-A.

Steve Green: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Another very profitable company.

Steve Green: It is one that you say, "Okay, it's easy to say that, but if we mean it, what does it look like? How does it work its way out?" That one thought there though is, "If this is God's business, how would He have us operate it?" That answers a lot of questions for us. Again, somebody that's not a Christian doesn't think that way, but for a Christian businessman, that is something that you have to really think that, if God owns it all, then we're here to be stewards of what he's entrusted to us. We have to ask ourself, how would He have us do whatever it is that we're in business to do?

Carey Nieuwhof: You've hinted at it a few times, but there've been some real struggles in the company's history as well. Times where you thought, "Wow, it's almost over." Can you take us through some of those moments? I think a lot of us we admire the success, but we kind of relate to the struggle and talk about it.

Steve Green: Yeah, it's really focused on two family meetings. In 1986 in the spring, my dad invited the family over to the house and sat us down and basically told us he did not know how the business would survive. We were in Oklahoma, most of our stores were in that area. The oil boom had busted, we were in the oil patch and business is going out left and right, and we were struggling. 1985 is the only year that we lost money, and so in '86 at the time our profits were all made in the fourth quarter.

Steve Green: In the spring here comes a slow summer time, and dad's just not seeing how the business would survive. He spent a lot of that year on his knees, crying out to God, avoiding the phone because those calls weren't fun. It got to a point where he just cried to God, "God if you want this company to survive, you're going to have to intervene because I don't know how we're going to make it."

Steve Green: That year wound up being almost double the most profitable year we had had. It was a clear sign to dad and a lesson he continues to teach the family even to this day, is that, this is not our business. This is God's business. We're only stewards of what He's entrusted to us. Were it not for Him intervening, we wouldn't be here. That was the first...

Carey Nieuwhof: Can I ask before you go to the second one?

Steve Green: You bet.

Carey Nieuwhof: What turned it around, like what happened?

Steve Green: Well, I don't know that dad would have any answer for that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Maybe it's inexplicable.

Steve Green: It is one of those where you survive that tough season, it was a tough summer. Then the seasonal business comes in, in the fourth quarter where we made our profits. We had gotten rid of a lot of bad inventory in '85, which is what created the loss. Refocused, we know now who we are. That dad was trying all kinds of things and they were all working during the good economy. When the economy turned, those things weren't working anymore. Had to get rid of them and really refocused who we are and what we are. Ultimately the answer is...

Carey Nieuwhof: The results were bigger than they should have been?

Steve Green: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is that fair? Yeah, that's fair, but at least it wasn't just inertia either, you prayed and you acted.

Steve Green: Right.

Carey Nieuwhof: Which is good.

Steve Green: And hard work, yeah. That was the first family meeting. The second was a few years back, where the family was facing the requirement of our government through the HHS mandate. That we had to provide in our medical insurance to our employees at no cost, the board [inaudible 00:50:41]. Now it's typically referred to as contraceptives. We offered contraceptives on our health plan, but there were four that were required that could be abortive. That's where we had been warned beforehand, that when January hits, you'll be required to either provide those or face a fine. The fine at that time was calculated at \$1.2 million a day.

Carey Nieuwhof: A day?

Steve Green: A day.

Carey Nieuwhof: Even a billion dollar company doesn't last very long?

Steve Green: It was not sustainable, could survive a little bit, but it was not sustainable long-term. We had a family meeting again and laid it out. The serious consequences, you understand this is not sustainable. Really came back with, there were three options that we felt like God had. One was, the problem could be averted. Daniel was an example of that. He asked the king to provide a different diet that went against the Jewish law. The problem was averted. He asked for it, it was allowed, it was averted.

Steve Green: Next time Daniel was told he couldn't pray to his God later in his life, and there is no appeal option here. He opens his window and has to face the lions' den and in that case God delivered. Those were two options that we knew that God had in this discussion, but sometimes God does use a third option. That is He allows suffering, so Job lost it all, Stephen was stoned. Sometimes that is what God allows.

Carey Nieuwhof: It could be the dissolution of the company.

Steve Green: It could cost the company.

Carey Nieuwhof: Just to be clear for the listeners, the question for you was a matter of conscience and principle. It's like being pro life you cannot have these four pills, you just can't do it. You either pay the cost or you go out of business, or you appeal it and you went to court, right?

Steve Green: Yeah. It was either provide those or take our country to court, this country that we love. We felt like we had really no option. If we're going back to that first lesson, this is God's business and that we need to do it His way, would God have us be a part of taking life? It was pretty clear what was unanimous we can't be a part of taking life. The only option that we saw was to file suit, and so actually lost locally. Lost at district court, could have been intervened at the Supreme Court level, it wasn't. Asked for an en banc hearing full court in Denver again, and that we want an injunction. Ultimately going to the Supreme Court where we did have a win.

Steve Green: We had a sense of gratefulness and appreciation for our nation, that does provide religious freedoms. While there may be people that disagree with our positioning, hopefully they will understand it is a win for all Americans, because religious freedom is a gift that our founders gave us and is precious.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow, and so just to be clear from a matter of religious conscience, you said earlier we're speaking at the same event when we were backstage. You said, "That's a win for all faiths." It wasn't just this particular position but no, the government can't force you to do something that is against your conscience. What was the nature of the decision with the Supreme Court?

Steve Green: It was religious freedom argument that we were standing on, and it was somewhat nearly defined because it was for a tightly held private company.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, private corporation, right?

Steve Green: Yeah. That we did not have to violate our conscious in providing what the government was dictating we provided. In many cases, this is for some of the faiths that are not as widely accepted, where that this religious freedom protection is more of a part. An Indian tribe that has a specific belief or function. The government said, "You can't do that," and they stand on the religious freedoms and are allowed to hold that.

Steve Green: It's typically minor religions or beliefs that the law is used for. This happened to be a broadly accepted Christian belief that the government was requiring Christian businesses to violate their conscience. While it protected us, it also again protects other faiths and other religions to be able to operate in our society according to their faiths.

Carey Nieuwhof: Imagine one of the challenges, Steve is, when you're starting your garage literally, and it's a small family business even with eight stores. To be at 900 stores and then moving to 1,400 and 41,000 employees and 10 million square feet. There's a lot of scale issues and a lot of companies have difficulty growing let alone scaling. You've done this with a lot of family members at the home too. How have you navigated that? That's not easy or automatic.

Steve Green: Yeah, I think that when I first got started out of high school the stores, and my sister and my brother, it's smaller. We've grown up with the company in many cases and gen three is a little bit different experience. Now we have...

Carey Nieuwhof: That's your kids.

Steve Green: That's my kids and my brother's kids, and as they come in, here's a fast moving train going down the track and how do you jump on? A lot of times you just have to say, "Just start in a position that you like and grow into it." There's this idea also that we want to be sure that they don't, our kids don't ever feel this pressure that they have to be a part of this business if that's not where their interest or their calling is. We want them to be where their interest and their calling is.

Steve Green: While the opportunity's there for them to become part of the organization, we want them to not feel that they have to be a part of if that's not what they want.

Carey Nieuwhof: Does it ever feel overwhelming to you?

Steve Green: At times. There were times especially struggles comes along and it's like, "Boy this is, how do we handle this?" At times also then you just have to put in perspective and just realize that none of our decisions are so big that they impact our world to a huge extent. They're maybe impacting our world, but in the big perspective of things or big decisions or small, when you compare to other challenges that people face in there with.

Carey Nieuwhof: Last question for you Steve, what are some rhythms, habits and disciplines that have kept you fresh over the last few decades in life and in leadership?

Steve Green: Well I think that growing up regularly attending church is just a part of our life.

Carey Nieuwhof: Part of a local church.

Steve Green: Part of a local church, and then I made a commitment years ago that I would be, read at least five minutes a day minimum in God's word. It's a daily discipline that I have. That discipline has kind of many times would read a Bible plan in a year, and so. It's kind of a high level overview of it.

Steve Green: Then another discipline that I think is good for me is that, I rotate with two others in our Sunday school class at church in teaching a lesson. There I'm doing a deep dive into a portion of scripture versus the high level overview. It's a mix of, let me get the high end overview and then go deep for teaching a lesson. No one gets more out of a lesson than the teacher.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's very true.

Steve Green: That is a discipline in my life that has been of great value, because God does lots of teaching during those times. To me that's the disciplines that come to my mind, is church and being in God's word on a regular basis that has informed my life.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good. Anything in terms of nutrition or sleep or other habits, exercise, because you had a big load. I mean running the company, two companies really because I'm sure Museum of the Bible sometimes feels like its own thing.

Steve Green: I would like to be more regular on my exercise, and my wife will tell me my diet's not as good as it needs to be.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, but that napoleon at lunch was unbelievable.

Steve Green: It was good.

Carey Nieuwhof: Was it not?

Steve Green: That was good, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: That was great.

Steve Green: There's obviously some reasonable disciplines there.

Carey Nieuwhof: What time do you get up in the morning usually?

Steve Green: It varies sometimes.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, you're fine.

Steve Green: Typically, 6 or 6:30 is the most typical unless if it's get an early flight then I've got to be up at five or something. Typically, when I get up is 6 to 6:30 somewhere in there.

Carey Nieuwhof: You love to read the Bible? Are you a reader on other things?

Steve Green: You know, I'm not as much. My brother is a bookworm, but I don't read nearly as much as he does. The Bible is the focus, but do enjoy reading a good book now and then.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well you've written a few, do you want to tell us about that?

Steve Green: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Where we can find you online?

Steve Green: There's four books that I've been involved. The first one is Bible In America, where I talk about the newspaper ads that Hobby Lobby puts in Christmas and Easter. It was some of the comments that created a discussion, so that's what that book is about. The Bible In America, which the survey that we did for the Bible Museum, 100 questions, 1,000 people across the country. The results of that is what the Bible In America book is about. Me and my wife wrote a book, This Dangerous Book and that is talking about our journey and building the Bible Museum. How the Bible has influenced our life and a little bit of the Bible story.

Steve Green: Then the one that comes out in November is called This Beautiful Book, so This Dangerous Book and then This Beautiful Book. The purpose there is just to tell the Bible story. We want people to basically have an understanding of the Bible story. I remember going seeing Les Miserables on Broadway, not knowing the story and I was lost.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Steve Green: I didn't understand it. Who was this Jean Valjean guy.

Carey Nieuwhof: I had that same problem actually.

Steve Green: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Steve Green: Friends loved it, so I went home and I said, "I've got to give it a better try. I'm going to rent one of the movies," and watched it and loved it. Went back, watched the Broadway play and loved the play. It's one of my favorites. Having an understanding of the play helped me enjoy it. The same thing with the Bible, many people read a part and a piece and know a story here or there. I think they need to understand first of all the overall story of the Bible, then it makes the Bible come alive more and make more sense when you read a story. Oh I see how that plays into the big picture. That's what This Beautiful Book is all about.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh that's going to be great. Steve, if people want to find you or the books, is there a website? Obviously Hobby Lobby, where do you find Hobby Lobby online?

Steve Green: The hobbylobby.com is our website. We don't have the website out for This Beautiful Book. This Dangerous Book you can go to thisdangerousbook.com as well and see it there. As well as going to whatever your online book sources and acquire it there.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, Steve, you've been very generous with your time, thank you so much, and thanks for inspiring and helping so many leaders.

Steve Green: You bet. Thank you for having me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Don't you just love stories like that, where you do something that's completely counterintuitive like growing retail in a shrinking environment? Paying your employees significantly more than your competitors? Making a good amount of money that you can reinvest in the process? Fascinating. If you want more, we've got transcripts for these episode, so head on over to [CareyNieuwhof.com/Episode302](http://CareyNieuwhof.com/Episode302), where you will find them for free along with the show notes, all the links to everything we mentioned.

Carey Nieuwhof: Hey guys, if you subscribe, next week you are going to want to hear my conversation with Rebekah Lyons. Subscribing is absolutely free. She has some amazing, amazing content right now. She's released a new book about panic attacks, anxiety, stress and how to cope with it. She tells her own story, and we'll give you an excerpt from that in just a second.

Carey Nieuwhof: If you haven't yet applied to [ProMediaFire.com/2020](http://ProMediaFire.com/2020) to become one of the 20 churches, that is part of their growth accelerator program next year, make sure you do that now. Applications can be received until December 1st and get on in on the Red Letter Challenge, by going to [RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey](http://RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey). That way Christmas is almost here and gone, but you've got Easter next year, a lot of churches are using Red Letter Challenge at Easter, so you can check that out.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now, here's an excerpt from my conversation that happens next week on the podcast with Rebekah Lyons.

Rebekah Lyons: Calling for me, the way I define it, is where your talents and your burdens collide. We get these birth right gifts in the womb, Psalm 139, "All our days are written in plan before one of them begins, and that He knits us and His works were wonderful." Then He invites us into this destiny that is really informed by burden I believe. I think the world understands the birth right gifts, these natural things that we're gifted at, but they don't always know why.

Rebekah Lyons: The burden is informed by the life you've lived, the family you've been born into. It's actually the places of pain. It's things that have broken your heart. It's the things that make you weep.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm really looking forward to that interview. Now I love getting your questions, so make sure on whatever platform you're on, you just use the #askCarey, that's C-A-R-E-Y. Ask your question, we've got them in queue. We tackle one a week at the end of the podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof: This week Tony asks, "If you give one bit of advice to yourself 15 to 20 years ago, what would it be?" Yeah, I would have been a leader in my 30s, late 20, early 30s. What would I advise myself? Well, here's the number one piece of advice looking back on my life. Some of you have heard it before, but I think I'm going to talk about it till I die. Simply this, work twice as hard on your character Carey,

as you do on your competency. I was a hyper driven leader, still I'm a hyper driven leader. I get up everyday excited about what's ahead, well almost everyday, but pretty much everyday. Competency is not going to be an issue. I'm not claiming to be competent, I'm just saying, "Man, I'm driven, and a lot of you are driven."

Carey Nieuwhof: Listen you listened till the end of this podcast, so you are driven. What's more important that will really determine your legacy is character, it's just character. That's who you are, that's who you are when nobody's looking. It's who you are to your family if you're married. It's who you are to your team. You know who feels the edges of your character most? It's the people who are closest to you, so that is your family. That's your inner circle, on your staff or your key volunteers.

Carey Nieuwhof: Here's the reality, that's where we always let our guard down. That's where you're like, and the next thing you know, nobody wants to work with you. Nobody wants to live with you, or it's just difficult to do that. It's been a real journey for me over the last 15 to 20 years, to really keep working on my character. I said this in an email recently, for those of you who are on my email list. By the way, if you're not and you want to jump on, just go to [CareyNieuwhof.com](http://CareyNieuwhof.com). Type your name and email into one of those dialogue boxes you will see, and you will be.

Carey Nieuwhof: I spent sometime with John Ortberg a few weeks ago, and I was sitting down after breakfast looking over the Pacific Ocean. I asked John, who's been on this podcast, I just said, "What are you going to do with the next 20 years of your life? You're going to keep writing or whatever?" I expected a, "Here's what I'm going to do," answer and he said, he gave me a, "This is what I'm going to be." He says, "I'm really working on who I am." I'm like, "Wow, that is a great goal." I agree John, and character is far more important than your competency, because ultimately your character, not our competency determines your capacity. Your character not your competency is really your legacy.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now, I promised to give you a piece of advice. I don't give very often, this is a bonus one. You know what else I would tell myself 15, 20 years ago? Get a hobby, dude, get a hobby. All you do is work. You work, you're with your family, you sleep. Go get a hobby. Since I burned out last decade, I've had several hobbies. I tried some stuff, I tried photography, it didn't work out. I bought a camera and I got bored. The three that have stuck with me are barbecue, I love my Big Green Egg. If you follow me on Instagram you know that's an obsession, I enjoy doing it.

Carey Nieuwhof: We are boaters, we live near a beautiful lake and so we have a boat, and I also bought a bike. I cycle. It's the only form of exercise I actually enjoy. Those are some hobbies I have. We do some other things as well, but man, get a life dude, get a life. Okay, that's the advice I have to myself.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Next week we're back with a fresh episode guys, thank you so much for listening. I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

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