

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

Carey Nieuwhof: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Episode 303 of the podcast. My name Carey Nieuwhof. I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Today's episode is brought to you by RightNow Media and Married People, two brand new partners. Our guest is Rebekah Lyons. I've been excited for this interview for a while. She's somebody that I have followed for a few years now on social. She and her husband Gabe are founders of Q Ideas. They have hosted such fascinating conversations with global thought leaders like David Brooks, Malcolm Gladwell, Soledad O'Brien and Tim Keller.

Carey Nieuwhof: Rebekah is a national speaker and best-selling author of several books. She has appeared on the Today show, Good Morning America, CNN, Huffington Post, many other places. Her most recent book, Rhythms of Renewal is all about anxiety, stress, panic attacks. How do you overcome that? Chances are, if you are not dealing with that, somebody you care about is. Somebody in your family, maybe it's somebody on your team that you really rely on. She's got some great, great insights on that. I'm very excited for this conversation and being able to bring it to you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Also, we've got an Ask Carey today. Chris wants to know, "What are some effective ways to help your team not experience burnout?" After Rebekah's interview, I think your curiosity is going to be piqued even more for this. How do you put systems or processes in place that encourage staff to protect their personal time? I talk about that at the end of this episode if you listen to the very end. We got two brand new partners on this episode. RightNow Media, you guys are probably always looking for content. You're looking for things that can develop you.

Carey Nieuwhof: What I love about RightNow Media is that they bring you content from leaders. Subscribers get unlimited access to videos from some of our former guests like J.D. Greear, Francis Chan, Ann Voskamp, Henry Cloud, Patrick Lencioni. RightNow Media has got a free trial on for you right now. When your organization subscribes to RightNow Media, everyone gets access to these videos for free. If you're saying, "I don't really know." Why don't you try their free trial? You can go to RightNowMedia.org.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's RightNowMedia.org/Carey, C-A-R-E-Y and you'll get a free trial only if you go to that link. RightNowMedia.org/Carey you'll find Bible studies, leadership training, personal care resources. More than 20,000 churches, schools and businesses already subscribe to RightNow Media's streaming platform. I think you're going to love it. You know what one of the greatest needs you probably have facing your church right now is? It's the state of marriages. You poke a little bit underneath the surface and you discover that a lot of people aren't happy.

Carey Nieuwhof: You know the divorce rate for what it is. Having been married to somebody for 30 years and also somebody who practices law in the area of family law, I can tell you, things aren't as great as you might think they are. What are you doing in terms of marriage ministry at your church? In 2010, there was a study done on marriage ministry. You know what most people thought about marriage ministry? And, this is why most of them fail. It's preachy, boring, outdated and feminine.

Carey Nieuwhof: For the last decade, Ted Lowe has been working at MarriedPeople.org creating what has many people are saying is one of the best ministry organizations around. I've known Ted for years. I've also known Orange. I've worked with Orange, Reggie Joiner, for years. MarriedPeople.org is actually a marriage division of Orange. I am so excited about what they've created. They've flipped the old model of marriage ministry upside down. They've got a current, relevant, professional, helpful and often just really, really fun approach to marriage ministry.

Carey Nieuwhof: Something people actually want to go to. Even better is the fact that Married People has everything you need to start a marriage ministry from scratch or to elevate what you're already doing. It's a turnkey solution so you can truly hand it off to a sharp volunteer couple. You don't even need staff for this. As a leader, all you need to do is promote it a little bit. There are so many ways to do it from the stage, via email, word of mouth, etc. Ted told me he really wants to pour into you as podcast listeners.

Carey Nieuwhof: If you go to MarriedPeople.org/Carey, you'll get 30% off the annual marriage ministry resource bundle. That gives you everything you need for an entire year of marriage ministry. You're planning for 2020 right now, so check it out. It really is marriage ministry re-engineered for the way things are today. Whether you're passionate about helping marriages or know someone who is, make sure you go to MarriedPeople.org/Carey. I think you're going to be really, really glad you did.

Carey Nieuwhof: I am so excited to bring you my conversation now with Rebekah Lyons as we talk about panic attacks, stress, anxiety, how we got ourselves into this place and then some things you can do to get yourself out. Remember to listen for Ask Carey at the end. Rebekah, welcome to the podcast. It's so good to have you.

Rebekah Lyons: Thank you for having me. I'm excited to be with you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Your book, Rhythms of Renewal, which just released, an immediate hit. You made it to Fallon from what I saw on YouTube, too, right? That was fun. Number two in the world? We better explain the Fallon reference. That was really funny.

- Rebekah Lyons: That was funny. I think I was on the Today show the day before his book came out. It stayed down at Number 2 to 5, 6 but his book came out, too showing a big poster of his book. Mine was next right to it. I was like, "Oh, I got a little cameo."
- Carey Nieuwhof: On the Tonight Show. Hey, I'll tell you. That's more than most of us will ever get.
- Rebekah Lyons: It's funny.
- Carey Nieuwhof: You got to enjoy that.
- Rebekah Lyons: Someone sent it to me. They're like, "Oh, I love that renewal book made an appearance on Jimmy Fallon." I was like, "What are you talking about?" It's just funny.
- Carey Nieuwhof: That's great. Number 2 in the world, which is amazing in the Today show and a lot of other media outlets. Now, you've written before and one of the questions, we have a lot of aspiring writers and writers who are listening and that. It's always a bit of a mystery as to why a book catches on and then why it doesn't. This one was an immediate hit. Any thoughts on that or why other than the grace of God, which is clearly operating?
- Rebekah Lyons: Right. I think the topic is at hand. Part of the research behind the book is that 77% of us right now in society are facing physical symptoms of stress. That's racing mind, shallow breathing, sleepless nights. As a result, we are collectively spinning out. That's a topic that's a felt need, four out of five for us basically are feeling this personally. As a result, we are told often in the church, "Your faith needs to grow. You need to pray about this. Jesus is your peace," which I reached to the rooftops.
- Rebekah Lyons: I believe that in every way, I also believe that God created in rhythm and he established boundaries and framework within rhythm. He created our bodies in rhythm, the universe and nature in rhythm. When we stay within those boundaries, we do flourish and we walk in peace and purpose. When we get outside of those things because of a digital revolution or industrial revolution and we think we never have to shut down or turn off out of efficiency then our bodies pay the price. Our relationships pay the price. Our purpose and passions pay the price.
- Rebekah Lyons: People are paying the price right now. They know that. They're trying to figure out what are the steps to get back in rhythm. This book is just practical steps, a guide book. It's almost like a field guide for fear. This is what you do when you are overwhelmed and overcome. This is God's invitation. This isn't Rebekah. This is me just siphoning out what I see, the framework He established for His people to walk in peace.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm curious and we're going to get into the content of the book because I think it is a huge issue for men and women. Fear and anxiety, stress, the whole deal. Did it just come out of the gate strong? What happened? Because we all as authors, we watch our books and you have a launch window. Did you do anything different this time around on your launch?

Rebekah Lyons: The funny thing is, I wrote it in secret obviously over the last 15 months. I had adopted a little girl from China so I really binged myself professionally. I stopped traveling to speak for nine months. I was home doing edits and I was very intent on this content having faith and science together. Research and data is in every chapter. I wanted it to be a smart book. I was almost embarrassed to start talking about it. You've had it so long. It's so much a part of what you've lived and done. These are rhythms I started to walk out for the last several years.

Rebekah Lyons: It wasn't until my last book, *You Are Free*. Paula Faris mentioned it on Good Morning America. She gifted it to another anchor on air, I don't know, 18 months ago. It was right before Christmas two years ago. It exploded. It actually sold more books that day than it did on launch day 10 months prior. It was the same day we had said yes to adopting Joy. It's a long story. Gabe said, "You need to write a third book, a practical step. The end of your anxiety trilogy that really gives people handles and action steps on how to walk through sustained emotional, spiritual, relational health."

Rebekah Lyons: I was like, "No, no, no. I'm writing a book on home." He's like, "No, but this is a felt need. Look at the response to this." My husband usually sees things farther out than I do. That's when we just really began the idea of writing it because I had been living it but I didn't think of it as a book. I didn't think, "This is how I've had to order my life so that I don't keep having panic attacks or anxiety attacks." This is how I've lived for the last nine years but I didn't know that it was a book.

Rebekah Lyons: Then when I finally mentioned it in May so that would be I guess five months ago, I mentioned one time on Instagram. I did a post and I had a thousand pre-orders from one Instagram post.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Rebekah Lyons: That's where I was like, "Okay. I guess this is the moment for this conversation." That's just how it happened. It became my unicorn. Yeah. Normally, I wouldn't share my numbers like this but even just the launch them, they were such a huge part of it. It was over 1700 on that. They had to pre-order the book to be a part of it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Rebekah Lyons: I think the rules have changed. This is my third time around. Last time, I learned a lot about book launching. I really enjoy the marketing side of it because I've enjoyed doing free studies and things with people. As a result, you have a email

list that you can talk to about these things. I don't know. I felt like we were a team. We had a great team. Zondervan was wonderful. Great marketing team and that all was a part of it. A lot of factors come in there.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Yeah. How did the Today show thing happen? Did they hear about the book? Was it a connection? Was it from before?

Rebekah Lyons: We hired a PR in June. She pitched it and they were saying no to everything. Again, they wanted to really talk about panic attacks and faith and anxiety. She called me in July. I had not even launched the pre-order page or talked about it beyond that one Instagram post in May. I had not even done anything and she said, "So which day on your tour could you be in New York for the Today show?" I'm checking out bananas at the Kroger's. I was like, "Wait. What?" She said, "Yeah. They want to do it."

Rebekah Lyons: I think it was again God's kindness to go, "Hey. You're going to work really hard and I'm going to appreciate that but this part's done." You know what I mean? I had literally nothing to do with that. I don't know. Shauna Niequist was a good friend of mine when my very first book came out. She just said, "You can have a splash in the beginning like a lot of us. We worked really hard to do but ultimately, the credibility of content itself and how it relates to people is what is going to actually make a book sell over the life of the book." This is my third one.

Rebekah Lyons: I didn't get this reaction the first two. The second one did wonderful. I think the second one was really written to the church. It's about the freedom that we already have. This one I felt a strong conviction even as I was finishing this final edits that this is for people outside that have curiosity about faith that maybe haven't invited God into the middle of their pain because of whatever reason they've been wounded by the church. God doesn't really seem relevant to them.

Rebekah Lyons: This is to me a bridge to people to consider that God actually has a created order and a plan and a purpose for them and wants to be invited into that. Because we have free will, we don't have to invite him into it. He's not going to force it but I think sometimes our pain gets us to the point where we are willing to consider that again.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's interesting, Rebekah. Because we both are writers. This is your interview not mine. I was on a phone call with my publisher yesterday. I have a book on stress and overwhelm and burnout. That comes out in September of 2020. I have the same conviction that this is definitely for people inside the church. I'm not the last guy to speak for God because I think that gets way overdone. I would say I feel a prompting or leading to like, "No. This is for the lawyers you used to work with in Toronto." Even more so than my last book and people who don't have faith.

Carey Nieuwhof: People who may be meditate or do yoga but don't understand Christianity. How did you write this book differently with that in mind? Did you write? Because you do talk about your faith. You talk about it in there but what was different when you try to get that voice?

Rebekah Lyons: I want to always relate to the reader no matter where they stand in faith. The feelings and the emotions and the response and the doubt and the fear and the questioning. I'm wrestling with God in the first three pages like, "Am I a fraud?" I don't think most people outside of the church are used to hearing someone inside the church saying that out loud.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Rebekah Lyons: Being sincere and honest about that. Because then all of a sudden, we become relatable again and approachable because we're not preaching as if we were right and as if we don't struggle and as if we got this thing figured out. I think the humility that we can take as people who follow Jesus all of a sudden becomes compelling again to someone outside the church. You don't have to be a great writer, a brilliant wordsmith to write a good book as long as you can connect. You have to be honest though. The only way you can connect is if you're honest.

Rebekah Lyons: I think sometimes, we're trying to write these eloquent books but we're not willing to be honest. When we begin to get really honest, there's all of a sudden an open door. Whether I'm teaching from a stage or I'm writing a book, I'm like, "No. This is where it took me." Someone outside of the church is going to go, "Wow. I didn't know that people even inside faith were that vulnerable with their relationship with God." That's where I'm at. If I could invite God into that and He would not reject me and send me away, then I'm interested in hearing more about Him.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's interesting. I've heard you say in other interviews that you've always been a pretty direct person. Almost an over sharer, am I misquoting you? To the point-

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: ... Where I heard you say Gabe early in your marriage would be like, "Please don't say this at group."

Rebekah Lyons: Right. Totally.

Carey Nieuwhof: That kind of thing. Where is the line for you? Because this is a pretty honest book. I did read it prepping for this interview. It's a great book. Where is the line for you between what to share and what not to share?

Rebekah Lyons: When it's a story about me and there's redemption, there's a threat of it somewhere, it doesn't mean I have to have a right or figured it out. I see God's closeness in it, His nearness. The conviction, maybe the outcome, on some level, the other side of depression or the other side of fear. Then I think, "Yes, this is an inroad to share." I don't share stories that are about other people because while it very much affected me and I was a half of that story, out of honor, I'm not going to share that. Because it might jeopardize something else with someone else.

Rebekah Lyons: I just wouldn't do that. I don't think that's honoring. I think ultimately, our role as followers of Christ, as walking the way of Jesus who lowered Himself, being God lowered Himself and walk in humility and took that. I think sometimes, in the church, we want to raise ourselves and get all these accolades and we don't want to take death. To me, taking death is like being willing to share something that's vulnerable or intimate knowing that, yeah. It might not look like I've had it all figured out but actually, that's the place where people find hope.

Rebekah Lyons: They begin to actually find like, "Wow. You walk through some hard things and yet your faith is still strong. In fact, in ways it's stronger because you really are resting in the fact that God is at the helm of your life." As a result, I love engaging. When we moved to New York City nine years ago, yes it was the birthplace of panic disorder for the first couple of years. Walking out of that, I became so vibrant in my faith talking to non-believers.

Rebekah Lyons: Because I was like, "Hey. Here's the thing. You don't have to agree with this. You don't have to believe with this. This is what God has shown me that there is a freedom in being able to lay down our burdens." Not feeling like we have to fix and save ourselves in every area of our lives. For the person who's tired, I don't care where you are in faith. You're like, "That sounds interesting. I'm curious. I'd like to hear more. Because you seem to have some joy that I could borrow from." I think if we don't live as a witness, then it doesn't matter what we say.

Rebekah Lyons: A bit of our lives start to reflect transformation and abundance and joy and honesty when we have relapse. That's the point of the book. I started in vulnerability. Yes, I had relapse. What do I do with relapse? What does anyone do with relapse? I'm so grateful for that moment because it reminded me that you don't take credit for any of this. There's an empathy for the person who has a victory season and then a struggle season. When those trials come, how do we respond? It gave me a tender heart for people. It gave me more dependency on God, which I think is the goal so that our faith can grow.

Rebekah Lyons: It gave me more boldness. It gave me more boldness to go on the Today show and say, "Our identity is not formed by what our kids see online. It's the only one who can speak into our identity no matter what label the world has given us. Whether it's OCD, ADHD, I don't care. That's not who we are. That's what come against us. The only identity that we have is formed by God." I wasn't

planning to say that on television but I was so in the end glad I did. Because I was like, "This is actually the truth that I believe." The truth sets you free.

Rebekah Lyons: If that's the case, then people who might be a little confused by it or at least intrigued. I had a friend in New York because I was in New York when this was happening. Several of my besties from New York, we all had brunch the next morning. One of the girls said, "Hey. We were all watching it at work." My agnostic friend and my Muslim friend were all in tears watching.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Rebekah Lyons: Because there was something you were saying that was resonating deep, deep down. I think it's important that no matter where are and what denomination but as people of faith, it's very important. You think of the prophets in the Old Testament. I believed and therefore, I spoke. I want to be that on the things that matter, on the things that I feel strongly about. I choose as we've discussed what not to speak about.

Rebekah Lyons: I think when it comes to proclaiming Christ, the freedom and the peace that He is for us and how God invites us into a story of healing, then yeah. I'm going to talk about that. I think let God just do the work.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't want to get into gender stereotypes but a little background for me. About a year ago, I decided as a male and we have tens of thousands of content creators here. Preachers, writers, bloggers, podcasters, you name it, YouTubers. As a guy, I'm like, "I want to put myself under the leadership of some women writers that I don't know particularly well and I really admire." I started reading and getting to know Ann Voskamp, mutual friend. Lysa TerKeurst, Annie F. Downs, I was on her podcast. She was on mine.

Carey Nieuwhof: One of the first things, you can be 10 minutes into this project and you realized, "Wow. Women seem so much more vulnerable than men do." They do to me. Do you have any thoughts on that? That's something that I've seen. It's a reminder to me and particularly the bigger the platform becomes and we're about to hit 10 million downloads on this podcast moments from now.

Rebekah Lyons: Wow.

Carey Nieuwhof: The more you're tempted not to open up, at least I, I won't speak for you. I am tempted to pretend I have it all together when I don't.

Rebekah Lyons: Right.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's way more of an active struggle than when there were 100,000 people or 1,000 people or 50 people. Can you speak into that? Because I think that's a unique voice that women in my opinion seem to master better than men.

Rebekah Lyons: That's a great distinction. I wonder how much of that is really just part of our hard wiring, our DNA. Because obviously, God is very intentional about male and female. When he knits us in our mother's womb and all the things He puts there, there is a vulnerability that women carry that men don't carry. I think that's partly what why men and women are together. Now granted, it doesn't mean that men aren't feeling that same vulnerability. Sometimes, I know for Gabe, his vulnerability would be, "I want to make sure that I provide and protect and defend my family."

Rebekah Lyons: His vulnerability might be more like, "I want to make sure that I can do those things. Sometimes, I don't feel equipped to do those things but that is the responsibility and the burden that I carry." I think the female in our home, as a mother of four, my vulnerability is more to read what's not being said. Like read the room, discernment, see behind the eyes, dig in to those conversations. Because there's a heart thing going on. We've got the outside thing going on but then we've got the inside things going on.

Rebekah Lyons: Whether we have three teenagers and so it's trying to get behind those conversations and say, "What are we missing? Are there places that we're running too fast?" I always have to lead with my own vulnerability in that. We joke because we do small group. When we were first married, I've always been as you said, the chronic over sharer. Gabe would be like, "What stories are we willing to tell," on our way to small group. Now we're in a group. All the guys were joking. They're like, "It's where everyone goes around the room and shares where they're at."

Rebekah Lyons: Gabe goes and everyone was like, "Can I do mine again?" Because he really has become so much more vulnerable and honest. What I find is that male or female, when we are willing to be honest, almost everybody is like exhale. Like, "Oh, that's the kind of relationship this is going to be. I'm safe to tell you this thing because you just told me this thing." We all really want that connection and intimacy and friendship. You're not going to have that with a large group of people.

Rebekah Lyons: I would say for men, the more you're vulnerable with a friend or two or three, then the more comfortable you're going to get with doing that in your work or your writing or your teaching. Because you realize that there's a safety there because to me, part of verbal processing is getting things out that you're struggling with. As you get them out, you're like, "Okay. That's not as big of a thing as I say it as it was in my head. I also now realize that I'm not alone in it. That I'm drawing strength from you as a result."

Rebekah Lyons: Thank you for free therapy and friendship. Part of what vulnerability does is that it keeps us healthy emotionally.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's really helpful. You're right. I have that kind of relationship with a few friends where there's nothing really off limits. I think you're right. I think one of

the challenges, this is a frequent theme on this podcast is for a lot of leaders and I would suggest particularly male leaders that friendship quotient is missing. There's just not as many as we need to have. Can you take us back to your first experience of anxiety? Because you describe yourself as a pretty driven person in your 20s and you had it all together. It came to a crashing halt. Can you catch us up on that story?

Rebekah Lyons: Sure. The first halt was at 26 when my first born son was born with Down syndrome. We didn't know until six hours later after he was born. It was an emergency C-section. Like the doctor said, "Failure to thrive. You have no fluid." He stopped growing the last trimester so he's only four and a half pounds full-term.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Rebekah Lyons: All this was a surprise at 39 weeks. That whole day was so traumatic in so many ways. It's a longer story in the first. As a result, I got on my knees before God that next year and my faith matured more in one year than it had in 20. Partly because I was grieved, I was crying out, I was fighting for his life to come home from the intensive care. Once he came home, just trying to navigate my role as mother. What does healing and wholeness for him look like? Because it wasn't just Down syndrome.

Rebekah Lyons: It was just growth and even just the delay that he was up against. I was full-time at a church at the time at North Point actually. Andy Stanley's-

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: ... Yeah. I was like, "There's only 30 of us on staff." It was early days. My role was Director of Married Adults to get 5,000 adults and 500 small groups. I had a team but I realized about a year in that my team knew more of what was going on than me. I just felt God literally say this is a season where you need to come home. Because Cade was up to eight hours of therapy a week. My life was just done as I knew it. That began. There wasn't anxiety there but there was definitely pain. There was surrender. We have two more kids. My husband and I launched a non-profit we co-founded called Q.

Rebekah Lyons: Nine years later, because that organization is all about engaging faith on the front lines of culture, whether arts, media, government, policy, education, we moved to New York City because so many people we were working with were coming through that space. We were convening these gatherings all around the country. Our second one was at Gotham Hall in New York City. I think we went with these dreams and ambitions and my youngest daughter at that point was starting Kindergarten. I had ended that decade. Diapers and Cheerios and poop and was trying to rediscover who was she before this? I forget.

Rebekah Lyons: In that four months in moment, I'm at that time taking the train down to Parsons School of Design. I'm back in fashion and design because that was my background. Four months in, I have my first panic attack on a plane and then that continued for over a year. Planes, trains, elevators, subways, crowds and I got to where it was rooted in claustrophobia. It made no sense to me.

Rebekah Lyons: It was totally foreign but the anxiety was so intense physically that I started taking nine flights of stairs or walking an extra mile or just avoiding and declining invitations. Because I couldn't get a handle on it. That lasted for over a year.

Carey Nieuwhof: I've struggled a little bit with anxiety. Certainly, I've burned out. I did a great job on that one. I don't think I've ever had a panic attack. For those of us, I know a lot of listeners have. For the people who haven't had a panic attack, can you describe what that feels like?

Rebekah Lyons: Sure. It's not rational. Your body is acting and responding as if you're being held at gunpoint. The adrenaline of your heart is just beating out of your chest. You're sweating profusely. You can't even find your words. It's sheer terror. For me, it was rooted in this idea of feeling trapped in a tight space. The plane turbulence wasn't what was throwing me. It was when this plane hits, I'm going to be stuck here. I'm not going to be able to get off. On an elevator, same thing. What if this door doesn't open? If I have to sit in this small space, I will die.

Rebekah Lyons: Literally, that's what you're feeling like. I've learned as I've studied claustrophobia in general, a metaphor for feeling trapped in a context in your past. Whether it's a relationship or a circumstance or literal.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: You might have been physically trapped. The only way to combat that is through exposure and rewiring your brain to go rationally. For me, I had to just very much so because for me the plane, the airplane was the trigger for me initially. Then in New York, it was everything that was small or crowded.

Carey Nieuwhof: Which is everything in New York, right?

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah, everything in New York. I do remember being in a moment where I just was physically, my body was doing the panic attack and then mentally, I was coming back from a funeral of my aunt. I pictured her staring into the eyes of Jesus. I just kept holding on to that vision in my eyes while my body's acting insane. It subsided. It did the whole cycle of panic and yet mentally, I had to focus on something, a fixed point that was beyond myself that was full of peace. It's just hard to explain. I do think for a lot of people that have this, there's a book called Your Body Keeps A Score.

Rebekah Lyons: It's how you have trapped trauma that your body keeps reliving but your cognitive brain cannot remember it. It doesn't actually have the ability to discern fully why this is happening. It's a fascinating read. He treated trauma patients from war or abused children for over 30 years. It's very scientific. It is true that we all store some level of trauma, which is basically trauma just means it's anything beyond the bounds of nurture.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay.

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah. It doesn't have to be an incident. It could just be the way you received or didn't receive love or rejection. It could be something that was either too much or not enough. Every kid growing up takes that in differently. It doesn't mean that your parents were bad or that someone abused you. It just means that sometimes, for each of us, we walk the road that fell outside of the boundary of nurture. Where we didn't feel like there was someone we could go to or someone we could talk to or someone who was our safety.

Rebekah Lyons: As a result, our kids that grow up that are trying to hustle and strive and read the room and work the room and find that acceptance by whatever means necessary.

Carey Nieuwhof: What was your journey with panic attacks like? Because you mentioned, you open the book with relapse. You got it under control to some extent. How did that happen? Yeah. Just catch us up to where that is today.

Rebekah Lyons: Sure. After that year, I do remember no longer confined to small spaces. I would wake out of dreams or in my bed and I would wake in that same panic attack mode. September 20th of 2011, I wrote the date down because it changed everything. I woke in the middle of the night full of terror, can't find my voice. My husband wakes up, begins to pray. He knows the drill. He begins to pray and then all of a sudden, I found my voice and I just held up my hand. I said, "Rescue me. Deliver me. I cannot do this without You."

Rebekah Lyons: In that particular moment, I don't know why the spirit of God prompted me to cry out in that way but in that particular moment, I was flooded with peace.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Rebekah Lyons: For the first time, everything stopped immediately and I just collapsed on the bed and laid there in the dark. Nothing can move but my eyeballs. I just remember thinking like, "I don't even know what this is." There might be a name for this in Pentecostal circles but this Baptist girl has no idea what is happening. I would have called it healing at the time. I don't know. I just walked out the next day and I started to see the city in living color. I started to realize that when you're sick, you only look inward. When healing begins, you look up and you look out and you see everyone else.

- Carey Nieuwhof: That's so true.
- Rebekah Lyons: I started to see people just like me walking the streets of the city gripped in fear. I started to study faces on the subway and trying to figure out their stories and smile at them. Strike a conversation. Just be different because when you're so afraid, you're not trying to be someone for someone else at all. Yet I started meeting with different women for coffee and hearing their stories. Realize, "Wow. So many of us are walking through hard things." I started to write. That's when I started writing. I wrote an article for Q called Why Are Women Fading?
- Rebekah Lyons: It was this idea that we march up to college ready to charge hell with a water pistol and then two decades later, we've lost a sense of who we are. In that lostness or that purposelessness that somehow got buried between the weight of roles and responsibility, we start to spiral. That really just struck a chord and got me writing. I didn't actually have another panic attack for seven years. I definitely had triggers of anxiety but I started to create these again, rhythms for health. Part of it was just if I had to get on a plane, that's the great irony of God.
- Rebekah Lyons: I now had to start getting on a plane every Friday to talk about the rescue of God. The same place I got panic attacks. What I would do is I would just put worship in my ears. I would literally read the word and journal the whole time. Because that's the only time the way I could just stay in that framework. I wouldn't even quite prepare for that night. It was more like you're just going to need to direct deposit what you want me to share tonight because I'm just going to need to feast on you being my peace. You are my peace so I submit to that and I come under your covering of peace.
- Rebekah Lyons: I don't need you to give me enough peace to get through this flight. I'm just going to submit that you are my peace. Taking that role of submission under that, I felt covered. I felt protected. I just had several go-to passages or scriptures I would read. It did. I was flooded with peace. That's why when Jesus says, "The peace I give the world cannot give so don't be troubled or afraid." I think it's so true. We don't always experience it so we doubt that that's true.
- Rebekah Lyons: When we get to a point where we tried all the things and they're not working, then we consider this again and go, "Okay. Are you really the Prince of Peace? Can we submit and come under that? Can you be that for us?" That came through just a lot of time of just focusing in that way a lot of prayer. Just walking in a new way, just deciding if this is already done, I'm going to receive it. My first that came to my head after all this season of coming out of that was like, "Rebekah, I don't give you a spirit of fear. I give you power, love and a sound mind."
- Rebekah Lyons: If that is true in 2 Timothy, then there's got to be a true framework that God ordered for us to walk this out. If we are to feed people of power, love and a sound mind, then certainly, He's going to give us a rule book or a play list, somethings that's going to actually help equip us to do that.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think we've all been in a place where we think we've conquered something and then all of a sudden, it's back. That would be 2018. You had a relapse. What happened?

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah. I'm stuck in this tiny, little bathroom stall. I start the book with a story but it really was that we were in this 100-year old home made out of concrete basically on the cliffs of Carmel. Everyone had left to go into Carmel by the Sea for a couple of hours where we're hosting a retreat, Gabe and I. Everyone was taking a break. Again, I must have this thing with devices that power off too soon because my iPhone died at 40% because I did not want to pay an upgrade to a new phone. I had just texted him like, "Don't worry. I'll just take the car and I'll come meet you guys."

Rebekah Lyons: Because no one was going to come back for a couple of hours. Right as I'm doing that, my phone dies. The bathroom stall will not open. The door is 100-year old wooden, heavy door with these antique locks and that would not open. It was literally 2x4 just enough for the toilet. Cement walls and no one's going to come back for hours. No one would hear me. I couldn't contact anyone. Something rose. It was as if the worst version of a panic attack I had ever had. Because I was alone and I was trapped in the tightest space I've been in in a long time and had nowhere to turn.

Rebekah Lyons: As a result, my body freaked out so bad. As if the muscle memory was yesterday, from eight years ago or seven years ago. When that happened, I literally am thinking, "You're not going to make it."

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Rebekah Lyons: You're not going to actually be able to handle this. I was so afraid of me and spinning out because here's what I know about a panic attack. When it begins, you have about a 15-second window to combat that immediately before it consumes you. Once it consumes you, you feel so powerless to it. Every single part of your body is Jell-O. Just trembling, shaking and then you're mentally going, "How do I even reign this thing back in?"

Rebekah Lyons: It's one of the most paralyzing feelings because with fight or flight, the only thing you can do is run and escape. If you can't, that's why solitary confinement is so condemning.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Rebekah Lyons: What it does is it robs the human of their dignity of you are so stripped of help. You've never have been more helpless. That you are powerless, you are helpless. You are defenseless. There's nothing you can do. I think that's why it's so terrifying for people because you can't take any agency over anything. Everything's been robbed from you.

- Carey Nieuwhof: You obviously got out of that bathroom and that castle.
- Rebekah Lyons: Yeah. I looked up and there's this tiny, tiny, little window, Palladian tiny, antique decorative window above the toilet way high. It's a high ceiling. I thought, "Can I get up there?" The fact that I saw the window, I was like, "What?" Then I thought, "Can I hoist myself to the back of this toilet? Will these hips fly? Can they get through this window?" I had scratched my legs out pretty bad getting out but I got out. It opened and then I sat there on the cliffs overlooking the sea. I was just like, "What was this? What was this?"
- Rebekah Lyons: That's where I just thought, "Am I a fraud?" Kind of the promise that God gave me in that moment, and I think it's a good reminder for all of us. Because we can get pretty bold and bravado in our faith but yet we're not the ones doing the rescue.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.
- Rebekah Lyons: I said to my spirit later that night, "I don't promise that fear won't come knocking but I always promise a way of escape." The passage, the scripture that's from is that you will be able to bear it. It's this idea that I'm going to be your ever present help in any moment of trouble. No matter what your fear thing is, I am readily available right here, ready to be your source of strength and your aid. I think what happens in church or outside the church, sometimes we get so self-reliant on putting all the systems around us. Yet we need a reminder that like, "No."
- Rebekah Lyons: There are moments where that desperation where we have nowhere else to turn is when God is ready to move. Because there is no other way. I'm so thankful for that reminder because I want to stay in tune with my frailty and with His sovereignty and how the power of walking in faith really is from Him. The joy of Him gives me strength. That's a good thing to be reminded of. It keeps us humble.
- Carey Nieuwhof: You do have rhythms that I want to get to in this conversation that have been really helpful. I wouldn't say that I have that system but I can resonate with a lot of what you're saying. For the leaders listening, I think everybody has got stress. Everyone's got some level of anxiety. People have been through depression. People have been through burnout. A number of leaders have panic attacks. They're the immediate delivery out of the moment. Like, "Okay. How did I get through this one?"
- Carey Nieuwhof: You're saying there should be not a system but there should be a rhythm to your life. There should be some things you can do that help prevent those conditions from arising. Is that accurate?
- Rebekah Lyons: Yes. Because when this relapse happened, I was not rested. I was not restored. I wasn't eating well. I wasn't really connected in friendships because I was

traveling so much. There was a lot of output happening. There was not a lot of input. These rhythms are again, a reminder that there's four rhythms. The first two are input. It's funny. I have an online quiz like what's your healthiest rhythm? I've had thousands go through it. Of course, the lowest one for everybody is rest.

Carey Nieuwhof: Which is number one, right?

Rebekah Lyons: Right. Right. I like it. That's why we're going back to the drawing board. This is the foundation. It's the baseline for health is rest is a superpower. If you've forgotten to rest or you don't have permission to rest or you don't think that you can afford the time to rest, here's the thing. It's going to get you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: Rest is not optional to God, because He rested, and we must rest. I think part of it is just going back, the reason we're so stressed out and burned out is because we have forgotten how to rest. Our bodies are being pushed beyond the circadian rhythm that was established in creation to be like machines that never turn off out of efficiency. We have a phone telling us to never turn off. Meanwhile, you've got a sunrise with the blue light that tells you to wake up. That emits blue light and the sunset that emits red light, which is natural melatonin for your bodies. God's like, "I've actually created a system that your body's function and thrive within."

Rebekah Lyons: A machine on the other hand is going to tell you, "Do something different."

Carey Nieuwhof: We're buying pills and devices off of Amazon that generate these things when it's right out there to begin with, at your front door.

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah, exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you walk us through what rest looks like for you? Break that down because I'm glad you started there in the book. It was a lack of rest but a thousand other things that led to my burnout. That is one thing I take so seriously and I don't always do well anymore. It's more than just sleep. Sleep is part of it but what does rest mean?

Rebekah Lyons: Right. There are seven chapters I start with. Rest and restore are your input rhythms. Connect and create are your output rhythms. We'll get to those in a minute. Rest and restore. Rest for me is the inner life. The health of the inner life. Like am I okay? Are God and I okay?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: Having a real conversation in the last few days. The first chapter is all about taking inventory of your life. Because I think sometimes, because we're so busy reacting and going, we don't pause long enough to go, "Is the life I lead the life that longs to live in me? Am I actually doing the work that I am so passionate about? Am I just reacting to everything?" Part of this take a tech detox. I walk through having to do that for three months and how that created in my heart a desire to sleep again, dream again, learn again. All of a sudden, I'm thinking, "Wow. I have original thoughts again."

Rebekah Lyons: This isn't me trying to look at what somebody else did on Instagram and go, "How do I recreate that?"

Carey Nieuwhof: What did your tech detox look like? Because I've read the Digital Minimalism by Cal Newport. It's really interesting. What did yours look like? What did it do?

Rebekah Lyons: For me, I looked at where I spent most of my time and it was Instagram. It had been seven years almost to the day that I began Instagram. I was an early adopter. We just moved to New York. It was an online photo gallery for my friends back home. I take dumb pictures of a hotdog cart or tulips in Central Park and my kids sitting on a statue, whatever. Then I realized as my platform grew with writing and teaching, I stopped making it about what I felt compelled to share but more about what I thought people wanted to hear. I lost my voice in some way.

Rebekah Lyons: I didn't lose it when I was writing or teaching because when you're in the room, you still are who you are. I found it so much easier with no filters to just be real. Somehow online, in that medium, it felt a little more like you had to be editable. Whether the photo is editable or the copy was editable, there was still a degree of separation that was hard to overcome. Then you're always looking at what everybody else is doing. When my dad died, it was a long, painful journey. He had died in April. I felt prompted to get off social media for Lent.

Rebekah Lyons: I was like, "It's not a big of a deal." I ignored it and then I found that after my dad died, I was really facing depression and I was very familiar with that because I had depression in New York. I called a friend and I said, "I don't want to hemorrhage publicly." I'm just going to get offline for the whole summer. I took three months off. It was great. I didn't even have my phone. It got to where I didn't even know where it was. Because apparently, I just was really just unplugging, trying to heal, trying to grieve.

Rebekah Lyons: I learned even in that chapter on tech detox that I finally am going around the bend and I see the sunset. It's so glorious in Franklin. There's a lot of pretty sunsets in Franklin. Normally, I would feel the compulsion to take a photo and share it. I reach for my phone and realize I don't even have it with me. I have no idea where it is because I haven't looked at it for a week. Because it's summer and my kids are home, we're all just as family being together. God says, "You're worthy to receive something beautiful. You don't have to share it."

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Rebekah Lyons: It made me ask a deeper question. Why do I always have to share publicly these gifts you give me that are really meant for us and meant in communion and meant for intimacy? Yes, we could certainly share things that you've done and that we're learning. I'm not against that because I think we're called to that. How do you differentiate when you're just receiving from God? That this doesn't have to become a Bible study? This doesn't have to become an Instagram post. This is just receiving. That was a fundamental lesson on worth for me. Honestly, when I re-entered in the fall, it was awkward.

Rebekah Lyons: It's like going back to middle school. What's everybody wearing? What's everybody doing online? I didn't even know you could do this certain swipe up feature, whatever. It took me a while. It still felt a little clunky. Even now, I just have reordered how I see it. I think it's a mega phone for the work that you're already doing outside of that space. That's a wonderful thing. When it starts to become the work itself to manage that, then to me, for my work, it's getting unhealthy.

Carey Nieuwhof: How much of your anxiety do you think was tied to technology?

Rebekah Lyons: Because it's like a popularity contest that won't quit, it's like you're in 7th grade and you can never leave. Everyone's just trying to be a part of the cool guys. Because it's a public display of people sharing how much they like your content and how much they're commenting on your content. It's just literally created to be a place of comparison. It's set up that way. I know several countries were considering Instagram where they took down the visibility of likes and the visibility-

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. We did that in Canada.

Rebekah Lyons: Okay.

Carey Nieuwhof: I find it now.

Rebekah Lyons: That's why I love stories so much because nobody actually has to see me engage in a direct message with someone. I find that that's really freeing for me. If someone has a question, like, "Sure." It's quick but it doesn't have to be all be public. I think that anxiety is like, "Am I enough? Am I keeping up?" I think the reason why they consider taking that not public is because so many kids and teenagers, their worthiness, their literal question of worthiness was contingent on a number. If that's the case, then we're no longer human.

Rebekah Lyons: We're just functioning as robots and say, "My worth is dependent on my output." My production cycle and my number. That is so far from where God sees humanity and His belovedness for us." I think, man, it's no wonder so many

of us are spinning now. Because we really could see our worth based on our latest accomplishment.

Carey Nieuwhof: Was it just social on your phone? Were you just off the internet period?

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah. I was off. Yeah. I was off. I did listen to podcasts because I'd go for long walks in nature. I have several people whether it's sermons or just practical content. I love learning. To me, that was a great way to get outside. I got outside a ton. I think that's really important. There's a morning routine in there. I think it's very important for rest. There's a chapter on routines for deep sleep. Hopefully, you got a good night's sleep.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: The next morning, there's a chapter on morning routine. Because that first hour sets the framework for your day, what do you want that to look like? I talk people through about making sure that I got outside and then making sure that I got low before the Lord. Why a posture of kneeling for me is so centering in this because when you kneel, it automatically slows your breathing, which quiets your central nervous system. When you extend your palms, you put yourself before God in a posture of surrender and release and the heart and the readiness to receive.

Rebekah Lyons: I do think prayer isn't about so much as just like giving God our laundry list of the things we want him to do. It's about communion with him and just almost praying in a way that just says, "What do you have? Show me. Show me who you'd have me talk to today or encourage. Prompt me with someone I can speak life to. Convict me. Convict me of the things that I'm blind to." That to me is what prayer is about and then just show me where to go, what to do, what to say.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you have any Sabbath rhythms? I've talked to Jon Tyson about Sabbath and some other people about Sabbath. Do you take it? What does it look like for you?

Rebekah Lyons: Yes. That's the last chapter in it. Stop the work. We do do Sabbath. It's a little bit harder in the fall especially our kids are in school and they have so many things on a Saturday with school stuff. Fun things because they're now in high school and they're finding this freedom with driving and friends and places to go. Then that falls to Sunday, which we try very hard but still going to church. It does still sometimes feel like work. What we're trying to do is just making sure that on Sundays though outside of church, no phones. We're just spending time together. We get outside. We go for walks.

Rebekah Lyons: We play games. We just have long conversations. We'll play guitar. My kids play guitar and ukulele and love music. Just really try to make that rhythm of that Sunday be different than the rest of the weekend. Sometimes, I will go online

like Sunday night later than eight to just say hello. If I do it but I'm getting to where I'm not doing that actually much.

Carey Nieuwhof: You just eventually lose interest. It's interesting.

Rebekah Lyons: You do.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: It almost feels like I don't want to really start my work week yet. I'm just going to wait until tomorrow.

Carey Nieuwhof: Anything else on rest? I'm glad you started the book there. We have so many driven people listening to this podcast. Most of us stink at rest. We just do. We're just robots. We just go, go, go, go, go. Anything else before we move on to restore?

Rebekah Lyons: Sure. The get quiet one is good because I realize we don't know what we need to confess until we have room to listen and to get quiet. Sometimes we think we're good. We're good. The practice of getting quiet and in solitude it's not loneliness. It's you and God. You're not alone. There's a difference. In those moments, I try to carve out in my work week not even on the weekend because we're all here. Even in the work week, I'll try to carve out an hour to somewhere in a morning before I go into the office where I need just some extended time of quiet. No noise, no music, no nothing. I'll read.

Rebekah Lyons: I'll journal. Journaling is a huge piece for me because again, I process verbally. That means I even process as I write to get to the bottom of some things that I'm confused about. Because I think we are invited by God to take inventory of our days. To just answer those questions I talk about in the first chapter. What's right, what's wrong, what's confused and what's missing. We're not going to get to the bottom of those answers if we don't create space to get quiet.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. I'm finding solitude is such a gift these days. I never used to love it. Do you have to have a certain level of peace with yourself to sit quietly? There's that Blaise Pascal quote that I love, one of my favorites. "Man's chief problem is his inability to sit alone quietly in his room."

Rebekah Lyons: Yes. Yes. I find it such a comfort now. As a kid, I would have never done that. You know what I mean?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: Now, it's like, "Finally." I joke with my mom friends. When all the kids get out of the car and they go in the house. You just linger in the car in the garage and they're like, "Are you coming?" You're like, "No, I'm okay," for a moment

because it's quiet. All of a sudden, you really relish the quiet. I feel like I'm becoming my parents. Because sometimes, I'll play music so loud. Even if it's worship or whatever and I'm like, "Can you just turn it way down?"

Carey Nieuwhof: I know. I know. I'm getting that way, too. It's great. Okay. Restore. How is restore different from rest? Because I would think they're almost the same but they're not.

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah. They are. They're both input but the way I separate them out is rest is more for our spiritual health. Where restore is for our physical health. Once you've got this baseline with God and you're getting the rest you need. You're getting that input and that examining the heart and those mornings are strong, then you're starting to have let's work on the energy level. Because you now have a plan of attack. For me, restore is all about what are we putting in our bodies? How are we stewarding the life we've been given? Our bodies and the breath that we've been given.

Rebekah Lyons: It's all about diet, exercise, using the workout pants not just wearing them for errands and then what it does for our mental health. We know that a brisk walk outside or anything that raises your heart rate produces serotonin in your body, which is what everyone's taking medication for these SSRIs is to give you this happy hormone. Yet when you actually work out, you are getting a happy hormone. You feel more confident. You feel more joyful. You feel more like, "Hey. Life is not as overwhelming today." My daughter, every time, she doesn't like to walk.

Rebekah Lyons: She does other things that she loves to work out but sometimes, I'll be like, "Just for a walk with me in the woods," or whatever. We have a hiking trail. In the end she's like, "Yes, mom. I'm in a better mood but please don't remind me of that next time when I don't want to walk." It's like we know that it does. We take the dogs and it's fun. There's just something about getting outside. Also, I took our family through a Whole 30 a couple of years ago. I felt an energy drain, always having to be on planes. You do on, on, on.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: You're traveling and then you're speaking and then you're traveling. Basically, you have a 36-hour window of just non-stop with a little bit of sleep thrown in somewhere. A few hours for one night but then you're coming home to a family that's looking at you like you're ready to go. You're just like, "I got nothing."

Carey Nieuwhof: You want to lie on the couch. Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah. I'm looking at this laundry pile and just staring at it with crazy eyes. I don't even know what to do. I would find the kids would go to school, come home at three and I would be like, "I know I haven't seen you all day but I need to take a nap." I thought, "No. This isn't who I want to be as a mother."

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: I'm feeling this adrenaline on the road but the reason I'm able to do that is because of adrenaline. I get home and that crashes. This is the quote behind me, "If you want to bring happiness to the whole world, go home and love your family."

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: It's hard to love them if you're sleeping the whole time. Part of it was I've got to change my diet so that it doesn't spike with caffeine and sugar. By three in the afternoon, I'm crashing. Diet and exercise are a big part of this section of restore as well as play. Play is a big part. Taking us back to child-like fun.

Carey Nieuwhof: I want to go back to diet for a moment, not leave it. Because again, busy lifestyle. I did the Whole 30 five years ago. I lost 20 pounds, which I miss losing those pounds now. I was on it for about 45 days. I could not believe the difference in energy. It was night and day because I was getting into double napping. I've always been a nap fan, a sleep guy. I'm like, "I'm just not tired." I had way more energy. What did you discover on the Whole 30? Which basically eliminates dairy and caffeine and gluten and carbs essentially?

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah. Yeah. It's funny they call it tiger blood. Do you remember that?

Carey Nieuwhof: I forgot. No.

Rebekah Lyons: It's like Day 16. They're like, "No, it's tiger blood."

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Rebekah Lyons: You never knew that you could have the potential for this much energy. It's true. I think it's an anti inflammatory diet ultimately. What we don't realize, it doesn't mean that you have to be on that for life. It's really to reset your gut because your gut health is very much connected to your emotional health. As a result, if things are sluggish in your body or you're eating foods that inflame and they can't actually stay on the move. Then you get sluggish and you have brain fog. You always feel overwhelmed. Part of is then you double the caffeine.

Rebekah Lyons: You have a glass of wine to help you go to sleep or whatever that choice is. You're always trying to do something that gets you up and then slows you down versus a natural diet. I found that as I reordered my day with fitness and diet and had a more productive day, my sleep followed. My nights were more productive. I wasn't waking up intermittently as much. Our bodies will respond if we treat them well.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yes.

Rebekah Lyons: It takes some time. It made a huge difference for me for energy level. It wasn't about weight for me. It was about energy because I think for you, for me, for so many of us, we want to be able to run this race with perseverance for as long as we're given. I would hate to just shortcut it just because I don't have the internal discipline to go like, "I should probably not eat three donuts right now."

Carey Nieuwhof: Right.

Rebekah Lyons: I don't want to thwart that out of just that. Sure. There can be other vices. Let's just try to eliminate the things that seem basic. For me now, there's so many options. Even at Costco, we have six in our family. I have to go buy lots of food. Even Costco has a million organic healthy snacks now that are natural. There's a bar right now called That's It. I gave one to my daughter today for lunch. It's like, "What's in the bar?" It says a mango and an apple.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Rebekah Lyons: It's basically a fruit bar. There's nothing added. There are ways to do it. You just got to find things.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's more whole foods. How long did you do Whole 30 for?

Rebekah Lyons: I stuck with it as a lifestyle and never added cream or sugar back to my coffee. Now, I don't do much gluten or dairy ever unless it's a special occasion.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: I've pretty much stuck with it. I'll do Ezekiel bread as a gluten because of those early grains. I don't have any intolerance to that. Other than that, I'm just not doing what I used to do with baked goods and stuff like that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. I've changed my diet but it flipped back too far. I'm in the process of redoing it now and just cutting some things out. Funny, the food chain's broken that's for sure. It is a direct cause and effect. Okay. Let's talk about the lats two rhythms. Man, this has been a great, helpful conversation. Because we do have mostly creators listening. We're not going to fail on these but you've probably got a variation.

Rebekah Lyons: Sure.

Carey Nieuwhof: Rest and restore. Pay attention to your body, exercise, sleep. Before we leave restore, what's your target sleep? Because you're a mom right in the middle of it. You've got four kids ranging in age from?

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah. I have 18, 16 and 14 and then we just adopted a little girl from China. She's in Kindergarten so we have a six-year old.

Carey Nieuwhof: You've got it all going on.

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah. We've got prom going on and we still pull ups at night because she was literally in an orphanage until nine months ago. She's doing amazing. Yeah. It's taken us back to those toddler days a little bit. It's been really fun.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: I shoot for seven, seven and a half. I can do eight. I'm usually pretty tapped out and tired by 9:30 and then I'll probably fall asleep by 10. We get up early, five, 5:30, something like that. Gabe and I try to go for a walk. Now that it's staying dark a little later, once the time changes, we'll be okay. We usually walk at 6:15 for about an hour because we've already put one kid on the bus. The other two are getting themselves ready and then as soon as we get back, I get Joy ready. We'd have to have again a morning routine. It's so essential I think.

Rebekah Lyons: Those first hours of the day really do establish the framework for the next 15 hours of the day.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's a good segue because you make the argument and I think that's true. I've got some research in my own book about the connection between walking and thinking. If you're going to create, do you want to talk about that? There is an actual correlation between physical movement and your ability to create great ideas.

Rebekah Lyons: I got a treadmill desk.

Carey Nieuwhof: Ann Voskamp has one, too. That's funny. Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: We joke about it. I have a chapter in *Restore* called take a walk. I did put it in that one instead of create. The point of it was that walking actually stops writer's block.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: We have a podcast *Rhythms for Life* and I interviewed a friend, Ryan O'Neal with *Sleeping at Last*. I said, "How do you temper a creative block?" Because he challenged himself to write 36 songs in one year. Score them, produce them, put them out. He said, "Well, it would always be I would just take a nap and then I would take a walk. A 30-minute walk or a 20-minute nap to just stop." Because what happens is our subconscious needs to speak into that creativity. We're always in that the brain is trying to produce.

Rebekah Lyons: When you get away from it, all of a sudden, the subconscious takes over again and starts to connect the dots that you weren't able to do when you were trying so hard. You're like, "Oh, aha. That was the moment." There's a book on rest I

read a year ago. It's not a faith book. It's a science book. It just studied artists and scientists and past presidents for centuries that had to work within rhythm. They would always do their most creative moments first thing in the morning. They would have lunch and they'd go for a walk, then they would take a nap.

Rebekah Lyons: I was like, "They got a lot done." They would do 70 volumes of work or paintings. All these writers prolific, just brilliant people and rest was such a centering thing for them with walking and napping.

Carey Nieuwhof: Isn't that interesting? You can debate this all day long and then night owls will email me but I'm a morning person. Very similar. I fade after nine o'clock at night. I'm up usually pretty early, usually by five, 5:15 at the latest. I will follow that rhythm. I will do all my creative output in the morning. I have lunch, go for a bike ride in my case if it's a nice day and then I'm tired and I want to have a nap. If I'm lucky to squeeze two more hours out of the afternoon, that's a good day. You're saying that's an atypical rhythm.

Rebekah Lyons: No. In fact, in this book, they would say that back in the day, centuries ago, they could do correspondence in the afternoon.

Carey Nieuwhof: Correspondence.

Rebekah Lyons: From three to five, which I'm sure was a hand letter writing but for us is email.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: The point is sometimes, there has to be maintenance to our work. Maintenance work is probably not the best first thing in the morning. To me, that's more when you're later in the day. The creative part of our work to me is earlier in the morning. That's what I found in all of my studies. That's what usually works for me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Let's talk a little bit about the last two rhythms because I think that's so important. Connect and create.

Rebekah Lyons: The reason why I start with connect is because most people create in collaboration. The whole point of these rhythms is they're building blocks. You're rested. You're strong. You have community and then with that community, you create amazing things. Collaborative work is very important. People think writing is a solitary sport. I have to say I worked with 20 people to get this book out into the world. It's not a solitary sport.

Carey Nieuwhof: How so? 20 people. You're talking beyond editors, right?

Rebekah Lyons: No. First, my editorial team. Let's see. One, two, three, four, five including me. Five people actually then you've got someone else actually doing the copy

editing. You've got someone who's helping with marketing and then PR and agents. In the end, it's 20 people that I'm exchanging meetings and it's just so fun. Because everyone's really great in their lane. They're collaborating on this book baby. I think that's the point of community is that you find the people you love to do the work you love together. There's so much joy there.

Rebekah Lyons: Jumping into connect real quick, I write about friendship and about how to be the friend you wish to have. Because there's a loneliness epidemic right now in society. 46% say they experience high feelings of loneliness. 27% believe they don't have a real friend, one real, deep friend. This is up to ages of 38 and millennials. That's a problem because we're online talking to everyone but connecting with no one. Because connection really can't happen outside of embrace, eye contact, non-verbal communication.

Rebekah Lyons: This is taking you back to what does friendship look like? What does proximity and permanence and presence look like in your home, in your city, in your neighborhood and community? I talk about friendship leading with vulnerability. Open porch policy we do at our home where potluck were perfect. I'll always host a holiday and we'll provide the entrée like the meat or something. I have friends that are way better cooks than me. Everyone loves to pitch in. I think hospitality is how the church began. Breaking bread in homes, opening your homes.

Rebekah Lyons: It does not have to be perfect. People just want to feel invited. I think part of this idea around connect is to make sure we're carving space for that. Our marriage, make sure that we're carving space. Gabe and I will be 22 years this December.

Carey Nieuwhof: Congrats.

Rebekah Lyons: We're leaving in two days to help lead a marriage retreat for 80 people. I think because of how much we value, we're dependent on a healthy marriage to do the work that we're called to do. We don't want to take that lightly. I think the other thing that I find people struggle with in the connect rhythm in relational health. Again, rest is spiritual health. Restore is physical health. Connect is relational health. That a lot of people hold grudges. We go to bed angry and we have unforgiveness in our hearts, which then grows into bitterness, which then grows to contempt.

Rebekah Lyons: I do remember a year ago waking up of again, another dream. I just heard God say again not audibly but, "You don't have a right to withhold forgiveness from this person."

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Rebekah Lyons: It was this idea that this is now becoming a weight. It's affecting you physically in a way. It's going to inhibit or prohibit even some assignments I've given you. I

felt the weight of my sin right in that moment. I had to just confess. Three pages in my journal in the middle of the night and then I was like, "Well, crap. Now I have to call this person." I was like, "I'm fine confessing to God but now I actually have to talk to the person." Because James 5 says, "Confess your sin to one another, God and one another so that you can be healed." I think there's something to that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: Sometimes, we withhold forgiveness or we hold on to something for a long period of time. We're so afraid to just go to that person and be like, "I'm sorry for the way my pain spilled onto you and how I took it out on you. I needed someone to blame." I do believe that if we can start to forgive one another, to just choose to trust, to not condemn one another and this goes for being online doing that as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: He who is without sin cast the first stone. That's a strong one for me. I want to be relationally strong. I can't control what somebody else is doing but I can certainly control and ask for forgiveness for the places in my heart I have withheld forgiveness or I've built a root of bitterness and allowed it to grow. Because I don't want that to slow me down. I don't want that to be the reason just like eating three donuts and restore them.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: I don't want my grudge holding to keep me from walking in the fullness of what God's invited me into. That's connect.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. Okay. For all the creatives, all the out putters, you guys you have to get the book. What's the quick skinny on create?

Rebekah Lyons: Create. 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 and planned before one of them begins. That he knits us and His works were wonderful. He invites us into this destiny that is really informed by burden, I believe. I think the world understands that birthright gets these natural things that we're gifted at.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: We don't always know why. The burden is informed by the life you 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. For me, I was called Bekah Book in 4th grade because I read 62 Nancy Drew books that year. We didn't have a TV and I was obsessed with reading. I didn't know then that

readers make writers. In fact, I've never heard until I was 32. My mom was pushing my son on a swing and she said, "I always thought you'd write." I thought, "That would be super helpful when I was picking a major in college."

Rebekah Lyons: Because I just didn't ever connect the dots that I could write. I was a voracious reader. I loved vocabulary but I just didn't connect the dots that I would actually publish a work that was way beyond.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: I was a musician. I played trumpet and piano. That was the lane I thought I was going to land in. I watched my dad have his first mental breakdown when I was a senior in high school. He went into a psychiatric hospital when I was a freshman in college. I watched him struggle much of his adult life, just a mild depression and then I have a first born son at 26 whose IQ to this day is in the 40s. I'm a daughter and a mother sandwiched between two men in my family line that have struggled with mental illness on some level. I just felt deeply.

Rebekah Lyons: When I started my struggle in New York, I thought, "Well, this is genetic. This just seems like that would make sense where I'm walking into that lane, too." That's why I think pain even in that season became purpose for me. Because I was able to start writing about it or talking about it, bringing light to it. Feeling passion about it because the root of passion means to suffer.

Rebekah Lyons: I think sometimes, even the work we're so passionate about comes from a root of suffering, of watching someone we love suffer, us personally suffering in a way to where we're actually able to mobilize that into something beautiful. That we are able to offer the world. I do believe that the measure of trial you've endured does directly relate to the measure of hope you can offer the world.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Rebekah Lyons: It's just letting you be a vessel for that to flow through and being honest about it. Because you then realize, "Wow. So many other people are facing this, too." I'm just trying to give language to it. That's been the most rewarding part of my work quite frankly.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm glad you make the connection between the burden you bear and the story you have and the message you have. I'm sure you get this but a lot of young leaders who are like, "What am I going to write? How am I going to build my platform?" I'm like, "You need a story. Maybe get a couple of laps under your belt." Now we have this influencer thing where you're just an influencer because people follow you. At the end of the day, if you're going to have sustaining content, you need a message. You need a story that somehow informs what you're sharing. Any thoughts on that?

Rebekah Lyons: I agree. I think you can't write unless you've lived. If you've lived, that means there's some stuff you've learned.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: It's important to not get ahead of ourselves because God invites us into so much to share. Part of it, we really can't with authority take something public until we've wrestled it private. Until we've walked it out, until we've watched Him move, until we've seen a richness come and then we can offer that as something redemptive. I think it's important because we can put a lot of stuff out online today that we're feeling today. Is it something that's going to actually offer someone hope, encouragement, strength? It's hard to offer what you haven't received.

Rebekah Lyons: Part of it is we have to walk that on our own with our community and our people. Let it surface. Let it bubble to the surface. You're right. That's how my first book came. It was a story of rescue and I was like, "All right. Here we go." The other part of create, I think not everyone's a writer. There's so many ways to create. I do a chapter here called Work With Your Hands. I think part of it is we've lost the art of just actually just the tactile things. I challenge people. Just figure out what you could create with your hands.

Carey Nieuwhof: You mean build a bird house or something like that.

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah. Make a new recipe. Color with your kids. I don't care. Just something that works a different muscle that you don't always professionally do. Go back to your eight-year old self. What did you love when you were a kid before you learned how to be afraid? You loved it so much you drove your parents crazy. Recover those things, those hobbies, those places of enjoyment. Because that's this holistic picture of health, this comprehensive picture. You said you love biking.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: Probably you loved that as a kid, right?

Carey Nieuwhof: I did. I was always on my bike. I love barbecue. That's another thing after I burned out. I'm like, "Okay. I need some hobbies."

Rebekah Lyons: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: To be able to make a brisket that smoked for 23 hours and to see your friends take that first bite, that's fun.

Rebekah Lyons: Yes. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: I think that to me is the comprehensive picture of health. It's not like, "Hey. We're killing it in our vocational work from nine to five." We're actually relationally strong. We're inviting people in. We're sharing our hearts. We're making food for nourishment for them. That's what God sees when he creates us is like, "I want this holistic picture of health." You're going to have a dominant rhythm that maybe is more effortless and more prone to but don't neglect the other three. Because a holistic healing is going to include all four areas.

Rebekah Lyons: You can't have the fullness I don't believe if you avoid one of those things because God's not casual about any of them. He says, "I made you to rest because I rested. I want you to steward your body. I want you to be one. I want you to walk in unity. I want you to take the birthright gifts I've given you in the womb and use them for my good and my glory."

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. The book is called Rhythms of Renewal. You can get it anywhere books are sold. Where can people connect with you online? I know you're on Instagram. Is it just @rebekahlyons?

Rebekah Lyons: Yes. My name is spelled a little different. It's Hebrew. The Hebrew spelling is R-E-B-E-K-A-H L-Y-O-N-S.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you have a website people can find?

Rebekah Lyons: Yes. It's just rebekahlyons.com. It's so basic. Just my name on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and then my website's rebekahlyons.com. The book is Rhythms of Renewal. It is everywhere books are sold.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Rebekah Lyons: Amazon, Barnes & Noble, you name it.

Carey Nieuwhof: I got to tell you. This has been a joy. Thank you so much, Rebekah. I really appreciate what you're doing and the message you're getting out there and the practicality of what you shared today. Thank you.

Rebekah Lyons: Thank you for having me. It was so fun.

Carey Nieuwhof: Man, that was a great conversation with Rebekah. She has so much wisdom on this. If you want a little bit more, you can head on over to the show notes. We will link to everything we talked about. There's also transcripts if you want to go a little bit deeper. All of that is free. You can find it at CareyNieuwhof.com/Episode303. We have some exciting episodes coming up on the show. Who have we got? We've had some exciting episodes, too. Pat

Lencioni, have you heard that? N.T. Wright, Gordon MacDonald but coming up, we've got Carlos Whittaker.

Carey Nieuwhof: I got a couple of my staff. They're coming on in December. We are going to talk about what it's like to work together. John Ortberg is back. Larry Osborne. Instagram sensation, Jasmine Star and you want a sneak peak at at 2020? How about Francis Chan, Louie Giglio? Liz Forkin Bohannon, did an unbelievable interview with her. John Mark Comer, Jefferson Bethke, Jennie Allen, Craig Groeschel, Lysa TerKeurst. Crazy. We got a great couple of months coming up. You get that all for free when you subscribe. Also in 2020, we've got Mark Driscoll on the podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think hey, if that isn't reason to subscribe, I don't know what is. I only listen to the podcasts that I subscribe to. Thank you so much. You guys are making every month better. Thank you, too for standing with our partners. We vet these fairly carefully. Actually, very carefully. If you haven't checked out two brand new partners that we've got for you this episode, RightNow Media, go to RightNowMedia.org/Carey. They've got some great leadership training videos and personal resource, personal care, Bible study, so on and so forth.

Carey Nieuwhof: Really build into the families in your church. Build into marriage ministry by heading over to MarriedPeople.org/Carey where you can get some significant savings before the new year starts. What I want to do right now, two things before we wind down. I want to give you a sneak peak of next week when we are here with my friend, Chris Lema. Chris and I met in San Diego. We taught together at the Sticky Teams conference in San Diego and then we sat down and did this conversation on how to gain traction online, what really matters and what really doesn't in your online platform.

Carey Nieuwhof: Plus some really interesting conversation from the early days of the internet in the '90s in Silicon Valley.

Chris Lema: It's also incredible for 48 to 65-year old men.

Carey Nieuwhof: Who're looking for that final job?

Chris Lema: They're the owner of a company.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, okay.

Chris Lema: They're looking for a vendor. Because they look at Facebook and they go, "That's for kids." They look at Instagram, they're not on it. They look at Twitter and they go, "I don't get it. It's just a bunch of yelling." You're talking to a 60-year old executive who the only network he's ever been on is LinkedIn. You say to him, "Hey. We need to hire a guy who does our Facebook ads." He doesn't go to Google. He doesn't go to YouTube. He doesn't go to Facebook or Instagram.

He goes to LinkedIn and he searches for this. Here comes my buddy's article and he goes, "Oh, yeah. Contact this guy."

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Chris Lema: It's a completely different ballgame.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's next time on the podcast, guys. Well, time for Ask Carey. The question and I want to thank you for your questions on this. On any social platform, just use #askCarey and very apropos given what we talked about with Rebekah Lyons. Chris wants to know, "What are some effective ways to help your team not experience burnout? How do you put systems or processes in place that encourage staff to protect their personal time?" A couple of things plus I'm going to give you a free resource. Okay. This is fun. I would encourage you to help them see the entire picture.

Carey Nieuwhof: Often what happens is it's very popular in culture to throw work under the bus. If you're starting to feel any stress or anxiety in your life, you can just say, "Oh, you know, it's work, man. My workplace is toxic. Blah, blah, blah." Very, very common to do that. Now, what I've done and by the way, if you want the free resource, just go to TheHighImpactWorkplace.com and I have got a free PDF. You sign up for the waiting list for my brand new course that comes out next month, The High Impact Workplace. I give you a resource that I think can go a significant way to helping you reshape your staff culture.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's absolutely free. You'll get it immediately. I share with you five questions I have asked my staff over and over and over again over the years. It really does help prevent burnout. Some of these questions, here's what they're going to do. They're going to in a very appropriate way help people see that sometimes burnout is not just a work issue. It's a life issue. If it is a work issue, then those questions will also help lead you to some solutions. For example, here's what I've done. The question is, how do you make sure that your team doesn't experience burnout?

Carey Nieuwhof: Life is going at a billion miles per hour right now. People are going to get burned out. Here's what I'll often say to the staff. I want to ask them, "How are you doing? How are you doing?" You just listen and you ask them not just about work but you ask them about life. How's it going at home? How's it going with the kids? How's it going at school with your kids? How are you feeling? Are you getting some sleep at night? That kind of thing. It's amazing what happens because people start to tell you about their lives. You want to do that in a very appropriate way.

Carey Nieuwhof: I've got some coaching and counseling in The High Impact Workplace free resource. Again, just go to TheHighImpactWorkplace.com. You can get the sheet that tells you far more than I will in this brief segment about how to coach your staff on these things. People will say, "You know what? I'm just not getting

enough sleep." Young singles might say, "I've been watching Netflix all night, gaming all night, out with my friends all night. Man, my kid just isn't sleeping." Again, you're not judging. You're just listening.

Carey Nieuwhof: What happens is when you have that conversation with people, they begin to realize, "You know what? I need to get to bed earlier. I need to get some help with my daughter. I need this." You ask them some work-based questions but often, it's a moment where they realize, "Wow. It's life that's stressing me out." Now I've coached a lot of people through that. You're not a counselor. You're not any of that but it's a light bulb moment for them because here's the reality. Okay. Let's say you work 40, 45 hours a week. You know what that means, right? There's 168 hours in a week.

Carey Nieuwhof: That means about 128 or 123 are beyond your control as an employer. That's often where people get just jettisoned, it's like, "I don't know how to manage my time." When I've used these five questions I'm giving you for free, it's just changed the dialog. Because intelligent people go, "Wow. I really should work on getting to bed earlier. I really should work on eating properly. I really should work on getting some sleep. I really should work on getting some help for my kids, my sons or daughter." Sometimes just being a caring, listening ear, they just feel great about getting it off their chest.

Carey Nieuwhof: You ask them some questions about how's work part of the issue here? Are there any obstacles you're facing? They say, "Actually, I've got a problem on this project I'm working on." You can come alongside and help them. The other thing is, if you're making unreasonable demands on your staff, which employers do, that will be unearthed in this conversation that you're having with your team. As a bonus to you right now and it's not available forever but if you go to TheHighImpactWorkplace.com and you fill in your email, you'll get this sheet. It's five questions every good managers asks for free.

Carey Nieuwhof: I've got some coaching in that. That's how I've helped my team stay out of burnout and how we try to keep our organizations healthy. I really hope that that helps you. Thanks so much for bringing your questions to Ask Carey. Just use #askCarey on any social platform. We'll do one of these at the end of the podcast every week. Next time, we are back with my friend, Chris Lema. That's coming up on Thursday just in a couple of days. Really excited to bring you that. Thanks so much for listening, guys. 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.