

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

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Well, hey everybody, and welcome to Episode 306 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well guys, it's here, or almost here, or just happened, 10 million downloads. Man, that is like the last thing I was thinking of when I launched this podcast just over five years ago, but you guys have made it happen by sharing and telling your friends and being such enthusiastic supporters of what we're trying to do here on the podcast, which is bring you backstage interviews with some of the best people in leadership today.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** It will be on Instagram, Twitter and or Facebook. I'm Carey Nieuwhof on Instagram, [cnieuwhof](#) on Twitter and Facebook. Guys, just thank you for this, and thank you for sharing the podcast, telling your friends, letting people know about it, and here's 20 million. How does that sound? Hey, today's episode is brought to you by the Red Letter Challenge and by The High Impact Workplace. Red Letter Challenge, man, I know you've got messages to prepare and I know you've got a congregation to lead. If you haven't yet checked out the Red Letter Challenge, today's your day. Over 60,000 people have already completed it. Pastors have used it and churches that have used the red letter challenge, which is a turnkey campaign, messages, graphics, small group curriculum, now a kid's ministry curriculum, all done for you.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Churches that have completed it have not only seen weekend service growth but small group attendance growth by an average of 40% which is pretty incredible. This is completely turnkey and you will get a discount because you listen to this podcast. So you can get between 10% and 40% off, and whether your church is small or very large, it doesn't really matter. You can start with as few as 10 copies or get 1,000 or more. Just head on over to [RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey](http://RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey) before it's too late and that'll be a 40-day challenge for you and your church next year. Speaking of challenges, hey, have you noticed that there is a talent war going on for young leaders? You're going to meet two of them today in the podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof: My guests are Sarah Piercy and Dillon Smith. I met Sarah about a decade ago. Well actually, long before that, but hired her just over a decade ago when she was 22, and we worked together at Connexus Church for a few years and then when I stepped out of the lead pastor role there to focus on this, she joined me in the company. So we worked together in my company bringing you this podcast, and all the other stuff I do in leadership. Then Dillon Smith is someone I hired a couple years ago at the age of 19 and so today on the podcast I talk to Dillon and Sarah about their leadership in my company and what it's like to work together and some of the highs and some of the lows. This is like a behind the scenes, backstage conversation with two of my staff members.

Carey Nieuwhof: Now, why am I having that? Well, first of all, I think they're fascinating people. Secondly, the challenges that we run into in leadership are exactly the same that most leaders run into in leadership. I wanted to have Dillon and Sarah on. We actually do another version of this conversation in a course that I'm releasing this week called The High Impact Workplace. It is the first course I have released in about 18 months. It's brand new. I've been working on this for a long time and I'm so excited. Here's what the deal is with The High Impact Workplace. Do you know there's a talent war going on for young leaders and I run into more and more leaders who are like, "I just can't keep high capacity young leaders around." Well actually you can, but to do it, you've got to change because everything's changing around you.

Carey Nieuwhof: The gig economy is growing, and we talk about this in this interview today, but Sarah and Dillon could easily go out and do their own thing, or join another company or start their own company. So how do I, as their boss, attract, keep and motivate high capacity leaders? Here's another reality. Has not been my experience, but a lot of people say, "You know what the problem with the young leaders is? They're lazy, they're unmotivated, they want everything now." We talk about this in this interview and we talk about it in The High Impact Workplace course. In the course, you will get all new content. I want to set you and your team up for success to build an intergenerational workplace that young leaders will love, older leaders will love, and in the course I'll show you why eight to four doesn't work anymore and why so many of your young leaders are pushing back against it, why the flexible workplace is the future workplace, and how to lead the next generation when they don't want to sit in cubicles and in offices all day.

Carey Nieuwhof: You can learn more and get in before enrollment closes by going to The High Impact Workplace today. We have a special introductory price. I have not had a course at this price in a long time. So head on over to [TheHighImpactWorkplace.com](http://TheHighImpactWorkplace.com) while enrollment is still open, it will only be open for a short window. Now I am so thrilled to bring you my conversation with my executive assistant, Sarah Piercy, and my content manager, Dillon Smith. Here we go.

Carey Nieuwhof: Dillon and Sarah, welcome to the podcast.

Sarah Piercy: Thanks for having us.

Dillon Smith: It's good to be here.

Carey Nieuwhof: Sarah and I are together in the world headquarters studio. Dillon, you're joining us from Nebraska? Correct?

Dillon Smith: I am.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. Can you both give us a really quick introduction on who you are, because we all work together, we're all part of this little communications company I run that does the podcast, the blog, books and all the other speaking, all the other things that I do, and our little team has grown to seven of us now plus other contractors, which is insane, but we service, well, lots of leaders? Our content that we produce gets accessed about 1.2 million times a month, which is insane. Sarah remembers when it was one time a month on a good month. Correct, Sarah?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, I remember when you decided to blog in the morning.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that was what? Seven years ago?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Tell us a little bit, Sarah, we'll start with you and then Dillon, tell us a little bit about your role on the team. Because we're going to talk about high impact workplaces and some of the things we do well, some of the things we struggle with, and how to create a culture that attracts and keeps young leaders. That's really what we're talking about. You guys, I think both qualify as young leaders. Is that fair?

Sarah Piercy: I still qualify?

Carey Nieuwhof: Absolutely. Well, you're in your 30s now, but you started with me when you were how old?

Sarah Piercy: 22.

Carey Nieuwhof: 22, so that counts, which is, is that how old you are, Dillon?

Dillon Smith: I'm 21.

Carey Nieuwhof: 21.

Sarah Piercy: There you go.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. Dillon is still trying to get to 22. It'll be a while, right?

Dillon Smith: Yes. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: You started with me when you were 19, correct?

Dillon Smith: Yes. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't care whose definition it is, that is young leader.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Fair?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Sarah, how about you tell people how we met?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah. So we met when you were leading Connexus Church, and I started on staff as the first ever intern of Connexus Church.

Carey Nieuwhof: Correct. Right after launch.

Sarah Piercy: Yep. Right after I graduated from university so the church was less than a year old and my role kind of morphed into your assistant just because I was in the right place at the right time.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, the wrong place at the time. You drew the short straw. You did.

Sarah Piercy: Well, I didn't think I did, but thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof: What happened was we looked around and there was no one else to be my assistant as lead pastor, so the lot fell to you.

Sarah Piercy: Well, so I took on the job, but that was 10 years ago now. I have been your assistant since then. That role has changed and evolved over time as your work and the influence and writing has changed and evolved over time. Now, I actually work part-time. I have two little boys and this job gives me the flexibility to work from home and keep doing something that I love that I find really meaningful.

Carey Nieuwhof: You and I worked on church staff for five years together-ish?

Sarah Piercy: Yes. Yeah, more than that.

Carey Nieuwhof: More than that, seven?

Sarah Piercy: Seven. Yeah, probably about seven.

Carey Nieuwhof: Then the last four years you've been in my company working for me.

Sarah Piercy: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's right. So when I stepped out of the lead pastor role into the founding teaching pastor role, you stepped away from church staff, although it's still your home. Your husband works there.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, I go there every weekend.

Carey Nieuwhof: Justin's awesome. You're there every weekend. Your boys are being raised at Connexus and that's our church still, but we work in the company now.

Sarah Piercy: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: You've kind of had that EA role but it's like you've had 10 different jobs. Is that fair?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, it has changed so much.

Carey Nieuwhof: Because you used to do everything. And now, what is your main day-to-day responsibility?

Sarah Piercy: Helping you manage your time and energy, your calendar and public inbox, a lot of public interface. Once in a while projects come my way and we tag team together with a great team of people that we've got.

Carey Nieuwhof: It sounds so dumb, but like calendar management is a big job, isn't it?

Sarah Piercy: Oh, it's huge. Yeah, it's huge.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's insane. I always did my own calendar until a decade ago or whatever when you came along. It is a dozen or more hours a week just trying to juggle all the requests and the time and travel and enough time to write, etc. and you're great at what you do. There's an episode that we did a couple of years ago on the podcast. I think I called it, how to ...

Sarah Piercy: The first year. It was the first year.

Carey Nieuwhof: Was it the first year?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, it was.

Carey Nieuwhof: Was it really? Is that long ago?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: We'll link to it in the show notes. I think it still works. It's like how to be a rockstar assistant and we share all of Sarah's tricks and tips for that, which is good. Then, last time Sarah had a maternity leave, which was ... was that two years ago? Year and a half ago? Or it's Levi.

Sarah Piercy: Well, Levi's one and a half. Isaac's three and half.

Carey Nieuwhof: So about a year and a half ago?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, about a year and a half ago, I needed to find someone to fill in that EA role. This time the lot fell to you, Dillon. So pick up the story there.

Sarah Piercy: Yay, Dillon.

Dillon Smith: It did. Yeah. About that time we met and I came onto the company, and for that first year I was in Sarah's role as she was gone. My first year with you is in a significantly different position than where I'm at right now. It was a lot of fun. It was good, it was hard, but learning kind of from Sarah first coming in and then just learning ... because you sometimes you don't give yourself enough credit Carey, but you're a really great coach of a position that you've never had. At least, I don't...

Carey Nieuwhof: It's true, I've never been an assistant.

Sarah Piercy: That is very true.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's true. I've never been an assistant in any ... yeah, nothing I've done could be that role. I can be demanding sometimes, true, fair?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, fair.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Well, thank you. I appreciate that, but you didn't train as an EA, you-

Sarah Piercy: No, everything that I learned was coaching from you.

Carey Nieuwhof: You didn't train as an EA, Dillon. You stepped into that role, and it's an unlikely thing, because you're at a Christian college and you'd never thought, "Oh, you know what? I want to be an EA when I grow up." So at 19 you step into this role. Pick it up from there. What were you doing?

Dillon Smith: Yeah, so I was doing the things that Sarah just kind of listed off the calendar, the public inbox requests, just a lot of like working with the team and different

projects. Back then, I think it was only three of us and you on the team. It's grown quite a bit since then. But yeah, definitely a lot of that everything role. And then, after I'd been in the company for two months, your book launch for Didn't See It Coming came in. This is just a subtle thing but we realized that we're going to need an internal lead on this or I guess you realized it and said, "Hey Dillon, do you want to lead the book launch as it goes live?"

Sarah Piercy: Amazing.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's pretty. We've done a lot of dumb things over the years, and looking back, that was a really smart move. You look at, "Okay, how much money do I have available? Who do I have on the team?" You'd had two months under your belt, so it's like, "How would you like to lead a book launch for a national book release?" Which seems perfectly logical, doesn't it, Dillon?

Sarah Piercy: No, Dillon.

Dillon Smith: No, but I'm very grateful for it either way. That was a learning curve for all of us. Because that was also the first time that you'd worked with a major publisher, right?

Carey Nieuwhof: Correct. Yeah.

Dillon Smith: Yeah, so that was jus ... Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'd done three books before. So one was through cook with Reggie Joiner. I just wrote the book. That was it. I didn't really mark it. Then I released two through Orange Books, Reggie's company. I was the first book they ever released, but it was like a hybrid of self-publishing back then and going with a publisher, but Kevin Jennings helped me with those launches. Then this time we had a great publisher in WaterBrook, Penguin, but I realized we needed an internal lead on the team. So, tada, there's Dillon. That was a year and a half ago, right? You started in the summer of 2018 so now here we are recording this in November of 2019.

Carey Nieuwhof: We've been almost a year and a half on the team. Then about four or five months ago you pivoted to a new role.

Dillon Smith: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: So, describe that.

Dillon Smith: In the summer of 2019 Sarah came back from maternity leave and I stepped into a role called content manager, that me and you had been thinking through for the last five months cause we knew Sarah was coming back or had a strong, like we were pretty sure that she was coming back.

- Carey Nieuwhof: No, I was praying that Sarah was coming back. That's the most accurate description of it.
- Dillon Smith: Yeah, I was too. It actually gives a lot more freedom and flexibility to do what I love, which is writing and creating and thinking through ideas. That's what I've been doing. I run a lot of your social media and I kind of help with audience engagement there and we've been kind of looking at course launches and stuff like that. With that position, you have freed me up to kind of learn how to grow what we're doing. You've just given me a lot of like free round to say, "Hey, what you love, go and do it. Teach yourself, go take courses if you need to, all these things. Like learn how to do this and thrive where you can." That's been amazing.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Well, it's a little more in line with your gifting and a little more in line with your training as well in terms of what you would hope to do with your life. But I think one of the lessons on this is, and I hadn't thought about this, but both of you were just willing and you were flexible and you were open. Your background, your education, you have a BA in psychology, is that right?
- Sarah Piercy: Yeah, and child and youth development.
- Carey Nieuwhof: So you're here to figure out messed up bosses. That's what you've been doing for a decade.
- Sarah Piercy: There you go. Tell me about your childhood.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Tell you about my childhood. That's right. Exactly. So this wasn't exactly like what you thought you would do, and what do you do with a BA in psychology, normally?
- Sarah Piercy: Well, there's a lot of options and no options at the same time.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Exactly. I have a BA in history. It's prelaw, that's what it is. It's prelaw.
- Sarah Piercy: Yeah. Really, I was just studying what I loved and hoping that God would guide my steps in the process, and I think he did.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, he did. And then Dillon, yours is in ministry, right?
- Dillon Smith: Yeah, pastoral ministry. Bachelors. Yeah.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Which is really cool. I think this is what education does. I have three university degrees, but I don't spend a lot of time on the academic section of anyone's CV or resume because what I do think it does, I'll hire anybody who's got hustle and skills and gifting and that kind of thing, but what I do think a university education or college education prepares you for is it forces you to study and to



learn and to submit yourself to a course and to earn something, and both of you were great students. Let's talk about, because college prepares you knowledge-wise for certain things and you get a certain skillset out of that, but leadership's a whole other game, and working in the real world, that's a different thing.

Carey Nieuwhof: If you were to assess your leadership skills when you started out, Dillon, two years ago, Sarah, a decade ago, take us back and talk about how prepared you felt and what the challenges were for you when you got into the workplace for the first time.

Sarah Piercy: I would say everything that I would have identified in myself as a leadership skill was accidental at that time. I just noticed that people would follow what I was doing or I felt like I had stumbled into this role where people needed to follow what I was doing and I had no practical skills or training.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's true, you were always kind of a leader. I saw you, even as a teenager in our church kind of grow up. You had important moral principles and you had certain things that people followed you on. Is that something you noticed even in like elementary school or high school that ...?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah. But it was always an accident and I thought, well I guess it's just the way it is. I didn't know what to do with it. All my leadership skills were accidental.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, I saw that in you, even on staff when you started as an intern that you were somebody people paid attention to, so it was more of a natural leadership skill, but in terms of the hard skills for the job, how prepared did you feel?

Sarah Piercy: Not at all.

Carey Nieuwhof: No?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, no hard skills or training or anything.

Carey Nieuwhof: Dillon, what was that like for you?

Dillon Smith: Very similar to Sarah's of, I knew a lot of like head knowledge and I knew all of the information, but I had no clue how to get the results. I had no clue what actually meeting a deadline looks like, because as a student, this may have changed in the last decade or so, but I feel like deadlines are becoming less and less strict. All of my college experience, I'm not going to say most college, there was a bit of give that just doesn't exist in the marketplace. There's a bit of grace that is great and it's awesome for developing young people, but now that I'm in the workplace and we have to produce results, I just wasn't ready.

Carey Nieuwhof: I mean in terms of papers, right? Like you would get some flex on papers and you wouldn't necessarily have to get them in on time. Is that what you're saying?

Dillon Smith: Yes. Yeah, I still don't actually.

Carey Nieuwhof: Fair enough. Fair enough.

Dillon Smith: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: How does that go over at work, Dillon, when you're like, yeah, I'm not going to hit the deadline?

Dillon Smith: Well, I think I've definitely missed a deadline. I don't remember a time where I've intentionally missed a deadline, that I could say.

Carey Nieuwhof: But I mean, one of the things we say even with this podcast, right? The podcast ships every Tuesday, no matter what, and we're over five years into it. We've never missed a Tuesday. In the early days, that was some 5:00 AM phone calls, some work til midnight to try to figure out how the heck does this thing work. Now we have a, we have a system and everything, but yeah, so deadlines was a big different. What else would you say about your skillset, Dillon?

Dillon Smith: I personally, I thought that I was stressed and I thought that I had lived like a really busy lifestyle, but what I realized is I just wasn't stewarding my time well. In college you, you make these things ... you go to like the 10 o'clock late night special at the restaurant with everybody and like all these social events that were happening all the time and I had to realize like, "Oh, I can't do these things and have a full time job, or a near full time job, 30 hours a week and be a full time student." I had to learn some kind of time management that was deeper than the level that I had at the time. That was a really big shift for me, also.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you miss that part? Because you have been working on average about 30 hours a week plus carrying a course load, and that's by your choice. Nobody's making you do this, but do you miss the freedom and the flexibility for that?

Dillon Smith: I don't think so because, you look back at those times and yeah, you could do whatever you wanted pretty much all the time, but you don't do anything meaningful by the end of the day. You just go and you live life, you have fun, whatever. I didn't have the partying college lifestyle, but I did have the going and having fun with my friends, playing video games and watching movies and all that kind of stuff. That kind of college experience, it's empty at the end of the day and what we're doing now is meaningful.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. And you still have like a social life, do you, of some element?

Dillon Smith: Yeah.

Sarah Piercy: That's great.

Dillon Smith: I was just in Minnesota this weekend, so yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, exactly. Think about that because I remember when you were young and single, just straight out of college, you would often spend your weekends and evenings with friends.

Sarah Piercy: Oh yeah, all the time.

Carey Nieuwhof: All the times. You're incredibly social, Sarah. Now, totally different stage of life. Two kids who basically occupy 99% of your free time.

Sarah Piercy: Yes, and mental real estate.

Carey Nieuwhof: And mental real estate. But any thought about that tension? Because we are talking about how to attract and keep high capacity leaders, particularly young leaders. What was that season like for you when you were trying to balance your social life but also you had real responsibilities in a real job at work?

Sarah Piercy: I felt like I didn't have kids so I had a lot of time. I don't know if that's a cop out answer, but ...

Carey Nieuwhof: Did you feel like you had a lot of time at the time or just now looking back on that?

Sarah Piercy: Now looking back on it, I realized I had a lot of time, but I always felt like my schedule was full because I was filling it with things that I wanted to do and I would volunteer a lot more than I do now and I would take road trips to visit from college and all that kind of stuff. It was a bit of a tension, but I think partially because in a ministry role, a lot of the work falls on weekends, where my friends would be available, I would be working simply because it was ministry, but that was the only tension I think that I really had to navigate with work.

Carey Nieuwhof: You got exhausted at times.

Sarah Piercy: I did. Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: Both of you, we would have conversations, and we got a free download for people with The High Impact Workplace on the five questions I've learned to ask and you guys were kind of my guinea pigs with those questions, but they've been really helpful, but there've been times where both of you came to me and

said, "I think I'm burning out." I remember I got a call from your mom once, said, "I'm really concerned about Sarah."

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, because I had no boundaries. I was putting my work ahead of everything else and letting everything else fall in around it, which meant my work didn't have a boundary to bounce up against. When I was single and I didn't have kids waiting to be picked up or I could work late, I could work every day of the week and that's what I was doing, which was not healthy and not good, but I just didn't know anything else and that's what I was doing.

Carey Nieuwhof: What helped that?

Sarah Piercy: I think I followed your lead in establishing some more boundaries. I think the work culture that we were in at the time at Connexus started to shift.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's true. As I got healthier, we got healthy.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, and taking Fridays off became normal instead of working on Fridays and that kind of thing. I just realized I needed boundaries otherwise I was just going to keep living the way that I was.

Carey Nieuwhof: Was it fair to say sometimes that your social life ... like for sure we had issues at work where it was, we were launching a church, it was a a meat grinder at times and I was trying to get healthier, I was recovering from burnout myself, trying to get healthier, but sometimes it was work. Was there ever a time where sometimes it was like your social life was out of control, but it was hard to ...?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, I was in a wedding every other weekend or something ...

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh yeah, you were. Yeah, you were.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, in my mid 20s when all my friends were getting married, it was so much fun. But holy, weddings are a lot of work and a lot of time and they're a blast.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, it's that whole life thing, right?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: We would have conversations about that. I remember the light bulb going off sometimes in your brain that it's like, oh, wait a minute, this isn't work. This is like 42 weddings in a month or whatever it was ...

Sarah Piercy: 42.

Carey Nieuwhof: ... that you were navigating. Yeah, and then there was the whole dating phase, which we don't need to get into. Sometimes I...

- Sarah Piercy: That was fun. Carey was my dating coach.
- Carey Nieuwhof: The speed dating story I will never forget.
- Sarah Piercy: Yeah. Okay, now everybody knows about that.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. So we should stop. Should we cut that out?
- Sarah Piercy: No, it's fine. It was great. I highly recommend it.
- Carey Nieuwhof: All right. And then Dillon, remember that first summer you had a season that was really difficult too.
- Dillon Smith: Yeah. So it was the same story with Sarah where I didn't have boundaries and I would just work all the time. I think that was to accommodate the really steep learning curve that I was on. I think part of me knew that so I was okay with working a ton at the beginning because I just realized, Oh, I'm way behind where I need to be for this job. That happened. But then, what I realized is after that summer hit, I was still feeling pretty burnt out into the school year when I moved back into college. What I realized is that although I had good work boundaries, I had never even thought about putting in place good personal boundaries. Specifically, in a dorm, this is a problem where people can just walk in your door and talk to you at any time. I love my roommates, I love the people there, but I do not need to be talking until 1:00 AM when I have to get up at 6:00 the next day for work.
- Dillon Smith: I prided myself on having really good boundaries with like, I'm going to get work done when I need to get work done, I'm going to be focused. But I had terrible personal boundaries. I think that's something that, yeah, it just helped me a lot to put in place.
- Carey Nieuwhof: I think depending on the culture of the leaders listening, I can't think ... I remember who hired someone once from Pepsi. She came right over from Pepsi and she goes, "Wow, you guys, you talk about personal life a lot more than anyone at Pepsi does." And I remember the joke being, "How was your weekend? Oh, I filed for divorce on Saturday. Okay, well you were on that 10 o'clock meeting?" Like it's almost that level of like non-personal self-disclosure. I remember from the law firm in that year I spent in law, that was very typical, or in radio, you didn't really know what was going on in people's lives.
- Carey Nieuwhof: We tend to talk about it more but I want you to help leaders listening understand how does that stay an appropriate conversation because you can be too probing as a boss. You know what I mean? The whole speed dating thing, people are like, "Well, how did you know that?" But it's not like I was picking ...
- Sarah Piercy: No, I told you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, you told me. Yeah. I just want to make that clear because there's something that I really enjoy getting to know the whole person of people that are on my team because I think you bring the whole person to work, like you bring your whole self to work, Dillon, you bring your whole self to work, and if you've got a long line out of your dorm room because you were basically a resonance proctor or assistant or whatever, and they're trying to keep you up til four o'clock in the morning, you bring that Dillon to work the next day and to your exam the next day. What are some good practices or what are some insights on how that conversation stays healthy and not probing or inappropriate?

Sarah Piercy: That is a good question.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, I don't know. We navigated without talking about it, right?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm just curious.

Dillon Smith: In our personal calls, Carey, I don't always know that they're coming, but I keep a list running at all times of things that I need to talk to with Carey and I know that that personal conversation is happening first, but what I try to do is I try to make sure that the role results don't get affected. We talk a lot in the course about being results-based and not attempts-based. As long as those ...

Carey Nieuwhof: Attempts-based, I like that. I should have used that language. Dillon, that's good. Yeah, attempts-based. I attempted.

Sarah Piercy: I tried.

Carey Nieuwhof: Which counts. It does count.

Sarah Piercy: Yes, it does, but still ...

Dillon Smith: Yeah. But as long as I can still get done the things on that list that we need to get done in that conversation, the personal can keep going. For me, it's how I view it. If I know I have you for 20 minutes and I know that I've probably 10 minutes of stuff to talk about, I'll transition into that at 10 if I can. That would be my thought, but ...

Sarah Piercy: Yeah. I think for a while, I didn't realize you actually wanted to know how I was doing. I don't know how long it actually took me to realize that, but you just kept asking, "So, how are you doing? No, really, how are you doing?" You did a thoughtful job of asking followup questions when I would answer that showed me that you're really curious about how I'm doing, not just at work. I think once I realized that, then I felt like I could tell you that I went speed dating and how it

went and it was a good, it was a good laugh. I spent, I don't know, six or seven years working in ministry as a single woman and dating life affected how I was doing at work because dating affects how you do at work, but if those two are separate and you feel like you have to hide or can't talk about that, I just don't think that's as healthy or helpful.

Sarah Piercy: Where do you draw the line? What is too much information? I think as a gut check, I don't know that I have a hard answer for that.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think part of it for me is I let you tell me as your boss, I let you go to the level that you're comfortable with. I'm not like probing, you know, Dillon, you're dating someone right now. Like if you want to talk about it, we'll talk about it. If you don't want to talk about it, we won't talk about it. I'm not your counselor, I'm not your therapist, but I do want to be your friend and I want to be your boss. I realized too, even for married people, for Toni and I, when we were having challenges in our marriage, that did show. Absolutely, that shows up at work. You stayed up till 1 o'clock arguing about something, you're going to suffer for that the next day, and it's even the mental fog, right?

Carey Nieuwhof: Now, you're a mom and our kids are grown, doesn't mean you don't have issues, but it's less of a day to day thing. If you're really burdened for your kids that shows up at work, you're distracted. You can't think particularly for office workers, knowledge workers, what do you bring to your work? Your brain, that's what you bring, and your heart. If your heart and brain are burdened down by other things, then you're not going to be able to help us accomplish the mission. I want to help you try to accomplish your mission as well. What would you say, looking back on it, just shifting gears a bit, was the hardest learning for you when you stepped into marketplace leadership? Like when you got that real job in college or out of college?

Dillon Smith: I never had had somebody above me who just looked at the results, not the attempts. That's my own language obviously, but ..

Carey Nieuwhof: No, that's great.

Dillon Smith: Yeah, understanding that difference took me forever to get ... you can probably agree, but once I understood that, that was game changing for knowing kind of the culture I was working in and how to do my job.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you explain that a little bit more? The difference between attempts and results, Dillon?

Dillon Smith: Yeah, so an example is early on when I was your assistant, one big thing that was always random but a part of our company culture is you were really generous with gifts that we'd send people, whether it was one of our team members was having a rough week, something bad happened, and you would really try to give them something, which is awesome. But if we needed that gift

by Friday and I called three flower companies but never got flowers on the way, that doesn't count. That doesn't matter. It doesn't matter how many attempts I get. It's the results that happen is the end goal of that. So understanding that and moving towards that was huge because ... well, that's another ... if you look at school and when you grow up you can attempt to paper and get a 90 and that's good enough, that's fine, but I could have written everything wrong in that paper. I've gotten 95s in college by voice typing and just hitting send.

Sarah Piercy: Amazing.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's exceptional. I did not know that. That's incredible. I want to go back to college. Wow.

Dillon Smith: It's still conveys the quality of thought but not the organization or anything.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's funny because I do want to reward effort and yet at the end of the day, we just got a ship. Like I said, you know, if the blog is due Monday, it's due Monday. If you've got to get back to this in 24 hours, you've got to get back to this person in 24 hours. If the gift or whatever we're doing needs to be, this week we have a funeral for somebody we care about. So you're sending flowers, Sarah, you're back in the assistant role, but those flowers shouldn't show up the day after the funeral. They need to be there day of, or before. That is a little bit of a difference I think stepping into the marketplace. How about for you, Sarah?

Sarah Piercy: For me, the hardest part was actually figuring out my voice, speaking up when I had an opinion. Part of that's probably a personality thing for me, but for a long time I would keep quiet unless asked and I think finding my voice, learning to speak up, learning to contribute meaningfully to conversations and meetings and decisions was hard for me and I think I probably didn't have the confidence to speak up at first and you would really call that out of me and say, "No, I really want to know what you think. Your opinion matters here." And that was helpful to me. I don't know that everybody has that problem, but for me it was, I didn't know how to speak up so I had to learn that.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good. What helped with that?

Sarah Piercy: You helped with that a lot because you would ask me and you would push for my full opinion, especially if I didn't agree because I am not wanting to rock the boat on things, and if I didn't agree with something, you could sometimes tell and be like, "No, really tell me what you think." You need to know that as an Enneagram eight.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yes, I do need to know as an eight, I need to know that you disagree, which is hard for you as a two, and Dillon, you're a three which is hard for you.

Dillon Smith: I'm a three wing two, so yeah.



- Sarah Piercy: There you go.
- Dillon Smith: I've got that in me.
- Sarah Piercy: Yeah, so that was probably the hardest.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Was that hard for you too, Dillon, that "No, I really want to hear what you think."
- Dillon Smith: Yeah, and I think it was, for me it was the overall just the embracing the differing opinions and conflict in a workplace. I've written a blog post about this, but just understanding that when we disagree we need to talk about it and we need to address it. That was huge for me coming in and it was really hard. My Strengthsfinder is restorative, harmony, connectedness, belief and inclusion. So, restorative, harmony, that's number one and two for me.
- Sarah Piercy: Keeping peace.
- Dillon Smith: Conflict just doesn't work in my head, but I've learned to make it work and I think we've gotten a lot better at it. Just in our team call yesterday I brought up a differing opinion that I was really nervous to share and it went okay. It was a good conversation. It's happening every day now where before I would get into conflict once a year and it never ended well.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Well even yesterday, last night we were trying to get something shipped and it was a work late kind of night, just the way the week is shaping up. I remember we had a text thing going between you, me and our podcast manager, Erin, about what to include in the show notes and you had one view and I had the other, and I rarely pull out my veto power, but at like 9 o'clock last night I was done, and I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to pull out my veto power and I'm going to say we're not going to run this." We deleted it and it was done. The interesting thing is, I don't think anybody took offense at that. Is that fair?
- Dillon Smith: I think that we've just created a culture where, like I personally realized that the more feedback we get, the better the company does and ultimately, the more leaders we help when we make things better. If we see things that could be better, it's better to say something. Although like I used to view it as, "Oh, you're just hurting people's feelings in the now, no, I think just part of life is conflict." And, one thing that I really had to wrestle with and understanding an embracing conflict is if I look at this as a Christian thing, but if you look at the words of Jesus, almost always he was saying something that was in conflict with somebody else.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's fair.

Dillon Smith: I had never looked at it through that lens. That was why I didn't take offense to it. I think like we have enough relational clout between everyone on the team where if someone does get hurt, we can definitely say something if we do.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and I think the intent in the conflict is to help not hurt, right?

Dillon Smith: Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: Like a passive aggressive thing where you're nice to someone's face but not behind their back. That that feels good in the moment, but well it's not. But down the road it just results in even deeper hurt. So it's better to say, you know what? When you said that in a meeting that was frustrating or demotivating and that kind of thing. On motivation, what motivates you? Because that is a huge issue when you look at attracting and keeping high capacity leaders. And I would say you're both people that I consider to be high capacity leaders, but people jump around all the time to different companies. So different churches, different organizations. What, what motivates you? Like why do you get up in the morning on the days where you're excited about work, which I hope is more than once a week. What motivates you?

Sarah Piercy: Doing a good job for something that is important. I think what we are doing is important, equipping leaders and helping people thrive in life and in leadership. I like seeing you succeed and that's probably good because that's my job to help you succeed. But I am also very motivated by work that allows me to have a rich home life, to be home with my boys and tuck them into bed at night and have some time to take them to the park in the day. That kind of thing makes my job even more valuable because I can actually do both and I can thrive in both. That's very motivating to me. Also, I love the culture of our team and that's a big deal.

Sarah Piercy: I think if it wasn't a healthy culture, the rest, I would give up the rest if it was not healthy culture.

Carey Nieuwhof: So you think you would leave if the culture was bad?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: What makes it a healthy culture in your view?

Sarah Piercy: Probably what we were just talking about. Healthy conflict, genuine care for each other. Really wanting to know how each other are doing, having the freedom to speak our mind and our ideas. What would you say, Dillon? What makes it a healthy culture?

Dillon Smith: Our company values I think. Not just company values because everyone has values or something, but whether we follow them or not ... we actually do, we

talk about them all the time. I think generosity gets brought up three or four times a week as one of our company values. It's air on the side of generosity.

Carey Nieuwhof: What motivates you? Like the company values? What else? Why are you still here? You have options.

Dillon Smith: Yeah. One, is I personally am pretty deeply motivated to help the big C church thrive. I think we have a lot of reasons that the world can look at the church and scoff and say, "Why do you even exist anymore?" We've moved on. I think the world is just missing out when it says that. Well, you can just change that from one independent church, but like we can have a greater impact on that if we're helping 1.2 million leaders a month like that and say 800,000 of them are pastors like that's awesome.

Carey Nieuwhof: Question for you. How much is pay? I mean, we don't pay minimum wage here, we pay above that, but without going into details, how much is pay a motivator for you?

Sarah Piercy: It needs to be more than it costs for my kids to be in daycare.

Carey Nieuwhof: Which a minimum wage you're kind of losing, right? I'm losing money.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, but at this point, pay is a bit of a motivator. If I was in the minus I would not be doing this. I'm not doing this for the money. I just I'm not.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, I realize that. I knew you would say that, Sarah. That's kind of your heartbeat. You buy ethical clothing, you are very careful about where ...

Sarah Piercy: I try.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, you do. You think about where whatever you purchase was manufactured and who made it and things like that. I think that's very consistent with the data when you look at any study and you look at Millennials or Gen Z, you see that pay is not the motivator that people think it is. How about for you, Dillon? Is that a factor? To what extent is that a factor?

Dillon Smith: I think I am probably in the top two or 3% of people my age that really care about how my financial situation is looking.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can I say? You paid cash for a car, which I think is amazing.

Sarah Piercy: Go Dillon.

Carey Nieuwhof: Way to go, Dillon.

Sarah Piercy: That's awesome.

Dillon Smith: Thank you, guys.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's not a Lamborghini, just for the record. What is it? It's a ...

Dillon Smith: Ford Fusion. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Okay, but cash for a car dude. That's incredible. At age 20, to go out and just write a check for a car.

Dillon Smith: That's really big. Obviously, we're not paying paid minimum wage, which I know a lot of people who are in ministry as a fully grown adult with kids who get paid almost minimum wage. Looking at that, I'm really grateful to not be there and you just take care of us. You care about Sarah and I like one of your kids and we know that so I'm really grateful for that aspect.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, and ... go ahead.

Sarah Piercy: I was going to say you pay us well and that communicates to me that you respect and appreciate the work that we're doing and knowing that I'm respected and appreciated is actually motivating, so that's what the pay tells me, but it's not like ...

Carey Nieuwhof: I want another 50 cents an hour now. Right?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: I appreciate that. I appreciate that. The churches is chronic for either overpaying or in a tiny percentage of cases overpaying. Did I say that right? Underpaying or overpaying? Underpaying or overpaying. Vast majority is underpaying, which I think is bad. I think you should pay a living wage, but money stops being a motivator. Again, all the data that I've read suggests that once you hit \$75,000 a year, which is a very decent salary for most people, they're like, "Okay, I can pay the bills, I can buy groceries, we can take a vacation once or twice a year," and now money stops being the motivator than it was. If you don't have like, like you say, if you're losing money on daycare or you're breaking even or you have to say to Justin, "Don't go too far. We haven't got money for gas." That's a very different conversation than saying, "No, we can live on what we have," but then it just stops being the motivator. Other motivating factors for you?

Carey Nieuwhof: Let's talk about how the team likes each other. We're a small team, but we had that when I led at the church. I think we genuinely loved each other. Dillon, you weren't part of that, but Sarah was, but looking over the last decade, what about team chemistry, team dynamics? That kind of kind thing.

Sarah Piercy: Oh, the people make or break your office. At the church, they were some of my favorite people in the world that I got to work with every day. I think I can say

the same of this team and team members in the past. I've always loved the team that we've had. Having a team that you like working with is huge. Because it affects the culture and if the culture is poisonous, it's easy to walk away from a poisonous culture.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Dillon Smith: I think one thing that I really, really appreciate about our team is that, not only do I like everyone that we work with, but I trust everyone we work with.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Dillon Smith: I think that's huge too, where ... I think this is probably more common than I think, but like my girlfriend, Maggie, who is like really important to me. She's amazing and I'm very grateful for God for her, but she's never met any of you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's. We're a virtual company. Yeah.

Dillon Smith: Yeah, but she knows our company culture and she knows the character that all of us carry. Not just you Carey but we all have to carry that. I think that's huge and I think that that's ... I'm just really grateful for that. We have a ton of fun too so that's always good.

Carey Nieuwhof: One thing I've always appreciated the is there doesn't seem to be a lot of politics, or if there is I'm out like I don't know, you guys are talking behind my back because I missed it but it's pretty gossip free, politic free. Do you want to talk about that? Because that is so rare at work.

Sarah Piercy: I don't know where I first heard this but somebody along the line said this and I adopted it, is "Negative up positive down."

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh yeah, we used to talk about that. I forgot about that.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, at Connexus.

Carey Nieuwhof: At Connexus. That was a Connexus thing I did.

Sarah Piercy: Do you remember where that came from? Did you come up with that?

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know.

Sarah Piercy: You might have.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'll claim credit for it because I can't remember who did. No, I really don't remember.

- Sarah Piercy: I started putting everything through that filter. If I have negative feedback ...
- Carey Nieuwhof: I actually forgot about that. That's good.
- Sarah Piercy: ... that needs to go to you or to somebody that I'm reporting to and not go down, and the positive stuff needs to keep going down. I mean, positive up too.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Explain that because there is a thinking behind it. Negative up, positive down.
- Sarah Piercy: Yeah, so the person that I report to consider up or above so I've been reporting to you for years. When I have negative feedback that shouldn't be going to a volunteer that I'm leading or to a staff member that I'm working with. That needs to be coming to you to solve. That just avoids a lot of gossip and unnecessary conversation and tension when negative feedback or circumstances or whatever goes to the person you're reporting to. Then the positive stuff needs to keep going down and going out in the organization. I don't remember when you said that or where, but I just think that was huge in creating a healthy staff culture then, and I think it's just in the water of our team now.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. I think it is. Does that surprise you, Dillon? I guess that's been our working assumption.
- Dillon Smith: No, not at all. Actually, my first week of working for you, I think I listened to your episode Bryan Miles where Bryan talks about how if anybody gossips once they're fired from their company.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Zero tolerance.
- Sarah Piercy: That's incredible.
- Dillon Smith: Zero tolerance. Yeah, and it's when you like it obviously they warn people where in the interview they're like, "This is your warning, if you gossip you're gone." That's where I like have that kind of based in, and that was a big like eye opener for me is because when I said that I'm like that's amazing that he would think that they have that rule. Do we have something like that? And you said, "Yeah, that's the rule here too." And I'm like, oh this is different because ... every church had...
- Carey Nieuwhof: Churches and gossip go hand in hand.
- Dillon Smith: And college.
- Carey Nieuwhof: We really don't deal with that, even that Connexus to this day under Jeff's leadership. It's not a gossip culture.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, it's good.

Carey Nieuwhof: Which is great, because we really ... it's wonderful to like the people you work with. Okay. We got to be honest, it's not all sunshine. What demotivates you? What are some of the hardest, just sort of mountains we've had to climb together. Let's start with that. What demotivates you?

Sarah Piercy: When you're grumpy. Am I allowed to say that?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yes, you are. I can be grumpy.

Sarah Piercy: Sorry, you're allowed to be grumpy, but when you start to project how you're feeling onto me, then it's de-motivating I was like, "I can't fix how you're feeling."

Carey Nieuwhof: And I do get grumpy.

Sarah Piercy: Sometimes, but you are incredibly self aware now that you realize that you're grumpy and you realize that it's not ...

Carey Nieuwhof: Usually what triggers my grumpiness other than a bad night's sleep?

Sarah Piercy: Exhaustion, too much to do.

Carey Nieuwhof: I get overwhelmed. You're so good at this because you will look at my calendar. You told me in October by the way, you said, "You're going to hate October." Because I was on the road like a crazy amount with very little. I love the ability to just have unstructured hours. That green zone we talk about, we will talk about The New High Impact Leader where I just have time to think and reflect and write to dream and I didn't have a lot in October but we've done a really good job of building around that now so I've actually enjoyed October.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, because if you're expecting to hate it and then you didn't.

Carey Nieuwhof: See.

Sarah Piercy: See.

Carey Nieuwhof: A little ninja psychology trick there. Did you get a degree in psychology?

Sarah Piercy: I did, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: You got me. That's awesome. Yeah, but I would say, for sure. Talk to Toni about it. You guys are going to have tea one day and talk about grumpy Carey. Yeah, for sure.

- Sarah Piercy: No, but I do think that your mood impacts my motivation.
- Carey Nieuwhof: For sure.
- Sarah Piercy: For better or worse.
- Carey Nieuwhof: No, that is good to know. Okay. Because I would have expected you to say, "Your mood impacts my mood," but what you said was, "My mood impacts your motivation."
- Sarah Piercy: Yes, yeah.
- Carey Nieuwhof: That's like every boss, "Hey, wake up." Dillon, you're nodding.
- Dillon Smith: Yep. Yeah. Especially when I was your assistant, it was the same thing. We just had so much contact that if your mood was down and ... there's always something like looking back at my time as your assistant, there was always something that you could have pointed at and said, "Hey, why isn't this better?" Just so, sometimes when you are grumpy you would point to all of those things.
- Carey Nieuwhof: Correct. No, that's fair. That's very fair. That's a really good reminder to me. I want to keep getting better at this, but to know that that actually impacts your motivation. Part of my gifting/curse because your blessing and the curse are the same thing. I know how to make things better because I always spot what's wrong. I have an instant ability to spot what's out of place. A lot of leaders have that. I know of pastors of large churches who've been banned from run through because they're pointing out that this light is flickering or that the EQ isn't quite right. I have all those critical bones in my body.
- Carey Nieuwhof: It's hard because as a boss, when I'm overwhelmed and exhausted, yes, I'm not at my best. I'm always at my kindest when I'm at my most rested for sure. But when you see the problems in the organization, there is a difference. A rested me will point them out in a helpful way or ask a question, a exhausted me or a bad day me will not. I will just like, "All right Sarah, here's five things that are wrong today, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Dillon, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." That's real fair.
- Sarah Piercy: But I should say, it's not like you can't have a grumpy day. Everybody has a bad day. It's how that comes across to the team. What you started to do with me as our trust group, as your assistant is you would tell me why you were having a bad day. That gave me empathy. You would pull back the curtain appropriately and I had to have a hard conversation and I'm just feeling really bad about it or ...
- Carey Nieuwhof: It's true.



Sarah Piercy: If I could understand why you were having a bad day, then you don't have to hide it and I can support you in a different way because I can empathize and ...

Carey Nieuwhof: Is that because then you don't take it personally or what?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, because I would think, "Oh this is my fault. He's mad at me for all these things." Really, you're having a bad day because there was things going on in your personal life or things going on higher up in the organization that I couldn't see.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yes. That was especially true at Connexus where there were times where I just couldn't tell you what was going on and you would-

Sarah Piercy: But you were stressed about it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Absolutely. Yeah. Now, you guys, because it's a company, a privately held company ...

Sarah Piercy: It's different now.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, it is different. I don't have a board that ... well I have a board, but I don't ... you're the heart of the organization and so it's just different. Dillon, you were doing a lot of nodding there for our listeners. Tell me more about, because I know you're a three, you're a performer and there's such an age gap too sometimes it feels like a father figure coming down your throat or something. Is that fair?

Dillon Smith: Yeah, definitely. Especially I think I was more prone to that too. The listeners know my dad passed away when I was 12 so that gap has ... that just follows you into leadership all the way where ... so it set me up where I put a lot of value on what mentors say. The upside of that is I have a lot of mentors. The downside of that is that when I disappoint a mentor, it's like taking my knees out from under me. Whenever we'd have those conflicts, like moments or the discouraging conversations like that would be, as Sarah said, extremely demotivating and just take all the wind out of my sails and then you're working hurt a little bit. Yeah.

Dillon Smith: But when I began to understand you and how your brain worked, again, I was able to not take it so personally, and knowing that you were an eight and that you saw the conflict differently, it was really helpful.

Carey Nieuwhof: And I welcome it.

Dillon Smith: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, I actually welcome conflict. Dillon, to be fair, it was huge for me as you shared more of your story as you felt comfortable, it helped me realize, "Oh

Dillon feels this differently than I would feel it." I could just be more sensitive to how I presented something on a good day or a bad day. We are always navigating, and I think most leaders can probably relate to this. We're always navigating the tension between grace for each other and these results that we want to get, like we're on a mission. We're out here to help people thrive in life and leadership and if we launch a course like The High Impact Workplace and hundreds of people are signing up for the course, we actually need the login information to work, the videos to be where they're supposed to be. We were proofing some documents for that course launch, which is underway right now at TheHighImpactWorkplace.com, but we're proofing all that stuff so it's high standards, high grace. Is that a good accurate way to describe it?

Sarah Piercy: I think so.

Carey Nieuwhof: Because sometimes you have high standards and low grace and then sometimes you have low standards and high grace. That would be an interesting quadrant to build out. I want to build that out one day. That's an interesting leadership quadrant because people are used to high standards, low grace. It's like, "Shut up and get it done right." Right? Or high grace, "Oh we love you and you're so amazing, but we suck."

Sarah Piercy: Neither of those are motivating, right?

Carey Nieuwhof: No.

Dillon Smith: No.

Carey Nieuwhof: Actually, right. Motivation to them all in both cases. Right? So how do you manage that tension of really high standards? We have to ship, we got to get this done or else, just pack it in and go home. Just give up. I don't want to give my life to something that stinks. I don't want to give my life to mediocrity. That's one of our values, battle mediocrity, right? Am I allowing what is good to stand in the way of what could be great? There's that or but I would say with my personality, on bad days, I am the low grace, high demand, so high standards, low grace. I'm learning as a product of my growth, personal growth to try to be high grace and high standards.

Sarah Piercy: That's great.

Carey Nieuwhof: There's a blog post right there, man.

Dillon Smith: Yeah, and you repeat this statement all the time, "Attack the problem, not the person." That's how you navigate that I think.

Carey Nieuwhof: Trying. On my good days, I get it right. On my bad days, I get it wrong. Anything else that's demotivating to you guys? This is really good because people hate work, right? 70% of employees are disengaged, and you're right. If that became

the case, you'd probably disengage and then both of you have great options. You'll probably get 200 job offers as a result of being on this podcast and you'll go somewhere else, right? That's what will happen if it continues to be demotivating. What else demotivates you?

Dillon Smith: I'm always shocked at how much of my personal life can seep in. That's probably the other big demotivation factor in work is there's just countless examples looking back over the last year where like I've got three papers and a test to take this week, and meanwhile at work, we're launching this big course or whatever and I have to stay focused and drive on that where when I get overwhelmed personally, I become demotivated in some of those individual areas. That's probably the other big thing is just our boundaries in those have to stay high as a company.

Carey Nieuwhof: You and I will negotiate sometimes where you're like, "Hey, I'm going to be at the cabin this weekend or at the lake or I'm going to be away doing this or I've got a whole bunch of stuff." Do you feel fairly confident that you can say, "I'm going to work a little more this week and less next week and just so I can focus," like we have that kind of flex?

Dillon Smith: Yeah. Last month, a very practical part of having a flexible workplace is last month I turned in four weeks of times. One week was 15 hours and then the next three were 35 so I averaged out at a 30 hour a week all month. Your regular statement of, "Bill me for whatever hours you work," that gave me the freedom and flexibility to do that. Meanwhile, I probably wouldn't have taken that 15 hours a week, which was actually a school trip, so I would have had to anyways, but if I didn't feel that flexibility to go above 30 the rest of the month.

Carey Nieuwhof: What demotivates you? Anything else, Sarah?

Sarah Piercy: Oh, I feel like we've covered all the bases.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay, well that's good. That's good. We're not perfect. Interesting, hypothetical question for you, what would be like, I like that high, what is it? High standards, high grace? When you think about a high grace, low standards environment, how does that demotivate you? If you were to move into one of those workplaces where it's really high grace, we're great at people, but really like we don't really care what happens?

Sarah Piercy: It wouldn't matter if I did a good job or not, and I want to do a good job. If the standards are low and I don't know, it feels yucky. It doesn't feel good to me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Dillon, even as somebody who appreciates, I thought you were a nine at first because you're such a peaceful person, but you're a three. How would that not be motivating to you anymore? Because in the not-for-profit world, it's a ton of high grace and low standards.

Dillon Smith: Yeah, as a three, like the the performer side of me would be like, "I wouldn't be proud to work there, I wouldn't be proud" ... Okay, churches, "I wouldn't be proud to invite my friends there," any of that. The part of me that wants results, wants to do something meaningful with my life, which I think most of our generation does or everyone does, you're not doing anything meaningful if you're not getting results. If you've had zero baptisms this last year, are you actually doing anything at all? That would be the question I'd have in my head and just wrestling through that, it's hard.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. No, that's fair. And then the opposite, the corporate world has the reputation for being low grace and high standards. How would that feel? You would last three minutes.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, I would just be like, "I'm out."

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm out. I'm done.

Sarah Piercy: I don't need to be treated like that.

Carey Nieuwhof: You'll care for your own kids at that point. Yeah.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: How about you, Dillon? What would you think about that?

Dillon Smith: Yeah, I think I'd be gone also. I might stay like five minutes longer than Sarah.

Sarah Piercy: Just because you're a three.

Dillon Smith: Yeah. And the three thinks we can hang, but we can't actually.

Carey Nieuwhof: I have to remember that because my default would be low grace, high standards and so I just have to be really ... that's a learned behavior. I've learned a lot of that behavior from you, Sarah, so that's good.

Sarah Piercy: Thanks.

Carey Nieuwhof: You've helped a lot with that. So we've crafted a mission statement to help people thrive in life and leadership. We have seven cultural values. You'll get those in the course if you sign up for The High Impact Workplace. We'll share all that stuff with you. Why does a mission-driven and a values-driven organization matter to you? We've touched on it a little bit, but I'd like to know a little bit more. Why is that so important to you that it can't just be, "Hey, podcast had a record month or the blog traffic is up 50% or we sold X number of courses." Why can't it just be results-driven? In corporate that would be P&L, in churches

it would be attendance and giving and that kind of thing, but why does a values driven organization matter to you?

Sarah Piercy: Because I know why I'm doing what I'm doing. Yeah, I'm know what I'm doing this for and we're trying to help people thrive in life and leadership and that's why. That's why it matters that the podcast is getting more listens and that the blog has more views, that I'm interacting well with the people that contact us. Yeah, that's about why.

Carey Nieuwhof: How about you, Dillon?

Dillon Smith: This is something I've been thinking about quite a bit and one thing that I'm realizing with my generation specifically is we don't need to work. We really don't. I have multiple people that I know, I'm not going to throw in any names or anything, but they just live at home and they don't pay rent, they eat food from their parents. Maybe they have savings, maybe they have a credit card, but people don't have to have a job anymore if they're my age. It's just not mandatory. And they don't care about the stigma of, "Oh, you live with your parents," because everyone lives with their parents. I live with my aunt, this is her apartment. Not having a need to work, now it's just, "Do I want to work?" When it's a mission and values driven company, I want to work there.

Dillon Smith: I think that's a really big thing for me and just people my age is we don't have to. The mission, vision and values is the only thing left to motivate.

Carey Nieuwhof: Again, this is so interesting because in real life you are saying what all the data says that I'm a Gen X at the upper level of Gen X, and Gen X and Boomers are more like, "You got to earn a paycheck, get out there and hustle, get a job, put something in the bank, growth for growth's sake." And you're like, "Nah, I don't have to work." That drives Boomers crazy about you're almost Gen Z, Dillon, you're right on the border between Gen Z and Millennials, right?

Dillon Smith: Yeah, 98.

Carey Nieuwhof: Depending on how you do the demographic math. It's so interesting because people are like, "Really? People think that way." But both of you, you really think that way. Sarah, I know you well enough. Your husband has a full-time job. If you didn't believe in it, you wouldn't do it either, would you?

Sarah Piercy: Right. Yeah, and we have an open conversation in our house like if we no longer feel like we're doing something meaningful in our work, we will alter our lifestyle to make that change because we want to do something meaningful in the world. If what we're doing isn't meaningful, we will make lifestyle changes.

Carey Nieuwhof: Sell the second car.

Sarah Piercy: Right.

Carey Nieuwhof: Downsize.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: For real?

Sarah Piercy: For real.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. See, and this is what I think older leaders have no idea the talent they're missing.

Sarah Piercy: But that's not to say that picking up the garbage off the curb isn't meaningful because it actually is.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Sarah Piercy: There is meaning in every position in our society. It's just making sure that people know that.

Carey Nieuwhof: But you're just not going to work for a bad company culture.

Sarah Piercy: Yes. Yeah, I should say that. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's really, really good to know. Okay, so we do have values. You get to pick a favorite of our seven values, which is your favorite?

Dillon Smith: Mine on here's battle mediocrity. That's my favorite because I think it's the most rare one that I've seen. Being a three also, I hate appearing mediocre specifically to the three, not just being mediocre. I'm okay with being mediocre as long as nobody sees me, but ...

Sarah Piercy: As long as nobody sees, that's awesome.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's awesome.

Dillon Smith: Golfing with friends, I always do better than golfing alone. But battle mediocrity, that's something that a lot of one school's ... like in school, you can get an 80, and that's a B, that's great, but that's mediocre. Come on, you can do better. Get the A. That's a big one for me, I think.

Carey Nieuwhof: Right. That was our alternative to pursue excellence or the excellence virtue. Because I think excellence springs diminishing returns and you don't want to be awful. Who wants to be awful, really? But it's really mediocrity. Most people settle short of what's great, and then eventually, something is good enough. Right? You got your minimum viable product. In Craig Groeschel's language, it's GETMO - Good enough to move on. But it's not mediocre. It's just excellence

brings diminishing returns. Another \$10,000 may not solve the problem the way you think it will. So, just move on. Okay. That's great. Sarah.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, I love air on the side of generosity. That's just my love language.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and what does that mean in our company?

Sarah Piercy: It means that we aren't just in it to make money and I think that's important. We give when we don't have to give, we want to see people succeed and sometimes that means being generous with the resources that we have. I just love that. I love that.

Carey Nieuwhof: I see it as a financial thing. I also see it as a mood and disposition thing that we try to be generous with our words. We try to be generous as much as we can with our time, even though that's a big issue and that we try to be generous with each other and even in the tone of our emails. Both of you have spent years of your life in the public inbox and we try to take every single email seriously and we get, how many emails would we get in a day these days? You're in there. You'd know.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, almost 100.

Carey Nieuwhof: 100 emails a day. Yeah. I remember there was one day last year we got a thousand emails in a day. I'm like, "Wow, okay." But about a hundred times a day, you're trying to be generous in your words, you're trying to be thoughtful. I know you'll sometimes pray over responses, Sarah, and then definitely there's a financial side because lots of people say, "Well, I'm very generous except for money." Now, then you're not generous, but you want to be on that side. Now, in The High Impact Workplace course, which is open right now, there are five different principles that we cover in one of the units. When things change and you don't, your company becomes irrelevant, young leaders work for themselves, which I think we talked about.

Carey Nieuwhof: Freedom and autonomy are the next generation's new currency. Lead people the way they want to be led and replace suspicion and misunderstanding with caring coaching. Those are some of the principles that I think are going to define the next generation workplace as you try to attract and keep high capacity leaders. You want to pick a favorite and then talk about what that means to you of those five values?

Sarah Piercy: I have a hard time picking a favorite. Now that those are in writing, I understand why I've been around for 10 years, because all of those things have kept me engaged at different seasons.

Carey Nieuwhof: Let's talk about freedom and autonomy because you have more, so many times in your job and then you can chime in. I really would love your take, because I

really do think with younger leaders, Millennials and Gen Z, freedom and autonomy are the new currency.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah. Well, I couldn't do this job that I love and that I want to do well if I didn't have freedom and autonomy because sometimes my kids throw up in the night and I have to take them to the hospital and I can't show up at 9 o'clock on Monday and that kind of thing, but because there is the freedom and the autonomy to work when I can work, I can show up and do a good job. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here and couldn't be here.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can you talk about how that works very specifically? So we are in a virtual workplace, which means there's no office.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, I have to communicate what's going on. I can't just go AWOL.

Carey Nieuwhof: But do you have to ask permission?

Sarah Piercy: No.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, correct.

Sarah Piercy: But unless there's a critical meeting, like I need to figure something out if there's a critical meeting on the calendar. It's pretty rare that I run into that. But no, if I need to take my kid to the hospital, I don't have to say, "Hey can I go to the hospital?"

Carey Nieuwhof: Right. "Hey can I get time off?"

Sarah Piercy: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: Or you do communicate, but it's more telling than asking. Is that fair?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah. Is that okay?

Carey Nieuwhof: That's fine. Yeah. No, and you know why it's okay? Because you hire great people. At the end of the day, you have to get your work done, and if the work doesn't get done, because usually it's time shifting, not time avoiding, you'll just say, "I'm so slammed, both the boys are sick. We were in the hospital overnight. I don't think I can get this done." Well then, the problem shifts back to us and we try to figure out how to get it done.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah. It's a team effort.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's team effort.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.



Carey Nieuwhof: It's a team effort, but I really find like that is the kind of freedom and autonomy I want as a leader. Maybe that's my Enneagram eight, but I've always wanted that, I've always operated with that and so I can't expect it as the senior leader and not give it to my team.

Sarah Piercy: That's good.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is that fair?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, that's really good. Yes.

Dillon Smith: That's good.

Sarah Piercy: How about you, Dillon?

Dillon Smith: Well, this plays into the course, well on the freedom and autonomy note of when you talk about how people our age could just go and start our own business. Sarah, your husband and you both design on the side. Justin can go start his own design firm. I've seen his stuff. If you go to CareyNieuwhof.com, you can see his design work, he's awesome. But he chooses to work inside of a company because he loves what they do and that's Connexus. Not only is it, "well, I'm an entrepreneur because I don't want to have a boss over me," but now you've given us the freedom where everyone doesn't have ... they have same the freedom with their time.

Dillon Smith: I think that's pretty huge where like we have options, we have Fiverr, we have our parents' basement, as I said earlier. We don't have to be tied down by anything. We probably will choose not to, unless like my girlfriend is in the medical field and there they're still pretty strict on that kind of stuff.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, but for the kind of stuff we do, that's the thing is you have options. I know both of you can go figure something out overnight on your own, but we have to create the kind of workplace and the kind of mission that is so big that you're like, "No, I want to be associated with this," which is such a big shift. We're moving from a need to to a want to as the care for employees.

Sarah Piercy: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. Well, any other advice for leaders who might be struggling with these concepts? What I've found is the kind of conversation we're having today, generally speaking, because I've given talks on this, resonates very deeply with Millennials and Gen Z and frustrates the heck out of Generation X and especially Boomers who are like, "What is wrong with this generation? How can you possibly demand all this? You should just sit there and work at your desk, shut up and collect your paycheck." Right? Not quite. That is some of the mindset that's out there and nobody can figure out why young leaders keep walking, which is why we're having this conversation and why we designed The High

Impact Workplace. Any final words to anybody? Talk to someone my age or older who's struggling with this.

Sarah Piercy: I would say don't underestimate replacing suspicion and misunderstanding with care and coaching. That's easily underestimated and five minutes of curiosity and caring conversation can diffuse a situation. If there's misunderstanding or you think somebody has dropped the ball and you just charge ahead with that in mind without asking questions, trying to coach and care for the person. It can be a mess. But if you care about somebody and you're coaching them, that is probably why I've stayed around for 10 years, because we've had rocky moments and misunderstanding and that kind of thing.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can we talk about that in the course? Where we do a video interview with you guys in the course where we talk about some of the rougher moments?

Sarah Piercy: Yeah, but at the end of the day I know that you care about me and you're in my corner and you're coaching me. Yeah, so don't underestimate that is what I would say to older leaders.

Carey Nieuwhof: Dillon, any final word to anyone who's struggling with sort of the new rules for the new workplace?

Dillon Smith: Every leader, I don't think it's going to be optional anymore to have good conflict management skills that you use a lot. Because I think every, I'll say pastors because my background is pastoral, but every pastor can go and open up Matthew 18 and go, "Well you need to go to them and you need to go with one other person next." We, as a church, need to be able to have conflict every day in a healthy way. I think we're so avoidant of that and I think that's why there are so many small churches and that's why there are so many dying churches because nobody wants to talk about the one worship leader that just can't sing, but is still singing and driving people away.

Carey Nieuwhof: Correct.

Dillon Smith: I think we need another level of healthy conflict management, and we talked about that in the course a lot.

Carey Nieuwhof: Also, in the course we give young leaders a script for how to negotiate more freedom and autonomy. Any word for young leaders that you want to encourage them with or anything you want to tell somebody your age?

Sarah Piercy: Stay humble. Don't expect it just because it's our culture as younger leaders. Don't act like it's coming to you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Dillon?

Dillon Smith: I've grown a really healthy distrust for what I've learned as a structural outlines in the school system. I would say the market place in school is more like ... there's a bigger difference than you expect. So be ready for that. College is not going to solve all your problems. Getting a four year degree doesn't solve anything. You still got to earn it, you still got to go and you got to make your own opportunities. I think have a healthy distrust for what you've always accepted as normal and just be working harder than you think you should be because we have to, we have to keep our heads down, especially being 20-year-olds, we have zero skills, but a lot of potential.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, you have a few of them, come on.

Dillon Smith: Yeah, okay.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, you really do. This is the great privilege is I get to work with some incredibly gifted people, incredibly talented people and people with deep character and it is a joy to be able to do this with you. We've scaled some incredible growth. It's gone to places we never thought it would go and we get to do this together, which is so much fun. Guys, listen, I feel like we can talk for another hour or two. Really, I had all these questions I didn't get to, but this was really, really good. Right now if you're listening to this episode in real time, you can go to [TheHighImpactWorkplace.com](http://TheHighImpactWorkplace.com) and we would love to be able to serve you inside that.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's a brand new online on-demand course on why 8 to 4 doesn't work anymore and how to attract and keep high capacity leaders, particularly young leaders. I want to show you how the future workplace is really the flexible workplace and I think you guys have illustrated that incredibly well today. Grateful for both of you. Thank you so much.

Sarah Piercy: Thank you.

Dillon Smith: Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Man, I just have so much affection for Dillon and Sarah and I am so grateful for, man, to be able to work with such great leaders. I know that's a challenge for a lot of people and that's why we put together The High Impact Workplace course. So it is open. It opened yesterday. If you're listening live, it is open for just another week at current pricing. So head on over to [TheHighImpactWorkplace.com](http://TheHighImpactWorkplace.com) if you want more information and I would love to get you in on the course. I will show you how to create the kind of workplace environment where every generation thrives, what you can do when you have young leaders who want flexibility, how to be fair to leaders who are saying, "No, no, no, I want to work 8:00 to 4:00 in the office," and how to create the kind of culture that is going to make your organization thrive. That's all at [TheHighImpactWorkplace.com](http://TheHighImpactWorkplace.com).

Carey Nieuwhof: You can go check it out and registration is open, well for a very limited time and this pricing, well, that's gone too, real soon. So I hope you can check that out. If you haven't yet checked out the red letter challenge, make sure you do that. Head on over to [RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey](http://RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey) so just [RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey](http://RedLetterChallenge.com/Carey) and get in on what over 60,000 people are raving about already. Guys, we are back next week with a fresh episode and I am so excited to bring you John Ortberg. John and I got together in California, and this is a little bit of a flip the mic, but we got a lot of John in there as well. So here's an excerpt from my conversation with John Ortberg, which will be the next episode in just a couple of days.

John Ortberg: While she was doing that, she was diagnosed with stage four cancer. So this second book, *Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved* is kind of a memoir account of her journey and she is still being kept alive from six months to six months with some very radical and innovative immunotherapy. She's just written another book that looks at women in the evangelical church world, particularly pastors' wives, and how often those are the only women that have access to much impact or being known. She writes about how they kind of have to have a tragic story or a number of them to become famous. She actually asks one of them, "I'm not making this up. She asked her, "How many major traumas do you think you will need to be successful?" And without batting an eyelash, the woman said, "Four."

Carey Nieuwhof: Subscribers, you get this automatically because it just comes to your podcast, and you've heard me say this before, but it's so true. I only listen to podcasts I subscribe to. So if you're listening for the first time, you haven't subscribed yet, just do it for free. Wherever you get your podcasts, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Overcast, which is where I listen these days, just hit subscribe and then you'll get these episodes automatically. Also, hey, we got an Ask Carey segment. I didn't mention at the beginning, but those of you who listened to the end know that that's what we do. So Corey from Colorado says, "What do you do when you're perpetually too tired or don't want to spend time with God? Ha, ha, I want to, I want to spend time with God. But the desire is just not there right now."

Carey Nieuwhof: Corey, I have been there, even as a pastor, I have been there. I have a couple of disciplines in my life. Number one, I decided to flip my time with God, my devotion time to the morning. I used to do it at night and what would happen is I would be praying and I would fall asleep. I would wake up eight hours later after the longest prayer in the world and say amen and feel very spiritual, but have slept through all of my devotions. That was a really bad idea. I'm a morning person now, and even though I want to be so productive in the morning, I've given the first hour to God. Now, sometimes it's 15 minutes, sometimes it's 10 minutes, sometimes it's half hour, but I would say quite regularly it's a half hour to 45 minutes, so I give that first window to him.

Carey Nieuwhof: I did that change years ago. It made a big difference and I think God gives you that time back in spades. There is a quote from Martin Luther that goes something like this, "I have so much to do today, I don't know how to handle it. I can't imagine not starting with three hours of prayer." Now, I am not at three hours of prayer. Okay? There's an inverse logic to that that I think is really compelling. Try moving, and if you're not a morning person, move your devotion time to the time where you're most alert and most awake. You'll be tempted to use that for other things. Don't. Give it to God. See what happens. Secondly, you also said, "What if you don't want to spend time with God?" You know what? Almost everything that's good for me, I don't want to do. I want to eat dessert, not vegetables. I want to not work out and lie on the couch rather than workout. I want to not write, but I got to finish this manuscript.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's the weirdest thing. I think on this side of heaven, we rarely want to do the things we should do. Look at it, you just look at what we're struggling with, the health concerns that come from lack of exercise or poor diet or obesity or financial decisions that land people in ruin, seemed good in the moment, but longterm it was a bad strategy. I think that's just normal human behavior. Here's what I've done. I've done two things. Number one, years ago, like literally over 20 years ago, I adopted the Bible in one year because I would cheat some times and instead of reading a personal scripture that would speak to me as a human being, I would just work ahead on my message and pretend that that was my devotion time.

Carey Nieuwhof: Nope, not good. So I bought a one year Bible and I open it to the date. Today when I'm recording this, I just opened it up and there it is. I'm recording this on November 15th, so November 15th open it up. There's the old Testament, the new Testament, the Psalm, the Proverb, boom, done. So it takes all the guesswork away and then I know whether I did it or not. Now, it's been really cool in the last five years as I've used YouVersion. I do the Bible in one year. I'll link to that in the show notes, the Bible in one year. I use my iPad in the morning, I open up my iPad, I read the devotion, and then I go through the the scriptures and then it gives me a little check mark and tells me I'm on a streak where I've read the Bible 382 days in a row or whatever it happens to be. I get a little bit addicted to that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, it's one of those things where I think, you just do it whether you want to or not and it's ... I know this is a bad analogy, but it's a little bit like saving money. If you put that \$10 aside every week, whether you want to or not. At first it seems like nothing, but give yourself a year and you go, "Oh, I got something in the bank." And then, give yourself a decade and you're like, "Whoa, I got a lot in the bank." And give yourself a lifetime, and you're like, "Okay, we don't have a lot of worries here." I think it builds up over time and I have found that I am reaping the benefits of reading the Bible and praying in a spiritual investment years down the road for moments where I just didn't feel like it either.

Carey Nieuwhof: I hope that encourages you Corey and thank you so much for the honesty and the transparency. Guys, we're back in a few days with a fresh episode. Thanks so much for listening. Make sure you check out [TheHighImpactWorkplace.com](http://TheHighImpactWorkplace.com). While the course is open, I am so pumped to bring this to people. Whether you're a young leader, you're trying to build a team, you're an older leader, you're trying to figure out how to attract and keep high capacity leaders, I think you'll find something there for you, [TheHighImpactWorkplace.com](http://TheHighImpactWorkplace.com). In the meantime, I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

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