

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 323 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Today's episode is brought to you by Planning Center and Pro Media Fire. My guest is Josh Gagnon, and Josh is a frequent flyer on this podcast. He's got a brand new book out today called It's Not Over. We're going to talk about that and staying put in leadership. He is the leader of the largest church in the history of New England, something he started about a decade ago Next Level Church, it's a great church, and I think you're really going to love this conversation. Also make sure you stay tuned for the What I'm Thinking About segment at the end of the podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm going to talk about a value inversion that really has me thinking about how to use time, how you should use your time, and how to use it in a really valuable way. There's something shifting in culture, so it's a value inversion between content and access. Anyway, man, I am pumped to have you here. Thank you for leaving ratings and reviews. We have so many new listeners this year, and I love being on the road and connecting with you guys. The encouragement you give is exceptional. So whatever you're doing today - on a run, at the gym, whether you are on a drive, I'm so glad you joined us. If this episode has been helpful, thank you so much for leaving a rating and review and for sharing as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I am on let's see Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. I'm Carey Nieuwhof on Instagram, CNieuwhof on Twitter and Facebook would love to connect with you there. And thank you for sharing on those platforms. Well, if you're looking to coordinate your growing organization, Planning Center has really emerged as one of the industry standards, and you can use it in some really innovative ways. Did you know for example, one of the challenges a lot of churches and organizations have is that they end up burning out their volunteers, not because they mean to, but just because they've over scheduled them? Well, using the Planning Center app, you can actually have your volunteers themselves block out dates, when they're like, "I'm going to take a break" or "I just need a month off." They can do that themselves. That really helps you make sure that your volunteers are healthy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Another way to make sure that your volunteers stay healthy is through the Planning Center app, you can send thank you emails, let them know you appreciate how much they serve. Plus, it helps you do things like track RSVPs for whoever is showing up to events or to practices. You can also use their workflow and list tools for follow up with new visitors, volunteers or even prayer requests, and they've got a support team that can help you. If you haven't checked out Planning Center. Make sure you do that today at Planning.Center. Just head over to Planning.Center and see what all the fuss is about.

Carey Nieuwhof:

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Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey podcast, listeners, thank you so much for being just great partners for our partners because they allow us to bring you this show at the level we do for free every single week, so we really, really appreciate that. Now without much further ado, my conversation with my friend Next Level Church founding pastor, thought leader and now author Josh Gagnon.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Josh, welcome back to the podcast.

Josh Gagnon:

Awesome Carey love being here.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, I owe you a huge and so do the listeners a huge debt of gratitude, because it was actually you who after two years of finagling schedules, got me a day with Gordon MacDonald, one of the most beloved episodes ever on this podcast, other than yours of course, Josh.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, well I figured that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What is this for you? Is this number six, number five?

Josh Gagnon:

No, I think this is only number three.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Come on. It is not.

Josh Gagnon:

I think it's only number three I think it...

Carey Nieuwhof:

No we'll link to it in the show notes.

Josh Gagnon:

I think the other two went so long it felt like six.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Welcome to my show, man.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You and I have got a friendship that now goes back many, many years, and I was so glad. We're going to talk about your new book, which I'm really pumped about. But catch us up to a little bit just for listeners about your friendship with Gordon, because that was a very special day. You and I did a couple of interviews with him, one of which we're going to share inside The Leader's Circle, this new thing I'm doing, another one we shared here on the podcast. We actually had lunch with him, and you've got a really cool relationship with Gordon, don't you?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, he's a close friend. He's a hero of mine. He's somebody that I tap into his wisdom whenever I can. There's something special about getting together with a man who's 80 years old and sitting across the table and just hearing how he loves his wife, hearing how he loves his kids. Learning lessons from him that you couldn't have learned otherwise. The only way to learn those lessons is sit across the table from someone who has gone before you. It's a beautiful thing. He's somebody that I cherish very deeply. We get together once a month, and we'll have breakfast together and talk. We don't talk about church growth, we don't talk about ministry. We just talk about our hearts, we talk about pointing the arrow in the correct direction so that we get somewhere on purpose. It was a privilege man to have you there, and two of my beloved friends in the same room was pretty special.

Josh Gagnon:

You guys were spitting out some serious wisdom, and so that podcast if someone hasn't listened to that, they need to go back and listen to that, because that was special. I was in the room, and I could just sense all over it. I was sitting there thinking, "This is gold right now."

Carey Nieuwhof:

I felt like what Gordon shared in that hour and 40 minutes, and my job was just to be quiet and ask a few questions, was not just a gift to podcast listeners, but like a gift to posterity and the church, because one day we're not going to be able to have that conversation with somebody who's made the impact like Gordon MacDonald has. One of the first mega church pastors, been through some situations in his life, but also, just incredible wisdom, is finishing so well. And former counsel to US president like that's pretty cool when you think about it.

Josh Gagnon:

That's good on the resume, it looks good on the resume.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can I ask you this question Josh? Do you have any like... because people... we get... I'm sure you do to requests for mentorship all the time. Do you have any rules or guidelines or thoughts about what makes for a healthy relationship with someone like Gordon, someone who's twice your age, and just this super sage individual that you are privileged to have access to on a regular basis? Do you have boundaries of what you will say or won't say, or will ask or won't ask, or how you value that relationship so it's...? Because it's very clear to me, it's mutually... like he loves it as much as you do. That's pretty clear.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah. What I've learned in that relationship is that people his age and people who have gone before us, and who are now out of ministry, but have tons of wisdom, they want to share wisdom. They want to be wanted, right? They want to sit down with people and share what God has done and what they've learned. And he'll often say to me, "One of the things he loves about our team is that we just ask questions." He says, one of the things that's missing in today's culture is that young leaders think they know answers, but they very rarely ask questions. He says, one of the things he loves getting together with our team for and his wife is friends with my wife, and Gail will often say this to Jennifer, "Gordon just loves getting together with your team. She loves getting together with Josh, because you guys just ask so many questions."

Josh Gagnon:

I would say in today's day and age, we feel like we need to have the leaders or the answers in order to build platforms. We need to have the answers to be seen as a leader. I think what we need to do is we need to have great questions, and ask great questions and gain great wisdom, and then eventually maybe we can walk in the shoes of someone like Gordon.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How do you develop the questions you want to ask him when you get together?

Josh Gagnon:

I just get real vulnerable. Like I said, my questions are based on marriage. My questions are based on my own battles. I talk about insecurity, I talk about how I don't feel like I measure up. I talk about how at times I'm not being the husband I wish I would be, and I don't know how to get there. I just get real deep, real quick. I don't think he has time to sit around and talk about surface stuff, but he'll certainly get into the deep end of the pool with me, and he'll help me swim better. We talk about all those real things. I'll talk about all of my internal struggles. I talk about my relationship with my family growing up and the things that I've been through there. I mean, we're talking... this is a relationship where he now understands that I'm not playing a game and I'm not using his name to get anything.

Josh Gagnon:

Matter of fact, I've never asked him for anything until I asked him to write the afterward for my book. The reason I asked him to write that had nothing necessarily to do to have his name on the book, it was personal. I wanted one of my mentors, one of my heroes to be inside of my book. That was the first time I ever asked him for anything to do with ministry or to do anything for me. Other than that, it's just simply been an authentic relationship where I'm just coming to him as a broken man, and asking him to help me point that arrow in a direction that's going to get me somewhere further.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think that's a really good point. I think we've all been used one way or the other to get to something else, or somebody wants you because of what you can do for them. I think that's a really good insight that sometimes you just want to cherish the relationship because it's a relationship, and that is increasingly rare these days where everybody's climbing and trying to get ahead and be an influencer and the whole deal.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, that's the sad thing, isn't it?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, it is. The other thing that I think is really neat, there's this story, there's a book called Trillion Dollar Coach, which is on my reading list for this year. This is about a guy in Silicon Valley who just went around and for free just poured into some of the top CEOs in Silicon Valley. When you look at the leaders he built in, they built companies that are worth over a trillion dollars, hence the title Trillion Dollar Coach, but there are people who just really want to give back, and sometimes they might be right next door to us and we kind of miss them.

Josh Gagnon:

Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Josh, you got a new book. I know we've been talking because we've been friends for years about writing a book, and I'd love to find out why... Because it's been a multiyear process for you, right?

Josh Gagnon:

It feels like it's been a lifetime process.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Didn't you write two books to get to your first book?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah actually...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because I read your first book, which never made it.

Josh Gagnon:

One of the stories that really compelled me into writing this book is as you remember, a few years ago I had an agent reach out to me and said, "Hey, listen, you need to write a book. God's doing great things, you've got a story to tell." Here I go with this agent and we write this proposal and we put it out there, and every single publisher laughed at it. Even some publishers said, "Not a chance." Others said pastoring a church in New England, the least church region of the country, there's no Christian audience so it's just dangerous. One person said I didn't know how to write it. It was a pretty big slap in the...

Carey Nieuwhof:

That really fed into your insecurity very nicely, didn't it?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah. It made me feel really good about myself. I can remember after that man thinking, "I'm never going to write a book." I can remember crying in the shower. I got in the shower after I got all these nos. And that agent said, "All of our leads have dried up." I remember getting in the shower and just crying and asking, "God why in the world..." because I didn't seek after an agent. I wasn't trying to fight and open up doors. I said, "God, why in the world would you bring this agent to me, would seemingly open this door only to shut it on my face? Why in the world?" I said, "I'm not writing a book, I'll never write a book." A year later, Alex Fields reached out to me who's an agent. He said, "Have you thought about writing?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Alex is a good guy.

Josh Gagnon:

He's a great guy. Get out of my inbox. He said, "Have you thought about writing a book?" and I didn't get back to him for almost a year. I didn't even get back to him because I didn't want to open up that dream again, because I didn't want to feel the pain of disappointment again. Finally, I wrote him back and said, "Hey listen, I can't put this flame out. I feel like it's a God dream, and so let's go after it." We got several offers for this book, and I feel like God's going to use it in great ways. Here's the thing, Carey, it's interesting. Often in the shower that day, I'm crying over what God didn't do, but what I didn't realize is what he was doing, right. He was doing more in me in that moment, so that he could write this book eventually through me, and that first book was just a skeleton of what this book is today. I'm so thankful, I'm so thankful that that God pumped the brakes on the dream so that he could build me into a different person so that I could write a book that would actually impact more people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can we go back... Not to be mean to a good friend, but can we go back to the rejection and what that felt like? Because I would just... knowing you, Josh, that must have felt like a... that must have been a real pattern interruption for you. I mean, you were an entrepreneur before you became a church planter, and your business did really well, and then you planted a church, which in a very short window of time, went on to become as it is the largest church in the history of New England. Just let that sink in for a minute. Because New England has a long history. This goes back to the Puritans. You're pastoring the largest church over multiple locations in the history of New England, and all of a sudden, they're like, "Yeah, we don't want your book." Can you take us back to how you handle that? Because hasn't it mostly been, like, pretty much up into the right for you to that point?

Josh Gagnon:

No, I think for most stories from the outside looking in, it looks up to the right. But as you know that there's a lot of pain involved in anything that moves right. There's a lot of pain involved that nobody sees in the highlight reel. We don't post the rejection on Facebook or Instagram, we just post the successes. I didn't go off to Bible college the traditional way, I went off in pre law, criminal justice was my major, and I took Bible courses online and so I never felt qualified. I never felt like I did it the right

way. Not to be funny, but to just be real. When I was in high school, I actually had to stay after school every day of my senior year and take extra credit courses in English because I was going to fail English. Yeah, so writing I'm writing a book. And everything I do, if I send you an email... well your close friends, so I don't do it too much to you, but I'm not the greatest speller in the world, I'm not great with grammar.

Josh Gagnon:

There was all these insecurities when I said, "Okay, I'll do this, I'll step out." Because there was a dream in my heart to do it, there was a story to tell, and here I am stepping out. It hurt me, it took me a week to even tell my wife because I didn't want to tell her about what happened because I didn't want her to see me as a failure. It was a pretty deep wound that was created and hence the reason I kept saying, "I'm never going to write a book, I'm never going to write a book." And people are asking me, and here I am writing a book that God has titled It's Not Over. Of course I titled it, but he birthed it in me, it's a book titled It's Not Over: Leaving Behind Disappointment and Learning to Dream Again. And every leader that listens to this podcast, can feel the pain of disappointment in the past over expectations that that were unmet.

Josh Gagnon:

It was a deep scar. I still struggle with insecurity, Carey. I still don't feel good enough. And you and I have talked about this. You and I have talked about how we both fight those things, and every leader if they're being honest, they're going to tell you that that's something we're going to have to fight probably forever.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, it's interesting, Josh I've been thinking about that a lot. I was actually thinking about that at breakfast this morning, and I think I want to do some writing on it. But I keep thinking, "Oh, at some point, you're going to be passed all that." And then I realized, "No, actually, that may be the very thing that God is actually using to shape you, and to redeem you, and you should be okay with your imperfections." I know we all know it, but somehow when it get... It's easier to see in your life than it is in my life, I don't know. Give us the broad outline of the book, because I think it's a really important message.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, the broad outline is hope. If I had to give it one word, it would be hope. To all the leaders listening, we know what it feels like to feel hopeless. The reality is many of us start off in leadership, we start off in life, and we've got this God sized dream in our heart. Now this book isn't about just inspiring people to go start businesses and start churches, although I think that's great. But this book is also about inspiring people to tackle the dreams inside their heart to overcome addictions, to overcome that insecurity we're talking about. It's a dream in our hearts to overcome hurts from the past. And so whatever that looks like in our lives, many of us know what it feels like to come up short of those dreams, of those desires, of those hopes that we have out in front of us. It's in those moments that I feel like life comes at a crossroads. It's what you do in the moment where you show up and in the dream within the church feels dead. When you look around, and there's just a few people there and yet in your heart, you see a picture that looks so much different than a few people.

Josh Gagnon:

It's when you show up to that kids ministry and there's no kids and you're like, "What am I even doing? I have a dream in my heart that looks so much different. What are you doing God?" Or when you're praying for your marriage or relationship, whatever that looks like, we all know what it feels like to be at this crossroads where what we expect is not lining up with what it is we're seeing. Far too many people in that moment choose to live life believing that that's just the end of the road. That it's not necessarily even a crossroads. It's just the end of the road. This book was really born out of a moment, the title of it came from a moment where I was in a prison, and I was visiting a friend of mine who made a horrible, horrendous mistake, but I still love him, even though he made a mistake.

Josh Gagnon:

He was in ministry for many years, and I was the first person to ever visit him in prison. We were sitting at table number seven, I'll never forget it. First time, and he comes walking in, and we talk and after the conversation, I get up and I give him a three second hug because that's what you're allowed to do. I looked at him, I said, "It's not over." And he looked back at me and he said, "I don't know if I believe that." And his tears in his eyes, he walked away. Then I got in the car and I was driving home and I was seeing people at gas stations, people mowing their lawns and I was just seeing people, and every person I saw my heart broke over the thought of them thinking it was over, that their best days were over, that marriage they hope for is over. That that child that they prayed for would never be healed. That that dream they longed for would never become a reality.

Josh Gagnon:

I just started thinking Carey, it is true. Like it is true, this isn't theory. Most people, most people are living in a skeleton of what they hoped for years ago. Most people are living in a skeleton of what they once hoped for, because of the expectations they once had, have buried the hopes for tomorrow. The definition of the word discouragement has the word expectation in it. That's why we get-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay, say that?

Josh Gagnon:

Within the definition of the word discouragement, you find the word expectations.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay.

Josh Gagnon:

What we want learn is-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah you're right. You're right.

Josh Gagnon:

... discouragement is born out of expectations that have been unmet. When we're discouraged, it's often simply because we expected something to happen that didn't happen. I feel and that's why we

birthed this book is we need to understand that our expectations of the past not matching up with what we hope for doesn't determine the hope we can live in, in the future.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can you walk us through a few dreams for you? Obviously you've been very open about the whole publishing dream, which looks like it died, and then here we are. But some dreams that... Yeah, your dreams.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, I've had dreams... Once again, I don't want to go back to it all the time, but just I think it's important to say like some dreams in my own heart of finding, finding security in my own skin, that's a dream of mine. My dream to walk into a room and not try to feel like I have to measure up but I can be who God called me to be is a dream of mine. When I first started Next Level Church, I never had told anybody that I felt called to be a pastor. I was running a drywall company and I went golfing with my pastor at the time, and I had never told anybody about this dream that I felt like God was calling me to be a pastor, to be in ministry. I haven't told anybody. I was so insecure, I was so scared. I finally tell him on the 10th hole. It took me 10 holes to build up to coverage. On the 10th hole, I tell him and he looks back at me and says, "I don't think that's what God has for you Josh." It sounds-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Like, "Yeah, not really."

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah. So it's like, man my heart was crushed. I don't even remember what happened the rest of the time I really don't, but a dream of mine is in or was to start Next Level Church and to lead a church that is healthy. A dream of mine is to someday at whatever age God graces me, is to sit with my wife and to finish strong. A dream of mine is to love my kids into the people that God has called them to be. I don't want to paint the picture when it comes to dreams that we all have to chase after these dreams that are saving world hunger. At the end of the day, these dreams are all around us. They're all around us. We just often fail to continue to chase after them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, and I think, just to be totally transparent, and hopefully I'm not skating out of bounds here, but you and I've had lots of conversations where we've even been at Next Level and I totally relate to it. But, Next Level's an amazing church and it's great, but in your head, in your heart, it's 10 times bigger than it is. You want to talk about that tension, because I think every leader has been there?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, that's a tension we all live in. My kids love LEGO sets, and we go to the LEGO store and they walk around, and they look at all the outside pictures of the box. The last time we were there, they said, "Dad, buy me this one. Can we buy this one?" That was 4,124 pieces. I'm thinking, "4,000 you guys, you're only 11 and 12 years old, like you probably should get 100 piece one." They talked me into buying it for them. We got home and we're looking at the outside of the box, Carey. The outside of a LEGO box, man it's so put together, it looks clean, it looks so done. Then we get home and we open up the box and

we pour out all of these pieces on the table. We're reminded in that moment, we now have to put that together and they seem overwhelmed. They're looking at me like, "Oh my goodness."

Josh Gagnon:

I think when God gives us a dream, it's the same way. There's the outside of the box experience, and then there's all the pieces. When God gave me the dream to start Next Level Church, you're absolutely right. I saw thousands of people, I saw lives being changed or one of your leaders, your leaders that are listening, your listeners, when they were given that dream, whether it's personal, whether it's ministry, man, they see it clearly in their heart. God gives us the outside of the LEGO box picture in our heart. Then here's what he does. He then dumps out all of the pieces and says step by step in faithfulness in obedience, step by step through resistance, step by step and grit, step by step through my strength, piece by piece, now you start building. For many of us, what happens is because of we see it so clearly in our heart, we quit at the beginning or midway before the finish, before we finish building the LEGO set, Before we finish seeing that dream, we quit midway, because we're not there yet.

Josh Gagnon:

Here's where I'm encouraged. The dreams that God has put in my heart are not small enough for me to obtain in one week. The dreams that God has put in my heart, I shouldn't be able to accomplish them in two days, in five days. But piece by piece, by piece by piece in faithfulness, picking up each piece of that picture and putting it together, I believe that when leaders see their dreams become a reality. Just remember, there's the outside of the box reality, and then there's the inside of the box reality. We have to be willing to put the pieces together that God has called us to be faithful in.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think that's a really helpful analogy, something I'm going to try to remember Josh. It's good. How do you know that a dream is worth chasing? For example, you're on the 10th hole, it takes 10 holes of courage and two and a half hours to work up the courage to say to your pastor, "I think I'm called to plant a church." And he's like, "Actually, probably not." We've all had that experience, right? And one of the questions I'll often ask podcast guests, is whether it's, "Should I launch a business? Should I do this? Should I not like..." How do you know whether that's a dream worth chasing? Because I think we've also seen the experience where there are people who are chasing a dream, and we're like, "Yeah, you should have given that up a while ago." Where's the line in your mind... because obviously, you went on to launch the church, and that pastor would probably want to take that back right? But-

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... where's the line?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, for me I wanted to be an NBA player before I wanted to start the church. Then one day I looked in the mirror and realized...

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're not exactly six, eight, right?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, not quite, not quite. So I realized really quickly that that's probably not a dream that should be chased. I think sometimes when we look at just our experiences, our abilities and who we are, we can pretty clearly line up dreams that probably shouldn't be chased. I think there's wisdom in that. The other thing is many dreams that we should be chasing are simply found in the Word of God. Like God's Word tells us the dreams that we should be chasing, whether that's to overcome that addiction that's holding us back in ministry, whether that's to put guardrails in place so that we don't slip and make a wrong decision inside of our leadership position. There's certainly a lot of dreams that line up with God's word, forgiveness, our marriage on and on I could go right? Those dreams we really don't need clarity we know that...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Obedience is always in the will of God, yeah.

Josh Gagnon:

Exactly. We know when it comes to those dreams, or when it comes to those hopes we should continue chasing after those. I think there's those other dreams outside of us, whether it's ministry or starting up a business where I think it's wise to look at who we are. In the book of Nehemiah, we learn that Nehemiah was in a situation where there was a need that was presented, and it broke his heart. I think that's important to realize. It broke his heart. One of the things that tell me that I'm continuing to chase after something that means something to me is that it breaks my heart. For instance, I've never been discouraged over something that didn't matter to me. Many leaders when they're chasing after a dream, they become discouraged. What if we started looking at discouragement as spiritual proof that we're still chasing after something worthy of catching.

Josh Gagnon:

Discouragement really is spiritual evidence we're chasing after something that means something. For me when you look at Nehemiah, there was this need that broke his heart. There was something that told him, "This breaks my heart and it has to be for a reason. It aligns with God's word. It's not sinful and it breaks my heart for a reason." Nehemiah, of course there was need. We talk about in the book, how there was opportunity. Nehemiah was able to walk into situations where the king comes to him and says, "What do you need? What's the problem? There's opportunities. There's doors that are opening." Then Nehemiah's abilities and experiences. Here he is raised up and in Kingdom, he has abilities. He has leadership experiences that God's able to tap into, to help him fulfill that dream. Then I think opposition. I think opposition is a recipe that is always present inside of chasing after a God sized dream or the hopes of our heart.

Josh Gagnon:

We're going to face opposition. For many people, opposition sometimes causes them to give up. But don't get concerned when you're facing opposition, in the journey towards your dream, become concerned when there's no reason to face opposition, because your dream isn't big enough.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Let's go back to the 10th hole.

Josh Gagnon:

You love that 10th hole.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know.

Josh Gagnon:

You love that 10th hole,

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're like, "I never should have mentioned that."

Josh Gagnon:

You love the 10th hole.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But no, I think that's a very, very interesting case study, because obviously, he felt that way. Putting yourself in his shoes, why do you think he told you, "I'm not sure that's really what you should be doing with your life." Do you have any idea why he said what he said?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, I had never spoken in public in my life. I hadn't finished bible school. I'm not an extrovert, and so I was never somebody just going around and talking with people and people saw as vibrant. I was never that guy that people would point out and say, "That guy right there is going to do great things." I'm more or less be the guy in the backseat of the room and just quiet, minding my own business. He wasn't evil or trying to be hurtful.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, but I mean...

Josh Gagnon:

I can totally understand why he would say that. Just looking at who I was and how I lined up, but there was a fire and a flame inside of me. I would go home at night, and nobody knew this. Nobody. I would go home at night and I'd watch preaching on TV. This is when the internet wasn't I guess as popular. I'm watching preaching on TV and I remember getting in my car, Carey. I'd never preached a message a day in my life, and I'm preaching in my car with tears coming down. I'm crying, preaching the Word of God to nobody yet I'm just having to get it out because I felt like that's what I was created for. I even took up an offering and gave one week in my car by myself.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You took up an offering and gave it to yourself. That's amazing.

Josh Gagnon:

It's this passion, this fire that just won't go out. I think that God really directs us by the fire he places with inside of us. This is the God who created the heavens and the earth. This is a God who created us. He knit us together in our mother's womb, as if he can't put fires in us that are not easily snuffed. As if he can't put fires in us that don't go out easily. I would just say, even with the book, it's just a fire that wouldn't go out. I've often said and I don't know if you agree with this, this is pretty edgy. I guess it's not too edgy. But for me, I would have quit ministry several times. And people ask, "Why haven't you quit?" You want to know the honest answer, the honest answer is this outside of like, I feel like God's called me to do it, and this that and the other thing.

Josh Gagnon:

The honest answer why I haven't quit ministry is because the pain of not doing it would hurt worse than the pain while doing it. That's why I haven't quit ministry. I know that if I quit ministry, I would sit there and feel so much pain knowing that I wasn't doing what I was created to do. That pain would be worse than the pain of enduring the trials and the frustrations of staying inside of what God has called me to do. I know a lot of the listeners just thinking, "That's it man, because I want to quit." If I were to say, "Why haven't you quit?" They're going to say, "It would just be too painful. It's painful here but not as painful."

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, thanks for going back to that, that is so clarifying, Josh. That whole... because we've all had those conversations where people are like, "Yeah, I don't think that's you." But when you've got that fire, you brought me back to where I was, and I don't think about it enough, but when I think about a call on my life, so for 20 years it was to lead the local church. Last five years, I've been focused more on leading senior leaders while still being involved, to some extent at my local church that I founded. But how this passion for leading leaders... there was a seminal moment, probably five or six years ago where Andy Stanley was speaking at Orange conference, there's 8,000 people in the room. I'm sitting in the side wings just with my wife and my assistant. Andy starts asking the Nehemiah question like, "What breaks your heart?" I'm just like, "Leaders. Leaders don't have enough tools," and then I start to sob. You know me I'm not like super... I'm emotional, but I don't cry a lot. And I'm just, I cannot stop weeping, because I'm thinking about just coming alongside leaders.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's rare that I'm without words, but I was totally without words, and we're walking back to the car because I get to speak next, at the next part of the event. I'm walking back to the car with Toni and Sarah, and I can't even talk, I can't even compose words, which like never happens, because my heart is just like broken for leaders who need resources. You're talking about that fire that just won't go out. I think when you've got that fire... Because there have been times where I'm like, "What am I doing? Is this even ministry? I do a podcast I write books. I speak like, I don't even know what this is. Am I being faithful? Am I being unfaithful?" That's what goes on in my head. Then remembering those fire moments, and you're right, because I'm having conversations right now about, "Okay, well what happens a decade, 20 years down the road?" I'm like, "Oh, the beach would be more painful than doing this."

Carey Nieuwhof:

I can enjoy the beach once in a while, a couple weeks a year, I'm going to really enjoy it, but I can't not do this. You're talking about that kind of burden... It's really a burden, that's what Charles Stanley would call it. It's just this burden that I can't not not do this.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, and I think anybody who knows you knows that you're exactly where you need to be. It's funny, I don't know...

Carey Nieuwhof:

I guess, but you don't see that from the inside, right? Like, you don't really. You're like, "Am I in the right place? I don't know if I'm the right place."

Josh Gagnon:

Go back all the way to what? What were you 18 years old when you broke lips into a DJ mic? Is that what it was?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I was 16 man, I was a kid. I was just a kid. Yeah.

Josh Gagnon:

God preparing you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What makes a kid walk into a radio station at 16 and go, "Hire me"? I don't know. But I did that, and I can see that as the hand of God at the time.

Josh Gagnon:

My wife always says, "Man he has the perfect voice. He has the perfect voice for that."

Carey Nieuwhof:

No I want to be Alec Baldwin, okay? He does.... if you listen to Here's the Thing. "Here's the Thing, I'm Alec Baldwin." That's the perfect voice.

Josh Gagnon:

I don't know my wife-

Carey Nieuwhof:

You tell Jennifer thank you.

Josh Gagnon:

My wife's like, "Carey..." My wife's like, "He has the perfect voice." I'm like, "Watch it girl, watch it."

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's funny, but no, I'm glad we got into the raw part of it, because I think that's super clarifying and what you shared about preaching to yourself in the truck and like taking an offering from yourself. I remember that as a young preacher studying seminary, I'd be like, literally preaching in the car, on the way over to an event, saying, "One day they'll let me try this. One day they'll let me try this." We have a ton of young leaders listening to this, if you've got that fire, don't let it go out right?

Josh Gagnon:

Amen. Amen.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Anything else about your whole call story? Because it is pretty remarkable. Now we see churches growing across New England, not like every day, but you're not the only one that's growing. But it's like put the paddles on a whole region of the country. Anything else that was seminal in that decision making period of your life for you, what, 12 years ago, 13 years ago?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, we started 11 years ago. There's tons of movement in New England, tons of amazing churches that are just... are growing, I think we're seeing growth, like we never have in New England, and so it's been great to see so many, so many... Next Level's just one of the many, many great churches that are growing and seeing God do amazing things in that region of our country. It's an honor to be a part of it. There's so many times where we wanted to quit, so many times we got to that crossroads and felt like it was over and continued to put the pieces together step by step in faithfulness. When people look at that story of Next Level Church, 11 years in with many locations, they're like, "Man, that thing really must have just taken off and grown quick and fast and easy." And I smile because there were days I shivered in tears holding the next piece of the LEGO box or next piece of the LEGO set, not wanting to put it together because I was scared.

Josh Gagnon:

By God's grace and faithfulness, I followed after that call and God's been gracious.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What have been some of those almost setbacks, where you thought it was over? I can think back to 2009, was the only time through my amazing leadership skills I'd grown the church from 800 to about 350 in 18 months, which is like awesome.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, just...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow, whatever. I thought, "Wow, this thing might not actually work out." That was like, "Wow." One of my elders said, "You said that out loud? You shouldn't say that out loud." I'm like, "I said it out loud." And obviously it worked out just fine, but yeah, there's some real seminal moments. Have you had moments like that, and what were they like?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, we've had moments where we couldn't pay the bills. Moments where we wondered how in the world we were going to make it. There's a church in our area that's doing amazing things. The pastor's name's Anthony Milas, and he paid for us a salary. There's only four of us on staff, but I can remember one week we hadn't been paid in two weeks because we couldn't afford it. I remember I called him up and he was talking he says, "Do you need anything?" I said, "No." He said, "No, be honest, do you need anything?" I said, "Well, we haven't been paid." The next thing I know, there's a check in the mail for my entire team. It's in those moments where God has just continued to be faithful. Building projects. When you get in the building project and you start it with one idea of cost and then you find out that that idea was, 50% off, and you're like, "What in the world." Then of course, leadership changes, leadership transitions, staffing. Staffing's difficult.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It is.

Josh Gagnon:

If something's growing, you need more and more staff, but you don't really have the structures and systems in place yet to hire this staff in a correct way because you've never done it before. Just with staffing we made some mistakes and there were opportunities and moments of gossip and division, and I'm just thankful that we continue to press down culture. The culture within the organization ultimately won. A culture of generosity and the culture of unity, and the culture of doing anything short of sin to reach people for Jesus ultimately won the conversations, but I could sit here and we could talk for days just about the moments where I looked in the mirror and wondered if it was ever going to end. Carey, listen, there's still days where I look at our giving or I look at our leadership, or we go through a storm at a location and I still sit there and think, "I wonder if we'll be here next year?" There's still days that I have those thoughts and so I think...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Quote our buddy Mark Clark. "We could be 300 people by Christmas" right? I got to say it better.

Josh Gagnon:

You didn't say it in the right voice. You didn't say it in the right voice.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, that's right. "We can be 300 people by Christmas." That's the one.

Josh Gagnon:

There you go.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. No, you're right. A good mutual friend, but that's so true. What is your self-talk in moments like that? What do you say to yourself? How do you talk yourself off the cliff?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, I remind myself to be faithful. Just stay faithful. God will be fruitful. I know that sounds so simple, but we all have these little sayings that we go back to, and they're profound to us. Over and over, and

over again, I just tell myself, stay faithful. Continue to stay faithful to God, continue stay faithful to your family, continue to stay faithful to your friends, continue to stay faithful to the calling on your life, and God will be fruitful. Ultimately, even if God doesn't show me the fruit, all I'm required to show him is faithfulness, and the rest is up to him. To sound a little cliché, I tell myself, it's not over. That it's not over.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That would be a good title for a book. Yeah.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, someone should write that book.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, I got a couple things in my life where I'm like, "That's right. This is the middle of the story. It's not over. It's not over. It's not over."

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want it to be... There is something hardwired into us to always want to live in Eden, to always be at the end of the story, to always say, "Will these things just go away?" What would you say, Josh, to the leader who would say, "Yeah, okay, so you've had some struggles. You've had some success. A lot of your dreams have come true." Let's be fair. They have. Your life isn't terrible. What would you say to leaders who are listening, who would say none of their dreams have come true?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, I would say that's definitely a heavy burden to carry.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Josh Gagnon:

I would also say that they still have breath in their lungs. As long as God gives us breath in our lungs, there's still a purpose for our life. I know that sounds so preachy, and it sounds so cliché, and it sounds so one liner-ish, but the simple reality is, there is breath in that leader's lungs. They may be at a church where they feel like they're pounding their head up against the wall, and God's not doing anything. I would say, listen, you continue to stay faithful and trust him with the results. It's not over. One of the things I'm passionate about inside of this book is prayer. We talk a lot about prayer in this book, and I think that leader that feels it's over needs to examine their prayer life, because when our prayer life is on empty, our intimacy in Christ is on empty.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Josh Gagnon:

I have a friend... well, he's a friend of yours, too. Daniel on staff here.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Love Daniel.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah. Daniel and his wife, Catherine, 10 years ago gave birth to a son... or she gave birth. They didn't give birth. She gave birth.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Fair enough.

Josh Gagnon:

She gave birth to a son named Josiah. Josiah was born with many, many medical issues, many medical conditions. He had over 30 surgeries in the first year of his life. He spent more nights in the hospital than he did at home. At 10 years old, and I won't get into details, of course, Josiah, there's conditions that he's going to live with for the rest of his life, and they're going to affect his life pretty severely. I was out at dinner with Daniel and Catherine, and I looked across the table and I said, "Catherine, what's been the hardest part of the last 10 years?" She looks over at me and with tears in her eyes, she just says, "Praying." I look back and I said, "Really? Explain that, would you?"

Josh Gagnon:

As tears are coming down her cheeks, she said, "Pastor, when I was pregnant with Josiah, I would beg for God... I would put my hands on my belly and beg for God to heal my baby. I would pray and I would pray, and I would pray, and I really believed he would. Then when Josiah was born and we had all these complications, for years I was praying and praying, and praying, and really praying and believing that God would do it. Pastor, prayer was so passionate in my life." Then she said, "Now, 10 years later, my prayer life is simply just a skeleton of what it used to be. Every time I open my mouth to pray over my dream, over that miracle, over that hope, it feels empty. It feels pointless. It just feels so dry. I have no passion. It feels like it's just dead." I got in the car with Jennifer... we cried at the table, of course, and I tried to encourage her the best I could.

Josh Gagnon:

I got in the car with Jennifer and I looked at her, and I said, "Do you know what? Our prayer life and our dream life, they parallel one another. They're not two different things. They are one and the same." The moment we start believing that there are not better days ahead... now, we're talking about a real severe situation with Josiah, but let me make it relatable to everybody that's listening. The moment we start thinking that our ministry is hopeless, the moment we pray Easter after Easter, after Easter after Easter, and we do all the marketing. We take all the money we have, and you remember this, Carey, you put it-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Josh Gagnon:

... into this one event, this one moment and it fails. What happens is, is year after year of those expectations not being met, our prayer life goes from, "God, fill this room," to, "God, could there be some guest to show up today?" Our prayer life goes from, "God, could you do the impossible?" to "God, just do a little bit better than last year." What happens is, is our dream life and our prayer life, they run in the same lane, and for many people today, they don't have a prayer problem. They have a dream problem, because you're never going to pray big bold prayers if you've given up on the dreams of your future and the hopes of your future.

Josh Gagnon:

You're never going to pray as if God can move mountains if over the past years, you've given up believing that he can. For me, I would say that leader that feels like just no dreams have come true, and nothing's moving and nothing's happening, I would say, the first thing we need to do is we need to get back to that intimacy in Christ. We need to get back to believing that our God still does the impossible and our God's still on our team. I think some of the listeners can relate. I can do... I relate. My prayers for Next Level are often way smaller today than they were at the beginning.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Josh Gagnon:

The reason why? I have all sorts of expectations and all sorts of proof of what's going to probably happen in the future. Now, when I started, I had no experience, no statistics, so I prayed as if I wasn't bound by those. Now, 11 years later, my prayers are bound by statistics in past results.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're right. We can probably anticipate a 4% growth year, so therefore, we don't even need to pray about it, right?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, and I don't think that's bad.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, so let's talk about that because that's... I mean, we've talked about that before on this podcast with other guests. There's a certain level of leadership, and I've been through the launch phase, mature phase, everything in between where you have to fly by instruments. It's like you're an idiot sometimes to make a budget that isn't somewhat realistic, right? Yet, I 100% agree that your dreams can just become slight modifications of last year, plus 2%, 10%, 20%. Pick your percentage, right? That kind of young, visionary, bold faith, entrepreneurial leader just becomes a manager. Can you talk about that tension and how you keep the dream alive?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, I think we have to have wisdom, right? As leaders, we have to have wisdom. I think percentage...

Carey Nieuwhof:

As we've seen, people make stupid decisions where it's like, "We're going to double this year," and everyone's like, "Actually, no, you're not," and then you can end up ruining the organization because you're just a bit of an idiot. How do you handle that?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah. I don't think our prayer life always needs to line up with the wisdom that we're aligning the organization with. I think those can be two separate things. I can look at Next Level Church right now and say I probably... for one of our locations, say it runs 400 people, I can make the decision that it's not wise right now for us to build a building that will seat 2,000 people. That's not wisdom, but my prayer life doesn't necessarily need to stop at what wisdom would say, right? Prayer can step into a level of faith. Prayer can step into believing God to do the impossible and to increase my wisdom, and so I definitely am not saying that, have no wisdom and just make crazy decisions-

Carey Nieuwhof:

No.

Josh Gagnon:

... but what I am saying is that if your prayer life is simply a skeleton of what you used to hope for, it's time that you start remembering that God can still do the impossible. If you used to pray for your marriage to be restored, if you used to pray for-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Josh Gagnon:

... to break certain addictions, if you used to pray and believe, but now, because it hasn't happened for years, you're basically limping by, I would say you're living life as if it's over and not praying as if anything's possible.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I have a word. I don't know that this one is in your book or not, but it's an interesting thought because it's... I'm glad you went there. I wonder if our prayers and our plan should be asynchronous, in other words, not totally in parallel, whether there should be some misalignment between what we see on the dashboard and what we are trusting God for, because I think it's often in the surprises that we're like, "Well, that was lower than I thought, or this was bigger than I thought," that we still have room for faith. There's a word I don't use very often, but here we are.

Josh Gagnon:

That's good.

Carey Nieuwhof:

For two guys who had to go... I also had to go after class in English because I was so bad at it. My teacher in grade 12 took me under her wing and said, "You cannot compose a sentence out of a wet paper bag, so I'm going to teach you how to do that." I'm still working on that one.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah. Seems like you're doing okay with it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, we're learning.

Josh Gagnon:

The blog would say it's doing alright.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's doing okay. I have good proofreaders. If you follow me on social, you'll know half of what I do is mistyped. Anyway, you see that in my texts, too, buddy. How much of a dream is on God and how much is on you? This is a age old question. Right?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Goes back to Augustine and Mark Batterson's talked about this, and so many others have. How much is on you, how much is on God?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, one of the parts in the book I talk a little bit about, which I'm super passionate about, is the story of Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Lazarus being the brother. Mary and Martha know Jesus, they're friends with Jesus and we know the story, right? Lazarus gets sick and they expect Jesus to show up, and then guess what? That discouragement comes because of what we talked about a minute ago where expectations weren't met, so they become-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Josh Gagnon:

... discouraged that Jesus hasn't showed up. It was the fourth day, we find that Lazarus is finally dead. He's in a tomb, and Jesus comes over to this tomb. Mary and Martha are sitting there. Jesus says this, which I think is incredible, Carey. Jesus says, "Move the stone. Move the stone." Now, this is Jesus were talking about. He could easily move this stone if he wanted to move the stone. He was going to do a miracle, but he wanted to make sure Mary and Martha's muscle lined up with the miracle that they were praying for. He wanted to make sure that they were digging ditches so that he could send rain essentially. Right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Josh Gagnon:

He said, "Move the stone." He put the miracle back into their hands saying, "Listen, I can do the impossible, but I'm going to ask you to do something that lines up with my impossible. I'm going to ask your faith to line up with my power." He says, "Move the stone." They move the stone, and we know the story, Lazarus comes out. He's wrapped in grave clothes, and then something powerful happens. Jesus says this, Jesus says, "Unwrap him from the grave clothes. Take the grave clothes off of him." That always blew my mind because if I'm Jesus and somebody comes back to life, I'm just walking out of there. I'm done. Drop the mic. Jesus says, "Take off the grave clothes." Carey, check this out, right? It wasn't enough for Lazarus to just breathe. Jesus wanted him to shed the appearance of death.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Josh Gagnon:

He was saying, "Take off the grave clothes," and here's what God showed me through this entire thing, is that we need to be willing to move the stone so that God can do miracles, and we need to be willing throughout this thing called leadership, because I know this podcast, man, we're focused on leadership, this journey of leadership is going to beg for you and me to put on grave clothes, to start dressing ourselves in grave clothes, to start dressing ourselves in discouragement, defeat, gossip, disappointment, failed expectations, soft and small prayers. We're going to want to dress ourselves in the past.

Josh Gagnon:

I believe that God would say to leaders, "Hey, listen. It's not enough for you just to have your position. It's not enough for you just to stay at that church. It's not enough for you just to go through the motions, to be alive, to breathe. Take off the grave clothes. Live. Dream. Be alive. Go after what it is God's planted in your heart. You've been placed here on purpose." I would say what part of our dream is up to us and what part of our dream is up to God? God knows that answer, but I do know that he asks us to join up into his power when it comes to our dreams, and move the stones. We can't sit on our hands and not move stones, and hope to see our dreams become a reality.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Before we wrap up, you also talk about people who can extinguish our dreams and people who can accelerate our dreams. Do you want to give us some indication of how to navigate that? Because all of us have different voices in our head, internal, but also external, people who are like, "Yeah, don't do that," and other people who are like, "Go for it." How do you determine the difference?

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah. In the book we talked about different types. We talk about vampires as one category of people. Vampires are people that slowly suck the life out of us. After that leadership event, they're the ones that come over to you and say, "The music was just so loud, and can you..." and you're just like, "Man, can you just give me a minute? Can you just give me a minute?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Josh Gagnon:

Those people that you're around and you just feel empty after hanging out with them, we call those, in the book, vampires. Then there's zombies we talk about in the book. Those are the types of people that they're going to lead you down a wrong path. It's that coworker making eyes at you. Get away. They're zombies that are truly going to just discredit you, and cause you to make horrible decisions. Those are a couple people in the book that we have to build guardrails around when it comes to the influence of our future and our hopes. We also talk about sidekicks. You'd be a sidekick for me. I've got sidekicks in my life who are who are Robins. They're the Robins to Batman. They're the people that you could reach out to at any moment, and they're not "yes" men but they care enough about you to tell you the truth, and to love you into becoming the person they know you hope to be.

Josh Gagnon:

There's Robins in our lives that we do life with daily. Then the last person we talk about in the book are heroes. The heroes are the Gordon MacDonalds we talked about, where they are targets that we are aiming our arrows at. They are targets that we're aiming our arrows at. We're probably not doing life with them on a close friendship level but we aim our arrow at the target that they're setting, and we chase after the example that they've set. We get into how, never allow someone to speak into your dream until they first are willing to sweat alongside of you within it. We talk about how-

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's good.

Josh Gagnon:

... we have to be willing to allow people to speak into our dream. Only a fool does life alone. Only a fool doesn't handle... get criticism and get redirection. That's a fool, but the people in my life that are redirecting me are going to be people who are willing to sweat alongside of me. They're not going to be people who are just throwing arrows, or people who are just giving comments. They're going to have sweat on their brow because they were willing to fight with me. Now, because you're willing to fight with me, you can basically say anything to me and I take it as trustworthy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think that's a good distinction, too, because there are people who are willing to get in there with you and who have some sweat in the game, as opposed to just yet another armchair critic.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. I got enough of those.

Josh Gagnon:

Person in the stands with ketchup and mustard on their face yelling at all the players on the field, right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, exactly.

Josh Gagnon:

"You're horrible!"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Is it okay for some dreams to die?

Josh Gagnon:

Absolutely. I think my NBA career died-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Josh Gagnon:

... before it got started. I think that dreams do die. Of course, who am I to say what dreams die and what dreams don't die? That was one of the hard parts within this book. We talk a lot about following after the will and the leading of God, and how he opens and closes doors. We talk about that in the book. There's no way anybody can talk about what dreams should die, but I will say this, that I'm confident that every time a dream dies, there's space for a new dream to be born. God fills that space with a new dream. I don't believe that God desires for us to live life without new dreams and hopes for our future. Once again, when I'm saying dreams, I'm not talking about ending world hunger. I'm talking about things that we're pointing towards and chasing after that better the life that we're living today. Absolutely, dreams die, some dreams that we probably have a little bit of a part in them dying. We make-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Josh Gagnon:

... a mistake and we have a part in that dream dying, but a dead dream doesn't mean we are now sworn to live a life with no dreams. A dead dream just means there's space for a new dream to be born.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's awesome. Josh, anything else you want to share with us?

Josh Gagnon:

You're the man.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I don't know about that, buddy. Yeah.

Josh Gagnon:

No, honestly, Carey, thank you so much, man.

Carey Nieuwhof:

This is great. Where can people go to get the book? Obviously, everywhere books are sold. Amazon. Does it have a special website? Then tell us about your podcast and your website.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, we have the ItsNotOverBook.com, and of course, anywhere that books are sold, people can buy it. My publisher made me start up an Instagram account.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Josh Gagnon:

Yeah, I'm getting... I'm pretty hip, okay? I'm pretty hip right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're really hip. You're where all the kids there.

Josh Gagnon:

Exactly. Josh Gagnon. Pastor Josh Gagnon on Instagram, and so come hang out with me there or Twitter, Josh Gagnon, Facebook, Josh Gagnon, Pastor Josh Gagnon. Come hang out with me. We're going to have a lot of fun over the next year, and I'm expecting God to do great things, and I'm so honored to have these opportunities to speak to the listeners, and I can't wait, Carey, for that opportunity to get an email in my inbox that simply just says, "I don't know who you are, but I read this book, and God inspired me to believe my best days are still ahead," and I can't wait for that opportunity.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's going to come soon and it's going to come often. Josh, thanks, my friend.

Josh Gagnon:

Thanks Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, that was a great conversation. If you want more, you can get everything we talked about, including transcripts of this episode and links to anything mentioned, including Josh's new book over at CareyNieuwhof.com/Episode323. Well, hang on. In just a minute, I'm going to give you our brand-new segment, What I'm Thinking About and talking about how to value your time in light of a value inversion that's happening because content is everywhere. I think there's something you can do with your time as a leader that is really, really valuable and I'll share that with you in just a minute, but first, I want to get to some of our future guests.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Man, we have got an incredible lineup coming up. I'm so excited to have Lysa TerKeurst back on the podcast soon, Mark Driscoll. Who else? Gary Thomas, Mark Miller from Chick-fil-A, Nir Eyal, John Eldredge, Danielle Strickland. Michael Todd is going to be on the show, Jo Saxton, so many more.

Coming up next, we've actually got Claire Diaz-Ortiz. This is someone I've been wanting to interview for a long time. We talk about social media success, the early days of Twitter, and what's happening in social media as well as tips for entrepreneurial parents. Here's an excerpt.

Claire Diaz-Ortiz:

For me, what happens is I end up at the office about an hour and a half to two hours after getting out of bed. That first hour at the office is devoted to me with coffee doing my morning routine, so doing expressive writing. I usually do expressive writing, journaling and then some type of motivational or devotional reading essentially, and that first hour is essential. It's so funny because I was in... I do it in my office coworking, in the kitchen part of the coworking because I like to do it away from my desk. I want a different space for that first hour. A guy came up to me just yesterday and was like, "What are you always doing for a whole hour every morning without your computer?" It's the best hour of my day.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, that's coming up on the next episode. Subscribers, you know you get it for free. Now, it's time for my favorite new segment. It's called What I'm Thinking About, brought to you by Pro WebFire. Podcast listeners, if you head over right now to ProWebFire.com, use the coupon code DREAM2020, you will get 20% off any Pro WebFire plan. That is an incredible offer. That's actually good for life. Make sure you check that out and act on that now before the 20 discounts are gone. Also, if you haven't checked out Planning Center, visit them at Planning.Center. They can serve all your volunteer and organizational needs. What am I thinking about lately? Well, I am thinking about a value inversion that's happening in light of content. If you think about 10, 15, 20 years ago, two things were true, content was scarce and it was usually expensive.

Carey Nieuwhof:

In other words, if you wanted to hear a talk, you had to go buy it, get the CD, go to the conference, go to the event. It was limited, kind of like music, right? You think about music, I remember as a kid, and even as a young adult, right, you only had so much money to spend on music. It's like, well, do I buy CD A, or do I buy this CD? What's happened, of course, with streaming is now for a small monthly fee, you can get almost any song in the world that you want. The same is true with content, right? This podcast is free to you, but there's three quarters of a million other podcasts out there, and then there's YouTube, and there's TED Talks, and so on, and so on, and so on. What's happening is that the value... I mean, hopefully you find this to be really valuable content, but when you're thinking about the size of the audience, there's a really interesting value inversion happening.

Carey Nieuwhof:

The ubiquity of content now everywhere is really starting to impact live events. If you're hosting a conference or you do weekend services at your church, you probably know it's getting harder and harder to get people to attend in person. Why? In part because they're overwhelmed by content. Here's a really interesting value inversion, alright? This has always been true, but it's even more. Imagine going finally to hear a speaker you've never heard before and you're so excited to go there. How much do you pay for a ticket when there's 10,000 other people in the room? Probably not a whole lot. You're probably paying several hundred dollars, maybe, A thousand people around the same. But what if you could get into a room with that leader and there were only 30 other people in the room? Would your ticket cost the same? See, intuitively, you're like, "No, I would actually pay more for that."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Maybe with 30 people in the room, you wouldn't pay \$149. You would pay, I don't know, \$500, \$1,000? What if it was five people and you with that leader, and it was an open interactive session? Well, that would be worth more. What if it was a one on one? It's worth even more, right? There's this value inversion happening that actually the more people who can access the content, the less valuable it is, but the more access you get exclusively to the content, and the more interaction you get, the more valuable it is. Here's the value inversion, okay? In an age where content and information is free to anyone, the smaller the group and the more custom the insight, the more valuable it becomes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What's the application here? Well, don't just think in terms of ticket price or money, but think about the way you spend your time and your insight, and the access that you give to your team as a leader. You can give it all away if you want, and you should, but you should be able to see that when you give certain people access to you and to your insights, and to your time, it actually is greater value. Here's the direct implication, I think, for how we spend our time in our organizations. Number one, the people who actually drive the most value probably should spend the most time with you. Secondly, that's a way of rewarding really great leaders or listeners, or clients or whatever to say, "You know what? I'm going to give you an hour of my time." That's exceptionally valuable. Then if you're structuring live events, like a lot of us do, just think about the value inversion that's happening there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

In an era where content and information is available for free to anybody, the smaller the group, the more custom the insight, the more valuable it becomes. I'm just noticing that, thinking about it. It's a trend. I hope that helps you think about how you value your time. Your time really is valuable. Your insight is really valuable, and the access and interaction that you have with some of your top people, really valuable as well. Anyway, I got this new thing that I'm starting next month, by the way, that you can listen for, it's called The Leader's Circle, and some of that is under there too. Just how we do access, how you get access to me, how I get access to you. What does that look like? Watch for The Leader's Circle coming up.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's an expression of that principle and also a way to try to connect better with some of you, so I'm really, really pumped for that. Anyway, wow, we covered a lot today, didn't we? Thank you so much for listening, leaders. Hey, if you want to connect with me online, I'm at CareyNieuwhof.com. Drop me your email and I will be able to infuse your mornings with a little bit of leadership goodness, first thing in the morning, absolutely free. Head on over to careynieuwhof.com. You can subscribe to my written content there, and in the meantime, thanks so much for listening. I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer:

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