

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 332 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 ICM and Pro Media Fire and my guest is Bobby Herrera. We have done a little bit of a pivot on this podcast. That seems to be the word of the last month as we head into month two of the current global crisis. We just asked how can we get alongside you, and so what we've done is redone our lineup. You're going to hear a bunch of fresh interviews. It's funny. You work ahead. I was done this podcast up well for another month or so and then we kind of scrapped all that. We're rerecording episodes and bringing you some real time feedback for the most part on the global crisis.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think as you know, I also started a second podcast called ChurchPulse Weekly. So that is more of a news and analysis style podcast that I co-host with David Kinnaman. We bring in top church leaders, more of a panel style where we talk about what's happening this week on whatever week you happen to be listening. So you can find that at ChurchPulse Weekly, and then what we're doing with this podcast is deconstructing in longer conversations some of the crisis. Then once in a while, we're going to bring you long awaited episodes like Mike Todd. So many of you have asked about Mike Todd. Yeah, he's going to be broadcast when his book comes out at the end of April or at least that's the current plan.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But Bobby Herrera, my guest today who is CEO of the Populus Group, a company that supplies numerous Fortune 100 companies with staffing, we were supposed to record this interview about a month ago and then it got rescheduled. So we just talk about the crisis now because guess what, as CEO of a large company, that's what he's struggling with and he shares some really good principles that he learned in the Army. Actually he talks about VUCA, which you will soon understand what that means, I didn't, and so does the guest next week, Ken Costa who is an international investment banker as we talk about the economic collapse associated with what's happening right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So we're just trying to bring you real time conversations. I've also got Mark Sayers lined up for this month now. Mark and I were supposed to get together in Australia, but we got together via Skype anyway because travel these days and we talk about crisis leadership plus all the other things Mark talks about. We've got David Kinnaman and Scott Beck coming up. We will talk about responding to this crisis. Steve Cuss, all about anxiety and leadership. Sean Morgan who's coaching pastors through everything and yeah, Tim Keller as well. And then as things kind of normalize, I don't know when that'll be or from time to time, we'll bring you some of the regularly scheduled interviews as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Anyway, I just wanted you to know we are doing everything we can to serve you, to help you, and would love to know what you need too. So hit me up on social. I'm on Instagram @CareyNieuwhof, Facebook,

Twitter @cnieuwhof, and I've also got a brand new course I'd like to tell you about. It's called How to Lead Through Crisis. My team and I decided to make it 100% free to you, and I'm going to talk about the crisis at the end in my What I'm Thinking About segment, but if you want to jump into that course, why don't you head over to HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com. You can get it 100% free or just text CRISIS to 33777, just the word CRISIS to 33777. We had, in the first 24 hours, over 2,500 leaders jump into that course and it's just all the best stuff I could come up with on crisis free to you and your team.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Also really want to thank our partners. Everybody is in this together and ICM, as much as you have needs and I have needs, ICM is International Cooperating Ministries. They're moving around the world to try to help indigenous pastors around the world. There's been a lot of stories about India for example and the crisis happening there. Well they're in India, and imagine navigating this crisis as a pastor in India where your church not only doesn't have a building, but you don't have resources to anything and you really don't have money in the best of times. So ICM is a leader in global church development work, and they work with local leaders and they're really coming alongside them in a time of crisis and their methods are proven. If you are looking for a great ministry to support, and I hope you are, my wife and I have tried to step up our giving not only in terms of free resources but in terms of being able to come alongside people. They are EFCA accredited, they have four stars on Charity Navigator, and they're getting God's word into places that have never heard it before. You can start for only \$35 a month and be equipping pastors in a developing nation. So make sure you check them out at ICM.org/Carey. That's ICM.org/Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then Pro Media Fire has been doing some great work. Oh, my goodness. I'm just so impressed with their response. So they do digital media, but what they want to help you with is free stuff between now and Easter which is right around the corner. The Pro Media Fire team has put together some incredible graphics that you can use for free because you're ramping up your social media ministry. Just head on over to GreatNews.world. That's GreatNews.world. There are free graphics there for you and for every church prior to Easter, and would love for you to get behind our friends at Pro Media Fire. Hey, we are all in this together. I am so glad you've joined us. Remember, if you want to get my free crisis course, go to HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com or text CRISIS to 33777.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well Bobby Herrera is the CEO of Populus Group. He has a powerful story. His new book is called The Gift of Struggle, and he tells some stories from that book. Yeah, how do you lead through all this? What do you cut? What do you keep in crisis? How do you get your team thinking ahead when they can only think about today? We cover all of that and so much more. You know what I love about my conversation with Bobby? He was a listener. He actually sent me his book and I'm like, "Wow, this is really cool." But listen to his heart. I hope my heart stays as soft as his appears to be in this conversation. So without further ado, my conversation with Populus Group CEO, Bobby Herrera.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Bobby, welcome to the podcast. It's an honor to have you. Really is.

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah, grateful to connect, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, and fun. You sent me a handwritten note. You've been listening to the podcast for a little while, and Pat Lencioni calls you the best CEO you've never heard of which is a high compliment coming from Pat.

Bobby Herrera:

That's a very kind man.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How did you get to know Pat?

Bobby Herrera:

Well interesting story, Carey. I met Pat in 2014, I believe, for the first time, yet when I was about two years into starting my entrepreneurial journey, I was overwhelmed. I was frustrated, I was dodging arrows. I had no idea what I was doing. A gentleman that had been a student of his work gave me one of his earlier fables, and I met this gentleman at a network networking event that I reluctantly attended. I read the fable and he said, "Hey, if you read this fable, I'll give you more time." I said, "No problem. I can do that," and I desperately wanted to learn from this man. I remember reading that fable. It was The Four Obsessions where his dad Rich was one of the main characters, and I remember thinking to myself I'm overwhelmed with this entrepreneurial thing, but I can do this. This, I can do.

Bobby Herrera:

And I started studying all of his work since then. You fast forward about 10, 12 years from that moment and Pat had a friend who's an attorney in California and he had stopped by one of my offices in San Francisco to meet with one of my executives. She has all of Pat Lencioni's books on her bookshelf. So he asked her, "Hey, so what is this?" And she goes, "Well this is the way Bobby works. This is our overall methodology of how we run our company. If you don't do this, you're not going to be on his team." And he told her, "Hey, Pat's one of my good friends. We coach a football together." And a week later, he told Pat about my story. He told Pat about what we do, and I get a phone call from Pat and next thing you know, I'm in his office talking to him several months later and we've been building on the relationship ever since.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a pretty cool thing. I mean one of my favorite business authors and speakers, Patrick Lencioni, and that's really neat that you've got that kind of connection. So Bobby, obviously we're recording this in the midst of the biggest crisis in our lifetime and perhaps one of the greatest ones in history. We definitely want to go there because I want to talk about how things are changing, but give us a quick snapshot of just who you are, what you do, what your company does, and then we're going to talk about The Gift of Struggle in the context of the struggle of a lifetime.

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah. Wonderful. So I'll start with the backside of the resume first, the more important part.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

So above all, I'm an All Pro Dad. I'm a proud Army veteran. I'm a student of struggle and God's given me more than I deserve, Carey. So one of 13 kids so I still eat with my elbows on the table. My wife hasn't been able to break me. I've been very fortunate. On the other side of the resume, I built an organization named Populus Group. It's in its 18th year. We help companies better manage their non-permanent workforce. In real simple English, that just means that most organizations have two workforces, a full-time workforce and a non-permanent workforce. We help them better manage that fast-growing, confusing workforce that can be comprised of many different-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Casual contractors, temporary part-time, that whole side, Bobby?

Bobby Herrera:

You got it. Foreign nationals, independent consultants, and they're all treated differently. That's really relevant now, Carey, because with organizations managing large workforces in general, many of our customers are Fortune 100 and they're all responding to this differently.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Bobby Herrera:

These flexible workforces, there's a lot of really good people that rely on these independent gigs per se to help serve these companies they're working for. They're my employees and they're being hit incredibly hard during this difficult time.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, I was going to ask you. So we're three weeks into the crisis so to speak as we record this. How has this impacted employment, both in terms of your employment, some of the top companies, et cetera, et cetera? Because I know a lot of churches are looking at layoffs. It's interesting. The data says no, but the stories say yes. So I don't know what to do with that. I know that in Canada where I am, a million people filed for unemployment insurance in like a two-week window. In the US, there's been massive dislocation and job loss, and we've never seen anything like it in our lifetime. So give us a little snapshot of how it hit the non-permanent workforce.

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah, well here's some interesting vitals that have really been catching my attention. If you look at two weeks ago, we had the largest amount of unemployment claims ever-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Bobby Herrera:

... in US history.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Worse than The Great Depression, right?

Bobby Herrera:

Yes. Well what's interesting is as I unpack that part of the narrative for what we're all going through right now, it was just four weeks ago, two months ago we were at the lowest unemployment levels ever in our time.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's so true.

Bobby Herrera:

At the end of last year, we had hit unemployment levels that ... I mean we were in a deficit and we've been there for quite some time. I mean this has been the great equalizer of sorts. Every industry's being impacted by it significantly. We're a flexible workforce for most organizations as is, and so we're a pretty good indicator of either what's coming in the positive-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Bobby Herrera:

... as organizations ramp up for big projects. They don't want to make those investments in full-time employees yet or as things start to get really difficult, it's usually the first workforce to go. Depending on the industry right now, the last two weeks, we have been on a pretty pretty significant downward slide which is in line with what we're seeing overall. Now with that though, I think one of the more uplifting positive trends that I've seen and being a student of your work and the impact that you make on leaders, there's been such a drastic increase in humanity and compassion. I'm genuinely seeing leaders of all organizations treat their employees with such compassion and such care that, unfortunately in a lot of cases, wasn't there before, Carey. As much as I'd like to say the opposite, it is spiking the essence of humanity and compassion and leadership which is well overdue. So I think that everyone's doing the best they can to retain both sides of their employee workforce right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. So everyone's trying to retain and yet you've seen some massive layoffs and losses in your industry?

Bobby Herrera:

I have. I mean I think there's some that even now are probably already past the point of recovery.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Really? Some businesses and industries that'll just disappear?

Bobby Herrera:

I mean I think it's yes, there's some that ... You and I get to a lot of events. We speak at events and those, no telling when they're going to come back. There's big organizations that are dependent. That's their lifeblood. So if they can't pivot quickly, if they weren't doing those things that allowed them to pivot quickly prior-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

... it's going to be real painful.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Even I was scheduled to speak at South by Southwest this year and I don't know. We haven't heard anything official, but there've been articles about is South by Southwest even going to be around a year from now. You think about it. You're in the live event business. We serve a lot of church leaders on this podcast, also a growing number of business leaders who are listening, but churches in many ways, we're in the live events business and so everyone's trying to pivot to digital. Have you seen anybody hiring in the last month? Have you seen any signs of hope? There's a big shuffling going on right now and nobody really knows what it means and we probably haven't hit bottom as we record this, but are you seeing any shifts where people are saying, "Actually I need a few more workers," or that's just everyone's tightening, turning off the tap?

Bobby Herrera:

No, we actually are, Carey. We talked a little bit about that offline, but one of the other interesting trends that we're seeing right now is obviously a lot of organizations that are being called to action to either make more ventilators or make more masks, a lot of the supplies to help these wonderful people on the front lines in the medical profession. As they pivot, obviously we're seeing the need for more specialized skills and people that-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Bobby Herrera:

... can help out there as they adapt quickly. We're also seeing a significant ... The momentum hasn't shifted a whole lot yet for our technology-based customers. Obviously, the need for their services right now has skyrocketed. So we're seeing a lot of those where they're already in work-from-home type scenarios or readily available to deploy. We're seeing that still continue not quite business as usual. However, they're probably more delaying now than making any major decisions.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

We're also seeing a pretty interesting trend that companies who have a global footprint where they've outsource some of their services, whether it be call centers or whether it be service centers, they're

starting to bring them back in, one, to adapt to the service levels whether it be banks, large financial institutions. They're having to respond to all these questions that the customers have and they can't rely on their offshore call center services. So they're bringing that back in and they're-

Carey Nieuwhof:

And they're hiring. Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

They're hiring. They're having to make significant adjustments on how they care for these people, but everyone's doing the best they can to try to answer a lot of questions. There's a term that I learned in the military, Carey, that I've been using from the moment this started and I call it VUCA. A friend of mine reminded me of it-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

... recently.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Do you want to explain that? That was really, really good. I read that in an article. I don't know whether that was through Pat Lencioni or who it was, but I read that in an article. VUCA. Explain that.

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah, so I learned it very early in my career in the military, but it's an acronym and it stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Bobby Herrera:

And when you have a lot of that, obviously it causes a lot of stress. It caused a lot of overwhelming feelings on what to do next. And very early on as a soldier in my military career, you learn how to manage the VUCA. And so from the moment this started, what I started doing with my leadership team and my teams across the country is first and foremost, the most important thing that I want you focusing on right now is managing the VUCA for yourself and for your teams because our responsibility from a leadership perspective is to help our teams think really well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So vulnerability, uncertainty, complexity-

Bobby Herrera:

Complexity, ambiguity.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... ambiguity. Yeah, I'd love to go there. How do you manage the VUCA?

Bobby Herrera:

Well, here's three questions that I've been guiding my team with. First and foremost under normal times, our teams are always asking themselves three questions. What's the purpose? What's the plan? And what's the process? And when you're under times of stress and there's lots of VUCA, you have to be even more clear about the clarity for those three questions because people at this point when there's a lot of VUCA going on, they don't want to make decisions.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

So one of the first things we do is look, let's move everything to a high directive, high supportive model. Let's be very clear about what's essential. So what's the purpose? So for us because we have thousands of employees nationwide, for us, I made the mission very clear. Right now, our sole purpose is to keep our community safe and keep all of our contractors employed and serviced. That's it. Anything else that doesn't align with that is off the table for now. So we go into a simplification and editing.

Bobby Herrera:

Then secondly, okay, what's the plan? Then that's where you look at your routines. You look at everything that you're doing to execute on that sole purpose and align every ounce of energy in the organization around it. And the third part, Hey, what's the process? That's all around the ... We use the four disciplines model from Pat-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

... so it's like, "Hey, what are we over communicating it? How are we reinforcing it? What are we building into our systems right now to make sure that we can support it?" So I mean that's the steps that we've taken as we've managed the VUCA because right now if you don't simplify it and go into directive editing mode, you're going to cause a lot of angst and unintentionally albeit, but you're going to cause a lot of angst for your people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Isn't that interesting? We didn't talk before this interview, but I went, instinctively without knowing what VUCA was, into a similar mode and by the time it was clear that, when the stock market fell off a cliff and just kept falling and people were losing their jobs and borders were shut down and people got quarantined, I'm like, "Oh, my gosh. What's going on here?" I instinctively went in to try to protect the employees. I do not want to go into layoffs. I want to keep people here and then serve the customer. What does our customer need? How can we help them? Knowing that probably the business model was going to have to pivot because some of it was live speaking, some of it was core sales which obviously in a downturn are going to take some kind of a hit, less than I thought but still going to take a hit. And so

we came up with a new podcast. I now have two, and then we just today, the day we recording this, launched a free course to serve our customers and that's not the end of the list. It's the beginning of the list.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:22:04]

Carey Nieuwhof:

But, you mentioned editing. How do you edit? How do you simplify? What were some things that you initially ... First of all, let me bifurcate the question. Any comment on those two reactions and what else we should be paying attention to? Then, how do you edit out what used to matter that doesn't matter? I think that's where a lot of leaders are struggling right now. It's like, "I don't know what to cut", and sometimes you end up cutting the jugular and then you're like, "Oh, I cut the wrong thing." Just help us think through that.

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah. It's a great question. I think the question that I heard first and foremost ...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. There were 12 questions in there to be honest ...

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... Bobby, just to be fair.

Bobby Herrera:

Good for you. That's wonderful, because there's a lot of leaders that are going to be able to benefit from a lot of the wisdom that you'll be helping there, so it's good for you to be able to do that. Here are the questions that we asked ourselves. Perhaps I hit it from that perspective as we ...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Let's go there.

Bobby Herrera:

Prior to everything changing for everyone, we pride ourselves on what we call, "We climb as one. We have our march." You and I talked offline about my passion for the mountains and climbers, right? We had our existing mission, and under that mission everyone knew what to do as part of their role in the ecosystem of our organization. As we moved into our new mission now that we're all 100% remote, servicing confused customers all over the country, I simplified everything for everyone.

Bobby Herrera:

What's our purpose? What's our plan? This is how we're going to do it. What's our process? Then, one of the things that I leaned into, something that we've been utilizing very well from my time in the military

... It's like I credit our ability to debrief pretty much better than anyone ... So much of our success for our client in the last few years. I look for every opportunity in our debriefs to boil it down to just one thing after every call that everybody understands we're all supposed to do, leaving whatever team call that we're on. Does that make sense?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, and you're dealing with how many people in a call like that?

Bobby Herrera:

My core exec team. They all have their different parts of the ecosystem, but our organization ... We're serving several thousand across the US.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, so you're trying to get everybody focused on one thing.

Bobby Herrera:

That's it. Just one thing.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can you give us an example of what that would be from the last few weeks? Just pulling out of the air, "So this week we're focused on X."

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah, so this week our focus is pretty simple as part of that core mission. It's, "How are we going to respond to everything that's coming down from the CARES Act?" This massive stimulus bill that is beyond complex, it's trickled down to every organization. For us, this week it's, "What do we need to understand, and how do we respond to the information that we're getting?", because there're thousands upon thousands of people that are relying on us right now, not only to get paid on time, but to get paid accurately. They have a lot of questions that they're asking around scenarios that are completely uncharted waters for everyone.

Carey Nieuwhof:

To basically pivot the entire organization and focus on one thing.

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Bobby Herrera:

It's easier said than done, yet the reality is I think there's a lot of organizations that maybe they're manufacturing a product or they're producing a lot of complex products that don't have that luxury. A services organization and organizations that are primarily focused around one core mission, if you're not

simplifying it even further, you're going to find yourself in a lot of pain as you try to manage the VUCA for people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. Okay. That's really good. How did you know what to edit? How did you know what to cut? Can you give us a couple of concrete examples that you're like, "Yeah. That doesn't matter anymore"?

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah. Prior to heading into this crisis we had our existing rally cry, and underneath our rally cry we had ...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Another Pat Lencioni term. That's from Silos, Politics, and Turf Wars.

Bobby Herrera:

You got it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

We zoomed out, and we looked at everything within our existing rally cry. As part of that, we just looked at it and said, "Hey. Can it be delayed? If so ... Yes? No? Why? When?", so we just laid that out and put it to the side and said, "No. It's not essential right now. We can't." I call it Double in the Debriefs. Are you familiar with what a debrief is?

Carey Nieuwhof:

No. I have an idea in my head, but we probably mean different things, so please explain.

Bobby Herrera:

A debrief is a vernacular that I've brought over from the military to my organization. It's real simple. I think the military does it better than anyone. After every mission and/or before every mission, soldiers in a military unit will debrief. What are we going to do, who's going to do what, and where do we need to be by when? All the core essential questions.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Bobby Herrera:

After every mission, they debrief again. What did we do well? What did we not do well? What do we need to start doing? Stop doing? Continue doing? We're very rigorous about that under normal conditions, but in crisis mode we look at our existing routines and, at a minimum, we double them. We have taken a real intentional look at our debriefs, and in our debrief, that's where we're looking at those non-essential items and putting them to the side. We're doubling the debrief, doubling the discussions,

and doing everything we can to look for ways to simplify what our team needs to do to execute on our current crisis mode plan.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's interesting. From some of the resources I've been listening to ... I listened to an interview speaking in the military with General Stanley McChrystal and Ryan Hawk. Ryan will be a guest on this podcast this spring. Listening to him interview Stanley McChrystal, who leads now a company of 90. He's not in the military anymore. He's retired, but he just said he felt it was so critical to check in with his team every day. I felt that impetus. Just check in, "How are you doing? What are we doing?" You've got tens of thousands of leaders listening to this. How would you advise them to be present for their teams in a moment like this?

Bobby Herrera:

A tweak that I've made ... Obviously, first and foremost, making sure that you understand how they're feeling and how they're managing the VUCA, first and foremost. A tweak that I've made is I think it's one thing to ask someone, "How are you doing? How are you feeling?", and my observation has been that in most cases people's initial response is going to be, "Hey, I'm good", or they'll give you a surface level answer. I'll always listen. I'll always ask a few more followup questions, and then after that part of the discussion, I'll then ask them this. "Okay. Now will you tell me how you're really feeling?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's good.

Bobby Herrera:

And just adding that one additional word, I'd say nine times out of 10 I get a deeper narrative from then. Maybe something's happened for their family. Maybe some stress they're carrying, and I'm also taking advantage of that to edit maybe things that are on their mind. Just one word, one little tweak ... I've been doing that every single conversation throughout this, and I found that most times I get a little bit deeper just by adding that one word when I ask it again.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I don't want to ask what sounds like a really obvious question. It's going to sound like a really obvious question, but I don't think it is. You said something earlier that the people who've had to make massive cuts and some of the companies that maybe aren't going to be around in the future, that you've noticed that CEOs or senior leaders are acting far more humanely than perhaps in the past. This is good, and I think a credit to things Patrick Lencioni and other leaders have been trying to do in these "soft skills," and certainly that's been something I've been trying to help leaders with. Again, here comes the obvious question. Why is that important? I think it's really important, but incorporate that. Actually in church world, which has a reputation for pastoral, often can be brutally un-pastoral. I just want to know from your perspective why it's really significant for leaders to be finding out how their team is really doing. Why is that important to you?

Bobby Herrera:

I think for people like yourself and myself, we consider it permission to play. I think first and foremost, but before this crisis even started I was of the belief that there's never been a greater need for

compassion in leadership. Unfortunately, I believe most leaders unintentionally believe the dogma or some of the alpha mist that they've been in leadership for far too long. Putting that aside for a moment, I'll often say that whether I'm working with a group of veteran entrepreneurs or mentoring another CEO or something, I'll often ask them this question, "What's the single most important asset that you will ever own in your lifetime?" And I always get some creative answers. We talk about it, and then I say, "Hey. You're correct in essence," in whatever it is that they say.

Bobby Herrera:

I get some really good positive answers, but I always boil it down to this. Trust is a single most important asset that you will ever own, because regardless of what problem you solve for the world and regardless of whatever impact you want to make, the more trust you have the more you're going to be able to impact and/or make the impact that you want to make. I don't believe that leaders intentionally measure that with their everyday actions; however, now there's never been a greater need for people to trust the source of where they're getting their information, whether it be for their job or for their families. There's never been a bigger "why" to really lean into that and build trust with every interaction. I think a lot of leaders are having to accelerate that now that they're checking in on their people, but to me it's all around building that critical asset that we'll own during our leadership journey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Something I've been practicing for the last decade, and I've definitely seen different results. When you really care how people are doing, what difference does it make, sort of in normal conditions and especially in these times, when you get an honest answer to the question about how people are doing? How does that change things in your view?

Bobby Herrera:

Ask me your question again, because I want to make sure I understand it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Okay. Let's assume in one scenario you're just like, "Did you get your stuff done?" You don't really ask how they're doing ... Or you do the perfunctory, "Hey. How you doing?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

"I'm good. Yeah we're getting by."

Carey Nieuwhof:

"Okay great. Now onto the agenda."

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's one scenario, but you're actually going deeper and I'm sure those are not three minute conversations. Sometimes they are. Sometimes that's a 15 minute conversation, a 20 minute conversation, there are tears, or whatever. What is the difference when you go deeper? How does that impact what happens in the organization?

Bobby Herrera:

I'm going to kind of walk you through a visual that I think may help you touch a little bit. If you drew a graph and on one side you put, "Demanding this," and now on the other side you put, "Involvement" ... I'll often ask people, "Name the one person who's had the most significant impact in your life." Pretty quickly someone can name a mentor, a pastor, a teacher, a coach, or someone that really shaped who they've become.

Bobby Herrera:

Then, I'll ask them this, "If I was to ask you to plot them on this graph in terms of how involved they were with you and how demanding they were with you ... In other words, did they hold you accountable to what you said you were going to do when you said you were going to do it, and was their bar so high that you had to stretch to get it? Then, from an involvement perspective, did they understand who you were, what made you tick, and what was important to you? Did you feel like they really cared?" I'll often ask, "Do you feel like they wanted more for you than from you?", because I believe that's the essence of leadership. They'll say yes. I say, "Okay, so if you put them up here and you plot it up to the far right, you have what you call ... The higher demanding and the higher involved you are as a leader, you're going to build a high trust culture."

Bobby Herrera:

The impact is that you have to balance out the demandingness and the involvement to get that high trust, collaborative, purpose-driven culture that I believe every leader imagines building. Now, the opposite of that, to your example, if you have someone that's not very involved but they're highly demanding, you're going to end up getting that culture that the person that we all know loathes and talks about when their boss isn't around. "It's all about the number. It's all about the results. They don't care about me as a person." Where you are on that graph determines the impact that it has on the culture and the level of trust, cooperation, collaboration, contribution, and all those things that matter to us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a super helpful twist, and I think you're right. People are terrified in this environment. They're scared for their jobs. They're scared for their family. They're scared about health concerns. I think having a boss who cares ... I always think of it from the perspective of people bring their whole selves to work. If you have a fearful employee, an exhausted employee, an employee that has a tough marriage right now ... I can't fix your marriage, but being able to talk about it to understand that's on the table and that they care, really helps engagement at work I've discovered. Anything else you would share before we move on about just how to interact with your team in a season of crisis like this?

Bobby Herrera:

I think most leaders out there are doing the best they can, and they're trying to meet the results and survive. One thing that I've started doing for the last few weeks that has been real helpful is I'll look at a crisis in three parts. You have the survive part, you have the recovery part, and then you have what I actually called the reframe part. One of the things that I started asking myself early on is, "All right. First and foremost, do we have the plan in place to survive, and are we thinking ahead so that we can recover? How can I start guiding my leaders right now to start reframing their thinking?" In other words, as you know through my leadership philosophy and so forth, I believe that every struggle that we have has a gift pack in sight. What I've started doing very intentionally, and you can see it, this little pamphlet that I have right here ...

Bobby Herrera:

Three weeks ago, I started having conversations with my teams, and as they started sharing things they're doing differently as a team, I started writing them all down. I started encouraging them. We're getting stronger with that idea that you just share. Write it down, and I'm having every leader in my organization write down everything they're learning. The messaging for me is I'd rather be directive than you be resentful down the road of all the things that we're learning right now when we debrief and try to figure out all the things that occurred that are changing ... who we're going to be after we get through this, because we're going to get through this. I'm telling every single of them, "I'm going to invest in all the better ideas that are coming out of your pamphlet." So, I'm using that to reframe their narrative. I'm on page eight. I actually told a leader this morning, "Hey, I'm on page eight. Catch me if you can. What page are you on? I'm using that to start to reframe their mode of thinking."

Carey Nieuwhof:

They're already getting them to think ahead about, "How are we going to be different? How are we going to move into the future?"

Bobby Herrera:

That's the part of the reframe, because once you get out ... If you start reframing now, my opinion is that your recovery period, all the stuff that you have to clean up afterwards, you'll flatten that curve because it's going to be really difficult to gather all the pieces together once you get together, but we're all learning so much. I think few leaders are probably writing them down. I'd like to encourage them to do that, because I can't remember what I had for lunch yesterday. We're going to get so many curve balls thrown at us over the course of the next few weeks. Start reframing in parallel with your survive and thrive approach, but encourage your whole organization to do it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay. That's a really interesting perspective, because I'm trying to imagine the new reality. I'll give you an example. I'm a speaker, right? I've already flown 40,000 miles this year, like a lot of miles, and got grounded three weeks ago. I'm like, "Yeah. Speaking is going to come back, but I think it's going to be different." I think we're going to be in an economic recovery period, et cetera. We're kind of guessing. Unless you know something I don't know, I don't think any of us really knows where the bottom is on this thing. I don't think we really have a clear picture of what's ahead. How do you reframe if you don't know what's ahead? What's a responsible reframing? What's pure speculation and we need to move on? Any advice on that?

Bobby Herrera:

My narrative with my leaders has been based on what we can control. Based on what you see and based on how we respond, what is it you're learning that's making us better, that's going to allow us to climb as one, and that's going to allow us to serve our mission more effectively? That's an example of where you really have to hone in on that narrative and that line of thinking, because if we start focusing on all of these external factors, it's a guessing game.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're looking at what's in your control?

Bobby Herrera:

That's it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Exactly. Our answer to that was, "Well, let's double down on digital products."

Bobby Herrera:

There you go.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm not saying I'll never speak again. I'd love to speak again, but it just could be a different market. Again, that's interesting, because that was beyond our control. Can you give us one or two examples from your field or your company just to make it really tangible? That's a helpful reframe.

Bobby Herrera:

Sure. I'll give you one that I wrote down very early on as we were wondering for a lot of our employees that are in the contractor space. There was a lot of complexity around how their benefits are handled, who's eligible, and what about people that are really in need? We're a very purpose-driven organization. At my core, I believe everyone deserves an opportunity to succeed and a kind act changed my life when I was a young man. I looked at it, and I looked at our entire benefits plan, and I was like, "Why haven't we started some form of a retainer or foundation where we can retain funds for benefits for people that are deeply in need that were part of our contractor population?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Bobby Herrera:

We didn't have that before. I think there're a lot of situations that are going to be situational to whatever problem you solve for the world, but all of our conversations have stimulated so many examples for me.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:44:04]

Bobby Herrera:

And many of them are questions like, "Okay, well let's explore this. Why can't we do this? Or what if we tried this?" Does that make sense?

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you're tentatively rebuilding what I'm calling to to our leaders, the new normal. Like there's a new normal coming, we're not going to go back to normal. Things have changed too much for that.

Bobby Herrera:

Right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's not like somebody hit the pause button and we're just going to hit play. So you're already thinking about, "Okay, from what we can see..." I think that makes a lot of sense.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So one of the conversations we're having sort of in my world for church leaders is digital will be the new default. It just will be. You and I talked about that offline too, just about remote teams, right? Like all of a sudden. Any thoughts on some of the reset that will happen even with employment with remote teams and that kind of thing? Do you have a sense of where that is heading when it resets?

Bobby Herrera:

Well, my sense and my observation, Carey, is that it was already at a place to where, if you can't offer some type of remote or flexible option for talent that you're trying to attract to your organization, you were going to be at a disadvantage. Now, going forward, I believe it will become permission to play for everybody.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Bobby Herrera:

Whereas before, organizations were doing either just enough or dismissing it, or perhaps hadn't caught up, maybe some driving business reasons. After this, this has been the great equalizer. Like if you don't have that option for your workforce and/or more flexible options for them to care for their family in the event something happens, the war for talent is going to be even more difficult for you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, because economy will come back, people will have jobs, and it's funny, you and I were talking about The High Impact Workplace course I did last fall, which at the time seemed like it was really ahead of the curve, and now feels like normal, which is really, really... Well, we're all in virtual organizations now.

Bobby Herrera:

Right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Let's talk about The Gift of Struggle. So for those of you watching on YouTube, we've got Bobby's book, it's called The Gift of Struggle: Life-changing Lessons About Leading, and it's a really powerful book. Really just some great life lessons in there. Tell us why struggle. I mean, you know, all of a sudden the world situation has amplified this title a thousand times over from what you probably had in mind, but why inherently is struggle a gift? And then, how do you find the gift in the struggle right now?

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah, good question. Great questions. I'm going to answer the first part first, if you don't mind.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, that one's the easy one.

Bobby Herrera:

You're right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right, Bobby?

Bobby Herrera:

Let me tell you a brief story.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

So I was 18 years old and I was three weeks into basic training when I raised my hand to join the Army. And three weeks in, you're right in the middle of that mental and physical breakdown, and you're in a haze. And I remember vividly, I was polishing my boots by flashlight, about 11:30 at night, and there was no end in sight for that evening. And all around me, I could hear the soldiers complaining about the morning that was going to start way too soon.

Bobby Herrera:

And as I listened to my fellow soldiers grunt and moan about what we were going through, I vividly recall thinking, "You know what? I've been waking up in the wee hours of the morning to work in the fields as part of a migrant farm working family ever since I can remember. I know what it's like to have absolutely no money. I understand the painful feeling of not having any material comfort and even less time." And I remember asking myself, "Well maybe this was part of the plan? Maybe I went through all that for a reason."

Bobby Herrera:

And I recall thinking, "There's nothing that they can say or do to me in the next six weeks that I haven't somehow experienced, and in some cases, a harsher manner." I mean, I had even been asked to leave the table because of the language I spoke and the color of my skin. And I remember thinking for the first time, Carey, that, you know, we all struggle, but every struggle has taught me something. And that was the beginning of me shaping my leadership philosophy, which became just that, we all struggle. Every struggle teaches us something. That's the gift, and leadership is sharing those gifts with others.

Bobby Herrera:

And I started reframing my lens around my story. And for the first time in my life, I was looking at it differently. And it helped me understand that everything that I had gone through somehow prepped me for something I'm going through right now. And I started using it as a sense of encouragement for my fellow soldiers and I carried that philosophy through my career, imperfectly albeit, yet it's been the

leadership philosophy that's guided me. And I just believe struggles is the purest form of progress that any one of us will ever have.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can you tell us a little bit about your parents, your dad, and some of your earliest memories as a child being out in the fields as a migrant worker?

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah. So I'm the son of a [inaudible 00:49:45] from Mexico, which what that means is, you know, my dad was actually a temporary contract worker from Mexico that would come to the US. So there was an interesting thread there based on what I do for my organization now and where my dad started, part of his story. My dad did that for many, many years, Carey. And-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Backbreaking labor, right?

Bobby Herrera:

Backbreaking labor to handpick the fruits and vegetables that we all enjoy. And he did that for 10 years. And he would leave the family for 10, 11 months at a time. And he did that from 1954 to 1964, and then he finally immigrated the family to the US based off of a promise that a kind rancher had made to him.

Bobby Herrera:

And I joined the family story a few years later. I was the first one born in the US. I didn't speak english very well until I was about seven. And all I knew growing up, you know, my dad would pull all of us as kids out of school in mid-April and we would start our journey. We were living in southeast New Mexico and we would go from New Mexico to Colorado to work in the onion fields, and then to Wyoming to work in the sugar beets, and then up to Idaho to pick potatoes and pears. And we'd make our way back down in September and re-enroll back in school. And growing up that way, I thought every kid had did that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. It was just normal. But your days weren't spent in daycare, they were spent in the fields with your dad, right?

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah, most. Most of the days were spent... You know, I'd get some time to play because I was younger, but most of them was either following my parents, working in the rows with them or helping out any way that I could. And from the time I was in third grade or going to be a third grader, I was 10 hours a day in the field, sometimes six days a week.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. So that's struggle, you know?

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Sometimes people go, "I had a tough childhood." It's like, "No, that's really struggle."

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah. So by the time I got to the Army and I had that aha moment, I'm like, "I've been getting up in the wee hours of the morning to go to the fields like 30 minutes earlier. It's no big deal." And it helped me really understand that gift that those years had given me and what it prepared me for.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Was there ever a time as a child or a teenager where the lights started to go on and you're like, "Wait a minute, this is really hard."

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah, the formidable years when I was a teenager, probably my marker story leading up to that, you know, the bus story that I start.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, go ahead and tell it. It's a great story.

Bobby Herrera:

I was 17, and my brother Ed and I, we were on a return trip home from a basketball game. And we were excited. We'd won to be game. And along the way, we stopped for dinner. And everybody unloaded off the bus except for me and my brother Ed. And we were about to dig in and have my mom's legendary burritos. We were sitting near the back and this gentleman steps on board the bus, Carey.

Bobby Herrera:

And I remember, as he's walking back, he teased me a little bit because Ed had outscored me that night, and then he said something to me that I'll always remember. He said, "Bobby, it would make me very happy if you would allow me to buy you boys dinner so that you can join the rest of the team. Nobody else has to know. All you have to do to thank me is do the same thing for another great kid just like you on this bus." And to this day, I can't tell the story without getting goosebumps.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I got goosebumps right now.

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah. I had this wave of gratitude come over, Carey, that's still hard for me to explain. And I remember stepping off the bus and I had no idea what I was going to do with my life outside of the desire to raise my hand a year from then. But although I didn't know what I was going to do, after that kind act, I knew why. Like I would somehow, some way figure out a way to do something, create something to pay forward that kind act to other kids like me who were born on the wrong side of the opportunity divide.

Bobby Herrera:

And that moment gave me identity. It gave me purpose. And I often say that it gave me the hope that I could someday check the ultimate box i.e. Will my story matter? Because up to then, I didn't know if that was ever going to be a possibility for me-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Bobby Herrera:

Because I had more reverse role models around me than I care to admit. Like I wanted off that bus more than anything, Carey, but I'd be lying to you if I told you that I was past the shame and past the embarrassment. I was very accustomed to being on that bus, but I didn't want to be on that bus. I wanted off more than you know.

Bobby Herrera:

And there's an interesting backstory that I think is very relevant for these times. The gentleman that came on board the bus, he was a very successful businessman in the community. And the narrative that I told myself was that, you know, people like Harry Teague, they don't see kids like me. And with one kind act, not only did he show me that I was wrong, but he taught me that one of the most important parts of leadership is seeing and encouraging potential.

Bobby Herrera:

That was the first time in my life, Carey, that I felt seen. And it changed the course for me. It became the invisible force that drove me. And I knew that I was going to do whatever it took to pay that forward. And you know, God's given me more than I deserve. And him seeing me that night changed everything for me.

Bobby Herrera:

And there's a lot of people out there who are going to confront some form of struggle. And I think the hardest struggle is the pain that we feel inside where self-doubts going to settle in for so many good people at a pace that we've never seen before, and the time to see people has never been more important. I never imagined how it would change me, and it was a life-changing act for me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I so appreciate you sharing that. You know, you tell stories in the book about self-doubt, that you went through seasons of self-doubt, and how did you overcome those?

Bobby Herrera:

Well I had some very great teachers throughout the years that showed me with their demandingness and their involvement they wanted more for me than from me. You know, I talk about several people in the book, but there were times, Carey, that it felt like it was too much for me, but every time it was that invisible force, it was that desire to create something, to pay forward that kind of act that got me through it. The pain of what I was going through was never greater than my desire to make that obligation, that acceptance of that dinner that night become a reality.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Well now you've got this big company where you're able to pay it forward to thousands of employees and see them and to make a difference in some of the top corporations in America. It's pretty amazing to see the journey that God has put you on.

Bobby Herrera:

I've been very, very grateful.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

Very grateful. And you know, a few years ago, I picked up the phone and I called that gentlemen. He had no idea. And I told him, I told him the impact that it had on me. I told him everything I'd done to make it a reality, and it was a real special moment for us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I bet.

Bobby Herrera:

And a few days later, I get a note from Harry Teague again. In his note, he says to me, he says, "Bobby. Thank you for calling me and telling me the bus story. I don't mind sharing how many tears I shed during and after that call. You made me feel like my life had mattered." Isn't that something?

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is incredible.

Bobby Herrera:

He had no idea. And this last June, I did something I'd been waiting 33 years to do. When we launch the book, *The Gift of Struggle*, I had a big event in Detroit and I surprised everybody. I reached out to him and I flew him and his wife out. And the day of the launch, my brother and I took him out, bought him lunch, had a great lunch with him and his wife, a little bit better than the cheeseburger he bought me, Carey.

Bobby Herrera:

And after my talk that evening, I surprised the crowd. We had a pretty good crowd that night and I brought him up on stage and he got a raving standing ovation. There wasn't a dry eye in the place.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh my gosh.

Bobby Herrera:

So it was a hands-down one of my cherished moments where I was able to show him how, you know, the power of kindness and what it can do for a lot of people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What advice would you have for leaders who are making those really tough decisions right now, Bobby, and may have to let some people go that they don't want to let go, or they've got to radically scale back, or perhaps they're realizing they lead an organization or church that may not make it? How do they stay encouraged knowing that their life still matters? I mean, back to one of the earlier questions, there's the gift of struggling. Those are real things, but this is the deepest struggle I think a lot of us have ever been in, at least when it comes to work and the economy and health and so on. What would you say to them? Because I imagine they're pretty discouraged and pretty frustrated right now.

Bobby Herrera:

Well, I mean, Carey, I wish I had a silver bullet answer for all those wonderful people, but we're all going through it. You know, I'll tell you, the questions I'm asking myself right now is, hey, what can we do? And how much can we do? And exhausting every possible route. And when we feel like something's not an option, then we flip the narrative and I'm like, "Okay, for the next hour, let's talk about how that's possible."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Bobby Herrera:

"Like we think it's not possible. Now, I want you all to focus and tell me every reason why it would work." And if we're not going through every possible scenario and source of discussion, then you're not going deep enough. I think right now is the time for there to be absolutely no compromise of depth whatsoever because you're going to have to make some tough calls, but figure out with your people, like do it with them, have those conversations with them. If you're going to, say, "Look, right now, the reality is that we may not be able to move forward. Let's sit down and talk about it. What could we do? How can we help you? What is possible?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think that's a really good thing. One of the things I've talked to my team about is, it's a question I think he got from Mike Hyatt and I don't know whether it started with him years ago, but whenever I've had a bump in the road, and this is more than that, it's like, "What does this make possible?" So your plans got canceled. What does this make possible? Well now, that can be simple. I can go mow the lawn. I can go for a walk. I can get some sleep. It's simple as that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And in a crisis like this, when a whole bunch of stuff gets wiped out overnight, it's like, what does this make possible? And that's where we came out of that question with we can launch another podcast, which we'd been thinking about doing. We can offer a free course, we can serve our leaders, we can start an Instagram series, we can start a blog series, we can do all of this stuff.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So I think that's good, but what I see a lot of leaders doing is not practice leadership, but reactionship because I think crisis is paralyzing and you fall into the narrative of everyone's going under, everything's going down, everything's crashing, I have no options. I've seen my team step up in ways... Some of the

best ideas have not been mine in the these last 30 days. Actually, few of the good ideas have been mine. How do you get the best out of your team? How do you make sure that they're really... Particularly because, if you're a command and control leader, which I've tried not to be for a long time, but if your command and control, your team is used to saying, "Sure, yeah, okay," and they're not used to thinking. So how would you counsel leaders to get the best out of their teams?

Bobby Herrera:

Well first, I agree with you. The leadership chain is not the IQ chain.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

Like they have 99% of the information, so if they're not doing 99% of the talking, so there's an opportunity for you to self-assess. You know, part of my vernacular is like, I have a real simple approach, Carey, that I've been using for a while and I call it, hey, put the pen in their hand. And you can visualize that. And the way that I do it, whether it be around a specific scenario or whether it be around helping someone take control of their climb, which is something that we do. I call it mine place climbers, whether it be their career or something.

Bobby Herrera:

The way I put their pen in their hand is, I'll take out a blank sheet of paper and then, on the left side I'll say, "Okay, Hey, write down your gifts. Like the gifts that you bring to our community. Like the things that make your heart sing, the things that give you energy, the things that you're better at, that you excel at, that really excite you."

Bobby Herrera:

And then after that, I'll take them to the middle part of the sheet and I'll say, "Okay, right there, I want you to write down, based on what you see from your spot on the mountain, what are all the problems that you see need to be fixed in our ecosystem? Like start listing them, write them all down." And you'll get some amazing insight on the stuff that they see that either you both know need to be fixed or you may not even know it needs to be fixed.

Bobby Herrera:

And they write those down. And I say, "Okay, if you were to design a role where you disproportionately applied the majority of your energy utilizing those gifts to fix those problems, what would that look like?" And again, they've already thought about it, we just haven't mined it out of them. And so our responsibility is to mine it out of them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I would imagine that's the first time some of those smart people have ever been asked questions like that. Is that fair?

Bobby Herrera:

It's unfortunate, and yes, it is fair.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

And we will be surprised what we do when we put the pen in their hand and we create that safety for them. And whether you're in a crisis or whether it's fundamental recovery after this, that's permission to play leadership if you want to build a purposeful compassion-driven organization where your people feel like you want more for them than from them. And putting the pen in their hand really makes them feel valued and heard, and like Mr. Teague, made me, feel seen.

Bobby Herrera:

It's like they're wanting to know more than anything, does my voice matter? Well, give them that voice, but mine for it. And if you do that and after you get to that part, then here comes the ownership piece. Then you can ask them, "Okay, now tell me what two or three things must happen or must you do in order for that to be a reality." And more often than not, they'll be like, "Okay, well first and foremost, I have to find a successor. I have to train them. I have to do this. I have to do that."

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:06:04]

Bobby Herrera:

They'll come up with that, you just have to guide them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's when you get self-driven employees, self-driven team members, right?

Bobby Herrera:

That's it. That's it. But go through the physical exercise of walking around the table and giving them the pen and say, "Now let's go up to the whiteboard. Let's go up to the board. And let's draw this out."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Bobby Herrera:

And it's... Everyone that I've ever done that with, Carey, you know what question they stop asking me? They stop asking me, "Where's my opportunity? Where can I contribute? How can I do more? Where can I make the most impact?" Because that's our part as leaders we have to give people contribution, meaning, connection to the bigger plan and you do things like that, crisis mode or not, and right now it's even more relevant.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hand them the pen. I love that.

Bobby Herrera:

That's it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's great. You got a great story in your book about a shower in the desert and the power of scarcity. This is a season of scarcity for almost everyone listening to this podcast. We're just dealing with fewer resources than we have, probably at any point in our leadership or at least anticipate dealing with that. Do you want to talk to us about scarcity and how that can work for you in a crisis?

Bobby Herrera:

Yeah, well, I wrote that lesson, carrying around an experience that I had. You're doing...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Go ahead and tell the story. It's an interesting story.

Bobby Herrera:

I was at what's called NTC, the National Training Center in the Mojave Desert when I was in the Army, and we were about two weeks in and hadn't seen a shower the whole time. And there was this makeshift shower at the station, and it was my turn in the rotation and I get there and one of the soldiers that was manning that area, handed me two gallons of water. And let's just say I was beyond smelling reasonably.

Bobby Herrera:

And, and I'm like, "That's it? That's all I get? That's not going to be near enough." And he said, "Just pour it in the bucket, raise it, it'll start dripping slowly. But start from your head to toe, go all the way down." And I'm thinking, there's no way this is going to work. I filled the bucket, raised it up, and the drip starts. And it was just this little tiny, they call it an Australia shower, and it just started dripping on my stubble and I just started the top, before I know it, I'm clean as a whistle.

Bobby Herrera:

I lower the shower head, and I see that I had only used about half of the water and I'm beyond myself. And the takeaway and the lesson was, often our natural intuition as leaders is when we're running low on energy, we tend to throw bandaids at things. We tend to try to throw more resources. We try to throw more people at our situations and so forth. And more often than not, if you have the discipline to slow down, use less, have deeper meaningful conversations, you'll find that more is not the answer, just like I found out that I didn't need more water. But you can't substitute the time and energy that it requires to do that.

Bobby Herrera:

And I think right now, a lot of people are learning that in this crisis, where more is not even an option. So they're being baptized per se, into that type of mode. It's like, "Okay, well, we can't even get supplies, we can get more resources, we can't do that." What can we do? As part of that...

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, it kind of shifts the question you are asking.

Bobby Herrera:

It does. Yeah, it does.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What is one question no one is asking in this crisis that you think people should be asking?

Bobby Herrera:

Well, my opinion Carey was, what we covered in essence while ago is, "How can I start reframing what we're experiencing-

Carey Nieuwhof:

So good.

Bobby Herrera:

... so that it lowers our recovery period and the pain that we're going to feel during that time." And again, it's not chronological, it's not just like leadership, it's not a checklist, but it's something that needs to run in parallel, that survive, recover, and reframe. And more conversations need to start evolving around the reframe piece and continuing to shift that narrative. It'll help manage the VUCA. It'll help keep people thinking well. It'll help people start thinking about what's possible down the road. And you can send all types of positive signals with that. That's my opinion, that seems to be working pretty well for us right now. Obviously, the story is still being written.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Being written. Yeah.

Bobby Herrera:

We have no idea how we're going to title it. But-

Carey Nieuwhof:

So then, let me ask-

Bobby Herrera:

... I'm just crying for those less fortunate.

Carey Nieuwhof:

One final question to you, which is I don't want to be opportunistic and see people making pronouncements right now and I'm like, "Whoa, way too soon." We don't know where this is going. But there are opportunities, crisis is the cradle of innovation. It is an opportunity. It's what does this make possible?. So when you think about even your own field of employment, what do you think are some opportunities there for, when things are reframed and we move into the new normal? Are you seeing anything yet?

Bobby Herrera:

So, yes, and in a very positive manner, we talked about earlier the spike in humanity, the spike in compassion. When you look at the two workforces that most organizations manage under normal times,

there's, I think, a very fair approach that full time employees are more important, they're more essential, more critical to the organization. Well, with the spike in humanity and the spike in compassion, as the war fatality continues, carrying these non-permanent employees, I think one of the positive outcomes of this is, organizations are going to realize that, "Hey, we all have a heartbeat. We all have dreams. We all have families."

Bobby Herrera:

And my hope is that, that helps balance that like a parody out a little bit because in the end, we're all part of the bigger grand plan. So I see an opportunity for our industry to lean into that, so that we can care for these people with more compassion and make them feel like they're also part of something because they're often left to the side. And it's an opportunity for us to see them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ryan, the temp hung out on the office for a long time, if you know that show, right?

Bobby Herrera:

That's it. Yeah, that's it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, this has been so helpful. And I think too a couple lessons I'll pull away from this. The digital default church I think is here to stay, but the digital default workforces also just got accelerated, just, I don't know, whatever was going to happen in five years happened in about five days. And-

Bobby Herrera:

That's right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... here we are.

Bobby Herrera:

That's right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Anything else you want to add, Bobby?

Bobby Herrera:

Well, I mean, for me, Carey, my energy is around. You're one of my favorite. I'll show this to you, but this is my bookmark. It's that prayer for generosity-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ignatius of Loyola.

Bobby Herrera:

... Saint Ignatius of Loyola, you bet. And I think right now, we're all being called to, in our own way, be as generous as we absolutely can. I'm saying this with my children every day. It's probably part of our routine and I think we're all being called to tap into what I believe is one of the single most important attributes of leadership and that is generosity, and somehow somehow seeing these wonderful people that are going to need us as we get through this.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, next time, we'll have to pick up where we left off because I could spend an hour talking about generosity. It's actually one of our company values, air on the side of generosity. We're trying to figure out how to do that too, through free and just financially supporting some people who maybe need a little bit extra help in this season. So Bobby, thank you so much. I appreciate it. So the book is called for those of you watching on YouTube, The Gift of Struggle, it's a great book. It's an easy, not an easy read, it's a good read, but it's not going to take you three days to get through it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And it's written in a really narrative form as well. So, Patrick Lencioni, who we mentioned many times as a powerful leadership book from the best CEO you've never heard of. That is an Alan Mulally from Ford and Boeing endorsed it. Great book, Bobby. A joy to meet you. And also fun to have a listener on the show all the time as well. So this is such a deep privilege. Where can people find you online? And where can people find the book?

Bobby Herrera:

Well, first, Carey, thank you for those kind words. You're doing great work. Thank you for giving more than you're taking. The world needs your wisdom and I've been very fortunate to learn from you. So thank you for that. They can follow me on LinkedIn, my websites, Bobby-Herrera.com. I'm putting out as much as I can around students' struggle and things that I'm learning through my leadership journey. The essence of everything that I'm putting out is to give and like I said, the conduct changed my life and if I can pay that forward to someone else who needs it, I feel like I ran through the tape.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Bobby, this has been so rich. Thank you.

Bobby Herrera:

God bless. All hail the underdogs.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I hope you found that helpful and what you're going to discover over the next few weeks in the conversations that we have on the show, it's no surprise. Nobody really knows where the bottom is. Nobody knows how to get through this, but you pick up clues along the way. And Bobby offered a few that were so helpful to me. I really am thinking about VUCA. I am thinking about, "Okay, what can we know about the new normal, even though we don't know what that looks like?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ken Costa and I, talk about that next week as well. And then I'm super excited for the Mark Sayers conversation. If you listen to This Cultural Moment, yeah, that Mark Sayers. We're coming on with him

very soon. And if you want more, we do have show notes. Of course, you can go to CareyNieuwhof.com/Episode332, and you can find everything we talked about in this episode there including some quotes that you can share on social media with your friends. Make sure if you do you tag me because we like to share what you share with other people as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And don't forget the crisis course, HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com or just text CRISIS to 33777. I've got of What I'm Thinking About the segment coming up. And today, I want to talk to you about the voices of crisis leadership. Yeah, that'll make a lot more sense in a few minutes. But I'll tell you motivation alone is not going to get you through this crisis. It just doesn't work. And I want to talk about the three crisis voices I'm aware of and how that'll help you. In the meantime, we have an excerpt from the next episode. Here is an excerpt from my conversation with investment banker, and Alpha Chair International, Ken Costa.

Ken Costa:

What does engagement mean, when the locals, the place where people are meeting, the church is closed? And for the first time, we are reaching people where they are at, rather than saying, "Oh, come to me. Come into this place. Ecclesiastics talks about, so now because you don't know which seed is going to germinate, whether it's this one or that one or both. But what we're doing is actually selling, "What kind of worship do people want? Do they want meditation? Is it just what we've always given them?" And that's the piece that I think is the huge opportunity. Whereas, the airwaves are clear, there's no Hollywood, there are no football games, there is no basketball games, there are no gigs. How the church rises and responds to this will be the formative experience of our generation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that's next time on the podcast, subscribers you'll get it all for free. Thank you so much for getting the word out and sharing things. I know you've got a lot on your mind and kids at home and the whole deal. Your encouragement during this season means the world to me and we're just going to do the best we can to resource you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So now it's time for What I'm Thinking About and this is brought to you by our partners Pro Media Fire. They are giving you free graphics, you've got a little bit more time to get in on it. Go to GreatNews.world and share with your community, the love and the hope of Jesus brought to you by Pro Media Fire. That's all free for you. And ICM, International Cooperating Ministries doing great work around the world, you can get started for \$35 a month. Head on over to ICM.org/Carey and help some pastors that are even in a rougher shape than you are right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, here's What I'm Thinking About. I am thinking about how we speak as leaders and none of us, I mean, it's axiomatic now, but none of us have been through this before. And there's three primary voices I think we have as leaders. One is motivation. And a lot of us are motivational, maybe you've been called a motivational speaker. Sometimes people call me that I'm like, "Well, I hope that's not all I am."

Carey Nieuwhof:

But we do motivation really well. And motivation is a great style of leadership. I mean, in normal conditions, it's like, "C'mon, you can do this, we can build this thing, we can invite our friends, you can lose that weight, I mean whatever it is, let's do this." We're going to motivate you. And motivation alone, unfortunately, is not going to get you through a crisis like this. You need a much wider skill-set because what happens is, you can't motivate your way out of a crisis like this, you have to lead your way out of it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you don't want to lose motivation. And you certainly don't want to be de-motivating. But if you're just there as the positive person, and the stock market's and the garbage borders are closing, millions of people are unemployed, everyone's uncertain, trillions of dollars of wealth are wiped out, people's families are dying on them, and healthcare workers are stressed to the max, you can't just say, "Everything is going to be alright people." I mean, it is going to be all right, but that's a very limited style of leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you need other voices. And I think the one that's needed right now is not just motivation, it's interpretation. And when you use the voice of interpretation, you become a trusted voice for accurate information and next steps. So, people are confused. They're not 100% sure of what's happening. You already heard that in the interview with Bobby today, you'll hear it in the upcoming interviews. I mean, nobody has navigated this before in our lifetime.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, what people need is a source they can trust. Somebody who can figure it out and then act accordingly. So what you can do as the voice of interpretation is you can be an accurate source for information. So, that means you need really good sources. And number two, it means you got to get rid of partisanship and spin. So if you minimize the crisis, people will not trust you. If you over blow it, people will not trust you. But if you just become a reliable, credible source, things will go better and people will come to trust you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, what you need to do is start interpreting things and what you do, is you just bring the best information that you have, and I would trust the medical authorities in this case, and kind of be on the front end of, "Hey, you know what? It's a little bit ambiguous, but we're going to be on the safe side on this. And then just move people to the next step. That's it. "So, our next step as a result is..." that is what I call the voice of interpretation. Very needed right now. You can do it. And you just got to get rid of spin, self interest and partisanship in the midst of that. But if you can become a reliable, trusted interpreter, that sets you up for the third voice which will be needed.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We're already seeing hints of this, but it's a little bit early to say what's going to happen down the road. But the third leadership voice is transformation. And that is a trusted voice for where you're headed in the future. So, this is where motivation comes back a little bit. But as the crisis begins to resolve, it may not be lifted all at once, or it might be, we'll talk about that next week's episode with Ken Costa. But what will happen is you're beginning to get a sense of what the new normal is. And then your job is to lead people from what was, which has now gone, into what will be the new normal.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And what that means is crisis will change your methods. We will not be the same. You're going to hear that in interview after interview. I believe that deeply, we are not going back to the way it was. So, it's challenged your methods, but it can give new life to the mission. And what you do in transformational leadership, is you then say, "Okay, here's the new normal," and you tie the new what to the eternal why.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, Okay. We're going to have a more, let's just say, advanced digital presence. And some of you are going to meet in groups more often or social distancing is part of the new normal for us and you just explain where you're going, what decisions you're making in the new normal and why it matters. So, when the why and the what line up and the mission gains new life, you not only have a new normal, you potentially have a better normal.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So what you're doing as a leader in the midst of this is using all three voices. Motivation has a role, but not nearly the role it does in normal conditions. Interpretation is really important. And then as we move into the new normal adopt the voice of transformation. You can learn more about that in my free course on crisis leadership. So it's called, How to Lead Through Crisis. And you can get it by going to HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com or texting, CRISIS to 33777. That's CRISIS to 33777.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, thank you so much for listening. We are praying for you daily. We are trying to come alongside you however we can. And if you need anything, would you let me know. My email is carey@careynieuwhof.com. We love you listeners. We love you leaders. Whether you're leading in business, whether you are leading in the church, we're behind you 100% and we will get through this together. Thanks for listening, and I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Speaker 4:

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.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:25:06]