

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 333 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 the Leaders in Living Room podcast, and the How to Lead Through Crisis course, my new free course on crisis leadership. My guest today is Ken Costa, he is an internationally renowned investment banker. He's been in international investing for 40 years, brings a wealth of experience. We talk about the economic implications of the current crisis, and how to get through them. We also have a really interesting conversation about how to approach wealthier donors in a moment like this. I know a lot of you as church leaders or even business leaders are looking at trying to shore up investment and people who can help you make it through this struggle. And there's some really good advice in this episode.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Plus, we talk about global economics, something I was really interested in drilling down on because, well, these are unprecedented times. And as you may have noticed, I think our last week's episode we pivoted on this podcast. We had some interviews lined up, we'll bring those to you in more normal times down the road. But I'm trying to interview as many people as I can just to find out how to lead through this crisis together. So thanks for joining us. Hey, we're behind you 100%. I don't know what this finds you doing, you may still be in shelter-in-place or perhaps you got out for a ride, or a walk, in the beautiful spring weather. But however you're listening to this, we're just behind you 100%. And if this means something to you, if you would share it on social media, if you would send the link to your friends, if you would leave a rating and review on iTunes. It means a world to us. And of course, if you subscribe, you get everything we do for free.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And speaking of subscribing, have you yet subscribed to the Leaders in Living Rooms podcast? Sean Morgan leads that conversation, and he does a really good job. It's interesting as an interviewer myself, sometimes you listen to podcasters you're like, "Oh yeah, they did a good job, but I knew all that stuff." With Sean, he's one of those rare people. Sometimes I've interviewed people two or three times, I listen to an interview Sean has done and I'm like, "I didn't know that. That's really good." He's a great interviewer. Listenership for the Leaders in Living Rooms podcast has doubled in the last 30 days. He interviews people, well, like for example, Ken Costa as well will be coming up in May on that podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But this month's episode features Dave Stone from Southeast Christian. He became the successor to a legendary founder 15 years ago and now has just passed on leadership to Kyle Idleman. Dave is also the current interim pastor at Harvest Bible in Chicago, they drill down into all of that. And if you're a next gen leader, and a lot of you are, and you're taking over for a Boomer or a Gen Xer who is passing the baton, you do not want to miss this podcast. It's so good. He really interviews, really, a whole class of leaders who are doing that transition right now, and no one is better at it than Sean. So if you haven't yet subscribed to Leaders in Living Rooms, you can get it on Apple podcast, Spotify, anywhere you get

your podcasts. Or head on over to [CDFcapital.org/LeadersInLivingRooms](http://CDFcapital.org/LeadersInLivingRooms), but you can get it anywhere you get your podcasts. It's one I listen to, one I think you'll enjoy, wanted to let you know about that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Also, we are leading through really unusual times, probably once-in-a-century level crisis. And nobody really has all the answers, but here's what I know. A lot of leaders are worried, a lot of leaders are scared. A lot of leaders are like, "I don't even have a compass for this." That's why my team and I put together a course, and it's called *How to Lead Through Crisis*. You can get it absolutely for free by texting the word CRISIS to 33777, or just go to [HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com](http://HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com). And what I've done is taken 25 years of my leadership experience and the ability to access top leaders around the world. And I give you some strategies for mastering the art of fast-paced clear decision making, how to cultivate a non-anxious presence to lead with confidence and trust, how to advance your digital presence to scale past physical barriers, grow your outreach, and learn and leverage the best strategies to lead your team virtually.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Plus, there's a lot more in the course, we just decided to give this to leaders 100% for free. There's a lot of good stuff inside the course, if you haven't yet checked it out, head on over to [HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com](http://HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com), or just do this, text the word CRISIS to 33777. Well, I'm so excited to have Ken Costa on the program today. We talk about all kinds of things, but I really wanted to zero in on the whole economic fallout. He has sat with Prime Ministers, Popes, Presidents, top financial officials around the world. He also happens to be somebody who has invested heavily in the kingdom. He's the Chairman Emeritus of Alpha International, an introduction to the Christian faith attended by over 2 million people in the UK and 27 million people worldwide. He's the Dean of the Leadership College in London. He is passionate about creating connections in a divided world, he's chairman of the Reconciling Leaders Network for the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Carey Nieuwhof:

He is also the chairman of Worship Central, a movement promoting worship events and courses around the world. And he read law with ... I love the way they say that, they didn't study law, they read law together with Nicky Gumbel. He's just a brilliant, brilliant, guy and I've had the best privilege of spending some time with him in person as well. So Ken and I sit down, it was late one night in London, England. He was in lockdown and I, well, had a fascinating conversation with him about the economic chaos, the economic fallout, how he makes decisions in times of uncertainty. And how to approach wealthy donors in bad economic times, and what he thinks is ahead for the church. So excited to bring you today my conversation with Ken Costa.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ken, welcome back to the podcast.

Ken Costa:

Thank you, Carey, for having me back. It's a great privilege to be able to do so from locked-down London, a locked home as so many of your listeners will be as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yes. Well, you're right in the heart of London, are you not?

Ken Costa:

London is a ghost town at the moment. I just cannot believe that the thriving London places, and not even ... No taxis on the road, it is so quiet. And as you may know or you may not, we're only allowed out of our rooms or our houses for one outing a day. So it's a tough time.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And you're an extrovert, you were telling me?

Ken Costa:

To be an introvert in these day.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, Ken, it's good to have you here. And just for those listeners, you've been on the show before. But just give us a brief resume of sort of your involvement in business and involvement in the church just so people get an idea to frame the conversation.

Ken Costa:

Sure. Born in South Africa, came over to the UK. Born into a fairly nominally Catholic family, faith didn't mean very much. Came to university, found that faith came alive in Cambridge University here. Decided that I wanted to test whether this faith was real or not, so I read theology in addition to law for a year, and it was an amazing experience. I then became an investment banker where I've been for the last 40 years, still am, trying to work in the world. And then have spent a lot of time as Chair of Alpha for 16 years. Alpha is an introductory course to the Christian faith, and I've been Chairman Emeritus of that at the moment. And continue to write and speak, written a few books and the latest one is called Joseph of Arimathea, which is a good sort of good read for those who have never heard of Joe.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now, did you and Nicky meet when you were reading law at Cambridge?

Ken Costa:

We did. That's where we met and-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's Nicky Gumbel, by the way, Holy Trinity Brompton in London.

Ken Costa:

Sure. And so we've been sort of together and good friends since then. It's a long time ago.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is a long time ago, but both of you had tremendous impact around the world with your lives, your ministry. You have a lot of business leaders listening, but the world of investment banking is a little bit mysterious. Can you explain exactly what that is? We've all seen the movies, visited Wall Street, but what is investment banking?

Ken Costa:

Well, the best way of trying to look at it is perhaps not to watch the movies, although they're very compelling. Investment banking is in its essence, basic advice and supply of trading, and research, and analytics to the major corporates and institutions of the world. So when they need to raise capital, when they need to ... where they want to merge with each other or sell divisions of the companies, then an investment bank will be part of that process. And that's a sort of world-wide phenomenon. And we tease you by saying, not for you, but for your great colleagues across the border, that it's part of the Americanization of finance. It was sort of developed in the US and exported to the rest of the world. That's what I've done for 40 years, I've principally been a trusted adviser to a number of families and companies, and still am.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And it brings you into some very interesting circles as well. You've had a chance to meet with some top world leaders and business leaders, and so on. That's one of the reasons I was really excited to have this conversation with you again, Ken. And just to time stamp it, we are at the very first day of April and closing down for you in London. It's almost, well, it's past evening and late in the day here in the Toronto, New York timezone. But you've seen an awful lot of change over the course of your life and have weathered a number of crises before including the great recession, and the oil crisis, I'm sure, when you were starting out, and numerous recessions.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Tell us how what we're dealing with now is like or unlike anything you've been through prior to this point in your life, as far as crises go?

Ken Costa:

Well, it is unlike anything that we have seen certainly in the last 40 years that I can remember, and talking to older people, that anyone can remember. And the reason for it is that there is a perfect storm. We have the Coronavirus, which is precipitating a lockdown of the entire economic systems in the world. And it's as if all of the industries have a coronary heart attack, so it seized up. At the same time, people are afraid of contracting the virus. The death toll is growing every evening, it's on our screens. It's almost becoming like an index, like the Dow Jones of how many people have died. That's one of the great taboo subjects of our generation, but we're now facing and we're talking about it. And so, it is very different in terms of just the macro economic impact.

Ken Costa:

It's not like the great financial crisis because that was basically bailing the banks out. It's much like 9/11, where for those moments, that frightening time, when the financial markets just simply seized up in New York in particular. I think this is unprecedented, no one has ever been here before, so no one can navigate through it. But having said that, I think we have to realize that it also will create some extraordinary opportunities.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I definitely want to get to the opportunities, but I want to talk about the level of crisis that we're going through. Because I'm sure your phone, like my phone, just explodes every day with leaders who have questions, and these are great uncertain times. I think everybody knows borders are locked down, businesses are closed, people are in quarantine or various versions of that around the world. But as

somebody who studies finance, what are some of the factors that concern you right now? When you look across the devastation of the economy, trillions of dollars of wealth has been wiped out. But just for the average leader listening, whether they run a small business, or they're involved at a company, or they lead a church, what are some of the factors that you see in play that we should be really noticing and paying attention to?

Ken Costa:

Well, I think the most difficult is the question, well, when this is over, what does it look like when this is over? And nobody knows the answer to this. How long will it take either, because people say it's a very sharp V, the recovery was gone ... will be as sharp as the decline. While others would say, "No, it's an L shape that you've dropped and then will move along the bottom." That creates the first great uncertainty, which is there is no end point. It's almost like we will have the world's how long. Now, it's really the financial markets, how long can we actually continue before we have to bring people in and weigh up the very difficult risks with when you're trying to weigh up human life of those that are subject to the virus. But also, the ability for people to be working and earning their food for their families, and the social consequences of that are enormous. That is, for those pastors listening, that you have a great, great, responsibility to care for the well being, the spiritual and mental well being of your people.

Ken Costa:

Because you see what has happened here is that there's been a collective loss of control. And it's not just individuals losing control over things, it's totally collective governments, national health services, hospitals, medics, financial markets. Individuals and their own lives just realized that there are forces outside of our control. How do I cope as an individual? That worries me, as to how we will learn to deal with the total loss of control. Now, of course, in the Christian message, we begin to understand that there is someone in control. So the most frequently asked question my hedge fund friends who don't believe would say ... said to me just yesterday, "Well, Ken, where is your God in all of this?" These are tricky questions.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How do you begin to approach that, Ken?

Ken Costa:

Well, I thought you would ask me that. It's above my pay grade. I'm not a great leader, church leader. I think the way I would approach it and the way that one has to provide a sensitive answer to the fact that this is not ... and I know people will have differing views. But in my view, this is not something that is deliberately sent and targeted by God, but that he will use this brokenness in the world. Because what has happened is that there is a ... it's a broken world we're living in.

Ken Costa:

Our natural assumptions are that this is a well functioning world, and it's not. It's a broken world and into this broken world, we will remember when Easter comes upon us that Jesus Christ came to put the breaking, put it back together again. And as such, there will always be those open questions. But he will use what appears to be for evil, for good, in ways which I didn't actually know, but I believe will be the case. But he would allow it, but not direct it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

As you meet with leaders who operate at high levels, whether it's hedge fund people or your banking friends, or politicians, how would you describe the mood? I'm sure there's a variety, but I am surprised by the number of high-level leaders who are just alarmed at what is going on and really a little worried, fearful. What is the mood that you're sensing as you connect with leaders, Ken?

Ken Costa:

Fragile. It's fragile. Because leaders are ones that want to be in control of what they're doing, of their businesses, of their products, the ways in which they operate. And they can deal with an uncertainty, a supply line changes, or a producer fails, because it's a short event. But what they can't deal with, and are struggling to deal with, is this massive uncertainty in their markets. But above all, individuals. What is happening here is that there is not a collective loss of control, but there is collective grief.

Ken Costa:

People are feeling something in the pit of their stomachs. Many of the people listening to us will know that feeling when you wake in the morning, there's something in the base of your stomach, almost in the core of your being, you can't explain what it is. And that's grief, it's the grief of many of this world that we've just left behind in two months. Dreaming of what it was like last year, and deep apprehension that it's died forever, and therefore, it's not coming back. And that grief is what we're trying to process at the moment, differently expressed, but also felt by all people, pastors, businessmen, bankers, bishops.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm going to ask you a couple of questions that are probably unanswerable, Ken, because we're probably in the early stages of this crisis, unfortunately. But any idea what the bottom might look like economically?

Ken Costa:

I don't think anybody knows, but there are two scenarios. One is, it's a virus, the antidote is found, the virus disappears, the sunshine comes, it's all killed. And the markets all respond and everybody's back to work, and it's just been a very bad dream.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And there's that V recovery, right, that people are talking about?

Ken Costa:

And we rather hope for that. But the other one is the dislocation. Just think of the airplanes, hospitality, the restaurants, the people that work in them. Here's the problem, when they come back, many people will use it as ... businesses will use it probably as an excuse to use fewer people, and the social consequences are the ones that one really wants to worry about. I think a number of key business people have been saying to governments, "I know you're front of mind trying to get through this, but don't neglect to plan what happens when we come through this." Because if unemployment rates are 20% or 30%, the social consequences of sort of civil unrest will be quite serious globally. But the good news is China seems to be stabilized, China seems to be coming back into full production. And that is a very positive part of the more optimistic, and of course for us as Christians, the more hopeful scenario or people coming through this well adjusted.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to ask you next, is there a danger, or what is the danger that no one seems to be talking about right now? You have a unique perspective, is there anything we should be paying attention to that we're not?

Ken Costa:

Well, yes, that it could occur again. This is fine until November, and then the second strain comes. That's what no one is wanting to talk about. And then, the most difficult is what happens to India and Africa, who clearly the health services cannot cope? And they're going into their winter seasons in the Southern Hemisphere, what happens there? These are really very difficult times.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You spent a lot of time with government leaders. I was surprised, and this is just a lay person's perspective, at just the level of government spending, billions and trillions of dollars here in North America. It was rapid, it was fast. When you look at that, does that level of spending alarm you, does it comfort you? How will we pay for that, does that permanently impair the economy? I'm just curious. These are such early days, but I'm thinking, "How do we even pay for this?" What's your perspective on that?

Ken Costa:

Well, my perspective is that it is alarming, but there was no other alternative. The Fed and the Bank of England, and the Treasury here, as in all the major countries, China and Japan, had to throw whatever it takes to be able to cushion the seizure that is occurring in the normal ... in the natural economy. Now, depending on how long this lasts, of course, it has to be repaid, and the repayment is measured at the moment much easier because interest rates are very low.

Ken Costa:

But if interest rates start rising, as well they might if investors start saying, "Well, I lend you my money, but I need a better rate of return." Then I think we will find it much more difficult. And I think that, for the moment, it's the right thing to do, but we will have to repay it. And it's not just one generation, this virus is hitting everybody. Younger people are dying as well as older people. So it's spread, rich, poor, different cultures. There's no country that you can go to, there's no safe place in the world now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, it's staggering that way, Ken. One thing I was reading this morning from, I think, a fairly reputable source, it was the Globe and Mail in Canada. But it was comparing the level of current indebtedness to the Second World War and the First World War. And apparently, we are still below percentages of GDP spent on those war efforts, but it's still the greatest peacetime spending we've seen. So yeah, we're all in uncharted territory. I've asked a few leaders this question Ken and-

Ken Costa:

The difference between the war and where we are now is that during the war, people still continue to be employed. The real issue here is that they're not, and so this is the alarm.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Correct. Do you have any advice for church leaders, business leaders, who have to look at their budgets? Almost everybody I talked to is dealing with less right now, not more. What are some good principles to guide people through a season like this where to cut, where not to cut if you can avoid it? Any advice for the leaders listening?

Ken Costa:

Well, I'm not an investment advisor, I wouldn't want to be in times like this. But I suppose you must conserve cash and be sure that you can get through, not only the next weeks, but the next few months. All our banks today have deferred the payments of their dividends, that's a serious issue for pensioners who would be reliant on the dividends of the major banks in the country. But keeping cash for what might be even worse times to come is a very good thing to be doing at the moment, if you can. And if not, then make use of the government facilities that governments are being provided, to charities, to small businesses, that may be in the various countries where people are listening to. They certainly are in the UK.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Do you have any principles when you're looking at a budget? You're very involved at the local church level as well, so if you were advising as a board member, you would say, "Well, think about this, but hey, at a last resort, this is where you go." Do you have certain priorities that you cut and then other areas where you're like, "Man, if we don't have to cut we're not going to do that?" Or what are your thoughts on that?

Ken Costa:

Do you know there is a very fine balance ... Sorry, not a very fine balance, there is a balance to be struck between faith and finance. And there's no simple answer to it. And on the one extreme are those who say we just must believe what the Lord provides, the Lord resources, and I believe that. And the others that say, "Look, we just got to be accountants and do what an accountant would do." And I think somewhere in the middle, there is a room for faith, but it's also based on some tangible evidence. So that if you see the entire ... the dwindling of the weekly money coming in, you want to begin to take that into your account rather than believing that by faith you can turn it. There is a balance, a measure. And equally, we stay stretched in our faith and believe that the Lord will resource provided we are responsible for the way in which we are stewarding the money that we have for the moment.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're not the only leader I have asked this question to, and I will continue to ask it. But in every church and every organization, there are people who the first time the paycheck disappears, they're out of money. People living paycheck to paycheck. But there are other people in churches who have more significant means and maybe who might be considered to be wealthy. Can you walk us through, because I know the leaders listening are thinking, "I wonder if I should approach so and so who attends our church?" Can you walk us through the mindset of a wealthier person in an environment like this? What are they thinking? What are they feeling? What are they worried about? What are they not worried about? What would you say from your experience in the world of finance, people who have greater means are feeling or experiencing right now? What are they thinking? And then that will lead me into the next question, which is, can we approach them and how to? But what are they feeling now?

Ken Costa:



First question that has to be asked, should have been asked last year, if not the year before. Which is, what level of investment have you made into the life, into the teaching of that business person in your congregation? Is it really is merely a milk cow, and it's all dressed up in a very wonderful way.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're right. You're exactly right, Ken.

Ken Costa:

At the end of the day, business people are quite shrewd, and they can see you coming for them. And there is a straight way which basically says, look, here is where we are, this is what we need, and to level with them. But I think it has to go hand in hand with an appreciation of the person as an individual to be pastored rather than to be milked. And if one gets over that piece, then people will be much more generous. That would be the first. The second is to involve them in where the money is going, is it doesn't just disappear into some pot in the middle to be dispensed in some distant way by some committee or another. But if there is a group that is looking after the elderly, or the marginalized, or the poor, or whatever it is, draw that person in so they can follow their investment in exactly the same way as they follow their investments in the stock market.

Ken Costa:

Because we're told about treasure on earth, and we can help people understanding what that means in terms of following the investment. So I think it's no more than one would have no pastoral setting, and then to be bold and make ... If you've got that relationship, then you see. If you haven't got that relationship, well, I'd start there first before I...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, you'll be pleased to know that's a conversation we've had several times on this podcast, encouraging and trying to break down that divide. I think, the big surprise is pastors ... that's not a surprise, pastors get intimidated by people who are successful in business or finance. But, we've also heard the opposite, that a lot of people who have done well in life really crave that kind of relationship with the pastor and need leadership and are sometimes a little intimidated themselves. They don't have a relationship that goes back 40 years with the vicar, so that's wonderful.

Ken Costa:

That is true. That's true, Carey, but we always have to remember that from the pastor's point of view, not to be intimidated. Because the person that you're looking to is as dysfunctional in their personal lives, as you may think someone else in your congregation is, who is less wealthy, less position, less affluence, less influence. And the issue we want to do is we want to enable people to steward their affluence and to steward their influence. But at the end of the day, they're human beings that are crying out to be loved, to be known, to be called. And the way in which a pastor can affirm that is very different. The amount of money that is in that respect a very different from the person who can discern and see the window of the soul of an anxious, guilt-ridden person.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a good word, Ken. Thank you for that. That was extremely helpful in any context, this one or a more stable one. If you don't mind, and if it's not a good question, we can move on to the next line of

questioning. But what are people of some means feeling right now? What are the mental processes of some of your friends, colleagues, that kind of thing? What's going through their mind?

Ken Costa:

Everybody is in a state of shock and fear, whether they're rich or whether they're not so rich. Because you're now beginning to fear for your life and for your health, and the finances are also going ... run with it. It's one of the wonderful fictions and people believe that people with a great deal of money don't worry about money. It's my experience that those that have got more money than they could ever deal with worry about it far more than others. Money is a very powerful ... Economists say that money is nominal, it's merely a rate of exchange. We could use bricks to change, we use money which is a way of exchanging one thing for another with a common denominator. But money isn't nominal, it's numinous. It's got power in it. That's why Jesus uses those words, which are not commercial words. That you should love man, and you give your life to man. These are not commercial words, they're not economic words, they're relational words. There's something powerful in it, and I do think one does have to be careful about how money takes hold of those who have and those who don't.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a good word. I've seen it go both ways, Ken. I know I want to be honoring of your time, you mentioned opportunity, and I do want to spend some time on opportunity. Opportunity for Christians, opportunity for church leaders, opportunity for business leaders. So you said at the beginning of the conversation, that there are some tremendous opportunities. What are you seeing right now in terms of opportunities, Ken?

Ken Costa:

What's interesting, Carey, as we were talking earlier on and I've literally just finished a very short reflection on what I call crisis talks taken from the life of Joseph of Arimathea. Which as I mentioned, is the new book.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Latest book.

Ken Costa:

Yeah. One of the things that really struck me in the life of Joseph, is that there are only 16 verses on Joseph of Arimathea. He took Jesus's body from the cross. He did that at a time when where was John? Where was Paul? Where was Peter? Where were those favorite disciples? They weren't there. And what happened was that there were two practical business people, Nicodemus and Joseph, who had to do the dirty work, take the cross, take the body of Jesus from the cross. When the guys from YouTube, the guys that have built the greatest followings. You'll forgive me for saying this, I have not anyone in mind, were not there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

True.

Ken Costa:

What happened was you've got business people doing their work, and they did ... They were friends, the first thing to do in this crisis is forge your friendships. Joseph did that with Nicodemus, they were both members of the council, the Sanhedrin. And the second is they faced their fear together, you remember Nicodemus came by night?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yes.

Ken Costa:

And John tells us that Joseph was a secret disciple because he was fearful. So they faced their fears together, and then they found the funds. Each one made a contribution. They were partners to the tomb that was provided by Joseph and some of the spices. But the rest, hundreds of thousands of dollars in modern times provided by Nicodemus to be for the body of Jesus. Now here is a simple Easter example of practical business people wanting to be pragmatic, working in partnership to achieve an extraordinary goal. And the way I put it is that it's the extraordinary calling of ordinary people, it's ordinary people that are like Joseph become the footnote, the small crypt of history.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's fascinating. And I can see that as an opportunity, it's an opportunity to take what God has given you and serve the wider thing. What are some of the other opportunities you see for church leaders?

Ken Costa:

The great question that I've been asked is, what kind of leadership do we want to see now? All the leadership books will tell you about leaders are ... they are seven leaders, they are this, they are that. And that's all true, but in this moment, the real characteristic of a leader is going to be flexibility. The ability to move, there are so many moving parts here that you've got to read the signs like the sons of Issachar. You've got to read the signs and see what action to take. And it might become my favorite expressions, a poem by an Irish poet called Micheal O'Siadhail is, don't look for this year's birds in last year's nests, because then the model doesn't apply, and stability is needed. And therefore the opportunity is being created to examine again what does engagement mean when the locals, the place where people were meeting, the church, is closed?

Ken Costa:

And for the first time, we are reaching people where they are at, rather than saying, "Oh, come to me, come into this place." I got nothing against churches and I believe they are great places of worship et cetera, but we are learning something new, but we don't know. Ecclesiastes 7 talks about sow 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 sowing at the moment and watching to see what is the online take up? How much do people miss being in physical presence and wanting to worship? What kind of worship do people want? Do they want meditation, or is it just what we've always given them? And that's the piece that I think is the huge opportunity.

Ken Costa:

Plus, the airwaves have cleared. There's no Hollywood, no football game, there's no basketball game, there're no gigs. You have a free to run of the airwaves. And how the church rises and responds to this will be the formative experience of our generation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want that to sink in. I think you're right, I think it is the formative experience of our generation. You have been involved at a very detailed level with Holy Trinity Brompton, which has multiple locations across London. And again, for leaders who haven't been there, these are very beautiful 17th, 18th, 19th century ... well, more like 18th, 19th, 20th century buildings that are just pretty. Picture a British Anglican Church, it's gorgeous, and that have been converted for ministry to the next generation. How has HTB responded to the closure of physical buildings? What has happened to the ministry there?

Ken Costa:

Well, like almost every pastor that's listening to this, we've gone online. And we've created content that's very different, and quite disturbingly different from what a normal service would look like. Because we want others to watch and see what the format might look like of churches, they've never seen it before. We're only two weeks into this, so like everybody else we're planting the seeds and we didn't know which one is going to survive.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How's it different? What's different?

Ken Costa:

Well, it's shorter, and of course it's ... there are interviews that have to be put into it. It has a quicker pace than one we'd normally have. Without a doubt Nicky Gumbel is an outstanding leader and has managed to draw a very good palette to this presentation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then you were telling me before we started recording that you spoke Levi Lusko's church recently, and that was virtually?

Ken Costa:

It was virtual, it was completely alarming. Because it's one thing to talk to you because I can see you. Here I am sitting in my study in London and trying to dream of what Montana might look like, and for half an hour trying to visualize it. It requires some real imaginative skill, which I so admire if pastors have to do it every week which I don't.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ken, that was great. What message did you give? What was your message?

Ken Costa:

Well, it was, as you can imagine, Joseph of Arimathea. He said, "Well, why did you choose this obscure person?" You know what, the Bible, one thing about the Bible is that it leaps out at you. And there was a verse in Luke's Gospel, which said, "Joseph was righteous man and he was not part of the decision or the action of the Sanhedrin." In other words, he was not part of the majority, and he had to stand up as a minority. And I thought, "This is what we need to see. People are prepared to stand up for what they believe, rather than what is convenient. For what is the truth rather than for something that is just easy to go along with." And I was deeply struck by that, and that's one of the things I was trying to draw people to an understanding. That this is the time where we're not part of the majority, we are a

minority. But then Churchill did say, "Beware of the power of a sizable minority." The church could be a great influence for love in the world in that respect.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, we got a few minutes left, I want to go through a few questions quickly just to advice to leaders. You have had four decades of leadership experience. What's some of the best advice you've been given in previous downturns that you think is helpful perhaps in this one?

Ken Costa:

When you don't know what to do, don't. The world at the moment is, as I described in an acronym, VUCA. It's Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and deeply Anxious. And when you see international markets whipsawing one way or the other, trying to make an intelligent decision, whether it's in finance or in planning for the next program of the church, like what are we going to do in September or August when everybody comes back? The great planning machine of many churches. You can't do that, you simply don't know. When you don't know what to do, don't. Because if you go one way you're likely to get it wrong, if go the other way you're likely to get it wrong. And if you stick in the middle, you may well get it wrong, but not so badly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, and back to flexibility. How do you make decisions when you don't have reliable information? How do you do that?

Ken Costa:

You're always going to have to make decision on not having 100% of the knowledge base. And that's the nature of leadership, it is the way in which you can color trajectory or assume. You may get it wrong, but you have to make certain assumptions on the basis that you don't have the full picture. And that I think is one of the things that we will ... Our entire education system will change as we learn to teach people how to deal with uncertainty from the youngest age, rather than by rote to expect the very sort of static world which we're shown is not the case anymore.

Carey Nieuwhof:

When you think about the future, I think it's somewhat reasonable that this could be a bit of a long run. And as much as we all long to go back to normal, I think there's an increasing consensus that probably the normal will be new in the future. It'll be a new normal. What are some things that you think already are permanently changed? Maybe that's a premature question, but you mentioned experimenting with the services online and doing a different format. Do you think some of that's going to stick around in the new normal? Is it too early to say? Is there anything that you think, "Huh, I wonder if this is something that will always be different?"

Ken Costa:

I think the shake up has caused an extraordinary rethinking, and it will definitely not be the same. I think you and I talked a bit about it, it was almost as if God's screaming across the world, to the extent that God does scream before your theologians get cross with me. Basically saying, 'Stop. Just stop. Just reboot. Just hold it for a moment and rethink what you've been doing.' What about the programs and the processes and have we forgotten the person of Jesus? You bring him back in a relevant way. I think that the most wonderful thing that's happened is that the church in many, many, countries became

institutionalized, and it's much the same in this country in the UK, but similar. And now, we've all been shaken up becoming insurgents again. That's the sense of newness, of creativity, of excitement, of wanting to press forward, rather than to have a machine that is rolling week after week with a program that never changes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I detect a bit of excitement in your voice, is that so?

Ken Costa:

It is because ... I don't know. Like the person standing on the beach and waiting for the tide to come in, one day the tide will come in and you'll be standing there and you'll say, "Oh, you called it right." Just don't know whether in the wake of this, could it be that if we follow 2nd Chronicles 7:14, that we humble ourselves pray, that the plague, which is what is being written about there, that our land would be healed? That if they were an earnestness in our pray, might it be that we see the glimmers of an awakening? And we believe that God is merciful, that we pray for his mercy on us at this time. And that his judgment to the extent that we understand that will be averted and his mercy will be with us and he visits us again with a new freshness of the spirit in the Living God.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ken, final question. How do you keep the people around you, and perhaps yourself, encouraged in the midst of this? When everyone's worried and anxious, how do you care for people, how do you keep them motivated, and love your thoughts?

Ken Costa:

I think for this moment, over communicate is very important. And do so on Zoom, or Skype, or whatever medium you use. Because when we look back, what will happen is people will remember those that were in touch during this time, and will value the ones that made the effort. Particularly, to those who not necessarily on the very closed WhatsApp list that we have, but maybe a little distant, that we've not really spent much time with. But actually showing people that that Jesus Christ is alive, his spirit is still with us, and able to encourage us even in the most painful, hard ... People dying that were friends and family that can't go to the hospitals and the funerals are taking place. There is a massive brokenness, but yet, that we are able to encourage you to build each other up. And don't hesitate to self invest. This is a moment where you want to be reading your Bible more, and praying more, meditating more, worshiping more, even if it appears to be selfish. Because otherwise, all that'll happen is that the clergy will all burn out because they're so overworked.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Is there a question in this crisis that no one's asking that you think we should be asking?

Ken Costa:

Well, yes, the assumptions of life. We've assumed that we are in control of every aspect of our lives. And how do we deal with volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and anxiousness? All of that is a financial, it's a spiritual, and it's an emotional package, and we need to help each other to learn from that how to navigate what is now a forever changed world.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ken, every time we get together it's rich and meaningful. Thank you for making the time to be with our leaders in this unprecedented season. People are going to look at your books and find you online, where's the easiest place to do that?

Ken Costa:

Well, the books are on Amazon and online, either on Instagram or on my website KenCosta.co.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay, great. We'll link to all that in the show notes. Ken, thank you so much.

Ken Costa:

Carey, thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I'm so grateful for that conversation with Ken Costa, and I thought some of his advice was so, so, helpful. We've got a, What I'm Thinking About, segment coming up in just a few minutes and I'm going to talk about the other side of the recovery. Like, how long is this going to take? A couple of thoughts in that direction, and how to prepare yourself, your leadership, and your church for that. By the way, we have a lot of fresh episodes coming up. My next episode, I'm so pumped about, so will you be. This alone is worth subscribing for, Mark Sayers is coming up.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Mark has become one of my favorite people over the last year or so since I discovered his work and his podcast, This Cultural Moment. We had his partner in crime John Mark Comer on in January, but Mark and I had a long, fascinating, conversation about the global crisis. What it means at the meta level and how to prepare for it at the micro level. Here is an excerpt.

Mark Sayers:

My encouragement for leaders at this moment feeling frightened, scared, loss of control, is step into this moment. What if this is actually in the midst of this suffering, and the pain, and the economic dislocation, and the medical pain? What if in the midst in this dark cloud? Psalm 18 says, "God comes wrapped in dark clouds with lights ... like the bolts of lightning. But the brightness of his presence is in that cloud." What if you'd step into the cloud, see the brightness of God's presence? This is an incredible moment, God wants to do something. Step into it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's next time on the podcast. If you subscribe, you get it automatically for free. I want to thank our partners who have stood with us in this time as well. So make sure you check out the Leaders in Living Rooms podcast, listenership is exploding and Sean brings you great conversations. They're a little bit shorter than on my show, and like I said before, he will get stuff out of guests that I'm like, "Wow, I didn't know that." And you're going to be fascinated by that. Subscribe for that wherever you get your podcasts. Don't forget the How to Lead Through Crisis course I put together for leaders absolutely free, text CRISIS to 33777, or just go to [HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com](http://HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com), where you can pick it up.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now, what have I been thinking about? I have been thinking about the future. I know it's a little bit early for predictions, but I want to share with you just how to get ready for the new normal. A lot of people they say, "I can't wait for things to get back to normal." And my gut on this one, and remember we're recording this a week in advance, so everything changes in a heartbeat, right? Normally, you can record things a month in advance and nothing changes. So if the world has changed by the time you listen to this, understand I'm not narrating this live. But here's what I think. I don't think this is an interruption, I think it is a disruption. And if you listen to really closely to what business leaders are saying, to what industry leaders are saying, to what politicians are saying. I've been listening to a billion podcasts, reading a lot of articles on this.

Carey Nieuwhof:

A lot of people are thinking, "No, things are different." And so, one assumption a lot of church leaders have is, listen, when we're finally able to open our doors, people are going to come flooding back, right? Well, a couple things underneath that. Number one, don't assume that all of a sudden the restrictions are just going to be lifted one day and thousands of people can gather. Professional sports teams now and events, for example, as I'm recording this, I read this morning that Microsoft has canceled all in person events until July of 2021. So they're actually pushing this forward a full year. Why, because they're not convinced that the health threat is going to lift immediately. And even so, you look at sports leagues and maybe it's all back on by the time you hear this podcast, I don't know. But a lot of people are not just talking about losing the current season, but are they even going to be able to start up in the fall?

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then there's what is allowed, but I think at a deeper level, there's a psychology here. Just think about yourself, are you ever going to see people the same way in the grocery store again? For a little while, anyway, right? You're going to say, "Is there some virus, is there some contagion?" Right? So even if you have the ability to go back and gather in person, the question is, will people have the willingness, or will this personally change things? I've read a few articles that say airlines are now looking into the possibility of perhaps distancing people on flights. If you get crowded in that middle seat, let's say we're flying again in October and you're in that middle seat, what are you thinking about with the person to your left and the person to your right? Exactly, right? So we have still a whole lot of leaders who are like, "Oh, listen, when things go back to normal, when things go back to normal, when things go back to normal, when things go back to normal."

Carey Nieuwhof:

I don't know, are we heading into a new normal? And I suspect we are. We haven't really got a name for what we're going through right now other than the Corona pandemic. But in my head, I've started calling it not an interruption, but the great disruption. We've had the Great Depression, we've had the great recession. I wonder if this is the great disruption? And yes, there will be a point where you're not in quarantine, where you're not in lockdown, where you're not in shelter-in-place. There is a time where the virus will be beaten, but what is this going to do to our psychology? And so, I think about people ... I'm old enough to remember people who lived through the Great Depression. That had such a profound effect on them that they never threw away aluminum foil. They were so un wasteful it was like, we pay cash for cars, we don't believe in debt. They went through so much pain, and it's so impacted their psychology that it changed the way they live.

Carey Nieuwhof:



And then people like me come along and it's like, "I don't know what your big deal is, I'm going to throw that tin foil out." Yeah, fine. And so it's very different. I think this is going to shape the psychology of a generation, so what does that mean? What it means, and I'll give you one takeaway now is, let's start taking digital way more seriously. Way more seriously. A lot of people are like, "Well, that's okay. We're just going to open up our church. Everybody will come back." It's like, "Well, maybe that's true." But the other thing that's true, some of the data I have on my other podcast, The ChurchPulse Weekly Podcast is showing us that half of churches are now growing through their online presence, including some very small churches. Really small churches that maybe had 100 in attendance, and all of a sudden they're reaching 300 people online.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's like, "Okay, so let's say we move back into our buildings?" Great. Well, don't neglect your digital presence because you're going to reach people online that you can't reach in your building. So, just think about your digital presence, in fact I would suggest you should go digital first, and physical second. I think that's a really smart strategy. And secondly, as Bobby said last time, Bobby Herrera on the last episode of this podcast, "Do not assume that everyone is going to want to come back to the office." Yeah, right now you got kids hanging off you, there's no school, there's no daycare, I get it. I get it. I get it. But there will be daycare, and there will be school again, and some people will be, "You know what, I don't really know whether I want to go back to work the way I used to work. Maybe I want to work from coffee shops, maybe I want to work from home, maybe I want flex hours." And the flexible workplace is the future workplace.

Carey Nieuwhof:

8:00 to 4:00 didn't work anymore for a long time, but now I think it's broken beyond repair. Here's what I would be doing in this season. I would be seeing your digital strategy not as a temporary strategy, but a permanent strategy to reach more people. And I would think about the virtual team that you're leading right now as new normal in teams, because I think we're going to be different. And as we go through this great disruption, I would be preparing for a radically different future. So that's what I'm thinking about right now, I'd love to hear what you think. Send me a note, at [Carey@CareyNieuwhof.com](mailto:Carey@CareyNieuwhof.com). You can email me direct or hit me up on social, I'm Carey Nieuwhof on Instagram, [cnieuwhof](#) on Twitter, and also on Facebook. And if you found this episode helpful, please, please, please, share it with your friends, leave a rating and review. Back next week with Mark Sayers, so excited for that. Thanks for listening, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before.

Announcer:

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