

Announcer:

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

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, hey everybody. Welcome to Episode 336 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well, this is the moment so many of you have been waiting for. I get messaged all the time. "When's Mike Todd on? When's Mike Todd on?" Well, let me bring you a surprise. Okay, how about today and tomorrow? Yeah, this episode and the next episode. We actually snuck another one in just recently a Coronavirus update with Mike Todd that we're going to bring you tomorrow.

Carey Nieuwhof:

This episode was recorded at Transformation Church back in February, long before we all moved into shutdown, lockdown, reopening the whole deal. It is so good, we decided to bring it to you. Also, a really exciting day. Mike's first book, Relationship Goals, is available today. Would not shock me if it quickly became the best-selling book in the world. Anyway, he is a really special leader.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've gotten to know Mike over the last few months. I got to tell you, I have been excited. Sometimes the more you get to know somebody, the more you like them. That's what I'm discovering about Mike Todd. We talked today about the meteoric rise of Transformation Church. Make sure you do not miss tomorrow's episode where we dive into 10x growth for Transformation Church during the Coronavirus and what it means to be an online church. Fascinating.

Carey Nieuwhof:

On this one, we sort of tell you the backstory on their rise, blowing up on social media, and my favorite, the power of 51% certainty in decision making. Today's episode is brought to you by Craft and Character and Ministry Boost. We so thank our partners for bringing this to you for free all the time. Yeah, Mike just to give you an idea of who he is, he is the lead pastor of Transformation Church. So, they were a church of about 200 people in 2015. They have seen astronomical growth under Mike's leadership over the last four and a half, five years. We get into exactly how that happened. He is now an author.

Carey Nieuwhof:

He has spoken at so many of the leading conferences, Elevation Church, C3 Conference, Lakewood Church with Joel Osteen, VOUS Conference, XO Conference, Catalyst, and even with Kanye West last fall. So, many other things going on in his life, and he's been so generous with his time. In fact, when we signed back on for tomorrow's episode, we spent about 25-30 minutes together, just giving you an update. It is worth an episode all by itself. So, this is actually the first week we brought you three episodes in a long, long time. But if you haven't subscribed, you will enjoy them all, I think. Make sure you do that. If you're enjoying this, leave a rating and review. We would love to get that to you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, CDF Capital is launching a brand-new ministry for church communicators called Craft and Character. It's led by Steve Carter, one of the best teachers today. You can learn more at [CraftAndCharacter.org](http://CraftAndCharacter.org). Here's the deal. If you're a ministry communicator, which a lot of us are, we're doing a live broadcast event, June 4th. I will be there, Steve Carter will, Sean Morgan and Dharius Daniels. It'll be backroom, personal, and conversational, where we will walk you through the craft of public speaking, developing the personal character of a pastor. Rather than just getting a content dump, you're going to get some backstage access to, I think, two of the best communicators around today, Steve Carter, Darrius Daniels. Sean Morgan and I will host that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, what you can do is go to [CraftAndCharacter.org](http://CraftAndCharacter.org), you will get a 20% discount if you do that before May 15. So, make sure you check that out. That's brand new. If you are a communicator in person or online, you definitely want to get in on that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then let's talk about church growth for a minute. Most of the time when we're thinking about growing our ministries, we think about ways we can reach new people. You're probably, like most churches, reaching a lot of new people online, but what gets neglected is the strategy to get new guests to come back for a second or third time, whether that's in person or online. Which begs the question, what's your strategy for that? Over at Ministry Boost, they've got an exciting new resource called The New Family Retention Plan. It's five-part framework for new family retention, you can grab for just \$25. As a listener of this podcast, you also can get a free resource that will help you better engage and connect with families as you navigate COVID-19 and the recovery in the new landscape ahead.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, head on over to [MinistryBoost.org/Carey](http://MinistryBoost.org/Carey). That's [MinistryBoost.org/Carey](http://MinistryBoost.org/Carey). So, appreciate our partners. Make sure you check that stuff out. At the end of this episode, in What I'm Thinking About, I'm going to go a little bit deeper on online church attendance and share some questions about how to measure it. And then of course, remember, we've got a second episode with Mike Todd coming up tomorrow. So, this one was recorded in February before the world changed. It is so, so good. It's an absolute delight to bring you, Mike Todd.

Mike Todd:

I am so excited to be here with you today, man.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's been great. We're getting to know each other a little bit. Here we are at Transformation Church, which is an arena.

Mike Todd:

An arena.

Carey Nieuwhof:

An arena, which is really, really cool. You've had a rocket ride in the last 24 months.

Mike Todd:

Yes, sir.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Do you want to walk us through sort of the whiplash that's been happening? I'd love just to... Because I think a lot of people know your story. But it's pretty remarkable what's happened, because it didn't just start 24 months ago.

Mike Todd:

No, sir. This has been a kind of culmination, if you will, of lot of obedient steps along the way. But I don't know how much time we have because this is a long story but-

Carey Nieuwhof:

All the time in the world.

Mike Todd:

Okay, okay, okay. I think the best place to start this is that I always thought I would be in music production, play a few instruments, have always done music. I thought that's where I'm going to make my mark on the world. God kind of used music as a segueway into ministry. I started off as the sound man at Greenwood Christian Center. As the sound man there, I went from the sound man to over the music. From over the worship experience as a music director to the youth pastor, from the youth pastor to the executive pastor, and from the executive pastor to the lead pastor in five years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Mike Todd:

How that happens? I have no idea except I lived it. It was just step after step, moment after moment, movement after movement, obedience after obedience, and working the season I was in that produced this amazing moment of really trying to impact the world using my gift of communication. It's been a lot of leadership lessons I've learned along the way, a lot of trial and error of finding out who I am. But this has been kind of one of those crazy, crazy, crazy roller coaster rides of a bunch of obedient steps.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, take us back, because you took over. You didn't start Transformation Church.

Mike Todd:

Transformation Church has been going for 21 years. We just celebrated two weeks ago, 21 years of ministry as a church, and then five years of me and Natalie being a pastor. It was started by Gary McIntosh and Debbie McIntosh, which are a white, older, amazing couple. If you're listening to this, the reason why that's so powerful in our day and age is because they started a church in the hood of Tulsa.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, North Tulsa.

Mike Todd:

In North Tulsa, where one of the worst race massacres happened in 1921, Black Wall Street. They felt that they were supposed to go there and reverse the curse. They started a church there. And then to be able to hand it over 15 years later, to a young African American leader, who then would take it to the world in a different kind of way has been a really, really cool story that has been written.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I just found out, I've been in Tulsa for a couple days getting ready for this. I did not know the story of Black Wall Street. Can you give us what happened? It's just devastating.

Mike Todd:

It's completely devastating. It's a story that so unfortunately not told in American history or even Oklahoma history-

Carey Nieuwhof:

I have a degree in American history. No, I didn't know about it.

Mike Todd:

1921, over a very minimal interaction between a young lady and a man of different races in different socio-economic classes, this massacre started. There is conspiracy theories around it. There's all kinds of stuff that go with it, but the whole crux of it is that an entire community that was at one time the wealthiest community of African Americans in the US, called Black Wall Street. It was that influential with all types of businesses and communities and self-sustaining and stuff. Within 48 hours, it was completely burned down, bombed, and many people lost their lives. Since that time, it has still been the oppressed and depressed area of our city.

Mike Todd:

So, you can drive over there now and see the disparity between just the people that live there, and the rest of our city. It's kind of a hush-hush, kept quiet type of thing. There are so many amazing people that I believe that God has called our church to reach. So, our founding pastor started the church right in the middle of that devastation in 1999 and started to be the bridge of racial reconciliation. So, to even be continuing that on and the diversity that we see in these seats every Sunday is just a testament to the vision he started being carried on by another generation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, you take over in 2015.

Mike Todd:

Yes, sir.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How big is the church at that point?

Mike Todd:

350 people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Mike Todd:

Yeah. Most of them when I took over were like, "Yeah, this is not going to last. So, we're leaving."

Carey Nieuwhof:

I see the picture in the lobby when you come into Transformation Church, and you look at you, you're how old when-

Mike Todd:

26, I believe.

Carey Nieuwhof:

26. And then you look at the senior pastor. It's like, yeah.

Mike Todd:

Oh no.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You would not normally put you two together.

Mike Todd:

I think, according to my knowledge, one of the only successful transitions of leadership from a white elder person to a young African American in American history.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. So, you start out 350 people-

Mike Todd:

Yes, sir.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... and for a few years, there's no inflection point. You started to grow a little bit.

Mike Todd:

I mean, like everybody that would come, somebody would leave. It was kind of like one of those things. It was like, "Oh, we got a new family," and then they would tell me like, "The Johnsons just left."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Basically, they took their money away.

Mike Todd:

They took everything with them. For the first, 2015-2016, a lot of those years were just maintaining. I lost honestly all of my staff, the second year of leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, they all left?

Mike Todd:

Not like a revolt or something like that, but some people didn't work out. Some people had a transition in life and other people felt like they couldn't go with my leadership. So, I mean, literally, I'll let you meet her before you leave. But Miss Tammy, she was over all of the business. She's been my only staff member that stayed with me before I became the pastor to the transition to now. She's our CFO. There would be days I would walk into the office with just me and her. I would be talking in faith to people who weren't there. "Hey, Sally, it's so good to see you. How are the kids, John?" She would be cracking, I mean, dying laughing, because she's like, "What are you doing?" I said, "One day, we'll have a staff that I'll have to talk to and see. But today to encourage myself, I got to do it in faith."

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, there's no one there?

Mike Todd:

No one there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Mike Todd:

That was a season that really made me because I thought if I had all my friends that I'd done youth ministry with and all these crazy graphic designers and all of these people who said they believed me, if we were a team, and we were all there, that I could be a pastor, because I had no qualifications to be able to do it. So, I felt like I needed everybody. Looking hindsight, I feel like God stripped everybody away to make sure that I knew I was called to this besides anybody else.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How did you keep yourself encouraged in those first few years?

Mike Todd:

I relied heavy on the vision. That's why I believe that God tells us, "It's not a vision until you write it down and make it plain." In too many people, they have visions and dreams. I feel like it's dreams and when it's in your head, it's actual vision when you write it down. Most people are living their life in a dream land instead of actual vision. When I wrote that vision down that we would represent God to the lost and found for transformation in Christ and I wrote the vision down that we would be multi-ethnic, multi-generational, multiplying, and multi-campus. When I wrote the vision down that one day our church would expand the globe and be able to impact people in places, we would never be able to set foot in.

Mike Todd:

When God gave me the vision of this building, like all of those things were vision. So, instead of looking at sight, I had to close my eyes and see vision. See, most people think vision and sight are the same thing, but sight is what you see with your eyes open. Vision is what you see with your eyes closed. I saw this. I was preaching to this room before I ever actually did. Because my sight was I was preaching to 150 people, who seemed like they didn't want to be there sometimes and like some of them had just drink pickle juice. Like, that's what my sight was. But my vision was, I was speaking to arena of people, I was speaking to white and black, young and old. That was my vision. So, that's really what kept me encouraged.

Mike Todd:

And then going to other places like other churches, other ministries, other concerts that gave my vision an actual sight. So, I would go to a Justin Timberlake concert, and I would look at the technology. I'd see the lights hanging and I would see the LED screens. I was like, "I saw that in my vision. It's possible because I see it with my sight." That's really how I stayed encouraged in those years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, take us back because you shared this with me before we started filming. You had a day where you actually wrote down and your church wasn't very big that you would be right here in what was the Spirit Center.

Mike Todd:

SpiritBank Event Center.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay, SpiritBank Event Center-

Mike Todd:

What a name.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... which is now Transformation Church. I mean, we're in an arena that seats 4,000-ish-

Mike Todd:

4,500 people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

4,500 people. We're in an arena that used to be for sports, and you'll fill this on Sunday morning. You had that vision. So, tell us about that day.

Mike Todd:

So, I think one of the craziest things about my journey is that I was offered a lot of opportunities, I feel, by God, and I took them. So, one day in my quiet time I get up and I pray, and I meditate. I felt like, "Hey, write this down." So, I'll write this down, okay. So, I get my laptop up and it's like the SpiritBank Event

Center will be Transformation Church. I just go down. I mean, it seems completely crazy in the moment, like completely nutty. We have no money. We have nobody barely coming to the church, but I write down this whole document. I go to Google, and I look up a picture of the SpiritBank Event Center.

Mike Todd:

When I do that, I take it off. I rip pages. I didn't have any real Photoshop experience, so pages. I did my best. I tried to be very intentional. I put the Transformation Church logo on it, and I spelled 'transformation' wrong for some reason, all of these things. I wrote it down, and then I marked it. It was March 9, 2015 7:29 AM in Bella's room, which is my oldest daughter.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Mike Todd:

When I look at that document today, Carey, I just get emotional, because there was no actual way that I could make that happen. The only thing that I did was I believed enough to write the vision down.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You didn't even have momentum at this point.

Mike Todd:

No, no, no, no. Like, I just had a migraine. No momentum, I just had a migraine at that point. I was faithful. I was continuing to work on my craft and work on my gift. But I wrote that down, I shared it with three or four people. That was one month-

Carey Nieuwhof:

What did they say?

Mike Todd:

You know the patronizing like, "Okay!"

Carey Nieuwhof:

"Good for you. Good for you, Michael."

Mike Todd:

"Okay, yeah. That's going to be good." But the one thing I can say is that the Pastor Emeritus Bishop McIntosh, I told him, and he said, "Let's go over. Let's go see it." We came over here, we broke in. I admit, we broke in. The door was open, but we came in. We walked around as much as we could get into. He said, "I think this is your building." I said, "I think this is too." He said, "Stand right there and take a picture." I have the picture-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.



Mike Todd:

... of me standing in lobby with my hands wide open. He's behind the camera, which is such a chilling picture or invigorating picture in my mind that the person who started this, who handed it over to somebody, and it's just trying to keep it alive. He had the faith to encourage me in that moment. "Hey, that one day, I think this thing that would eclipse anything we've ever done, could be yours." Took the picture of it and documented it. I have that picture today. I showed our church a few weeks ago, because we believe that we're standing in history, but we're still in the making. So, where we're at right now, though, it's amazing, it's just the beginning. I really do believe. I'm getting new visions. It's a fun time to be here.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, yeah, how did you know that wasn't just illusion?

Mike Todd:

Well, the thing that I always tell people is that in this walk with Christ, I don't think you're ever going to be 100% sure. I think people always try to make it act like, "I knew it was God. I knew it was God. I knew this was what I was supposed to do." But I honestly think it proves to be God. It proves to actually work out. I think our thing is to have faith. Without faith, it's impossible to do a lot of things. I tell people, I tell my church, I said, "I live my life at 51%." I have this philosophy that if I feel like it's God, 51% I'm doing it. A lot of people want to be in 80%, 90%, 100% sure it's God before they take a step. But anytime that I look at anybody in leadership who's been successful at anything, nobody knew. They had to believe.

Mike Todd:

So, for me in prayer, in talking to counsel, if I'm 51% sure, they know I'm going forward. Like they know that if he thinks that they 1% over a negative, it's going to happen. It's proven to be God over and over and over again. Even down to a year ago when I told the team like, "Hey, if this SpiritBank Event Center comes open..." Because another company had a bid on it. They told us it was not available. Literally, that deal fell through. I said, "If they tell us this open, we're going for." It's like, "Well, we haven't done all the specs, and we haven't done..." I said, "I got this word from God five years ago, and now we're in a position..." Like that was the 1% I needed to go. I found that even if it wasn't God, he knew he had somebody he could trust.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, that's good.

Mike Todd:

Because I thought it was him, I would go. It takes me back to like Abraham when he says to Abraham in the Bible, like "Hey, go to the land that I will show you." Most of us would need God to lay it all the way out. Go to the land that is right here at this coordinates that you'll meet Betty at the city gates. We want it all planned out. I feel like so many of us miss things because we don't walk by faith, we walk by sight. For me, this is the thing. It may be delusional. It may be delusional to some people, it may be this will never be able to happen. But I found that in my relationship with God and my leadership, when I'm 51% sure, I bet on that. Every time I bet on it, I either learn something amazing along the way that's preparation for the next or it happens.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It hasn't all been up into the right.

Mike Todd:

No.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Have you had some of those 51% that have turned out to be like "Yup, shouldn't have done that"?

Mike Todd:

Definitely. I've had to fire a few of them. There are definitely, but if you turn every potential L, like a loss, into a lesson, you're still winning. I call it the bounce back. Like I'm always looking for how does this loss turn into a greater trajectory of upswing? Once I have that attitude and that perspective as I approach things, things don't stay losses for long.

Carey Nieuwhof:

This is like a personal question I ask myself almost daily. Let's talk about motive. How do you keep your motive pure? Because there's some God in it, but there's always self.

Mike Todd:

It's you first. God doesn't bless who you pretend to be, He blesses who you really are. I think that there have been several things that have helped my motive. I have a wife named Natalie that really does help me remember why I'm being used and what I really do believe when a lot of big things come or opportunities, I have to remember assignment. That has really helped my motive. The second thing that has helped my motive is hearing the stories of people, and how it's impacting their life, how I would never want to pervert or tank that. Like when you hear stories of families being reconciled to have never been to Tulsa, but they watch in different areas of the country what we're doing. It's the only thing they can talk about without arguing, and they've done it for a year.

Mike Todd:

Now, they're having Christmas together for the first time. If I add ambition into this and becoming a money grabber, it makes me afraid that level of transformation, which is the whole reason we're here, could be tainted by my own thing. I'm like, "Yeah, I don't want to mess with that. I don't want to do that." I think the last thing that is really like purified my motives... I'll say two more things, if that's okay, that purified my motives is my daily time with God. That prayer that David prayed, I pray all the time. "Search me, O God." If there's anything in me that is not like you... Now, this is a scary prayer for all the listeners. Do not pray this prayer if you don't want to be exposed. But when I pray, like "Search me, O God. If there's anything in me that's not like you, take it out. Show it to me, remove it." He does that.

Mike Todd:

Like how he answers prayers that we're excited about, posting about. We're talking about the blessings of God, he'll answer that prayer too. I'll say something was like, "Oh, snap, that was ugly," and that was in my heart. Or I'll do something I'm like the whole motive of that was wrong. When that happens and I'm exposed to that, it's that thing where you get to either humble yourself or be humbled. I've just chosen like, I don't ever want God to humble me. So, like I'll humble myself under the mighty hand of God. So, it's been a fun thing with that.

Mike Todd:

And then God's given me an awesome opportunity to remember that all of this really doesn't mean anything. My son, MJ, he's four years old. He has autism. At the same trajectory of all of this exposure and attention, we find out my son has autism. It made everything really be like great and not that great all at the same time. It made everything be like "Who just called? Where am I going? They want to pay how much?" All of that be like, but if I could hear my son say, "Daddy," or if he could be able to eat more, it just made it all. So, looking at it still being in the middle of it. It's one of those things that has become an anchor. I know that as big as God wants to use us, he's given me this anchor to keep me dependent. I believe all of us have that in some way.

Mike Todd:

Whether we recognize it or not, there's this thing that God's trying to use the anchor. You can be trying to untether yourself, but I honestly think it's the greatest thing that has happened to me, because it's kept me humble and it's kept my motive pure. I believe those are the things that allow me to work in transparency and authenticity.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to come back to that. Okay, let's talk about the inflection point. So, something happened a couple of years ago, it was 2018, where one of your videos just... So, take us from 2015 to that moment when your first video kind of took off online. What was the trajectory?

Mike Todd:

2015, I became the pastor of the church. Nobody's coming to church, almost didn't survive, okay? 2016, God told me to believe, to go beyond. That year, we gained \$400,000 in the budget and 400 new families came to the church. So, that for me, as late 20s church planter, I could have died and gone to heaven in that day. That was it. That was it. We made it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You know when it's like, "We're there. We're there. We're in the promised land."

Mike Todd:

We're going to be okay. 2017, God said, "Stride." S-T-R-I-D-E. I was like, "Stride? I don't even say that word. I don't even know what that means." I had to look it up. It means to walk in long, decisive steps in an intentional direction. I was like, "That's a dumb word." Why would you walk somewhere when you could run? I went back and forth with one of my mentors, Tim Ross, around this subject. We concluded as we searched the scriptures that Jesus fulfilled every messianic prophecy ever spoken about him. He did it in three years, Carey, but you never hear about him running to his next appointment.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're right.

Mike Todd:

He walked everywhere. He walked to some Samaria, and they walked to Jerusalem, like they walked... If I was the Son of God, I would at least had a horse. I would have at least had a carriage. Some of the disciples would have been the first Uber. I would have done some-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hurry up, Peter.

Mike Todd:

Come on, but they walked everywhere. This is what, I coined the phrase as, they found the pace of grace. They were graced for a certain pace that could have been faster, but they would have been outside of that window of grace. I adopted that. It culminated in 2017 December 5th and 6th of me canceling Christmas. For a church planter, I mean Christmas and Easter, that's the Super Bowl. That's when we want fireworks, pyrotechnics. We need ice cream sandwiches, and we need the kids to get tattoos that say, "Jesus lives." Like we need the whole thing. God said, "Cancel it. Have a regular Christmas service, and you preach." That's it. That was a huge faith step for me at the time because I didn't really know that that was okay to do. I felt like that was doing under what we should be doing.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, you had a big production in your head ready to go.

Mike Todd:

I mean, it was already in production.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, wow.

Mike Todd:

I pulled the plug on it. This was December 5. I felt like that was the obedience step to striding, to walking, to not burning out, to doing less, so God could do more. We ended up doing that and I'm twiddling my thumbs the next two weeks, like what in the world is about to happen? December 23rd, 24th, a young lady that we never met, doesn't go to the church, not a celebrity, posted a two-minute clip of Relationship Goals, a series I did in August. So, this is December, I did it in August. She's watching it. Oh, I forgot to tell you one of the only things that I did as a pastor in my first years, I felt very strong like we were supposed to buy new cameras for our church. So, we had several families that left the church-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Over the camera purchase?

Mike Todd:

Over \$80,000 of camera purchases. For two and a half years, we saw nothing happened from it except we would put our messages from Sunday on YouTube. About 100 people would watch outside of Transformation Church. Most of them were my mother, going back, and watching me like, "That's my baby. How come you leave?" She was just happy for me. So, for two and a half years, nothing. So, now fast forward back to 2017, this girl posts it and 2 million people watch this Relationship Goals clip in 48 hours.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Insane.

Mike Todd:

It's completely insane. She posted on Twitter and I didn't have a Twitter account at the time that I was managing. So, it was like God was using all of these things to say, "Hey, listen, because you obeyed me. You did less you. I'm about to do more. I'm about to do it in the most unconventional way. So, that people can see this wasn't you, it was me." So, then I'm sitting there oblivious to what's going on, because I don't have a Twitter. All I know is Instagram starts blowing up. I have 4,800 followers on Instagram. I'm at dinner at P.F. Chang's with my wife. I'm like, "Babe, Instagram says I have 14,000 followers." She was like, "What?" I was like "Yeah." I was like, "We just added 10,000 Instagram followers today." I was like, "Oh, Instagram is bugged." You know they have some bug.

Mike Todd:

I think what they did is Black Panther had just came out. They thought I was Michael B. Jordan, not Michael Todd, but I'm not going to tell Instagram. Next day, 10,000 more followers. Thursday, 10,000 more followers. I'm like, "What is going on?" And then I start talking to some people at our church. They're like, "Yeah, people have posted all over Facebook the Relationship Goals thing." and I'm like, "What are you talking?" I literally was oblivious.

Mike Todd:

And then we started seeing different things. People were like, "Who did you hire?" We're getting calls from different people, like "Who's your PR agency?" I'm like, "PR agency? What are you talking about?" Because we, at the time, had less than 12 staff members. So like, we didn't have nobody cutting up videos and putting them on Facebook. That was all the people being impacted, doing it on their own.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Crazy.

Mike Todd:

So, these people became the marketing team. They're sharing it with their friends and their groups and all that other stuff. So, what ends up happening in this moment is we go from 1,800 YouTube subscribers to 100,000 in less than 45 days.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Man.

Mike Todd:

I'm looking at it like, "What's happening?" But the thing was, is that we didn't have even a real working church website at the time. So, when people saw this two-minute clip, they were like, "We got to hear the whole sermon." So, they go, and they look, they type in "Michael Todd Relationship Goals," and they find an eight-part series. So, they start binge watching it, like it was Netflix. They're telling all their friends about all this stuff. So, then after they finish Relationship Goals, they find out there's two and a half years' worth of the same type of content on different subjects, which speaks to me being obedient at the moment that I said, "We got to get these cameras."

Mike Todd:

Because when everything blew up, we didn't have to create new content for them to fall in love with. They were falling in love with the content that had already been created. So, it became this thing where "Have you heard of Michael Todd? Oh, you got to watch this. Oh, this is a series on finances. This is a series on relationship. This is a series on damaged goods." People are watching. To this day, hundreds of thousands of people watch those series right now today, every week.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Which you had been doing when there were 200 people in the-?

Mike Todd:

When there was nobody watching.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Isn't that incredible?

Mike Todd:

It's so incredible.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's a story you couldn't engineer, a story you couldn't write-

Mike Todd:

Can't make up. Disney couldn't write this. It's kind of one of those things that it's just been a real divine work.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm not sure there's an answer to this, Mike. But any idea why your content resonates so much?

Mike Todd:

Yeah, I have a little idea. I'm actually authentic. Like, everybody buttons up, especially in church to give people... Even when people like "I'm going to be real right now," it's like the fake real.

Carey Nieuwhof:

There's a little bit...

Mike Todd:

Let me give you a little more than what the average. I'm authentic. I talked about my struggle with pornography. When I was coming into ministry, I talked about having a potential felony case at one time. I talked about the real issues that we have in our marriage. I always go to the raw of what the issue was, and then I show the answer, which is Jesus all the time. I think people can identify with that. I think the plastic, the fake, the edited, the uncensored, everything in our lives is getting more unfiltered except the church a lot of times.

Mike Todd:

What ends up happening is we have the answer for all of the raw, perverted, messed up things that are going on in society, but a lot of people are scared to lose touch with their donors, with the people that have signed up to this for being too controversial. I have nothing to lose. Like, honestly, when I've come into this, I knew it was God. If all of this goes away tomorrow, I'm good.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I was going to ask you that. Do you still feel like you have nothing to lose?

Mike Todd:

Nothing to lose.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Mike Todd:

Nothing, like I didn't do this. I'm sitting in this auditorium right now. It's paid off. We paid it off in seven months and all this other stuff. All this can go away, but I'll still embody the vision. I'll be representing God to loss people and found people for transformation in Christ, whether it's at FedEx, whether it's in a studio. I was doing this vision before it was a church vision. That's what I'm trying to get people to understand, is God doesn't care about the organization as much as he cares about the organism. When you embody what the word of God says, when you become a living epistle, when your business is so successful that people that don't even believe, like your believer are asking like, "What are you doing?"

Mike Todd:

We have more people checking into what Transformation Church is doing, not because they love God or they want to know more about Jesus, it's because like you just bought an arena. You don't have a college education, you have six months of Tulsa Community College. How did you do that? It's because my life is a living epistle. I can't tell this story without people knowing there's some divine things happening in here. Then it becomes the one thing that I don't have to be afraid to secure something that I didn't give myself.

Carey Nieuwhof:

The fame and celebrity can be hard at the best of times. What's this doing to your soul?

Mike Todd:

Man, I believe that it's exposing what's actually there. That's all light can do, like all light can do is illuminate what's already there. So, when a spotlight gets turned on you and cameras are turned on you, people think that's something they can hide behind. No, that's the only thing that really exposes you. I have had the awesome opportunity of being exposed in safety. I have people that are around me that know me, that know my heart, that know my heart's desire. God's brought people in into my life like Rich Wilkerson and Tim Ross, and Steven Furtick, and Pastor Robert Morrison, and different people that if I call their name, you would know them because they don't have to have anything, but they've been able to be around.

Mike Todd:

The number one being my wife and my parents who are still sitting on the front row every Sunday with me in ministry. Those people, I've been able to be like, "Hey, what does money do to you?" Be able to figure that out in safety. Hey, what is being able to have a picture with everybody you paid to go to their conference two years ago? Like what does it look like for them to text you and ask you to be a part of stuff?

Mike Todd:

And then you have to obey God and say, "I can't come because God told me to stride." Like, I've been able to do it in safety. I've been able to counsel. Me and my wife have done two weeks. We're headed to a third one here very soon of intense counseling, three hours, every day for five days straight of counseling. But it's been the most refreshing thing because the Bible says, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Why did you go?

Mike Todd:

Why did I go?

Carey Nieuwhof:

To counseling.

Mike Todd:

I went to counseling for a few reasons. Number one, me and my wife, the initial reason was trying to navigate the season we're in with everything that's happening with my son, the disappointment, and all of the first steps we missed. He has a younger sister, Eva, now. She can talk everybody's head off, but she's two and he's four. She has more words than him. Just navigating all of the disappointment and being people of great faith, but being very disappointed in a situation.

Mike Todd:

Touching everybody else's family and really having to deal with the tension of like, "I believe God, but why hasn't this situation change?" So, we were navigating that as a couple, individually. One was like, "We're going to go to counseling." When we got there, it was so much more about us and not that situation, and really what God's doing in us in this season that we're in, and all of the little traumas. Success is trauma.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, it is.

Mike Todd:

People don't understand that. They think that the trauma they go through of not being able to pay bills or having to work on a small business is like a thing, but success is a huge trauma.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How has that been traumatic for you?



Mike Todd:

It's been traumatic because it's been fast. It's been traumatic, because everything that I do is in front of hundreds, of thousands of people. I can't fail small.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How does that pressure feel like?

Mike Todd:

It's one of those things that... I don't know if this is the right answer, but it's the truthful one. I felt like I was built for it. Like, I don't know how else to say it. I work very well under pressure. The one thing that I've had to learn is that everybody doesn't. Because of the people factor of it, because of the people I love, because of my wife, my family, my team, I've had to slow down. That's why God, I believe, gave me that word 'stride,' because my motor, like, "Let's go full team ahead."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Let's just go.

Mike Todd:

But you miss miracles when you go fast. You miss opportunities to touch people. So, you remember in the Bible when Jairus was saying, "Hey, my daughter's dying. Jesus, will you come?" He says, "I'm coming," but he walked there. How do we know he walked? Because he went at a pace that a whole crowd of people could be around him. A woman who had been bleeding for 12 years was able to reach out and touch him. If he was running, she would have never been able to even touch him. If he was going as fast as he could go, he could have floated there. He could've walked through a wall, but he was walking at a pace where people could keep up and a miracle could happen.

Mike Todd:

For me, when we went to counseling, when we did these different things, it was making me step back and be like, "Yeah, we just got to stay in the pace of grace." We got to make sure our soul is healthy. We got to make sure that we've had fun, that we enjoy these moments, that we can step back and pray. Look at each other and be like, "Can you believe what God did?" It's helped us so much in our marriage. We're about to celebrate 10 years of marriage. It's crazy that this book Relationship Goals is coming out at a point where we're celebrating 10 years. We met when she was 14 and I was 15.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Mike Todd:

So, we've been together for a very long time, but our marriage is stronger than it's ever been. Our family is stronger than it's ever been. Our ministry is stronger than it's ever been. I've done less than I've ever done.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because we're talking about that. Was it right after that first counseling round, you just kind of cleared the deck for six to seven months?

Mike Todd:

It was right before.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right before. Take us through that.

Mike Todd:

So, I think this thing of striding, we said less is more, but there are seasons that stride doesn't have to do with fast or slow. It has to do with what's your graced for in that season. A lot of people, they just run at this motor, like "This is how I do." But maybe you were graced to do that in one season, but now the season has changed. You need to find the pace of grace in that season. The result is the same. The increase is the same, but you're not burnt out at the end of it, or your marriage is not failing at the end of it. What ended up happening was, 2018, God opened up doors. I spoke at some of the most influential churches and conferences ever. It was like, "What is happening?" So, we're just like, "Okay. 2019, let's keep going."

Mike Todd:

In 2019, I had bookings in 2022. It was like, ridiculous stuff. And then I got to about June or July, in prayer, I felt like God was like, "Hey, you need to check with your wife and see how everything's going." So, we had a big team meeting and she was like, "Mike, I really need you. I'm overwhelmed with stuff that's happening with MJ. Just take a few less engagements." I was like, "Okay, cool. We'll do that." That morning, I woke up with such a conviction on my heart that my first ministry is my family. God gave me scripture for it and all this other stuff. I was like, "I'm canceling everything." I feel like this what I'm supposed to do.

Mike Todd:

I went to my team, I went to my church, I went to the people. I had 13 engagements, arena engagements. I mean thousands of people on the billboards, all this other stuff. I was so worried about my reputation. I'm new in this and da, da, da, da. God said, "You know this is me, and I'll protect your reputation. I'll be your refuge." So, I was like, "Okay." I called a couple of very influential leaders and asked them how would they approach this. I got wisdom, because there's wisdom in a multitude of counsel, and then I did it. I canceled all 13 engagements. So, literally, I didn't have any engagements from July 2019 until January 2020. Cleared the deck, but at the moment I obeyed to stride again, God opened up this building, two weeks later.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Isn't that incredible?

Mike Todd:

Two weeks later, this building opens up. We didn't do our first conference, and 4,500 people come from all over the world. Somebody from every state in the US, including Alaska was at this conference and 30 different countries. It was our first conference. We sold out two weeks before the conference.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Crazy.

Mike Todd:

It was like all of these amazing things begin to happen. We weren't supposed to move into this building, Carey, until next September. On the second night of the conference, I just felt like, "Yo, we can't go back to that converted grocery store. God is saying this is it." So literally on a Thursday during a conference, I tell the team, "We're not going back to our other location. We're staying here." They're like, "Oh, right." But I mean, logistically, we had nothing here. Jeremy Foster preached at our church that Sunday. Hope City are moved by faith. They paid for the rental equipment for that day, which was \$60,000-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh my god.

Mike Todd:

Just for the day.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Mike Todd:

Literally during the week, I have a picture of it, this entire arena empty, no sound equipment, no music equipment, everything, because we rented it for a conference. We had to have church here on Sunday. It's crazy until it happens. That's why this whole thing of crazy faith, I really do think some of my ones are like, "I could never work with him," or anything. But it's one of those things that it's really been shaking people's faith of what's possible. I'm happy to report seven months later, we own every piece of equipment in this building. Everything is paid off.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's insane. It was built for how much?

Mike Todd:

\$54 million.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And you got it for?

Mike Todd:

\$10.5 million. It's 162,000 square feet of arena and four stories of office spaces. It came with 975 car covered parking garage. We bought the entire thing for \$10.5 million. We took the loan out in August and we paid it off in seven months.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's exceptional.

Mike Todd:

That's God.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We could be here all day.

Mike Todd:

Yes, sir.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I wish I was here all day.

Mike Todd:

Come on, man.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But let's talk about your book.

Mike Todd:

Yes, sir.

Carey Nieuwhof:

For the three people who haven't read it by the time this comes out, would you tell us... This is the series that kind of blew up that is now turned into book form. But you didn't... It's different.

Mike Todd:

It's different.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because you shared with me the vision behind the book.

Mike Todd:

Yes. So, I grew up in church. I was a wild child. So like, I heard all of this stuff we were supposed to do and like did the exact opposite. You know what I'm saying? One of the things that I realized as I navigated through my relationship journey is out of all the sermons, all the lessons, all the things that I learned, nobody really talked about relationships. It was kind of like you had one rule, don't have sex before you're married. It was kind of like, "Uh-oh. What happens if you've done that? What happens if you were violated young? What happens if you went to your uncle's house and found some magazines under the bathroom kept like...?"

Mike Todd:

There was no instruction. I decided that a lot of me and Natalie's struggles and successes were accidents. They weren't intentional. This phrase came up called relationship goals. I began to think about that. How can you have a goal if you don't have aim? There are so many people that want relationship goals. They want their husband or wife to be this or that. They got their list and all that other stuff, but relationally, they get friends, they date, and they marry people with no aim. I thought

like, "Hey, why don't I take what I didn't have. Instead of complaining about it, become a solution." I really wrote this book for my granddaughter.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Who does not exist.

Mike Todd:

Does not exist right now. I am 33 years old, and my oldest child is six. But I thought about what if I wrote a playbook of things that I've learned from the Word of God in my actual life that my granddaughter or grandson could pick up. Be able to have an understanding of what I had to figure out with a lot of hurt, with a lot of frustration, with a lot of accidents, because I just had no understanding. Where there's no wisdom or no knowledge, people perish, because of a lack of knowledge and lack of understanding. I believe in this time that we live in, where more people don't want to be in relationships, they just want to have friends with benefits. They want to Netflix and chill. They want to create babies, and have children outside of the context of family. It's just all these things.

Mike Todd:

I think it's one of those things that if we're going to win in relationship, we need to go back to the originator of relationship, which is God. We need to figure out what are those truths that last and let's see set that as the target, because culture is really setting the target for relationships. It's an ever-moving target. What marriage was in the 60s is different than what marriage is in the 90s. It's completely different than what it is today. That moving target allows people not to truly aim. So, I decided, "Hey, let's get a real goal for relationships and let's win in relationships." I am really excited to be able to share some of the things that I've found from people who are dating and need to figure out a system to do that, and which they can get in and get out of.

Mike Todd:

Today, dating is like getting married. Like once you're Facebook official, it's like you have to have a divorce to not be in relationship with those people. Intentional friendship, so what happens if you're on your second marriage? Or what happens if you're single and becoming content in singleness? How do I know a relationship needs to end? Like all of these different things we have tried to concisely and authentically put into this book that'll help people win in relationships.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Was writing hard for you or easy?

Mike Todd:

I think that writing is hard for me. Talking is not hard or me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, I can tell.

Mike Todd:

Talking. So, we found a process where I could really dictate most of this, and then put it in somebody's hands that could put it together. And then I went back, and fine-tooth combed, and rewrote basically

the whole book. So, I kind of find I found my process to like, talk it out first, put it in book format. It's like, "I would never ever say that." So basically, rewrite the book with the format, and we came out with Relationship Goals.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Last question for you. Again, we could have gone on another hour-

Mike Todd:

You got two more in you. Come on. I like talking to you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, right. Listen. You know good interview? I didn't even look at my iPad.

Mike Todd:

Oh, wow.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think I looked once so that's a good interview. So, I guess I can close it.

Mike Todd:

Okay, come on, man.

Carey Nieuwhof:

All right. I can close it now. Because this is breakneck speed, I love the part of your story where it's years without momentum, just a lot of crazy faith. That's going to speak to a lot of leaders. But there are people who are on a rocket ride right now, listening to this podcast to in business and in church world. Walk us through. So, you've shut yourself down numerous times. You've gone off site to counseling, three rounds, which is good.

Mike Todd:

I take a month sabbatical every year,

Carey Nieuwhof:

You take a month sabbatical every year, so talk about that. What do you do with that?

Mike Todd:

This is a spiritual practice for me that it's very hard. So, I want to preface it by that. Because I feel like if I'm here, if I can do what I need to do it, at least if it fails, it was my fault. But this is where I put the ministry and the church back in God's hand, every year. This is another thing that keeps me humble, is I walk away from everything, office business. If it's not on fire and burning down, don't call me about it. It makes me know this is God's church. It's not mine. It's going to be his before me and it'll be his after me. I go away. I go on a week vacation with my wife. We have a great time just connecting and thanking God for everything that he's doing.

Mike Todd:

I come back and we do what we call PK Vacay, which is my kids are young right now, but we spend and plan out seven whole days of going to the zoo, going to the activity, making Gak, making slime, doing all this other stuff. But making it just completely intentional. I've seen too many ministers, business leaders, as well as CEOs lose their family and gained money, gained success, gained affluence. I was like "We're not going to do that." So, we are intentional with that. Then that third week I do what I call Honey Do List. Like everything that I should have hung, put up, painted, I do that. That last week, then I go away, and I seek God. I go read, I go pray. I write down vision. Relationship Goals came the first message off a sabbatical.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Really?

Mike Todd:

The first message after I recreated. That's what that word means, recreation. It's recreating. God could have built everything in six days. But he put in there another day that is counted, but he said he rested. There are too many of us that are not doing the things that we need to do to recreate. We're just continuing to create. What happens is if you don't get re-up of the creation, sometimes, it'll run out. I decided we're going to do that. Again, it's a spiritual practice. It's a trust practice. It feels like, "Ugh, I'm sitting here and I'm not doing anything." It takes me a week and a half, two weeks to even turn off, but at the level that God is blessing. He's like the church's growing when I'm gone.

Mike Todd:

It's almost like maybe I don't need to come back. Or we see momentum, where I get the best ideas coming off a sabbatical. It's one of those things that it helps me. I just would encourage anybody who's on a rocket ship ride, like turn them off. Less is more. Less is more.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We talked about that before and people don't get that.

Mike Todd:

They do not get it, because they want it to never stop. This is the thing. Either it's going to stop involuntarily, or you're going to stop and make it last.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I can tell you all about that one day.

Mike Todd:

Yes, sir.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's what happened to me. When did you start your sabbatical? What year?

Mike Todd:

At the year I became the pastor of the church.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Really? 2015?

Mike Todd:

2015.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, when you had 150 people.

Mike Todd:

Literally, that first time, I was like, "I'm going to come back, and the church is going to be completely gone." Because February 1st, 2015, I became the pastor. July, my mentor said, "You got to leave." He said, "You got to teach the people that your priority is not the church. It's your family. If you teach them early, some people will leave." He said, "But the people who get it, they'll respect you and honor you for it." I literally get up and tell my church every time that we take a sabbatical, I said, "I'm giving you permission as the pastor of this church to take two weekends off of coming here for the purpose of intentionally connecting with your family." I've never heard that from a pulpit.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've never heard that either.

Mike Todd:

But why in the world where we have people come... We're healing stuff that could be healed if you took a break. We're praying for stuff. We're sending people to counseling and doing stuff. That if you would just stop, and look at your wife, and pay attention to your kids, and actually go do something you like to do, that you lose money at. It would give back to you in a way that would allow you to last. A lot of people aren't lasting. You see these rocket ship stories, but as my friend Judah Smith would say, "I want to be better at 70." Like, I'm 33 years old. I don't know how long I'm going to be a pastor.

Mike Todd:

If God's done all of this in five years, I don't know what he's going to do. I'm 40 in seven years. I don't know what 40 looks like for me. What I am going to know is that my wife will be a priority. My children will know that I love them. I'll be obedient to whatever God tells me to do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Mike Todd:

I'm going to stride.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Anything else you want to share, Mike?



Mike Todd:

I like you, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I like you, Mike.

Mike Todd:

I mean, this is fun for me, man. Honestly, I'm excited about all of the people in that are listening right now that have a huge dream. I just want to let you know I'm living proof that if you follow the playbook that you feel in your heart that has been set out for you, at some point, at some time, I'm not saying it'll happen in 5 years. I'm not saying it'll in 10. All this could be gone tomorrow. What we're trying to do right now is live at 51%. So, I'm encouraging you, everybody that's listening, live at 51%. You got it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm in, I'm down. Relationship Goals, available everywhere.

Mike Todd:

Everywhere.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Literally everywhere.

Mike Todd:

Hopefully, everywhere.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It would probably the number one book in the world.

Mike Todd:

Hopefully.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Mike, what a gift this has been. You've been so generous with your time.

Mike Todd:

Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thank you so much.

Mike Todd:

This has been fun, Carey. I appreciate you, man.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, by the way, for those of you who love YouTube and who doesn't, there is a really wonderfully produced video version of this interview. If you want to use it for team study, you want to look at it again, you can find that over at my YouTube channel. Man, that was so rich. There are transcripts, there are show notes. You can find that all at [CareyNieuwhof.com/Episode336](http://CareyNieuwhof.com/Episode336). Coming up, next episode, well, Mike Todd part two. Here's a little excerpt from that. It was pretty great.

Mike Todd:

Well, this is the metric that's going to matter to most pastors. Our giving has doubled, I mean 100% more. I say that to say that it's real to the people. Like if you could get over you, and like get over like how it feels to you, I am preaching in an arena that seats 4,500 people with less than 10 people in it every week. But it is real to the end user. There is no way, Carey, that we could have fit the amount of people that we reach last week into our building if we had 20 services.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that is tomorrow on the podcast. Subscribers, you get it all for free. Yeah, we just sat down with Mike and talked about what's changed in the last 40 days. He was super transparent. If you want to see the future... I told him when I was done, I wanted to call the episode, "Hey, the future called. His name is Mike Todd." This guy gets it at a level that most ministry leaders don't. So, we'll talk about that tomorrow.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Also, if you haven't yet checked out my crisis course, we've had, probably by the time you hear this, pushing 8,000 leaders. Take it, it's absolutely free. You can text the word 'CRISIS' to 33777 to get in, or just go to [HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com](http://HowToLeadThroughCrisis.com). As we move into What I'm Thinking About, thank you to our partners, Ministry Boost. They've got a brand-new resource. You can get it very inexpensively, \$25 for the new Family Retention Plan, and a free resource that helps you navigate what's ahead at [MinistryBoost.org/Barey](http://MinistryBoost.org/Barey).

Carey Nieuwhof:

Something brand new, Craft and Character, all about communication. You can get 20% off registering before May 15th at [CraftAndCharacter.org](http://CraftAndCharacter.org). So, if you're a communicator and you're not going anywhere to learn at conferences, you'll want to definitely check this out with Steve Carter, Dharius Daniels, myself, and Sean Morgan. We're so happy to bring that to you. Now, here's what I am thinking about right now. Tomorrow, Mike and I do a deep dive on what to measure in online attendance, but this has become a huge issue. At the time that I'm recording this episode, which is about seven days before you hear it, 80% of all churches now are experiencing the same attendance levels that they did in person or increased. It's now 59% who say they're growing.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now the critics say, "Well, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. How do we know what to count? How do you even measure online growth?" So, I want to unpack that a little bit for you. Let's take a few questions. Question number one, should three-second Facebook views count as online attendance? It's a great question to ask. Because if you look at how if you're broadcasting on Facebook Live... This is true, by the way, business leaders, content creators, anybody, not just online church. You think "Wow, 8,000

people watch my video." But then when you go into analytics, you learned that maybe you had 8,000 three-second views, only had say 3,000 ten-second views.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How many one-minute views do you have? Well, on a recent video I did, it dropped from 7,800 to 3,000 in ten-seconds, one-minute views 1,100. So, all of a sudden, your metrics get just slaughtered, right? But it's really easy to say, "Oh yeah, 8,000 people watch the video." Well for three seconds, does that actually count? Obviously, there are a variety of opinions. But what I would want to suggest, and we'll pick up this conversation tomorrow with Mike on the next episode of the podcast. You probably want to count conservatively, because yeah, it's great to have a three-second, somebody scrolled through your feed. Facebook registered it. They went, "Oh, yeah, I saw that." But you're not really reaching people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm not really influencing people at the three-second level. If somebody has watched for 10 seconds, you can argue they stopped to pay attention. I would probably use the one-minute metric. That's where you discover, okay, somebody listened enough to engage, perhaps to remember. I would even pay more attention to engagement, which we will get into tomorrow again on the show. But counting three-second views on Facebook as attenders is kind of like counting people who drive by your building as attenders, probably not a wise strategy or one that you can build the future on.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, the other thing you'll get on any metrics, YouTube, Instagram or Facebook, is average watch time. So, on that video in question, where there were 7,800 views, people on average watch my video for 20 seconds. Now, remember, that average is down because of the people who are on for three seconds. But you really start to drill into the metrics and your four-minute video was only accessed for an average of 20 seconds. So, can I really claim that 1,000 people watched my video if they didn't watch the whole thing? Well, that's where I'm going to switch it up a little bit and say, "Hey, guys, that's the internet." I mean, that's how I behave. That's how you behave. It is life online in 2020.

Carey Nieuwhof:

As much as I would love everyone to say, okay, you memorized the entire talk I gave, it's probably not realistic. Think about it. If you were in person, because people in person, you can count 400 people in the room or whatever. But do you start discounting attendance based on who's really paying attention? Does someone's attendance only count if they can tell you the main point of the sermon? Or if they could tell you all five key points of the message? Or do you only count their attendance if they can pass a sermon comprehension test on the way to the parking lot, right? Or what about worship? How many people attended worship? Well, do you subtract people who didn't sing? Do they count? Do you eliminate people who didn't raise their hands?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Or what about the people who sang the lyrics, but didn't really mean it in their hearts? You see what I mean? You can start discounting everything. This is where there's a line. I would be on the conservative side, maybe do the one-minute views. But if you're like, "Well, they didn't all listen to the end. Da, da, da, da. It's like, well, even when people are in the room, are they really paying attention or not? So, before you write off online church or online anything as America reopens and the world reopens,

probably in stages, remember this. Over 1 billion hours of video are watched every day on YouTube, that's every single day. Some of that is actually real focused engagement.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now, if you're a podcaster, like I am, you can go into Apple Podcasts Connect. I really worry at times about long form podcasting, hour-, hour-and-a-half episodes. Well, that'll take tell you how many people listen. People listen to somewhere between depending on the episode 50 to 90% of these episodes on average, which is good, which means most of you are listening pretty much all the way through the end. Most of you are listening. I had a 90-minute show, and people are engaged for 10 minutes of that, I got to rethink my format. But the vast majority of people actually listen to the whole thing, which is really super encouraging. So, remember, there are people online every day. You can get too conservative and say, "Well, they're not really listening until the end, so I'm not going to produce content."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Over 1 billion hours of video are watched every day on YouTube every single day. So, you can go back to your room of 200 people or 2,500 people, unplugged your online ministry. Or you can figure out how to do both well. And then finally, I'm going to ask this should you use an attendance multiplier? We've touched on this before on the podcast. Many churches use 1.7 as a multiplier. So, in my Facebook video example, 1,100 views becomes 1,800 in attendance. Now, why a multiplier? Because unlike podcasting, for video, sometimes families gather to watch a video or friends gather or a team gathers. So, I would tend to lean away from using multipliers, because already your one-minute view stat is pretty generous. But if you want to use it, there's a couple ways to do it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Number one, err on the side of conservatism. I would go with 1.4, 1.7. Or number two, find out how many people are actually attending. So, if you have a little sign in or welcome card, ask people how many people are watching with you. Once you get about 100 results, you can average it out. You can go, "Oh, actually, in our case, it's about 3.8," or, "It's 0.5." So, whatever, that wouldn't be 0.5, but you know what I mean? 1.5 or whatever the multiplier is, but you want to be accurate. Because here's what I believe. A lot of these are vanity metrics. The more a leader exaggerates or distorts the truth, the harder it is to trust him or her. So, you really don't want to be exaggerating.

Carey Nieuwhof:

When I share some of the stats on this platform with clients, I want to make sure that they are 100% accurate. I want to make sure that we are not exaggerating, we're not boasting, we're not lying. That if we say we have 11.3 million downloads, we actually have 11.3 million downloads. I can say "No, we actually know the numbers on listener retention. Yes, it's a long form podcast." But depending on the episode, people listen to 50 to 90% of the way through the entire episode. Not bad in an attention economy, where attention deficit seems to be the case. And then obviously, we'll talk about this again tomorrow on the podcast, but you can start to track engagement over time.

Carey Nieuwhof:

As you grow your email list, as you see in a church case, decisions for Christ, as you see clients, customers jump on board, as you see people interacting, engaging, that's when you really know you're making traction. So, those are some thoughts. That's what I'm thinking about. How do you count online to attendance? That's my shot at it for now. I love these days. Crisis is an accelerator and we all are

moving fast through this space. We're back tomorrow with a fresh Mike Todd episode. Where if you enjoy this kind of nerdy conversation that I've had at the end, Mike and I go at it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How do you count online? How do you make an impact online? Why is there traffic up 10x during Coronavirus? Yeah, we're going to talk about that and so much more tomorrow. It's a short episode. Probably, I don't know, 40 minutes max. So, I think you're going to enjoy it, then we're back Thursday with a fresh episode as well. So, yeah, kind of new stuff here on the podcast. But hey, crisis is the cradle for innovation, is it not? Thanks, guys, for listening. I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer:

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