

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 341 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. My guest is Joel Manby, he's back on the podcast. We're going to talk about crisis leadership from his time in Amazon, Saab, as the CEO of SeaWorld, and also working through the Great Recession, how that worked.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Today's episode is brought to you by Pro Media Fire, and by the Leaders in Living Rooms podcast. So I'm so glad you guys are listening. Hey, thank you so much for joining us. We had an incredible month last month, and in the midst of all the craziness that the world is right now, you have been listening in in record numbers. So really, really grateful. For those of you who are new for the first time, welcome. Make sure you subscribe. It's absolutely free.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And if you would be so kind, please leave a rating and review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. I read every one of them. I'm so thankful for you, and I'm glad that we get to do this together. We do a segment at the very end of the show called What I'm Thinking About. And in today's interview, Joel talks about how difficult leadership can get. And he has led through numerous crises, including the dotcom tech bubble that burst 20 years ago, the Great Recession, SeaWorld was under siege when he was leading it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And he talks about getting really, really low in his life, very openly, very transparently. Leadership is hard, and he even went through a period, Joel and I have talked many times, where he thought about ending his life. And so at the end of this podcast, in the What I'm Thinking About segment, I'm going to talk about suicide, leadership, and the dark inner struggle that very few people understand. I had a very dark episode myself in 2006 where I thought about suicide. So grateful I didn't take that step.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But anyway, I know leadership can be hard. I'm glad we can have a conversation about it here on the podcast. So that will be at the very end. Very excited to be able to share conversations like this with you. Hey, do you know that Netflix started by sending DVDs in the mail and then made a shift to digital? Yeah, people forget that, right? That Netflix was actually a DVD company. Well, there's a disruption happening in the church right now. And most people think things will not go back to normal. I would agree with that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So here's the question, do you need a partner that can help you in the shift to digital? Well, that's exactly what Pro Media Fire is doing with their Church Growth Program. The Church Growth Program provides your church with a digital coach, a creative team, a web team, and a social team for less than

the cost of a staff hire. So it's not just, "Oh, we got some graphics, what do we do with them?" I mean, you get strategy, you get a coach, you get everything. And so you basically get an entire team of professionals, a graphic designer, video editor, web editor, social media expert, digital strategy coach working for you. Yeah, for less than hiring even one of those for yourself.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you can book a free strategy session by going to ProMediaFire.com/ChurchGrowth. That's ProMediaFire.com/ChurchGrowth. Also, those of you who heard the Sean Morgan episode a few episodes ago, know what a great leader Sean Morgan is. I loved that. I thought that was a masterclass. He brought his military background, et cetera. Well, do you know that Sean's got his own podcast? It's called Leaders in Living Rooms, and I'll tell ya, it's something I listen to. I don't listen to a lot of podcasts, but that is one on my personal playlist.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So he sits down and has conversations with Jud Wilhite, Brady Boyd, Aaron Brockett, David Kinnaman, Kenton Beshore. And he even had a conversation with me. And the thing I like about Sean's style is he got stuff out of me that nobody else gets, and he just has that ability. I've interviewed a lot of the people he has, and I learned something from every interview. They're shorter, maybe 40, 45 minutes, and they're really catalytic. So if you want to add a podcast to your rotation, wherever you get your podcasts, just look for Leaders in Living Rooms. And the home base for that podcast is CDFcapital.org/leadersinlivingrooms. But of course it's on Apple Podcasts or wherever you currently listen.

Carey Nieuwhof:

One quick thing before we jump into today's conversation with Joel Manby. So the world is changing unpredictably and strangely right now. There are going to be some organizations that make it, and some organizations that don't. I put together a little quiz called the Will I Thrive quiz. It's short, takes about two minutes. I'd love for you to take it. So you can go to willithrive.com, or just text the words willithrive to 33777. Take the quick quiz. I designed it to help you see whether you're positioned to thrive in the new normal. Some organizations are going to do it, some organizations are not, and it's all part. It can lead you into our 30 Day Pivot program, a brand new resource that I've just released, that is going to help you pivot as quickly as every 30 days, if you need to.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's something I've done multiple times this year, but I got to tell you, I think it's going to become a superpower in the future. So to see whether that is something that would help you, go to willithrive.com, take the quick quiz, and we can pick up the conversation from there. Well, I am so excited to have Joel Manby with us. He's got 25 years of CEO experience. He's been a guest before, he's written a book called Love Works, which talks about how to use love as a leadership matrix. It sold over 100,000 copies, and an expanded version was just released in March, 2020.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Joel was previously CEO of SeaWorld. He also served as CEO of Herschend Entertainment, and worked at Saab, did an Amazon startup. We get into all of that. And he's the non executive chairman of Orange, one of my absolute favorite organizations. So without further ado, here is my conversation with Joel Manby.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Joel, welcome back to the podcast. Good to have you back so soon under rather insane conditions, right?

Joel Manby:

Yes, I wish it was under better circumstances.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, well, we're here in the midst of this season, and Joel, I wanted to have you on because you and I were on a lot of calls together, and we worked together through ReThink and Orange, and just have developed a friendship too. And, as we were starting to talk personally about navigating this crisis, I realized you had a lot of gold to go. I want to start in kind of an unusual place, because we pivoted on this podcast to just be talking about the crisis. But what has been the most surprising thing about the crisis so far to you?

Joel Manby:

To me, Carey, it's the instability and lack of safety that we feel as a society. In 9/11, we were all afraid for a while, afraid of flying, afraid of high buildings. But now, I don't think, at least certainly not in my lifetime, has the human race faced this kind of broad feeling of lack of safety, lack of security. People call it anxiety, people call it fear, but we don't feel safe anywhere right now. And it's a crazy feeling. It is scary. And then as a Christian, sometimes I think I shouldn't be ever scared. I shouldn't ever be worried, but I am. And then it makes me challenge myself. But the most surprising thing is that how our safety and our feeling of safety has gone away.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You have your foot in both the church world and the business world, so you're the perfect guest for this podcast, cause that's where most of the leaders live. Some of them live in the business world, some in the church world. But when you think back to your SeaWorld days or your GM days, or the corporate CEOs you know, how would you read their mood? What would you say, is the fear pretty deep there as well in the corporate world, among your friends and colleagues?

Joel Manby:

Yeah, no one has ever seen anything like this, and no one was really prepared, right? And at the end of the day, the only way you could stomach this crisis is to have built up a ton of cash. And other than very old entrepreneurs who have been through the Depression or have been through another crisis and ran out of cash, most people are leveraging too much. They don't have enough cash in the bank, and I think we've all learned an incredibly valuable lesson.

Joel Manby:

But unless you're a business that's really been helped by the crisis, like an Amazon, you know who they all are, there's a lot of fear and a lot of scrambling right now. Even people that appear to be smooth ducks on the surface are paddling like crazy underneath. Whether it's to get liquidity, maximize their revolvers, get more loans to just see it through. There's a huge scramble to get the government money, the PPP. You know, I'm hearing all kinds of rumors there that it's running out. People are already a lot more demand than supply. So there is fear.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've asked this question of a few people, but I don't think on the podcast yet, but I'm just curious, cause you've run four or five organizations as CEO. Do you have a good rule of thumb under normal conditions for how much cash on hand you should have in the bank? I know you can have too little. I think maybe Sean Morgan did say this on the podcast, you know, so many conversations, you can't remember what you had when.

Carey Nieuwhof:

He said you could also have too much, cause it makes you lazy and not innovative. Do you have a rule of thumb about if you're running a church or an organization? And I realize it varies organization to organization, but some say a month, some say three months, some say a year. Do you have a benchmark?

Joel Manby:

I will tell you, the benchmark I would have said is six months. But now I would tell you a year. I mean, from now on, any business I'm involved in, that's what we're building cash for. Unfortunately, obviously if you have more cash in which you can't invest, or you can't get a return on of any degree, you're decreasing your return a little bit because you could lever up and invest. You could maybe get more stock in the company and so forth, but that demands a higher return.

Joel Manby:

So I think in this case, we've learned that you should sacrifice a little return, because the worst case scenario is running out of cash, closing the business, and no investor can take that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Would that be a year worth of revenue, a year worth of core expenses?

Joel Manby:

Yeah. A year worth of absolute bottom line fixed expenses, whether it's payroll. And not too many people are going to say a year, it's probably going to be three to six months. But after this, you can never feel too safe, really.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's funny, I'm a six month core expense person, and I'm thinking about the same thing, like maybe a year next time.

Joel Manby:

Yeah. And then we may loosen over time, but right now there's just too many uncertainties with the virus.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, that's really helpful. Can you fill us in Joel? We gave you a resume during the intro a little bit so people have an idea who you are, but can you talk about some of the crises you've faced in the past? You've had your share, right?

Joel Manby:

I laugh just because we were talking briefly before it started, yeah this gray hair is earned through all the crises. It's specifically a SeaWorld gray. Sherwin Williams, I think it's color number 132. But obviously Blackfish with SeaWorld, the whole crisis there, that was existential. It really threatened our whole business model. We can talk about that more if you want. That was a big one. They had California legislation that was going to drive them out of business, et cetera. But also with Herschend Entertainment, which was a large theme park company, went through the 07/08 crisis. And we came through that, but we had to lay off a lot of people and all that kind of thing.

Joel Manby:

Saab, I ran Saab, North America. They were really at the bottom of the industry. We were running out of cash. We had to make drastic, drastic changes, but we were able to turn the ship there. And then that last one was Amazon.com. We were a partner company with Amazon, and we had a company called greenlight.com, which sold cars through Amazon, which I still think is a great idea. But we got caught up in the, the dotcom crash, and basically were forced to sell the company. And I would say I probably learned more from that failure than any of the successes of the other turnarounds. And you always learn more in a failure, but those are the four big ones I've lived through.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. So how old were you when you were CEO of Saab, and when you were with cars.com and Amazon? You were in your thirties, right?

Joel Manby:

I became CEO of Saab, North America at 36, which is very young for GM. And I was very fortunate because they wanted a Saturn person specifically. And most of the Saturn people were very young. Then when I ran the dotcom for the Bezos company, I was probably 40. And then going to Herschend, was probably 43. And then leaving SeaWorld, I was 58. So just to give you a range of ages.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, because we have a lot of young leaders listening. I listened to your resume, and again, when you were on, we'll link to that original one, you're like, "Wow, that's quite a resume." But you have weathered a lot of crises. So take us back, cause everybody, and younger leaders will have read about or heard about the dotcom bubble bursting in 99, 2000. But why don't we start there? What was that crisis like? What was the crisis? What happened?

Joel Manby:

Well, basically I was recruited by the board that included Amazon, Asbury Automotive, and then Kleiner Perkins, which is a great private equity firm in California. They're very big out there. So very well respected. And the financials they gave me, which lesson learned were not audited, it was their spreadsheet, but I trusted it of course, said that we had five years of cash. And all we had to do is get 1% share of market, and my stock was worth X millions, and the company would go public, and it looked fantastic.

Joel Manby:

Well, my first day of work, literally my first day of work, the NASDAQ crashed 35%. By the end of the week, it had crashed 50%, and all valuations were gone. The money we were going to raise that gave us that five-year length of time, they pulled their funding. Then I found out that we had to pay 15 million even to launch with Amazon. So what I thought was five years, literally within a week became 90 days of cash left, and it was a disaster.

Joel Manby:

And I had to lay off almost 80% of the people the first week. And I literally, Carey, got sick to my stomach. I literally went in the bathroom and threw up, came back out, would do it again. And I just wouldn't delegate it cause I felt so badly. And we had to move so quickly. But I learned so much then about, I came into a situation, I didn't do enough due diligence, and I waited a few days too long. You had to move extremely, extremely quickly in those situations.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you've got some leaders listening and it was, "Hey, March 1st is my start date." And then they walk into this giant cliff, their company, their church, whatever. So thank you for sharing that. How did you, at 36, 34, how did you talk yourself through those moments? What was your self talk like, if you can take us back to Amazon?

Joel Manby:

Yeah. With the Amazon one, it was, we just have to survive as long as we can, and do the best thing we can for employees. So we tried to transition them to other places. I tried to keep the investors informed. But we had to give haircuts to everybody. Every supplier had to take care of cuts. But it's just constantly on the phone. But just knowing that ultimately that didn't define who I was. I am glad in those situations I'm a believer, because at least you're able to go back and say, "Whether this thing goes public or not, God does not care."

Joel Manby:

And I had to focus on those kinds of thoughts, because from a worldly perspective, it was going down in flames and we had to sell. We only had so much cash left. So you really have to fight that societal pressure of everything we do has to turn to gold. And as it applies to COVID-19, 99% of the time, nobody did anything wrong here. Nobody could have had enough cash probably stored up. And yes, some people were caught off guard, but we have to realize that we had no control over this. And we just have to do the right thing and take a day at a time, not project too far out in the future. Cause the projection will really take you down, from a depression standpoint or a fear standpoint or anxiety standpoint.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How did you decide that you wanted to be CEO again, when it was that hard on round one? Why did you not just say, "You know what, I don't belong in the C suite. I'm not a CEO. I'm going to step back."? I would imagine I would ask myself that question in that moment.

Joel Manby:

I did for a while. Actually it was when I left, I left the Amazon deal that I worked with Reggie Joiner to start Orange. And for those of the listeners that are church related or leadership related in the church, Orange is a very big supplier of strategy. And I thought that's what I wanted to turn my life to. And Reggie was brilliant, and I helped him with the money backing basically. He did all the strategy.

Joel Manby:

But I decided that God really wanted me in the marketplace, and felt like I had the education and the qualifications, and so I decided to go back at it again. And Herschend was just a tremendous, tremendous 13 years of learning leadership with love. And that's what we talked somewhat about in the last podcast, is that if I hadn't gone forward, I never would have learned about leading with love from the Herschends. Love Works wouldn't have been written, and the whole Undercover Boss experience, none of that would've happened.

Joel Manby:

So what I would encourage your listeners, is sometimes in the very darkest moments, you don't see a way out. And I did have terrible thoughts. I considered suicide even in that era, including at SeaWorld. But you get through it. And then you realize that God was wanting to teach you something. And for me, he's taught me a lot, but that's what I would encourage your listeners, is just keep going. Do the right thing every day. We will get to the other side, and you will be such a better leader for going through this crisis, the rest of your life.

Joel Manby:

I know people are probably thinking, "Well, I'd like a little less of a lesson right now." And we're all feeling that way, but just hang in there cause you'll look back at it very positively.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Joel, I appreciate you raising that. And if you don't mind me going back there, I had a season where I had suicidal thoughts too. It was a number of years ago. Do you mind talking about that a little bit more? What that was like, how you move through it? One of the concerns I have in this moment is, mental health is a huge issue right now, for people who are struggling financially, for people who've lost their job. I'm sure numerous listeners are like, "You should have seen me in January. You should see me now. My life looks totally different." What was that season like for you, and how did you move through it?

Joel Manby:

Yeah, well, I don't mind going there. I appreciate the asking. I've actually had two periods in my life where I thought seriously about ending my life. And one was what we just talked about, but also at SeaWorld. and we mentioned a little bit that I went through a divorce, and leaving Seaworld within six months of each other. And that was as deep as it ever got.

Joel Manby:

I know this sounds cliché, but when it was worse for me, as I would think about it so specifically, and I would see it in my head over and over again. And the more I fed that visual image in that everything would be okay, then there would be peace and there wouldn't be pain and there wouldn't be all this medication and self destructive behavior in this period.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:21:04]

Joel Manby:

I just somehow got through it one day at a time. The best thing I can say other than just don't give into those thought patterns, fight for something positive, read Scripture, take a quiet time, take a walk, drink

tea. Second thing I would say is just don't medicate. I think when people medicate their pain, we think we're doing ourselves a favor, but it actually makes it worse. It's a spiral downward.

Joel Manby:

I didn't get healthy, I didn't get totally out of the pit at least with SeaWorld for three years. And it was finally, I had the courage to completely stop drinking anything. I drank tea when I got anxiety or just, we can't medicate. And because that's the only way we get healthy is to be thinking of things clearly and seeing the world clearly, good or bad. But medicating doesn't help.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I really appreciate you talking about that. And it's hard, mine was so long ago or it feels that way, but that pit is so dark. I would just say to leaders, my lesson from that season in my life is you're most tempted to quit moments before your critical breakthrough. At that time I wasn't doing leadership stuff. I was leading a local church. I thought my life was complicated, but I had no idea the joy that lay ahead, the opportunity that lay ahead. I think we have an enemy, Joel. I know you would agree with that, spiritually.

Joel Manby:

Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And he would love to take us out, wouldn't he?

Joel Manby:

I love your phrase. It's similar to the sunshine doesn't come out until just after the darkest moment of the night, basically. And yeah, I'm so glad that I didn't do that because of the impact on our family and kids and just what God has taught me. And I'm glad you said that to your listeners. In the new edition of my book, I actually spend a whole chapter on the darkness and how I came out of it. And there's eight points, basically. Four of them are mistakes, like trying to find happiness versus just contentment or getting away from my own self reflection. I won't go through all of them now, but they're all laid out in that Love Works book if people are interested, there's some good learnings to getting through, I call it the slimy pit, like you said.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So have you read the earlier version that wasn't in there.

Joel Manby:

Right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And you've totally updated it. The book is called Love Works. We're going to talk about that a little bit more at the end, but thank you for being so real about that.

Joel Manby:

You too.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And we had Ken Costa on the podcast. Well, it's a real struggle for everybody and I asked Ken, because he's an investment banker and meets with some of the top financial leaders on the planet. And he said, "People think people with money have no worries about money. That's actually not true. Some of them worry about money more than the average person worries about money." And you think, "Oh, SeaWorld, Amazon, GM, you must have no issues, Joel." And it's like, "You have no idea," right? You have no idea. We're all the same.

Joel Manby:

Yeah, people who have money, they're still insecure about losing it. And this whole crash here kind of shows people how that can be true.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So at Herschend, and just describe what Herschend owns and then let's talk about the Great Recession in '08, '09 and leading through that because there's a lot of comparisons, but obviously if you're looking at the charts, when we record this in mid to late April, I mean it looks like a speed bump compared to the giant uptick in unemployment we've got right now. But what was that like? And just give us the history there and what Herschend does as well.

Joel Manby:

Sure. Herschend is the largest privately held theme park company in the United States. They are most known for partnering with Dolly Parton, the wonderful Dolly Parton on all of her parks and her dinner theaters. They own the Harlem Globetrotters, a lot of things in Branson, Missouri. So very large organization, about call it 12,000 employees, privately held by the Herschend family.

Joel Manby:

Basically in '07, most people remember that was the Great Recession and basically major banks shut down. Our business went down 40% almost immediately. And we had just purchased two companies. We were over leveraged. We were coming up against bank covenants. So one of the most amazing selfless acts I've seen ... it's a neat story. We sat in a room and within literally an hour, Carey, of just getting the numbers out there. We figured out we had to cut 70% of our capital expenditures and if all of us full time and executive people took at least a 20% pay cut, we could save the 350 jobs that we would have had to cut if we didn't make those other changes.

Joel Manby:

Then what was really neat ... and this is when you know your culture is right. When I said a pay cut, it was really the top 20 people. Well, as the word got out, it ended up that every manager in the company just came forth and said, "We all want to take a pay cut so that we can save more jobs." And that's the kind of cultures that Herschend's had. And that's really what Love Works talks about. But that's the crisis I'm most satisfied with how we got through it because it was all about saving our employees. And obviously we reopened or got the business back as fast as we could, but it was mostly about how we treated each other and then treated our employees through that crisis.

Joel Manby:

You see some of that right now, it's really harder because we at least knew things were going to come back. They were starting to come back, but here we haven't seen the light coming from the end of the tunnel quite yet. We're still waiting to see things start to reopen. So it's harder to be positive right now and maybe to be as kind to our employees, but at least we should try. I think the key principle there is the share the pain for sure, and not just between all employees, but suppliers. Everybody should really understand that they have to take part of the pain right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That looked like an almost impossible situation. But compared to this, it's like, "Wow, we're in uncharted territory economically." Patrick Lencioni has been encouraging people to do exactly what you described. Before you lay people off, everybody take a pay cut. And he said, "Start in the C-suite, start with the CEO, take a 20%, 30% pay cut, but then encourage your employees to say, 'Hey, to save our sisters and brothers, take a pay cut.'" What are the dynamics like that like? Because either people have done it who are listening or they may have to do that as a next step or as an alternative. So can you talk about that?

Joel Manby:

Sure. I think the key concept there is A, being unselfish and that's one of the words of love. You just have to do things that are better for all people and to be brutally honest and brutally truthful and just say, "Here's what we need to cut to save from either hitting a bank covenant, going out of business, whatever the if then is, we have to save this much, and this is what I'm doing." And C-suite, like you said, 40%, 50%. They should always take the bigger percentage because they're making more to begin with and everybody knows that. Then everybody has to share.

Joel Manby:

And I think the more you just communicate it flat out that, for instance, in this case ... and I'm chairman of Orange, as we talked about ... we went to our employees and just said, "Right now, everybody's safe. We've applied for the government money." It's the PPP loan in the United States. You can get two months worth of payroll loaned to you. And we said, "If we get it, we're fine. If we don't get it, we may have to make some cutbacks and we're going to do everything we can to not touch our employees." But we went right out and told them, and thank goodness it appears it has come in.

Joel Manby:

But my point is brutal honesty, just tell them the facts. People will understand that, but they won't understand if they don't get why it's happened and they make an assumption about senior executives. I mean, look at just to show the opposite part of the idea, what SeaWorld did, which I'm no longer there and I don't support this in one way, shape or form. They furloughed 90% of their employees without any payment of benefits, the board gave the executives who were willing to stay huge stock options at this lower price. And six months before they bought back a ton of shares with cash that used up precious cash. So those people should be criticized for that, but when you're honest and brutally honest with the facts, I think everyone's going to have to go through that in one way, shape or form if they haven't already.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Before we leave that, I want to ask you just for your opinion on not really a hypothetical, but again, I'm talking to a lot of leaders like you are. I talked to a lead pastor of a good sized church the other day who told me one on one that he had taken a 30% pay cut, but he hasn't told anyone about it. He just

instructed finance to do that and he feels awkward. You know, he's trying to raise money like everybody else is for this season. And I've done a similar thing, Toni and I, in my own company, we've kept everybody employed. Nobody got a pay cut, but we've scaled our thing back. And I haven't talked about it publicly either until right now. Do you say that kind of thing publicly or is that something you just do privately? I just said it publicly, but ...

Joel Manby:

Well, I do believe, at least for your own employees, if you're going to ask them to take any pain, you have to communicate. Now in this case, you haven't given your [inaudible 00:30:58] or the pastor hasn't you talked about, but if he was going to, I think he has to go and talk about it, especially if he's trying to raise money right now. I think you have to tell people you're raising money from, "We're all making sacrifices to get through this together."

Carey Nieuwhof:

That was my advice too. I would say, I don't think you need to hide that. I don't think you should say you're the lead gift on a capital campaign or something like that. But I think that gives me, as a potential donor or a donor in that organization, that gives me confidence that, "Wow, you're really walking the walk you're doing that." Okay, that's super helpful.

Joel Manby:

I agree.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Anything else on the Great Recession that-

Joel Manby:

No.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay, well let's talk about SeaWorld and your time there. Walk us through the timeline, the documentary, just assume people haven't listened to the previous episode and the crisis that you found yourself in very quickly.

Joel Manby:

Yeah, well at SeaWorld ... I think most listeners will know the Blackfish movie, if not it was a shockumentary put out to show that SeaWorld damaged its whales and basically held them in captivity against their will, et cetera. The movie was very damaging and it caused a lot of negativity against the company. Our trustworthiness went from 65% to 35%, literally within a year. Our sales and cashflow at the SeaWorld parks dropped in half.

Joel Manby:

Then legislation was introduced against our ability to breed killer whales in California and through Senator Feinstein from California in Washington DC. On top of that, we had a SCC and DOJ investigation, which meant employees from the past ... it didn't involve my tenure, but they could go to jail if convicted over securities fraud. I mean, all this stuff was going on at the same time and it just absolute

pressure cooker of a fixed cost business, yet our sales had dropped in half. So cashflow had dropped in half and the decisions you have to make so quickly and so rapidly and pivot 180 degrees was very, very difficult.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Walk us through some of the decision making framework that you had in that kind of moment. How do you even begin to problem solve in that environment?

Joel Manby:

Yeah, no, it's a great question. I went in with a 10 point plan. The board actually hired me based on this 10 point plan. So we went right to work executing, but just like in this COVID crisis here, I think one of the hardest things in hindsight that I wish I had done a better job of, is balancing the "manage for today" versus "pivoting what the future is going to look like." For us at SeaWorld we had low cash flow, we had to cut expenses, pay attention to making sure we didn't trip covenants at the bank. Yeah, at the same time, we had to completely pivot our business model because it was at risk. If Shamu doesn't exist or can't be bred internally, there is no more SeaWorld. In addition, just having animals in captivity period was not the rising tide.

Joel Manby:

So in some ways it's like this crisis where pastors, leaders, not only are they dealing with low cash flow in managing today, but they have to pivot to a world where people are going to stay home more and they have to connect with their parents and their children at home. That is really tough. All I would encourage people to do is, it's an art, not a science, and how you balance today versus thinking about tomorrow, just don't do too much of one and not the other.

Joel Manby:

Because I think a leader can seem tone deaf if all they're thinking about is cashflow and opening tomorrow, but they can also seem tone deaf if they're so creative and see the future so well, but yet we have cashflow issues. That's the balance that I frankly found the most difficult. At the end of the day ... in hindsight, if I could do one thing again, there's many a things I would do different ... but I would have forced myself out of these other extraneous issues that I mentioned, like the SCC, the DOJ or activist investors and I would only focus on the vision and operating today and let other people take care of the rest. Hopefully it helps.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, that's extremely helpful. If you can speculate, I don't know, I mean, you were CEO of SeaWorld for a number of years, but as you were pivoting toward a different future where clearly the conditions were going to be different, what would a re-imagined SeaWorld have looked like or look like in your mind? Where were you trying to reposition the company? Because I think most of us know what SeaWorld is. Most of us know that documentary. And so that is a really difficult challenge for a number of issues. But how does SeaWorld have a future in that environment? Where was it going in your mind?

Joel Manby:

We were trying to move away from an animal entertainment positioning to what we call Park to Planet, which is basically if you come to the SeaWorld park, part of your proceeds will go help an environmentalists save the planet. So environmental issues, animal issues, so we're very much a social

consciousness company. Which frankly they were inside [inaudible 00:36:22] organization, does so much for animals. They're the largest animal rescue organization in the world today, but no one knew that. So we were trying to position and just change. All the shows kind of went away from, the whales shows from being strictly entertainment to more here's what happens in the wild, which they happen to do the same things in the wild. But since humans couldn't be in the water with them, we adapted the shows.

Joel Manby:

We added festivals that were about the sea. We added rides that were about the sea or partnered with people like Guy Harvey, who is a painter. Everything we sold went to help animal causes. So a complete repositioning of the company, including having hotels and underwater hotels. I mean, we had so many great ideas that were affordable. The problem is every day I was spending on that, there was still the day to day protests going on from PETA at the parks, or they were protesting my house or they were doing this, that, and the other thing. We had lots of people attacking us and that's that art of kind of being able to go big picture envisioned versus day to day. But that's in essence what our vision was.

Joel Manby:

And also the other thing I didn't mention was a lot of basically virtual reality, where you could have exciting films and underwater experiences being in a submarine, but not necessarily live animal entertainment over the next 10 or 15 years, we'd be pivoting-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Completely pivoting the company into a different eco future.

Joel Manby:

Yeah. Now we always would have rescue animals. We would always have animals, but at least for mammals in captivity, that's just a tough one. Dolphins and whales are always going to be challenged. The others, not so much.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. One of the differences between what you went through at SeaWorld and what we're going through collectively right now is that was opposition challenges that were targeted directly at you as CEO, directly at you as SeaWorld whereas right now that's not the situation most people have. We are dealing with a general apocalypse of sorts that is impacting different people differently, but the loss is collective. Yet the principle here is you've got to figure out what to listen to and what not to listen to.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know in the early days of this crisis, fake news versus real news, trusted credible sources, and you've got to develop an information pipeline. Then you've also got a question of focus because you could spend all day scrolling on your phone, researching on the internet, trying to figure out what's going to happen next, where the economy's heading, when things are going to be reopened, when they're not. What was your filter at SeaWorld for how to crowd out the noise that didn't matter and listen to the noise that did? Because you only have so many hours in the day and it's exhausting, Joel. Did you have any guiding principles to help you with that?

Joel Manby:

Yeah, I did and that's a great question. Especially today with everyone able to Google and they get this instant information, you get little bits and pieces from everybody. Even today with Orange, it's like, what's the right information? Both at SeaWorld and at Orange, we appointed one person who's basically head of communications or head of HR, depending on the situation and say, "You are the one, you have to be up to speed on what the government's saying. You're the expert. We're going to come to you. How big can crowds be? When can we go back?"

Joel Manby:

Don't listen to anybody but one person who has access to a lot of credible sources and it's not the news, it's the World Health Organization or it's the Center for Disease Control. Now they aren't always perfect either, but we appointed one person, they summarized it on a daily call that we just do an all hands call, not every day, but let's say we averaged three a week, and that's communicated so everybody's on the same wavelength. And then when we talk about how does this impact our company or our employees?

Joel Manby:

In both cases, the CEO, me at SeaWorld and Reggie at Orange, they communicate any strategy shifts. The head of HR communicates every week who, you know, "You're still fine to stay home, come back in two weeks," or we'll evaluate every week, but it's one point of contact who's getting excellent information. And then we always communicate back out through HR or the CEO exactly what's happening.

Joel Manby:

It goes to another principle that everybody knows right now, but I would call it where we need patience is we have to over-communicate until the point that we're absolutely sick of it. Jack Herschend told me that once in the 2007/08 crisis, I said, "I'm so tired of doing these ..." you'll fly in, because back then we didn't have Zoom. So we flew to the properties to communicate openly and honestly, and he said, "If you're not sick of it, you're not doing it enough because employees can't get enough of it." And you've seen some great examples of that out there. So that's the process we used in trying to get through a complete array of information that is tough to sort through sometimes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Did you redeploy your existing leadership or executive team or did you create, for lack of a better term, a war cabinet? You know, like special people that you said, "Okay, this is our crisis team." How did you handle that?

Joel Manby:

That's a really good question, Carey, because we did.

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Joel Manby:

I hadn't thought of even talking about that, but for re-pivoting the company, I had a special task force of the most creative people that wouldn't let their negative thinking take them down. And then there was the team that was mostly finance people, but they were the team to save cash no matter what, you come to me with any idea to save cash and let's talk about it. And it was different than the executive

leadership. And then the heads of those teams would report out to the executive leaders at least once a week.

Joel Manby:

So we definitely had a squad task force mentality. And we stuck with that through the entire crisis, and then went back to normal in 2018.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm going to ask you a general question here, because we have a diversity of leaders listening. But when you think about things to cut, whether that framework of SeaWorld, or Orange, or Herschend Entertainment, or Saturn, or even the church world, what are some things that you would consider core, and what are some things like, these are super easy to cut, you should cut them? But yeah, I would really think three times, I think you're sawing into bone at this point. Do you have a working list in your head of first things to go and last things to go?

Joel Manby:

I wish I could give you a crisp answer on that one, but I really think it depends on the company or it depends on the situation. I would say the obvious things that most people would say, I did everything before we could cut any employees because employees are really the lifeblood. Their cost of turnover so much greater than any of us think. Obviously suppliers, I would probably be tough around myself, and the people you pay rent to and the banks, when we're in a crisis like this, they're having those conversations with everyone, so I would go to the places that they're seeing that everywhere and they're used to taking the cuts and just try to save the employees for last, but even there right now, people aren't able to do that. But nothing scientific.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can you talk about cost of turnover? Because that's something I think about in normal conditions and it's funny how quickly in this crisis, people pivoted immediately to layoffs. And that was one of the things I was instinctively, as a leader, determined to protect was the team, because I actually love my team. They're really hard to replace. What is just the economics of turnover? Not just the psychological toll, but you let somebody go, they find another job, and then you're like, well, now things are better again. I got to replace that person. What are the costs of turnover?

Joel Manby:

It's a lot more than anybody thinks it is. And I think your instincts are absolutely correct. Most of the time they put figures to inefficiency of a new employee coming in, but when you multiply that out, it's just much, much greater than we think. And-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Is it two or three X salary sometimes over red stats?

Joel Manby:

Yes. I have seen as low as 30% of salary up to probably three or four times salary. I think it's at least 100% of salary, if not two to three times, just depending on the leader and the situation. Because everybody wants... It's not created equal. But it's a lot greater than any of us think. So I love your

instincts there. And I think everybody should keep that instinct. With a furlough, at least you're saying, you have your job back as soon as it comes back, as soon as we reopen and that communication and how you communicate it, goes a long, long way versus just, you don't have a job anymore.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, people are so grateful too. I've noticed in the teams that I'm coaching, those who are still employed are so grateful for a job right now. They're leaning in double hard. Talk about your role. And again, you haven't served directly in a ministry context, you've been an elder at North Point, et cetera. But the CEO almost becomes the pastor shepherd at this point, reassuring people. How did you do that in your corporate leadership? I heard Stanley McChrystal, the general, say he basically does a daily call with people in a time of crisis just to make sure that everyone's okay.

Joel Manby:

Wow. That's really good. I don't know if I have time, or had the time, to do it with everybody that worked for me, but-

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, he doesn't do it with 900 people, but he's like, "A group call. We're all okay. We're all going to be all right. Anybody have any questions? Let's move forward."

Joel Manby:

What's interesting about these crises is, on one hand, there's a lot of negative, but on the other hand, people, when there's a problem, it creates opportunities. And when people are working together on an opportunity, they really get invigorated. And I see that actually right now with Orange. We pivoted from an 8,000 person live conference to a digital conference. And it's just the pressure's crazy, but everyone is engaged and really excited about trying to pull this off.

Joel Manby:

So I would always try to, at least with my teams, focus as many people on the vision part, the broader teams, get more people involved with what's SeaWorld going to become what's. How is Herschend going to survive this? What's Orange going to look like after that? And you have as few people as possible focused on the cost cutting and the really tough thing.

Joel Manby:

And we did that in both companies, because those are the tough conversations and thinking about how you can cut 30% of your expenses. You don't want a room of 100 people trying to figure that out. Whereas you might want a room of 100 people figuring out vision and creative ideas. So that's one great way to keep people engaged, is what you have them focused on during the crisis.

Joel Manby:

The other thing I would say that's really important, especially in this disconnected period, is that we right now, with Zoom calls and conference calls, if we don't think about process more and think about who should be on this call... In my book, I talk about the [inaudible 00:05:48]. Who's responsible? Who has to approve it? Who has to be consulted? Who has to be informed? If we don't think about that consciously and make an effort to get the right people on the phone, we're going to breed insecurity and

distrust because when you're not invited to that Zoom call, you think, they're making those decisions without me. My job is the first one to go.

Joel Manby:

So I've already actually, even as chairman of Orange, been talking to people. I did that a lot at SeaWorld, talking them off the shelf, that no you're safe, keep working hard. But if our process isn't nailed down in our communication, and if we don't have them focused on the most positive thing possible, it can go negative and spiral down really, really quickly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you've talked very honestly and openly about some decisions you wish you could get back and some of the struggles, but looking back on your decades as CEO, what are some of the best decisions you've made in crisis?

Joel Manby:

I'm thinking more... I'll start with SeaWorld. I think with SeaWorld, getting the product right and the repositioning. I spoke up earlier and getting a strong vision that people rallied around. I felt I did that right. I also, at Herschend and really at Orange, we moved really quickly. So as far in Herschend, like I told, you a one hour phone call, we cut everything that we could possibly cut.

Joel Manby:

So it's really important to have a vision, cut quickly, move fast, and just communicate, communicate, communicate, over and over again.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right. Any other best decisions you made in crisis leadership? The quick pivot?

Joel Manby:

I think at SeaWorld, the one thing I didn't say that is somewhat analogous even to COVID-19, just to assure that the way we were pivoting, we had support in the media and in the basically the consumer and the media. We partnered with an adversary, which was the Humane Society of the United States. People at SeaWorld and, they're called HSUS, Humane Society of the United States. So they didn't like each other. They didn't trust each other. I reached across the aisle, gained a personal relationship with Wayne Pacelle, their CEO, so that when we launched on national television this pivot of SeaWorld's business, he was at my side at all these shows saying, "SeaWorld is a good company. They've made a big move here. People need to support them."

Joel Manby:

And I think for people struggling with the pivot right now, it's just important to get the right people on your side. And I'm just thinking specifically churches as they pivot some of them to be more in home, not necessarily having church inside of a church building, but through a home, they need to get elders on board with that shift in strategy, they can show their parents who are very satisfied with that shift in strategy. And I'll tell you one thing, everyone's not going to like your pivot. You're not going to please everybody. But pick something that you believe in, put all your heart and soul into it, and that's

something I've felt really, really good about what we did at SeaWorld. And we got wide support for that pivot.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'd love to talk a little bit about Orange and ReThink because you're involved as the unofficial Chairman of the Board. This has been an area of focus for you. And you've been involved since the very beginning. And I've been part of Orange since it was Reggie in the condo leaving North Point, just a handful of people and now it's over 100 employees and one of the largest church events of the year, 8,000 people. And I've been impressed to see how quickly Orange has pivoted from an amazing, super high production live event to digital events.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You and I are leading with Brad Lomenick, ReThink Leadership, which we've moved until June. We're doing a senior leaders track at Orange Conference. And it's been a pretty impressive pivot. Can you walk us through how that happened?

Joel Manby:

It was pretty amazing situation. On, I remember it was Thursday before the Friday when all the... Because some of the restrictions started coming out and we were still planning live conference. And when President Trump basically went on and gave some of the restrictions on that Thursday night speech, I came in and went to Reggie. Reggie is very focused, so his mind was still a little bit on live conference, but we made that decision as four senior leaders. We had to pivot. Called all the senior leaders in on Saturday, the 8th, so we communicated to them that the pivot, and then on Sunday, basically brainstormed all day on, what could it look like? And Reggie is brilliant at leading creative conversations. So is Kristen. And so they basically outlined it and we've been trying to execute it, but we also pivoted like you said, ReThink Leadership.

Joel Manby:

We couldn't do it all at one time with high quality, so we moved that to a different concept and I am very proud of how quickly, but again, it goes back to speed and clarity, brought everybody together, told them where we're headed. We have twice a week update calls with all the team leads saying, here's what has to get done. And it's a scramble, but people can do it. I think most church leaders right now, I will say, not trying to give an Orange commercial, but they are at the forefront of being able to deliver great quality content for next gen leaders, next gen staff, whether it's kids or student ministry, and engage the parents at the same time. Because I think for the church, for the future, the church is going to grow when home ministry grows that they can connect into the church.

Joel Manby:

Meaning I think it is almost like a reverse Trojan horse. If we can get families connected with great quality spiritual products to connect with their kids and then they realize that church down the street is using this really good quality content about values and ethics, it might grow the church in a different direction. But I know that we have a real specific strategy and a great plan going forward and so I appreciate what Reggie and his team have done.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We talked about on this podcast before in the crisis, agility becoming a superpower. So, at the time that we're recording this, which is, let's see, April 17th, I can almost sense people saying, "Okay, I've done this for five weeks. I'm tired. We found a new normal. I know we're not at the real new normal yet, but we're just going to settle in and stop right now and do this until someone turns the lights back on, or we can get in our building."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Good idea, bad ideas are a danger in that. Is this a continual pivot, a continual reevaluation? Thoughts on that?

Joel Manby:

It's tough, Cary, because I think the single biggest decision of the President of the United States or Premier of Canada, whatever, whoever the lead person is, or a governor in the state, is when to turn back on the economy because it's a very non politically correct conversation of yes, people are going to die of the virus, but so far it's been a quarter of what die of the normal flu every year in the United States, about maybe 25,000 versus about 90,000 of the normal flu. So what's tough in this situation is the turn on has to happen and people may die because of it. But it's that impact. Which is the bigger impact of unemployment, like you said, substance abuse, mental illness, suicide, all the issues are going to happen if the economy continues to be the way it's headed. That's a tough call to make.

Joel Manby:

And so I believe we have to be thinking it's going to be over. By the fall, we're going to be coming back in groups, maybe not sporting arenas and maybe not large churches, but 500 and under we're going to be gathering again. And we're just heading towards being able to have 10,000, 20,000 together. That's obviously going to take the longest. So I just hope that people can move forward because I don't think people can say, it's going to be like this through January right now. I just think that's the absolute wrong thing to do. I don't think we know enough and I think it's too depressing for people to think that far ahead right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Do you think that there are going to be permanent changes to our culture? The new normal is not going to be the old normal? And any thoughts on what some of those might be? I know it's early days.

Joel Manby:

Yeah. I wouldn't pretend to know. We do know that it's going to be different. That's part of that lack of safety and security, we all feel. It's just like when 9/11 happened and those buildings were coming down, we knew life was going to be different. And flying has never been the same. What's going to never be the same now? Not sure, but certainly distance, and more mask wearing and more hand washing. Hopefully, that's all it is. But I don't think any of us know right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Well, I want to talk to you a little bit about your book. You've re-released *Love Works: Seven Timeless Principles for Effective Leaders*. How do you lead with love in a crisis, Joel?

Joel Manby:

Well, some would say, I think as we talked about earlier, real briefly, for those who didn't hear the first podcast, that Love Works is about applying 1 Corinthians 13, seven words of love to create a loving culture.

Joel Manby:

The biggest problem with that nomenclature is people misunderstand what love is and they think of romantic love. And as the book goes into, it's not. It's a verb. It's agape. It's how you treat people. And actually it's a very difficult way to lead, but it's what Christ called us to. And so I actually went back and took the seven words, Carey, and I said, all right, Carey wants to talk about crisis. How would I look at those words in crisis? And we've talked about a lot of it already, but one thing under the first word, because it's paraphrased from 1 Corinthians 13 is, patience. And we've talked a lot about having integrity and being fast, not patient with how you communicate. Another piece, I'd say don't be patient is of course cashflow and cutting expenses, so definitely don't be patient there.

Joel Manby:

But I do think we have to be patient with ourselves and that nobody has been through something like this. I don't know about you, Carey, but I, even as chairman of Orange, I felt shame in that, yeah, I've been asking them to buildup cash for six years, seven years, but have I demanded it?

Carey Nieuwhof:

And we have.

Joel Manby:

Have I put people's jobs on it? I feel ashamed that I didn't do more to get this organization ready. And I think we all have to also cut ourselves some slack and be patient with ourselves, almost forgive ourselves for that.

Joel Manby:

Under kindness, which is the second word of love, we've alluded to it, but now more than ever, I would focus on positive and enthusiastic reinforcement of people. Not faults. It has to be true. It has to be specific. But I was talking to Henry Cloud, who we both know on a different podcast, and I said, "My rule of thumb is three positives to every negative to get their emotional bank account up."

Joel Manby:

He said, "No, it's actually five or six times more scientifically proven that the human brain tends to focus on the negative." And let's face it, we all tend to go to the negative in another person or the negative in our business plan. It's just the way human sapiens are made by God. We need five to six more positives. So very, very important to be very kind in this situation. And I know that sounds soft, but it's actually... Maybe it's soft, but it's very hard to do because we're not wired to actually do that. And that's the place where you want to use the, if possible, lots of note writing.

Joel Manby:

Another word that is so important is the brutal honesty, the truthfulness, that I talked about earlier. So I don't need to repeat that, but I want to share a quote that I heard myself just the other day from a five star general about being authentic and truthful in a crisis is so important because [inaudible 01:00:16] if

we try to cover it up or we try to be more positive than we should be. And he said, "People will forgive a leader if they're not the leader they should be in this crisis, but they won't forgive that leader if they're not who they claim to be." And that's where authenticity is so important.

Joel Manby:

And I think, Carey, it's certainly a sickness that I've had in my life, try to be more authentic the older I get. I'm a three on the Enneagram, so my great sin is to almost be deceptive because I want to be successful. And I've just learned the hard way that it's just tell it exactly like it is. People will see through it if you don't. And I can't say it more definitively than that.

Joel Manby:

One other key word I would talk about is trustworthiness. And what I have seen in crisis, and I've seen this frankly in my circles and in myself when I was at SeaWorld, when we're in crisis, we tend to accumulate power quickly. Now it's true you have to make fast decisions, but if you don't pivot at the same time, we become the blocks. We become why the company can't move fast enough.

Joel Manby:

And it's an absolute art Carey, it's not a science. Because on one hand you do have to move faster. I'm a consensus leader usually, but in a crisis, I go to majority vote because you just got to move fast. But at the same time, you just can't afford to pull all the power in because then people don't feel empowered and that has a much more destructive behavior, but mostly not being able to move fast enough. I don't know. Have you ever felt that dichotomy?

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, you just named something, and we're talking, all of us, are talking to dozens of leaders, hundreds sometimes in a week. You just named something that I can't put my finger on, but in this first five weeks of crisis, a lot of leaders have consolidated power and it's all on the leader. It's war time situation. And many of them are exhausted now. And they're saying, "I don't know what to do with my team. I have all these people who they did the physical this or relational that, and I don't know what to do with them."

Carey Nieuwhof:

And you're right, that's exhausting. I've got an unanswered message in a private Slack group from a leader who says, "I just can't do anymore." And I think you're right, it's that crisis leadership. But then you've got to empower your team. You've got to release your team. That may be a lifesaver for some of the people listening. That 100% resonates.

Joel Manby:

Well, I appreciate it. And you are right about exhaustion.

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Joel Manby:

An exhausted leader is not a great leader. Somehow we think there's a badge of honor of working 20 hours a day. You can do that in a short sprint, but this may not be a short sprint as far as the total pivoting and all the things that have to change about a business.

Joel Manby:

So, Carey, it is so important. The smaller the church or the smaller the organization tends to be more entrepreneurial and tends to be more maybe control-oriented. This is the time to let it go.

Joel Manby:

But the other side of that is you will find out who needs to stay and who might not be able to adjust for the new future. But you're only going to find out by giving them responsibility and seeing how they respond.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, and the idea of a wartime cabinet or that special forces or whatever can really take the load off. One of the things that saved us in the first five weeks is I've been really focused on equipping my team here at the podcast and the blog and that kind of thing, and they have been unbelievable in the last five weeks. Because if it was up to me, I'd be crushed, cowering in the corner. Come find me in the fetal position somewhere, Joel. But that's what it ends up being if it's all on you, right?

Joel Manby:

That's right. But it takes a little bit of time to have those command meetings, give instructions, then you meet again and they report out versus ... Yeah, I've seen the good and the bad and the ugly of that result. What you're advocating to your listeners is exactly right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Anything else from those principles? Because I want to shift gears, unless you have something else.

Joel Manby:

Well, I think the only thing that is being ... I talk about being forgiving and being unselfish, and I've alluded to it. But we have to forgive ourselves and we have to be willing to accept the faults and mistakes that we made and continue to move forward, because the best way we take ourselves down is to get exhausted, beat ourselves up, shame ourselves into, "I'm not doing a good enough job."

Joel Manby:

People want to see leadership right now. The other last piece of advice I'd give is don't try to be a cheerleader. It's one thing to be specifically enthusiastic or compliment someone, but on a massive call with a lot of people on it, yeah, you can break the ice and, yes, you can tell a few good stories, but once you're into solving issues, too much rah-rah or too much sense the humor can be, I think damaging. They just want to be led in this period.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a tone-deafness.

Joel Manby:

It is tone-deaf.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's so funny because normally I'm recording talks right now on video, and normally I try to open with an entertaining story or something that's funny or self-deprecating. Instinctively, I don't know if it's the right call or not, I'm just like, "Okay, here we are and here's point one." I'm just right down to business because I'll let someone else do the jokes right now. I'm like we've just got to get through this.

Joel Manby:

I think your instincts are absolutely right. Yes. No time to be a comedian.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah. Oh, so, Joel, we were on a call with some leaders. I don't know whether I threw this question at you or whether someone else did, but you just had such great insights. So there's high capacity leaders who are saying, "Okay, we do have a cash shortfall right now. We have to lean into our donors."

Carey Nieuwhof:

So in a business context, that might be an investor. In a church context or not-for-profit context, it could be a donor. I would love for you to walk us through what that looks like. So definitely you want to make an all call, and there are single parents who are giving sacrificially. But sometimes you just need someone to write that five or six-figure check, or perhaps a seven-figure check, to bridge you through to the future. Any thoughts or advice on how to approach that kind of donor?

Joel Manby:

Well, I would start with what not to do because I think we tend to sometimes say, "Hey, we didn't have enough cash. We need money to fund our staff for the next six months." Maybe that's the result. But what I would start with is is, "None of us saw this coming. We didn't save enough cash. Nobody did. In our defense, nobody did. However, this is what I've learned from it so far."

Joel Manby:

So I would state some learning and some humility to the people you're trying to raise money from, but then do talk about what the pivot's going to be. It may be minimal, but it may be a lot. I would try to paint that vision for the future and say, "Okay, here's where we are today, X thousand dollars short, and here's the environment we're in. But in two years, we want to be here. Our vision looks like this. Our attendance looks like this. Our giving online and blah, blah, blah." You paint the picture and then just say, "I need this money to bridge me to get to that."

Joel Manby:

So you show your donor that you've thought through it, you have a strategy, that this isn't a bottomless pit that you're going to keep coming back over and over again. In some ways, it probably sounds like commonsense, but I think in the middle of a crisis, sometimes we'd get desperate. We don't think through how we're being interpreted on the other side of the phone or the letter.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's so simple, but it's so helpful. I mean we talked neuroscience briefly. I've heard that stat before, five positives to one negative. But the same thing, emotions deactivate logic. So if you're nervous, if you're scared, you're not thinking clearly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

When I heard you say that, I wanted you to bring that to our leaders because I thought that was so sensible, because you're asking that question, right? Like if you're a steward is a high-capacity giver of God's money, you don't want to pour it in a garbage can. You don't want to just pour it into a sinkhole and go, "Wow! I was less \$10,000, \$1,000, \$100,000," into an incinerator. You want to have some confidence that you're making a good investment with some good ROI.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Having sat in the senior leader's fundraiser seat for a number of years, I realized that sometimes you just go, "Joel, I just need your help." Maybe that's not the right message. You've got to show a plan, some confidence that you're making a good decision, some humility. I thought that was just really great advice, Joel.

Joel Manby:

Oh, I appreciate it. Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Anything else you want to share? This has been a masterclass, so we've been trying to have a bunch of these on the podcast, in crisis leadership. Everybody brings something different and it's so rich. I wondered if it would get old, but it just gets richer and richer and richer. So I've loved this conversation.

Joel Manby:

Well, I've loved it too. I've been listening to your podcast, and it's great. Your guests are great. You're digging into some incredible issues.

Joel Manby:

I don't have anything new to say other than just encouragement to all your listeners in that I'm 60. I have a lot of gray hair. I've been through a lot of really bad situations, and this is as bad as it gets. If you can get through this ... And we will. We will get through it. We may be changed, but we have to trust in the ultimate creator that there's a reason for this. We will be better and we will learn something on the other side.

Joel Manby:

I just want to encourage people. Let's just hang in there. Take a day at a time. Don't project too far. Jesus always taught us not to look to the future, but look to today. It has enough problems of its own. We will all get on our knees every day to just get through the next day.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Joel, thank you so much. Where can people find you online and tell us where they can get the book? Is it out yet or is it out soon?

Joel Manby:

Yeah, the book just came out. It's on Amazon, of course. The easiest place to get it is barnesandnoble.com, audible.com. There's a red version, which, if you're sleeping at night, I'm reading it. So it may help soothe your nerves.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's great. You have a great voice. You really do.

Joel Manby:

Well, I've made [[crosstalk 01:10:56](#)].

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's called Love Works.

Joel Manby:

Love Works. Then you can follow me on Facebook at LoveWorksByJoelManby.com. In a week, we'll have JoelManby.com up. I'll have some more information available on crisis leadership and also Love Works.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that'll all be in the show notes. Joel, once again, thank you. You have really, really helped a lot of leaders today.

Joel Manby:

Well, thanks for having me. I really do appreciate it, Carey. It's always good to talk to you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, that was rich. If you want more, we have that episode on YouTube. We also have transcripts and show notes. You can see the links to everything over at CareyNieuwhof.com/Episode341. We're back next week with a fresh episode.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Remember, I do have a little bit more on this episode at the very end, What I'm Thinking About. I'm going to talk a little bit more about the struggle of leadership and even suicide. Why does this happen to business leaders, to church leaders?

Carey Nieuwhof:

But next episode, we've got Ian Morgan Cron back. I think this is his third time in the last year and a half. Ian's become one of my favorite people. We talk about leading through uncertainty and stress and how does your Enneagram impact that. We had a free-flowing awesome conversation, as always happens when Ian's in the house. Here's an excerpt.

Ian Morgan Cron:

That's a very powerful question. What does love require of me right now? Perhaps in your situation, it would be to get vulnerable, which is not easy for eights, and say, "You know what, guys? I'm really

drained. I'm really tired. I think I've hit the end of myself. I'm at the end of my own rope. I love you. Would it be okay if next week we took a pause?"

Ian Morgan Cron:

That would have been maybe a better course of action were you to remind yourself that there's always a question on the table, which is what does love require of me? Being vulnerable with my team or my group? That's not easy for me, but that's what love is asking me to do right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that's coming up next time on the podcast. Also coming up, Scott Harrison from charity: water, Paula Faris, ABC News, Nicky Gumbel, who is one of my favorite people as well. We've got JP Pohluda back on the podcast, Patrick Lencioni, and so many more. I'm so excited for this year's episodes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thank you so much for partnering with us. When you share this on social, it means an awful lot. When you leave a rating and review, I'm so grateful. Yeah, just let some other leaders know about it. We know a lot of you use this with your teams. And so, whatever we can do to come alongside you, we completely will.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So what am I thinking about? Well, I'm thinking about leadership and the challenge and the dark inner struggle few understand. This segment is brought to you by Pro Media Fire. If you haven't booked your free strategy session yet, what are you waiting for? Go to ProMediaFire.com/ChurchGrowth.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And brought to you by the Leaders in Living Rooms podcast. It is a podcast I listen to. You can find it, well, here, wherever you're listening to your podcasts. You can search for Leaders in Living Rooms or just search Sean Morgan. He was a guest a couple of episodes ago. If you listen to that, you know you're in for a treat.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, here's What I'm Thinking About. I just know that leadership can be a real struggle. A few weeks ago, there was another large church pastor who apparently took his own life. My heart goes out to his family, to him.

Carey Nieuwhof:

This just seems to be a story that we hear over and over again, and not just in ministry but also in business and leadership. People blame the megachurch and they're like, "Oh, it's all the pressure of celebrity or megachurch."

Carey Nieuwhof:

But I know small church pastors who have taken their lives, and congregations and families that are left sobbing and grieving. And so, I don't think you can easily blame it on the size of the church. Certainly, size brings with it complexity.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But I want to ask the question: what's really going on? People do have theories. I went through a really dark time in 2000. I write about it in my last book *Didn't See It Coming*. Some of you know that story.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But there was a period probably about a month, month and a half, where I just thought the only way out was out. The only way through my pain was to end it. I'm so grateful I don't own weapons. I'm so grateful I did not succumb to those voices in my head.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm not in a period where that is a serious temptation anymore. But I've been thinking about it. Why does it get so dark? And so, I want to share just a few insights with you that I hope can help you as a leader. These are true whether you're in ministry, in business, whatever you happen to be doing.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But one factor, I think, that can make leadership so dark is that leadership surrounds you with people, but it still can leave you feeling utterly alone. I'm privileged of having a great audience here on the podcast, also on my blog at CareyNieuwhof.com. I recently polled about 700 of them and I asked them, "How are you doing?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so, it was really interesting. There was a bit of a gap in the data. So 93% of church leaders agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I have people in my life I can count on no matter what happens." It's like that's great. 82% said, "I feel very connected to my friends and family." 90% said, "When I'm in crisis, I find my hope in God." You'd be like, "Well, nobody's really struggling. 93%, 82%, 90%. That's great." But dig a little deeper.

Carey Nieuwhof:

In the same survey, I also said, "How isolated are you feeling today?" 51% of leaders said extremely isolated or somewhat isolated. Boom! There it is. You can be surrounded by people in leadership, but you can still feel utterly alone.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that's one dynamic, and I think simply being aware of that, because I get to the point sometimes where I'm like, "I'm peopled out. I'm just too tired." Then I withdraw. That's not necessarily healthy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Another factor, and I've thought about this a lot over the last five years, particularly as the podcast has taken off, you live in this world where not a lot of your friends or family are doing what you're doing. But leadership brings with it a pressure that's hard to understand if you're not in leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So imagine you go to a family function, a party, even small group, or you're just hanging out with friends, and you want to talk about what's going on, but nobody really seems to be able to access your world. I thought about it when I was writing about this recently. Imagine going to a social gathering and you're

talking to a brain surgeon, and the brain surgeon says, "I'm thinking about changing my strategy on cerebral aneurysm repairs. Do you have any thoughts on that, Carey?" I'd be like, "Uh, I don't know."

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so, when you talk to your non-leader friends about strategic planning or staff moves or writing techniques, they're just like, "Yeah, I don't really know."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now this is not their fault. It's not their fault. I just took the right problem to the wrong people. I need to talk to other leaders about those problems. But sometimes you're at a family gathering or whatever and you're saying people don't understand. Well, of course they don't understand. They're not leading what you're leading, but it took me a while to figure that out.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Number three, leadership means you're probably great at giving, but not at receiving. Mostly what we do all day as leaders is we give, give, give, give, give. But relationships should be mutual.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Fourth factor is people don't often ask you how you're doing and when they do, you end up hiding. So I've written about this before again in *Didn't See It Coming*, in other places, but often in a conversation these days, and I don't know whether it's unique to leadership or just where the culture is going, but I can have a long conversation with someone and not once will they ask me how I'm doing, "Tell me what's going on."

Carey Nieuwhof:

A lot of other leaders are finding the same thing. People just don't ask me questions. It leaves me feeling isolated, unheard, unnoticed. But when they do sometimes, I hide and I give them not a full or complete answer even if I know them well. That can be a super challenge. So you've got to realize that not everybody is asking and you've got to seek out relationships.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that leads us to a conclusion, which is most leaders just really need a friend and most don't have one. Friends come in different packages. There's the friends you can go to the ball game with. There's friends you can hang out with, friends you can barbecue with, friends you can go cycling with or running with. But then there are people who really connect with your soul. I've had to intentionally carve out those friendships. The deepest friendships don't just happen, they have to be built. John Townsend, who we've had on this podcast, and we'll link to him in the show notes, he agrees and shows you a process.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So I want to give you a really quick strategy. One of my best friends in the world, I just reached out to him probably about a month into COVID because I was feeling a little bit isolated. Again, peopled out all day long, like Zoom calls, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I just said, "Hey, can we connect every morning?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

We send each other a text every day. It's just really short. It's like best, worst, prayer. So what's the best thing that happened yesterday, that's best. Worst, what's the worst thing that happened or is happening? Then prayer. What do I want you to pray for today? So it's just best, worst, prayer. It's not a lot of words, just a quick text. It's been such an incredible lifeline in the midst of everything. We don't live in the same city, which is often typical of a leadership friend that you've got that you can really share everything with.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So those are just some thoughts. I think if you've got those healthy practices in place, the inner struggle breaks.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now if you are suicidal, please, please, please take action. Call 911 or head on over to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. You can give them a call. Just text the word 'Home' to 741741. Talk to your doctor, tell your counselor, tell a friend. Break the silence before the silence breaks you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that was long time ago I went through my dark night of the soul. I would say I have dim days, but not impossible days. Just being aware of some of the things that I talked to you about today here at the end of the show has really helped me. So I'm on your side, cheering for you, praying for you, really grateful for your leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We're back next time with Ian Cron. If you haven't done the Thrive test yet, the little quiz I put together, would you do that? Just head on over to willithrive.com and do the little assessment. We've got a brand new resource for leaders that I think can help a lot of you pivot in the new normal or into the new normal as things continue to change. That quiz will get you started. So just head on over to willithrive.com.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay, thanks so much, guys. Really appreciate you. 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.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:21:58]