

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 355 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Today's episode is brought to you by The Unstuck Group. I love Tony Morgan's work and they, at the Unstuck Group, have got a one day masterclass about the key shifts churches need to make because of Coronavirus. So you can get a free copy of lesson one by going to theunstuckgroup/carey. So just theunstuckgroup/carey gets you a free session from their masterclass. And, ServeHQ's online software subscription tools for churches. You should check them out at servehq.church. Get a free, no obligation 14-day trial account. Staying connected with your church is more important than ever. While I'm so excited about today's guest, John Eldredge is on the podcast and this ... what we get to do, you got to be honest, it's pretty amazing.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I remember sitting in a crowd, with 10,000 other people listening to John Eldredge for the first time. And to think that we'd be able to connect and have a meaningful, really deep conversation, which we're going to bring to you today is pretty cool. And we get to talk about living at an unsustainable pace, something he and I are both well quite familiar with. And we have a conversation about that and so many other things on this podcast. So John Eldredge is a bestselling author, a counselor and a teacher. He is also president of Ransomed Heart, a ministry devoted to helping people discover the heart of God and their own hearts in God's love and learn to live in the kingdom. He and his wife Stasi, who's also written some amazing books live near Colorado Springs, Colorado. And it's so funny because one of the things I loved about this conversation again, this is one that we did months ago before the crisis hit and we're bringing to you now was, I just always assumed that John was in the mountains hiking, and he's ... no, he's a driven leader, just like you and me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So it's fun to poke behind the scenes and learn more about people's stories and their lives. So, man, are you feeling a little bit overwhelmed right now by the rapid changes and decisions that need to be made as a ministry leader? So my team at Connexus just wrapped up another strategic planning session with Tony Morgan at The Unstuck Group. And we sought to clarify where we're going in the season, how we're going to get there. And I honestly cannot recommend Tony highly enough. We've used them again and again, when I was lead pastor, and now that I am founding pastor, my successor is using him. Why? Because they have a practical, proven approach that actually works. And that's what we do with our partners, we bring you people that I personally believe in. So if you want to get a taste, The Unstuck Group is hosting an exclusive, one day masterclass on July 30th on key shifts churches need to make because of Coronavirus. It's \$99, you'll walk away with action steps and clarity around what needs to change to thrive in a post-pandemic world.

Carey Nieuwhof:

My listeners get free access to lesson one from the master class guidebook. So you can download your copy and get it exclusively at theunstuckgroup.com/carey. That's just theunstuckgroup.com/carey. And speaking of partners we believe in, have you checked out ServeHQ yet? If you haven't heard of them,

they offer a couple of industry standard services that you should definitely check out, TrainedUp and HuddleUp. These are the tools that are used to equip and engage your church no matter where your church is at. So how do you communicate with people? One of the things that's bothering me these days is their algorithms filtering out all of your messages. So it's really hard to actually congeal a group online. Well, what if you could go direct? So that's what ServeHQ does through TrainedUp and HuddleUp. It's a mass messaging through video and video emails, text messages. Basically, there's even a chat feature that allows you to stay in direct contact with your people without worrying about inappropriate private communications. And it's like your own private social platform for your church members and volunteers. It's not controlled by an algorithm.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So they launched a brand new feature called Followups that's included in all accounts with both TrainedUp and HuddleUp. And this feature can automate messaging, training and follow up task assignment for every follow up workflow in your church. Followups is simple to use. It's a system that allows you to create a time delayed sequence of actions or tasks, so you don't have to be doing it in real time. Maybe you could even use it on your vacation. It allows you to send drip emails or text messages from HuddleUp. Automatically enroll users and courses on a schedule in TrainedUp or automatically assigned follow up tasks to staff and volunteers to complete manually.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you want more? Check out ServeHQ at servehq.church. You can get a free, no obligation 14-day trial account servehq.church. Well without further ado, I'm going to get into this really life giving conversation with John Eldredge. And then at the end of the podcast in the What I'm Thinking About segment I'm going to talk to you about well, some things church leaders are really thinking about their own personal health at this time. So my conversation with bestselling author and someone who's deeply impacted my life, John Eldredge. John, this is a real privilege. Welcome to the podcast.

John Eldredge:

Yeah, likewise, Carey. It's great to see you by video and talk to you over the miles here.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, Colorado Springs to Toronto or north of Toronto, which you would enjoy probably more than Toronto. So yeah, we're out in the country, middle of nowhere.

John Eldredge:

Oh, I love that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, you would. I've really appreciated your voice. We're sharing ahead of time how much it's impacted me. And we're not going to camp along on it. But I think most people probably first heard of you when Wild at Heart came out, which was how long ago now, John?

John Eldredge:

20 years. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's incredible. I think I've read it. And then I saw you at Catalyst 2004 back in the day.

John Eldredge:

Yes, yes. Right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That what was then the Gwinnett Center. And it was really amazing. And we're talking a little bit about that. The book is not one of those books that came out had a flash in the pan and disappeared. It continues to do well around the world. 30 languages, I think you said it's been translated into and it sells-

John Eldredge:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Probably hundreds of thousands of copies every year. Why do you think that message has resonated so deeply for so long, John?

John Eldredge:

Well we came in to the fatherhood crisis I think at the moment that it was really blowing up. People were wrestling with how do you raise boys? What does it mean to be a man in the world? Does God have some guidance for us? So it was a moment 20 years ago of real ... I would call it gender confusion. And since then, we had no idea what was coming. I thought as a therapist, I was already looking at the train wreck. I thought, my clients and all of that I thought, I know what's happening. 20 years later, it is gender collapse. I mean, gender isn't even a thing anymore. It's a spectrum across which people move and change and that sort of thing. And so there is this heartache in the world to understand who am I? What am I wired to be? What did God mean when he created male and female there in Genesis one. So it was a timely message in a critical moment. And it's healed a lot of lives, a lot of marriages, it's brought a lot of dads back to their kids. It's been a very beautiful story.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, because it's ... I know the book continues to do well, but most of the listeners to this podcast are in their 20s and 30s. So they may have missed it the first time around. Can you give us a little recap? And I'd love to know whether you think the message is more relevant today or whether you would reshape it in any way, given the way the whole gender identity thing has changed over the last two decades?

John Eldredge:

Yeah I think ... to get down to the core of the message, I would say that the search ... every little boy has one question. And the question is, do I have what it takes? Do I have a strength? Do I have a competency? Do I have a gifting? When I am called upon, can I come through? That is the masculine question. And what was intended to happen was that through dads and uncles and coaches and over time, that boy comes into a subtle answer. Yes, you do. You have what it takes. So then he is able to move with courage and with kindness and strength into his world. What happens however, in most of

our upbringing ... I was raised in an alcoholic home. Most actually of your audience ...more than 50% of your audience then, if that's your age group grew up without a dad.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's that high, John? Really?

John Eldredge:

Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Or in single parent homes, dad may have been in the same city or he may have visited but the question doesn't get answered well. And when a man does not know who he is, when he's not grounded in love and validation ... He needs love and he needs validation, then he will take that in all kinds of wrong directions. He'll give it to his career and he'll sacrifice literally his health for a career, he'll blow up a marriage, because he keeps looking to other women to answer that question, tell me who I am. Tell me I'm loved, tell me I have what it takes. So that's the core message of Wild at Heart is that the healing of the masculine soul and coming into a genuine sense of strength that enables you to love well and live courageously in the world.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's interesting, because what I hear in that message and I read the book when it came out and heard you speak and studied it in small group, the whole deal as with some of your other work, but I think one of the stereotypes is to be a man for those of you who are watching on YouTube, you've got pardon my ignorance, but is that an elk or a deer? Or what is that?

John Eldredge:

It's an impala.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What is it? It's an impala.

John Eldredge:

It's an impala.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, not a Chevy. Okay, so that's like a real animal.

John Eldredge:

Yeah, And over there is the caribou, which you would recognize from your neck of the woods. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. So you're an outdoors man. I mean, you go hunting, you go hiking the whole deal. You got your Patagonia vest on. And some of it is that, but a lot of it actually deals with our hearts and the wounds of our heart, right? It's just your message is an interesting juxtaposition.

John Eldredge:

Yeah, yeah. Because there is a craving in every man for adventure, but it's just that the adventure looks different for every man. I thought it was fascinating that Wall Street Journal marketed itself for a while as adventures in capitalism, because they were tapping into the entrepreneurial. That is a big adventure. Start a company, take a risk, start a new career, right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

John Eldredge:

Okay, so every little boy's wired for that. Every man's wired for adventure, it just looks different. Every man's wired for courage. This isn't about being a lumberjack and drinking motor oil. This is a core desire to live courageously, and then how that plays out. I mean, my goodness, getting in a relationship takes enormous amounts of courage. Pursuing your graduate degree takes massive amounts of courage. So, yes the masculinity can express itself very, very uniquely in each man's life.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Which I think is a really needed message because often you get into axe throwing or whatever you need to be and there's your manly thing. I would be more the entrepreneur than see, I don't even know that's an impala. But I remember the question, the way you phrased it was so simple, so clear, really hit me at an opportune time in my 30s. And then my wife, the question for every woman you and your wife argue is which let's just touch on that before we jump into your new work.

John Eldredge:

Yeah, it's different than a search for validation. It's a search for intimacy, will I be chosen? Will I be delighted in? Am I seen? Does anyone see me, the real me? Will anyone fight for me? And what's fascinating is that they've done business studies on this. And women can survive career setbacks that absolutely destroy men, because they're not looking to their career for validation. Isn't that fascinating?

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is fascinating.

John Eldredge:

But a man will attach that need to his career or his status or his income or, his athletic prowess. But on the other hand, the study that I'm referring to, it was fascinating. They asked leading executives, women executives, and the majority of them said, "I would trade my success for a wonderful relationship." Women are relationally wired, they are experts at it. And they're brilliant at it, which is why it's really important to have them in companies, by the way, because they can help you create a company culture that is far more caring towards human individuals versus the bottom line. But yeah, they're very, very different. And every little girl has that question and every little girl carries a wound. And then if she doesn't get that this is fascinating, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah.

John Eldredge:

The number one predictor of teenage pregnancy girls, teenage girls getting pregnant is the presence of a loving father in her life.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

John Eldredge:

If she's loved, and she knows that she will not look to boys to answer that question.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's like that old John Mayer song, right? That came out around the same time as Wild at Heart, Daughters. I always think there's profound truth in that. Well, this is so helpful. And maybe this is a reintroduction to some of our younger listeners to John's work. The book is called Wild at Heart. And if people want to tap into that, I know you and your wife published a number of books around that time. So what are the top two or three resources that people could look into?

John Eldredge:

So Wild at Heart for men, Captivating is the book for women. And then if you get on our web, you can just google Wild at Heart and you'll find us and there's videos and films and we actually still do conferences around it. Our Wild at Heart and captivating events became so popular globally, we had to go to a lottery system. So that gives you an idea of the ache, of the need, right? People are really looking for deep healing of their soul and clarity on who they are. And so we continue to just sell those events out.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's incredible. Okay, well, this has been so refreshing and a good reminder to me of how pivotal some of these ideas and concepts have been in the healing of my own marriage and my own journey as a Christ follower, as a person, and then also as a leader. So really just want to thank you so much for that work.

John Eldredge:

I'm very, very honored.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, so grateful.

John Eldredge:

Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to know John, how are you spending your time these days in Colorado Springs? What are you doing, you're writing?

John Eldredge:

Well, you heard about the lotteries. We are full tilt over here. We have a non-profit called Ransomed Heart. We have 19 employees, and it's conferences, international travel, its podcast, filmmaking. There's a lot of creative people in this shop, because we love that we're heart people. Live from your heart, live from your passions, chase the adventure. But when you get a group of people who are all wired that way, there is a ton going on over here. I have to keep putting the bridle on it. No, no, no, not that film project. Not right now. So my days look like everybody else's days, I go to work. I lead a team. I do interviews like this. I have to fit my writing into my personal time.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Isn't that interesting? Yeah, because my picture of John Eldredge is always you're up in the mountains somewhere on a long hike with minimal provisions, almost like Bear Grylls style thing, which is great Man Vs Wild, which is part of your life, right? You do some of that?

John Eldredge:

Yeah. Yeah. In fact, my personal dream is that Bear asked me to be on the show. But I love the wilderness. It nourishes my soul. I seek it every time I can get. But I live in a pretty typical city, in a pretty typical neighborhood, and take out the trash and walk the dogs and come into work and lead a team.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've got to ask this before we jump into Get Your Life Back, which is a fascinating book and space that I spent a lot of time thinking about these day. So I want to get there, but how does your unique perspective as a leader leading a not for profit company of 20ish employees? How does that impact the culture you create at work? I'm just curious because we all have a culture.

John Eldredge:

Well, I had to repent of the culture that I created, because I am a hard charging guy. Like let's take the hill, Let's live the adventure. Let's go, go go, and I created a pretty intense culture here with too much going on. And then we began to see employees not doing well. They're not employees, their team members, they're friends. When you live in that small of a group of people. And I realized that I had projected a lot of my lack of personal soul care. I'm just one of those people that can endure a lot and can go without, and I can withstand international travel. I can do multiple events, I can ... but it's not good for me. And it's not good for those who work for me.

John Eldredge:

So we had a huge culture reset here in recent years. And I could show you the living room to my wall here, you'd see a foosball table at a ping pong table, and there's staff lunches and play time and I, personally, I had to learn soul care and I had to do it on behalf of my team to say we're not going to drive everybody into the ground in order to take the next objective.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a hard lesson. I work with people several decades younger than me for the most part these days. And I've had to be ... because I'm an Enneagram eight. I just go and again, the travel, the schedule, and I got some hacks around it, but I realized that my personal pace is something that ... and drive is unique to me and there has to be a healthy calibration for the team. And I think a lot ... and hey, there are seasons, let's be honest, where it's not healthy where I'm not healthy or I'm not this but it's a good

reminder that even if ... I try to remind myself of this, that even if I am going extra hard in the season, I cannot expect that level of sustained effort from the team, because it's just not fair.

John Eldredge:

Yes, yes. One of the greatest epiphanies in life for me was the way I treat my heart and my soul is the way I will end up treating everyone else's. And I thought that I'm like, "No, that's not true. I'm super compassionate towards people." But the thing is, I am projecting a set of expectations. And when they see me work late and work weekends, when they see me getting tons done and they're getting email service at 9:00 PM and stuff. It projects expectations. And so I had to almost on behalf of others, sometimes we can't make the choice for ourselves but on behalf of others, I had to learn a more reasonable way of living and working and creating. I really did I just had to completely recalibrate. Because I care for these folks. And can I care for my wife. And I realized that I was asking her...you and I sound very similarly wired.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, I think we might be.

John Eldredge:

Yeah. Yeah, I wish we lived closer because we would probably-

Carey Nieuwhof:

We'd probably hang out and have a good time and commiserate.

John Eldredge:

Yeah. But I projected it on my wife. I wanted her to keep up the same pace and it wore her out, and that was not kind. So it's been wonderful this last season. And I would put that into like the last five years here in our company. It's just a total recalibration of how we live and love and what we consider to be a reasonable pace for creative people wanting to get a ton of stuff done.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Has I've been hard for you?

John Eldredge:

Of course, yeah because I am the wild horse, I want to run an open country full tilt. I don't want to be constrained by anything. So it actually requires continual adjustments and continual choices and, and now in states that are mapping out the year, the question we're asking is, where's the Sabbath? Where's the Sabbath in that schedule? Not just once, but quarterly. Where's the Sabbath? Where are we going to catch our breath? So that's been really good.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you can't mean a day then if it's quarterly. Are you talking about a week? Are you talking what-

John Eldredge:

Yep take a week quarterly. Yep.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, it's funny, my wife and I've been doing weekly Sabbath. So I broke it last weekend because we're in the middle of a launch and I'm like, I think I sinned actually. But I know that's Old Testament, but I broke that and then my wife is like, "Let's make July and August this summer a no travel zone." And we're just not going to fly anywhere. You're not going to take any speaking engagements. That was so hard for me but for those who are listening, you're celebrating.

John Eldredge:

I am raising my hands in the air. That is such a good call.

Carey Nieuwhof:

She's such a great wife. I got to listen.

John Eldredge:

Good for her.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. So on that note, there's a good segueway into your new book. You argue that we have and I'm quoting, "We've been sucked into a life nobody's enjoying." Can you tell us about that? And what the premise of Get Your Life Back, which is a great title, by the way, your latest book is all about?

John Eldredge:

Yeah, it's a perfect storm right now. Its several things together. It's not one thing. It is the pace of life that most people find themselves living because what technology did, it allowed our capacity to increase like triple X. We can get so much more done. But the problem is therefore so much more as required of us and then you just have ... everyone's got their normal life, things to navigate. You've got your aging parents, you've got health issues, you've got dreams and finances that you're trying to get in order and you got maybe kids, or maybe you're single. But the problem is now the pace of life is absolutely nuts. Nobody remembers free time anymore. When was goof off time? When was that?

Carey Nieuwhof:

We're getting bored in the summer. That was awesome, right.

John Eldredge:

Yeah, just pure goof off. I have no agenda. I have nothing to be productive about and no one's able to reach me. So you have the pace of life. And then you have the technology. And you have the fact that everyone is way over connected. We're checking our phones 80 times a day and we're spending three hours a day using apps on our phones and so you've got this ... we're all wired into the world now. And so that technology gives everyone access to you. I mean you're getting texted at 11:00 PM and your company expects you to answer now. Those are the expectations now you are 24/7 available.

John Eldredge:

And then the third piece I would add to it is the tsunami of information coming at us. Everybody knows about the Coronavirus now everybody knows about the deaths. Everyone knows about the earthquakes

in Turkey and what's happening in Syria. And the human soul was never meant to live like this. You were never meant to be subject to an insane pace of life with no downtime to being over connected in technology and to being subject to the heartache of the entire world. That perfect storm is wearing everyone out.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, I mean the term I think years ago, decades ago of compassion fatigue surfaced. And every day there's a new issue. So today the day we're recording this, this will air months later but there was a tornado in Nashville. So I'm like literally texting my friends to see how they're doing, praying for people. But 100 years ago, you wouldn't even know that kind of stuff. The Coronavirus you wouldn't know, I mean maybe read the newspaper, if you're literate you read the newspaper. So you're arguing it's a soul thing, we were not actually designed to handle the information that we are now processing daily?

John Eldredge:

Yeah. Clearly. Yeah, I think the human soul is village sized. I think we were meant to love and care and share the heartache and the losses of a small group of people. But when you are now ... we are all subject to all the heartache you just named and then on and on you go, the fires in Australia. I know you're heading down to Australia. 1.9 billion animals have died in the fires in Australia. I mean, that kind of heartbreak. It just wrecks me. And so I think you're right. I think it's empathy overload. I just think it's too much. And so how do we explain the rising anxiety rates? The rising depression rates? Anti-anxiety drugs are the leading pharmaceutical in the world right now. And by the way, I believe in drugs, I think as a therapist, I believe in them 100%. My wife uses antidepressants. If your neurochemistry has been hurt by your genetics or by other things, childhood trauma, those drugs can be enormously helpful.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, very life giving.

John Eldredge:

I'm not condemning them. I'm just saying what kind of world do we have right now that we need so much medication? And so many people just seem so overloaded? I think we are all overwhelmed.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because you've been practicing as a therapist now for decades, so again, speak to people who are under 30. I'm thinking a lot these days, John, because we're doing research in a similar vein, and I don't know whether it's in your book or not but have you heard of Robin Dunbar, Dunbar's number?

John Eldredge:

No.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, this is fascinating. I've got his book in my library. He's an atheist sociologist who argues exactly what you just said that the average person really was designed for the size of a village and he studies medieval villages throughout history and discovers the number to be about 150.

John Eldredge:

Wow.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So I've got a book coming out next year now at this point not this year, where I talk about exactly that problem, Dunbar's number. You were not designed to have 20,000 followers or 2,000 followers or 500 friends, you're about 150. And if you look at historically, over the whole period of human history ... and Dunbar, who's a sociologist who's alive today and a historian, basically argues that psychologically you're wired to about 150 people. And then what do you do with that? That's overwhelming in anxiety, right? And so I have a pre-digital memory, you have the blessing of a pre-digital memory where you remember. I mean, earlier today ... I don't want to make this about what's happening in my life, but we just disconnected our home phone. And the only reason we have it is in an emergency, we live in the middle of nowhere. It's like it might be the only way to get out in the event of a fire or something like that. But I just disabled all the inbound stuff because I just can't stand the telemarketers and anybody who really knows how to reach us. It's just one more channel we're able to close off, but keep open in case of emergency. But if you're under 30, you don't remember life when you weren't instantly accessible.

John Eldredge:

Like what you just said about Dunbar's numbers is a very kind thing to inform people of. This isn't criticism, it's kindness to say to those under 30, "Look what you think is normal, it is actually very brutal on the human soul." Humanity was never living like this for thousands and thousands of years. For thousands of years, the pace of human life was three miles an hour.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a great point.

John Eldredge:

It was the pace of walking. And this was one of the things in the gospels that just blew my mind. And I need to give credit to Archibald Hart, because years ago, he did this study on adrenaline and stress. And he was pointing out in the gospels, we read these stories, here's a miracle and then there's a teaching and then there's a deliverance and then ... but when it says, Jesus went from Jerusalem up to Galilee, we think it takes place-

Carey Nieuwhof:

On his private jet and he was there in minutes. Yeah.

John Eldredge:

Three days, walking by foot. Three days by foot, walking, and that's the downtime. That's the soul recovery time. That's the time to process. Talk about what just happened, have a meal, rest under a tree, get ready for the next thing. And we have lost all transitional space, there is no transitional space. We go from one angry phone call into a heartbreak news report and then we check our feed and your soul is like, "Mercy! Uncle!" And this is what happened to me. This is where the book came from. Everything we're describing happened to me, and I got so dried out. I was cooked, I was baked. And I just said, "This isn't the life I want, this is absolute craziness." So to the degree that I can begin to do

some things, reasonable things. I'm not quitting my job, I'm not moving to the mountains, reasonable things to get out of the madness.

Carey Nieuwhof:

When did that happen for you, John?

John Eldredge:

Yeah, I was describing the cultural shift in our non-profit about the same time. So over the last several years, I've been trying to make these small course corrections in my life, small choices as simple as this. Like this morning, I had to discipline myself again because I did...the tornadoes. Don't look at your phone first thing in the morning. It just became a habit. And I would just reach for my phone, right? It's the first thing you do, well, then you're in it, you're in the matrix. There's the emergency text and there's the email that, oh, I forgot to answer that. And there's no space left to be human. And so what I do is I just simply don't check my phone. I leave it facedown on the counter at night. When I come out in the morning, instead, make a cup of coffee, look out the window, be human. Be kind to your soul.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you've been a clinician, a practicing therapist now for decades. How have you seen ... how long?

John Eldredge:

Almost 30 years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Almost 30 years. So over these three decades, how have you seen the presenting symptoms change?

John Eldredge:

People used to be ... it's margin. It was Richard Swenson's book, that groundbreaking book.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a good book.

John Eldredge:

People ... yeah, right? As a young therapist, I could give someone an insight. I could help them unpack something in their story. And they would go think about it. And next time they came in, we would be able to build on the work that we were doing. But now what's happened is, people do not have time to think. It's restart every time we sit down because there's no mental space for people to just have margin or room or free time or whatever you want to call it to just think about their lives or process things. When I suggest that someone journal those feelings, record that, they look at me like, "When? When am I supposed to do that?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Yeah. So those are some really, really big differences. How would you describe the stressors that people are ... you're saying information overload, which really takes on compassion fatigue, there may

be a better name for that. What are some of the other stressors that you're seeing in your practice and in your observations?

John Eldredge:

Because of profound hopelessness ... You don't understand the suicide rates in your listening audience are off the charts. It's the number one killer of young people in the West now is suicide. And that just breaks my heart. That's just devastating news. Therefore, why? Well, it's hopelessness, is that they do not see opportunity ... If you ask people 40 years ago, 50 years ago, "Do you think that your life will be better than your parents?" They would have said, "Yes." Because of this idea of progress, right? And my goodness, look at ... we're getting better at health care and women aren't dying in childbirth and come on, the world is getting better. But nowadays, if you ask young people that question, they will say, "No, I don't anticipate that my life will be better than my parents." The economic stress, the multiple career changes. The typical Millennial, for example, will have seven different careers. Not jobs, careers. And so it's the instability. And then it was the thing you were touching on just to come back to community for a moment. I can't wait for your book to come out. I'm very excited about that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Neither can I. I got to figure it out. But thank you.

John Eldredge:

What we have now is artificial community. Everyone's community is digital. And like you were saying, so what that you have a ton of friends on Facebook? It's not real communities, it's artificial. You're not face to face with someone, you're not sharing their life, you're not. And so I think it is loneliness. I would add, disconnected loneliness and the hopelessness is really getting people into this spiral of anxiety and depression because they're connected in the wrong ways. I was about to say they're not connected. They're over connected. We're all over connected. I am way over connected, right? But it's not face to face and it's not human to human and it's not life to life, and that's what we desperately need.

John Eldredge:

There is a beautiful Jewish therapist, Irving Yorlom, he's incredible writer. He's an existential therapist, and his mantra was, it's the relationship that heals. It's the relationship that heals. He was trying to help young clinicians understand it's not your knowledge, it's not your expertise, it's not your PhD. It's the relationship that you are offering someone as you listen to their life. And we don't have that. We don't have the healing because we don't have the relationships, right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's true.

John Eldredge:

We don't have time for it. And then we're overloaded online.

Carey Nieuwhof:

John, you make the argument in your book in one form or another that social media may be destroying our souls. Can you talk a little bit more about social media? And then before we wrap up, I want to get into the reconstruction. What are some things we can do, some practices-

John Eldredge:

Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because I think you're reading everyone's mail.

John Eldredge:

Yeah, there is good hope. Again, so the research shows ... overwhelming research, this isn't even contestable anymore. The amount of social media you consume and the rising rates of anxiety and depression and also envy plenty of research on that, direct correlation. It's a one to one ratio. And so if you want to be well, stop doing that yourself.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah.

John Eldredge:

That's the good news Carey is this when I when I realized I was really cooked and spun up, I would just be so spun up at the end of the day. I realized this is a persecution, I'm not in a camp. I have choices. I actually have volition. I have opportunity to make some changes. Not massive ones maybe. But I can make some changes. And that began to lead into a series of healing practices like learning to pause in my day. They're very simple. The opening chapter the book is the one minute pause, learning to pause in my day in order to just reset. I realized I never stopped. I just go from email to email, phone call to phone call meeting to meeting boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What does that look like? What are you doing a one minute pause.

John Eldredge:

Okay, what's really fun about this, I'm going to give a quick shout out. This became so healing, we built an app called the One Minute Pause that will guide folks it's free. And it's online. 40,000 people have downloaded it in a couple months, which shows you it's working.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

John Eldredge:

It's really helpful. So here's what I do. The whole point of the pause first is that you do nothing. The soul needs to do nothing, sometimes. And so I'm not making my lists and I'm not answering emails in my head and I'm not planning my next ... I am getting quiet. And then the main practice I use the pause for now is the second chapter in the book and I talk about benevolent detachment because of the information overload because of the empathy fatigue, the compassion fatigue, I have got to let it go. Somewhere in my day, I have got to practice releasing it. And so I literally, when I pause, I pause, I get quiet. I become aware of my body. I'm like, "Whoa, I am so tense." I become aware of my breathing. I

am breathing so shallow, just short little breaths. And I'm already cranked up. And this is by 10 in the morning.

John Eldredge:

I pause and come back to myself. And in that pause, I begin to say something like this, I say, "Jesus, I give everyone and everything to you." And then I repeat that because I need to repeat it. "I give everyone and everything to you." And as I'm doing it, I am this I'm disentangling myself from the chaos of my world. And the world, the news, the report I just heard. At some point, you got to learn to let it go. And as you do that, it is so marvelous for the soul, and we're talking 60 seconds Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah.

John Eldredge:

This isn't monasticism. This is very doable. And it's become so such a life giver in our offices here that every day at 10:00 and 2:00, bells ring out throughout the building in the PA system, and everybody stops for 60 seconds.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

John Eldredge:

And it's a reset. And what's cool is after doing this, having instituted this then people start sending me the brain research and that kind of thing and the brain research shows it's literally a reset, you come out of that with greater concentration and greater focus.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a great tip. How do you ... with a compassion fatigue because I think one not necessarily healthy thing is to get just totally detached. And you almost become cynical or indifferent or cold to the suffering in the world. Do you want to comment on that release to Jesus which theologically I would align with? How does that not lead you to a place of total detachment or being cold or indifferent to the suffering in the world or this paralysis of wanting to do something about it, but really being powerless to help?

John Eldredge:

Yes. That's why I call it benevolent because it's not angry. I'm not cynical. I'm not ... sometimes I am, but I'm not detaching because I don't care a world. I am choosing first off to be human again. And I'm saying, I can't carry that there is absolutely nothing I can do right now about the fires in Australia. I will pray. And I do pray for that. But I have to let it go. I can't carry that. And sleep disorders are a huge, huge issue because everybody's so wired up, I would do this at bedtime. This is what Stasi and I do as part of our bedtime prayers now is that, "We give the world to you, God, we give the world to you." And then we name some things, "We give our kids to you, and we give our team to you, and we give the release of this new book to you." And you got to let it go. And the thing is, it doesn't turn you into a cynical person, it actually ... you are more refreshed and therefore able to care. It's the burnout people who can't seem to care anymore. The people who are refreshed and thriving are very caring people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How do you choose what to care about? Because I would imagine that there are some causes you support. There are some charities you give to, there are some times you pick up the phone, and you're like, actually, I got a really good friend in Australia. I did text a handful of people this morning in Nashville, just pull the current example to see that they're okay. And I may donate to something because I have lots of friends in the city. But how do you use that filter to determine, "Oh, yeah we're going to act now but not act in this case?"

John Eldredge:

Yep, concentric circles, right? You start with those close to you. It's Dunbar's model. And I didn't even know about it, right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

It is his model, you're right.

John Eldredge:

Yeah, you have to start with what's close to you, because that's where you can make the biggest difference. I can take a meal to my neighbor, I can actually do something, right? I can help that girl change her flat tire, I can do that, I can intervene there. And then you start going out and ... when it gets to be super global, there's very little I can do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And that's somebody else's ... it's funny because that's in the book, too. It's like you got your five you got your 15 and then you've got a slightly larger number and beyond that, it just doesn't work. But there is someone else for whom that affected person is in their five or they're 15.

John Eldredge:

Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Okay, that makes a lot of sense. It makes a lot of sense. Any other tips? What about talk to the young leader who's got three kids, busy, they're on the edge financially, they're still moving up in the world. They don't have as much freedom as perhaps you or I do at this stage and our life is driven as we are. And they're like, "John, I hear you man, but I just can't slow down. I'm not even the CEO. I'm not the senior pastor, I'm not the manager. I'm just ... here I am, tell me how to slow down because I'm living on the crazy train."

John Eldredge:

All right, I'm going to tell you download the One Minute Pause, on the App Store, because you get that on your phone, it's going to be a lifesaver, because everybody can do 60 seconds. You can do that. And it's a start. It's a beginning place. I'm going to give another practice ... a bunch of practices in the book, but I'm going to give one that you might find surprising. I would say there is beauty all around you. And you need to begin to notice and receive it. So you get in your car, the frost's on the windshield. The patterns of the frost are so extraordinarily beautiful. The way sunlight comes through the window, in the

morning in your kitchen, the sound of songbirds. God knew the human soul is going to be traumatized by this broken world.

John Eldredge:

I think everyone is traumatized. And beauty heals trauma, beauty heals the soul. And so I have begun to become an addict for beauty. Play beautiful music in your home, play it in your car on your commute. Find things of beauty that are beautiful to you. And fill your world with it. What is it for you? Is it wood? Is it flowers? Is it music, fabric. The beauty of human faces is infinite. To let beauty back into your life and into your soul because it will heal you in ways that you didn't even know you needed heal.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a good counsel. And is it you? I think it's you in this book. I was reading it this week. I think it was from you. That said, "We live way too much of our life indoors." Is that your point? It's just, yeah.

John Eldredge:

Yeah, the World Health Organization released that report, that we spend 93% of our life indoors now, 93%.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And that's not healthy.

John Eldredge:

Oh, well, it's not for all ... it literally isn't healthy, because the human soul needs nature and you need fresh air and you literally need dirt. Because microbiomes and all that improve human immune systems. There's a lot of good research coming out that the immune deficiency crisis that we're in and all the autoimmune disorders are because we've been detached from nature. Because we live in plastic worlds now. So again, I know I sound like the nature guy, and I know I sound like a monk. I live a normal life. I get home late, I have work to do when I get home. My life is crazy. But I make it a priority to get outside every day.

John Eldredge:

Sometimes that just means a lap around the building. I literally just walk outside the office building and I just take laps, just walk around in the parking lot. But I can feel the weather and I can feel the wind. And also, it's also for the mind to get out of your work environment for just a moment, a five minute walk. It is a reset. It is a reset, and you do feel less stressed and the cortisol begins to drop in your body. So get outside, if only for a few minutes every day.

Carey Nieuwhof:

John this could be a three hour conversation. It's been so rich. I really appreciate it. And I would echo that actually, that's one of the reasons you and I were talking. I took up winter running, and I was just trying to put this together in my mind. Why do I hate exercise in the winter? In the summer, I cycle.

John Eldredge:

Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And it's not even ... well, the exercise is great, but I just love being outside in the sun and on the road and the wind. And since I've started winter running, and it's like 20 degrees Fahrenheit. I love it. Don't love running, love being outside and I needed the exercise.

John Eldredge:

Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I agree. And it's good, yeah. It's good for my soul. And usually the leader in me is like, "Oh, I get some pretty good ideas when I'm doing that." That's a little carrot, a bonus. But, John, man oh man, anything else you want to share to encourage leaders as we wrap up?

John Eldredge:

No one and nothing in the world is going to tell you to take care of your soul. But Carey and I are. You want to be a more loving person? Care for your soul. You want to be more creative? Care for your soul. You want to make a difference in the world? Care for your soul. Everything depends on the health of your soul. And the mad world is not going to encourage you to do these simple things, but it's worth it. It's worth it. Care for your soul.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is a great word. So I'm excited for people to get the app. I'm going to download the app. And I would love for you to tell people where they can find you online and track with you, John.

John Eldredge:

If you google John Eldredge, you'll find me quick. Wherever you get your podcasts, we have a regular podcast. So you could search for John Eldredge there and you find our organization called Ransomed Heart. You can find our live events and the things that we do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We're on the waiting list. A lottery. John, I have a feeling this won't be the last time just thank you so much. What a gift this has been to me and what a gift you've been to millions. So thank you for sharing with us today.

John Eldredge:

Yeah, thanks, Carey. I've enjoyed it immensely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I hope you enjoyed that interview as much as I did. If you want more, we've got show notes for you including transcripts at CareyNieuwhof.com/Episode355. And want to thank our partners on this episode too, The Unstuck Group. You can download your free copy of lesson one from their one day masterclass about key shifts churches need to make because of the Coronavirus at theunstuckgroup.com/carey. And check out ServeHQ's free 14 day trial, no obligation at servehq.church, and they have online software subscription tools for churches right there for you. So next episode, I am

so excited to bring you Dharius Daniels. Dharius and I, we talked about a lot of different things. And he's somebody who has really got a voice worth listening to. We talk about the ups and downs of communication, leadership, learning lessons the hard way, and how to live and lead with greater relational intelligence. Here's an excerpt from that conversation.

Dharius Daniels:

There's this experience in the African American church that is rich. And so what we wanted to do was to take some of those same values and figure out what does it mean to reinvent them for another generation who needs church done differently? Maybe to the global church, some of the things that we did would not be considered trendsetting, but in the context of the tradition I was hued out of, we had to be highly experimental and innovative. I'm sure other people in other contexts can relate to this, I guess in some way. Sometimes a break from an approach isn't just seen as a break from an approach. At times, it's seen as a betrayal of identity, like, "Oh, this isn't good enough for you anymore. This is the way we do it." And so we had to work through a lot of that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that's our next episode. And in the meantime, what am I thinking about? Well, I am thinking about what you are thinking about. And in the same way that Henry Cloud and I had a good conversation about mental health and then we brought you this one with John Eldredge today. Here's some things I'm sensing leaders are thinking about this summer. Number one, "I don't know how much longer I can do this." I've talked to a few leaders who are like, "I just didn't sign up for this. I did not sign up for opening and closing and online ministry and the craziness and the chaos what 2020 has become."

Carey Nieuwhof:

I interviewed Levi and Jennie Lusko recently, and you'll hear that conversation soon if you haven't already about the Coronavirus. And I love Levi's metaphor. He just said, "Look, it's like we knew how to run this race. And we're running the race and we get to the end of our marathon. And then we think we're finished and somebody's hands us a bike. And then they tell us, oh, yeah later, you've got to swim." And you're like, "I could do the run. I just can't do this biking and swimming." And it's so true. You thought you signed up for a marathon, but it's actually a triathlon.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I know a lot of leaders are like, I don't know how much longer I can do this. So a little hint for you, never quit on a bad day and there have been a lot of bad days lately. And then take a break, because leaders who never take a break end up breaking. And I said more on that on another segment. Your time off, can't really fix problems with your time on but sometimes you just need to rest, and maybe that's what you need to do. Second thing leaders are thinking right now is, "I'm just too tired to address the things I know I'm supposed to fix." I got a text this morning from a good friend who said his pastor is just so sick of everything he wants to go ... everything just has to go back to normal. And I'm hearing that every single day.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And you know what, there are things you need to fix, right? There have been declining church attendance trends for a long, long time. And maybe online, you're not optimally staffed for it. But denial is not a great strategy, irrelevance and effectiveness are arguably worse. And the reality is fatigue is a terrible decision maker. When you're tired, you just don't make good decisions. So I would try to get

some rest this summer and then say, "Okay, what am I supposed to do? How am I going to find the energy to address the things I know how to fix?" And then finally ... and this could be a sign you're burning out. Maybe your thoughts and emotions are total yo-yo.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I have that at times where I'm not particularly healthy. You're up one minute, down the next and everything in between, I get it. That's just something to really pay attention to and maybe you want to see a counselor, maybe you want to see your doctor, maybe you want to slow down your pace a little bit. But those are three things leaders are thinking this summer. I don't know how much longer I can do this. I'm too tired to address the things I know I'm supposed to fix. And my thoughts and emotions are total yo-yo. So if you're interested in getting some more information like this that can help you in your leadership journey, there is a little daily dose I send out and the easiest way to subscribe is just text my name CAREY to 33777.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We will sign you up for the daily email that you get. Join 70,000 other leaders who every day hear a little bit of leadership advice and strategy from me. Won't clog up your inbox, we are very careful. We do not share your email with other people. You'll only hear from me and you can do that by texting CAREY to 33777. Well, we're back next time with a fresh episode. Thank you so much for listening. I really hope this helped. And 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.