

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 371 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. This episode features Lecrae, the hip-hop artist, and we talk all about, well, what do we talk about? We talk about how he lost his faith when he was on top of the world, finding it again, the anxiety and pressure of life at the top, and overcoming personal trauma. A lot of leaders have been through a lot of trauma. This episode is brought to you by Red Letter Challenge. For our podcast listeners only, go to redletterchallenge.com/being, they will mail a free copy of their newest challenge, the Being Challenge, directly to you for free. And by International Cooperating Ministries, ICM. Check out ICM's latest report, designed to equip you with information on a growing global church, by going to icm.org/growingglobal.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, man, oh, man, I've got to tell you, it has been quite a year, hasn't it? And I just want to say, it's such a joy to be able to still partner with you. So many of you have joined the podcast, found the podcast, thank you for your encouragement. If this episode, and I think it will, if it encourages you, if it inspires you, if it challenges you, and you want to share it, just do so on social. Let Lecrae know that you heard it, let myself know. I'm Carey Nieuwhof on Instagram, [cnieuwhof](#) on Twitter and Facebook. So, just share it, get the word out, and thank you for leaving ratings and reviews as well. We so appreciate that, and it's a joy to be able to do this together.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We also have at the end of this episode, What I'm Thinking About segment, and I want to talk about what happens when we lose our minds online. You ever notice, sometimes our social feed gets a little bit crazy? Well, when Christians lose their minds, people lose their faith. So, I'll do that in the What I'm Thinking About segment at the end. Let me tell you a little bit about Lecrae. Lecrae is recognized as the first artist to have an album debut at number one for both the Billboard 200 and the gospel chart simultaneously. He is a multiple Grammy Award winner. He has gained respect for his socially conscious advocacy work, and speaks directly into some of the most important conversations facing our nation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

His latest album, Restoration, features, well, all kinds of incredible artists, including John Legend. And he's got a brand new book out today called I Am Restored: How I Lost My Religion but Found My Faith. He has helped to found and establish the Peace Preparatory Academy in Atlanta, Georgia, and created partnerships with Love Beyond Walls and Masks for the People, which have directly impact disenfranchised communities during the COVID global pandemic. He resides with his wife and three kids in Atlanta, Georgia, and it's just been a joy to get to know Lecrae. We ended up in the same green room at an event we were doing together in 2019, really hit it off, started comparing notes about some of the highs and lows of leadership. And it's just great to be able to bring that conversation to you a little bit later on.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, I said, "Hey, would you ever be up for the podcast?" He's like, "Yeah, 100%. So, I'm just thrilled, you'll find it real and raw. And, hey, if you're looking for a way to unify your congregation as you head into, well, a brand new season, you may want to consider the Being Challenge from our friends at the Red Letter Challenge. The same people who brought you the Red Letter Challenge have put together a brand new 40-day challenge your whole church can go through. It's called the Being Challenge. And what it does is it focuses on the five keystone habits of Jesus. When the disruption came in 2020, new habits were formed by everyone, and the best habits of all, of course, are those that lead you to life. So, just like the original Red Letter Challenge, the Being Challenge is a turnkey 40-day church challenge, it's got everything.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's got small group guides, videos are already done. Your sermons are complete, you can use them, modify them, write your own, whatever. Kids' curriculum's done, graphics are done. It truly is turnkey. The first wave of churches are going through it right now, seeing great results. Small groups are back up again, engagement is reaching all time highs, and social media engagement even increases. And right now, you can get some specials, 10 to 40% off, at redletterchallenge.com/being. That's redletterchallenge.com/being. And if you're a pastor and you want to check it out, but you're like, "I don't know if it's right for me." Because you listen to this podcast, go to redletterchallenge.com/being, request a free copy, they will mail it directly to you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Also, there's so much bad news. I don't know about you, but sometimes I just look at my phone, I'm like, "I can't do it anymore." Well, did you know, on Sunday, September 6, just over a month ago, 1,400 new believers were baptized in Central Thailand. That actually made my feed. It was really encouraging. Not only is that one of the largest baptism services in the history of that country, those first-generation Thai believers come from one of the least Christianized people groups in the world. And they are just the latest wave in an indigenous movement that has been growing in that country. So, maybe that surprises you, well, believe it or not, stories of explosive church growth haven't been exactly leading the news cycle, but it is happening. And our partner, ICM, International Cooperating Ministries, is in the middle of it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, if your church is committed to missions and you need some good news stories to share with people, ICM has a report that's designed to equip you with the information on trends in a growing global church. It has insights you can share with people in your church who want to know the good news about what's happening globally. You can check it out by going to icm.org/growingglobal. That's icm.org/growingglobal. So glad you joined us, man, why don't we just dive right into my conversation, the real and raw one with Lecrae?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Lecrae, welcome to the podcast. It's such an honor to have you.

Lecrae:

Glad to be here.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Hey, you and I had a chance to meet backstage at an event we did, I think, in Dallas, last year, really hit it off, had a good conversation. And I said, "Man, it'd be great to have you on the podcast." You've got a brand new book, which I actually have read cover to cover, great book. And in it, you talk a lot about the celebrity journey, your relationship with your faith, how you lost it, how you found it. But I want to talk about, because we all, particularly in this Instagram age, everybody wants to be famous, everybody wants to be well known, everybody wants to be recognized, but celebrity has pressures and surprises that I think a lot of people don't see. Can you start just by talking about some of the pressures and surprises you've had with the celebrity that's coming your way?

Lecrae:

Yeah, I think the pressures of celebrity are really, some of them are self-imposed, some of them... I think the biggest thing that I found is that the higher people exalt you, the more they demand of you to fit whatever ideal they have. And when you don't live up to that, in whatever respect, then they're a lot more eager to tear you down. So, we tend to do that. We tend to build up our idols and tear them down just as fast. So, I think I wasn't prepared to be praised as much as I was, and criticized as much as I was. And just finding a space to find myself, to be myself. I actually talk about that on the album a lot, where I just need the space to process, because there're so many voices praising and criticizing all the time.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Do you think that's true of all celebrities? Or do you think that's also especially true in the church? I'm curious as to your perspective.

Lecrae:

I think it's true of all. Every public figure, that's going to be true. I do think there's a different expectation when it comes to the church, of grace and love, that you expect people to walk in. You expect a certain amount of wisdom, grace, love, to be exemplified and offered, but I think we're a little harsher toward those in public spaces, if I'm honest.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, the criticism and the praise were really surprising, anything else? You've been on the road an awful lot, just describe what road life is like. I've been off the road now for six months, I'm sure you have for the most part, and a lot of people used to travel a lot, but it's very different on the inside, I'm sure, than it looks like on the outside.

Lecrae:

Yeah. I mean, being on the road is, initially, it's glamorous, it's great. It's like, "Oh, wow, new cities, new places." But then, it turns into work, and it turns into, "Make this stop, do this interview, talk to these people, meet these people, perform," and you're going, going, going, and you're not really given the space to process, enjoy what's happening here. If you're having a bad day, there's no room for you to have a bad day because you've got to meet people, and they're excited to meet you. And so, you get off the phone with your wife and she tells you, "Your son is acting up." You're like, "Oh," and then we've got to deal with this. And then I've got to shake this person's hand. And in the back of my mind, there's chaos in my house.

Lecrae:

So, it's not as glamorous, especially for a married man with kids, it's a lot tougher because you're torn in two worlds at one time, a married person with kids.

Carey Nieuwhof:

A lot of people, because we think about this, and as a preacher myself, you think, "Okay, the Christian story is a story of before and after. So, before you met Jesus, this is what your life was, but now, you got it all together, et cetera, et cetera." So, sort of like, "Before, I was messed up, but now..." I'd love to get your take on that, because you're so honest and so raw in this book about some of the things that just weren't going well in the midst of it all. What do you think about that narrative, where it's like, "All my problems are in the past, but here I am, and now things are together"?

Lecrae:

Yeah, I think, what was really important to me with the book is chronicling what restoration looks like. Restoration is the journey not the destination. Restoration is something that we're in a marathon, and you win a marathon by finishing it, not by coming in first, not by looking like you're better than this person or that person. And I think, that whole narrative, like, "Man, I was all messed up, but then I found the Lord and now I'm better," it's true in a spiritual sense. I was dead, now I'm alive. I did a song called Zombie that articulates just that point. I was dead, now I'm alive. But, it's like a child coming into this world. When a baby enters the world, it's going to take some time to learn how to walk.

Lecrae:

And when it gets a little older and it starts walking, what's the first thing you do when you see them taking steps? You clap like, "Good job, good job." And when the baby falls, we don't say, "You stupid baby, what is wrong with you? Get up and walk." We say, "Oh, it's okay. Get back up." And then we encourage them to take more steps and more steps. We anticipate that throughout this process, the child is going to keep falling. And similarly, as believers, we're learning how to walk in a broken world, and we're going to fall. And hopefully, we get up and walk further than we did before, but there may be times when, "Oh, I fell again." It's okay. Get up. Just don't stay down there, get up and keep walking, and maybe you'll take more steps this time than you took before. And that's the narrative that I think is a much more healthier version.

Carey Nieuwhof:

In the book, you talk an awful lot about your childhood and you share some things you haven't really shared before, at least, not in that form. You talk about being sexually molested when you were a child, physically beat up, sleeping with a knife under your pillow because you feared for your safety as a child. And growing up, not really knowing your dad really well. How do those wounds, how did they continue and how do they continue to impact you as an adult?

Lecrae:

Yeah, I think, and I say this every so often, that there's freedom in confession but there's suffering in suppression. And I think, as you suppress those wounds, as you keep those wounds closeted and you don't address them, they will create issues in your life. Those are traumas that you will have to navigate for the rest of your life in certain circumstances. But you have an opportunity to allow those traumas to cripple you and to keep you in a constant state of suppression and fear, or you can allow those traumas to grow you, to strengthen you, to help you to say, "You know what? I've endured some crazy things," and that's what's happened to me in my life, I've endured some crazy things. But those things have

shaped me and molded me and afforded me the ability to move forward to climb higher heights, to do different things, to trust God, to be more dependent than I was historically.

Lecrae:

So, again, I think pragmatically or practically, they affect my sense of security or insecurity, like, "Who am I?" So, you've got to wrestle with those particular issues. And then you've got to really begin to do the work of understanding who you are and whose you are. And I think, whereas the average person may have some identity issues here and there and say, "Man, who am I?" A person who's experienced some traumatic things like that, they may have to revisit that a little more often, because they've got these narratives screaming at them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, you tell stories about being a kid or a teenager, and are you man enough? And I think at one point, did you have relatives who were trying to get you into a fight and betting on you and that kind of stuff? Talk about that. How did those insecurities chase you into adulthood?

Lecrae:

That's an interesting component. Every culture has ideals and values. And so, what may be idealistic for one culture is a value for another. What may be a value for one culture is an ideal for another. So, you can take a group of people in a Polynesian islands, family's a different ideal than a group of people in London. There may have two different ideals and values of what families should be like. And in my culture, in my community, with all of the different issues that plagued our community, there was no time to be weak. You never knew what could happen at any given moment. You're walking down a street with a group of your friends, and a guy steps out, takes a bottle and smashes it up against one of your friend's faces and it rips his face in the shreds, and you're left there, like, "What am I supposed to do?"

Lecrae:

And so, it's kind of like this environment where you've got to be prepared at any given moment to deal with this kind of chaos. So, college, sure, that's an ideal. Value, you better be tough. That's a value, because you need that in this space. And it was something that, man, I just became frustrated with, because it seemed as if there was no room for the nuance and the dynamic of who I was, it was just stone face, be tough, be prepared, be ready at all times. And I felt like there was so much more to me that I wasn't able to express and unleash. And I craved that freedom.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Was music and outlet for you in that respect? I remember there's a moment where, I think it was, some of your friends were fighting, and it's like, "But Lecrae, he can rap, that kid rap." Right? Was that your artistic outlet, your nuanced outlet?

Lecrae:

Absolutely. That was my sanctuary, being able to write and just put my ideas and my thoughts and express them. As I mentioned in the book, my aunt would send me postcards from different places she had traveled. She taught English in different countries around the world, and so, I knew the world was bigger, and it would make me say, "Wait a minute, there's more out here." And I would just write and

try to express. And then my mother always was an advocate of reading. So, "Just read books." And I would escape in these books. Now, mind you, there are bloody wars going on outside, helicopters swirling around, sirens, and I am lost in a book inside the house. Because for me, it was like, "I know there's a bigger world than what I'm seeing." In some kind of way, I have to have an outlet to express these things that I'm experiencing.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Remind me which city you grew up in, which city?

Lecrae:

I grew up in between Houston, Texas, Denver, Southeast San Diego, and in Dallas. So, multiple different places where I have an experience in all of these particular things.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But you're always in a particular neighborhood, grew up where things were rough, people weren't rich, that whole thing.

Lecrae:

Absolutely, absolutely. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Grew up on the streets. There's a certain point, and I want to chase a couple of things down you said already, you mentioned the word insecurity. So, you've got tens of thousands of leaders listening, and I know in my own journey, I write about it in one of my books and talking to a lot of leaders, it's something leaders really struggle with, insecurity. Has that been a battle for you even as your career took off? Did you ever get over your insecurity? What was that like for you?

Lecrae:

Yeah. I mean, insecurity, I think what a lot of leaders don't realize is they feel their insecurities by achieving more. They feel their insecurities by accomplishing more. What you are actually doing are wielding false senses of security to yourself. Every trophy behind me is a tool I can use to wield on to myself to protect myself against the darts that I aim in my insecurity. And so, leaders, "Look how many followers I have, look how big my church is, look how many people bought my book." All these things are ways you can wield a shield around your own insecurity without ever dealing with your insecurity, dealing with the root of it. And so, what you begin to do is you begin to do what God never intended for you to do is create your own sense of security with these inanimate objects or ideals of success, instead of recognizing that you have infinite worth and purpose, and it was bestowed upon you from birth.

Lecrae:

With every accomplishment, you actually begin to blind yourself and numb yourself to the insecurities that you have, until that fateful day, when things don't work out, or when someone doesn't like what you said or what you did or buy your book, and then your world begins to crumble. And we see that happen with professional athletes all the time. As soon as they retire, they're asking themselves, "Who am I?" Because they were shielded from knowing who they truly were.

Carey Nieuwhof:

When you look back at your career so far, what would you say was the height for you?

Lecrae:

I mean, on material level, I would say 2013 and '14, on a material level, were probably like this combination of a highlight reel. I've continued to do things that I hadn't done before, but I think they were just consistently happening during that time period. It was like, bam, number one album. Bam, Grammy Awards. Bam, Billboard Awards. Bam, "Big artists want to feature you." Bam, speaking at these conferences on massive stages. And it was just all within this one year span of just soaring and different opportunities coming at you, doing this world tour that sold out everywhere. And so, I think, on a material level, that was the most successful year. But on a spiritual level, it was not successful at all.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We're going to go there. What was that like? Because I've had a conversation with a few people, we've watched a number of leaders implode publicly recently, and I've just been in some private conversations, and I'm like, "Well, look at the stratosphere." They went from zero to 60 in 2.5 seconds, and that is so much pressure. What did that feel like when all of a sudden, your number one record in the world, not in a category, but in the world? You're on the stage in wherever they do the Grammy's, I guess it's Hollywood, and they announce your name as the winner. What is that like? What does that do to you?

Lecrae:

Back then, I could articulate to you that there was an internal battle with pursuing humility. Back then, I wouldn't be able to articulate that to you. I can tell you that now, there was an internal battle with pursuing humility. At the time, I just was like, "What is happening?" Because I didn't know, I didn't know any better. I went to the mall and bought a suit to wear to the Grammy's. It's like, it wasn't tailored. I don't know what is going on right now. When they called my name, I didn't think I would win it. So, there was a sense of, "What is happening right now?" And there was an internal wrestle with, "Okay, how do I pursue humility and yet be appreciative?" And I didn't know what those emotions were at the time. I know now that's what I was battling, but you're trying to process, "How do I stay down to earth? How do I stay connected?"

Lecrae:

My friends, I felt like the air started changing around me and different conversations were happening. And it was like my friends couldn't... It was like, "Hey, man, I've got to go talk to this person about this deal." And they're like, "Deal? What do you mean deal? Aren't we playing basketball?" And I'm like, "I can't. Man, I've got to talk to Dr. Dre and Pharrell," they're on the phone. And it's like, "What? Is it all..." These massive things. And my friends were just like, "I don't understand, why are people screaming your name? What is going on here?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because you've been Lecrae to them for years. Right?

Lecrae:

Exactly, exactly. So, it was a mixture of me trying to walk in these new shoes, and them trying to figure out what these shoes were. It's a lot to just process.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, it's a lot to process, and all of a sudden, I think that's another thing that can happen. And we've got a number of leaders listening, who are in high growth environments right now. Maybe it's not number one record in the world, but it's like, all of a sudden, it's five times, 10 times bigger than it was, your friends change in a moment like that. Maybe you hangout and you're still playing basketball with the guys you've known since you were 16, on the one hand, but all of a sudden, Pharrell and Dr. Dre call, and all these artists want to feature you, and producers are interested. Can you talk about that and what that was like in that moment when all of a sudden, your phone starts ringing and you're like, "You've got to be kidding me"?

Lecrae:

Yeah. I'm not sure where I got the analogy, but it was an analogy that I remember of, when you start off with your team, because I started off with my home team and everyone around me helped me get to this place. And you start off with your team and you guys are all playing golf, it's like golf game, and everyone hits the ball, you're having a good conversation. And then it's like, all right, things are getting a little more intense and it's basketball now. Everyone still touches the ball, we're still all on the court, but maybe some people shoot a little more than others. But then you just hit this plateau, this peak, and it's football. And it's like, your cousin, who's been with you playing golf the whole time is like, "Hey, can I play?" And you're like, "Ah, I just need someone to kick, and you're not really a good kicker."

Lecrae:

So, ah, this is rough, because now you need all these specialized people around you. And if you don't know how to transition, which I didn't know how to transition well from that kind of friendly game of golf to this specialized football, it is rough relationally. It is tough to navigate that type of growth and that type of stretching. And so, it took a lot of intentional conversations, a lot of processing with people. And there was some shrapnel, people were hurt in that process as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, it's interesting because I've never heard that analogy and I'm glad you shared it, but there's that saying that, "What got you here, won't get you there." Right? And I think that's such a typical leadership journey where, when it was the six of you going for lunch in that booth at your favorite restaurant, and you were going to be together no matter what. And then things really take off, and this guy leaves, and you've got to let this guy go, and next thing you know, it's a whole different crew of people. Any advice for leaders, knowing what you know now, because that was like six years ago, how would you replay that? Would you replay any of that relational weirdness differently?

Lecrae:

Yeah, I think I would... you have to measure the connections. Because everyone has this idea that every connection is relational or every connection is transactional. And I think you have to temper that, and you have to understand the dynamic of who you're dealing with and what that can potentially be. And so, I'm very upfront with people, when I feel like, "Hey, this is a contractual relationship and not a covenantal relational type of deal." I'm very upfront and I don't want to give off the idea or the vibe that we're going to be holding hands walking down this plane together. And just not in a rude way, but just

not trying to sell anyone on the idea that, "Hey, we're going to go on this long journey," but just being honest and saying, "Hey, I don't know how this is going to go. I love what I've seen here, let's try this out, let's see this, and we'll meet back up to see how this goes."

Lecrae:

And then gradually pulling them into seeing if this is a more relational interaction. Because that's ultimately what causes a lot of the problems is that you've developed these deeper kind of friendships with people that you're on a contractual journey with. And so, that's tough. You know what I mean? It's tough. I mean, obviously, you want to love everybody and you want to treat everybody fairly, of course, but at the same time, I have to let the guy who comes to fix my sink know, "Hey, man, I just want you to know, I don't know if you're going to be the same guy that's going to come next time my sink [crosstalk 00:30:35]."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right. "You might be a session player."

Lecrae:

Right. You know what I mean? So, just making sure that those things are understood.

Carey Nieuwhof:

"You're not on a band."

Lecrae:

Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

"You can play on this track."

Lecrae:

Exactly. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, that's good. And I would say, the other thing I've learned too is that people sometimes come in for a season. And that's okay. Have you seen that in your life?

Lecrae:

Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. And seasons, that's not a bad thing. You know what I mean? It's not a bad thing that they're in your life for a season. I mean, they're there for a specific reason and a specific goal, and you accomplish that goal together. And, man, that was the point and the purpose of your connection.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You do talk about that season when you hit number one in the world, when you won the Grammy's, and I think the quote is, "At the height of your fame," from the book. But you also said, and this is a quote,

"My life was a wreck." Talk about that disconnect between reaching the pinnacle and at the same time going, "Oh, my gosh, I'm imploding." What was going on?

Lecrae:

Number one, I mean, if you have unresolved historical trauma in your life, that's going to come for you, under stress. Because if you never developed healthy coping mechanisms as a kid, or just even as an adult, when you're under stress, you're not going to have healthy coping mechanisms. And so, what had happened for me was just not having developed those skills, not having dealt with a lot of those issues. I did not have healthy coping mechanisms. I liken it to, there's a speed boat, there's a raft, there's a sailboat. And a speed boat leader is somebody who's just going to power through like, "I'm just going to power through this ocean." And you're not realizing that, yes, you have all power and this propensity to just go far and fast right now, but you have not prepared yourself for running out of gas, and you're going to run out of gas eventually.

Lecrae:

And so, I ran out of gas like a speedboat, and it's like, "I don't know what I'm supposed to do." And then, of course, you have other people out there who are rafts, and they're just like, "I don't know where I'm going and I'm just out here floating." And typically, you look at those people and you say, "Look at those people, they have no direction, they don't know what they're doing, they're just out there aimlessly. That's why they're not leaders." And look at you now, when you run out of gas, you're just like them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, wow.

Lecrae:

You're just like them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So true.

Lecrae:

You did not have a plan. And so, the ideal way that you deal with that is you have to be a sailboat. And a sailboat, you're prepared for the different directions that the wind may blow. You're prepared. You have your sail like, "Okay, this is going to be a good one here. We can take advantage of this wind going in this direction and we're not going to be stuck here." You're understanding the environment and the volatility of everything around you and you're prepared for what's coming your way. And so, I think that is what I've had to learn over the years is that, man, you've got to deal with your stuff and you've got to find preparation because it's coming. If you're dependent on yourself and just you're... you're going to run out of gas eventually.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're pretty raw in the book. And so, your speed boat runs out of gas, so to speak, in 2014-ish, what were some of your coping mechanisms that got out of control? What were some of the things in your life that you were like, "Wow, I can't believe this is me"?

Lecrae:

Yeah. Firstly, it was, starts subtly. It's not like, "I can't deal with all this, give me something to help." It's subtle. It's like, "Ooh, what a long day at work. Let me have a beer." And it's like, I mean, "What a long day, let me have a beer. Well, when every day is a long day, then I need a beer every day. And then one beer is not helping me deal with the different levels of stress because I'm not just working one job, I'm running a company, I have multiple irons in the fire. So, I need a beer for every job I have going on here." And that began not a kind of sloppy drunk dependency, my body became adjusted to, "This is what always takes my edge off. So, I need a little more, I need a little more. I need something harder. Give me a shot of this, give me two shots now." And my tolerance level would just go up.

Lecrae:

And when you're on the road for 20 days and you need to decompress after everything, it's like, "Man, hit me with another one." And what begins to happen is you develop a dependency on that decompressing, that thing that helps you decompress, and you look up and you're like, "I've been drinking for 20 days straight and I didn't even notice it." And you look up and you're numb to it now, it's olfactory fatigue. You don't even smell it. So, it's like, "This is normal." Of course, we're going to get-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, you've normalized it.

Lecrae:

Absolutely. "I'm going to get on the flight, have a drink. I'm going to do this, have a drink." And I didn't think I had a problem because it never showed itself as like this overt issue, but I did notice that just my judgment will be impaired. So, it was easier to make bad decisions. It was easier to swipe the card on something I didn't need after a few drinks, and it was easier to be upset and be mad at somebody and have a terrible conversation before my wife. It's easier to get wrapped up in flirtatious behavior or pornography. It's way easier when you're intoxicated and you're ready, you're myopic, in your view, of what you need in that moment. So, make a long story longer, it then became, I'm stressed out and I know it, and I don't know what to do with it.

Lecrae:

And I had a crazy anxiety attack at a basketball game. First anxiety attack I've ever had, I was at a basketball game, and I'm sitting there waiting on my food, my wife is sitting there with me, and a fan says, "Hey, Lecrae." And I'm like, "huh-huh-huh." And I began to be on edge all the time. Someone's going to say something, jump out, "Lecrae, Lecrae," I don't have peace. I know someone's going to want a picture, recognize me. And this person did that, and I was like, "Hey, okay." And I couldn't calm down. And I was like, "Whoa, I can't calm down. I'm still on edge. What is this? This is weird." So, when it wouldn't leave, I went to see a doctor, and the doctor was like, "Hey, listen, try this Xanax and it'll calm you down."

Lecrae:

And that turned into another addiction. We all know about the opioid epidemic and benzos and so on and so forth. So, it was like, I just married two terrible spouses at one time in this season of my life.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. So, you got that. And again, it's a prescription issue. So, you're addicted to that, got alcohol, did you have people around you who started to notice the changes, who spoke into that? Or was it a self-realization? Or how did you wake up and go, "Hmm, maybe that's an issue"?

Lecrae:

The unique part about that was, during this time period, there was... a lot of the triggering for this was a lot of the racial tension going on in America. And so, that added an immense amount of stress to everything else I was dealing with. So, it wasn't just like, "Oh, work stress." I've been dealing with work stress for 12 years at this time, it was compounded work stress with crazy amounts of criticism, seeing people dying, dealing with the racial issues in society and trying to process it all within just all these different spheres of life. So, a lot of my friends, particularly my African-American friends were grieving. A lot of them were struggling. A lot of them were in pain.

Lecrae:

So, I think it was accepted. It was like, "We understand. You had a little extra to drink tonight, but we know times are tough." You know what I mean? And so, it was a little bit accepted. I mean, it was a little sad, like, "You all right?" "I'm good." "Okay. All right. Just checking on you."

Carey Nieuwhof:

"Just checking." Yeah.

Lecrae:

Yeah. "Just checking on you." And then you've got to remember, I'm at the top of the food chain. So, people, they don't tell you no.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're paying a lot of these people, right? Let's be honest.

Lecrae:

Exactly. Yeah. So, no one's telling you, they're like, "Well, you know better what to do than I know you. You made it." So, what do I know?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. You do, and I'm so grateful for it, you talk about the challenges of being black in America, the legacy of slavery. And I thought you made some really interesting points. So, let's go there. How has, I think this is a phrase I lifted directly from the book, the legacy of slavery impacted you here in the 21st century, as someone who is, honestly, near the top of the food chain? How does that still impact you?

Lecrae:

That's a good question. When you look at a company like Johnson & Johnson, or even the Rockefellers, we see, the work that the Rockefellers put in initially, directly impacts the current Rockefeller family. It benefits them currently. So, the inheritance passed down, and now they can move forward in different ways and do different things. Conversely, when you have, it was crazy as my three times great grandmother, Emily, was brought here from West Africa. Nine years old, she's a slave. And she becomes adult, has my two times great grandmother, and they say, "Hey, slavery is over. Slavery is done." Well,

that's awesome, except, they didn't have any land, money. They couldn't read. They didn't have any resources. They had nothing.

Lecrae:

So, they were literally faced with two options. One, to live on the side of the road with the clothes on their back, or two, to take an opportunity to still work the land in Arkansas for their former slave master and not get any payment for it, just be able to stay in their slave quarters. So, "If you work my land, you can stay at my slave quarters, and we'll work out this agreement." And so, they did that, and eventually, now we go to my great grandparents, Bishop Bryan, he's able to secure, through side jobs and little things like that, he's able to secure a little bit of a financial foundation to purchase a home. And you get to my grandmother, who, in order to help keep up that home, had to quit school at 13.

Lecrae:

So, her education level is 13 year old, to my mother, who's got a mom with a 13-year-old education, and she's like, "I don't know much about school or college or any of this. My mom's eating dirt to keep her stomach from growling." And my mom is like, "All right, Lecrae, you're the first one, you did it. Don't let us down." And I've got all of that weight sitting on my shoulders, to be like, "All right, here we go. Let's figure this out. Let's do this for the generations before me and after me." And so, that legacy, oh, my goodness, is impactful, is weighty.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thank you for sharing that. It was a very emotional story. And, yeah, I hadn't quite seen it that way, that legacy, it's like, wow, you're the first one. You're the first one to escape, so to speak, this chain. And I think a lot of us who didn't have that background... If I can go back a generation or two, I did do a degree in history, that arrangement where, "You're either at the side of the road or you can live here," that was sharecropping. Is that right?

Lecrae:

Right. Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, basically, slavery in another form.

Lecrae:

Sure, exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Anything else you want to say about race and America? Or, we've got a lot of leaders listening, obviously, some black and brown leaders, but a lot of white leaders too, talk to us.

Lecrae:

Yeah. The current environment that we're in, I think, lends itself to people being listeners and learners. It lends itself to us that this is the temptation for leaders, leaders are really good at doing things on the fly. Leaders are really good at cliff notes. As it pertains to race or ethnicity, we're talking about cultures now. You can't do cliff notes on cultures, right? You can't read the cliff notes on India, get there and

inspect to understand what's happening. It doesn't work that way. So, you've got to become a practitioner. You've got to get involved in these relationships. You've got to spend some time in India and like, "Okay, let me understand this and understand that. Oh, that's why this is this and that is that."

Lecrae:

And so, as it pertains to race and ethnicity and culture in America, I think it's very idealistic for us to think that American culture somehow blankets us. We're not the gumbo we think we are, we're more like a salad, there's clumsy pieces all over the place. And so, it does take some investigation, it takes some listening, it takes some saying, "Okay, what do black and brown people have to say? How can they teach me? And what can I learn? I can't do cliff notes." And the temptation is to virtue signal and to say, "Well, look at who I have on staff, or look at who I have in the room. I'm a part of the solution." Well, you're a part of the solution where you begin to practice the relational steps of getting to understand these cultural dynamics.

Lecrae:

And so, that's just a lifelong journey. That's not something we're going to get overnight, almost a lifelong journey. I have to deal with that as a man, as it pertains to women. It's a lifelong journey for me to understand the differences that women experience in this world and in this society. And I can't just say, "Well, I'm married to a woman, I know what I'm doing. I got it figured out." I've got to say, "No, this is a lifelong process."

Carey Nieuwhof:

One thing that would have been really interesting in, I'm just going to ask the question, I don't know where it leads, but you would have had, knowing a little more of your history now, you would have had doors opened to you that never would have opened for your mom, your dad, who you didn't really know, your forebearers. What was that like when, for the first time, you're like, "I can't believe this door is opening and I'm out of the neighborhood, this is for me"? What was that like for you?

Lecrae:

It's scary. And honestly, you live in that fear. It doesn't go away. You're constantly thinking, poverty's about to come on you. I'll never forget sitting with my financial advisor, and I had just made more money than anybody I knew in all of my family. And I was like, "Oh, God, I'm going to lose it all." It just made me afraid. And he said, "Well, typically, when you reach this level, you never go backwards." And I was like, "You don't? Because I don't have any experience. I don't know how this works. This is all news to me." So, it's fear. It wasn't a sense of like, "We made it, yay!" It was like, "Oh, my God, oh, my God, oh, my God, oh, my God, oh, my God, how am I going to stay here? How am I going to keep everything afloat?"

Lecrae:

And so, I've had to teach myself to celebrate more. I've had to teach myself to stop, reflect, appreciate, be grateful, way more than I ever have in the past.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to give you another quote from the book, "The more you step away from your blackness, the more the majority culture accepts you." Your comment on that.

Lecrae:

Yeah. We've got to define some terms, because I'm sure people will hear that and not quite understand all those terms. First, let's talk about majority culture. When we say majority culture, we're talking about the culture who has control, the dominant, controlling culture. Because, I mean, typically, you may say, "Well, there's more Hispanics than white people in America at some point." But it's really about, who has the power? When you look across the board, when you look across all the Fortune 500 companies, who is in charge? When you look across the wealthiest people in our country, who are they? And therein, you're going to see like, "Okay, this is majority culture here." Right? And in America, that's white people.

Lecrae:

And when I say blackness, we have to understand that this color, we're not really referencing color, we're referencing culture or ethnicity. Because I think some people think it's a skin thing, it's connected to skin, but it's way deeper than that. And so, when I say blackness, what I'm talking about are those things that are usually culturally associated with people with this skin color. Right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Fair enough. And I've had this conversation with a few other people too, like Albert Tate has talked about it on this podcast, Sam Collier's talked about it, that, "There is a way to fit in, and we will accept you if you tick these boxes and do these things." So, that's why I was really taken by that quote.

Lecrae:

Absolutely. And so, the more you let go of the things that are your cultural norms and embrace what the dominant culture, the culture who's structuring your society, the more you let go of your cultural norms and embrace theirs, the more they accept you. The more they tolerate, in some senses. An example would be, I'm a black man. I do not, I have not, probably will not ever be a Seinfeld fan. No offense to Seinfeld, I just didn't grow up watching Seinfeld.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Fair enough.

Lecrae:

So, I may be missing out on something.

Carey Nieuwhof:

My wife would say you are, but that's okay. You keep going.

Lecrae:

But if I'm in a corporate setting, and it's a group of white men who are having a conversation about Seinfeld in jest, there's an expectation that I should know about this and appreciate this. And if I want to talk about The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, then it's kind of like, "Haha, I didn't catch an episode, love Will Smith." If I want to talk about Martin Lawrence's show, it's, "Haha. And so, if you can let go of that and embrace more of this, let go of Fresh Prince and embrace more Seinfeld, you'll be more accepted here. It'll go better for you here." And so, typically what people of color do, black people, in my experience is

we code switch, what I did is you switch the code. "Let me change the channel, put on my simulated black person and turn off my full black person."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow, wow. As a guy who doesn't really follow sports, I can totally relate to that. Because you get around all the football guys, and they're like, "Well, you saw the college draft." I'm like, "Just don't say anything, just smile, smile, look nice. I have no idea what you're talking about." But that's really helpful. Now, you talk about church hurts are the worst hurts. And there was a period where you were really into Reformed theology. And you talk about that in the book. And you got burned on that one. Do you want to go through what that dynamic was like for people? Because we see this, this is like my social media feed all day long, people arguing with each other. And you got really into it, and then they dropped you. What was that?

Lecrae:

Man, I think, when you're someone with historical traumas, like I have, wanting acceptance, lacking your father being in your life, you're clamoring for whatever that looks like. And I think what I found specifically within the church community was like, "Hey, you don't have to fight for that anymore, we're your family now." And I was like, "Awesome. I have this family now." And it's almost like a child who's been adopted, and you're like, "This is my new family, this is awesome." And then one day, you say, "Hey, what happened to my parents?" And like, "Let's not talk about that. We don't want to talk about what happened to your parents, we're just focusing on this new family, this new world right here."

Lecrae:

"But what... I mean, my parents, can I know anything?" "We're not talking about your parents." And you feel this sense of like, "But they're a part of who I am, and this is why I'm here. I mean, I appreciate you, but I'm just saying, this is a part of me." And to be dropped by your adoptive parents is like, "Wow, did you ever love me? Did you ever love me in the first place?" That's what it felt like.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, man. Oh, man. You reference the book, *The Body Keeps Score*, a few times, and I want to get back into that period in 2014. And I know when you and I met last year, we ended up talking about depression. And I think you reference it as you went through this period of depression and everything. How did your body keep score? And then talk about the dark night of the soul that you went through, Lecrae.

Lecrae:

Yeah. Body keeping the scores, essentially, our minds tell us, you had an altercation or maybe you went through a nasty divorce, and your mind is like, "Well, that was 10 years ago. I've moved forward." But your body, whatever emotions that you felt, whatever stressors, essentially your brain chemistry, your brain has not just forgotten about that. You have told yourself that was forever ago, but your body chemistry is like, "No, no, no, no, no, that has altered us. And now we are constantly, we don't forget that." You know what I mean? So, it's like a bad injury. You may say it's 10 years ago, but your leg is still messed up from that injury. So, that's ultimately what it was.

Lecrae:

And so, for me, a lot of my historical traumas, because I hadn't dealt with them. When you go to sleep at night, REM sleep, your eyes move side to side. What that's doing is, your brain is actually processing and reconciling everything that you've gone through. And I had not had that reconciliation of the soul, so to speak, of all of those particular traumas that I had had. And so, I just distinctly remember the breakdown. I remember the stress. It was like a buildup, buildup, buildup. It'd be like, the stress of not being able to reconcile, "Who's real? Who's not real? What's up? What's down? I'm stressed out about this." And then just saying, "Man, I'm throwing it all to the wind, I don't know what I believe anymore, and I'm moving how I want to move."

Lecrae:

Well, now, your moral compass is off and you're wondering, "Is this wrong? Is this right? Did somebody see me on this website? Did somebody not?" Adding all these things. So, for me, what ended up happening was, those many panics, and many wonderings, and many stressors culminated and just came to a head after a long night of drinking, and I woke up and I was like, "Whoa, what a night. Ooh, I still feel groggy. This is weird. What is this? Wait, what is this feeling? Wait, this won't go away. This is like a fog." And it was like this fog that wouldn't allow me to tell how beautiful the trees were or the sky was blue. It was just a darkness that sat on me and I could not shake it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know all about that.

Lecrae:

You know exactly what I'm talking about.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. It wasn't a long night of drinking, but it was a morning with, "The sun was there but I couldn't see it." How long did that last for you, Lecrae?

Lecrae:

Oh, boy. Sheesh. I think it was on and off. What my brain would do is have these like, and we're back. And then it was like, I'm normal, and then it would, like someone shut the power back off again. So, man, I think that happened for a good two to three months in that space. And it was dark. And even on month three as I'm crawling out of it, it wasn't overnight, it's like month three happened, but you have to deal with the fear of going back there, which could take you back there, because you're so afraid.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, that took me years to get over that fear that I was going to go back.

Lecrae:

Exactly, exactly. So, I'm now probably 18 months removed from that day, and I now have to battle the anxiety of going into a depression. And that's the crazy part. So, that's the part of the work that I've had to do over the years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Are you hypersensitive to anything that you think might lead you back there? I remember almost like a trigger, if I got tired, because I didn't sleep well or there was a time zone change or it was just a really busy period at work. That was some 12 years on the other side, 13, 14 years on the other side of my burnout. But for about five or six years, I was like, if anything felt like that or reminded me of that, I almost went into this hypervigilant state of, "I can't go back." Because you lose control. You lose control when you're depressed like that.

Lecrae:

Yeah. I mean, I think, for me, I definitely try not to think about it, I try not to think about that time period. That's been a part of it. Obviously, I think the scarier part, mine was this weird combination of acute anxiety and depression. So, it was this weird combo where the acute anxiety made me very agoraphobic and afraid to be around people, and I was freaking out and just didn't know what was going on. So, it is that combination of like, "Man, if I don't get enough rest, I'll be anxious." And what does that anxiety lead to? It leads to panic attack. What does that panic attack lead to? It leads to depression. And I was like, "I don't..." And so, it's this whole cocktail.

Lecrae:

But I've done this process which I think is phenomenal, I highly recommend it, called EMDR. And it's where they use stimulators, whether it's light or sound or motions, to do the work you're supposed to do when you're asleep, and reconciling everything that you've experienced. So, it's used for trauma. And the best way I can describe it is that there's a woman who was robbed at gunpoint, a gun was pointed to her head, and she survived. But now, every time she looks over her right shoulder, she sees a gun and freaks out. Well, she did EMDR and that process helped her to reconcile it. So, little by little now, she can look over that shoulder. She sees speckles, but she doesn't see a person with a gun. She knows something's there but it's not what it was, and she's able to function. And I think that's what happened for me is I know this all happened, but I can process it and talk through it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

If you don't know the answer to this next question, we'll Google it and put it in the show notes. Do you know what EMDR stands for off your head?

Lecrae:

Ooh.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I don't, I do not. It's a therapy. It's a trauma therapy?

Lecrae:

Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We'll put it in the show notes. We'll just put it in the show notes. So, we'll figure that out. Now, that was also a faith crisis for you, which is the center of the book, I Am Restored. And, Lecrae, you know, as well as anybody listening to this podcast, this is an era of a ton of deconversion stories. And as I'm getting to know you and read through your story, you could have been number 1,086 on the deconversion story.

Talk about how you lost your faith and then how you reconstructed it. Because you would consider yourself a Christian, you would consider yourself a person of faith, but it's a different kind of faith maybe than you had a decade ago. So, walk us through that, the deconversion and the reconversion.

Lecrae:

Yeah, I mean, that's why I call the book, I Am Restored. I think it was more like my faith was restored. And I know there's lots of different philosophies or theological perspectives on this, I think I let go of God, but He never let go of me. And so, I think that is ultimately what happened is that I can say, "I don't believe this stuff." And God was like, "It's too late. It's too late, you're already a part of this family, buddy. There's no way out of this." So, what essentially was happening for me was, I experienced so much church hurt, so much trauma dealing with people within the church, I had no other vantage points of what faith look like outside of this context, that I said, "I want nothing to do with it."

Lecrae:

And it's ironic because it wasn't like I visited a Korean church and was like... when I said I was done with the church, I hadn't been to all the churches in the world. So, "Haven't been to all of them? You're done with them all." It's like, "Well, no, but my experience is enough for me to say I'm done with it." And so, I didn't imagine that my experience was a context, I just thought my experience was the experience. And so, "Clearly, if God is allowing all of this turmoil and pain and rejection from these people that I looked up to and that I consider family, then He's not real. Because they're telling me I'm crazy for bringing up these inconsistencies. And so, either I'm crazy or they're crazy, but there's more of them than me." So, I said, "Oh, this is a cult, I don't believe. This isn't real." And I was done with it.

Lecrae:

Now, what I will say is this, I can't say this for everybody, but for many people behind the decision to turn your back on God, oftentimes is a desire for some sort of personal freedom, whether it's heat in this thick weather, whatever it is, there's some sort of undergirding thing that you were hindered from having, if you were consistent with this following of God. So, maybe-

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think that's a very astute observation.

Lecrae:

Yes. There's always that. It's like, "I really want to love money, but He hinders me from loving money if I'm really serious about my faith. But if He's not real, I get to love money." And so, for me, there was that, coupled with the pain and the trauma. There was that sense of, "I want to be mad at folks, I want to be angry at them, I want to hate them." Just being candid, my wife, who's amazing, she's wonderful, but I was like, "Shoo, I'm a superstar, what if I was single? What would that look like?" You know what I mean? "Who else could I date out here? What celebrities could I... People get remarried to celebrities," and all these thoughts of what could be if God is not real, because then I'm not bound by these moral obligations.

Lecrae:

So, all of that was coupled in there as well. And so, yeah, I said, "Well, I'm out." And I told my friends, because I wasn't passive aggressive about it, I was like, "Man, I don't think this stuff is real." And they

thought, "Well, you're going through a phase. It's fine. You'll be all right. You'll work through this." And I was like, "I don't think so." I told my wife, I said, "I don't believe this stuff anymore. I'm not doing Bible study with the kids. I don't know what I believe right now." And that was a very traumatic time in my family. It was very difficult. It was like, "What is he going to do? And what are the rules? What rules do we abide by? Because when you come together under this idea of faith, there's at least a standard that you both agreed to.

Lecrae:

Well, if one person is like, "I don't really have a moral standard, moral compass, so, how can I discipline children? I can discipline them whatever way I see fit. I don't know. What's the moral standard here?" So, that was a really tough time and I wrestled with these philosophical questions. And I wasn't lazy. I studied and I tried to figure out, and I was like, "Who are you, God? And where are you, God?" And the reconstruction or the restoration of my faith was a process of one going to Egypt, seeing that this God is dealing with a historical narrative way beyond my little 500 years in America. And I saw some amazing things there. And then it just continued from there, going to-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can you tell that little story, if you remember it, I don't want to put you on the spot, about the tour guide in Egypt. Yeah, that was awesome.

Lecrae:

So, we're in Egypt and I'm there trying to restore my marriage, I'm there trying to battle with everything that I have going on. And I said, "If I'm going to hear..." I already didn't go to hear from God, I just came, I was like, "God, show me something if you're real. I don't know. But show up, I'm here." And we went on tour, we get to these tombs, and we're going through the tombs and we're seeing all these ancient pharaohs. And our tour guide, she's Egyptian history expert. She's brilliant. Not a Christian at all, and shows us this particular Pharaoh, she's like, "Oh, this guy, he's frowned upon. That's why there's not much about him and there's no monuments or anything about him."

Lecrae:

And I was like, "Why is he frowned upon?" And she said, "Oh, because he let so many of the slaves go." And I was like, "He let the slaves like... You mean like Moses?" She was like, "I don't know what you're talking about." "I was saying like in the Bible, the Pharaoh let all the slaves go." And she's like, "I don't know. I don't know the Bible, but this Pharaoh let all of the slaves go and he's frowned upon in Egypt." And I said, "Now, listen, I don't know if this is historically accurate or connected, but it's enough evidence for me to come..." It was like God saying, "Now, do you want to come back or no? I'm extending my hand to you." And that began my restorative journey with God.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How is it going to be different moving forward for you? This is, I think, a defining moment for the church, and I think we're being called out on our judgmentalism, our cancel culture, where if you don't exactly fit what I believe, you're done, you're banished. I would love to know your vision in your heart for the restored or reconstructed Christianity that you are a part of.

Lecrae:

Yeah. I mean, for me, it's understanding that everybody has something to offer. And I think that's what we fail to realize is that everyone has something to offer. You don't have to fully agree with this particular view, this particular view, but there's something in there that may be God-endorsed, and helpful. And I think we have to be okay with that as saying, "There may be something here." We are a cancel culture and we will say, "Man, if you don't get it all right, then nothing you have to say is worth hearing." You know what I mean? And I think that is very opposite of what God calls us to be, He doesn't call us to cancel. Hold accountable, accountability culture, sure, not cancel. And what has changed for me honestly has been cultural context.

Lecrae:

I think that is a huge problem for us in America, because we forget that we live under a particular cultural context that reads into everything that we see with that Western cultural context. The scriptures were written in an Eastern world, an Eastern context, things don't mean the same thing. And so, just a little small example, there's a verse that talks about, "Their throats are an open grave." And I remember reading that in my kind of American Western cultural context of thinking of a graveyard. Like, "Oh, it's like a graveyard. So, it's like an open grave." And I'm just imagining like, "I guess you can fall in that hole. And that's what it's like." And I'm reading my cultural context into that, not realizing that when it was written, it was talking about tombs where there were no coffins, it was just bodies wrapped in linens.

Lecrae:

And so, if the grave was open, it would smell horrendous. The idea they're trying to get across is that their throats stink what's coming out smells, it's foul. And if I don't understand that, I miss so much. So, that's what's happened for me is, I've been able to say, "You know what, man? We're all going to miss the mark because of so many cultural differences and nuances. So, everyone's got something to offer. And let me keep trying to grow and understand the original intent. Let me keep growing and trying to understand what God is trying to say."

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think a lot of us have some near deconversion moments. Mine happened in my early twenties, and I just couldn't shake that. I thought, "I think this is the most true stuff I've ever encountered in my life to date," and would affirm that all these years later. What was it for you that was there a moment or a sensation where you were like, "Yeah, that's why I didn't deconvert, that's why I didn't just keep walking down that road"? Was there something that just, there was that Egypt thing, but was there a moment or a truth that just pulled you back?

Lecrae:

Yeah. Well, I think it's seeing the consistency. When you see the consistency of God staying with me, just like, oh, wow, Jesus isn't going anywhere. He's not transactional either. He's not snapping His fingers like, "I'll fix it for you, here." He's relational. He's saying, "I'm going to walk with you through this. I want to be here for you in this whole process." I think we want transactional, we want a microwave solution for these profound moments. But our trials are meant to develop us. Temptations are meant to destroy us, but the trials are meant to develop us. And so, I think it was realizing I was being developed. I think it was being okay with that and saying, "I don't have a better solution." And I'll be honest with you, the real issue for me narrowed down to, I do believe I'm valuable.

Lecrae:

And so, if I'm going to be honest with myself, I cannot treat myself to a steak dinner and tell myself that I'm so wonderful. If I believe I'm a cosmic accident, and just a bunch of atoms and cells, there's no reason to stand up for the rights of people, there's no reason. We don't matter. There's no purpose. We're just cells and atoms. We are nothing more than blades of grass. And if that's the case, then why do I want purpose when I wake up? Why do I feel like I need to take care of things? And so, that's what really got me was, I believe I have purpose. And if I have purpose, it was given to me by someone greater than myself. And that really was like, "All right, I can't reconcile that, seems it's got to be God."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thanks for being so open, transparent. And I mean, you continue to make music, you've got a new album, you've got a new book, so, tell us what you're up to and where we can find all things Lecrae.

Lecrae:

Yeah. Lecrae.com, the album is Restoration. It is due out this month in August. The album is, I Am Restored. I mean, the book is I Am Restored, which is obviously out in October. A documentary will precede the album. And I am really in literally the best season of my life. And it's not because everything's going my way, it's not because the pandemic somehow is not at my doorstep, it is because I have healthy mechanisms of dealing with the circumstances around me, and a healthy vantage point to look at everything from.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, thanks for saying yes to the invitation, Lecrae, and I've really enjoyed this time with you. Thank you for being so transparent, open, honest, and we're all on a similar journey. It may not be full of Grammy's, but as leaders, yeah, we know what that's like to be in some spotlight, big or small, and have all the pressures of trying to keep it together. So, hopefully, this won't be the last time we have you on. Thank you so much.

Lecrae:

Thank you. Appreciate it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So grateful for that conversation, and it's one of those things where leadership is hard, but the spotlight is hard, so much is difficult. But my prayer is that you come out of it on the other side a lot better. And that's what Lecrae has done. His brand new book is out today. You can get everything, including all the links, at careynieuwhof.com/episode371. We've even got transcripts for you there. And we do show notes for all of these episodes. We're also on YouTube these days, so, you can check out that on YouTube as well. We have a small, but growing following there. And if you haven't subscribed yet to this podcast, but you enjoy the episode, just do it and share it online as well. Hey, next episode, so excited that we have Pat Gelsinger and Scott Beck. It's not every day that you meet people who have done what this pair has done.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Pat is the CEO of VMware, which you may have heard of, and the first and former CTO of Intel Computers. He was involved in developing things like, oh, let's say, USB and wifi. Yeah. It's not on my

resume, I don't know about you. And Scott Beck, he scaled blockbuster video, Boston Market, Einstein Brothers Bagels, ancestry.com. And both of them are involved as the founders of Gloo. And they are going to talk about how churches can use online technology and a brand new thing that I'm partnering with them on. Here's an excerpt from that episode.

Pat Gelsinger:

Imagine if you and I, Carey, says, "We wanted to be able to reach 100,000 people. Let's go start by building the stadium church to go do so. We only need to raise maybe a billion and a half dollars to go do." That's nuts, right? You couldn't even dream of that business case. But to say, "We're going to go reach 100,000 people online." Today, that's like, "Okay, let's get our media put together, that'll take a week, and let's go get it up on Facebook and let's go start some promotional activities. Great. Let's go have 100,000 people participate in this service." It's the scale aspects that are possible now because everybody is connected, the cloud computing capacity is there to deliver it, and the social networks already assuming that that's the case.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I love talking to leaders who have accomplished the kinds of things that Pat and Scott have, and that's a very rare resume. So, that's up next time on the podcast. And also coming up, Andy Stanley's going to be on a couple of times. We have Rich Villodas. Let's see, who else? Lysa TerKeurst, Beth Moore, Mark Batterson, Bob Westfall. Yeah, Patrick Lencioni, Rachel Cruze, and so many others. I'm so excited for what's ahead. Subscribers, you get that all for free. And now it's time for What I Am Thinking About, and I have been thinking about our tone online. This segment is brought to you by the Being Challenge. The same people who brought you Red Letter Challenge will be happy to send you a complimentary copy of the Being Challenge. You can go to redletterchallenge.com/being, request a free copy to be mailed to you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And if you want some good news for a change, check out the report on what's happening in the global church and mission work by going to icm.org/growingglobal, that's icm.org/growingglobal. So, I am thinking about the tone online. In the same way that the news is depressing, so is my social feed these days, and we are, well, almost minutes away from an election, right? So, what do you do about that? Here's my concern, and I just want to share this. For those of you who are faith leaders, we know we have all kinds of leaders listening, but I just want to say, as someone who's been a pastor, as somebody who is committed to faith and a person of faith, I'm concerned that Christians have been sucked into the nastiness division and partisanship along with everyone else.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Often these days, Christians are providing an alternative to the anger and the outrage online, they're fueling it. And that's a little bit concerning for me, because here's why, I think when Christians lose their mind, people lose their faith. People forget, it's so easy to forget that even if you have 300 followers, if you start posting raging conspiracy stuff or very partisan stuff, people look at that, and they may never say anything, but they roll their eyes and they get an impression of you. And I think they sign off. And what I say to my team is, and we don't always get this right, but we try, right? Whether it's this podcast or whether it's something I write on my website or my social media feed, I'm like, "I want this to be a place where the good gathers on the internet, where reasonable people can gather, and where we can have a conversation that hopefully isn't too inflamed."

Carey Nieuwhof:

And here's a few things to think about influence. First of all, for all of us who are online, which is pretty much all of us, influence takes years to build and seconds to lose. You see that when someone has an affair or does something illegal, and all of a sudden, boom, they're out of leadership. But you can also lose influence just by saying the wrong thing, doing the wrong thing. And just a reminder, it takes years to build, seconds to lose. So, think about that before you post. A lot of people are posting some very partisan things right now. And despite what you think, God is not a Republican, a Democrat, or an independent. He transcends all of our political categories, however important they might be to us. And you wouldn't know that, when you look at most people's social feed.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Really respect Tim Keller, he's been on this podcast before, and Tim has a very simple and profound answer on how Christians fit into a two-party system. They don't, they don't. And we'll link in the show notes to my interview with Tim Keller. You can watch it. I think it's got 100,000 views on YouTube. And well, I don't know, lots on the audio podcast as well. But Tim has, I think, his head screwed on really well when it comes to politics, culture, and sharing the gospel in a post-Christian America. So, we'll link to that if you want to go deeper on that. And just remember this, I remind myself, because I have partisan views as well, if God has all the same opinions your political party does, you're probably not worshipping God.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then third thing I would say is church is an alternative to culture not a reflection of it. We really should be the distinct option that is different from what people see around us. And I think that's what younger adults are looking for. They're actually not looking for you to be the Republican candidate endorser or the Democrat candidate endorser, they're looking for something different. And people don't want to know what you think is right, they want to know what's real. And nobody really finds life in your kingdom, they find life in Christ's kingdom. And if you can introduce them to that, I think good things can happen. So, what can you do to be a more positive presence online? I would focus a little more on timeless truths than temporary viewpoints. That's what I try to do in these interviews, right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

What I want to talk to Lecrae about, or anyone else on this podcast is I want to talk to them about the stuff that we all struggle with, the deep stuff, the soul stuff. And hopefully, when we get it right, we do that well. Other thing, before you post, sleep on it, pray about it. I have been tempted to post things that I know I would have regretted. And if I have a good night's sleep and I pray about it and maybe talk to a friend, guess what? I don't post them. Or if I post them, they turn out to be helpful. Same if you're responding to somebody. You're like, "Oh, I'll get them with my words." Well, yeah, that's almost never a good impulse to act on. If Christians prayed as much as they talked, we'd have a different church.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Here's another thing, there's a lot of shame and blame going on. What about confessing? What about just confessing what you've done rather than shaming someone else or blaming someone else for a problem? Jesus never asked us to confess the sins of our enemies, He told us to confess ours. And social media has become a lot of confessing the sins of our enemies. A couple of other ideas, start real-life relationships with people who are different than you. People who don't have the same skin color, people who don't maybe make the same income level, or have the same education level, or don't live in

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the same neighborhood that you do. If you really start to deal with real-life relationships with people who are very different than you, I think you will gain more empathy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then ask yourself, five years from now, what will you wish you had done? Just don't post it. If you think, "Oh, five years from now, I'm going to be glad I did this." No, I don't think you will be. So, let's try to create space for the good people to live on the internet, let's try to be a source of promise rather than a source of pain, and a place of hope rather than a whole bunch of hype or hate. So, I hope that's helpful. I've got a written version of this over on my website at careynieuwhof.com. And by the way, we're serving, well, almost 75,000 leaders these days with a little daily email that we send out. And if you would like to receive it, you can head on over to careynieuwhof.com and subscribe.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Listen, thank you so much for listening. So appreciate you guys, 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.