

Announcer:

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

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, hey everybody, and welcome to episode 375 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well I'm so excited to have Rich Villodas on the podcast today. Talk about Western spirituality and succession. Today's episode is brought to you by our partners at Remodel Health. Do you know listeners of this podcast have saved \$2.1 million by going to [remodelhealth.com/carey](https://remodelhealth.com/carey)? And by Red Letter Challenge. If your church actually needs some unity, check out [redletterchallenge.com/carey](https://redletterchallenge.com/carey), and you can learn more there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, Rich is a guy I've known for a number of years, and you may have heard of New Life Church in New York City. He succeeded Pete Scazzero there in 2014. One of the rare examples of a really, really good succession that worked out well. We talk about all kinds of things. He's got a brand new book called *The Deeply Formed Life*. We talk about what's wrong with Western spirituality, which is really interesting because I'm very interested in root causes. I know a lot of you are struggling with like, "Why are people not coming back to church?" And, "What's the whole deal with online?" blah, blah, blah. Well, we're going to talk the question under the question. Also, what are some ingredients for successful succession for young leaders? What went right at New Life, and how to live a deeply formed life, which is something I'm increasingly interested in.

Carey Nieuwhof:

New Life Church is a multiracial church with more than 75 countries represented in Elmhurst, Queens, New York City. Prior to becoming the lead pastor, Rich gave oversight to New Life Small Group Ministry and was a preacher. He's a graduate of Nyack College and Alliance Theological Seminary. He's a good reader. Loves to read, preach. I'm just so glad to see in the next generation of leaders, people who tap into a deeper vein. Anyway, also a husband and a father, so I think you're going to really appreciate that. In *What I'm Thinking About*, I'm going to ask two questions as we head into 2021. If you listen through to the end, as many of you do, you're going to hear that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

For those of you who are new, thanks for listening, subscribing, we're just glad to have you here. If this episode means something to you, make sure you share it on social channels, okay? We're heading into the end of the year, you're thinking about what's next. It's time to reevaluate your health benefits. Well, things are challenging enough for leaders right now, but how are you going to do health insurance next year? Well, as you may know, Remodel Health has helped leaders of this podcast alone, save \$2.1 million. That's just in 18 months. Imagine what your ministry could do if you could offer better benefits or the same benefits for less money and reinvest the savings directly into ministry.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We know it is a little bit of a challenging time. That's one way to actually save money without really changing anything, maybe making things better, that rarely happens. If you're curious, go to

remodelhealth.com/carey to learn more. You can get access immediately to their free savings calculator, church buyers guide and brand new ebook. That's remodelhealth.com/carey. It is late October, it's almost November, and Christmas is right around the corner, and then 2021 is here. There's a lot of planning work. You're already overwhelmed. Well, have you thought about Red Letter Challenge? This is also a very divided time, and Red Letter Challenge can be a great way of bringing your church together.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's based on the teachings of Jesus. There's the Red Letter Challenge and The Being challenged, which is brand new. I sat down with Red Letter Challenge founder, Zach Zehnder. I said, "40 day turnkey campaigns, they kind of work in normal conditions, but these aren't normal conditions. Can a turnkey campaign be something that actually works in a pandemic?" Here's what Zach had to say.

Zach Zehnder:

Yeah, great question. Churches that have done our 40 day challenges have seen it really be a tool that has unified their congregation. That's the word we keep hearing, unity, unity, unity. As church is getting a lot more complicated with physical and digital, we're going to be looking for more and more tools to come together. I think what better than a tool that's centered on Jesus. We've actually heard rave reviews on how this has brought churches closer together in a divided and distanced time like never before.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, if you're looking for a way to really unify and reassemble your church digitally or in person, check out [redletterchallenge.com/carey](http://redletterchallenge.com/carey). There are discounts of 10 to 40%. Just for podcast listeners, if you're a pastor still on the fence, he will ship this out to you for free like a free copy, you can access it yourself. [redletterchallenge.com/carey](http://redletterchallenge.com/carey). By the way international listeners, there are many of you around the world, they will ship to you as well. With all that said, I'm so excited to dig into my conversation with Rich Villodas.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Rich, welcome to the podcast. It's just great to finally have you on.

Rich Villodas:

Thanks for having me, Carey. Love this podcast and look forward to our conversation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, me too. We have a lot of young leaders listening who are either have just done or will soon do what you did, which is to take over an established church as a lead pastor right? Succession almost never goes well. But I would say how many years ago was that, that you took over for Pete Scazzero?

Rich Villodas:

It'll be seven years this October. October 6th will be seven years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. Look, you're still alive, you're breathing, you have a smile on your face. It went okay, didn't it so far?

Rich Villodas:

It went a lot better than many people thought it would go and myself included. I'm so grateful just to be in this place and see how New Life continues to thrive.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. How old were you, if you don't mind me asking, when you took over?

Rich Villodas:

I'm 41, so I was 34 when I officially took over. But behind the scenes, I was leading the church for a year and a half prior to that. I was in the role functionally at about 32, 33 and then took over at 34.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Pete had been there for how long as senior?

Rich Villodas:

26 years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, exactly. Long legacy. Was he the founding pastor?

Rich Villodas:

He was. 1987, he found the church with his wife and a couple of other people. His story is well-documented, but he's the one who started it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. This is really fascinating, because generally speaking succession is not going well. I'd love to start here take us through some principles, because this is going to be the story in the next decade, right? The average senior pastor is 57, so they're going to be handing off to people at your age and stage. What happened that went well, and then what are some bumps that you're, "You know what, if Pete and I could do that over again, we'd redo that?"

Rich Villodas:

So many things come to mind. I think the first thing that made the transition and succession a success was Pete's maturity. Seems to just be like, "Yeah, of course." But I think his own work that he did, seeing a therapist on a regular basis, talking about what it means to let go. His own interior work that he did was pivotal for the transition. His own emotional maturity. I also think about ... We brought in outside consultants, and one consultant in particular helped us to navigate very clearly, the succession process. If it was left up to us, we just wouldn't have the objectivity to make some decisions.

Rich Villodas:

He came in, we brought a consultant, and we had a three year chart with various categories preaching, vision, hiring, firing, leading staff meetings, and at what percentage would Pete be doing it this year, and what percentage I'd be doing it this year. Then as the years progressed, the percentages would change, that outside counsel was so important, and then having a strong elder board to help us continue moving

that forward. To keep us accountable to that process, and to that timeframe. That was incredibly important. It was a slow process, Carey. I had a year and a half behind the scenes where I was being tested to see can I lead in this capacity? It was very thoughtful, slow.

Rich Villodas:

The entire process from beginning to end was about four and a half years. From the first time Pete said to the elders, "Hey, I sense God calling me to step out of this role." Pete would then remain, which is also a unique thing. Usually pastors leave.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah, I'm in that same process where I'm still around. Yeah.

Rich Villodas:

He stayed, but it was a four year process. It was slow was thoughtful. After it happened, what also made the transition helpful was to clear job descriptions. I mean, we it was crystal clear, what would Pete be doing, what would Pete not be doing, and what would his salary be for the first few years and then afterward there? We talked about all the what tends to be difficult things to talk about with succession and transition. Yeah, his maturity, outside counsel, strong elder board, a slow, methodical process, clear job descriptions. I think all of those things contributed to a really healthy succession.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's funny that you would start with maturity, because in the not so good stories I hear, that seems to be a real issue, that this 50, 60, 70 year old lead pastor just didn't have the emotional wherewithal to be able to handle it. From the outside looking in, Pete's been on the show before. We'll have him again, so I'd love to ask him this question, but from what you can see in your seat, what were some of the issues that Pete had nailed down, that made it possible for him to step away without becoming that overbearing, overreaching, meddling person that destroys things? Like, what are the shifts he would have had to make to do that? And what did you benefit from?

Rich Villodas:

I think the first shift was moving away from New Life being personality-driven. I don't think we had a high personality ... but when you have a strong leader, like Pete, who is a very strong presence, I mean, you just gravitate towards that personality-driven model, but what Pete would do regularly, beyond just sharing the pulpit and preaching, and taking a month off every summer, and having sabbaticals where he went away for three to four months, and the church had to exist without him. I think that set us up, that the church is not built around Pete's gifts.

Rich Villodas:

The church can function and flourish as a body, with people stepping in and leading with their own unique gifts. So, I think Pete created a culture where the church did not have to function and exist based on his gifts and his presence. That's probably the biggest thing. By the time, as he was slowly transitioning, he started preaching less, and the congregation began to see, "Yeah, we're not building this church around this guy. We're building this church around Jesus, and a community of leaders that we believe can take us forward." I think it's ... and then again, back to his own inner work.

Rich Villodas:

I think Pete... most pastors don't do the inner work that make succession successful. He had to wrestle with, "Who am I apart from this position? Who am I apart from the attention I'm going to get? Rich is going to start getting a whole lot more attention than I'm going to get from our congregation." He noticed that very quickly. The other thing I mentioned, just in passing, Carey, that made it successful is, we talked all the time. During the transition, after the transition, we just talked all the time. I'm grateful. I mean, I was 34 years old.

Rich Villodas:

I needed someone, and whoever's taking over needs to have some level of their own security, that they can withstand a presence like Pete, or like you, Carey, there. You just need a solid self to say, "Yeah, I'm okay with their presence here, and I'm going to lead in the way that I believe God has called me to." I had to delineate and distinguish between one of the moments when Pete is Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, giving him advice, and when is Pete Saul, trying to give me armor that doesn't fit me? And I'll tell you, there are times where Pete were both right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right. Yeah.

Rich Villodas:

There are times when he was giving me his armor and saying, "Rich, I do it this way," and I said, "That doesn't feel right," and there were times he was Jethro for me, giving me wisdom. I had to do the hard work of trying to distinguish, is this Saul or was this Jethro? In the best way possible there. Yeah, so those are some things that made it possible.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow, that's really, really, really helpful in that, it seems like there's might be some parallels between your process and what Jeff Brodie and I went through it Connexus, which is interesting. But what made you say yes? Because we're all a little insecure, I think, deep down. A least I am. What gave you the security to be able to say, "I'm going to step into these big shoes founder, well known, national profile, and local church, but I'll step into that." What was your own emotional process like in that?

Rich Villodas:

A couple of things. One is, I knew ... God spoke to me, I think deeply in a college class that I took at ... I went to Nyack College. I was taking a leadership and administration class. I was 21 years old. We were talking about various leadership styles, from entrepreneurial style to someone who's going to systematize, build systems around. There was one profile of a leader that I thought, "Oh, that's me. I'm going to take what someone has already established, and I'm going to build on it, not just build systems, but help carry it forward." Deep down inside, even when my friend started planting churches left and right, and I felt the urge to plant a church myself, I just knew, this is not what God has called me to do.

Rich Villodas:

God is not calling me to plant the church. God, I believe has called me to build on what someone else has done. I'd still try to plant a church, but it just never work. It just didn't work out in terms of the denomination I was looking to work with. Then I got a call from New Life to be an assistant pastor there,

but it was my own internal call of, yes, this is the role I've saw myself in for many years. When the opportunity became available, I just sensed that was God's confirmation of, "Yeah, this is who I am." The other thing is, Carey, I know I'm a good preacher. I think my preaching gifts ... I feel very confident in my preaching gifts.

Rich Villodas:

I know Pete, we're very similar, and we're very different. I think my preaching gifts, I thought, were strong enough to lead this church in this capacity, as well as just the ways that Pete was discipling me. I thought I had enough from him, in terms of growing in self-awareness, leadership practices and strategies, and such, but I just had a confidence in my own gifts, that, yeah, I don't want to live a false humility, and I don't want to be ... I just, I know what I'm good at, and I thought, I think I could do this well, with the proper parameters around me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Once you got into the lead pastor seat, the senior role, what was the biggest surprise, Rich?

Rich Villodas:

The biggest surprise was how fast my shadow side came to the surface, and what I mean by ... I remember Bob Beal. Are you familiar with Bob Beal?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know the name, never met him. Yeah.

Rich Villodas:

He's written books on ... He was a consultant for us. He came in and said, "Rich, there are four years to every transition, and every year has a name. Don't mix up these years." He said, "It's going to take you four years to come up to speed," and he said, "That's basically what it takes for the average person in any new role." He named the years. He said, "The first year is orientation. The second year is experimentation. The third year is evaluation. The fourth year is acceleration. You'll come up to speed at that point."

Rich Villodas:

He said, "Don't mix up those years. Don't try to accelerate when this is a year of orientation." I thought, "Yeah, no problem." Then I got into the role, and I thought, we need to plant 70 churches in the first three years. I was trying to justify my existence as a pastor and a leader. I wanted to show the church, I have gifts and I'm different than Pete. So, I was just surprised. I started moving in a particular direction, and one of our pastors said, "I think we need to pause for a moment and discern God's will." We had been reading one of Ruth Haley Barton's books on discerning God's will together.

Rich Villodas:

It was a really nice process of discernment. One of our pastors took that, adapted it to our own situation, and by the end of the two and a half hour discernment meeting, prayerful meeting, it became really clear, this is not the right time, and this is not the right decision. Seven years later, we're looking to start our first church plant next year, but it took seven to eight years to get there. But I was surprised

at how easily my shadow side, my need for validation, my need to prove myself came to the surface. It was very quickly. It very quickly happened.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, and on that note, how has becoming the senior leader threatened, improved or changed your spiritual health? It's a different seat, and almost everyone I know who's stepped into it is like, "Oh, here we are. This is really different." You can't explain it. You can't anticipate it. So, how has that, your spiritual health morphed or emerged?

Rich Villodas:

There is definitely an intensity of being the lead person, so lots of projection coming my way. When people with their unresolved family of origin issues are going to now see me as an authority figure that represents all of their unmet needs and such.

Rich Villodas:

So, I'm 34 years old and I have 50 and 60 year olds that are talking to me like I'm their father, or upset with me, like, I haven't affirmed them. I'm thinking, "I'm 20 years younger than you." The level of projection is very difficult, which is, I mean, why Pete would tell me over and over, the higher you go, the more self-aware you need to become. The weight that was put on me to grow in self-awareness, to confront my own unresolved issues, that was a weight, and that was heavy.

Rich Villodas:

To be confrontational, with self-confrontational, compassionately, self-curious and confrontational with myself, but yeah, that's what I think about, it's different when the buck stops with you. There's just a pressure that I didn't feel when Pete was in the role. So, growing in self-awareness, I think, it changed my trajectory. I have to be the most differentiated person in the organization, or in the church, because the differentiation of any church is dependent upon the person who is shaping the culture most. I had to really learn about that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can you explain what you mean by differentiation?

Rich Villodas:

Differentiation, my definition, it comes out of family systems theory-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Sure.

Rich Villodas:

... and my definition of differentiation is remaining close to myself and remaining close to others in times of high anxiety. It's rejecting the two polar extremes of enmeshment, or cutting people off, which is often what happens in leadership context, and in marriages, and all that. How can I remain close to myself and close to you, especially in times of high anxiety? So, someone who's lowly differentiated, will either go down the road of enmeshment, where they, "I'm going to do what you want me to do." "Why don't we have another prayer meeting?"

Rich Villodas:

"Why don't we have these kinds of small groups?" "Why don't we have three services on Sunday?"  
"Well, let's do it then." Alright, and I'm not clear within my own self, or I'm going to cut everybody off and do whatever I want to do, and hurt relationships and such. To grow in that, where I need to be clear about my own vision, and where I sense God calling our congregation, while remaining close to people who may disagree, especially in times of high anxiety, really creates a culture.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Which was your tendency, to cut yourself off or to get enmeshed with others?

Rich Villodas:

I want to be liked too much, so enmeshment. I want everyone to like me, Carey. Which is why, during this time of COVID, I'm making decisions, not everyone's happy with, and so that's been particularly challenging for me, because I want everyone to like me. The gravitational pull for me is to go towards enmeshment, as opposed to cutting people off.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, how do you work through that? I mean, you're reading the mail of a lot of leaders listening right now. They're like, "Yeah, I want to be popular," and I think, having worked with a lot of people who are the successors, like yourself, to founding or longtime pastors, legacy pastors, or legacy leaders, even in business, I think there's an even deeper desire for approval, because the founder was seen to be so approved and esteemed, or whatever. I promise you, after a few years, they forget about you. I can vouch for that, but that's not the perception. What would you say? How did you overcome that? Or, how are you overcoming? I realize it's not complete. We all struggle with that stuff.

Rich Villodas:

Yeah, it's a journey I think I'll be on for a while. I think part of it is, I have rhythms of therapy, number one, just, back to that self-awareness piece, where I need multiple people in my life to help me navigate the interior world. I have a leadership coach. I have a therapist, I have seasonal spiritual direction, and I need all these things to help me grow in greater self-awareness, name the shadow parts of my ... the dark sides of my own soul. I just know, left to my own devices, I'm going to lead in a way that is going to be hurtful either to myself or to others. I just know I need a lot of help from the outside.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, you got a brand new book called The Deeply Formed Life that, probably, by the time this airs, will be out. I'm not exactly sure when this is going to air, and it's about spiritual formation. I'd love to start with your critique, because you wouldn't be alone in saying perhaps there are some issues with spiritual formation in the western church or the American church, but I'd love your assessment or critique of Western spirituality, as it sits today.

Rich Villodas:

Yeah. How long do we have, Carey? No.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. I know.

Rich Villodas:

Let me try to distill some critiques that I've seen. Robert Mulholland, who's written a number of books on spiritual formation, he passed away a couple years ago, he makes a really powerful distinction in one of his books, where he says that we can either be in the world for God, or in God for the world. We can be in the world for God, or in God for the world. To be in the world for God, is what the typical discipleship expression looks like. We have our banners, we have our issues, we have our things that we think God is concerned about. Of course, God is most passionate about what I'm most passionate about.

Rich Villodas:

I wave my particular banner, to see a particular issue addressed, which is what drives much of the church with regard to politics and such, and so it becomes issue-generated. We are formed by particular issues. That's being in the world for God, and we bring what we think is important to God. But to be in God for the world begins at a different place. It begins with our being with God, out of which now we want to be a presence of God in the world. I think that little statement from Dr. Mulholland really gets at it. Moreover, when I think about what's going on in spiritual formation, my critiques of it in the Western world and the spaces I inhabit are often evangelical, Pentecostal, charismatic context, in which increase ... and mainline context as well, just so ...

Rich Villodas:

I'm in many different spaces. Spiritual formation is often seen either as right thinking, right experiences, or right action. So, it's in the evangelical, get the right doctrine right, and you'll be okay. Or, in the Pentecostal charismatic tradition, it's get the right experiences, and you'll be okay. Or a more progressive, mission driven church context, it's right action. It's justice and mercy. Get that right. For me, discipleship in formation has been so compartmentalized, that we are, yeah, working for justice, but our souls are compromised. Or, we are having right experiences, but we're still not loving well, and so how do we hold these things together?

Rich Villodas:

Lastly, I'd say about this, is spiritual formation, discipleship is often begins and ends at behavior modification. Change your behaviors and you'll be okay, which is why at New Life, our logo, our church logo is an iceberg. We're in Queens, but hey, it's an iceberg. It's the image of Jesus wants to transform more than what you see above the surface, your idols, your fears, the deeply ingrained family of origin strips that have shaped the way we live in the world. God wants to get at those things. We want to move beyond behavior modification into the transformation. So, those are some of the things that I think about with a spiritual formation that doesn't help people, but actually does harm.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've been thinking a little bit about spiritual rhythms, disciplines, and even the monastic order, not that that's part of my life or tradition, but probably my all-time favorite book, I don't know whether you would have read it is Genessee Diary by Henri Nouwen. It's just, when he went into a Trappist monastery in upstate New York in 1974, and just subjected himself to the rhythms of monastic life. I think it's fascinating, and yet, you see, most people don't have a spiritual discipline.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's like, "Well, I had five minutes with God this morning or in the car, I went for a walk," or whatever. Do you think there is a connection between that in purposelessness, or the spike in anxiety? Or some of the issues? Like, you just look. We seem to be an untethered, unhinged culture, even in the church. What is the connection between spiritual disciplines and all the problems that we're seeing in people?

Rich Villodas:

Yeah. I think insofar as the rhythms that we give ourselves to help us to be present to God, to ourselves and to others. Insofar as that's the truth, we will live with a greater sense of peace, purposefulness, a life of meaning and such. But I do think, because we have been so disciplined by a culture of speed, we live in a scrolling, skimming, fast-paced culture, I do think there's significant correlations between the pace of our lives and the anxiety that we feel. I think rhythms ... every person does not need to be practicing every single spiritual rhythm and such, but I do think, to the degree that we open ...

Rich Villodas:

For me, spiritual rhythms are opening ourselves up to God. Whether that's in silence, whether that's in the slow reading of Scripture, whether that's in Sabbath keeping, I think, if we are connecting ourselves to God in that way, that sense of meaning will start flowing, but it takes time. Henri Nouwen, speaking of Nouwen, he would say, it's in prayer ... You don't see change while you're in prayer. It's only when you look back, that you've actually begin to see something's happened. It's this Kierkegaard statement, that life is lived forward, but understood backwards.

Rich Villodas:

I see in retrospect, the ways that God has been moving in my life, but it takes significant patience, and a commitment to remain in those rhythms, which is why there's a prayer that I teach our church, to ask the Holy Spirit to produce in us a desire to pray more. It's, "Lord, give me the desire to seek you more and more. When that desire is not there, grant me discipline to do so." I want to pray out of deep desire. Then I know that there are times where I don't want it at all. I'd rather just be playing a video game but, "Lord, give me discipline to seek you more and more." I do think there's a significant correlation between the lack of spiritual rhythms and the deep anxiety and purposelessness that people feel.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How is typical churchy, spiritual advice unhelpful?

Rich Villodas:

When I think about churchy, spiritual advice, the challenge with it is, it's very simplistic.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Can you give us a couple of examples of what you think simplistic church advice would be?

Rich Villodas:

100%. "You've got to just rejoice in the Lord always." Okay, so Paul said ... and that's very biblical.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's actually true. But?

Rich Villodas:

It's true. It's fine. However, the same Bible that says rejoice in the Lord always, has a book called Lamentations. Okay? So, praising God and lamenting are not mutually exclusive, but churchy advice says ... it stays within the simplicity ... Not the simplicity, the simplistic nature of just life. Another one is, I think of churchy thing, "God will give you clarity." It just sounds great. I remember a story told about Mother Teresa, where someone came up to her and said, "Mother Teresa, can you pray for me that I would have clarity?" And her response was, "No, I will not pray that you have clarity. I will pray that you would have trust and decide." I thought, "Wow, that's a disorienting prayer. I want clarity." But sometimes, God doesn't give any clarity and we have to just move forward. So, churchy advice, it's pretty simplistic. It's not nuanced. It doesn't see the multiple layers that work. It's easy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But yeah, it's a weird world we live in. Let me try this theory out on you, because I'm thinking back over decades of ministry, and often, I don't even know how to express it, but I've got actual people going through my mind. Often, when people have those simple spiritual answers, they come from a good place. They're good people. They actually love Jesus, but no pain is allowed.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I look into their lives and the better I get to know them, the more, I think, "You're using that as a mask for your own pain, that there's such deep pain and such dysfunction. You want to praise the Lord and you want to lift your hands, and you wish worship was more joyful." Anytime someone's down, you're like, "Oh, we're going to be there for you," but I'm like deep ... is there an ocean of grief underneath that? Have you ever seen that? Or, do you think sometimes we mask our own emotional angst with these little trivial spiritual bandages?

Rich Villodas:

Yeah, I absolutely think it's underlining grief, fear, a fear of losing control. I mean, when we have these biblical platitudes and theological clichés, and such, it's our way of maintaining control, when we feel totally disoriented. It's our way of convincing ourselves things are going to be okay, when in fact, I think the invitation from God in these moments is what's happening inside you? What is God trying to tell you? What do you need to hear in this moment? But we want to remain in control. I'm a seven on the Enneagram. I'm accustomed to pain avoidance. I can use every Bible verse in the book to keep me focused on all the good and happy things that are going on, but yeah, I think these things are often a mask to our own grief, sadness, and reveals our deep desire to be in control.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And our vulnerabilities right? I like your categories, and may have heard them before, but you just said them so clearly. Right thinking for evangelicals or conservatives, right expression. Did I get that right? For people ...

Rich Villodas:

For experiences.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Experiences on the charismatic side, and then right actions on the social justice, maybe perhaps more progressive thing. I wonder if all of that, to one extent or another ... and all of them are needed. You should have a good experience. You should have good thinking and doctrine, and you should have good action. I mean, it all goes together, but I wonder when they get to become part of the ... that aspect becomes the whole, whether that, in fact ... My certainty is a mask for the uncertainty I feel, or my experience and constant comfort is a mask for the discomfort I feel. I don't know. Any other thoughts on that? Maybe that's a dead thing, but you've got me thinking.

Rich Villodas:

I think we often use God to run from God, and we use God to run from ourselves. I think these are the various ways that we do that. To be in relationship with God is to confront ourselves. This is Isaiah in chapter six. The holiness of God isn't the temple and he goes, "Woe is me." Any genuine encounter with God is going to lead to an encounter with ourselves, but that's hard. That's a hard path that most of us, myself included, have a difficulty wanting to go through.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, so deconversion stories have become almost the norm in the last few decades, where prominent people, whether that's pastors, musicians, and then just probably millions, sadly, of Christians who are like, "Yeah, I'm just out on this." Is there a link between the deconversions we're seeing and a lack of spiritual formation, this spiritual poverty?

Rich Villodas:

The deconversions, Carey?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I meant deconversions. I know the question I sent you said 'reconversions.' That was a flip. That idea that I'm walking away from my faith, the college student who never comes back, the 35 year old who got divorced and just slipped away from the church, the deconversion stories where people are just gone.

Rich Villodas:

Yeah, and the connection between that and spiritual formation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And spiritual formation. I'm just wondering if you're there for three songs and a message, and you're just participating, and the faith never really got formed in you ...

Rich Villodas:

Yeah. I thought you said deacon, first of all.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, deconversion. Must be my Canadian accent.

Rich Villodas:

What do deacons have to do with this?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm sure there have been a few people who deconverted because of a deacon. There must be three, at least.

Rich Villodas:

I can think of a few more than that. Yeah. I think this moment in COVID that we're in right now brings something to the surface, regarding our formation, regarding our ecclesiology. We are learning afresh that church is not an event. It's not an experience. It's not a product. I think most people have related to church in this way. It's an event, it's a location, it's an experience, it's a product. I think that's part of it. Our ecclesiology has been underdeveloped for many years.

Rich Villodas:

As a result, if I don't have church, I don't have God in this kind of a way/. But I also think the ways that we form people, or don't form people, have led to the deconversions that you see, because if you don't have rhythms to sustain you in times of difficulty and hardship, you're going to find other ways to numb your pain, other ways to figure out how to get through whatever you're experiencing. I do think there's a correlation between it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay. One of the interesting quotes from you is that, "We are formed to believe that God is only in the places and with the people that mirror our belief systems." Can you explain that a little bit? I thought it was very powerful observation.

Rich Villodas:

Yeah. I include myself in this. I think we live in a self-referential world. God is passionate about what I'm passionate about, and so it begins with me. If I believe this, God is here. If you don't believe this, God is out. It's a bounded set, in or out, either or way of ...

Carey Nieuwhof:

If you vote the way I vote, if you think the way I think, if you believe the way I believe, then God is with you, and otherwise, probably not.

Rich Villodas:

We're seeing it ... I mean, we got an election coming up here. I don't know if you're aware.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've heard. Yeah.

Rich Villodas:

You have pastors saying, "If you don't vote for this person, you are not a Christian." I'm thinking, "Wow, here we are." It's a filter bubble world. It's a self-referential world, and I think what's happened is we've turned belief systems into gods, into idols. Stanley Hauerwas would say that, "In America, we don't

believe in God. We believe in belief." We create our own categories of what we are most passionate about, and then determine God must be with me, and not with those people. I think about what Ann Lamont said, "You know you've made God in your image when God hates all the people you hate." Again, it's a self-referential way of living in the world, which is not Christian at all, because it sets me at the center of everything.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You talk about three diets that help you explain our disordered understanding of sexuality and the inherent dangers in each of the diets. Can you keep talking about that? That's an interesting way of framing sexuality.

Rich Villodas:

Yeah, the categorizations of these diets come from Christopher West. He's written a lot on theology of the body, focusing on John Paul II's massive work on sexuality. His framing of it that I've adapted is that the three diets are starvation diet, fast food diet and the banquet, when we talk about our bodies and talk about sexuality. The starvation diet is really about seeing our bodies, seeing our longings, seeing our sexuality as things to be repressed, suppressed. It's the journey ...

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's the conservative upbringing. Yeah, it's like, "Oh, this is bad."

Rich Villodas:

And Carey, how can the church navigate the challenging waters of the LGBTQ+ conversation, when Christians, generally speaking, have this view of their own bodies? I remember, I never forgot, Carey, we had an Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Leadership Conference, and Geri Scazzero got up and she said the word penis and vagina from the stage. You would have thought she'd cursed someone out because the shock. And I'm thinking, "If we can't say terms that are biologically sanctioned." Okay, just that-

Carey Nieuwhof:

These things ...

Rich Villodas:

... how are we going to wrestle with some of the larger complexities of sexuality? So, the starvation diet is, see your longings to be repressed, to be suppressed, to be rejected, is Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful, above all things. Who can know it?" So, it's starvation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Your body is bad, basically.

Rich Villodas:

Your body is bad, and this comes out of ancient Gnosticism, which says that the body is bad, the spirit is good. You want to do everything you can to release the spirit from the cage of the body. This finds itself manifesting all throughout church history, in the third century with Origen who, tradition says, castrated himself because he wanted to do away with his sexual urges. Saint Augustine, who had a long struggle with sexuality and spirituality, and such, to revivalist movements, evangelical purity movements,

Pentecostal holiness movements, where the body is bad, the spirit is good. That's the starvation. Then there's the fast food diet, which if the starvation diet is about repression, the fast food diet is about reduction. By that, I mean, you are reducing your deepest longings and deepest desires to physical desires. It's, I'm going to eat at McDonald's and do whatever I want with my body. It's the fast food diet, but too-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's almost like a hookup culture kind of thing or?

Rich Villodas:

A hook up culture, no discernment around what our bodies ... about sexuality, and too much fast food will make you sick. It's the polar opposite of that starvation diet. Then there's the banquet. That's the categories that Christopher West offers that I found to be helpful. The banquet is really about, what does it mean to cultivate intimacy with God and with others? It doesn't mean that someone's sexually active, or doesn't mean you have to be sexually active to live a full human life. I mean, Jesus was not sexually active. I mean, the fullness of God, you're not going to get more human than Jesus. The banquet is about communion between God and each other, seeing each other not as people to use, but as people to be in communion with.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow, that's interesting. How do you counsel Christians who feel stuck somewhere between fast food and starvation? What do you say to them?

Rich Villodas:

Well, it's not easy. I mean, I think part of the formation of our sexuality has to first be about looking to our past and how we've been sexually deformed. Before we can even talk about, how do we move forward today, I think we have to identify, how have you been shaped? How have you been formed? What are the sexual messages of ... deformed sexual messages you've inherited, and let's talk about that before we can talk about how to move forward. Because at New Life, we say Jesus lives in your heart, but grandpa lives in your bones. By that we mean, we all have positive legacies that we've inherited from our family's origin, our parents or grandparents, but we also have some negative legacies. One of those negative legacies is often the ways that we have been formed to think about sex and sexuality, from our parents, from our churches. I think there's a lot of work that needs to get done to identify those things before we can even talk about what it means to see our bodies as a good gift for the world around us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's interesting that you would include so much on sexuality in a book on spiritual formation, *The Deeply Formed Life*, because normally you would expect prayer, Bible, worship, right, which is part of it, but you actually camp out on the sexuality a lot. Why did you do that?

Rich Villodas:

On one level, what I'm attempting to do in this book is to offer an ambitious reframing of spiritual formation. *The Deeply Formed Life* for me is, it's a life that's shaped by and for Jesus, and the world, of course, but in a way that is robustly integrative. You're right. Usually books on spiritual formation are

about your private disciplines, the prayer, the Bible, the silence, the solitude, but as I look at the world we live in, I think, we have to be thinking formatively about many different issues. I mean, the five I talk about in it are contemplative rhythms, race, racial justice, interior examination, sexual wholeness, and missional presence. For me, I'm trying to think formatively about these areas, because as a pastor, I mean, these are the areas that I think are really significant for this particular cultural moment that we're in. To think, not just biblically or ... but formatively, formationally. How do we live from a different sensor when talking about these things?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Porn, and we'll get to some of the others in a moment, but porn is such a huge issue for people, also for leaders, also for pastors. What would you say to someone who says, "Rich, appreciate what you're saying, but I'm somewhere between starvation and fast food, at least in my thought life. I don't know how to get to the banquet table." Any advice for leaders who would say, "I'm stuck in that path," either mentally or physically?

Rich Villodas:

Yeah, and when I think about things like porn or any addiction, for that matter, I think we need a reframing of it as well, and it's often the case that when someone hears that someone has been addicted to pornography or what have you, it goes right into behavior modify. "You shouldn't do that. That's not right," as opposed to, these are various ways that people are numbing their pain. That's what addiction is. It's a way to self soothe, because I've been experiencing lots of pain, and I need to escape this pain, and whether it's with food, whether it's with work, whether it's with sex, pornography, there are some wounds deep within that I'm trying to just soothe. I'd like to counsel people that whenever they encounter someone's experiencing some form of addiction sexually, instead of saying, "Stop doing that," I think we should say something along the lines of, "Wow, you've survived. You figured out how to survive through your pain, but this is not going to help you in the long run.

Rich Villodas:

Let's think of something else." I think that's such a different reframing, a more gentle reframing of addiction, as opposed to moving from right or wrong categories to, "You're deeply wounded and you're trying to self soothe, but the self-soothing is actually going to lead you to greater bondage. Let's try something else."

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a really helpful reframing. I haven't heard that before. Let's talk a little bit about your model for racial justice and reconciliation that you lay out in *The Deeply Formed Life*, and you lead. You minister in a hugely diverse city right out of Queens, New York City, but it's a particular moment where I think America is waking up to injustice in a way that perhaps hasn't happened in a while.

Rich Villodas:

Yeah. Our congregation, we have 75 nations represented, 123 languages spoken at the nearby hospital. We have folks from all walks of life, and so we have seen ... There are moments where I see God working in our church and there are times where I go, "Wow, this thing is not working. This diversity thing is not going to work here." But when I think about race, I like to think of it in terms of framework and formation. If we're going to have a good robust conversation about race, I think we need to address it

on at least six levels, Carey. I think six levels, and here, this is what I think those levels are. I think it's theological, historical, sociological, ecclesiological, formationally and politically.

Rich Villodas:

If we're going to have a good robust conversation, what's scripture say? Where have we been historically? What are the sociological data that we need to pay attention to? What's the church's response? What life do I need to engage the conversation? And then what does this look like in the public sphere? If we're not having those conversations on those layers, we're going to have a pretty limited myopic view of this massive issue. When I think about my approach, that's the framework for it.

Rich Villodas:

Then, when I think about formation, what I'm attempting to do is to help people live with greater self-awareness, so that they can make courageous decisions about what it means to move beyond the racialized world that we live in, that sees hierarchies, that sees matters of race being expressed, not just individually, but interpersonally and institutionally. Yeah, in the book, I just talked about various racial habits to cultivate, so we can move to greater freedom and greater love, not just personally, but also publicly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can you name one or two of those habits?

Rich Villodas:

Yeah. Very similar to the chapter on sexual formation, in terms of racial formation. How have we been formed by our families of origin? I lead our church in a very interesting exercise. I connect the genogram.

Carey Nieuwhof:

The what?

Rich Villodas:

The genogram. The genogram comes out of family systems theory. Think of it as a family tree, but you are helping to make connections in three areas. You're trying to identify various patterns from one generation to the next, trauma. This is my rendering of it. And the various scripts that you've inherited, whether consciously or unconsciously. When I think about race, and I'm trying to help people grow in this area, I want to find out, what are the stories? What are the patterns? What are the scripts that you've inherited, and how is that shaping you today? So, I mean, in our church, we ask very direct questions. How have you been formed to see black people? How have you been formed to see white people, Asian people, Native American people, Mexican people? What are the stories you've heard about them?

Rich Villodas:

Can you name them? And let me tell you, there are times when people in our church ... and I've done this in other leadership gatherings, the embarrassment to name, "This is what I think about black people. This is what my family thought about black people." Can you name it? Can you confess it? Lots of people have a hard time doing it, but I think to do that leads us down a path of now, healing and

freedom, and vulnerability and honesty. I mean, we cannot change what we cannot name. Identifying the ways we've been shaped by doing our own racial self-examination, I think, is really important.

Rich Villodas:

I also talk about the habit of remembering. Using the genogram is, again, as well, I am who I am, in large part, because I have been formed by a particular family system. My past has much bearing on my present and my future. If I don't address my past, honestly, I'm going to just perpetuate this from one generation to the next. I think, you take that principle and apply it now nationally, racially, we have a particular history in this country and in this world. Unless we are able to be honest about that history, and the residue of that history today, we're going to have a hard time moving forward. Most people want to forget. They live with a cultural amnesia when it comes to race. Those are a couple of practices that I try to help people dive into, to walk through the way of healing racially.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, there's so much else. Anything else you want to touch on, before we wrap up? Anything else that you're like, "Oh, I want everyone to know this."

Rich Villodas:

When I think about leaders within the marketplace, pastors, and I think about the particular moment that we're in, I am aware that our rhythms are all messed up. I think that the greatest gift that leaders can give themselves in this moment, is the gift of Sabbath. I think it informs everything else we do. The Sabbath is just a 24 hour period with no have to's are should's, which is to result in deep rest and renewal. We live in a society, especially with COVID now, where things blend, days blend into the next day. Sometimes I don't even ... is it today Monday or is it Thursday? I have no clue.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, everything feels the same all the time.

Rich Villodas:

Yeah, it's Groundhog's Day. The container of the Sabbath for pastors and leaders, I think, is really critical to sustain the work that we do for God. With regarding that, I'll just end with this story, Carey. You have any other questions, I'm happy to answer them, but when I was interviewing for the position to pastor at New Life, Pete interviewed me and I was the last interview. We're at this diner. I ordered grilled cheese sandwiches and french fries. Pete is notorious for stealing french fries off other people's plate, so I'll just throw that out there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, now it's out there. Okay, thank you.

Rich Villodas:

He's grabbing my fries. I'm going, what is this guy doing? I just met him. So, we were talking and then he goes, "Rich, do the only way you'll get fired here?" I sat up a little straighter. He said, "The only way you'll get fired as a pastor at New Life ..." and I think he was speaking a bit hyperbolically, but his point was well taken. He said, "The only way you'll get fired is if you don't take time to keep Sabbath." I thought, that's odd. I thought he was going to say, if you don't work your tail off and all ... get fired. He

said, "If you don't keep Sabbath ..." He said, "Because if you don't have that rhythm, you won't have the life with God deep enough to sustain the work you're doing for God. You won't make it." I took that to heart and I've been practicing Sabbath the last 12 years, and it has meant the world to me to recognize that this church is not built on me and it's not held together by me. Jesus Christ is before all things and in him all things hold together.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What's your Sabbath look like? It may vary, but just give us a little snapshot.

Rich Villodas:

6:00 PM Friday to 6:00 PM Saturday, that's the period. We have four movements or four categories of Sabbath that we teach at New Life. Just stop, rest, delight and contemplate, and so number one, I'm stopping all work. I mean, literally stopping all work. No emails, no phone calls, no sermon prep. I'm stopping. Resting is, I'm napping from time to time, I'm trying to ... What are the activities, or no activities that that give rest? The big part is that the delighting piece, and Carey, this is the area that I have struggled with for 12 years. The older we get, the more delight deficient we become, which is why we are to be like children. Children have no problem delighting. What are the things that produce joy and delight in me, and how do I pursue those on the Sabbath?

Carey Nieuwhof:

What are one or two things that are doing that right now for you?

Rich Villodas:

Sports is great. I love exercise. Basketball is huge for me, which is why in this COVID season it's been so difficult, because they took down all the rims in all the local playgrounds during COVID here in New York, and all gyms are closed. That's one area that gives me great life. Reading, of course. I read extensively. Meals with family, those really produce joy. Then that last part is just contemplation. Am I spending intentional time with God during the Sabbath? So those are the four. Now, with two small kids, there are times where the Sabbath feels like heaven and the times where it feels like hell. So, I go, that was not a Sabbath. I feel even more tired because of my six-year-old and my 11-year-old, but we get 52 of them a year, so we try the next week-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Try again. Yeah. Rich, okay, I love to ask this question from time to time. What is one question nobody ever asks you, that you wish they would ask you?

Rich Villodas:

Man, that's such a good question.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's perplexing. Yeah. It could be trivial, or it could be deeply profound.

Rich Villodas:

I wish people asked ... and I can't say people don't ask me this. People rarely ask how my children are doing.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Rich Villodas:

Rarely, if ever. At the last minute, "How's your wife doing?" They don't ask how my children are doing. I'm sure there's others, but that's one thing ...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Rich, how are your kids doing?

Rich Villodas:

They are pretty disoriented, because my daughter's ... well, she's starting middle school, but she's starting middle school from home. School's supposed to start on September 10th. It's going to be delayed another week, and she just wants to go to different classes in a different ... in a given day. She's going now from the living room to her bedroom. That's the classes she's going to here. She's really disappointed with that. We're helping her to grieve that until we can make a change. So, she doesn't want to go to school and my son Nathan said the other day, six-year-old over dinner, "I hope my school blows up," so he doesn't want to go to school at all. So, I mean ... How are they doing? One's lamenting and one's very angry that he has to.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's a good reminder, to ask the personal questions. It really is. I love this, Rich. Deeply Formed Life available everywhere books are sold. If people want to connect with you, where can they do that?

Rich Villodas:

They can go to richvillodas.com. That's one place, and then I'm pretty engaged on Twitter and Instagram, so the same handle @richvillodas.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, we'll link to everything in the show notes. Rich, it's been a joy. Thank you.

Rich Villodas:

Thanks, Carey. This was fun.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, that was a meaningful conversation with Rich Villodas. We have everything for you over at the show notes. You can go to careynieuwhof.com/episode375. The transcript's there, things you can share on social and so much more, and all the details. Anything we talk about, and you're like, "I'd like to get that," or, "I'd like to learn more." Yeah, we got that in the show notes for you. Thanks to Erin Ward, our podcast manager, who takes care of all that stuff week in and week out, as well as managing our brand new little podcast network, Thrivicity. If you haven't yet checked out the other podcast on this network, we're going to be growing it over the next year. Check out Brad Lomenick's H3 Leadership. It's a great podcast. He actually had me on recently, Rick Warren, and others as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, coming up real soon, how about next episode, we do Jon Gordon? Jon's been on before and if you need a positive focus, Jon is your man. He's got a brand new book, and we talk about the five D's—doubt, distortion, discouragement, distraction and division. It's actually based on the story of the Garden of Eden. We talk all about that and how this gets into the head of leaders. Here's an excerpt.

Jon Gordon:

And so, those lies have a goal. The enemy's goals with those lies are to discourage us. The enemy knows that he can't beat us himself. So, what does he do? He gets us to beat ourselves. We don't give up because it's hard. We give up because we get discouraged. That's really the main goal of the enemy, is to discourage us, and we see a lot of people right now, in this world, they are feeling discouraged, and they're giving up.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's coming up next time on the podcast, and we also have ... who do we have? We have Bob Westfall, Andy Stanley, Patrick Lencioni, Lysa TerKeurst, and Todd Wilson. Many, many others coming up on the show. It is time for What I am Thinking About, and I am thinking about two questions every leader needs to be asking for 2021. This segment is brought to you by Red Letter Challenge. You can learn more by going to [redletterchallenge.com/carey](http://redletterchallenge.com/carey) and unify your church in the midst of the pandemic with a 40 day turnkey done for your campaign, based on the teaching in the life of Jesus. And go to [remodelhealth.com/carey](http://remodelhealth.com/carey) and start saving on health care today.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Give your team the same or better benefits for less money. Listeners of this show have saved \$2.1 million so far and counting. That figure goes up every week. So, here's What I'm Thinking About. I'm thinking about the future. We are getting to the point ... I don't know about you, but I'm starting to think about 2021. There are two questions that I'm asking about leaders, two big questions for 2021, and I think they're really important. Question number one is this. Do you have the personal reserves to lead in sustained instability and uncertainty? I think a lot of us thought, including me, at this point, I thought, okay, we'll be back to normal in the fall.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Scratch that, and at the time that you'll be listening to this, if you're listening in real time, we're heading into an election. That doesn't feel very stable. I don't know when things are going to turn around or move into a new era of stability, but right now we're heading into more sustained instability and uncertainty. You need a new coping mechanism, because you're disappointed, you're frustrated, and just, this whole strategy of, "Well, it's going to go back to normal," isn't really working, and it may not work for a long, long time, or it may not work ever. What do you do?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to say, what you need to do is find a sustainable rhythm, because time off is what we all look to, right? Time off won't heal you when the problem is how you spend your time on. Like, when you're living in an unsustainable way day to day, to day, from crisis to crisis, to crisis, a Saturday off isn't going to solve that, or a two week vacation at the beach isn't going to solve that. I would really encourage you

to rethink your rhythms as we head into a brand new year. I do something called The High Impact Leader that could help. I have lots of material on my blog at [careynieuwhof.com](http://careynieuwhof.com) that can help.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Actually, I've just turned in a final manuscript for my next book, which will be out in September 2021, which is all about that, but don't look to time off to heal you when the problem is how you spend your time on. That's one question I'd be asking. Do you have the personal reserves to lead in sustained instability and uncertainty? I'm working on that myself. Number two, do you have the courage, as a leader, to make the long term changes that disruption this deep requires? I think, as we move into ... because, you think about all the adaptation you did in the second quarter of 2020, in the summer of 2020, and you're like, okay, we found stability.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But if this instability and uncertainty continues, this probably requires some systemic changes, maybe a reallocation of staffing, maybe a rethinking of your model. For those of you who are church leaders, people who are going back to church, it's like, yeah, it's still not the way it should be right in your head. Well, what if that becomes a more chronic situation? Do you need to change your model? Those are really deep questions. That's why I asked the first question, first. Do you have the personal reserves to do that? Again, going back to normal has not proven a successful strategy and crisis as an accelerator.

Carey Nieuwhof:

A lot of these changes that were coming anyway, are here, and perhaps they're here to stay. Maybe the shifts in behavior that we're seeing around us, that you probably don't like, as a leader, I'm beginning to think they're not just medical, they're cultural. In other words, yes, there's a virus. Yes, there's no known vaccine right now. Right? So, there's all that stuff, but what happens is, are your shopping patterns going back to the way they were before? Some of you have pivoted on schooling. Some of you ... with gyms opening and closing ... I know near Toronto, they closed again, because of a surge in the virus. If you got those kettle bells going, maybe you're not getting a gym membership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

They are not just medical changes. That's what they were for the first few months. It's like, "Oh, we have this virus. We can't go to church. We can't do this. We can't do that." But now, I think they're becoming cultural changes. What was medical is now cultural. Those are just some things to think about. I know those are really deep questions, but here's why I asked them. I want you to be stronger next October when you're listening to this podcast, than you are right now. If you chase down this, do you have the personal reserves to lead in sustained instability and uncertainty?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, develop those, and you'll be in a much better place. I've spent a lot of time in the last 15 years thinking about personal reserves, and how to adapt and pivot, and I'll tell you, it's a worthwhile journey. Again, you can go to [thehighimpactleader.com](http://thehighimpactleader.com) if you want more on that. Then, do you have the courage to make the long term changes that a disruption this deep really requires? So, those are a couple of questions on my brain these days. I hope they help you. Thank you so much for listening. Really excited to do this again next time, and I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer:

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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.