

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 378 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Today's episode is brought to you by Pro Media Fire and Remodel Health. Get an amazing website, custom graphic designs weekly with Pro Media Fire's new digital growth bundle. Just go to [promediafire.com/digitalgrowth](http://promediafire.com/digitalgrowth). And by Remodel Health, if you want to start saving, like so many listeners have, go to [remodelhealth.com/Carey](http://remodelhealth.com/Carey) and get better health care for less money in 2021.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Anyway, so excited to have you guys with us. Today on the podcast we've got Thom Rainer and we are going to talk about something that might even be a little bit further off than we thought when Thom and I recorded this about a month or two ago. And that is the post-quarantine church. He's got a new book about it, what does that actually look like? And then what pastors of small, mid-size and even larger churches are missing and what are the opportunities ahead.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thom's somebody I have really appreciated his leadership, his insights. I know many of you follow his work. He serves as president and CEO of Church Answers and executive director of the Revitalized Network. He's a graduate from the University of Alabama and has served as a pastor of several churches and the former president of Rainer Group Consulting. He's also served for 12 years as the Dean at Southern Seminary. And for 13 years as the president and CEO of LifeWay. He has authored and co-authored 33 books. That's impressive. I think Thom told me he wrote three books so far during the pandemic. I'm like, "Yeah, I've been working on one for two years." So always makes me feel great.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But really glad to welcome you on board to this podcast. And for those of you who are new, lots of new listeners still, welcome. We're really glad to have you. The idea here is to bring the backstory to leadership and try to analyze trends. And I hope this is something I know a lot of you take this to your leadership team. And on that note, we have show notes for you. So you can find show notes at [careynieuwhof.com/episode378](http://careynieuwhof.com/episode378) so you can find it there. And we just want to serve you and help you lead better in these very chaotic and confusing times. So would love for you guys to figure out social media for 2021.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You know that I talk all the time about how big online is going to be, how big it actually is. Think about it. This is an entirely virtual conversation. And as a leader, you're going to have more of those. So what if you could have a custom website and graphics, like a big church, like North Point or Life Church, but this time for a reasonable price because you don't have all their resources?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, good news. You can have an amazing website and custom graphics delivered weekly with a brand new plan from Pro Media Fire. This is the new digital growth bundle and here's what it includes. Custom built website with a strategy to increase engagement. No hassle web maintenance every week updated by a pro web team. That is a big value add, and trust me, something you're going to need more and more of. We are always tweaking my website here. Custom graphics from your on-demand graphic designer, Monday through Friday for print to social media, like everything done for you. And a bonus brand identity package for a new logo or a brand refresh for any department. Pricing is simple, no upfront fees, just a monthly flat rate price. If you want to check out, they have a special launch price on right now. You can save a lot of money by going to [promediafire.com/digitalgrowth](http://promediafire.com/digitalgrowth). The price is going up soon. So lock in and go to [promediafire.com/digitalgrowth](http://promediafire.com/digitalgrowth).

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then Remodel Health. I get so excited about this because I'm somebody who believes in a living wage, that that is something employers should pay and that you should be fair to the people you work with. And a lot of that these days is healthcare benefits, which can be so uneven. And what if you could actually improve the health benefits that your team gets, the benefits they get and do it at a lower price? That is a win by my standard. And so far, listeners of this podcast have saved well in excess of \$2 million in the last year and a half alone on healthcare while improving benefits. So if you want to learn more, you can go to [remodelhealth.com/carey](http://remodelhealth.com/carey) to learn more there. Just to start, you'll get access to their free savings calculator, church buyer's guide and brand new ebook and join the growing number of churches, not for profits and businesses that are benefiting by what Remodel Health offers. Go to [remodelhealth.com/carey](http://remodelhealth.com/carey) and start the savings today.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, without further ado, let's get into a really fascinating conversation with Thom Rainer. Thom, welcome back to the podcast. It is a delight to be with you.

Thom Rainer:

Always great to be with you, Carey. Boy, I have fun talking with you before we hit the record button, whether it's about church life or whether it's about our lives, whatever. You're an inspiration to me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, likewise. And thanks for having me on your podcast. Tell us about it.

Thom Rainer:

Oh, that was fun. That was great.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, that was great. Yours is short. I'm the guy who just goes on forever, but tell us about your podcast.

Thom Rainer:

Well, the podcast is called Rainer on Leadership and I don't know how long it's-

Carey Nieuwhof:

You've been doing that for years, right?

Thom Rainer:

Yeah. It's been around a long, long time. And for many years, Jonathan Howe was my co-host.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I remember.

Thom Rainer:

He was the straight man in many ways, and it was so much fun. And when Jonathan ended up taking another job, of course, I grieved over his departure, but that gave me the opportunity to work with my son, Sam.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know.

Thom Rainer:

Sam has another podcast called VST, but this has just been really good. And he's a natural. He is just an absolute-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Yeah. You can sense that. I have a son named Sam and I get to work with him as well. He joined our company over a year ago and it's been more in the background, but that can actually work. What are some keys to working with family?

Thom Rainer:

Open communication, willingness to be forthright with one another in the context of that open communication, setting clear, clear expectations, probably even more so than your other employees. Less they think that a dad will give me a little breathing room over here, I can edge over here. And then taking feedback from them. I listen to my sons, Carey. Of course, I listen to my wife. All three sons are somehow involved with me, Sam more than the other two. But when I need a sounding board, they're my advisory group. I go to them first. Their age is 40, 38 and 35. They're mature men and they are just absolutely incredible. And the blessing of them giving me 11 grandchildren is kind of a bonus.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, that's pretty neat. Yeah, but you're right, family can either be wonderful or it can be horrible. The horrible stories always make the news, but that's good to hear, that that is a joy. I don't think this is my Sam's permanent life goal, but it's great for a season. I've been really enjoying it.

Thom Rainer:

What my boys have always been able to tell me and act out is that they have no sense of entitlement. And they've been that way all of their lives. So just because they're with dad on his program, his ministry and his business, they have no sense that they are entitled to it. They said, "Dad, you've always told us if we're going to succeed, we're going to work at it. And that includes with you as well." I love their hearts for that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, no, I think you're right. If you're a relative somehow of the founder owner, pastor, whatever, it's almost like you at least in the initial period worked twice as hard just to earn the respect of your colleagues. I remember my dad wanted me to take over his business when I was 16. And it was a tool mold shop. And I'm not very good at math. You're machining metal down to a thousandth of an inch and I worked in the shop. I worked on the machines. I cleaned the toilets. I enjoyed cleaning the toilets a lot more than working on the machines because I knew how to do that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But I remember saying to him, "Dad, I think I could run the office," which was like three people at the time. I said, "I think I could run the office, but I know I would never have the respect of the guys on the floor unless I knew how to build a mold." And so I said, "I don't think I can run the office because I can't figure out the X, Y axis down to a thousandth of an inch."

Carey Nieuwhof:

So I left that, but yeah, there is that sense that you almost have to work twice as hard if you're related. So you have a chance now with Church Answers to serve so many local church pastors, and you've been doing this your whole life. I've been asking a lot of guests this question in 2020, but I'm going to ask you for your view in a moment, but I want to know the pastors that you're seeing, are they seeing the crisis of 2020 more as an interruption or a disruption?

Thom Rainer:

Unfortunately, more of them are seeing it as an interruption. And if you're seeing it as an interruption, what you're doing is you're waiting for normal to come back. And normal is not going to come back. I don't even like the phrase new normal because you still have the noun even though you put an adjective in front of it. It's a new reality. And I would say, this is all anecdotal, but we have conversations with hundreds, if not thousands of church leaders every single week in different types of venue. And I would say about three fourths of them holding on to something normal returning. And that, as much as anything else, is what frightens me about local churches, what we'll see we move forward in this post-quarantine era.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. I sense your answer would be a little bit different than the answer you hear at three quarters. And I would say, from the pastors I've talked to, the church leaders I've talked to, that seems pretty accurate. About 75% are holding on for some form of going back to normal and saying, "No, this is definitely an interruption." I've run into business leaders too, who just think it's an interruption, not a disruption.

Thom Rainer:

And think about where you're spending your time when you're doing that. If you perceive that it's an interruption, you're spending your resources, your focus, your mental, emotional, and spiritual energy on returning to that normal when God may be telling you, "I've got you in a new era and a new area and a new land and you need to be spending your time and resources on that instead of trying to return to something that does not exist." We cannot keep crying that we want to go back to Egypt because all we'll get as a wilderness if we do so. We need to move toward that promised land.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you see it differently. Why do you ... I'm going to take it that you see this as a disruption and I'd love to know why. Why do you think this is a disruption? What are the factors?

Thom Rainer:

One of the major factors is that the pandemic accelerated everything that was going on. So when we see attendance patterns be incredibly reduced and disrupted themselves, some people will say, "We didn't see it coming." Well, you probably would have had much of the same thing three to four years from now had there not been a pandemic. There was an acceleration of trends. One of the great news, pieces of great news about the pandemic is the acceleration that took place opened our eyes to the reality that it was there. I love the beach. I love-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Thom Rainer:

Cape San Blas is a beach that few people know about and I just absolutely love, been going there two decades, but it has an erosion problem. But if you watch it every week, that erosion is so incredibly subtle. But when Hurricane Michael hit in 20 ... Well, two years ago. When Hurricane Michael hit, all of a sudden the erosion was dramatic and people were saying, "Look at these beaches." But they would have gotten that way anyway. So restoration was necessary regardless. I love the fact that the pandemic has awakened us to the reality that we need to change. It is a disruption in the sense that things have been accelerated. It is a disruption in the sense that the mission field has been clarified.

Thom Rainer:

For many of us, the mission field was the holy huddle on a Sunday morning. And we wouldn't have said that was our mission field, but that's where we spend our time and our energy. That's where we did all these things that took up 80% of who we are, preparing sermons and being with people and pastoral care, the important things. But we were neglecting the fact that there was this huge, huge mission field that we were not seeing that is digital.

Thom Rainer:

One of the greatest benefits of the disruption is now we see that or now we should see that. And when people say what is a good sign of a church that has made the shift, I would say more than the action. As important as actions are, is when the mindset has changed from the digital world being a tool to the digital world being the mission field. Once that mindset takes place, we treat, we act and we respond to that world differently than if it's just another tool that have streaming services or Facebook ads or something of that nature. When the mindset shifted, those become the 25 or 20% of the leaders that are ready for the disruption and the blank slate that is before them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

One of the things you and I have talked about recently is so many leaders seem to want to get back to normal. It's just like, "Hey, let's just reopen as much as we can. We'll get back to normal." Neither you nor I think normal is coming back. I'd love to know why do you think there seems to be this scramble among the majority of leaders to go back to normal?

Thom Rainer:

Let's go back to pre-COVID and let's look at some of the problems or let's say challenges we've had as leaders. And since I connect with a lot of pastors whose churches are under 300 in attendance, I see this specifically with many of the church members there, one of the primary challenges these leaders would have is if they made a change, what you and I would think would be a methodological change, whether it's in the physical facilities of the worship services, something like that, there would be an outcry. And the outcry would be, "My church is changing." Normal was defined by their perception of what a church is and should be. And when you disrupted that, you would get conflict.

Thom Rainer:

Now, what we haven't seen for many of us leaders, many leaders is that the pandemic got us away from our comfort level as well. We were talking about our church members not being receptive to change. We're now discovering, many of our leaders are now discovering, that we are not ready for that new world. What will many pastors do if they have three times as many people that are watching and listening to their messages digitally as in-person? What will pastors do when groups take on a whole new model that you've never seen before? That's draining to many pastors. They are losing the church they know. They are losing the church for which they have found comfort.

Thom Rainer:

And it's easy for me to be a bit judgmental about it and say, "No, you got to do it differently." But that's the human nature. We love our routines. We love our comfort and the pandemic has jerked a lot of leaders out of that routine and comfort.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Talk a little bit more about that, Thom. I guess in the evangelical movement, it's a little bit conservative theologically, but it also seems to be conservative methodologically.

Thom Rainer:

We do confuse the two, don't we?

Carey Nieuwhof:

We really do. And as much as you write about it, I write about it, we talk about it, it's hard to do. You look at podcasting. We're doing this interview and people ask me, "Are you going to do podcasting forever?" And my answer, despite how well things have gone is like, "No, I don't think I'm doing it forever." What I'm committed to is bringing conversations with great leaders to the public sphere. That's what I'm committed to. Right now podcasting is a really good way to do it, but I'm sure there's some technology nobody's thought of or is in development in Menlo Park right now or Cupertino that's going to be the next thing. And then podcasting will go the way Periscope or some of these other ... Remember Periscope? Periscope was a new thing. And I'm going to do my daily Periscope show at 12:00 noon central and then it's like, wow, that was a blip.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Here's something. I'd love to hear your take on this. Some people would say, "Yeah, Carey, great, go on, go on and go on about that stuff. But here's the reality, public worship has been part of the practice of Christians for thousands of years, arguably in the current form since the reformation with some

variations. So you can't tell me that that's going away anytime soon." Have you heard that? And what would you say to that?

Thom Rainer:

I would say it's going to change dramatically. I do not think in-person worship is going away. You remember 30 years ago when multiple worship services were controversial? Everybody should be-

Carey Nieuwhof:

You know, I really don't. But you probably remember that better than I do.

Thom Rainer:

I'm older than you are. I remember it well. As a matter of-

Carey Nieuwhof:

You know what, you took me to a place like a not very well traveled path in my brain. I remember when two services were seen as splitting the church. Okay. That's where you're going.

Thom Rainer:

Yeah. That's where I'm ... When multiple services were controversial in themselves. Because we had gotten away from the reformation model of one worship service at a certain time. And there's still some who are arguing for that. And then when we went to multiple venue, multiple site, it really started to shrug ... A little side note here. I went multi-site as a pastor in 1980, 1992. The only other church that I knew of that was multi-site at the time was Perimeter Church in Atlanta. I didn't know any others. Maybe there was a Church of God somewhere that was also multi-site.

Thom Rainer:

I'll tell you, Carey, I was labeled heretical because ... And you know why I went multi-site? Now because I did something cool or I was pressured. I did multi-site because we'd run out of space and couldn't do any more services with the parking there. So I said, "Well, why can't we go four miles down the road?" "Well, we can't do that."

Thom Rainer:

So anyway, back to where we are right now. I know I'm going down all these paths, but where we are right now is we will ultimately see the in-person service be one manifestation of the gathered church, not the manifestation of the gathered church. And that's troubling some people right now because that's not the world that we knew back in January of 2020. And it's been a rapid change.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I've been thinking about that too because I've been doing worship off my iPad phone, laptop for six months. In part because even as a founding pastor, there were strict limits on how many people could be at our production facility thanks to quarantine. So I couldn't go if I wanted to. And I've fallen into that rhythm and I've had lots of people on my platforms say online attendance is not attendance. It doesn't count. What is your take on that?

Thom Rainer:

It does count. That is my simple response. And you have done as good a job as anyone I know about what counts counts.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Yeah. It's like Sears asking if Amazon counts, right? It's like, well, it kind of counts.

Thom Rainer:

It does. I think that that is not only part of the gathered church, but that is part of the mission field. That is the future of the churches. So if we begin to say, "They don't really count." What we're ultimately saying is, "That is not the mission field we wish to pursue." While some of them may be followers of Christ, many of them are not. And if there's anything that has been waning in the North American church in particular, it has been conversion growth. They're seeing people come to Christ.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Amen to that.

Thom Rainer:

Followers of Christ and the church. Why? Because our mission field has been three people, me, myself, and I, and maybe them, so four. And it's just been us. Now we're seeing a new mission field. And if we are not counting these, we're basically saying reaching people does not count, worshiping with others does not count. Yes, it counts. I'll let Carey Nieuwhof decide how to measure it, but yes, it counts.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, it's interesting because I'm sitting in my backyard, Thom, thinking ... And you can't really see your neighbors. They got a mask up or whatever, but that season is coming to an end at some point in the foreseeable future. And I'm like, am I more effective in my backyard making connections with the people I live around and the people in my life than I am trying to get them to go to a building?

Carey Nieuwhof:

And listen, I'm the guy who built the building. So I've got a vested interest in both and I'm just, I'm rethinking the home as the hub for the future ministry. Why do you think we are so addicted to our buildings? Or do you think we're addicted to buildings? That was a pretty lawyer-like leading question. It's not a trap.

Thom Rainer:

We are addicted to our gatherings. We have measured success by a number of people in a facility. Therefore, the facility became important because we measured by the numbers who were there. We measured by those who were gathered for worship. We measured by those, many of them were in on-campus small groups, or even in the traditional churches, Sunday school. The metrics of our success depended upon the building. And because it depended upon the building, the building took on an importance that was far greater than it should have been, and it certainly will be in the future.

Thom Rainer:

Gosh, Carey, we could talk at length about conversations both of us have had with design build firms and those who know facilities well and are looking toward the future. And prior to COVID, they were

talking about the major trend, with reducing the size of worship centers, sanctuaries. And now they're saying everything has changed, the whole idea of the facilities have changed.

Thom Rainer:

I was recently in a church in the Atlanta area, and it was large facility because they had bought out a clothes shopping center and a shopping center that had closed. And the pastor was walking me around, he was showing where something new is about to be built. I said, "What's going to be there?" And he said, "Those where the washing machines and dryers are going to be." And I said, "Excuse me." He said, "Yeah, we have a lot of people in our community who do not have washers and dryers and we're going to let them come in for free. And we're going to provide you childcare at certain points and get their clothes clean." I learned later that that became a booming ministry.

Thom Rainer:

He said, "Now, over here is the police precinct." I said, "What?" Because this is still in the framing stage. He said, "Yeah, this is where the local police are going to actually have a small precinct located." This was pre-COVID and I'm thinking, this guy gets it. This guy absolutely gets it. If we're going to have a building, let it be for the community and let it be something that the community embraces instead of a building that merely says, "Y'all come and satisfy us with your presence." I got excited just watching that. He was a pre-COVID pastor before being post-COVID was cool. I think I said that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'd love to know, if you could just get leaders together, and let's think average size churches and people who are going back to normal or trying to regather as many people as possible, which is still not going well. 20, 30, 40% of the former gathering is happening. And if you could tell them anything, what would you tell them? What would you want to very politely just kind of shake them up and go, "Guys, like pay attention." What would you tell them?

Thom Rainer:

I would tell them that they will not have a church in five years if they don't embrace the new reality of which they're apart. And I would just look them right in the face and I would say, "You're either going to close or you're going to be so discouraged that you're going to walk away." I did a blog post sometime back, September, I think. And it was simply entitled Why Your pastor is About to Quit.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I remember. I read that one. It's a great post. We'll link to it.

Thom Rainer:

And it's one of those, you wake up that morning when it's released and it's gone viral and it's just, it's all over the place. And I thought I would have hit a nerve. I just did not know that nerve was that sensitive. Why is it? Why is it that somewhere around 80% of pastors are contemplating quitting?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Thom Rainer:

Why is it in this post-COVID era? And it's because they don't know the world in which they are leading and ministering. And I would get those people in front of me and I would say, "You are no longer in Kansas. Now it's time to wake up and see this new mission field." Imagine that you had been trained and look ... I'm thinking about the most recent other country I've been to, Uganda. Let's say that you've been in Entebbe and you wake up and you have to minister in Entebbe. I don't think you're going to do that the way you did that in Birmingham, Alabama. Let's look at this new culture. Let's look at this new world and let's ask the question, what does it take in God's power to reach minister and care in this new culture?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Obviously, there's been a lot of dislocation. There are few leaders that are thriving, but I think you're right. That 80%, is that like a guess or you have a stat that like you're pretty sure 80% of-

Thom Rainer:

That is survey that we did through social media.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Thom Rainer:

It's not bar or scientifically approved, but it was well over 1,000 people that responded.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No. And listen, I track with David pretty closely and he says the emotional health of church leaders is at an all-time historic abnormal low. So scientific or the quick poll.

Thom Rainer:

It's anecdotal.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, I think that's very real. I did a poll pre-COVID at a Pushpay event in Dallas, in May of 2019. And they wanted me to live poll the room. So there's like 800 church leaders. And I asked them, and self-describe, but, "How many of you have experienced signs of burnout in the last 12 months?" And it was something like 96% of people in the room put their hands up. And I stopped. I almost started crying.

Thom Rainer:

That's pre-COVID, right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's pre-COVID. This is like a year before the whole thing. So it was already fragile. There was already a tinderbox. Talk to the pastor who's ready to quit or the leader who's who's ready to quit and goes, "Thom, I haven't got the skills for this. I didn't learn this in the seminary. I didn't train for this. I don't have the staff for this. I don't know where the budget is going." Is there anything you would say to them to help them hang in there?

Thom Rainer:

They are in good company. There were 11 men who were not equipped to take on the world and they would eventually become 12 and then 120 and it would grow. They were fishermen. They were tax collectors. They were the least likely in a hostile Greek or Roman culture that was not ready to receive the gospel message. And in God's power and in God's grace, those handful of people, as you well know, the New Testament makes it clear, they changed the world.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Thom Rainer:

Now, here's something that I tried to remind pastors of. They had the internet in the first century. And people look at me like, what in the world are you talking about? Okay. They had the internet equivalent in the first century. Had the Roman roads not been built the previous two centuries ... Completed. It had started before that, but completed in the previous two centuries, and were ready as they were, primarily for warfare, sometime for commerce, but Roman empire holding its power together from a human perspective, the gospel wouldn't have cared. It would've cared over sea, but not over land.

Thom Rainer:

So most of the known Roman empire would not have been reached if it was not for those Roman roads. Those Roman roads were radical in that day. They had proper drainage. They had cleared through the forest. They went over border ways. It was a technological marvel of that day. And instead of looking at the Roman roads and saying, "The dirty Roman government has messed up our land." The early followers of Christ said, "We have this new communication system and this culture that is not friendly to Christianity. Let's see what we can do in God's power."

Thom Rainer:

Start looking at the first century church. I got a book that I have read now I think 22 times. It's the only book that I have read that much other than the Bible itself. And it's called Evangelism in the Early Church by Michael Green, who was first published in 1970. And every time I read that book, Carey, I am reminded that 2020 was not anything new. There's always been this time when there has been major disruption. We've just had a long period where we've gotten too comfortable.

Thom Rainer:

This is almost normal. I don't want to use that word. This is almost closer to what we have been experiencing historically than just the fact that we have been disrupted. This is an opportunity to be like the first church and just go back and read Acts 2 and begin with verse ... Read it all, begin with verse 41 and start going forward and just see what happens to the early church. This is the mission field. This is the great opportunity that is there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I love that you went to the New Testament on that rather than just some principles. I went to Rome last year for the first time. Only time in my life. And stood on the Appian Way, just outside of the gates of the city of Rome. And those are the gates that Peter and Paul would have gone through. There's a little plaque commemorating that this is where Peter had a vision of God before he went back into Rome to

be crucified upside down, according to tradition. That's where Paul walked. And to actually be on the road that they walked was pretty amazing, but that was a completely different model than temple worship, which was facility-centric versus home-based. So it's a really interesting parallel that you draw. You've already alluded to this, neither of us are 25-year-old leaders. Can we say that just for argument's sake?

Thom Rainer:

I can say you're closer to it than I am.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You strike me as very resilient. You've had a lot of change in your life. You've led different churches. You've led a major organization. You pivoted Church Answers over the last couple of years. You're a podcaster. You're an author. You've done so many different things. Why does this not threaten you? You would think that someone with decades of experience would say, "We've got to get back to the way it was." Why are you excited about the opportunities?

Thom Rainer:

I'm excited about the opportunities. One reason is because that is the way that God prepared me through my parents. And let me just give a little bit of background so you can understand. You probably didn't think I was going to go this way, but just for the listener to know something maybe different about me, if they know anything about me. I was born and raised in South Alabama. Most of my childhood was in the '60s. And for those who know the history of the United States in the 1960s, it was a volatile time. If we're looking at the racial unrest today, it was magnified during those days. And I was in the middle of it.

Thom Rainer:

I was halfway between Selma, Alabama and the Pettus Bridge in Tuskegee, Alabama. And I was a minority white person in an African-American town, highly racist, really, really, really some ugly things took place against the African-Americans that resided in our town. I was raised by a father whose mother died when he was 10 years old, my grandmother, and whose father took the alcoholism. And guess who came and raised my dad? African-Americans.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Thom Rainer:

My dad was raised by African-Americans. I was a minority white in a highly racist town that was taught by my dad that you can make it during these times because God is working through all people. And that has been a part of who I was. He was a World War II vet. He had multiple medals. He was my hero. He taught me resilience. And what he taught me, and it is cliché, but he put it in my heart and my mind is, "The circumstances will change, Thom, but the God who's going to use you has not and he will continue to use you." I'm sorry to go back and give that-

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, that's a powerful story.

Thom Rainer:

Of Thom Rainer. I've done it very few times, but it was my dad's reminder that God always has a plan for us. The circumstances do not change that. And my dad was shot twice over Germany and a big 24. He was wounded for death on one occasion. One other little thing, and boy, am I traveling, I'm given too much about autobiography here, but one more little thing. He had not married my mother when he was in World War II and he didn't make a deal with God, but he said, "God, if I come back and I get to marry Nan," my mother, "I will dedicate my children to serve you." He told me that story on his death bed, by the way.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No way.

Thom Rainer:

Yeah. So the dad who raised me to understand that the God of all circumstances is in the post-COVID era and he can see you through this, pastor. It's not just he can see you through it. He can let you see this world. And if you'll be willing to open your eyes, instead of saying, "We want the whole world back," he'll give it to you. So my apologies to the listeners for-

Carey Nieuwhof:

There's no apology needed. Thank you so much for sharing so personally. I love it, love it to when leaders do that and when you share that way. What do you think some of the qualities and characteristics that have made you resilient are? And what would you be looking for, would you say to leaders, "Hey, these are the skills you're going to need moving forward." There are qualities and characteristics, I think, to resilient people.

Thom Rainer:

They are asking questions. What's next? Didn't you write a book? You didn't see that coming or something?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Thom Rainer:

They may not can predict the future, but they're always asking about the future.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Curiosity.

Thom Rainer:

Yeah. A lot of curiosity as they desire to move forward. Resilient leaders don't think that they can do it all themselves. They depend upon teams. They depend upon other people. They depend upon ... Of course, they depend upon God. But some of the greatest leaders I've known, I've said, "Tell me about your team." And I haven't met all your team, but one thing I know is that Carey Nieuwhof has a great team. Because-

Carey Nieuwhof:

We're fortunate that way. Yeah.

Thom Rainer:

And I do too. They've always ... Great leaders that are resilient usually have these teams around them. Great leaders look for where God is working instead of where God is limiting. And the pandemic is where God is working. He's not saying, "Oh, I've shut the door. Church is not going to make it, whether it's a little sea church, the universal church is not going to make it. Shut the door."

Thom Rainer:

Resilient leaders say, "Let me try to find out and see what God is doing here." Sounds almost a little bit like Henry Blackaby, but maybe it is. Let's find out where God is working and join him in it. That's one Canadian to another, between Blackaby and Carey Nieuwhof. Those are some of the characteristics that I see.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to go through different church sizes with you because you have the unique perspective to talk to so many church leaders. Let's talk about the church of say 75 to 200 people, somewhere in that range. So you kind of know everybody still, you know the name, you're still doing pastoral care. It could be one service, two services, but which is what, 80% of the church in America roughly-

Thom Rainer:

Yep.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... is around that age or that size. What are some of the best and worst practices that you've seen among church leaders of churches that size?

Thom Rainer:

Well, at the risk redundancy, one of the worst practices I've seen as a desire to return to pre-COVID in a cultural church. I'm being redundant at this point, but that would be true for leaders of churches of all sizes. Another thing that I think that those, the small churches or smaller churches, predominantly smaller churches are doing is that they are looking at the attendance as their measure of success. And I'm talking about in-person attendance, and if they had 75 gathered pre-COVID and they have 30 gathered now, they are feeling like failures.

Thom Rainer:

And I want to tell them, "No, you're not. Your people are still there. They're just in some different places right now. And let's adjust accordingly." So the attendance metric, I think, is more pervasive in the smaller churches, because when you go from 75 to 30, it really feels like you've lost a lot of people, as opposed from going from 800 to 400 or 500, you still have a good mass that is there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, that's interesting. I hadn't heard that point. That's a really good point, yeah. And you feel it. And those are names attached with people. It's like, the Johnson's aren't there, the Smith's aren't there, right?

Thom Rainer:

Yes, exactly. So I would say to these pastors of these normative churches, "Hey, don't get hung up on the number before. Look at the mission field in front of you."

Carey Nieuwhof:

What are best practices? Have you seen some churches innovate in that normal size church space?

Thom Rainer:

Oh, yeah. Yeah, absolutely. I can think of one church right now in central Indiana that is running about 90 in attendance pre-COVID. I don't know exactly what their post-COVID number is or their post-quarantine number is, but around 90. It's below 100. Before COVID they started a second campus. A rural church, they started a second campus.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Thom Rainer:

After COVID they have started micro churches, micro ... Somewhat home churches, but they don't have to be in the home, churches of around 15 people, 20 people, almost single-cell. I know of one particular church that has said, "You know, we're going to use the digital world for our connection to worship, but we're going to have the smaller gatherings that are just going to stay right where they are." And I've called them micro churches for right now, because I don't have a better name for them. And I think that that is a trend for the future.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I agree.

Thom Rainer:

And it could be a trend for larger churches, but it certainly is for the smaller churches.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. And I've seen large churches do that, but it's really cool to see small churches doing that. Let's talk about churches that are, and I know this is a huge range, but 200 to 1,000. So you're getting into mid-sized churches to larger churches at that point. Best and worst practices there. Anything that's different.

Thom Rainer:

I am seeing an obsession on the negative with some of these leaders with the facilities.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Thom Rainer:

The facilities are bigger. And therefore they're more expensive. And I'm saying usually. I mean, think of a facility that holds maybe 700. That's a rather large gathering place. And if there are 200 people there, they're not only worried about the numbers who are there, they're worried about paying the bills, they're worried about the upkeep, they're worried about the look. And I could take this to mega churches too, mega churches that have gone from 3,000 plus together to attendance to 600 and maybe a facility that holds 2,000 or 2,500. They're looking at that and they're saying, "Oh my goodness. What do I do about these facilities?"

Thom Rainer:

I know of a pastor who built a facility and I think the gathering size was only 350 and he had a studio connected to it, and he did this pre-COVID and I think ... Isn't that what you did, Carey?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That may have been what we did. Yeah. We basically built a broadcast studio.

Thom Rainer:

Think how smart you seem now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, yeah. It was constraints, but we built a broadcast studio with a church attached and it's turned out really well. It was Todd Wilson who said something very similar to what you said, and that'll be on the podcast, if it hasn't aired already by the time this all sorts out, but he made the argument quite compellingly I thought, Todd Wilson from Exponential, who you know. He just said, he thinks a lot of the return to church is being driven by exactly what you said. It's like these buildings are big. If you look at most church budgets of smaller churches, that's like sub 1000, which is 98% of churches is, he said they're driven by facilities and staff. And the staff are basically there to facilitate in-person experiences at the facilities. So the push back is like, how do we fund this thing if we can't fill it back up? Any thoughts on that? He did a better job articulating that than I just did, but ...

Thom Rainer:

I think Todd is right on. Let's say 50% of our budget is personnel. Maybe 35% of it is facility related. Those are not uncommon numbers, by the way. So 85% is facilities and people. And all of a sudden you don't have people funding the facilities in the facilities. That exacerbates the angst that already exists. Well, our whole church model is beginning to fall apart because the church model was people, staff supporting people particularly gathered at usually a Sunday morning time of hours. And when that model disappears, they start looking around and saying, "Not only can we not support model A, we don't know where model B is and where to go."

Thom Rainer:

So there's a double angst that my model of gathered people in a facility supported by heavy staff structure has gone away, we don't know how to replace it or fund it and we're not sure what model B is. You talk to pastors today and some of them are struggling with model A right now, which is how do I get that back the way it was? Instead of looking at what is the future and what is the model that we need.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So what would you say to the church leader who's like, "No, exactly, Thom." Like, "Okay. Tell me what to do. I've got four staff. I got a \$2 million mortgage on this place. We used to gather 500 people and now we're gathering 182 on our best Sunday. What do I do?"

Thom Rainer:

Well, let's do a consultation of that church and let's say, "What do we have? What type of resources do we have?" Well, some of the resources that we have are called facilities. They're not going to go away. Is it possible that we could do something differently with those facilities? Is it possible that instead of making the facilities for us only, that it could become this type of community center that this area does not have? Let's rethink facilities.

Thom Rainer:

And I work with smaller churches a lot, but I know of a church that was in a one school town and there was no facility of any type or recreation or gathering for the community. And they said, "We're going to open up our fellowship hall and it's going to be the community center." And it became the impetus for growth of that church. That's all pre-COVID, that's three or four years ago.

Thom Rainer:

Can we look at the facilities anew? Can we rethink, if God has given us these resources, what do we do? Is it possible that another church can use those facilities? I mean, is that heretical, that two different churches are in the same facility? I don't think so. Let's look at that possibility. And then the hard decision is, what do we do about staff? And I don't want to make the church the secular world, but the secular world is leading the way by saying, "We are going to have to make some tough decisions."

Thom Rainer:

It means that sometimes we will have to make adjustments in personnel that are painful, but it's all about the kingdom and what we need to do to move forward. We are poorly aligned, many of our churches, staff-wise with what we need to be doing in order to be most effective as a local church.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What are some of the large churches doing well or poorly? By that I mean almost mega churches, very large, 1,000 plus, to mega churches. What are they doing well? What are they doing poorly?

Thom Rainer:

What they're doing well is most of them have grasped the technology to make the worship services and other digital venues really solid. They've really done an incredible job. And as I watch some of these larger churches, they have become lessons for smaller churches. I've even seen some of the larger church staff members be so gracious as to, whether it's YouTube or some other type of means of communication, share some of the best practices in technology. The larger churches have led the way in helping us to understand what technology can do in order for us to see this new mission field that is out there, the digital mission field. So I commend them for that.

Thom Rainer:

They have, on the negative side, some of the similar challenges that the other churches do that are focused on people in the building. And the churches that are large churches that are moving past that tended to be the multi-site, multi-venue churches that weren't trying to fill up so many people into one service or one point in time service. So if they have the multi-venue, if they have this 350 here and 200 here, are multi-site, they are more equipped for this new era.

Thom Rainer:

Now, we could talk about Gen Z, we could talk about younger Millennials, early trends ... And I know David Kinnaman would affirm a lot of this, as you all talk on your podcast. But early trends are is that the younger Millennials and Gen Z are going to be going to smaller gatherings. So the large churches that are thinking about, it's cliché, getting big by getting smaller, are the churches with some of the best practices. The churches that are thinking about getting big by getting bigger are the churches that are going to struggle.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, trying to fill 3,000 seats was hard pre-COVID. It'll probably be even more difficult down the road.

Thom Rainer:

Exactly. Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What advantages do small to mid-sized churches have over large churches right now? What would you say like, "Oh, this is your opportunity."

Thom Rainer:

Well, one is assimilation. We haven't talked a whole lot about that, but small to mid-size churches, they tend to know everyone. And if you're in a church of 200 to 250, as you said, with a smaller church, we know when the Jones' aren't there. We know when the Nieuwhof's aren't there, although not many churches have Nieuwhof in their congregation, but we know when they're there. So assimilation can be highly personal and highly intentional. It's almost like having a small group. You're able to connect with them because that they are there or not there, as the case may be.

Thom Rainer:

I'm going to say this is going to be across church size. One of the biggest challenges of churches pre-COVID is now the biggest opportunity post-quarantine. And that is evangelism. Now, that sounds so basic and so maybe even trite, but going into the quarantine, the latest numbers I have is that it took about 75 to 80 of our attenders to see one person reach for Christ in a year. So if you're in a church of 75 or 80, you might see one new believer a year. If you're in a church of 200, you might see two or three new believers.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Pretty low.

Thom Rainer:

We're losing the battle for souls, if I may be crass to put it that way, we're losing that battle. What has happened is in the post-quarantine era, the eyes have been open to the opportunities because of the responses digitally. And people have seen neighbors and strangers and people that they never thought would darken the door of our facilities, but they're showing up in these digital services. And they're saying there is a mission field out there. We can reach people for Christ. So this is an opportunity for simple, profound, relational evangelism to be in taking place.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I love the hope you paint in all of that. What key questions do you think church leaders should be asking themselves right now that maybe you don't hear them asking?

Thom Rainer:

One, how am I spending my time?

Carey Nieuwhof:

On that note, everybody I talk to is like, "I've never been busier." And I get that. I get that. The world's upside down. Talk more about that question.

Thom Rainer:

I would tell a pastor or another church leader, if they cannot clearly point to five to 10 hours a week that is used to reach people who are not followers of Christ, that you're not using your time well. In fact, I'll tell you about an experiment I did way back when, when I was a seminary dean. I took some doctoral students. And I think we had 10 in our seminar. All 10 of them were in declining churches. Maybe that's why they were in a dean seminar on church growth.

Thom Rainer:

And I said, "Let's do an experiment. Between now and the next seminar," which I think was three months later, "I'm going to ask each of you to be accountable to one another. I'm not going to tell you how to do it. I'm not going to suggest a methodology, but I want you to lead your church and yourself in connecting with people with the gospel. And I want you to be accountable to one another where you are sharing with one another through text messages," or I think we used the chat board, "through a chat board on how you're doing that every single week."

Thom Rainer:

Okay. Here are the results. Nine of the 10 churches turned around in three months. I began to do that with all my doctoral students. And now, when I do coaching, I do that as well. It's not as successful with coaching because they don't get a grade. When I told them they'd fail if they didn't do it, there was a good bit of motivation. One of my questions would be, "How are you spending your time?" The tyranny of the urgent is exacerbated during this era because you're supposed to lead an in-person church, a digital church, and you're supposed to be a referee during a heightened political season. And you've got all these people arguing about different things.

Thom Rainer:

I'm saying, "If you're not spending five hours where you are focused on reaching people, whether it's writing a letter, if you can meet with someone for a coffee, even with your mask on, whatever the case

may be, think about how you can connect with people and be intentional about it for five hours." One of the first questions I would ask is how are you spending your time?

Thom Rainer:

Second question, I'm seeing this a good bit, I would say, how are you leading your family spiritually? Right now, we're hearing about a lot of families of pastors and other church leaders that are just falling apart. And what has happened is pastors often segregate family and church. And they say, "I need to balance the two." No, you don't. You don't need to balance the two. Your family is a part of the church. Paul makes it very clear. How can you manage your church if you cannot-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Manage your family. Yeah.

Thom Rainer:

One of the first duties that you have is to make sure your spouse is okay, that your children are okay. And if you do that, so much more is going to be strengthened. And when I get past question two, usually things have turned around in a pastor's life. That pastor is more evangelistic, that pastor is taking care of the family. Those are the two questions I would ask pastors. I wouldn't even get into, I would eventually, hey, let's start looking at the digital world more closely, how can we reach them? I would do that, but I'd have to get to those two questions first.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want you to, and I know this is a tough question because nobody really knows, but I want you based on what you've seen so far, to look into the post-quarantine church and world. What's the same? What's different? What do you see?

Thom Rainer:

Different is relatively easy. Different is gatherings will be smaller. Attendance will be smaller. That's a hard pill for many church leaders to swallow, but attendance is going to be significantly smaller.

Carey Nieuwhof:

When you say significantly, any ballpark guess?

Thom Rainer:

I would say that the typical decline post-COVID is going to be in the 30 to 35, maybe even 40% range.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. So a church of 1,000 becomes a church of six or 700?

Thom Rainer:

Right? Again, I'm not totally oppression so I can-

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, no, no. I'm not disagreeing. I'm just clarifying. I would probably pick a similar number. I might even go 50%.

Thom Rainer:

There will be some.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Some of those people, well, they're not gone. They're just not in the room. I might be watching on my porch. I might be at a neighbor's place. I might be doing something different, but the habit forming period that we've been in probably isn't going to move people back to their old patterns immediately. Is that what you're thinking?

Thom Rainer:

That's what I'm thinking.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Okay.

Thom Rainer:

There will be some sameness. I have a book coming out way in 2020, '21. It's about this whole issue of attendance. Despite everything I said, I'm big on attendance. Now, how you count is one thing and what you're counting is another thing, but being present is ... If all of a sudden, none of our friends or family communicated with us anymore or in our presence anymore, we would think something is wrong. So I will say one of the things that will not change is there will still be a gathered church. It will be a clear manifestation of what we do in church life.

Thom Rainer:

Yes, it may be smaller. Definitely, it will be augmented digitally, but there will still be an in-person gathered church. That will be the same. And on the somewhat negative side of what will change, I think for the foreseeable future pastoral care needs are going to be heightened. And what are pastors going to do about that when really many pastors, the church members expect them to have certain spiritual gifts. One is omnipresence. One is omniscience, another is omnipotence. If you could just be everywhere, know everything and have all power, then you would really be a good pastor.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You are. You're a very good pastor. You're also God, but that's okay, you know.

Thom Rainer:

I do think that the pastor needs to be prepared, church leaders need to be prepared for heightened pastoral care. And maybe even in terms of what we're seeing now, heightened division taking place in the church. We're certainly seeing it in a political season. Maybe a less than a little bit in 2021, but we're certainly seeing it at a political season, but to be prepared for that. But I do think pastoral care needs will accelerate. I do think the gathered church will be the same. And I do think we will be in a smaller church gathering.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thom, as always, just so helpful. Anything else you want to share with us while we're together today?

Thom Rainer:

Well, Carey, if I haven't communicated it, I want to be clear to your listeners because you have a lot of them and I want them to hear what I'm about to say clearly, not because Thom Rainer is saying it, but because I really believe that this is the truth. I think this is one of the greatest opportunities that we will ever know in our lifetime.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Yeah.

Thom Rainer:

Seize this as an opportunity. It's become cliché to say God wasn't surprised by the pandemic, but guess what? God was not surprised by the pandemic. So we're looking on the other side of most of the quarantine and it is a mission field that I think we have not seen in our lifetime. Ask God to open your eyes and then seize the opportunity.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, that's a good word to finish on. And Thom, people are going to check out your podcast. You've got a lot of writings, you blog regularly. So where can they find all that?

Thom Rainer:

Everything is located nice and centrally at churchanswers.com. If they happen to put my name in, ThomRainer.com, it'll send them right there to churchanswers.com.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thom, it's been such a gift to have you on. Thank you so much.

Thom Rainer:

Thank you, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's so fun just having different guests, like Thom Rainer. You've heard Todd Wilson already. And we're going to continue the conversation. And one of the things I love about just having a variety of perspectives is that I think it really helps inform your thinking. We live in a world where everybody just lives in this echo chamber and it's like, "Okay, I just want to hear what I already believe." That doesn't grow you as a leader.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So I really love what Thom had to say. If you want more, including transcripts for free, head on over to the show notes, which you will find at [careynieuwhof.com/episode378](http://careynieuwhof.com/episode378). Or, of course, you can just Google Thom's name and my name and that'll get it to you there as well. We also do some quotes, some insights so that you use them for team study. All that is free for you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We're going to talk about What I'm Thinking About, and I want to drill down a little bit more on generational shifts. We talked about a lot in this interview. I want to focus on something I don't think enough leaders are paying attention to, which is as much as we are having medical and cultural shifts going on right now, there's a generational shift happening. I want to talk to you about that, but before we do that, let's do a little preview of the next episode.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We have a lot of guests coming up. I'm very excited. Andy Stanley's going to help us kick off 2020. We've got Jon Acuff. Patrick Lencioni, Rachel Cruze. Craig Groeschel just confirmed to come back. Mark Clark, William Vanderbloemen. Next time it's Lysa TerKeurst. One of my faves. New York Times bestselling author and simply a brilliant mind dealing with a really tough issue, which is how do you forgive something you can't forget? Here is an excerpt from the next episode.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Usually it's not just the pain of the present. Usually it's traveling somewhere inside our brain, where our trauma experiences are stored, which is in the amygdala of the brain. So it's like we can travel and locate those memories of unhealed, unresolved hurt that this present offense is tapping into that unresolved hurt from our past and the two get combined together and it's just an explosion, because it's not just the story that we're living, it's the story we're telling ourselves.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's next time. It's a really powerful personal interview with Lysa. Plus, she's super honest about what she's gone through. I think you're going to love it. If you're not a subscriber yet, why don't you make yourself a subscriber and we can do this every week. Does that sound good? Sometimes we do, well, two a week. Subscribers, you get that absolutely for free. And now it's time for What I'm Thinking About.

Carey Nieuwhof:

This segment is brought to you by Pro Media Fire. Get amazing website and custom graphics weekly with Pro Media Fire's new digital growth bundle by going to [promediafire.com/digitalgrowth](http://promediafire.com/digitalgrowth). And by Remodel Health, get in on the over \$2 million savings listeners of this podcast have enjoyed already by going to [remodelhealth.com/carey](http://remodelhealth.com/carey). Give your team the same or better benefits for less money in 2021. Sounds like a good deal to me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to talk to you a little bit about generational shifts that are happening. We do live in this really strange echo chamber world that concerns me, where basically, if you don't agree with me, I can't listen to you or have a relationship with you. That's problem number one. But here's where it becomes a leadership trap. It becomes a leadership trap when you hang out with people who kind of look like you think like you, same age and you go, "See, I don't believe the trends that are out there."

Carey Nieuwhof:

And there's some recent data that Barna released that I think is super helpful. One of the things they've unveiled is a giant gap between how Boomers are looking at the post-pandemic church and how all the other generations are looking at the post-pandemic church. So, 71% of Boomers say that they would

primarily want to gather physically for church. Whereas, only 47% of Gen X would say they do. So that's a minority. 42% of Millennials, 41% of Gen Z.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And what's happening, I think, is several. We can look at the pandemic situation we're dealing with. Whether you're in the restaurant industry or the small business industry or retail or you're a church leader, you can say, "Okay, what we have right now are pandemic-related problems." And that's partially true, but not entirely true. Because what's happening right now is there's a cultural shift, like crisis as an accelerator so the culture is shifting, but, and this is what I really want to drill down on, do you consider the generational shift?

Carey Nieuwhof:

When you look at this data or so much data, that's out there by Barna, you will notice, and you'll see this in Gallup surveys as well, a huge attitudinal shift between what older leaders are thinking and what younger leaders are thinking. So it can be easy to think like everybody's going to come back to church. Well, if that's what you think, because you're a Boomer or you're Gen X. I'm an older Gen X. I'm not first year of Gen X. You're like, "Yeah, they'll all come back." It's like, well, have you talked to a 25-year-old about that? For real?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because all the data is showing that's not 100% true. Yes, they will be back from time to time, but less often. When you look at religious attitudes, the rise of the nones, people who say they have no religion. It's a small percentage in the upper age brackets. It's huge in the lower age brackets. And I want you to think about this. As you plan for the future, don't just think cultural shift, think generational shift. Start paying attention to that, and I think you'll really start to grow.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, I really hope this helps. Thanks so much for tuning in. Back next time with a fresh episode. And I hope our time together today helps 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.