

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 398 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well, so much has changed. We are going to talk about the future of live events, burnout, and well, that's kind of relevant, isn't it? My guest is Christy Nockels, the recording artist, member of Watermark, solo artist, worship leader. And today's episode is brought to you by Pro Media Fire. You can get help with your social media account and receive 10% off for life by going to promediafire.com/Carey. And by Convoy of Hope, you can bring hope to the hurting and hungry by texting COH to 68828 or simply visit convoyofhope.org to donate.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, man, I'll tell you, the world is upside down. And I was messaging a friend the other day who is in a Master's program right now of Leadership Development. And she said to me, she said, "you know what, what if this is the next decade?" Not this, not vaccine rollout and viruses surging, but what if instability is the next decade? It's a really good question. And I knew it was going to be a few years, that would be my prediction, but I thought, yeah, we are moving into a fundamentally different future and that's a time to rethink everything. So if you're recording artists, what does the future look like? If you host live events like a lot of church leaders do or conference leaders do, what does the future look like? And I think that's a really great question. So I talked to Christy Nockels about that and a lot of other things today.

Carey Nieuwhof:

She talks about road life, how she dealt with life-altering burnout, how to work with your spouse, some of you are doing that and the future of live events and what the music industry might look like moving forward. I will be taking notes on this conversation. Christy is a worship leader and singer, songwriter. She hosts a podcast called The Glorious in the Mundane. She has released seven solo albums with six steps records and her independent label, which we'll talk about Keeper's Branch. She previously toured nationwide with her husband, Nathan, as the duo Watermark, she had seven number one radio singles, five acclaimed albums. And she also leads worship at Passion City Church and Passion conferences where you know her from. She lives in Franklin, Tennessee, and we have a wide ranging conversation. So I hope you really enjoy this one, man. We got a great lineup too. I'll tell you about that on the other side.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And of course, if you're interested in learning more, we have show notes. So you can find those at careynieuwhof.com/episode398. Well, we really want to thank our partners. We choose them very, very carefully around here. And if you haven't yet checked out Pro Media Fire, make sure you do that because social media is so important, more important than ever, and they can help you save time and reach more people with complete team working for you. It's a very simple process. The social media team meets with you to discover your brand, your story, and who you want to reach. Kind of like a consultant. They create a custom strategy and their plans include social media, branded storytelling, post creation to graphics and videos, writing post captions, posting and managing the accounts. So they can actually do that for you and digital marketing to expand your reach. So if you're curious and you

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Carey Nieuwhof:

And Convoy of Hope is a fantastic humanitarian organization that exists to bring hope to the hungry, through feeding initiatives, disaster response, women's empowerment and agricultural training, empowering other people to live with greater independence and freedom from poverty, hunger, and disease. So in 2020 alone, Convoy of Hope delivered 150 million meals to people impacted by COVID-19 all partnering with the local church. So thousands of churches across the U.S. partner with Convoy of Hope to be their outreach and compassion ministry. If you want to bring hope to the hungry, you can do it directly by texting COH to 68828 or visit convoyofhope.org to donate. And here's what happens, when you partner as a church or individual with convoy, they will stretch your single dollar into six because they have partnerships that you and I can't get with brands like Walmart, The Home Depot, Collagen, Nestle, Bass Pro Shops, and more so just text COH to 68828. Well, with all that said, I am so excited to bring you today's conversation with Christy Nockels. Well, Christy welcome. It's so good to have you on the podcast.

Christy Nockels:

Thank you so much for having me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you have toured for years doing something that most of my listeners would not have done. So you're an artist, you're a worship leader. You're now an author. I would love to know because a lot of us, whether it's business travel or for people like me who do a lot of public speaking, we got yanked off the road. And so we've had this massive reset over the last year. What are some of the highs and the lows, the challenges and the good parts of road life as you've experienced it over the last few years?

Christy Nockels:

Yeah. Well, I was thinking about that just now. And I think one of the big things that's been such a plus, I don't know, maybe some people would be like, "how in the world do you do that?" But my husband, Nathan and I have always been in it together. We met when we were 19 and we got married pretty young, 21. We're from Oklahoma. And back then people just got married really young.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, it happens once in a while.

Christy Nockels:

It does. But we've been doing this. We've just celebrated 25 years of marriage this summer and have been...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Congratulations.

Christy Nockels:

Thank you. Just have been traveling that whole time. Of course, it started out in the beginning we would just kind of go sing anywhere that we could, that would give us enough money to have a meal afterwards and buy some groceries that week. But now, of course through the years we've been a part of tours and we have three children now. So life on the road for us, thankfully we've had each other, of course we always get that question of how do you work with your spouse and not be in a fight every single day on the road. But I think having each other in it has been so important. So I think if I didn't have Nathan to travel with me, we've talked about it a lot, even because this'll be the first time I'm really traveling and speaking since I just wrote this book and that will be a new thing. If there are events to go speak at, just to have someone with you, I think is a huge thing.

Christy Nockels:

I think I'll always bring a friend with me or one of our daughters now they're getting to be teenagers. And that helps a ton. I think just having someone with you, even if that's for just accountability of when you might just get in a not great place, in a head space that you need to be kind of in a space where if you're going to be pouring out, you got to take care of your soul. And I think having someone else there with you, at least they're checking in on you, you're in conversation that helps a ton. And so Nathan and I work out a lot of stuff together and even just you can get into different venues and meeting different people. And that can kind of... we're both introverted and we all have different wirings I realized, but we really need each other, especially if you kind of run into an interesting situation where it's maybe not what you expected or the host is just maybe a little bit different than you thought.

Christy Nockels:

So that helps, just having those people to kind of bounce things off of. We have a blast when we get to travel with our band, because there's always this funny things that happen in the night. And you get in the car afterwards or the bath afterwards and you get to talk about what just happened. And it just helps I think, to have those people that I think for me, it's like, as a mom, we have three kids, like I said, and life on the road it's actually harder for me sometimes to come home. Because I've had catering laid out for me and my family. I get home and I'm just like, I forgot how to make food. I don't know what to do.

Christy Nockels:

So sometimes just those in between times of coming home, I actually have to work harder when I get back home to really, if I've left the kids to get back in a groove with their world to be present with them, not be on my phone, not be checked out as soon as I get home. So those are some of the things that I think of when I think about us being in a groove, which we haven't been in a while, like you said, but it causes you. It's good time to reflect on life on the road. What that's been like the last several years, the last 25 years for us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Well, you raised something really interesting and I'm working with my wife these days, so we've been married for 30 years and it's going way better than I thought it would because for years I said, we could never work together. Two strong personalities. I'd love, because for a lot of people, they do work with family or they think about working with a spouse. What have been some of the keys for you and Nathan to make that work over the last 25 years?

Christy Nockels:

One thing is that we always say, well, it's all we've ever known. So we don't really know any different, like you. It's like you've kind of just come into it. And I think that we've had to develop those practices over the years and even, I will say in the last five years, it wasn't just a given that, Oh, we've got this thing down. It was like in the last five years for whatever reason. And I think that could be, we're both in our 40s now and there's something that happens in your 40s where you kind of get comfortable in your own skin and you start really understanding more about yourself. And I think we both have come into our own more in the last five years it seems. And so he's gotten more comfortable with voicing to me his opinions and I've gotten more comfortable voicing mine.

Christy Nockels:

And so that was kind of a new, "Oh wow, we're going to have to figure this out." Figure out how to talk to each other, how to have conflict. And then just another thing that's kind of happened recently, that's been interesting is that since I wrote the book, that was an added facet to my life that I was not ready for. I wasn't ready for how hard that was number one to write. And it was a story that happened to me 15 years ago that I've lived really spiritually for the last 15 years. And so getting it out on paper was a thing, but then just meeting and having marketing meetings and all that stuff, it was this whole new team of people in my life. And we just experienced kind of burnout for me on a new level. And I had to wave a major flag with Nathan.

Christy Nockels:

And at first, we've done this for 25 years, like I said, and he was kind of, "you got this girl, suck it up." You can do this. But then it was like, no, I really think I'm falling apart. And so then it was really cool because Nathan stepped up to the plate and really kind of, as I voiced to him what I was needing, he saw literally this place where he could step in. And so he's actually taken on a new role in our Ncn Music LLC. And it's all perfectly aligned with his skillset. It was just that before he hadn't really seen his place to step in with. We have our own record label now we've been independent for the last five years and he's like, "Oh, I can be doing this, this and this."

Christy Nockels:

And so I think just knowing each other's role and where we can help each other, and that has been even more defined, like I said, in just the last few years, which has actually been really beautiful, but we've had to work hard and I will say we've had our biggest fights in the last five years probably of our whole marriage or at least it's the very beginning. You know what I mean?

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's interesting because everybody thinks it's a progression, that it just gets better as time goes on. But I remember our early 40s where some of our most turbulent years, and we're a little bit beyond that now. I definitely want to talk about your burnout. I want to talk about the business of music too, how that's changing, how the industry is changing and you've seen a lot of change, but I want to go back to before we leave this question of how you work with Nathan and how you work that out, what would you say, when things are going well, what were you doing? And then when things fell off the rails, relationally looking back on it to the best you can tell what happened when things were not going well.

Christy Nockels:

Yeah. I think that when things aren't going well, it's usually me being highly offendable.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's honest.

Christy Nockels:

Taking offense, man, it can just be the worst. And I think choosing the right time to talk about things. When it was going rough, it was like we were bringing up stuff when we should sort of put a pin in it and talk about it later. So I think timing is huge for having those conversations when you need to communicate about stuff. And I really think when it's going well, it is we're taking time and Nathan probably he's better at this. Or he just is really doing well at knowing when I need him to just listen and be my husband, you know what I mean?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christy Nockels:

And then knowing when he needs to put producer hat on, or I'm helping our manager out hat or he's kind of working with my manager to figure out weeds and details that I get really lost in. We're finding the things that really are taxing on me as a creative and it's not taxing on Nathan and that gives me life to be able to do that. So the times it's working well, he's in his lane, I'm in my lane. And just that communication, knowing and that's the biggest thing I would say working with your spouse is, you've got to also take those times. You got to know your things. For us, it's like watching a movie together. That just sort of our time, we love movies. We like to talk about it after, just having those little things that we can do. It's like, okay, it's movie night, we've got to shut all this off. And knowing when and when not to talk about work stuff.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's what I was going to ask you about, because in the last few years working, I work with my wife and also my son is involved in my company right now, which is an absolute joy. But, one of the things I've discovered is you need to have times where it's like, you don't work together. We're just to dinner as a family. That's worked really well for us. What's your experience with Nathan? Do you have to have, we're not allowed to talk about work today or tonight or a dinner or this weekend? Or how does that work? Because I could talk shop all day long. That's my vent. I'm just wired for leadership. So it's a discipline for me, but I've found it to be helpful, but everybody's different.

Christy Nockels:

Nathan and I are both, I think I said earlier introverted. And so there is something in that that is really helpful because I know when he's sitting in a certain chair in our house, we have a couple of them, we have a little love seat in our bedroom and there's a TV in there. If he's in that love seat, it's like, my brain is off and it's just best not to talk about things. I don't know that we haven't figured out as far as like, okay, this time we're not doing this, but it's more of picking up on each other's body language, I think for us. It's, if I have a cup of coffee and I'm holding my long hair dachshund in my white chair, that's usually the signal for "let's just be married right now."

Carey Nieuwhof:

What are some of the best practices? And I think you've already hinted at one when we first started talking that community is so important. Because on the road, I love it when my wife can come. But when I'm alone, I'm like, "Oh yeah, it does get lonely." I get that. And usually there's friends in the city or that kind of thing. So you're traveling with your family, but we hear so many stories about what happens behind the scenes on the road. What have been some important disciplines for you to make sure that your whole character doesn't implode or you don't blow up your family or all those things you hear about over and over again in the headlines from artists that just kind of dissolve personally or there's the onstage persona, but the private reality is totally different. What have you done to sort of guard against that or protect yourself and your family?

Christy Nockels:

Yeah, well, one of the things I'm so grateful for is, I kind of attribute this to how I was raised. I was raised in a pastor's home and that was not a perfect upbringing by any means. In fact, my dad had a pretty big failure when I was in high school, it was pretty public. He was a pastor of a big church in a small town. And they handled that as far as what God did in him personally as a leader. My parents would tell you now they've been married 50 years, that they wouldn't trade it. They wouldn't trade that hardship for what they have now. So I learned a lot, even watching my dad being a leader my whole life, and watching that kind of behind the scene thing. But also I think it trained me to look at what we do, which I know, not everyone... Well, I mean, you can do this, even if you're out in the business world, I think that you can view what you do as a ministry, as a believer.

Christy Nockels:

And I think that has been a major just safeguard umbrella over, I think what Nathan and I do together all these years, we don't look at it. Yes, it is a career, but we look at it more like our tent making and that it is a ministry. And so we're ministry minded and even the manager that I chose. He's been with us almost 12 years now. He started out as a road manager and now he helps manage our whole thing. And he's very ministry minded. He gets it and honestly he works out in a lot of different, I mean, he's done a tour for Oprah. He's worked with the NFL and he's out in the world enough. And I think when it comes to Christian music, I think he almost is like, "I need for the people I'm working for, for this to behind the scenes, be the real thing."

Christy Nockels:

Just as far as if you're going to carry the name of Jesus to people, really being ministry minded and keeping things the same as they are, backstage as they are on the stage, having our family on the road, like I said, it's just been a safeguard in general. Our son Noah is actually in our band.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, that's awesome.

Christy Nockels:

So he flies with us now, he travels in the rental cars with us now. He's with us every step of the way. And the girls do come out with us as well. But I think that overall just viewing what we do as ministry, rather than a business, we do know it's a business and we have those ways that we do need to go, "okay, we need to be smart here with money. We need to be smart here with business decisions." But I think overall looking and viewing and having the perspective of we're pouring out, we're ministering. And so if

we're pouring out, and this is really what my whole book is about is I got to a place where singing for God became more important or just what I was doing day to day, rather than living for God.

Christy Nockels:

And I think as leaders we get in performance mode, we are so used to having to pour out all the time and use the gifts that God gave us. He's wired us so perfectly. Each one of us have an intricate wiring from God, but that can quickly get just into a pace that can become unbelievable. And we were there and I was on the brink of burnout. That's kind of where the book starts.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. That's what I want to talk to you about. So tell us about the name of your book and then pick up, because you say you got to the place where I think these are your words, you were bone tired, and you're talking to a lot of leaders in ministry, but also in business who are bone tired. And it's something just because of the headlines. And I had burnt out 15 years ago, so I'm hypersensitive to that. I'd love to know what happened and how did you get there?

Christy Nockels:

This was when we just had two children, they were little and I was determined that I was going to keep going. And God can use anything. It's not always motherhood, obviously. But he used motherhood for me as that kind of moment to hit a wall and realize that I was trying to do it all and really keep the calendar full and keep us going. We had booking agent, a manager, a record label, a money manager. So I had all these people looking in and when you get in that pace, you can kind of get in that posture of looking out for number one because you're just like, all everyone's asking you for things. What do you want to do about this? What do you want to. So then it can become really us-focused, where you're just constantly like, okay, what do I need to do for this? What do I need to do for this?

Christy Nockels:

And as a believer, I didn't even realize that, like I said that doing things for God or even just, if you're business leader, you're just taking care of your family and using your gifts, doing what you think you're supposed to be doing. All those things have become more important to me or just more of a daily practice than really living from God and trusting him. And I think really, so this book is called, *The Life You Long For: Learning to Live from a Heart of Rest*, but this isn't a lounge around rest. We need a Sabbath, we do need a weekly Sabbath. And that's huge for burnout. You do need to take a day where you're able to rest.

Christy Nockels:

But this is really, this kind of rest is a deep soul rest. And it really comes from learning to trust God in a new way, really trust Him. And I realized in, I call it my farm table epiphany that I wasn't truly trusting God with my life, with my career, with the trajectory of my career. I was hustling to put things in place, but what God showed me was that hustling was actually holding me back from the life that I was truly longing for. And what I've found is that God provides us a rest that actually propels us. It's a rest that has us contending for things that we might not have ever contended for before. For me, the very first thing God did was, "you need to contend for your family. You need to come home for a few years."

Christy Nockels:

And for me, He literally asked me to lay down my career and I didn't know that He would give it back to me. That's a part of, I think Him having me live this for 15 years is I've gotten to see Him give it all back and in a way that I never thought He would. And so if you're even on the brink of having to maybe lay something down, I just encourage anyone listening or watching that God is so faithful. When you know that you know, you're supposed to lay something down. I've lived this long enough to see Him give it back and give it back 100 fold.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can you describe the hustle? When you look back on your old self, what were some of the differences, now from this new place, you kind of look back and go, "hmm." But that felt very normal to you. And I think there's a lot of leaders who can relate to the hustle. We'll even talk about it. What's your side hustle or hustle hard or that kind of thing. So what did your hustle look like?

Christy Nockels:

Well, in the book I kind of call it, I think we can all develop a commodity mentality even as church leaders, even being on staff at a church, you can begin to feel like a commodity. And I believe that we have an enemy of our soul and I think that he's going to do whatever he can to come after our identity. And so he loves for us to get our identity wrapped up in of course what we're doing, how we're performing, how well we're performing. And so for me, like I said, it was like, "keep the calendar full Christy, keep the dates coming in, say yes," because I think this is a big one. You get that opportunity and immediately we can get some opportunities that come across that immediately you feel in your soul, I'm tired already. And I haven't even done this.

Christy Nockels:

But you're like, "but if I do it, it's probably going to connect to that. And this person's connected to that person. And so it's going to be this opportunity that would give me probably that opportunity." And I think that was what the hustle was for me. It wasn't necessarily that I was trying to be a big shot. It wasn't that at all. It was literally just, well, it would probably be good if I said yes to that because then it would bring this in and then it would cause this to probably happen. And if I don't build that bridge, so really what I was doing was I was leaving no margin in my life, even just physically, I was filling the calendar, but also I wasn't saying no to those things that immediately already made me tired. The scripture say that there's a voice behind us that says, "this is the way walk in it." And we do have the Holy Spirit in us. And I think there's also those opportunities that come along and you probably will know right away.

Christy Nockels:

Some of them when I say it, but just they immediately make, it's life-giving and it might not be on paper the thing that makes the most sense, but it's the thing immediately that you're kind of like, "That. I want to do that. That gives me life already and I haven't even done it." And I've learned to listen to... that's the Holy Spirit in us, I believe. It's him saying, "this is the way you're supposed to walk in." And it's always going to be life-giving. Ephesians 2:10 says that we're his workmanship in that he's already created good works for us to walk in that he's prepared in advance. And I think that part of really learning to rest in your soul, I believe that we make room or at least we make room to enjoy and for those things to give us life, because then we don't have the 10 other things we said, "yes" to out of obligation because we feel like a commodity. If that make sense.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It makes a lot of sense. Can you unpack a little bit more for us? What was compelling you to say "yes," because I think you've identified a problem a lot of people have, and I love the way you phrased it. I should do this, but I'm already tired. You just know it's going to make you tired. I've said "yes" to those events, absolutely. It's, I should say yes to this. What's underneath that? From where you sit right now, looking back on that, why do you think you were so biased towards saying "yes?"

Christy Nockels:

It wasn't money. I can truly say that. I know that about myself and this is probably why I got in such a predicament. It wasn't something where I was just, again, even I want to be a big shot. I want to be on top. I think for me it was more a need that was there. And someone asking me to come and I should use the gifts God's given me. I should go do that. This is what God's called me to do. I should say "yes" to that because we've got a record label, they're counting on us, they've paid all this money for us to do this album and they're counting on us to get the word out about this album. And so it was kind of just a lot of different things maybe, but I think overall, if I had to nail it down, it would just be kind of, well, God gave me the gift of singing, I should probably use it, I should probably.

Christy Nockels:

Also, maybe it was people pleasing too. I mean, I think I definitely have that in me to not want people to be disappointed in me. If someone's taken a risk on me, I'm going to kind of try to prove myself and yes, I'm going to do what I said I'm going to do. And to the point of "yes"ing myself into exhaustion, and at that time it was my kids hanging in the wings, the balance of just, "am I going to leave them behind?" And at that point, looking back, if God hadn't got a hold of me, I think I would have had so many regrets looking back now. And I'm so grateful He got ahold of me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What do you think would've happened had you kept going at that pace?

Christy Nockels:

I don't know that we would have had a third child. I don't know. When I had that space, the desire came for a third and at that point in our lives, we were just like, we've got two, we're going strong. Let's keep going. I don't know how that works. I believe she was from God, our third, but I don't know if the desire would have welled up in me like it did because there was space, there was margin for me to breathe again. And then it was like, someone's missing in our family, it was even a spot. It was just the room to breathe and go, "what do we want? What do we want as a family? What do we want our lives to be about?" And I think just that time for me was God really helping me undo my identity from what I was doing. I think that was probably to answer that last question too. A big part of it was just that my... I'm like this is who I am, this is who I am.

Christy Nockels:

And it was wrapped up in me doing things for God, rather than learning to really just be seen by Him in the secret and for that to be enough. And Nathan, at that time we built out our basement and he started working for other artists and producing other worship leaders and records that you've probably listened to. And those people were coming to our basement and I was hearing the music come up through the vents of our home. And I'm just wondering, I'm up there, got the toddlers and I'm doing the thing and

I'm wondering, "am I ever gonna do that again?" And I didn't know if I would. It was just a lot of me going, who am I? And it was that time, it was space for me to take inventory and be seen in the secret place and be loved by God, regardless of what I do. And that was really hard for me. And it took... I will say it's still a process.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I don't mean this to be a trivial question. It's probably going to sound like it, but in all sincerity, how did you know you were burned out?

Christy Nockels:

I mean, I was physically tired. But also just I had no creativity in my home. Even just songwriting became laborious. The things that I loved became a chore almost. And usually as an artist I could be pretty creative in the kitchen, or I was at least learning that, but it was just, food was rotting in our fridge between tour dates and you know what I mean? And keeping up the house was laborious, even though we had probably a person helping us clean a couple of times a month, but I was doing all the things and I think that's why God used motherhood really to sort of thwart my plan of doing it all to help me realize that I couldn't do it all. And that was the beginning for me of, it was really burnout can actually be a massive, invitation.

Christy Nockels:

It is an invitation, it is an invitation for God to come and do something really amazing. It's actually beginning. Burnout, I think is the beginning because it's like, if you can just own it and then kind of build from the bottom up, it can be one of the best things that could ever happen to you. So I think I was physically tired, but I think I was mentally tired. And in fact, the moment that, I call it my farm table epiphany, like I said earlier, I was actually upstairs though. I was cleaning a toilet and it's just proof that God can meet us in the most mundane tasks.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So what happened?

Christy Nockels:

I was cleaning a toilet and I just had this contentment come over me of just desiring to be home, desiring to clean my home, which I hadn't done in a really long time, desiring to just take care of my kids. And I hadn't had that come over me before. Before it was music and keep making records and tour and get on whatever tours we could get and keep going. Again, not because I was trying to take over the world, but it was just kind of like, this is who I am. This is what I do. But it was for the first time I believe that God leads us by our desires. It's one of the ways He leads. And so I think that's why in that moment, I was like, "what is this? What is this feeling?" I literally was like, I want to come home. I want to get off the road. I want to quit. That's another big burnout moment is when you want to quit everything.

Christy Nockels:

But I do think I'm back now, it was a call physically to come home, but it was a spiritual call as well to come back and live from the center. And I call it living from the bullseye in the book. And what that looks like. And when you live from the bullseye and God just showed it to me that morning. I went downstairs after that contentment moment, I talk about in the bathroom. And I literally did that thing

where I opened my Bible just to see where it would land. That's how desperate I was, I was just like, "okay, God, I need to hear it for me right now." And I opened it. It was Psalm 37. And that's actually the very passage of how I became a Christian as a seven year old.

Christy Nockels:

Psalm 37 was written on a plaque in our house. We each had one that had our name on it. There were these 80s looking wall plaques said, "Christy follower of Christ, Psalm 37:5 commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass." And I didn't know that was paraphrased at that time. And I memorized it as a kid. And actually one night when my dad was preaching Sunday night, I was sitting next to my mom, seven years old. I was handwriting that verse because it was attached to my name. So I thought, this is my verse. And it turns out it was my verse, and I memorized it, wrote it down from my mom. She turned that piece of paper over, I still have it. And she said, yes, if Christie gives her heart to Jesus, He will show her the way to go.

Christy Nockels:

And that was the night I was convicted of my sin. I knew I needed a savior. I went up to my dad but here he was bringing this gospel story back to me really at my farm table that morning after I cleaned the toilet. And in fact, my podcast is called The Glorious in the Mundane, because in that season, it was God meeting me in the mundane before it had been like, Oh, God meets me in these arenas when I'm out on this platform. And there's 30,000 people, but then it was, Oh, God's meeting me at my farm table. He's meeting me while I'm doing the dishes and changing diapers. And so that was the shift in that season.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You have a lot of leaders who end up on a stage, maybe not in front of 30,000, there'll be a few, but some in front of 3000 or 13,000 or 300 or 30. But you're up there. And maybe a lot of your stories so far is resonating, and they're feeling a little bit empty or a little bit disingenuous, whether they're a worship leader or in my case, if you did my job, you got to deliver a new sermon every week or a new public talk these days on a regular basis, but you're feeling empty. Any thoughts on what the... I think there's an inevitability. Did you feel even when you were in good shape that every night you wanted to do it, or how did you get yourself through that? And then what happened when it felt there was maybe a cognitive dissonance or did you get to that stage where you felt you were going through the motions? Can you just talk about that dynamic a little bit? Because I think it's a tension most of us who have stood behind a microphone face from time to time.

Christy Nockels:

It's crazy because some of the moments, I talked about this yesterday with someone, I remember a moment, we was the first time, we were a part of Passion conferences for 20 years. And I remember the first year we went to the Georgia Dome and I think there were 75,000 students there and walking out on that stage, literally you have to have to let a moment like that not swallow you whole. So you're trying to figure out and before that I'd watched other bands leading and they look like ants. I literally couldn't even pick out my husband playing in Matt Redman's band but I walked out on that stage. I'll never forget. I closed my eyes pretty tight and so funny that I literally pictured myself as a little girl. It was like I was holding a mic as a seven year old girl. And it was a foam colored, the red foam mic that I used to sing on my dad's church in the 80s.

Christy Nockels:

But I almost laughed and I had my big 80s glasses on and my Mary Lou Retton haircut and I just almost laughed like, okay, why seven year old me right now? And in that moment, it was so sweet because I felt once I thought about it, even later, even more, it was like, God, again, bringing me back to that identity piece of, "who am I?" And I loved that He brought me back to seven year old me because that was seven year old Christy that when I first met him and it was just this message from the Lord of, this is who you were when I've found you and this what you need in order to lead these people right now. And so I say all that to say, and that was a real experience that actually happened to me.

Christy Nockels:

And I've told a lot of worship leaders about that because I do feel there is an order to even just living as humans, but especially as leaders of living from God and anytime in scripture, actually, when it says we are from God, 1 John 4, the whole, it says we're from God several times. And it's like, "what does that really mean?" And I found it's this little preposition it's ek but it packs a punch. And in the Greek, it actually means out, from and to, and so it's outcome oriented, meaning we're out from the source and to where we're headed, almost like an arrow. And that was just such a huge discovery for me because God was teaching me in that season especially, and I will say it's 15 years in the making.

Christy Nockels:

None of us get this fully, this side of eternity. So it's something that God's always, owning our belovedness it's owning who and most importantly whose we are. So it's this identity peace. And I feel like as leaders, we often will go out and we'll keep leading from our skillset, but there's a shelf life to that. And I think that's where it can get really confusing, especially for people in the ministry, especially for pastors or business leaders who are believers that are out wanting to be in the world and be a light in that space. But I think we get discouraged when it's just, we try from our own capacity. But our own capacity dries up. And then you're just like, well, I don't know how to do this then. And I think that we've seen leaders just leave, just check out. Like, I can't do this anymore. I can't do the faith anymore. I don't get what God's wanting me to do here.

Christy Nockels:

But I think it is that continual, whatever we need to do. And for all of us, it's probably going to look different, the practical, and for me it's been just, what do I need to do each day? So it's really is before my feet even hit the floor, I was like, what do I need to do today to live from God out from Him and to, so that I'm always constantly waiting on Him. I think it's Isaiah 40, is it that, they that wait upon the Lord, He shall renew their strength, that word renewed is He'll exchange it. He'll exchange, our weak strength for his amazing capacity. His never-ending capacity. His strength that says we'll pass through. It's this exchange. And so it's like they that wait. And so anytime I lead, I try to go out in that head space and that heart space of "I wait for you God here". And even if you're getting ready to go into a business meeting, it's like, "God, I can't do this for my own capacity. I need you."

Christy Nockels:

And I think that God is attracted to weakness, but we haven't flipped around. We think we're supposed to be these strong people, be strong in the Lord, but that's live out from Him and then to whoever you're called to go to today. And so it really is living from His strength, His capacity. There's three sections of the book and the end, I end on capacity. But sometimes, we think the capacity of the beloved we have in our Americanized brains, it's what we crank out, capacity is what we supply because we have that commodity mentality a lot of the time. But I think that God really showed me the capacity of the

beloved is actually what we can contain and hold and receive. We've got to receive it first before we can give it, we are supposed to give it, but it's then from His capacity and not our own.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's interesting. I would say my life kind of gets broken into two halves, pre burnout, post burnout. So that was about 15 years ago for me. And I definitely sense a difference you're talking about, can you talk about, was there a period where you stopped your career where you just kind of shut down? I think that's a great fear for a lot of leaders. I know in my burnout I was afraid of was all going to end in unravel and I was able to keep my job, which was great. But then something brand new got birthed out of it. But I know that's a terrifying thought for a lot of leaders, particularly if your identity is fused into your work. So can you walk us through what that was like, what happened and then how you rebuilt it?

Christy Nockels:

Yes, I did lay it down. I did feel like that was the call in the moment. That was the invitation. And so Nathan, like I said, took on a different way of providing for us, before we were both out there doing the thing and hustling, which was great. We loved it. We worked with great people. It was scary. I was terrified, honestly. And honestly I had to deal with some anger at first.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What were you angry at?

Christy Nockels:

Probably God. But I would take it out probably on the kids. I wasn't screaming or hitting, obviously it wasn't anything physical. It was just more of, probably, "I don't know what to do with you right now. You're getting in the way of what I really want to be doing." And so I talk about in the book, how often that would come out, the anger would come out and sort of just rushing through bedtime routine, rushing through something that was supposed to be life-giving. And that was, real life was right under my nose. The recipe for what I was longing for was right there.

Christy Nockels:

And so it took the lane down and then I will say that in the beginning, there was just, the gears were shifting. Because it was like, you're going all the way down. And it was not pretty at first. And I'm pretty honest in the book at the end, I was like, yikes. I was probably too honest. My parents read it and they were like, wow, we didn't really know all that was going on, but I think we've got to be transparent. We've got to be honest about this because it's not talked about enough.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What surprised you about where you found yourself or the emotions you were processing? What's like, "Oh, I can't believe this is me?"

Christy Nockels:

Yeah. Because I wanted to be a mom more than anything. And then it was, these kids were here and they were the reason that I laid everything down. And so it was like, then it was sort of this tension of I love you, but I don't know what to do with you now. And music's coming up from the basement. Nathan's producing these records in our home. People are coming and riding and I'll never forget a lady

came over and he was doing a demo for her and she asked if I would sing the vocal. And I remember just being like, Oh my gosh, I get to sing because it was just me up there washing sippy cups most of the days and watching Blue's Clues and the whole time the Lord's just waiting on me to have this other epiphany that, "Oh, I actually like these kids." It just took a minute for me to slow down and see them. I talk about that in the book, how I had to learn to stop looking at me.

Christy Nockels:

And when God did that work in me, it was like all of a sudden I could see others for the first time. And it started with my kids. And I think him wanting me to see my kids was this beautiful thing of him going, "I want you to be my kid again, watch how I want you to take care of these people I've given you these kids, because I want you to learn how to just be my kid again." Because I was His messenger or His little soldier. And it's like, no, just learn to be my kid again. And this lady that came over, wanted me to do that vocal. I ended up going to coffee with her because I asked her while I was down there. I was like, "what do you do? Tell me about yourself." And she's like, "well, I have nine kids. I homeschool them all. And I'm a songwriter." And I was like, okay, can we go to coffee?

Christy Nockels:

And I remember just sitting at the coffee shop crying with her, just saying, "how do I do this? How do I mother, but still keep my soul alive as a creative." And she said, and this is where I credit her. This is what she said to me. She said, "you have to invite the glorious into the mundane." And I just sat with tears streaming. It wasn't what I wanted to hear because I wanted the checklist, do these things and then you'll be able to get to a place where you're able to function again. But it was so true. She was right of just, I could invite God into the spaces of the unseen, the kitchen sink, the sprinkler with the kids running through it. And that's where the work, that's where it shifted for me. And that's why I named my podcast that, because I know that that's where tons of moms are. They've had laid down a career possibly but it just took me a minute to see the work that was in front of me of getting to be a mom. And how beautiful that work is.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'd love to know as we kind of wrap up where you see the future of your industry going, because there's a lot of people who do live events, listening, they're definitely some musicians, but you got a lot of pastors, you got business leaders who host conferences and that kind of thing. As you look forward into the future, you guys have had streaming, CDs disappeared during your career and you went to streaming. So can we talk about some of those pivots and the pivots that you see coming in the future.

Christy Nockels:

The craziest thing here in Nashville is that I think that's the one thing is that nobody really knows what's coming. That's part of the fear. It's just that there's been so many changes already. Like you said, I mean, just everything going to streaming, already musicians are barely getting by. They're barely making it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So for those of us who are not musicians can let us know and you don't have to give us exact financial numbers, but are you getting a 10th of what you would get under CD sales? 50%? Because everyone's dealing with a disruptive model right now. But look at a decade ago when it shifted from CDs to streaming, what kind of impact did that have on musicians, artists?

Christy Nockels:

Yeah. I don't even know that it's a 10th. I don't even know the exact numbers. I just do know that it takes thousands and thousands of streams. I forget how many to equal one \$10 sale. So one song would have to be streamed, I forget how many times, but it's thousands of times to equal one \$10 sale.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And if someone has bought your CD single, or your iTunes download single, you would get a meaningful percentage of that. And now you're getting, not even dimes on the dollars pennies on the dollar?

Christy Nockels:

Yeah. So then with platforms like Spotify, then of course there's this trade-off because you're reaching more people, even though you're not getting the sale, the reach is wider. So there's this trade off. So a lot of artists, only the Taylor Swifts of the world can say, "I'm withholding from Spotify this many days" or whatever, but most of us, it's just like you got to choose whether or not you're going to get in the flow or not. Because the reality is, is that more people are going to hear your music through Spotify than they would be if you're withholding. And so it's a trade off. And so then you're thinking, okay, well, if we're in this really for our music to be a guest to people and of course, if you're a believer that the gospel would go out into the world, then you're like, okay, we would want more people to be reached.

Christy Nockels:

Well, then the emphasis got put on touring. And so touring became this massive thing where that's where then except for the past, I would say six years bands and musicians have been putting all their weight into touring. So now, you can imagine, boom. So I mean, in this town, it is really, really devastating. There are men that we've known for 20 years that have been in lighting or sound and production. And they've got a day job, they work, they're doing computers and working just a nine to five because it's just never happened. And so it's really hard to tell for all of us, what does this look like moving forward? And even a lot of us are doing live streams, especially this Christmas.

Christy Nockels:

And that's a new space, even in and of itself. It's the platforms in which you do that on and what are the difference, the platform we're using as opposed to what Chris Tomlin's using. There's different advantages to those and mine that we're doing, you can host it on your actual website. Whereas his is the sites you go to and how do you sell merch off of there? I mean, it's just this whole other world. And one of Nathan's big things, my husband is like, you've got to keep evolving and changing and moving and growing and keeping up on, you just got to stay creative and stay in it. Otherwise, you're just going to get left behind. And we are still thankfully we've got enough finesse of that creative spark of just wanting to go, we still love this so much. We still want to do it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, Christy, I think you've already said it, nobody knows what the future holds. I'm not asking you to be a prophet or a prognosticator, but I'm curious if you look ahead, the vaccines are being rolled out as this episode airs, we can almost see the end of COVID at some point in the future, not too far off, hopefully. Do you think touring is going to just pick back up where it was? Do you think it will be different? Any thoughts on where the industry is heading, live events?

Christy Nockels:

Goodness. It's so hard to know, but I would hope that it would cause us to have a new appreciation for the arts and for getting together. I would hope that we all have a sense, myself included of just... and we have done a couple of events recently and like I said, we did one church event the other night or the other morning. And there was just a new sense of gratitude for getting to do what we do. And it had just become, again, just like old hat. It's just like, yeah, of course we do this. We're touring and last Christmas we were on a bus with all five of us, our family, our band. And this year the kids were just so sad about not getting to do that, but I would hope that there's a new gratitude, but then I wonder too, if there's just going to be, it'll be interesting as far as just venues and stuff, but we've heard the bigger venues, there's a waiting list of 20 to 25 people to even just play at the venue.

Carey Nieuwhof:

To book it.

Christy Nockels:

To book the venue. So there's that, so one thing that we've really actually been grateful for is that the last five years, so we moved from Atlanta in 2015, our last Passion conference was 2017. Just felt the need to let the younger people take it. It was time. We'd been there for 20 years and we've really been doing... one of the chapters in the book is actually called The Power of Small. And there's just been sort of, I think, just starting fresh with a new label. We have our own record label. We're independent. I started a podcast, I wrote this book, but it's just been almost a new start but it's been small and we've just had to be okay with that. In fact, I'm sitting here at my dad's office, we've been leading at his little church. It's 50 people strong.

Christy Nockels:

And my mom's had some health challenges this fall and we just decided we were at a huge mega church which we love, we're still a part of that community group, but we've started going here on Sundays and I think there's something that God wants to do with the small, and I think there's something to it and we'll see, but don't be afraid of small right now. I think that when we went to Israel, right before things shut down, we got to go and I came away with the biggest thing, I came away with how tiny it is. And so it's like Jesus's words ring in my mind. And then I see where He was standing when He spoke those things. Like the room where they lowered the man, the paraplegic, where they lowered him, where Jesus was teaching. I mean, that would fit on the area rug in my living room.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Christy Nockels:

He just changed my perspective on even the great commission. Just like He did his ministry in a 22 mile radius in three years. It was small. And I think there's something too, that for us as leaders to not be afraid of what's coming, not be afraid of the small and not be afraid of things being stripped back, going back to the basics of things. I hear a hunger in people around me and in leaders to get back to the center and back to what matters, back to the basics on a lot of things. So I'm hoping that there's even a simplicity moving forward that's really beautiful instead of, I think we're getting to the point, maybe we're running out of things to do so maybe it's like, the way forward is the way back.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. That's a good place to wrap things up Christy, so helpful. Your book again, where people can find you, obviously it's available everywhere books are sold. But tell us about it and where they can find you these days in the simple.

Christy Nockels:

Christynockels.com. That's N-O-C-K-E-L-S, it's kind of a funny last name, but Christynockels.com. You can find all about the book. You can order it from there even. And of course it's preorderable right now on wherever you buy books and on Instagram, I'm just @Christy Nockels, I would love to connect.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Awesome. Christie, thank you so much.

Christy Nockels:

Thank you, Carey. I appreciate it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's going to be really interesting to see what happens in the future. And I'm so glad we got to talk about burnout again. I do enjoy having that conversation because I burned out without a pandemic and before technology really took off and I don't want to do it again, and I don't want you to do it again. I was talking to Rick Warren recently and he'll be on the show coming up in a little while. And he just said 100% of pastors are tired. I think that's true. 100% of leaders are tired. Well, we got show notes for you at Careynieuwhof.com/episode398. If you would like a little bit more, that includes transcripts and also some key quotes. If you want to share on social, please do we love it when you do that. And we try to re-share as much as possible. Also, if you haven't yet subscribed do so. My good friend, Mark Clark is back and we talk about the church during COVID, how to grow a church, why he switched his communication style, how to speak to an online audience, and basically how online services are different than in-person services. Plus he talks about his latest book. Here's an excerpt.

Mark Clark:

That audience is extremely important. It's not some kind of, I focus on the real people and then these online audience can kind of get the video that I did for the real people. It's like, no, no, this is a whole, this is thousands of people. So they need a focus on them. You need to talk directly to them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I promise you it's never boring with Mark. You're going to enjoy that. We've also got Harvard's John Kotter on change, Cal Newport, Chris Heaslip. We have John Maxwell, John Acuff, Adam Grant, Annie F. Downs, Simon Sinek, and so much more coming up. Hey, if you would like me to interview someone, send me a note, just email me at Carey@careynieuwhof.com, always looking for great leaders or people you may want to hear from, I'm very excited to do that for you. Oh, by the way, Steve Cuss is coming back too, we're going to talk more about managing leadership anxiety. And now I'm going to talk about What I'm Thinking About and what I'm thinking about is trends for the future. We touched on it a little bit in the interview in the conversation, but I really want to dive down a little bit more.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And this segment is brought to you by our friends at Convoy of Hope. You can bring hope to the hurting and hungry by texting COH to 68828 or visit convoyofhope.org to donate and buy Pro Media Fire, if you really want to up your social media game and receive 10% off for life, go to promediafire.com/Carey. So a lot is changing and I shared a little bit last episode about some trends that I'm watching for the future. So I want to move into a few more and you can find a version of this over at Careynieuwhof.com. These are the Eight Disruptive Church Trends for 2021, but I want to talk about content. I don't think in the future content alone is going to cut it. You need something more. And I think particularly for church leaders, community and connection will.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So when everybody pivoted to online, everyone was like, "look at my views, look at my consumption. Look at my content. I got to have better content." And yes, you need good content but content alone isn't going to do it. And what happened when a lot of people started tuning out in mid 2020 pastors said, "well, that's because people are screened out." No, just check out TikTok or Instagram or Clubhouse. People are not screened out. They're not tired of their phones. What they're doing is they're looking for something that will give them more. So what can you do as a church? Well, I think nobody should be able to out-local or out-community the local church. So the goal of digital content isn't just consumption; it needs to be connection and community. So the goal of putting a message out there, the goal of putting your content out there is to drive people to community.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I started one a year ago for leaders called Leaders Circle. And what we're doing right now is we're splitting that into two tribes. A tribe that access is content only is kind of done for you staff development. I do a lot of team training inside Leaders Circle, but then we have a premium strain where I'm on a Slack channel with leaders. We do a couple of calls a month, video calls where we just check in and do a live Q and A. See, it's not just like, "okay, here I am talking to you in your car." But if you head over to leaderscircle.live, you'll discover that there's a community building as well. And that's what you want to do at your church. That's what you want to do. I walked into a restaurant recently and we've gotten to know these guys. They launched in February of 2020, they're my favorite local restaurant.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I walked in and I'm not just buying food, but I'm talking to the owners, I'm talking to Simon and Darcy and we've gotten to know them and we have a relationship with them. And I called them last minute. And I said, "Hey man, I know it's super late, but can we grab takeout for tonight?" And they're like, yep, come on in. That's what you're looking for in a world like this. And if you don't think that can happen. I remember talking about Herman Miller, the iconic designer, furniture maker and a, I just put something on social and someone from Herman Miller got back and just said, "thank you." It's like, see that's connection, not just consumption. Another trend generational differences will become clearer than ever. According to one survey done by The Barna Group, 71% of boomers prefer physical worship as opposed to digital or hybrid church. Check out Gen Z only 41% preferred exclusively physical worship moving forward. That's a 30 point gap. That's a big gap.

Carey Nieuwhof:

When you look at political differences, they're generational. It almost feels a little bit like the 60s are coming back in terms of a generation gap. So this doesn't change core theology. But what it does mean is that a lot of leaders have to rethink their tone and approach. Leaders who understand the emerging

culture and the emerging next generation, its language and values will have the best chance of reaching it. So Generation Z is a force now, they're not kids. They're not teenagers. They're moving into the marketplace and really pay attention to generational differences. Another trend I'm watching is that the political and ideological churches will lose influence with the unchurched. So 2020 was a year unlike any other. But when you see, and I'm not saying you can't have views on government or that kind of thing, but so many Christians have anchored their identity in whatever parties in The White House, in Washington or the state Capitol. And that's a mistake. That's just a mistake.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I think younger generations are sick of it. Unchurched people aren't looking for an echo of the culture. They're seeking an alternative to it. And the future church, I think will consist of Christians who look, live and sound much more like Jesus than the political candidate of their choice. And then finally, this is good news, because this is very disconcerting. These trends are disruptive, but spiritual entrepreneurs are going to thrive. If you're an entrepreneur, whether that's in the business realm or in the church realm. Man, I think this is a great opportunity. With every obstacle comes an opportunity. Spiritual entrepreneurs are the kind of leaders who will find tomorrow's solutions when most people can only see today's problem. And as often in culture, they get criticized early on. You're like, "well, I don't like that way of doing church. I don't like that way of thinking about things. I like things the way they were," et cetera.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But it's often in culture that the leaders you criticize today will be the leaders who coach you tomorrow. So if you're a spiritual entrepreneur, I'll tell you, there are good times ahead for you. So your ideas might get dismissed like Airbnb and Uber, but one day they won't be and suddenly everybody will go, "why didn't I think of that?" So be entrepreneurial, try some different things this year, try some different approaches and see where that lands you. I hope this help, man, it is fun doing this. Thank you so much for listening. And I hope our time together today helped you lead like never before.

Announcer:

You've been listening to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. Join us next time for more insights on leadership, change and personal growth to help you lead like never before.