

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. Welcome to episode 413 of the podcast. It's Carey here and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. I am so excited to have Francis Chan back on the podcast. I know a lot of you know him and what we go all over the place today and really talk about unity, also talk about racial unity and the whole anti-Asian backlash that people have been experiencing in America, something I'm deeply concerned about. And we talk about the future of the church and a whole lot more. I know a lot of you know and love Francis. This episode is brought to you by Pro Media Fire. You can book your free digital strategy session today at [promediafire.com/churchgrowth](http://promediafire.com/churchgrowth). And by Generis, you can schedule your free Generosity Pulse Report today, an exclusive offer for listeners of this podcast, by going to [generis.com/carey](http://generis.com/carey), that's G-E-N-E-R-I-S.com/carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, let's talk about division, let's talk about stopping Asian hate and why influence in the church can't come from self-promotion and so many other things with Francis Chan today. A lot of you know Francis. He's the best-selling author of Letters to the Church, Crazy Love, Forgetting God, Erasing Hell. He and his wife Lisa are coauthors of You and Me Forever: Marriage in the Light of Eternity. We catch up with them this time as he has come back from Hong Kong and is back in the US and talk about, well, all things leadership in life with Francis as usual.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, thank you so much for those of you who are leaving ratings and reviews. We are at over, I think, 1,400 on the US iTunes Store right now. Tyler Dickerhof, thank you so much for the feedback on the convo with Adam Grant, five stars. You said, "Such a wonderful interview and conversation with Adam. Conversation and ideas were very enlightening." Man, I've heard so much about Adam Grant's interview. Adam, again, thank you for being so open and so available to our audience. Another review, this one left by Sheer Biv, "Carey's conversations are leadership goal. Doesn't matter who Carey speaks with." He says, "There are always lessons I can clearly identify and apply to teams. Sometimes the lessons are challenging and provocative, sometimes they're affirming, but they're always timely."

Carey Nieuwhof:

So glad to hear that. Hey, if you haven't left a rating and review, could you do that? And if this episode means something to you, I would love you to be able to share it. We have show notes for you too for free, including transcripts over at [careynieuwhof.com/episode413](http://careynieuwhof.com/episode413). So are you getting ready to hire a creative or digital staff member at your church? You've got a couple of options that you can hire yourself. You know how complicated that is, or you can go and get Pro Media Fire to get an entire team of experts working for you for less than the cost of a pro staff hire. With Pro Media Fire, you save on employee taxes, healthcare, and you get the benefit of a full team.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So it's your choice. One person, whole team of pros. You can book your free digital strategy session today to explore more, there's no downside to it, by going to [promediafire.com/churchgrowth](https://promediafire.com/churchgrowth), that's [promediafire.com/churchgrowth](https://promediafire.com/churchgrowth). A lot of churches surprisingly have experienced stability in their giving over the last year, which is some of the best news that the team over at Generis has heard during the pandemic. But a new concern is growing, will another shoe drop in 2021? What about the economy? What's happening to giving, especially with the switch to hybrid church? The truth is whether it's next month, next year, or in five years, probably the shoe will drop. The economy is going to shift, there'll always be a new mission, new need, or maybe a new opportunity and you're like, "Man, I wish we had money in the bank."

Carey Nieuwhof:

So the team at Generis is offering a free opportunity for leaders of this podcast to do exactly that, to prepare for the future with their Generosity Pulse Report. Think of the Generosity Pulse Report as a quick snapshot of the health of your culture of stewardship and giving so you can get a bit of an insight now into how prepared you are for the future, whatever it brings. So that way, you know where you stand.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So if you want to get your free Generosity Pulse Report today, an exclusive offer for listeners of this show, go to [generis.com/carey](https://generis.com/carey), so [G-E-N-E-R-I-S.com/carey](https://G-E-N-E-R-I-S.com/carey). And that way, no matter what lies ahead, or whatever opportunity presents itself, Generis can help you achieve it. [Generis.com/carey](https://Generis.com/carey) for that. And now, well, why don't we dive right into my conversation with Francis Chan. Francis, welcome back to the podcast. It's great to have you back and catch up. A lot has happened since you were on last about a year ago. Can you catch us up on what's been going on in your life?

Francis Chan:

Oh gosh, so much has happened. Was I in Hong Kong the last time we-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, the last time you and I talked, it was for the ChurchPulse Weekly Podcast I do. You were going to the visa office to see if you could stay in Hong Kong. Well, now we're with you in Phoenix.

Francis Chan:

Yes, yes. I had to do a quick filming thing out at the Grand Canyon yesterday. So I'm in Phoenix. But yeah, we had issues with our visa. They said we need to leave the country, so we did, and we're trying to get back in. But so far, it seems like the Lord has me in America for now. We really don't know what's next. We're just floating here.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, that's really... because we've connected a number of times over the last four or five years. You have an openness particularly at this stage in your life that I think is fairly rare. You were in California, led a very, very big church, went to San Francisco, then you went to... Was it Myanmar? No, you were thinking about going there. Then you ended up in Hong Kong. You were there, you were starting a church there and doing your other wider ministry. Now, you're back in the US. It's a very interesting like... I wish I was as open as you are. I really like my safety. You know what I mean?

Francis Chan:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Talk to us about what that feels like at this stage in life because you're in your 50s. That's almost like a 23-year-old kind of level of relocation. I find it very challenging and I hope God doesn't require it of me, to be honest with you, Francis.

Francis Chan:

Well, you know what? I really enjoy it and I feel more peace when I'm just out trying something and living by faith, where I'm not sure what's going to happen next. Yeah, I think I've always just thought I want to make sure I'm not living for myself, not to say anyone that's staying in one place is. I think for me, it's just one of those things where I want to know I made every effort to get out there. But it's weird, every time I leave, I feel like the Lord makes things happen to where I have to come back. I don't know if I'm just trying to run away from America because I'm tired of a lot of things, or if it's really God's calling. But we had great things happen in Hong Kong. Started some churches and they're doing great. It could be that the Lord just wants us to let the leadership there, take it from here now. And that's not a bad thing. So here we are.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, that's one thing you've done. You've gone from city to city and left churches in their wake to take over leaders, which is very apostolic, I think, from one perspective. I'd love to ask you now a year and a half into this pandemic that we're in by the time this airs, what has been the biggest impact on you personally? I love asking leaders that question and everybody's got a different take.

Francis Chan:

For me personally, it's been so good. I loved it. This is the first time in my adult life that I haven't traveled. And so when we got to Hong Kong, we thought we're going to go to all these countries, try to get to the unreached people, encourage leaders. And there we were, just stuck in this city, which we ended up just loving. So that's the first time I've spent a year without getting on an airplane. I don't remember the last time I spent two weeks without being on an airplane. So being with the family, getting some close relationships with people in Hong Kong, like really deep family type relationships. I had my two married daughters there, son-in-laws, grandkids. And then we just really got to know this group of people in our neighborhood and just fell in love with them. And after doing that, I really am questioning, "Do I ever want to travel again?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Can we talk about that a little bit because there is like... I've seen it described as revenge travels. So there's a whole group of people who like none of us have been able to really jump on a plane. So it's like, "Yeah, I want to go on a cruise. I want to go to a desert island and to a beach or a resort or the mountains or whatever." There's that kind of travel, but then there's what you and I do, which is we're in the air for a living. I think that's a different thing. Like would I like to see the ocean again? Yeah, I'd like to see the ocean again at some point. But I think this has been a reset for me. I don't think I'm going to travel nearly as much as I used to. What are your thoughts on that for those of us who do live a lot of our lives on the road?

Francis Chan:

Well, for me personally, like what we're doing right now, people are listening in, I'm just going, "Gosh, if this is what I do and people can hear me without me jumping on a plane and this is just the way people listen and communicate now, then is it really that much better than I'm literally standing on a stage and you can see me or look at me through a screen in a room?" It's really not that different. So why do I do it all of that time spent traveling? Just the hurriedness, which is not like my life is boring and slow and I need some excitement. It's like why spend that time getting rental cars, hotels, lines at the airport? I could be doing much better things with my time and still accomplishing.

Francis Chan:

I think this is what a lot of people are learning. "Wow, I don't actually have to drive, commute an hour to my office. I can actually be more productive this way." So that's good. But at the same time, we have to be careful because there is something that's lost. It's cool to see your face and we're talking, but there is something that's lost with the face-to-face. If we were sitting down for coffee, it would be different.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, it would be different. I think the last event we did together was in Hawaii about three years ago. I remember seeing you at breakfast with your... Some of your family was with you. I'm like, "I'm not going to bother Francis at his table," like you need to have that time with family. But you're right. It is a different vibe. Do you think... because now you and I and along with a lot of people listening to this podcast have basically been home for a year, so to speak, and had that hard reset that was not our choice, what is the difference you notice in your soul? Do you think road life can be damaging to your soul? I'm not talking about moral failure, but how are you different because you haven't been in the air all the time?

Francis Chan:

Yeah, it's interesting. I think a lot of people have found this. We thought that all that time that we saved from travel, which is hundreds of hours, would give us more rest and peace. But here's the thing is we end up spending more time online, which gets our mind moving even more, and digitally, maybe more time just in front of the screen. And so there needs to be this discipline because if you told me three years ago, "Hey, there's going to be a year where you won't travel at all," I would think my mind is going to be so much more clear, my prayer life will be more focused. And yet because of the amount of time in front of screens, it took away some peace.

Francis Chan:

At least on the airplane, I was too cheap to pay for internet, so I could have some quiet and be disconnected. But now, it's like, "All right, I can't go out, might as well be online and trying to do all that I can." I think that even messes with our minds even worse, even more so. Sadly, that part hasn't been as helpful as it could have been because of my lack of discipline. I needed to just shut off the devices more often.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know as we're recording this, one of the big changes has been just... We're going to talk about division and unity and the whole deal. But some of that has racial implications. We've seen this with African American racial equality justice and all of the things that have happened over the last year, but also

particularly more recently just Asian hate, like a lot of Asian hate. I'm wondering if you have anything you want to say about that, Francis, as an Asian American leader, pastor, preacher. How has that impacted you? Has that impacted you? What are your thoughts on that? It's something that's deeply disturbing to me.

Francis Chan:

Yeah, gosh, I have so many thoughts. Okay, this is really interesting. Last night, I spent the night on a reservation, Native American reservation with this guy that I just met and he invited us to go. I was so ignorant of the hardships that some of them have gone through. You look at our country's history, I mean, that's another thing we don't talk about. But listening to his heart, a great guy, and he wasn't being angry or anything else, just explained the situation because I'm like, "How do you guys live out here?" I was a bit ignorant. I was very ignorant and it just saddened me. It messed up my mind because I'm going, "Whoa, that is awful." And in a sense, I'm a part of that as an American in some way.

Francis Chan:

And so I guess God was opening my eyes to my own ignorance on certain issues. I think that's what has happened across the country. While some people have dug in and decided to fight, others have really tried to be in their shoes, whoever's being attacked. And so for me as an Asian American, yeah, it hits me. There are quite a few attacks in my neighborhood in San Francisco with elderly Asian men, which I'm in that group now. It is weird. You get calls people saying, "Wow, it's really not safe in our neighborhood to be walking around." It's weird. There's part of me that's at peace because I married a Caucasian and my kids are mixed, but it's weird to be the one targeted.

Francis Chan:

So I thought I was pretty sensitive to the Black Lives Matter movement. But you really can't understand it till it's you. As much as you think you do, then you realize, "Oh, shoot, they're targeting me now." That's really weird. Okay, this is different. This does feel different. I couldn't have understood that. I've dealt with some things throughout life. I remember being in my 20s and falling in love with this girl. I mean, just was so into her and she was into me. And then one day, she just says, "Hey, this isn't going to work. My parents would never go for this." I'm like, "What?" They're leaders in the church and everything else and I'm like, "Whoa, really?" It was the first time it really hit me and hurt me and it's like, "So just because of my nationality? Whoa, that is so crazy." It was devastating.

Francis Chan:

And so there's little things here and there, but I don't expect anyone to understand that and understand those are isolated, they're few and far between. For the most part, the majority has been they don't treat me differently because of my skin color or my nationality and it's been a blessing to me. I love being able to go back and forth and... I think that's a hard thing for me is I genuinely like people that have different nationalities. I don't get the hatred, I don't get the level of anger, but I also understand that I have not gone through what others have gone through and the hardships they've gone through. And so I am a bit more understanding.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You said number of things, but one of them is it feels different when it's you. So am I right in saying now you feel like an escalation of that, even over what you would have experienced in previous decades, Francis?

Francis Chan:

Yeah, it's a tense time because of the tensions between China and the US. It's weird. It affects my life a lot because here I am trying to get over to China and maybe I've been a little naïve. But I just think, "Gosh, I can live anywhere and people will treat me okay." And now, you start realizing, "Gosh, when I'm in China, they aren't thrilled with me because I'm American. And then when I'm in America, I'm Chinese and there's implications to that now." But I don't know. At the end of the day, because I believe in the sovereignty of God, I go, "Lord, you have me on the earth right now. And it is by no mistake that I am Asian American and there is something you want me to do." This is stuff that was ordained. I believe before the foundation of the world that God knew me, He created me for this time. It's not like I was born and God goes, "Oh, what do I do with this one?" There was a plan in all of this.

Francis Chan:

And so I get excited. All the things I just described, yes, they can be hurtful, but it's not lasting because I get my mind act focused on, "whoa, God, you made me for this time, so you knew I could handle whatever came my way and I was actually made for this because you just show me... Give me the words to say. Because I don't want to mess this up, give me power when I speak and just... If I can sense your presence with me, amidst whatever I go through, that's a good thing. Anything that draws me closer to you is a good thing." And so I look at all of this and it seems weird, but there's an excitement to it because I believe I can be a part of the solution.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, we live in a really divided era. I think over the last year, we've seen that division even get worse. We talked about it and we'll link to it in the show notes, but even the subject of criticism before, not because of your skin color or whatever, but just like, "Oh, Francis did this, or Francis did that." We've had some really meaningful conversations about how to handle that, how to handle the division, and you are a relentless optimist. But you've got a new book out and I would love to talk to you about why you wrote it and how you have felt the climate change when it comes to unity, division, tribalization, politics, all of that.

Francis Chan:

Yeah. Yeah, so I wrote a book about unity. I've been thinking about this for well over a year. It's from reading the scriptures when I think about what God. Forget what Carey wants, what Francis wants, who cares? We're talking about the one who spoke the universe into existence, who is keeping us alive right now. We're able to have this conversation because of Him. The moment He stops giving us breath, it's over. It is all about Him. He says He sent his son, his one and only son to die on the cross so that Carey and Francis who both believe that Jesus died for our sins on the cross... We believe this story. We believe this happened. He says that happened so that we could be one with Him and perfectly one with each other. Okay, that's what he wants. There may be things about me that bother you, there may be things about you that I haven't found any yet, but there are good things about you if we got to know each other more.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, of course.

Francis Chan:

But I just, "Gosh, who cares?" Let's put that aside and just try to please him the best we can. It just seems like not many people are thinking about this and we have a very casual... I've had a very casual attitude towards Christian unity and I think it's because it just felt like it was impossible. So why even try? But then I look at the scriptures and I look at what God wants and I go, "I have to. I have to give this a shot." That was the heart behind it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I love the dedication of your book. It's probably the most startling I've ever read and the most refreshing I've ever read. I'm quoting here, "This book is dedicated to the followers of Jesus from various denominations who have forgiven me for my arrogance and divisiveness over the years." Can you explain? Can you talk about how you got to that place?

Francis Chan:

I've not always been in the place that I am right now. When I came out of seminary, I just thought I knew everything and I had an answer for every one of each denomination and they've all got it wrong and I'm going to fix them and I'm set to write it. I'm going to do it in the name of Jesus. This is my calling on the earth, is to fix their theology. I was arrogant. I was very anti anything charismatic. So if I heard someone believe that a gift of prophecy or tongues or whatever and they were in my church, I seriously didn't want them there. That's where I was. I mocked anyone who felt they were led by the spirit and could hear from the spirit.

Francis Chan:

I saw a video I made. Okay, this is back when we had video cameras and youth groups and stuff like that, where I was mocking, just literally mocking people who felt they were led by the spirit. That's how bad I was. Over the years, I got to know some people from different denominations and I saw their devotion to Jesus, their Christ-like lifestyle, their knowledge of the Word because I used to think they were ignorant. And you realize, "Okay, these guys are pretty sharp." The way they love me, I saw the love, the joy, peace, all the fruit of the spirit far more than what I saw in myself and my own camp, and you realize, "Ooh, I think I was wrong about this guy."

Francis Chan:

And if he is a brother or sister in Christ, that means the very spirit of God himself dwells in them. And so I need to be careful of that. That's a child of God. It's like if I ran into your son or daughter and I just flat out mock them and then I come onto your show, like, "Hey Carey, how are you doing?" You would have like, "Hey, my daughter told me what you said about her." There would be, as dads, this protectiveness, like a little bit of wrath like, "I don't care what you say about me. You're talking about my daughter," and we're doing that. And then coming before God the Father, that's crazy. So I have gone to some of these people and apologized and said, "Hey, you know what? I used to mock people in your camp and I am so sorry. I see your life now. I see your love for Jesus. It doesn't mean we're going to agree on everything theologically, but will you forgive me?" There's been such a graciousness.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You say something about... because I think about myself in my 20s and I was much more certain of what I believed, not feel theologically, but just my opinions about what I believed in my 20s than I am now. I'm probably a little more open, a little more like, "Hmm, I could be wrong." I know some young humble leaders, but there is that confidence that comes with youth, perhaps that overconfidence. You got a ton

of young leaders listening right here. Anything you would say to 25-year-old Francis who's coming out swinging that young leaders would want to hear?

Francis Chan:

Yeah. Well, first of all, I don't want to ever quench someone's fire. God cares about truth. He does.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, He does.

Francis Chan:

I'm not saying unity at the expense of truth, which anyone who pursues unity will be accused of, "Oh, you just want unity at the expense of truth." Well, would it be possible that you want both? I want both. I feel like both are commanded, and then you add holiness to that and go, "Gosh, no, God wants this." And so please don't lose that. But here's what I would have you consider because no one had even questioned this, because some of you are listening and you're going, "Oh, there's Francis, his theology is so messed up." Okay, how do you know that? How do you know that you are right and I am wrong?

Francis Chan:

Seriously, sit down, goes back to your epistemology. How did you arrive at a better theology than I did? Wasn't just God blessed you with better people to teach you and your circle is more intelligent than my circle? Is that it? Is it an IQ thing? So when you study the scriptures, you go, "Gosh, whoever has the highest IQ is going to have the best interpretation of scripture." I believe mine is higher than Francis's. My ability to reason and study and come to right conclusions, I'm just more gifted at that than he is. And so he's been deceived. Is that it, or would you say, "No, when I read the scriptures, the spirit has to enlighten us to truth according to Corinthians and natural man can't understand this"?

Francis Chan:

So I have a better theology than Francis because I'm closer to the Holy Spirit, more in tune to the Holy Spirit, therefore, I have a better theology, or finally, I'm almost done. Could it be that you think your theology is better because God gives grace to the humble and he opposes the proud? And you are just a lot more humble than I am, so God has graced you with knowledge of truth. And because of my arrogance, He's opposing me. So what is it? Is it your knowledge? Is it the spirit, or is it your humility that has given you a better theology than mine? And so therefore, you need to fix me. I think those are important things to think through because if you really start thinking this through, you go, "Gosh, why did I think I knew more than those guys? Because I was told by my circle that I knew more than those guys and I just accepted it."

Carey Nieuwhof:

There is a cultural moment we're in, there's also human nature that humans have been humans ever since we've had humanity. So you got arrogant people and humble people and division. None of this is new. You can see the division in scripture too between families, between factions, et cetera. So it's a human condition. On the other hand, we also have social media now, we also are in this cultural moment where for all intents and purposes, to some of us, it feels more intense than it used to. Would you say that we are more divided than we were two decades ago, or would you say our division has been amplified more publicly now than it was two years ago? What's your take on that?



Francis Chan:

I think we're way more divided now. It's more of a every man for himself type of time, whereas before you more joined yourself with a group of people. Think about it, in the church, a thousand years ago, there wasn't that much of an issue. There was one church for the most part. So then for the next couple hundred years, there were two places you could go and then it went to three and then the last 500 years it's gone to thousands of these groups you can choose. But now in the last decade, you can just start your own group at any time. And so there's just more to choose from. I think when everyone wants to have a voice and everyone wants to have followers, there's this weird thing that happens where you start saying things to gain followers and to almost keep people from following others. And that's new to this generation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Is that social media driven, do you think, and internet-driven in the sense that we all have like... You're right. 100 years ago, geography was a barrier. It's like, "Well, we have three churches nearby and I like this one the most." But now, you can go anywhere anytime. It is hyper-individualistic. What does technology do to that hyper-individualism?

Francis Chan:

Well, also to get people's attention too, you have to write something pretty shocking. If you say, "Yeah, I'm not sure if I agree with Francis on this point," no one's going to click on that. But if they say, "Francis Chan is a heretic, he thinks he's the second coming," like, "What? Francis thinks that?" I'm going to go look at that. So now, I could look at that and go, "How dare he. I'm going to find so much junk on this guy. I could just destroy his life." So this is back and fourth of, "You don't even know me and you're just trying to gain people's attention and you don't even realize what it does to a person. So I'm going to get you back." And I could. It's just that the possibility of stirring up anger, we couldn't do that before. Before, if you wanted to fight me, you'd have to find me. Now, you don't even have to know my email. You can just post something about me and it's... Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, it is interesting. There is a formula that gains attention and we live in the attention economy. We've talked about this before on this podcast where you said you basically quit social media because you've tried numerous times to get in and try to make a difference and it's almost impossible. I see in you the same thing because I've talked about it with Seth Godin and Cal Newport on this podcast, but none of them is particularly active on social. They're just not. Cal Newport doesn't have anything. And yet they've sold millions of books and have a global impact.

Carey Nieuwhof:

For the leaders listening who are like, "Yeah, Francis," because we have this joke, I'll just give you a bit of an exclusive here in our company. I know how to double my traffic and I won't do it because it would be something like, "Is Francis Chan a better preacher than X" and create some battle, or "what Francis Chan won't tell you about, or the secret behind Francis Chan's constant movement or whatever." I know that would double traffic overnight, but it's like, "No, I actually like Francis and I want next time we're in the same room to go to lunch with you and I want to ask you some great questions, but we're on the same side, dude. We are friends. But I know that that would double traffic overnight.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so there's a certain point, we joke about that in our company. It's like there are lines that we won't cross, there are things we won't do. And if it means that fewer people listen, fewer people listen. I'd like to get your story out on this podcast, I'd like to benefit from your work. So there is that attention economy that is continually... It tempts you to do things that create an ethical line. So you're somebody who has largely not totally walked away from social, but you're not gaming the system on social and yet you've impacted millions of people through your teaching and your books. Any thoughts to leaders listening who are like, "I don't want to play the game, but I don't know how to get influence"?

Francis Chan:

Yeah. I've been really convicted about this lately. Okay, so a few weeks ago, I just see my mind is going nuts. I try to pray and it's like... I use that illustration, like those bingo balls.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, I know that part of life.

Francis Chan:

That Jesus ball in there, but it's rattling around with 80 other thoughts and they're battling for my attention. And so I just went for a run and I thought, "Okay, God, I'm going to clear my head and I just want to pray through the Lord's Prayer without distraction." And I go, "Do you know what?" I mean, I ran for miles, like longest I've ever run because I'm like, "I'm going to do it. I'm going to pray through it and mean every word and say it to God," and I couldn't. And so I realized I need to clear my mind. And so that week I said, "I'm not going to pray any other prayer other than the Lord's Prayer. I just want to do it over and over."

Francis Chan:

I kept getting to that phrase, hallowed be thy name. And so convicted like, "God, do I live everyday going hallowed be your name?" God, as I do this podcast with Carey, at the end, would your name be lifted up? This is all we want. Right now, people say Jesus like that means nothing. Is there a way to make your name hallowed? Because right now, if you have an event at a church and it says Francis Chan will be there, there's a group that will show up for that that would not just show up for communion in the presence of Christ. And so whose name is hallowed right now?

Francis Chan:

We have these Christian celebrities and I've had a different attitude where I've always been like, "I don't want that, I don't want that, I don't want that. But as I was praying that week, that phrase from John 3 where John the Baptist says he must increase, I must, must, must. So just go, "Okay, how does Francis Chan decrease?" I've got to figure out. I must decrease. I think most leaders in America are thinking, "I must increase so that He can increase." We think it's up to us. "I better get more followers so that I can lift up the name of Jesus." And there's something about... No, no, no, John the Baptist wasn't thinking that. He's just like, "Go to him, go to him."

Francis Chan:

I've just been seeing myself more like the receptionist at the ER going, "Okay, I got it. No one wants to see me. I'm just going to get you into a room with a great physician. I've got to get you there." You're going to thank the doctor, you're going to thank him, but we are looking at ourselves as the doctors, as

the ones who are going to fix everything. And I'm just going to say, "Lord, I must decrease. Help me figure this out." And so for those of you starting off in ministry, don't fall into this trap.

Francis Chan:

One last thought on this, I remember being with an underground church leader in China years ago and he says, "You Americans keep thinking that you have to become popular to have an impact." But in China and the underground church, it was those who were most hidden that had the most impact, the greatest impact, because we couldn't be found. I thought, "Wow, what a beautiful thing for your soul?" Could it be possible that me being quieter and being in the presence of God and doing more things that are unseen will actually have a greater impact in lifting up the name of Jesus and making hallowed his name and is it the fact that everyone is thinking they need more followers on social media to make the name of Jesus greater because it's not happening? It's not worth it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, and it's a fascinating link between influence and division. You're right. I think there is not a dotted line, but perhaps a solid line between one of the ways to get... Well, Rick Warren was on this podcast saying that he heard years ago from a church leader in the 1980s that the best way to raise money was to have an enemy. Because if you polarize people, they will try to fund you. What do you think this is doing to the church, this kind of division, this kind of hatred, this bitterness? I know it feels like a rhetorical question, but it's not.

Francis Chan:

I don't think people realize how damaging it is and it's almost like they can't help themselves. They want to grow their whatever it is. They're following somehow. And so they do these things sometimes subconsciously. I'm not saying everyone has these horrible hearts and that's why they're doing this. It's just happening. One, I don't think they realize how much it affects leaders. I'll be honest. Like for myself, I consider myself pretty strong. But it hurts sometimes. I fight through it. I know I'm not going to be a coward. I'm not going to cry about this. But some things that have been said by people you thought loved you and were on your side now because it's not even a thing you said, it's the fact that you're associated with someone who in their mind was an enemy, like a Rick Warren. I got blasted for saying anything nice about him.

Francis Chan:

I was actually threatened. They said, "Take it back publicly, or we will put you on this list and label you a false prophet." I was like, "That was the first like so direct." I was like, "Whoa, and this is a friend of mine." And you're like, "Whoa." And so sure enough, I'm put on this Christian blacklist and then it happened again with several other leaders, Mike Bitco, Ravi Zacharias, Bill Hybels, whoever. It's like if you're going to say anything positive about them, it makes you start wondering yourself as a leader who's strong. And I have agreed I love the Lord Jesus, but it goes through my mind, "Am I on the wrong team because this is weird?" And these are supposed to be people on my side. I know they're wrong about me, so what else are they wrong about? It has caused me to question some things.

Francis Chan:

And so if I have gone through so much and now as a 53-year-old man who's walked with the Lord for about 40 years and has seen answered prayer after answered prayer, the behavior of people who call

themselves Christians has caused me to wonder. I can only imagine what it's doing to the church at large. And if I'm hurt, I can imagine how it's affected others.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So the divisiveness, the partisanship, and the tribal thing that we pass off as Western Christianity, so to speak, do you think that's even Christianity? Do you think there's a line at which this stops being authentic, biblical, Jesus field Christianity?

Francis Chan:

Okay, so my quick answer is, yes, it could be still Christianity, because like I said, when I came out of seminary, I love Jesus, but I was indoctrinated and told, you know what I mean? The circle that has been telling me for years, they're not really believers, they're not really believers, they're not really believers. They're not speaking in tongues, they're communicating with the devil, like those types of things. And so you come out and you're like, "Whoa, that's not the Holy Spirit, that's evil." And so I really believed I was doing that in the name of Jesus. So I do believe there are those who love the Lord and have just been instructed this way. But then there's another part of me that questions, the same question you have, because the Holy Spirit of God, if he is in you, the Bible says in Ephesians 3 that these divisions, this slander grieves the spirit of God.

Francis Chan:

And so if he is in you each time you partake in this divisiveness, there's going to be something internally that is longing for unity amongst those who claim the name of Jesus. So if you feel nothing of that over a period of time, you've got to wonder, is he really in you? Because I really believe it's like when... And I don't want to go too far, they just came to my head. So don't judge me theologically. But it's almost like when Mary and Elizabeth, when the baby jumped in her womb and there is something of that when you read another believer and you go, "Oh, I can tell he or she has the spirit of God in him, in her. That's my brother, that's my sister." And there's an excitement. Why? Because there's this oneness in the spirit.

Francis Chan:

And if you feel nothing for people outside of your little circle, I've got to question whether the Spirit is in you. Because I know as much as I was indoctrinated one way, once I met some of those people and saw the Spirit of God in them, there was a desire for unity. I believe that comes from the Holy Spirit. And if you don't have any of that, Ephesians 4 tells us that we're supposed to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit, to maintain it. We're not creating something, the spirit created that in you. You should be eager to maintain that. So that would be my moment.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a good point. Okay, final question for you. There are leaders listening, and I think we're all guilty of this, to some extent. We stir up division. There are some people who are like, "You read my mail. Okay, yeah, I am trying to gain influence by pitting myself against other people." What would you say if someone feels convicted by their level of competitiveness, divisiveness? What are some steps or a step that they can take to change course?

Francis Chan:

I think the number one thing is to just shut up, like not say anything. The Bible says, "In the abundance of words, sin is not absent." Ecclesiastes, he says, "Guard your steps when you go into the presence of God." Don't be so quick to speak. You don't know that what you're doing is evil. I would say get in the presence of God, take some time to think about who He is compared to who you are. Think about his thoughts being so much higher than yours. Think about the fact that you can think and breathe right now because of Him and just bow down at his feet like... Don't know, just say a bunch of stuff to Him. Just sit and stare. Like David says in Psalm 27, "This is what I want every day. God, this is all I ask, one thing I ask. Can I just dwell in your house? Can I just gaze at your beauty?"

Francis Chan:

We say like Lord, we want things on earth to be like they are in heaven and having not everyone just talking to each other about random things. They're all staring at the throne at Jesus, at the father, just marveling, worshiping Him. I just really believe that's where we have to start. And then when you start seeing other people doing the same thing, not looking at you and what you've done and said wrong or said right, but we're not looking at each other. We're staring at Him and you see someone over there weeping, screaming out praises to your God. There's going to be a more unity in that way. So it has to start there.

Francis Chan:

And from there, then comes the repentance and the apology for those who have publicly slandered and have been wrong. And no one ever hears the apology as loudly as they hear that initial biting, angry thought. You may not gain followers, you may actually lose some, but you got to just do what's right and just be convicted about it. One last thought and I've used this illustration before, it's like if I lived during the time of the Virgin Mary and I knew my Savior was in her womb, how would I treat her? And so now if I believe that very Jesus is inside of you Carey, no matter what you say to me, no matter what you do to me, what type of honor should I show you? That's what I'm trying to do with those who I know the Holy Spirit of God is in them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, that's a good place to leave it. Tell us about your book. And then where are you active online these days? My guess is not very, but that's okay. That's a good thing.

Francis Chan:

Yeah. I feel like the Lord wants me to film a message or say something and that's why I was at the Grand Canyon yesterday. Yeah, I want to go over there and shoot something. I have some things to say I think are of the Lord. You do your best. I'll do that. Better than that, I'm not on it. But there is a book coming out and it's about unity. It's about this issue. I don't believe a book is going to change everything because other books about unity have been written.

Francis Chan:

But if it can get people to think and if it can get people to pray and say, "God, you know what? I want the same thing Jesus prayed for. This really is the desire of my heart," that John 17 prayer that we could all become perfectly one so that the world would believe, "God, I want that. I really want that. And show me how I'm adding to the division." If I can just get people to pray and God could see all of these humble people praying to Him saying, "We want what you want," then a book that some use, but I'm not kidding myself thinking, "This is the book that's going to bring all believers."

Carey Nieuwhof:

And what's it called, the book? Just tell people what it's called.

Francis Chan:

Until Unity.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Until Unity.

Francis Chan:

It's Until Unity. It's based on Ephesians 4, where it says, "The job of the leader really is to equip the saints for the work of service until we attain to the unity of the faith." And so we have to fight for this. If you're a Christian leader listening to this, go look at Ephesians 4, you don't have to read the book. Just look at Ephesians 4. This is our calling, this is what we got to do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I have had a chance to read the book and I really, really appreciated it and really grateful for the time that you've spent with our leaders again today, Francis. Thank you. I know this won't be the last time. Thank you.

Francis Chan:

Yeah. Thanks, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I really appreciate everywhere that Francis went and his words when it comes to the discrimination that he's experienced really, really move my heart. I just think this is a time for all of us to band together and say, "You know what? No more, like no more. We got to stop Asian hate. We got to pursue racial reconciliation. We have to pursue unity." As a person of faith myself, one of the things that really humbles me about the Christian Church is racism, division between economic classes, ethnic groups. That's as old as humanity. And the early church was really a symbol of unity, unity in terms of racial reconciliation, unity in terms of economic justice and so much more.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, I just want to encourage you, man, Keep the dialogue going, keep your own attitudes and heart close to God and close to people who are not just the same as you, but different than you. And Francis, thanks for bringing light to that. I really, really appreciate it. And for all of you who are experiencing discrimination, hate, injustice, standing with you, as best I can trying to stand with you. So we have more conversations coming up. No surprise there. You know who's up next time? Tim Keller. This one was so deep and so real. He had a personal crisis over the last year with being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. And so we talk all about that and then we talk about the church and the future and life and here's an excerpt.

Tim Keller:

We also don't know if that one person is somebody in Iowa who's just tuning into your church in New York because they used to go. In other words, and you begin to realize we still actually don't really know who we've got and what's going on. And basically, I think the main thing is not only is everybody tired, but nobody's getting any positive affirmation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's next time. By the time you hear this, I've also just completed an interview with Simon Sinek. We have Tony Morgan coming back. Christine Caine is going to be on, which I'm so excited about. We also have... Oh, who else? So Chris McChesney from 4 Disciplines of Execution, Louie Giglio, David Allen, so many more coming up subscribers to get it all for free. And if this episode has helped you, let us know. Let us know on social. I'm Carey Nieuwhof on Instagram, C. Nieuwhof on Facebook and Twitter. And now, it's time for What I'm Thinking About and I am thinking about unity because that's what Francis Chan talked about.

Carey Nieuwhof:

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Carey Nieuwhof:

Let's talk about unity a little bit. This is something that's really close to my heart. And you know what? It's close to my heart because it's just easier to be divisive than it is to be unifying. And as an Enneagram eight, I got to tell you, I think my natural unhealthy tendencies lead toward division and lead to blame. And so here's a couple of thoughts that I think can move us closer to unity. On the racial front but also just on the personal front, the marriage front, the team front, the relational front, the cultural front, a thought number one is simply this, a blaming culture, and we live in a culture of hyper-blame, needs a confessing church.

Carey Nieuwhof:

One of the best things I can do, one of the best investments in my time is to confess my sin because you know what? If I don't, I'm just going to confess yours. I'm going to say, "Well, this person needs to apologize, this person needs to do X, this person needs to do Y." And could you imagine the church instead of being like self-righteous, or the line that's been resonating in my mind a lot this year is that line from one of the stories of Jesus where it's like it's the Parable of the Good Samaritan, or it's like but he wanted to justify himself.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's like, "Yep, how many times do I get into trouble because I want to justify myself?" I say, "Well, I'm not a racist, or I didn't do that, or I didn't do this." It's like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, what's underneath that?" Have you never had bad thoughts? It's like, "Ah, okay." What if I just confessed my sin? What if I say sorry to the brothers and sisters I've hurt? What if I take a humble view of myself? Can you imagine what would happen if we did that as leaders, confess our sins, repent, change because you'll never address what you don't confess? I think that's really important. I think when people start to confess more and accuse less, we will start to make progress.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Second thought is these are divided times. A divided nation needs a united church. We really, really do. People on the outside are like, "Why would I hang out with you, Christians? You guys are a mess and you're so angry and you're so frustrated." You know what? A divided nation needs a united church. And then finally, our culture is exhausted. I know these are exhausting times. Even today in the middle of almost middle of 2021, sometimes I'm like, "Yeah, that's enough news for today." An exhausted culture needs an alternative to itself, not an echo of itself. The culture is tired of itself, but it doesn't know how to escape. They're just in this post-Christian, post-modern vortex, and they're like, "I don't know how to get out of that." Well, that's where I think people of faith can help.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So what we sometimes do is we offer the culture an echo of itself. We're just as divided, just as angry, just as political, just as ideological, just as... Yeah, just bad. And the culture needs an alternative, not an echo. And here's what I just remind myself as a person of faith. If God has all the same opinions you do, you're probably not worshiping God, so in a divided culture, Christian should be the help and the hope, not the hate. So I'm challenging myself with that. Hopefully, that's challenging to you. What can you do to bring about a more united culture, more united world on all the issues, racial justice, economic justice, and just the personal discord that infects so much of family life and leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

A few thoughts I'm challenging myself with. I hope this is helpful. And hey, I'd love to see you somewhere other than the podcast too. Follow me on social. I'm on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, also a kind of on Clubhouse too. I haven't done anything with that, but let me know if you think I should do something with Clubhouse. And then we got a party going on all the time over at careynieuwhof.com. It's a joy to be able to serve you as leaders. I really hope this helped. Looking forward to the next conversation. I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer:

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