

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 424 of the podcast. It's Carey here. I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Wherever you happen to find yourself today, whether you are in the car, whether you are, I don't know, working out in the kitchen, wherever you find yourself, welcome. Really glad you've chosen to be with us today. Today's episode is brought to you by World Vision. You can sign up for their free web series, Right Side Up Soul Care with Danielle Strickland at worldvision.org/carey. And by CDF Capital, you can learn more about their XP cohorts and sign up today by going to cdf.capital/cohorts, that's cdf.capital/cohorts.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Really excited to have Rich Stearns on the podcast. This was a fascinating interview. We talked all about failure and leadership, the value of persistence and what for-profits and not-for-profits can learn from each other. I did an Instagram poll recently and we just asked a real simple question, how many of you have thought about quitting in the last year? Barna did a proper study, 29% of senior pastors thought they seriously thought about leaving. On my little Instagram polls, 77% of you thought about quitting in the last year. A whole bunch of you messaged me and said, "Yep, I did too."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I think conversations like this, the recent episode with Christine Caine, are really going to encourage you, and I would just encourage you to hang in there. Hang in there in life, hang in there in leadership, hang in there in your faith if you're a person of faith like I am. We are going to get through this. Rich just adds to the dialogue. A little background on Rich, Rich is the president emeritus of World Vision US. He is the longest serving president in World Vision's history. Having spent over 20 years there, he's logged three million air miles traveling around the world. He has been featured on Christianity Today, Fox News, CNN, NPR, Charisma News, and Relevant Magazine.

Carey Nieuwhof:

He has been honored for his humanitarian service and five honorary doctoral degrees, as well as induction into the Society of World Changers at Indiana Wesleyan University. He's got a long list of awards. He also talks about his time in the corporate world, and he's the author of several books, including the bestselling award-winning *Hole in Our Gospel*. He also wrote *Unfinished*. He's got his new book, it's called *Lead Like It Matters to God*. It's a fascinating book. I just think you're going to be encouraged by this conversation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Speaking of World Vision, the deepest truths about living like Jesus often come from leaders who are suffering and persecuted. And so World Vision invites you to listen to the voices of leaders from around the world who have used their suffering and persecution to build and to strengthen their faith. You can join Danielle Strickland and World Vision for brand new series called Right Side Up Soul Care. In this free web series, Danielle and the leaders in the global church will share how they have learned to practice

their faith and feed their soul through difficult circumstances. The church can really be a force for good and World Vision has a heart for the bride of Christ to be healthy and mobilized, and they have a heart for you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

If you need some encouragement, head on over to worldvision.org/carey, that's worldvision.org/carey. Sign up for the free series with Danielle Strickland and leaders around the world today. As the church shifts away from lockdowns and uncertainty, the questions that lie ahead really haven't changed. Now more than ever, learning from each other is critically important. CDF's Capital XP Summit cohorts provide an exclusive year-long experience that bring together hand-selected global ministry leaders and your peers in an intimate small group setting.

Carey Nieuwhof:

As a member of the cohort, you will grow personally and professionally engage in three in-person experiences with a world-class mentor, and you'll be able to see and witness his or her ministry firsthand. You'll connect in a monthly coaching session with a ministry professional who knows you and can speak into your situation with accuracy and insight, and you can enjoy conversation and community with your executive pastor peers across the country. Curious? You can learn more and sign up today by going to cdf.capital, that's cdf.capital/cohorts. Well, I am so excited to bring you this conversation with Rich Stearns. Here we go. Well, Rich, welcome to the podcast.

Rich Stearns:

Thanks so much. I've been looking forward to this, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, me too. Let's start here. You spent quite a bit of time in the corporate world before you became the president of World Vision. You studied at Cornell, you went to the Wharton School of Business, very prestigious place to get your MBA. You worked in marketing at Gillette, then you moved to Parker Brothers, and then finally you became the CEO, you kind of joke, of a fine, luxury tableware company, which is Lenox. Not that anybody would ever aspire to do that, but there you found yourself, you said. What did you learn from your time in the corporate world? What were some of the takeaways?

Rich Stearns:

Yeah, so I really look at my time in the corporate world as another education about how an organization is run. You learn a lot of the basics about how organizations are run, basic financial dynamics, marketing, sales, human resources, IT, all of that stuff. Big corporations are to business and leadership, what Harvard and McGill are to education, their institutions and actually laboratories of higher learning. And so those are the things that I learned when I was... my time in the corporate world. It was really an education. I learned a lot about leadership because you learn about leadership by watching others. And so I got to see a lot of other people as well. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What was your childhood like? Did that prepare you for that? You had a different childhood, didn't you?

Rich Stearns:

Yeah. I'm kind of an unlikely candidate to have ended up at two Ivy League schools and to have been CEO of a number of companies. My dad had three marriages and three divorces. I was a product of the third marriage and he was an alcoholic. My dad never finished the eighth grade. He was not an educated man, had a lot of problems, alcoholism, bankruptcy. The bank foreclosed on our home when I was 10. My parents divorced and my mother was married twice and never finished high school. Coming out of this working-class background as a child, I guess my reaction to it was, "I'm going to try to avoid the mistakes my parents made and try to do something with my life." I saw education really is my way out and it turned out that that was the case, Cornell and then the Wharton School of Business, as you mentioned. Yeah, so that was my childhood background.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's a really interesting profile, Rich, because there's... I haven't done the numbers, but 400 or 500 interviews into this thing. The number of successful CEOs, founders, senior pastors who have had that story or a story like that in their childhood is shocking. It's got to be disproportionate. Was there a moment where you were like, "Okay, this is not going to be my life." I'm curious because I didn't grow up in that background. It just makes me wonder like, do you have a defining moment where you said, "No, this is not for me."

Rich Stearns:

Well, I think that kind of background, usually there's one of two outcomes. You either walk in the shoes of your parents and substance abuse and broken marriages and those kinds of things, or it becomes a motivation to move in the opposite direction. I used to say that my dad was a great role model because if I did just the opposite of everything he did and made the opposite choices that he made, I'd probably be in a pretty good place. Don't get me wrong. I loved my dad. He loved me. He just was a broken person that was... He had a hard time coping with his life and the cards he was dealt. I actually learned from that. And that was a motivator to me.

Rich Stearns:

When I went to the Ivy League schools, Cornell, a lot of the other kids there were sons and daughters of the elite. Their parents were surgeons and lawyers and CEOs. I felt like I was there without a safety net. I couldn't fail at Cornell because if I did, there was no safety net. In fact, I drove a taxi for two summers in Syracuse, New York, where I grew up. My fallback probably was if I flunked out of school, I might've ended up just driving a taxi the rest of my life. There was another college guy there with me one summer and he did drop out and became a cab driver the rest of his life. Nothing wrong with being a cab driver, but that's not what I wanted for my life.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Correct me if this isn't in your book because I enjoyed reading it, but did you not say at one point to motivate yourself, "Okay, I want to be the guy riding in the taxi rather than the guy driving the taxi." Was that a motivator for you?

Rich Stearns:

Yeah. It was a motivator. When I drove a taxi, I realized I had never sat in the back seat of a taxi because taxis were for rich people. I couldn't afford a taxi. I used to dream, I'd pick businessmen and women up at the airport and drive them to the hotel or whatever. I used to say, "Well, someday I'm going to be in

the front seat or in the backseat of the taxi." I ended up over my career taking a lot of taxis and then Ubers after that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. You ended up as president of World Vision. But if I understand your background, that wasn't a Christian home that you grew up in. Was it faith came to you a little bit later, or how would you describe it?

Rich Stearns:

Yeah. My parents were nominally Catholic, Roman Catholic. But because of the divorces at that time, they had been ex-communicated from the church and so they didn't feel they were welcome at a Catholic church. But they did send my sister and I down the street to go to mass on Sundays when we were little, which now I look back, that's strange. Two small children... My sister was five or six years older, but going alone to church.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. That wouldn't happen these days. Yeah.

Rich Stearns:

When I got to college, I majored in neurobiology and I got really into science and I became an atheist, maybe an agnostic, for sure, possibly an atheist. But I looked to science as being the answer. Long story, I won't necessarily get into, but I met a young woman my senior year, who is now my wife of 46 years. She was a follower of Christ. And through that relationship, I ended up becoming a Christian, fairly dramatic experience when I was in business school prompted by the relationship with her and doing a lot of studying and reading. I think I read 50 books on theology and comparative religion and philosophy.

Rich Stearns:

With my scientific method, I came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ was who he said he was. And if he was, then that changed everything. And so I basically said, "I want to live my life for you. I'll go where you send me. I'll do what you called me to do. I'm yours." And that was my conversion moment when I was at the Wharton School. I may be the only person that's ever become a Christian at the Wharton School of Business. I don't know.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, you know what? It's not exactly a fertile ground for Christianity. How did you believe that was possible? Because you're speaking to a lot of young leaders here, some of them have a similar background. I am very curious about the switch that went on or the self-talk that helped you go, "No, I can go to Wharton. I can do Cornell." Those are Ivy League schools. They are top tier schools to this day. What kept you going? Because I'd take it, it wasn't your parents pushed you into that route at all.

Rich Stearns:

No. In fact, when I told my mother... By that time, I was living with my mom and I told her I was going to go to Cornell. She laughed at me. She said, "You're going to go to Cornell University, haha." She said, "Who's going to pay for that? Certainly, I can't and your father is a drunk. He can't pay for it." But I said, "Well, gee, mom, I don't know, but I'll figure it out." When our kids were getting ready for college, we

hovered over them, "Have you gotten your essays done? Have you done your application? Do you want us to proofread your essays?" I had to do it all on my own. My mother didn't read my essays, didn't look at my application.

Rich Stearns:

I was fortunate. I got in and I got a scholarship. I had a couple of scholarships. I don't know what it was. I just had a drive, again, motivated by what I saw in my parents' life that I don't want my life to turn out that way. Again, education seemed like the way out. I always did pretty well at school. I thought, "Well, I can use this. I can aspire to something greater." But there were moments of doubt. My first physics exam at Cornell... I enrolled in the engineering school of all things. My first physics exam, I got a 48. I thought, "Oh boy, this is not going to end well," because I was just not ready to compete at that level. My high school hadn't prepared me for it. And so that freshman year was terrifying. I had to study all hours of the day and night and I made it through that freshman year. And then it got a little bit easier as I got acclimated. But yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Again, this may be going nowhere, but I just would love to know were you 8 when you realized, "Okay, I'm going to make a different life for myself," 13, 5, 15? Roughly, what stage of your life did that idea occur to you?

Rich Stearns:

Yeah. As I said, when I was 10, the family fell apart with divorce and bankruptcy and foreclosure. I can remember lying in bed about that time as a 10-year-old and hearing my parents screaming at each other in the kitchen. At that moment, I realized that my parents could not take care of me. They could barely take care of themselves. I couldn't depend on them and I just felt, "I'm going to have to do this myself. I'm going to have to be the one that looks after me." I remember thinking that year and maybe the year after that, "When I'm 18, I will be able to leave or escape from this situation." I started to think about, "How would I do that?"

Rich Stearns:

And because I had an older sister, when I was 12, she was 18 and going off to college. She went to a teacher's college in New York. She kept telling me, "Rich, you can get into a good college. If you get good grades in high school, there's a way you can get in one..." She wanted me to go to Notre Dame. "You can get into Notre Dame." She also knew Cornell because it was pretty close to where we grew up, Syracuse. And so she's, "But you got to get those grades." She motivated me and helped me see things that maybe a parent would normally help you see. "Here's the way you can do this."

Rich Stearns:

And so I listened to her and I started to buckle down in school. I had some success, and then I got with a cohort of kids that were all going to college in my high school. And that became competitive. I think I graduated second in my class from high school. And fortunately, and I say this, as a white male, doors were open for me. And growing up in the United States, opportunities were open to me in ways that they weren't open necessarily to women or minorities. And so I really was the beneficiary of a culture that was willing to take a risk on a young kid that worked hard and got good grades. I was able to get scholarships and all of that. I was fortunate.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Did you have any other mentors along the way?

Rich Stearns:

Probably some of my high school teachers took me under their wing and saw the potential in me, although I do say that no one is more surprised that I've now written four books than my high school English teacher. She would be shocked because English was not my subject, that I was a bit difficult for her. But yeah, I think teachers inspired me a bit and helped me see what might be possible too.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You started at Gillette in marketing and then moved through a few companies sitting in the C-suite a couple of times. You had a couple of situations too where your employment was terminated early in your career that you write about publicly. What was that like and why didn't you quit? Can you fill us in on some of those stories?

Rich Stearns:

Yeah. I've been fired twice and people are often surprised to hear that because they look at my resume and they say, "Wow, you've been really so successful." I was fired twice. I became the CEO of Parker Brothers games, Monopoly, Clue, Sorry!, Nerf balls. I became the CEO when I was 33. I had six vice presidents reporting to me who were all in their 50s. And so I took over that company and I was CEO for about two years. My wife used to call me business boy because I was so young. I wasn't ready for the job. To be very honest, I wasn't ready for that kind of responsibility. But I just happened to be at the right place at the right time.

Rich Stearns:

But anyways, about two years in, the company was divested. It was owned by General Mills and they divested their toy companies. When they did that and spun them off, they wanted to... Parker Brothers had been through some difficult financial years. They wanted to put new management in and then spin it off on Wall Street. And so they fired virtually all the division presidents at that time and replaced them with new leaders. And so what goes up must come down. And so I went up like a rocket at Parker Brothers and then my descent was even quicker. It was a very sudden, called into the office, and today's your last day and very sorry. Anyways, that sent me into unemployment from the corner office to a corner of my basement where I was sitting in my bathrobe figuring out, "How do I find another job?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's hard. There's not a ton of CEO jobs out there.

Rich Stearns:

No, it was soul crushing and just devastating personally because so much of our identity is wrapped up in what we do. But it turned out that was a time when God really worked in my life in a powerful way. I had plenty of time to read the scripture and pray and turn to the Lord in a time of need. And make a long story short, I found another job in about four or five months, moved my family to Pennsylvania and went to work for The Franklin Mint, which was a company that sold collectibles through mail order. I actually got a bigger salary than I had at Parker Brothers. I was back in the game and back at work.

Rich Stearns:

Nine months later, I got fired at The Franklin Mint. Here I am unemployed again. My wife said, "Whatever lesson God is trying to teach you, would you please learn it so that you can get back to work." She was not working. She was at home and we had three little kids at the time. We're five in total. We had a mortgage and all the financial worries that you have when those things are real. And so that time I was unemployed for nine months, nine months of agonizing everyday, "Lord, why is this happening? What is it you want to teach me?"

Rich Stearns:

The aha moment I had really came out of my old catechism classes as a young child getting ready for my first communion. One of the questions was, "Why did God make me?" I started to ponder this question and I remembered the answer. "He made me to know him, to love him, and to serve him in this world." And then I realized, "Look, that's the purpose of my life. The purpose of my life is not to sell toys and games or collectibles or fine China. The purpose of my life is to know God, to love God, and to serve him in this world." That's the deal I made with God when I became a Christian, that I was going to follow him and serve him.

Rich Stearns:

And so when I finally got a job, I got a job at Lenox as a president of their smallest division that had been losing money for three years. I was the last hope for that division. I went that first day of work and I just prayed, "Lord, I am not here to sell more China. I am not here to succeed. I am here to know you, love you, and serve you in this place. Help me do this today." I think I prayed that prayer every day. I was at Lenox 11 years, became group president, COO, and then CEO of the company over those 11 years. The Lord gave me another season of prosperity before I was called to World Vision.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because there's a lot of leaders who are still reeling from 2020 and early 2021 and have encountered a lot of hardship and they're trying to overcome it, what was your self-talk like when you got fired twice in a row? How did you not just give up at that point?

Rich Stearns:

Yeah, it was really discouraging and depressing. I think I came as close to depression as I ever have in my life during that period because self-esteem, all of the things that... identity, self-esteem, who am I? And then just the weight of the responsibility that I've got children, I've got a family, I've got a mortgage, I've got to find a way to get back into a work situation. Again, I just leaned on the Lord, "Lord, not my will, but thy will. I want to follow you. What do you have for me? I'm open to whatever it might be." And just taking it one day at a time and being diligent. I spent roughly seven or eight hours a day looking for jobs.

Rich Stearns:

At the time, we didn't have the internet. I was looking at The Wall Street Journal want ads. I was writing cold letters applying for jobs. I was networking through former business associates and finding leads. I'd occasionally get an interview. Anyways, it was just that process until finally Lenox came along. I went to the interviews. That's a funny story because I heard there was a job at Lenox for the CEO of this small division and I thought I was a perfect fit. And so I got the name of the human resources vice president and I called him. I got his assistant who said, "Well, Mr. P is busy right now. Please give me a message

and I'll give it to him." I said, "Well, I know this sounds crazy, but I think I could be president of that division that you have. I'm calling to see if he would interview me."

Rich Stearns:

She probably thought I was like a nut job. This guy's calling and thinks he can be president of our division. I ended up calling her more than 20 times over a period of two months and leaving a message every time, persistence. On first day, I said, "Nancy, this is Rich. You know why I'm calling. I need to talk to Mr. P." She said, "I know, Rich. I keep nagging at him that he needs to call you. I'm really mad at him because he hasn't returned your call. I'm going to try again." And so finally, he called me back. I gave him my spiel and he said, "Well, we have a search firm and we're doing a nationwide search. Why don't you send me your resume and remind me of our phone call because I'm going to forget you as soon as I hang up."

Rich Stearns:

I said, "Okay." And so hung up, typed out a letter, reminded him of the phone call, attached the resume, send it in, thought I'd never hear from him again. The next week he called and he said, "Rich," he said, "I've got your resume." He said, "My, you have an impressive background. You're like a perfect match for this job." I said, "I know." His name was Wayne. I said, "I know, Wayne. That's what I've been trying to tell you. I think I am a good fit for that job." Anyway, it turns out he was a believer. I found that out later he was a believer. And then years later, he came to work at World Vision. It's funny how God works.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, that's amazing.

Rich Stearns:

Anyways, I got the job, went through a bunch of interviews, got the job. He ended up reporting to me at the end of the thing because when I became CEO, he was still a head of HR and he reported to me. I said, "I should fire you for the way you treated me." But we became good friends.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thank you for sharing that story. I think you probably encouraged a lot of people listening today. I'd love to ask you because you've basically sat in the C-suite for most of the last three or four decades. When you see that kind of persistence... because there is a fine line, Rich, between being persistent and being annoying. It's another thing, again, hundreds of interviews into this, where you're not the only person to say that. We had Ryan Hawk from... He tells a story of trying to cold call people and sell LexisNexis and having to sometimes make 80 phone calls to try to close a sale. Cathy Heller talked about that when she was on the podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof:

This is recurring theme. Sitting in the CEO seat, which you've sat in for years, when you see that in a younger leader who's trying to get a foot in the door, what is the line in your mind between, "I'm going to reward that," or, "I need a restraining order? How do I get rid of this people?" Is there a line in your mind because it's really fascinating? I think most of us are too timid to do what you did.

Rich Stearns:

Yeah, I think there probably is a line. But I think persistence is often rewarded. Jesus talked about the persistent widow who kept asking-

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, I agree with you.

Rich Stearns:

... God for something. Persistence is an important quality in a leader because you're going to face hard times as a leader, you're going to be in difficult circumstances. How you persevere and persist in the face of opposition and difficulty is really a critical leadership quality. I would say in my career, I've run into young people that have applied for jobs to work for me or my organization. Usually, that persistence at least got them a hearing. I interviewed a young woman a few years ago. She ended up at the Tim Tebow Foundation. But she was a dancer. She'd been a dancer in college and I think ballet and things like that.

Rich Stearns:

She kept trying to get her foot in the door at the Tim Tebow Foundation and couldn't and just tried everything. Finally, she bought a pair of ballet slippers and put them in a box with a note about her dance and her resume. She said, "I tried and tried and tried to get a foot in the door and maybe this is the only way to do it." And so the foot in the door were the two ballet slippers that she got in the door. They called her after that. They thought that was so unique that they called her and they actually hired her. And so, yeah, I think persistence... At some point, you got to know maybe when to move on and when to go.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, I hear that. We've been through a couple of rounds of hiring in my little company and there's one guy, I won't name names, who has applied several times. It just wasn't the right fit, but a really good person. My team keeps cheering him on saying, "Hey, maybe at some point we're going to find a role for this guy." After being rejected a couple of times, it would be easy to say, "Ah, forget it." But he emailed back and said, "Listen, if there's some project I can help with, if there's some side work I can do, count me in. I would love to be a part of this someday." I don't know, but when I saw that, I'm like, "Yeah, we really have take this guy seriously." It was respectful, it was kind, it was helpful. Hats off to him.

Rich Stearns:

There was a guy that worked for me at World Vision. I say he worked for me, but when he first approached World Vision, he had this idea that he could raise money for World Vision by starting a running ministry, marathons and things like that, half marathons, marathons. That's a way a lot of nonprofits raise money. They get 100 runners in the Chicago Marathon and they all raise money. We didn't have any budget for him. And so our guy in Chicago who was a leader there, he was the one that was the contact. The guy was so persistent, "Look, I'll do this as a volunteer. I just believe in this so much." And so finally, our guy in Chicago said, "Look, if you'll work for half a salary, I'll bring you on halftime to try this."

Rich Stearns:

And so he agreed. He said, "I'll come on for half a salary." I don't think he even had benefits. He said, "I'll come on." He started this running ministry at World Vision, is now called Team World Vision. Now, he's the vice president of church partnerships. This guy that knocked on the door and said, "I'll do anything to work for you because I have this vision." Team World Vision is raising, I think, more than \$10 million a year for World Vision. We're the largest single charity in the Chicago Marathon with something like 1,500 runners. It's all because this guy just believed he could do it and convinced us he could do it. And then we saw how good he was and he got promoted and became vice president.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's amazing. But there it is, persistence and resilience. I see that as a thread in your story. You tell some of these stories in your book. Some of this stuff is new to me. This is fascinating. Now, in your new book, you talk about the problem with success as a metric or goal. Why is that a problem if you make success your objective?

Rich Stearns:

Yeah, well, I talk in the book about a success culture. We're marinating in a success-oriented culture in our world. We celebrate the wealthiest people, the winningest teams, the fastest growing companies, the biggest churches, the most famous celebrities. We are literally marinating in a success-obsessed culture. I would say North America, Canada, United States, the American Dream is all about success. I say in the book it's a little bit like carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless gas that we're breathing it every day, but it can be deadly. If we make success our idol, if we'll do anything to be successful, that's dangerous. It's dangerous for anybody, but for a Christian to make success an idol in your life is problematic.

Rich Stearns:

I tell the story in the book. In fact, the inspiration for my book, *Lead Like It Matters to God*, was something Mother Teresa said years ago that she was being visited by a Senator from Oregon in the United States, Senator Mark Hatfield, a well-known social justice advocate. He went over and visited Mother Teresa in Calcutta. And being an analytical guy, he looked at the sheer ocean of poverty and suffering in Calcutta. And then he looked at this tiny little nun and her little ministry in the middle of the slums. He realized, "This woman's never going to succeed in eradicating poverty, even in Calcutta, let alone the rest of the world."

Rich Stearns:

And so he said to her, "Mother, don't you feel like a failure because you will never be able to help all the poor. You just will never have enough resources to do it. You've been doing this for 30 or 40 years. Don't you feel hopeless about this." She gave him a 14-word answer that I believe reversed the entire leadership paradigm or success paradigm we have in our culture. She said, "My dear senator, God did not call me to be successful. He called me to be faithful."

Rich Stearns:

And for a Christian leader, I want them to hear those words. You are not called by God to be successful. You are called to be faithful, to be a person of character, to be a good ambassador for Christ. And so a person of character, not a person of success. You may be you successful, but success should not be your goal. Faithfulness should be your goal. And if you are successful, great, that's a collateral benefit of being faithful to the Lord.

Rich Stearns:

But I want to differentiate because you asked about is success a good metric or a bad metric? I want to differentiate between the success of a business or ministry and the success of an individual. What I just talked about, I just talked about individual success, that we as individuals should not make success an idle in our lives. Businesses, ministries, organizations, they have to be successful. If they're not successful, they won't survive. You have to be able to balance the budget and show a profit or pay the bills.

Rich Stearns:

Success can have a lot of definitions for people. It could be money. Money is my definition of success. It could be position, professional fulfillment. It could be just happiness. I'm successful if I'm happy. I'm a cab driver. I love driving a cab. I'm happy, I'm successful. I've got a family who loves me, I'm successful. It's just that we have to be careful as individuals not to make success the goal and the idle. Because before long, the ends justify the means. You start doing things to achieve that success that cause you to have some regret later.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I appreciate what you're saying and I'm certainly not going to take on Mother Teresa. But I want to give you a line that I hear all the time, especially in the church, not so much in business. Because if you're not successful in business, you're done. But from church leaders, and they'll often say, "We're not growing, but we're faithful, or I'm not successful, but I'm faithful." I almost feel like sometimes, Rich, and just love for your comment on this, that Christians can use the rubric of faithfulness to blanket incompetence or laziness. Can you speak to that for a moment?

Rich Stearns:

Yeah. When I came to World Vision in 1998, I found a group of people who were passionate about the mission of the organization. I'd never seen such passion about a mission. When you're selling fine China and crystal, it's a little harder to get really passionate when you wake up in the morning that, "I'm going to sell more dishes today." But World Vision, you're literally helping the poor, you're feeding the hungry, you're bringing clean water to villages, you're giving microloans to poor people to help them out of poverty. You can get really passionate about it. But I didn't find a culture of excellence in the financial realm at World Vision, the fundraising and the managing the budgets. I found a culture of excellence in the field in terms of the actual hands-on work out there.

Rich Stearns:

I coined a phrase, I said, "At World Vision, you seem to be good people doing good things and you think that's good enough." I said, "That's not good enough. You need to be good people. You are good people, you're doing good things, but you need to do them with excellence. You need to do them with excellence." When I was at Lenox, I had a little sign on my desk that it said, "Relax, it's only dishes." Even at Lenox, we would have these panic attacks about missing our quarterly earnings or not making our goal and not getting our bonus this year. And to put it in perspective, I had this little sign that said, "You know what? Nobody's going to die here. If we have a bad quarter, it's only dishes. Let's put it in perspective, let's work hard, let's do our best, but let's put it in perspective. Nobody has a fine China emergency in their life."

Rich Stearns:

But I said to the folks at World Vision, I said, "How would you feel if I had a sign on my desk here that said, 'Relax, it's only children. It's only lives.'" I said, "I want an organization that works with a sense of excellence and urgency because, literally, children's lives are at stake. As Christians, excellence is our witness. I want World Vision to be on the cover of Businessweek or Forbes someday as the best run organization in America." Never happened. I said, "When you're serving the Lord, you need to serve with excellence. We need to be those people who the world looks at and say, 'Wow, you got to admire those Christians at World Vision because they really work hard and they deliver and they make good on their promises.'"

Rich Stearns:

You can't use that as an excuse because being faithful is also about being excellent. Jesus never said, "I want you to be faithful and give half-hearted efforts to your work." There's a verse in scripture. I can paraphrase it. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as if working for the Lord and not men. It is the Lord Christ you serve." I don't have the reference for that, but that's the paraphrase.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, but I know what you mean. I can imagine a whole lot of church leaders putting a little sign on their desk that says, "Relax, it's just eternity." Yeah, you're right. It's only life change. No, these are really big things. When you're pursuing a culture of excellence then, you're right, one of the challenges of not-for-profit work, a lot of knowledge work, meaningful work, startup world is you can get obsessed with it. Like when is your ministry ever done? There are always more kids, there are always more families, always more poverty, always more disease.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How do you begin because this is another issue on the other side that a lot of leaders struggle with? Some are like, "Yeah, whatever. I found it and I got the message done. I'm done." They're using faithfulness as an excuse to be mediocre or poor. But let's flip the switch. There are other people who are so obsessed with the mission. That's what I tell my team all the time like, "Sometimes the work is just never done. When is it good enough?" So how do you draw boundaries in a situation like that where you really are trying to change the world?

Rich Stearns:

There's a whole chapter in my book on balance because I think it's so important for a leader to have a balanced life. If your life is your work and your work is your life, you live in a very small world. That's what I say. But the founder of World Vision was a guy named Bob Pierce. He started World Vision in 1950 just after the World War. This man was on fire for the gospel and on fire to help the poor. He passed away in 1978, but I once met one of his original board members. This board member described him as a psychotic for God. He was a psychotic for God. Well, sadly, Bob Pierce's story didn't end well. He did start World Vision and it became the largest Christian relief and development organization in the world, maybe the largest relief and development organization in the world of any kind.

Rich Stearns:

But in 1967, the board of directors fired him. His passion was so red hot that he was impulsive, he was disruptive to the organization, and he was ultimately destroying the organization he built. The board recognized that he was headed for a breakdown. One of his daughters committed suicide. He lost his marriage. He became estranged from the rest of his family. There was one story where his daughter

committed suicide. He flew home from Asia to attend the funeral. And then from the funeral, he was driven directly back to the airport to return to Asia, leaving his grieving wife and his other two daughters to grieve alone. And that's how driven he was. And so he ended up losing his family, losing his job, losing his minister. And how did that benefit anything?

Rich Stearns:

I talk in the book that for a workaholic, Christian ministry is like a fully stocked bar to an alcoholic because you can say, "Hey, I'm doing it for the Lord. I'm doing it for the Lord. I know I work 80 hours a week, but honey, I'm doing it for the Lord." I really don't think the Lord calls us to abandon all the other relationships in our life and all the other responsibilities we have in our life in order to serve him. When we do that... We talked about idolatry, but isn't it a form of idolatry when a pastor or a ministry leader says, "Without me there, God will not accomplish his purposes. If I'm not at that committee meeting, if I'm not preaching every single Sunday, if I'm not involved in every detail of the new sanctuary we're building, if I'm not there, God cannot accomplish his purposes without me."

Rich Stearns:

That's idolatry and it also sends a horrible message to your team of people who are there to pitch in and to help. You're saying, "I don't trust you to do this work. I have to be there. I have to oversee it. I have to make every decision." And so I just think Christian leaders have to be really careful about this because... In the last chapter of my book, I said, "You have to understand something that what God is doing through you, it involves you, but it doesn't depend on you."

Rich Stearns:

I get examples. Peter was involved in leading the first century church, but the outcome did not depend on Peter. David was involved in slaying Goliath, but it didn't depend on David. Paul was involved in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles, but the outcome didn't depend on Paul because God works through us and he will use us. But he will prevail and he will get his work done. And so that should be a relief to a Christian leader that, "I'm involved, God wants me to work with excellence and to use the gifts he's given me. But the outcome doesn't depend on me and I can trust God for the outcome."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Let's go a little bit further with that. You are trying to address/solve global poverty. That's a pretty big mission, I would say. It's not like, "Oh, a better city, better neighborhood." It's like, "No, the world poverty. We want to make a dent." I talk to leaders pretty much every day who are like they don't know when to stop. There's no stop line because ministry never ends, or if you're running a startup in the corporate world, that's a very intense season and you believe in it. If you're a founder, you believe in it. You really do. How did you turn off for a Saturday? How did you sleep at night knowing that... or how did you even draw because you're dealing with limited resources? You probably can't be in every single nation. You can't spend the amount of money you would love to spend in a country that you're in. How did you get peace around the boundaries that you had to inevitably set in your ministry?

Rich Stearns:

Yeah, part of it comes to this issue of trust in God. I felt God called me to World Vision. I felt God gave me certain gifts that I could use at World Vision. There's a phrase I like to use that, "All we can do really is the best we can do." If we make best efforts... And best efforts don't mean most hours, it just means using our giftedness as best we can to serve the Lord, to motivate our teams, to hire and fire the right

people for the ministry, to set the right direction for the ministry. We really must trust God for the outcome.

Rich Stearns:

The other thing that I learned is... You've heard the expression, "Is the glass half full or half empty?" When you work in the humanitarian space and people are dying every day and there's more refugees and more conflict and more famines, it's very easy to live in the half empty side of the glass. "I've got to save one more, I've got to save one more." In other words, you grieve over the people that you aren't able to help because you can't help everybody. I found that I had to live in the glass half full side of that equation to celebrate the ones we could help, to celebrate the victories, to live in the celebration culture of, "Look at how many people we've been able to help. What could we do to help more? What are our best ideas?"

Rich Stearns:

I used to say to our staff, "God loves these children more than we ever will love them. We can take that to the bank. We can know that. But God is also using us to respond to them. And so what can we do next and what can be our next effort?" Again, you slip into that idolatry that, "Unless I do this 80 hours a week, 7 days a week, it won't happen." In a way, that's not trusting God. Yeah, I think of the disciples, when Jesus, "We're going to feed the 5,000," they were, "You can't do it. It would take eight months wages. There's no way. We've got to send the crowd home and everything." Jesus is like, "Chill, chill, I got this. Just follow me and follow my orders and watch and learn. Watch and learn."

Rich Stearns:

When I came to World Vision, in the first five or six years I was there, revenues tripled, revenues tripled. I don't think it was because I was a genius. I think it was because God was saying, "Thank you, good and faithful servant, for being willing to serve and making your gifts available. Now, sit back and watch." Because my first day at World Vision, I was cowering in my office saying, "Lord, I hope this wasn't a huge mistake. I hope you know what you're doing because I have no idea what to do next. I am helpless." I was whimpering. It was like God said to me, "That's exactly where I want you, Rich, helpless and whimpering, and totally dependent on me. Just be faithful and watch because I got this."

Carey Nieuwhof:

How did you develop the skills for what was ahead for you at World Vision? How did you figure out along the way? Sure, you have an MBA from Wharton, very impressive. But as you know, that doesn't fill in all the gaps. How did you begin to figure that approach out?

Rich Stearns:

Well, one of the first realizations I had at World Vision because... I just had a conversation this morning with another group about when you come from a corporate environment to a ministry or church environment for employment, the cultures are so radically different that you can't just come in and lead in exactly the same way you did in the for-profit world because the culture is very, very different. Sometimes people entering a ministry culture... I use the metaphor of remember when the old spacecrafts would hit the atmosphere, they're returning to earth and there's tremendous turbulence and heat and there's heat shields. Everybody holds their breath because they lose radio contact. And for eight minutes, you don't know if the spacecraft has burned up entering the atmosphere, or whether it's going to parachute safely into the ocean.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I remember. Yeah.

Rich Stearns:

I think when you enter a Christian ministry from a corporate world and probably vice versa, that culture shock is real. You have to adapt as a leader to a different kind of culture. When I got to World Vision, there was that turbulence as I was trying to adapt my leadership style to. The organization simultaneously was trying to adapt to me and a new leadership and a new point of view and a new vision. And so we met each other in the middle, but I realized that I didn't have skill sets in some of these areas. Public speaking was very important. I was not a preacher, I was not a public speaker. I was a CEO. I used to do PowerPoint presentations to my board, but that was the extent of my public speaking.

Rich Stearns:

And then I also realized that the staff wanted a shepherd. They wanted a pastoral person who could interpret the ministry theologically and inspire them out of scripture. Again, I had no seminary degree, no theological background. So I had to grow into those spaces. I found over time that the Lord gave me or helped me identify skills that I never even knew I had. I never thought I'd write a book, I said earlier and yet I've written four now. It was like, "All right, Lord, maybe I can do this. I can try." And again, step out on faith and see if the Lord will help you to do these things. But there was a lot of adaptation I had to do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Were there things, or what were the things that you tried to bring in from the corporate world that just didn't work in a nonprofit context, corporate tactics that you're like, "Yup, got to abandon that?" Were there any like that?

Rich Stearns:

Well, corporate leadership, it certainly isn't always like this, but it's pretty hierarchical. It can be very hierarchical and very authoritative. It's the old thing like, "Here's the organization chart. I'm here, you're here. Any questions?" In other words, the corporate leader is and can be an authoritarian dictator because you're higher up in the organization chart, you get to make all the decisions. If people don't like the decisions, that's...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Or you're the founder in some cases.

Rich Stearns:

Founder right is another issue that we deal with in the nonprofit world, or even in the for-profit world. The founder has all the answers. And so the best corporate leaders don't lead like that, in my opinion. They're much more participative and collaborative. But I found at World Vision that I had to be even more collaborative because my legitimacy as a leader did not come from where I sat on the organization chart. My legitimacy came from how I embraced the ministry and understood it and could communicate the ethos of that ministry to all of our constituencies. And the first one being our staff.

Rich Stearns:

And so in the staff's mind, this guy who had been selling fine China 30 days ago was an interloper who frankly had no business leading World Vision. I had to prove something before they could even accept me as their leader. I had to prove that I saw them, I heard them, I wanted to learn from them, and I was going to let them be my guide initially until I got to a place where I felt I could start to make these decisions myself.

Rich Stearns:

And so that's where humility... I've got a whole chapter in my book on humility that I came in with a humble spirit to say, "Guys, I know I seem like an illegitimate leader. All I can tell you is that I feel like God called me here. I'm being obedient and I need you, each and every one of you to help me find my way through this together. You're critically important my team. Teach me. Help me learn." I didn't come in like a know-it-all that said, "All right, starting Monday, here's what we're going to do. You're going to do this and you're going to do that." It was much more of a learning curve for both of us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to flip this question both ways. What would you say the business world could learn from the church world? And then I want to ask you what the church could learn from business.

Rich Stearns:

Yeah. I think the business world... Interesting, when I left Lenox, some of my colleagues there chuckled and said, "Yeah, I guess Rich is retiring early. He wants to leave the pressure of the corporate world and retire to a nonprofit." That was their attitude. After being at World Vision for a year, I said to some of my former colleagues, I said, "What I am asked to do here is at least three times as complex as what I was asked to do at Lenox." I said, "First of all, we're trying to solve the oldest problems facing the human race, poverty, genocide, famine, pandemic diseases, human trafficking. We're trying to solve the toughest problems facing the human race, doing it, living off donations."

Rich Stearns:

I thought of that old saw about Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, the famous dance pair from the 1940s and '50s, where Ginger Rogers said, "Fred Astaire got all the credit, but I had to do everything he did backwards and in high heels." At World Vision, I felt as a nonprofit, we had to do everything that a for-profit had to do, but we had to do it backwards and in high heels, living off donations. Every time we got a donation, the donor wanted to know how much our overhead was. "Are you spending too much on overhead?" Nobody ever asked what my overhead was at Lenox who bought my products, or if you buy a Toyota, you don't care what the overhead of the company is. You just care whether the product is good.

Rich Stearns:

Anyways, I think that there's something in the non-for-profit world, which I'll call soft power versus the hard power of the corporate world. In fact, Jim Collins said this in one of his writings, Good to Great, that hard power is not that challenging because if the leaders got a gun to your head, the organization chart, I can fire you if you don't obey me, that's not leadership, he said. But a nonprofit leader has to lead through influence and persuasion. You've got to influence and persuade donors, you've got to influence and persuade pastors and church partners, you've got to influence the US government on policy issues.

Rich Stearns:

And even with your staff, you can try an authoritarian approach to your staff. But in my experience, it doesn't work very well in a ministry context or a not-for-profit world because your staff feel like they want to be full partners in the cause. They've all given up salaries that could be much higher to work for the cause. The cause is important to them. They want to be treated like full partners, not like employees. And so nonprofit leadership, I think offers some challenges that a lot of for-profit leaders would probably fail at.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It'd be interesting to talk to like, for example, Adam Grant, who's written a lot in that area. I didn't ask him about that when he was on the show. But that seems to be where younger generations are moving. They want to be seen as collaborators, even in the for-profit space. They want to work for a just cause. It needs to be about more than the bottom line. How would you flip it? What do you think because you're involved in the church and nonprofit world? What do you think the church and nonprofit world could learn from the for-profit world?

Rich Stearns:

Well, first of all, there are just a lot of skill sets, principles, techniques that transfer very well from one organization to another, good management, financial accountability, risk management, HR practices, performance management, strategic planning. I said earlier that businesses and big corporations are learning laboratories for these things. They have a lot to teach, a lot of best practices that have met the test of competitiveness as businesses have to compete for customers and for market share. Some of those things are great. You bring them over with you to a nonprofit environment and they will work there as well. They might have to be modified in some way.

Rich Stearns:

I talked earlier about excellence. I think we need to aspire to excellence in the not-for-profit world. There is this... sometimes in ministry and you mentioned it earlier, Carey, this notion of, "Excellence is a worldly value, performance is a worldly value and we're in a spiritual space." When you pray with somebody in the morning, it's hard to give them a brutal performance review in the afternoon, or maybe fire them on the next Friday. And so I think sometimes in a church environment, problems go unaddressed for a long period of time because in the culture, it's hard to address those problems.

Rich Stearns:

In fact, I was just on the phone this morning with a pastor who I'm on his advisory council. He's got very much the same thing. He's got a group of people and a leader that is not working with excellence. "What do I do? How long can I let this go on? I don't want to fire her." We had a conversation about, "Well, if there's a hole in the boat and you don't plug it, the whole boat sinks, the whole boat sinks, or if there's a bad apple in the barrel and you don't remove it, the whole barrel spoils." The leader has to do something and there has to be some excellence as well.

Rich Stearns:

And so I think churches and ministries have to be willing to make tough decisions for the health of the organization and even for the health of those individuals. Because I believe in most cases, when someone's failing at their job, they know it, they probably know it before you know it, and they're

drowning and they need somebody to get them out of their misery. I used to say there's no such thing as bad people. There's only good people in the wrong job. And that same person who might be failing in the job they have might be very successful in another culture, another organization in a different job that's more suited to their gifts. And so sometimes when you terminate somebody or move them from one position to another, you're doing them a big favor and you're actually helping them come to terms with their own giftedness.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, the time has flown by, but I'd love to double-click on that for a second because that is you've honed in on something that I've found in my experience. Not only difficult for me, I've done it before, don't enjoy it, but almost impossible in some faith sectors, which is terminating someone. You're right. Some people are like, "I just can't do it. I don't think it's Christian." What are some best practices you've seen in terms of allowing someone to leave with their dignity and to do it well?

Rich Stearns:

Yeah. Well, first of all, it should never be a surprise to someone that they're getting terminated. I think the healthiest thing is an ongoing dialogue around performance between a leader and a subordinate. You clear expectations, frequent conversations about how are we doing toward those goals and towards those expectations, give and take back and forth. I used to do 360 reviews on all the people that worked for me so that it would not just be my opinion of their performance, but their peers could weigh in and say, "Here's what we think about their performance," or the people underneath them could say, "Here's what we think about their performance." So get a clear view of an individual.

Rich Stearns:

And so over time, hopefully, that individual, if they're failing in the job, it's not a surprise that sprung on them very suddenly, but it's something that there's been multiple discussions, there's been multiple opportunities to turn things around. Maybe there are some resources brought in to help an executive coach or a mentor or some things like that. But when all of that fails, then I think it's time for the conversation that, "It's probably best... You're not succeeding in this position, you're not able to meet the expectations I have for you here. It's time for you to move on." And if there's not another position that is more suitable for that individual and there usually isn't, you have to make the hard decision of termination.

Rich Stearns:

That's hard. It's happened to me twice. It was two of the hardest days of my life. In fact, the person I terminated at Lenox was a vice president and he'd been there for many years and everybody loved him. That was even harder. He wasn't a bad person. He was really well-liked, but he was failing in the job. I told him that day, I said, "I know this is not the day for you to hear this." But I said, "You're a very talented and gifted person. But you're failing in this environment and your skill sets are not the right ones for this place at this time. There's another job out there where you could thrive, another culture, another job, another organization where I'm sure you could thrive. If I see you in a year, I said, I wouldn't be surprised if you looked back on this day and said, 'Rich, it was one of the best things that ever happened to me because I did find another job. I am loving it. I am thriving.'"

Rich Stearns:

And lo and behold, a year later, I was at the tabletop show in New York. I went into a competitor's showroom, Waterford Crystal, and there he was across the room. He had been hired by Waterford and our eyes met and he walked over to me and I thought, "Oh-oh." I said, "Hey, how are you doing?" He said, "You know, Rich? I love this company. I love my job. I've got a new lease on life." He said, "A year ago, you told me that this could be a good thing in my life." He said, "I wasn't ready to hear it at all." But he said, "You were right." He said, "Like a withering plant, I needed to be repotted into some fresh soil. I've been blooming here and I love it."

Rich Stearns:

He said, "By the way, we're going to kick your butt in the marketplace this year." I said, "Well, touché, I hope you try. I don't hope you succeed, but I hope you try." It helped me as a leader to say, "Well, that was a good thing," because he was drowning and somebody needed to throw him a life raft. It was hard to do. I never enjoyed firing anybody, even people that were terrible employees, I never enjoyed because they have families and they have responsibility.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I had a feeling this was going to be a delightful conversation when I was working for your book and it's turned out to be just that. Any final thoughts you want to leave with leaders today, Rich?

Rich Stearns:

Well, one of the reasons I wrote the book is I wanted to talk to leaders in the secular marketplace because most Christian leaders are not in Christian ministry per se. They're working at Amazon or Microsoft or General Motors. They're working at a university, they're working in a hospital system. And so I think one of the issues that pastors probably deal with as well in their congregation is people that compartmentalize their faith and they basically understand themselves to be Christians, but in their workplace, they don't see that as a place to take their faith. Of course, we live in an increasingly secularized society where faith is not welcome in the workplace and faith conversations are not welcome. And so I'm not talking about proselytizing people in the workplace.

Rich Stearns:

I say this in the book, that on Sunday, some of these leaders, they hear about putting on the full armor of God from Ephesians. But on Monday morning, if they don't put on the full armor of the world to go into that difficult workplace, they're going to get eaten alive. It's a dog eat dog world, and, "Pastor, you don't understand what I'm facing in the place that I work." But I want to encourage those leaders that God has placed you in that workplace to be his ambassador. 2 Corinthians 5:20, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God is making his appeal through us." And so if you work at one of those places, you're the person that God wants to make his appeal through. You're an ambassador for Christ in that workplace. How do you be an ambassador? Again, not by proselytizing. An ambassador tries to embody the character, the values, and the priorities of the one who sent them.

Rich Stearns:

And so as a Christian in the workplace, if you go into that... Maybe it's a toxic workplace, maybe it's a difficult workplace. But if you go into that place as a leader of integrity, if you go in there as a leader of humility, if you're a forgiving person that forgives others when they make a mistake and asks for forgiveness when you make a mistake, if you go in there with a loving spirit, love your neighbor as yourself, well, those neighbors are your coworkers. Do you love them in the sense that you want the

best for them? Can you be the leader that says, "It's not about me succeeding, it's about helping every one of you succeed. Because if everyone of you succeeds, I'll probably succeed as well. I'm here as your coach, your mentor to help you accomplish the goals and to realize your God-given potential."

Rich Stearns:

If you can be that kind of leader in a difficult workplace, you are an island in the storm for the people and your character is your witness. My advice is take God to work with you, take your faith to work with you. You may be the odd man out, you may be unusual in that workplace, but I've known very few places that didn't appreciate a leader with that kind of character. You will be an oasis for the people who work under you because you'll create an environment where they can flourish even in a difficult organization.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Rich, tell us where people can find you and the book online.

Rich Stearns:

Well, the book is available pretty much online everywhere books are sold, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, christianbooks.com. You can find me on Twitter @RichStearns. You can find World Vision at worldvision.org, or World Vision Canada, I think is worldvision.org.ca.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Rich, thank you so much. It's been a joy.

Rich Stearns:

Yeah, it's been great to talk to you, Carey. I hope what we talked about helped somebody somewhere.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Helped me, I can tell you that. That's great. Thanks, Rich. Really want to thank Rich for that. I found it an inspiring conversation. I've got a What I'm Thinking About segment coming up in just a few minutes. By the way, we're going to change the end of the podcast up. Stay tuned for that. Okay, that's coming later this summer and fall. Pretty pumped for that. But I'm going to talk to you about what church leaders can learn from business leaders, some thinking I've done over the years. I love both spheres. I love church world, I love business world. I know a lot of you have a foot in both. Next episode, though, I want to tease out what we got coming up. We got Anthony O'Neal. Well, he's got a debt story and so much more. He's one of the Ramsey personalities. We had a fascinating conversation. Here's an excerpt.

Anthony O'Neal:

Now, let's be real right here on the show. I never said this anywhere else. When I got my insurance check, they gave me \$10,000 more than what I paid for the car. I say this all the time. Cash is king. When you pay with cash, you're going to negotiate a price. My tip is what I tell everyone. When you buy a car, you buy it the last three days of the month, and you go in there with a set number. If you're really, really good, as long as you got the money, you wait to negotiate the last day of the month because everyone wants to close out the month and get their commission check. That's exactly what I did. I told the guy, "This is what I'm going to give you. I'm paying for a cash. I can have it wired to you within the next two

hours." He literally waited until three hours before they were closing. I sent him the wire for the amount that I wanted.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's next time on the podcast. And just so you know, we have show notes for every episode. If you want more on today, you can find them at careynieuwhof.com/episode424. That includes transcripts. And that is courtesy of our partners. Also, coming up, if you haven't subscribed yet to this podcast, we have Steve Carter, Jennifer Kolari. She's a psychologist. It's just fascinating. Pete Scazzero is back, David Allen from Getting Things Done, Chris McChesney, Amy Porterfield, Erin Meyer, who wrote the book with Reed Hastings on Netflix culture, fascinating conversation. Horst Schulze, founder of the Ritz-Carlton is coming back onto the show. CEO of the Philadelphia 76ers and New Jersey Devils, Scott O'Neil, will be on. We're booking guests right through to the fall. Pumped for that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, I want to talk to you about what church leaders can learn from business leaders. These lessons I think are particularly relevant as we reopen the world. Thanks again to our partners. If you haven't yet signed up for World Vision's free web series, Right Side Up Soul Care with Danielle Strickland, go to worldvision.org/carey. And XPs, lots of you listen to this show. If you're an executive pastor, they've got summit cohorts sponsored by CDF. You can go to cdf.capital/cohorts to enroll or learn more today.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What I'm Thinking About is some surprising lessons that church leaders can learn from business leaders. I spent a lot of time in both worlds and love talking to business leaders and entrepreneurs and just a few thoughts. One thing is I love how business leaders really are focused. You get a variety in business too, but I'm not being cheap. There's a big difference between being a good steward and being cheap. Never confuse frugality with morality. In a nonprofit world that can be all about being frugal, don't confuse frugality with morality. Do we want our gravestone to read, "We kept charity budgets low"? That's a really good question. It's like, "Boy, we saved a lot of money. Didn't make a big difference, but we saved a lot of money."

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so I would encourage you cheap is often this happens at the board level, on the staff level. I do not believe in ostentatious, I do not believe in outrageous. But I think honestly, you can do a better job with your ministry if you choose to invest in the things that matter most. Not to excess, not to get into crazy territory, but I've just seen so many churches die of cheap. Don't confuse frugality with morality. They are not synonymous.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Second thing, and this was finance-related too, start with the size of the vision, not the size of the budget. A lot of the time we look at our budget and go, "Okay, that's all we can do." But your vision, it's something I learned from Andy Stanley years ago. But honestly, money follows vision. If you have a really big vision, you will tend to find the resources for it. If you start with, "Well, we have \$8, that's all we have..." And listen, I'm all in favor of bootstrapping and being responsible and all of those things, but really focus on the vision and the money has a way of taking care of itself.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Third thing, and this is just something that I think is really hard for a lot of church leaders, is quickly eliminate things that aren't effective. Businesses do this all the time. They pivot over and over and over again, "This isn't working, we'll kill it." And so many churches have activities that they've run for years and years and years and years that are not effective. But then nobody has the courage to say, "You know what? We're going to stop doing that." Businesses do that all the time because they have to. If they don't, they're not in business. So think about eliminating things that are ineffective.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Fourth principle is this, create value for people, don't extract it from people. You can end up using people in the name of ministry and what you really want to do, and I think the best leaders do this is you want to create value for people. It's more about as my good friend Jeff Henderson talks about all the time, what you want for people than what you want from people. And that's just an important thing to keep in mind.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then finally, number five, make your ask personally and specifically. Too often church leaders will stand up there and say, "Hey, we need a whole lot of volunteers." You know what? Your high-capacity people are probably not going to respond to that. If you need an ask... And venture capitalists, we've talked with people who have graduated from Y Combinator, venture capitalists here on this podcast. You know what they do? They go and ask specifically, and they say, "Hey, I'd like you to invest in this company in the future. I'd like you to serve. I want you to be on the board." They don't just put something out on the internet and go, "Hey, anyone want to serve on the board? Hey, anyone want to volunteer?" Yeah, you got to do those broadcasts once in a while. But if you really want the best people, you need to meet with them face-to-face and ask them specifically.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Those are some things, just a few things I've learned from... yeah, from the business world over the years. There's obviously a lot more. And what are we doing with this show as we move on? Well, we're going to be approaching 500 episodes. I'm rethinking a few things. One of the things I'm rethinking is I want to do some coaching. I'll be telling you about that soon. But I'm going to give you some coaching on time management as we head into the fall. Listen to future episodes. We'll have an opportunity for you just to leave me a voicemail and I will coach you specifically on this segment of the podcast. In the meantime, thank you so much for listening. Thank you for leaving ratings and reviews. Thank you for sharing this with friends, and I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer:

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