

Announcer:

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

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, hey everybody and welcome to episode 426 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof. I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well, we're going in a different direction today. I've always appreciated Ed Stetzer, but particularly, over these last few years. We're going to go in a different direction. We're going to talk about things I don't usually talk about and won't for a long time. The evangelical reckoning, QAnon, conspiracy theories, and why extremes are not the norm. If you follow my writing, you know I'm a little bit concerned and have been for a number of years now, about the extremism building in leadership, and particularly, church leadership. So we're going to talk about that today. And yeah, Ed Stetzer is the voice that I wanted to bring in to have that conversation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Today's episode is brought to you by Pro Media Fire. You can sign up for social media management and get 10% off your first year at promediafire.com/carey. And by World Vision, sign up for their free web series Right Side Up Soul Care with Danielle Strickland at worldvision.org/carey. I'm going to come back at the end of this episode when we're done and do the What I'm Thinking About segment and talk about how to lead with love. I know that sounds like all flowery and all that stuff, but I think it's really important. I've got five principles that I think can really help you develop a voice that I hope will be helpful. At least these are the principles that I try to use in guiding my voice. So that's coming up at the end of the episode.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And for those of you who, I know a lot of you know Ed. If you don't, Ed Stetzer PhD serves as the Dean of the School of Mission, Ministry and Leadership at Wheaton College. He is the executive director of the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center. He has planted, revitalized, and pastored churches, trained pastors and church planters on six continents. He has two masters degrees, two doctorates. He's written hundreds of articles, and is the regional director for Low San north America. He's a contributing editor for Christianity Today, a columnist for Outreach magazine. In addition, he's founding editor of The Gospel Project and hosts a national radio show, Ed Stetzer Live. And in his spare time, he has family and sleeps, I think some days. Anyway, Ed's one of those people whose output just completely blows me away.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, we're going to go down a road we don't usually do. I would like any comments to be respectful, but hopefully it's helpful clarifying and illuminating because here's the goal. The goal behind having this episode and doing what we're doing, what Ed and I are talking about, is to get us moving in the right direction and fulfilling our mission and getting rid of the distractions and noise that can sometimes take us down and maybe get in the way of doing what we're trying to do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So here's a shocking fact for you. On average, people are spending two hours and 24 minutes a day on social media. That's a lot of time. So clearly, the people you want to reach, which is what we're about on this podcast, are on Facebook and Instagram. But, here's the struggle. The algorithm is changing constantly, design trends are shifting rapidly, and creating engaging content is hard work. Online growth is challenging, and that's where Pro Media Fire can help you. They have a dedicated social media team that will handle the strategy, the design, the content creation and actual posting for you. So with Pro Media Fire, you save time and grow online while their digital team does all the work. Complete social media management and digital growth is just a few clicks away. As a listener of this podcast, you receive 10% off your first year at promediafire.com/carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And the deepest truths about living like Jesus often come from people who have been through a really difficult time. And that's why World Vision has asked Danielle Strickland to put together a brand new series called Right Side Up Soul Care. And World Vision and Danielle will help you listen to the voices of leaders from around the world who have used their suffering and persecution to build and strengthen their faith. It's a free web series, and you can get it by going to worldvision.org/carey. That's worldvision.org/carey. Here's why they're doing it. They're really concerned about leaders and keeping you fresh for the long haul, as am I. And with all that said, let's dive into my conversation that I hope will be helpful and enlightening and maybe perspective giving, with Ed Stetzer.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ed, I'm so glad to be with you again today. Thanks for coming on.

Ed Stetzer:

Well, technically I'm with you. So I'm excited to be with you today cause it's your show.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, that's great. Hey, for those of you who are watching on YouTube, you've got this nice step and repeat behind you. I was joking that maybe you were being drafted, finally. Right? Somebody saw the talent and they're like, "Yeah, totally, you're going to play for us next season."

Ed Stetzer:

We had none of these things like last year, but now we've got these logo things. Everything's a logo and I got to move to make sure it's not a logo, but yeah, 2020, 2021. Everything's got a screen now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, you're right. You're right. Well, this has been quite a season for all of us and for you as well. I want to start with something positive because we're going to cover a lot of challenging areas today. What are some of the best things you've seen in the church or in leadership in general over the last year, year and a bit?

Ed Stetzer:

I've seen a lot of churches step up, stand out, stand in the gap to seek to show and share the love of Jesus to their communities. I think though, it's been a tough year for the people who call themselves evangelicals. I think it's been a year where many local churches, evangelical and others, and we're living

on mission. And you know, for someone who for 20 years has been writing angsty blogs and podcasts and books about how the church needs to be on mission and leave the building and all that sort of stuff. And suddenly there was no choice and many churches, I mean, there are always outliers that get depressed and all this, but what I've seen is so many churches step up and really seek to be the hands and feet of Jesus in their community. And I think that's super encouraging. It hasn't been without cost, but it's been super encouraging to see.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's good to know. When you look, because you deal with a lot of students, graduate students mostly, but you're surrounded by students at Wheaton and at the Billy Graham Institute. Correct me on that title.

Ed Stetzer:

Wheaton College Billy Graham Center. But yeah, it's all good.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Billy Graham Center. That's what I was looking for. Thank you. What do you see in terms of hope for the next generation? Because it's mostly like we have a young listenership here for the most part and there's a lot of like, they're pretty much all Gen Z going through right now for undergrad. And then you got a lot of Millennials who are in the graduate program at this point. So what are you seeing in the next generation?

Ed Stetzer:

We do see, as Christian practice and identification predominantly has declined both in the US and Canada, you see a lot of people who were sort of nominally Christian in their commitment and faith who no longer identify as that, but many of the nominals are becoming the nones, the N O N E S. And so with that, it has actually created, among those who are using the name Christian to describe and define themselves, who are seeking to live for the Lord. It actually makes it more counter-cultural. So one of the things that we've seen is that though Gen Z, Millennials are less religious as a whole, just using the term of the research. That those who are seeking to be faithful to their understanding of the gospel, or really, we could say that of other religions too, but they tend to be more so, whereas I'm a Gen X-er and Boomers before us. People can kind of like be on the edges or maybe not in or not out.

Ed Stetzer:

But I think one of the things we're finding with Millennials and Gen Zs is they tend to be out more, actually out more than they are in, but those that are in are in more than maybe they've ever been before. So it's a fascinating contrast to see, but that shouldn't shock us. I think as we have lost and continue to lose our home field advantage, those who are going to follow Christ are going to stand out in the culture and that's going to also encourage them to more intentionally follow Christ, because why not? If you're already in and you're already hold these strange views, why not live it all out in your life as well?

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's interesting. You and I both have ties to Canada. I live here, you married a Canadian. We've talked about that numerous times, but one of the things I've seen, particularly over the last 18 months, I feel

like COVID just accelerated it, is the move to a post-Christian culture in America. So it's been sliding in Canada. You could argue, pick the decade, it happened in the sixties, the seventies, the eighties, but by the nineties, by the time I had moved into leadership, Canada was for all intents and purposes of post-Christian culture. Talk to our Australian, New Zealanders, English friends, European friends, they've all been in post-Christian culture now for decades, but America seems to have really slid there. It's been sliding gradually, but the last five years, the last 18 months in particular, it seems that there's a bit of a cliff. Would you agree or disagree with that? Or because you mentioned the separating, losing the home field advantage, all those things. Is that what's going on underneath that, Ed?

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah, I think that's part of it. So there was a real helpful article that Ross Stout that wrote for the New York Times. He's actually a former evangelical now practicing Catholic, New York Times columnist. And he wrote an article that really, I think, speaks well to this. People go Google it, it's called Waking Up in 2030. And what's happened, he wrote this in 2020, what's happened is that of course the pandemic didn't happen in isolation, right? We saw racial injustice, we saw economic collapse. We saw it then rebound and we saw a political division, unprecedented political division and what he writes about in the article, and I think it's right on, is that this is accelerated social change. So for example, where the same-sex marriage revolution, you look from Stonewall into Obergefell was decades.

Ed Stetzer:

The transgendered revolution is years. And so the acceleration of those things and some of the acceleration are things that I think as followers of Jesus, I would be in favor of. I'm thankful for a greater awareness of issues of race that I saw after the murder of George Floyd. We actually saw many evangelical pastors say, "How can we learn more?" And some of the books that were written by followers of Jesus just went number one New York Times bestseller. When people said there's a reckoning, and then of course there was a backlash to that. But I think that's a good thing, a greater awareness. On the other hand, there are parts of that acceleration, even on issues of race, where like, well, that's not really where we see the Bible teaching on issues of morality or culture shifts and more. So, in some ways it's helped us to see some things, but in a whole lot of ways, it has accelerated cultural changes that could be, and probably are, detrimental to people who are followers of Jesus in the culture.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. We have business leaders, but a lot of church leaders listening as well. And most of the people listening to this podcast are somewhat invested in their church. What are some of the top issues teaching leadership as you do that you see leaders having to navigate over the last few years? Changes the church has to embrace, leaders have to embrace. What is sort of the old tool kit and new tool kit on that one, Ed?

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah. So I think every 60 years it appears, I'm going to the term America for just a second, recognizing that you are Canadian. Who doesn't love the Carey Nieuwhof podcast? My daughter actually will be moving to Canada in the fall to attend the University of Toronto. So not only are we continuing our Canadian-ness, but she'll be living out. She's also a citizen. I'm the only one in my family who's not a Canadian citizen.

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Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, we welcome you anyway.

Ed Stetzer:

Canadians are very welcoming.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Also my wife and I and my son all graduates of U of T. So there you go.

Ed Stetzer:

Oh, nice. Nice.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Pharmacy law engineering, pharmacy theology engineering.

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah. People don't know that I had the privilege of having you and your wife on our podcast talking about her new book as well. I'm sure you, I hope you've mentioned it at some point on your podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yes, you did make an oblique reference to Toni's new book, Before You Split. Insert ad here.

Ed Stetzer:

I would imagine at some point you should do that. So let me give the bigger picture. I think every 60 years, and again, David Brooks writes about this in the Atlantic. Every 60 years, America seems to go through a cultural convulsion and it certainly impacts Canadian context as well. It's a Western thing, but I think right now we're going through a cultural convulsion and the last cultural convulsion was in the sixties and it was tumultuous and turbulent at a significant level. And I think that one of the things I want to say to leaders of all kinds. Church leaders, pastors, leaders in business, and more is that this cultural convulsion is not a pandemic experience alone. Remember too, that it was the pandemic, it was the economic collapse and then rebound, but not for everybody everywhere.

Ed Stetzer:

It was the political division in the US. In the course of a year, we had two impeachments and the division.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a lot historically.

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah, stunning. It's stunning. You've never seen a level of division except in 1968. I don't want us to miss this. Right? So, 1968 is perhaps the most divided year, more divided than this year, in many of our lifetimes. So 1968, the protests of much larger magnitude were taking place. Vietnam War protests, Civil Rights protests, and escalated into violence. In Chicago, Mayor Daley basically said to the police, "Just

break everyone's heads open." And they did. And then Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4th, 1968, and Bobby Kennedy assassinated later that year as well. And what a lot of people forget is 1968 was also a global pandemic. It was called the Hong Kong Flu.

Ed Stetzer:

It wasn't controversial to label it that then, but so you've got this global pandemic, cultural division, people talking about America coming apart at the seams. And so here we are in another cultural convulsion. So two things I want people to see. One is I don't think this is over when the pandemic is over. I think we've entered into a season of tumult and turbulence that will probably last three to four years as North Americans question their institutions, really determine that people have not been honest with them and they are going to find them other ways. And they're going to find those ways untrustworthy. And this is all what we're seeing going on with social media, the creation of new news sources, the echo chambers, all these sorts of things. This is not dissimilar to what we saw in 1968. It's a cultural convulsion.

Ed Stetzer:

Also in 1968 for church leaders, if you mentioned Martin Luther King Jr, who by the way, was not a popular figure in 1968. Now he's universally acclaimed, but you know, very unpopular. If you mentioned Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights protests, some people in your church were happy. Some people your church were unhappy. Churches split. Pastors were voted out just like they are in 2020 and 2021 when you mention George Floyd or not, when you mention Black Lives Matter or not, when you mention masks or not, when you mention vaccines or not. So the level of conflict that we are dealing with now is, in many ways, inconceivable for a lot of the pastors and church leaders on the younger side. I don't remember 1968. You don't remember 1968. We read about it in the history books, but the level of conflict they walked through lasted five, six years. And I think that's going to recur, and we're going into a season where we're going to have to build up, as leaders, greater reservoirs of resilience to face a higher level of conflict that's going to be ongoing. And we're going to have to grow accustomed to that level of conflict in our churches, our ministries, in our leadership positions, our businesses and more, and that's not good news. I just think it's factually true.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I appreciate you sharing that perspective and mentioning 1968. So I just want to put a pin in something for listeners. We'll link to this in the show notes, but you can go back some episodes and the link will be, but I had a chance to interview Eugene Peterson before he died. He talked about 1968 in Baltimore. And then one of the interviews I've done with Gordon MacDonald, he talked about Martin Luther King and exactly to your point, he was just emerging. They were both emerging as young pastors at the time. And like King is pretty much universally revered today, but he was reviled in many circles in 1968. And it was every bit as tense as a lot of the leaders are feeling. What is the tool kit? So we'll link to that in the show notes. That was the point. If you want context on that, because there's very few people who remember that anymore. Right? Like I was three, you were in diapers I'm sure at that time in 1968. So what's the toolkit you need when it's this tumultuous? What are you trying to encourage leaders to pay attention to?

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah, part of it I think is growing accustomed to a greater sense of dissatisfaction from the people that we lead. So I used to make the joke, and I think I wrote this in my book, Comeback Churches. I said,

"Listen, if 5% of your church isn't mad at you, you're probably not doing anything significant." And then I would follow it up with a joke. "But if 70% of your church is mad at you, you need to slow it down." You need to pace yourself better. I mean, that's just the leadership principle. There's going to be people who are unhappy. I think that 5% is now resetting at 20%. 20% of people. I mean, think about we did an interview early on in the pandemic with Andy Stanley about their decision to pause services until the end of 2020.

Ed Stetzer:

And then eventually they started back. They're back meeting now. But one of the things he said was, I think it was in our interview. He said, "I've had people that I've pastored for 20 years who, because we paused meeting, or because of something else we did, largely has decided that I've abandoned everything that I ever believed and they've left the church unhappy." And so many people were unsure. You know, I just preached out at Saddleback Church in Southern California. And the question is, who's coming back and how many people are coming back? And I think some of that question is there's a great resorting going on. So people have left this church because they required masks and went to this church that didn't, but then this church over here did mention the name George Floyd or others, Ahmaud Arbery or wherever else may be in that city or context.

Ed Stetzer:

And those people were attracted to that church because of that, other people left that church. So we're in this great resort that's going on right now. And it's mainly driven by cultural currents rather than gospel fidelity. And I think ultimately this is new for leaders. I do think you can't sit back. I mean, I think one of the questions that during the Civil Rights protest or in 2020 people held high signs were "Say his name." I think a generic thing, we're against racism, didn't speak to a whole lot of people. So what does it mean when you say the sign was related to George Floyd? So you say that name, how do you explain that? How do you walk people through that? So I think for leaders, it requires them to build up a greater resilience, be ready for that level of conflict. Probably a greater courage, because you're going to have to say things that will bother some people. Should I say something about vaccination or not? This is a huge issue in the US right now. Where vaccine hesitancy-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Canada too. Oh my goodness. My feed's blown-

Ed Stetzer:

Very high amongst white evangelicals. And we, at the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center, we have been bringing on evangelical leaders, Jay Baker from the CDC, Francis Collins from the CDC, others to talk about and to encourage people to, yes, just let me say it, to encourage people to be vaccinated. We think that that's an important thing. Well, that takes a certain courage and decision. Finally, we looked at resilience, courage. I would also say, you're going to have to figure out what your filter is. I'm a cultural commentator in a way that you're not because you chose not to be. I mean, you're all of our leadership guru today. But you know, for me, I write articles in USA today or in CNN or in Christianity Today that I try to speak to evangelicals or to the culture.

Ed Stetzer:

And I will tell you, I don't think pastors and most leaders should not do what I do. They should do what I say, not what I do. So there are times to speak up, right? So when I wrote an article that USA Today put

their number one story for almost a day and a half, it was on Oral Roberts University, Sweet 16 and Cancel Culture. And I know nothing about sports. I had to Google what the Sweet 16 was, didn't even know what it was.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's why we're friends.

Ed Stetzer:

Exactly. That's the way we bond. But I think for me, I need to say something about that. And do you, as a leader of a company or a business, you'd say something about everything? Um, maybe not, but I think after January 6th, most pastors said, "We got to say something about the Capitol riot."

Ed Stetzer:

I think after George Floyd's murder, most people said, "We need to say something about that." I hope that most pastors would say something in and around sanctity of life or to speak up for Christians' ability to hold views that are now outside of the mainstream of culture in their workplaces. So that filter is really tricky. And you're going to have to figure it out. If you say something about everything, you're probably burning down your own church from underneath you. But if you never say anything, where's the courage to speak to some of the issues that indeed the Bible speaks to in 2021 and in any year?

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a really interesting point because being on social, like pretty much everybody is these days, Ed, I would say sometimes the silence has been noticeable. I think you're right. I forget exactly how you phrased it, but there is a time where you need to speak up. There is a time where you need to engage beyond virtue signaling or whatever else everybody else is doing in that moment. But I've also seen some leaders, because I follow a whole lot of church leaders and some business leaders, lots of business leaders. My experience is church leaders probably feel the compulsion, some do, to comment on everything. And it's almost like that burning down your church thing. It's like, where is the line? Because there are some times where I think once or twice it's been an unfollow. It's like, "Wow, you're constant running narrative on mask, no mask, every small finding on vaccine. Like, are you the news agency for your followers? Like, you know that the people you're trying to reach are watching, right?" I don't see business leaders doing that nearly as much as I see church leaders doing that. Any further nuance for leaders who are trying to figure out when to shut up and when to speak up?

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah. It's a great question partly because a lot of times our constituency likes when we say certain things. So I will tell you that personally, because I'm someone who is deeply committed to the pro-life cause, and for concern about the unborn and someone who really is concerned about racial justice. .

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:24:04]

Ed Stetzer:

I am somebody who's really concerned about religious Liberty and someone who thinks it really matters how we speak of immigrants and refugees. I am immensely frustrating, people tell me, because someone said to me recently, "Why don't you just pick a team? You can be critical of so many different

things." They said, "Why don't you just pick a team?" I said, "I have, it's just not the political party. It's ultimately, as a follower of Jesus." But I would be much less engaged in some of these issues if I were not a commentator. So that's literally part of my job at Christianity Today, I comment there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

As a columnist, as a writer.

Ed Stetzer:

Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay. So put on Ed's local pastor hat because you've done that job more than a few years.

Ed Stetzer:

I would say too, that one of the things that gets tricky is that the churches I serve, so right now I'm the interim pastor of a church in New York City, and does that rial people up there? I've had people at churches that I serve, I'm teaching pastor at High Point, or I was the interim teaching pastor at Moody for four years. Four years during the two election cycles, and so it's tricky and I have to remind people I'm a cultural commentator. I'm here going to teach and preach the word of God, and then I'm going to leave. But if I was pastoring day-to-day, what I would say, the filter I would use is, what can I say that might help people to understand the situation better from a Christian lens, from a biblical worldview that would advance the conversation rather than ultimately to undermine it or set it on fire?

Ed Stetzer:

So I would say... and pastors asked me so... January 6th, my phone lights up, should I say anything? And my answer generally was, "Yes, you should say something." Partly because these people went to the floor of the Senate and the House and they prayed in Jesus' name and I think there's an expectation that we might say rightfully something. But again, I would say that that's doesn't mean, and I would say the time before that, where people texted me was after the election in the US. My phone blew up saying for people, "Do I pray for President-Elect Biden the Sunday after the election? Because one of the things we find here is a significant number of Republicans still to this day, think the election was stolen.

Ed Stetzer:

And so am I making a political statement by praying for President-Elect Biden? What I told people was is that, "At this point we should pray and pray for President-Elect Biden," and I'm trying to remember how far I was. It might not have been the first Sunday, because there were still some... It hadn't been called by most context, but even that was controversial. So, I would say George Floyd and the names of others as well. So for me, what is that? Three times in a year, a very tumultuous year, encouraging people to say something is not an overwhelming number of times because what I don't want is people to say my agenda is anything other than as local church pastor than making much of Jesus, showing and sharing the love of Jesus, helping people trust and follow and grow and discipleship. However, people can't grow as disciples if that discipleship is other-worldly and doesn't address the issues of the world that are around us as well.

Ed Stetzer:

So partly, let's say I don't have to make a statement about this, but one of the things we could learn among evangelicals, particularly white evangelicals in North America is that statistically, they tend to be anti-immigrant at a higher level, not just to anti illegal immigrant or undocumented alien, but they're anti-immigrant at a higher level than almost any other group. Well, is that something that is from the Lord or is that something we want to disciple and grow through?

Ed Stetzer:

Canada visible minorities is the language that is Canadian much more so, but Toronto and Vancouver have more people born in another country than they have people born in Canada, living in those cities. So the Christians are more accustomed to it but here... So it might not mean that I got to get up and say, "Here's my view of immigration reform," but it might mean that I need to teach what it means to welcome the stranger, what it means to show the love of Jesus to people who are here and more so not everything has to be a statement. Some things can be a discipleship process as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Are those local leaders who would say, "Well, Ed, I feel like I need to comment. I need to comment on vaccines, masks, whatever, whatever headline and whatever news source I look at, I feel like I need to add my little piece on it, on my social profile, in my sermons." What would you say is at stake to that leader? What would you counsel them to do? What are they not seeing that they should probably see in your view?

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah. I think one of the things that, and it's always this tricky balance is that how do you bring people along without losing them? One of the things, if you're 10 steps ahead of people, you lose them. So one of the things you mentioned vaccines. So one of the things I've encouraged pastors and church leaders to do, and I've got a forthcoming national article on a secular publication about this is, I encourage church leaders to post the vaccine selfie and to encourage people, "Hey, I got the vaccine, I want to encourage you to consider it as well." Or something light like that. Now, there's going to be some people who have already gone down the rabbit hole and are convinced that it's some sort of gene therapy and they're going to be getting better 5G reception after they get their vaccine than they got before the vaccine.

Ed Stetzer:

So you're not going to persuade those people, but those people need to be lovingly said that, "This is not honoring the Lord, your obsession with conspiracies," and I will tell you, the QAnon people and some of these most dire conspiracy theory, the anti-vaccers, the Venn diagram between those two is basically a circle, and so you're not going to persuade them. I wouldn't empower them, but I do think that part of my job is to lead, is to say to my congregation, because there are a lot of people who are not, they haven't gone down the deep dark rabbit hole and believe the wildest conspiracies. They're just like, "Well, should I do this? Do Christians do this?" And so I think it's a good thing. You don't have to do a sermon on it. You can just give a nudge on it and people can... And encourage it, is not requiring, you're not requiring vaccine passports to go to church or anything of that sort.

Ed Stetzer:

So, what I would say is something... A subtle nudge can help lead a congregation in a way that could be helpful for them in the long run. In this case could save lives. What I would say on the other hand is I

think that as people... These things have become politicized. The pandemic didn't cause the politicization, but it did exacerbate it. So, now masks or non-masks is actually a controversy. On the other hand, vaccination and masks ought to relate. If you get vaccinated, we ought to have some more similar paths to greater engagement and more. So, what I encourage churches to do, now of course, you're in Canada, so you're still mostly locked down in all of Canada. Yeah. It's hard. It's tricky because Canada doesn't have a domestic vaccine production industry, made a bad bet on a vaccine that didn't work out and now countries are just taking care of themselves first.

Ed Stetzer:

Now I think the US is going to start out an extra soon based on the fact that vaccine hesitancy is pretty high. So hopefully we can partner and help as well, but what I would say is, is that, we've tried to make paths where, for example, the church I'm serving some in Denver, I'm helping out a church there called Cherry Hills, and we have a 9:00 AM mask required service. So if people feel vulnerable, they want to... Maybe they got a child with asthma. Maybe they're going through chemo. Everyone there wears a mask. If you're not wearing a mask, you shouldn't come. In fact, you'll be asked to leave. And then there are people who are vaccinated or moved on different places. I recognize that CDC has guidelines. CDC has never really created mandates on these issues. CDC, US Center for Disease control.

Ed Stetzer:

So I would say that then we have, it's called mask recommended, we don't say mask optional because we're still living in a pandemic. We say mask recommended, but I can tell you that the 11 o'clock service people are not wearing masks. Those who feel that they're coming to 9. So to try to find a place to say... And one of the things I think we can lead, I think it's very appropriate for you to say, "We want to be careful, there are people in our church who are at risk and who are vulnerable." But remember there's still some of those people have gone deep down the rabbit hole and they'll say, "No, this is all a hoax. There's no pandemic. This is all fake." And those people, that's not a difference of opinion.

Ed Stetzer:

Those people have been misled into false information, and if we're followers of Jesus, who says He is the way, the truth and the life we don't need to pander to people who have been misled and are spreading false information. Instead, what we need to do is to nudge people towards a better and a more truthful understanding and lead in ways that don't alienate unnecessarily. And that gets tricky when you start talking about race because I'm talking to you from the Billy Graham Hall basement. Right above me is the Billy Graham Center Museum. And when I take people through the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center Museum, I stop at the place where there's a picture of Billy Graham and Martin Luther King and I remind people that Billy Graham took down the ropes at Chattanooga and said, "We're no longer going to do integrated."

Ed Stetzer:

But I also remind people that he did not participate in the March on Selma. He did not participate on the March on Washington, and actually it was vocally critical and said later the greatest regret of his life was not participating in the civil rights movement. So what I would say is, don't hear what I'm saying, and I don't think Carey is saying this either as, don't speak up on prophetic issues of our day, find ways to move people and nudge people along, teach them the Bible, teach them the word of God, challenge them when they're being misled but ultimately we have to have the, remember I said earlier, resilience, yes, courage and filter. Resilience, courage and filter. That courage is going to need to be turned up for

some people because they're just... They didn't go into ministry to have people mad at them, but you're not going to make it the next two or three years if you're not going to be willing to have some people unhappy about you taking stands on the right things.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, and I appreciate your perspective too, because I think there are definitely issues. We are in a pivotal moment. Historians are going to write about these years, as long as there are people. This is a major epoch in history, and for you to be silent, I think is a mistake. On the other hand, it is not a prophetic office in my view, to be commenting on everything on your newsfeed every day. You're probably missing that. Okay.

Ed Stetzer:

Let me just say, if I was a pastor, I'm kind of a fake pastor. I shouldn't say that because people, I love people and, but I'm the interim pastor of this church in New York City. But if I was a actual pastor, I would say and write a lot less because I wouldn't be spending all my time trying... Part of what I do is, I try to persuade evangelicals to respond in gospel focused spirit filled ways and I try to persuade the culture that of evangelicals are okay and here's how to deal. So that's my role. That's not my role if I'm pastoring First Church of Wherever Kansas.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, and, and to that point too, sometimes I think if you're a non-Christian listening in on this podcast and there's probably quite a few non-Christians listening in this podcast, you're like, "What are you guys even talking about?" There's a weirdness to this dialogue. I realize how important it is, but it's like if you're trying to reach a city, I always thought in our country it's liberals and conservatives and your country it's Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Libertarians, all that stuff. Your community is diverse. Your church may not be, but your community is diverse, and if you're really trying to reach people, you're trying to reach all people, people of different backgrounds, ethnicities, races, people with different voting tendencies, socioeconomic status, and the constant ideological drip in your sermons is getting in the way of reaching the people that God loves. And a lot of this seems to be as much ideological as theological. Would you agree with that, that this is as much about ideology as theology or is that?-

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah I think so. So I think they intend to track together on certain things, right? So it's not as much the case in Canada or much of the rest of the English speaking Western world, but in the US, largely in some ways because of the actions of the parties over the last few decades, is that their ideology and theology has begun to align, and some of that has to do with issues like pro-life and religious liberty. So those have aligned more easily. I aligned much on those issues. Where it gets tricky is that, I'll give you an example. So, I've been a vocal supporter of immigration reform for, I don't even know how long, 15 years. I've signed over the evangelical immigration table and more, and my view was almost identical to George W. Bush's view, very similar to the, what's called The Gang of AIDS view. So that when Marco Rubio happens to be a friend and several others who were Democrats and Republicans. And that was considered a... George W. Bush, compassionate conservator that was considered a conservative view.

Ed Stetzer:

Well, what's happened is, most evangelical leaders could have got behind the evangelical immigration table we followed that pattern. What happened was, is that ideology continued to shift and now nationalism has arisen and not just in the US. Those elections, in Quebec where... Yeah, so, nationalism has risen and what's happened is, it's taken evangelicals, at least here, white evangelicals particular, with it. So now I'm, according to a Snopes article, Snopes debunks urban legends, one of their religions about me, that I'm in George Soros funded open borders radical. Though, actually I held the same view that George W. Bush held and so now again, that was debunked and it's not true, but let me tell you, if George Soros wants to give me millions of dollars and is fine with me using it any way that I want, I will tell the world the good news of the gospel with that money.

Ed Stetzer:

So he's not yet though, however. And I'll just do a great evangelism campaign, but my point is, is that ID... One of the questions I think evangelicals need to ask is, the reckoning evangelicals need to faces is, how much now are we being shaped by ideology, less by theology? And I think the reason we can tell is when the ideology shifted and nationalism is making a global resurgence, much of the church tribe rimen just shifted with it, which tells us that it's more driven by the ideology than it is by theology, and that is a cause, I think, for great concern.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Why are so many Christians falling for conspiracy theories? Suckers? You've written about this, you've talked to NPR about this. What do you think it is? Why do we bite that?

Ed Stetzer:

I wrote about it in September of 2020 and widely panned by the most conservative voices on the Twitters. They basically said you can actually track them. We call them the Theo bros. So they all said, "This is just Ed Stetzer virtue signaling. There's no problem with conspiracies. There are bigger problems," and everyone got real quiet about that on January 6th, when the QAnon supporters that I wrote about in September of the year before breached the Capitol and the stunning debacle, that that was. So, I do think it's a real issue. It's a substantial issue. Now, why? First of all, it's not just a religious issue, though it does impact evangelical-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It has religious undertones, maybe.

Ed Stetzer:

It does have religious overtones particularly here, but QAnons also big in France, which is one of most secular countries in the world. So here it has religious overtones.

Ed Stetzer:

And I do think here QAnon and other conspiracy theories can often run on the tracks that religion has put down. So, I believe that there is a God of all the universe who's working behind the scenes, that there are evil forces that are working behind the scenes that ultimately in this great moment, God's going to reveal the fullness of that, Christ is going to return. There's going to be this great revealing, but until then, there's subtle signs and God's at work in the background in ways that might surprise us. And

of course that sounds a lot like Q and it sounds a lot like this cabal of cannibalistic pedophiles that are running media and all kinds of other things.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That whole theory.

Ed Stetzer:

So what I would say is that people get drawn to it because they're trying to make sense of the world. There must be somebody doing something and then they see some hints that point to it. So I'm very sympathetic to people who have been influenced that way because I do believe some common things. I ended up doing this, well that NPR interview you mentioned, I tried to explain this and to irreligious people, and I don't necessarily know that... I'm not talking about the host. I don't know if they were religion or non-religion, broad audience, I'm talking to 3 to 4 million people and I'm trying to explain this, but I do think that people right now are afraid, they're unsure and they're isolated, and when you're afraid and unsure and isolated, conspiracy theories just escalate and with easy access to online, that is just created to continue this. And it's interesting, Facebook bans all the stuff afterwards and actually, was it Parlor got kicked off of their server and had to shut down?

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah, exactly. So, but it was actually Facebook where most of these things were planned. So, they kicked Parlor off of the interwebs, but it was actually private Facebook groups where people were self radicalized and ended up storming the Capitol. So what I would say is, how did they get there? Well, what is a private Facebook? It's a community. It's a community that cares about things, that care begins to be multiplied. Those views begin to become radicalized and the end result is people without outside input, and The Washington Post did a great story on, and we can link to it in the show notes, I'll send it to you, great story of this guy who attended this church, this mainstream, I think it was a Southern Baptist Church in Kentucky whose pastors started seeing him get down this rabbit hole and they tried to say to him, "Hey, you don't want to do this?" And he distanced himself more and more and more and later he'd come back and say, he was just almost bewitched by this.

Ed Stetzer:

And I think there are some... We can see early some of the patterns of people who believe these things, and we want to reach out to them before they get too far down the rabbit hole, and then it becomes a self perpetuating cycle of an echo chamber that's just heartbreaking. Let me say too, one more thing. City of Rome, Italy was 2,000 years ago, had hot and cold running water and people maybe are unaware, but it was the biggest city in the world, was a million people and there wasn't another city with a million people in the west until London.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think the Roman baths, the ruins. It's unbelievable.

Ed Stetzer:

It's unbelievable.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You have to be there. And it's like, "Oh my gosh." This was 2000 years ago.

Ed Stetzer:

How can they do that 2000 years ago? And the reason is they had these pipes made of a metal that was malleable in a way that other pipes aren't, it was called lead, and so they ran lead pipes to all of their waters, to their drinking and everything else. And people have... I don't think it led to the fall of the Roman civilization, but it led to serious health impacts. And I'm telling you that 50 years from now, maybe two years from now, people are going to look back at the social media age as the lead pipes of the Romans, that it was simultaneously feeding and killing us at the same time. It was quenching a thirst and poisoning us at the same time, and I think social media... When this era is made into history.

Ed Stetzer:

I think social media will be seen as a huge downfall. And I did a fascinating interview with Karen Swallow Prior about this and she helped me see that like every 60 other cultural convulsion, there's a longer time when people have an information revolution and they don't know what's true anymore. They don't know where to find what's true, and they question what's true because their everything's undermined and it's a bad season. It's a dark ages, and she calls this often the Technological Dark Ages where people don't know what to believe, they're being drawn in down rabbit holes that can lead them to echo chambers that can fool them and radicalize them, and if we don't find a path through, I'm not sure that Twitter and Facebook banning everybody is the answer to that because again, you're already seeing people getting caught up in that who are what you and I consider mainstream Christian voices. When they say things that are not appreciated.

Ed Stetzer:

But man, I tell you, I don't know all the answers, but the next few years are going to be a tumultuous... I almost feel bad saying this, but I've come to this conclusion very strongly that if the pandemic ends by the Fall, which might be in North America, we recognize that in places that are-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Globally it's heartbreaking.

Ed Stetzer:

But if it ends in North America by the fall, we're not done. We've got 2, 3, 4, 5 years of cultural turbulence while people just question everything, and I hope, back to 1968. It was 1968 when a guy named Chuck Smith said to his daughter, "I want to meet a hippie." He was a Foursquare pastor. She goes out and brings home a hippie, his name's Lonnie Frisbee. They start a Bible study on Sunday nights. Soon they have coffee houses up and down the west coast by the 69, 70, and it explodes into a movement that 20 to 30 million people become followers of Christ and maybe cultural times have tumbled actually lead with churches will be faithful to a fruitful season of gospel ministry.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, such a helpful narrative. I want to put a couple pins in things for leaders. These are going to be big show notes, apologize to my producer, Erin, for this in advance publicly, we'll link to all that in the show notes. So, one of the books I read this year was very similar to your view because I think right now, everybody wants to get back to normal. Everyone wants to put their head in the sand and just pretend it

isn't happening the way it's happening. And it's like, can we please go back to normal? Can we please have some peace? Yuval Harari said something really interesting, and again, not a person of faith to my knowledge or at least certainly not the Christian faith, but he said, "One of the natural responses to the chaos that we're seeing is cynicism."

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's just like, "Oh, you want to put your head down, you're just so angry at everybody." Et cetera. He said, "And this really challenged me spiritually." He said, "The proper answer is bewilderment." And I thought that was really helpful. It's like, I'm just bewildered by all of this and I don't know which end is up.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:48:04]

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then I think it's George Freeman, I may have his name wrong, but he wrote a book called, *The Storm Before the Calm*. And he said the same thing, that we're in for a decade of tumult. And he talked about economic cycles and political cycles, both culminating around 2030. So I think this is really helpful conversation because if we think, "Oh, I'm just going to get everybody back in the building, everything will go back to normal," I'm not sure that's a realistic view of what's ahead. And it's going to make leadership more demanding, no matter what you do. I mean, quit your job, you're still living in this world, right? So let's, with all that said, let's talk a little bit about this reckoning that you've written about. You feel like the church is going through a reckoning, which I think those on the outside are grateful to see. It's like, "Have we got some sins we need to own?" And, many people inside the church are either denying it or like, "No, I don't think so." What do you mean by that? Reckoning?

Ed Stetzer:

Well, of course, I wrote an article after the January 6th riots in USA Today and it was widely, probably the most read thing I've ever written. And based on the... I literally got two inch high of paper, letter responses, let alone thousands of emails and tens of thousands of tweets and threats and everything else. But USA Today put the title on it, *Evangelicals Face a Reckoning, Donald Trump and the Future of our Faith*. And let me just say what I said. I started with, "No one likes to admit they were fooled. It's tough to admit we're wrong. Now, many evangelicals are seeing president Donald Trump for who he is, but more need to see what he has done to us. It's time for an evangelical reckoning." And I was really very careful in the article. People who read through it could see that.

Ed Stetzer:

And I talked about how there's a subset of evangelicals and let me just say at the beginning, people make complex decisions when they vote. They walk in and they say, "These are my values I care about, who would best get us there? Maybe, there's two or three paths to get there." And one of the things I did in the article, which I think surprised a lot of people was, I really just pointed out that how for many people, they made a difficult choice between, I think it was Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump the first time, and then Joe Biden, because of their concerns about lots of very important issues to them. And so I very much defended people who were those President Trump supporters and voters who voted and knew what they were, saw him for who he was, and for what he was doing.

Ed Stetzer:

But there's a subset of people who just didn't and they were all in and they were fooled. And I quoted Chuck Colson. We have the Colson scholars here at the Wheaton College, Billy Graham Center, and Colson said this, "When I served under President Nixon, one of my jobs was to work with special interest groups, including religious leaders." He says, "We would invite them to the White House, wine and dine them, take them on cruises aboard the presidential yacht." And he went on to say, "Few are more easily impressed than religious leaders. The very people who should have been immune to the worldly pomp seemed the most vulnerable." And I think ultimately, just a lot of people were all in and in a way that I think people of color, evangelicals of color, were like, "How could you just push aside all of these concerns? What he says about this or what he did about that."

Ed Stetzer:

And then of course, now everyone is saying, "Well, it's just mean tweets." It wasn't just mean tweets. I mean, this was of course right after January 4th riots as well. So, for me, I want to say to people, I love the words of Martin Luther, "Towards those who have been misled, we are to show ourselves perennially affectionate so they may perceive that we seek not their destruction, but their salvation." And I would say that we need to say to people who were fooled into thinking that President Trump was some, now not everyone was this way, right? I say in the article, "I don't believe everyone who voted for Trump was fooled or foolish. And Trump voters are not Trump." These are my actual words. "They're not responsible for all his actions, but they are responsible for the way they responded and for their own hearts." But when I saw, for example, I don't think from what I know, you're not a charismatic Pentecostal and I'm not that much, though I got a little bit of that in me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, I'm a former Calvinist and Presbyterian, so there's not a lot of emotion up here.

Ed Stetzer:

So, you can't have those things. But, all the prophets who prophesied that President Trump would win the election and then all the Christian leaders who were actually just fooled on some of the big lie about the election being stolen, even though Bill Barr and the head of Alexis Security said it wasn't and all this sorts of stuff. Then at the end of the day, we got to say, there's a reckoning. Why were we so easily enraptured by a thrice married casino owner who is very clear on his own life and his own journey? And I think that's the question that still needs to be addressed now, for white evangelicals in particular. And I think a lot of evangelicals of color are asking why were they as well?

Ed Stetzer:

So let me say again that, because you have listeners right now who are throwing stuff at their electronic device that they're listening to this on, is that in the article-

Carey Nieuwhof:

You've got a few people upset, yeah.

Ed Stetzer:

Fair. And I'm okay. A few people were upset at the article. But in the article I made very clear that there were people, and this actually get people mad, I interviewed David French and I'm like, "David, can you not find any place," this is paraphrasing, because he basically says people were either fooled by Donald

Trump or complicit or something like that. I said, "Well, what about a third option where people just thought he was the least of two choices. They didn't want to go along with the Democratic approach to whatever, abortion, sexuality, transgender views, whatever it may be." And so for him, there wasn't that. I think there is. I think there are people probably if you're listening to Carey Nieuwhof, you're probably maybe in that realm of, "I made a tough decision between two people."

Ed Stetzer:

But you also know that there were people, millions upon millions of people, who were fooled and January 6th was an eyeopening moment for them. Some actually wrote about it. Some actually said more. And what I would say is, I think a lot of people lost their witness in a way that they felt the need to defend often and always the indefensible. And there were times when it just didn't need to be defended. And my hope is, as one who's, I didn't support President Biden, then candidate Biden. I didn't support President Biden. I've been publicly critical of his stance on the Equality Act. These are things that are not Canadian, so I won't spend too much time.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah.

Ed Stetzer:

But I just think for us, we have got to acknowledge that there needs to be a reckoning of how evangelicals, certain subset of evangelicals, reacted and responded to the affection of this President that ultimately cost them a lot in the process. And I think a lot of people know that now and we're still picking up some of the pieces from that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And that goes back to your earlier point about the constant, our earlier point, about the constant running narrative that so many leaders feel compelled to have, right? If you're weighing in on all the small stuff, it's big. I'd love to go back to the Chuck Colson quote. And I'm so glad you connected some dots for me because it must've been your article I read and that quote haunted me when I read it. I never heard it before. Can you read it again? And then I want to unpack it because I think about that on a regular basis. And when did you write that, months ago? Like four months?

Ed Stetzer:

So, this was January 10th, so four days after the Capitol riots.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, so four months ago you wrote this. I think about this all the time and I hadn't looked it up. So just read it again please, Ed.

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah, yeah. It's been haunting for me because partly, I mean, I've been privileged of being to the White House and had talked to different people in leadership and more, and they're all, I don't know if you, I think they all want you to think they like you and that's part of how it works. But anyway, so here's what... So Colson who we know as this prison ministry reformer, prison fellowship and more, but he was

like, again, most of us are able to remember this, but he was like the hammer in the Nixon administration.

Carey Nieuwhof:

He went to prison. He was the center of the scandal.

Ed Stetzer:

Oh yeah and goes to prison. So here's what he says. "When I served under President Nixon, one of my jobs was to work with special interest groups, including religious leaders." Let me say today, the Biden administration has that. That's Josh Dixon. Before that it was Shannon Royce with the Trump administration or Paula White. Everyone has that. Nothing wrong with that. Says, "We would invite them to the White House, wine and dine them, take them on cruises aboard the presidential yacht." And then here's what he says. "Ironically few people were more easily impressed than religious leaders. The very people who should have been immune to the worldly pomp seemed the most vulnerable." And it's heartbreaking. But here's the thing, when I say that, for most of our listeners, there are evangelical leaders in the US that come immediately to mind and say they-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ed Stetzer:

... And that's what I was writing about. Those leaders, and I hurt for some of them, those leaders and millions of people who joined them as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And okay, so let's unpack that a little bit, because I not only saw political influence and I'm not making myself immune from that. Okay, I'll put myself under this. This is not a judgment thing. I think I'm too easily impressed sometimes by power, by influence, but celebrity culture flashes through your mind and how many Christian leaders, business leaders, sports leaders have we seen fall? And this is a passion of mine to try to figure out how do we stop this or prevent it or minimize its happening, where they got impressed by the trappings of whatever office perk came with it. And there's the political power. We saw all the pictures on Instagram of people standing in the White House with the President, whoever that President might be. And I thought, "Oh my gosh, am I easily impressed?" Why are we so vulnerable?

Ed Stetzer:

I think it's inherent in all of us. So first of all, we're not wired for celebrities. So that's why pastors and Christians need to be very careful because it's just not. I mean, Eugene Peterson talks a lot about that and that's part of the challenge. I would say that there's something to being listened to. So I would tell you as one who's, I was actually, I'm trying to figure out what I should say on a widely listened to podcast as someone who was helping a Republican candidate in 2016 that you would know, he wanted to meet some evangelical leaders. I was happy to do that. I could still feel the sense, like I got the cell phone of someone, everyone in the world would know. And as someone who's been approached by other politicians and presidential candidates... And in 2016, I think I interviewed five of the presidential

candidates, Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush, Ben Carson, and I mean, it was great. And everyone was super nice to the evangelical because they wanted to recruit the evangelicals.

Ed Stetzer:

But it still feels good to you, right? And so Democrats will reach out. And I'm not so naive. So my local representative is, or Congressman here, is a liberal Democrat. And he asked me to come on a Facebook live with him. And I basically said, "I can say whatever?" And he said, "Yeah, you can say whatever." And so, it's nice to be consulted. It feeds our ego. And here's the thing that many of the closest supporters of President Trump and President Biden have already found out is that, when you stop agreeing and speak prophetically, your access is suddenly diminished. So what happens is, you are incentivized to always just slavishly support whatever it is that that person is.

Ed Stetzer:

I've written about this. I think I was quoted in the Washington Post about it. I was asked to be on President Trump's advisory council and I declined to be on that. And to be fair, that wasn't, I mean, at the time they, I think they were asking everybody who was an evangelical leader to be on the council.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, they missed me. Go ahead, yeah.

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah. Well, you're Canadian, so we don't count you in American elections. But what I saw was, is that people, because then all of a sudden, some egregious things come up. So what do you do when the Access Hollywood bus tape comes out? Well, many of those Christian leaders said, "This is horrible. And this is, it's inconceivable that somebody who says these things could be President of the United States." Well, they weren't consulted much anymore.

Ed Stetzer:

And some who really walk... I actually saw him, because I don't think everyone, I think people got caricatured and sort of lumped together because a couple of people in that who really did actually use their influence to work towards criminal justice reform and to help soften some things related to immigration so there's this weird balance. Someone needs to be at the table, but if coming into the table, you end up having to sell your soul to stay at the table then ultimately, that's not Christian. This is always the challenge with Christians and politics is that it's never pure as the Bible study that we're leading Sunday morning before church. It's tricky to figure how ultimately that is. And so for me, people try to draw in. I've actually determined that I've declined any invitations recently that have been both for the Trump and Biden administration, though I've worked with both administrations through their office's faith-based partnerships. Anything that involves going and being in pictures and being whatever, I just say, "I don't know how that helps."

Ed Stetzer:

All that does is create in me, "Look, look, here's a picture," when we can actually do some things together. And I would just say that under the Trump administration, we work with them with their opioid. I testified at some of their mental health and the church's response to that. We worked with them and met in mental health issues. And the Biden administration, we're working with them on

vaccine hesitancy. We're working with them on rural ministry, rural options, both for churches, both the Trump and Biden administration. So there are places and ways you can do that. I just don't want to get caught up in a place where people use you for their agenda.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. It reminds me a little bit of the now oft repeated social media mantra that, "If the product is free, you are the product." There's a certain sense in which there's a very specific thing going on here. And then I would say, just to be totally clean, I haven't been invited to the White House, but there are times even in thinking of celebrity culture where I will land a guest, like Ed Stetzer, or someone that was a cold call and I'll be like, "Yes, I can't believe they're going to be on my podcast." And what is that? I think underneath that is a bit of insecurity, just to be totally transparent. I think there's some insecurity under that. You're right, it makes you feel good. It makes you feel like perhaps you've arrived and that's something that I probably need to check on a regular basis. But that Colson quote, we'll put it in the show notes if people want to find it. It was so powerful.

Ed Stetzer:

And let me add too that I think it's worth noting too, that Evangelicals, and recognize not all your listeners are evangelicals.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, of course.

Ed Stetzer:

... Your listeners who identify as Christian. But evangelicals have an inferiority complex because culture has sort of pushed us aside. They feel marginalized and more. And so then when it comes to President Trump, President Trump, just, I mean, for a lot of evangelicals, there was a president who liked us. And so worship leaders were in the oval office. And I would say that during the 2016 election, I was interviewed for an article in Slate Magazine. I'll give you the link to put in the show notes. And it was why Hillary Clinton bombed with evangelical voters and I was the main source for the story. And I said in there, "It's as if Hillary Clinton was working to alienate evangelicals and it worked."

Ed Stetzer:

And what I would say is that there's very much a sense that if you look even at President George W. Bush, who I think evangelicals by and large loved. I think he used the term evangelical to divine himself at times. He goes to a Methodist church, primarily. I know he listens to Tim Keller sermons. But where the administration didn't look like that. And one of the things that nobody ever picked up on, I wrote about this once, but I don't think anybody cared, is that there were more active evangelicals in President Trump's cabinet than any cabinet in the history of the country. And so, people like Purdue, who's a Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Woodstock, Georgia. People like Ben Carson's an active Seventh Day Adventist. People like the Devos'. I mean, who's who. They've been key donors to all kinds of things from Global Leadership Summit, everything else.

Ed Stetzer:

These are people that we know. Now, people might not like them, but these are people that we know. So if you got a president who, even though clearly there's some personal issues that were dominating

decades of his life, but he likes us. He really likes us. And I think a lot of people were persuaded by that. And I would also say too, and I wrote about this in the article, that as one who supported his Supreme court nominations, vocally and aggressively, as I did. One who was deeply appreciative of his executive orders on pro-life issues and more. So, what I would say, it's complex. My article was asking the question, and I think the question still remains, is how do we address that subset of evangelicals who were so all in, that they're willing to sacrifice unity in their church? They were willing to not listen to the concerns of maybe people of color.

Ed Stetzer:

And they just dismissed all that because he's our guy. And I think that has some longterm ramifications that still need to be addressed in the church. And I call that an evangelical reckoning and I'm writing a book in and around that space. That might even be the title of the book, The Evangelical Reckoning, though it's not about, well, it's not about politics. But it's ultimately, what, I think the last decade, hasn't just made evangelicals into something else, it's revealed who evangelicals are and there's some real issues that need to be addressed for that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I think you made a link back in one of the pieces I was reading getting ready for today, to Mark Noll's book, The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind, which I haven't read and I want to read. It was like, "Better buy that book." But it was about something that I'm really passionate about, which is the poverty of intellectual thought that seemed to be existing in the church. When did he write that? Eighties? Nineties? It was a while ago wasn't it?

Ed Stetzer:

Gosh, I don't know. It's a classic around here.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It was a classic. It's not like three years ago.

Ed Stetzer:

I'll look it up, because I don't remember.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What I really appreciate, Ed, is obviously there are going to be people with very different opinions who are listening to this podcast and might vehemently disagree with you. But what I appreciate about it is, it is a thoughtful conversation that seems to have pushed beyond the polemics, the arguments, the all caps debate that seems to have defined the last little while. And I hope shows like this actually spawn more thoughtful dialogue.

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah, I'd be interested. Yeah. So 1994 is when the book was written, by the way.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay yeah, '94.

Ed Stetzer:

I just was emailing Mark today. We love Mark around here. But I'm interested. It's your show. And you can edit this out later if you don't like it, but this is not generally your space, but you obviously thought it was important. So why have this conversation? Why alienate what could alienate some of your audience by having us talk about this?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'll tell you why I wanted to go here because we could have talked about a million things and we have. I mean, I've done a lot of racial justice episodes. We've hinted on this. But I've really appreciated your perspective Ed, because I feel like you take it from all sides. I feel like the conservatives don't like you, the liberals don't like you, the independents don't like you, evangelicals don't like you. The Progressive's struggle with certain pieces and something about that tells me and you're right, I'm not a cultural commenter. I'm not a theologian. I basically write on leadership. The secret mission of the company really is all the stuff that they didn't prepare you for. I went to law school, I went to seminary, graduated law school had no idea how to operate a law firm.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Graduated seminary, didn't know how to run a church. I could read my Bible better. I'm really grateful for that. Knew some theology, read some history. It was awesome. But, "Oh my gosh, herd these elders, I have no idea." So that seems to be my space. And yet what I'm trying to do is I'm trying to create a space where people who disagree can come together and not be disagreeable. And I've found you to be a very reasonable, refreshing, encouraging voice in the midst of what honestly drove me to the cynical side of my personality. I'm an optimist, but I'm looking at this going, "Can I please wake up in another world?" I've had a lot of those days in the last year. And so I've really, really valued your voice. How do you withstand... Is that a good enough answer, because I have a couple more questions?

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah, I was just asking. I would say that I would want to nuance... It's your answer, but I want to nuance it. I think that online, makes something, I think the kind of ideas that I'm talking about are actually not that controversial and based on the fact-

Carey Nieuwhof:

They're long form conversations that you can't have on social.

Ed Stetzer:

Exactly. So, I'm speaking at the same place as I'm speaking. I'm engaging evangelical leaders and denominations and everything else in the same way I've ever been. So it hasn't been like... But what happens is, first of all, only 7% of Americans are on Twitter and only half of them are active. So it's a little bit confusing to people. They go on Twitter and they see this crazy response to something and it's not real world. So what happens is, so I think partly is the kind of things that, the reason I think you and I resonate, partly we just, we know each other we're friends, but I think the reason that you read that and say that's a reasonable, evangelical voice is because that's what probably most of evangelicals like you think. And it's like, "Oh, I agree with, I think Ed's reasonable, because I agree with him."

Carey Nieuwhof:

I agree.

Ed Stetzer:

And so what happens is-

Carey Nieuwhof:

All the time on my team, it's like, most people are not on this poll or that poll. Most people are in the middle and we want to create a thoughtful dialogue with people. And I don't agree with all my friends. I don't agree with all my guests, but it's like, "Please, can we have a civil dialogue about this?" Because I get better.

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah. So what I would say is that the reason I even have a space or a voice is I'm a conservative evangelical who I think articulates what a lot of evangelical centrists to conservative evangelicals think. But it's actually the loudest voices that make the news.

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:12:04]

Ed Stetzer:

So when I'm on NPR's Morning Edition and people are like, "Yes, yes, that's what I think," but that's because that's what most of the other pastors in your community think. And that's what most people in your church think. It's actually the other people are sort of the outliers and where you and I are. And that's what I want to say to our listeners is that this is not like... Yeah, I know it doesn't make Fox News. I know it doesn't make even CNN or MSNBC. But pastors, church leaders, Christians in business all across the country are trying to navigate these things and they care about racial justice and they care about the unborn and they care about religious liberty and they care about immigrants and refugees. And I think one of the reasons... So when I go to a place, a pastor will say to me, "Thanks for being our voice."

Ed Stetzer:

And I'm like, "Well, it's not that hard." I'm just kind of saying what most pastors and Christian leaders I know think and say, just saying it in a public sphere, because I've been given the blessing and the opportunity to do that. So I think we are being fooled into thinking that the extremes are the norm and I don't think they are. And I think to a lot of people, you and I will be extremes to some parts of the world, but I think ultimately that's the voice that God's called me to have is to help to say, "You know what? That's just a reasonable, conservative, evangelical view on those things. And so we'll keep pressing in." Who knows? Who knows?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm so glad you said that Ed, because I really think that's why I haven't had this conversation very often. I'm trying to deescalate the venom, not escalate it. And I think that's where I'm like, "Okay, who's safe to go there and have it?" And that's why long form, we're an hour and 11 minutes into this interview. You can't do this when you have 40 seconds on Fox News or on CNN to answer things. You just can't do it that quickly. So I really appreciate it. How do you withstand the criticism from all sides? Because that is what a lot of leaders are dealing with right now. They're like, "Okay, I'm not in your seat, not in the

White House. I'm not in the Washington Post, New York Times, but I am getting beat up on all sides and I want to quit."

Carey Nieuwhof:

You, David Kinnaman and I, you probably know the stat, 29% of all pastors have seriously thought about quitting. I think you can extend that to a lot of leaders who are like, "Yeah, I'm out. I'm going to go pack boxes for a living or something that doesn't require this level of difficulty or detail cars." Or whatever you want to do. Right? How do you stay in the game and how do you just not say, "I'm not going to go there anymore"?

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah. Well, I do want to... I haven't talked to David and I'm a big David fan. I think Barna is doing great work. I want to know if we know what that compares to in prior years, because I will tell you, depending on when you asked me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Significantly higher. I can't tell you the exact stat.

Ed Stetzer:

It's going higher. Okay.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Significantly higher.

Ed Stetzer:

Okay. Good. That's why I was wondering, and I'm not surprised because I think next year is going to be harder. One of the things too, you probably talked about this somewhere along the way. Pastors tend to leave a church after a building program. It's kind of an old, urban legend. I think there's truth to it. And the reason is they sort of get the church to the other side and they're tired and like, "I'm done." Well, I think the pandemic is going to feel like a building program to a lot of pastors.

Ed Stetzer:

I think they're going to get the church to the other side. And I think a lot of people are going to step away from the ministry. So I do think that we need to... This one of the reasons we partnered together to create the Resilient Church Leadership Strategy that we've launched with several ministries. We think it's a... Church United South Florida has helped us pastor, serve, soul care and we've kind of come together to say, "We need reservoirs of resilience." So I think ultimately, to answer your question, my advice would be that you're going to have to become accustomed to not receiving the level of affirmation that you've received in the past and instead seeing some of that shift to a level of criticism, and you're going to have to get used to it. Now you ask the question, "How do I do that?"

Ed Stetzer:

So part of the weird thing, and you experienced this as well, now, you don't necessarily engage on cultural controversial issues sometimes. And I will tell you, that article on President Trump and evangelicals got me a lot of hate mail, but the vitriol of my article saying Oral Roberts University

shouldn't be canceled from the NCAA Tournament was actually much more aggressive and threatening and more. So part of what happens is both you and I have sort of emerged into our different lanes in the last decade. And you're just amazing, all the places I see you and just God's blessing and favor has been so neat to see on your life and ministry, and it's not this controversial space. But 10 years ago when we started these... You and I would see each other at some national platforms 10, 15 years ago. Social media wasn't as big of a thing.

Ed Stetzer:

So we'd get criticized. They might send a letter or more, but as our ministries became more impactful, as our voice grew, social media grew with it. So when I sat down with a colleague recently who just really... Esau McCaulley is his name, and he's here at the Wheaton College Grad School. And so he's now just suddenly emerged. His book Reading While Black. He's a New York Times columnist. And for me, I've had 10 years, 2007 start speaking nationally and by 2010, some tweets are critical. And by the time you get to 2020, and you've had 10 years that your platform has sort of grown with social media, you're sort of used to it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Ed Stetzer:

So I don't... I let it ride. And when I hire somebody new, I recently hired a person who works with me in social media. And I said to her, "You need to just know it gets really crazy sometimes and it just blows up and sometimes for something... Sometimes something bizarre." I remember I said one thing once. I was talking to Donna. Donna, my wife. And I said, "A lot of pastors, they just always say, 'This is my wife.' And they never say her name. And it's like so her identity is my wife." And I said... So I tweeted and said, "Listen, why don't you... Let me encourage you pastors to say your wife's name and introduce her." And it just becomes... It gets conservative. Social media picks it up and like million follower conservative women on Twitter are saying, "I am honored when my husband calls me his wife." I'm like, "Wait. Did I miss when I said that..."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Did I say that?

Ed Stetzer:

And I go look back and I'm like, "No, that's not..." Anyway, but you know it just happens. But it's sort of like you shrug and you kind of go on. So the thing I got to warn people is when a colleague sort of emerges into this is that it's vicious. It's just vicious. And been friends with Beth Moore for a few years. We've sort of walked through some of these things together. Beth and I text each other when we want to tweet things and we text each other instead. And it's a way of coping, but it gets us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You need a friend like that.

Ed Stetzer:

You do need a friend like that. So what I would say is for me, that doesn't bother me at all. When somebody in a relationship bother... Has a conflict with me, that actually bothers me.

Ed Stetzer:

I'm like, "Oh man, what do I need to do to fix this? But some person on social media that I've never met before and then 10,000 people... I actually had one day where 10,000 people tweeted me. So that's when the Scopes created that article about... I said Scopes. I meant Snopes. I think I said Scopes earlier.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. No, you said Snopes earlier.

Ed Stetzer:

Oh, did I say Snopes earlier? Okay.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's the Snopes earlier. Yeah.

Ed Stetzer:

So that's why I say... So that day, 10,000 people, I just put the phone down, didn't come back to it. It's all you can do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How do you decide when to engage your critics and when not to?

Ed Stetzer:

I like to retweet my critics. Is that wrong? So that's...

Ed Stetzer:

I just sometimes like to retweet them. I like, "Let's tweet you up." Particularly if they have... Two reasons. Sometimes they're valid critiques, I retweet it. But I don't... So what happened to me is I stopped responding because it never gets anywhere. Now, so maybe once a week, I'll go on...

Carey Nieuwhof:

It doesn't make it better, does it?

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah, it doesn't. It doesn't. So there's always a follow-up to the question. And I don't know who has the time to just spend all day, like it's basically every tweet turns into an ask me anything. And so for me, I don't generally respond. So sometimes I see one of my staff will say, "I think people have... A lot of people have a question about what you meant here." And then I'll say, "Okay, well, let me put a followup tweet kind of attached to that that goes from there."

Ed Stetzer:

But by and large, I think you have to realize, and this is... People would probably take this out of context and maybe make a tweet out of it. I think most people are not having good faith conversation on social media anymore. And if that's the case, it's not my responsibility to answer every question asked in bad faith. Now there are some questions asked in good faith, but the challenge is that then you start responding, which are not. So if we've kind of met, reached the tipping point on Twitter, where it's mostly bad faith, I'm just not going to spend my time trying to... It's been interesting to watch... Tim Keller has recently just decided that he's going to respond to things on Twitter and I'm cheering him on. But I'm just not seeing that it's persuading anybody. It's tricky. So whereas Facebook is a little different, because Facebook is... Twitter is just toxic. Twitter, toxic. Instagram's all happy people. Everyone loves...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Instagram's mostly happy. Facebook's became a lot angrier in the last year I've noticed.

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But yeah, that's fascinating. Ed, I had like a million more questions, but I think this is a really good place to leave it because we're going to have you back again. And anything else you want to share with leaders? It's been a really refreshing, surprising, I hope helpful and healing conversation. That's the kind of conversation I'd love to bring. And I totally echo what you're saying. I'm going to say 98% of the tens of thousands of people listening to this episode actually want to do what you say. They're reasonable people. Some of them might have different political views. Some of them maybe got fooled. I've been fooled politically before. Talk to me about election in the 1990s in Canada. One day, I'll tell you all I got totally taken in by somebody.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I'm not saying... I'm not even making a comment on that with the 2020 election, 2016 election, but we want to broker dialogues and I can imagine people sending this out to their board or their staff going, "Can we have more conversations like this?" Because I hope we have more conversations like this because somehow if we do and we listen to each other and this isn't a round table, we don't have a whole bunch of voices and different opinions and that kind of thing around, but I really appreciate the dialogue, really appreciated your voice and really appreciate the way that you figure out how to comment in a way that is kind of, I think, a prophetic voice into the moment we're in. So I just want to thank you for that.

Ed Stetzer:

Oh, thank you. And I would just say that as Christian leaders, it's not a time to get discouraged. Though recognizing discouragement is the normal response to this. Again, I talked about resilience, courage, and filter. Those three things I think will help us. But one of the things for me as I began to think through the cultural convulsion and I can't imagine the stress of being alive in 1968. It was far more than 2020 and 2021. It is ironic that when they had a pandemic, instead of shutting everything down, they had Woodstock. So people responded differently to pandemics in the past.

Ed Stetzer:

But what I would say is...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Great.

Ed Stetzer:

As a person who is really concerned that... And again, I recognize you have a broad audience, but let me just talk about for what...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Great.

Ed Stetzer:

With the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center, we're deeply concerned that women and men will respond to the good news of the gospel by grace, and through faith and become followers of Jesus.

Ed Stetzer:

And I do believe that Fall 2021 could be a great season of people responding to the good news of the gospel, that in the midst of the cultural tumult and turbulence, they might see that they need something that we would call a rock that is sure that is Jesus' work on the cross on our behalf. And so I would just encourage Christian leaders, so your main audience. What I encourage Christian leaders to do is to tether themselves to something eternal that is in Christ, in him, walking in the power of his Holy Spirit. And yes, recognize that we may need relationships and support in a way we didn't before. You need elders who are going to walk alongside with you. If you're a pastor, you may need to strengthen your family relationships. You need to find other pastors to be in community with because it's going to get harder and you need that reservoir of resilience.

Ed Stetzer:

And also, we need courage. Build some bridges with visible minorities or people of color so that when someone sends you another video, this is what happens in the US, everyone sends to the same five people that they think you should listen to on issues of race. And rather talk to some African-American or some visible minorities in Canada and say, "What is your lived experience?" Particularly, the followers of Jesus. And that'll help you grow that courage because then... When I speak up on issues of race, I'm thinking about my pastor friends, like John Jenkins, or James Meeks, or Michael Henderson, we're in a cohort that we have together. They tell me something is wrong and I believe them. And so that's where courage can come from is some of those relationships.

Ed Stetzer:

And then that filter, be wise, steward your voice. I think that I'm stewarding my voice. I have people that will say to me, "Ed, you're not stewarding in this way. You need to pull back or speak more." Steward your voice. And you probably do that in community with others. Talk to your elders. If you're a pastor, talk to your board and others, and maybe you might have to nudge them to have more courage, but at the same time, listen to them so that you can walk forward together. I'm not discouraged. Now to be fair, I've read the end of the book and Jesus wins. So I'm always just encouraged at any opportunity.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. He is a good news kind of guy.

Ed Stetzer:

Exactly. But what I would say is let's walk through these next few years together. We're going to need each other. And if my words enraged you in this podcast, it's okay. Hopefully, we have a common faith and that common faith puts us on a common mission. And I'm on the same team as everyone who names the name of Jesus and wants to change the world for him. So thanks for the opportunity to come be on the program.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, this made me a lot more hopeful and gave me hope, and I really do agree that we are seeing the extremes that are amplified again and again. We live in an age where the enraged tweet now makes the news cycle. It's bizarre territory for sure. And I think the vast majority of people are somewhere in the moderate zone, moderately right, moderately left, moderately this, moderately that, and we can and should get along a lot better than we do. So thanks for making it a great conversation. Ed, I know tons of people follow you, but if they want to find you on the socials and where you hang out these days, where's the easiest place to do that, Ed?

Ed Stetzer:

Yeah. Probably like you, I have an unusual name. So @edstetzer is on all the Twitters and the social networks and edstetzer.com is easy to find me there as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Awesome. Yeah. Well, thank you for everything you're doing. One day, we're going to talk about the future. We're going to talk about your productivity with the questions I had for you. How do you get it all done, dude? Great team. Great team.

Ed Stetzer:

Anyway, have a nice time.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Ed, thank you so much.

Ed Stetzer:

Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, that was a lot, wasn't it? Yeah. And I do hope that was clarifying. I hope it was illuminating. I have a degree in history. That was my first degree in university. And I think sometimes what history does is historians give you perspective on things you couldn't see in the moment. And I hope that a few decades down the road, as people look back, they'll look at this era and go, "Wow, what was that?" And hopefully, this helps a little bit, and at least gives you perspective whether you agree or disagree. I'm going to talk a little bit about the one thing that should characterize every leader in the What I'm

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Thinking About segment. And if you want more there, there're show notes and transcripts, if you want to talk about this with your team for free, you can just go to careynieuwhof.com/episode426.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Next episode, switching gears, we have Allison Fallon and she has helped CEOs, Olympic gold medalists, politicians, and many more unlock their brains and leadership by learning how to write things down. It sounds so simple, but it was a fascinating conversation. Here's an excerpt.

Allison Fallon:

20 minutes a day for four days in a row spent expressive writing can dramatically improve your mood. It can also improve your immune system. When they did studies around this, they saw that the control group visited the doctor 50% less often for up to six months after the study ended for upper respiratory infections and flu, meaning that their immune systems were actually functioning better because they had written regularly for four days in a row for 20 minutes at a time.

Allison Fallon:

So if we just boil this down to the very simplest version of this, that means if every six months, if you stopped for four days in a row, so for part of the week, and you sat down for 20 minutes on each of those days, and you wrote your deepest thoughts and feelings about what was going on in your life, you could see an improved mood, an improved immune system. The data also shows increased levels of happiness in romantic relationships. The data shows people are more empathetic. It shows they're happier with their jobs. They get paid more. I could go on and on and on about the kind of benefit that people receive from entering into this process of writing.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Also coming up, Amy Edmondson on psychological safety. Chris Hodges talks about depression and a really tough season he went through. We also have Louie Giglio, Pete Scazzero, Kendra Adachi, Chris McChesney from The 4 Disciplines of Execution, Horst Schulze, Scott O'Neil, CEO of the Philadelphia 76ers and New Jersey Devils and a whole lot more coming up for you. And yeah, we are really excited about what's ahead and thank you for sharing the show. Thanks for leaving ratings and reviews. And thanks for everything you're doing in leadership. We just come alongside you, try to bring you fascinating conversations with the best people we know to help you thrive in your leadership. So I think there's one thing in the What I'm Thinking About segment I want to talk about, and that's basically how to lead in this hyperpolarized era. Want to thank our partners for making this segment possible.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thank you to World Vision. If you haven't checked out Right Side Up Soul Care with Danielle Strickland, go to worldvision.org/carey. And Pro Media Fire will give you 10% off your first year of complete social media management if you go to promediafire.com/carey. So I'm thinking about leading with love. I don't always get it right. I get it wrong sometimes. I'm an Enneagram 8. Love is a discipline sometimes for me, but I've also read scripture enough and believe it deeply enough to know that the mark that would define every authentic follower of Jesus and leader is love. Love would be the proof to the world that we are Jesus followers and I'm a Jesus follower. So now I think the challenge with that is as a people, we kind of break down in two categories of people, truth people, and grace people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Truth people tend to stand up for what's right. They don't compromise. They get loud. They get angry. Grace people, they're about love and relationship and they feel for others. They don't want to rush to judgment. They don't want to sacrifice a relationship for the sake of a disagreement. The truth people, and I tend to be more a truth person, believe it or not. Outside of my spiritual disciplines, I can be a truth person. I can be harsh. Truth people think the grace people have no spine. And the grace people think the truth people have no heart. But the reality is that Jesus came full of grace and truth. He never spoke the truth without speaking it gracefully. And he never displayed grace in a way that compromised the truth, as in never. And that leads us here. Truth isn't truth without grace and grace isn't grace without truth. So they have to be tethered together.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So how do you do that? Here are five principles that have guided me. And again, on my good days, I get them right. On my bad days, well, at least we get another chance tomorrow. But number one, just try this. Think more of others than you think of yourself. I love C. S. Lewis's definition of humility. You probably heard it a thousand times, but, "Humility isn't thinking less of yourself. It's just thinking of yourself less often." So just think more of others than you think of yourself. That's actually deeply scriptural. And if I think of you more than I think of myself, I'm going to be a better leader. That also helps you die to yourself and you can begin to live in love. Second thing, and man, our culture needs this so badly, speak well of people publicly and deal with disagreements privately and directly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It pains me deeply when people just decide to pick fights with each other online and there's no private dialogue. That drives me crazy. And even if you had a private dialogue going, why would you pick a fight publicly? I don't understand that. So speak well with people publicly and deal with disagreements privately and directly. Third, disagree without being disagreeable. We've done whole episodes on this with Scott Sauls and Sarah Anderson on last year. You can disagree without being disagreeable, just you don't... Otherwise, here's what you do. You just build a whole army of people who think exactly like you do, and that is hyperdangerous, reinforcing confirmation bias, and you don't want to do that. And then the fourth is take the high road. I know it's a cliché, but looking back over your life, you probably never regretted taking the high road, not once.

Carey Nieuwhof:

The high road is never the easy road, but it is the best road. And you probably know what the high road is. You're like, "Yeah, I know. I know. I don't want to do it, but I know we'll take it." Take the high road. You never regret doing that. And then number five, serve those you lead. One of the best questions you can ask as a leader and ask this to your team, ask this to the people you lead, "How can I help you? How can I help you? How can I help you?" And that will get you into a posture where you are worried less about serving yourself and more about serving others. So hopefully that helps with leadership. I think whether you lead in the business context or the church context, my goodness, if you begin to really embrace principles like this, we move ourselves into a new era and I think we need a new era. Hey, really hope this helps. Back with a fresh episode next time. Thank you so much for listening. And I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before.

Announcer:

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

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