

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 448 of the podcast. It's Carey here, and I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life and leadership. It should because Mike Todd is back on the podcast. This is his third appearance in the last couple of years. He is the bestselling author of a number of books and the pastor of Transformation Church. And I always think when you talk to Mike, you get a peek into the future. We also go very, very deep personally on this one, into some of his counseling sessions on what drives him. That alone I think I want every single leader to hear. It's so powerful.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Anyway, today's episode is brought to you by Pro Media Fire. You can join me and others for five days of learning on how to create amazing social media content, and it's free. You can sign up today at socialmediachallenge.com. And this episode is brought to you by Gloo and Barna for Barna Cities. Get access to new local research from Barna and help people in your community discover your church and programs. Go to barnacities.com/carey. Well, Mike Todd is going to talk about his backstory to drive and success. This is a theme that I've drilled down on with a number of leaders, including Gordon MacDonald, talked about some of my own story.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then Mike actually lets us in on a counseling session he's had, some current work he's doing. We also talk about lessons from taking 103 days off of leadership. How do you do that? Now he's a new dad. Their fourth child was born, but 103 days off. And we talk about how crazy faith works. So a lot of you who lead in churches or even businesses have been kind of locked out of your building. I don't know anyone who has been out longer than Mike, and he talks about why. They just got back this September for their first in person service in 18 months. And so he talks about why that is, where he saw the opportunity, and how his church actually grew while he took time off. Yeah, talk about crazy stuff. Anyway, we're going there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Mike is the number one New York Times bestselling author of Relationship Goals. He's the lead pastor of Transformation Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He speaks at a variety of influential churches, events and conferences each year. He's been married for over a decade and they now have four beautiful children. I'm going to do an Ask Me Anything About Productivity at the end of this podcast as well. We're going to take Carter's question. And he's diving into my new book, At Your Best, and wants to know about how to schedule your calendar, the Thrive Calendar, which I make available for free for everybody who purchases the book. And he wants to know: How do you actually set meeting times when you don't have control?

Carey Nieuwhof:

So if you don't have control in leadership and you can't call all the shots, hang on for that one. Want to thank our partners, who come alongside us every episode, and I want to ask you this. Would you like to

learn how to create amazing social media content every day and do it in seven minutes or less? Well, you can learn how this October with the free five day amazing social media challenge. In five days, you'll discover the framework to create amazing social media content every day, that engages people, and how to do it in minutes. This free online event is for faith based churches, nonprofits, schools, and businesses. So join me, Bob Goff, Tim Timberlake, and the Pro Media Fire team and other guests during these special five days of learning. And if you're looking to accelerate your mission, this is for you and it's free. So it's the five day amazing social media challenge. Join for free today by going to socialmediachallenge.com.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I also know a lot of leaders like you are navigating massive shifts. Everybody is. Well, our friends at Barna and Gloop are taking that seriously. Last year, they launched an effort to equip the church through the State of the Church research and tool kits. Over 25,000 churches benefited. Well, this year, they're going deep in cities. They're in four or five major cities and are rolling that out across the United States. So when you sign up at barnacities.com/carey for more information, if you're not in one of the active cities, you will be first to know when they come to your city. And here's what you're going to get. You'll have access to brand new local research about your community from Barna. You'll get to join in with other local church leaders every month to get new research and insights that Barna will put into context. Best of all, because of kingdom minded investors, they are giving away some of their premiere products bundled behind the city tool kit.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Here's what you're going to get, full membership to Barna Access Plus, that's a \$588 value, yours for free. You'll also get GloopConnect Cooperative, always on ads that run across your city and make it easy for people to discover your church and programs at no cost to you. All you have to do is sign up. You also get Click to Connect, that is my personal four part course designed to help you connect digitally with your people and community. It's also included. That's because of generous donors. So if you want to see if you're in one of the cities, or you want to sign up, so when it comes to your city, you're ready, go to barnacities.com/carey. That's barnacities.com/carey. It's 100% free.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, let's dive into my long and wide ranging conversation with Mike Todd. And then hang on at the end for another Ask Me Anything About Productivity. Here we go. Oh, Mike, it's so good to have you back on the podcast. Welcome, man.

Michael Todd:

Man, I'm excited to be here with my guy, Carey Nieuwhof, you're the man. I appreciate you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, we're going to talk about Crazy Faith, your brand new book, which is out shortly, or will be out. And I want everyone to get it, so if you haven't got it yet, you're the only person on the planet who doesn't have a copy. But these are crazy times. You and I started talking about what a different ... You've been shut down since the beginning of coronavirus.

Michael Todd:

March 15, 2020.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And that was the last time you had an in person service at Transformation Church.

Michael Todd:

Yes, sir.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Some of that was not your choice, but some of that was your choice. Right? Can you talk about that?

Michael Todd:

Yeah. So the first year, year and some months, was not our choice. I mean, we felt that for our community, especially because we lead a multi ethnic church, and we saw how that coronavirus was disproportionately affecting African American and Latinos, and because we have a multi ethnic church, we got a bunch of white people, black people, yellow people, green people, purple. We got everything, and so we thought it was intentional for us to be cautious as we let this thing continue to do whatever it was doing. And for us, we saw that God was giving us the opportunity to innovate, and it gave us brand new opportunities to do things that we never could do in a real live service context, from camera stuff, to visual stuff. And you know me, I like to, if I could be in the Bible showing people what it was like and all that other stuff, and so we got to try stuff, and we got to do stuff.

Michael Todd:

And there was a really cool freedom to be able to produce an experience or a service that helped people understand the word in a very real way, and we did that. And our teams stretched and prayed and planned and did all of the different things that it takes to do ministry, as well as it grew us in our reach, our small groups were more effective than ever. And we had to learn how to communicate differently. And we have a unique dynamic at our church because we're in Tulsa, Oklahoma, if people don't know. But our church is, before the pandemic, because now everybody has a global church and online ... I mean, the pandemic forced everybody online.

Michael Todd:

But before, probably two or three years before that, we were very intentional on engaging and encountering, having our online audience encounter and be a part, Transformation Nation, shout out to you if you're out there right now. And so we were already down this process, but it made us really figure out new ways. And so it was a really good season, not the pandemic wasn't a good season, but what we were doing organizationally to be able to try to make the best out of the season we were in and not let it be a wasted season. We started to do things, and before the pandemic happened, we moved into an arena in 2019. And it was this crazy faith miracle. It's behind me if you're watching on podcast. That was the first week we got into this building. And it's filled with 6,000 people, and it was just nuts.

Michael Todd:

And then literally, we were in it for six months, and then corona happened. And while we were there, there's a community right behind our church. And so when we get in there, we rock it. I mean, it's shaking the whole community. And so we wanted to be good neighbors, and they had made some

complaints and different things like that about the sound. So during when corona first hit, I decided we're going to be good neighbors and we're going to spend the resources to soundproof our entire arena and make that a state of the art recording studio and soundstage basically. So we started that process.

Michael Todd:

So when we got to the point where we felt like maybe we could start opening again, we were in the middle of construction, so we weren't shut down for corona. We were shut down for construction. And as we started that process, I was like, "What else can we get done right now?" Because we'll never ever have this moment again to be able to not have to clean everything up before Sunday when people come. And any pastor or leader of an organization knows any building projects take six times longer because you've got to be ready to fire again on Saturday night to have people in there Sunday. So we started that process, and going through that. And as we started that, the new delta variant came back, and we weren't fully finished with our construction. And so we're almost finished right now, and so we're looking to open that very, very, very, soon. And we're excited for what God's going to do.

Michael Todd:

But we're opening back up. We called this in our internal organization a holy pause for our organization. And it's one of those things that at first it was like, "Man, we was just about to do the things that we wanted to do." And as we looked back on it, it was God saying, "I just blessed you with an opportunity if you would get the right perspective to be able to see what I'm doing, where I'm doing, and calibrate." That's been a word that I've been talking about a lot in my own personal life and with our team, is that it takes time to calibrate to new things and what is happening.

Michael Todd:

I think about my cell phone. Every time I get a new cell phone, there's certain settings that aren't on there that I need to calibrate to be able to have it work functionally for me the way that it needs to work. And I believe that in every church, every organization, no matter if you're leading your home or leading a Fortune 500 company, many times we're running at such a pace that we don't calibrate. So we have the ability to be able to run at a more efficient and effective speed, but we haven't had a pause long enough to go in and change some settings, and to go in and dial some things back and pull some things up.

Michael Todd:

And for Transformation Church, that's what this time as been. And so as frustrating as it's been in some seasons, as you know what you want to do as an organization, it has been life giving because it's made us have the margin to be able to reevaluate. And when we open back up, we will be stronger, more anchored, as well as I believe more impactful for leading people to transformation in Christ than we've ever been. So I'm excited, man.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What have you learned about communicating online only, exclusively? Do you have a little in house studio audience when you're preaching right now? Or how do you handle that?

Michael Todd:

Just the staff.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Just the staff.

Michael Todd:

Just my staff, it's about 25, 30 people that are there. And they're rowdy, so it makes me go. And yeah, what I've learned is that people are more adaptive than we think they are. And I've also learned that there are certain things that you cannot duplicate as far as physical interaction. There's certain things that you cannot duplicate. But the impact can still be the same, and that's where I don't know if everybody's fully bought in. It's like if you set a destination to get to a place, the church has acted like there's only one way to get to that place. Take highway 75, exit on Peoria, and that's how you get there.

Michael Todd:

And I really do believe that though that may be the most comfortable route, that may even be the most beautiful route, as well as it may be our tradition to go that route, there's other ways to get to that same location. It may take rural streets. It may take going through neighborhoods. It may mean hitting a bunch of stop lights, and it may mean you have to park further and walk to your destination. But I feel like we can still get there, and that's kind of the perspective and attitude that I've had in this season is like, "Okay. I can't hug people, and I love hugging people." How do I make them feel like they just got a hug from me when I cannot hug them?

Michael Todd:

So from the way that we use social media, the way that we promote other people's things, the way that we'll pick somebody. We just did this really cool thing when I was gone. We had people from our church that don't live in Tulsa send in seven minute videos. We do this thing called Seven in Seven, and many churches do this. But we flew in four people that have never been to Tulsa and let them preach on Transformation Church's stage, along with my staff and different people. The amount of comments and congratulations and camaraderie that came to know that somebody that's just like most of our church, that live in Iowa, in Dallas, in Houston, in Florida. "Oh, this is real, you can actually be away, and you're a part of Transformation Church." It was like we gave 10,000 people a hug to say, "Our church sees us." They know we're just not a name out here.

Michael Todd:

So we've just figured out and tried to try things that make people get the same end feeling and same end result, and honestly, closer to Jesus because that's our organizational's end goal. And so yeah, we're trying stuff.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's incredible. So you've been 18 months now fully not in person, which would make you the outlier. Tell me what it's felt like to build ... Because you're stepping into the future I think.

Michael Todd:

Yes, sir.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I've done a lot of writing on hybrid church and digital is the future, and taken a few hits for it. But I think it's got a tremendous upside. What has the upside been? Have you continued to see growth? How do you connect with people? Walk us down that road because I said it before, I'll say it again, I think in so many ways, you're blazing a trail for the future. And a lot of people should be taking notes, Mike.

Michael Todd:

Man, Carey, you're the most encouraging person I know. From the time we met, you're just like, "Man, there's something here," and I really appreciate that. And honestly, for us-

Michael Todd:

Can we go deep? You want to go deep? Okay. So what this has made me do is reevaluate my personal wins because what ends up happening in church, our personal wins many times are more metric and not margin. It's about the metrics of what we can do, and it's not about the margin and how long we can do it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Michael Todd:

So I got friends and people that it's all about opening another campus, getting more campus pastors, getting a new location, and all of that. And all the while, their health, their marriage, their joy, like, "You used to be joyful when I saw you. You're not joyful anymore. You're actually a butt hole." Nobody likes to be around you because we're driven by the metrics and not the margin. And for me, this space where I'm doing one service, where two years ago, I was doing five services a Sunday. I wore that as a badge of honor like, "I'm doing five services." And it was killing me. I was dead on Monday. I had nothing to give to my family. The Instagram was popping and people were coming, but I wasn't my best self. I wasn't reading scripture just to read scripture. I was reading for sermons. I was doing all of these things that for me as a leader of an organization, I wasn't taking care of my health. I wasn't working out. I would rather sleep than to actually serve myself and my family, all of these different things.

Michael Todd:

And so really, this season of working what I call smarter, not harder, has given me the ability to appreciate margin, to the place where now I protect it. And for me, I mean, where God has brought our platform and the different things that I could be doing, I could be gone every night of the week, preaching at somebody's conference, Zoom calls, all this other stuff. Carey, I've spoken maybe two times outside of Tulsa in the past two years. And what that has done is made me more potent. It's made me more focused. It's given me the ability to give to what gives back to me. We just had our fourth child. And to be able to be on paternity leave and then back it up with sabbatical, I've been off for 100 ... I haven't preached yet. At the time of this recording, I haven't preached in 105 days. Hopefully, I still know how to do it. But what's happening is I'm better than I've ever been before. I'm 35 pounds down since June.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Dude, congrats.

Michael Todd:

When I tell you, Carey, I am going through a transformation. And I don't know if I would've ever had the time to be able to observe myself, be self aware enough, because of the machine of ministry, and the machine of business, and the machine of promotion, and the machine of book deals, and all of the different things. And I've kind of unplugged. Even three weeks ago, Carey, I got a flip phone. On Sunday night at 8:00, I turn my phone off. And my wife and two other people have my number. And Monday until 8:00, I'm unplugged.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're on that flip phone. That's the only thing you carry around.

Michael Todd:

It doesn't matter what, I'm on the flip phone. And I promise you I'm not texting you because it takes too long now to punch in all of those numbers. I don't even know how to do that. And so it has given me the opportunity, Carey, to transform. And I believe that where I'm at today, I can see us doing this for a long time, as opposed to where I was two years ago, I didn't know how long I was going to be able to keep that up.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. Can I ask you a weird question? You mentioned 18 months ago, you were doing five services, you were dead on Monday, that kind of thing. Did you know you were that tired at the time?

Michael Todd:

No.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Or is that something you've discovered in the last 18 months?

Michael Todd:

Yeah. It's like being ... Definitely, I didn't know I was that tired. And when you're in a machine that allows you to get praise for abusing yourself, it kind of is like, "But they're clapping, and people are coming." And when they see you, it's like, "You're running five? Woo, boy." It's like that whole thing. And so it's a very disorienting position to be in, to be able to know that you don't have enough to keep going, but everybody's cheering for you to keep going. And so I read something, I was talking to my doctor the other day, and our stories felt very similar. And I thought about it, and somebody said it, that doctors and pastors are the only professions that people will praise you for abusing yourself, being available 24 hours a day because you're always helping somebody.

Carey Nieuwhof:

True.

Michael Todd:

And that'll be the same thing many times with CEOs and mothers and all that stuff, that they're always helping, so it's at the detriment of themselves that they're always helping. And one of the things that

you have to have is margin to be able to see. When you don't unplug long enough to be able to even notice it, it will either happen from tragedy, or it will happen from intentionality. And I think a lot of the stories we read about in our sphere of influence is tragedy, from adultery, to crazy night, or picking up a prostitute, or having a secret drinking addiction, or popping pills, or all of these, or stealing money, or doing all this other stuff, it comes out as a tragedy, where it could if we had the space and teams around us that would give us that opportunity, and people with accountability that would give us the questions. It could come from intentionality. And I'm just grateful that in this short tenure that I've had of being a lead pastor, that it's come from intentionality instead of [crosstalk 00:22:48].

Carey Nieuwhof:

I would encourage people to go back and listen to our two other interviews, which we'll link to in the show notes, because we talk about the rocket rise of Transformation Church, the whole backstory there, then about the early days of the pandemic. But I'm so encouraged to hear that. I want to put a pin in the whole idea of moral failure tragedy because that was one of my questions for you. But it's really interesting. You and I, it's funny, we were chatting before we started recording. We were supposed to be at this event in Atlanta together, just a handful of people, and it got canceled. And it would've been my first intentional trip since coronavirus, and that was at the end of August. It didn't happen.

Carey Nieuwhof:

There was a part of me, as much as I wanted to go to that event, hang out with those people, be with that organization, I was kind of relieved. I'm like, "Oh, good. I get to continue this time away." Do you have a little bit like that, where you have really ... You've been off for 103 days. That was your sabbatical and everything. Is this a season where you are just loving this new pace? Or what's going on in you right now?

Michael Todd:

I feel like ... What's the ... The Incredible Hulk. I feel like David Banner and then the Incredible Hulk. There's an inner tension and just being ... You know me, I'm always hot, humble, open and transparent. I'm going to be like, "We're going to talk about it." And so I have spent so many years developing a motor that has hundreds, if not thousands of horsepower. And this is how we run. And then it's like, "Yeah. But in this lane, you only can go 40 miles an hour." And so do you know what I'm saying?

Michael Todd:

So sometimes it feels like, "vroom, vroom, vroom, vroom." And all I'm doing is revving to go 40 miles an hour, and then how many things I miss on the journey because I'm trying to go fast instead of just hitting the cruise control at 40, rolling the windows down, and putting the top down, actually observing the season that God has me in.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:25:04]

Michael Todd:

And so I would say there's a tension, and it's okay to have a tension with the nature that maybe you've created, and the way, the rhythm that you've created is faster than the rhythm that will sustain you. And that's where I'm becoming. And I'm very clear with my team. This is my second week back in the office. And you talk about not wanting to come back. I was off of social media for like 35 days, completely none of it. And it would surprise you how much you don't need social media after those first two, three days

that you're like, "Oh God," then you keep clicking the app and all that other stuff. So I just deleted it. And none of my phones had social media on it. I mean, I was just unplugged.

Michael Todd:

And I told my wife the week I'm coming back because I had to start promoting our new book, Crazy Faith, and I had made commitments and all that. I was like, "Ah, yo." I don't want to get back into that race again, because I know what it feels like to feel like I got to post. And I know what it feels like to feel like I got to do something and it feels more like bondage than it is helping somebody else break through.

Michael Todd:

And so even my social media people, they were calling us like, "Are we posting today?" And I was like, "Uh..." And then they're like, "Are we posting today?" And I was like, "Ah." And it took two or three days for me to get up the thing, and I set up standards and I set up things. Like the first thing I told my social media team, and they're in the room right now. I was like, "On Mondays, I'm not posting, so I'm not looking at what I'm posting. It's on you. So literally, whatever you post and however it happens and all that other stuff, it's on you." And they're like, "Oh, this is new." You know what I'm saying? Because I've already told you, I'm usually very intentional with what we're doing because it's our messaging, but yeah, it's a tension. And then there's other days that I want to create a campaign and reach everybody I can and promote stuff. You know what I'm saying?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Michael Todd:

So it's a tension. But I think it's a tension to manage in this next season for me, because it's not all bad. It's helping reach people. It's helping grow the kingdom of God. It's helping get people that are in darkness to even start looking to the light. So it's not all bad, but I have to manage my soul and what that looks like, and that's more important than anything else.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I was just looking, 1.6 million followers, if anyone's asking, on Instagram.

Michael Todd:

That's crazy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is crazy.

Michael Todd:

Carey, but this is the thing. I remember when I had 4,000 followers, less than five years ago. We have never paid for one person.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're not getting Russian bots, right?

Michael Todd:

We have never done a campaign. No, we're not doing none of that. Because at the end of the day, if you do it, you have to sustain it. And that's been the thing that even when we've had people, I've had a couple of social media people come in and try to work with me and they couldn't last, because they didn't get it. They were trying to grow the platform. I'm not trying to grow to the platform. If God wants me to have 200 people, 200,000 people or 2 million people, I want him to do that because then I don't have to sustain it. The only thing I want to do is promote his messages. So if I promote his messages and he grows the platform, cool. But if I promote his messages and he keeps it right here, cool, because I don't have to sustain it. And so that has been our mode of doing it. And I'm authentically myself. I share what's really going on in my life to hopefully re-present God to somebody who's lost or somebody who's found for one reason: transformation in Christ.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What does it do to your head or to your soul to have 1.6 million followers in a church that's exploding?

Michael Todd:

Yeah. It gives you a reason to stay on your knees. What it does for me, somebody asked me, it's like, "How do you feel?" Somebody that was there at the beginning when I took over, there was 300 people coming to the church. We were in a converted grocery store in the hood of Tulsa. And then they came five years later and saw what God's doing. It's like, "How do you feel?" And the only word that came out of my soul was, "Sober." I said, "I feel sober. I am not inebriated by what has happened at TC. I am fully aware that this could only be God." And so I've obeyed, I've studied, I've listened. I've been strategic on what I feel like we were supposed to do, but it makes me sober. It makes me walk the line straighter. You know what I'm saying?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Michael Todd:

Because I know how many lives are on the line. I know how many people will never, ever hear anything about God, but they like the way I dress, so they listen to me. And while they're smoking a blunt and they're in a trap house, and while they're doing all of these things, they got me playing in the background, and it makes me sober to know that God would trust me to be in places that are very dark, but for some reason they're letting a little light in. And what could that little light potentially do over a long period of time? It just makes me sober. And so from the 1.6 million to the New York Times bestseller to number 10 on the Billboard R&B charts, all of that stuff makes me go to my knees, Carey. And like, "God, it's me, again. I don't know what I'm doing. I'm going to need you to help me. If there's anything in me that's not like you, if there's anything that's growing or in seed form, help me, change me, point it out." And so I'm sober.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You have raised it, and I'm glad you did. But once again, in the last two years, since the last time we talked last year, there've been more people who have fallen from grace. People who had huge platforms, who ended up in a bed not of their spouse but of somebody else, or people who just kind of

imploded under the weight of leadership. What are the tensions and what are the factors that you think lead leaders to that place, and what are you doing to guard against it?

Michael Todd:

I've already said one of them, it's pace. I mean, most people are running at a pace that has nothing to do with their purpose. They're running at a pace that has to do with their ego. And that's one thing I had to check in my heart as God began to do all of these things. Am I running at the pace that God... The pace of grace is what I call it. The stride, where we talk about using... The difference is striving instead of striding. And I'm going to write that book, but I believe God is giving me another 2.0 of it right now to find the pace of grace.

Michael Todd:

And that whole concept of Jesus being on the earth, who I believe is the greatest leader that ever lived. And he fulfills every messianic prophecy ever spoken about him. He does all of this in three years, and you never hear about him running to his next appointment. I mean, just think about if we had three years to do everything that God called us to do. We wouldn't even have time for this podcast today.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No sleep, hyper-caffeinated.

Michael Todd:

We wouldn't have time... No, we would just be pumping ourselves full of stuff. But he walked everywhere. And I just think about how Jairus comes and tells him his daughter is dying and he says, "I'll come," but he doesn't run. He doesn't get on a horse. The only time we find Jesus on an animal is a donkey, which a donkey is a walking animal. Like you ain't never seen no donkey going fast. What I'm saying to you is God was trying to show us and give us an eternal picture of the pace of grace.

Michael Todd:

That there is a pace that you can go at, that you can get everything done you were supposed to get done, as well as be able to take people with you. Jesus did life in community. So if he went at a pace that was too fast, his disciples wouldn't have been able to stay with him, i.e., our families wouldn't be able to stay with us. Our staffs won't be able to stay with us. The people that we're supposed to be leading won't be able to stay with us. And then the people you're supposed to touch, wouldn't be able to touch you. Because when he goes to Jairus' house, on the way, the Bible tells us that there was a woman with the issue of blood that had an infirmity for 12 years, that Jesus was going at a pace that that woman, with all of her infirmity, had the stamina and the speed to reach out and touch his garment.

Michael Todd:

Now, if he was running, she would have never been able to reach out and touch his garment. She gets healed. She literally gets healed. Jesus stops. Now, if I was Jairus and my daughter is dying and I have something pressing, and Jairus represents culture at this moment, who is telling you to hurry, rush, grind, make it happen, do it, 10X it. All of these different concepts, it's like, "Now, now, now, now." Jesus is in the midst of on his way to a place and literally stops. He stops and turns around. He has a holy pause. He creates margin. And he says, "Who touched me?" And the disciples are sitting there like, "Jesus, we're in a crowd of people. What are you talking about? Everybody's touching you." He said,

"No, I felt virtue go from me." And he has a conversation with this woman, talks to her about her faith, talks to her about her problems, all this other stuff, and then says, "All right, now I can keep going."

Michael Todd:

Jairus is probably freaking out, like most of us are, like, "Jesus, my daughter, my business, my company, my church, my status," all of these different things. And somebody comes, the Bible says, while he was on his way, there was a word sent from the house, "Jairus, your daughter's dead." And they said, "Don't bother the master. Don't even let him come." And Jesus overheard them and said, "No, I'm still coming. She's not dead. Your dream's not dead. Your purpose is not dead. Your church is not dead. The book is not dead. The music is not dead. The score is not dead. It's not dead. It's just sleeping. I'm still coming." And he walked the rest of the way to this man's house, healed the daughter, after clearing out all the people who were haters and didn't believe it can happen. He had to get faith in the room. And that girl was raised from the dead.

Michael Todd:

A woman with the issue of blood for 12 years and a girl that was 12 years old. They may have passed each other in the hospital. I just want you to think with me right there, that because Jesus was going at the pace of grace, he was able to heal somebody and raise somebody in the same timing. And I just believe that's the type of miracle that God wants to display in each of our lives. No matter if he gives you a \$50 million business, or he gives you 50 dogs to run a puppy grooming company through, it doesn't matter. There still has to be a pace that you're graced for and you got to find your stride.

Michael Todd:

And so for me, I think one of the reasons that so many people are finding themselves in the temptations that we all face. I face them. You face them. I mean, this is not a select group of people that are being targeted. This is the temptation of life in a fallen world. You know what I'm saying? We go to coping in ways that make us feel good to give us the ability to get up and do it one more time. And a lot of those ways are secret and unhealthy. And it's because we're going at a pace that is not connected to our purpose. We're going at a pace that's connected to our ego. So I would say pace is one big thing that you have to monitor, or it's not going to be good.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Any other things you're watching in your own life?

Michael Todd:

Definitely. I think accountability is a big one. Accountability is a word that people use in church, but don't apply in life. It's kind of one of those things, "You need accountability and you need..." And for me, accountability is proactive. It's not reactive. And most people's accountability is reactive after something happened, after I messed up, after... You know what I'm saying? It's like, "Now I need accountability."

Michael Todd:

From the first year that I became the lead pastor of Transformation Church, I've had proactive accountability. So my oversight pastor, as well as one of the people who I'm personally accountable to, from my marriage to my finances. He knows how much money I make. He knows what me and Natalie are going through. He knows what the church is doing, everything. It's Pastor Tim Ross in Dallas, Texas,

Embassy City Church. And he came into my life when I was doing youth ministry. And I mean, it was one of those things that obviously God ordained, but literally every year, probably two or three times a year, I call him and say, "Where are you at on this date?" And he's like, "I'll be in duh, duh, duh," and I go meet him there. And if he's preaching, I carry his Bible.

Michael Todd:

I mean, I just did it on this sabbatical. People come in, it's like, "That's Mike Todd." And I'm like, "No, I'm his assistant." I want you to see me. I want you to ask me questions. I want you to hear me. And I have kids. I have a staff. I have two companies. I have all this other stuff, but accountability does not care about your crowns. Like you cast crowns and you get accountable. And so we spent nine hours together. He was in Oklahoma City. I took a flight to Oklahoma City. That's about an hour and a half away from Tulsa. I served him at a men's event and we talked. We went to Cracker Barrel on I44. And he drove me back to Tulsa and we talked the entire way. And he asked me about my health and my spirit and my sex drive. And what have I been attracted to? I mean, he asked me about everything.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're going everywhere.

Michael Todd:

Because I'm susceptible and I got a target on my back now. The enemy would love nothing more than the influence and the platform that God's given me to be infiltrated with strychnine and have poison in it, so that it goes to other people. And so I did the same thing with another notable preacher that I won't mention, but I just went. And the reason I said preacher is because there are certain people that understand what I do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

They get your world. Right? They get it.

Michael Todd:

They get my world. They understand all that stuff.

Carey Nieuwhof:

They're like, "I know what that is."

Michael Todd:

And so I went and just went to church at a service, not speaking, not there for a honorarium, not there to network. And we had lunch together afterwards and sat with his family. "I want you to hear me. I want you to see me. Did anything change in my tone? Did I say something that was prideful?" You know what I'm saying? And I'm saying this, and I believe you have to submit yourself to accountability. Not invite people in when it gets bad, because then it's too late. It's at that moment.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So not to throw anyone in your inner circle under the bus, but do you find that when you're leading an organization, it's hard to get your staff or your team to tell you the truth, that sometimes you got to go outside for a second opinion?

Michael Todd:

I think that one of the things that I have learned to do is not put the wrong expectations on the wrong people. And I think that if I put the expectation on the people I pay to be able to be my personal accountability, at some point, even if it works for a season, it's going to get flawed, because there's other things that come into it. "Well, will I lose my job if I tell them the truth? Or will they promote somebody else because dah, dah, dah, dah?"

Michael Todd:

So I have strong accountability around me. The one thing that I have on my staff is Brenda Todd and Tommy Todd. My parents work here at Transformation Church, as well as two of my brothers. So they don't care if... Like one of my brothers is less than five feet away from me right now. He's listening to everything I say. He knows where my drawers are in my room. So there's a part of it that I'm insulated, just because I have people that if they work for me or don't work for me, they want the best for me, my family and everything like that.

Michael Todd:

And then I have a few people that have been with me for over a decade that know the maturation. My chief of staff, Brie, and her husband, Aaron, they know me and my wife, like, know, know. Like when we go on vacation, we go on vacation together. You know what I'm saying? And they're people that have accountability. And so I believe there's layers of accountability. There's things that Tim and my other accountability will never see because they're not here. You know what I'm saying? And so I have to have accountability that sees what's going on and that knows.

Michael Todd:

And when you start to live in that level of integrity, as well as inspection, what it does is it makes you live differently. Like when I do something, people are going to see it. You know what I'm saying? And I would have to work harder to circumvent accountability than I would to just live the type of life that I'm speaking about and that I want to live anyway. So give the right expectations to the right group of people, and it will help you not run into hard waters to navigate in different seasons.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's so nuanced and helpful. So pace, accountability, anything else?

Michael Todd:

Yeah, the last thing I'll say is recreation. A lot of people do not have fun. And I mean, I don't even understand how you preach 48 sermons out of 52, take a three day vacation with your family and try to make everybody feel like they got to keep up with that standard. That is unhealthy. And I mean, even in the Bible, when you think about God creating the entire world, we're still figuring out things, Carey, that God created in six days. He didn't create in 60 days. We wouldn't even be able to handle what God would have created in 60 days. Just think about it for one second, six days of creation. And we're still figuring out and managing and naming and trying to get our minds around what he created. And he intentionally put a seven day work week so that we could have a weekly gift from him to be able to enjoy what he created in those six days.

Michael Todd:

And most people don't realize that the Sabbath is the lengthiest commandment in all of the commandments that God gave. And we would definitely tell nobody to murder. "Don't murder. Don't sleep with somebody else's wife. Don't steal." But like, "Take your day off." "Ah, we don't need a day off." You know what I'm saying? God understands. He wouldn't have given us all of this if he didn't want us to... And God says, "You are going to continue to ignore the gift I gave you?" And what ends up happening is, again, your body's going to rest because of tragedy or intentionality. And I just decided at some point I'm going to have to partner with God and the principles that he set in the earth to be able...

Michael Todd:

I mean, you can look at our global world and we've over harvested so many areas because we didn't give the land a break. We didn't give certain things a break. And now we're having to synthetically make up stuff and say, "This is the new something," when the land would do it, if we did it at a pace that was sustainable. And there's all kind of scriptures and all kind of different things like that. But I just think that if you don't enjoy and have fun, something that you do for recreation or re-creation. So I make music for re-creation. I love the beach for re-creation. I go on drives and just look at houses. I like looking at architecture. Those things help me re-create. And until you have fun, I don't know if you can function. Function is a by-product, especially when you're at a high level of leadership, intentionality, goal setting, and vision casting and all those other stuff, you have to be able to have fun to function. And so we do all kinds of stuff for fun.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What did you learn on your sabbatical this year? Because you're 103 days into some rest, which is pretty significant. Obviously, welcomed a fourth child into the world during that period.

Michael Todd:

Yes. Gia Joy. That's my baby.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Amazing.

Michael Todd:

We're so grateful, man. Our family is complete. I did get a vasectomy this summer, and that's a whole nother podcast. But what I learned this summer is that God is more gracious than I am good. Like I have a propensity to want to be really good at whatever I'm given, and not even good, I want to be great at it. I want God to look at me and say, "Hey," like the story of the talents, like, "My good and faithful servant, because you were trusted with this, I'm going to give you some more." That has been my mission.

Michael Todd:

But when I think of the story of the talents, and for everybody that's watching, I'm a pastor. So all my examples of leadership basically come from the Bible. So I just want everybody to understand. But when I look at that story, I've never really realized how much the story is not about what the servants did with their one, two and five. It was that what they were given was a grace gift from the beginning. None of them worked for their one, two or five.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, you're right. "Here it is."

Michael Todd:

It was like, "Here, here's one. Here's two. Here's five. Be faithful over what I've given you." And I think for me, I've always been concentrated on, "I'm not going to bury what God's given me. I'm going to double it. I'm going to triple it." Do you know what I'm saying? Instead of being in awe of God's goodness to give it to me in the first place. Like, "How did I get here?" It's my reasonable service to be able to take what God's given me and at least double it, not triple it, not quadruple it, not 10X it, just double it. The requirement in that parable was to give me back what I gave you one more time.

Michael Todd:

And that has allowed me to look at some of the things that I was doing, and more than what I was doing, the perspectives that I had, and be able to say, "Am I trying to outdo the pace and the rhythm and the motion that I feel like I'm supposed to do?" That's part of the reason why we haven't come back yet. If I look at all my friends, especially here, we're in the Bible belt, we're in the buckle of the Bible belt here in Tulsa. And we look at all of my friends that are back in service and all the different things. This has been a personal transformation for me because my natural nature is to get back in the game and triple it, quadruple it, and keep this thing rolling how God's been able to do it. And God's been like, "Who is that for? Where's the little child that needs to be praised because they're doing good?" You know what I'm saying?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I was going to ask you, what drives that in you, do you know?

Michael Todd:

Yeah. So I've been doing counseling every week on my sabbatical, this is probably the answer to your question. And I put it all out there, because what my hope is that if I live authentically and transparently, that people will have the freedom to do the same in their own lives. And so I found out that there was a time when I was 11 or 12 years old, my actual gifting that I believe, like that God gave me gift-wise, is music. I've played drums since I was two. And I just have a knack for melodies and keyboard and all the different things. So that's what I thought God was going to use me to change the world through music. And what ended up happening is when I was young, I was raised in church.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:50:04]

Michael Todd:

My parents would take us to a church, more times almost than the pastor, it felt like. We'd be there for prayer. We'd be there for choir rehearsal. We'd be there for all this other stuff. And I got good at drums. And when I was 11 or 12 years old, I had this desire to play for the big service. You know what I'm saying? Usually, they had the youth choir, the children's choir and then the adult service, and I really wanted to play and I was good enough to play. And our music pastor at the time had a guy that he liked to play drums. So I was like, "Okay, cool." But every once in a while, they'll probably let me play. So I remember sitting in the back of the choir pit with my drumsticks, there at rehearsals that no kids were at, but I'm there, I'm waiting for my opportunity and they never let me play.

Michael Todd:

And I remember continuing to get better, taking lessons, doing all this stuff. And there could have been a legitimate reason why that was happening. Whether they were paying him. My mind wasn't thinking none of that at the time. You know what I'm saying? I'm just like, "Why won't they let me play? I know I'm better than him. Why won't they let me play?" And I remember being in that moment, making an inner vow that I will be so good at whatever I do, that nobody will ever be able to deny that I should be doing what I want to do. And at that moment, at 12 or 13, that motor started. That's where it started. And it was good was not good enough. It had to be great, because I was good at 12, but good didn't get me on the drum set. So I had to be so good or so great or so amazing that it just made sense. You would be an idiot not to be able to do that.

Michael Todd:

And from that point, I mean, my drive just started going. I mean, when I was 15, I stopped playing basketball and I was good at basketball, because I was going full time in music. I started taking lessons. I went on tour when I was 17, with the late Wayman Tisdale. I would go to high school three days of the week and I was on a professional tour making \$1,200 a night while in high school. I was the senior class president, the junior class president. I was the first black Mr. Edison. I had made up in my mind, I was going to be so good that you could not deny what... and it served me. It was the motor that got me to the place that I was a year ago.

Michael Todd:

And then, that motor started working against me because now I'm sitting in the blessing of being intentional and prepared and stewarding right. But it wasn't good enough. It was like, "I need to do more." I had been so used to going on that motor and it was fed from a hurt little 12 year old that didn't get to play. And all of us have these different things. We may not have located them yet. We may have not had the margin. It was while I was on sabbatical, while I was sitting there just contemplating my life, that this thought came to my mind and it's like, "Is that where it came from?" And as I began to research that and talk to my accountability and my counselor about it, it was like, 'Yeah, that's where that motor started."

Michael Todd:

And now, I have four kids, one of them with special needs. He has autism. I have a wife that is more introverted and loves our family and wants to protect what that is. And I have this rocket ship that's just ready for me to press go at any moment. And I can be at this place, that place, on this, that. And God was like, "Yeah, if you let that little boy in the driver's seat, you're going to go on this rocket ship and it's going to damage whatever you have when you come back down, or you can mature in this moment and you can allow a transformation to happen in you that allows you to be able to still benefit from all that is happening," but be the person that I am supposed to be today, to be able to lead other people into that.

Michael Todd:

So I know we just had a full counseling session on the Carey Nieuwhof podcast, but for me, what I'm going through right now, Carey, is transformation. The name of our church is my current life experience. I'm being transparent.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I would just encourage every leader to go and hit rewind for five minutes, and listen back to that about 10 times. Thank you. That feels like a whole other podcast that we will dive into at some point, Mike.

Michael Todd:

Yeah, we could do it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But there is a drive that destroys and then there's a drive that gets redeemed. And that has been a big story. I got a couple decades on you, that's been a big pattern in my life. And it's amazing how often in leaders, this gets traced back to a childhood wound, and there's some kind of an agreement that gets made or lie or a belief that's like... For me, in law, it was communication. In preaching, it was communication. Now what do I do? It's communication. And God showed me a few years ago that came out of a wound in my childhood.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then he says, "That's okay. It got you here, but will you let me redeem that gift? Will you bring it to a point..." I believe the ancients called it sanctification, where the shadow side of that goes away. Because that can cut, that kind of drive, how big is big enough? You could buy all of Tulsa and it wouldn't be big enough, because that hole is like, "Well, then we got the country and then we got the nation and then we got the planet and then maybe you'll colonize Mars." I don't know, it never stops. It never stops, Mike. Wow, that's just so powerful.

Michael Todd:

And this is the thing that people really don't understand, even as we are embarking on this journey of crazy faith and we've talked about the different things that God has given us in buildings and all this other stuff. I'm on my biggest, crazy faith journey right now. It takes crazy faith to take out the motor that got you to the Indy 500. You know what I'm saying? It takes crazy faith to be like, "You're not going to accept that engagement, and you're not going to go to that, and you're not going... You're going to take a sabbatical before you release your next book. You're going to come back 14 days before the book comes back." I have to pray for my publishers all the time, because they be having heart attacks. Because they're like, "What are you doing?"

Michael Todd:

But I was just like, "I have to take the motor out that got me here." And the beautiful thing about this journey that we're on is God uses the foolish things to confound the wise. I have been more productive, more impactful and more joyful about this in the last few days I've been back than I have in years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's your shift.

Michael Todd:

Because I know God is doing more while I do less. I'm obeying. This is where I believe the scripture comes into my life. When God gives me another pace to run out and it's hard to, like I said, it's the Incredible Hulk inside of me like, "No, I need to be able to do more." Obedience is better than sacrifice. I could literally put myself on the altar and God said, "That's not necessary." I could put my family on the altar. And he said, "That's not necessary." I could put my dreams, goals and my health on the altar. And God said, "That's not necessary. All I need you to do is obey me. Obey the pace that I set. Do the deep

work that's on the inside of you. And I'll do way more than you could think." And that's where we're at right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Is there a fear associated with that? A fear of missing out? A fear of, "Oh, I already hit my peak"?

Michael Todd:

Definitely. But at the end of the day, again, let me say definitely. That's the fight. I was talking to my counselor. I said, "If I don't run on this motor, do I become lazy?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

One of my deep fears too.

Michael Todd:

She was like, "There is nothing you will ever do that you will be lazy at, because you're not built to be." You know what I'm saying? But in my mind, I'm really like, "So if I stop, do I become like a 400 pound couch potato? That's like, 'God's doing it all.'" And she was like, "No, you actually become more present. You actually get to enjoy the things that God has called you to do. And you get to be more intentional and nuanced with it." You know what I'm saying? And so, I think there is a real fear that what got me here is what got me here. And so, if I change up now, then I'm going back to wherever this abyss is of insignificance. But I honestly am starting to believe... I told my wife the other day, this transformation that I'm going through is... You ever seen those little things that have the water and the oil and you flip them over, and like the oil starts dripping down some... It's like they're kids' toys.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I don't think I have, but go on.

Michael Todd:

Okay. Basically, you know water and oil don't go together. So they color some water oil and they have these little wheels and stuff in it. And you flip it over like an hourglass and it starts dripping down into the other thing. And I said, "I'm trying to allow what God is doing in my head, to drop down to my heart." And that's where the fear is. The fear is in my head and I can't do it. But when I get something that I feel like, "No, this is better for me." I let it, bloop, drop down to my heart and day after day, as I meditate, as I pray, as I listen to the right things, my heart is getting fuller with this idea of a pace that's sustainable long term, as opposed to a pace that's powerful in this world.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, and as a leader in your thirties, that keeps you out of the ditch in your late thirties, in your forties, where you end up destroying. If there's anything bad in that drive, and there was in mine, definitely, I'm confessing it here with you. Unhealthy, not redeemed. If there's anything not redeemed in that, that's how you end up blowing it all up. And this huge thing you built becomes like a house of cards and it just starts to crumble. So Mike, this is so worth the price of admission. And just thank you for taking us into that inner journey, because I think if we can have more of these conversations in real time, isn't it better to talk about this now than have a postmortem five years from now, dude?

Michael Todd:

Yes, sir.

Carey Nieuwhof:

"So what happened, Mike?" "Well, this engine got out of control and it ran mowed down a lot of people."

Michael Todd:

We need to be proactive leaders, not reactive leaders. And we think that a lot of times with our organization, we do not think it with the organism. And I think that every leader needs to evaluate where are you not being proactive as an organism? You're planning your year out for your company. You're planning what next month looks like for your finances. You're planning what it looks like when you're going to take your team on a retreat and all of the business stuff, conferences that you're going to go to. When's the last time you sat down and had the margin to plan those things and be proactive for the organism? Because all of it doesn't matter if you're not healthy. All of it doesn't matter if you have a moral failure. All of it doesn't matter if you make one fiscal mistake that was not integrous.

Michael Todd:

And so, I think that we are in a place right now that God would rather us last than be ones who seem like they're living it up right now. And I think that's one of the funny things that when people look at our ministry, they think, "Oh, he's just out here just doing the most and doing all of this other stuff." And that's authentically me. You've been around me. We talked on camera, off camera. We had Chick-fil-A together.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We did.

Michael Todd:

We've done the whole thing. And I'm me when a camera's on, when a podcast is on and when I'm at home, I'm the same person. So anything that I do is me. I'm going to wear something flashy, but I would be doing that if I was a pastor, if I was a janitor, that's me. And so, when I say that if you can authentically be yourself and then allow God to change you from there, I say it all the time, God doesn't bless who you pretend to be. He blesses who you really are. And I think for me, that's part of what has helped me, is whatever version I am of myself today, I come as that full version and God is open to work on that. And that's how I got to this point right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I've said the last 18 months I've been grounded, involuntarily, but increasingly voluntarily. And I keep saying to my wife, "I feel like there's always a lower gear." It's funny. I've been using the engine metaphor too. And I'm like, "Okay. I thought I was in low gear. There's a lower gear. And maybe that is the pace of grace." And ironically, God's doing more. We're having a record year, which is so weird. It's so inverse. You think, "I got to run harder," but you don't.

Michael Todd:

No, it's kingdom. He uses the foolish things to confound the wise. How would they look at me and you or anybody that's taking a day off, spending time with family, actually practicing Sabbath, actually saying, "We're not going to do all of this, this year." And somehow, more happens than what you even planned. More people are impacted. More people are transformed, more money is made. How does that happen? Well, it only could be God. And I really do believe, in my context, everything is for God to get glory. And so, how better than to take the underdog, the person who doesn't have a chance of making it happen, the person who didn't start out with the advantage and turning them into a poster child for God's goodness. And that's what I believe in crazy faith for everybody. When you start doing things differently, it changes the trajectory. And that's how, again, everything that has happened here at Transformation Church has happened.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. So let's talk about Crazy Faith, because I think it takes crazy faith to take that last 20 minutes that we've been talking about and actually apply it to your life. Because the fear for every leader is, "I am lazy." And my wife said the same thing your counselor said, "You'll be the last person to be lazy on the face of the planet." But why did you write Crazy Faith and what are you hoping it will do for people? Because it's a great book, Mike. I really appreciate the work in it. And I want to touch on some key points. Again, it's available now. So make sure you grab it. It's only crazy until it happens.

Michael Todd:

It's only crazy until it happens. I think for me, Carey, the reason I wrote this book, and I have a lot of books that I feel like I'm called to write. I feel like I have messages that will help people move from where they are now to a place of transformation. But the reason I wrote this book, number one, it's my life message. How I'm here on your podcast today, talking about all that has happened is crazy. And if you would've told me when I was a youth pastor in a circle with 150 kids with no microphone, walking around sharing McGee and Me! stories with them, basically that we would be here eight years later, I would've said you were crazy.

Michael Todd:

But the thing about the crazy things that God has planned for us is it's only crazy until it happens. And I began to look at my life and think about all of the things that I aspired to do and how we never talk about anything that's normal. If it's normal, if it's unimpressive, if it's the same as everybody else, we don't really talk about it. But we remember these stories of people who did crazy things, that we probably would never do, but it ended up being the thing that they were remembered for. And so, I then started applying that to the word of God.

Michael Todd:

And this whole thing started as a sermon series at my church. I'm a music head, like I told you. And I was listening to a song that I really liked by Gnarls Barkley, called Crazy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know that song.

Michael Todd:

And one of the lines in the song says, "I remember when I remember when I lost my mind." Everybody knows that one. "Does that make me crazy?" But there's a third verse that I was listening to in car and it said, "My heroes had the heart to live their life out on the limb." And I remember thinking, "I want to be just like them." And I began to think of the heroes of the faith. I began to think of Noah and Abraham and David and all of these people. And I was like, "We, 2,000 plus years later are referring to their acts of faith. Will anybody ever say anything about my act of faith? Will anybody ever say, 'I want to have courage like David or I want to have courage like Mike Todd, or I want to have the ability to trust and step out like Carey Nieuwhof'? I want to have the ability to slow down like Susan or Sarah.' Will anybody ever speak about our faith?"

Michael Todd:

And the truth of the matter is the way that we view faith is we think it's just saving faith. So we put our trust in God to save us and that we don't go to hell and we go to heaven. And that's where it usually stops and the rest of it is enduring life until we make this transition. But I believe that there's a level of faith that we can live at that's going to be crazy to other people, until it becomes something that it is actual in our life. And that's why I say to everybody, "It's only crazy until it happens." There's no way I should be here right now. And God doing what he's done in my life. But it was crazy at one moment. And now it's reality.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I would encourage people to listen or watch the episode that Mike and I first did together back in 2020, it's on YouTube. We shot it beautifully at Transformation Church before the world changed. And thank you for that. But it tells a lot of the story. I love this. This to me is worth the price of the book. So for those of you who are watching, you know what I'm talking about, it's like, "Do I have vacant lot faith, Porta Potti faith, trailer home, fixer-upper, mansion or skyscraper?" Do you want to talk about that? Because it's just a brilliant matrix. And I'm like, "Yeah, there are some days where I'm like at the Porta Potti level of what I'm trusting God for."

Michael Todd:

So one of the things that I said is that a lot of people want to build these skyscrapers in their life and want to build these big structures. But your structure is only good as your foundation. And me and my wife have been in the long, arduous, crazy process of building a house. And one of the things that took so long was the foundation. And I was like, "What is going on?" I'm going in day after day and day after day. And I'm like, "Where is the house?" And the guy who was over the foundation said, "The foundation is the most important part of the house, because it allows everything else to be able to be sturdy, standing and last." And he said, "We can go and tear down a wall and blow out something and make it bigger, but if the foundation is not set properly, we're going to have to do so much work to jack it up to either relay a foundation or you may have a faulty life."

Michael Todd:

And I began to say, "Doesn't that look like our faith journey?" Is many of us have faith foundations that are faulty. And we're trying to put a mansion on a vacant lot that was not prepared for that. And so, I just challenge people to evaluate seriously. What kind of foundation of faith do you have and what could be built on it? And most of us, again, like I just said, have the faith to believe that, "Maybe God will save me." And that's it. But in the Bible, there's all type of miracles, signs, wonders in our lives. There's things that can happen, that can change the trajectory of generations in our family. But most of us don't

have a foundation that is big enough and solid enough to be able to build the things that God would love to build in our life. Everybody quotes Jeremiah 29:11, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you, not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.'"

Michael Todd:

Can your faith hold that hope in future? Can your faith be able to be big enough to believe God when he says stuff that seemed like, "There's no way that can happen." And he's like, "Yes, it is, but you got to prepare the faith foundation."

Michael Todd:

And so, are you a Porta Potti? I said in the book, I said the Porta Potti faith is used only as a last resort. Usually, full of crap, requires a lot of maintenance and has just enough room for one person. Some people have Porta Potti faith. And I just think about those things in my life and in different areas, in different seasons, I've had those different things. But the goal is to get the skyscraper faith, to be able to have a foundation that goes deep. When they build big skyscrapers, that stuff you see in Dubai and all that other stuff, they go down so deep to build that foundation because then that building is to withstand everything that happens. And I believe it's God's desire for all of us as leaders, as family members, as people, to be able to have crazy faith, that's able to build whatever God wants to build in our life.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I mean, to go again, part of your story, it is a story of crazy faith. It's only crazy until it happens, but I mean, the first African American black pastor to successfully take over from a white founder and then see it go from a... Well, you went from 400 to 200 and then up to what it is today. Just-

Michael Todd:

Yeah, thousands of people. And God be the glory.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, thousands of people in person when it happens, hundreds of thousands, millions online. I mean, it's just bonkers. And then, like you said, Top 10 Billboard artist, it's nuts. How do you, for the average person, because we've always been... I've been around people who have crazy visions, but they're just crazy. You know what I mean? How do you know it's crazy faith? How do you know, "I am not smoking something, I'm not diluted here"? Because particularly for those of us in leadership, if we cast a really big vision and it's a failure, you can crush a lot of people.

Michael Todd:

Well, one thing that you have to realize is that for me and what I believe and what I know is true, that true vision is a collaboration between you and God. So I'm not talking about coming off and saying, "Oh, I want that purple car." And then you're saying like, "I'm going to believe for that purple car." That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about in your quiet time, being able to pray and be... again, this is why margin is so important. Every great thing I've ever done came in the margin. It never comes when I'm trying to get it. It never comes when I'm chasing after it. It's like every great thing comes when you're just still. A butterfly does not ever land on somebody who's running. A butterfly lands on people who are still.

Michael Todd:

And that's my analogy for some of the things. Relationship Goals, the book that I wrote, my first book went number one, New York Times best seller. That message came to me off of sabbatical. That butterfly landed on me. Crazy Faith, first message, off of sabbatical. It landed on me in the margin. And so, one of the things, again, that I'm encouraging people, is give the space to be able to see what are those visions, ideas, thoughts that you need to allow God to birth in you. And then we know what Habakkuk says, "Then write that vision and make it plain." Because it's not a vision if it's in your head.

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:15:04]

Michael Todd:

So one of the things that I do all the time and I wrote a chapter in there, I talk about baby faith. Nothing starts at crazy faith. It starts at baby faith. And many times, the first baby faith step is writing it down, and making it plain, and putting it in a place. Having enough faith to take it from your mind, that's a step of faith, to piece of paper. And that's what I did. 37 days after I became the lead pastor of Transformation Church, I was in my daughter's room, just sitting there on my computer in prayer, and I just felt like I was supposed to write this down, that Transformation Church, the SpiritBank Event Center, would be Transformation Church.

Michael Todd:

And that's all that... It was crazy, Carey. We're sitting in a converted grocery store with barely anybody committed to our ministry because they're trying to see if I can even lead the church. And 37 days after I became the lead pastor, I write it down. And when I write it down, I wrote it down with about 11 or 12 other things. I literally put it in the book. This is a picture, if you're watching, that you can see in there. And I wrote it down, "The SpiritBank Event Center will be Transformation Church." And when I did that, I didn't tell a bunch of people. I told my wife, and she was like, "Yay! Okay." You know what I'm saying? There was no smoke. No nothing. And we just kept being faithful. This would become our location five years later and we paid it off in six months.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. And you had no way, there was no logical step-

Michael Todd:

No.

Carey Nieuwhof:

-to get from where you were sitting at the computer.

Michael Todd:

Carey, Carey, can I... Let me open up the QuickBooks for you real quick. When I took over the church, there was \$1.2 million coming in in the entire year, okay, \$1.2 million. When I wrote this down, we were believing God for \$15,000 a month, a week, to be able to function. I remember the Christmas before I became the lead pastor of this church, I'm just going to put it all out there, that if we didn't get \$20,000 on, it was the Sunday before Christmas, we were going to have to let somebody go in Christmas season.

I want to be very clear. We had no huge donors. We have no professional sports teams in Tulsa. We don't have no... You know what I'm saying?

Michael Todd:

I just need everybody to realize. For me to write this down was absolutely crazy. It was insane. And this building was built by the city of Bixby for \$54 million. It has a 975-car parking garage. It's in the back of one of the most affluent shopping centers in our county. And for me to write that down and graphically impose Transformation Church on the top of it and print it out on a piece of paper, was completely crazy until it happened.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Until it happened.

Michael Todd:

Until it happened, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well...

Michael Todd:

And now, what people called crazy in one season, they call it faith in another season. And that's why I just try to challenge people that there's a thin line between what is crazy and what God is calling you to do. When he talked to Abraham and said, "Hey, leave the country that you're in right now and go to the land. I will show you," there was no definitive anything there. "Hold on, God. I'll go, but show me where we going." "No. Take a step of crazy faith and I'll show you." And that has been the story of what has happened here.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And what's so encouraging is it's lots of real-life examples, it's super current, and it's encouraging for people. I think we live in an era where everybody needs, yeah, a bigger type of faith, a crazy faith. And yet toward the end of the book, you include a chapter on fading faith. And you've probably heard the stat-

Michael Todd:

Yes, sir.

Carey Nieuwhof:

-30% of pastors want to quit, have seriously thought about it, a lot have already done that. We're in the season of the great resignation. There's a lot of de-conversion happening. Life and leadership have been really hard lately, Mike. What would you say to pastors who feel like their faith is fading, that they don't believe anymore?

Michael Todd:

Yeah. I think one of the greatest things that I could tell you is it's okay. Jesus is not intimidated by your fading faith. Other people may be, your team, your staff, your spouse. But we see a clear example in the Bible where Thomas, who very rudely has been named Doubting Thomas. I don't think he was Doubting Thomas. I think he was Discouraged Thomas. I think he was Dejected Thomas. I think he was "Done with what happened to him" Thomas. You know what I'm saying? But not doubting because there's so many context clues. I share more in the book. But one of the things is that Jesus is crucified, then he comes back in a resurrected form, and shows up to the disciples, and Thomas is not there. And he gets back and everybody's like, "We saw Jesus." They got crazy faith, they pumped up, their business is successful, they outlasted corona, their company exploded during the thing, their church tripled and quadrupled.

Michael Todd:

It's that kind of feel. And Thomas is like, "Man, you all can miss me with all of that crazy faith talk, all that believing. I didn't see it. It didn't happen for me. My child didn't get into the college I wanted them to get into, my family member didn't survive that operation, my dream is still on the ground. You all can miss me with all that." That's where many people are. And he said, "If I don't physically see the nail prints in his hand..." So he's going to go to the craziest thing he can think of because he doesn't think this can happen. "If I don't put my hand in his side or see the nail prints in the hand, don't talk to me about faith."

Michael Todd:

And it's so crazy that one of the greatest things that that community and Thomas did was still stay together. And many people do not have a group of people where they can actually be in doubt and that community doesn't leave them. Because we find this out, because a few days later, Thomas is in the same house with that same group of people. He didn't deuce out on them. They didn't cast him out. They allowed him to stay with the doubt. Woo! That's a whole word right there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Man.

Michael Todd:

And there are too many people, especially in this movement that we're in right now, that won't allow doubt to be a part of it. And Jesus shows up. And before Thomas says anything, he says, "Here, Thomas. Here's my hands. Put your hand right here." And he said, "Man, you just got to have faith." And I just think about that God will do something personal and tangible to prove himself to somebody who has fading faith. My encouragement to you is to just pray that God would do that. "God, I am at a place where I cannot take this anymore. Would you please meet me like you met Thomas and do something tangible that I can feel and something personal that only you could know?"

Michael Todd:

And I'm telling you, he's such a good God of grace, that he will meet you right there. And just tell you, "Just get a little more faith. I got you. And don't give up leader. We need you. The world needs you. Your family needs you. Your future self needs you to show up in this moment." And God's okay with your fading faith, but he can turn fading faith into crazy faith.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh. Well, I'll tell you, this has been wide-ranging, fascinating. Is there anything we didn't touch on that you want to touch on as we wrap up?

Michael Todd:

I mean, I'm excited about what this next season looks like for me. I'm going to have to tell you what just happened when we're off the air because it's happening right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay. Cool.

Michael Todd:

But as I have walked in this crazy faith and not taken my foot off the gas, like I told you, we got this building and paid it off in six months in 2019. Well, it sits in the back of this complex that I told you is the second-highest rent district in our city. And it has Chick-fil-A, and State Farms, and chiropractic offices, and all this other stuff that were built to look just like the church. And I was driving in one day... And I don't know who this is for, but somebody's making me say this. I was driving in one day after God had done this miracle, just being grateful and just thankful and in awe that this is where we get to do church and business and life and all this other stuff and help people transform. And literally, I just heard this impression, "Don't take your foot off the gas." I'm like, "What?" Like, "Keep believing in crazy faith." And many times, I know my propensity is once something happens that was unimaginable, we're like, "Whew! That's it. That's all I needed."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, that's it. We're at the end. Yeah.

Michael Todd:

"I don't want to put my faith out there no more. We did that. I'm done with that season." And it was almost as if God was telling me, "You've opened something that you need to keep going down." So I was like, "What does that mean?" He said, "Believe for the entire complex." I'm like, "Huh?" "Believe for the entire complex." And so what did I do? Baby faith. I drove around it, took a video, and I wrote it down. "We're going to own the entire thing." Carey, I am sitting here, talking to you, and as sure as I am black, wearing a jacket with green, white, and blue on it, one year almost to the date, we purchased the entire complex.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Michael Todd:

Okay? Seven buildings over 35 commercial businesses. I can't even tell you, it was easier than doing the first acquisition and it costs double. And it's producing revenue for us to go do mission work, that we don't have to ask anybody for an offering or do anything like that. It is a for-profit that is now producing things that can go and bless other people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Incredible.

Michael Todd:

It was crazy when I said it. Within two years, we had amassed over \$30 million worth of property. Here I am, a 33-year-old black man from Tulsa, Oklahoma. That's not supposed to happen, and us not have these huge things over our back, and donors pulling us, and all. It is crazy faith. And so I'm encouraging somebody. There's something that has happened for you, and you've been like, "That's it. That's good. That's enough." But what I believe is God wants to take you to crazier faith so that somebody can believe it's possible. There's somebody that's watching and hearing me right now, and you think the thing that you thought was impossible couldn't happen, and it happened. And now, you set back. And it's time to put your foot on the gas. And Carey, when we get off this call, and I tell you what just happened, we'll be back on another podcast real soon.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We will do that. Oh, Mike, I can't thank you enough. The book is called Crazy Faith. It's only crazy until it happens.

Michael Todd:

Yes, sir.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Pastor Mike Todd, Michael Todd. You're iammiketodd on Insta, if you're one of the three people not following Mike. And book's available everywhere books are sold. And yeah, they can connect with you on the socials. Any particular website or anything that you want to direct people to?

Michael Todd:

Yeah, iammiketodd.com. You can get Crazy Faith, you can get Relationship Goals, and you can see a lot of what God is doing with somebody who is not qualified to be in this. But I got crazy faith, man.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, there's two of us in that category. Mike, this has been amazing. Thank you so much.

Michael Todd:

This has been the best podcast I think I've ever done, Carey. And I don't say that like... It's our mixture. I told you off of air, we might have to do a monthly or bi-weekly something to just... I mean, this is... I really appreciate your platform. I appreciate your intentionality to help people. You don't have to do this. You've done so much that you could sit back and not give the gems that you have away, and the relationships that you have that you stewarded. But I want to tell you that so many times, I've been scrolling on Instagram or listening to the podcast, and it's been that push that I needed over a hump. And so on behalf of all the leaders that'll never get on here to be able to tell you this, I just want to say thank you, man. I appreciate what you do behind closed doors and how you live your life. And you're a beacon of light for all of us, man. So I love you, man.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I love you too, Mike. And I'll tell you, you really encouraged me. You put some flickers of hope in some stuff I had forgotten about. And I'm like, "Okay, I guess at like 56, I still got some stuff in the tank here, man."

Michael Todd:

You still got it, bro. Come on. Let's go!

Carey Nieuwhof:

"There's still some stuff in the tank. Time for crazy faith."

Michael Todd:

Let's go!

Carey Nieuwhof:

All right. Let's go, man. Mike, thank you.

Michael Todd:

Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Don't you wish everyone could hear that section of the podcast about drive, and success, and counseling? I just think so many leaders, myself included, have stories like that. And I love how Mike just is allowing that to be redeemed to the drive. I wrote a piece years ago about don't let the thing that drives you, destroy you. And that's what can happen. And so good for you, Mike. Man, I felt like that could have been a four-hour conversation. If you want more, you can go to the show notes and you can find that all at careynieuwhof.com/episode448. Make sure you check out his brand new book, Crazy Faith, available everywhere books are sold. I got an advanced copy. It's a fantastic book. And Mike is literally blazing a trail for all of us into the future.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Gonna tell you about the next episode in just a second, but I do have an Ask Me Anything About Productivity. Going to talk to Carter today. And what happens when you're not in control? How do you control your calendar? If you've ever struggled with that, hang on. Next episode, Horst Schulze is back. And man, he is the founder of the Ritz-Carlton and Capella Hotel Group. And we're going to talk about what he learned as a young leader that gave him an edge that defined his future career. Hint, it came out of failure, almost failure. He also explains why service still matters and how his industry can compete against Airbnb. It's a fascinating conversation. I think the best one we've had. Here's an excerpt.

Horst Schulze :

I was staying in a five-star hotel in California, five-star. Well, big name, big name, name. I went to my meetings in the morning, came back in the evening, the room was not made. In fact, it was never made. It was never finished. I had slept there the night before. It was not made. So the next morning, the next morning when I checked out, I told the front desk person, I want for checkout. I usually just give my keys. And by the way, nobody made my room, just so you know." He said, "You know, I hear that all the time." That's a five-star hotel. If he would've said, "Forgive me," I would have nearly been embarrassed that I complained. "Forgive me." I would have said, "Oh, it's okay. No problem. No problem."

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that's the next time on the podcast. Also coming up, we have Max Lucado, Jacqueline Novogratz, Scott O'Neil from the 76ers, AJ Harbinger, and Johnny Dzubak from The Art of Charm Podcast. Dave Hollis, Ken Coleman, Erwin McManus, Nicky Gumbel, Michelle Williams, and so many more. And now, it's time for Ask Me Anything About Productivity. This is brought to you by our partners at Pro Media Fire. You can join me, Bob Goff, Tim Timberlake, and others for five days of learning on how to create amazing social media content. It's free. Go to socialmediachallenge.com. And if you want to get in on what is happening city to city and tons of free resources, go to barnacities.com/carey. See if your city is included and sign up for when they come to your city so that you can have a bigger impact locally.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, now it's time for What I'm Thinking About Productivity. And hey, this actually comes out of my brand new book, At Your Best. I just want to thank you once again for everybody. You have been so kind about the book. It is the strongest launch I've ever had for a book and the feedback has been incredible. So I just want to thank you so much. Now that you're getting into the weeds of the book and looking at how to get time, energy and priorities working in your favor, the questions are getting very specific. So I want to share that with you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Also, I just want to share one or two reviews that came in. Authors do read them and they really make a difference. I particularly want to thank one of you who gave it five stars and said, "Wow, just, wow. I'm a junior high life-skills teacher who thought this third year would be easier. Not so. So thankful that I was led to this book and the gift of the masterclass for all of you thousands who you signed up for the masterclass in advance." Still available, by the way, if you want to go to atyourbesttoday.com. He says, "I'm excited to go to school tomorrow and implement all that I've learned from devouring this material. Highly recommend. Thank you so much." Lots of five-star reviews. Lots of encouragement. Man, I got to tell you, it's been a very worthwhile journey and I'm very grateful for that. So today, we're going to take Carter's question. And here we go, Carter.

Carter:

Hi, Carey. My name's Carter and I'm a pastor in Calgary, Alberta. I'm just looking at the Thrive Calendar and wondering how I can best set it up when I don't necessarily dictate when my meetings happen. Just based on the size of our church, I have a direct report, who then also has a direct report. And so it's oftentimes competing for time. So how would you set that up when meetings are set that are not necessarily based on your preferred scheduling? Thanks so much.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So Carter, that is a very common issue. And probably the number one question I get asked by leaders after they work through the material is like, "I am not the senior leader. So what do I do about this?" So I'm going to start with a general principle and then I'm going to get very, very specific. So you're not the senior leader in your organization. And the Thrive Calendar, which actually puts all of the theory together so that you can protect your best hours, which I call your green zone, those three to five hours a day, where you're at peak productivity. A lot of people when they read... Well, pretty much everybody, when they read the book, starts to reorganize their calendar so they can do what they're best at when they're at your best. And what I hear you saying is, "I can't move some of these meetings to where they're optimal for me or for my team. What do I do about that?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

So one big principle is this, focus on what you can control, not on what you can't. I'm not saying you're doing that. But it's very natural for me, when something feels out of my control, to throw my hands up and say, "I don't have any influence at all." So we'll do a little bit of math. So a work week is 40 hours. You get 168 hours in a week. That means you actually, by default, have control over 76% of your week. Now, if your meeting schedule is typical, where maybe it's 10 to 12 hours a week of meetings, that still means that you have control over 93% of your time, which is a ridiculous amount of control. And even if it's like 20 hours a week where you don't have a lot of control over your schedule at work, that gives you 88% control of your time, which is pretty staggering.

Carey Nieuwhof:

However, I think you can do better than that. And what I would suggest to you, if you've got some meetings that are not within your control, and you've got a boss who is controlling that, I would sit down and have a conversation with your boss and express desires, not demands. But say something like, "Hey, boss." Don't call him boss. I don't know his name. "I've been working through this material and I want to become more productive. I want to become more productive at work, I want to bring more energy to my tasks, and I want to do a better job in moving our mission forward. In order to do that, I have a question for you. Is it possible to move one or two or three, pick your number, of these meetings to a different time? And here's why." And then explain why. I'm guessing it's because your green zone, your peak hours, are being impacted or maybe your team is being impacted by that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now, most bosses will respond very well to that. If it's going to lead to productivity, because you've already said why, the other thing I would do is ask if you could do it for a couple of months as a trial. Like, "I want to make this better. I want to move the needle on our mission. And I think by moving these meetings, the whole team can perform at a higher level. Would you be open to that for a couple of months or until Christmas or something like that," but put a date on the calendar and then see what happens. Most reasonable bosses, when they understand the why behind the what, will be wide open to that. And then when you start making the changes, hopefully there's a noticeable change and improvement in your energy levels, in your performance, in the results you're getting for the team, and how the team is operating and feeling. And if that's the case, at the end of the trial period, your boss will probably say, "Wow, that's optimal. Do you have any other suggestions for how we can make things better around here?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

And the other thing I would say, you're probably thinking, "Man, it'd be great if my boss would read this book," just a note to the cautious. As much as I would love to get a copy of my book into your boss' hands, sometimes that can come across as aggressive. So what I would do, if your boss is interested, by all means, get him a copy of the book, but I would just go do your work and do it spectacularly. And my guess is your boss would say, "Hey, do you mind if I have a look at your book? Do you mind if I borrow a copy? Do you mind if I get a copy? Maybe we can look at this as a team." And then sort of take it from there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because whenever somebody just hands me a book and like, "Here, you need to read this," I get a little defensive about that. And I say that even as an author. So what I would do is be ridiculously good at

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what you do and my guess is you'll get some credence. And at that point, it could become a team study. We are hearing from lots of leaders who are making this a team study. And yeah, I hope that helps, Carter. If you've got questions, leave them for me at careynieuwhof.com/podcast, just click on the button, start recording, and I will take your questions.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, next time, we are back with a fresh episode. If you haven't yet checked out my book, make sure you check it out. You can get it anywhere books are sold or you can go to atyourbesttoday.com. And well, there's some bonus resources there as well. And for everybody who's purchased the book, if you haven't gone to atyourbesttoday.com and downloaded all the free resources that come once you had the book, you should do that. There's everything there from the Thrive Calendar, to all the charts in the book, to some things that will really help you get time, energy, and priorities working in your favor. So appreciate you leaders. Thank you so much for making this an amazing journey. We had an incredible September so far. And can't wait for what's ahead. And I hope our time together today has helped you thrive in life and leadership.

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.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:39:19]