

Announcer:

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

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, hey everybody, and welcome to episode 469 of the podcast. I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life and leadership. It's been a great year so far. Thank you to everybody for your encouragement, your support, shoutouts on social, sharing this podcast with friends. That's how we get the word out there. And hopefully if you enjoyed this, you share it with a friend. Our guest today is Mark Sayers, and this marks actually part one of a multi-part series on the future.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I hope it's really going to help. And today's episode is brought to you by World Vision and CDF Capital. You can download your free leadership assessment guide today at [worldvision.org/CareyPodcast](http://worldvision.org/CareyPodcast). And by CDF Capital who's hosting an XP Summit in Manchester, New Hampshire, May 24th, 25th, 2022. Just go to [XPsummit.org](http://XPsummit.org). Well, Mark and I are going to talk about future church trends, how to lead through profoundly disorienting change and what to expect in 2022.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So it's wide ranging conversation. And we have been going through so much. And I look to Mark as one of those guides for me. He's got a Rebuilders Podcast he and I talk about, I never miss an episode. He's got a new book coming out I've had the privilege to read and endorse. And yeah, Mark's just a thought leader and I've really appreciated his contribution to the wider conversation. And he studies trends like crazy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so I follow. Mark is the senior leader of Red Church in Melbourne, Australia. He's passionate about spiritual renewal and the future of the church. He's the author of a number of books, including *Strange Days* and *Reappearing Church*. He lives in Melbourne with his family. What I really like about Mark is there's a few churches and Mark would be close to that where I'm like, "I think this is what the future church is going to feel like and look like."

Carey Nieuwhof:

And if you don't follow him on the Rebuilders Podcast, make sure you do that, but I hope you enjoy this conversation. And then we are going to dive into, I'll tell you at the end where we're going with this mini series within the podcast, but we will talk about the metaverse and hybrid church and well crypto and the way everything is changing. So hopefully you enjoy it as much as I enjoy thinking about those things and looking into the future.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So World Vision, can you remember a more difficult time to be a leader? World Vision doesn't. And every day there are more challenges. And as I've said to a lot of my friends, it feels like we're moving into year three of crisis. So how is your leadership? Well, World Vision is partnered with Krish Kandiah to

create an interactive tool, to help ask yourself the critical questions you need to know to take stock of your leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so they've got a guide, it's absolutely free for you. And if you really want to see how you're doing, you have it what do you need to do to lead through another year of this? I'd go to [worldvision.org/Careypodcast](http://worldvision.org/Careypodcast), and make sure you check it out. And it's brought to you by CDF Capital. So at some point we'll get lockdowns and uncertainty and learning from each other is critically important.

Carey Nieuwhof:

One of the questions that's really emerging is okay, what are the new best practices. Well CDF Capital's XP Summit 2022 is happening May 24th and 25th. If you're an executive pastor in that role, you want to be there. The theme is post-pandemic church. We will get there eventually and as part of your registration, you'll get access to an exclusive digital library created just for you. You can extend your summit experience by joining XP Summit Leadership cohorts, and it's an exclusive opportunity to grow and connect. You can register for XP Summit today by going to [XPsummit.org](http://XPsummit.org).

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I'm grateful for our partners. We trust them and that's why we bring them to you. But I'm also really grateful for you as the listener, wherever you're listening to this, whatever you happen to be doing, I hope it is encouragement to you. And for all of you who leave ratings and reviews thank you so much. It's a huge encouragement to me and the team. I was just reading Shatter Glass Ceilings. Thank you so much for a review you left a few months ago.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You say, "I fall into this category of listener that Carey mentions as being the majority of his audience, a Millennial. Deconstructing, what church means and looks like as a lifelong church kid and a leader, earnestly seeking on how to better self than I was yesterday. The variety of guests, both men and women have given me insight and value to add to my formal education and experience in the workplace. It is well produced, thought provoking and the right mixture of vulnerability, navigating change and tried and true leadership practices. Thank you for investing in us."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, I am so glad to hear that, a lot of next gen leaders listening, and then a lot of people in my season of life too. And so thank you for leaving that, really appreciate it. And now my conversation with Mark Sayers. Mark, welcome back to the podcast.

Mark Sayers:

Yeah, it's fantastic to be here again.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I thought it would be fun to start off the better part of a new year just kind of picking your brain, looking at all the ground that we've covered, well really in almost two years now, which is insane when you think about it. It feels like 20, and it feels like two months. I don't know what that is. But I have lived

off of your Rebuilders Podcast for the last few years. Any leader who is not listening to the Rebuilders Podcast is missing out.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So I'd like to pick up on some of the themes that you have really been batting about on that show, in some of your other writing. So let's start on the macro level. What are some of the meta shifts or the global shifts that you think the world is experiencing right now in the church?

Mark Sayers:

Well, I think a really key concept to understand this big change that's happening in the world is the shift from a complicated world to a complex world. And in a complicated world, things to work in a fairly linear fashion. Problems come our way, but we find a work around and we deal with that problem, when we move past it and perhaps innovate a little and then sort of keep going until we hit the next problem.

Mark Sayers:

And in many ways, if you think about even like some of the solutions that we discovered over the last sort of century and how to deal with complicated problems. People dealt with how to deal with building things. We created factory lines, where it's this repeated process. That even influenced leadership and sort of modern management theory, where we oversaw this process and made sure it was really effective. But where we're heading now is a world, which is much more complex. When it's complex that means it's non-linear. Things don't happen in this clear step one, step two, step three.

Mark Sayers:

There's many things happening at once. A really helpful way to, I think, think of this is some of the supply chain issues that the world has been dealing with of late. So for example, I ordered a car during the pandemic in lockdown here. First of all, that was a complex world thing. I'd never thought I would buy a car unseen. So we ordered a Toyota Camry and then very quickly discovered after we'd sort of ordered it, that there was this whole complex world out there of how a Toyota Camry gets made and gets to my city in Melbourne. But all these factors going into play from the fact that there is chip... That the chips, the processes that go in the cars, there's a supply issue with that. That's linked to stuff that's happening around the world, involved with the environment.

Mark Sayers:

There's a magnesium shortage, linked to energy things happening in China. And there's been various things with port production in Southern China, around coronavirus outbreaks. So all of a sudden, this really simple thing, I had a complicated world issue in my head when I bought cars before, which was how do I go to the dealership, get a good deal and get home?

Mark Sayers:

When all of a sudden I just went into another universe where I'm dealing with stuff that I'd never thought I was going to deal with in buying a car. So we are living in this networked complex world. And I think that's the big shift. So we think about coronavirus and its effect over the last couple years, but we're seeing how that interlinks with so many other things that are happening in the world. So it's a big

shift for us to get our heads around, but the world is becoming more complex. I think that's the big, big shift that's happening. That we are living and leading through.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've heard you also just that as maybe a world that's increasingly destabilized. I mean, I think there's still remnants of it now where people are saying, "Well, we're coming out of the pandemic. So we'll have a normalized world." Do you think that is a simplistic reduction of what's happening? Do you see more instability ahead? And if so, why, how and where?

Mark Sayers:

Yeah. So I think that one of the, I guess, things we need to get ahead around is that a more complex world derives from a more connected world. If you think about, if you invited 10 people over to your house, just say you invited 10 people that you know fairly well. Maybe a couple, you don't know as well, but you sort of know them acquaintances and you have a dinner party. There might be some complicated things arise. There might be a difficult subject of conversation. Someone might spill something on themselves, again, complicated world issues.

Mark Sayers:

But if you invited 5,000 people randomly picked from around the world to your house for dinner, that is a much more complex reality. And so that's the world we're living in. I was always wondering, I'd read a number of things and articles, which talked about the fact that at some stage we were due for a global pandemic.

Mark Sayers:

And I remember reading an article and not long after that being in Dubai airport, and having to kill two hours, you're sort of completely exhausted out of your brain, having flown 18 hours from Melbourne there. And I remember just sitting in my chair, just looking around at the absolute, just diversity of places that people had come to that airport. And I remember thinking, "Man, we're so connected in this world. If there was a virus in a place like this, it's just going to be across the planet in 24 hours."

Mark Sayers:

So the more connected we are, it brings benefits. We get to enjoy... In a city like Melbourne I get to enjoy food from all over the world. Meet interesting people who've come here from all over the world. I can talk to you on another continent in this electronic way. But what that also means that there's complications and complexity comes to us. So we're closer to everything in the world, including all of the world's problems. And also sometimes we're isolated from even people who we're close to in our street. So the more we're connected, the more issues that are going to come our way. So I think that's really that driver then of the big thing I see is disruption going forward. So disruption is the new environment in which we're going to live.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. So normal as a concept, would you pronounce... Here we are at the beginning of another new year, whenever people are accessing this. Would you say normal as we knew it is dead? Or like just give it six more months or what's your take on that?

Mark Sayers:

So I think I've been more and more... Because definitely when the pandemic first kicked off, people talked about the return to normal, the new normal. And I think now I'm starting to see it more as we're actually coming out... What we thought was normal was actually abnormal. And there was this period of you could even say, let's say 2005 to 2019 or 2016, where there was really a sort of like belief in the world that the world was going to move to a more smooth world. I remember I'd have these moments sort of 2017, 2018, where perhaps I'd be on the other side of the world in London. And I could use my Uber app and I could go into a coffee shop and find like Australians running a coffee shop in London or Los Angeles, who could make a coffee like I'd get in Melbourne, you could walk into a H&M store and get the shirt that you're looking at a few weeks earlier in another continent.

Mark Sayers:

And so it was this very smooth world that you could move around and it seemed like things were just economically stable. It's a bit of instability in the world, but nothing that affected you personally. But really where we are now is I think we've returned to more what the world's always been like. Periods of geopolitical tension, pandemics, economic upheavals. This is normal. I think we bought a myth that we could have this world, which is really stable and we could live our best lives and go about our projects and lead without disruption. So I actually think we're more returned to normality. Disruption is normal.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. And as much as I don't want to hear that, I suppose you are right. I mean, I did study history for a few years in university. And if you look at it, it is plagues, war, factions. I mean the biblical narrative. It's like every other book, something's blowing up, some civilization is being overthrown. Some people are being exiled. Someone's in jail. It is not the life that we grew up in. And even my parents who were born in the 1940s were born into the midst of a world war.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then Baby Boomers come on after, Gen X and Millennials grow up in this little bubble where you're going to do better than your parents. You're probably going to have more money than your parents. You're going to have a stable job. There's a career trajectory, you can fly pretty much anywhere you want.

Carey Nieuwhof:

When my dad came over from Holland in the 50s, late 50s, he thought, "That's it. I can never afford a plane ticket back." Well, air travel was so expensive and it wasn't as much anymore. And now we live in this... You say, I got a new car too, theoretically, I don't even know whether I'll have it by the time in this air. It's like, I've never had to wait six months, four to six months for a car. And they were literally trying to intercept one at the manufacturing line to get one for me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I'm like, "That's weird." Normally they're like, "Yeah, we can have it here Tuesday. When do you want it?" But you think this destabilized world is more normal. And that probably is a normative view of history. What are the destabilizing forces? What are the things that are making... Because I think every leader loves predictability. Leadership is hard enough, but what are the factors that are making this a destabilized era?

Mark Sayers:

So one of the things that is happening now is that in a complex system, you got to think of it as a work or a system where everything's connected. So one crisis doesn't stand alone. A crisis can start to fall into another crisis. So for example look at some of the supply chain issues, which we're chatting about here that is linked to so many different factors. So for example, I just mentioned magnesium, that affects production. So magnesium production as of recording is gone down. Why is that? Well, that's actually because a number of the coal power plants in China, where a lot of the smelting happens of magnesium have actually gone offline. Why? Because China is doing a number of things. One, they've stopped buying Australian coal because of some geopolitical things where Australia pushed back on some political things with China.

Mark Sayers:

So that's one factor. Also China's committed to quite an ambitious global carbon emission goal. So that means they're moving from coal into renewables. That's another factor. There's been COVID outbreaks in China as well, which is affecting... So all these are different crises. And what happens is crises in a complex world begin to then cascade is the term that we hear from complexity science, where they begin to cascade.

Mark Sayers:

So I look forward. I think that what we are looking at is we're looking at geopolitical issues, geopolitical change. We're looking at cultural change. We're looking at climate change. We're looking at moving towards a new economic model. We're looking to increasing technological disruption. The world is moving away from a centralized American, global order to now a more decentralized multipolar world. I just saw one sort of prediction the other day where it said the world will now move around sort of like America at the center, three centers. An American sort of led world, an EU led world and a Chinese led world. There's talk of the internet breaking up into regions.

Mark Sayers:

So even one of the big things that people are now talking about is the digital pandemic. That the Internet's going to become a less smooth, unpredictable place to expect that with cyber attacks, the internet may go offline in your country for a period is an expectation of the future.

Mark Sayers:

And so all of these factors, globalization, de-globalization, internet, and also even pandemics. The more we push into the environment, the more we can expect pandemics to happen in that sort of human nature overlap. So all of these factors put us at risk. One way I think about it is, which may be helpful for people, is we're coming to the end of an era. I think we're coming to the end of that smooth period. We're coming to the end of the American century.

Mark Sayers:

What we are about to head into, we don't know what it is, but we're in the waiting room between eras. And I call this the gray zone. And it's an overlap. So it's confusing. Because you see elements of the previous period are still here. And then the next era it is forming, but they're overlapping. It's like Rome didn't end on a Wednesday. And the dark ages began on a Thursday. There's always overlap. And I think we are living in this very confusing overlap gray zone in between time.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm not disagreeing with anything you're saying. I mean, I just listened to a podcast a few months ago about the possible collapse of the internet. You've seen little elements of it, but I mean, this isn't just, "Oh, I can't Google anything or I can't get Instagram." This is like, no, the power grid has failed or your self-driving car doesn't drive itself or your appliances don't talk to each other anymore. And your fridge is malfunctioning, et cetera, et cetera. This is pretty deep. Or there's just no water in your city for a season. You're talking about that kind of disruption.

Mark Sayers:

Yeah. And I think one thing I noticed when I talk about this, we sort of have these two settings in our heads. One is thing's going really well. And as you said I can jump on an international flight. And my Uber app is working in that city I just traveled to or we have zombie apocalypse. We have two settings. Where I'm not saying... Sometimes I talk about this and people are like, "Okay, do I need to start preparing? And is society going to-"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Where's my bunker. And do I have rice for two years? All that stuff.

Mark Sayers:

You're on a roof with a crossbow fighting up zombies. And it's like I'm... So I'm not saying that. But I think what we are moving away from is a predictable, secure, stable world where we don't have to think about what's happening outside of us or even outside of our church. And we can just get on with our thing. I'm more talking about more disruption as we change. And something might emerge. I don't know, it could be emerge in five years. It could emerge in 50 years. But I think just that predictability, instability and things coming down the road that you never expected to come down the road.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. So we're 15 minutes into this conversation. We're already all depressed now going, "Gosh, and we thought 2020 and 2021 were hard enough, Mark." And again, I'm not disagreeing with you. How do you lead in that kind of unstable... And this is true of church, businesses. I mean, we all have to lead in that environment. How do you do that? How do you figure out even what step to take? One of the dominant conversations I've had over the last year has been with leaders who are like, "How do I lead when I can't see ahead?" What do you do about that?

Mark Sayers:

Well, again we... I mean, to return to scripture. There's this really fascinating... I was reading this in my devotions yesterday. I'm reading through 1 and 2 Samuel. And part of the great drama of 1 Samuel is David is being pursued by Saul. David has been anointed for leadership, but he doesn't have the throne or he doesn't have the crown. And that's the drama of that story. And you know he's been sort of anointed, you're waiting for him to become king.

Mark Sayers:

And we have that moment where Saul dies and in your head, because we've been shaped by Hollywood, we've been shaped by simple world concepts. "Oh, so he's just going to be king and he's going to march

into Jerusalem. Everyone's going to be cheering him and he's going to be this great king." And maybe Bathsheba happens and that's his one little thing. And then we move on.

Mark Sayers:

But actually there's this in between period where there's still remnants of Saul's forces, his sons are still fighting. There's like these interesting battles still going on. The people actually supporting David, but he's actually almost depressed and feels weak.

Mark Sayers:

And I read that and I thought, "This is so much like actual leadership that I experience." And I realized that we have this fantasy world of leadership. And I began to think about this. I think what I felt... When the pandemic hit, there were lots of people like, "Okay, so here's this interruption. The pause button has been pressed. When does the pause button get released and I can just go about leading?" "Okay, well what's leading? Preaching, running programs and doing that without being interrupted or doing whatever, running that conference." And I began to realize, I thought, "Hang on maybe that's management not leadership."

Mark Sayers:

And then you see David, David's not like, "How do I get into Jerusalem and run the programs to ensure that everyone's following the Torah? And we're a holy nation." Actually as I experienced leadership. And I think as many people experience leadership, it is complicated. It's not that you're running a program... I mean, how many young pastors or come into the... They've got these grand visions of what the theological vision of their church would look like or how they would do programs differently.

Mark Sayers:

They go to seminary. They perhaps apprentice somewhere. They finally get the reigns to be the senior leader. And then they spend the next 10 years dealing with other stuff, perhaps tensions in their church, stuff happening in their community. They never get to the stuff that they thought this was always going to be about.

Mark Sayers:

And so I have this sense that actually we're being returned to reality. If we were in an abnormal period that we thought was normal, what if we're actually turning to reality? And what reality is is reality kicks your butt. Reality is not controllable. Reality shows up our weakness.

Mark Sayers:

And conflict is normal. Contentious is normal. Israel was divided when David took over, even though Saul had gone and he had to lead through that. So my sense is that there's this invitation at this moment to return to a leadership where we can't... When I can't predict I'm not in power in the way that I thought I was. So that means I have to be far more dependent. And what we see David doing there is David, this incredible devotional life, this incredible heart after God that we see that was developed in the wilderness, in this really difficult place in David begins to then be his sort of load star of how he leads.

Mark Sayers:

So I feel like there's this element of us leading from a different place. And I think there's a move... Look, we need management. There's always been management elements. I'm not downplaying that or saying we shouldn't run programs. But I think there's an invitation here to return to a more sort of raw dependent leadership. And I think that's actually the fount of creativity and innovation. Advances happen in the church when we're not just doing the same thing because it's always worked. When the last thing stops working that's horrible and hard and pushes us, but that's also the moment where the next thing that God's going to do actually begins to be built.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm glad you went to control. You glanced off it. But I want to drill down on that. Because some of this as I've been processing it, Mark, I'm trying to think how much of this is just we had either the illusion of control or the addiction to control? And I think control and predictability are fairly closely linked. At least in my mind. In other words, if I can anticipate what's going to happen, then if I do this, there's a cause and effect.

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

Carey Nieuwhof:

If we put our foot on this pedal, the car, the church, the organization will accelerate. If I put it on this pedal, we'll slow down a little bit over here.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And that seems to have got out the window. You step on the gas, and all of a sudden you're going backwards. It's like, "Wait a minute. That's not supposed to happen."

Carey Nieuwhof:

How much of this really gets in into control or predictability? Can you talk about that, and maybe even talk to our souls about that?

Mark Sayers:

I think on the theoretical level, first, yes. In a complex system, it's unpredictable, and you can't control it.

Mark Sayers:

Because an input can react in a really different way than you expect. Because it can cascade into different thing. So that's the scientific thing.

Mark Sayers:

So that's where we're at. Then my next question is exactly what you said, "What does that mean for us as leaders?"

Mark Sayers:

All of a sudden when things are out of control and you can't predict, how do you start to feel? Your worth gets attacked?

Mark Sayers:

When you are in control, predictable, people look to you. Because you know which way things are going. You're the one who seems to anticipate, when you are controlling this fantastic, big, Bible study network or whatever.

Mark Sayers:

"Wow! This person has this leadership gravitas. They're really in control. They know everything that's happening."

Mark Sayers:

When that's not happening, we begin to like, "Where does my sense of security? Where is my sense of self? Where is my sense of feeling, the foundation of my leadership emerge from?"

Mark Sayers:

I thought a lot about this. Here in Melbourne, our experiences, we've been in a very long lockdown. One of the longest in the world.

Mark Sayers:

I began to realize that I just was not in control. I would probably have criticized people for that in 2018, if you'd ask me. There's too much of control. I really had to lead it.

Mark Sayers:

And so, I feel like there's this moment where it's a turning to God, who is ultimately in control. This is actually this moment of, all leaders, personal renewal, at least corporate change.

Mark Sayers:

My friend, Charlie Long, says, "That the life of a leader is always about the overflow of what God is doing in them."

Mark Sayers:

And I think people less want to see leaders in control. Because a leader in control is great, until they're not.

Mark Sayers:

I think what people are looking for at this moment, in a world too, where we're looking at politicians, we're looking at industry leaders, we're looking at sports administrators.

Mark Sayers:

Half these people are looking at them and going, "I don't think you guys know exactly what's going on." That what actually people are looking for, who is someone who has an authentic intimacy with Jesus?

Mark Sayers:

And we're called to be disciples. Disciples are followers of Jesus. I think this moment, our leadership flows from someone who has intimacy with Jesus, who is following well, maybe we're one step ahead of our people.

Mark Sayers:

But that's more attractive than someone who's trying to command the environment, and be in control of it. Because I think that world's gone.

Mark Sayers:

So I think some of the disruption that people have been feeling, some of the disorientation, destabilization, particularly younger leaders, I think we've been culturally formed.

Mark Sayers:

Or younger leaders, perhaps Millennial leaders, have been culturally formed. If it feels bad, something's wrong.

Mark Sayers:

Now hang on. If it feels uncomfortable and something's wrong, that's not fun. But also that's an invitation to turn to God in a much deeper way.

Mark Sayers:

Again, to return to David. When David bites the life, he's able to see that battlefield very differently. Because he has a very different experience and has been doing it tough in the wilderness places.

Mark Sayers:

That all army with all their protocols, and their military strategy, did not see the way out of that. He saw the way out of it, because God had actually formed him in the wilderness.

Mark Sayers:

I think we're at this moment where he reaches into that little stream and picks up those rocks, and people would've been looking going, "You're a lunatic."

Mark Sayers:

Saul tries to put his armor on him, which is the programs of the last season. And he has this thing where he's like, "No, no. The battle's of the Lords." He goes forward.

Mark Sayers:

And the one thing I realize too, is, when disruption ends, and there can be little moments before the next disruption, we then find David later on; the guy who fought Goliath, when he is on run, and he goes to the tabernacle.

Mark Sayers:

And he's looking for a sword, and they're like, "Goliath's sword is in the tabernacle. Do you want it?" And he's like, "Yes, give it to me."

Mark Sayers:

This lesson, you're not going to learn this once. It's this continual thing where, I think this period of disruption, you'll master something, some cultural issue may happen in your country, maybe you finally get to deal with it.

Mark Sayers:

And you're like, "Great. Now I can move on. And then the next thing will come." An environmental change, a technological change.

Mark Sayers:

So God is pushing us as a church, deeper and deeper. I think, it's dependency on him. And I think that's where the next thing is going to come from.

Carey Nieuwhof:

The hits just keep on coming, as they joke. How did you get through the last two years? Because I think you're right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Most of the people listening to this podcast are Americans, and we have a global audience as well, but about 70, 80% live in America.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So it was a three month thing, where they shut down. They reopened, for the most part, there're variants. And then they're like, "Oh yeah. People didn't come back the way we thought."

Carey Nieuwhof:

But there is that illusion of control, because you're free to reassemble, you're free to take a mask off, you're free to whatever. And you didn't have that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You've been under strict lockdown for the s part of a year and a half, two years. So what was that journey like for you? How did you experience that as a leader?

Mark Sayers:

A number of things. I think at first, when the pandemic hits, what I noticed was... I was talking to people across the world, and particularly in that first six weeks, couple of months, there was this very unifying experience.

Mark Sayers:

And then what happened for us here is, Australia adopted a COVID zero approach for the first part of it, which was basically, get a few cases locked down, we shut our borders.

Mark Sayers:

And so, the strange thing was that, that is for how we did that, was different to most of the rest of the world.

Mark Sayers:

So all of a sudden that conversation I'm having with other people, where I can have this sense of solidarity and camaraderie with others, wasn't there.

Mark Sayers:

So it started to feel much more individual, what we were experiencing. Then what happened was, the rest of Australia got rid of it.

Mark Sayers:

My city went on this long lockdown. Our city was shut off. So you literally got the whole of Australia, which has no COVID, living their best lives.

Mark Sayers:

You look at your mates on Instagram, they're at the beach, and we are just here in Melbourne, it's colder here, it's winter. I'm like, "What is going on?"

Mark Sayers:

So it was this really interesting time. What I realized was that people in Melbourne, like many contemporary cities, you're living your life.

Mark Sayers:

But we actually went, I think, into this really communal experience. And I think for a lot of the pandemic, there has been some cultural clashy type stuff.

Mark Sayers:

But actually, the Pew Research said that, "Australians are actually become more unified at this period of the pandemic, where other countries have become more polarized."

Mark Sayers:

So I began to realize like, "God's got me this international voice to speak into stuff like I'm doing here. But I had to really focus on where I was."

Mark Sayers:

That I was in Melbourne. This was my city. What is God doing here? What's happening in my neighborhood? I all of a sudden went from someone who was flying around the world, to literally, I could not go with the orders for a lot, over the last 18 months, more than three miles.

Mark Sayers:

Three days ago, I went to downtown, which is not that far, 15 minute drive. That's the first time I'd been in a year.

Mark Sayers:

So I've gone from someone who's flying around the world, to literally, "You are in place, walking in the same streets." And I began to say, "There's a point where instead of feeling sorry for myself..."

Mark Sayers:

I think it was part of that for the first pandemic... with all of us. But I was like, "What are you doing, God? What is the opportunity in this, that I would never have again?"

Mark Sayers:

So we had a curfew. First it was 8:00, and then it was 9:00 PM. I would walk out there with silent until night. Every single night, I would walk to the front.

Mark Sayers:

I couldn't walk past the front of my house. Technically legally, I couldn't step out there. Police they're patrolling streets.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I would put my foot just right over the line, just to go, "Okay. Just to get a little bit of autonomy."

Mark Sayers:

But I would say to myself every night, "This will never happen again. What is God saying to you in this moment?"

Mark Sayers:

And for us as a church, there was a period we could come back, for a period in the middle. I think probably because here things are mandated, so everyone does it. So it's less free styling.

Mark Sayers:

I remember when we came back from middle, there was something different in my congregation. Did people leave? Yep. Did people come? Yes.

Mark Sayers:

But there was something deeper, where I realized that, this thing that I fought in Melbourne for years, around, there's so many fantastic things in Melbourne.

Mark Sayers:

We were the world's blue pool city for ages. That actually God was taking us deeper. He was making us more resilient. And so, I had to go with that, rather, what I thought was going to happen.

Mark Sayers:

I think this quite incredible experience we've had as a city, we haven't had the deaths of other city. We've saved a lot of lives. We've been always this thing of like, "By us all doing this together." Has actually been this light.

Mark Sayers:

And I think we feel bound together. You talk to people in the streets still, it's been going for 18 months or two years.

Mark Sayers:

So for me, it was a reconnection where it was a deepening of our congregation. But I think a deepening of me, that I have to lead out of dependency. I've got no other choice going forward.

Carey Nieuwhof:

One of the other themes, and I'm taking notes. Because I read through Jeremiah recently again. That was not a good life. Let's just be honest, that was not your best life.

Carey Nieuwhof:

He had a pretty miserable existence, when you really look at it, and was imprisoned a lot, and then thrown into the well, and then an exile. The whole deal.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I think, often we think, "If I've got favor in my life, it's going to be a lot of freedom, a lot of joy, money in the bank, sunshine every day."

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's just not the narrative of most of human history, or certainly, of scripture. You do talk about freedom a lot on Rebuilders. And I want to go there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I remember, and I might be paraphrasing here, but you talked about one of the responses to this change we are seeing in the climate change, is freedom.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We just want freedom. It's this libertarian push against any regulation, "I get to do what I want." Do you want to talk about the birth of that, or the resurgence, not a new narrative, but the resurgence of the libertarian agenda, and the freedom from all restrictions?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because I'm sure that there are people listening to this, listening to you, describe that. And they'd be like, "I'd be making a beeline out of that city, out of that country, and going to place where I'm free." Talk about freedom? What is good about it, and what is idolatrous about it, or wrong?

Mark Sayers:

What was really interesting, I talked a lot about the West. Go to Europe and North America, talk about... Australia is on the West. I realized how the West is really different.

Mark Sayers:

I think how Australia respond to this really differently, is that, Australia is individualistic, and Australians love freedom.

Mark Sayers:

But there's this moment that actually in crisis, we're really bound together. And we are willing to sacrifice for the whole.

Mark Sayers:

The language which we used in Melbourne is, "We're going to go through this to protect the rest of Australia." And it was just fascinating. I never expected to see that happen.

Mark Sayers:

But that raised all these things in people outside, because they're getting some messages, and this message of freedom.

Mark Sayers:

And I think one of the things that happened, how people frame this, is modernity. The enlightenment was all about this period of human history.

Mark Sayers:

Where particularly in the West, we felt that we had conquered nature. And because we'd conquered nature, we then could then work on the problems of human nature.

Mark Sayers:

If you think about Martin Luther. Martin Luther had his moments where he's walking through a forest and there's a storm. He's terrified by nature.

Mark Sayers:

He does not feel free at that moment. He's more worried about getting hit by a falling tree, or struck by lightning.

Mark Sayers:

If you think of Wesley on the Atlantic, in the midst of this storm, and he is looking at his morale, it's like, "How do you have this piece?" He's terrified by nature.

Mark Sayers:

So most of human history, we were feeling like we were really small, insignificant, and nature could crush us at any time.

Mark Sayers:

The modern world was creating these incredible environments, where we could go to a big city, walk around the mall, whatever.

Mark Sayers:

Even think of cruise ships, these huge artificial environments, where we don't have to worry about nature. Everything's provided for us. And we assume things.

Mark Sayers:

We assume that our health's going to be fine. We assume we're not going to be hit by lighting. We assume that a pandemic's not going to get us.

Mark Sayers:

And so, questions of freedom then, is, what can the individual do? And there's two ways to look at freedom. There's freedom from things and freedom to do things.

Mark Sayers:

So a lot of the questions of human freedom, we're really like, "How do I have freedom from oppression? How do I have freedom from discrimination?" These are freedoms from.

Mark Sayers:

But then there's a point where you get to in a human society, where people start to ask questions of like, "I don't have freedom to do this, and to self create."

Mark Sayers:

So a lot of the contemporary world that we've been living out of, is, how do I have these increasing freedoms?

Mark Sayers:

Which is out of a story that the modern world's tells us, "That you are basically are an individual who can self create. You are going to create your own identity."

Mark Sayers:

The world's your oyster. You can go where you want, do what you want, whenever you want." And that's actually how happiness is discovered.

Mark Sayers:

But on what I realized with that we are seeing now is, through the pandemic, I think increasing through the challenges of the environment through all this disruption that we're talking about, is the return of nature.

Mark Sayers:

It was just fascinating what I found in the pandemic. There were multiple books written, that a pandemic was coming. They'd been throughout human history.

Mark Sayers:

There was articles. There was the front cover of the Time Magazine, I think 2014, the Next Coming Global Pandemic. You saw TED Talks, where people were predicting. This was so obviously going to happen.

Mark Sayers:

Stories of my grandfather. Lived through the great Spanish Flu in 1918, and was really ill, and in this mass ward.

Mark Sayers:

Those cultural stories are with us. Why did so many people struggle to believe that this was actually happening? And actually, I think that's more about ideology than reality.

Mark Sayers:

Because we could not handle the idea that something from outside, something from nature, could restrict our freedom.

Mark Sayers:

And so, I actually see that, again, this is us returning to normal. Yes, nature is there. We live in a natural world, there are going to be challenges. And that put impinges on our freedom.

Mark Sayers:

So I think what's actually happening is, we are trying to deal with these things from these political issues of human nature. The world we're heading into, the 21st century, is the return of nature.

Mark Sayers:

Other problems of human nature are still there. Absolutely. But I think a lot of what 2020 was about, we thought we'd conquered nature. We also thought we'd conquered human nature.

Mark Sayers:

So 2020 was the return of nature. You look at all of the different protests. They started in the U.S., but went around the world, around racism, and then actually went into other things. That was about the return of...

Mark Sayers:

We can't conquer nature, and we can't conquer human nature. These ongoing problems of discrimination are still there. So there's this element, where the story that the world has told us, that we can conquer everything, and you can just be free.

Mark Sayers:

You don't have to worry about these problems. You can just do your free thing. But think about how that affected church. "Come to our church, we'll put on these things for you, you pick what you want.

Mark Sayers:

Here's the men's breakfast. Kids can go to this, great parking," all these things. And again too, I'm not saying we shouldn't do those things, but when they're the main thing...

Mark Sayers:

I think there's this huge evangelistic opportunity and a huge discipleship opportunity, as we begin to realize, "We're not as free as we thought we were."

Mark Sayers:

I think the line I gave on that podcast you're referring to was like, "A virus or a storm does not care about your freedom. They're not thinking about you and your rights." So that's the world we're heading into.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Do you think people got that message?

Mark Sayers:

Not yet. And what I read about human history is, people don't learn these lessons. Some do, there's always a remnant who have an opening. The risk keep trying moving forward. Our ideology is really, really powerful.

Mark Sayers:

I think that it's increasingly short circuiting. And I think that libertarian idea of like, "How do we push back on anything that may restrain us?" Is still quite powerful, particularly in the U.S.

Mark Sayers:

And again, that's different in different countries. I think one thing I learned is, Australia is West, but the libertarian thing never took off here in the same way.

Mark Sayers:

Particularly because we looked to government less to escape from. In Australia, government was something which actually provided us with a sense of security, because we're in this harsh environment.

Mark Sayers:

We see these things differently, but it's still a powerful, one of the big stories in the world that are out there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because part of me thinks, "I don't know that I've gotten the message." Because I saw the headlines too about a future pandemic, and the thought bubble in the back of my mind is, "But that's not really going to happen."

Carey Nieuwhof:

My first trip to the U.S. last fall, I was like, "If somebody had told me, you're not going to be able to fly anywhere, your church is going to be shut down for a year. Your whole way of life is going to change fundamentally."

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm like, "There's no way that's happening." And yet, somehow we got through that. I was flying back from Logan Airport in Boston, it was still bizarre to me.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know a lot of Americans have been flying for a year already. For me, it was the first one. And I, at the gate, saw people with masks.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I had to provide my negative COVID test to prove that I didn't have COVID before I got on the plane, all that stuff.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I thought, "If somebody showed me that two years ago, I would've said, 'What weird movie is this? And what am I doing in it?'"

Carey Nieuwhof:

But then there was that moment, and listen, millions of people died, I'm not minimizing it, but you survived. You made it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Are we learning anything about the resilience of humanity in this season? Or do you think that's premature, and we're just, got our fingers in our ears, going, "La, la, la, la. It's not going to happen to me. I'm moving on with my life." Are we learning anything about resilience, or is that premature?

Mark Sayers:

It's really interesting. I think one thing that I've learned during this pandemic is, I look at my church and I look at my city, and people reacted in really different ways.

Mark Sayers:

I think I used to think about the mass out there; that public, what does Joe Public think? And Joe Public is millions of people who all think the same thing, some giant entity.

Mark Sayers:

There are people in my church who struggled, and perhaps haven't learned. I'm sure that, as Melbourne emerges, these people just would go back to running around like headless chickens, doing exactly what they didn't want to do.

Mark Sayers:

There are other people who've profoundly changed. I think, there's something that being such a long lockdown, has changed us.

Mark Sayers:

I think what we missed was that, humans grow through really difficult periods. We were trying to create a world where we had no difficult periods.

Mark Sayers:

If you think about suffering, C.S. Lewis talked about, "God speaks to soft and loudest in our sufferings." I wish it was another way.

Mark Sayers:

I wish God spoke to us loudest in our most pleasurable moments. There's a remnant in the church who have learned something, and then there's a group in the culture who are open in new ways.

Mark Sayers:

Just what we're hearing here in Melbourne. People at the church are having conversations with people at the park. Because again, we can't walk anywhere.

Mark Sayers:

People are talking to people, and literally people are coming up and saying, "I'm starting to rethink my life." Now, is that gone to a God thing? Sometimes. Not always.

Mark Sayers:

But I think there's this big rework that's going to work through for about 10 years here, or in this transitional moment.

Mark Sayers:

You look at travel, yes, it's coming back. But we're about to move into all the different energy challenges. There's already, what the future of energy mean for travel?

Mark Sayers:

So it might be, that a number of these things where we just thought we could assume these things with the different, I think energy challenges that we've got coming.

Mark Sayers:

So we may not get it the first time, but we may get it on the third time. The third disruption, we may start to reconnect again.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How much of this has to do with humility?

Mark Sayers:

A huge amount, a huge amount. I've always thought, and I'll talk about you. When I've met believers from the two thirds world, who live in very different circumstances to me, there's a difference.

Mark Sayers:

Look, I had the experience of talking to people in different places in the world, throughout the last two years.

Mark Sayers:

I did notice that, in a lot of Western context, people are like, "How is this happening? Do I even believe this is happening?"

Mark Sayers:

And a lot of my conversations with people in places like Africa, or India, or whatever, there was this acceptance, this happens. There was a humility that you are not in control.

Mark Sayers:

And I actually think one of the great gifts that we could take from this is humility. That God humbles us, and I think these situations are humbling us.

Mark Sayers:

I feel like what the world needs now is not a triumphant church in its own triumphalness. Yes, Christ is triumphant.

Mark Sayers:

But I think that the world is looking for a humble church, at this point in time. And I think that's going to be an increasing cut through, particularly in Western culture

Carey Nieuwhof:

Before we leave freedom, and autonomy, and pride, in one of the Rebuilders episodes, and again, I would just recommend the whole series, the whole podcast to listeners who haven't discovered it yet.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You talked about the frontier myth, and how it impacted the church. And this would be true of business leaders too. Can you unpack that for us, Mark?

Mark Sayers:

So again, returning to nature. So it was really interesting, particularly in the U.S. As America began to industrialize, and in a sense, nature got conquered, particularly on the East Coast.

Mark Sayers:

It was really interesting. People began to look at nature differently. So you had this idea of the myth. There was this idea of, "People wanted freedom." So they kept going Westward.

Mark Sayers:

And so, if you didn't like how things were here, you kept going Westward, and you kept heading towards that frontier. And it began to be romanticized.

Mark Sayers:

The reality of it was very different. And the reality was that, it was not always free. It was actually really hard, and people died, and there was people who lived there before.

Mark Sayers:

And it was a lot of human cost, and there was elements of conquest and colonialization in the midst of all of that.

Mark Sayers:

But it grew up in this myth of the frontier, that you can just head Westward. And by heading Westward and leaving behind the trappings that held you back, you would discover this raw essence of what it was to be a leader, to be that rugged individual.

Mark Sayers:

You seen this in movies, you seen this in novels, cowboy movies, and so on. And so, idea of always pushing the frontier. It's interesting. Once the Westward frontier hit the Pacific Ocean, there's all these other frontiers.

Mark Sayers:

John F. Kennedy talked about the new frontier. Some of the people around here with this new frontier, go hit the West. But this new frontier, government, and how these really bright minds are going to come and think, it's space.

Mark Sayers:

Captain Kirk at the beginning of Star Trek, talked about space, the final frontier, as this new frontier. When the internet first kicked off, we talked about the electronic frontier.

Mark Sayers:

So there's this element of always pushing forward. But there's this idea that, by leaving behind things, if you hit a problem, just keep heading Westward. And that by connecting in nature, that you're going to discover this essence of this raw leader.

Mark Sayers:

And I think what this did, is it created this mythology of leadership. That the leader is this person who leaves behind all the stuff which holds them back, the difficulty.

Mark Sayers:

And almost what you get is, you almost got this model of leadership, where you've got the people in the organization. And part of this was actually an insecurity about the industrialization.

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

Mark Sayers:

The fact that, there were big organizations, and to lead them was really hard. In the 1950s, there was all these books about The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, and people felt like there was something disappearing in leadership, and just getting sucked into the institution industrialization. So, you get this idea of the organization or the company where yes, there's all the people who are tapping on computers, but then there's the maverick entrepreneurial leader, who's different to everyone. They're all in suits on MacBooks, but I don't know, he's got a leather jacket and he's riding a motorbike into work.

Mark Sayers:

Actually, this is pulled into the church a little bit. This idea of yes, the one leader who's different, but it's this leader who's separate, it's this leader who in a sense finds themselves by going to the frontier. But I

actually think again too, it's a misunderstanding of the return of nature. The frontier is not this place where we discovered that we're actually individualistic, nature teaches us that we're connected. Actually nature says, "You're part of a bigger system." You don't find yourself by being disconnected from everything. You actually, in a sense, sit in the mess and complexity of reality, find that you are less powerful than you think and then turn to God in dependence.

Mark Sayers:

So in the scriptures, the wilderness is actually used in a sense to teach us because, it's really hard. Israel looks for manna and learns to be dependent upon God. So, I think we need to move from a frontier mentality to actually a biblical wilderness mentality of leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, just so many directions we can pursue. One of the other topics you tackled that I'd like to touch on because it's become such a hotbed particularly over the last year and a half, is just critical theory. So, it shows up as critical race theory and people, as soon as that word comes out, it's just ... boom, to the polls. People are on this side or that side of the issue, but it's got a bigger framework and I'd like you to help us understand that in a wider context. Talk about critical theory, critical race theory. I'd love your take on that.

Mark Sayers:

Well, probably in the last 18 months, I've had more people asking me to comment on this than perhaps any other cultural phenomena. Most of that has been from North America. Essentially, part of the reason I did it for so long is I had this intuitive sense that something else is going on here. So, there's this whole stream that you could place in Western culture. There's the Enlightenment, but then there's in a sense this ... So the Enlightenment was, here is humanity, we've conquered nature, the individual, through through scientific inquiry, can come to this place where we create this world and we get rid of superstition from the past and we can power onto this wonderful new utopia through science and political science and all these things.

Mark Sayers:

But then there's this counter voice, which you look from the 18th century, you see this in German Romanticism and German Idealism where it's like, "Oh, hang on." You look at the story of Mary Shelley writes Frankenstein, it's this counter story. It's actually this critical theory of what's actually happening in the broader industrial culture. So, there's always this counter voice. In some ways what you could look at it, you could almost look at it as the king. If you look at it in this big sense, that first enlightenment story is trying to be the king role in scripture and then that counter voice is trying to be the prophetic role, calling it to account.

Mark Sayers:

Then critical theory is really the iteration of that that begins in mid-century. You could argue that it happens particularly on the left as many people, Marxists and so on, looked at some of the ways that the Soviet Union had let them down really and become something they didn't think through, Stalin, and then particularly in France after 1968, when there isn't a revolution and Charles de Gaulle's still in power, and you get the critical theories that we understand, Foucault and all these sort of people.

Mark Sayers:

So yeah, part of me is like, "Okay, so I could do this thing." What critical race theory is then is taking some of those ideas and applying particularly through the context of race, particularly United States, but I just have had this thing the whole time of something else is going on here. This is really, really bizarre. My sense is what I find so interesting is that a lot of people on the right who are talking about critical theory and worried about critical theory, and see it as this giant force that's rising in culture. Many of them actually are talking in the language actually of critical theory.

Mark Sayers:

Some of the ideas of critical theory was ... Look at Foucault, had this idea of bio-power. There was this idea that medicalization would be used as this great form of social control and it would be way that a government would actually use. So you've got this bizarre thing, you've got people who are pushing back on critical theory. Then the way that they're reacting to the pandemic is very much like Foucault, very much like a critical theorist, that there's this sense that actually these people are not in power. So the idea of a critical theorist was that, say, look at France, you've got de Gaulle's in power, you've got this bureaucracy. You look across Europe in places like Germany, there's this generation which have actually taken power and some of those people had dubious pasts with Nazi Germany and so on. So it was like, how do we speak truth to power from this position?

Mark Sayers:

But then we're in this bizarre position now where you've got some of the world's top weapons producers, the absolute center of the military industrial complex, are now in their tweets and their inclusion policies using all the language of critical theory. I'm looking at this going, "How does this work?" If Foucault or these people were looking at Nike or Apple using this language, something is really bizarre happening here.

Mark Sayers:

When I'm looking at people on the right who are decrying critical theory but using the language of critical theory, I'm like, "This is absolutely bizarre." Again, we talked about libertarianism, you've got people then on the left using the language of libertarianism. People who are social conservatives speaking like libertarians. It's like, "Hang on. This is bizarre."

Mark Sayers:

My read on all of this is Ulrich Beck, the German sociologist, talked of zombie categories, which is the idea of these ideologies or institutions, which basically they've become detached from their original meaning. That we're in this post-truth moment and these ideologies are being thrown around. They're almost disconnected from their original reality. I feel like there's actually ... what really is going on in the world is something far bigger, far more interesting, is that there's this deeper structural change. Many of these things that we're grabbing for, critical theory, libertarianism, that we're actually trying to use these concepts from the 20th century to try and describe what's actually happening now.

Mark Sayers:

You hear now, someone will go, "I just want to talk about racism that's existed in my city for this period." And people shout them down, "That's critical theory, you're a Marxist." They're like, "Hang on. I just want to talk about inequality that's happening in this area." You've got people who are shouting down different positions, so they're using this extreme language to actually stop and talk about the challenges that are before us that yes, the Enlightenment didn't get rid of racism. Yes, modernity is

struggling to deal with the challenges of nature. These things are still here. I feel like we're rummaging through the cupboard to try and create solutions for them. So, that's my take, there's something bigger and far weirder going on and my sense too is that these categories are, particularly in the US, there's been this thing of defining everything through this left and right container. It's not working anymore. That was a centralized concept, the world is now completely decentralizing and polarization is one step on the road to fragmentation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay, well, I want to take that in a couple directions. First of all, that was a really helpful understanding of critical theory. But for those who might be familiar with terms like woke or whatever they just say, "Hey ... " they react to it. What's an example if you can give one, and if you can't we'll move on, but of a phrase that someone who may not even realize that they're using the language of critical theory is actually using it. Can you give an example of slogans or the kinds of things that that person might say without, even being fully conscious that, "Hey, I'm criticizing this, but behaving like one of them as well."

Mark Sayers:

Look, again too, to be 100% honest, I'm finding this so hard to even define anymore.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know.

Mark Sayers:

So my idea is that there is no definition of woke anymore. So, I'm watching the sports news here, Fox Sports, and there's a female fighter in Australia and she goes to her weigh in. So they're like, "Here's this woman, she's gone to her weigh in." And she goes to her weigh in, in her underwear, she's wearing this lacy underwear. And it's this big thing, fight appears, underwear in her way in, and they had these two people commenting. So they have one group saying, "This is terrible. This is sexism. And she shouldn't be doing this, she's objectifying herself." The woke answer is, "We need to stop this kind of objectification."

Mark Sayers:

Then you have another person going, "No, the woke answer is she's embracing her womanhood and this is actually pro-feminism." Two feminists, both being woke or technically could be called woke, saying two different things. So, increasingly what you find is that there is no defined, woke answer. In a sense, woke is shorthand, which we're just chucking all these things in.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Woke is, "I don't like what you're saying," is kind of what it's become.

Mark Sayers:

Essentially. Yeah, it's become, so what is conservative? Are Canadians more conservative than people in the United States because they didn't actually reject the crown?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, you're right. In the 18th and 19th century, that's more conservative.

Mark Sayers:

Whereas people would go, "Oh no, Canada is more liberal," but are they? So my sense is actually none of these categories are working anymore and things are changing radically. You look at Donald Trump, again too, I know all this is controversial, but if you said to cultural conservatives in the 1980s, "Here's someone like Donald Trump," that he would be a champion of social conservatives. You look at Emmanuel Macron in France in 2019, he was being held up as the liberal centrist, his statements around immigration, and he's now pushing back on woke and doesn't want American woke-ism to come into France.

Mark Sayers:

So this is all continually changing, today's woke person. There are people in 2016 were on the left, who are now on the right. I think what we're having now is a liquidity of positions. So in a sense, for me, I think that all these categories are absolutely busted because I think it's just ... to say, "Here's woke, it's environment, it's pandemic responses, it's racism," I don't think it's working anymore.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm not sure I studied philosophy to the degree you have, but in my dabbling of it over the years, when I think about 19th century German, or early 20th century German higher criticism, when I think about existentialism from Nietzsche through to Foucault or Derrida, et cetera, et cetera, the thing that always got me is you see through things until there is nothing left. You deconstruct, but you're are not actually constructing anything. I almost feel like we're at an apex of that moment, where we've seen through so much and nothing is really standing anymore. I don't know whether that resonates or helps at all. Do you see that? Do you see it differently? Are we in that cultural moment, Mark?

Mark Sayers:

I think there's different things happening, different places. So I think particularly, US is ... because the US finds itself, and I think probably the countries like Canada and Australia, in that US influence sphere-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, we're in the orbit, we're in the orbit for sure, of the US.

Mark Sayers:

I think about the emblematic moment of the withdrawal from Kabul and it was really this sense ... in particular, there's that one image of the plane taking off and people trying to grab onto it on the runway. In a sense that was an end of an era. And this sense that I think there is deconstruction happening, particularly in the American world. To be honest, a lot of the deconstruction I even hear was stuff that people were talking about in the '90s here in Melbourne. So in a sense, there's this deconstruction moment happening in the church, happening in the culture in the US. I think that's because of geopolitical realities.

Mark Sayers:

What does this all mean? If you look at China, China, if you look at India, if you look at Turkey, if you even look what's happening in Africa, there's different places where they're building a civilizational approach. You look at Narendra Modi, his project in India is to actually build this culture, which is less a

secular pluralist culture as it is, is here's this Hindu culture linked to India. Xi Jinping's project of China, dream in China, is to actually build China about something.

Mark Sayers:

One of the really interesting things that's happening in China is China actually, for many years, I think they had a 15 year study on why did the Soviet Union fail? China is now had this long study on how not to have all the problems of America going forward. So, you've got these two things. You've got deconstructing culture, and you've got these other cultures building a culture, because they see that in a sense deconstructionism and nihilism is ultimately ... destroys a nation. So I think we've got different things. You look at say, even Central European places like Hungary and Poland, are trying to build this. "Okay, well, how do we do this differently to the nations in the West Europe part of the EU?"

Mark Sayers:

So, I think there's two modes. People hearing this will probably hear two modes going on. So I think, yes, that's happening in some places. But then also what you're seeing in the United States, in Canada, in Australia is, "Well, how do we also ... " There's people building that civilizational project as well. Even regionalization, you look at fascinating thing that's happened last two years with our two nations, is the idea of federalism and provinces or states. I've felt more like a Victorian being cut off from the rest of Australia during the pandemic than I felt like an Australian a lot in the last two years. I never thought that would happen. So there's this sense where yes, we're deconstructing, but we are building at the same time.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So the deconstruction has also happened at the church level. One of the things, because I've heard you say this, We look to international and national leaders, municipal politics has never been more important in local politics than it has over the last two years. I think we all get that, whatever the county decides, the state, the province decides, is our reality, but there's also a sense in which power has shifted away from institutions. So, one of the conversations I've been having lately with pastors is because people have always voted with their feet. People have always voted with their wallet. So, if I go to your church Mark, to Red Church, but I don't really like the direction it's going in normal times, I can vote with my feet. I can vote with my wallet. I can withdraw and I can move on. It's a free country.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But people have been doing that at a much faster pace. People have been doing that much more angrily than in the past. Talk to any pastor about his or her inbox over the last two years and they'll probably get very emotional, very quickly, one way or the other. I'm wondering whether there is a sense in which the power a pastor thought he or she used to have, has been eroded over the last few years? Any thoughts on that? Because people are deconstructing even the idea of church.

Mark Sayers:

So again, if you think about the American century, the period that we've come out of, it was about a great centralization of power and history tends to be like a lung. If you think about the medieval period, there was a lot of power centralized in the church. Then basically what happened was, we went into the Reformation where there was this decentralization. You think about the Gutenberg printing press, Europe went from the Holy Roman Empire into all these little statelets and kingdoms. Then really, we

then went back into another centralization of power, probably stayed in the 19th century industry and United States, it was Britain, then it was the United States, the center of the world.

Mark Sayers:

Even the institutions that ran it, Hollywood, big sporting bodies, the NBA, this centralization of power. We're now breathing out again and there's a great decentralization of power. The two main drivers of that are globalization and the internet. So it's now about power then drains away from centers and is dispersed more evenly throughout our network. Now there is a process where power then will begin to create new hubs. The internet starts and hey, everyone's just got a little web page about, I don't know, The Simpsons or something. But then you see power starts again, we have Facebook or Google.

Mark Sayers:

We're actually at a moment of breathing out in the church. It's actually not just happen in the church. It's a dynamic that's happening in the whole culture. So we've been told people, trained in seminaries, people trained in the last season, that the way they have influenced is to, in a sense, study, find your way to the top of a powerful, centralized institution and there you can effect and have a leverage point to actually affect change, as you see that God may be calling to happen in the world.

Mark Sayers:

Power is now draining away. There are people in the contemporary church scene now who have no leadership responsibility. They may have a blog or a Twitter page and have tremendous voice and podcasts reach more people than in the Sunday sermon. This is a whole new dynamic. So I think yes, power is draining away. But again too, I think innovation rarely comes from the top of organizations. There's this moment where people are draining away but partially, I think what that is exposing is this dynamic of individualism that was already happening within the culture, where people have this understanding, I'm part of the universal church and have these beliefs, but what churches have not done well, I think is then go, "Okay, what does it mean to actually belong to this particular church?" In a sense where our faith, affirmation, but then that's got to breakthrough into the real world.

Mark Sayers:

Okay, so what am I going to do about that? Who are the people I'm going to travel with? Now that's not just a digital, I think part of the mistake we've made is, "Ah, this is all becoming because of a digital reality with the pandemic." It was already happening. We already had a hyper-Protestantism and a hyper-denominational of one. So we went from say, the Roman Catholic church, to a few denominations, to many denominations to now, denominations of one. So, someone's freestyling, like, "Well, I like that. I don't like their thing on sexuality over there. I don't like them politically, I'm just going to go over here. It's the new reform things now," or, "I'm going to do micro churches," all this. And they're just going through these different things.

Mark Sayers:

I think the pandemic simply just revealed what was already happening. So, it's less about digital as it is, is what does it really mean to belong to the people of God and how do you express that? You could have a church where ... I feel like there's churches which have been more connected as an actual local church, I've seen here in Melbourne through the pandemic, has it been perfect, no, when they can't meet, than some churches before when everyone could meet together, because there were just people freestyling

and sitting up the back of the church going, "I like that. Don't like that. There's a great new church open down the street."

Mark Sayers:

So I think part the next season is rediscovering what is it to be the people of God? What does it actually mean to submit to a body? And maybe part of this is when we're realizing we are not in power, when we're realizing we are not these free autonomous atoms floating around the world in this playground that we can operate in. We're like, "Man, the world is an increasingly challenged place." I wonder whether that actual desire, for some not for everyone, for some to actually rediscover like that New Testament, biblical vision of church is there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How do you lead when everyone's freestyling and you feel your power slipping away?

Mark Sayers:

You have to let people go. There are people who are really, really want to do it and follow it. And honestly, could be the guy who's literally was in an AA meeting whose life's just born apart and is turning back to Jesus and looks messy. They may actually more want to lean in than the person who's been part of your church for 30 years and is a stall, but is freestyling their own life. So it's not like who are the Christians here? It's who has a heart posture after God? Who's willing to go on this journey with you? I think the model going forward is, we've often looked at quantitative. I think now it's qualitative. Qualitative discipleship versus quantitative discipleship.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. So the depth of the people that you're leading rather than just how many people are in the room? I really want to focus in on the church in our time remaining today, Mark, and this has been so helpful. I think getting a view at the macro really, really helps us get a view at the micro. Before we switch gears entirely though, is there anything I've missed in the trends that you think we should talk about before we get into some of the micro?

Mark Sayers:

Oh look, I can always do more trends, but [crosstalk 01:09:22]-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, I know. Well, this is so good.

Mark Sayers:

I think we've hit the main ones. Perhaps one, too, is I feel like there's this really important thing. Leslie Newbigin's one of my heroes and I'm hoping for a Leslie Newbigin moment. I do feel as things move more into greater deconstruction, greater destabilization, we become more possibly grabbing onto the stories that the culture's throwing at us. It's going through the cupboard, trying to grab this story, grab that story. But they're not the true biblical story. What Leslie Newbigin talked about is the gospel, the biblical story, is the one true story and that story is going to subvert all the other stories.

Mark Sayers:

So, I think one thing I'd really encourage people is, what I've noticed is, if you are a bit left leaning, people who are left leaning at the moment, are really concerned about what's happening on the right and they're focused on the right, and they're concerned about what they see on the right. They're never going to become the right. The danger at moments like this is you go deeper and pick up further into the left story. People on the right, who at this moment are traumatized, thinking, "Oh my goodness, there's this rise of this totalitarian left. Who's going to have digital technology and it's going to be like the Chinese social credit system." They're not going to all sudden wake up tomorrow and go, "Well, I'm just going to join that." They're actually going to go further onto the right.

Mark Sayers:

I remember being in the city as a kid and I was in Melbourne, I was walking in Chinatown and there were these two guys having a punch on. These two middle aged men, having a fight out the front of a store which sell alcohol. I remember thinking, my first thing was to look at them and go, "Who's the right one here?" I'm watching them fight for 20 seconds probably, as this crowd gathered. I realized, they're both right. These are two guys had too much to drink and they're just punching each other. I feel there's this moment where what we are doing is the church is looking at these battles in the culture and we go, who do we back? We're going to back the one that we have more of a connection with.

Carey Nieuwhof:

They're both drunk.

Mark Sayers:

The Newbigin story is that if you are right wing at this moment, the biblical story will ... Yeah, if you're a bit right wing conservative, you're going to go, "He said the biblical story deconstructs the left." That if you're on the left, you're [inaudible 01:11:41] "His is the biblical story deconstructs to the right." Yes, it also deconstructs the one that you're most familiar with. So there is this actual moment of deconstruction, but it's a ... I feel like we're doing it wrong.

Mark Sayers:

At the moment, we're deconstructing key things about theology and orthodoxy and we're now almost become suckers for political ideology.

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

Mark Sayers:

Let's flip it. Let's actually be people who are devoted to the core of the biblical story and the great vision that we see throughout scripture. And let's become increasingly skeptical and deconstructive of all the great ideologies that come across our path. We serve culture, but we refuse its idols. I think that's the way forward, so that would be ... I've noticed that. People loved it. There's people who love it when I'm critiquing things on the left and progressive is in this cultural moment. When then I'm going "Well, hang on. Here's how the right's getting it wrong," people don't like that as much and vice versa. So this thing is going to deconstruct stuff. So I think that would be my big thing, that politically we need to do how we're ... politically and culturally we need to, I think, reconnect with people like Newbigin help us to do that well. Because I think that's going to continually trip us up if we're not careful going forward.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hmm. What are some mistakes the church has made in the last two years that you wish we hadn't made?

Mark Sayers:

I think that's one. I think the politicization.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Going straight to the polls, right or left. Yeah.

Mark Sayers:

Yes. And it's so fascinating. Like, you look at a church ... What I find interesting about the last two years, and you mentioned pastors and men and women of God whose inboxes are filled, leaders with these emails, very few of them are actually about theology anymore.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, I know.

Mark Sayers:

It's all political. Something happened here. And I think that in some ways, again too, this is ... America, as it's going through this moment of where is its place in ... And we're moving to a more distributed world in terms of power and influence. I think part of that is there is this religious element to the United States, which has been wonderful and served us. I think of so many things that your country and my country has been blessed from, resources and leaders and content from the US has been wonderful.

Mark Sayers:

But there's an element where that's gone into political religions and it's not just the US. It's Europe as well. There's countries where politics is like a religion. Brazil, the Brazilian election coming out. There's all these things that are ... politics has become so to the forefront. I think that's actually about secularization, that humans have created this thing to worship. We want to believe in something. That normal period that we thought was normal, that actually wasn't, the myth of that was the Seinfeld world. Everything's about nothing. You just do your best life and you go to the mall and it's all ... I read one book which said, "Life has been reduced to sex and shopping." That failed. Humans are built for bigger things. So part of the hunger we see around these political things is actually because the culture is desiring something bigger to live for. It's a God shaped hole.

Mark Sayers:

And so I feel like the church is messed up because at this moment, when people are looking for a bigger story, we've just fallen into these reduced stories and these smaller stories. So I feel like there's a moment of humility and both the left and right have got it wrong, and jumping into those stories, whether it's internationalism or nationalism, both are ideologies. And yeah, I feel that that's a big mistake the church has made.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Looking forward into a brand new year and this era, the endemic church moving out of the pandemic, eventually we'll get there. I don't know when. Nobody can really call that for sure globally. What are

some tangible changes you're making at your church? Because you are. You're this amazing guy who pulls all these ideas together, but you also lead a local church. So what's going to be different at Red Church?

Mark Sayers:

We really have this sense, and as of recording of this, we're still reforming. We've had this huge period of [inaudible 01:15:32]. We feel this real sense of making it about discipleship. There are so many things that we're looking get now, like these bells and whistles. I realize now ... so for example, with where we're going and the different restrictions that we have going forward is we can't have as many volunteers and also, volunteers have dropped off. We used to have a lot of volunteers on a Sunday. That's how we got people involved. And I began to realize ... I just actually thought of this last week. Was I creating a volunteer culture? And I'm not saying there's anything wrong with a volunteer culture, more that I was creating discipleship culture. That someone could come and say they're on the roster to set up chairs or whatever, or be on sound.

Mark Sayers:

And we see that person coming and it's great. Oh, that role was fulfilled. Brilliant. So that person was a backside on a seat in that service and they were serving out the back, but how was their life changing with Jesus? And I feel like us going forward ... the thing that I realized that I could not see, and we tried to reach people and ring people and do different things and so on. The big project I began to realize that the last years, when I couldn't see everyone and I couldn't even see my staff, but I was in contact with my staff without the touch point of the congregation as widely as you were, is that I had to lead the staff into renewal. And so I felt like there has been a renewal in our staff, in their spiritual life.

Mark Sayers:

Like, I had a lot of Millennial staff who I think the last two years ... I think last time we spoke perhaps earlier in the pandemic, and there was this moment where I was looking at my Millennial leaders and I thought, "This is going to be the making of you." Like, I think two years on it has been the making of many of them. I think the big thing for me too, was yeah, people know me. I write books. And I realized that the model of ... in complicated to complex world is, in the complicated world you get the one leader that's known. People want to hear their sermons. They want to hear their thoughts. Who's the star at the top of the church? If you get a star at the top of your church organization, people are going to come. I think we're seeing in the last 18 months more, how stars are falling.

Mark Sayers:

If an entire organization is based on star power, there's a problem. And I thought one day ... this phrase came into my head, "Let's not build a star, or let's not have the star. Let's create a galaxy." And just in the pandemic, I've been watching digital church and seeing other people on my team preach. And I think the proudest moment is services that I'm not part of where there's people on my team, be it Millennials, and seen them develop their preaching skills, actually then leading other people to preach. And so I feel the way going forward is, I'm here for a finite time. I've done my job on earth for a finite time. I'm at the behest of nature. I'm mortal. There's a point where I'm going to exit stage left and I've done my job well when people who better than me do my job better than I ever could and I played a part.

Mark Sayers:

And I feel like we need to move that. I think that the centralized age was the age of the celebrity. We're now moving to the age from the star to the galaxy. So that's a big focus for us. How do we develop leaders? How do we release people into their gifting? How do we actually create a more resilient church, because it's not just based on one person, but it's stronger because it's based on many. And that's true from someone who's just coming to the church. We thought the best thing you want someone to go is not like, "Hey, come to this church." That's great. Red's great. Instead at someone's workplace, what's different about Fred or Mary? And that's actually an overflow of what's happening at Red. I want what they've got.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right. What is your take on digital versus physical or the hybrid church moving forward? How do you see that morphing in a healthy direction and what are some of the pitfalls to be careful of?

Mark Sayers:

Yeah, it's really interesting. I think we've seen a real journey going forward of early on, and particularly now, as we're thinking about coming back. So I do think the future's going to be hybrid. I think there is ... we had a members meeting last night. So as of recording this, we can't meet in numbers. Probably, when this comes out, we will be able to. There are meetings where it's just a lot easier for people to get to certain things who come home from work, who then have to get in the car and come back. So there's fantastic advantages. I think what we've seen is there's also the tangible of being in a room together. I did not realize. Again, to Australia, in the last two years, we've hardly met and I did not realize how those few moments we could, there was just tangible things.

Mark Sayers:

Like, I remember just being there. I thought, I can't replicate this online," but then we've seen the power of online. We've seen people join us who would never have joined us if they did not. There was people who are now part of our church, key people, who joined us during the pandemic online. So I think it's going to be this tension. I think we can't be ... I think before we were so over-reliant on Sunday services and they almost were like, the idea that we wouldn't have them, how would we operate? I feel like that's also with digital now. There's a lot I'm reliant on now. And so I think it's holding both, realizing they're simply tools, they're tactics. Strategy's the big thing. I do think, "What happens in the future if the internet becomes more destabilized?"

Mark Sayers:

So we can't completely go to a ... just as we couldn't meet physically, we may not be able to do stuff. So I think this is a journey we're going to learn. I think we're going to come to a point where we understand the nuances and I think it hasn't happened like we thought. I think the big thing that people predict is when the pandemic hit, oh, "Everyone's just going to become a consumer Christian. It's too hard to go to church. They're going to sit and watch in their track pants with a ... I don't know, bowl of popcorn or something. What I found was, you hear from people who three years earlier were like, "Oh, it's really hard to get to church." And then about six to nine months in the pandemic, like, "It's really hard to watch the service." [inaudible 01:21:26]. There's something here like, "I cannot make this any more easy to use. Just turn on your smart TV, [inaudible 01:21:31]." So I think there's something about human nature and commitment. So I think-

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a good articulation. I have heard that. Hard to make it to church. It's like, it's just hard to watch online. It's like, "Okay, what's going on here, guys?"

Mark Sayers:

Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh. Is there a question you don't hear leaders asking that you think every leader should be asking?

Mark Sayers:

I would say the environment's changing. We're not in control of the environment. How can this new environment, this changing environment, how can God actually do something in this moment that he couldn't have done before? So instead of resenting, lamenting, what are the opportunities that are possible here? And I remember hearing this articulation in this book where it said ... It was a guy from Europe who was talking to a Chinese professor and the Chinese professor said to him, "Westerners think about strategy, they're like, 'Here's where I want to go. There's the horizon. I'm going to bang towards it and then, if things come in my path, I'm just going to smash through them.'" His way of looking at things was how is the environment changing? And then how do I react to it in order to benefit my goals?

Mark Sayers:

And I've thought a lot about that in the sense that in this disrupted world, what can God do that was harder in the last season? I found it was so hard doing ministry in Melbourne because people have such a wonderful life. I've now been in this environment where people have not had a wonderful life. Melbourne had too many options. The last season I haven't had options. So how do I preach differently? How do I see the opportunities in that? So I feel like the question is, we can't control the environment. How do we see that God can do things in us that weren't happening in the last season.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Is there a question or two that we should just stop asking? Like, just never say it again? Anything that you've heard too much of that you're like, "Yeah, just don't do this."

Mark Sayers:

I think it's the go back thing. And you hear it in different ways. Like, "When will things return to normal?" You hear in that sense from a sort of practical, pragmatic sense, but then also even culturally. Like, people sort of, "Get back to these Christian values or this period in history." And looking at church history ... I love the Christian ... So I'm not saying, "Let's deconstruct and change that," but what period, when? Do you know what I mean?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Mark Sayers:

When was the golden period? The golden period is when the kingdom of God comes in fullness on earth. The golden period is forward. It's not backwards. And I feel there's this sense of, "The culture's changing. It's not what it was." I get read history. What's the normal period? You want the 1970s with

hyperinflation and chaos? The sixties, we go back to World War II? Do you want the 19th century, or do you want the dark ages? Like, every history had challenges and I think this idea that somewhere in the past it was easier. That normal, not normal period? Yeah, it was comfortable, but it was not fun to do evangelism and to do church in a period where everyone just thought that they didn't need God. It probably was more comfortable for us. So I don't want to go back. What's God going to do in the future? So I think we can't go back.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Anything else you want to share, Mark, or a word you want to leave with leaders listening today?

Mark Sayers:

My sense as I've spoken to leaders in the last two years, that there's this discernment going on in a lot of leaders and the raw question is, "Do I want to keep going?" There's the great resignation happening in society. And I think there's a great resignation happening in ministry. And I think there's a lot of people who are perhaps saying, "I didn't sign up for this." There's a lot of people who ... I've had a lot of messages of people, like, "I can handle the church stuff, but it's family, it's friends, political polarization, leading in a pandemic, looking forward, not being able to predict." My encouragement is that, as I've read church history ... I read the book [inaudible 01:25:34]. It's like, how does God renew the church? And there's so often this process that I discovered, as I read, that often there's this leader who became isolated.

Mark Sayers:

They went through this moment of real loneliness. And often, there was betrayal. There was frustration. There was dissent, there was conflict with friends. But through that process, they turned back to God. Again, you think about David coming into the presence of Saul to play him music, and then Saul throwing spears at him. What must have it felt like for the king of Israel, anointed by God, who his ... he would've heard the stories. It's Saul amongst the prophets. This is a guy who's filled with the holy spirit and he's chucking spears at you. That is a very discouraging moment, yet what you see is David then turns and that enables and opens up in him an intimacy with the father that we read in the psalms, which has been the prayer book of the church for centuries.

Mark Sayers:

Jesus prayed those psalms. And I think there's a moment here. Is it going to be comfortable? No. Is it going to be easy? No. Is there going to be points where you're going to be absolutely pushed to your limit? A hundred percent. But my sense is, I feel in the world that there is this cohort of leaders who may feel like they have no power or draining power, or they're increasingly marginal, but there's marginal places with people who have lost a sense of power. That's the exact place that renewal emerges from, when people turn to God. So my sense is, yeah, discern it. You've got to say, "I'm going to be in this because it's not going to be easy." But I have this real sense that if I look at yeah, the world's changing.

Mark Sayers:

When the world is changing, when the world's globalizing, when the political ideologies are falling, when Christian leaders feel like they're isolated, when everyone's writing off the church, get ready. Because that's the exact moment that renewal begins and things turn around and it starts in the life of leaders. So I can't promise you it's going to be easy, but I can promise you if you keep pushing into God, be dependent on him, that great things can happen. You may not become great yourself, but you can be

used in God's great mission in the world. So that would be my encouragement, not to give up at this moment. Trust in God. We're being reeducated by reality, but that's exactly where we meet God's reality.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Mark, this has been so refreshing, enlightening, helpful and in the end, encouraging. It really has been. I can't thank you enough. Where can people find you online these days? Tell us more.

Mark Sayers:

Yeah, you can find me on Instagram or Twitter, but you can go to MarkSayers.co and that has the links from there too, you find those things. Oh, also, Rebuilders Podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh yeah. Rebuilders Podcast. Definitely. Definitely. You're going to keep going on that one?

Mark Sayers:

Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Fantastic. That's great. Mark, until next time, thank you so much.

Mark Sayers:

Oh, it's been an absolute pleasure.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I love conversations like that and I feel like they could go on for a long time. So how about we do a series? Okay. We will. That's a great idea. There I am talking to myself. Next episode, I sit down with Nona Jones from Meta, Facebook, right? As we know her. And D.J. Soto. D.J. Is the founder of VR Church, I think the first church in the metaverse, or at least in virtual reality. And then Nona Jones has worked at Meta or Facebook for a number of years. And we get into a primer of the metaverse, web 3.0, How it will be different from web 2.0 And web 1.0, VR church, NFTs, DAOs, blockchain and all that stuff that really is going to be part of everyday life before we know it. It's a little mind bending. I know a lot of you have been researching this on your own as well. So hopefully we can just up the dialogue a bit. Here's an excerpt.

D.J. Soto:

What it represents is institutions becoming less relevant and that's going to affect the church as well. How it will, that's yet to be seen. But there is that move in this particular type of technology. And it's not just the technology; it's also the attitude behind it, where we're not going to need banks. We are going to be the banks with Bitcoin and all of those things. And so what does the decentralized church look like? But yes, it's going to be very disruptive. I think it's going to be more disruptive than the previous web and the previous paradigms and you're right, church leaders really need to chew on this because I think a radical, tactical shift is coming for the church and for church leaders.

Carey Nieuwhof:

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And today's episode is brought to you by World Vision. They are really concerned for you, and so am I, so download their free leadership assessment guide today at [worldvision.org/careypodcast](http://worldvision.org/careypodcast). That's [worldvision.org/careypodcast](http://worldvision.org/careypodcast). And then don't miss the XP Summit in Manchester, New Hampshire, May 24th and 25th. I've been at CDF Capital events, spoken there. They're amazing. You can register by going to [XPsummit.org](http://XPsummit.org). Also coming up in the future, we've got Craig and Bobby as part of the series. By that, I mean Craig Groeschel and Bobby Gruenewald. I'm going to talk to them about the future of the church. Craig's comment two years ago to me, that they're 100% digital and 100% virtual online, totally resonated. We're going to talk about that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Vance Roush is going to be on about crypto and the future of donations and even money. Yep. Believe it or not. How we think about money is changing. And then, well, we got some other really fascinating guests. If you subscribe, you get that automatically. And we do all kinds of interesting things over at my website too. We have over 85,000 leaders who subscribe to an almost daily email. If you would like to do that, you can go to [careynieuwhof.com/email](http://careynieuwhof.com/email). And then, well, the future trends post for 2022 is out. And I do some regular writing over there. And that's where the universe, at least my little tiny slice of it, all comes together. And you can find the home for this show as well. Thank you so much for listening, everybody. This is a privilege to do this with you. I'm grateful for you. And I want you to know, I don't say this very often, but I pray for you. Every week I have this little prayer rotation and I remember podcast listeners, so really grateful for you. Whatever you're doing, keep going. We're in this together. 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 [01:32:15]