

Announcer ([00:00:02](#)):

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

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:00:19](#)):

Well, hey, everybody. And welcome to episode 471 of the podcast. It's Carey here. I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life and leadership. I am very excited to have Craig Groeschel and Bobby Gruenewald together on the podcast. Yeah, we did this interview as part of our future church series. We are in a talk about the future of the church, hybrid church, in-person, online, the metaverse. And I think you're going to love this conversation. I hope it's healing.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:00:50](#)):

I said at the end, man, this has been a really healing conversation for a lot of the division that exists about how to do church. So thank you for tuning in. It's part of our future church series and series on the future. And today's episode is brought to you by Pro MediaFire. You can claim your free copy of their 2022 digital playbook by going to [promediafire.com/2022](https://promediafire.com/2022).

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:01:11](#)):

And by leader, go to [leadr.com](https://leadr.com). That's L-E-A-D-R.com, and use the promo code Carey to get 20% off your first year of their people development software. Well, I think Craig and Bobby in the church base anyway need no introduction. Craig is the founding and senior pastor of Life.Church, an innovative multi-site church based in Edmond, Oklahoma. He's one of the most respected leaders in the church and certainly, on my personal radar, one of the most respected leaders in my book.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:01:44](#)):

Craig speaks frequently at leadership events and conferences worldwide. He's a New York Times bestselling author and serves as the champion for the Global Leadership Summit. If you don't subscribe to the Craig Groeschel and leadership podcast, what are you doing? You need to do that. I listen to every single episode and Glassdoor also named him in one of the top 10 CEOs in the US among small and midsize companies and named Life.Church as the number one place to work for two consecutive years under his leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:02:15](#)):

He lives in Edmond, Oklahoma with his wife, Amy, and their six kids. And, of course, you can find out more about him, Craig Groeschel. And the duo of Bobby and Craig, Craig and Bobby has been amazing. Bobby Gruenewald serves as pastor and innovation leader at Life.Church and is the founder of the YouVersion Bible App, which has been installed now on more than 500 million devices.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:02:38](#)):

You know what? I asked him, this is so fascinating in the interview. What's a highlight of the last of couple of years? And that didn't even come up. It's like, "Oh yeah, half a billion devices." And there were other things that were as good. I know that was definitely a highlight for Bobby. But my goodness, it's just incredible what God's accomplished through Bobby.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:02:57](#)):

And as one of the leading voices in the church on innovation, in the use of technology, Bobby has been featured in the New York Times, TechCrunch, CNN, and more. Prior to joining the Life.Church team in 2001, he started and sold two technology companies and as well served in advisory capacities for various startups and venture capital funds.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:03:17](#)):

Bobby and his wife, Melissa, live in Edmond, Oklahoma with their four children. And so that's a little background. And man, this was such a rich conversation. I hope you're taking notes. And I think for those of you who have ambivalence around in-person, online, the metaverse, what is metaverse, I hope it synthesizes a lot of disparate thoughts. And we'll give you some better understanding into it. That's what it did for me.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:03:46](#)):

Hey, thanks so much to Pro MediaFire for doing what they do. And they want to get in your corner this year. Being in the right place at the right time can take you to the next level quickly. Understanding the trends and riding the momentum of what is working in 2022 is vital for your success. That's why they want to get this into your hands, the Pro MediaFire 2022 digital playbook.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:04:09](#)):

The digital playbook includes five digital trends to maximize your impact in 2022, the six biggest risks of decline to your organization and solutions for growth, why the hybrid approach will fail unless a key strategy is applied, and the digital investment guide with the best ROI for growth - strategy is the key to growth. And so, it's free. Their Pro MediaFire 2022 digital playbook is free. Claim your copy by going to [promediafire.com/2022](http://promediafire.com/2022).

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:04:39](#)):

And if you haven't checked out Leadr yet, please do so. I mean the great resignation probably took a toll on your team. And you know the data is telling us that 50% of people either have or will be leaving their job for another job in the next 12 months. Like, what? And they're looking for workplaces where they can be engaged and grow every day. And some of you have new hires. How do you know you're going to keep on? Well, Harvard Business Review says that 70% of the reason a person leaves their job is because of their relationship with their manager. That puts so much of the spotlight on the one-on-one meetings that you have with your direct reports.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:05:14](#)):

A leader believes that the one-on-one meeting is the most powerful leadership development tool manager has which is why they built platform to help you lead effective one-on-one meetings, develop leaders at every level of your organization and engage and grow every person on your team. 500 churches and businesses are already using Leadr. And if you want to request your demo today, go to [leadr.com](http://leadr.com). That's [leadr.com](http://leadr.com), and use the promo code CAREY to get 20% off your first year of their people-development software. That's [leadr.com](http://leadr.com). Use the promo code CAREY. You'll get 20% off.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:05:50](#)):

This transcript was exported on Jan 20, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

Well, let's jump right into my conversation, very life-giving conversation and illuminating conversation with the one and only, I guess, the two and only, Craig Groeschel and Bobby Gruenewald. Craig and Bobby, it is good to have you together and good to have you both back, welcome.

Craig Groeschel ([00:06:06](#)):

Yeah. Glad to be with you, Carey.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:06:07](#)):

Yeah. Good to be here.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:06:08](#)):

Yeah. So, this is the first time the two of you have been together. And I love to pick your brain. So let me start quick pulse check, just to generally talk about this crazy last two years that we've been through. I'd love for each of you to talk about a high and a low. Bobby, why don't we start with you? High point, low point for you. And then Craig, I'd love to hear yours.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:06:34](#)):

Yeah. I'd say on the high point side, right as the pandemic was starting, obviously, people were thrust to online church. And we had 20,000-plus churches, almost 30,000 churches, sign up to use the Church Online platform in just a few weeks.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:06:52](#)):

So the high point was just watching as our team pivoted from people that were involved in doing physical church services, were doing onboarding support for churches to help them get in Church Online. We basically spun up a team of 20 or 30 people, I think, overnight that were providing customer support to kind of help churches get connected. This team had nothing to do with the Church Online platform prior to that. They were just so simply responding to where the need was in the moment. And we kind of watched that sort of fast acceleration, fast growth. It was just kind of fun as a leader to watch as kind of a team dynamically adjusted all the priorities and met the need.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:07:32](#)):

Personal low, probably not too different than maybe many others. But there was one week where lost three people that I knew to COVID in one week. And it was just a low week. It was just one of those moments, the sobering reality from it. Kind of an upside to that week, because there was one other that was on a ventilator for 20 days and came off and has done great. So there's kind of like a silver lining on what was a really bad week. But that was probably one of the low moments for me in the last two years.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:08:05](#)):

Wow. Craig, how about you, high and low?

Craig Groeschel ([00:08:07](#)):

It's hard to just give one. I think on the personal side, just time with the family's been really, really special and a lot of high points there that I'm incredibly thankful for. On the church end, some high points I think even though we had to shut down physical attendance, the digital impact like Bobby and I in our church, got to celebrate a half a billion downloads to YouVersion Bible. And that was pretty

incredibly special to see our team fight for spiritual unity in a world of division and stay on point and mission was really special. So there's a lot of things like that.

Craig Groeschel ([00:08:46](#)):

Low point kind of like Bobby, I lost my pastor last year. Just yesterday, Carey, was feeding ice to a friend of mine in the hospital and prayed with him. Kind of looks like he's on his heavenly sendoff. And so the personal loss there has been real, like so many other people and just I've never had a prayer list that's anywhere nearly as long as it is right now. There's just so much pain in the world.

Craig Groeschel ([00:09:13](#)):

So we're just like anybody else, you're dealing with the personal pain and loss. And so, those would be the low point and filled with so many great things, it seemed, seeing really special relationships and ministry impact, we're thankful for that as well.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:09:29](#)):

I do want to get to the hybrid church questions. But I think I have to ask you both because it's just resonating with so many pastors I've talked to and frankly leaders I've talked to. But it seems especially pastors, how are you getting through? We're at the early part of a brand new year. How do you continue to motivate yourself to lead, to look forward, to hope, to believe, Craig? How do you do that interest?

Craig Groeschel ([00:09:55](#)):

Interestingly enough, so Bobby's a pilot and quite accomplished pilot. And so he kind of taught me into trying a lesson. And I took a lesson. Then, second and third and fourth and got far enough in. I thought I'll try to solo. Well now, I'm getting relatively close to taking my written test to see if I can pass that, which is not nearly as easy as Bobby made it seem, I think.

Craig Groeschel ([00:10:19](#)):

And I was talking just to our staff today. There's an instrument called the attitude indicator that tells you where the plane is, if the pitch is too high, too low, which bank angle is and such. And when I talked to the staff today was just about, when you don't know which direction you are, which is at times you may not in a plane if you don't have a good visual, you look at your attitude indicator. And your instrument tells you it's true.

Craig Groeschel ([00:10:44](#)):

And so we talked today. It's embarrassingly simple. But it was profoundly powerful. We talked about what do we know is true? And I went through just four very simple things and talked about God is faithful, Jesus saves, the spirit empowers, the church will endure. And it was that basic.

Craig Groeschel ([00:11:03](#)):

And oddly enough, Carey, I think that's exactly what our team needed right now because there's so many things we don't know. There's so ongoing another round, another round, another round of complications. And so we just went back to the very basics. And that is incredibly motivating. That's why we're here. That's why we do what we do. And so it was that. It was that simple. The faithfulness of God, God is faithful, Jesus saves, the Holy Spirit empowers, the church will endure.

Craig Groeschel ([00:11:28](#)):

And so, so often, it's not something big and fancy and like, "Oh my gosh. These special leaders have this magic power." It is the basics that keeps me going, keeps our church going. And we're talking more and more and more and more about the basic call of the church of Jesus Christ in the world. And that's aligning. That's the attitude indicator. We're going to align our attitude to what we know is true. And we're doing a lot of basic alignment right now.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:12:00](#)):

That's such a good word. It's funny. I'm preaching for the first time in a long time this weekend. And my message landed in a very similar place. It's like there's so much confusion out there. What do we know is true? What do we know is going to endure? Let's focus on that. And it's simple. You're right. Bobby, how about you? How do you stay motivated? I think we all kind of thought, "Okay, 2022 is going to be different than wham, some Greek thing we'd never heard of two months ago changes the world." Thank you, Omicron. How do you keep yourself motivated?

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:12:29](#)):

Yeah. I mean, I think it's a constant process. I mean, I don't have a lot to add to what Craig said, because I think there's so much in what he said that is really profound and true. But I do think that part of it is it was a constant reminder of what's true. And I remember talking to our team early on when something as significant as this happens, it's the uncertainty that's really the challenge.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:12:57](#)):

And if you're not careful, you sort of think of uncertainty in sort of a forever-type term. But in reality, if you step back away from it and process it, it's a little more clear like what today's going to look like for me. I mean, there's always a potential of a surprise.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:13:12](#)):

But I have a pretty good handle on the rest of my rest of my day today. Maybe tomorrow, maybe a few days out. Do I also think the long term a year from now, two years from now to have a pretty high sense of confidence of what I think things will feel like a couple years from now? And the answer back in the beginning of the pandemic was I feel more likely that things will improve if I think long term, two years, three years, five years. It's all that part in the middle is where all the uncertainty is.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:13:42](#)):

What will it be like a month from now, three months or four months? If we're not careful, we just sort of think about it as perpetual. It never ends. But that's actually not true. It's just because we're feeling the uncertainty of kind of that middle timeframe. I think right now, even looking at what we're going through right at this moment, I have a greater sense of optimism just because you can kind of see that things are different. Even though they feel similar, they actually are different than they were two years ago.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:14:11](#)):

I have to be careful not to kind of attach all the emotions of two years ago to just things that look similar but aren't the same. And I feel like the level of uncertainty in the midterm is not nearly as high as it was two years ago. And so, I think there's definitely improvement to that. Things are closer to normal even

though there's still a lot of things that aren't in terms of, and I say normal meaning predictable is probably the way to describe it.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:14:40](#)):

So it was just a kind of constant reminder. Perspective hacking is kind of a thing that I do all the time and kind of having to sort of look at something from a different perspective consistently was I think the thing that helped continue to help me to be motivated.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:14:52](#)):

So I want to focus in on hybrid church. And I don't even know that that was a term that people used popularly prior to 2020. But I mean Life.Church literally almost invented or it did invent Church Online. You were absolutely one of the first to market on that in the church base and YouVersion the whole deal.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:15:14](#)):

But when you think about how you were finishing 2019, what did hybrid church mean to you, Craig, as the lead pastor of Life.Church? What did having a presence online mean to you and what did having people in the room mean to you two years ago? And then I want to talk about how it's changed and how you think about it moving forward. But when you go back a couple of years, where was that in your mind as viable options for meaningful church experiences?

Craig Groeschel ([00:15:40](#)):

So if you go back to pre-COVID days, I think we probably did launch the first Church Online back in '06. And so, it's been of value to us the whole time all the way down the way I preached. So, it's not uncommon today. But I looked directly into the cameras. I think years before, a lot of people did and would not look at the people in the room because I knew there were more people on the other side of the camera.

Craig Groeschel ([00:16:09](#)):

And so it was all the way down. And then just an awareness, always in my mind that I'm talking to more people than are in the room. So my preaching was that way. Our staff was oriented to it. I wouldn't say things, I wouldn't make a local reference because I knew I'd be speaking to an international audience. So it was always, always, always on my mind. And I know where you're going to the next question and I'll answer it when you get there.

Craig Groeschel ([00:16:35](#)):

But it became even more so on my mind. I would say it was a secondary priority at that time, which was pretty high, because for most people, it wouldn't have been a priority at all. So it was a secondary priority. And then I'll leave it to your next question. But it shifted even up to a primary priority to me in the months to come.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:16:58](#)):

Yeah. For you, Bobby, as sort of the inventor, the innovator behind Church Online and bringing Life.Church online, how did pre-COVID, how did that strike you?

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:17:07](#)):

Yeah. So, I mean pre-COVID, I think we saw Church Online. Even though there's exceptions to this, we saw it as a distinct, separate community than our physical church community. So hybrid church was us reaching people in the physical space and reaching people in the digital space pre-COVID. And that was, I think, a distinction. We obviously knew there was some overlap.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:17:31](#)):

There'd be people that were in our physical campuses that would then also attend at Church Online. But for the most part, the way we let it, the things that we anticipated happening would really include us reaching a different group of people, people that were not necessarily the same people that were coming to our physical church, which is something that, I think, distinctly changed with COVID.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:17:56](#)):

Yeah. So Craig, I think it was a personal conversation you and I were having in maybe August of 2020. And I remember you were getting ready to reopen. And I think I asked you because a lot of people think binary. And even now you hear a lot of church leaders. It's like, "Well, is it online or is it in-person?" And I think I've been surprised at the level, I don't know what you're seeing, but of gravitational pull back to the building. Let's just get people in the room, people in the room.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:18:21](#)):

And I remember what you said to me that day just as Life.Church was getting to reopen. And if I got my timing wrong, correct me, but I think it was three months. You guys were closed for a couple of months. And you reopened. And it was like, "Carey, we're a 100% in on digital and a 100% in on in-person."

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:18:38](#)):

And that really lodged in my brain. And I think that is one of the best understandings I've heard of it. So can you explain what that looks like to you now as you head into the future?

Craig Groeschel ([00:18:50](#)):

Yes. So like I said earlier that it was always important to me and online was probably way more important to me than for most pastors I would say and not to brag. It was something we had done for years and years. So it was a part of our culture and the way we think.

Craig Groeschel ([00:19:07](#)):

And then when we obviously went all online, that's all there was. And so that became the top priority. Then opening the doors back up, what reframed for me was, online was not now a tier-two priority. It was tier one. And in-person is tier one. And what I started to realize and just become even more clear in my vocabulary, my reasoning, my motivation, or I should say our motivation, our vocabulary, our leadership is that they are both equally important, but not equally effective. And they are equally important for different reasons.

Craig Groeschel ([00:19:44](#)):

And they are equally important. I mean they really, really, really are. And what you can accomplish is different. Some of it's the same. There's some overlap. But there's a lot of differences. And you have to

understand the differences. You want to appreciate the differences. You want to leverage the differences.

Craig Groeschel ([00:20:03](#)):

And a lot of people attack the digital and talk about the limitations. Are there limitations? There are a few limitations. If you're smart, you're going to recognize there's some limitations to physical as well. And then, digital has more opportunities in some ways that physical doesn't have.

Craig Groeschel ([00:20:24](#)):

And so, they are both incredibly important. They're both very, very different. And so, the way we approach them, we want to maximize and leverage the opportunity. And you can criticize all day long and say, "This isn't right or real, or is valid or whatever." And you can do that. But you're going to miss an opportunity, I promise. You're going to miss a real opportunity.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:20:45](#)):

Can you say that again? I'm taking notes. They're something equally, but not equally effective. Can you just repeat that? I think it's worth repeating. They're equally important but not equally effective.

Craig Groeschel ([00:20:58](#)):

And they're not equally effective. And by that, meaning they're equally important, but they're not equally effective. I should say this way. They're equally important and they're different in effectiveness because they are-

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:21:09](#)):

Effective in different ways.

Craig Groeschel ([00:21:10](#)):

They're effective in different ways. Yes. That's a better way to say it. There's different opportunities that should be leveraged for both avenues of reaching people, administering people and creating community. They're effective and are effective in different ways for different reasons.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:21:29](#)):

Well, okay. I want to drill down on that. Bobby, just to comment on that, what is the upside of digital to you because, again, I'm looking to you as the one who's sort of been masterminding all of this now for better part of 15 years plus? Where do you see the upside of digital because there are a lot of pastors who just dismiss it outright? I can sort through tens of thousands of comments online of church leaders who are dismissing digital right now. It's just, "Everybody back in the room." So how do you process the upside?

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:22:03](#)):

Well, first, I'll answer your question. But first, I would just say that even though know that I've been such an advocate for digital in the midst of the pandemic, I think Pastor Craig could attest this too. I was a massive advocate for physical for us getting back into physical worship.

Craig Groeschel ([00:22:19](#)):



That's important to note, is you don't have to be, again, if you're for one you don't have to be against the other.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:22:24](#)):

Right. And I mean, not just like a cooperative, like, "Oh, I think it's a good idea." But no, really advocating for it, fighting for it because I viewed the importance of physical.

Craig Groeschel ([00:22:33](#)):

We are ridiculously passionate about the physical gathering, ridiculously passionate.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:22:37](#)):

But to speak to your question about digital and the uniquenesses of it, first of all, I think it is a little bit humorous that you have tens of thousands of comments on a digital platform advocating so strongly for physical, because I think that's sort of the irony a lot of times is that people are so heavily engaged in where they're communicating about all their opinions in these online communities and yet kind of describing the community doesn't take place online.

Craig Groeschel ([00:23:06](#)):

Exactly. And they would call it community and then tell you that church...

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:23:08](#)):

Yeah. Church is in the distinct category that's separate and set aside. I was also a little bit taken back or not taken back, just fascinated by how many people's theology aligned really quickly when physical doors of the church were closed, meaning all of a sudden, it was theologically permissible to do Church Online when just three weeks earlier, it wasn't, and not trying to be sarcastic or flipping about it because I understand there is a sincere concern over the perspective that online somehow replaces the need to meet physically or somehow changes, alters connection and people's desire to be together in some fundamental way that kind of prohibits them from wanting to be together physically or from ever coming back together physically.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:23:56](#)):

And that's simply not ever what technology's never done that in history. Any new technology, be it the telephone, even the VCR, some of these bold predictions that people were going to no longer gather together, no longer meet together, no longer leave their house, these things are like tired arguments that have been around for essentially many, many decades that simply aren't the case because there's these inherent human qualities that we have that do cause us to want to be physically connected and physically together.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:24:29](#)):

But I didn't really answer your question on digital. Digital does have some unique upsides though that you can't really ignore, some unique attributes. One is that you're able to have connection and conversation and community with people that are geographically dispersed.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:24:44](#)):

So it creates an opportunity of diversity, diversity of thought, diversity of community that sometimes is really challenging to do depending upon where you live in the world. If you're not in a really urban environment, your ability to kind of connect with people simultaneously that are in Northern Africa, in Australia and in the UK, and to be able to have set of inputs into your community is something unique that digital can provide that you just simply can't get otherwise.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:25:13](#)):

The ability to in many of the expressions that are there today with Church Online, you have the ability to kind of ask questions and even unpack in real time, what's happening in a sermon or in worship, people can kind of go on tangent explorations of a question that's asked where in a physical context, that's just simply not... There's really no good mechanism to do that. It's disruptive in a physical church environment.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:25:43](#)):

And so, those are some unique things you can do. You can also have community at really odd times or anytime in an online context, which is limited a lot of times by physical venues, just because of time zones and just practicalities associated with it.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:26:00](#)):

And I think one of the things that we'd see with Church Online that is unique and you would think that this exists in physical church and environments., but oftentimes it doesn't, is the ability for me to have a one-on-one prayer, a one-on-one conversation at any moment in time with someone that can sit there and pray through what I'm going through at this given time.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:26:20](#)):

Oftentimes in a physical church environment, there might be a moment made for that. But many times, there's not a practical way of bringing that point of connection or facilitating that from happening. And those are some of the unique qualities that digital provides. So there's definitely some upsides. And there's more than that. But that would just be some examples of things that are unique.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:26:40](#)):

Craig, what would you say to the critics of Church Online who would say it's all got to be in the room?

Craig Groeschel ([00:26:45](#)):

Well, I think I understand to some degree that you can love what's in the room so much, and you may not have experienced... Maybe, you haven't experienced real community. For example, Carey, my bias is toward the room, meaning, I love it so much. And I haven't put on goggles and gone into the metaverse.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:27:09](#)):

Yeah. Oculus, right? Yeah.

Craig Groeschel ([00:27:10](#)):

Yeah. I haven't done that. So I haven't experienced it. So that's not my preference. Just because it's not my preference doesn't mean that it's not effective. And we have to be really careful not to let our

preferences drive our theology. When Jesus had go into all the world, I think that means dark places. I think that, I cannot imagine Jesus saying, "Hey, share the gospel everywhere. But don't do it online."

Craig Groeschel ([00:27:37](#)):

And like Bobby said, it's interesting. The very place that the critics are often the loudest is on an online community. And they're saying you can't have community where they have a community. And I would say to somebody, "Hey, if you'll come with an open mind and let's just watch what happens and be open." And what you're going to find is almost every time you watch the chat where people are actually talking and having a community and asking questions and answering questions and praying for each other and sharing scripture and having real community, what you're going to find is they're almost always more open, more transparent and more talky there than they are in a church lobby in a physical building.

Craig Groeschel ([00:28:18](#)):

Meaning it's not face to face. You can't lay hands on people. But you can meet with people you couldn't meet with otherwise. People that are home bound, they couldn't come somewhere else. I had a dad DM'd me that said his son has a condition. He's got social anxiety. And he's so excited because his son will now go to church in the metaverse.

Craig Groeschel ([00:28:40](#)):

But he's terrified to go in public. Don't let your preferences rob from seeing the opportunities that someone else who has a different preference might be able to experience the gospel. And at the same time, to someone who's online, I'm not going to say, "Stay there forever, and only do that."

Craig Groeschel ([00:28:56](#)):

What I'm going to say is there are others expressions. Let's gather together. Let's pray in the same room. Let's worship together. And if you can't, there's online or if we can reach in some other ways, it's not an either or. It's both and, and, and, and. There's going to be a bunch more ands that come along that will leverage and redeem technology in everywhere we can to bring the message of Jesus in the world.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:29:16](#)):

I would say one thing I'm hearing from both of you, and it's in the verbal but also in the nonverbal, is neither seems to threaten you. Do you know what I mean? There's almost, as I've waited through debate, and had lots of discussions, almost like a scarcity mentality that if one wins, the other is going to lose.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:29:35](#)):

And what I'm picking up from the two of you is I don't want to say abundance mindset. That sounds very woo, woo, whatever. But, yeah. This is like the answer is yes. It is both and. Am I getting that right?

Craig Groeschel ([00:29:49](#)):

100%.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:29:50](#)):

Okay. So put on our philosophical and amateur theologian hats for a moment. And I haven't asked anybody this question. But I thought it'd be a fun one to punt to both of you. Hebrews, I think it's 10:25 comes up. Maybe, I've got it wrong. I should have Googled it beforehand. But let us not forsake meeting together.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:30:08](#)):

I see that all over the place about digital church. Any thoughts on whether that's an appropriate use of that verse? Again, realizing none of us are professors. But we have read the Bible. So what's your take on that?

Craig Groeschel ([00:30:20](#)):

Well, I think we obviously, yes, we're called to meet together. And we talk about this all the time where I really believe that the term personal relationship with Jesus is incomplete that when you look at the New Testament, there's more of a corporate or a shared relationship with Jesus that is the one in others. So, an isolated Christianity is maybe not a real Christianity at all.

Craig Groeschel ([00:30:46](#)):

So meeting together is a part of being the body of Christ, a part of being the church. And we found out during the kind of COVID days that a lot of people did meetings from their home online. And those meetings were effective. A lot of people said they're more effective. Let's stay with this model.

Craig Groeschel ([00:31:02](#)):

And so, I would say that meeting together is exactly what it is. It can be meeting digitally. It can be meeting physically. And again, both have opportunities. And both have limitations. And one doesn't make the other one wrong. One isn't necessarily better. They're just different.

Craig Groeschel ([00:31:19](#)):

And so, I'm really, really passionate. And if we're ever, ever wrong and we get to heaven and God says, "Yeah, you probably shouldn't have preached the gospel online," if we're going to be wrong, Carey, I would so rather be wrong trying something than being a critic of something. Let's get down there and mix it up. Let's try. Let's take the gospel everywhere.

Craig Groeschel ([00:31:41](#)):

And if we are wrong, I promise you we're going to be wrong attempting to reach people, not being wrong, sitting back, picking apart what might actually work.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:31:50](#)):

Yeah. Bobby, any thoughts on the gathering part? I mean, I definitely have my own take. But I'd love to hear what you think.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:31:57](#)):

I mean, it's hard to add anything to what Craig just said. I mean, we see gathering in all formats. And I think it's important for some people to recognize that there are actually people that can't physically gather. And that's not just an anomaly that has to do with someone's physical health.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:32:15](#)):

But I mean, we were put into position where we were obviously all in isolation and unable to physically gather in the context of that everybody feels or that people are arguing is real gathering versus not real gathering. But every single day in certain parts of the world, there are people that either do not have anyone in geographic proximity to them that's a believer or don't have the ability to gather as believers physically in their context.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:32:46](#)):

And so the fact that that even exists to say then that their ability to gather online isn't valid, isn't really gathering, I think people have to kind of think about the theological implications of saying what if people cannot. And that's the way that they can, or that provides a method for them to do that. And I think we all get to experience it for the first time when we couldn't. But I reminded people that when we get to come back together again, there'll still be a lot of people that can't in different regions of the world.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:33:16](#)):

And so I look at that way. I'm definitely not theologian. I'm not going to add anything theological to what Pastor Craig said, because he went to seminary, and I didn't.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:33:27](#)):

Well, I think the two of you too, I mean, this might be so in the water supply at Life.Church that it's just second nature to you. But you have been facilitating what I would call decentralized gatherings now for many, many years so that there are little house church gatherings around Life.Church. And I think, to me, the faulty assumption under the Hebrews argument is that that verse means you need to get into a building owned or rented by a church in a row listening to a preacher talk and a band play when actually that wasn't even how the church met for two centuries, almost three centuries after that passage was written.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:34:06](#)):

They met in people's homes. So I agree. Isolated Christianity, unless if you're completely can't be with other humans, sure. Church online is great. But otherwise gathering in people's backyards, inviting your neighbors, inviting your friends, meeting as small groups and then also going to worship, I think, has a tremendous upside.

Craig Groeschel ([00:34:23](#)):

I always hesitate to throw out numbers because it can kind of sound weird. But we have online weekly over 800 small group communities. And so, well, here's what I want to understand is, that this isn't just you come once a week and at a certain time and the online experiences are all through the week, like maybe Tuesday night at 10, o'clock our time which is 8:00 AM, someone else's time. And someone maybe works on Sunday.

Craig Groeschel ([00:34:50](#)):

And then, there's a secondary 800 small community groups that meet. And I was just thinking, I'm sitting here looking at you on a screen thinking, "Do you think we're closer today as friends than we were five years ago?" What do you think?

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:35:03](#)):

Oh 100%.

Craig Groeschel ([00:35:04](#)):

And how many times have we gathered in person? Right.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:35:08](#)):

About 10 minutes in London, England in 2019.

Craig Groeschel ([00:35:12](#)):

One time by accident, meaning it wasn't intentional. 10 minutes outside of the service. But we are closer. Why? How have we met in the last five years?

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:35:23](#)):

Well, you and I, we text. We call each other. We Zoom occasionally. We're in each other's lives. And we're close. We're friends.

Craig Groeschel ([00:35:31](#)):

We're close.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:35:31](#)):

I agree. And, so many of my friends, the guy who's produced this podcast, Toby, shout out to you, has produced every single episode. I've never met him yet in person, we consider him part of our family. And I love the expanse of thinking.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:35:45](#)):

So metaverse, Craig, you went there. You mentioned it. Right after it kind of became the subject of the day and, what was that, September, October, as Facebook rebranded itself, who pops up on the metaverse but Life.Church? Of course. So I'd love to talk about it. And Bobby, maybe let's go back to the first incarnation of this with its Second Life in 2005-ish for Life.Church. Help me with the timeline.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:36:15](#)):

2007.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:36:16](#)):

2007. Okay. Talk about that. And then, the reboot into the metaverse and the launch into the metaverse.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:36:25](#)):

Yeah. We start in 2007, we built what was kind of a virtual at that time, it was called an island. We didn't want to be an island. But that just kind of the way that they did it. But it was the essentially a 3D virtual environment that actually resembled or was modeled after one of our physical campus buildings. And it was a place where people could come with avatars. And it was a 3D type space that if you haven't

experienced it before, it would be very akin to what you'd see like in a video game, Roblox or Minecraft, or just a little different graphics.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:37:01](#)):

And people would come with their avatars. And they would be able to have conversations on inside of our church building. We'd have services at Second Life. So we were experimenting with this back in 2007. We had great response. We had learned a lot about what ministry feels like in that type of environment and some of the unique advantages, Craig mentioned earlier, about how willing people are to share and to talk about what's going on in their life.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:37:28](#)):

I've found that when people have an avatar or have something that is a physical facade for themselves, they're much less likely to have an emotional facade or a spiritual facade. You're able to get to a conversation much deeper around spirit, much quicker around spiritual things whereas when we're in person, we don't have that.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:37:48](#)):

And so, a lot of us will end up having more of an emotional or spiritual facade. We're not going to let people quickly on the inside of what we're really feeling or really thinking because they can see us. And so, that one different dynamic, I think, creates a really unique ministry opportunity in that type of space.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:38:05](#)):

Now, back in 2007, the challenge was not that no one came to it or that people weren't interested. It was that too many people came. And the technology just bogged down. The most you could have is about 80 people in the given time. And then, there's a bit of a wave of interest. And then I would say the popularity of it begin to wane.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:38:25](#)):

So we did that for a few years, learned a lot from it. So today, there's been essentially a reboot of exactly the same thing. I mean, people talk about it today as if it's brand new. The concept of it is a similar type of environmental world. The technology's improved, obviously, because we're talking about something from 13, 14, 15 years ago versus today.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:38:47](#)):

So it's not a surprise that the quality, the technology's improved. And the new dimension to it is now in addition to just using your computer screen and mouse and computer to kind of engage with it. You can now put, if you choose to, you can put on VR goggles. And it basically makes it real immersive so that you feel like as you are wearing these goggles that you're in the room. It feels like as you turn, you can kind of see from side to side, and you can even have things that sort of animate your avatar in there, raise their hands or lower their hands and engage that way.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:39:22](#)):

So it's a different type of an engagement. But the premise and the environment and everything around it, even the ministry kind of opportunity is really distinctly similar to what it was back in 2007. So, yeah, no surprise.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:39:37](#)):

I mean, we are always looking to how to experiment, how to learn what we can learn from it. Right now, there is no singular metaverse that's out there. There's not like one place that everybody's at. There are platforms, just different environments. And most of the energy around it is, honestly, because of what you just said, that Facebook changed their name to Meta, brought a lot of focus and a lot of energy around it and making a pretty significant investment themselves and the platform that they're planning to build around it.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:40:07](#)):

So we wanted just be given the new investment, given the new interest. Our team wasn't even something that pastor Craig or I really initiated with our team. Our team is just programmed that way to say, "We'd like to try this. We'd want to..." So they begin to do some experiments.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:40:25](#)):

And then, of course, we put a little bit of fuel on the fire as they begin to learn from it. We've expanded. So we're just for clarity today, we're in one space called AltspaceVR. And it's a platform that's owned by Microsoft. It's not the platform Facebook's working on right now. But that's where we're holding church services each week and having a great response. Pastor Craig could tell you more about what we've seen happen in it.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:40:49](#)):

Yeah. Go ahead, Craig. I'd love to hear more about your angle.

Craig Groeschel ([00:40:53](#)):

Yeah. So, I like the ministry impact. And so Bobby would be up into the technology helping coach the team. And then I say, "Tell me the stories on the backside."

Craig Groeschel ([00:41:05](#)):

And one of the ones that happened this week is they told me about a guy named Chad, which is really cool. He is from way, way, way far from us. And I don't want to give too many details. But he had never been to church in his life before. And it's odd that we know all these details. And the way we know him is because he told us.

Craig Groeschel ([00:41:26](#)):

And so, he came. And I don't want to disrespect and tell all this stuff. But he told us all the stuff he's been through, just a long list of personal loss, pain. And he was intrigued by church in the metaverse. He came in. He asked questions. And he sent something really different. And so after people talked to him, he said he wanted to become a follower of Jesus.

Craig Groeschel ([00:41:50](#)):

And now, this guy in a real short period of time is ridiculously excited, is coming back, is asking all sorts of questions, is engaging, has relationships. And this is a guy that we would've not reached in any other way. There wasn't another physical church anywhere that had reached. He'd never even been in a physical church before. And now, here's a guy. He'll be back this weekend. He's in relationship with people that are praying for him. And that to me is exciting.



Carey Nieuwhof ([00:42:18](#)):

There's something I think it was Bobby who said it. I just wrote it down really quickly. But that idea of physical facade versus spiritual facade, really, I would love to double click on that for a minute. Is what you're saying, and, Bobby, I could have the us wrong that if I want to go out of the house and I want to go to physical church, I got to dress up or I got to wear certain clothes because I need to fit in. And there's how you doing and everything. And that can almost put up a veneer.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:42:46](#)):

But we had a conversation. I know you guys know Nicky Gumbel quite well. But he was deeply opposed. He said it on this podcast to ever putting alpha online. Pandemic hits. And he's like, "Okay, I got no choice. I got to do this."

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:42:59](#)):

And he just came on and said, he is the most surprised person to see how people just opened up and so much faster than in 20 years of physical alpha he had seen. And I wonder if there's something that physical spiritual façade. Can either of you or both of you say more about that because I think there's truth in that. That resonates.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:43:18](#)):

I mean, I think it's something we discovered back of Second Life is where we really had that discovery. But if you think about it, it's not particularly difficult to understand in that even in a physical environment, people like to hold things in their hands. They feel more comfortable if they're holding something that's more of a protected posture because they feel vulnerable. Just people looking at them or people being there.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:43:43](#)):

So because of that, there's definitely more spiritual facades, more of a people can see me. So I don't really let people get on the inside of me. But when people have that avatar or where people aren't seeing them, they feel safer. They feel safer to have those conversations and get right to what it is that they're dealing with.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:44:05](#)):

Now, it is also true that people can be deceptive. And there's also downsides to that type of environment. However, we found it to be very true, that sincere people that are coming wanting, seeking, looking for answers are very comfortable talking about the most intimate details of their sin, of their struggle, of their challenge, of whatever it is that they're going through, which would be very, very difficult to have that same type of thing happen in a lobby experience in a physical church, at least that quickly. For sure.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:44:37](#)):

Craig, any thoughts on facades?

Craig Groeschel ([00:44:39](#)):

No. I was just thinking how right Bobby is. If I'm somewhere, I want my backpack. I want something. I literally want some kind of a comfort something if I'm in an unusual place with people or come up with something. And I was also thinking too, the other side, I've noticed how transparent people will be.

Craig Groeschel ([00:44:58](#)):

They'll get in there and talk about taking their life. They'll talk about depression. They'll talk about their marriage falling apart. And I'll walk into a lobby. At physical lobby, we don't get any of that. And you know the other side is true too.

Craig Groeschel ([00:45:12](#)):

For example, anybody who does what we do, we get a lot of criticism. A lot of criticism. We get a lot of criticism. Well, I cannot think of the last time someone's come up to my face and criticize me. They just don't do it. But they do it online, nonstop, nonstop, nonstop, because there's something to hide behind.

Craig Groeschel ([00:45:31](#)):

And so in the same way, they might be more critical online. They'll also be more open online. And so it's a real. It is not better. It's different. It's a different way of reaching people. And if you'll be someone who's against it, if you'll be open enough long enough to hear the story of a dad who is thanking God that his son has a place to go or someone who's a shut in, or the guy that I went in the hospital yesterday, who will not be able to be at church this weekend, because he will not be able to be at a physical church this weekend, but will be there online.

Craig Groeschel ([00:46:05](#)):

If you hear their stories, see their appreciation, talk to someone whose life has been changed by it, then, you'll start to say, "Well, this may not be my preference or it may not be what we're good at." But oh my gosh, there is some validity to that. And so let's be for different ways of reaching people rather than being against.

Craig Groeschel ([00:46:24](#)):

And the other thing too is Andy Stanley always says it, let's be a student, not a critic. So before we start tearing down with someone else's doing to try to reach people, let's ask, "Can we learn from it?" Is there something there that we don't understand? And I found the places that were often most critical are the places were most uninformed, meaning if I understood the context there, I wouldn't be as critical if I knew what they're accomplishing or how they're accomplishing it or the motive behind it, or the story behind the story.

Craig Groeschel ([00:46:56](#)):

And there will be times meaning we want to be open to correction, okay. That wasn't a good idea or that didn't work or that's not effective. We're not saying it all is. What we're saying is let's not assume it's not and without trying it to see if there's an opportunity.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:47:14](#)):

That's a good word. It's true. I think it's human nature to criticize things we don't understand. So I know this could be a two-hour podcast on its own. But any insight on, first of all, what is the metaverse?

Where is it going? When you look into the future a couple years, Bobby, what do you see inside the metaverse?

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:47:36](#)):

I mean, obviously there's a lot of investment that's moving into that space. I think what you see today with the metaverse, if you've seen any images or videos from metaverse environments, it is very much more game-like. However, in the next couple of years, it's going to be far more photo realistic, where if you want to, you could have an avatar that looks exactly like you. And it's photo realistic. It looks like a person-person.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:48:04](#)):

That's where the technology's going with it. The interface to it with VR goggles if you're skeptical about how effective wearing goggles like that look like that will be, join me because I'm skeptical too. I do not believe that is the format of the future for interfacing with those types of environments. It just is what is today.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:48:28](#)):

And I tell people like, "I'll believe something's mass adoption when I see it in an airport."

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:48:33](#)):

So, are you saying it's basically the PalmPilot of our current phones. I had a couple of PalmPilots, and they were functionally useless, but really expensive.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:48:42](#)):

Correct. And there'll be people that have disagreed with me on this. In fact, there've been people for the last 10 years that have disagreed with this statement, because I've had real strong views on VR that have proven so far to be true in the sense that mass adoption is going to really depend on there being the right type of device or the right type of interface.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:49:01](#)):

And we're not really close to that right now. So you kind of have to almost look past what is today to kind of think about what could be with it. But that's why we call it an experiment. I mean, this is space that we're exploring, looking at wanting to be present, doing ministry for the people that are there today. But also recognize it'll likely change pretty dramatically over the next several years, just because of all the investment in people that are involved in it.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:49:29](#)):

I personally think that it's going to be a more of a blend of augmented reality where some of these metaverse-type environments are blended with the physical environments that we're in. It's probably more of a use case that I think has a lot more practical uses for. But that's my opinion. And that, of course, my opinion's oftentimes wrong. But that's just kind of what I see in the near your future long, long term. I really can't speak to that because I never try to make long, long-term predictions.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:49:58](#)):

Again, we're in the lightning round here as we wrap or wind down. But I'm just curious, when you got onto, Bobby, the metaverse and opened up your metaverse campus, did it take as much effort as launching a physical location, which you guys have pretty much just systematized? Was it less than that, way more than that? Do you have any idea just in terms of resources for people listening? It's like does this take a billion dollars and human effort? How much work is it to launch on the metaverse?

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:50:34](#)):

I don't want to trivialize it because the team that worked on it, I know worked really hard. But by comparison, it's way, way less than what we put into launching a physical campus. In fact, initially, the team just simply used a kind of venue that was available in that platform that we didn't really build.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:50:52](#)):

It was just an auditorium that we kind of purposed that we didn't have to go and build. Recently, in the last week or two, they actually modeled a venue that looks like one of our physical campuses as far as like it's the actual dimensions and shape and colors and experience.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:51:08](#)):

But even that just took a couple of our team probably a week or two to do. So, it's completely different magnitude of investment and cost. In fact, I don't think I've even seen a budget revision for what it costs for us to be in the metaverse. So I'm not quite sure that it's that dramatic. It's probably fairly nominal and certainly by comparison.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:51:29](#)):

That's great. Craig, as you look into the future and you think about hybrid church, where do you see this going? Where are you? You think about Life.Church as the senior pastor two or three years down the road, what do you hope in your heart? What do you see in your mind?

Craig Groeschel ([00:51:44](#)):

Yeah. Well, I tell, I think one of the things that is important to me and again, this is of my bias and I think I could make a theological argument for it that the church isn't just receiving content. So if I stream a message on YouTube or someone watches it later on, is that church. And I would say that adds spiritual value. But that's not church.

Craig Groeschel ([00:52:09](#)):

And so, we have to understand, I think what is, church is both gathering and scattering. Technically, it's really the scattering that makes it powerful. And so what we're going to do is we're going to gather. And in my theological opinion, if we don't broaden our view of gathering today, we're unwise, meaning it's got to be... I think gathering is more than just physical.

Craig Groeschel ([00:52:33](#)):

And I want to say it again. Physical is my preference, meaning I love it, love it, love it. It's my preference. And I'm ridiculously passionate about it so much so that we launched campuses in the middle of a pandemic, meaning we believe in it.

Craig Groeschel ([00:52:47](#)):

So I think that what we want to do is we want to recognize that people are going to gather. And what we want to do is we want to leverage what we can in every way. And as we move forward, the big thing I would just say to pastors is let's not settle on content delivery where we're not clicks. That's not the big win. But community and empowering people to reach a city, to love their neighbors, that's where the real power is.

Craig Groeschel ([00:53:14](#)):

So, do we want to not be successful at content delivery? No. But what we want to do is we want to create community around whatever it is, worship content, mission, and then transform that community, not just from one ones that gather. But then ones that scatter. So, that's the other part of the church where we are called out, called out ones to make a difference in the world.

Craig Groeschel ([00:53:39](#)):

So again is a gathering important? Yes. But it don't let us stop there. That's a really narrow view. Get him the building in that church. Okay. Now, get him into a gathering feed on the word of God, worship God together, lay hands on each other, pray for each other. Do all the one and others. Encourage, love, rebuke.

Craig Groeschel ([00:53:58](#)):

And then take the gathering and scatter and go take the gospel all over the world. And so, that's using online, in-person, trains, airplanes, automobiles. Do whatever it is. Whatever the newest way is, we're going to do that. And let's recognize we have a really big God and a lot of different cultures and languages and communities around the world. And so, let's not talk about what we can't do, or a wrong way of doing it.

Craig Groeschel ([00:54:24](#)):

Let's look for a right way and opportunities. And the great thing is, Carey, as you know, being alive and doing ministry today, there's more opportunities... There's more need today than in years past. And there's more opportunities today. So what a great time to serve Jesus in the church.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:54:40](#)):

Wow. I think we need to leave it there. That is so good. And I had high hopes for this conversation. You were absolutely my first choice to have the conversation, both of you, on the hybrid church. But I didn't know it would be this good. It feels like perhaps this is a unifying moment. And unity is something we really need in the church. And maybe we can put down our swords. And maybe, we can just say, "Hey, this is church, guys. This is church. This is where we're going. And this is what we're committed to, and we're going to reach people."

Craig Groeschel ([00:55:11](#)):

But before you wrap it up too, let's go with that for one minute and recognize. You ask me questions about metaverse. I'm going to stumble my way and fake my way through it. Right? Let's not even pretend that I know much.

Craig Groeschel ([00:55:25](#)):

Bobby has a gift and a calling. Church Online was his idea. YouVersion was his idea. I'm just kind of the guy that sits around and says, "Okay. Good idea. Let's try it." I'm the guy dumb enough to try stuff. So our church is able to do some things that other churches aren't able to do. There are other churches that are able to do things in their communities that we're not able to do.

Craig Groeschel ([00:55:45](#)):

And so, we don't have to do it all. We don't have to be great at all of it. Let's just do what God has called us to do and celebrate what others are able to do. So there are some that you don't believe in it much. You're not good at it. Don't do it. Just do what you're great at doing, right?

Craig Groeschel ([00:56:04](#)):

And so if you try to do it all, you're not going to be great at much. So we're focused in a few unique areas. We happen to be pretty good at getting the Bible into people's hands. We happen to be pretty good at taking the message online. And we happen to be decent at opening up campuses. There's a lot of things we're not good at. And I'm thankful for pastors and churches and Christians all over the world that are good at those other things.

Craig Groeschel ([00:56:30](#)):

And so, I'm sorry to interrupt you. I just wanted to just say it's exciting to cheer on the body of Christ with a diversity of ways to impact the world. And I wouldn't want anyone to feel discouraged if they're not good at something because they're great at something else and be great as God has gifted you.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:56:51](#)):

That's a great word. Bobby, if people are interested in more resources for online church or even the metaverse, do you have any websites that you would direct them to, or we can just put it in the show notes too?

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:57:03](#)):

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:57:03](#)):

So anything come to mind, Bobby?

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:57:05](#)):

I think right now, the team's talking a lot about the metaverse and what we're learning just on our social media channels. So if they follow live Church Online on social media or even occasionally Pastor Craig will post on it or I post on it, that's probably the way to get the most current information, including some links that we put out there from time to time that have a little more information. And then, I can give you some links for the show notes too.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:57:26](#)):

That's great. Well, I can't thank both of you enough. You've been extremely generous with your time, and I just admire you both so much as leaders and as friends and just want to thank you for building into the capital C church, building into kingdom-minded business leaders who are listening, who care about

their church, who care about the future, who donate, who sit on boards, who volunteer, who serve, who give.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:57:51](#)):

And you know what, after a conversation like this? I just think this is some of the hope that we are all looking for. I want to thank you both very much for bringing it today.

Bobby Gruenewald ([00:58:00](#)):

Thanks, Carey.

Craig Groeschel ([00:58:01](#)):

Yeah. Thanks. Love you, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:58:02](#)):

Love you too. Thank you. I love the way that conversation wrapped up. I mean, that was just so powerful. And Craig and Bobby are absolutely two of my most favorite leaders and fantastic people.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:58:15](#)):

Again, one of the frequently asked questions on the podcast when I talk to people is like, "But what so and so really like?" And the answer is, with Craig and Bobby, fantastic. And that is the answer in 99.9% of the time with leaders.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:58:29](#)):

But they're two of my absolute favorite people and really, really privileged to call them friends as well as leaders who inform and inspire my leadership. So if you want more on that, we got it on YouTube as well. They did a really beautiful job filming that at Life.Church for us for this episode.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:58:47](#)):

So you can check that out on my YouTube channel at Carey Nieuwhof. Just search for me on YouTube. You'll find it there. And you might be able to share that with your team. And if this helped you or you found it beneficial, please leave a rating and review. That is how we get the word out.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:59:02](#)):

You can do that wherever you listen to this podcast, Spotify, Apple Podcast, Overcast. That's where I listen to podcast. But wherever you do, please leave a rating and review. We would so appreciate it. And that gets the word out. We continue to break records on this podcast these days and in terms of listenership.

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:59:20](#)):

So when you share the word, that's what gets it out. And we want to do a better job serving you. We offer transcripts as well, so you can get the show notes, including some of the things that Bobby mentioned. We will include those all in the show notes at [careynieuwhof.com/episode471](http://careynieuwhof.com/episode471).

Carey Nieuwhof ([00:59:38](#)):

So you can find that. All this is for free. And that is thank you to our partners as well. Make sure that you check out Leadr. Go to leadr.com. Use the promo code Carey to get 20% off your first year of their people development software. And by Pro MediaFire, claim, your free copy of their 2022 digital playbook by going to promediafire.com/2022. And remember for Leadr, L-E-A-D-R.com.

Carey Nieuwhof ([01:00:03](#)):

And next episode, we're going to continue with our future series. I do think that sometimes we criticize the things we don't understand. So we're just trying to get better understanding around the metaverse and the future and hybrid church and all of those things. And we're going to get into crypto a little bit next time, and also a really innovative company, overflow.co, which is a startup, a 32-year-old entrepreneur and church planter has begun. And he's trying to make it easy to give non-cash donations, like stocks, assets, and crypto to churches. And his name is Vance Roush, gotten to know him over the last couple of years. Here's an excerpt from that episode.

Vance Roush ([01:00:44](#)):

They would say, "Hey, Vance, how do I donate some of my Facebook, Google, Apple stock?" And at the time, Carey, I didn't know. But I knew that Facebook stock is valuable. So, I should figure this out. And so I went to Fidelity to open up our brokerage account. By the way, that wasn't were seamless. It took me about three weeks. But got it done. So I sent that over to about a dozen people that had requested for this.

Vance Roush ([01:01:10](#)):

And I didn't see anything come through the account. And so I went to one of my buddies, and I said, "Hey, you mentioned that you wanted to donate some of your Facebook stock." And then he said, "I'm going to do it. It's just that I gave your information to my Charles Schwab broker. I just haven't had a chance to do it. But I'll get it done before the end of the year." And that was honestly my epiphany moment, that the only thing standing in the way of this donation, this gift, is a little bit of friction.

Vance Roush ([01:01:40](#)):

What if we remove that friction? All of October, I built a prototype, and I email a thousand active recurring donors. Across the next three days, 32 people responded to that email. And we raised 1.1 million in stocks in three days.

Carey Nieuwhof ([01:01:57](#)):

That's coming up next time. And I'll tell you, this got really huge implications for the church and for businesses as well. I mean, the vast majority of wealth is not easily transferred to causes that you care about. He's trying to make it simpler. So we talk about FinTech, crypto, donating stocks, and a whole lot more next time.

Carey Nieuwhof ([01:02:18](#)):

Also coming up on the podcast and again, subscribers, you will never miss an episode. Francesca Gino, Deon Nicholas. We're going to talk a little bit about AI. That's down the road. We've also got Max Chafkin. He's coming up. He's from Bloomberg Business. Dave Hollis, Jennie Allen, Bob Goff, Ian Cron. We have Philip Yancey on the podcast for the first time. That's all coming up.



This transcript was exported on Jan 20, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

Carey Nieuwhof ([01:02:41](#)):

And if you really enjoyed this, head on over to [careynieuwhof.com](http://careynieuwhof.com). That's where all things sort of live including this podcast. And I do a lot of writing there. Our content gets accessed millions of times a year. And you can join over 85,000 leaders who receive my daily content emails.

Carey Nieuwhof ([01:02:59](#)):

And I would just love to help you even more. So if you find this helpful, head on over to [careynieuwhof.com](http://careynieuwhof.com), and we can meet over there as well. Well, thank you, Craig and Bobby. Thank you to you for listening. And I hope this has been a really encouraging, clarifying and perhaps motivating episode. And we'll catch you next time on the podcast. In the meantime, I hope our time together today has helped you thrive in life and leadership.

Announcer ([01:03:25](#)):

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.