

Announcer:

The Art of Leadership Network.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Welcome to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. It's Carey here, and I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life in leadership. Today's guest is none other than Thom Rainer, and we are going to talk about church. We're going to talk about the death of denominations, the stunning decline in evangelism and the digital revolution, especially for small churches. Yeah, some real surprises in here and some great insight, and this episode is brought to you by the Church Disruption Summit. Register for the free event. It's my event. I would love for you to join me. I am going to dissect the seven disruptive church trends that will define the next decade, to the church of 2032. You can get your whole team in for free at [churchdisruptionsummit.com](http://churchdisruptionsummit.com) today. Go to [churchdisruptionsummit.com](http://churchdisruptionsummit.com) and by Pro MediaFire. Submit your application for the digital grant program for a limited time, by going to [creativo.org/grant](http://creativo.org/grant). That's creativo, C-R-E-A-T-I-V-O .org/grant.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I'm so glad to have Thom Rainer back. I joked it been a few hundred episodes and we were definitely due for return conversation. He is the Founder and CEO of Church Answers and the Executive Director of the Revitalized Network. He's a graduate of the University of Alabama. He's got a degree in business administration and an MD and a PhD from Southern Seminary. He has served as a pastor of four churches, the former President of Rainer Group Consulting, and for 12 years, he was a Dean at Southern Seminary, and for 13 years, the President and CEO of Lifeway. He has authored or co-authored 33 books. Yeah, I joked about it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's like man, you can just... I think we talk about this on air. We talked a lot off mic too, but he wrote his last, well, not this book, but another book during the pandemic in 18 days. I'm like, "What?" I don't write an introduction in 18 days, but anyway, good to have Thom back. This episode is brought to you by the Church Disruption Summit. Change is inevitable, but irrelevance isn't and everything is changing quickly, and here's the reality, churches that aren't changing quickly, die. So talk to leaders, they'll tell you they want to grow. They want to be more effective. They want to reach more people, and what does that all involve? Change.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Then ask them their strategy for leading change, they can't answer the question. And unfortunately, hope is not a strategy. The other problem, I think a lot of leaders struggle with, with change, is that you're afraid of pushback, opposition, confusion and anger. Well, I want to take you and your team on a journey and at the Church Disruption Summit, which I'm hosting, we'll have a one hour event over two days, one hour each day, where I will dissect the seven disruptive church trends that will define the church of 2032. That's right. We're going to look at the next decade and look at the change that is coming.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Then, in the summit, I'm going to give you a framework for change that will help you lead change without blowing your church apart. Interested? Go to [churchdisruptionsummit.com](http://churchdisruptionsummit.com). You can register

your entire team. I would suggest bringing your board. I would bring your staff. It's free. Go to [churchdisruptionsummit.com](http://churchdisruptionsummit.com). You'll leave equipped to lead something bigger, something better, something more meaningful and helpful, and change will no longer work against you. That's [churchdisruptionsummit.com](http://churchdisruptionsummit.com) to register for free. It's coming up soon.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Today's episode is brought to you by Pro MediaFire. Have you ever applied for a grant? Well, maybe you did during the pandemic. Normally the process is long and hard, but that's not the case with the digital grant. It will take you five minutes to apply. That's it. The digital grant is perfect for church plans, small churches and nonprofits, and includes a new website, social media management, professional content library and the digital growth system. The digital grant is provided Creativo, a division of Pro MediaFire to help small organizations grow online. Grant approvals are based on your size, mission and are up to 70% off the regular price.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Pro MediaFire is also providing a limited number of complete website makeovers at zero cost as part of the grant program. Interested? Well, if you're a small church, check out the digital grant program today for a limited time, by going to [creativo.org/grant](http://creativo.org/grant). That's C-R-E-A-T-I-V-O .org/grant. And hang on, for later in this episode, Thom's going to talk about how small churches are using social media to reach their community, so if you want a motive for that, check it out, but definitely get that grant, [creativo.org/grant](http://creativo.org/grant). Now, without further ado, my conversation with Thom Rainer.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thom Rainer, welcome back.

Thom Rainer:

Carey Nieuwhof, this is fun. It's fun just to be with you, and I'm a fanboy, you know that. I like to go through airports and point out books that are on stands and airports where mine are never, and yours are always, and I just say, "I really know that guy," and people are looking at me weird. "No. No, you don't." I'm like, "Yeah, I do."

Carey Nieuwhof:

I want to know how that works. I really do, because I haven't figured that out. I mean, that was in my contract with Penguin Random House. I'm like, "Hey, one day..." I'm sure the clause doesn't read this, but, "I would love it to be in airports, because I think you reach influencers." You reach different people in airports-

Thom Rainer:

Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... than you reach on Amazon, and you reach at Barnes & Noble. And those are all good outlets, but yeah. It's good. There's something behind the scenes that I haven't figured out yet, and sometimes mine are there. They're always in the airports my friends are at. They're never in the airports I'm in. That's what I've also discovered.

Thom Rainer:

Hey, I put one on social media so you could see it sometime back.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You did. I remember that.

Thom Rainer:

So somewhere in my Twitter file, there's a photo of your book, and I think it was the Metroplex. I think it was a DFW airport, so I think that's right, but don't hold me to it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

There you go. We'll have to look for it next time. A lot has happened since we last had you on, you were one of the early adopters for this podcast. I think I had you on once or twice at the beginning and it's about time I brought you back, and now we're resurrecting the archive with the Art of Leadership Daily, so you may even pop up there-

Thom Rainer:

I love that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... from time to time with a little clip. But I want to look at, you have such a perspective on the church, and we have a lot of people who listen to this podcast who are invested in the church. A lot of them work at church. A lot of them are entrepreneurs, CEOs, people who work in the marketplace, but they're invested in their church or they care about the church, or they're just interested in leadership principles. But here we have a whole, the church isn't an industry, what am I saying? A whole sector. The church has changed so much over the last, even, five years. What are some of the big trends that you've got your eye on, that you're like, "You know what, Carey? This is changing fundamentally. Pay attention to this. I don't know if there'll ever be the same again in this area"? What or two or three, just off the top, that strike you as big changes happening now?

Thom Rainer:

So Carey, I don't mean to alliterate, but this does alliterate, for those who want to remember it. There is no doubt that we would look at the digital revolution as something that has come out of this. Now for a Carey Nieuwhof or a pastor of a large church, you'll say, "What digital revolution? We've been doing the following for years and years and years." But then, all of a sudden, we go from a 10% adoption rate to almost the inverse of that. To almost 90% adoption rate. I don't think we have even begun to unpack the impact of all of these churches going digital.

Thom Rainer:

Now. Some of them did it for a season and ignoring it, but some of them are really invested in it. As small as 30 and 40 in attendance, we're seeing more and more that investment in the digital revolution. And we can unpack what that means later, but that is definitely one of the trends that's taken place. The alliteration continues with, I would call it, the death of denominationalism, from digital to death. It is an exaggeration to say that denominations have died. It is not an exaggeration to say the decline is precipitous, way more so, than before the pandemic.

Thom Rainer:

When you look at denominations, what are they? They're churches, so obviously you're looking at churches within the denomination declining, but you're also looking at disaffiliation with denomination. It does not have the hook. It does not have the appeal. It does not even have the doctrinal unity, where many denominations were put together and we're watching this extremely carefully. Some of it is obvious. You've got the United Methodist denomination at a tipping point and they will probably fragment into three denominations. We're working with several churches in that area to talk about what direction in this new world for them. You've got the Southern Baptist Convention that has just been torn upside down on the sex abuse scandal, on the sex abuse issue. But there are many others that are not as obvious where the decline just continues to be precipitous.

Thom Rainer:

And we can come back to these, but just to get those three Ds out, the digital revolution, the death of denominationalism, and again, that might be hyperbole, but we'll say the significant decline anyway, and then, in the North American church, the death of evangelism. Well, again, I don't want to get ahead of you, Carey, but we have mounds of data that indicate that this was already happening, but it has been accelerated or, if you want to look at the inverse, evangelism as a priority has been decelerated, and this may be the single focus that we're on right now. What is happening, where the great commission cliché has just become the great omission? What has happened, where reaching people with the gospel is no longer a priority for many, many churches? So, man, I could unpack all those forever, but-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, I want to.

Thom Rainer:

... I'll be quiet for a minute, just see where you want to go with this.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, I really would like to drill down on all of those, because as you say those things, that really syncs up with what I've been seeing with my intuition on those issues. The part that really intrigued me, you're right, it's funny, I was telling you I'm a little bit flushed right now, because I just got back from an hour long bike ride at lunch and it was on the bike-

Thom Rainer:

The audience cannot see the red, Carey. I don't know if I should say you're as handsome as ever, because that may seem weird, but you look fine.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, thank you. Yeah, the YouTube audience can see that, both of them. So anyway, we are on YouTube for most of these episodes these days. But I was thinking as I was doing my ride today, I had been working from home since the '90s. That was in part because the original churches were so small. They didn't have an office. They weren't heated in the winter during the week because we couldn't afford it, so it's like, "Well, work out of my house," right? But I've been used to time flexing for two and a half decades, which is really interesting.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And you're right, we were ready for the pandemic. Not because we saw the pandemic coming, but because, when we built our broadcast location, that was the last thing I did as lead pastor. It's like, "Well, I know more people are going to watch our messages through the lens of a camera than through a seat in the auditorium, so let's overinvest in the audio video lighting, the AVL." So when you look at us online, we look like a really big church. I mean our biggest auditorium seats 350 and we were seeing 1500 people through our locations pre pandemic. But it was a flip of a switch for us, but you're right. I think the different things, it was 10 to 30% of churches were online, and other than having a social media account, a Facebook account.

Thom Rainer:

Or a static website that nobody went to.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Exactly, and now the adoption is 90%. But what I'm really interested, because one of the things I love about our conversations, and we've had many since you were last on the show too, is, you really have your finger on the pulse of the average size church, the normal size church, small church pastors, 30, 40, 50, 70, 100. What does digital look like for those churches?

Thom Rainer:

Digital has several arms to it. One of the arms is it is for those who choose not to come in, the obvious one, on that particular worship day. So let's say it's Sunday morning, that is obvious. Both the effective, smaller churches see two other purposes in it. One of the other purposes, other than just the stand in for the in person service is that it has become a place of ministry and outreach to the community that they did not discover, they did not know was there.

Thom Rainer:

I was talking to a pastor of 65 worship attendants, so that would put his church right at the median. I think it's 55 to 60 right now in North America, and so we put him right at the median and he said, "We have been highly intentional with our digital services to connect with as many people who are willing to connect with us." And he told me some of the ways that they did that. He said, "We have done more ministry in our community through the digital door, than we have through the physical door," in his history there, which was a dozen years. So they've discovered ministry opportunities and they're following up.

Thom Rainer:

Correlated to that, but a little bit different is many churches have started prayer ministries for the community online. I recently heard of a church in your area, Canada, I don't know which part of Canada, so it may not be your area. This was two days ago and they have a vision statement that is one word. Other. That's it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ooh.

Thom Rainer:

Other.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Thom Rainer:

I just heard that-

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a pretty cool thing.

Thom Rainer:

Oh my goodness.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Thom Rainer:

They filter everything through that word. Are we focusing on God? Other. Are we focusing on the community? Other. So they put everything through that filter and that particular church put their digital media through that filter, and they said, "How can we make this about reaching beyond ourselves, instead of making ourselves more comfortable?" I mean, I like simple church, but that is about as simplest as it can get church.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yes. Other. Thom, I love that you're sharing that, because what I want to underscore is, it sounds like it's as much about social ministry, not just social media, not just live streaming a service. I think often, we narrow the whole idea of church online to, "Oh, did you watch the live stream? Did you watch the message?" What you're saying is, using social media, using their online presence, they're going out into the community connecting with people, making relationships, which again, that works.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I remember leading our churches back when they were 65 people, and I know how many resources you have. Live streaming that service is not very good. You got a preacher who's learning how to preach in my case. You've got maybe a guitarist that you found, maybe a keyboard player. Your vocalists are not particularly strong, probably. What is it? I'm reflecting on me. That's a hundred percent where we were when our churches were 65, and obviously, it was a journey. We're in a very different place today. But I remember working with no money, no resources, not much of a team, and it was good. We cared, but it wasn't broadcast worthy. What are they finding? What are you finding in smaller churches without the resources of larger churches when it comes to the quality of the live stream and the way that is connecting?

Thom Rainer:

The quality will not match the resources of the larger churches for the most part, so we take that as a given, and the reality, Carey, is most of the people in that community, and of course, I know that the livestream can reach a worldwide audience, but most of the people in that community will realize that this is a smaller church and they will give grace, even if they're not a believer, so that's part of it. But what we are seeing that is a little bit different than a lot of the larger churches is that the smaller churches are focusing on the sermon only, and maybe a prayer time, and not trying to bring the music and the mix through the livestream. That is one of the things that is more problematic for smaller churches than larger churches that have the resources that can mix and make it sound really good.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You do have to mix. Yeah, you really do. You get auto tune.

Thom Rainer:

You get some of these worship services with these musicians and singers and it's not mixed. It really sounds bad. It really sounds bad.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. I mean, decent musicians, if the mix isn't right, it can be brutal and that's churches of 1000 or more. You've got to have mix and, often, a little bit of auto tune fixes the mistakes, right? So trade secrets. But does that strike you as a really good option? I mean, there are people like Brady Shearer who say, "Small churches should never live stream," but I think people are focused on the message and maybe a time of prayer or interaction or something like that, do you think that makes more sense?

Thom Rainer:

I would respectfully take another position than that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Sure.

Thom Rainer:

I would tell all churches of any size to go digital. It is a mission field that you don't know about until you get there and you really need to be in that mission field. I understand most of us have a preference for the in person, but don't abandon that digital world. Don't abandon that digital field because it is one of the areas that you can reach that you may not have yet discovered. I would say, keep it going, keep it going churches.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay. Let's talk about the decline or the death of denominationalism. This is something I've been thinking about for a long time, having cut my teeth in a denomination and then 15 years ago, moving in a non-denominational direction with the launch of Connexus Church and why were denominations a great idea, or were they ever a great idea? And then, what's happening?

Thom Rainer:

They definitely were a great idea. They served one of two purposes or both. One purpose was geographical limitations, so a denomination would be in a certain area, therefore there was a point that

you had the Northern Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. They were geographically aligned. There were a lot of other differences in that, but just as a point of reference. So denominations were often formed around where immigrants gathered and it may be an immigrant that had a Lutheran background. It may be an immigrant that had maybe our higher church Presbyterian background, and they would form in that area where the immigrants were, so it had a geographical need.

Thom Rainer:

The other one was a doctrinal unity, and the doctrinal unity would be very specific things. Presbyterian is different than a Methodist, is different than a Baptist, and they would organize around those doctrinal unique ideas. So there has been a time where the denomination is very, very positive for our churches, but two things are happening. First of all, we know that the geographical thing is really not necessary anymore. I mean, you're in Canada, I'm in Franklin, Tennessee, and we're together right now. There are a lot of ways that we can connect otherwise. The denominational thing was basically formed around, many times, unique, ethnic and areas where immigrants had their denominational background, and so it was focused around that doctrinal uniqueness.

Thom Rainer:

Now, quite frankly, if I went to, say, my youngest son's church, Church at Spring Hill, I can click onto their website and when it goes to the, about section, I can find their doctrinal position and I can choose to align with them doctrinally and if I see a major red flag, I probably would not go. Now we have means to communicate doctrine where you can, in essence, organize around a church when the doctrine is a major concern, and it should be some level of concern. Those two things were not available, and those two things were, predominantly, in the digital pre-revolution than they are now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It makes sense, because I imagine some people hearing this would say, "What do you mean, ethnic?" But if you really think about it, I came from immigrant stock, and we looked for the Dutch Church, right? I was born in Canada, but my parents were both Dutch immigrants, so we looked for the Dutch Church, but even where I am right now, north of Toronto, I started in a Presbyterian context and I started with three small rural Presbyterian churches. But just down the road, 10 minutes from my house, is a church that was opened in 1840 and closed in 1907. The historic plaque explains why it closed, and it closed because they were Gaelic speaking congregation, Scott's Presbyterians, and nobody was speaking Gaelic anymore in the 20th century, so it was the first Presbyterian church to close in the area, because they thought that Gaelic was God's language, right?

Thom Rainer:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So they wouldn't change. So I mean, that seems very foreign today, but it makes a lot of sense when you look at everybody moved to North America from a different... Well, not everybody, but a lot of people who live here today, who are not indigenous, moved here from another area and then you clumped together. When did the denominational decline start? I mean, a lot of people point to the '60s, '50s, '70s, when did you see it start to shift in the US?



Thom Rainer:

'60s and '70s for the mainline denominations. For the evangelical denominations, '80s forward. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So it's been sliding for 40, 50 years?

Thom Rainer:

Oh yeah. Yeah. I mean, look at the largest Protestant denomination in North America, which would be the Southern Baptist Convention. It wasn't that long ago that its peak was 16.5 million. They've dropped below 14 million now. That's with, reporting generously, membership numbers in churches. So that is just one sign that there is significant denominational erosion taking place.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I've never written about this, but I have thought about it a lot. If you think about what denominations provided, there was that doctrinal adherence. There was also a common liturgy, right? There was a Presbyterian style of service, a Methodist style of service, a Baptist style of service, a Pentecostal style of service, et cetera. That was pretty uniform across the board. The other thing they did was they equipped their pastors. They were responsible for training. They were responsible for continuing education for national conventions. But you look at, over the lifetime of my ministry, and I'm not exactly a young leader, all of that has now been distributed.

Carey Nieuwhof:

At first, it was parachurch organizations who took a lot of that over. Then there were affiliations. It's like, "Well, were you part of the Willow Creek Network back in the day?" Or, "Were you part of the North Point Network as it grew?" Or, "Were you a Life Church church?" There were different affiliations. And then you look at people like yourself, well, with your Church Answers or people like me, we just came out of nowhere and we're equipping a lot of leaders. Everything shifted, as Mark Sayers says, "We're in a networked world, and the networks are now by affiliation." Do you see some of that? And feel free to disagree or nuance it, but how is that impacting denominations, in the past, but also in the present and moving forward?

Thom Rainer:

Your point is well taken. It's about your organization and Church Answers, my organization, I cannot speak to the specificity of yours, but I know that in the course of a day, that our team will probably have, maybe, 100 different churches of different backgrounds that contact us for one thing or another. We have become a resource provider. We have become an equipper and on August 1, we'll become an educator of multiple denominations.

Thom Rainer:

I'll just give a quick direction on that one, and hope it's not too much of a shameless plug, we are opening Church Answers University on August 1, and Church Answers University is not a degree program. It is a certificate program. We saw the growth of certifications in the secular world, particularly in the world of technology, but now it's expanding to the business world and others. This started, Carey, as a desire to help churches in Uganda. We have a relationship with significant leaders, church leaders,

in Uganda, and they had to get education to get credentialed, and they had to get credentialed to keep their churches open, so it was a gospel issue.

Thom Rainer:

So we opened Church Answers University for, specifically, East Africa, Uganda, and some of the contiguous countries. Well, after we started getting word out that these students were lining up here, we started hearing from American churches. We started hearing from American leaders. Well, I've got this multi site and, probably, 90% of our folks have never had any type of ministry training or education. Can we do that? And so now we're bringing on a new form of education. That used to be the role of denominations. It still is. Let me say that. There's still good seminaries. It still is.

Thom Rainer:

But there are a lot of people out there that aren't trained that need something that is affordable, accessible, and attainable, and so, we moved into that world because we were asked to move into that world, because many of the denominations still have the more common path of university seminaries, et cetera. So I think it's exactly what has taken place. There is diffusion of ministry and equipping and resources, and it used to be highly concentrated in denominations and in the churches of those denominations. I think you nailed it when you talked about that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hmm. Yeah. It's interesting, because you reminded me, we're not in current negotiations, but we've been approached several times over the years about even taking some of the courses I've done and partnering with a university, a seminary, to use them as accredited courses so that they count toward a master's or a bachelor's or whatever you happen to be working toward. And we haven't done anything about it, but it's a very interesting problem and I hear you. I was, for a long season, the only person with seminary education on our church staff, because I generally wasn't hiring from seminaries. I was hiring from the marketplace, right?

Thom Rainer:

You were hiring from within a good bit as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I was hiring from within. Yeah, a hundred percent. We live in the middle of nowhere. It's like, "I'll hire from within." And so then, I'm grateful for my seminary education, theological preaching training I've had et cetera, but things are changing. So what's the prognosis for denominations? Do you think they'll eventually fade away, be reinvented? What do you imagine?

Thom Rainer:

I do not think the denominations per se will be reinvented. If you and I were talking 50 years from now, it would be a miracle, but if you and I were talking 50 years from now, I think there would still be some vestige of denominations still remaining, because denominations hang on tenaciously and so they will be still be here. Some of them will have a role. Some of them will be reinvented. But I think what we're seeing, Carey, is diffusion, and it is not it, being training, equipping, credentialing, is not going to be primary the purview of denominations, as much as it is diffused to other organizations.

Thom Rainer:

That's why we did the certification is because, the people in Africa said, "Is there any way we can get educated in less than a year?" I said, "Yeah, we can do it. It may not be as robust, but we can do it." So we did it. Now they've come along, and we just accepted our first Tanzanian students, so we just expanded a little bit beyond Uganda. So yes, I do think that has taken place, but I do think it is going to be more, broadly diffused, than we could ever imagine in the future.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, no. And I'm so encouraged to see that you're doing this. We'll link to it in the show notes, if we can find it again, but I was rereading an article that ran, maybe a year or so or two, in Canada, just called, Gone by 2040. It was about the disappearance of two, or perhaps three, major Protestant denominations in our country that used to be, in the '50s, the peak of Protestant Christianity. They are now predicting the demise of all three denominations by 2040. Some are, which is interesting.

Thom Rainer:

And the great reduction in others as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

The great reduction. Mm-hmm. Okay, so we talked about denominations, we talked about the digital revolution and some really encouraging stuff there for small churches. But the third D is, I'm just going to look at my notes. Oh, I've lost-

Thom Rainer:

The death of evangelism.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, death of evangelism. Yeah. Probably the most important. Let's talk about that. What are you seeing? That one surprised me. You know what? When you said it, I'm like, "Oh yeah. Probably true." But I'm like, "Really?"

Thom Rainer:

I think it's definitively true. And boy, that's almost an oxymoron statement, I think it's definitive. Let me rephrase.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think it's a hundred percent accurate, Thom, I do.

Thom Rainer:

Let me rephrase what I'm saying. We have data, that strongly suggest, strongly suggest, that this is happening right before our eyes. We started doing, what we called at the time, a church health report back in 1996. I mean, I've been doing this thing a long time and you know what that means. Number one, I got experience, but mainly I'm just old. I'm just really... So we started doing this-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Still alive, right? There you go.

Thom Rainer:

... survey for tools for churches so that they could get a perception of where they thought they were. I mean, it did not measure actual results in churches, such as conversions, baptisms, et cetera, but it measured where they perceived they were. And their perception was pretty much reality because, whatever they perceived was happening, whatever they perceived made what was happening next. So we started following these in 1996, the primary purpose of it was to allow a church to evaluate itself. We started harvesting that data recently. We started putting it in the cloud in 2017, and so we're going to have to go back and do some other types of input for pre 2017 data, but we started harvesting this data. Right before your eyes, we measure 160 variables, but they come down to seven categories and six of them are the purposes of the church of evangelism, discipleship, ministry, worship, fellowship, and prayer, and then the seventh one is, what you believe doctrinally. They come down to the six purposes of the church, and then what you believe doctrinally.

Thom Rainer:

Got the data, and I said, "I just want to see the high level. I want to see what the scores were just in the six categories. What's the score for worship? What's the score for fellowship, discipleship, ministry?" And if I'm boring people with this, keep in mind that each of these broad categories had 25 questions underneath them, so these are the broad categories. The most shocking, and yet we acknowledge that it was happening right before our eyes, was to see the evangelism number almost look like nothing but a downhill rollercoaster.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Thom Rainer:

It was just one of those things that you look at the numbers and you gasp. Worship didn't go down that much. Even discipleship held its own ministry. Fellowship, prayer, evangelism. Now what this means is, the churches are dying in evangelism and the members know it and they're frustrated, and they're depressed about the fact that their church is not fulfilling the great commission. So we're looking at these numbers and said, "This may be one of the clarion calls of the church today. I mean, what were Jesus' last will and Testament words? Basically, it was Act 1:8 before he was lifted up. "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And he did not say, "Go and build a nice facilities." Nice facilities are fine. He did not say, "Have the best worship services, though they're needed." He just said, "Go reach people with the gospel." And we said, in essence with our actions, "Nah, we got other things we need to do right now."

Carey Nieuwhof:

So people are concerned about it, but the activity is dropping nonetheless. Is that what your data is showing?

Thom Rainer:

They are concerned about it and they don't know what to do about it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay. So let's talk about the reasons for that. I mean, one of my theories, and I've done some writing on this is that, a lot of the church growth in the last 20 years has been, what I call, market consolidation. In the same way that if you look at when Borders and Barnes & Noble started to really expand in suburban America, they gobbled up independent bookshops. Everybody knows that, right? Now there's a little resurgence of independent book shops, which I think is a really good thing, but what that was, it wasn't, we sold more books, it's just we sold the same amount of books in fewer places and a Barnes & Noble would replace five small mom and pop shops.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think you could argue, there's definitely some megachurches that have had conversion growth, but when you really look at, it's just Christians going, "Oh, I like this better." And I think you could argue that you saw an even bigger trend in that, during the pandemic, as everybody reassessed their preferences and went, "Yeah, we're not going to this church anymore. We're going to go to this one." So a lot of the returners, who are new, are just recycled Christians. Do you see consolidation as being part of what explains some of the church growth movement over the last 20 years, or do you have a different view?

Thom Rainer:

Yeah. The direct answer to your question is, yes. It explains the church growth movement very well. It does not fully explain the death of evangelism. That is another story into itself.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So what's going on there? I think America is becoming a post-Christian nation.

Thom Rainer:

It is.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Is it that, church has become a place where you're just trying to hold on to traditional values and circle the wagons and we'll make this about us and we're going to forget our community. Is it the culture wars? What do you think is going on with the church's inability, unwillingness and effectiveness in evangelism?

Thom Rainer:

Well, let's start it off at the heart level, the spiritual level, and then we can look at some of the manifestations of that. I think I wrote several years ago, don't hold me to it, but I think I wrote an article called, If I Were Satan, and there were probably some people who said, "Hey, you're close."

Thom Rainer:

If I were Satan, I would insist that people look at activities in the church that are more important than evangelism. I wouldn't worry about moral failure. I would just get churches busy, so that they neglect the main thing. I do think that there's spiritual warfare. And when you talk about, what does the enemy want us not to do? It's definitely, he does not want us to depopulate. Hell, Christ wants us to populate heaven, he does not want that, so we know that there's a spiritual issue at stake.

Thom Rainer:

Another thing that I think took place as an attempt to try to respond to this in the '70s, '80s and maybe early '90s was memorized evangelism, which had a good purpose. Evangelism explosion, continuous witness training for spiritual laws, all had a very good purpose, and quite frankly, I like the way those people were doing evangelism better than the way most of us aren't, so I don't want to be too critical, but I think that type of evangelism, particularly the heavy memorization was only there for a season in most churches. It could not be sustained.

Thom Rainer:

But, Carey, from a manifestation point of view, I think the primary reason is, our churches were once in an area of their own. Now they're in a mission field they don't recognize. Pastors don't realize, church leaders don't realize, that they have gone from being a local church and a mission agency. And so our community is a mission field, and most of our church leaders, pastors and lay people alike, do not know how to function in a mission field. The culture has shifted so much, it is definitely post-Christian, definitely post-Christian. And we, collectively, as churches in North America particularly, we do not know how to function in that mission field.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hmm. So if you want to play with that idea a little bit more, I would be afford if you are Thom, because I've been thinking about this a lot, but I really haven't had a conversation about it on this show, which is, I have this theory and I grew up in the church, so I may be totally the wrong person to pull on this, but I felt like, you could walk into any Christian Church 20 years ago and feel relatively comfortable. But I wonder if the collective psyche has changed, at this point, to the point where, when you see churches, when you're not in church on a Sunday morning, you're driving by one, they feel more like a private club or a peculiar organization.

Carey Nieuwhof:

For example, if you saw a branch of the Legion, I don't know that you have those in the US, we have the Royal Canadian Legion, but veterans places, right? Well, I didn't serve in the military, so I don't feel welcome there. Or let's say you passed a hunting club, where people are gathering. It's like, "Well, I'm not a hunter. I'm not welcome there." And I wonder if, when the average person passes a church, they think, "Oh, that's a private gathering for people. Not a public gathering." Almost like crashing a funeral, it's like, "I don't know who that guy is," right? I wonder, if we went from that perspective of, we're open for everybody, and then there's been a lot of problems in the church, you mentioned the abuse, Southern Baptist, but not just Southern Baptist. The judgementalism, the anger, the hatred, the political division, and I wonder if people driving by are just like, "Yeah, I'm not invited to that club, and I don't know whether I want to go." Does that resonate at all, or bad theory?

Thom Rainer:

You're nailing it, and that is one of the reasons why we cannot expect people just to drop by our church anymore.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No.

Thom Rainer:

We have to develop the relationships. We have to be in their world. We cannot expect them to come to our world. And, Carey, you nailed it with describing what was going on. We have become, in many of our churches, a religious country club. Therefore, we are not in the business of looking beyond our own. That single vision statement, other. No, we're focused on self.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Us. It's like, "Those guys are bad guys," right? Judgment is a terrible evangelism strategy, and if you look at what so many people are posting online, it's just anti-culture, here's what's wrong with America, here's what's wrong with the President, whatever president happens to be in power in the moment. Here's what's wrong with culture, here's what's wrong with Hollywood, here's what's wrong with Disney. Then you're like, "Oh and love your neighbor." Where does that come from?

Thom Rainer:

If I were a non-Christian, I did not grow up in the church. Well let me correct that. My first 11 years were in a church, a non-gospel church, up until age, about 22. I dropped out of church, and so I've experienced, in both my teenage and young adult years, what it's like not to be a part of the church, so I'll just simply say this. If I were not a Christian, and I had one source to find out about the Christian faith and it was social media, I would declare, "Never in my life would I become a Christian, because those people are mean. Those people are venomous in many cases, not in all cases, but venomous in many cases, and all they want to do is argue about the next thing." So culture is not coming to church. We've got to go to them, whatever that means. We have got to go to them and that's what's not happening, therefore, that's why evangelism is not happening.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I couldn't agree with you more, and that was very well said, but don't we need to do some soul work first? Isn't there some repentance, some change in attitude? Do you really want to go and hang out with a bunch of angry, judgemental, suspicious people?

Thom Rainer:

Well, we can do it one by one and just let it begin with me and maybe disciple one other person and see what happens when God uses a few. Yeah, all of us need to repent and get our act together, but don't wait for perfection, just get on out there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Well, you know what? The death of denominationalism, the death of evangelism, the digital revolution, the three DS, thank you for sharing that. That's absolutely worth the price of admission. Even if we were charging for this, it's worth the price of admission. It still happens to be free for the podcast.

Thom Rainer:

Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thom, you also released a book, I guess, in 2020 called, The Post Quarantine Church. So in that book, what did you see as the opportunities and the challenges facing the church coming out of the pandemic?

Thom Rainer:

I have more of a 2020 hindsight view. At the time I wrote it, we were in the pandemic and so got a call from a publisher, Tyndale, and they said, "Look, we really need to get a book out on about what's going on right now. We don't know how long it's going to last. Can you write a book quickly?" I said, "Can you give me a framework?" And they said, "Three weeks, 21 days." I said, "I'll sure give it a shot."

Thom Rainer:

I wrote it in 18 days. Released The Post Quarantine Church, and so understand, I was writing that book in the midst of the pandemic. And it was about getting out of the quarantine and getting into gatherings, getting back into workplaces, et cetera. But there were a couple of things that just became glaringly obvious. One of those is that we have ripped the timeline. Now, what I mean by that is, if you look at a timeline, 2019 is here, and for those of you who are on the audio podcast, I got my hands up, so I got to remember most people are listening, and then I'm putting up my other hand, and the timeline is between my hand here. What happened was, we took out a piece of that timeline and everything accelerated, and at the time we looked at it, everything accelerated by two years or more.

Thom Rainer:

Now, let me explain. So if a church was in decline, slightly declining in 2019, and then they wake up and they look at 2021, it's like they were in the year 2023 or 2024 or 2025. The decline had been accelerated even though the time hadn't. It was just like you ripped a page out of the timeline, and you're just thinking, "Oh my goodness, how did we get this way?" Many church leaders panicked. Many church members got frustrated. They were already frustrated with the pandemic, with politics, with the rules and not rules of what you do during the quarantine, and then they get back, and, "Oh my goodness, only half of my people are here." And then for most churches, it's still not gotten better than only 80% or 70% of my people, when I say here, I mean the in person service.

Thom Rainer:

That was the big negative that came out of the quarantine. We don't know how to handle this acceleration that has taken place. The big positive was the reset. People, for a season, and they may still be, but I don't think they are as much today, church members for a season, have been ready for change that they have resisted for so long. So this was an opportunity for many churches to say, "Things have changed. We need to do the following."

Thom Rainer:

Now we may be leading that period now, but immediately when that book was written, I said, "Look at this as a great reset. Move quickly, because this is an opportunity where you don't have to ask the question, 'What is the way that we've always done it.'" That was the big negative, and the big positive. Obviously things have begun to change a little bit as we've moved more and more past the original quarantine time.

Carey Nieuwhof:



Okay. Anything else? When you think about what you see changing in the church, what are the big trends that you see changing?

Thom Rainer:

Well, I will go back to my hobby horse, and I do think that the healthy churches are going to rediscover evangelism. I don't have a methodology for them. This is not a new program that is being introduced, but I do think they're going to say, "Look, as Carey Nieuwhof said..." Much better source than Thom Rainer, "As Carey Nieuwhof said, 'People are just not going to come to our churches. It's just not the natural thing to do. It's those people.'" So it's going to click with many church leaders and many churches.

Thom Rainer:

Okay, now we got to start talking about going to them. What does that mean? Is it one-on-one relational? Is it community ministry, where we connect them with the gospel? What does that mean? And the mere asking of the question would tell me that that is a good sign for the church in the future.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Thom Rainer:

The big picture, Carey, in North America, barring intercession of a miracle by God, the decline is going to continue overall. I don't want to be hopeless with a God that is the God of all hope. I am speaking as a demographer, as a, want to be, statistician, but somebody at least watches the trends. We don't see an abating of the trends that have been negative to this point, and so more consolidation will take place. More decline will take place unless something happens.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I don't know the answer to this question, Thom, but when you mentioned, and I thought it was so well put, that if you didn't go to church, and you based the assessment of the church, basically on what you saw on social media, the last thing you would do is want to become a Christian or start attending church. I think that's a very, in my mind, to my mind, that's a very fair comment. Some of that, and I don't want to throw leaders under the bus, but some of that goes to the quality of leadership we have in the church today. One of my concerns, for a long time has been, that 150 years ago, with some exceptions, clergy was a noble calling. It was like, "You go get a good education. You get some of the best and the brightest." It's like law, medicine, clergy, what would we do? You got that. I'm not sure we're there anymore. When you think about Godly people, who are high capacity leaders, what is it going to take to attract another caliber of leader to local church leadership in your view?

Thom Rainer:

Well, again, your impression and your thoughts and your words, so you're really very much on track with that. The reason that many pastors and other church leaders are not effective is because they learned how to, and most of the people who aren't listening by podcasts, I do air quotes, but I'm going yield from doing that. Most of the people have learned how to, do church, in a different world, than the world that exists today. And they have not adapted to that new world. It takes a high capacity leader, maybe a good willing leader, to gain the capacity to say, "I know that the world is different. I know North

America's different for you North American listeners. I know North America is different and I cannot be the type of leader that I used to be if I'm going to be effective going forward, because the way we do church," air quotes again, not showing them, "The way we do church has to significantly change. If it does not, the trends are inescapable."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. What else do church leaders need to do to be prepared for the challenges ahead? You know, Barna said 42% are ready to quit. There's personal resilience, but there's also the practical skills that leaders need to be able to lead in an era of change. So what are two or three of the things that you see that leaders need?

Thom Rainer:

I love studying leaders who have been effective by some measurable outcome, but also who have hung around for some period of time in a church. Tenure does not necessarily make you effective, but if you're very ineffective, the likelihood of longer tenure is smaller. And so one of the words is just tenacity, stickiness, the ability to hang in there, that 42% number, that Barna cited, I see that too. I would've, anecdotally, had a higher number, so I'm glad he has a data, but the first thing is just, hang in there. Go through a season. We have found that the most effective years, not effective, is defined subjectively by interviews with the pastors that we have, objectively by some metrics, so again, I want to give clarity there. The most effective years for a pastor begin after year five of a tenure, and here's the other thing about it, Carey. You have to write off two years now. Basically you have to write off '20 and '21.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, reset. So if you started in 2020, welcome to your first day on the job, right?

Thom Rainer:

This is your first day on the job, and you have to treat it as that way. If you look at change leadership, if you look at what is taking place in the effective churches, most leaders are thinking, "What will this church look like in 5 to 10 years?" And they can live with the incrementalism, even though they may not be leading incrementally, they can take the small wins. Then when the real big pushes come, and there is significant conversion growth, deeper discipleship, more celebratory worship, maybe after year five, you begin to see the momentum come. So this whole idea of just, hang in there, that is just the tenacity, is just part of it.

Thom Rainer:

The other thing is learn, learn, learn. If people are not listening to your podcast, people being church leaders, then they are missing an incredible opportunity. Put Carey on 1.5 speed if you don't have time, and you can put me on double speed and people think I'm talking normally, but listen to the Carey Nieuwhof Podcast. Read his books, because you're going to learn something about the world in which you're in. You write about leadership. You write about the world that we live in. You write about the challenges and you write about the church. Find a way to be that continuous learner, because you have to learn the culture that you're in, right now, in order to move forward. So tenacity, what is it Angela Duckworth called it? Grit? Grit, in her famous book, now become a classic. Have that grit and just hang in there, but be a learner, because if you want to do church the way that you've always done it, you will not be the pastor that you want to be.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Well, speaking of writing books, you've written a lot more than me. You have a brand new book, a little one, called, I Am A Christian. I don't know whether it's a sequel to I Am A Church Member. That sold a ton of copies. Tell me why you wrote the book and why now? I'm curious.

Thom Rainer:

Well, I wrote this book because I Am A Church Member is incomplete. And I did not want to write a book that was a sequel, as much as I wanted to write a book that was a replacement. That's a dangerous thing to say. I'm trying to cannibalize myself, but it is the reality. All right, let's think for a moment. How was I Am A Church Member used? Most of the sales came through pastors buying them in quantity, either for small groups or new member classes. They wanted people to know what it meant to be a part of the body of Christ. But let me tell you what was not in that book, that's not in most new member books, and that is, what does it mean to be a believer in Christ? I'm talking about an expanded version, not just a very synopsis type of version.

Thom Rainer:

So we often have people come into our churches that are nominal or non-Christian and they come into the membership and we have unregenerate membership. So I said, "We've got to have a book that focuses on what it means to be a believer." So we talk about the new member class, and we're not talking about what it means to be a Christian. On the other hand, we have new Christian books that rarely talk about what does it mean to be a part of the body of Christ? And we say, "Okay, you're now a believer. You need to set up a spiritual discipline of prayer, spiritual discipline of sharing your faith, of reading your Bible." And we say, "This is what it means to grow as a Christian."

Thom Rainer:

Most new Christian books miss the spiritual discipline of gathering, and that is a spiritual discipline that is most time, not mentioned, and not mentioned as a spiritual discipline. Carey, the New Testament, beginning with the Book of Acts in chapter 2, all the way to Revelation 3, is written about, or to, the local church. The local church is God's plan A and he doesn't have a plan B.

Thom Rainer:

We have, we, people like me, have said, "This is what it means to be a church member. This is what it means to be a Christian." And although they're not synonymous terms, church membership does not have salvific value, and neither does being saved put you in a church automatically, but we need to integrate those more. We need to have people who are coming in our church that understand what it means to be a follower of Christ, and we need to have followers of Christ that know it is important for you to understand, believer, that you will never grow in Christ the way you are supposed to, unless you're in the context of a local body to whom you're accountable, where you have fellowship and who love on you and who pray for you. So this connects those two. It connects the membership. It connects, what we often call, the new Christian, but I just thought what it means to be a Christian, and puts it into one volume. I wish I could say it's a sequel, because both of them could keep selling, but I think-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's a replacement.

Thom Rainer:

It's a replacement.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, what, because we talked about this already, but what does church membership mean in a digital context? There's a slim percentage, probably still single digits of people who are saying, "Virtual is going to be my church. That's just it." Can you join a church digitally? What is your take on that?

Thom Rainer:

I will always, I better not say always, that's a bit dogmatic, but I tend to say that in person is the preferred. I don't want to have a digital relationship with my wife all the time. I don't mind talking to her, emailing her, texting her, but I want to be with her. And after 44 years, I've discovered I want to be with her more than ever, and so that in person is invaluable. But please, local church leaders, if I can speak to you through the podcast or through the videocast on YouTube, if I can speak to you, don't abandon the digital in the process, because the digital is going to be the place for some of your members. I would rather have them at the digital than not have them at all. The digital is going to be the place for ministry, for prayer, in addition to that.

Thom Rainer:

The digital is an opportunity to keep those who would not be there otherwise, and it's an opportunity to reach those who did not know about your church. The digital church is here to stay. It may, and it will likely, evolve in what that means, but it is not going away, so please don't abandon it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay. I want to imagine that we are 15 years in the future and, with hindsight being 2020, we're looking back on this moment. What are some of the key decisions facing the capital C church and individual church leaders right now? We're like, "Oh, this is..." Because I think you're right, this is an access. This is a crossroads, and if we were going to get some things right, what do we need to get right, now? So that 15 years from now, it's a better story.

Thom Rainer:

Point number one, are you ready to accept the fact that you are on, what we used to call when I was growing up, a foreign mission field? That's not the term preferred now, but we'd always talk about the foreign mission field and most of us would think about someplace in Africa. I don't know why that continent got all the attention, but that's what we would think of. But we are now on a new mission field, that is as different as it was to the missionaries who went to places where the culture was dramatically different. We're getting there. So the first thing you have to ask is, "What does it mean to be a pastor in a place that is more of a mission field than a church like field And that will let you stay longer, because you are able to deal with issues that a pastor would say, "Oh, these are just people like me. Why are they picking on me like this?" Well, if you look at a mission field, it gives you a new and a fresh perspective. So the first thing I would say, to pastors and other church leaders is, "Look at this as a mission field."

Thom Rainer:

Secondly, what is the thing you should be doing on the mission field? Sharing the good news of Christ, and what investment are you making right now to see that become a reality? You may not have all the answers, but I can tell you this, if you could ask God to provide the opportunities... I mean, what did he say in Matthew 8? He did not say that we got to pray that there are a lot of people that we can reach. He said, "No, the harvest is there. Pray that the Lord of harvest would send people into the harvest fields."

Thom Rainer:

The harvest is there. We need the ability, through God's power, to see the opportunity and to seize the opportunities. And so start praying that prayer. At my son's church in Spring Hill, our benediction, every single Sunday, and I hadn't been in a church in a long time, Carey, that had a benediction, so this... I'm in a fairly contemporary church that now has a benediction, so I'm not sure how to handle that. But every time when, when we close our service, we are reciting that passage about the mission field, and whoever is providing that leadership to do the benediction will say something to this effect, "Church, this is your mission you are sent, and as a reminder to us, every single day, certainly through this, that we are to be workers in the field."

Thom Rainer:

So here's our benediction, Matthew 9, verses 36, 37 and 38. We recite it from the NLT every week. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He said to his disciple, 'The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord, who's in charge of the harvest.' 'Ask him to do what?' 'Send more workers into his fields.'" So the next thing we got to do is say, "We're available." That's not a program or even a plan at this point. It's just simply to say that we are available.

Thom Rainer:

Thirdly, I would start asking the question, "How can we make what it means to be a part of a church?" If you don't like the word membership? Okay, that's fine. I like it, wrote a book on it, but whatever you want to call it. What does it mean to be a part of the church and start making steps to make that more meaningful. Instead of, just come, take a seat, don't do this or that, but what does it mean? Raise the bar of what it means to be a part of God's church. Those are three things. And if you look back, mission field, looking at the culture differently, making evangelism with a great commission a higher priority, and then, just being willing for your church to be that kind of church that makes a difference and is different, those three things by itself, I think could be revolutionary, if we're able to have this conversation, how many years did you say?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I said 15.

Thom Rainer:

15.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, just a random number. Random number.

Thom Rainer:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thom, this has been so refreshing. So where can people find you online these days?

Thom Rainer:

Churchanswers.com. Really hard to find us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Awesome. Awesome. And Thom, thank you so much. Appreciate you.

Thom Rainer:

Always great to be with you. I continue to follow you. I'm a fanboy as you well know.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, likewise, Thom. Thank you so much.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, there's some pretty powerful insights in that conversation and if you want to drill down a bit more, check out the show notes. You can find everything at [careynieuwhof.com/episdone513](http://careynieuwhof.com/episdone513), and we even include transcripts. I love transcripts because you can do searching in them and you can find the particular word you're looking for or topic you're looking for and away we go.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Hey, we're back with a fresh episode soon. I want to thank our partners, the Church Disruption Summit. This is my event you can register for free. I will dissect the seven disruptive church trends that will define the church of 2032. It's a look into the future, and then how are we going to change? Talk about all that at [churchdisruptionsummit.com](http://churchdisruptionsummit.com). You can register for free, bring your whole team, bring your board, [churchdisruptionsummit.com](http://churchdisruptionsummit.com) and by Pro MediaFire, they got a really cool thing. If you're a small church, the digital grant program is for you. It's available for a limited time. Apply today, go to [creativo.org/grant](http://creativo.org/grant). That's C-R-E-A-T-I-V-O .org/grant.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Next episode, well, why not talk to a comedian? I've got Tripp Crosby coming up. I enjoy bringing comedians on the show every once in a while, but he's much more than just a comedian. He's a brilliant thinker, strategist, leader, and well, we're going to talk to Tripp. Also coming up. I've got Nancy Duarte returning to the podcast. Chris Anderson of TED Talk fame. Yeah, he's the founder. We are also going to have conversations with Patrick Lencioni, Nona Jones and Jeff Henderson. So much more coming up. If you subscribe, you never miss an episode.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I just want to thank you so much for listening. I don't know what you're doing while you do this, but I am extremely grateful for you sharing this show, for letting your friends know, for bringing your

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team on it. I hear from you on a daily basis and I am so grateful that we have the privilege of doing this. Before we go, I'd also love to share something with you that I'm doing free.

Carey Nieuwhof:

This August, and as in this month, I'm hosting a two date Church Disruption Summit. I'm going to dissect the seven disruptive church trends that will rule the next decade, then we're going to talk about how to engineer change. You'll leave fully equipped to lead something bigger, something better, something more meaningful, even if you feel like change is working against you. This is an event you should bring your board to, you should bring your team to, [churchdisruptionsummit.com](http://churchdisruptionsummit.com). Bring everybody. It's free. It's two days, one hour a day, can't wait to see you there, [churchdisruptionsummit.com](http://churchdisruptionsummit.com).

Carey Nieuwhof:

Thanks so much for listening everybody, and I hope our time together today has helped you thrive in life and leadership.