

Announcer:

The Art of Leadership Network.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Welcome to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. It's Carey here. Thank you so much for joining us today. I hope our time together helps you thrive in life, in leadership. Today's episode is brought to you by Ministry Grid. You can get \$200 off the regular Ministry Grid price by going to ministrygrid.com/carey. And by Tithe.ly. Get your free resource kit to help church leaders do fundraising better by going to increasegenerosity.com.

Well, I've got Tripp Crosby on the podcast. I've known Tripp for a long time, and I really admire his craft. Every once in a while, I like to bring a comedian onboard because I admire comedians. I wish I was one and I am not. And he's one of the funniest people I know. But also deep and really thoughtful and kind of has eclectic taste. He's done all kinds of things, including being on Family Feud recently. He's a comedic host, inspirational speaker, and filmmaker who at this very moment is writing about himself in the third person, as his bio says. His most popular comedy sketch, he's done a lot on YouTube, is called A Conference Call in Real Life. This video is one of the most popular workplace related comedy sketches of all time, and possibly the only YouTube video to go viral twice. Aside from creating video content, performing, and consulting teams, Tripp's real passion is connecting with his family and friends. He and his wife and three kids live in Alpharetta, Georgia. And well, he's just a fascinating guy. So I think you're going to love this conversation.

And want to direct you to thinking about how you're equipping your volunteers for the fall. The fall's almost here. I know, I know, I know, I know. It's almost here. And what are you going to do? What if you could streamline and standardize your volunteer onboarding process and trainings. If you want to do this, check out Ministry Grid. They have everything you need to streamline volunteer training all in one place. They've got over 700 courses. They have seen churches add their own content. So you can train the people in your church on everything from new membership classes to discipleship growth tracks. And you can turn other in-person classes into digital courses using the Ministry Grid platform. My church, Connexus Church, uses Ministry Grid. And podcast listeners, you will get \$200 off the regular price. So for just 399 a year, you can get unlimited access for your church. Just go to ministrygrid.com/carey to get this special offer. And pastors, you also know that the health of your church is deeply connected to the generosity of your members.

And these are starting to be sketchy times as far as the economy is going. So how do you create a culture of generosity no matter what? Well, it's simpler than you think. Tithe.ly has got a free tool that helps churches increase generosity through digital giving. It's never been more important. And they've got a resource kit to help you do fundraising better. So it's easy to download, and it includes a five step plan for building a culture of recurring giving at your church. That's key. A practical guide for fundraising in the volatile environment of 2022, a bumper video for a sermon on generosity and a lot more. So if you're interested in growing generosity at your church, and the level of financial partnership your people have, well, you can get this special offer just for listeners of this podcast. Get the free fundraising resource kit by simply going to increasegenerosity.com. That's increasegenerosity.com. Remember this offer is exclusive to you. Head to increasegenerosity.com today. And now my conversation with Tripp Crosby. Tripp, welcome to the podcast, man. I've been looking forward to this conversation. It's been years in the making.

Tripp Crosby:

I am super flattered to be here. I know it's a good podcast when I tell a friend... Or actually I didn't even tell my friend, Joe. He just text me and said, "Why are you on Carey Nieuwhof's podcast?" Like you don't qualify. That's how you know it's a good podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is not true. Not true. And was that Joe or was that Tyler? But anyway, hey, it's really good to be with you. And you and I, we have been on the same circuit, so to speak, and have lots of green room conversations. There's so much more than you see on stage for those of you who know what Tripp does, and he's masterful at it. So we're going to talk about that, but we're also just going to talk about life. We're going to talk about leadership and all of those things. So we did the bio already and that kind of thing. But probably, is it true that you're best known for A Conference Call in Real Life? That's probably the piece that got the most reach of what you've done.

Tripp Crosby:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Or what are some other pieces?

Tripp Crosby:

Yeah, there was a point in time where I was probably most known for my YouTube channel. But then I got old, and then I was sort of known for the one hit wonder, right? I was hosting an event a few weeks ago for Calendly. And when I introduced myself and told them I was the guy in that video, they were very kind, just kind of looking at me, and then I put up a still frame and everyone in almost unison was like, "Oh yeah." And I said, "Yeah, I'm that guy. You forgot about me. I'm still here. I'm the guy in that video."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, you produced the video, you shot the video, you directed the video, you wrote the video. You did all that stuff, right?

Tripp Crosby:

Not alone, but I did. Yes. Technically I was the director. But I co-created with my good friend, sometimes I even say my best friend, but I always feel a little awkward doing that because I'm afraid he would never say it in return. I'm talking, of course, about Tyler Stanton, the funniest person I've ever known.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, one of the interesting things too, I think I've known you for well over a decade, but you seem to keep evolving. So if you could give us a snapshot of what you're doing right now because it's a lot bigger than people would realize, people who've seen your comedy or people who've seen those sketches.

Tripp Crosby:

Well in my field, whatever it is, you sort of have to evolve. YouTube algorithms change, social media changes, events change. So the snapshot of what I'm doing now is I'm usually either involved with some

sort of corporate event as an MC, or I'm working on some sort of commercial for a brand, usually a social media bound comedy sales video, as we would call them. One of those things.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So like A Conference Call in Real Life, which was, what was that an ad for?

Tripp Crosby:

It wasn't. So that was-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, it wasn't?

Tripp Crosby:

... our first attempt after years and years of finagling contracts with corporations so that we would get... Well, let me explain what I mean by that. For years, a company would hire us to make a funny video for them, for their event, for their internal campaign, whatever it was. And in our contract, we would make sure that we had the right to re-edit it and put it on our YouTube channel. So that way they were funding the type of content that we could have never afford to make on our own. And eventually we had an audience. And we were like, what if we had a brand just give us money to make whatever we want if we mentioned them at the end.

So I went to Leadercast, which is this big leadership event that I used to have. I was there for seven years as their MC. And I said, "Hey, I've got this idea for video. I think it will be wildly successful. At minimum, it's going to get tens of thousands of views because that's just what happens on our channel. Would you be willing to fund it? And we'll talk about you at the end." Well, that video went massively viral. And actually, it helped them, but it hurt them. Their sales department was, what they would say is it broke it. They did not have the personnel or the processes in place to handle the volume of people calling in to get tickets to the event. That was our first sponsorship technically. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But it was a brilliant approach. I mean, because if you think about it, and there's a lot of leaders listening who are into branding, a lot of corporations, they don't know how to do comedy. And they'll try some half baked effort, or they'll make a lame joke. And so I thought that was a really innovative approach because if I've got my chronology right, that led to a series of videos that were different takes for companies-

Tripp Crosby:

Yeah. That launched my career.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... on a similar template.

Tripp Crosby:

That launched the last 10 years of my career, that one video.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. So let's break that down a little bit. Because we have a lot of creatives, a lot of side hustle people. So prior to that, what were you doing? You were just being paid to host, like paid to host an event, right?

Tripp Crosby:

Yeah. Tyler and I were scrambling to figure out how we could make videos for our YouTube channel. We'd either do something cheap and scrappy ourselves, or we'd, like I mentioned, have a company somehow fund it. And I had a production company. I've had a production company since 2004. I was just-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It used to be Green Tricycle Studios.

Tripp Crosby:

It did. That's what it used to be. And we were a work for higher company. We would make whatever you wanted us to. And we worked for churches and non-profits and corporations alike. So I was just kind of like I am now, I was just taking on projects. And the YouTube channel started growing. And with that, our request started evolving. And instead of seeing us as a production company, people started to view us as creatives. And they would hire us for our ideas more than the execution. They didn't care what kind of cameras we had or who we had on staff. They just wanted something as funny as what they saw on our channel. And that's what sort of spurred on everything that exists today.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And you spent a lot of time hosting at Catalyst, you would host at North Point events, you would host at Leadercast, you continue the MC role, do you not? And the video production?

Tripp Crosby:

Yeah. And I've had a hard time reconciling why I like to do such vastly different things. Because all of the experts in my life would encourage me to, and when I read a book about personal branding or read success stories, there's always this level of focus that I can't seem to find. Because I have such a vested interest in being on a stage and have such a vested interest in filmmaking. And my old manager used to tell me really, it's just that I like to be in control. And that's what it is. But maybe he's right. And I'm sure he is to an extent. But at the end of the day, what I've realized in the last couple of years is that what really lights my fire, Carey, is connecting with people. And that's my way of doing it. I like to build a connection with an audience especially. And I can do that on a stage and I can do it behind a camera. I can do it in front of a camera. That's what gets me going is people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, and it's interesting, you and I were talking before we hit record just about the MO of this podcast. And how, if you look at it from a strategy or branding standpoint, it's kind of stupid. I go from talking to Malcolm Gladwell and get his backstory, and then I'm interviewing a guy about spiritual formation. And then we're talking about comedy on the next episode. And the outside voices sometimes say, "Well, you should pick a lane or you should focus." And I'm like, "I don't know." Just I'm interested in all of this thing. Is that a similar thing to what you are discovering as well about yourself?

Tripp Crosby:

It's a similar thing to what I'm not only discovering, but I'm working really hard to accept about myself. I deal with a lot of self-judgment as I compare myself to these focused entrepreneurs out there who've spent 10, 15 years doubling down on the same thing and just slowly growing it. But what I'm learning is that, A, that's not the way I'm wired. And oftentimes creativity is inefficient and unpredictable and that's what it has to be. And I'm learning to not only accept that, but like it about myself.

I read a story the other day about Pablo Picasso. Wow, here comes an anecdote. I'm not much of an anecdote guy, but here comes one. I was just so blown away to learn that, as you would expect, he would do many, many, many, many renditions of one painting till he got it right. But oftentimes after doing many, many, many, many, many renditions, he would end up landing on one of the first ones because that is what the creative process requires. It requires an openness and a level of exploration that is inefficient and unpredictable.

Carey Nieuwhof:

There's a really good insight in that. And the creative process. Yeah. I heard a Picasso story. It's funny. I don't think I've told this one publicly because it could be apocryphal. I don't know. I never met Picasso. But apparently Picasso was in a restaurant once. And this is another word for creatives. Yeah. I think it's worth telling. Picasso's in a restaurant once and he's an old man. He's doodling on a napkin. And he's ready to go and leave it behind. And there's a woman sitting a couple tables over who realizes who he is and what's happening. And as he's getting up to leave, she says, "Do you mind if I have that napkin? I mean, I'd love to own a Picasso." And he's like, "Yeah, that'll cost you \$100,000." And she goes, "It took you 38 seconds to draw it." He said, "No, it didn't. It took me 70 years."

Tripp Crosby:

Amen. That's it. That creativity, I think, the most masterful artists are the ones who are best at expressing a lifetime of feelings and insights. And you know what, first of all, this is why I like talking about this stuff. I want to just say this because I know there's a lot of people probably listening who are like, I'm not creative. I don't care about talking about art or comedy or whatever. But as leaders, I think we have to understand how creative people work. I think we're all hoping for our organizations to be innovative. I know we are.

There was an article. I used this in my keynote. There's an article a few years back the World Economic Forum put out about how much creativity has moved up the list on what employers are looking for in new candidates. And it went from like number 12 to number two, right? Because innovation is everything now. You got to keep up. It doesn't matter what you do. It doesn't matter what industry you're in. You've got to innovate. And I work with a lot of corporations. And what I see is a strong desire.

I just did an event for, I'm not going to say the company because this is going to be sort of a knock, it was a very big company. You would know exactly who they are. And they were putting out this message to their whole marketing team across the world saying, "We want to be a creative, innovative company. We want you to bring ideas to the table." And what I was thinking is that sounds great, but I bet you don't know how to do that. I wonder if these people that work here feel like they can... You can say that, but are they in an environment that welcomes new ideas? Are they in an environment that takes a risk on unpredictable ideas? Are you? Because I would put my money that you're probably not because that's just what I see.

And that's not to point the finger. It's just to say that because we're all trying to build our thing and grow our thing, and increase profits, and build our brand, and yada, yada, yada, we avoid inefficiency and unpredictability. We want to have a plan that has guaranteed results and we want to stick to it. And that's not always going to be what creates an environment for... That's sort of mentality can stifle the creative brains, I think.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So let's talk about the creative process because that's something you've done. I've watched your comedy for a long, long time. And always, I have this envious spot for comedians, people who make me laugh. You have made me laugh as hard as anybody has made me laugh, whether that's live or on stage or your videos, or some of the stuff you've even pulled down off the internet for a variety of reasons has made me laugh so hard. You're One For One video that you did for TOMS back in... Oh, I don't know when that was. That was, yeah, I don't know-

Tripp Crosby:

They wouldn't fly today.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... if we should talk about that video, but that was really funny.

Tripp Crosby:

But at the time-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It wouldn't fly today, no. But at the time, it was perfect. And the whole business video you did, the rental car one where I think it was Tyler was at a rental car counter and trying to rent a car. I mean, some of that stuff. And then some of the comedy nights you would do at Orange Conference, et cetera.

Tripp Crosby:

Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I mean, just could not stop laughing. But all of that starts with creativity. It comes with an idea. And I wonder every creative process is different, and I'm sure yours is evolving, but for the leader sitting there, who's like, you know what? I say, I value creativity, but you called me out, Tripp. I'm probably not that creative and our company is not that creative. Can you break down the creative process as you've experienced it and explored it?

Tripp Crosby:

I am willing to try. I think that's a big question. I can tell you that there are some principles that I've found to be consistently true, that when revered these principles can have a massive impact on a person or a team's ability to create. I think for one, I'll just go right to the thick of it here. I think our ability to create is a derivative of our ability to be open. What I mean by that is we have to deal with our pain. We have to be people who can listen and be in the present. And when we can get there, the more we can get there, that's a lifetime pursuit, right?

But the more we can get outside of our dumb little mental frameworks that contain us, that cause us to categorize things, the more we can acknowledge how small those little frameworks on our brain and get outside of it, the more open we are, the more likely we are to recognize a fresh perspective, new ideas. One of the most powerful exercises that I've ever incorporated it in my own life, and I now teach it, is the morning pages routine. I don't know if you've read *The Artist's Way*.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I have not. No.

Tripp Crosby:

But that's stupid little... Oh, it's fantastic. It's a book on spirituality and creativity. And if there was ever a Bible on creativity, this would be part of the canon. Okay? She teaches this practice called morning pages where you just take the first five to 10 minutes of your day to write down everything that you're thinking and feeling, especially negative stuff. We know scientifically now that what's happening in your brain is you're releasing something that would otherwise ricochet around in your subconscious all day.

These things prevent your ability to be open. So the first thing I teach people who want to grow and spread their creative wings, they want to grow in their ability to be creative teams, I teach them well, then spend time each day just on paper acknowledging your pain. Don't bury that. When you bury that pain and you're looking for ways to not have to really face the uncertainties that you feel about your life, yeah, then you'll just start organizing your iTunes. And you'll just do any little thing you can to feel productive, to get those little dopamine hits of I'm moving the ball forward, right?

But that's all just an escape too. If you want to tap into your creativity, you got to be able to sit in the present with all of it and you got to be willing to feel it and acknowledge it, call it out, and own it. I just said so many cliché things there, but it's hard not to talk in clichés because it's just true. So that would be the first thing. I would say, openness, practicing facing your pain.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Pain, if I can drill down before you get to number two, pain and comedy are very related. Are they not? I mean the study I've done of comedy, a lot of Canadian... A lot of Canadians. A lot of Canadians are comedians. That's another thing. But a lot of comedians-

Tripp Crosby:

Great comedians.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. And a lot of comedians really struggle with some pain in their life and tough childhood and addiction that they're carrying, that kind of thing. Why do you think pain and comedy are related?

Tripp Crosby:

There's probably some really smart philosophers that could give you the right answer to that question. I can say it makes sense to me intuitively whether or not I can put words around why. But I think that for some people, comedy is the relief. You'll see overweight people. They're the ones that make the fat jokes on stage, right? When you can laugh at what hurts, it gives you a little bit of relief, right? And I think that's healthy. But what I wonder about some of these famous comedians who had dark lives, or they suffered from depression to the point of suicide, I wonder if they didn't become too dependent on

their craft. I don't know. Who's to say? But maybe there were other ways to face that pain that would've been more productive.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think that's really a good insight.

Tripp Crosby:

Maybe. I mean, I definitely know comedians who they live on the surface of life. You know these people. Everything is a joke. You can't have a serious conversation. It gets derailed with a joke. If you try to get deep, a joke. If someone's emotional, they escape with you. These are people who, they understand comedy, but they've never faced their pain, right? They can't go there. And comedy becomes a remedy and an escape, sort of both and, somehow.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I get that. And that's one thing I've always appreciated about you.

Tripp Crosby:

Geez, Carey. You're asking me such deep questions that I'm nowhere near qualified to answer stuff like this.

Carey Nieuwhof:

This is just an open script. One of my goals, you mentioned openness, one of my prayers, like a weekly prayer and a regular goal is, as I get older, I want to be more open. Because I think the inevitable is that you become more closed.

Tripp Crosby:

I love that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And more certain. And I definitely have core convictions, faith convictions, et cetera, et cetera. But I want to be open to different points of view and I want to grow more curious. And that's one thing that really, when I realized, I think I really want Tripp on the podcast, because we would always meet backstage, is you're not one of those guys who's always cracking jokes. You can be funny on the spot and you are, but there's layers and depth to you. And you really think deeply about issues. And I thought, oh, this is going to be a great conversation, and a side of Tripp=

Tripp Crosby:

I'm not actually funny.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You're not. Like in real life, you're just-

Tripp Crosby:

I'm not. I'm a serious guy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

If you're in a green room, it's like spot the comedian, you would not naturally go to Tripp. He's having a meaningful conversation in the corner with someone. And the deeper, the better. Which is great. I think that's good.

Tripp Crosby:

Yeah. I guess I have two gears. I remember driving home from college. I went to Asbury College in Kentucky. My family lived in Georgia. And so what you do is you find someone else during the breaks that lives in your area, and you carpool home. And I remember riding home with this girl. And about halfway there, she said, "Tripp, I thought you were going to be more fun and funny than this." I didn't know what to do with that. She was like, "All my roommates were like, 'You're riding with him. It's going to be hilarious.'" And that was the first time I really got that feedback. And I realized, yeah, I guess when I'm one on one, at least. You're not my audience right now. The girl in the car was not my audience. When I'm sitting around with my friends, I mean, trust me, we laugh. But yeah-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Actually that's one of the things I found really-

Tripp Crosby:

.. I like the serious part of life too.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... interesting and really endearing about you is to see the layers. Yeah.

Tripp Crosby:

Oh really?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Very much so.

Tripp Crosby:

Well good. Because I would be fine hearing that it's a huge disappointment-

Carey Nieuwhof:

[inaudible 00:26:53] comedian.

Tripp Crosby:

... as well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

There you go. Okay. So that was number one, openness. And morning pages, and getting in touch with your pain, and just kind of letting it fly. I think that's a good leadership tip because, honestly, the number of leaders who are just distracted day to day, as you say, organizing their iTunes or doing

meaningless stuff or unloading on staff, I think a lot of that is the stuff that we don't get out one way or the other that just kind of sabotages our day.

Tripp Crosby:

Yeah. And when you're a leader, especially a high level leader, your stresses are piling up typically. You're oftentimes increasing the amount of things in your life that are causing you to feel pain or uncertainty. And that's just the reality. So I think what I notice is that some high level leaders, instead of embracing that and figuring out how to face that, they just double down on their productivity and their success and their growth. And they just get addicted to all the things that they can do to make people applaud and pay them more money. And we know what happens in the end of those stories.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. We do know what happens in the end. I have this post that I've never written, but probably have to write at some point, it's like how much church growth and organizational growth is actually fueled by our insecurities and our dark side. And I don't know that I want to know the answer to that question, or even the answer to the question in my own life, but I suspect it's more than we let on. Okay. So that's number one. Two-

Tripp Crosby:

But Carey, I love that you ask that. I love that you're even writing about that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I look back on my life, and I'm not going to pretend that I'm through it. It's a process. But yeah, I think that's a real factor. How much of my insecurities, how much of my challenges, how much of my personal junk, fueled growth. And then, if you really want to go deep, does that mean God wasn't in it? Yeah. You do.

Tripp Crosby:

Now, we're going deep.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But does that mean God wasn't in it? No, I don't think he wasn't in it. I think he uses it. It's fascinating. It's weird. He uses our brokenness. I'm not saying horribly abusive things that we keep hearing about, but it's just a really perplexing area. So there was a second point somewhere along the line to the creative process. That's where we were.

Tripp Crosby:

Well, You asked me what are those principles? And I said the first one that comes to mind is openness. There's more.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, let's go.

Tripp Crosby:

I think that confidence is another one. And these are all related, right? I think that the more we become willing to take little, or even big, risks with our ideas, the more we get used to our own bad ideas, the more confident we become in expressing them. Talk to any successful standup comedian. And they're going to tell you the first year or two of their standup career was terrible. And they're going to be, "This is just what you have to do. You have to go through it. You've got to get used to crickets and no one laughing and bombing. And then once you build up that resilience, you build up confidence."

And I really believe the secret to brilliant ideas, the secret to finding the brilliant idea is the exploration of the 999,999 terrible ideas. That's just what you have to be willing to go through. And that's not organizational efficiency, right? That's a meeting where you go down rabbit trails. And when someone throws out some really stupid, silly idea that would never work, that's going, "Oh yeah. That's crazy. Let's talk about that." And you just keep going. You do that enough times and you're going to strike gold. But it just requires that sort of non-linear process.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So I'd love to go there. Bombing. Because we have a ton of communicators here. I just think for preachers, and I'm not so much preaching these days as giving a talk. But I gave a talk the other day in Chicago. And it was a combination of mostly the audience was on video, there were a couple hundred people in the room. And they had created what I call a bowling alley for the camera so that there were no people between me and the camera. They're like, "Look at the camera." So there's no people I can see. Don't look at the crowd, but the crowd is to the right and to the left. So I'm trying to be obedient, look at the crowd. And then most of these people are international. I didn't realize until after that half the room is getting simultaneous translation. So I'm dropping what I think will be jokes, and it's... And I'm like, okay. All right, keep going. And it's not my first rodeo. So I'm going.

And in the middle of the talk, I'm like I think I'm bombing. I'm pretty sure I'm bombing. And it's just like, okay, you know what to do. You're a professional. You've done this before. Just keep going through your content.

Tripp Crosby:

Keep going.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Don't worry about the reaction. But I'll tell you, the emotional journey that that is, for me anyway, on stage is horrible.

Tripp Crosby:

It's bad.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I found out after that the translation was happening in the room. And then there was a long line of people who came up to express gratitude. And I'm like, okay, I guess I didn't bomb. But man, it felt like I was bombing. And that's like, my nightmares, when I have nightmares, I'm bombing on stage somewhere. People are walking out while I'm talking. Now that's 28 counseling sessions to unpack, and a whole bunch of therapy.

Tripp Crosby:

Let's do it. Let's do it right now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Please bring on heaven.

Tripp Crosby:

Let's unpack that. I'm all in.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Let's do it. But what do you do when you're bombing? I've rarely, I'm trying to remember, and what's happening inside you?

Tripp Crosby:

I'm dying inside. I remember one time, Carey, this is so funny, I've never told this story, Tyler and I were invited to perform at a company Christmas party for this, I don't think they're a national brand, they're definitely statewide here in Georgia. And it was in a brewery. And they rented up this big event space inside of the brewery. And they had different bars and kegs around, but there were no tables, no chairs, right? So people were just kind of congregating and gathered. And there's this little wooden platform. And they said, "All right, about 15 minutes, you guys are going to go up there." And in our mind, oh, so between now and then you're going to set some chairs out. Someone's going to get on a microphone and say, "We're going to be starting in..." No, no. In 15 minutes, what she meant was you're just going to walk up onto that platform and start telling jokes to a completely non-captive audience.

So Tyler and I got up there. And we had to go 45 minutes, mind you. And we could tell five minutes in that no one... They were people seven feet from us with their back turned to us talking to a group of people, right? The sound was bad. And we looked at each other like, we're just going to have to do this, aren't we? Yeah. And we knew. And we performed into thin air, Carey. And now it's something to laugh about. But in the moment it was like, who am I in this universe? Where did I go wrong? This is not why... I got into this because I wanted the affirmation of an audience, not because I wanted to hear myself talk. So yeah. It's tough. But that's the story of any performing comedian. I'm not even a standup expert and I know that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. So it's interesting that bombing and confidence are related. I would not naturally have connected those two. I want to make sure I understand what you're saying. The constant failure leads to confidence. Is that it?

Tripp Crosby:

I'd say it this way, because I realize that is confusing. I would say that oftentimes the really stupid idea is the one that leads to the brilliant one. There's a story that I love telling this story. And I'm sorry if anyone listening has heard me tell this story before, but this is a true story about an energy company on the West Coast, Pacific Gas and Electric. PG&E. They're big. They're big. If you're on the West Coast, you know PG&E. You probably pay them every month.

Well, they had this issue with power lines that ran through this Northern California mountain pass where they got a lot of snowfall every year. And it was very remote. So what was happening every year was the ice was building up on these lines and then they would snap. But it was so remote that the

expense to send a crew out there time and time again every year was getting out of hand. And it was dangerous for the people that they would send. So they called together a creative brainstorming session. And they invited people from all different departments of the company. That was the first thing they got right was they had everyone from male clerks to decision making executives in the room to formally brainstorm how in the world they were going to solve this problem.

During one of the breaks, one of the linesmen was joking around. He was telling a funny story about how he was out there on one of these mountain passes, and got nearly chased to his death by a bear. And he told the story, and then they reconvened into their meeting. And someone jokingly said, "How about we train bears to run out of the woods and shake the power line so the snowfalls off?" And then, right, everyone's laughing. And then someone else piled on, "No, we don't have to train them. Actually, we could just put honey on all the poles, and they would run out naturally and maybe shake the poles." And then someone was like, "Yeah. And then all we have to do is fly over with a helicopter a couple times a year and drop honey on the poles."

Here's the fascinating thing. To this day, as far as I know, the way that they solve this problem is they fly helicopters across this mountain pass at a low altitude and the downdraft from the propeller knocks the snow and ice off the lines. So the moral of this story is don't be the A type person in front of the room that stifles the creative process. Don't shut down the dumb ideas. Let them go. Because those are the ones that will usually inspire the brilliant ones. There was a woman in the room whose husband was a retired military aircraft pilot. So when she heard someone say fly helicopter, she thought, wait a second, wait a second, right?

So what I try to do in my world, and what I try to help other leaders understand the importance of, is have meetings where there is no editing of ideas. It's just get them all out. You know where I saw this modeled amazingly was Catalyst. For years and years on the Catalyst creative team, we would have these big brainstorm. And if you negated an idea, if you said anything, this is five hours of a meeting, okay, if you said anything that sounded like, "That's too expensive," "We did that last..." anything that was negative, you went to adult time out and you had to leave the room, and go sit down in a chair in the hallway. Because the idea was this is ideation. This is creativity. We're just going to throw it all out there. And then the curation happens, right? But it's a separate meeting, and it always should be. That should be a separate meeting, not the same one. That's the moral of that story.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a great principle. And I mean, I had known about that for years in my leadership, and kind of ignored it. And I always did it to my peril. And the longer I lead, the more open I am trying to be. And you're right, there are some really brilliant ideas that get shut down every day. Okay. Anything else on creativity? We can go long on this. This is super.

Tripp Crosby:

Oh, I love this topic. And I'll talk about creativity as long as you let me. Because Carey, I wish more people realize their own creative potential. I hate this idea that creativity is something that artists and performers experience in their life. It's not true. In fact, there have been studies that have shown that creativity isn't really even genetic at all. Creativity is often the result of practicing. And yeah, creative kids grow up in families that encourage creativity. They do art classes. It is nurture more than nature. And I hate that there are people out there who don't get to experience the joy and fun of having new ideas and exploring them and bombing.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So when you and Tyler, you and your team, are sitting down and you're thinking about, okay, what are we going to do next for the next sketch, or we're going to MC this event, what would a typical process or sequence look like from meeting one to, all right, the show's tomorrow? What does that look like?

Tripp Crosby:

First, I feel like I should be honest and say, oftentimes I am the person in the room shutting down the ideas. This is something I have to work at. I understand the anxiety that comes with there being deadlines and financial pressures. I get it. But our process, it depends. If we're talking about a video, let's say we're making a comedy ad for a brand, for the Carey Nieuwhof Podcast, okay? If that's what we're making, then we are going to do lots of homework first before we even get into our ideation. The thing that I've learned the hard way, and way too late in my career did I understand this, that the success of our video almost completely depends on how well we actually understand our audience.

And we didn't have to think about that as much when we were just YouTubers and we were just making whatever we thought was funny. But once we got into the world of advertising and branding and all those things that probably just stifle creativity in the end anyway, but once we got into that world, we realized that, okay, we have to actually do work here. We have to understand what our audience feels. What are their pain points? What are their hopes and dreams? Where do they spend time?

And we have to do our best to not assume that. So for some of our brand clients, we will do actual message testing campaigns. So before we even write a video script, we come up with 10 to 15 different versions of their brand message that are focusing in on different value propositions. And we run Facebook ads to see what people actually click on. Because we know that we might think this is what people are going to click on, but we have learned that we don't actually know. And so the first part of the creative process is just homework. It's just being a student of the audience. And that applies to hosting too.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is interesting to hear that you do that because, in the early days, if you listen to Tim Ferriss talk about how he titled the 4-Hour Work Week, he did a very similar thing. He had emotional bias toward a title. It was something to do with blah, blah, blah, and drug dealing or whatever. I don't know what it was. And publisher was like, "I don't know about that." And then they ran a bunch of, I think it was Google ads at the time. And the 4-Hour Work Week just kept winning over and over again. And millions of books later, it was a good decision. And I think that whole idea of market testing is a really good idea. Okay. So your learning the client, studying the client, you will beta test-

Tripp Crosby:

Studying the audience, not the client usually.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... some ideas. Okay. Fair enough.

Tripp Crosby:

Same with an event. If I'm hosting your event, Carey, we're going to be on a lot of Zoom calls talking about years past. Who's there? Where are they coming from? What are they probably feeling when they're sitting in those seats? I want to know everything I can about who I'm talking to. That's the first part. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. And where does it go after that?

Tripp Crosby:

Then we get into the brainstorming. The next phase is always unfiltered ideation. And it's tricky because I'd like to say that we just have one meeting, like PG&E had, and that's all it takes. But it's hard sometimes to contain the creativity in that way. Oftentimes it takes one or two meetings with some time in between. But I like margin. I like to schedule margin in the creative process. Can we write a script in one day? Yes. But if we can brainstorm on a Monday, and not write again until the next week, I just think that there's opportunity for something to happen. And it may not. But I like margin. I like to sit on and wrestle with and play around with ideas.

And then we just kind of know the general direction. We all kind of feel it. Usually our clients feel it. Sometimes we'll pitch two or three ideas to them, big ideas, big concepts for a commercial or a video. But I avoid that. And I usually tell them ahead of time, "You might want me to pitch two or three ideas, but I don't want to do that because what I'm probably doing is pitching you the one that I like, and then putting two more in there because you wanted to see three. And then if you pick one of the ones we don't have energy around, that's not good. So why don't we present to you where we feel creative energy and see if you feel it. And if you don't feel it, we'll go back to the drawing board." But the goal there, once we get through the ideation, is to figure out where our energies are aligned. And it almost always is easy to see.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay. I'd like to go back a little bit. When you're in the brainstorming, the ideation process, do you have an ideal number of people who participate in that kind of thing? Is there a range?

Tripp Crosby:

No. Sometimes budget is a factor for how many people we can invite in. If we're doing a brand video, my goal is to have my team, which is two or three people usually would be involved in these, at least one outside creative, a writer, a comedian, someone of that nature, and at least one industry practitioner. So if we're doing a video for a tech company that sells cloud data management software, which we have done, I will try to find someone who works in IT at another enterprise who might be interested in purchasing this. And I bring them in. And that way we're getting someone who can speak a language that we don't know how to speak.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So you get the inside jokes.

Tripp Crosby:

That would be the minimum.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That kind of thing, right?

Tripp Crosby:

Yeah. That would be the minimum. Because we work with brands in different industries. We can't possibly understand all of the nuances of every industry, right? So we know that we need outside perspective.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So it sounds like it's usually a handful and a bit. It's not 20 people. It's not-

Tripp Crosby:

No, no. It's 10 or less.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's a smaller number. 10 or less. Okay. Great. And I think you've sort of answered the next one, but I'm thinking of like in a church or in a corporation, people are trying to implement this. Who should be in the room and who shouldn't be in the room? If you're choosing who attends the meeting. Are there any like, yeah, don't invite these kinds of people? I'm wondering, I guess it's as much personality type as position, but what are you thinking?

Tripp Crosby:

Definitely. That's definitely true. Ranking is the least important thing. I think that mail clerks and janitors and executive assistants should be invited into these kinds of things. I really do. But I do think there are some personalities that can be toxic in a brainstorm. We did a whole video about this one time. There's Negative Nancy. There's the person who negates. They hear an idea through the lens of why will this not work, right? And that kills the energy. It just kills it. There are some people who, this sounds backwards, but sometimes I think the most egotistical people in the room are the ones that say the least. It's easy to identify a big ego when a person walks in a room and they're demonstrative and they do all the talking and they like being up front.

But I think sometimes the people that care the most about what other people think about them are the ones that are just saying nothing. I'm not talking about introverts. Okay. That's a whole nother conversation. There's another nuance to how we include introverts in our meetings. But I do think that, in general, egos are bad. The big ones, the demonstrative people that steamroll, those people are toxic in meetings. And also the people that don't know how to be vulnerable enough to share at all. They make other people feel uncomfortable. And so-

Carey Nieuwhof:

And is that because they feel that this is beneath them, or they're insecure?

Tripp Crosby:

I think it's insecurity sometimes. I think some people just aren't at a place where they know how to be vulnerable enough to share an idea. It's not a fault of their own probably. And maybe it's good for those people to be in those meetings for their own development. But the best meetings happen, in my opinion, when you have a room full of curious, conversational, imaginative people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. That's good advice. Okay. Well, I think we've walked through that. Is there anything else on the creative process you want to share? Because I got a bunch of other questions.

Tripp Crosby:

Nah, we can move on.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, Adam Grant, this is super high praise, says you're the best MC, the best event MC he's ever seen. And that is really high praise. We have a lot of host listening. And a lot of you will know Tripp, and Tripp and Tyler from hosting big events like Catalyst and Leadercast, et cetera, throughout the years, as well as for their videos. And I think you either posted it, or you messaged me with your hosting reel, which was super impressive. I want to get to that.

But it blew me away at the level of thought that because I think the impression that I had is, oh, some people are just naturally funny, and you get up there and you're just naturally funny. And you MC the event and away you go. You make it look so easy it feels like you're winging it. And nothing could be further from the truth. So let's start here. What are some of the dos and don'ts of hosting well? Because we have a lot of people who host services, host events listening. Dos and don'ts for hosting well.

Tripp Crosby:

I already said one. Do your homework. Know your audience. Be an expert on the program. That's how you build trust. As soon as people feel like you understand them, you earn their trust. As soon as they can tell that you really do know what's going on in the room, they trust you. And that's ultimately what you're doing as a host is you're building trust. You're a guide. You're literally the guide of the room, right? And so what I try to do is find a way as quickly as I can... If you look at my hosting script for any event, you're going to see a placeholder that says, I don't remember what I write there, it's a little different right time, but my goal right in the beginning is say something that immediately clues these people in on how well you understand what they're feeling right in this very moment, right?

So if there's something glaringly weird about the room, I acknowledge it. If it's cold, I acknowledge it. If I know that they've been through a bunch of really dumb, boring team building exercises the whole day, at the risk of pissing off the executives, I say, "Welcome to the next programmed thing that you have to do and pretend that you're excited to be at." Right? I want them to know I get you, right? I'm here. I'm in this with you. That's the first do. Know your audience. A don't would be... What's the best way to say this? The thing I have to work on the hardest is not needing anything from my audience in return.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's the price of admission right there. Wow. Not needing anything from your audience in return.

Tripp Crosby:

I'm there to serve. I'm there to give. I'm there to bring light and joy and direction and empathy. It's nice when I get a big laugh. It's nice when at the end of the event, they're like, "Did you guys love having Tripp here? Who loved having Tripp?" That's nice. Even though they all do it and I'm kind of used to it by now. But I try to just not need that, and find the satisfaction I'm looking for in how well I can tell the audience feels guided, right? I try to sense am I helping these people? Or am I up here just going through some sort of emotions that... Let me tell you. Go ahead. What were you going to say?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, no, I want to hear you, and then I have an interjection question.

Tripp Crosby:

I was just going to say, growing up in the church, we've all seen the host going through the motions. They say the same thing. They're on a script. It is basically white noise.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And no one's engaged. It's like when is this over.

Tripp Crosby:

One's engaged, right? Right. Can we get to the sermon? That's why I'm here, right? I'm either here for the... What's this guy wearing a t-shirt over a collared shirt doing on stage? I don't care about the announcements right now. I know you're so glad I'm here, but you're not. You're probably mad at your wife right now about something, and that's what you're really thinking. You don't care that I'm here. You don't even know that I'm here. It's very easy in a church service to go through the motions, right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right, right. Oh, so don't go through the motions. Okay. What was I going to ask? I don't know. You made me laugh. You really made me laugh. Oh yeah. I know what I wanted to ask you. This goes back to bombing. So you don't need anything from the audience. So that's really big. And that's where I was the other day. First of all, if I had done my client research better, I would've figured out that that there was a live simultaneous translation in 50% of the room when I was going there. But that's on me. I didn't do it. I did a client discovery call.

By the way, listeners, Jon Acuff is brilliant on this. I've talked to Jon about it. He's got a whole session on his podcast about public speaking. And he studies his audience. So take it from some pros like Tripp and like Acuff, you really have to study your audience. But back to your point, so you don't need anything from your audience. But you said, okay, you're up there. Let's say you didn't get the big laugh. Let's say it's like you landed something and it didn't land. What happens next? When you're like, okay, that didn't work. Because a lot of us, we get in our own heads, and we start either, well, this is the worst thing ever. I'm going to resign tonight. And I'm finished. Or you get mad at the audience. Or you just get scrambled with your head and then you lose your place. So I'm in the process on my good days of reminding myself, no, you know your content, these are good people, that didn't land. Just keep going. Just keep doing your thing. You're here for a reason. It's okay. Keep going. What do you do in that moment?

Tripp Crosby:

I usually just do the thing that I was already planning on doing next.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's good.

Tripp Crosby:

I mean, I think that when I'm derailed it's because I was putting so much stock in a moment. I was like, this joke's going to kill. And that's what I was thinking about. And I've lost sight of my real goal which is to serve the audience. I'm not even there to tell jokes. I mean, I am there to tell jokes, but I'm trying to give laughs, not get them, right? So if it's not working for them, then I try to just keep things moving forward.

Maybe this is why I like hosting more than standup, Carey. Because when you're doing standup, you have to just try another joke. I think I can hide behind a speaker introduction. Well, let me introduce our next speaker. That joke didn't work. Which by the way, another don't is don't apologize. That shows insecurity.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, that's good.

Tripp Crosby:

When you feel insecure, it makes everyone else feel uncomfortable. Confidence is everything. Even if you have to fake it a little bit. They're looking to you for confidence, right? There's nothing more awkward than a person telling a bad joke and then kind of getting fumbled up on themselves and apologizing for it. It's not a good look from a host or a standup. You got to just keep rolling with it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What other ingredients are there to successful MCing or successful hosting?

Tripp Crosby:

The best way to know what to do next is to be as present as you can in the moment. And definitely have a script, definitely have a plan. But hosting, even more than speaking or doing standup, hosting is being very aware of what's going on in the room and being able to adapt to what you didn't expect, right? And that requires being present. And that's probably the hardest part of it. That is something that I have had to work at. I still have a long way to go, years of improv, acting study, years of therapy facing my pain, getting outside of my own ego, not needing the feedback and the validation. All those things help me just be with people.

And just notice. I try to listen as a host. I try to be on stage listening to them. Know what are they doing. Are they paying attention? Do they seem like they know what's next? Should I just walk down there and talk to them? And sometimes I do. If I start to feel like they're not into me performing on this stage, I just walk down there with a microphone and I start asking them questions. And I start making sure they know this is about them and not me. Sometimes that doesn't even work, right? But at the end of the day, what I'm trying to do is just be there in the moment, present.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is really, really good advice. Want to talk about, and this is a bit of a hard right or a hard left-

Tripp Crosby:

That's fine.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... but your MC reel and your website are brilliant.

Tripp Crosby:

You're so kind.

Carey Nieuwhof:

They're really, really good.

Tripp Crosby:

You've been so affirming about that reel. I appreciate that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I love it, man.

Tripp Crosby:

Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's really good. I mean, you own a video production company, so you did an excellent job on that. But talk about the value of that. Because we do have creatives listening too who are trying to get noticed in this big sea of creatives.

Tripp Crosby:

Well, I'm going to get kind of personal then. The reason I made that reel is because I realized in 2021 that my heart was more in that than running a video agency. And I decided that instead of hosting and speaking and consult, all these things that I do that are in person with people, instead of those being sort of a byproduct of my video business, I wanted to actually focus there and pursue those things. And so that was sort of step one. It was like, okay, maybe you should let people know what you do because I don't really market well. I love studying marketing.

I love helping other businesses market, but I'm a terrible self-marketer, and that's my own ego. Don't mistake that for humility. Okay? It's my own insecurity and lack of confidence. And sometimes, for me, self-marketing brings this whole new crisis of, okay, is this really what I want to do? Because I could do this or I could do this, or I could do this. And if I put this out there, now this is the thing. And I do all this swirling. And so this reel represents a point in my journey where I realized this is what I want to be out there doing. I think this is the best way I bring light and joy into people's lives. So let's tell people about it. That's all that was.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because your production is excellent.

Tripp Crosby:

Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I enjoy it. So Green Tricycle has become Very, Very Video.

Tripp Crosby:

Yeah. We rebranded two years ago.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So when you're putting a reel together, when you're putting a promotional piece together, and let's say it's not comedy, let's say it's more traditional in the sense, again, a lot of creatives listening, what are some keys to effectiveness? You clearly storyboard things. But just walk us through how to make something that really gets noticed, and gets a guy like me to who sees a million of these things go, Tripp, that was excellent. Break it down for us.

Tripp Crosby:

I don't know what the real rules are. I know what the data would suggest is that anyone who watches it is probably going to watch 15 or 20 seconds of it. So if they can't watch 15 or 20 seconds of it and get the essence of what you do, you need to rethink that first 15 or 20 seconds. That's true with internet content in general, right? If you can win them over in that 15 or 20 seconds, then they might watch the rest. So I put a lot of my thought into, okay, so who are the people watching this? I could just put all the funniest stuff right away, right?

But I actually know that event producers who are looking for a host, even if they're wrong about this, the thing that they're most looking for is someone that they can trust as a presenter, right? So I front loaded my reel with a bunch of clips of me being very buttoned up and friendly and warm, right? And the further you get into it, the more you're going to see that I get really zany and do out of the box stuff, right? But I try to imagine who's watching this. I mean, sure, I know some people are watching it that are just my friends and followers, but who are the people that will hire me and what are they looking for, right?

I'm glad you like it. I feel like it is definitely a V1 and it needs a major overhaul. I didn't even fall some of my own rules. It's too long. And so I guess then the next thing I would say, if you're a creative out there and you're trying to make a reel, or if you're not a creative and you're trying to make a promotional video, or you're working with an agency that's making a promotional video, or you have a video guy on your team making a promotional video, it doesn't matter, if you're trying to promote yourself, the only thing that matters is whether or not you understand your audience, and what they are looking for, and what they need, and what they're feeling. Otherwise, they don't care what you have to say about yourself. They just don't.

If you've ever gone through Donald Miller's StoryBrand, he teaches so well that we're all trying to survive and thrive. And our brains are all trying to conserve calories. We don't have time or energy to waste listening to people talk about themselves if it has nothing to do with our own needs to survive or thrive. So how is your audience trying to survive? How are they trying to thrive? Let them know how you can help right away in the first 15 seconds. I'm on such a high horse. This is something I do so well, but I'm again, my reel, it's very hard to make a reel about yourself. It's very hard to see the forest for the trees, right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. But you have some fun stuff in your website, like where you're doing your bio. And at the very bottom, it says, "Why are you still scrolling? That got me. That was funny.

Tripp Crosby:

You know why I put that there? Because I'm not good at websites. And there was all this extra space. And I'm like, if someone kept scrolling, because I don't know how to get rid of this space, I want to make it worth it, right? So here we are.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Well, you and I have been around the church for a long, long time. I was just consulting with a very large megachurch today about their reboot post-COVID and everything. If you could give the church advice on branding, how would you advise the church in this moment?

Tripp Crosby:

That's a big question, but it's an important one. I appreciate that you're asking. We could do a whole nother episode on this question. But I would say what first comes to mind... Is that even the smart thing to do, share what comes to your mind first? Isn't that unwise?

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think I listened to somebody who said that actually your first idea is often iteration one or two is where-

Tripp Crosby:

Was it Picasso?

Carey Nieuwhof:

... the money is. So I think you should go your first idea.

Tripp Crosby:

Did he tell you?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Was it Picasso? Was it Tripp talking about Picasso? Perhaps it was. Perhaps it was.

Tripp Crosby:

I wish the church would just kind of chill. Like the church's anxiety is really showing right now. And I get it. It's hard to know what to do with all these outspoken people who are leaving. It's hard to know what to do with attendance numbers. But I think when the church gets defensive, it's showing a lack of faith and it's showing anxiety. And it's showing that maybe you don't really believe that there's a bigger, more powerful being behind all of this if you're having to apologize for it. And I just sometimes want to be like chill out, guys. Chill. Just love people. That's so cliché. But just be Jesus in the midst of a world full of people asking hard questions.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, you and I have seen the church from the inside out. I mean, that's what happens when you do the circuit. And I mean, and I'm a fan more than a critic. I'm a follower more than an angry guy or whatever. But you also see, it's like that post I talked about, how much insecurity has driven all of this. How much of our dysfunction is driving the desire for church growth. And then the anxiety. This whole thing about we really do love our full rooms. What is that about? What is that about? And on the one hand it's really well motivated. Yes, we want to see more people come to full life in Christ. And on the other hand, it's like, and yet you turn the rock over and there's a little bit of slimy stuff on the bottom.

Tripp Crosby:

I think feeling the anger and the bitterness is part of the journey. I mean, I've definitely been down that road. I've been way down that road. And I've reconciled now that some of the seasons of my adolescence where I was the most engaged in the church are seasons where I was getting the most baggage and receiving some of the most value. And it's hard to reconcile that. But at the end of the day, I was getting love. I was receiving love from mentors and adult leaders. I was learning values. And I mean, I could go on and on about the value that I gained from growing up in the church, right? And if you wanted to have a conversation about some of the baggage, some of the bad theology, some of the toxic leadership that I experienced, we could talk about that too, right?

Carey Nieuwhof:

What were some examples of the toxic leadership that you experienced along the way?

Tripp Crosby:

I got to be careful what I'm going to say because I don't want to throw anyone under the bus. I consider myself very lucky, blessed, fortunate, all the things, to have grown up with such amazing, amazing leaders in my life. I mean, it's really unfair when I think back, even to high school, having the kind of youth pastor I had who would show up in my life when no one else would. But I think I grew up in a world where the most important value was having the corner on truth. And so I was taught early on that if you want to know God, you have to understand him and you have to know how all the pieces fit together. And if you sound like you don't know, then you don't know God. And that's a very oversimplified way of putting it.

But what I've had to undo in my life is realizing that some of those people, usually men, they were insecure. And gosh, boy, this is a big one. But I wrote my mom a letter the other day because I have recently realized that men have hijacked divinity. And I wanted her to know... Does anyone ever get emotional on your podcast? Is that a thing? Because dang it, I'm about to. I wanted her to know that while all of the men in my youth were trying to explain to me what God was like, she was the one showing me. And while all of the men were telling me what all the rules are, where I was falling short, what I was supposed to do, she was the one holding me and nurturing me and she was where I felt unconditional love.

And I want to be part of the solution to that. I'm not blaming anyone. I think culturally we're already doing a lot. But divinity doesn't have a penis, man. God is so much bigger than human biology or hormones. I'm sorry, but God is not this... It's easy to say. I've heard people say, "God isn't a man in the sky with a beard," but they still act like he is, right? He's not. God is whatever the thing behind the thing behind the thing that we will never even begin to understand is. And the older I get and the more open-minded I become, the more I realize that God is actually love. And we have a long history. Humanity has a long history of religion trying to steal that idea. Of men trying to grab and maintain power.

And if you can't tell, it's finally starting to bother me a little bit. I'm watching my wife, Hannah. You know Hannah. She is a brilliant, brilliant leader. And it's hard. It's hard to even be a woman in leadership now. It's better. It's getting better. Okay. I'm not here to be a flame throwing feminist or anything. I'm just saying. I hope she doesn't get mad. I'm going to ask her after I say this if we're allowed to keep it in here. But we were shopping for cars, and she's like, "No, I'm not getting a minivan because I am trying to establish myself. I'm trying to maintain the respect of the leadership and the people that are under me in this organization. And I know that when I drive up in a minivan, there's so much baggage that comes with soccer mom with a side job." Right? And she's like, "That's not who I am." Let

me tell you. My kids are lucky to have her as a mother. She's an amazing mother. She's an amazing wife. She's had-

Carey Nieuwhof:

I've known Hannah for a long time, since she was in high school. It's crazy.

Tripp Crosby:

She's freaking unreal. Okay? And she has brilliant ideas. You talk about creativity, you talk about leadership. Her influence on her organization, it's incredible. And I see how she fights the stigma. And she does it very gracefully. But here I am. I'm going on a rant. How do we get here? How do we get here? You asked me about toxic leadership. And I started telling you about my wife and there was some tears.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And you know what, I'm really glad your mom is alive to get that letter. Way too often that happens after the funeral. You know, I wish. A lot of truth there. I think back to my childhood, and I remember the judgment. And it's that that almost pushed me away. But I also remember the grace and it's that that pulled me in.

Tripp Crosby:

It is.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think that's a really important lesson for the church right now. And you're right. I think humility is going to be part of the path forward. Chill, grace. And there's an authenticity and a hunger. We're trying to rebuild what fell. And I don't know that's going to get us to where we think it will.

Tripp Crosby:

If I could stand up and say something to the whole church, which is kind of what I'm doing right now, that's how big your podcast is. I feel like I'm talking to all the church leaders. I would say let the world know that you're more interested in truth than Christianity, your version of Christianity. Because if you can portray that, then we know you know whatever about your version of Christianity is true is what you'll find anyway. That's what you'll find.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's really profound. As somebody who grew up in a post-Christian culture, Canada, that really, really resonates. Because when you attach a label to it, it comes with all this baggage.

Tripp Crosby:

As soon as people sniff out that you are loyal to an ideology more than you are a seeker of truth, in today's day and age, there's no interest. I don't want to talk to you. I'm not interested in what you believe. Because I can tell you're loyal to something. And that shows an unawareness of how limited, we talked about this earlier on, our dumb little mental frameworks are, right? Our egos, the part of our brain that's our ego, it's a storyteller. It creates a framework for how I see the whole world. And it's

unique to me. It's all of my life experiences, all of my pain, successes, hurts, all that make up this framework that's unique to me and that's how I process and categorize things.

But the more I realize that's just my dumb little ego. And if it had a corner on truth, then Carey's would be the same. But yours is yours. And we all have these small little frameworks. And the more I can get outside of that, the more open I can be to truth. And the more comfortable I can be in the unknowns and the areas that I'm not certain. And the more I can become comfortable with the unknowns and the uncertainties, the more empathetic I can be towards other people. And the more people can feel welcomed in my presence. And the more likely people will want to have a conversation with me about things that matter like what is God? What is the Bible? All of these things, right? But I just think the church needs to do a little bit better at being curious.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is really well said. And I think there's a lot in what you had to say. And I think that's a wonderful, wonderful place to wrap things up. Thank you. And you know what I'm excited about?

Tripp Crosby:

What's that?

Carey Nieuwhof:

People get to see the whole other side of Tripp that I've really enjoyed over the years.

Tripp Crosby:

Well, this is all there is. This is the whole other side. There's no more than this.

Carey Nieuwhof:

This is the whole thing. It's all encapsulated in an hour and 20 minutes. Anything else you want to share, Tripp?

Tripp Crosby:

Well, I mean, let me do some smoke blowing, Carey. I want you to know that it means a lot to me that you have me on to have this conversation. I don't get invited on a lot of podcasts because most people that don't know me well don't know that I like talking about things like this. And I think for from what I've been able to observe knowing you, and being at events with you, and listening to your podcast, I think what you're doing is amazing. I think you are demonstrating curiosity and humility and openness. I think you do a great job of that. I think that's why you have so many listeners. You are-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's a big church.

Tripp Crosby:

Yeah. But you're part of the solution of this. And I appreciate that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, so are you, Tripp. And I just want to say, thank you. Thanks for the difference you made in my life. Thanks for helping me understand creativity. And thanks for some really good conversations we've had on the road and today here just about faith, and what it looks like moving forward. And how the church can still be a part of a conversation the culture would like to have. It's just that conversation is changing so quickly.

And I really think if somebody listens to this three years from now, what you just said in the last 15 minutes, it will make more sense three years from now than it even does today. And for that I'm really, really grateful. Thanks for wrestling down the tough issues. There's a lot of stuff we didn't get into, but this probably won't be our last conversation. And thanks for also making a few of us laugh along the way too. We need it, man. It's a great coping mechanism, I'll tell you.

Tripp Crosby:

It is. Thank you, Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It is, isn't it?

Tripp Crosby:

It is.

Carey Nieuwhof:

After a long day, I'm like just make me laugh for a half hour, whoever that is. It's awesome. All right. So people, we will link in the show notes to the reel, to your website. But if people want the easy way to follow you and what you're doing, where can they find you on social, and where can they find you online?

Tripp Crosby:

I'm most active on Instagram as trippcrosby, two P's. And if you are interested in getting more detail in the areas of creativity and leading creatives and all the things we talked about, I have an email list that I try to be as candid as I can about the things I'm learning and what I'm succeeding at and what I'm failing at. And you can just go to my website trippcrosby.com, and you know what'll happen. You'll get a pop up. There's somewhere on there you can sign up. I won't spam you. I won't promote myself very much. But I'd love for you to... That's where you can go. If you want to keep having these conversations with me, that's where you go.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And you're working on a book. Is that true?

Tripp Crosby:

It is. It is.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What are you writing about?

Tripp Crosby:

I've been putting this off for a long time, and I finally feel ready to get some thoughts on paper.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Cool. Can you say what it's about, or do you know what it's about?

Tripp Crosby:

It's a lot of this. The main premise is that, this is going to sound hokey, but the phrase that I'm living by right now is that real is magic. It's not that magic isn't real. It's that real is magic. And that existence might just be the miracle we've all been looking for. And I want to write about being present and experiencing people and life. And a lot of the tactical things about creativity and career and stuff will be in there as well. But that's the main premise. I want more people to experience the magic of their life and their existence.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'll be excited to read that. Tripp, thanks so much for being with us today.

Tripp Crosby:

You're welcome.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I really appreciate Tripp. And if you would like to get show notes and transcripts, you can get them at careynieuwhof.com/episode514. Happy to help you out there. That's also the gateway into everything else I do. And we do a lot these days. Have you checked out the New Art of Leadership Daily Podcast, or some of the stuff we still write on our website, or the Art of Leadership Academy? Well, that is all there at careynieuwhof.com. Check it out.

Want to thank our partners for this episode. Ministry Grid is going to give you \$200 off access to Ministry Grid for the entire year when you go to ministrygrid.com/carey. You can start training your volunteers digitally today. That's ministrygrid.com/carey. And by Tithe.ly. We've got an exclusive free resource kit for listeners of this podcast to help you partner with your congregation financially. Go to increasegenerosity.com, increasedgenerosity.com.

Next episode, a really interesting conversation with Jesse DeYoung and Jim Burgen. So I first heard about this on Rich Birch's podcast, where Jesse was just talking very candidly and transparently the kind of conversation you only hear behind closed doors about Jim's burnout. And I reached out and they're both going to be on the podcast. And well, here's an excerpt.

Jesse DeYoung:

It was years and months of pent up vomiting of emotion. And you haven't done this over and over and you've done this, and every time I ask you to do this, and how about that thing two months ago? I mean, I'm pulling stuff out of. And you remember the time that you did this? And I'm working through. And I'm basically saying you don't exist without me. How dare you question my leadership?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Also coming up, we got some incredible guests. We've got Stephen M. R. Covey, Patrick Lencioni, Tim Tebow, Nona Jones, and many others. And if you subscribe, you get that automatically. Also a quick word before we close out today. For those of you who want to grow your online influence, whether that's growing the number of followers you have on social, actually read your emails, stream your sermons, or simply people who will engage with your content, I've got something free I want to give you. And it's hosted by my Art of Leadership Academy, but this one's free.

It's the Influence Kickstarter. It's a mastermind that will help you with exactly that, getting the right people in front of your platform, getting in front of them, getting your attention, and getting them transformed by your content. So if you want to grow your online platform, I show you, well, some of the things that I use to do this. I mean, it grew this to 24 million downloads and my website to millions of visits a year and so on and so on.

You can go to influencekickstarter.com to sign up for free. That's influencekickstarter.com for free. In a matter of hours, you can actually start growing the trajectory of your platform. Hey, thanks so much for listening everybody. I really appreciate it. Make sure you subscribe so get in the next episode automatically. I do not take your time for granted. Thank you so much for trusting us with that. And give us a shout out on the socials. And I hope you're having a great summer. We will catch you next time on the podcast. And I hope our time together today has helped you thrive in life and leadership.