

**Announcer:** The Art of Leadership Network

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Welcome to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. It's Carey here. It's a thrill to have you along today, and I hope today's episode helps you thrive in life and leadership. Today we've got one of my favorite humans alive. Tim Keller, has helped me so much in my leadership thinking about faith, thinking about life, and so much more. Tim Keller is back on the show. In today's episode is brought to you by Generis, Generis has over 33 years in the field. They'd love to help you get generosity fostered in your church especially in this economically turbulent year.

Visit [Generis.com/Carey](http://Generis.com/Carey) to get a completely free pulse report and a 30 minute coaching call for your team today and by leadr check out [leadr.com](http://leadr.com). That's L-E-A-D-R.com and use the promo code Carey for 20% off your first year and start having productive one-on-one meetings with your team today. So

So we are talking to Tim Keller, it's a wide-ranging interview. So we talked about the decline of the mainline and Evangelical Church, he wrote a fascinating piece on that, we will link to it in the show notes that's just [CareyNieuwhof.com/episode548](http://CareyNieuwhof.com/episode548) and we will link to the longer extended pdf version. It's like a mini book. It's so good. It's so good.

I read it all and how forgiveness Injustice get mishandled during pastoral moral failures, the threat to Liberal democracy civil dialogue and how nominal, Christianity damage things. So, Tim Keller is the chairman of Redeemer City to City and Pastor Emeritus at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City which he and his wife, Kathy started in 1989 for over a quarter century, Tim let a diverse Congregation of young professionals, that grew to a weekly worshipping community of over 6,000 people meeting in eight different locations in Manhattan.

In May 2017, those congregations became independent churches. Tim transitioned to become not a Senior Pastor, but to work more broadly in New York City and global cities through the work of City to City, which he helped start, which has helped start over seven hundred and fifty churches in some of the most influential cities of the world. So really thrilled to have Tim back on. By the way, if you haven't read his books, he's got a number of New York Times bestselling books, such as

The Reason for God, Prodigal God, The Meaning of Marriage and his latest one called Forgiveness. So Tim Keller is going to touch on some really important topics about the health of the church today and thriving in the future. But there's another really important health factor in your church.

and that is the health of your Church's generosity and keeping track of generosity and giving his important all year. But in January-February even more critical, you already know what your total giving was for last year. But do you have a good perspective on what happened in your giving database and among your donors. So what if there was a tool that could eliminate the guesswork and provide your team with significant insights into the state of generosity in your church, thankfully our friends at Generis have developed just that with their free Generosity Pulse Report. This tool assesses, the current health of your churches giving and provides deeper clarity into your financial reality. Beyond, just like the bottom line figure of how much people gave. You'll see the behavior of your givers, not just your financial numbers, but most importantly, it helps you understand what might be possible if you implemented a few key measures in your church.

The best part totally free you don't ever have to pay.

So if you want to not miss out on this timely opportunity to assess the state of generosity in your church visit, [Generis.com](http://Generis.com) carry that's G-e-n-e-r-i-s.com/Carey to include a completely free Pulse Report and 30 minutes from a team member for your church today.

Who else has leadership development intentionally high on your New Year's resolution list?

A new year is a perfect time to kick. In with some more intentional leadership habits, as I'm talking with leaders, I hear all the time that the one-on-one meeting is a felt need people hate their meetings.

They don't like them. The bosses, don't like them. Employees, don't like them. Why?

People just are disengaged. And what happens is if especially if you're a boss, your people don't feel cared for or develop, they're not engaged. While my friends Leadr are solving that problem. They're the first ever people development software focusing on helping you have better one on one meetings that are employee focused that drive

engagement and put an end to meeting dread. And as a one-stop shop software solution for all things, people focused, they also help you streamline other healthy leadership habits you're struggling with such as effective feedback, clear goals and better performance reviews. And it all starts with a one on one meeting. So join me on becoming a more intentional leader by checking out [Leadr.com](http://Leadr.com) That's L-E-A-D-R. No. Second "E", [L-E-A-D-R.com](http://L-E-A-D-R.com) to figure out how you can better engage and grow your team today through one on one meetings. Use the promo code Carey. You'll get twenty percent off your first year. That's [Leadr.com](http://Leadr.com), use the promo code Carey twenty percent off your first year. And now my conversation with Tim Keller.

Tim, it's a delight to have you back.

**Tim Keller:** I'm so glad to talk to you again and I appreciate you Carey and I know what you the burden that you having to spell your name to everybody every day said no that's not how you spell my last name. I just I just appreciate the way in which you carry that burden with grace.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Well thank you, you know. I think it was in kindergarten I realized oh this is not going to be easy. Like other kids get like simple names and here I am with Nieuwhof but the good news is you get to own the internet, right? You can misspell it and they still find you.

**Tim Keller:** That's true. That is true. If they can if they can spell it though, you know.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Yeah. You have to come within some closeness of spelling it.

**Tim Keller:** If you're going to look up, what people are saying about you on the internet, you probably going to have to put in five or six different spellings, because they're probably under, especially, on Twitter, there's probably there's probably Carey, you know, C-A-R-Y, N-E-W-H-O-F

And I bet there's all kinds of stuff they've been said about Carey Nieuwhof there you've never even seen

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Well that might be a good thing, isn't it? A really good thing.

**Tim Keller:** It might be, I suppose.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Yeah. Hey I'd love to start with a little update on how you're doing. I've been praying for you. I know I've been joined by many many people. How are you feeling? How is your health?

**Tim Keller:** Well, I'm I'm very happy to talk about that but very briefly, I've had I have pancreatic cancer stage 4. That was first spotted actually in February of 2020 and as most of your listeners, probably know it's very deadly.

And the fact that I'm about to celebrate my third Christmas with my children and grandchildren is a great gift of God. I've had good doctors and I've done chemo and right now I'm in an immunotherapy trial, a drug trial. And I'm just, you know, alright right? You. You have cancer, you live from scan to scan. Basically their last scan was great. But then, you know, another scan is gonna come up and it's gonna come up in a few. Um. You know, weeks or a month or two or something like that. So but I meanwhile, in spite of the fact that I can't do it nearly as much as I used to do especially travel, um, I can stay productive In other words I can still do a lot of things and write a lot of things talked about people. So I'm extremely grateful. That's the sum.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Yeah, wow. Well we'll continue to pray for you and thank you for continuing to write. We're going to talk about a couple of your most recent works, which I imagine were written in the last year or two to while you've been going through this. So let's start with the, the article, the series of articles that you released on the rise and decline of the mainline and then the evangelical church. And then there were the potential renewal of the church, which by the way will link to in the the show notes and you can get the individual articles but you also wrote a PDF, which is much more detailed and has an extensive bibliography. So what are the differences? Maybe we'll start here between the decline in the mainline church that we saw kind of a generation ago. And the decline that we're seeing today in the Evangelical Church.

**Tim Keller:** Well, the similarities are that both the mainline Church a generation ago and now the Evangelical church more recently have essentially hooked themselves up to a particular political program. Obviously the mainline church just became essentially completely hooked up to the Democrats. And to Liberal Progressive Democratic

politics and saying that this is the only really Christian way to be and that decline happened quite a while ago. On the other hand, back by the 70s. For example, on the other hand, the Evangelical Church is more recently made the same move it has

As at least in the public's mind, I'm not saying this is true of every single person in the main line or of the evangelical church, but largely and in the public's mind, evangelical church is seen as having hooked up to the Republican party, especially to very conservative wing of the Republican party. And so in the same way, we have also the evangelical churches sort of said, this is the only Christian way to be politically. And so I think the population and on the whole sort of sees both churches as basically a power block, and not really speaking to the transcendent issues that all human beings have.

The I think what's interesting is the difference by the way, is that, whereas the mainline Church jettisoned, Orthodox Doctrine, it jettison the idea of the authority of scripture and a deity of Christ and the return of Christ and all that. And they thought they were getting with the times. But what's actually happened is, they're cut off now from 80 90 percent of the world Church, which is, which is growing and it's very embarrassing that you know, there's two million Episcopalians in America, very liberal church, and yet like there's 11 million Anglicans in, you know, in Uganda alone, and there's twice that much in Nigeria and they're all orthodox.

And the same thing has happened for the Methodists other words. The little church here's Methodist was sort of liberal, but worldwide methodism is not. So they've actually cut themselves off from the growing edge of the church and the World Church. Evangelicals have not which I think means because we haven't cut ourselves off, and because we haven't jettisoned Orthodox Doctrine, at least, not yet, we haven't. It means in some ways, there's something there to be revived, and there's something there to be revived. Especially if we, because I believe, of course, Orthodox Doctrine is true in biblical. But I also believe it keeps us in touch with the with the world church. And therefore I have little or no real hope.

For any kind of renewal with the main line. But I have a lot more hope for know what the evangelicals want to say a lot more means. That's a low bar to prepare to how I feel about the main line. Evangelicals I still

don't? I'm still worried. Very very, very worried, but I do think there's something there.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** No. And it is it is helpful. And yet, you don't exactly whitewash the issues of the evangelical church. And in that paper, which again will link to, you know, you do make a distinction between white evangelicalism and other forms of evangelicalism. And I'm not sure we'll have time to get into all seven traits that mark the soul actual history of white US evangelicals them. But could you give us a little overview of how white evangelicalism is because it's in freefall right now? Some of those traits and how that has become counterproductive.

**Tim Keller:** Yeah. I can name them at least and that way whether we can go into them or I could name them. And yeah, um, well, one is there's a moralism.

It's because we moralistic, which means self-righteous. It's separatist, which is in in general white evangelicalism, or you want? Some people are going to say this is just fundamentalism. Okay, well that's we can talk about that but that fundamentals many evangelicals and are in some ways just joined at the hip and it's always very hard to tell quite where the, where the divide is. But point is conserve evangelicals are moralistic and self-righteous, they tend to be separatistic. They don't really like to engage. They feel like it's compromising. They see good and evil and kind of Manichean ways. You know, we just have to denounce and withdraw. Okay. Number three, they're very individualistic. It's all about just me and getting myself, right? And getting to heaven,

Four its dualistic which goes together with individualism, it's dualistic where it's basically tends to, you know, pit Christianity against culture, we either withdraw from culture, or we fight it. But with there's no idea of, there's it goes along with separatism. But it's there, in other words the the world is bad and everything in the church is good. Instead of seeing that the world is got common grace and the church has got you no sin in it but instead dualism it's like, it's all good or evil anti-intellectualism is a major

trait of American evangelicalism. You don't see it in the British as much. For example. You know, when you take it. You know, why? Is it that when I was first coming to be a Christian in 1970 in the 70's?

Why? Why is it that almost every as a college educated kid? Everything I read, you know whether it was C. S Lewis or J. I packer, [inaudible] they were all British and it's because in America you just have an anti-intellectualism and you just really didn't have books written for college educated people, um, then there's an anti institutionalism. Which means evangelicals just like to set up their own shop, their own organizations. They just don't like to become part of existing institutions and existing organizations. They just they like to do it themselves.

Highly entrepreneurial, but also anti institutional. So the stuff just kind of they needed, they don't build things that last. And finally enculturation that is to say, there's a tendency to wed Christianity to American culture. So, it's the reason why. Yeah, there's a I would say there's certainly is grounds for the gender roles. I think, the Bible does talk about, there's differences between male and female, but there's a tendency amongst Evangelicals and fundamentalist in America to exaggerate those. And, and basically read anything traditional American gender roles back into the Bible. Also, there's nationalism which is the idea that we are, the greatest country in the world, you have to read your americanism back into the Bible. And so, there we are moralism separatism, individualism dualism, anti large wisdom, anti spiritualism.

Enculturation. And if you want to find out where they came from, you got to kind of read both Nate Hatch. His book The Democratization of American Christianity and Mark Noll. Mark, knows stuff. And basically, they, they essentially say that kind of what happened to me back in the 1820s and 1830s American evangelicalism in order to really grow in the frontier, had to go to a less educated Ministry. It just went anti- it went populist in the 1830s long story and, you know, what? I've already taken too long on this question. This podcast is not lasting three hours, so I should make my questions little shorter, but they explain why American evangelicalism has been so anti-intellectual populist, you know, of the people, but then really not trusting the academy, the university, not trusting science.

Just not trusting. You know, people with degrees. Just not just not trusting them to. Yeah.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** And which of those like if you had to pick a couple it, maybe it's a false question? And if so, we can move on? But which of those do you think in this moment has become the most damaging because I was just looking over the Barna data this morning doing some writing. And I mean, we are in a bit of a freefall. There's a little uptick after. Ah. But when you look at Gen Z, I mean, they're spiritually open. But Christianity is just not very interesting to younger adults.

**Tim Keller:** Well if you read if you read those seven. I don't think I'm gonna pick one out. They really are involved with each other the seven. When I was working on it, I could have made it three. I could have made it five because they kind of overlap. Um. But I I broke them out because I I think it's a um.

if I'm trying to think here, is there a way for me to summarize it? I think the two things would be the moralism and the the fear of in a kind of I don't want to be mean here. I kind of fear of ceremonial impurity. I like I'm going to get him. I'm just going to be harmed if I read this book or if I if I associate with these people and see that is moralism, some ultimately it's not it's not the confidence, you know? Jesus was eating with prostitutes and sinners and people like that and the religious leaders of the day we're saying, how could, you know, if you're a real man of God why would you have anything to do with them?

And because Jesus understood who he was and he understood the gospel of grace, he was just not afraid of being made impure. And I do think that that I don't I really do think a lot of evangelicals and they they can articulate the gospel. I'm saved by grace, not by works, but deep in his heart it's pretty moralistic. And the way you do that is you stay pure and you keep your Doctrine writing, you live in all these ways and then you start looking down on people and you separate from people. So I guess I think it's the moralism in the lack of grasp of the gospel and the particular way that that has played out in American history.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** But it also really helpful in the paper. Do you call it a paper? Feels like a mini book. It feels like there's a book there Tim and I hope one day there will be

Yeah I think it's about a half a book.

Yeah. It's it's it's the um. Yeah. It's it's the spine of a book. So yes. Thank you. But anyway, what did you say?

**Carey Nieuwhof:** It's robust. But you also trace a racial history and yeah. Evangelicalism and make a distinction between white evangelicals and other forms of evangelicalism, which arguably aren't in the kind of freefall that white evangelicalism is. Ah what. What is helpful for us to focus on when it comes to race and the evangelical church?

Well we do have the history is pretty sad actually? Ah. Mark Noll has two books that he does have a book or I forget the name of it. It's behind me. I think it's the. Oh dear, he's got a book on race and the church. I just forget the name. But he's also got a little link to. Yeah. He's also if you put it in. Ah. Mark Noll and race. There's a book that actually has the word race in the title. So it's kind of a history of.

the church and

**Carey Nieuwhof:** God and Race in American Politics. That's it. That's the one. But there's another one that I think in some ways gets to the question of, where did this, why is it that white evangelicals are so ambivalent about race?

**Tim Keller:** That's it. That's the one. But there's another one that I think in some ways gets to the question of, where did this, why is it that white evangelicals are so ambivalent about race?

In fact, the title is a fascinating thing. Yeah, and he points out that the rest of the world

already had moved on. I mean, for example, James Thornwell and Robert Dabney who were two Southern Presbyterian. So I'm going to take Carey, I'm going to take responsibility here. Yeah, conservative Presbyterian, theologians. Calvinist, you know, very Orthodox and they were absolutely in lockstep theologically with the with conservative Presbyterians in Scotland. And the great leader was Thomas Chalmers and you know, the Free Church of Scotland which was a really, really strong

Church and philosophy theory exactly the same, but Thornhill and Dabney were making all these arguments about well. The Bible justifies race. Slavery. Slavery fine. Look. It says slaves obey your masters and

the free church people over in Scotland saying you're you're kidding, right. You know, I said, ah, you know the Bible. Look. Yeah. Look. It says, ah, you know, slavery is something that God in the mosaic legislation's there. And they look and say, you know, it does say in Deuteronomy, that if a slave escapes, you don't return him because it shows they were abused. It says in Exodus that if you hit a slave to punish him and you knocked his tooth out, he goes free. It says there that nobody should be slave more than six years.

It says, there slaveries never based on, you know, race and this that you're kidding, right? And and yet what had happened was because the economy of the South certainly the prosperous South, you know, the people who have the money was based on slavery and there was this enormous pressure on the Christians to justify it and not to undermine it and you look at somebody like Thornhill and Dabney because I have read their stuff. And at one level, they seem to be extremely sincere and very, very smart. But it's so fascinating that the cultural times shape the way in which they read the Bible, and people who were not in that spot.

They could see that they were being distorted. I mean, people from Scotland elsewhere, they could see it and but what happened, was they justified it? And then, of course, they had the Civil War and then they lost and afterwards.

There was a lot of white Southern evangelicals that held onto this self-justifying approach saying. Well, black people, they should be slaves because, you know, look, they're inferior. Look at look at their poverty. Look at, look at the crime. And that just, that was a very, very powerful moment in in American history where the church, the Southern church should have turned to the Bible and read it. I think in context with made, read it in connection with other people from other cultures. See it wasn't that easy to do back then and said are we reading this, right?

Or we just reading what our own needs into it? Are we really listening to God's word or we kind of exegeting you know reading into it what we want to see but they failed.

They did read it in and that just

That that has infected. I mean, the white evangelicals have always had a strong strain of distrust of other races. And I think I think it comes

down from that. And those those two books by Noll do help us see how that happened. And it's yeah. Is that our original sin? I don't know. Is that American evangelicals original sin? I don't know if I'd go that far, I think we have our own original sin. It's it's not slavery. It's turning from God. And we we all have remaining sin in us. But it's it's been tremendously tragic. And we're still experiencing it now. Yeah.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Yeah. Well another thing we're really experiencing too is politics. Yeah. I forget whether it was New York Times or Atlantic that you wrote for. But you've had a couple of pieces over the last few years on the.

Close coupling of conservative evangelicals and the politicization really of church, your thoughts on that and where that becomes problematic and perhaps contributing to the decline of American evangelicalism.

**Tim Keller:** Well, now that's tough. If you ask, why, this is, why did this politicization happen? You know what, why is it happening? That's the hardest question, you've asked me so far? I think, in fact, I bet it's the hardest question. You're going to ask me. So I'm you might want to give yourself a cigar right now. Well, thanks is. Yeah, you're welcome. This this this is, this is hard. So let me give you the best answer I can.

Liberal democracy. Which is how our I'm using the word liberal, very broadly. Liberal democracy, which is how our constitution was written. How are, you know, how our country was founded? Was the idea that the government is neutral when it comes to religion and religious beliefs. It does not impose religion and religious beliefs on people. It doesn't impose a worldview on people. It doesn't say, it doesn't hook up to Catholicism or Christ were priced, you know, Lutheranism or whatever. And, therefore, it's big on freedom of association, freedom of speech. It's a pluralistic society. So you have Jews and Catholics, and various kinds of Protestants and athiests it's and hand and it doesn't impose a worldview or religious views on people.

And or moral values on people. And it came out of the Enlightenment because the enlightened was born one hundred years before, ah, America. In the wars of religion. When everybody was fighting, basically, people were dying as to which religion my my country is going to be, and that a lot of the thinkers of Europe came up and said, hey, you know what. Let's let's create a society in which there's no one religion that is the official religion. And we are coming together just as

reasonable people. And we decide how we want to live together. And I we park our religion at at the door when we come into the public realm and we we make laws based on, you know, common common good. And that kind of thing.

And for a very long time that worked in America and I just want you to know that that's the problem. The big problem is that liberal democracy is in crisis and the reason it's in crisis is because, and here's the irony, and I don't think I, I think I could trace this out. If I was writing something down, I think he'll be a little hard early right now to do it, but weirdly enough liberal democracy kind of led to the decline of religion. Probably because it really said, you know, religion is okay for your private life, but when it comes to the public life, the real or need it, you know, it's really not important. We just use science and reason to figure out how we're going to live and you park, your religion that door when we come out here and talk together, you know, whether you're a Jew or a Catholic or a Muslim or Christian or an atheist, you know, you you come together and we just we just you know, we just decide

And it was it was part of I think what weakened faith because it was really saying, faith is a private thing. It just makes you happy, but it really isn't all that necessary for how you live your whole life. Whatever. But the fact is that when religion started to decline, the thing that now I have some atheist friends who admit this say, the thing that actually held us together was not freedom of speech, freedom of Association, you know, using our reason what held is together was like 80% of the population went to either a Catholic or a Protestant church. They actually went and that even though, like, you do the Liberals and Conservatives in Congress, would were arguing over taxes or unions, but they would never argue over same-sex marriage. They all thought it was be a horrible thing.

In other words, everybody was a and 80-90% of people are nominal Christians. And because they were nominal Christians, they had they had a moral base, and they lived with the illusion that we're really not a Christian country where a secular country. But the fact is, they'd never really had to deal with pluralism using liberal democratic, ah, you know, structure. And when real pluralism came along when real pluralism came, we found out we we couldn't abide it. And so now here's the first. And it happened first. The first group of people that

actually moved away from liberal democracy into we're going to impose our worldview you where the progressives, they were the first people to start doing it. Um what. Ah. Rowan Williams Archbishop of Canterbury Former.

Talks about he calls the programmatic secularism rather than procedural secularism. In other words, they used to be the government was secular in a sense of being a neutral umpire and said, okay, you know, we want to make sure everybody has a level playing field to make your case and live your lives, but but programmatic secularism goes like this. If you expose well, put it this way in the 60's and 70's. Even the 50's. If somebody Wrote a book saying, it's okay to be gay. That would probably be not publishable because it would be banned as obscene, speech, right? Today, if you say, if you try to write a book or say, it's not okay to be gay. Now it's also condemned as obscene speech, except it's called hate speech.

And what's happened is there was a kind of hegemony again, it wasn't pluralistic, there was a kind of crit nominal Christian hegemony that really did run things and when when that fell apart, now we realize well, who's going to get in charge of defining hate speech and obscene speech. And progressive said, we're going to do it. And so what they actually have done is they are imposing a kind of programmatic hard secularism and conservatives and Christians have seen that. They say, you know what, you're not being neutral anymore, you're really actually pushing you're really. You're actually saying, you're actually saying, you have to keep your religion, totally totally private

When our religion doesn't allow that and by the way, it's the same problem with Islam. So they're gonna have more Muslims that are here that will props are going to have there, too. But the issue is that conservatives are pushing back wrongly, I think and are saying, yeah, liberal democracy doesn't work. We need there's a lot of conservatives, and we need Christian nationalism. We actually need to get the the state needs to be overtly Christian, overtly Protestant, or there needs to be. You know, the Catholic integral to say that the Catholic church should be the state church, and what they're saying is there's absolutely no way to get that moral consensus. We're always going to be fragmented, liberal democracy doesn't work. And it is a crisis because the fact is, as long as everybody was a nominal Christian,

liberal democracy works, and it doesn't. We're not that anymore.  
Liberal democracy undermined Christianity.

And religion in general and created this situation where we truly are divided and now the old liberal democracy Democratic, you know, proceduralism doesn't bring us together. We're just at each other's throats.

We have alternate views of reality, totally different views reality and I don't have a good way forward by many. If you were asking me that question, I'm not going to answer it because I'm actually thinking it out, I still think liberal democracy is way better than Catholic integralism or Protestant Christian nationalism, but I also feel like you've got to call out the progressives, you know, to say this, what youth consider democracy actually isn't, it is actually an imposition of your worldview on us.

We have alternate views of reality, totally different views reality and I don't have a good way forward by many. If you were asking me that question, I'm not going to answer it because I'm actually thinking it out, I still think liberal democracy is way better than Catholic integralism or Protestant Christian nationalism, but I also feel like you've got to call out the progressives, you know, to say this, what youth consider democracy actually isn't, it is actually an imposition of your worldview on us.

So I feel like we have to call both sides I but when I do that I am it maybe Carey, you know, I am called both sideisms, you know playing you know, bake or or or being trying to be a political when you can't be our. I think that's possible but I do think it's fair to say sorry, right and left. Your I don't know what the alternative is. But you what you are proposing is absolutely wrong. Will never really work. So I told you this was the hardest question and I don't know. What you could do with.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** So Tim that is fascinating and I guess you can say that for the first time we really do have a plurality of opinions, right? Like, that's what pluralism is we have divergent opinions?

I also know that, you know, you spent a lot of time in your active Ministry navigating LGBTQ issues and the sexuality of the scripture verses our cultures view, um, just to draw that out a little bit more. I know we've talked about identity and how that's become a defining

characteristic of this generation. But how do you suggest? Because obviously there are people who are affirming who listen to this podcast. There are people who are not. But how do you suggest when you have a different viewpoint than perhaps the culture does, how do you express that in a way that isn't reactionary or angry or inflammatory or completely alienating from the gospel?

Well you've half answered. I love questions. Where you the questioner actually gives half the answer?

**Carey Nieuwhof:** It was a softball was it?

It was. I mean, a lot of it has to do with tone. It has to do also. Ah. Another thing a lot of it has to do with

the theater that you're in when you're talking numbers. In other words are you just spouting the world or you actually talking to somebody face-to-face or you talking to neighbors?

Are you? I think what you have to do is you have to say, here's how I see it but then, the best way to do this is to say, "My understanding of your point of view is this" and then when you are done if the other person says that you said that perfectly well I couldn't have said it better myself, then you can say.

Well here's why I don't agree with it and here's there's my point of view.

I think that in that way, you actually have its face to face. You know, you have people who are talking to each other. I actually, by the way, believe that that Cadre of people they do have to spend time together before they would make those videos. They actually have to have these a lot of these conversations before they make the videos, but I do think you might be able to do something like that, where you, where you were, giving people examples of how we ought to be talking to each other and how we can still live together. So that's the reason why I still believe that liberal democracy, a truly pluralistic society in which the progressives are not actually shutting out

religious people may know Orthodox Muslims and and Christians and Jews who have particular views. But at the same time, there's not some Christian hegemony, some Christian nationalism that's shutting out secular voices are gay voices or anything like that. I don't know

how we're not going to have. Um. A pluralistic says, I were going to get a pluralistic society unless we change public opinion, which right now is actually trending on both sides away from freedom of speech. It's trending away from these this kind of stuff. And that is, especially under a younger people, you know. Ah yeah. You both both left and right younger people are not not in favor of what. What us older people would have considered free speech they are? They're definitely in in the they like speech codes. They like just telling people you can't say those things on both sides.

And so, what you have to do is give people examples and I think that could be done. I think on the other hand, I don't know Carey, once you come up with your list of 10, I actually do know a few frankly. I'm on a zoom call fairly often with people on both sides, you know, both religious believers and non religious, people and liberals and more conservative people all that actually get together in order to have conversations like this. But it's very, very very private and very, very informal. But if you were going to do something like this, it might be possible to be very interesting.

It would be? But it requires maturity and relationship. And I think that is what is lacking in so much of the debate. Well, it's very nice, segue into your new book. It's called forgive. It's an excellent book. And one of the most intriguing things, it's obviously what the Bible has to say, what Jesus taught about forgiveness etcetera. But I loved, and you spent quite a bit of time on this. You talked about what happens when there isn't forgiveness. And I think we're in a moment right now in our culture, where forgiveness is very much, a rare commodity, I mean, we're in cancel culture, What is culture? Look like without the Christian imperative to forgive?

**Tim Keller:** Well, the old shame in honor cultures, that didn't actually the Greeks and the Romans were shame it on our culture's. Now, some are more than others. The Athenians were a little more big on pluralism, to some degree, in their own way, then the Spartans, you know, but Paris and he said that some people deserve to be slaves.

And um, it's the ancient cultures were shame and honor cultures, which meant you had people with more honor and people with less

honor. And ah, the people with less honor just weren't treated as equals at all. And and they also felt basically, you know, I remember reading where was I when I read this this anyway, I read a historian of early Europe, which was, of course, as you know, um, pagan. I mean, it was ah, it was. Ah. You know, the the Norse gods and German gods, you know, Odin, and Thor and all that sort of thing, okay. Um. And when the Christians showed, which were the monks, it was this amongst they were building monster. And when the Christians were there.

They are, they were talking about forgiveness and most of the pagan said, this is crazy. You never going to have a an actual coherent society if people aren't afraid people in charge, they have to be afraid and it brought them, they, you're going to get vengeance. And is it was the retaliation. It was a it was a [inaudible] culture. Face, the fear society, biggest fear the strong beating the weak. and I mean, like all I can say is that the Christian culture actually did cohere.

What the left one culture there was it didn't get rid of it because Christian culture never became thoroughly Christian. Right. Everybody knows in Christendom it didn't mean that 90% of the people were devout Christians but it definitely. I mean, you couldn't have [inaudible] in it in a Christendom Society where you could have it in a shame and honor culture, and so, I don't want to go back to that. I don't want to go back to more tribalism, more violence, but there is a worry on my part that we might be going back to that.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Well, it feels that way, I mean, with cancel culture. And I mean, you engage the Me Too movement the church to movement, and there are just horrendous stories of abuse etc. Etc. And yet it raises the question. Well, talk about that a little bit because I don't I don't want to put words in your mouth.

You. You make the point that sometimes the call can be well. We need to forgive unconditionally will just restore that person immediately, which is probably not wise or the other extremists. Well there's no forgiveness. You're banished to the desert until death and never reintegrated with culture. So when you think of but the cancel culture, we're in right now often, you know, people have done horrible things. They need to be held to justice. Where does forgiveness legitimately play in or how does it play in in those situations?

**Tim Keller:** The key, I think is a point a case I make in the book that forgiveness is not the opposite or the contradiction to seeking justice. In fact, forgiveness is a precondition for seeking justice.

That's the key because most people put the two against each other, that's the reason why. And by the way, both sides, both victims and perpetrators like the think of Christopher, they think of forgiveness as being opposed to each other. And that's the reason why the perpetrators have come to women in churches who have been abused. And then the perpetrators and the church officers as they come and say well he repented he you have to forgive him and so, don't go to the police. Don't talk about this, you have to forgive him. And so they're saying there's no, you know, it's you forgive, you don't do justice. And of course, the victims themselves, then say, I don't have to forgive them, not going to forgive because forgiveness leads to injustice.

But I try to make the case in the book, that if you don't forgive before you suggest this, you won't really be seeking justice you'll be seeking vengeance and vengeance is a motivation that leads to excess and eats you alive while you're going after it. And so we go tell yourself as you're going after justice, but actually, you're probably going to want more than just, what is fair. You're probably going to want the person just suffer and be angry and upset, just like you are. And also, you probably won't be very convincing because we very obviously that you're eating up with a, just a desire for payback. It's not good for you, it's not good for the process. Justice is something you do for the for other victims, sake for God's sake for the human community sake for justices sake. Even for the perpetrator sake.

Not just for your sake, whereas vengeance is all about you. And so I acknowledge in the book that that the idea of a a justice less my saying that right justice, less forgiveness. Forgiveness. That gets rid of the of pursuing justice. That's not typical. Just not right. Just not true. You know, by the way, they even give you a weird example. You might say, ah, when Moses sinned against God, remember when he struck the rock and got told not to strike the rock. Um God, didn't destroy him. God forgave him. But he says, you know what those consequences you you. You're not the guy to lead the children of Israel into the promised land. And somebody else is gonna do it. Very interesting.

It's like God was saying on the one hand I do forgive you, on the other hand you shouldn't be the guy who just that anymore. There's no consequences. Yeah. And, and so, for quite example, for a woman who was hit by her husband to say, I forgive you, I'm calling the police, I think you can do that. In fact, I think you must do that because you should not it's not good for anybody to let that sin against you. It's not good for anybody to let them sin against you, not good for their soul. And therefore, if your husband breaks the law like that and beats you, then you should call the police. But the hand unless you forgive, it's really going to harm.

the whole process you there's any chance of a feeling the marriage, you know. You got to do the forgiveness. Later on you might wish you had forgiven him because I really wish I had brought the marriage anyway, so it is you have to do both. I think biblically have to do both. You have to honor the civil magistrate, he broke the law is the same time you have to give Jesus a in, Mark 11:25 if you stand here praying, and you have anything against anybody, forgive them.

So I know we're coming up to the end of the podcast. But, you know, we've seen so many pastors fall and I think you're right, you accurately, diagnose it as almost instantaneous rias, you know, reappointment, in other words, there were no issues. Everybody said we're sorry. Sweep justice under the rug and on with it or you know you're banished in the wilderness until you die and

You're suggesting a different path, correct.?

**Tim Keller:** I believe the Scripture does show something like with Moses, in fact I've talked about this before when people have said, what does it mean if this man committed adultery with a member of his of his, ah, here's a pastor commits adultery with members congregation, which is both an abuse of power and sexual morality. Inside you're supposed to be, you know, obviously we're all sinners. Yes. Of course. God forgives me anyway. But you know that when when the Bible talks about the fact that elders are supposed to be given from given to hospitality, you say, well? Isn't that true of all

Christian's? Doesn't the Bible say all [inaudible] of be given out about the answer is yeah, but if you're going to be an officer, you have to be particularly [inaudible] And so the point is you do eat. There's nothing wrong with holding Christian leaders to a higher standard even if it's

something that you hold, even if it's everybody's supposed to be doing the same thing. So I would say frankly, if somebody does that, let's say it's the senior pastor, both four justices say can even for, I think the sake of just about everybody including the man, it's I mean I'm doing a male Pastor here right now I think either that person should leave the ministry or not ever be a Senior Pastor again. You know there's chaplaincies there's all sorts of ways to say well I still got

there's all sorts of ways that you might be able to stay but not to me. The thing is, mainly the leadership thing. You have, you broken, trust.

I think they will. I don't think they can't. I don't think they should because trust takes time to rebuild and I think will be a long time before people were really trusting. I don't think you should, you should put a church through that and so I was Would say yeah, forgive the man and an even make it pot, he might want to be restored to some kind of ministry but not the same kind of ministry. And I think most is a perfect example of that. A perfect example that God didn't actually take Moses out right away.

I think they will. I don't think they can. I don't think they should because trust takes time to rebuild and I think will be a long time before people were really trusting. I don't think you should, you should put a church through that and so I was Would say yeah, forgive the man and an even make it, he might want to be restored to some kind of ministry but not the same kind of ministry. And I think Moses is a perfect example of that. A perfect example that God didn't actually take Moses out right away.

He just basically said you. You can take them up to the promise land. But you're not gonna. You're not gonna be the guy to take them in. And I don't know why God did it that way. And you know he doesn't explain. And I don't think we have to try to divine that. But so yeah, I do think that that's both reconciliation restoration, compassion and forgiveness. Not like you're banished for ever and ever want to hear from you again. But at the same time, it's really not just go back. Starting with the church down the road. It doesn't make sense at all to do that. I don't think that's right.

Well there's so much more than what we were able to get into today Tim. But I want to thank you for your time. And we made it through a couple of Internet glitches and survived. So that's good. Um

if people want to follow your work these days. Where are you most active? And obviously the book *Forgive* is available anywhere books are sold. But where can they track with you these days online Tim?

**Tim Keller:** Find Gospel in Life.

Which I think at this point, is probably going to be released after January 1 of will be at this, Redeemer City to City website, but it won't be that hard to find, but you can put in Gospel in Life Keller. There it is. And that's the best. That's the best place to figure out what's going on.

Well, on behalf of so many people, thank you so much. Tim, I really appreciate you, really appreciate the time you've taken today.

Thank you.

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Well, I am so grateful for Tim and so grateful that he is doing well. In his medical prognosis and with his health. And I wish him many, many more years. And I am selfishly hoping, he continues to write and podcast and give interviews and think about the problems were facing today because he is a huge gift to this generation. I always say to people, you know who's going to be read a hundred years from now, people who are alive. Today, I'd put Tim Keller at the top of that list, rest of us, probably know.

Tim, yeah, definitely. Anyway, I want to thank our episode partners today. If you haven't checked out Generis man, they have a free pulse report that will show you what your donors are doing, way more than just the bottom line. And you'll get a 30 minute coaching, call from a team member for your church. Today go to [generis.com/carey](http://generis.com/carey) that's G-E-N-E-R-I-S.com/Carey and check out [Leadr.com](http://Leadr.com). Use the promo code Carey, you'll get 20% off your first year and start having way better one-on-one meetings with your team today. So you can get show notes for today's episode. And you'll probably want that because we linked to the well, now, it's a PDF, the article, he wrote on the decline and renewal of the American Evangelical Church and Mainline church. You can get that at [careynieuwhof.com/episode548](http://careynieuwhof.com/episode548) . And next episode, we've got Bill McKendry. So we have been talking about

the Super bowl ads. And He Gets Us campaign, their partner with us. And I was at a conference recently, and Bill McKendry is the guy behind that. And I talked to him. Here's an excerpt.

**Bill McKendry:** You know, one thing that drives me crazy about churches is they seem to kind of like borrow from secular, the secular world themes like, you know, the whole I saw for years, you know, got Jesus, you know. And and instead of Coke, you know, and number one is, you know, that's illegal. You're stealing somebody's intellectual property. You know, whenever too it's very unoriginal. And and people then start to look at the churches, unoriginal people and people that need to borrow from the business world because they don't have credibility themselves. And so you know that originality and that inability to really kind of say, hey.

Our business is about capturing people's Souls about bringing people to Jesus and saving them. Right? Why would we not take this anymore? Seriously, where than just borrowing somebody else's tagline?

I thought it was a fascinating story. I really wanted to bring it to you. Also coming up Andy and Sandra Stanley Craig groeschel John Mark, Comer John Lee, Dumas, we're doing all the John's with middle names, Gretchen Rubin, Irwin, McManus an e and e would Nathan finocchio and a lot more. And hey, It comes to pastoral succession at your church. We know that a bad transition ruins, a great legacy, and can make the incoming Pastor a sacrificial lamb. Well, that doesn't have to be your story. The Pastoral succession toolkit is available for free and it's your guide to discern your call to be a lead, Pastor understand your alignment with the church you'll be leading. It will show you how to negotiate your salary and time each of those steps carefully and get it for free. Courtesy of my team over at succession tool kit.com that succession to