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**Announcer:** The Art of Leadership Network.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast, it's Carey here and I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life and leadership. I'm excited to have JP Pokluda back on the podcast. I think this is the second time. We're going to talk ChatGPT and preaching, and the preaching process he uses. I've been asking a lot of communicators about this. I think communication is a superpower, particularly in light of the advances of AI because, you know, ChatGPT's okay. But hey, where's the human touch? Gen Z church and the virtues and vices of leaders. We talked about all that and a lot more. And so grateful. Make sure you check out today's partners: Gloop is revolutionizing the way your church communicates. If you want to start texting, they have a free service. Go to [get.gloop.us/texting](https://get.gloop.us/texting) to sign up today. And ServeHQ is changing how you can serve your volunteers.

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Well, I'm glad to have JP back.

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His name is actually Jonathan Pokluda but everybody calls him JP. He is the Lead Pastor of Harris Creek Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, former leader of The Porch where he saw the ministry grow from 150 to more than 7,000 young adults.

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I was there one, I think it was a Wednesday night or Tuesday night they do that.

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And yeah, you could not get a parking spot, it was incredible. He's the author of several best-selling books on adulting.

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And now has a brand new one that we'll talk about as well. And if you're new to the podcast, really, glad you're here.

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Here's what we try to do to try to help you thrive in life and leadership. Sometimes we bring you business leaders. I know a lot of you are church leaders, and then sometimes we bring church leaders to business leaders. So, we've got a diverse audience listening, and we're so glad to be able to serve you. One of the ways that you can help, because we bring this to you for free, is to give us a shout-out on social if you enjoyed this or any past episode.

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Hey Carey, thank you so much for having me on. I love your podcast. It's an honor to be a guest.

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Well, I appreciate you as a leader. It's been good to hang out in real life and hang out online and text, that kind of stuff. But I think last time we caught up here on the podcast, it was mid-pandemic and you said some stuff. I remember that episode just got a lot of downloads as leaders shared it. You were talking about redoing your messages for YouTube. I think it was one of your children who said, Dad, that's too boring, or whatever. Right? Always the kids who are the best thing, but I'd love to know, you know. Now we're back into a more normal world. What are you learning about preaching and reaching people? Have you pivoted back? Like what are you doing with your teaching that might be different than it was four years ago. Or did you just revert back to normal?

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**JP Pokluda:** Yeah, so what happened was in the pandemic, my kids loved watching these YouTubers and it was the flash frames the quick movement. You know, the entertainment, the words on screen, and as churches move into the homes I'm like

what can we learn from that and so I contracted with some YouTubers just to have them advise us and coach us and to see what we can do during the pandemic to stream into homes. And so now people have returned and this is interesting. Because I met about this, this morning. So at Harris Creek at our campus here in Waco, we are at capacity and so we have 1,100 seat auditorium and we're running three services. And there are about 120 to 125% full, actually on some Sundays 150% full. So we'll have

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So we'll have overflow, for 4-500 in overflow, on some Sundays into the commons, which is our lobby. So we're navigating those space issues. So here's the conversation that I had with the elders this morning is, can we ask people who are not in need of kids ministry to meet in their homes, together though, and stream the services and then have lunch afterwards and really spend the majority of Sunday together, like, would that be an experience, that would be conducive to the assembly that Jesus had in mind, the kind of home church idea. And so as we think about growth, we're exploring building, we bought some land. You know, the cost of construction that is just so high right now. Like, is there a smarter way to use technology?

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And so that's kind of the first answer to your question. And then I can go into, you know what we're doing to raise up communicators and preachers and thinking about those type of things. , some things.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** So let's go there, but just to clarify, so you're saying, watch the service at home if you don't have need of kids ministry and then gather later for like a meal or something like that? Would that be in homes or church-based? Or what would that look like?

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**JP Pokluda:** So we have a small group model. We call them life groups, you know, community groups, home groups, cell groups. Different people call them different things; the small-group model. And so any member of Harris Creek is in a small group. And so they're meeting, you know if they're they're married, they're they're meeting with four to six other couples on a consistent basis. If they're single, they're meeting with six to twelve other single friends on a consistent basis. That's

their life group. And so I'm asking the question, hey, what if we had life groups meet on Sunday in homes together?

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So you would say, hey let's have all of our life group go to John's house you know John has a theater room or a media room, we'll go up there. We'll all watch the service together and then we'll all share a meal we'll do a potluck in the kitchen afterward. We'll bring something and we'll all eat. We'll discuss the service, see what we're learning, and experience community, and there's a cost for always choosing your problems in leadership. There's certainly a cost to that model, but I think for some people in the stage of life that they're in that could be more conducive to a discipleship church experience than even coming and gathering corporately with the other members.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** You know, as someone whose kids are grown, that's actually rather attractive. And we're doing a version of that right now. We'll still attend in person, although we do have capacity issues right now too. But we are sharing a meal and then doing small group on Sundays, which is really cool.

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Okay, so then, and tell me, like, are you still doing a message straight to video for YouTube or you're streaming live, or what are you doing for the message on Sunday morning?

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All the above. So we're streaming live to YouTube to Facebook to the Harris Creek app, harriscreek.org. So we're streaming. we're doing the two morning services, our evening services is predominantly a college service right now. We're reconsidering that as well. But you know, something that's a distinctive of Harris Creek, is we want to be a communicator school. So a lot of churches will bring people in - communicator training school - churches will bring people in and they'll train up the resources and they're afraid to lose them though. You know, they hold them tightly. Hey, don't poach my people. I really want to be a sending church and traditionally that means a planting church. But no I'm more interested in church revitalization because I'm down here in the Bible Belt.

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There's a church on every corner. And, you know if somebody already has a building and a congregation, and a people, and a gathering space, what if we sent leaders into those places. And so all that means is losing resources to the right people that will give them authority and autonomy to lead as they've learned. And so that doesn't mean that we have the edge on leadership. I just, we've paid a lot of dummy tax along the way. I've learned a lot of things from people much smarter than me. And so we want to raise up these leaders. And so people are moving here that desire to learn about preaching and teaching. And then they kind of go into this preaching leadership school all in hopes to not be planted, per se, but actually to get a job at another existing church, hopefully, in a position of leadership, like a lead pastor job or senior pastor job.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** That's a great approach. How are you developing them? Are you putting them on the main stage, youth stages? What are you doing?

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**JP Pokluda:** That's right, so it's on-the-job training as you can imagine with ministry. So much of what they're doing is in small groups with pastoral care, learning how to counsel through the scriptures and lead through the scriptures. We gather every Tuesday as an entire staff where, you know, some of that's like a Q&A, they ask questions, and then on the Indication front, every Monday we start in a room. So I'm an extrovert. So I'm not this kind of like lock me in a room with commentaries. I love to prepare with people. There's about a dozen Proverbs that say wisdom comes from the counsel of many and so I want that to kind of carry my preparation or my sermon prep process. So we gather on Monday and we just talk about the message. Hey, what are we talking about? What does scripture speak into this? What is the passage? How do we want to break down this? Passage? What's an opening image I follow? And

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I follow an outline its; image, subject, need, preview, text, summary, conclusion.

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And so those are the first words that go on the word document and then we begin to fill in those blanks collectively. And then the communicator, let's say it's me.

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I leave there and then I just kind of think on that, see the world through that lens.

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And then on Thursday, I write the message. It's done by Thursday at 2:30. Thursday, at 3:00,

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I step onstage and I give the message to that panel of people, those developing communicators,

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for a grade 1-100. 70 is passing. And so they have the outline in front of them, they take notes on the outline, they then give me a grade and why, and then we do a play-by-play page-by-page feedback.

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And then I take that outline that they've spoken into and I and I reshape it and then preach it three times on Sunday. Now if one of them is going, they step into that process. So I will preach about half of the Sundays and I will give away the other half to them. If they've never taught before in their life, Carey, of course, we're going to start them on a smaller stage and give them other opportunities. Like you said, in students or just you know, the nature of the gathering. There's no shortage of opportunities to speak. But as they grow as a communicator, they will have an opportunity on Sunday to teach to the thousands that are here in person. But then also the thousands that are watching online.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Wow. That's a really interesting process. I've heard others do a similar thing. But that idea of, what does Tim Lucas call it. Do you know Tim from Liquid Church? He'll call it Gospel Hour, or something like that. Where he does a very similar thing.

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You're being critiqued, Craig Groeschel has a variation of that process.

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**JP Pokluda:** Craig and I have talked about it at lengths, recently, even so yeah.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Yeah. And what do you what are the benefits? Like how much better typically does a message get? I guess there's twofold to that. One, you know it's going to be evaluated so you probably do a better job up front, right? Like okay, I'm gonna have to at least get a 70%. I love that it's 70, not 90, because yeah, it's hard to hit 9 out of 10 every week. And then yeah, what does that do to the creative process? And also do you think the quality of the messages you're preaching?

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**JP Pokluda:** So I've been doing this for about 10 years and people initially have been very resistant to it. And so if you've never preached a sermon just to a fairly empty room but just a panel of critics for a grade.

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You know, it is a little nerve-racking, and especially if you tend to be a procrastinator, you have a little bit of a false deadline because it's like it has to be ready days before it really needs to be ready. There's not a chance. I mean they're just really is not a chance, and I've never seen it and I've now done it hundreds and hundreds of times. There's not a chance it doesn't get better. I mean the sermon is going to get better. It just it just always has. It had not one single time can I I think of a time it didn't get better. It's a simple idea. Are, you know, nine minds better than one operating in isolation? You know, nine people.

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I have older women there. I have younger women there.

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I have single people there.

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I have married people there, so different life stages.

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Different, you know, challenges different age groups. All the different demographics and they're speaking into the message, making sure that we hit, you know, kind of all of the different life stages that people are walking in, all the different challenges that they're carrying into the room. So they're there in addition to the communicators that we're training up. So, those communicators are learning, those



preachers and teachers are learning, just by the feedback that other people are getting. Two, it enforces humility. And so for the lead communicator, like he's, you know, he's walking in there or I'll say I'm walking in there. And these, you know, people who works for somebody, who works for somebody, who works for me, is just about to know, just tear me apart. And on some days they do. And it's a humbling thing and a sobering thing that I think is actually helpful.

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They'll they've helped with creative illustrations, they don't like that illustration. Sometimes it's a hey, let's move that here. I think you're closer is actually a better opener pay, I don't know that. That's what that verse is actually saying. I know this commentary over here says that, but I think a better understanding of that verse is this, those kinds of things, you know. They, go through that process and so it always gets better. The challenges that you're choosing with this model. Honestly, is you become dependent on it? And so, when you have to write a message without it, you feel a little bit like you're flying blind because it's like, all right, when's my run through and you kind of organize the whole week with the run-through, and it also, I won't say it takes more time, but it takes more time of other people who are not the primary Communicator.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** So, how do you not let that blow up your Friday and Saturday? Like, are you able to usually incorporate that Thursday by the time you head home for dinner, or how does that impact your workflow?

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**JP Pokluda:** No, I set it, you know, I set it on a shelf at Thursday, I don't touch it. I just let that feedback, I kind of leave it there and I go on about my life and I pick it up on Saturday for an hour and I see what stuck from that time, you know, I want the right things to stick. And so I took good notes to, but I just like, all right, what stayed with me, and then I make those adjustments and then redo it.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Are you still doing a direct to YouTube message? Or did that switch when everything went back live?

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**JP Pokluda:** We are, we're still doing a direct to YouTube message.'

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And when do you film that?

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Oh, maybe I don't understand the question.

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I meant, you're streaming direct to YouTube. But are you doing a separate like edited last version?

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**JP Pokluda:** Okay, no, we're not. I mean, that has turned into,

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What's happened since last we talked is reels, right? They've really blown up. And so we've we take those those snippets and we we cut them down to try to, you know, have the big teachable moments and make it onto reels. And then we'll pushed those through Youtube Shorts, TikTok and Instagram.

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Got it. Got it. Yeah. So that kinda took care of itself, didn't it, I guess in that way.

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**JP Pokluda:** I don't think it's a bad idea to take the message of some of it was the nature of, um, you know, our video editing resources. We lost a guy that was just really masterful in his ability to edit those. But then he moved on you still here. Still attends, but he's no longer in that position. And so some of it's just the demands of the day. As you know.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** I get it. I get it. You only have so much time. You only have so much energy, and you've got a lot of momentum and anything else you're changing or morphing as we speak, in your model?

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**JP Pokluda:** Yeah, you know, I'm asking, what is the role that technology is to play in this? And I know that you've been at the Forefront of asking that Carey, I know

that many leaders are asking that. I'm looking at VR. I'm watching ChatGPT and Ai, and I'm saying, okay, all of these things hitting for such a time as this, or at this time seem to have implications for the church and I'm just trying to be prayerful and understanding what they are. I don't want to be behind the curb. But saying that right now feels like you already are, you know, as it's moving fast, that train is moving fast.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** I mean by the time this airs or secondarily by the time someone listens to it months down the road, this could be a dated conversation. But for those who are listening in real-time have you tried ChatGPT, what are you seeing as possibilities? You know, strengths and weaknesses. I'm starting to use it and really finding it helpful. We can talk about that more but

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You know, as a creative it also feels threatening, right?

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**JP Pokluda:** Yeah.

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It feels like, and this may be so naive to say out loud, but it feels as big as the internet. I mean, it feels like that level of discovery.

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I had it write a sermon so not one

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Not one I had any intentions of preaching, but just to see if its capabilities. I said, hey would you write a three-point sermon on this verse?

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And it just spit it out in 20 seconds, and I thought man that is, wow.

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I think it could be really helpful right now in terms of when you get kind of creative block. So something to get you over that.

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I'm always hopeful that the creative's gonna win. Because you know, we're gonna figure out how to use the things that are a threat to creativity and use them to further creativity. And that's what I'm believing about for ChatGPT and AI in general. But you know, I could go to some weird places. I don't know where you wanna go on this podcast.

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Well we can go to some weird places.

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I mean, I'm happy to do it. I mean, I'm seeing it's utility right now, and to timestamp this, we're toward the end of February 2023 when we're recording this, where I'm using it for brainstorming, first drafts, and ideas. That's sort of the three big buckets.

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Brainstorming meetings. I'll give you an example. So, I often have to title posts I'm writing or emails I'm writing, or whatever. And we've all sat in creative meetings where we're like, alright, let's come up with a good title and a half hour later, you've got a couple of mediocre titles. Literally you can tell ChatGPT, "give me 10 headlines for a blog post on cynicism and church leaders that will convert well and rank in Google." Boom. I like you said, 18 seconds later, you've got 10. And whether you use one of the ten or not, I really love having those prompts because I'm like, oh, I never thought about calling it that, or yeah, that thought never occurred to me. So I might not use one of those.

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But it will launch me into something that I think could really convert or like, then you come down to two headlines and it's like, okay, which one has a better chance of converting in search, and it'll tell you, so you're not guessing, you know, it's almost like your Thursday night thing, but an AI version of it Thursday afternoon thing but an AI version of it. And I've done the "write a blog post on X" and honestly, it's pretty banal right now.

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I don't know what ChatGPT 4 is going to be but it might give me ideas I haven't heard.

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And then I turn it into my own words that's about as far as I've gotten with it. I have asked it just yesterday, actually I'm like, tell me about Carey Nieuwhof, and it was actually really good and really bad.

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Because it got my date of birth wrong. Yeah. Did it for my wife said she was born in the Netherlands. I'm like, where did you get that? There's nothing in her record. She was born in the US, lived in Canada. Got that wrong. It got, a friend of mine, it says he wrote a book. He hasn't written a book. I mean, so you can't rely on it for veracity at this point. But I mean,

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**JP Pokluda:** Google's only as reliable as the data inputs, you know. Google says I'm thirty-three years old. So I wish Google was right.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Are you gotta roll with that. I would just roll with it.

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What Google says. It's gotta be true.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Yeah. It's actually, ChatGPT has me two years younger than I am. Which is great. It's like, OK, but it's not true. So um, any other thoughts about AI, preaching, ChatGPT? We can go down that rabbit trail.

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**JP Pokluda:** I mean, I think the bottom line is, it is a game changer. And we have to be aware of it.

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Even. I mean, it's going to have overlap into our craft, and I don't think we need to be threatened by it. I mean, we, you know, we've read the back of the book and we know where this goes and God is sovereign over all of these things. But if there's a way, I have such a redemptive theology, and so anything that can be used for evil, it can be used for good. And I'm trying to run in front of these things and say, okay,

how can we use these for good while remaining above reproach and use these tools to further the gospel and build the kingdom.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Yeah, yeah. So, do you use it in sermon prep or you're just experimenting, right now?

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**JP Pokluda:** I've just experimented. I used it in similar to how you have. I was writing a blog on Valentine's Day and used it to kind of speak into that too, and it provided some facts. I was like, oh, that's a helpful line. Okay, so let me take that idea and work it into this into this blog. And like I said,

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just really right now trying to understand what his capabilities are.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Yeah. No, you know, but I think you're right. There's an inevitability to it. I never knew my grandfather well, who was from Holland, but my father said, he was born in 1899. So he never liked to use tractors on his farm. And the reason was he thought they weren't good for the environment. He thought they weren't good for the soil, so he used horses until maybe the 60s, or 70s, probably 60s, because he died in the 70s. You know what, he was right, but he was also wrong, because nobody uses horses today.

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Right? So you can fight it, or you can figure out how to cooperate with it. You can develop theology around it and you can hopefully use it for good. And I agree. You know where it's going. Go ahead.

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**JP Pokluda:** Francis Chan has a children's book about a tractor that they didn't know how to turn on. And so they would push the tractor and it's a metaphor for the church, as I recall, it's been a long time since I read it. But one day, someone found the manual to the tractor, and they were able to turn it on and see that it actually works for you. It's not this thing that you have to push uphill. And so as you share that story, that's what I think about is, you know, how do we have these tools work for us and use them just to further the mission that we're already on?

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** That's a really great metaphor. I haven't read that book. So this is your first time as a lead Pastor, right?

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**JP Pokluda:** Kind of eye towards the end of Watermark I was playing a lead Pastor role at my time at Watermark, and so, we were a multi-site, multiple campuses. I was there as the, you know, if it's okay to say primary or campus.

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The Dallas location.

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**JP Pokluda:** The first campus, and I was playing more of a lead Pastor role there in transition,

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What was your biggest surprise becoming a lead pastor?

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**JP Pokluda:** I think that, you know, the layer of protection is gone and so if someone's going to be on 60 Minutes, it's going to be you.

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And so, there is as I drove down 35, which is the interstate here.

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Moving from Dallas to Waco, it just felt like there was a covering that was being lifted off of me, and that doesn't sound super spiritual, but that is just, in my fear and insecurity, is what I felt in that moment. It just felt like, oh, I'm walking out from beneath my protection and man, you know, the responsibility, the weight of that, we stepped into some debt. And so even that, I just felt that on my shoulders, the weight of that debt. Like it was the first time ever that I had preached underneath debt and I understand the temptation that people would feel by, you know, not wanting to upset someone or to keep donors, or those kinds of things. And I just didn't want to fall into that trap. I wanted to be faithful, but I was seeing some of that temptation for the very first time.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** So I appreciate you sharing that, and anybody who hasn't sat in a senior leadership seat before, whether that's in ministry or CEO of a company. That's a very common response. And I came by it honestly. I mean, I started when I was thirty. So I almost never didn't have this job in one capacity or another. But yeah, there is that like, I know one woman has said publicly when she became a lead pastor, she felt like she had to write a note of apology to every pastor she's served under going, I didn't get it until now. Yeah. Like yeah,

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**JP Pokluda:** I relate to that for sure. I've apologized to a few people and just like man I did not understand.

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And I empathize for, you know, a senior leader I worked under many times now, because like I remember him having this frustration that I'm right in the middle of right now

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And now makes sense.

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So a lot of Christian organizations, churches, even companies, they struggled to reach the next generation. You've done so well in that area. What do you believe are some of the most effective ways to engage and disciple young adults, moving forward, and maybe how that's changed in the last 10 years.

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**JP Pokluda:** I'll give it to you in one word and I don't love this word because it's been overused. And as I say this word, I think people will think they know what it means and some will be right, but I think, I think some will mean something different than what I'm implying when I use this word. And so authenticity is the word. If you want me to put more synonyms around it transparency would be another and there's so much fake

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In church today and some of that comes from production. Some of that comes from a person, some of that comes from even the, the pressures. There you go. As a good 3p alliteration for pastors,

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well done,

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**JP Pokluda:** Production, person, the pressures of debt, and those kinds of things. And I just like, man, church is such an awful hobby. Like, this is not a hobby, if we were just looking for a hobby, like we should go race remote control cars, or fly airplanes, or, you know, whittle or something, but, but church is an awful hobby. And so, why get into the church and play games? And so with me, it's like, man, what you see is what you get, like this is who I am, it's who I am on the stage, off the stage. I don't want to manage perception, I don't want to pretend to be someone I'm not

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You know, and that for whatever reason, I think has attracted the generation behind me if you will. And that's the only offense I know to run. And I didn't come into this with a lot of church baggage. I grew up Catholic and when I became a Christian. Because I wasn't a Christian when I was Catholic. Just meaning I wasn't pursuing Christ. I didn't have a relationship with Christ. I didn't go to church in college. And then I was at a club 22 years ago where I began to hear the gospel and understand the grace of the gospel. And when I placed my faith in Jesus, you know, I was just like, hey, I just erased the whiteboard, like my deconstruction looked like, hey, I'm gonna forget everything I know. And just start over and start to read the Bible like I'm on a deserted island and try to understand who God is in this.

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And that just kind of allowed me to be, I think at a healthy place with God and understanding of the scriptures and a Biblical worldview. And so I'm just saying, hey, this is what God says, this is what I think he means, if you disagree with me, you know, as long as it's not that, you know, Jesus rose from the grave. Hey, there's a place for you here, we can, we can still be friends and I'm going to continue to read this book and try to explain it based on the best of my ability. You know, and be me be who God called me to be.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Yeah. Do you think and mean again we time-stamped this episode, Asbury, the revival there is still going on. You actually went there. Do you think that's a preview into Gen Z church or do you think it's more of an anomaly? It's really too early to say.

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But I thought hey that's kind of an interesting question.

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Yeah, I'll timestamp but even more and just say, we had celebrated Ash Wednesday today and we had stations of the cross in you know a 144-year-old Baptist Church in the country just for context.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** That doesn't do that kind of thing. It was basis.

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**JP Pokluda:** It was 6:30 in the morning. 6:30 a.m. and it was just all reflective no-frills, whatsoever. No band, no speaker, you walked in you grabbed a sheet of paper, and it was a self-guided tour and self-guided stations of the cross and reflective time. You received ashes and you could take communion

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And it was all young people, man. I couldn't believe it at six thirty in the morning. Now we are near Baylor University, obviously. And I I couldn't believe how many college students were here this morning. Just not what I was expecting. And then I had that thought about Asbury. And I do remember an article I read probably about a decade aid ago. The headline was, I think it was "millennials are getting high in church," you know. And and they were just talking about how the next generation, the play on words, they're high in church, was like liturgy, high church. And so there's something about the reflective nature of days past that I do see a longing for in this generation and Carey, I think what coincides with it is confession and repentance.

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And so with that authenticity and that transparency comes, you know, out of that comes a real dealing with sin and saying hey this is what I've done, and where I think we spent a generation in secrecy under the banner of confidentiality. So we

called it confidentiality but I think it was actually secrecy and we were permitted to keep things to ourselves or to ourselves and one other person. And what I think is going to happen in the church is you're going to see this purging of, hey this is what I've done and I do not care who knows. And my God Is bigger, and I think there's something really pure about that, that excites me, but that's what I'm seeing in the next generation. And some of what, even I observed there in Asbury.

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Yeah, any other Reflections on Asbury?

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**JP Pokluda:** Yeah, I mean I think it's a work of God and I'm not critical of it. You know, we call it a Revival, that name doesn't even bother me, you know, we're just using the best words we have. I don't think you can really label a Revival until you see the wake that is created from it, you know, the tail that comes from the Revival. So I would say only time will tell but this outpouring of the spirit seems as best I can tell authentic. And I would say firsthand as a follower, I've experienced it. And I just was in there, you know, I got inside and

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You want to experience God. And in so many ways, the desire to experience God is a distraction from actually experiencing God. And so I'm sitting there and I'm like, God, I want more of you. You know, I wanna experience you. I want to, I want to. What do I need to do? Put away my phone, open up my Bible, you know. And then he was just gracious to me. And I would say we started singing Agnes Dei and I got to, you know what I would say experience, you know, which. And I mean, that in a real, tangible, emotional sense, a personal sense. And so it was just something that filled my heart with the fruit of the spirit. And so I was encouraged. I was encouraged by what's happening. We came back to Waco. We moved our 7 pm service to Baylor's campus.

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And so, we met there on the lawn and Baylor and, and and worshipped and prayed, and that was all student-led I said, had don't even want to be out there. I don't want to preach out there. I just want it to be of the students and so some other pastors and I gathered behind it, and when I say other pastors, I mean, of other churches, we gathered behind it and we just prayed over those students as they were praying over that campus. And that's something I will say, you know, to those in ministry that are listening, there's a beautiful thing happening in Waco where we just have

such a great relationship with other pastors here. And so, there's not a competitive spirit, we're all for each other. We're locking arms, we're seeking to build the kingdom together, and that's been really fun, and really refreshing.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Yeah. So feels more decentralized. A little more organic, a little less produced. Yeah. And perhaps a bit less structured is what I'm hearing.

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**JP Pokluda:** Yeah. All of those things are true, consistent with my observations. It's not the way, and even the sermon, that Zach preached. And I'm not here to poke fun at anyone's sermon, he said, so I talked to him, Zack.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** This is the guy who preached leading into what became known as a Revival, right?

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**JP Pokluda:** That's right. He preached the sermon on love and he had taught 18 times in two weeks prior to that. So he just said, hey, I was done and didn't have anything left in the tank. I asked the Lord for something, I got up and I said what I sensed, where I sensed he wanted to go.

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And I listened to that sermon and it's not the sermon that I would've thought would've lead to a revival. And he, you know, again, I can say, he said that. I'm repeating his words, too. And it just goes to show man, man's wisdom only gets us so far. And we need, we have to walk in dependence. You know, we have to walk in dependence with our father.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** I think I read online that he said that was a stinker.

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Yeah.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Like, it didn't work, to his wife. He's like, yeah, because we all have that report when we're done, it's like, yeah, I shouldn't gotten up today, that often it's in those moments that God really uses it the most and other times we think we've crushed it, nothing.

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**JP Pokluda:** Nobody's there to talk. You wanna run another lap around the bases, and everybody's like alright I'm going home. Glad we went to church today.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** So you got a brand new book called Why Do I Do What I Don't Want to Do. Congratulations on the book. JP. Paint a picture, because I think it's a really good contrast of your life before you came to Christ, after you came to Christ. So you've already mentioned growing up Roman Catholic, club scene, and all that. But what was your life like prior to, you know, becoming a pastor and first being called to faith? I was raised in a small on a farm in a small town in the middle of nowhere, South Texas. And then I went to a two-year Technical College in Waco. And so I always say I crammed, you know, a lifetime of partying into those two years as running from God. God at this time was a kind of the sheriff in the sky that wanted to get me for doing something wrong and I was doing a lot of things wrong, you know, they say drugs sex and rock and roll and my case it was drugs sex and Hip Hop.

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**JP Pokluda:** I was raised in a small on a farm in a small town in the middle of nowhere, South Texas. And then I went to a two-year Technical College in Waco. And so I always say I crammed, you know, a lifetime of partying into those two years. I was running from God. God at this time was a kind of the sheriff in the sky that wanted to get me for doing something wrong and I was doing a lot of things wrong, you know, they say drugs, sex, and rock and roll, and in my case it was drugs, sex, and Hip Hop.

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It really thrives on entrepreneurship, because there's not really landscape there. There's no bodies of water or mountains like you're there just to make money. And so I live in a penthouse condo, drive a Jaguar, wear a different suit every day. Different watches to go with the suits. And I'm in the club on the weekend, you know, getting bottle service and whatnot. And um, somebody invites me to this church. I sat in the back row, hung over, I smelled like smoke from the night before,

and I really started wrestling with, who is God? Because I thought if I was born in India I'd be Hindu, If I was born in China I'd be Buddhist, If I was born in Iran I'd be Muslim. If I was born in Israel, I might be Jewish. And so, what are the odds I'd be born to the right area to come to the right faith?

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And so I had this bias against Christianity, but as I explored it, I kept tripping over this character in history named, Jesus Christ that I knew of, obviously. But I never realized like, he had reset the calendar that 2023 years ago, every atheist, I know acknowledges him by the date on their iPhone. And I was like, man, how did this Carpenter born in Bethlehem, a town I wouldn't even know of except he was born there. Who lived in Nazareth, another city I wouldn't know of, except he lived there. How did he become the single most polarizing character in the history of history? And I realized it's because he came back to life. He died and came back to life. And when he died, I realized I was a payment for all the things, you know, my sexual addiction, my drug use, my alcoholism, my materialism, my pretentiousness, my narcissism, all of those things, he was paying for those things so that I didn't have to pay for them in eternity. I trusted my life to him and everything began to change in that moment. I mean, for it is by grace you have been saved through faith. It's not of yourselves. The gift of God. It was a gift of God.

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mmm-hmm.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** So big contrast. I'd love to, know once you became a Christian and particularly stepped into Christian leadership. What was the hardest cice to give up?

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**JP Pokluda:** Yeah, so when I became a Believer, some of the things went away right away, like my language. So I cussed like a sailor at the time and it just like, I don't know. There was just a heavy conviction on that. Things like pornography were slower to die. Now in the business world, you know, nobody cares, doesn't matter, you know, it's like you go to the strip club to close deals. I mean, that was a common practice at the time. You would take people there. You'd entertain clients.

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But in Christianity, now, it's like those things, people are praying for me. I'm finding healing, but you're still in corporate America and so, Carey, I would tell

you, now I've been to the jungles of Africa. I've been to the jungles of Brazil. I mean, I've gotten on a boat, gone six days down the river to get off to a tribe that we were told had never heard of Christianity. I've been to Haiti, rural Haiti, up in the mountains Haiti. Different parts of Mexico. The darkest mission field I've ever seen is in Corporate America.

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**JP Pokluda:** I mean, you know greed was just so tangible there. Like everything we did was for the bottom dollar, there's no heart there. I mean I tell people that I work with in ministry now that that are not always professional, you know, they'll be late or something. I'm like you don't you can't get away with that in Corporate America because they don't care. You know, the big Corporation isn't concerned about your two-year-olds, you know, whatever. And so I think that's the biggest one, greed, the pursuit of comfort, and you know, the game, the perception management game, the entitlement is so, like you feel owed. I mean, people would just get so upset because they felt owed something. So, those are the things that are so prevalent there.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** How does greed show up in ministry? Because you took, like a lot of people, a huge pay cut to get into ministry, right? You're right about that. It was like a 90% pay cut. You're making a tenth of what you made incorporate almost to start.

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**JP Pokluda:** Yeah, man. I mean

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It's not, just like, in the business world, it's not everywhere. Meaning there are people with pure and right intentions and I would say in ministry, you know, it shouldn't be anywhere, but it still is, and I think one of the greatest evils in the world is this deal ministry leaders strike where they're like, "hey you show up and let me entertain you, and you keep the lights on and I won't, in exchange, I won't ask much of you." And I'm like man that's not the church and that's not going to work and we're going to end up in a story like in Revelations, you know. Ephesus or something. We can't do that. And so, I think there's a greed. You know, we have a deep desire for followers today, and especially in an age of social media. We have a deep, there's a greed for people and I think we can focus on stealing people from other ministries.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** We want our church to be growing. Yeah, yeah,

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**JP Pokluda:** Church growth can be an idol. And then there's the financial greed. I mean, you see it today in the church.

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More than I ever have. And it's not reserved to particular denominations anymore. I mean, it really has bled into every denomination where it's like, hey, if you are one of the the top leaders there should be particular privileges that go with that. Some of those are right and holy, some of those are real, the ungodly and unholy.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** How do you know which is which?

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**JP Pokluda:** I don't know that you can by yourself because we can be so self deceived and the nature of a blind spot as you can't see them. That's where that transparency comes in. And so I've got to have guys in my life that they know what I make. They know what I give. They know what I spend. I process big buying decisions with them. Today I texted them about a car. You know, I was like, hey, you know, I was on the waiting list for this vehicle and it became available today, and was just like, hey, guys, is this still a good idea? Like here are the specs, here's what it costs.

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Here's where we're at financially right now. Is this still a good idea? Is this going to inhibit our ability to be generous, you know, how much should I be concerned about the perception and like, asking those kinds of questions of those people. So, I don't know that we can tell on our own. That's where I think those dozen Proverbs that say wisdom comes from the council of many everything in the scripture that's pushing us to real accountability, we have to have, we can't be self-deceived.

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We don't want that.

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Like every listener right now, there's a part of your heart that doesn't want that and you will fail. You're going to climb to the top and it's going to drop you to your death if you don't have people in your life who will tell you the truth, you have to have, and it can't be these one-off phone calls and you know in a singular text here and there. It needs to be a consistent group of people that you're meeting with on a consistent basis so that they're all hearing the same things at the same time, and they're able to feed off each other's feedback and learn from each other.

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And then I'll go one step further. I think it's even better if those people are different than you. And so like, meaning, they just think differently. They're wired different, you know, their personality types are different. I learn the most from people who don't think like I do. And so I try to always make sure that I have, you know, that really structured person around me cuz I'm not naturally the most structured person.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Yeah, let me ask a little bit more about that because I think that is a great principal. And I think you're right, we all have random friends we'll bounce stuff off of, but to have a board so to speak, on the other hand, JP, we also live in an age where people create fake boards, you know? It's like these are the rubber stamp people, and I realize you're not talking about something structural, you're talking about something more organic.

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But, you know, I can think of four people who would say, yeah, buy whatever car you want.

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And then other people who would say, oh, no, you should buy like a ten-year-old used car. How do you go about selecting people who would be varied enough that you would get a more reflective answer? And then that would still tell you the truth.

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**JP Pokluda:** And then other people who would say, oh, no, you should buy like a ten-year-old used car. How do you go about selecting people who would be varied enough that you would get a more reflective answer? And then that would still tell you the truth?

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Man, the person that's most valuable to me. Back up and I'm gonna say there is a structure to it. So I am talking about, you know, formalizing this. I don't think these are different groups. It's a consistent group that you meet with on a consistent basis and sure like anybody can build this, you know, cardboard board.

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**JP Pokluda:** Yeah. This echo chamber of "yes people." Sure you can do that. That's not good. That's gonna be a complete and total waste of your time. And you're gonna, that's gonna fall in the bucket of perception management. And there's a harsh warning for you in Acts chapter 5, is what I'd say.

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But for me, you who is most valuable to me, I say, valuable in air quotes like meaning they're most beneficial, is someone who understands the word of God, you know, they fear God, they walk closely with God, they yield his spirit, and it comes out of their life like that, you know, it's almost like I'm looking for the holiest people I can, to be that, and holy people come in all shapes and sizes, and different backgrounds and personality types, you know? And so it's where I can get diversity in those kinds of things, great. But for me, I want someone who walks closely with the Lord, you know, and some of that's going to be in and out of seasons and the older, you get the more you realize,

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Sometimes life kicks you in the teeth, you know, and sometimes you're on the mat and people have to carry you, sometimes they're on the mat, and you have to carry them, but I find those guys, and then I assemble that board and we call it a life group at Harris Creek. And then those are the guys that I'm meeting with every single week. And in fact, we meet twice a week and we're on a group text and that's the guys that I sent that group text to is like, hey here's the truck that's ready, here's what it costs. You know, here's our situation. What should I do? Do you know?

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And is that mutual? Do you all bounce each other's stuff off? Or is that like a personal board? That's great. That's a great question. It is mutual. And so and I think that's, yeah, that's probably a big difference. Then then maybe I was portraying

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**JP Pokluda:** That's great. That's a great question. It is mutual. And so and I think that's, yeah, that's probably a big difference than maybe I was portraying. This is not like, hey, they exist for me. This is we exist for each other. And so when they're, and it's interesting because not one of those guys, none of them are in vocational ministry. Now, that's not by design it's just happenstance. And so you know it's helpful. Because I get to give them, you know, they're building companies and selling companies and doing business and consulting and all those things. And I get to speak into that sometimes, too, which is fun. Oh. Interesting. It sounds a little bit. Like what? John Mark comber has done in creating a little Council or group for himself. So you. Um I would say, you know, here's another tough personal question of all devices that linger to this day.

[00:51:50.500]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Oh. Interesting. It sounds a little bit like what John Mark Comer has done in creating a little council or group for himself. I would say, you know, here's another tough personal question. Of all devices that linger to this day.

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Yes. So if I walk you through the progression of my life like so initially, when I became a Believer, kind of go back to the question, you asked earlier initially, like lust is the one that lingered, and you was a pitfall that I would be constantly and consistently tempted to fall into. As I kind of progressed in Corporate America and I had people praying over me in that area, then it became materialism. I feel like I got swept up in the current of Dallas, which is really just the current of our world. And I wanted, you know, trinkets and treasures and stuff and status. And all of that felt like materialism.

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I continued to, you know, then went into ministry and it was a different kind of like whack-a-mole, different things would pop up, you know, at different times and, you know, pride I think, is one as people start to listen to you. You know, and they say, oh well now we're going to give you a microphone and want you to talk to us and tell us what to do. Oh wow, it's so easy to get puffed up and ego is taking out many a

pastor And I think what's interesting though, as I have thought about it and reflected in creating this resource is, sometimes it's like whack-a-mole man, in seasons.

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And it can be just like, oh, this one shows up. And so in the book, you know, we kind of talk about the ancient battles as you mentioned. And then the modern wars. And so, in list form it's you know, pride, anger, greed, apathy, and lust. Those are the ancients, and in the modern ones are perception management, entitled, busy-ness, drunkenness, and cynicism. And so they all have counterpart virtues. So if those are vices in the vice category, they have counterpart virtues, and the reason I think that's important, and I know your audience is predominantly leaders, is a lot of times, you know, in as leaders, we talk about competency. But I think most of us would agree that character is even more important. Any competency has to be built on a solid foundation of character.

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And when you're talking about competency, it was Marcus Buckingham I first heard, you know, "put your strengths to work," don't focus so much on your weaknesses, focus on what you're great at and build a career and opportunities out of what you're great at.

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Well, what if the character aspect is similar? I think in the church, we can focus so much on the don'ts, so don't do this, don't do this, don't do this, don't do this. But what if we focused on the do's? And we said, do become this, grow this in your life, focus on growing this. So in like lust, Instead of fighting lust, if I grow self-control. Instead of fighting greed, if I grow generosity, you know, what does it look like for me to become a bigger giver and more generous with those around me, and rather than focus on, you know, the defense, I go on offense and I live the abundant life that Jesus calls me to.

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And I think that is transferable to any work organization, whether it's in ministry or in the corporate world for leaders because anyone who leads teams, you want to make sure your team is all practicing character. Otherwise, you know, any one of them could sink the ship and as we're training up those leaders, I think this has been an effective way, is like, alright. Hey, focus on the virtue. What is the counterpart virtue to the vice that we can pursue and grow in the virtue?

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** So, greed is generosity, right? As a virtue. And so you know, the more generous you become the less greedy you become. I find that too. I like to write checks that hurt, you know what I mean? I don't write checks anymore, but you know what I mean.

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Yeah I know what you mean. Swipes.

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**Carey Nieuwhof:** Whatever digitally, like to transfer money that hurts. I think that's a really good antidote and then live considerably below means is good. Anything else on greed that you wanna touch on?

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I mean, it's just another form of lust. You know, we always think of lust in the sexual sense. But it's wanting things that you don't have and man, it feeds discontentment. And um, and so we talk about entitlement in the book, which, again, these are kind of like a really complex Venn diagram, they all have overlaps. And so the opposite of entitlement is gratitude. And I say, gratitude turns what you have into enough, which is also a way to combat greed. And so I'm not just wanting to present to you and rub the reader's nose in their struggles. I'm wanting to give you a solution for each of these struggles, which I think is actually a pretty comprehensive list.

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Meaning, what I've learned in 16 years of ministry, and I'm curious if you agree, is it's not really a long list of things that take people out. It really is a, it's a smaller list of things, hey, if you're going to self-destruct, it's probably going to be one of these 10 things. And so if that's true man, then identifying those ten things and understanding which one I'm most susceptible to, that's invaluable to finishing the race, which we all want to finish the race. You know, none of us want to self-destruct.

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I agree. I think the big three, and your 10 are subsidiaries of it, sex, money, and power, it's sex, money, and power.

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You took stuff that didn't belong to you.

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That's completely inappropriate non-consensual. It's money:

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And you're right, you know, I've done a million funerals.

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You took too much. You were unfair. You were not transparent. Or it was power, right? Abuse of power, bullying, absorption of power, lack of accountability, it sex, money, power, sex, money, power.

[00:57:23.600]

And sometimes they lie about it. It's really good guy. No. Sometimes, you know, you meet with families and it's like no, dad was a jerk. or

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I think I wrote about this in Didn't See It Coming. But when someone's lying in a casket, or you've got their ashes in an urn, and the families gathered around, nobody pulls out a resume. Everyone talks about your character.

[00:58:20.500]

And sometimes they lie about it. It's really good guy. No. Sometimes, you know, you meet with families and it's like no, dad was a jerk.

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Or he really blew it when he cheated on mom, that destroyed our family, or he was selfish. You know, you hear these stories. Then you gotta make up some sanitized version, as sanitized version of the truth as you can for the funeral service. But like, that's all your kids are going to care about. And at the end of the day, all these people who follow you, follow me. They're not going to be at our funeral.

My wife's gonna be at my funeral, my kids are going to be at my funeral, my friends are going to be at my funeral. The community I've been a part of for 25 years is going to be at my funeral. All the other stuff. That's all going away.

So you did talk about rest and burnout, which is a really personal subject for me. Ah. What? Tell us your thoughts on rest and burnout in leadership.

[00:58:20.500]

Yeah. Man that Minister sobering, but for such a time as this. Thank you.

[00:58:20.500]

So you did talk about rest and burnout, which is a really personal subject for me. Ah. What? Tell us your thoughts on rest and burnout in leadership.

[00:58:57.300]

Well, I've learned a lot from you, I will say that. I think that, you know, we can disagree on some of these things or have a great discussion on them. I think that burnout often comes not from doing too many things, like doing too much, but doing too much of the things you weren't made to do. And, you know, one of the, one of the things I learned from you is even like when you do it matters, like the time of day and when you have the most energy. And so I've learned a lot of that just from the resources they have in your life.

[00:59:00.500]

How did that play out in your life, like, I'm curious. I'm always a student.

[00:59:05.500]

When someone applies that principle like, you know.

[00:59:05.000]

And so I just feel like my brain gets really active when the sun gets down goes down and so it's changing seasons. Carey because right now we have little ones. In the house. I say little.

[00:59:17.000]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Oh you're a night owl?

[01:00:03.000]

**JP Pokluda:** And so I just feel like my brain gets really active when the sun goes down, and so it's change and seasons, Carey, because right now we have little ones. In the house. I say little.

[01:00:29.600]

Students and basketball practices and baseball practices. And so I've and I'm, and I'm trying to figure out and I'm in the season where I'm really, I've been thinking a lot about this, even this week, is how do I make sure they get my best, you know, which is another thing that you've addressed through the years and so like, what does it look like for me to make sure that I don't just deplete all of my energy, in the professional environment and come home and give them the scraps. And so I've always, you know, on own my best days, I'll take time to transition in the car just to stop for a minute, think, and and and I noticed times where I get home and I'm on a call, you know, and have to go, and my kids are at the window waiting for me to get off the call that those those days don't go as well as when I have that transition period, you know, to move into that.

[01:00:38.000]

And so, the other thing is, it's not early morning. But morning, kind of that 10 am, is a really productive time for me. And so that's something. Just an auditing of what you created. And so I try to put, meetings drain me a ton. And so I try to, you know, strategically place those in the right times of the day. And have the more fun, engaging, creative meetings at that that ten am slot.

[01:00:46.900]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** So you're a go, go, go, go, go guy, have you had a period of burnout in your life? Or if not, how have you avoided it?

[01:01:43.400]

**JP Pokluda:** Yeah. Six or seven years ago. I mean, I hit a wall at a hundred miles an hour.

[01:02:39.000]

For sure I mean, it's why I know you. You know, it's like, you're desperate for resources and people are like, "read Carey." Sure, man. I mean I you know, all of the things. I'd just written a book. I had just started speaking, so I always had this job that I always had which was just working for the church, just working for the church. Now, I'm an author and now I'm a speaker and I'm trying to manage all of that. Plus, you know, our kids are at At a busy age and marriage, and all of those things at once, it was just like I was carrying a load that I wasn't strong enough to carry and everyone, you know, all my professional life people said oh he's so high-capacity, he's high-capacity, he's high-capacity. I felt like my capacity got cut and there was like an eighth of it left and we're one day I could carry, you know, a



hundred pounds. You know, the next day I could carry just much, you know, significantly less.

[01:02:55.900]

And I couldn't sleep panic attacks, anxiety. I had taught on anxiety, but in hindsight, I had really, I was really teaching on worry, because this, this thing was a whole different animal. And, and my heart started. Skipping beats literally, like, like physically. I messed up my heart. And so, I had to go to the hospital and I was just like, I remember sitting. There is like, man, something is wrong with me, and they hooked me up to this EKG machine and they're measuring my heart and they say, yeah, you know there's some PVC PCS and Pa sees premature ventricular contractions and I'm like, can you fix it? And this this ER, doctor looks at me and she says, no but you can. And I'm like what do I got to do? And she's like, a whole lot less than what you're currently doing, you know. And I'm like, okay, you know. And so that was a big wake-up call.

[01:03:26.900]

I was 36 years old and I was driving down the road. My left arm went completely numb. And I thought I was having a heart attack. And I was like, this is it, man. I don't get to walk the girls down the aisle like I'm donezo. And it was all related to that.

[01:03:30.100]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** It's amazing. You know that whole line you said about everyone said you're super high capacity. And that's the thing about burnout, is you're super high capacity until the day you're not. And it gets taken away from you. And it sounds like we had very parallel experiences. Almost overnight went from, you know, sixty to zero. What have you done in the last six years to guard against that? Because it's not like you're carrying less. You could argue, you're probably carrying more right.

[01:04:22.500]

**JP Pokluda:** Yeah, I would.

[01:05:05.200]

You should have told me we were going to talk about this, Carey. Nah I'm just playing. I love it, man. I do. I, in part, and honestly, I moved to Waco, Texas. And I took over a church of 400. The first time I taught here, Carey, was, you know, there were 425 people here.

[01:05:19.500]

That was easy, but lasted about 4 minutes.

[01:05:21.400]

And everyone and everyone said, and everyone said, "man, I bet you don't miss the traffic in Dallas," and I thought, man, there's no, I don't remember traffic in Dallas. I mean, I lived, you know, two miles from the church and I just, I never really remember complaining about the traffic. I drive back into Dallas today and hyperventilate. I'm like, where did these people come from? You know, and so there was just something to changing the pace. I removed responsibilities.

[01:05:55.000]

I became very okay at letting people down. There was something for a long time where I just didn't want to let anyone down. And I was I mean, I remember in the middle of all this, I'm preaching at Saddleback and they're in this, some kind of Heroes series, Heroes of the faith I think. And the guy goes up and he's like "man that guy," like he was talking about me and said some kind things and he was like, "he's Superman. He looks like Superman." The person who was doing announcements and I just, you know what? I am not Superman. That's what you need to know is, I'm a chump from Cuero, Texas, with an associate's degree in art from a college you've never heard of.

[01:06:38.100]

And I'm a servant of Jesus and man, I'm going to let you down. I'm going to say the wrong things. I'm gonna do the wrong things. I'm not going to get things done. I'm not going to get things done on time, and I'm going to be as excellent as I can. I know excellence honors God. I know it inspires people. But I'm gonna be as excellent as I can, and then I'm gonna sleep well at night. I'm gonna live for first and foremost, Jesus Christ. And then I'm gonna live for the people that are gonna be there at the funeral. And ah, you know, if you're not even in the running of people that might carry that box that I'm in forever, or at least my body's in, then I'm going to be okay disappointing you. And yeah, that's gotta be okay.

[01:07:04.000]

You also talk about margin. I'd love to take on margin.

[01:07:06.700]

Yeah, margin is helpful, right? And it's, and it's like, it's kind of the yeah, of course, like if I have space to do whatever I want, like that is absolutely going to be beneficial. There's just some seasons where it's not realistic. And so I say, you know, under the banner of letting people down, there has to be a list of priorities. He's so where I find myself and where margin is difficult is there's always more to do than time. You know? So it's like the margin I have is not real. I mean, I can create time and space for myself and to myself.

[01:07:27.500]

But I'm really just delaying things that I need to do, because they're, they're not going away, they're still there, and there's always more to do than time. And so then I have to say, all right. What are my priorities? And that's been helpful to me, is to think in terms of priorities, rather than margin. What are my priorities? And what am I oka not getting done today, so that I can run at a sustainable pace.

[01:07:40.300]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** You know, it's challenging. We're in the process of hiring an EA for me and in the interview I just said, basically, you're going to be saying no all day long. Like, that's the hard part. We have so much inbound. How do you feel about that? And we want you to do it in a really thoughtful, not just like, sorry. But like you know, and the person we're looking at is super compassionate, etcetera, etcetera.

[01:08:06.400]

But there's a part of me too. That is still hard. Is it still hard for you to let people down to say no? I've got an email in my inbox now that I got to go back and say, I just don't have time to connect. I'm not going to make the time, man.

[01:08:26.900]

I don't know why, it is so hard. It is so hard. But I think even that is, there has to be a prioritization. I think as your leadership quotient grows, you get really good at the short form email. You know the response that expresses the heart that I really want to be able to do this, I just can't. And I'm sorry. And man, thank you for understanding. But yeah, it's still very hard.

[01:08:34.200]

Yeah. It is tough, but you know what I intentionally build margin into my calendar now. Yesterday morning, a great example. I had nothing on the clock for the first six hours. And I'm like, oh, good, I can stretch. I can imagine, but inevitably, crises come

in. And I had a call from a guy that I coach. And he's like, I got a meeting in an hour and blah blah blah, and again, I coach like two people.

[01:08:43.200]

So it's so small, right? But I'm like, I got time for that. But if you're if you're scheduled to the wall, you don't have time for that.

[01:08:59.700]

**JP Pokluda:** Yeah, I mean that's the challenge I find with margin is there's always something competing for it and so I have to think in terms of priorities.

[01:09:19.900]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** So I've seen ride take out a lot of leaders. You've seen it, you write about it. It's a daily struggle for me, trying not to take credit for the things that God is doing in my life or through our ministry, or whatever. How do you spot? Pride in, what do you do to tackle it?

[01:09:53.700]

Yeah. When I think in terms of it and I don't know if this is what you mean, when you say spot it, it's almost like, how do you see it when it shows up? And I would say it's always there. That's the thing for any leader, like, for anyone with responsibilities pride, is always there. You just have to identify it and keep it in check.

[01:09:55.700]

And the biggest time, you know, it's when you don't realize it's there, it's when you stop thinking about it being there, that's when it gets you. That's when you're short in the meeting, that's when you respond out of anger, that's when you cope in one of those ways, that's not above reproach. Those are the ditches and so I think it's like, okay. I know that it's there. How do I find where it is? Because it's already there. It's not that it's just pops up, it's like, okay, it's there.

[01:10:15.700]

And and so they they're quick to show me where it is. My wife is also such a gift to me in that way, you know, shoot. She's very humble, and she's just such an agent of Grace to me. And she's quick to say, hey, I don't. I don't think that's your best moment in the way that you just responded to to one of our kids are in in what you said, Ed. From the stage like, hey, I would. I would tweak that. I would change that.

Um or even ask me better questions. Like what's going on in your heart right now? That that's how that's coming out. Because out of the heart, the mouth speaks. And so you've got to have people in your life. You know, woe to the man who falls and no one's there to pick them up. You know, Solomon says you have to have those folks that will help you identify it. And then so many of our other responses are just symptoms out of pride. Like I said, when we when we were short and anger when we're seeking vengeance, when we're fantasizing vengeance in our head.

[01:11:09.400]

And how do I manage that? And so for me again, back to those guys that board of directors community, that life group, I'm meeting with them on a consistent basis. They're not impressed with me, Carey, like don't care. And in some ways I am a burden to them, you know, because of what I do.

[01:11:36.000]

And so they're quick to show me where it is. My wife is also such a gift to me in that way, you know, she's very humble, and she's just such an agent of grace to me. And she's quick to say, "hey, I don't think that's your best moment in the way that you just responded to one of our kids, or in in what you said from the stage. Like, hey, I would. I would tweak that. I would change that." Um or even ask me better questions, like hey, what's going on in your heart right now that, that's how that's coming out. Because out of the heart, the mouth speaks. And so you've got to have people in your life. You know, woe to the man who falls and no one's there to pick them up. You know, Solomon says, you have to have those folks that will help you identify it. And then so many of our other responses are just symptoms out of pride. Like I said when we're short in anger, when we're seeking vengeance, when we're fantasizing vengeance in our head.

[01:11:52.400]

When we're wanting to buy something that we can't afford or shouldn't buy because it's just going to feed a materialistic heart. So much of that is just coping for this age-old struggle of pride. C.S. Lewis says, "pride is the sin that made the devil, the devil." And I think it sits underneath all of our other struggles. All of our other habits, and we got to know that it's there. And we got to find out where it is in that particular season in that day.

[01:12:13.400]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** I'm so glad you talked about perception management too. I'm not sure our parents really thought a lot about perception management. If you made a

mistake, you apologize to the person you made the mistake to and you moved on with your life. And now, you know, social media has amplified it.

[01:12:50.500]

To the point where you say one thing slightly the wrong way and it blows up online or you got thousands of people following you and they're like ugh, you know, and so there can be a real tendency to want to manage your image. What do you have to say to leaders about perception management?

[01:13:39.700]

I think it's one of the greatest evils in the church today. And if you look in Acts, The Acts of the Apostles in the scriptures, you're seeing miracles and massive gatherings, and momentum, if I was to say, in one word, you see momentum. 4,000 people saved, 5,000 people were saved, you know, Peter preaches the gospel and this happens, it's just momentum, momentum, momentum, momentum. And then you have this couple and Ananias and Sapphira, and Barnabas has just sold a field and he brings the money and he lays it at the apostle's feet.

[01:13:50.800]

And then this couple, they see him get all of this praise and accolades. And they say, man, we want that. And we want that praise. And so let's sell a field and bring the money at the apostle's feet. At least we're going to make it look like that's what we did. When really we're going to withhold some money back. And so they lie out of a desire of managing perception. And what you see in the Scripture is this massive halt, like all things come to a screeching stop. And speaking of funerals, they both die. Right there. And it is the harshest warning. It's like God, it is saying something to us. Hey guys, don't play this game. Okay? So you might get canceled for being real.

[01:14:30.300]

But we're called "Christians." Little Christ's. That's what we are. We're little Jesus'.

[01:15:11.200]

Like Jesus got canceled in the most heinous way; on the side of a road, nailed to two pieces of wood, to his death. You know? And so it's like we shouldn't be confused when people are upset at us when we're transparently following Jesus. And you mention parenting and I spent, you know, I spent over a decade with the results of parenting, like, young adults. Tens of thousands of young adults, I had a front-row seat of watching their lives, and you know, so much of ministry is pattern recognition.

[01:15:54.800]

And I can just tell you, the parents that that were authentic? They made disciples, the parents that were like, Hey, we're going to go to church on Sunday, and kids will know what's going on. Like, you know, they'll read between the lines. Oh, we're playing a game. We want to show them. We want them to think that we're spiritual, but when we go to lunch afterward, no one's sharing the gospel with the server. We're not really inviting other people to our table, we're not sharing our home and our resources. The kids that came out of homes where the parents did that, were just different, Carey, to a person. Like it was one of the clearest patterns.

[01:16:02.500]

Parents who lived out their faith authentically, their children were drawn to that faith and lived at are authentically. Parents that were managing perception around faith, they raised kids who deconstructed, left the faith, went somewhere else. I'm not trying to shame anyone, because there's always hope. And hope for prodigals. And I was a prodigal, you know, and we take way too much credit when our kids turn out good, and way too much responsibility when they don't. But I'll just say. this perception management thing is serious. And we need to take it serious. And we need to stop it if we're in involved in it?

[01:16:13.400]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** So what would you say to the leader who is very carefully curating an image, managing perceptions.

[01:16:47.800]

Trying to make sure that they come across in a certain way? Because I see that online every day. What's the answer? Just like, yeah. What's the answer?

[01:17:45.700]

**JP Pokluda:** The outcome that you want? Your desired outcome? It's not sustainable and there's a way to get it faster. But there are risks. And so here's what I mean you can manage perception and you can build an empire but you can't do it forever. And the empire's going to come crashing down and when it does, it's going to be loud. But if you just, instead of doing that, be who you are authentically,

[01:18:30.500]

People are going to be drawn to that authenticity. Certainly, the next generation is going to be drawn to the authenticity. At times, you're going to be misunderstood

leadership, is a commitment to being misunderstood. At times, you're going to be misunderstood. At times, they're going to say you were too honest. That's all going to happen. Those are the problems you choose with this path. But it's obedience and then I'll just say also, and in some ways, this is a contradiction to what I just said, but you can't determine obedience by the outcome. And so, I'll say two things. I'll say it works. But even if it doesn't work, it's still the right thing to do. So it just so happens that it does work, it is strategic. But even if it didn't, don't sell out, you know, what does it forfeit the man to, what does it profit a person to gain the whole world and forfeit their soul, you know.

[01:18:42.400]

I think the thing, I get asked that question a lot about, you know, how do you build a platform online? And I think you know one of the pieces of advice I always give. I don't want to quote Oscar Wilde too much. But "be yourself, everyone else is taken," and there's enjoy at this stage in life to be able to choose what I do, to have me just show up and do these conversations, like there's not really a gap between public and private. You get a good view in my life if you follow me on Instagram, and that's sort of what you get. And maybe I could be better if I was carefully marketed and sculpted or whatever. But you know, it also helps you sleep at night. So I think that's a very, I'm glad you went there. Anything else you want to cover or say that we haven't talked about? Yeah.

[01:18:47.700]

I would say to the person who's asking, you know, how do I build a platform online? I would say, be careful what you what you wish for.

[01:18:49.600]

And make sure that that's not just the end desire, you know that it's...

[01:18:51.200]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Do something significant and share it.

[01:19:23.600]

Where it's like, if you just if you Champion a camp, you can grow followers really fast? Oh, yeah. And so what's harder to do is to stay true to who you are. And, and to stay honest and, and to not operate in the motive of wanting to gain followers.

[01:19:39.500]



It's kind of like it's kind of like the person who says, "I want to be rich because I want to give away all the money," and I'm like, you don't want to be rich, you want to be poor, you know. That's what happens when you have a lot of money and you give it away. You're left with none. And so it's in the same thing is true of followers. Like, how are you faithful with your followers now? And I think what I'm getting at, Carey, is I'm seeing something really interesting in the world of social media, and you and I heard somebody say this and I was like, man, that's so true.

[01:19:42.400]

Where it's like, if you champion a camp, you can grow followers really fast. And so what's harder to do is to stay true to who you are. And to stay honest and to not operate in the motive of wanting to gain followers.

[01:20:13.800]

I want. Peace and unity.

[01:20:15.500]

Is we further the division that we see in society. That the gap just gets wider and wider and wider and wider. If we're just talking numbers, like the days of my biggest growth and followers have been when my critics have been the loudest. Because, you know, people who are critical of them, will just run over here and say, oh, I'm on his side and I don't appreciate it because I know that it creates more and more division and I don't want division, you know?

[01:20:57.300]

And I mean, everybody's welcome here. I'm not out to build a platform on what I'm against or, you know the siege mentality. It's like, let's just have honest normal conversations and try to go from there, and believe it or not, just an encouragement. To, those of you who are wondering, you know, listening wondering like, yeah, sometimes it works. Sometimes you can actually build an audience just being you and trying to make a contribution and a dent in the universe. And, you know, In your case, trying to reach people in Waco, particularly young adults, in my case trying to help leaders along the way. Like it's okay, just relax, man, it's going to work out there.

[01:21:36.800]

And if they found you in a fight, they'll probably leave you in a fight.

[01:21:54.300]

Man, tweet that out guys; if they find you in a fight, they'll leave you in a fight.

[01:22:32.500]

Such a weird thing happening right now. Where everybody sees the world through a really narrow lens. And so I do something on Friday, Friday Q&A will answer questions and the other day, someone said, why do you think Taylor Swift is hated by so many people?

[01:22:46.300]

And I thought what an ironic question because I would think Taylor Swift is one of the most beloved human beings on the planet or in the world. Like she's loved by more people. And I just like, I was like, oh, their perception is that she's hated because of whatever echo chamber they're in, and you know, what they're looking and viewing the world through, and that's how we see it is just like, as things get more bifurcated, the camps, get bigger and you see the side that you want to see. And we rarely go around and see the other side and it's an interesting science experiment, this social media thing.

[01:22:59.300]

It's hard to build yourself up long-term by tearing other people down. I learned that years ago and it's just, it's not fun. Well, the book is great. It's called *Why Do I Do What I Don't Want To Do: replace deadly vices with life-giving virtues*.

[01:23:09.800]

JP, Thank you so much. I appreciate your friendship. Appreciate your leadership. Books available Where Anybody can buy a book these days. But where do they find you? at J Pakoda is my handle?

[01:23:12.100]

@JPokluda is my handle most places. The first letter of my first name, and my last name. And then jonathanpokluda.com. I don't love that being the website. But it's helpful to people.

[01:23:13.400]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Everybody calls you J P? Right.

[01:23:15.400]

Thank you so much but carry you or a leader of leaders. And I'm grateful for you.

[01:23:20.000]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** That's right. JP, thank you so much.

[01:23:32.300]

Thank you so much. Carey, you or a leader of leaders. And I'm grateful for you.

[01:24:22.600]

Thank you so much. Carey, you or a leader of leaders. And I'm grateful for you.

[01:24:25.500]

I'm looking forward to hanging out again next time.

[01:24:36.500]

Yes man.

[01:24:37.100]

**Carey Nieuwhof:** Well, I hope you enjoyed that episode. He's always a fascinating conversation. We got more in the show notes for you. You can go to [careynieuwhof.com/episode566](http://careynieuwhof.com/episode566)

[01:25:15.400]

And that's free we got transcripts there. We've got key notes and links to everything that we talked about. I'm going to tell you who's coming up on the podcast plus I got a free offer for you, but first check out today's partner. They're the reason we can bring this to you for free. The reason why from time to time I can fly all over the country and interview people and, well, bring you the YouTube channel and this show. Gloo has got a free texting service for you. Go to [get.gloo.us/texting](http://get.gloo.us/texting) and get a 90% open rate starting today. And go to ServeHQ. You can go to [servehq.church](http://servehq.church) and I talked to leaders, there's a volunteer crisis. If you want to solve it ServeHQ is in your corner. Go to [servehq.church](http://servehq.church). Well, next episode, I was so excited. I loved his book, Unreasonable Hospitality, I love the show he did call The Big Brunch with Dan Levy.

[01:25:39.900]

I absolutely loved hearing about how he built the number one restaurant in the world. His name Will Guidara and he is the former owner of Eleven Madison Park

which was ranked the number one restaurant in the world. We talked all about hospitality. Here's an excerpt:

[01:26:07.000]

**Will Guidara:** I notice absolutely everything. It's a blessing and a curse. I feel unsettled in an environment that isn't perfect, or is close to it is humanly possible. And so, I mean, when you're trying to have all of the Michelin stars on the form, I mean that's just a strength, right? Because everything needs to be at a certain level of excellence, in order to even play the game. And if you want to get to the top of it, you need to be at the highest level of excellence.

[01:26:45.900]

I actually don't believe that being obsessive in pursuit of details and excellence is a weakness. It only becomes a weakness if you're not matching your level of obsession to the details with the similarly obsessive pursuit of hospitality. and speaking of competitive advantages.

[01:27:06.600]

And we'll catch you next time on the podcast and I hope our conversation today has helped you, identify and scale. The next growth barrier you're facing