

[00:00:01.100]

Announcer: The Art of Leadership Network.

[00:00:07.800]

Carey Nieuwhof: Welcome to a very special edition of the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. This is episode 583, but it's going to be totally different from really almost any other podcast I've ever done. And this is my, Tim Keller tribute episode. Tim was tremendously influential in my life. I had the opportunity not only to meet him but to interview him three times over the last number of years before he passed away earlier in 2023, and I would bring you all of those interviews in one place. Number one, I think they make an incredible listen, number two, then you don't have to go clicking around and finding the other episodes. And number three, I'm going to bring you a little tribute, some of my own thoughts. So today's episode is brought to you by the Art of Leadership Academy and ServeHQ and this month's Art of Leadership Academy live coaching call my friend Rich Birch UnSeminary is meeting with all the members to talk about, how to grow your church, you can get access to this coaching, call at the artofleadershipacademy.com. If you want in, and make sure you join before July 19th.

[00:01:14.900]

ServeHQ, check out servehq.church to discover an easy and sustainable way to onboard your volunteers, so they succeed. So why this episode, Tim Keller, while we're wrapping up our Integrity Series in, you know, as somebody See who is looking at the next 20 years of my life as probably, you know, you never know how long you're going to live, but the fourth quarter as Jerry Seinfeld Once said. I want to finish well and I've talked to Rick Warren about that. I've talked to other leaders about finishing. Well, we've had great conversations with Gordon MacDonald and I never specifically talked to Tim Keller about it. But I think, you know, especially if you heard the last episode, Tim finished really well, and I think that's a model for young leaders.

[00:02:00.000]

It's a model for all of us and I wanted to explore in the series, you know, what happens when pastors go off the rail what happens when your platform gets too big for your character? How do you steward that?

[00:02:10.800]

Well, and you know, Tim wasn't perfect. We talked about that last time, but I think he did a very very good job of that. And so I wanted to put on all of my conversations with him in one place and then offer a few thoughts. So we're gonna get to that in just a second. A couple things and we do really appreciate our sponsors on this episode. So I want to make sure that you know about my Art of Leadership Academy. It's something my team and I pour a lot of time in I spend a lot of time

there. And this month on July 19th, my friend Rick Burch is doing some live coaching in the Art of Leadership Academy. So if you want to grow your church

[00:02:49.900]

And do it this way by helping the people who attend your church proactively extend invitations to more people, and get some actionable steps on how to foster a culture of invitation with your church. Then you can go to the artofleadershipacademy.com, sign up. Now, in addition to live coaching, you're going to get access to all of my courses and training programs on topics like preaching, developing effective Outreach, creating a culture of growth, team leadership, change and a lot more. It's all at the art of leadership. Ship, academy.com, and if you join by July 19th, you can access this month's live coaching call. I'd love to see you there. Just go to the art of leadership, academy.com, or click the link in the description for this episode. And if you're like, most leaders,

[00:03:35.000]

We also know how tricky it can be to onboard and equip people for your team, especially with volunteers, which is the crisis right now in the moment of a lot of churches. Well, what if there was a resource that made it easier, so I would like to recommend ServeHQ to you. They provide simple tools to create your own training, without needing special video equipment, or software. Just your computer and your web browser. It's that simple. So, if you're not a detective, this is a great solution. If you're into onboarding people, effectively check out Servehq.church.

Well, Tim Keller. My goodness. Tim, Keller was chairman of Redeemer City to City. He's the pastor emeritus of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City which he started with his wife Kathy in 1989 and my goodness his biography goes on and on and on and we covered that in the last episode, but I want to provide before I go to the interviews with a few thoughts on the life death and legacy of Tim Keller.

[00:04:34.800]

I was genuinely saddened when I heard about his cancer diagnosis. Prayed for him regularly. I kept thinking, well, maybe you'll keep Tim alive to age one hundred and he can write more books. I was shocked to find out. I should have done the math. But I was shocked to find out the last episode that his first book was published when he was fifty-seven. So in fifteen years, he produced all of these books and obviously had a lifetime building up to them.

[00:05:00.600]

But if you're a leader who's like, I'm a late bloomer, hey, man, Tim wasn't a late bloomer, but he didn't publish till he was fifty seven, which I thought was fascinating.

[00:05:09.900]

And you know, he just left a legacy, unlike few leaders in my life, in the lives of many others. So I want to offer a few thoughts on what really helped contribute to the legacy that he left.

[00:05:23.600]

And first thought is simply this. That intellectual rigor, deep faith, and personal integrity are a very powerful combination, you don't always get them together. Sometimes you get people with really deep Faith, but they're not very intellectual, they don't think they can't think past their next argument, sometimes you get someone with great personal Integrity, but they don't have a deep faith, and intellectual rigor, or sometimes you get people with intellectual rigor, but they're just really smart. They don't have a deep faith, they don't have a lot of integrity. He combined all three; intellectual rigor, deep faith, and personal integrity, and that is an explosive combination. Second thing about Tim that I really appreciated is long-form thinking and argument are not outdated, they're more needed than ever. So this may end up becoming 580 some-odd episodes into this podcast, the longest episode I've ever done because we're stitching 3 interviews together.

[00:06:20.200]

So, I think this could, I don't know what the final length will be. We might be pushing three hours on this episode, but if you really think about it, who can hold court for three hours these days? I know, we've got the attention span of goldfish, but that said, Tim was so good because there was so much more. And when I had 90 minutes with him, it was like, oh, I know there's another day there under the surface. So as Evangelical Christians at times, we can become a caricature of simplistic thinking. And what Tim Keller did was he continued mining intellectual depths unabated and perhaps, that's why people listened, and even in a 30-minute sermon, you knew that he didn't exhaust the pool of his knowledge. And here's where I think the intersection goes for. Those of you who are inclined,

[00:07:05.900]

To really be able to think deeply. The culture isn't suffering from a lack of information. It's suffering from a lack of meaning. And Tim Keller spoke into that wound over and over again. So second thought, third thought on Tim Keller to be original. Immerse yourself in the work of others. We talked about this last epoch code with Colin Hansen, but the joke had been made several times that when Tim prepared, he quoted from a lot of people. When he wasn't prepared, he just quoted from C.S. Lewis.

[00:07:36.400]

And I mean, it's weird, but he was known as an original thinker, but probably more than any other communicator, I would hear him in his talks and sermons, even in his interviews. So you're law, listen to these interviews. Listen to how many people he quote

[00:07:49.100]

So here's here's the takeaway. Alright, a lot of us think we ought to be original. I have to have all original thoughts. Hey there's been nothing new Under the Sun for 3,000 years and Tim Keller is genius wasn't based on his ability to articulate brand-new thoughts. No one in history has ever voiced. His special ability was to take ideas, formulated over thousands of years and apply them in a clear way to today's events. Plain and simple. Fourth insight about Tim Keller, I want to share and this one's really powerful particularly if you're a young leader. Image matters less than you think. Everybody's talking about, I want to build a platform. Want to build a platform that's a sub-theme on this. This podcast, I talked to a lot of leaders about it and Colin Hanson, verified this thought, in the last episode, but Tim Keller, didn't build a platform hoping his message would get heard. He crafted a compelling message and the platform built itself. He was surprisingly unaware of like, what platform building took, he didn't spend a lot of time about it and yet he had influence, nonetheless. I think there's a huge lesson for us there. I mean, to some extent, that's what happened with this hobby, too.

[00:08:59.700]

I'm definitely not comparing myself to Tim Keller, but, you know, this is just, I think I want to write in a way that's going to help leaders.

[00:09:05.700]

And then the vlog blew up to Millions, well tens of millions of, I think maybe 100 million page views now over the last decade or so, and then the podcast, you know, it was just an attempt to experiment with something and see if I could bring conversations that I was having or wanted to have two leaders and suddenly 30 million downloads later.

[00:09:25.800]

It's like, wow. Okay, there you go. So, you know, just worry about making a difference, the platform will take care of itself.

[00:09:33.600]

And then the most haunting thing and Colin really helped clarify this but focus on what God has called you to do, not what others want you to do. I can't imagine the inbound that Tim Keller had, especially in the last fifteen years since he started publishing, etc. And as Tim said to me and you'll hear this in one of the interviews, the last one we played today he said, I really didn't have any focus until I got my diagnosis. I wasn't doing, ah, what I was supposed to do with my life. I was doing whatever anybody asked me to do. And when Tim said that, that really shocked me. Now, if you go back to the previous episode, Collin Hansen, his biographer, nuanced that a little bit. Maybe he got better at it in the last decade. But, you know, for Tim Keller to be unfocused really surprised me. And I think that's convicting because

God has given you a special message. God's given you a unique gifting. And then what do you do if you just end up doing what other people ask you to do?

[00:10:32.700]

And so I've taken that to heart, I want to set more time aside for deep work so that I can write more books and think more deeply about how I can serve you better and you'll hear that in the conversation. Today, I've got an article as well that will link to in the show notes with some of my favorite links, from Tim Keller, some more observations on his life, his legacy, and his passing, obscure sermons I really love, PDFs that he'd like, the decline and renewal of the American Church, so good. We talked about that. So we'll link to that in the show notes, but will also link to my article on Tim Keller, that I hope will help you as well. So again, we're doing a super long episode today. These are all of my conversations with Tim Keller.

[00:11:17.500]

And let's start with the one that Tim and I did in New York in February of 2020. So the world was shutting down covid-19 but we didn't really know what was happening. Yet, people start to wear masks in the city and it was one of the last two. Perhaps the last in-person interview that Tim Keller. Gave because two weeks later the world would shut down. And I'm so grateful. We got it. Thank you again to the Barna Group, who facilitated a lot of these conversations. And we went to New York, we sat down. By the way, all of these interviews on YouTube on my YouTube channel. This one in particular has been well-received as my first, it was longest with Tim. Here's my conversation in Manhattan with, Tim Keller in February of 2020.

FIRST INTERVIEW

Carey Nieuwhof: You and Kathy came here. In 1989.

Tim Keller: Thirty years ago last June.

[00:12:08.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: What was the city like when you came?

[00:12:11.500]

Tim Keller: A lot more dangerous actually a lot more dangerous. So you actually saw you know crime. You actually saw people get mugged and saw blood and things like that. Some people stabbed. So it really was actually a more dangerous place not anymore.

[00:12:26.400]

And of course nobody can agree on why. As soon as you start to talk about it immediately people just start screaming at each other.

[00:12:34.800]

Um, because the the various political ideologies just disagree on why the crime went down and so, but anyway, that wasn't the biggest difference in thirty years is the change in the danger and the crime which made a massive difference because one of the reasons why starting the late nineties in the early nineties

[00:12:58.000]

Most immigration is now domestic say up until for many, many years. The majority of new people coming into New York were immigrants from outside. It was when the crime went down and culture changed, in some ways somewhere in the mid 90s, the number of new people that came into New York from America, moving here, became greater than number of people coming from outside and I and so that was partly because of the crime going down and that really changed the nature of the of the city quite a lot.

Carey Nieuwhof: What would you say the spiritual temperature of New York was when you arrived?

Tim Keller: Well, it was very vital in the boroughs because for about 30 years, where all these new churches getting started from non-western missionaries. So there was the people who are starting churches were from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and they're planning hundreds and hundreds of churches that was from probably around 1970 to about the year 2000 or so when I got here, just starting the 90s, Manhattan was very very secular but the rest of the city was not. So if you want to a community board meeting in the Bronx, for example, it might be open in prayer because most of the most of the Civic leaders were Black and Hispanic and a costal ministers. And if you went to Brooklyn, it would be filled with Orthodox Jews. And if you went out to Queens, the community boards would be filled with Asian Christians but Manhattan was secular and the churches were extremely small or dying. And so when I got here the the spiritual growth that had been happening in the rest of the city hadn't really reached the center or they changed it since then.

[00:14:48.100]

Carey Nieuwhof: And was there lots of mainline churches in Manhattan?

[00:14:51.500]

Tim Keller: Yeah, there always are, still are, because in Manhattan, what happens is in Manhattan the real estate is so incredibly expensive you cannot imagine, then if you have a building of any sort, you can monetize it. Like you can actually sell a third of it and let somebody put a high-rise up and get one hundred million dollars for it and then you just put in the bank NHC or you rent the place out or something like that. So churches here generally don't go out of business. They stay small. Um, they find ways of monetizing things and so they kind of limp along. So there's lots and lots and lots of mainline churches that would not really um, they wouldn't the man

that you believe much of anything different than the average New Yorker does anyway, right? They would say war for peace and justice and that kind of thing. And we don't, we're not going to tell you what to believe, which is part of the problem they have is you start to say, why do I have to get up on a Sunday morning to just do what I could do anyway, because you're not calling me to be any different? Nevertheless those churches, you know, their community centers and they've got nice buildings and they have endowment funds and all that they more Evangelical churches. They were pretty much in completed clips in the center of New York. When I got here, that's been the change, biggest change. The 30 years is, there's been, I don't know, at least 100 or so new Evangelical churches started in the center at least.

[00:16:20.800]

Carey Nieuwhof: I've heard of stat, it may or may not be accurate. That something like less than 1% of Manhattan was attending an Evangelical church when you arrived.

[00:16:28.000]

Tim Keller: Yeah. Right. What we define Center City as the top of Central Park South to the tip plus a little bit of Brooklyn little bit of Queens. Other words that very near environs that we would call it Center City, right Cosmopolitan very wealthy professional. There's about a million 1 million fifty thousand people that live in that area and from what we can tell 1989 they're only 9000 Manhattan residents going to Evangelical churches out of the 1 million in 1989 and by 2040. Teen, the rough 54,000. So that was a kind of growth of fun to people. Yeah, yeah, in about in about 25 years. So that's been the biggest change spiritually.

[00:17:17.400]

Carey Nieuwhof: Have you felt yeah temperature like does that mean?

[00:17:19.700]

Tim Keller: Yeah, yes and no, I mean because I'm because I was here first. I'm kind of well-known. But you know, I'm sort of an elder statesman type. So surprises me that when I walk around the city, you know very often.

[00:17:32.600]

Um, I'm recognized by the Christians not by anybody else, but there are more of them.

[00:17:39.700]

So it surprised me a little bit. It's very sweet, you know, younger people say, oh, I've read your books or I went three years ago. I went to Redeemer recently. That's right. It's a little surprising. But still fifty, sixty thousand people out of a million. Christian's

aren't really tearing up things, it's just way better than what it was, that's about 5%, right.

[00:18:05.900]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, which is amazing, which means in any of these office tower. Yeah, there's probably a co-worker.

[00:18:10.900]

Tim Keller: Yeah, yeah. On the other hand, now, you know, it depends on how you Define evangelical, okay? I would say, if you Define evangelical, like inerrancy of the were, you know, 30, the Bible got to be born again, that kind of thing. You know, that in Atlanta and Houston. It's more like 30 or 40 percent of the population say that Here is five percent. So it's not like I said, it's not overwhelming, but it's, it is an increase and you're right. There's they are there's a whole lot more than I used to be. Yes. So I mean, I just no reason to get too satisfied with it. I'm certainly not at all.

[00:18:47.300]

Actually, it needs to go. It needs to go. It needs a triple or quadruple again before I think you might really begin to say, there's no significant Christian witness in the variation in the cultural economy of the city, the cultural economy, I mean, in the Arts, in the media, in business, where you have significant leaders who are believers with a servant mindset, not trying to dominate But also being not having given into the spirit of the age and a really being thoughtful and distinctly Christian, I would say, most of the people who are out there are younger and are sort of lower levels are not having as much of an impact on the cultural economy. I think it will take at least two or three generations. And if the church keeps on growing where you start to hate that significant leaders in this,

[00:19:33.600]

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, that's interesting. Yeah. So you'd probably have because Redeemer is well known for attracting people decades younger. Yeah. And their founder.

[00:19:42.000]

Tim Keller: Yeah. That's one of the reasons why I stepped out when I was sixty six. And there's some people who are saying, well, you know, your sixty six years, you're senile just yet and you can still preach. Why would you do that? I mean, a lot of other ministers in your founder, you sort of hang on a long time and you keep preaching. I'm saying I am not I said, it's not just that everybody out there now or most of the people out at Redeemer, not only the younger than my children. I said, I don't want to get to the place or I'm preaching to people who are like my grandchildren. I said I said you don't even though they'd propped me up because oh, you know, you're the

founder and we love you so much. At a certain point you start to lose your ability to appeal. I think I think really.

[00:20:21.400]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, but you hadn't seen that yet.

[00:20:23.700]

Tim Keller: No, but I mean, you want to get out before.

[00:20:28.000]

You know, I don't know. I do. I do. I surely I've seen the founder types, especially when I founded Redeemer, you have a tendency to First of all, people actually are addicted to you because you were, you were there first right over the years is a self-selection process. If you don't like the founder, you just don't stay. And so what that? Because nobody thinks you can kind of face down the founder because he was there first and he did all that. So, what that means is over the years, the founders are just, it's basically is huge fan club. So they're addicted to you, they just can't imagine life without you and then you can kind of get addicted to it too, but if you hold, Don into your 70s even if you're preaching. Well, next thing, you know, you look out there and you see all the gray hairs in the bolt heads, and all that. Because ultimately, there's there's a limit, even if you stay up with things, even if you are all Quran and you

[00:21:23.600]

You even if you're preaching, is staying up on it, you still people walk in and they don't see themselves up front, they see an old white, man. You know, most of our people are not white. Most of our people are not old, and at a certain point now, no matter how much affection, no matter how much I try to stay up on things. I think I would start to lose my ability to connect so they get addicted to you.

[00:21:46.600]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. How did you not get addicted to that? How did you manage? Cause that's, that's an issue.

[00:21:52.000]

Tim Keller: I'm married. And you know what, she's not more. She's no more impressed when she married an awkward 24-year-old kid. She doesn't she knows you know you put your underwear on one you know, you know one like it.

[00:22:10.900]

But I gotta tell ya.

[00:22:11.900]

I mean I mean that's a that's a help I think is your wife if you actually listen to your wife,

[00:22:17.400]

Um, your wife certainly doesn't get visions of your your grandeur. Ah, there's this thing called prayer that you know, the same sort of thing happens in prayer, God.

[00:22:29.000]

I don't know exactly. But anyway, there's there's um, it's ah, it's important not to get addicted to their addiction. Yeah, and that's that's called it's called a dysfunctional family, you know member may nobody talks about that so much anymore, but it used to be that in a dysfunctional family where you had ah an alcoholic one of the reasons alcoholic couldn't get better was because the rest of the family needed him or her to be a mess.

[00:22:58.600]

So the spouse, for example, starts to get an identity out of being the one who's pulling it together. Making sacrifices, always rescuing the other person in a certain place, it becomes it almost becomes. He needs to be rescued and she needs, or he needs to be The Rescuer. And so you are happily unhappy together. You, it's a feedback loop in you reinforce and that addiction to the other person's addiction. Becomes happens in churches especially with Founders and I just wanted to make sure it didn't happen. It wasn't easy for and it's still not easy. By the way for them. It's a little easier for me because I don't have to pressure of preaching four times every Sunday.

[00:23:43.600]

Four times every Sunday. Which was not a wise thing to do, but once you get to it, I couldn't pull back and so I don't miss that. I was a little too much and I also do miss the pressure of it. But do I miss the preaching every week? I miss the people. Yeah. And they miss me.

[00:23:59.400]

But only God's irreplaceable.

Carey Nieuwhof: I've been 25 years with the same people. Yeah. And taking that Journey, you made in 2016, I guess ttep back from preaching. This final, you know. So do you miss it?

[00:24:21.600]

Tim Keller: When I preach, which I sometimes do, you know, I don't Preach as often when I preach. I say, boy, I really like this, but as I said, I to preach four times on its

own, which I did for many, many years, what twos, twice in the morning, twice at night, and no matter what else I got interested in.

[00:24:42.000]

Everything had to stop to prepare that sermon. So I actually started to feel like I have no whatever I do has to always happen over like two or three days because every two or three days, it's back to preparing getting ready for Sunday. And so I always felt like I had no long ramp.

Carey Nieuwhof: How many Sundays did you preach?

Tim Keller: Typically 42.

[00:25:06.900]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and a lot of reps. That's like one hundred and sixty times a year.

[00:25:10.900]

Tim Keller: Yep.

[00:25:11.800]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yes, you do. You are never much of a guest preacher, right? You'd usually be in the Pulpit at Redeemer.

[00:25:19.900]

Tim Keller: Yeah, I didn't do much. No, but out here at Redeemer what it did was for many years. We had eight services on a Sunday, even though I only I can only reach four and I decided for various reasons. I don't think it's important to go there. But I decided not to do the video thing. They're the reasons why it might be it.

[00:25:42.800]

It may work now maybe but I don't think New Yorkers years ago. New Yorkers, they go to the theater, not to movies our words, we various reasons. We felt like it wouldn't go. Well. So what it would mean is, I would preach four times there's eight services and so what I do is one week I preach in these for the next week, I preach in these four and then each of the churches had a lead pastor. And so you'd get your lead Pastor, you're particularly Pastor one Sunday, you get me the next Sunday and be back and forth. So I was preaching, every week, they were preaching, I was preaching. Every week, they were preaching every other week.

[00:26:24.800]

So wasn't like, people are only getting me, they work at. And I did that for several years as a way of trying. And they they, you know, again I when I stepped out, it was

so traumatic for plenty of people, but the point was that these other, these other preachers had been building up over the years. So I actually spent almost eight years of seven or eight years, getting ready to leave. Where we went to this model where the lead pastors were going to become the Senior pastors of their Church. We're going to be the regular preachers for eight years. So you lean people off.

Carey Nieuwhof: But it's still a hard stop. Yeah. When you're not going to see him anymore your favorite preacher. That's still a challenge.

Let's drill down a little bit further, Tim. When you look back on the last 10 years when it comes to the church in America, so just think about the last decade. What do you see changing? And, let's start with things that you can celebrate. What have been some bright spots in the last decade? This transcript was exported on May 10, 2020 - view latest version here.

Tim Keller: Well, there's not a lot. Let's put it this way. Certainly, there are a lot, but I mean there's probably more areas of concern than there are on bright spots, honestly, but bright spots I think is the growth of new multi-ethnic churches by and large. There's a lot more of those. I do think that the future of Western society, and Western culture is multi-ethnic. There's a lot of reasons why that's true. I'm not so much celebrating it or denigrating it at all. I'm just saying that the percentage of white people in the West and in the world will be smaller and smaller. There'll be more multi-racial marriages, there'll be more multiethnic communities, and cities, that's still not true for parts of the heartland like Iowa, and New Hampshire, are still 90% whites, and so on, but by and large, that's changing, and the church is changing there too. That there really are more efforts to create multi-racial churches, especially in cities, there's more of them, and I think that's to me maybe the biggest bright spot, because that's keeping up with the changes.

Carey Nieuwhof: What are some of the challenges you see over the last decade?

Tim Keller: Well, I just see exactly what Lesslie Newbigin saw, so this is nothing, but don't give me any credit for this at all. I'm just channeling him. He would say that for a thousand years the Western church assumed a mission model in which most people in the culture would feel some social pressure, or at least see some social benefits of going to church, and the culture created people that had the basic furniture for a Christian worldview, that is, they usually believed in a personal God, they often believed in an afterlife, heaven and hell, they believed that they should be good, and they weren't perfect, and that therefore they did need forgiveness. You could call those the religious dots, believe in God, believe in an afterlife, believe in the moral law, believe in sin, and so, the church could assume that people would just show up in church if they were invited, or they would show up in church maybe at Easter and Christmas, or maybe for weddings and funerals, and if they came they would have a general respect for the Bible, and they would have some basic understanding of these things.

Tim Keller: Evangelism was just waiting for people to show up, and then, connecting the dots, but what do you do if people don't come to church, and won't come to church? Why should they? And, don't have the dots? You can't evangelize by saying, "Oh, you want to

go to heaven when you die." Right? And, "You know you're not perfect, but Jesus Christ died for your sins so that you can be sure if you believe in him that when you die you'll go to heaven." So, that's assuming all the dots, and what if the dots aren't there, now what do we do? And, Newbigin's basically saying the entire Western church for a thousand years has assumed a Christendom culture, and now that it's gone, it has no way of reaching people, doesn't know how to talk to people, get their attention. It doesn't know how, even if they do show up, they don't know how to share the gospel in a way that makes sense to them. Is that a cause for concern? Yeah, that's why I'm saying to me that is an overshadowing concern.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. How do you see that show up in the model of church that you see in America today? What do you think? You think a lot of evangelicalism, or even mainline evangelicalism is still waiting for people to show up-

Tim Keller: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: ... and, connect the dots.

Tim Keller: Yes, and now the Willow Creek seeker model did take one step in the direction of saying people aren't going to come to church unless they have great production values, so they don't feel the same social pressure to go to church, but even that seeker service model kind of assumes that people would see a social benefit, and that they have somewhat of a traditional mindset that they would say, "Church is good, and it's good to be talking about these moral issues, and it's good to be talking about how do you handle anxiety." I would still say that they are assuming still a fairly traditional kind of person that would come in the door. I don't think they're reaching people who feel like the church is an agent for injustice, I don't think they know what to do with people who say, "You can't make me feel guilty, because the meaning of life is not to be a good person." So, that's what my family, my parents' generation, whether they're Christians or not, the meaning of life is to be good.

Tim Keller: Today, the meaning of life is to be true to yourself, and I just don't think that our church today has any way of dealing with that, and they certainly don't know how to answer somebody who says, "I'm just being true to myself."

Carey Nieuwhof: When you look at your ministry at Redeemer, how did you respond to that? How did you attempt to say, "Okay, we're going to turn the dial on that a little bit different.

Tim Keller: Well, the 30 years ago there wasn't yet that... My parents' generation, whether they're Christians or not believed the meaning of life was to be good, and the way you preach to them was to deal with their guilt, and say, "You're never going to overcome your guilt with moral effort. You're going to have to get forgiveness from Jesus." That sort of thing is what you did. By the time I came along to New York, and New York, it was further advanced than the rest of the country toward [crosstalk 00:12:57]. When I got here, the meaning of life was to be free to discover your true self.

That's very Rousseau Jean, and that's very much like what Rousseau would say, which is society kind of screws you up, but there's an inner child in there, a kind of perfect inner being, and the world makes you feel very guilty about it, and you just need to be free to discover who you really are and express that without guilt.

Tim Keller: It was very Freudian. It was very psychological. When I got here all the talk was about dysfunctional families, and enabling behavior, and getting free from people making you feel guilty, so that's the reason why if you assume people are guilty, and then, they know they ought to be guilty, and then, you give them the relief through Jesus, you try to do that with the people that were in front of me in New York, they would just walk out the door. They said, "That's what I don't need. I don't need that." And so, the way the gospel worked with my parents' generation was you know you should be good, but you're not This transcript was exported on May 10, 2020 - view latest version here. CNLP_339 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 05/08/20) Transcript by Rev.com Page 5 of 24 as good as you would like to be, but Jesus Christ can forgive you, and in him you can be accepted by God. With my young people that I came to here in New York, basically, I said, "You think the meaning of life is to be free, but you're actually not as free as you think you are. You have to live for something. Everybody has to live for something, and whatever that thing is you're living for will enslave you, and you will feel guilty and shameful because you'll never feel like you can live up to it."

Tim Keller: So, let's just say, well, I've left my little Bible believing church back in Hot Coffee, Mississippi, and I've moved up here to be an actress, or to be an actor, or to make it on Wall Street. Well, guess what? You've got a new God. You've got a new master, and when you say, "I'm going to be free to discover that my true self." Now, you're going to have to live up to that, and you're actually still a slave. You'd be a slave to your work, you'd be a slave to your figure, you got to keep your weight down, you'll be a slave. You think you're free, but you're not, because if you're living for anything but God you are a slave, and Jesus Christ is the only master who if you get him will satisfy you, and if you fail him he can forgive you. Your career can't die for your sins, and so, that's how I did it with them, and it was okay, and I assumed their cultural narrative, and showed how only in Christ, you might say their, their storyline have a happy ending, just like I did that with my parents' generation.

Tim Keller: Today, it actually has changed again, because there's not that same feeling like I just need to be free to find my inner childhood path. Now, the emphasis is not psychological and sociological, it's all about justice, it's all about creating your own self. If I say I'm this, that's who I am, I can do that, and it's all about including marginalized peoples, marginalized identities, and the change was happening just as I was stepping out. Carey Nieuwhof: So, literally in the last six years?

Tim Keller: Yeah. In the last five or six years, and therefore if I was starting a church now, I'd have to retool again.

Carey Nieuwhof: Really?

Tim Keller: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: What do you think... Like, just off the top of your head?

Tim Keller: But, I haven't done it. You're saying, what would you do? I say

Carey Nieuwhof: What would you do? Even a couple of broad strokes?

Tim Keller: Yeah, a couple of broad strokes would be to say the Christianity gives you the only identity that is... because it's all about identity now. Christianity is the only identity that is received, not achieved. If you say, "I can create myself." That's a lot of pressure, and you can see it online. You can see people, they come up with an identity, and then, they just scream at each other. If you don't support my identity, or then you get screamed at if you're not true to your identity, you know what I'm saying? You say you're this, but you're hurting the rest of us who are like this, and I said Christianity is the one identity that's received, or the fact is that because of what Jesus Christ did, Jesus Christ is actually a person who lost his glory, and his power, and his privilege, and came, and died on the cross for us, paid the penalty for our inhumanity to God, and to each other. Other words, he took the penalty, and because of that, when I believe in him, I can actually know that God loves me unconditionally, forever.

Tim Keller: I'm righteous in Christ, and what that means is the minute I become a Christian, the minute I believe in God, God loves me as perfectly as he will love me five billion years from now when I'm perfect, and he loves me that well right now. Now, what that means is, it's the ups and downs of my performance, and see all postmodern people say that identity is performative. They say power is performative. They say identity, it's a role that you play. That's horrible pressure. I said we've got an identity that's received, not achieved, that it's not up and down depending on how well I perform, and also, this as an identity that doesn't exclude, because if you have an identity that's based on being an open minded justice oriented person, then you're going to despise the biggest, and one of the reasons you despise the biggest it's a way of you bolstering your kind of flagging sense of self worth, by basically saying, "Lord, I thank thee I am not as other men, including this tax collector right here." And, that's how you bolster an insecure identity by excluding other people, and looking down at them saying, "I must be okay because I'm not like these horrible people over here."

Tim Keller: With a Christian identity you don't have to do that. You will not do that. In fact, in James 1:9-10, it's interesting, it says that, "The rich Christian should think about his low position, and the poor Christian should think about his high position." Now, what's beautiful about that is the Christian identity says you're a sinner, and you would go to hell if it wasn't for Jesus Christ, so it's got the lowest, it makes you come all the way down here and say, "I can't save myself." So, you give a low position, you're a sinner, you deserve nothing but judgment, and yet in Christ, I am loved more than I dared hope. I'm accepted. Jesus Christ says, "The father loves you even as he loves me." Now, what's interesting is if you're a poor person, and look how brilliant the Christian identity is. If you're a poor person, and all of your life you've been told you're nothing, and you become

a Christian, you should dwell on your high position, dwell on who you are in Jesus Christ, and that will overcome all of the crap you've gotten for so many years from people.

Tim Keller: But, what if you're a rich Christian? What if your person that you've gone to the right schools, and you've gotten all these? All your life people are telling you how great you are. You become a Christian, you need to remember your low position. You need to remember that you are a sinner saved by sheer grace, that you are no better than anybody else. What's brilliant about the Christian identity is it doesn't This transcript was exported on May 10, 2020 - view latest version here. CNLP_339 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 05/08/20) Transcript by Rev.com Page 7 of 24 exclude people, and actually, it's an enormous equalizer, and it takes all the pressure off. Now, that's where I would be going. I would be saying, "I don't care how you guys are forming your identity, there is no identity like the one that you can find in Jesus Christ." So that's not the same quite as 30 years ago, I said, "There's no freedom like you get in Jesus." And, it's not like what I would have preached on Hopewell, Virginia, which I did in the 1970s when all the people out they were like my parents. You've got to connect the gospel with... Gospel is that Jesus saves you, you don't, and you have to connect it to the cultural narrative.

Carey Nieuwhof: So, just exegeting the culture?

Tim Keller: Yeah, right, but then you've actually got to find a way to take the plot line of the culture, and give it a happy ending in Jesus. For example, 1 Corinthians 1, it says, "The Jews want power, and the Greeks want wisdom, but the cross is weakness to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, but to the Jews and Greeks that are being saved, the true wisdom and true power of God." What is Paul doing? He says, the cultural narrative of the Jews is we're pragmatic, we want to know how you get things done give me power. The cultural narrative of the Greeks was, they're the artists, we want contemplation, we want wisdom, we want beauty, and what he's saying is the gospel confronts the idolatries of both of those cultures differently, but also, fulfills them differently. The cross confronts the idolatry of power and of wisdom, but then it says, but the cross is the true wisdom, the true power of God.

Tim Keller: In the cross you actually get or culture what you want. It's not just cultural acts of Jesus, it's a contradictory fulfillment. It's subverting it, and fulfilling it, and that's what you have to do, and every culture, that's the missionary task.

Carey Nieuwhof: We live in a disruptive age, and the State of the Church report talks about a lot of elements of disruption. What else have you seen disrupted over the last few decades in New York City and in culture?

Tim Keller: Well, one of the things of course is that the most disruptive thing is that there were always the kind of, how do I say it? There was a small number of evangelical and maybe conservative Catholics who were very devout, and they were very devoutly Christian, but they also had Christian ethics, so Christian view of morality, and sexuality, and things like that. That's maybe 20%. Then there was 80% of the population who are

nominal Christians. They maybe went to church on Christmas and Easter, they said they were Methodist or Presbyterian or Catholic, but it wasn't very deep, and yet they actually held the Christian views too, and the reason I'm making these strange gestures is they were like an umbrella. They were a shelter, because to be an Orthodox, Evangelical or Catholic, and to have all these views of things didn't look that weird, because 70, 80% of the population had the same view of marriage, and sexuality, and things like that.

Tim Keller: But, when that has gone away what's going away is inherited religion is dying, not chosen religion, not religion based on conversion, but inherited religion where you're born into it, my family is Methodist, I went to church growing up, that's just going away, and young people say, "Unless I choose it, nobody can choose my religion for me." The idea that you're born into a Catholic family, or a Presbyterian family is going away, and that's the reason why the main line and the Catholic church is just collapsing, and so what you have is these devout people are pretty much the same number of really devout Christians, but now they look really weird, and they in fact live up dangerous and strange, because you see what I mean? That protective covering's gone, and that means more ostracism, more strangeness, more strangeness from the culture. That's the big thing that's happening I think right now.

Carey Nieuwhof: When you look into the future, is there anything that you can see on the radar that you're like, "Hey, leaders pay attention to this?"

Tim Keller: Well, the political polarization, yes. Okay. Here's where I would go. The political polarization that's happening now is a major challenge for churches, because here's my reading of the Bible. My reading of the Bible says that Christians ought to be sold out for racial justice, that all races are equal on the image of God. They should be deeply concerned about the poor, and the marginalized. They should be pro-life, and they should believe at least for Christians that sex should only be between a man and woman in marriage. Now, those four things. The early church was marked by them, we know that. Two of those look very conservative, two of those look very liberal, and so, right now what's happening is since those four things are never combined in any political party, they're not combined in any other institution other than Catholic social teaching, and biblical Christianity.

Tim Keller: And so, what happens is there's enormous pressure, enormous pressure everywhere in the country for churches to major in two of them, and get quiet about two of them. Here in New York, huge pressure for the churches in New York City to talk about racial justice, and caring about the poor everybody applause, but if you say we're pro-life, or we think sex should be only between a man and woman in marriage is the people are going to pick at you. I would say in the middle of Alabama, if an evangelical pastor starts to preach about all four of those things, a lot of the people are going to get nervous about the racial justice and poverty things, so that sounds kind of liberal, that sounds kind of like, "Wait a minute, what are you doing here?" And so, I don't know anywhere where it seems to me that there's a kind of red evangelicalism, and a blue evangelicalism, and almost everywhere I see people like play up two of those, and play down two of those, or even actually stop believing in two of those.

Tim Keller: And, that's because these are packaged deals. The political parties say you can't have them together, you have to in other words to be a Democrat, or be a Republican for example, be Fox News or MSNBC. You just can't keep those things together, and so, that is to me the biggest challenge for Christian leaders. How do you be committed to the whole range? So, that's the early church, it's biblical.

Carey Nieuwhof: All four of those, Tim, have been, I think hallmarks of Redeemer at least to the extent that I've been able to access hundreds of your sermons over the years, and your writing, and your preaching, how have you held that tension in New York?

Tim Keller: Well, it hasn't been easy. It means, there are occasions I have definitely seen people get up in the middle of sermons and walk out, which is always a little bit satisfying, because when you see that you do say, "Alright, okay, I'm not a total coward here." Because see, here's the thing. I do think you have to care about context, which means for example, is you don't want to pat yourself on the back, and say, I'm valiant for truth, because I'm preaching against abortion every month. There are certainly people who criticize me for not preaching about abortion constantly, and I do say, "Alright, look, if I have a nonChristians coming to church, I don't want them to get hit over the head with something that I know that they're going to be offended by within the first two weeks they come." So, am I going to be careful about my context? Am I going to realize what offends people, and what attracts people? Yeah.

Tim Keller: I would say that if I was in Alabama, I'm in the middle of New York City, I wouldn't preach identically. I wouldn't be reaching non-Christians the same way. Nevertheless, what you have to do to your leaders constantly is, at least your leaders, you have to say, "We can not get cold feet on any of this." There is no biblical warrant. Here I'd have to say, y'all get excited about what the Bible says about justice, and you don't get excited about what the Bible says about sexuality. At that point you're really not letting the Bible animate you, here you're letting the culture animate you, and you've just got to immerse yourself in the word, because they go together by the way. There's one, I think it's Amos 2:7 where it says, "A father and a son go into the same woman, and they sell the poor for a pair of shoes." One verse, sexual sin, and economic injustice, the Bible sees it as a whole cloth. They go together, and we live in a culture that just tries to rip that apart, so important safety tip for leaders.

Carey Nieuwhof: I know you're committed to human flourishing, and the State of the Church report has an awful lot to say about it, and so, I want to share five categories with you of human flourishing. This is some of Barna's research that David Kinnaman has done. It's Harvard and biblical concepts of spiritual formation, and as I share them, I just like you to kind of riff on it. Just talk about what that means to you, why it's important to the church in your view, but we'll start with relationship, and the definition in the report is how biblical community in relational health impact human flourishing, so just relationship.

Tim Keller: Give me all five.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay, so relationships, spiritual health, fiscal and material stability, vocation and career, and wellness and behavioral health. Those are the five components that contribute to human flourishing. I know this could be a book.

Tim Keller: No, well, yeah, obviously. Well, that's a great list because it is comprehensive, it is true that as a church, if you're caring about people's flourishing you really cannot ignore any of those. There's no doubt that I think probably most churches would say the first two, we're going to talk about that, the last three, not so much. Of course, the one about giving yes, as long as it's giving to the church.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, fiscal stability, my fiscal stability as a church leader.

Tim Keller: Most churches, most evangelical churches they're not very good at talking to them about money in general. They talk about, give us some money. The fourth one is not mentioned much at all.

Carey Nieuwhof: Vocation and career.

Tim Keller: No, I think part of that is because we pastors are not trained on how to help people there. You see if somebody comes and says, "I want you to help me study the Bible, and pray." Got it. I've been trained to help you. Let me give you these books. I'll meet with you, but somebody comes in and says, "I'm an actor, and I don't know which parts I should take as a Christian, and which parts I shouldn't, and I got some questions about certain roles and what does it mean to be a Christian actor?" As a pastor, I don't know what to do, and I would say, "You have to figure that out yourself. I don't know." See, what happens I think when it comes to that one is there's an equality between the pastor, the minister, and the lay person that we don't have in the other areas. I may not know much about acting. He doesn't maybe know as much about the Bible, and we have to sit down, and kind of work together, so it's not a matter of him coming, and me telling him.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, you're the expert.

Tim Keller: Right, and the last one, I actually do feel that we have a tendency to outsource that

Carey Nieuwhof: Wellness and behavioral health.

Tim Keller: Yeah, and not talk about it, and say, go to a psychiatrist, or go to a doctor, or a medical doctor. I do think that there needs to be better ways for maybe Christians who are medical professionals inside the church talk to people about it. All that stuff though is fruit of the spirit, all five of them. See, this is my take on the fruit of the spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, integrity, humility, faithfulness, self-control. So love, patience and kindness is largely about relationships. Joy, peace, and humility is largely about spiritual disciplines. And self-control, faithfulness, which is faithfulness, integrity, those

things actually have a lot more to do with the last three. Basically, the fruit of the spirit covers it. It does, and the fruit of the spirit are a God spirit created character, and so, if you went to the fruit of the spirit, and you went to the book of Proverbs, they're all covered, because Proverbs talks about all those five areas in a way though, sometimes... there's other places in the New Testament that don't, but if you go to Proverbs and my wife and I did a devotional [crosstalk 00:34:15].

Tim Keller: Well, there's nothing that Proverbs doesn't talk about. It talks about every single area of human flourishing. I would say if you went to Proverbs, and you went to the fruit of the spirit, you basically could preach that, and I do think that's a great way of telling people you really can't ignore any of these areas, and you've got to make sure that you're honoring Christ in each of the areas.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's interesting because you raised it. Hamilton's playing right down the street. We're right in the heart of New York City, and you picked an actor as an example. How would you approach that? Actor knocks on your door at Redeemer and says, "Hey Tim, what part should I take? What part should I not take?"

Tim Keller: I would probably create a little, I got this idea from John Stott years ago. It would be good to get a couple of other Christian actors, maybe a little more experienced both in Christianity, and in acting. It would probably be good to maybe even get an academic. We do have, by the way, people who used to go to Redeemer and moved to other colleges and taught acting. I know one woman who teaches acting at a secular school in New England, another guy who teaches acting at a Christian college, and so, these are people who've not only done it, but they've actually had to do reflection on it. He would say, "Get an academic, get a practitioner, get a theologian, get a pastor and come together, and generate questions, and then, have a meeting over a period of year, maybe meet every month, or every two months, and work on the questions together." And, it's kind of egalitarian, because no one person has got all the answers, and have somebody take notes, and it can be

Carey Nieuwhof: A great idea.

Tim Keller: Yeah, I know. I've done that in other areas. I wish I had more time to do it, yeah, that's [crosstalk 00:36:19]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's a really good idea, and I know vocation's really important to David as well. David Kinnaman. We talk about it a lot. Also, in the report Barna asked pastors what are the top concerns for the church? And, these are some of the top findings, watered down gospel teachings, the culture shift to secularism, poor discipleship, declining attendance and reaching younger audience. Kind of touched on a lot of those already in different ways, and we've kind of touched on your top concerns for the church. Anything you want to add to that before we move on?

Tim Keller: Well, that's an interesting list. Watered down gospel. I do think that what they're getting at there is we may be over adapting to the identity narrative. The identity

narrative is you got to be true to yourself, This transcript was exported on May 10, 2020 - view latest version here. CNLP_339 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 05/08/20) Transcript by Rev.com Page 12 of 24 and you've got to feel good about yourself. It's possible that you start to adapt the gospel, and turn it into something where Jesus just makes you feel good about yourself, and by the way, what I did there a minute ago or few minutes ago about how you would talk about the Christian identity, unless you're careful it can really sound like Jesus is here to boost your self esteem. You have to say that when Christ's love becomes your identity it reorders all your loves. Which means, that's Augustine, what he would say is, "When Christ is your supreme love, he's the source of your love, but he's also your supreme love."

Tim Keller: What that does is it demotes other identities without effacing them, which is another way of saying, if you're Chinese, and you become a Christian you don't start being anything else. You're still Chinese, but your greatest pride isn't who you are in Christ, and therefore what it does is it takes racial pride, it takes vocational pride, it takes those things down a notch, and that has to be said. I've seen youth groups where people are told you find your identity in Christ, which means God loves you even if you screw up, he just loves you all the time, and you should feel good about yourself, and not hate yourself, and it actually just becomes not an understanding of how your whole life is reordered by the gospel. It's like Jesus basically makes you feel better about yourself as you [crosstalk 00:38:43].

Carey Nieuwhof: Regardless of whether you change, regardless?

Tim Keller: Right, yeah, and that's watered down gospel, which is more of a self esteemism, and I think that's right, and I think that's probably what they're getting at. That's a concern of mine too.

Carey Nieuwhof: Sure. Barna has a partnership with Gloop, big data is really making up... Yeah, we live in a very different age. You've done some work with Barna over the years where you've done studies for your work at Redeemer in New York City. What is in your mind, the line between being data informed, and data driven?

Tim Keller: Well, the German philosopher, not a Christian, by the way, Jürgen Habermas is famous for saying, well, he's famous for more than this, but he said that while science can tell you what you can do, and how to do it efficiently, it can never ever tell you whether you should do it or not. In other words, you can't get at ought of an is. You can't get an ought out of an is, so if science can tell you what is, it can never tell you what it ought to be, and you have to be careful. When I have people saying, "Well, the data shows that you should do this." The data can't show you what you ought to do. The data can inform you about what is, and on the base of what is, I can make decisions, but I make decisions on the base of my moral values, which I get from the scripture. There is a little danger that you say, for example, my church does not have to grow.

Carey Nieuwhof: What do you mean by that?

Tim Keller: It doesn't say anywhere in the Bible your church has to grow. Ordinarily, if people are growing spiritually, and they're sharing their faith, the church will grow, but that's a byproduct. The church must grow spiritually, the church must grow in joy. It must grow in worship. It must grow in those things, and if it's going to grow numerically, then it ought to be a byproduct of that, and therefore, I don't want to just do something that kind of does, and run around those things, and just gets more people in the door, and sometimes data can look like it's saying, if you do this, you will grow. Anyway, I would say the data can tell me what it is, but it can't tell me what I ought to do, and if it looks like it is, then I think it's overstepped its bounds.

Carey Nieuwhof: Anything else on the State of the Church today before we switch gears? I want to talk about preaching, but anything else on what you see, what worries you, what excites you?

Tim Keller: What confuses me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay.

Tim Keller: You didn't ask that, but

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, that's still

Tim Keller: ... what confuses me is I'm not sure how hostile the culture will get, so should we assume that all the evangelical colleges will lose their accreditation, for example? Should we assume that Christian radio stations will lose their FCC licenses, because they'd be considered bigoted, or hateful, and that kind of thing. I think that's at least possible. We should not live in fearfulness of that, especially, as I've traveled around the world as a speaker in the last few years, and everybody's got it worse than we do. Everybody's got it worse than we do, and certainly Americans, you're in Canada, certainly Americans have it even better than Christians.

Carey Nieuwhof: ... tighter where I am, for sure.

Tim Keller: Yeah, nevertheless, I would say that we have to be not afraid of that, but we also should be ready for it. We should be not afraid, but ready, and not be shocked if it happens.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you mourn that?

Tim Keller: No, not necessarily. Here's the thing, to me it's win-win, believe it or not. The win is if it doesn't happen, hey, that's great. There's great advantages to being able to keep your accreditation, your FCC license, and to keep on moving, and have your endowment funds and it's better for institution building. On the other hand, if it goes away, it's probably better for spiritually. It probably is.

Carey Nieuwhof: Even like the whole tax question?

Tim Keller: Yes. If it goes away, it's better for spiritually. If it stays, it's better for us institutionally.

Carey Nieuwhof: Would you fight it?

Tim Keller: Oh, I would fight, fight. What do you mean?

Carey Nieuwhof: Like, would you petition governments and that kind of thing?

Tim Keller: Yeah, sure, I'm not sure they'd listen. I'd be very happy to sign a petition for sure. Otherwise, I wouldn't, yeah, lightly.

Carey Nieuwhof: Hold it lightly, but you wouldn't...

Tim Keller: No, go to the mat, or say this is the end of the world, or how can you do this? Other parts of the world you don't have the minister's tax break, you don't have the nonprofit status.

Carey Nieuwhof: We still have that in Canada, but every time I get mail on that, I'm like, "Wow, this feels like the first century more, and more all the time."

Tim Keller: Yeah, I would not make it easy, but on the other hand, like I said, it's a win-win, I think.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Let's talk about preaching. What have you learned? Again, we've touched on this, but I think you're masterful at communicating to a post-Christian culture, and New York has been more post-Christian than a lot of America, and America's becoming very checkerboard. You go up the coasts, you go into the cities, it's much more post-Christian. I spent a lot of time in the Bible Belt, and there it's generational. You look at Gen Z, and Millennials, they're very post-Christian.

Tim Keller: Yeah, and what's sad about those areas is a lot of times the older people don't realize it's happening.

Carey Nieuwhof: 100%.

Tim Keller: Yeah, for example, if you go to the center of some of these conservative cities, if you go to the center of Houston, or you go to the center of these Bible Belt cities, the younger generation is definitely walking away from faith.

Carey Nieuwhof: They could be in California or New York.

Tim Keller: That's right, that's right, and very often the parents aren't as completely aware of it as they would be, so yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: What would you say to those kids?

Tim Keller: Well, I think, I would say that Christianity's better resources for what they're trying to do. You're looking for freedom, you're looking for meaning, you're looking for satisfaction, you're looking for identity, you're looking for a basis for doing justice. You want a basis for doing justice that doesn't turn you into an oppressor yourself? Do you want to have an identity that's not performative, that is not exclusive? I said, "I got better resources for you." Now, here's why I would start there with them rather than start with what I'd call heart apologetics, and here's the evidence for the resurrection. There's a pensive by Blaise Pascal, he says, "Bring people to the place where they wish Christianity was true, then show them it's true." There's really no reason for me to get out the guns on the evidence for the resurrection stuff like that, which is trying to show them that Christianity is true if they don't it to be true, but if they get to the place where they say, "Gee, it'd be great if that was true, but is it?" Then I can do your more traditional [crosstalk 00:46:16].

Carey Nieuwhof: So, speaking to the identity pieces?

Tim Keller: Right, identity, freedom, meaning, satisfaction, justice. You speak to the values they have, and that they're trying... you have to have an operational way to get those. You can't live without those things. This transcript was exported on May 10, 2020 - view latest version here. CNLP_339 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 05/08/20)
Transcript by Rev.com Page 16 of 24

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I think you've made the argument, others have made the argument that in some ways the culture still has the values of Christianity without the faith of Christianity to some extent?

Tim Keller: Yeah, especially, in the area of morality and justice. We have a questionnaire that in my evangelism class I ask people to go talk to a non-Christian friend, and they have a set of questions to ask them, and one of the questions is, how do you determine whether something is right or wrong? How do you make a moral judgment? He said, "Almost all the secular people actually tie themselves into pretzels." Because I said, "Look, the assignment is not to actually get into a debate, but you can if you want ask a follow up question." The follow up question there is to say, how do you tell somebody who doesn't feel that what they're doing is wrong, and his culture tells them it's not wrong, that they're doing something wrong. What would you say to them? They just have no idea because on the one hand they're relativist, and they say, "Nobody can tell me what is right or wrong for me." But then, on the other hand they want to tell other people not to live unjust lives, and that is deeply incoherent. That would be one of the things I would be talking to them about.

Tim Keller: The fact is that they don't have a sufficient moral source for their moral ideals, but that would be still not the heart apologetics, that's still saying Christianity has better resources for the things you're seeking than you have, and if I got them to the place where they said, "Oh, that's interesting, but how do I know this is true?" Then I can say,

"Well, let's read the gospels, let's talk about the claims of Jesus." Then you get into more traditional apologetics.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, it's interesting. You've written a lot about apologetics, and spoken a lot about apologetics, but I was listening to a talk you gave years ago, and I'm sure you've written about this as well, and I'm paraphrasing here, but you said, "The place to start with apologetics is not with hard logic. Like, there are so many codices in the New Testament, et cetera, because people don't actually respond to logic. They respond to emotion." Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

Tim Keller: Well.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is that accurate?

Tim Keller: Yes, and I was trying to say this, they got to want it to be true before they're open to an argument that it is, and they can only want it to be true if you actually, in a sense, do emotional apologetics. There's actually a book, I can't recommend every part of it, but a book by Francis Spufford called *Unapologetic*. He's a very cheeky British writer who is a professing Christian, not a full, and certainly not evangelical, and not an Orthodox one, but the subtitle of the book is, *Why in Spite of Everything Christianity Still Makes Great Emotional Sense*. That's the subtitle, and I thought that's pretty brilliant. That's what I was trying to talk about, is that if for people to think Christianity makes emotional sense, that it gives you a This transcript was exported on May 10, 2020 - view latest version here. CNLP_339 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 05/08/20) Transcript by Rev.com Page 17 of 24 workable approach to identity, or it promises a happiness, or a love that you find desirable, or it gives you a basis for making moral judgments that doesn't turn you into a Pharisee, but at the same time gives you a basis. It says when people start to emotionally want that, because that's not hard logic. It's more like saying, look, I have better resources than you do for the things you're dealing with.

Carey Nieuwhof: There's part of that pointing out the problem, anticipating the objections.

Tim Keller: Yes, I'm trying to show them that Christianity makes emotional sense, and if it makes emotional sense, there'd be open to a argument that it makes rational sense, that's what I was trying to say.

Carey Nieuwhof: ... an example just to make it crystal clear?

Tim Keller: Well, I'll give you an example. C. S. Lewis, when he does his argument from desire in his famous chapter in *Mere Christianity* on hope, and he starts off by saying, "If you're young you may not have experienced this, but as you get out in life, you're going to realize that all the things you thought were really going to make you happy don't do it." And, he does a wonderful job of saying, "The job you thought would make you happy, the marriage you thought would make you happy, the travel you thought would make you happy, at first, it seems like this is finally going to do it, and it goes away in the grasping

of it." And then, he says, "I'm not talking about bad marriages. I'm not talking about bad jobs, I'm talking about bad trips." He says, "I'm talking about the best possible ones, and you're going to find out that nothing actually satisfies. There's still a kind of emptiness." And then, he says, "Now, once you decide that there's only two or three possibilities, one is you could say, I need a better wife, I need a better trip, I need a better job, and out there that happiness is out there in this world. The second thing you can do..."

Tim Keller: He says, "And absolutely, it's going to make you driven, it's going to make you anxious. The second thing you can do is say there is no happiness, there is no satisfaction. I just have to harden myself. Stop crying after the moon. Just get cynical." He says, "Well, that might make you less of a nuisance to people, but it also is going to dehumanize you. It's going to kill the part of your heart that really wants love, and wants happiness, and satisfaction." He says, "The third possibility is this..." He says, "Ducklings want to swim, there's such a thing as water. Babies want to suck milk, there's such a thing as milk. Desires don't exist unless satisfaction for those desires exist, and if you find in yourself a desire for something that nothing in this world can satisfy, it probably means you were made for another world." Now, that's logical and yet it's basically working on emotion. It's not the evidence for the resurrection, it's not saying there's the existence of God. It's trying to say there is an emptiness in you that you can either say, I'm going to find it in this world, or you can say I'm going to kill my desire for happiness, and then become a real cynic, and a snob.

Tim Keller Or, you can say there's actually something else out there. There's another way. Now, if I was preaching this, and I do actually preach it, I would add the Buddhist approach, and the Eastern approach which is to say that the world is an illusion. It's a little bit like hardening your heart, but it seems more spiritual, but ultimately, it does make you detach, and I could make a case against it, so what I would do is I'm actually doing argument, I'm doing apologetics, but it's trying to make Christianity make emotional sense, and only if it makes emotional sense would people want eventually to sit, and listen to an argument why it makes intellectual sense.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know whether you would think this has changed a lot, but a lot of people would see a surge in the new atheism. Everybody from Sam Harris, to Christopher Hitchens, to Yuval Harari and people like that who have written a lot of books, and some of their arguments are fairly strong. You could make the argument that perhaps we're not doing very well on that front as Christians these days with a few present company excepted.

Tim Keller: Well

Carey Nieuwhof: ... go ahead.

Tim Keller: I'm sorry, I cut you off.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, no, no.

Tim Keller: ... think of that?

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I'm saying what do you think their best arguments are? That was going to be my question. What do you think the best arguments of the new atheists?

Tim Keller: I actually think that the older new atheists like Sam Harris, and of course, Hitchens is dead. Obviously, Richard Dawkins, I think actually they're stridency has actually faded. I think they're still striding. It's faded because they're

Carey Nieuwhof: It's got a little muddy you mean?

Tim Keller: This transcript was exported on May 10, 2020 - view latest version here. CNLP_339 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 05/08/20) Transcript by Rev.com Page 19 of 24 No, no. They're old and even Harari, he's a more recent one, but that's not where kids are. The new atheists are saying science will solve everything. It's sort of an old enlightenment approach that sort of sees everything rationally, and younger people today are all about justice, they're all about identity, and I actually don't think that, that kind of very detached, intellectual, scientific enlightenment thing that science has got the answers to everything. I don't think younger people resonate with that.

Carey Nieuwhof: So, back to what we talked about earlier.

Tim Keller: Yeah. I don't think that they're in ascendancy anymore. I think that they're fading. They also do come across just as fundamentalists and narrow-minded as fundamentalists.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh yeah, Harari, especially at the end of some of his work.

Tim Keller: The books are still selling.

Carey Nieuwhof: Very well.

Tim Keller: They're still making

Carey Nieuwhof: Very well.

Tim Keller: When I said they're not in ascendancy it doesn't mean they're not making a good income.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, so we got a lot of preachers listening who are like, I think I'm stuck in Christendom. Do you want to give them some tips on how to move out of that mindset? Whether that's generational in the Bible Belt, or they're in a city, and they're not having the impact that they wish they would. What are some starting points for some preachers?

Tim Keller: Oh boy, that is so

Carey Nieuwhof: ... To connect better? Yeah.

Tim Keller: This transcript was exported on May 10, 2020 - view latest version here.
CNLP_339 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 05/08/20) Transcript by Rev.com Page 20 of 24
Okay. Well, you want the cigar as the hardest question. He gets a cigar for the hardest question.

Carey Nieuwhof: Thank you.

Tim Keller: Because, there's not a lot of great examples. What worries me is I already told you I think that the secret mega church I still think it's not the place a lot of the younger justice oriented, postmodern people are showing up. I still think it's not the way of the future, I don't think. I would say if you can find a multiethnic church in a city that's growing, and it's not compromising on any of those four things on the sex, the pro-life, the justice, the racial, if it's multi-ethnic, if it's really equally evangelizing people, calling to repentance, and doing justice, calling people to be a sexual counterculture and work on being antiracist. If you find a church like that, that's growing, and Orthodox, and true to the whole, panel of those things, they're probably doing what they ought to do, probably, probably, go there, but, if you mean a movement, a book, even

Carey Nieuwhof: No, I just mean like they're stuck in an old mindset, how do they begin to detach from that, and move on?

Tim Keller: You could realize with Newbigin. Newbigin died in 1999, and so, he's already somewhat dated. He's already looking at a post-Christian West that has already moved from he saw it, and yet he was just ahead of his time, and so, if you could read Foolishness to the Greeks, and The Gospel and The Pluralist Society, I think, that's right. Those two books would be great starting points. They'd be really good starting points.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good. Anything else on the mega church movement that you've seen over the last 40 years develop? A lot of them are listening.

Tim Keller: Obviously, I planted a mega church by anybody's standards, and at this point I feel like I think it was the right thing to do to let it get that big. There wouldn't be a Redeemer City to City, there wouldn't be a counseling center, there wouldn't be Hope for New York. They wouldn't be all sorts of stuff, and I do think that for New York to grow an evangelical mega church was a good thing for the whole ecosystem, I think. It is breaking up. I broke up my bell. We were already three, and eventually four, five, six churches. Not there is no 6,000 person Redeemer Church anymore, there's a whole slew of them, and I think that's good, because generally speaking, when a church gets over a thousand people, it really becomes much more bureaucratic.

Tim Keller: I'll give you two real quick, that sounds kind of negative about big churches. The pastors can't know everybody. I always say to a pastor, if you can interview every single new member personally then your church is still small enough, and if you can't do

that anymore, it's too big. Secondly, what happens is, This transcript was exported on May 10, 2020 - view latest version here. CNLP_339 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 05/08/20) Transcript by Rev.com Page 21 of 24 listen, if you run a pharmacy, you start a pharmacy, you're probably a pharmacist. You probably know how to stock the shelves, and then, maybe you grow your pharmacy, and then, you form a second pharmacy, and a third pharmacy even. Generally, the people running those pharmacies are still pharmacists. They actually know what it means to make it a good experience for people to come in the door, and buy things, but when you have 50 pharmacies in a chain, the people running it know almost nothing about pharmaceuticals. They're just looking on ROI, return on investment, bottom lines. They're just operating like they're basically financial people.

Tim Keller: And, what ends up happening in a very large church is more and more, both the staff, and the lay leaders become people who are not so much doing the ministry at the bottom. They're not the pharmacists anymore. They're people who are looking at systems, and doing all these things, and I don't think that's healthy. I actually have been saying frankly the city would be better off with 10 churches of 500 people in general than one church of 5,000. Having said that, I think almost every city needs a of mega churches, because they can do things nobody else can do, a couple, but I wouldn't aspire to be the pastor of a mega church. I just want you to know that.

Carey Nieuwhof: There you go.

Tim Keller: For the reasons I just mentioned, it's a discipleship problem, a lot of passivity, and there's a bureaucracy problem where people spend an awful lot of time in just looking at systems instead of doing ministry. I would say looking forward, I think, basically, I'm not a big house church fan in spite of the fact that Francis Chan, and other people think it's the solution. I would say moderate sized churches, 100 to 800 is the way forward.

Carey Nieuwhof: You're speaking to most of the people listening to or watching this. I've got a list of questions that, and you've been so generous with your time, but I'd love to close with this one.

Tim Keller: Sure.

Carey Nieuwhof: A lot of leaders listening in right now are discouraged, personally. It's been a tough season, it's hard at home. I'm sure you've had seasons of discouragement. Do you want to just tell us about a time where you felt discouraged, and how you got yourself through it?

Tim Keller: Just so many. How will I ever choose them? If you're talking about leadership, the hardest time was there was a period from about 2001 to 2005 or so that was tough for me as a leader, because 9/11 happened, and that's a whole big story. 9/11 in New York City it's a world of discussion as I can't go there. The whole city got depressed, and everybody burned out. The day after 9/11, day after, a Christian minister

from Oklahoma City who had been through the Oklahoma City Bombing called and This transcript was exported on May 10, 2020 - view latest version here. CNLP_339 – With_Tim-Keller (Completed 05/08/20) Transcript by Rev.com Page 22 of 24 told me, "You're going to have a lot of trouble in your church for the next three or four years. You're going to have people burning out, you're going to have people grieving, you're going to have all sorts of trouble." He kind of gave me the list. On top of that, I got thyroid cancer. On top of that, my wife had Crohn's disease, had a big flare up, and had multiple surgeries on her body.

Tim Keller: I stayed the pastor, but basically really let the staff kind of go, and when I actually came back to health after about two years basically, I was still preaching and all that. I came back to health, and I sat down with my staff, and I found that they were all bitter, because I had left them on their own, and they also formed these little silos, and they were actually all having turf battles, and it was a wreck. It was a total wreck, and so, I said, "Oh my gosh, are we ever going to get out of this?" Basically, I did hire a new executive director, Bruce Terrell, who was probably the single biggest help at cleaning all that up, and reintegrating the staff into a community, but about three years before that, I'm not sure how we made it other than to say, you got to keep going, you got to pray. My wife was so sick that at certain point there I thought maybe I should leave the ministry, but I couldn't tell her about it, because then she would feel guilty, but I couldn't tell anybody else about it because I felt I would betray her, so I didn't tell anybody.

Tim Keller: I lived with that for a couple years, and never really resolved it other than God never gave me the freedom to leave, so that is when my prayer life really kicked in, in a new way. My prayer life changed drastically right during that period of time, just deepened, it got stronger, and pretty much worth it. The whole thing was worth it just for that, but no key, God sent in somebody who was important, he deepened my prayer life. That's how you get through it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Tim, this has been rich, deep, and such a privilege. Thank you.

Tim Keller: Thanks for the thanks.

[01:25:30.700]

Carey Nieuwhof: So that was the first very rich interview with Tim Keller and then we sat down again for another podcast that I do called Church Pulse Weekly. And here, David Kinnaman and myself talk to Tim.

[01:25:41.900]

This is after his diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in the midst of the pandemic. We pick up the story in 2021. Here's my second interview with Tim Keller along with my good friend David Kinnaman, President of the Barna Group.

SECOND INTERVIEW

Tim Keller, welcome back. It's so good to have you.

[01:26:00.800]

Tim Keller: I'm glad to be with you. I wish we could do this face to face, but this is way better than nothing.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yes, it is. And we got that opportunity last time and don't take it for granted anymore. Like, perhaps we would have in the past while the world has changed an awful lot since February of 2020 in your world, This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 3 of 20 as I'm sure many of our listeners would know has changed dramatically. What would you say has changed most profoundly in your personal journey? You got a diagnosis with pancreatic cancer, have been going through that. I would just love to know over the last year, what are you thinking about day to day?

Tim Keller: Well, yes, the day after I found out I did have cancer which was in May of last year, the, sat down, and two words came to me as I was meditating and praying. Don't forget I'm Presbyterian and not Pentecostal. So when you get words, when you're Presbyterian, you really better write them down. You usually don't get words. And they were your sanctification and focus. And what that meant was, first of all, it was... And David knows this because his wife's been through this with a very, very... I also had a similarly, very bad cancer. At times I'm not going to die tomorrow. I've got some time left, but it's very limited. And so, the number one, I realized that I needed to focus on certain things. I had to figure out what that was.

Tim Keller: I would say that as a man who was 69 years old, I actually was pretty unfocused because the reality is it doesn't matter whether you have cancer or not. When you're approaching 70, you should actually know the time is short. You don't really have decades anymore. You've got years anyway. And so I should have been more focused, but I was tending to do whatever anybody asks me to do. Like most ministers get in the habit two years. Before you're a nice person, you're a minister. So you do whatever anybody asks you to do. And I had no focus. I really didn't. I wasn't saying what do I really finally had one year left, two, three, four, five years. What should I be doing? I didn't have that focus. Now I did.

Tim Keller: Secondly, the word sanctification was that God was saying, "If you had died of a heart attack, at age of 73, that wouldn't work. Because if you've got two years left for three years left, you're really not holy enough for what I have for you. You're not close enough to me. You're not dependent enough on me. Too much of your faith is abstract. And therefore I'm not going to take you suddenly by a stroke or a heart attack. I'm going to give you a really serious cancer so that last part of your life, you will be living with the prospect of death all the time in a way that you wouldn't, if he was taking something like." And therefore the why? Why would he do that? Because He says, "Actually, you're

not holy enough for what I have for you left to do." And it made perfect sense. It was scary. You sit down, and you say, "This isn't right."

Tim Keller: Kathy always said, "I thought, when we turned 70, we'd feel a lot older." And we didn't, and we were ready to go and ready to do all those sorts of things. So why, at the same time unfair? And then, as soon as I thought about it, I said, "Actually, this makes perfect sense." I mean, God probably has a hundred million reasons why He's doing this to me. And I can only just deserve one or two, but the two even I saw make a ridiculous amount of sense. I said, "Of course." So yeah, that's what's changed. A lot has changed. The focus and just being drawn, just being pushed toward God in a way it wasn't before. David Kinnaman: Thanks so much for sharing with us, Tim, and these windows into these moments for you I've been trying to be faithful in a similar journey with my wife's glioblastoma of leading us publicly and as openly This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 4 of 20 and unafraid as we can about all that. And it has been this revealer of what I try to control, where real control comes from and what doesn't, what we do and don't really have impact on. And it's been a thing that's softened my heart for the place of the church and how we can really minister to people in their place of deep need. And also really recognizing through the pandemic. It was almost like as soon as the pandemic hit, it's like, "Wow, I've got three years. I've been practicing what it looks like to lead through crisis because my wife's had a terminal brain tumor." And so anyway, it's been too many lessons to compress into a couple of minutes, but I appreciate you sharing that with us.

Carey Nieuwhof: You wrote a very powerful piece. You've written a lot of powerful pieces, but your most recent piece in the Atlantic on Death and Dying, I thought, was very, very helpful. You said something interesting. I just want to pick up on and if I got it slightly wrong, let me know, but "God is doing this to me." It's interesting that sort of pushes at the theodicy. I'd love your take on suffering. I thought what you quoted from, was it, Charles Taylor was really helpful in the Atlantic, and how are you rethinking suffering?

Tim Keller: The word rethinking is interesting. I mean, rethinking could mean I'm just going back through what I thought before. That's closer than... Rethinking sometimes can mean thinking on new way about it in a different way. I actually don't think I am thinking about different wording. I mean, I think most of what I believed about suffering was more head knowledge, and I hadn't really made it operational in my life. That's the main burden of the article that you read was to say, "When I went back and looked at what I believed I was suffering, I did write a book on suffering," a whole book with Joni Eareckson was kind of an expert on suffering said was the best book she'd ever read on it in which she told me that personally. And I was thinking, "Oh, wow, all right. I mean, that's not high compliment." And yet, I hadn't suffered as much as Joni Eareckson. So I hadn't used a lot.

Tim Keller: I mean, when you have, you've got a couple of things of Bible. Christianity is the only religion that gives you a God who actually has suffered. I have to be very careful

with Trinitarian language here because Jesus Christ was the Son of God. And He experienced suffering in His human nature. I do know all that. So when all the letters come in from the Trinitarian, the Trinitarians, you can say Tim understands that.

Tim Keller: On the other hand, Jesus Christ still has a body. That is the teaching of all Christian churches, all Orthodox churches. And it's still has the nail prints. So when Hebrews says, "You have a God, you have a Savior who's experienced whatever you're experiencing." There's no other religion that gives you that. Have you ever lost a child, have you ever lost a son, outlived the son? Well, God has. Have you ever been betrayed by your best friends? Well, Jesus has. Have you ever faced a certain painful death? Yes. I mean, so first of all, you've got someone, and Hebrew says, "Go to him because he knows. He's been through it." And then secondly, he will also have a God who is going to heal all suffering again of time. And then, therefore, in the end, and one way to put this is if Jesus Christ really rose from the dead, if He really, really rose from the dead. So that means that the teaching of the gospel and the Bible is true.

Tim Keller: This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 5 of 20 So he really rose from dead, guess what? Everything's going to be okay. In the end, everything is going to be okay. David is going to be okay. Carey is going to be okay. My wife is going to be okay. David's wife is going to be okay. Everything's going to be fine.

Tim Keller: So you put those two things together. You've got a God who actually knows sufferings. I can go through now when I'm in the midst of it. And then I can know that eventually, just hold on because it's going to be okay. The other religions of the world actually they don't offer that sort of thing. Even people that believe in paradise, we're talking about a new heavens new earth. Christianity is saying, "Everything's going to be okay." That means this world's going to be restored. We're not going to get consolation for the loss of this world. We're actually going to get the world.

Tim Keller: So you say rethinking. Rethinking, meaning I just have to go back and think again, through all this stuff, I already believe I didn't change it at all. I had to appropriate it. I had to make it something that helped me get through the day. And in that sense, yes, I rethought it. But basically, I don't think right now the word rethink usually means I've changed. I haven't, which is weird because it's such a Christian theology of suffering. The Biblical theology of suffering is so potent. It's just sitting there unused by most people. So God has just said, "No, go get it, go use it."

Carey Nieuwhof: You mentioned unfocused, which kind of surprised me, to be honest with you. I think of you as very focused. Any more on that? And then, if you could go back a decade, 15 years, pick a time window, is there any way you would have changed your focus or become more focused knowing what you know now?

Tim Keller: I think what it means is that there're the things that you know you want to be trying to spend most of your time doing, and then there's things that everybody else asks you to do. Now, maybe yours will be different. Maybe it'll be different than me. I would

think most people are like this, though. I mean, I'm an oldest child. And so I'm kind of like... Man, there's a lot of ways in which I'm probably worse than most people are trying to please people and keep them happy. I'm certainly worse than my wife. And my wife is way better at saying, "I just can't do that." And knowing the person that's going to be unhappy with her, and that's harder. So it's harder for me. Therefore, that might be why I'm more focused.

Tim Keller: But basically, when I say unfocused, meaning it didn't mean I didn't know what I should be doing. It's just that I never get to the most of it because I was too busy with people who would say, "You can help me so much if you would write this, look at this, come speak here and do this."

Tim Keller: So I honestly think that that's what I meant, that I just wasn't able to be disciplined enough. And here's a gift about this. It's not only that I can really say that I have become more focused, but actually, frankly, the people around me are allowing me to do that. I mean, we're all selfish. We all say, "Look, I know This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 6 of 20 you're so busy and I hate to ask you this, but could you please do this for me?" And now people are actually being a lot more careful about it. So anyway, that's what I meant by focus.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you have sense of what you want to zone in on over the next couple of years, what you really want to devote your time and energy to?

Tim Keller: Well, now here's the thing. You actually do know about that because we talked about it last time we talked. So many of the things we talked about staying that there is, and maybe we can talk more about it now. There really has been a cultural shift, and it's not just a cultural shift, actually. There's a cultural breakdown, which made me want to talk a little bit about. Therefore, older ways of doing evangelism and Christian formation, I think are in this country, are becoming obsolete as how the truth is not where we're not going to change the truth, but how we impart it, how we shaped people with it, how we recommend it.

Tim Keller: So all the things we talked before, maybe you should say, "Okay, the pandemic changed those things." I know you're going to get to questions like that which you can't. But basically, I would say the things I talked to you about before, that's where it really was most concerns me that the church is not able to form its own young people growing up as the world is catechizing them in a way that we're not. And then secondly, even the way we do apologetics and evangelism, I think it's just going to have to change. And we talked about that. So we can talk about that more right here if you want. David Kinnaman: I'd love to hear one thought about ways you think that the church could better catechize young people. A lot of my life's work has really been focused on understanding this massive gap of those under age 40 and really under age 30 today, what are often called Millennials and Gen Z. And I'm just convinced that we've lost the heart of so many of these young people, that the data to bear that out. But even those who are in the church are sort of being formed and malformed by culture. What do you think some of the

reasons for that are, and what would be a way we could think differently about that as church leaders?

Tim Keller: Well, I think I may have actually even used this illustration with Carey last time. I can't remember, but that's okay because it's a new time and we have to talk about it again. I think I may have mentioned if you look at that real catechisms, I'm not saying that we have to actually write literal catechism, so maybe we do. But the real catechisms with the older ones, it's a question and answer. So if you go back and look at Luther's Catechism, Calvin's Catechism, Westminster, Heidelberg, all the various ones that were written during the reformation, you'll notice things like this. You'll notice that they ask very low... Two or three questions about the Trinity, but then they'll ask you 10 questions about justification or the sacraments or the Lord's supper, things like that. And the reason is because you never catechize... You never really are just only teaching people what the Bible says. You're also inoculating them against the dominant alternatives.

Tim Keller: This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version [here](#). CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 7 of 20 So if you are not a Protestant Christian in Europe, in the 16th century, you'd be Catholic. Otherwise, the alternative to being catechized as a Protestant was you would be a Catholic. That's the reason why the Catechism actually was inoculating you against the counter-narratives.

Tim Keller: Now Catholics and Protestants have these very same beliefs about the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, et cetera, but they don't have the same beliefs about salvation, how you receive salvation, justification, the Lord's Supper, and things like that. And therefore, the Catechism are actually not just shaped by what the Bible says but also what the alternative narratives are.

Tim Keller: I would say today, the alternative narratives are the way we train younger people doesn't take on the identity narrative or the freedom narrative or the science narrative or the... You know what I'm talking about? David Kinnaman: Mm-hmm. I do.

Tim Keller: They're very, very profound narratives, and they're getting them dozens of times a day in all sorts of ways. And unless we... Here's what is inoculation. Inoculation is giving people a little bit of the disease, but also one that actually stimulates the antibodies. I mean, I just got vaccinated by the way of COVID. So I'm just reading about that. And so what you want to do is you want it not just talking about the Trinity, but you want to say, "How does the doctrine of the Trinity actually differ from what people say about human life today?" I mean, how does it... Or what the Bible says about the gospel how's that different than the identity narratives that are out there, that your primary identity is something that you find in yourself or your primary identity is a racial one, is that your primary identity? And you have to... We're going have to engage those things in the way in which we do doctrinal training because the kids, they're being engaged.

Tim Keller: So you actually, you really can't just give them the kind of traditional doctrine that we've been given for 500 years, and then hope that they make the

connection. You have to say, "If you believe this, and this is true, then this doesn't work over here." And so that's why... I haven't seen almost any material that actually does that. It looks abstract, but it's basically based on by and large. Most evangelical churches are really still trying to teach kids how not to be Catholic. That's actually not their biggest problem. David Kinnaman: So interesting. And I couldn't agree more. I think I'm just observing that so much of your work and the city in New York and a world of ideas in a world of so many people who are socially and financially climbing and sort of the contest for how faith fits into our largely secular age gives you a context for that. David Kinnaman: This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 8 of 20 For me, what I've observed about this generation is that screens are disciplining them. That is as sort of the primary means by which they're being catechized by social media and technology and entertainment. And so the average church, not New York City is now dealing with pressures that would have been the case you've been dealing with for many years. And so we really do need a complete reframe of the kinds of, to use Jesus' metaphor, the wineskins of helping to invest in younger generations. So the way you described that as very inspiring to me, and I think it's so important.

Carey Nieuwhof: Again, in some ways, we talked about identity. I remember that very clearly from our conversation a year ago, how people are seeing everything now through the lens of identity, whether it's gender identity, sexual identity, et cetera, et cetera. And that the gospel actually addresses that. So in many ways, our earlier conversation talked about disruptions that were happening, and then COVID hit, and everything got accelerated. To what extent, what do you see accelerated, like any thoughts on, because obviously the world has changed, but like, I mean, what has got your attention now over the last year from a leadership theological perspective that perhaps got accelerated or changed by the pandemic?

Tim Keller: Well, I think the things that were happening before are going to continue to happen. I don't think it's completely clear to me yet how the pandemic is disrupting those trajectories. I don't think they're reversing any of them. I don't believe the pandemic's reversing them, but some will be accelerated. Some will be decelerated, and some will just be thrown off the older track. I mean, I'm just trying to think.

Tim Keller: So, for example, we did not talk about this, Carey. And one of the problems with even getting into this one is because it's actually unfortunately political, but the reality is that the middle-class is sort of going away. And the reason is, and there's a fair amount of good research that I believe in, is that basically wage... How would I say? Labor is not as valuable as assets. So the people who can live off of their investments are pulling away from the people who have to go out and earn a living with wages. And that's getting... The pandemic we know has made that worse because we definitely know that very wealthy people have become far wealthier during the pandemic.

Tim Keller: Virtually almost everybody who's really wealthy and has enough money to have a portfolio out there they've just done extraordinarily well. And we do know that there's a big for a lot of reasons why bluecollar labor has been hit so hard. There's a lot of

jobs that may not come back. And so there's just one example of the growing economic inequality that is really fueling a lot of the problems. Politically is not... In many ways, it's getting worse.

Tim Keller: On the other hand, we're just thinking about another one is well, I guess on identity, okay, here's a change. Carey, here's the change. One secular identity approach, which is non-Christian, of course, is I call the therapeutic model, which is you look inside, you find out your deepest desires and whatever's in there. You decide that's the real me.

Tim Keller: This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 9 of 20 Identity is not found in God or in my family, or in my duties, is found in, "I want to see my deepest desires. I have to realize those desires." And that's my identity. Another approach, which we already knew about before, was if I am a minority, that's my main identity, which means, in other words, because I'm not white, I'm not male, I'm not straight, there's a virtue in that.

Tim Keller: So my primary identity is, I've been a marginalized person, and that's another approach, which I think is certainly not the Christian approach, but here's the other thing is Christian nationalism, which is a fusion of America. Of course, the Kennedy's have no problems with this because they're just so sanctified here, but we Americans have this. Well, actually you don't have the same problem with it. And the reason for that is evangelicalism in Canada is too small.

Carey Nieuwhof: Very small.

Tim Keller: Is too small for this to happen. But down here, where it's bigger is you now have a number of people who are saying, "You're not a real American, unless you're a white Protestant, Christian, we don't want Muslims here. We don't want all these immigrants here." And you're getting a few. It's really a kind of... It's a new identity politics only. It's the right wing identity politics. And it's a fusion of Christianity with being a White American. So there's that one, there's the therapeutic individualistic one. There's the kind of progressive victim one, and now there's a right-wing one. And they're all what we would call in Christianity, they're all identity heresies. I mean, they're all ways of thinking about identity that are really, really very destructive.

Tim Keller: We think they're destructive to the people who are adopting them as their primary identities, and all of them are absolutely against what the Bible says, how identity works. And so that's a change. I wouldn't even have said that a year ago with you, that right-wing kind of identity. And yet, there they are.

Tim Keller: So in a sense, nothing is stopped, but some things are going faster, some things are going slower, and some things are kind of taking some detours, but they're all kind of. All of our political and cultural, and economic crises are still heading in that direction, but we don't completely know yet how the pandemic is changing things, but it

is still changing it pretty profoundly, but not reversing anything. David Kinnaman: One of the things we saw in our tracking research is this the profound impact that the pandemic has had on pastoring and on leading congregations which is primarily about bringing people together, was about a lot of things, but the expression of that is on Sunday morning worship. And so we saw in our data three, and 10 pastors say they've seriously considered quitting this year. Speak about how you find our sort of deepest truest calling in ministry and a time when things sort of all bets feel like they're off.

Tim Keller: This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 10 of 20 Well, now you're talking to a person who actually because I was retired. I'm retired, I stepped out of being a leader of a church three years ago. So I'm not actually experienced in this, but I mean, I can certainly speak to that because I'm talking to plenty of folks, so I do have to say to Kathy, I said, "I got pancreatic cancer, but at least I'm not actually a working pastor right now." I mean, I've said that some days. I said, "Man, you would not want to be out there trying to pull things together." Here's the thing, David and Carey, there's not a single pastor recently that anybody has said, "You're doing a great job." Because nobody is doing a great job. Because there's no wins.

Tim Keller: In a very, very beginning, when you went online, there did seem to be a little bit. I say, "Oh my goodness, we have a church of 300, but a thousand people are watching us every Sunday." Well, after a while, people begin to realize, "Okay, here's a thousand people that are watching, but we don't know if that one person got five folks in a family at home. And we also don't know if that one person is somebody in Iowa, who's just tuning into your church in New York because they used to go."

Tim Keller: In other words, and you begin to realize we still actually don't really know who we've got and what's going on. And basically, I think the main thing is not only is everybody tired, but nobody's getting any positive affirmation. So you almost always, you've got some wins every year. Some things, how does it, isn't that great? The Lord's doing that. And they're like, "Oh, almost nobody's getting any pats on the back. Nobody's saying this is great." So you're just running and running to try to keep things together. And there's no hugs, literally no hugs.

Tim Keller: So it's like they're getting absolutely no affirmation. And there have been... And also, there's just a tremendous amount of loneliness of feeling of being separated from so many people that we care about. We just can't live this way. On the other hand, I wouldn't say, I'm not sure that pastors are necessarily more depressed than everybody else because a young teenagers, a friend of mine's son just tried to commit suicide 16 years old. Not all that unusual, not up here in New York on an awful lot of the kids are just feeling cut off and like there's no hope.

Tim Keller: Anyway, the biggest problem is you don't really know who's with you. Who's really left. Who's coming back. You don't really get any kind of real decent feedback. And we can talk a little bit about remote Zoom calls stuff. It is way, way better than

nothing. Way, way better. But at the same time, it's still not. We have bodies, and we really do need to be in the presence of each other. I think so.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. I want to be respectful of the time, and I definitely want to talk about your new book, which is about hope in the face of difficulty and fear. But let's talk a little bit about digital church. I think almost every church is now online, and probably, as David has written about at Barna, hybrid church appears to be a big part of the future. I'd love your thoughts on that. What are the limits? What are the potentials? What are the dangers? The traps?

Tim Keller: This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 11 of 20 Well, let me be negative and then dial it back. I don't know if I should do it that way. Maybe I should be positive and dial back. But for example, Dr. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones was just a tremendous preacher for those of you might guess most of your audience will know who he is, but he was a British preacher in a big church in London, in the Heart of London for many years, basically through World War II in the 50s and 60s, and even in the 70s, I think it was. And he preached a big congregation. For a long time, he resisted allowing his sermons to be recorded. And the reason for that was, and we're all very grateful. Eventually, a lot of sermons are recorded, but his argument was pretty hard to refute.

Tim Keller: It wasn't a good enough reason not to listen. I mean, not to record them. But what he said is, "Do you really think that if you are walking along or driving in your car and listening to a sermon, that it will have the same shaping impact on you as if you were in the presence of the congregation, you're in the presence of the minister, who's preaching, you've been praying together, body next to body next to body all the way you've been praying together. You've been singing God's praises together, and then the minister streaks you, do you really think you're going to be as shaped by the sermon by the word of God, as you're driving on your car, as you would be, if you were in that spot in the body, in front of it in the gathered community?" So it's, of course not.

Tim Keller: You know what? When he says that, you begin to say, "Of course, he's right". And by the way, I've been on just like you have a zillion Zoom calls. And the reality is, is still easier. I mean, you really only this... Sorry, guys, you're only about this part. If I was in your presence, you would actually fill my field of vision. You don't. You're like this. And everybody knows that people do look at their email during Zoom calls. And they're though, you are not as present. You just simply are not. And yet it's so much, but I keep thinking, "Boy, 10 years ago, we just think these would be conference calls on the phone." It is still better because I'm actually seeing faces. And so I'm seeing your body. And I think I'm where incarnate beings, and even seeing a person's body is better just listening to their voice.

Tim Keller: Nevertheless, it can't replace. I'll give you an one more example. It can't replace in-person experience. Therefore, on the other hand, it does reach a whole lot of people, let me give you two examples. I've been teaching students, and I teach preaching.

I teach ministry students in the city. On the one hand, the Zoom only, which is what we've done, is really helpful because people's lives are so busy. They are so crazy and busy that I get perfect attendance every time. And before that, you know what? Listen. Honestly, people trying to juggle all the stuff they're juggling and still get ministry training in the study, always I had about 10 to 15% of the people could never make. It was always some absenteeism, and they didn't like us. So a lot of them say, "This is really helpful."

Tim Keller: Yet, at the same time, they also realize that, though, they're staying with me, they're not getting to know each other. That's a big problem. They're not getting to know each other, which is a very big part of being part of a... If you're in a class of 15 other people are learning preaching, and you live in the same in New York City, at least four or five of those people are going to become real good friends. And they're really going to be a big help to you. But what's happening with Zoom is they're not becoming really good friends. They're all getting me really well. And I'm not even sure. Frankly, if anything, I would say the This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 -With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 12 of 20 vertical. You might say that relationships getting the content from the instructor is probably almost as good if not a little better because there's a discipline to it, and nobody misses.

Tim Keller: But when it comes to the horizontal aspect of the education it's a lot worse. And so all I'm trying to say is something in the middle, brothers. I think we can probably draw a lot more people in evangelistically if we're really smart on how we use digital church. I do not think we should just go back to the way it was. I think there's a ton of people out there who are more online than they used to be. And they're more afraid of commitment than they used to be. And this is perfect for reaching a lot of people that otherwise wouldn't even know anything about your church.

Tim Keller: On the other hand... Here's my last example, Kate Bauer. You might know who she is. She's at Duke University, and she teaches at Duke Divinity school. She's got stage four colon cancer, I think. She's got some kind of cancer, young mother. She's kind of making it right now, but once I met her at one point and she said, the thing that is frightening to her, is that because she's written a couple of books on her cancer and all that thousands of people through the internet are trying to say, "Oh, you're helping me so much." And she's come to realize that people are so disinvited from community that they're looking to her as a celebrity sufferer to minister to her and to minister to them. And she's saying, "You can't do that. You need a community." And she's realizing she's talking to all these other people who are suffering. Like she got cancer. They don't have communities like they used to. If things are so mobile, they're not near extended family. They're not near. They're all alienated from the church. They don't like the church, so they don't have any community.

Tim Keller: She said, "I'm sorry, on a website, for a celebrity sufferer is not going to be what you need. If you've got cancer, you need somebody to make you chicken soup. I can't do that. You need somebody to do those things for you." And so that's what makes

me say, "I think we're going to be somewhere smack in the middle, that when it's all over, we're going to say there's a lot of things we can do digital way that are actually going to involve more people. We're going to be able to do better education. We're going to be able to do better outreach." At the same time, we have to use the digital to woo people into face-to-face relationships. Or they're not really going to be changed by the gospel.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's interesting because I think you're totally right about community and I'm sure you get those letters too. Tim, I'm really struggling with X, and when I get them, it's like, you need to talk to somebody who knows you and knows the situation. Like, I don't know. Here's a question for you. One of the critiques of large church and you pastored a very large church, you're there with hundreds or a thousand other adults. That's not really community either. Arguably you're in a moment. You're in an experience. One of the trends that's emerging is what we might call micro churches or distributed gatherings where perhaps they're not in a building owned by the church, but I could be gathering in my home with 10 other Christians and perhaps a neighbor who's experiencing Jesus for the first time. So it's like an iteration of small group. Any thoughts on that? And then perhaps you're watching digitally, but you're gathered in person. This is like post-vaccine, all that stuff.

Tim Keller: This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 13 of 20 Well, it's a little too impermanent is the big problem. One of the things, I know that here's where... You want to say to Christians, "Are you really being shaped by what the Bible says or by your culture?" The culture is anti-institutional in the extreme. And what does an institution? Is something that actually keeps going when the people are gone, because the institution has its own being. And one of the big problems we've had over the years, I'll tell you, I've been here 32 years. We still haven't had a really great house church movement in New York City. And the reason is what is the impermanence? People get very excited, but it's a mobile world now. And something that really is just changing your life. Oh my goodness.

Tim Keller: Suddenly half the people move away over a six-month period, and it falls apart. And there's no bigger community that you can go to form another one, or to be part of, and then you feel left out. So rather than micro church, I still think, though, every city needs an ecosystem in which you have all size churches. And I will just speak a church of five or 6,000 can do things that no other church can do. And they do them for the whole city. They can start counseling centers. They can start church planting centers. They can start the things that everybody in this study gets to use. On the other hand, as a minister, Carey you're absolutely right. There's a huge number of people that hide in a big church. They say, "That's my church," but they're really not being formed by it. They're really around the edges of it.

Tim Keller: So, in general, I would certainly say that in general. In general, a city would be far better served, and the individuals in the church will be far better served by 10 churches of 500, rather than one church of 5,000. The neighborhoods would be reached better. The people in them would be deployed better and pastored better in general. And

yet, if you think I'm saying that the city should never have churches of 5,000, actually every church, every city needs big churches. So there we go. David Kinnaman: I'd love to draft back and talk to us a little about the journey of suffering and that I've been on these last four years with my wife's disease and then her passing in October. And I mentioned to you before we started recording that I've been really benefiting from the book you and Kathy, your wife wrote the Psalms of Jesus daily meditation in the Psalms. And for me, at least the songs had been one of the few places in scripture I can go routinely because it does express this full range of God I can believe in who can sort of be a recipient of all my anger and frustration and loss and questions, and also my deepest place of trust and hope. And I just love to know what your rhythms have been like since your diagnosis. You lean a little bit to this in the Atlantic article, but I'd love to hear you tell our listeners a little bit how you're finding peace and solace and to what extent you are in scripture and in your faith during this time.

Tim Keller: Well, first of all, Kathy and I, I'll just tell you exactly what we do when it comes to just the nuts and bolts. Kathy reads three chapters. We do the M'Cheyne reading calendar, which is a way to get through the Bible in a year. I read four chapters a day, which gets you to the old Testament once, the new Testament twice a year. Kathy reads three chapters a day. That's all she can take in. She said, "But we do... The three chapters she reads I'm reading too." So it's a way of saying, what's God saying to us today.

Tim Keller: This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 14 of 20 Secondly, I still do the Psalms every month. That is to say I use the book of common prayer... So I read, pray Psalms morning and evening, and you get through all 150 every month. And David, the advantage of doing that is you run the gamut of it. And every day, there's something that just speaks right to you because the songs go through every possible. You might say emotional condition. You can be in any situation that human beings can have. And so we're up and down a lot as you know. Even if you get some good news or your wife, or in my case, it's me really feeling good, and we go do something. And as you know, ordinary things, if you do them well, and you're feeling good that day can be more precious than they used to be. You took them for granted.

Tim Keller: So those days, you just hit a Psalm that's filled with thanksgiving. And other days, you hit a song that, I mean, you're always hitting songs that are exactly what you were feeling. And it's just so, I don't know what to say. So empowering. I hate to use that word. I shouldn't have used that word. It's just so overused. But it is empowering to see it reflected in the word of God. And then, very often, we're more eloquently. David Kinnaman: Sometimes the depth of the anger or the questions of God felt like, "Wow, it's even stronger than I would express it, but it taps into something deeper in me." It's one of the things I think my confidence in scripture as I've grown older has only increased because Ecclesiastes feels like it's so written for an ambitious person like me who realizes all the end of this ambition isn't going to amount for much, or in the case of Psalms a place for crying out to the Lord Lamentations. It's such a fascinating part of the story of Lamentations. Like the Great Is Thy Faithfulness, that song actually is birthed in an element. And that was my wife's Jill's favorite song and even song at our wedding. And

so this idea of God was tying a whole thread of his goodness for us, even in our sorrow from the very first day that our wedding began. David Kinnaman: So when she said, "Hey, I want you to plan my funeral to play Great Is Thy Faithfulness." It was a pretty tough day. But the sense in which the goodness of God to provide for us a scriptural basis for lament and for our suffering has been for me a place that I couldn't have imagined going, and I couldn't have imagined it providing a greater anchor to my soul than it has.

Carey Nieuwhof: I feel like I'm on Holy ground. Well, I do want to talk about your book, Hope in Times of Fear. The world needs hope. We need hope. People are going leaders, listening, pastors listening. I think you're right. They're very on affirmed for the last year. There have been no wins or very few. Many listeners are navigating their own personal health crisis or the death of a loved one, or disillusion of a board or tribalization and politics and division in the congregation. And so on close to us on some hope, tell us what's in the book, obviously, it's about the resurrection, but I would love for you just to give us a pastoral word as we close up.

Tim Keller: Well, the book was originally was supposed to be a kind of a short book yet. You might say a companion book to a book. I wrote not that long ago on Christmas, which was a series of little meditations on Christmas. So actually, my publisher originally said, "How about a book on Easter?" Some meditations This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 15 of 20 on Easter. So I had already started the book, and then the pandemic hit, and then I got the cancer diagnosis, and here I'm working on the resurrection.

Tim Keller: It didn't change it technically. It certainly expanded. It certainly made this much more. I don't know how to say it. I mean, obviously working on a book day after day when you're struggling with all the bad news about your cancer, and you have the book is just filled with all the good news and maybe, I mean, the resurrection is first of all, if the resurrection happened, then everything's going to be okay. And that's the first chapter in the book. So I went back and redid the N.T Wrights so much of his scholarship, not just as big thick book, which is the Resurrection of the Son of God, which is the best book written on the resurrection last hundred years, but he's actually done other work since then.

Tim Keller: So I put all that together, plus a few other some of my own thoughts, but not mainly is in chapter one, because if the resurrection happened and whatever else is going to be okay.

Tim Keller: The other thing, though, is we don't know what to do with the resurrection practically. I have a systematic theology of Charles Hodge, who was a Princeton Theologian. In his Systematic Theology, 128 pages on the cross, on the death of Christ, four on the resurrectionB Because we tend to think, "oh the resurrection, that happened, and that proves he's the son of God. But how does that change my life?" It's sort of like a magic trick, almost, that proves that God is real. But actually, the resurrection does

change everything because if the resurrection happened, not only is there hope, and that means confidence in the future.

Tim Keller: But secondly, the resurrection actually teaches, the New Testament, teaches that when Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, He brought the powers the age to come. That's what into our world now. So the kingdom of God is present, but not present, as you heard before. If you just read what Jesus says in the Synoptic Gospels about the kingdom, it's very confusing because sometimes He talks about the kingdom. As of its present, it's going to be here. It's here. Now, it's in your midst. Other times He talks about when I come back with all my angels to bring the kingdom, and you say, "Well, is it here? Or is it not here?" And the answer is, yeah.

Tim Keller: When Jesus rose from the dead, He brought the powers of the age to come through the Holy Spirit into our lives now, the very power that's going to actually completely cleanse the world of all suffering, evil, and death at the end of time is already in our lives now, not fully, but partially. And what's perfect about that is it's just perfect for every day. You know why? Because on the one hand, it keeps you from either a naive optimism that if I really pray, I'll be healed, and anybody who's not healed, you're not praying. Well, that's an over-realized view of the kingdom. It's that you're acting as if the kingdom is completely present. Well, it's not, or we're going to get out there. We're going to change the world and get rid of all the systemic racism, well you're not, because not until Jesus comes back.

Tim Keller: This transcript was exported on Apr 30, 2021 - view latest version here. CNLP_414 –With_Tim-Keller (Completed 04/28/21) Transcript by Rev.com Page 16 of 20 On the other hand, if you were just too pessimistic, were defeated, there's no reason to pray. God never heals anymore. There's no reason we can make any changes. Things are terrible. The culture is falling apart. Let's get the wagons together in a circle and just hold hands. That's not the doctrine of the resurrection. You've got a real power, the power of the age to come as Hebrews talks about that is in your life now. And amazing things can happen. So pastorally, it's perfect because it keeps me from being either cynical or naive. And whenever I tend to cynicism, that doctrine of the resurrection pulls me back. When I tend to the naivete and started to get like, "Oh, everything's going to be fine now because we started," I got a good scan and then forgetting, "No, I'm sorry. It's not till the very end of time will everything be okay."

Tim Keller: So the resurrection is not something that just as a wonderful sign of... It's not an, just an apologetic proof that God exists, whether Jesus was the son of God, it's actually something I get to get at every single day.

Tim Keller: The other thing, by the way, Carey, but the thing is, the resurrection is paired with the death of Christ. It's the death and resurrection of Christ that saved us, which means God tends to work through weakness. So that when you know you're going to experience a lot of weak, then you have to say, but God brings resurrection. Elisabeth Elliot, was a good teacher of ours at Gordon-Conwell. She used to say, "Everything in the Christian life is a resurrection after death." So she says, for example, "If somebody

wrongs you, you might just say, I'm just going to go pay them back. I'm just going to tell them how awful they are, or I could forgive them in my heart and then go and urge them to see what they've done wrong." She says that, that's like death because you want to just slice their eyes out, but you don't. I'm going to forgive. And so it's like a death, but if you don't go through that death, probably if you just go and scratch her eyes out, that person will not listen to you. They'll just get worse at what they were doing, and your friendship is over.

Tim Keller: But if you go through the death of forgiveness, in a sense, there's a possibility of a resurrection of that your friend might actually see the truth and resurrection of the relationship. And she says, "Everything is like that. Every time you obey God, you're sort of dying to your self-well, and yet you're rising again to become a person of virtue. And eventually, you're going to really die in order to be raised." And so everything in the Christian life and in life is about death and resurrection. So it's not right that we have four pages on the Resurrection. I wrote 230. I've corrected Charles Hodge. And I sure hope that he appreciates it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Tim, you've been fantastically generous with your time. And I just want to echo what David said when we began. I just personally am so grateful for you for your ministry, for your writing. Keep writing. We're going to keep praying for you. We are in your corner, and thank you so so much for being with us today.

Tim Keller: I really think that the good scans and all that are largely because of prayer, and David certainly knows what it's like to have your whole family just list basically kind of like moving along on other people's prayers. You can tell the difference. You know when people are praying. So thank you

Carey Nieuwhof: Man. That was a great conversation.

[02:16:05.300]

And now the final interview I had with Tim this aired on this podcast in January of twenty twenty-three Tim and I had it in early December of 2022, and it was just really, really powerful. Again, we're talking about things that we'll link to in the show notes. In this about the decline of renewal of the American Evangelical Church, you can also find them in my article on Tim Keller. If you just Google me and Tim Keller, you'll find it. Some thoughts on his legacy. But here's my final interview with, Tim Keller, done just a few months before he passed away.

[02:16:37.000]

THIRD INTERVIEW

Tim. It's a delight to have you back. I'm so glad to talk to you again.

Tim Keller: I'm so glad to talk to you again and I appreciate you Carey and I know what you the burden that you having to spell your name to everybody every day said no that's

not how you spell my last name. I just I just appreciate the way in which you carry that burden with grace.

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

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

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

Tim Keller: If you're going to look up, what people are saying about you on the internet, you probably going to have to put in five or six different spellings, because they're probably under, especially, on Twitter, there's probably there's probably Carey, you know, C-A-R-Y, NE-W-H-O-F And I bet there's all kinds of stuff they've been said about Carey Nieuwhof there you've never even seen

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

Tim Keller: It might be, I suppose.

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

Tim Keller: Well, I'm I'm very happy to talk about that but very briefly, I've had I have pancreatic cancer stage 4. That was first spotted actually in February of 2020 and as most of your listeners, probably know it's very deadly. And the fact that I'm about to celebrate my third Christmas with my children and grandchildren is a great gift of God. I've had good doctors and I've done chemo and right now I'm in an immunotherapy trial, a drug trial. And I'm just, you know, alright right? You. You have cancer, you live from scan to scan. Basically their last scan was great. But then, you know, another scan is gonna come up and it's gonna come up in a few. Um. You know, weeks or a month or two or something like that. So but I meanwhile, in spite of the fact that I can't do it nearly as much as I used to do especially travel, um, I can stay productive In other words I can still do a lot of things and write a lot of things talked about people. So I'm extremely grateful. That's the sum.

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

an extensive bibliography. So what are the differences? Maybe we'll start here between the decline in the mainline church that we saw kind of a generation ago. And the decline that we're seeing today in the Evangelical Church.

Tim Keller: Well, the similarities are that both the mainline Church a generation ago and now the Evangelical church more recently have essentially hooked themselves up to a particular political program. Obviously the mainline church just became essentially completely hooked up to the Democrats. And to Liberal Progressive Democratic politics and saying that this is the only really Christian way to be and that decline happened quite a while ago. On the other hand, back by the 70s. For example, on the other hand, the Evangelical Church is more recently made the same move it has. As at least in the public's mind, I'm not saying this is true of every single person in the main line or of the evangelical church, but largely and in the public's mind, evangelical church is seen as having hooked up to the Republican party, especially to very conservative wing of the Republican party. And so in the same way, we have also the evangelical churches sort of said, this is the only Christian way to be politically. And so I think the population and on the whole sort of sees both churches as basically a power block, and not really speaking to the transcendent issues that all human beings have. The I think what's interesting is the difference by the way, is that, whereas the mainline Church jettisoned, Orthodox Doctrine, it jettison the idea of the authority of scripture and a deity of Christ and the return of Christ and all that. And they thought they were getting with the times. But what's actually happened is, they're cut off now from 80 90 percent of the world Church, which is, which is growing and it's very embarrassing that you know, there's two million Episcopalians in America, very liberal church, and yet like there's 11 million Anglicans in, you know, in Uganda alone, and there's twice that much in Nigeria and they're all orthodox. And the same thing has happened for the Methodists other words. The little church here's Methodist was sort of liberal, but worldwide methodism is not. So they've actually cut themselves off from the growing edge of the church and the World Church. Evangelicals have not which I think means because we haven't cut ourselves off, and because we haven't jettisoned Orthodox Doctrine, at least, not yet, we haven't. It means in some ways, there's something there to be revived, and there's something there to be revived. Especially if we, because I believe, of course, Orthodox Doctrine is true in biblical. But I also believe it keeps us in touch with the with the world church. And therefore I have little or no real hope. For any kind of renewal with the main line. But I have a lot more hope for know what the evangelicals want to say a lot more means. That's a low bar to prepare to how I feel about the main line. Evangelicals I still don't? I'm still worried. Very very, very worried, but I do think there's something there.

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

Tim Keller: Yeah. I can name them at least and that way whether we can go into them or I could name them. And yeah, um, well, one is there's a moralism. It's because we moralistic, which means self-righteous. It's separatist, which is in in general white evangelicalism, or you want? Some people are going to say this is just fundamentalism. Okay, well that's we can talk about that but that fundamentals many evangelicals and are in some ways just joined at the hip and it's always very hard to tell quite where the, where the divide is. But point is conserve evangelicals are moralistic and self-righteous, they tend to Be separateistic. They don't really like to engage. They feel like it's compromising. They see good and evil and kind of Manichean ways. You know, we just have to denounce and withdraw. Okay. Number three, they're very individualistic. It's all about just me and getting myself, right? And getting to heaven, Four its dualistic which goes together with individualism, it's dualistic where it's basically tends to, you know, pit Christianity against culture, we either withdraw from culture, or we fight it. But with there's no idea of, there's it goes along with separatism. But it's there, in other words the the world is bad and everything in the church is good. Instead of seeing that the world is got common grace and the church has got you no sin in it but instead dualism it's like, it's all good or evil antiintellectualism is a major trait of American evangelicalism. You don't see it in the British as much. For example. You know, when you take it. You know, why? Is it that when I was first coming to be a Christian in 1970 in the 70's? Why? Why is it that almost every as a college educated kid? Everything I read, you know whether it was C. S Lewis or J. I packer, [inaudible] they were all British and it's because in America you just have an anti-intellectualism and you just really didn't have books written for college educated people, um, then there's an anti institutionalism. Which means evangelicals just like to set up their own shop, their own organizations. They just don't like to become part of existing institutions and existing organizations. They just they like to do it themselves. Highly entrepreneurial, but also anti institutional. So the stuff just kind of they needed, they don't build things that last. And finally enculturation that is to say, there's a tendency to wed Christianity to American culture. So, it's the reason why. Yeah, there's a I would say there's certainly is grounds for the gender roles. I think, the Bible does talk about, there's differences between male and female, but there's a tendency amongst Evangelicals and fundamentalist in America to exaggerate those. And, and basically read anything traditional American gender roles back into the Bible. Also, there's nationalism which is the idea that we are, the greatest country in the world, you have to read your americanism back into the Bible. And so, there we are moralism separatism, individualism dualism, anti large wisdom, anti spiritualism. Enculturation. And if you want to find out where they came from, you got to kind of read both Nate Hatch. His book The Democratization of American Christianity and Mark Noll. Mark, knows stuff. And basically, they, they essentially say that kind of what happened to me back in the 1820s and 1830s American evangelicalism in order to really grow in the frontier, had to go to a less educated Ministry. It just went anti- it went populist in the 1830s long story and, you know, what? I've already taken too long on this question. This podcast is not lasting three hours, so I should make my questions little shorter, but they explain why American evangelicalism has been so anti-intellectual populist, you know, of the people, but then really not trusting the academy, the university, not trusting science. Just not trusting. You know, people with degrees. Just not just not trusting them to. Yeah.

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

Tim Keller: Well if you read if you read those seven. I don't think I'm gonna pick one out. They really are involved with each other the seven. When I was working on it, I could have made it three. I could have made it five because they kind of overlap. Um. But I I broke them out because I I think it's a um. if I'm trying to think here, is there a way for me to summarize it? I think the two things would be the moralism and the the fear of in a kind of I don't want to be mean here. I kind of fear of ceremonial impurity. I like I'm going to get him. I'm just going to be harmed if I read this book or if I if I associate with these people and see that is moralism, some ultimately it's not it's not the confidence, you know? Jesus was eating with prostitutes and sinners and people like that and the religious leaders of the day we're saying, how could, you know, if you're a real man of God why would you have anything to do with them? And because Jesus understood who he was and he understood the gospel of grace, he was just not afraid of being made impure. And I do think that that I don't I really do think a lot of evangelicals and they they can articulate the gospel. I'm saved by grace, not by works, but deep in his heart it's pretty moralistic. And the way you do that is you stay pure and you keep your Doctrine writing, you live in all these ways and then you start looking down on people and you separate from people. So I guess I think it's the moralism in the lack of grasp of the gospel and the particular way that that has played out in American history.

Carey Nieuwhof: But it also really helpful in the paper. Do you call it a paper? Feels like a mini book. It feels like there's a book there Tim and I hope one day there will be Yeah I think it's about a half a book. Yeah. It's it's it's the um. Yeah. It's it's the spine of a book. So yes. Thank you. But anyway, what did you say?

Carey Nieuwhof: It's robust. But you also trace a racial history and yeah. Evangelicalism and make a distinction between white evangelicals and other forms of evangelicalism, which arguably aren't in the kind of freefall that white evangelicalism is. Ah what. What is helpful for us to focus on when it comes to race and the evangelical church? Well we do have the history is pretty sad actually? Ah. Mark Noll has two books that he does have a book or I forget the name of it. It's behind me. I think it's the. Oh dear, he's got a book on race and the church. I just forget the name. But he's also got a little link to. Yeah. He's also if you put it in. Ah. Mark Noll and race. There's a book that actually has the word race in the title. So it's kind of a history of the church.

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

Tim Keller: That's it. That's the one. But there's another one that I think in some ways gets to the question of, where did this, why is it that white evangelicals are so ambivalent about race? In fact, the title is a fascinating thing. Yeah, and he points out that the rest of the world already had moved on. I mean, for example, James Thornwell and Robert Dabney who were two Southern Presbyterian. So I'm going to take Carey, I'm going to take responsibility here. Yeah, conservative Presbyterian, theologians. Calvinist, you know, very Orthodox and they were absolutely in lockstep theologically with the with conservative Presbyterians in Scotland. And the great leader was Thomas Chalmers and you know, the Free Church of Scotland which was a really, really strong Church and philosophy theory exactly the same, but Thornhill and Dabney were making all these arguments about well. The Bible justifies race. Slavery. Slavery fine. Look. It says slaves obey your masters and the free church people over in Scotland saying you're you're kidding, right. You know, I said, ah, you know the Bible. Look. Yeah. Look. It says, ah, you know, slavery is something that God in the mosaic legislation's there. And they look and say, you know, it does say in Deuteronomy, that if a slave escapes, you don't return him because it shows they were abused. It says in Exodus that if you hit a slave to punish him and you knocked his tooth out, he goes free. It says there that nobody should be slave more than six years. It says, there slaveries never based on, you know, race and this that you're kidding, right? And and yet what had happened was because the economy of the South certainly the prosperous South, you know, the people who have the money was based on slavery and there was this enormous pressure on the Christians to justify it and not to undermine it and you look at somebody like Thornhill and Dabney because I have read their stuff. And at one level, they seem to be extremely sincere and very, very smart. But it's so fascinating that the cultural times shape the way in which they read the Bible, and people who were not in that spot. They could see that they were being distorted. I mean, people from Scotland elsewhere, they could see it and but what happened, was they justified it? And then, of course, they had the Civil War and then they lost and afterwards. There was a lot of white Southern evangelicals that held onto this selfjustifying approach saying. Well, black people, they should be slaves because, you know, look, they're inferior. Look at look at their poverty. Look at, look at the crime. And that just, that was a very, very powerful moment in in American history where the church, the Southern church should have turned to the Bible and read it. I think in context with made, read it in connection with other people from other cultures. See it wasn't that easy to do back then and said are we reading this, right? Or we just reading what our own needs into it? Are we really listening to God's word or we kind of exegeting you know reading into it what we want to see but they failed. They did read it in and that just That that has infected. I mean, the white evangelicals have always had a strong strain of distrust of other races. And I think I think it comes down from that. And those those two books by Noll do help us see how that happened. And it's yeah. Is that our original sin? I don't know. Is that American evangelicals original sin? I dont know if I'd go that far, I think we have our own original sin. It's it's not slavery. It's turning from God. And we we all have remaining sin in us. But it's it's been tremendously tragic. And we're still experiencing it now. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. Well another thing we're really experiencing too is politics. Yeah. I forget whether it was New York Times or Atlantic that you wrote for. But you've

had a couple of pieces over the last few years on the. Close coupling of conservative evangelicals and the politicization really of church, your thoughts on that and where that becomes problematic and perhaps contributing to the decline of American evangelicalism.

Tim Keller: Well, now that's tough. If you ask, why, this is, why did this politicization happen? You know what, why is it happening? That's the hardest question, you've asked me so far? I think, in fact, I bet it's the hardest question. You're going to ask me. So I'm you might want to give yourself a cigar right now. Well, thanks is. Yeah, you're welcome. This this this is, this is hard. So let me give you the best answer I can. Liberal democracy. Which is how our I'm using the word liberal, very broadly. Liberal democracy, which is how our constitution was written. How are, you know, how our country was founded? Was the idea that the government is neutral when it comes to religion and religious beliefs. It does not impose religion and religious beliefs on people. It doesn't impose a worldview on people. It doesn't say, it doesn't hook up to Catholicism or Christ were priced, you know, Lutheranism or whatever. And, therefore, it's big on freedom of association, freedom of speech. It's a pluralistic society. So you have Jews and Catholics, and various kinds of Protestants and atheists it's and hand and it doesn't impose a worldview or religious views on people. And or moral values on people. And it came out of the Enlightenment because the enlightened was born one hundred years before, ah, America. In the wars of religion. When everybody was fighting, basically, people were dying as to which religion my my country is going to be, and that a lot of the thinkers of Europe came up and said, hey, you know what. Let's let's create a society in which there's no one religion that is the official religion. And we are coming together just as reasonable people. And we decide how we want to live together. And I we park our religion at at the door when we come into the public realm and we we make laws based on, you know, common common good. And that kind of thing. And for a very long time that worked in America and I just want you to know that that's the problem. The big problem is that liberal democracy is in crisis and the reason it's in crisis is because, and here's the irony, and I don't think I, I think I could trace this out. If I was writing something down, I think he'll be a little hard early right now to do it, but weirdly enough liberal democracy kind of led to the decline of religion. Probably because it really said, you know, religion is okay for your private life, but when it comes to the public life, the real or need it, you know, it's really not important. We just use science and reason to figure out how we're going to live and you park, your religion that door when we come out here and talk together, you know, whether you're a Jew or a Catholic or a Muslim or Christian or an atheist, you know, you you come together and we just we just you know, we just decide And it was it was part of I think what weakened faith because it was really saying, faith is a private thing. It just makes you happy, but it really isn't all that necessary for how you live your whole life. Whatever. But the fact is that when religion started to decline, the thing that now I have some atheist friends who admit this say, the thing that actually held us together was not freedom of speech, freedom of Association, you know, using our reason what held is together was like 80% of the population went to either a Catholic or a Protestant church. They actually went and that even though, like, you do the Liberals and Conservatives in Congress, would were arguing over taxes or unions, but they would never argue over same-sex marriage. They all thought it was be a

horrible thing. In other words, everybody was a and 80-90% of people are nominal Christians. And because they were nominal Christians, they had they had a moral base, and they lived with the illusion that we're really not a Christian country where a secular country. But the fact is, they'd never really had to deal with pluralism using liberal democratic, ah, you know, structure. And when real pluralism came along when real pluralism came, we found out we we couldn't abide it. And so now here's the first. And it happened first. The first group of people that actually moved away from liberal democracy into we're going to impose our worldview you where the progressives, they were the first people to start doing it. Um what. Ah. Rowan Williams Archbishop of Canterbury Former. Talks about he calls the programmatic secularism rather than procedural secularism. In other words, they used to be the government was secular in a sense of being a neutral umpire and said, okay, you know, we want to make sure everybody has a level playing field to make your case and live your lives, but but programmatic secularism goes like this. If you expose well, put it this way in the 60's and 70's. Even the 50's. If somebody Wrote a book saying, it's okay to be gay. That would probably be not publishable because it would be banned as obscene, speech, right? Today, if you say, if you try to write a book or say, it's not okay to be gay. Now it's also condemned as obscene speech, except it's called hate speech. And what's happened is there was a kind of hegemony again, it wasn't pluralistic, there was a kind of crit nominal Christian hegemony that really did run things and when when that fell apart, now we realize well, who's going to get in charge of defining hate speech and obscene speech. And progressive said, we're going to do it. And so what they actually have done is they are imposing a kind of programmatic hard secularism and conservatives and Christians have seen that. They say, you know what, you're not being neutral anymore, you're really actually pushing you're really. You're actually saying, you're actually saying, you have to keep your religion, totally totally private When our religion doesn't allow that and by the way, it's the same problem with Islam. So they're gonna have more Muslims that are here that will props are going to have there, too. But the issue is that conservatives are pushing back wrongly, I think and are saying, yeah, liberal democracy doesn't work. We need there's a lot of conservatives, and we need Christian nationalism. We actually need to get the the state needs to be overtly Christian, overtly Protestant, or there needs to be. You know, the Catholic integral to say that the Catholic church should be the state church, and what they're saying is there's absolutely no way to get that moral consensus. We're always going to be fragmented, liberal democracy doesn't work. And it is a crisis because the fact is, as long as everybody was a nominal Christian, liberal democracy works, and it doesn't. We're not that anymore. Liberal democracy undermined Christianity. And religion in general and created this situation where we truly are divided and now the old liberal democracy Democratic, you know, proceduralism doesn't bring us together. We're just at each other's throats. We have alternate views of reality, totally different views reality and I don't have a good way forward by many. If you were asking me that question, I'm not going to answer it because I'm actually thinking it out, I still think liberal democracy is way better than Catholic integralism or Protestant Christian nationalism, but I also feel like you've got to call out the progressives, you know, to say this, what youth consider democracy actually isn't, it is actually an imposition of your worldview on us. We have alternate views of reality, totally different views reality and I don't have a good way forward by many. If you were asking me that question, I'm not

going to answer it because I'm actually thinking it out, I still think liberal democracy is way better than Catholic integralism or Protestant Christian nationalism, but I also feel like you've got to call out the progressives, you know, to say this, what youth consider democracy actually isn't, it is actually an imposition of your worldview on us. So I feel like we have to call both sides I but when I do that I am it maybe Carey, you know, I am called both sideisms, you know playing you know, bake or or or being trying to be a political when you can't be our. I think that's possible but I do think it's fair to say sorry, right and left. Your I don't know what the alternative is. But you what you are proposing is absolutely wrong. Will never really work. So I told you this was the hardest question and I don't know. What you could do with.

Carey Nieuwhof: So Tim that is fascinating and I guess you can say that for the first time we really do have a plurality of opinions, right? Like, that's what pluralism is we have divergent opinions? I also know that, you know, you spent a lot of time in your active Ministry navigating LGBTQ issues and the sexuality of the scripture verses our cultures view, um, just to draw that out a little bit more. I know we've talked about identity and how that's become a defining characteristic of this generation. But how do you suggest? Because obviously there are people who are affirming who listen to this podcast. There are people who are not. But how do you suggest when you have a different viewpoint than perhaps the culture does, how do you express that in a way that isn't reactionary or angry or inflammatory or completely alienating from the gospel? Well you've half answered. I love questions. Where you the questioner actually gives half the answer?

Carey Nieuwhof: It was a softball was it? It was. I mean, I a lot of it has to do with tone. It has to do also. Ah. Another thing a lot of it has to do with the theater that you're in when you're talking numbers. In other words are you are you just spouting the world or you actually talking to somebody face-to-face or you talking to neighbors? Are you? I think what you have to do is you have to say, here's how I see it but then, the best way to do this is to say, "My understanding of your point of view is this" and then when you are done if the other person says that you said that perfectly well I couldn't have said it better myself, then you can say. Well here's why I don't agree with it and here's there's my point of view. I think that in that way, you actually have its face to face. You know, you have people who are talking to each other. I actually, by the way, believe that that Cadre of people they do have to spend time together before they would make those videos. They actually have to have these a lot of these conversations before they make the videos, but I do think you might be able to do something like that, where you, where you were, giving people examples of how we ought to be talking to each other and how we can still live together. So that's the reason why I still believe that liberal democracy, a truly pluralistic society in which the progressives are not actually shutting out religious people may know Orthodox Muslims and and Christians and Jews who have particular views. But at the same time, there's not some Christian hegemony, some Christian nationalism that's shutting out secular voices are gay voices or anything like that. I don't know how we're not going to have. Um. A pluralistic says, I were going to get a pluralistic society unless we change public opinion, which right now is actually trending on both sides away from freedom of speech. It's trending away from these this kind of stuff. And that is, especially under a younger people, you know. Ah yeah. You both both left and right younger people

are not not in favor of what. What us older people would have considered free speech they are? They're definitely in in the they like speech codes. They like just telling people you can't say those things on both sides. And so, what you have to do is give people examples and I think that could be done. I think on the other hand, I don't know Carey, once you come up with your list of 10, I actually do know a few frankly. I'm on a zoom call fairly often with people on both sides, you know, both religious believers and non religious, people and liberals and more conservative people all that actually get together in order to have conversations like this. But it's very, very very private and very, very informal. But if you were going to do something like this, it might be possible to be very interesting. It would be? But it requires maturity and relationship. And I think that is what is lacking in so much of the debate. Well, it's very nice, segue into your new book. It's called forgive. It's an excellent book. And one of the most intriguing things, it's obviously what the Bible has to say, what Jesus taught about forgiveness etcetera. But I loved, and you spent quite a bit of time on this. You talked about what happens when there isn't forgiveness. And I think we're in a moment right now in our culture, where forgiveness is very much, a rare commodity, I mean, we're in cancel culture, What is culture? Look like without the Christian imperative to forgive?

Tim Keller: Well, the old shame in honor cultures, that didn't actually the Greeks and the Romans were shame it on our culture's. Now, some are more than others. The Athenians were a little more big on pluralism, to some degree, in their own way, then the Spartans, you know, but Paris and he said that some people deserve to be slaves. And um, it's the ancient cultures were shame and honor cultures, which meant you had people with more honor and people with less honor. And ah, the people with less honor just weren't treated as equals at all. And and they also felt basically, you know, I remember reading where was I when I read this this anyway, I read a historian of early Europe, which was, of course, as you know, um, pagan. I mean, it was ah, it was. Ah. You know, the the Norse gods and German gods, you know, Odin, and Thor and all that sort of thing, okay. Um. And when the Christians showed, which were the monks, it was this amongst they were building monster. And when the Christians were there. They are, they were talking about forgiveness and most of the pagan said, this is crazy. You never going to have a an actual coherent society if people aren't afraid people in charge, they have to be afraid and it brought them, they, you're going to get vengeance. And is it was the retaliation. It was a it was a [inaudible] culture. Face, the fear society, biggest fear the strong beating the weak. and I mean, like all I can say is that the Christian culture actually did cohere. What the left one culture there was it didn't get rid of it because Christian culture never became thoroughly Christian. Right. Everybody knows in Christendom it didn't mean that 90% of the people were devout Christians but it definitely. I mean, you couldn't have [inaudible] in it in a Christendom Society where you could have it in a shame and honor culture, and so, I don't want to go back to that. I don't want to go back to more tribalism, more violence, but there is a worry on my part that we might be going back to that.

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

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

Tim Keller: The key, I think is a point a case I make in the book that forgiveness is not the opposite or the contradiction to seeking justice. In fact, forgiveness is a precondition for seeking justice. That's the key because most people put the two against each other, that's the reason why. And by the way, both sides, both victims and perpetrators like the think of Christopher, they think of forgiveness as being opposed to each other. And that's the reason why the perpetrators have come to women in churches who have been abused. And then the perpetrators and the church officers as they come and say well he repented he you have to forgive him and so, don't go to the police. Don't talk about this, you have to forgive him. And so they're saying there's no, you know, it's you forgive, you don't do justice. And of course, the victims themselves, then say, I don't have to forgive them, not going to forgive because forgiveness leads to injustice. But I try to make the case in the book, that if you don't forgive before you suggest this, you won't really be seeking justice you'll be seeking vengeance and vengeance is a motivation that leads to excess and eats you alive while you're going after it. And so we go tell yourself as you're going after justice, but actually, you're probably going to want more than just, what is fair. You're probably going to want the person just suffer and be angry and upset, just like you are. And also, you probably won't be very convincing because we very obviously that you're eating up with a, just a desire for payback. It's not good for you, it's not good for the process. Justice is something you do for the for other victims, sake for God's sake for the human community sake for justices sake. Even for the perpetrator sake. Not just for your sake, whereas vengeance is all about you. And so I acknowledge in the book that that the idea of a a justice less my saying that right justice, less forgiveness. Forgiveness. That gets rid of the of pursuing justice. That's not typical. Just not right. Just not true. You know, by the way, they even give you a weird example. You might say, ah, when Moses sinned against God, remember when he struck the rock and got told not to strike the rock. Um God didn't destroy him. God forgave him. But he says, you know what those consequences you you. You're not the guy to lead the children of Israel into the promised land. And somebody else is gonna do it. Very interesting. It's like God was saying on the one hand I do forgive you, on the other hand you shouldn't be the guy who just that anymore. There's no consequences. Yeah. And, and so, for quite example, for a woman who was hit by her husband to say, I forgive you, I'm calling the police, I think you can do that. In fact, I think you must do that because you should not it's not good for anybody to let that sin against you. It's not good for anybody to let them sin against you, not good for their soul. And therefore, if your husband breaks the law like that and beats you, then you should call the police. But the hand unless you forgive, it's really going to harm. the whole process you there's any chance of a feeling the marriage, you know. You got to do the forgiveness. Later on you might wish you had forgiven him because I really wish I had brought the marriage anyway, so it is you have to do both. I think biblically have to do both. You have to honor the civil magistrate, he broke the law is the same time you have

to give Jesus a in, Mark 11:25 if you stand here praying, and you have anything against anybody, forgive them. So I know we're coming up to the end of the podcast. But, you know, we've seen so many pastors fall and I think you're right, you accurately, diagnose it as almost instantaneous rias, you know, reappointment, in other words, there were no issues. Everybody said we're sorry. Sweep justice under the rug and on with it or you know you're banished in the wilderness until you die and You're suggesting a different path, correct.?

Tim Keller: I believe the Scripture does show something like with Moses, in fact I've talked about this before when people have said, what does it mean if this man committed adultery with a member of his of his, ah, here's a pastor commits adultery with members congregation, which is both an abuse of power and sexual morality. Inside you're supposed to be, you know, obviously we're all sinners. Yes. Of course. God forgives me anyway. But you know that when when the Bible talks about the fact that elders are supposed to be given from given to hospitality, you say, well? Isn't that true of all Christian's? Doesn't the Bible say all [inaudible] of be given out about the answer is yeah, but if you're going to be an officer, you have to be particularly [inaudible] And so the point is you do eat. There's nothing wrong with holding Christian leaders to a higher standard even if it's something that you hold, even if it's everybody's supposed to be doing the same thing. So I would say frankly, if somebody does that, let's say it's the senior pastor, both four justices say can even for, I think the sake of just about everybody including the man, it's I mean I'm doing a male Pastor here right now I think either that person should leave the ministry or not ever be a Senior Pastor again. You know there's chaplaincies there's all sorts of ways to say well I still got there's all sorts of ways that you might be able to stay but not to me. The thing is, mainly the leadership thing. You have, you broken, trust. I think they will. I don't think they can't. I don't think they should because trust takes time to rebuild and I think will be a long time before people were really trusting. I don't think you should, you should put a church through that and so I was Would say yeah, forgive the man and an even make it pot, he might want to be restored to some kind of ministry but not the same kind of ministry. And I think most is a perfect example of that. A perfect example that God didn't actually take Moses out right away. I think they will. I don't think they can. I don't think they should because trust takes time to rebuild and I think will be a long time before people were really trusting. I don't think you should, you should put a church through that and so I was Would say yeah, forgive the man and an even make it, he might want to be restored to some kind of ministry but not the same kind of ministry. And I think Moses is a perfect example of that. A perfect example that God didn't actually take Moses out right away. He just basically said you. You can take them up to the promise land. But you're not gonna. You're not gonna be the guy to take them in. And I don't know why God did it that way. And you know he doesn't explain. And I don't think we have to try to divine that. But so yeah, I do think that that's both reconciliation restoration, compassion and forgiveness. Not like you're banished for ever and ever want to hear from you again. But at the same time, it's really not just go back. Starting with the church down the road. It doesn't make sense at all to do that. I don't think that's right.

Well there's so much more than what we were able to get into today Tim. But I want to thank you for your time. And we made it through a couple of Internet glitches and survived. So that's good. Um if people want to follow your work these days. Where are you most active? And obviously the book *Forgive* is available anywhere books are sold. But where can they track with you these days online Tim?

Tim Keller: Find *Gospel in Life*. Which I think at this point, is probably going to be released after January 1 of will be at this, Redeemer City to City website, but it won't be that hard to find, but you can put in *Gospel in Life* Keller. There it is. And that's the best. That's the best place to figure out what's going on. Well, on behalf of so many people, thank you so much. Tim, I really appreciate you, really appreciate the time you've taken today. Thank you.

[03:01:41.400]

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, that is the end of the marathon episode. I want to thank you so much for listening today. And the good news is, it sounds like he was working on a number of projects before he died and his team is going to bring those to fruition. So I look forward to reading the balance of what Tim Keller has done and I'm just really grateful for his life and legacy. Again, if you miss the last episode Tim wasn't perfect by any stretch. This is not a hagiography, but I think when you make a significant contribution to the world and to Christianity and to people's faith as Tim did. It deserves some time and I hope you really enjoyed as packaging all of these interviews together in one convenient place. And if you got a very, very long drive this summer, maybe you made it through all of them in one sitting, but I'm really, really grateful and will miss Tim. We're praying for Kathy, and for his children and for the work of Redeemer City to City want to thank our partners for this episode as well. The Art of Leadership Academy. That's the way, well, really the premier place that we've created for church leaders and this month on July 19th, Rich Birch of UnSeminary is joining to coach you and he's going to talk about how to create an evangelism culture at your church and give you very specific tools.

[03:02:56.200]

You can sign up and not miss the coaching. When you go to the artofleadershipacademy.com. And go to ServeHQ. If you're like most leaders, you want to onboard your volunteers better and retain them. Check it out at servehq.church. Well that's the end of our integrity series as well. If you enjoyed it and you haven't subscribed yet, please subscribe. Leave us a rating and review. I hope it was helpful. It comes from my heart to help you live your life, the way you feel called to live. Of it and to avoid some of the traps and the pitfalls that are so easy to fall into next episode, back to our regularly scheduled program, we've got John Gordon on how to get out of a slump, the energy drain of defending versus attacking, and the power of talking to yourself, not listening to yourself. Here's an excerpt.

John Gordon: A few years ago, Tampa Bay Lightning loses the first round. This is several years ago when they're picked to win the Stanley Cup.

[03:03:50.500]

And I got to speak to the team. They're in training camp and they're all down, they're pessimistic. They're searching for answers. They got a lot of revved-up thinking. And so I gave him research. Teams that feel like they're defending something don't do very well, but teams that feel like they're attacking a new opportunity do great. I said, stop defending your status as a team that should win the Stanley Cup and just attack a new opportunity.

[03:04:20.600]

Carey Nieuwhof: Also coming up, we've got Paula Faris a great conversation with Kenny Jang, Kevin Kelly, Sharon McMahon, Richard Foster. Man, that was so good. Miroslav Volf, Jenni Catron.

[03:04:31.800]

Got John Maxwell, coming back, and a whole lot more on the podcast, and one more free thing because you listen to the end if you communicate on a regular basis. So do I and I put together a Preaching Cheat Sheet, you can get it for free.

[03:04:45.600]

If you want to reduce the time that it takes to prepare a message. Make sure that you know, before you deliver your message, how it's going to connect and have this cheat sheet, that's helped, really tens of thousands of leaders, go to preachingcheatsheet.com you can get it absolutely for free today the link will also be available in the show notes. Thank you so much for listening everyone I really appreciate it and I hope our time together today really has helped you thrive in life and leadership.