

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT



Announcer: The Art of Leadership Network.

Craig Groeschel: I remember being early 40s doing Catalyst. Remember Catalyst? And I thought to myself, I'm wondering if my best days in ministry are behind me. And I just started feeling a little bit obsolete and there were newer leaders coming along going, man, I'm not, you know, I don't have what they have and I started feeling, maybe my best days are behind me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast, it's Carey here, and I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life and leadership. Thank you so much for tuning in. Today, we got Craig Groeschel back on the podcast, one of my all-time favorite leaders, great friend, and I always loved talking to Craig because he's so transparent and today we're gonna cover the three things that are helping Life Church to grow right now, his best advice for leaders in their 20s 30s 40s and 50s. We kind of do a life retrospective and on the power of pre-decision and bad decision-making. I think you're really going to enjoy today's episode. It's brought to you by Church.Tech. So if you want to start focusing on what you got into ministry for which is ministry, you can turn your sermons into small group slides devotional social media content and more go to church.tech to get started and then Easter deserves special attention and glue has a new discover marketplace as a go-to destination for everything. You need to make this year's Easter truly Unforgettable. Go to gloo.us/Easter to learn more.

Well, Craig Groeschel is one of the most sought after leaders and church leadership today. He is the founding in senior pastor of Life.Church, which is as you know, and Innovative multi-site church that created the free YouVersion Bible app. He's in New York Times best-selling author and has written more than 15 books including Winning the War in Your Mind and Lead Like it Matters. He is a sought after Leadership Expert, hosts the top-ranking Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast, and regularly speaks for the Global Leadership Network, which reaches hundreds of thousands of leaders around the world annually.

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And best of all, he's a great friend. I really appreciate Craig. And speaking about global, I will be speaking at the Global Leadership Summit in Germany in early

March. And prior to that, right about now, I'm starting a speaking tour of Australia and New Zealand. So if you're one of our international listeners, and we have many of them, check it out. We're gonna be in Auckland and then in five Australian cities, and then also spend some time at the Global Leadership Summit in Germany. Very excited for that. So you can just Google your way to find out where I'll be appearing. And I'd love to say hi to you. It's kind of a travel year for us.

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So excited to be back on the road internationally. The last time I was going to go to Australia was March 2020 and we all know how that one worked out. But pastors, you know, that's the power of technology right is you can stay connected now and I got a question for you. Have you ever felt like you spend a good amount of your week writing a message that you present in the 30-40 minutes on a Sunday and then it feels like it's just time to move on to the next one. How much confidence do you have that that message is going to take root in the lives of the people in your church? Well in minutes Church.Tech will turn your weekly sermon the one that you worked so hard on into small groups studies, devotionals, dinner table questions with icebreakers, and deeper faith questions for families, sermon clips with captions, you can immediately post to social media social media content and a whole lot more and sure you may want to edit them or customize them but it's way easier than hiring a bunch of staff and starting from scratch. Now your Church's message can go further than ever and you and your team can spend more time on what really matters Church dot Tech is safe responsible and gives you tools you can trust. So if you're ready to save time visit Church dot Tech to sign up and learn more and it's no surprise. Believe it or not, Easter is about a month away. I know crazy, right? Well, whether you're refining your sermon planting the worship experience or juggling a multitude of tasks as a church administrator, you probably already started the prep for Easter because you want to make it special.

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So, my friends at Gloop have unveiled something new this year called Discover, and it's not just a resource hub, it's your all -in -one marketplace with everything leaders need to do to make ministry better, do it faster, and with more impact. With all its significance, Easter deserves your best attention, and so check out Marketplace. It's a go -to destination. You're going to find worship music, engaging kids curriculum that brings the Easter story to life, and it's all right there. So, here's what you can do. You can go to gloop.us/Easter to explore the Discover hub.

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Make Easter more than just a service, make it an experience. Go to gloo.us/easter to learn more. And now, my conversation with the one and only Craig Groeschel.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: Well, Craig, it's a joy to have you back.

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: Carey I always loved time with you. Thanks for having me on the podcast.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: Our conversations are so life-giving to me both on mic and off mic and every leader I know reinvented everything over the last few years. I don't know how you couldn't do that. What have you been working on? I mean aside from the new book aside from weekend messages and everything when you think back over the last few years, what are some of the the hurdles that you've had to clear as a leader?

CRAIG GROESCHEL: So it's interesting, you know, by and large the biggest value in my life driving force place. I put my work is always the church. And so that's you know, where I put the vast majority of my energy and have over the past few years.

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And interestingly enough, you know, I was looking back on how many years ago was did the world change and I guess it's been, you know, full four years since things started and was crazy. Is it, I just recently told Amy and my top leaders I said the church is something that I'm pleased with and proud of again, and it has taken every bit of energy, all the faith, prayers, hard work to come embarrassed to say second so long another probably had better results faster, but it's taken a lot of work to have it to the place where it's something that I'm very very pleased with again. And so it's been a full-on four -year effort of driving the culture, the values, the work ethic, creating health in the culture and helping the leaders. And I'm very thankful to be where we are today.

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CAREY NIEUWHOF: I'm really thankful you're there too. And, you know, it's sort of refreshing, I guess, you know, you and I have talked about this from time to time where there's something you can't figure out or I can't figure out. It's always a relief for me to know that Craig Grichel has problems too, right? Or other people do. What were some of the things that went off the rails for you? Because I know that's, it's kind of reassuring to know that everybody doesn't quite have it figured out. And I

don't know that there was a single person that went through the last five years unscathed, Craig.

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: I would just say the biggest thing is that when people, I'll just call it kind of went away for lack of a better term.

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They stayed home during the covid time, people came back different. That's the easiest way to say it and doesn't mean different in a bad way just means like different. There are some that really had strong work ethics that came back and just did not want to work at the same Pace there were others that might have been kind of lower performers that came back in more passionate and engaged than before there were some that, you know, always had a good attitude that came back and just with more kind of a negative bench some were more ready to work towards the mission and unity others were wanted to argue and be more divisive and so I only can say is that it is almost like we had the same players, but they didn't have the same talent, posture, mindset.

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And so it took a lot of work to sort out. What do we do with this? How do we lead through it? And it was it was more complicated and took longer than I thought.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: What were some of the things that you did to get things back on course to the point where you can say now as we you know are in the early stages of 2024, you're once again feeling like okay we're on mission, I'm proud of this place. We're moving in the right direction. What were some of the the buttons you had to push the levers you had to pull to get your team moving where you want it to move.

CRAIG GROESCHEL: So one of the things I just had to kind of unlearn some of the ideas that I had before about leadership and so what's interesting is yours ago. You could speak to your local congregation, and you spoke to your local congregation, that is not something that we ever do again.

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So you're speaking both locally and globally all at the same time. That's really hard to do because there are some things that you wish you could just say locally. So, and with the team, one of the things I realized is it used to be, we could say, hey, here's where we're going. And it was really relatively easy to move a bunch of people in

that direction. I think part of it, Carey, is just because our team is bigger now, that moving a lot of people in one direction is a little bit more complicated than moving a few people. So part of what we're dealing with, I think, is just a reflection of the scope and scale. And then another thing is I just recognized in order to lead change, I have to work, we have to work, more intentionally, there's just there's more that goes into it. And so it used to be we would roll something out to the whole staff. Now what we do is we roll down three different levels first with our top leaders, about 18 or so, next with our top 100 or so leaders, and then to the whole group of them and the reason is because I really really had to drive a deeper level of buy-in with our top leaders to help us lead. And so they're just a little bit more layers to it more forethought and just really crystal clear on what we're going to do, and then we just kind of set some things we're working on and I told them 18 months from now we're going to be talking about the same things and 18 months later we're talking about the same things. I gave him three things that were working on and we had to keep it that simple that focused in the past we could have said hey, we're going to work on this for next eight or ten weeks, but it was more of a hey for the next couple of years here is exactly what we're doing and that's what we did. That's the play we ran we lived up to our promise that we're still talking about it and it took time but as we've grown in effectiveness and again, it's something that things are really strong and moving in the right direction, but it took longer and more intentionality on more levels in order to bring about those changes.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: Do you mind sharing the three things that you've been working on and continue to work on?

CRAIG GROESCHEL: This will seem almost embarrassingly simple, but reach people, create margins, simplify processes. Reach people, create margin, simplify processes. So reaching people is the Evangelistic part of what we do that seems really obvious, but it is, the longer you do church, the more you tend to be around church people and the more comfortable you become.

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And we are not gonna tell our people, invite people, we are the, as it goes with us, it goes with the whole church.

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And so we're gonna be the driving force behind loving the lost, engaging with people far from God, caring about the broken. We're engaged, we're praying, we're inviting. And so reaching people, reaching people, that sounds obvious and it is, but if we don't talk about it, celebrate it, drive it, the trajectory is more towards self-centered

Christianity more than an aggressive Christianity. Create margin, this is, that language wouldn't mean a lot to a lot of people, but how do we fund the YouVersion Bible app? Well, we raise money now more today than in the past, but we actually create financial margin to fund that through Life Church. How do we start new locations in different places? Well, we create financial margin that gives us the ability to do that. So Financial margin is a really really big part of our strategy and as expenses go up, salaries go up, cost billing go up, our margin was going down. So for us to continue to be aggressive in new ventures and finding the ones that we do starting new campuses. We have to have financial margin and so we were creating financial margin. Everyone can be a part of that. Everyone can control expenses. Everyone can help create generosity and we have to do that and then simplify processes. The reality is the bigger you get the slower you move that growth creates complexity, complexity kills growth. And so we we've become slower more complex than organization and we can't do that. So we reward team members. We celebrate any time you can shave a meeting. Someone doesn't have to be in a meeting something that takes three steps, we cut it down to two. We want things moving fast. We don't want bureaucracy. In order to reach people to effective discipleship. We have to be able to make quick decisions. We have to be able to turn quickly and so we're simplified processes. So carry for I guess it's going to be probably 19 or 20 months we've been talking about it, driving it.

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And at our next all-staff gathering, I'm going to kind of bring that chapter. We're always gonna continue working on those things, but we're gonna kind of wrap that up and start thinking about a few other thoughts. But that's been, it will have been about a 20-month focus where every meeting, every time, we talk about these things, celebrate them. And we just would not have had that simple of a focus for that long in the past, but it took it in order to bring the culture to where we want it to be. And it has been effective, not easy, but effective.

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CAREY NIEUWHOF: You say not easy. What gets in the way of those three? And then what, because you're right. When you say it, you're like, oh yeah, I think we all kind of know that. They're not foreign thoughts, but what made that difficult? And then what is the benefit that you're seeing of sticking to that message for almost two years?

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: So, you know, in reality, Carey, what... in church ministry, there are a few things we should always be working on. And what happens, we get distracted and there are million sub narratives, there's all sorts of options and it's just really really really hard for church to stay focused on the most important things. Those things are not necessarily the most important things for every church, but they were the most important things for the season that we were in and we have to be very aware of what our current challenges and opportunities are and those were the challenges we're facing that we're keep us from the opportunities. And so we just need to be really really clear. What makes it difficult simple life simple and processes every time there's a mistake. What is someone do so someone makes a rule. So, you know, someone said what are policies their their organizational scar tissue?

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So every time you have a policy someone made a mistake somewhere in the organization and over time. You never grow simpler. You always grow more complex. And as followers of Jesus with a great mission, we cannot be slow. Organizations never drift towards simplicity. They always drift toward complexity. Organizations never drift towards speed. They always drift towards slow. And so if we are continuing to grow which we are if we're continuing to add staff which we are continuing to reach people and we're not intentionally working against the complexity. Then we are we're going to lose efficiency lose ministry effectiveness over time and that's just unacceptable. We have to fight against it and it's a hard fight.

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It's always easy to create a rule. It's much more difficult to go have a conversation. It's easy to do what you did. It's hard to undo something that you've been doing. So we've been working on undoing, breaking up log jams, simplifying processes, cutting meetings, cutting the number of people that are in meetings, cutting expenses, and then you have to celebrate it, so you can't, and so it's just, it's basic leadership, but it's defining what very specific things do you want to do, and then driving them deep, deep, deep, deep into the organization. Three years from now, they're still gonna be doing it naturally because it's so deep, but we won't have to keep it front and center forever, but now these are driven, they're now woven into the fabric of who we are.

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CAREY NIEUWHOF: One of the things I really appreciate about you is you are so open. I mean in your last few books. You've been super transparent and I want to take us back because the Journey's been organizational over the last few years for all of us, but it's also been personal. Yep, and if you go back to May of 2019, you would, around that season, I think you've said before here and elsewhere that that was probably a low point or a modern low point in your life in terms of exhaustion, maybe flirting with burnout Etc. Can you take us on the journey from there how you were feeling and how you got through all of this chaos we've been through and how you're doing now.

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: So for me, I think I started kind of thinking a little before that I think 2019 was when I was doubling down working extra hard. And then when 2020 hit I think I was probably physically depleted emotionally depleted spiritually depleted and so I did not cope as well and the challenges as we all know were extraordinary. You referred you recommended Brooks's books From Strength to Strength. So he talked about early on there's the fluid intelligence and crystallized intelligence. So, you know, so the, you know your effectiveness, the way you process ideas, tends to change and I think that book kind of gave language to what I was doing is I was in my early 50s and still trying to work in with the same intensity as someone in their early 30s, so my skill set and abilities had probably evolved but my game plan and attack had not and so my answer was to work harder work more work longer and and work smarter, but I didn't have the language to really or the understanding of how to recover and basically how to Function at the peak level at someone in their 50s with a different set of knowledge and even energy and so that book helped me to create language around how I'm thinking now. What ended up happening I don't want to go too long as I started working with a performance counselor coach and, you know trying, to go deepest what's going on oddly enough. My problems weren't deep which was kind of insulting to me. They were really shallow, but I didn't know you were an easy.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: You were an easy patient.

CRAIG GROESCHEL: Well, I didn't like his diagnosis but his diagnosis basically was that and what I did like about him is he said we're not going to tell you to slow down. I'm not going to tell you to take more time off. You're not wired that way. That was a first person to ever talked to that way. Everyone else said you need more vacation read more books still on the beach blah blah, and I just want to throw up with that. And so this guy said, you know, you are and and again this is he was working with me with an individual wired in a way that I'm wired, every

everybody's different. He said you are wired to work hard. You're your best when you go hard.

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You're not going to be happy. if you're not going hard. The problem is we need to help you do it in a way that sustainable. So my goal is not to get you to pull back. My goal is to get you to be to run hard in a healthy way. Well, I like that language and he did, he basically showed me I had no healthy distractions whatsoever and oddly enough. I had a lot of good friends, but they were more ministry friends, that they were friends around ministry. They weren't friends around any outside interests and so he challenged me and again, this is just for me not for anybody to be challenged me to come to list 30 different ideas that were high adrenaline kind of thrill-seeking type activities and then wanted me to try a few of them. I could not list that many, that sounded stupid to me. I came up with like five or six.

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I tried a couple and what it didn't do much at first, I didn't even really like what I was doing at first. But over time, I found myself enjoying something that I did not like. It's crazy. By meaning, I didn't like, the two things I started doing, one was taking flying lessons and two was doing jujitsu. I didn't like getting beat up in jujitsu. I didn't like not being good at flying because I didn't know much, anything about it. I didn't like it. I didn't enjoy it. And I started looking forward to it for this crazy reason because suddenly I guess I was now nothing but a student. Wasn't a teacher, wasn't the expert. I was just a student.

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And then I was also a student with other people that I liked. I was an equal on the bottom rung of just white belts and you know a guy trying to do his first solo and I found this camaraderie with other people doing something unrelated and then I started to like it more and midway through I recognized I'm actually more on my game at church. I'm more attentive at home. And I didn't understand it at the time. It took me processing on the back end, why was that effective and what I needed was I needed to disengage my mind from the ministry because my mind almost never ever takes a break. So what I'm trying to survive under a brown belt or I'm trying to land a plane, you know, my first my third solo whatever my mind was fully engaged in that moment and that disconnected mind.

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It gave me a mental rest a middle break and it wasn't like I was sitting by a beach reading a book. It was it was worked for me. It was something that was difficult. But difficult for me was good. And then those became a thing now, they're just a real important part of my life kind of like Bible study time or prayer time with Amy, you know, studying the word to preach. They're an important part of the rhythms that I have to function well, and I've just been then having a blast. I mean having a blast loving ministry again, loving being a Granddad and a dad now I have things to look forward to.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: And you really look forward to your Jujitsu.

CRAIG GROESCHEL: I can never say that and flying I do. Yeah and more he can't do but you know, he can't do both well, so I kind of go in and out of the other ones, but I've been flying more lately and I got my instrument rating and and fly with friends and it's it's and then I'll do some Jiu Jitsu. Just nothing to embarrass myself, but yeah, it just for me, I needed a distraction. How did I do this for so long and not have a hobby? I just, I didn't see the value, but it's kind of embarrassing. It's simple. Most people go, yeah, I've got a hobby. And then they'll have other blind spots. That was mine.

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CAREY NIEUWHOF: Yeah. And anything else you're learning about working hard and resting well.

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: Well, that's so with the staff, that's one of the things we recognized is we would, I think we almost sound as schizophrenic at times, Carey. We would come to the staff and say, make sure you take your time off. Make sure you take your time off. Cause we hired people that really are drivers, self -driven, self -motivated, and they wouldn't take all their vacations. So we'd say, make sure you take the time off. Then when the COVID season hit, a lot of people just did not want to work as hard.

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I wanted to work at home and be more flexible. And so then we kind of came back. We're like going work hard work hard work hard, but, you know care bring your best and then you had a big portion of the team that still didn't take their time off and they say don't forget to take time off they're going to which is it and and what we had to do is we kind of had to clarify the message it is it's both it's always both meaning we always want to bring our best why we ever do anything less in Ministry

and we want to do it from a posture of rest and strength. A big learning for me Carey as I thought, you know, I was always kind of tired and my counselor helped me recognize that there's a difference between if you're tired you can take a nap. You're not tired you're actually depleted. And so if you're depleted you need to refill, well, I wasn't refilling I could I could take time off and the way I took time off was not refilling to me.

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Affected many ways. I'd go on a vacation. I come back more frustrated because it never works.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: So why not? Why wouldn't it work?

CRAIG GROESCHEL: Well I wasn't working with the rhythms of the way God created me. I was trying to vacation like other people said I should vacation.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: Sit there with your suntan lotion and a book by the beach or the pool and you hated it.

CRAIG GROESCHEL: I hated it and there are people that you know work with their hands all day long. And so they you know, they want to go sit down and they want to rest their hands and do you know do nothing maybe read a book or whatever. Taking time off like that was so frustrating to me. I couldn't see straight.

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So I'd rather take time off, go find a gym, do two a days in the gym, find a jiu -jitsu gym, go get beat up in some other city with people I haven't met yet, and take a two hour flying lesson and come home and have dinner with my wife and watch it, you know. I'd rather be busy and active rather than sitting still. And so I learned to, and the key is everybody replenishes differently. If someone else goes out and tries to do that, it would be wrong.

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So we're working really with our staff on what do you do to recharge? And then there are different categories of recharging. How do you recharge spiritually? How do you stay spiritually strong? What do you do that works for your marriage?

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For example, Amy doesn't like to go like I like to go. So if I take her along that journey, it's not fair to her. I have to see her rhythms and adjust my preferences

many times to what works for her so that our marriage will be strong and I do that with joy, but I have to do it intentionally or I won't be as effective. So we looked at how do you not work and look forward to rest later. But how do you work from a posture of rest? A new language for me was we started calling it works sprints. We all get work Sprints and we all think I'll rest on the back side of the work Sprint and we might when I started to try to do is take a breath on the front side of it. I'm going into a work Sprint. So I'm going to take a weekend off and do what fills me up. So I'm going to go into it from a place of rest not always hoping for rest in the future. And those may be just maybe a little bit of play on words, but they're actually a really big deal when you have a strategic plan toward what works for you. So we're working with our staff to try to help them. Say what works for you you have permission to do it differently.

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My counselor gave me permission to work a little bit on vacation each day for some people, that'd be a big mistake. Like if you don't disengage you're in big trouble. For me working a few hours in the morning gives me the dopamine high of production. It gives me the sense of I actually did something and now I can go enjoy the rest of the day. He said for me that's a very good strategy permissible strategy helpful strategy for others, that'd be a massive mistake. And so we want to help our team understand. How did God wire you? How do you rest well recover? Well, stay strong in your marriage. Stay morally strong and bring your best in a way that honors God and do that over a 20-25 30 year period.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: You've helped me with so much and I remember you gave a talk at the Global Leadership Summit. I think it was in 2022 and there is something about your 50s that is fundamentally different. I've got a couple years on you.

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And I remember you talked about the tension, the seeming tension that leaders hold. And you wrote about it in a book as well that you were releasing, but it was that idea of, you know, great leaders are driven and they rest well. And you know, my last book was called At Your Best and it was all about my burnout journey and the rhythms that have sustained me. And that one hit me between the eyes. We talked about it afterwards because I felt like I have done such a good job of resting well and making sure I don't burn out.

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And there was something going on with my drive that I just wasn't as ambitious as I maybe was 20 years ago.

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And some of that was God was redeeming it, et cetera, et cetera. When you think about your 50s, and so I think I've got my mojo back.

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Pretty excited about that and it's a good tension. Now, you know, I keep them. I'm trying new things. I think you're right. I'm not designed to rest at a beach. So I skied in the Rocky Mountains five out of seven days over the Christmas break and that was amazing. It was super challenging. I had to learn new skills, you know, you can die if you do it wrong, so it was fun. I enjoyed that what are some other lessons that you are learning as a leader in your 50s?

CRAIG GROESCHEL: I am loving loving loving loving this season of life. And I think I was a little late to it. I'm 56 now that in I think I'm just now kind of hitting the 50s mindset but people told me years ago that so you're not going to care as much about certain things and you'll you'll likely be more relaxed. So here's I'm learning several things.

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I promise you I am every bit is driven today as I've ever been my work. Ethic is just as strong. I am more productive. I work just as many hours, but I work smarter version of the hours. But at the same time I am not my self-worth is not tied up in my production like it was in the past. So I am ridiculously driven and unbelievably content at the same time. I don't have to speak it any place, books don't have to sell a certain amount, podcast doesn't have to perform a certain way. I am still tied to kind of the church growth because I think that like really matters not to me, but it but I want to see more people in the kingdom of God, but I am not trying to prove anything anymore. And I think my whole life I was trying to prove, probably just to myself, that I'm valuable, good enough, whatever. And I am not trying to prove anything anymore. And that feels awesome.

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And someone from the outside could say, well, maybe it's because you've already proven such and such and such, whatever. I would disagree with that because there is never enough in this world.

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There's always someone somewhere doing more. And so that feels really, really good. I am learning in my 50s just how much family matters. I've always kind of known that.

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But because we did a lot of things well having when my kids are all gone and grown and having a marriage that I'm still really happy about, dear God, I'm so thankful. I'm so thankful. So thankful because a lot of my peers don't have that and it would be hard to go and undo a neglected season of marriage. I'm learning to find joy in other people's ministry success more than my own and so now just the whole Legacy thing means a lot to me investing in younger leaders seeing them succeed. I'm enjoying people more. It's not just the production part of it. I'm enjoying the people that I work with. I walk in my office and just sit down for 20 minutes, 30 minutes at a time and we'll just talk to him over lunch when before it was scarf it down and keep going. So just a little things like that and all those little things add up to what I consider to be a much more meaningful intentional purposeful. Rich life at this season, and I I wish I could help someone experience that in their 30s. I don't know. I don't know if it's possible or not. It wasn't for me.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: Yeah me neither. How did you? Decouple your sense of worth from your productivity or your sense of contentment from you know, that that drive to succeed, that desire to like ,this book doesn't outperform my last book. I don't know. You don't want to be around me. How did you decouple that because that's a toughie.

CRAIG GROESCHEL: So like Brooks called it detaching, you know, you want to detach from the things that give you before I think several things one is I've written enough books that did not perform as well as a previous one. So once you've been you know through that cycle you start to recognize sometimes God blesses some things more than others. And I've got a few books that I wrote that I think were better than their sales, meaning like that was a better book, people didn't see it. And there are others going, I can't believe that one did that well. So I learned to, there's some sermons I preached that I think were ones I'm proud of and no one hardly said anything. And there are other ones going, man, I could do that one better and people loved it. So I'm disconnecting the results from my internal satisfaction. If I brought my best, I'm gonna feel good about it, period.

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The results, whether it sells a lot, whether it grows, doesn't grow, whatever, I truly wanna honor God with bringing my best.

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And it took a long time to get there. I think it took enough seasons that come and go to recognize You can do all things mostly right and sometimes it works. Sometimes. It doesn't I'm just happy to show back up. Like I'm literally excited to start another year of ministry and be every bit as excited as I was in the very first days of the church, and also this was amazing, I preached our 28 year anniversary and I told the church I'm as nervous today. As I was on the very first Sunday of the church 28 years ago. I still feel in all that I would hold God's word and he would trust me to declare it, that makes me nervous. I like that. I like the fact that I'm excited to I love the church. Is it all feels if it feels amazing to me?

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If I was still tied to the result of myself worked was based on it. I would be up and down based on the last. Sermon the last podcast last book The Last handshake the last event. I got invited to her didn't get invited to and that just doesn't move the needle.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: That's a healthy detachment. So we hadn't planned on going here. But if your game we have a lot of leaders from different decades listening, and I know you care a lot about young leaders. I never miss an episode of your podcast. You're always building into them. If you would this could be a bit of a lightning round because I want to get to pre-decision but think about you and your 20s 30s 40s. I don't know that we can speak beyond our own lived experience. So we'll just stop at our 50s which we've explored.

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But I would love for you to think about highs and lows. Like, here's something I was doing that was great in my 20s, and here's something like, oh, I'd tell my 20 -year - old self, like, slow down. What are you thinking? Could you just touch on that for each decade's 20s, 30s, 40s?

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: So in my 20s, I was a new believer. My faith was ridiculously high, work ethic was strong, and just believed anything was possible. And that was contagious. There are few things more exciting than raw passion for Jesus, just a hunger to make a difference. And I'd say capitalize on that. I look back in my 20s, and I want to apologize to many, many people for being so dogmatic and so right about things that didn't matter, or I just wasn't right.

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Stood my pastor down a couple times over things that just didn't matter. We I used to think you had to have altar ministry we would do this at our single adult thing. And so you had to pray over people at the altar and I told him it's not church. If you don't have altar ministry. It's not in a thought and fought and fought and fought and I was right and he was wrong and he just he told me he said one day you'll sit in my seat and you'll realize there's a lot more flexibility in ministry than you realize. He was so right and so, you know, I would just I was I would have worked on more humility and teachability then but I wouldn't want to pull back on the passion. 30s, I would say that was almost like a decade of discovery was crazy is I didn't know what God had put in me, but in my 30s I was starting to find out, you know starting to be a little bit time-tested.

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I had enough time to both fail and succeed. I learned more from the failures. I think than I did from the successes. And so that was actually a gift. I felt quite a bit in that time. In my 30s, I think I was starting you talked about this brilliantly about not being the cover band. I would yeah, I was in my early 30s. I was still probably copying style and wanting to be like other leaders and I was starting to become myself, starting to discover who I was, so it's 30s were season of discovery 40s kind of were kind of almost like a season of questioning. I remember being early 40s doing Catalyst. Remember Catalyst? And I thought to myself, I'm wondering if my best days in ministry are behind me. And I just started feeling a little bit obsolete and there were newer leaders coming along going, man, I'm not, you know, I don't have what they have and I started feeling, maybe my best days are behind me.

And my 40s were the booming years of the church where we had kind of the real explosive growth. And I think in my late 40s, I started to recognize that I've got to change some of my rhythms in order to last. And 50s I'd say were kind of a season of settling, not slowing, but settling. If you're a marathon runner, I'd say getting in a pace at which I can finish strong.

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So I'm in a pace now where the wind's in my back, sun's out of my face, I feel like I'm running strong and my theology's real, meaning like Jesus has to be enough.

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And I'm less, you know less selfishly driven than I was in the past trying to prove myself. And so it feels good. I'm hoping 60s moves into just kind of a mentoring and

a handing off season. I kind of foresee that to be the case, but the great thing is every season is good. There's you know, there's something to learn in every season and those are very generalizations, but I think that many leaders will find themselves dealing with some of the same things because there are cycles to life and leadership and there's benefits to each and there's things to learn in each.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: You know, that's something Arthur Brooks gives us a lot of hope for and it's funny. I have a lot of parallels with what you talked about 2020 things. I wish I could give back and then other times you're like you have a God was still at work right for real which is which is amazing. But Arthur Brooks makes the argument that we're just starting on the crystallized intelligence where we're able to put together vast varieties of ideas and synthesize them in a way that honestly I just couldn't do in my 20s. And by the way for listeners, we'll link to the article I wrote about the cover era, cover band era of church leadership if you want to check that one out. Anything else on that? And anything else that, you know, there's so many leaders listening right now and a lot of young leaders look up to you a lot of leaders look up to you anything else you would you would say about the seasons of life or ministry?

CRAIG GROESCHEL: I think there's just it's just it's important to recognize them and for example in parenting, you know, we had six kids and I had no idea. how deep a season could be and then how fast the season could change. And in a different season, there's a different set of rules. And then you can be in one season with one child and another one with another, but you go from diapers and all of that to now soccer practice activities. And then you go into the teenage years where you don't know where they stand and then they're young adults. Every season is different. In ministry or leadership, it is the same way that one of the big things happened, Carey, when we came back post -COVID, I just thought that leading the way that I had before was gonna work. It didn't, different season, different season. And so now I think because I've lived through enough seasons, I'm learning to recognize when they're changing and try to change with them, not change when I look back and go, oh, I should have changed earlier, but recognize what's coming. And I think looking back, I was not as aware how deep a season could be and then how quickly it could change and how slow I was to change. I thought leadership was pretty basic for years. I actually think now is way more of an art form of reading what's in front of you. For example, you asked me this morning on text just back and forth. What am I going to do about something coming up this year? And I told you I'm actually not gonna think about that right now because there are so many what-ifs. That could consume my mind. I want to keep my mind free from those things and deal with only what I have to now and when that situation becomes a real situation don't deal

with it. Then I am conserving my energy and not worrying about what could happen like I used to, because I can't do anything about that now. I want to be in the moment in the seas and very aware and I don't want to lead by my old playbook. I want to diagnose what's happening right now and how do I need to lead differently and what I'm discovering is there are a lot more plays that we're running that I haven't seen anyone else run. I didn't read them. I didn't find him. I'm discovering them, making them up. And so I'm not playing by someone else's rule book now. I am looking in the moment. I'm reading the defense. I'm reading all the options we have and going, okay, we're gonna try something. No one's tried before here's how we're going to do it. And so it's more of the it's more in the moment real time. Intuitive leadership than it is a here's what I've done before. And that feels exciting to me. It feels authentic. It's challenging. I am less confident today in my leadership than I wasn't the past. I thought I knew more. I recognized that there's more complexity to it. And so I want to be more nuanced and how I do it.

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CAREY NIEUWHOF: Are you at liberty to share one or two of those plays that you're kind of making up in the moment that you don't think others have heard before?

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: Give me a category, they're everywhere. Give me a category.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: Let's talk about reaching new people.

CRAIG GROESCHEL: Okay, so reaching new people. Years ago, churches were, everybody went to church because they went to church. Then they stopped going to church. So then there came kind of the Seeker sensitive movement, whatever. And then I was in on the early stages of, let's make church cool. We didn't really say that, but that's kind of what we were doing.

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CAREY NIEUWHOF: Yeah, that's what it was about.

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: Kind of was. And that kind of worked for a little while. At this stage of the game, I almost want to de-cool everything. That to reach new people now, I mean, this is like real time, what I'm thinking based on just some resources you gave me.

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Authenticity and connection with God matters more than you can ever imagine. I'm not thinking marketing. I used to think marketing. I'm not thinking pitch sermon series. I used to think Pittsburgh German series. I'm not thinking create environments people want to be in I used to think that what I am thinking now really is is a couple of things is to authentically help people experience God and then, like crazy, I want them to relate to each other. I don't want to have a bouncy house or or cool stuff in the lobby to get them there, as much as I want them to if this sounds crazy, but I think one of the most spiritual things I can do is help people connect with each other.

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The relationships matter so much, so much, so much, and I think we're in a relationally void time that people don't know how to have intimacy. They don't know how to have community. So I want to if we're going to reach new people. I think they need to I think they need to belong they need to be loved. They don't need to be wowed. They don't need some kind of big fancy building. They don't need a fancy sermon series. They need to hear the gospel presented in a way that is accessible not like not cool not easy to find not seven steps to whatever that is. Pure authentic gospel is accessible I think, and I think they need a process it with somebody I think relationships matter so much and so, how does that evolve in what we do? It's kind of reprogramming the mindset that at a campus, we're not gonna just try to do a big, if we do a cookout, it's not to have a petting zoo and slides for the kids to come ride on. It's that we genuinely care about people staying around long enough to get to know each other. So it's just, there's little tweaks like that that are gonna impact what we do week to week to week.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: All right, one other category. I don't know why this one comes to mind, but we've had these conversations numerous times and I really admire the way you think about resources that you've been entrusted with, money that the church has been entrusted with, any plays that nobody else is running on finances, or could be in the field of generosity, could be in the field of operating with margin. It could be operating under constraints.

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: So, good question. I would say this people always kind of like, you know, how do you how do you start more campuses? How do you how do you do YouVersion Bible? Whatever, we do not think ahead and plan ahead to create opportunities. What we do, Carey, is we try to plan ahead to create margin for opportunities that we cannot yet predict. So I don't know what staff we're going to want to hire next year what land we're going to learn by what new initiative we're

going to start what Ministry we're going to find. I don't know what they are. But I know that there are going to be good ideas. And so I want to have resources to do it. So we are strategically in when I talk about creating margin. I want to have emotional margin, I want to have time margin, and we have to have financial margin for opportunities that we cannot predict. They are coming. I know they are I don't know what they are. But we've got to have margin there then what happens is there's going to be Seasons where we're putting that margin toward different places.

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In the early years YouVersion Bible app you would, I mean it would scare most people to know what we put into that, how much it costs to fund and Life Church funded the vast majority of it with the help of one donor from the outside. We don't raise any money. We did it all ourselves. Then we recognize we're actually underfunding it under resourcing it. So we went to the church and said hey, well you all helped us and then we've gone outside the church. And now we're putting more resources there and then we went to a season of launching campuses. We launched a bunch of campuses all debt-free and that's a very very strategic. Time period Force then we recognize. Oh digital ministry is really really big. We've leveraged more toward digital. Just social media at this point. We're looking at a couple things right now. We're under office. I hate spending money on office is never like it, but we've had to do it. So we've now we're moving resources toward offices. Then we recognize we have campuses that are not in eight services, nine services. Hey, instead of going and building more new campuses, let's put resources into those campuses to help them grow.

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And so now we're adding services more than adding campuses. Then we wake up and realize we got campuses that are 12 years old and they're starting to look like a rundown restaurant. So now we're going to take in a lot of money and we're refreshing the campuses. So what we're doing is we cannot run the same play when it comes to asset allocation. We have to have additional available capital and then we have to be intentional where we put it. And we're going to put it in different places for different seasons. And we've got to be real clear about that. So we're not going to be responsive. We're going to try to see what's coming. We're going to try to be proactive and we always want extra. Where are we going to put it? Well, it depends on the season.

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And we're strategically trying to invest them into the places that have the best Kingdom return and we're actually quite pleased with the strategy because we're out ahead and we're planting ahead and now we're thinking, you know, literally thinking a couple years out that we're going to build this office deal and we're going to redo these campuses and then we're going to go back. We're going to build YouVersion to this level and then we're gonna go and start new campuses again and it's never perfect, but it is prayerful and it's intentional, but you have to be prepared for opportunities. You cannot predict and that's where that's why we're creating Margin. I think that's difficult for churches to do if you don't prioritize it you will absorb all your resources.

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And if you absorb all your resource, you're gonna miss a lot of opportunities.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: And it really is the opposite of what many church leaders do by default. Oh, I see a problem. Let's go raise some money. It's like no we have the money by operating within constraints. Now we have the freedom to attack the problems that we're facing. Brilliant paradigm shift. All right pre-decision. When was the first time as a leader that you started realizing you had to make some pre decisions in your life. Can you define what they are? And what was the Catalyst to you going? Wait a minute. This is important.

CRAIG GROESCHEL: I would say I think it was years ago Andy Stanley and I used to do. We did these one day leadership events, and then we would interview ourselves afterwards and we were talking one time and I don't know who said the word first. It might have been him. It might have been me, but we were. Talking about we both had, we both recognized that things that God blessed were often things that we had pre-decided upon. And it was kind of intentional decisions early. What areas of my life did I start making what we call pre-decisions in? I would say a few early on and then more and more and more and more and more. And now I work to pre-decide as many things as possible because I've recognized the power of pre-decision. Little things like, I always joke around, Carey, I always say back before I was a pastor, I used to be a man.

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And everybody kind of laughs at that. Being a man means, yeah, I'm vulnerable to anything that other human beings are vulnerable too and as a guy early on in my life, I saw a little bit of pornography that much when I was a kid, but oddly enough the little bit that I saw I could still pull up in my mind if I wanted to. I'm vulnerable to be tempted to look at the wrong thing. Not nearly as much today, thank God at

this age, as 30 years ago, but I still can be vulnerable. So what am I going to do? I'm gonna pre-decide to make it really difficult for me in a weak moment ever look at anything. And so I'm you know, I've talked about this before but I you know have everyone has access to my passwords in computers and I've got locked downs and stuff and the way I say it is, why would I resist to temptation in the future if I have the power to eliminate it today?

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I'm just going to pre-decide to make it almost impossible to look at something that I wouldn't want to look at. Same thing with financial budget. If I want to create margin next year. I'm going to pre-decide to spend considerably less than what we think is going to come in. We're going to pre-decide it's all the way down to my diet. I was I just came from lunch and there was a meal that my team warmed up for me that I had ordered before because I know what I want and so there's a frozen meals sitting there my lunches from now until the end of time or pre-decided my snacks pretty decided if I if I don't have the snacks that I want someone brings in Donuts. I'm going to eat the donuts. So I started to recognize that any area that I had any kind of kind of like God honoring success wasn't because I was strong it's because I was smart.

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And any area where I wasn't succeeding, it wasn't just because I was weak, it was because I was dumb. I hadn't made a pre -decision. So I started to look at all the different ways we could pre-decide all the different things. And in leadership, in life, in my marriage, and the things that work well today are based on pre-decided systems that are in place. Today, I, before leaving the house, I prayed with Amy. Not because I decided today, but because I decided 12 years ago. Before I leave the house, I'm gonna pray with her.

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Before I made that pre-decision, I did not do that. I prayed whenever I could and then wouldn't. But one decision years ago before I leave the house I pray with Amy men men. I prayed with her today. And so I try to be in the book think ahead. I try to help the reader be really clear on. What are your values? What do you value, because Carey, there's some things you would value that would be different than me and your values could be very God honoring but they're different got on values in mind what evaluate when your values are clear your decisions become easier. And so we want to help you really be clear about what do you value and then based on

what you value? What decisions what systems can you put in place today? That will make your decisions clearer easier more effective in the future.

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CAREY NIEUWHOF: Mmm, I think it's such a great framework and it's something I really admire in you Craig and you know, you've written about declarations before Etc your last few books and the pre-decisions, I find that the stakes keep Rising every decade thinking about getting older. It was like 20 you could afford to make some bad decisions. You didn't really pay a huge price. I mean, there's some you could but now I find the the margin for error to be a lot less. It's like I'm stewarding a lot. I have a great marriage of 30 almost 34 years I don't want to blow right at this point because I've got three and a half decades in the bank with an amazing woman God's entrusted me with a lot of influence and leadership space and great friendships and relationships. And I find like I don't know that it's a fear, but it's just it's it becomes more important as

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I seem to get older. Have you had a similar experience with pre-decisions where you just realized, oh, these were a good idea back then. They're almost essential now.

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: No, they are essential now in my opinion. And we see what happens when a leader doesn't have the right guard rails in place, right? And I'm telling you, we have mutual friends that made decisions that they'll regret for the rest of their lives and hurt their ministry, took them out of ministry. And it's not because they're weaker than I am that they made those decisions. In fact, in many ways I would say I'm weaker than them, therefore I've made more pre-decisions.

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And it's not a matter of who's better, who's more moral. It's because we are all capable of sinful decisions. And so the precision's I make are not based on. I mean, they're necessary because I want to make the right decision. I think it's imperative and the earlier leader can be clear about choosing what's right or hard or what's easy, it's gonna it's gonna make all the difference in the world. And we have to talk openly about it. We have to be vulnerable about what we do share transparently. And if we do that, I think we can help each other really think ahead and be wise our enemy is going to attack, right?

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If our spiritual image doesn't then haters are going to and so we have to we really have to be wise we really have to be prepared. And I think this book can help its kind of give exercises to give people the tools to be be more prepared and make decisions are going to help them.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: So I hear almost every day about people who are struggling with decision fatigue decision paralysis. I imagine you've done the research the number of decisions. You have to make go up with the access of information that you have. Do I read this book or that book you have a lot of people in your church. You probably get a million requests you get a million requests to be on people's podcasts. How do precision's and decision fatigue impact each other because a lot of people listening who have got decision fatigue right now Craig.

CRAIG GROESCHEL: So true. So I think you know, you talked about 2030 I think in my 30s and early 40s. I was overwhelmed with the number of decisions that I was making and I was not making as good of decisions So that's about when I started kind of formulating the ideas As you know a book can be a result of 10 years of formulating ideas, right? And that's what this is this years of kind of honing in What is pre -deciding which decisions are the most important and such so I started to look at? every area of life and kind of obsessively pre -deciding So all the way down to in the mornings I want the distance between the time I get up to the time when the word is open and I'm hearing from God and right now knows I want that to be as short as possible. I don't want distance between and that's just me other people want coffee.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: How short is that for you?

CRAIG GROESCHEL: Well from the time I roll out of bed to the time. I'm in my office. It's about 40 minutes and my office is you know, 12 minute drive or so. And so that means the night before I have all my clothes out, my workout clothes out. It's all laid out. I've got my what I'm gonna have for breakfast the spoon out. It's just kind of silly. It's almost like a little game of efficiency that I play. Keys are out, everything's in their place so that I can get in and start the day. Then in the the way the decision-making flow works in the in the office, Jen my assistance in here right now.

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She doesn't bring me much to decide early in the week. She holds as many decisions as she can until later in the week because early in the week, I'm thinking content and I don't want my mind being slowed down by myself while I'm working on the sermon. Once the sermon is done, then she's got full access to bring in as many different things as possible. And then when we both the decisions together, we get

kind of what I call decision momentum. So I'll make one decision and I feel like the next one becomes easier and easier and easier to make is her job or the team's job to have as much information as possible. So when you put a decision in front of me, or the team is not a win if I just say go back and get this information. If you can think it had and have as much information answered then then we can keep the decisions flowing.

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By bulking them, it becomes easier. And then I've delegated things like I'm colorblind. I'm not good with matching things. So someone else will pick out what I'm gonna wear on the weekend so I don't stress about it. So I know here's two outfits. They both match. I can choose either one of them, but I don't have to go through everything because I don't know necessarily how to do it.

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So I delegate as many decisions like that as possible. That frees my mind. It empowers other people. How do you make effective decisions? We're gonna decide when we're gonna decide. Let's have a decision-making time. Let's postpone as many decisions until we can bulk them together. Let's delegate as much as we can when possible. And then whenever you get stuck on a decision, try not to get stuck on either or. Can we do this or this or this or this? We get stuck. A lot of times I try to say, okay, what's option three that you haven't thought of?

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Many many times there is an option that no one presented that is the best option and we want to try to get to that as often as possible. And then I don't want a bunch of decisions stacking up over time because then I start to bog down if we can't make a decision about the whole project make a decision about the next step, whatever the next step is. I can't decide the whole project but I can keep the project moving if I'll simply make a decision about the next step. So, we want to group them but then we don't want to delay too long in order to have any kind of growing organization high-impact organization. You have to make decisions. I'd rather make an imperfect decision than no decision. No decision is a decision. If you're slow decision-maker in your organization, you'll become the limit to progress and so we have to we have to keep the ball moving.

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CAREY NIEUWHOF: I love the idea to a bulk decision-making. That's a practice. I picked up a number of years ago. And I found it so helpful because if you think about

a typical day, you'll get 20 emails that actually require response a bunch of slack messages some text messages all of those involve a decision. Do I answer now? Do I wait and I find you know, my life is complicated enough that I need context to answer it. It's like I don't know whether I'm free to speak it an event. I don't know whether I'm free to do this and I have bulk just like pre-decision plays but when my assistant and I, Katie and I, sit down like you and Jen sit down and we go through an hour of decisions. I have to make, I find it's so much faster, it's so much less exhausting. Cause I can just ask her, well, wait a minute, am I not away the week before? Oh yeah, that's not gonna work. Okay. And then it's easy. Whereas that could have been 15 emails and a bunch of back and forth. Do you find efficiency in bulk decision-making when you batch them?

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: Yes. Yeah, a hundred percent. Yes, because you start getting momentum and you're just, you're in the zone. You're not distracted by other things. And so it's really hard for me to shift gears. If I'm in content and then you say, hey, what do you think about this complicated decision? I totally disengage my mind from content. I go into that. My mind's not fully engaged in the decision. And then it's really hard to get back into content. So if I can stay locked in content for four hours and then devote 90 minutes to making eight decisions, I can get fully immersed in it and bring my best to it. The other thing that works really well is to empower your team with kind of some, parameters that can help them decide without you. So let's say the speaking engagement comes in to you. You're like me. I don't I'm not able to take very many of them. And so there's a whole category. That's a no. He just doesn't do those. So those don't get them get in front of me. There's a whole nother group where Jen's gonna do a research and say you've got this church event. You've got your daughter's wedding. You got this around. This is probably a no so she she comes in with a recommendation before I ever see it and I can literally look within four or five seconds on most of them and say no no no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Then it's pretty easy. Then they go into maybe pile which is that this will be to consider later, but I'm not gonna make a decision right now in this moment because I want to look holistically at the calendar.

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And so that gives you it gives you categories and they can help pre-filter decisions and not not everybody's gonna get speaking engagements, but everybody's going to get invited to coffee or have a potential to do a Bible study somewhere or whatever. And so if you can you can empower the people around you with some

predetermined filters. That can make the decision-making process faster or even eliminate many of them.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: Yeah, I think that's so good. We've my EA's come in with recommendations to I think you should pass on this one and obviously not all them get to me, right there's a bunch that just get filtered out ahead of time. And again, even if it's just who do I meet with like who am I doing counseling for, or whatever, I don't do counseling. Everybody can apply these principles. So you outline seven pre-decisions that you encourage everybody to make. I'd like to play dealer's choice, pick one or two favorites and walk us through why you chose those areas, not only as pre-decisions in your life, but kind of prescriptive pre-decisions that you think everybody could benefit from.

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CRAIG GROESCHEL: Okay, so the decisions that we talked about in the book and you could make an argument, what are the most important pre-decisions? I took, you know, three decades of ministry and based on what I've seen selected, what I consider to be seven of the most important, I'll be ready, I'll be devoted, that's talking about how we stay close to God, I'll be faithful, I'll be an influencer, I will be generous, I will be consistent, I will be a finisher.

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I'll take faithful. I played an interesting game with the church. I asked him if there's one word that's most important word that you could live up to in all of the God's word, what would it be? And it's a fun question. There's no right answer but a lot of good answers. I could be loving kind generous. I could be empathetic. It could be consistent. You know, it could be passionate. I think the word that is most important for me based on Matthew 25 is I is to be faithful if you're faithful with a little God trust you with more if you are faithless as well done my good and faithful servant.

What does it mean to be faithful? It's going to mean a lot of different things to different people but for me as a spiritual leader, I see managing resources as one of the most faithful things you can do in the Bible. What resources do we have? Your most valuable resource is your time? Where do you put your time your your influence is a very valuable resource. Where do you put your influence your relationships? Who do you invest in what people around you you're whatever money or you know assets are under your leadership. How do you steward and maximize those for the glory of God? So we talked like a lot about earlier about kind of resource allocation. I believe that people say like, yo, man, you're so business

mind like no no no, no, no, no. No that is spiritual minded, the highest level is take the resources we have and to invest in the places that have the most Kingdom game.

I will be faithful and so that drives me over and over and over again in what we do when we have extra time when we have Margin in relationships when we have financial margin or try to create margin. How can we make pre -decision today to invest them in the right places? To be faithful that stands out to me two others that stand out would be consistency or are finishing And those kind of represent excellence and and consistency I think is one of the biggest drivers in success.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: Yeah, let's talk about consistency.

CRAIG GROESCHEL: Yeah. Yeah. Well all of us want to be consistent, right? but but most of us are not and there are a lot of reasons why. We look at other people and think well they were lucky or they got all the brakes. They weren't lucky. They were consistent. Anyone who is successful in any way is going to have consistent disciplines.

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But we want to do is we want to be really really really really clear on. What are the disciplines that that we need to have to bring about the results that we want to get and then we want to create the systems in our life that help us be consistent when I'm through today just like yesterday. I'll leave the office at the same time 3:45 and I'm going to go to the gym and we'll work out of the gym. Why, because I'm lazy and one more work a short day? No because I have pre-decided this is something that is good for my mind, good for my body, good for my marriage, good for the ministry, and I consistently do it almost every day. What does a hard end to the day do a hard into the day does it make me less productive but actually makes you more productive because during the day what I have to do I have to say notice hurting things in order to hit the hard end I have to delegate certain things. I have to make faster Decisions by having a consistent hard into the date increases my productivity. It gives me the physical both release, renewal, strengthening, get that done. I walk in I feel like I had a growth day in my body. I had fellowship with I always work out with people that pushed me both spiritually physically and mentally has someone that helped challenge me and it's it's wraps up a good end of the day. It's not what we do occasionally that matters is what we do consistently. So what we want to do is determine what are the drivers that matter. Carey, you interview, I don't know how many people a week but if you're not, there's certain things if you're not consistently doing them, you're not going to perform at the level that you are. So we're going to decide those consistent disciplines and Not waiting until the middle of what am I going to do today? And I've already decided.

[01:12:42.100]

CAREY NIEUWHOF: Yeah, and almost everybody I know who has had some level of success, fruitfulness, productivity in their life and ministry has made so many pre-decisions. Craig, I want to honor your time. It flies so fast when we have conversations. Is there a final word about pre-decisions? I mean, the book is called Think Ahead. I have the privilege of reading an early copy and endorsing it. It's a fantastic book. And it's good for your congregation too.

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There's exercises to do at the end, there's scripture verses to reflect on, so don't think of it as like a 500 -page leadership book you got to work through. It's a very substantial read, but I don't want to say easy. Easy to understand, important to implement. Is that fair?

[01:13:23.500]

CRAIG GROESCHEL: Yeah, I hope so. Yes think ahead seven decisions you can make today for the life you want tomorrow. I would say there's probably two types of people listening right now. There's a type that geeks out and goes, yes, I'm gonna plan ahead. I'm gonna get organized and then there's the other type that says this sound like a nightmare. I like to be in the moment go with the flow and I say to the second group because that might be the group that this would seem more unnatural too. You might think well that's you know, that kind of imprisoned me. It puts me in a box. It actually is the most freeing thing that you can imagine because you do make a few decisions ahead of time and then to eliminate the stress from other decisions. It frees you up. It eliminates temptations that increases the likelihood of success and it matters in every area of your life. In your finances if you can pre-decide first 10% goes to God and you can do that. That's amazing the next 10% you put aside to investors say that's amazing. And then you you know, every dollar has a name you if you can budget in that way for 20 or 30 years, you will have financial flexibility to make a difference in people's lives and your marriage. If you there are some decisions you can I'm telling you if you just decide. I'll make some up if you decide we pray together daily, we have a date night every week, and we go on one we can get away a year with no kids. You make those three pre decisions and that could change your marriage. Honest to goodness, if you pray together daily. Guess what you can't be fighting. You can't be like lying and cheating and doing weird things. You're not gonna feel like praying if you have a date night a week you will be talking. And working through his shoes and getting closer which will lead to more spiritual intimacy, more emotional intimacy, likely more physical intimacy, and somehow those things just compound and work better together.

And then if you disconnect and go away for a year, you're prioritizing your marriage over your children and over everything else, saying you value your marriage and those three decisions could compound. Just made those up. But whatever area of your life, if you make a few pre-decisions, you will see compounding spiritual returns, relational returns, financial returns, leadership returns that can impact your legacy, your leadership, your church for years to come. And you've done that, Carey. I've watched you. We've talked a lot about together. I've watched you implement some health pre -decisions.

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You've always been spiritually disciplined. Your work ethic ,you're writing ethic. You're you've created something special and it was not by accident. It was by intentionality decided ahead choose today and watch as God blesses you tomorrow in ways that you never thought possible.

CAREY NIEUWHOF: Well, I keep learning and I keep growing and you've been a big big help to me personally and just so people know. I mean we talked about this in previous episodes. You would not say by nature you're a disciplined person. The one pre-decision I made was that I would tithe when I was a kid and that's been easy to implement everything else hard-earned. I can show you the scars sure but you're right the value of pre-decision the value of time blocking the value of deciding ahead of time. What you're going to do is so helpful and I would say the older you get the more necessary at becomes because it doesn't always end. Well life can get more complicated with the right pre-decision plays and it allows us to Steward that so highly recommend the book. It is definitely a purchase you want to make leaders called think ahead Craig also has a fantastic leadership podcast never miss an episode Craig. I'm so grateful for what you do and yeah, where is an easy place for people to track with you these days Craig?

CRAIG GROESCHEL: Well, craiggroeschel.com has access to most places life.church is the church and then we're on social media as well and just honored to be with you. Your friendship matters a lot. For those listening, Carey, my number one source for good information. What are you reading, what podcasts are you hearing? And twice a month I ask him and I listen to everything that he does. So I appreciate your investment, you're a great student, great student and great teacher. And those work well together.

[01:17:52.500]

CAREY NIEUWHOF: You're a great friend, Craig, and I so appreciate it. And I learned so much from you. And yeah, keep those recommendations coming on on both ends

and we'll do this again. Man, I always feel like this could be a three-hour episode, but thank you so much for the generosity with your time. Thanks to the team who I know is behind the camera and we will catch up with you soon.

[01:18:13.200]

Thank you, friend.

CRAIG GROESCHEL: Thanks, Gary.

[01:18:14.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: I always look forward to our conversations and that was not a disappointment. You can get show notes and transcripts and a whole lot more at careynieuwhof.com/episode633. Also, something different, Craig's been on multiple times and if you enjoyed this episode, we are going to link to an archive episode.

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And if you scroll down where you're listening to this podcast, you'll see some links and we've linked to one of my favorite interviews with Craig. So if you enjoyed this, we always talk about something different every time and you can just do that. Click the link and you'll be taken immediately to another conversation with Craig Groeschel. Want to thank our partners so much man church. I'll tell you technology is growing and changing and with Church.Tech you can get your message that you work so hard on onto social into group guides into table conversation starters. So social media and more with the press of a single button go to church.tech to get started.

And Easter's almost here and Gloop has got their new Discover Marketplace. It's your go-to destination for everything. You need to make this Easter truly unforgettable. Go to gloop.us/easter.

[01:19:20.700]

Also one other thing that's kind of interesting talking about technology is Craig and I of course did a video of this and it's on my YouTube channel. And if you don't change it's really interesting, now, normally we'll have 10 lessons to every view we get on YouTube, but just recently that's starting to change. There are a couple of interviews we did where the video is bigger than the audio and sometimes the video and the audio keep pace with each other. But anyway generally audio is 10 to 1 still the winner, but occasionally a video will go viral and away it goes. So if you're not really leveraging technology, time to start, right, that's just a little editorial comment along the way. I want to tell you what's coming up next. We got Daryl Cripe. We are talking

about how to reverse the decline in the small church, and we're going to get Nitty Gritty. Cal Newport, so exciting, got a brand new book Slow Productivity. He and I are having a conversation.

We've also got Willie and Korie Robertson, John Tyson, Will Guidara coming back, Jenny Allen, and a whole lot more. Well, thank you so much for listening. And if you're like me, I got one more thing that I want to give you because I struggle to find really good content. And that's why I started my On The Rise newsletter. About 100,000 leaders get it every single Friday. And in it, I find really curious, really helpful, really practical things that will help you in your leadership. I'll send you the latest data on church trends, what's growing, what's declining, all of that. And sometimes some really curious stuff. For example, if you ever watch an NFL game, let's say it's in Buffalo and there's a blizzard raging and the players have no sleeves on. How do they stay warm? Well, I've got a link to an article that describes exactly how that happened. So this Friday, I'll send you something automatically for free.

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You can go to ontherisenewsletter.com. Join the leaders who get it every Friday. You can subscribe and unsubscribe easily. And thank you so much for listening. I hope our time together today has helped you identify and break a growth barrier you're facing.