

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT



Announcer: The Art of Leadership Network.

George Kamel: And so I think because of that and then me sending over some tactical, here's 20 things I would do for your brand if I started working for you now, you almost have to pretend that you have the job and that's when they can really start envisioning. Oh gosh. This person is legit. They have really good ideas and they've got skin in the game here. I think that's impressive as a as a leader or an employer. That's what we all want. Is that kind of initiative out of team member. So I think that coupled with the mutual connections really helped at least get me another phone call and then it's okay. How do i ace this phone call? So I was researching everything about Ramsey that I could because I knew on that phone call. I need to know my stuff if the HR guy thinks well, he's just looking for a job. I'm not gonna get the job here because we're more than about jobs here at Ramsey. And so that was the next step and then the next step and so as I progressed, you know, you get a little more rope and a little more trust.

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, and man, we got a good show for you today. George Kamel is on the program. George, you know, probably as a Ramsey personality we go through his whole backstory including how he was instrumental in launching this podcast almost 10 years ago, which is great. Today's episode is brought to you by The Art of Leadership Live. I am so thrilled to announce the Art of Leadership Live, my first ever leadership conference, which will be held in person in Dallas, Texas this September. You can register for the Art of Leadership Live at theartofleadershiplive.com. And by Subsplash. Of the 168 hours in a week, guess what how many hours does your church have the full attention of your people? You can go to subsplash.com/carey to sign up with Subsplash.

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Well, George Kamel is going to talk about how to effectively pitch yourself to an influencer as a young leader, how to get noticed and promoted in leadership, and EQ tips and money tips for millennials and Gen Z, and the new housing reality and a whole lot more.

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And I'm so grateful, George, thank you so much for helping us launch this podcast a decade ago when you were, well, definitely not a Ramsey personality. Ten years ago, we go through that whole journey, but my goodness, you were instrumental along with an incredible team that got this thing going. And thank you to all of you this fall. We're going to do like 10 years. So hang on for that. We're gonna do a big celebration. You're going to be involved. And thank you to all of you who share episodes. When you do that, we get the best guests and we have some killer guests coming up. And George is among them. So George is a Ramsey personality and personal finance expert.

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Following Ramsey's proven money plan. George went from a negative net worth to a millionaire in under 10 years. Since 2013, he has served on the Ramsey team speaking Nationwide and now frequently co-hosts the Ramsey Show. He is also a best-selling author number one best-selling author and his goal is to help people spend less save more and avoid money traps so they can live their lives with more margin options and freedom.

Well, if you're on my email list, you were among the very first to hear this news. I'm pumped. I'm excited to announce the art of leadership live. It's my first ever live leadership conference, which I'm hosting. It's going to be held in Dallas Texas this September over three really transformative days. You're going to engage in a series of powerful talks and conversations on your spiritual and emotional health as a leader strategic Church growth and creating a healthier future for leaders and church members. So this is so cool. This is not an event where you're going to sit down and listen to Keynote speakers talk at you for eight hours a day. Instead, it's carefully designed with the perfect balance of teaching connection and free time so that you can connect and find the right Insight the right leaders and actually act on it. It's a curated experience a select group of leaders. You'll be able to have safe unfiltered conversations you can't have anywhere else, not just with me, but with others in the room, you can learn strategies that challenge and change you and you can build connections with the right people. So you'll leave having set the foundation you need to grow your church and leadership and you're going to have a blast while doing it early bird pricing is available for a very limited time by visiting theartofleadershiplive.com. Again, that's theartofleadershiplive.com to learn more and secure a spot today. Head on over there. I would absolutely love to see you there.

And then here's a question I've been asking myself. Has there ever been a more distracting time to be alive? Think about it. I mean, you're being hit up 24 seven on

all channels and out of the 168 hours in a week, how many hours does your church actually have the full attention of your people? It's one of the biggest obstacles that you face in your church and that's where Subsplash comes in. For 18 years, they've been building the leading digital platform for churches with mobile apps, messaging, website streaming, groups giving, and more. Subsplash puts the best of today's technology into the hands of churches to help you break through the noise and make disciples. So you can join 17,000 other churches when you go to subsplash.com/carey, you will get \$500 off when you sign up.

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And now my conversation with George Kamel.

Carey Nieuwhof: George. This is long overdue. Welcome.

George Kamel: It's such an honor to be here Carey, inside of this podcast, because I once worked with you on this podcast which we're gonna get into later.

Carey Nieuwhof: No, we'll start right there. I don't think that there would be a podcast if it wasn't for George Kamel. So a lot of people know you now as a Ramsey personality and author, you've got your first book out Etc. It's been a rocket ride that we're gonna break down step by step, especially for the young leaders, but you and I met 10 years ago in 2014 when I was noodling around launching a podcast and I didn't have the bandwidth to do it all myself. So I reached out to a mutual friend who at that time worked at Ramsey and he said, I'm putting a crew together and well you pick up the story from there?

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George Kamel: Oh, absolutely. I was kind of a marketing consultant as a side hustle as I was trying to pay off debt and work through my financial journey and a good friend of mine and co-worker was like, hey, I'll hire you to help out. We're helping authors and entrepreneurs and speakers kind of launched their platforms and books and podcasts. That sounds awesome. And so one of the first clients that he had was this guy this Canadian guy Carey Nieuwhof that was this pastor slash leadership slash blogger slash podcaster, and I remember creating the first ever show notes for your first ever podcast and your first ever book and helping you launch that and look at you now, Carey, you stand on the shoulders of tiny giants like me.

Carey Nieuwhof: I feel like I certainly stand on the shoulder of a lot of people and George you're one of them. I gotta tell you that was really cool. So how long had you been at Ramsey in 2014?

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George Kamel: I've been here over 10 years now. So I started in 2013 at Ramsey as an intern and that was I was side hustling my way through debt payoff from 2013 to 15

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow, so you were Barely at Ramsey you started a side hustle just for a little bit of extra pin money to get that debt down. And what were you doing at Ramsey at the time in 2014 when I met you?

George Kamel: So I came on to help one of our mutual friends Jon Acuff. He was one of the original Ramsey personalities back before we even called them that and I was a big fan of John's work With his blog and stuff questions like and so I heard he worked for this guy named Dave And I was tweeting at him being like I want to work with you like hire me And so I had already graduated from college so I couldn't do a true internship. It's illegal apparently. You got to do it for like college credit to be an official internship.

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And so they found me a temp job because Jon was like Hey, this guy's got what it takes. I think he should come on. We'll give him this kind of he can kind of intern for me, but then we'll find him a temp job here. So I was a temp in the social media side helping with our tech recruiting, hiring developers, running that social media side helping Jon with his social media. And that was my first foray at Ramsey. It was kind of my foot in the door until I got a full-time role. After the internship was over and we both said hey, I like it here. You guys hopefully like me. Is there a full-time role and so I stepped into email marketing as a coordinator full-time in 2013, and that was my first salary job out of college.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay. So this is fascinating. I did not, either didn't know, or didn't remember the Acuff connection because I'm talking to Jon all the time right off my

George Kamel: You guys are traveling speaking together a bunch.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, we do a call every month just to catch up see what's new with each other and I want to break this down because I hear from young leaders all the time who want to get the kind of breakthrough today that you had back in 2013. So, you know, they're tweeting at somebody or DMing them now on Instagram or following them on TikTok. And it's like, how do I get into the sphere of Jon Acuff? And Jon Acuff already had a profile. I mean, he did stuff Christians like he had a book on that. He was a Ramsey personality. He had probably one or two New York Times

bestsellers by then. Yeah, and you're like a John Acuff fan. So what did you do as this college student hoping to get a break?

George Kamel: Man, well, you know it I can Coleman our friend has a book called The Proximity Principle and I accidentally followed those principles where you get around the right people who have the right connections and it was less about my degree. I had a little degree this communication degree from a tiny private Christian School in Mobile, Alabama. It wasn't my degree that got me there, my intellect or my talent. It was just who I knew plus persistence plus work ethic.

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And so it started as my roommate Judson got a message from Jeremy Cowart. He made a website called like JudsonWantsToWorkWithJeremy.com. And it was this amazing pitch to be to work with Jeremy as an intern. So John Acuff is friends with Jeremy. He sees that and he messages Judson and he's like, hey, on Twitter DM, I need like a hustler guy like you. And so Judson mentioned my name. He didn't tell me any of this happened. Weeks later, he goes, oh, yeah, I messaged Acuff and mentioned your name. And I was like, you mentioned my name to John Acuff? So I started DMing Jon. I was like, I think my friend might have mentioned me. I'd love to work with you. Here's my resume. Here's what I could do for you. And so that turned into, you know, a phone call with H.R. to to get a foot in the door. And I put my best foot forward with a strategic plan about what we could do to help grow Jon's social impact. And, you know, they saw that kind of hustle and grind out of a 23-year-old.

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Then went let's give him a shot. So I moved to Nashville from mobile for that internship.

Carey Nieuwhof: What was your pitch? Do you remember the first time you talked to John like because it's one thing you know where he meets you and kind of goes. Oh, yeah, good guy, but we're moving on. Do you remember what the quality or the content of that conversation was? Like the first time you got into an interaction with Jon Acuff?

George Kamel: I remember being such a fan of his and so it started with appreciation for what he did. It was rarely about me and my accolades because truth I didn't really have any as a college student.

Carey Nieuwhof: Graduated from here's a college you've never heard of. A man of small intellect. Just kidding, you're not.

George Kamel: You know what, he did speak at our college and so that was a connection point because he had spoken at the college. And so that was one piece of you know, finding any connective tissue, you can to that person that you're trying to reach out to is huge.

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Appreciating them and then going here's how I think I can add value to your life versus. What can you give to me? Can you mentor me? Nobody when you hear those words you go, oh this guy's gonna suck all my time and energy instead. It's hey, here's how I'm dreaming about adding value to what you're already doing. Tell me about your goals and do those aligned with what I'm thinking. And so I think because of that and then me sending over some tactical, here's 20 things I would do for your brand if I started working for you. Now, you almost have to like pretend that you have the job and that's when they can really start envisioning. Oh gosh, this person is legit. They have really good ideas and they're already got they've got skin in the game here. I think that's impressive as a leader or an employer. That's what we all want. Is that kind of initiative out of team member. So I think that coupled with the mutual connections really helped at least get me another phone call. And then it's like, okay, how do I ace this phone call? So I was researching everything about Ramsey that I could, because I knew on that phone call, I need to know my stuff. If the HR guy thinks, well, he's just looking for a J -O -B, I'm not going to get the job here because we're more than about J -O -Bs at Ramsey. You got to be bought in on the mission. And so that was the next step. And then the next step. And so as I progressed, you know, you get a little more rope and a little more trust. And my goal was just to be, how can I be so faithful in whatever's in front of me and do it with excellence and do it with such a work ethic that nobody could ever look at that and go, hey guys, he doesn't have what it takes. He's lazy.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Wow. Okay. That was like a two minute masterclass on how to pitch people.

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George Kamel: There's my TED talk for you.

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Carey Nieuwhof: There it is. Now, would you nuance that for the way things work today. I mean, I can't think of anything you would change but I mean, obviously that was very effective a decade ago. For the young leaders listening right now who are

hoping to get in with someone like a Jon Acuff or a Dave Ramsey. Anyway that you would say hey in 2024 the games changed and here's how it's changed.

George Kamel: Yeah, I'm thinking now because I'm sort of in Jon Acuff's seat, which is so fascinating to go from doing the social media help for the personality to being the personality. So I'm thinking if someone DM me what you don't want is something super long-winded, you know, I think Diana still a great way to do it, but I do think having a connection point is really good and so saying hey, I bought your book or I went through this course that you did, or I saw you at onstage here that helps me go. Oh, this is a real person. This isn't some person a thousand miles away who has no connection Point who's pitching me on why they I need to be there, you know sort of international editor from Malaysia because I get a lot of those, Carey. I don't know why. They're always pitching me like we can help you scale your business.

Carey Nieuwhof: Man, every day. My team keeps most of them out of my inbox like 98% of them. But like once in a while someone will get my number and I'm like, I'm not even answering that like, I don't know how to answer that.

George Kamel: Yes. That's a good team. I think what back in 2013 the difference was, you know, we didn't have a huge company we've gone from 300 people to over 1,000 and so there was more procedure and there's more you know, we have better processes and things and so I'd probably tell him hey, apply through the website if you want this role, because a role has to kind of exist already. So you kind of have to know they're already looking for help with new John needed already based on his DMs.

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Carey Nieuwhof: It's funny how, you know, and I think at whatever level you're at you're probably still cold pitching from time to time. I wrote an email last week for a guest I really want to have on the podcast. It's probably going to happen this year. And my team had reached out and we got a, hey, check back in a few months, which is not a no, which is good.

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But I thought, I wanted this guy to let him know, I don't want to say who it was, how much I appreciated him. And I didn't have a point of mutual interest other than other guests I've had on the podcast. And I was hesitant to ask those people for an introduction. So I happened to get his personal email address from my team. And I just sent him a note. And I just said, hey, I just want you to know, we don't know each other, but I'm really grateful for you. I've read your two books.

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This one in particular really spoke to me. Here's what I learned. One, two, three, we're looking at possibly having you on the podcast. That would be great, gave my download count, told him all of his friends that had been on the podcast. I know you're busy just want to know I'm grateful and hopefully we can do this later this year and he got back to me within a couple of hours and said would totally love to do this. Thank you. This really meant a lot. Let's circle back in August with a very specific date. And I'm like now I've got that diarised. I'm not gonna bug him between now and August but now I'm gonna follow up. I think it did. I think it cut through the noise in the crap rather than just here's what I want you to do for me. It's like I've read your stuff.

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And one of the books I'm reading for the third time and that's not an exaggeration. I loved it that much.

George Kamel: So you showed him, hey, I value what you're doing. Here's a specific thing. I've engaged and interacted with your content and then here's my ask just make it very clear instead of this vague thing. And I love that you said hey, would you be in my podcast? Here's the details here are some specific dates. I love making things tactical because it's one less brain Cal for that person to burn.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well and I could offer him an audience too. Right as a post and sometimes people do you favors? Like, you know, Andy Stanley was kind of enough to be episode one on my show when we had zero downloads. You did the show notes for that one, right? Yeah, and that was a great episode. I was a great episode. Yeah, he was great strong was it used to doing 40-minute interviews, you know on podcast that was new back in the day believe it or not. There was no Joe Rogan. I don't think in 2014 and nobody doing it.

George Kamel: Well you were on the cusp of like you were one of the first great kind of leadership podcast, doing these longer form interviews.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, in the church space, I think I was first, other than maybe catalyst. And everybody told me it wouldn't work because everyone has tiny attention spans. But hey, here we are a decade later.

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George Kamel: And he's broken the three hour episodes at number one.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Exactly. So when you got to Ramsey, I mean, I'm going to guess, did you ever think you would be on air with Ramsey or what was your ambition or your career plan? And if you did think you would be like, it's OK to say that.

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George Kamel: Well, I wish I had some grand scheme, like I'm going to work my way into an internship and become a personality. I really did not think it was in the cards for me, Carey. I came from a background of being a musician and I was used to being on stage and even in front of cameras for fun little video. You know, I was going to go into film and be a filmmaker out of college. That was a dream of mine. So I always loved video and even being on camera behind the camera, on stage, playing music, entertaining people. That was always something I enjoyed doing, but I never saw it as a career path that I could pursue where I could just go, yeah I'm just gonna go be a personality, that's easy. And so I was always the guy behind the scenes helping those people make it happen. Even helping speakers and authors like you I just loved helping people with a great message communicate it in an interesting and creative way. That was really to me. I still do that today. I'm just now all the mouthpiece for it, which is cool, but nothing's really changed in that regard. But what changed for me was I got that email marketing job. I convinced them by buying a book called HTML and CSS on Amazon and I read the book and that was sort of my I could do this job, here I read this book, and they gave me a shot. And so at every moment at every next opportunity. I just did whatever it took to learn that skill and then proved to them that I could do it over time. And so that email marketing position turned into another of the first official social media marketer for personality in 2016.

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And you know Ken Coleman from the Catalyst days. And now as a Ramsey personality, I had known Ken from the Catalyst days and he had spoken at a previous company I worked for and so I got to know him. I traded him. I filmed his Catalyst video, edited it, and I traded him for free tickets to Catalyst in exchange for filming his talk so that he could watch back the tape and learn and grow and use that so that was my first interaction with Ken little did. I know one day he'd be a Ramsey personality here and I would be taking the torch from him to emcee and host our Live Events host a video channel. And so that was my first step from normal marketer guy into public figure face for the company and that was a big transition too.

Carey Nieuwhof: Guy in the cubical to guy in the closet, you know typing away, to a personality. So how did that how did that happen? Why because I think it was as a host that you were first taped, right?

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George Kamel: Yes, so the situation was Ken was looking to move into this personality role. He had this message about work and career that he wanted to pursue at Ramsey, but there was a problem. We needed someone to replace Ken, and if you've ever seen Ken Coleman on stage hosting catalyst hosting podcasts He is so good at that role at hosting and emceeing so just to fill Ken's shoes is difficult. And so we do this event every year at Ramsey called Battle of the Bands And it is what you think it is our team members form musical bands and do cover songs and then we all vote for winners and it's this big rock and roll show And so I was in these In these in the competition for years Carey, three times in a row did not win with my bands And so I was tired of losing number one And the hosting truly was abysmal at the time It was any warm body in the company could get up there and try to make a transition between the bands and it was so cringy and I just thought man. I think I could do that and do it better.

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Not out of a place of ego, but just out of like I could add value to this event, this event that I love and care about. I have the music background. It'll be fun to poke fun at the bands in a light way and carry the show. And so I raise my hand multiple times with persistence until they finally went, okay sure. You can host next year and so I put my all into that we made creative videos. We did musical parodies. We did competitions and game show type things to really bring a whole new element to this show and they saw me on stage and I think that was a light bulb moment where Ken and a few of the leaders went, hmm, what if that guy hosted our Live Events he believes in the place. He loves the mission. He loves the people he represents us. Well, let's give him a shot.

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And so that's when I got tapped on the shoulder and I about fell out of my chair because my leader came to me and said hey, we're going to this marketing conference and San Diego, but I need you to take notes as if it's for someone else. I was like what he's like it's going to be for someone else because you're gonna backfill Ken Coleman. I literally thought it was talking to someone behind me. I was like, you're talking to me like I'm gonna be the guy to go on stage and do the video channel and they went, yeah, we think you can do this and so having a leader that

believes in you is one of the most powerful things in the world like a good manager is fine a good leader helps you become better at life and sees things in you that maybe you don't even see in you and so that was such a huge transitional moment in my life an early 2017 to start to get trained up to take on that role.

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Carey Nieuwhof: So, there was something you said as though it was natural and inevitable that I don't think is natural and inevitable. So, the hosting had been, let's just call it lackluster at previous Battle of the Bands. And then when you got tapped on the shoulder to do this, you could have just said, well, I'll just spend an hour on this, prep for it, and the bar is low enough that I can probably just do it and get away with it and be good. But you went and you made social media. You did all kinds of video for it. And you treated that like somebody had tapped you on the shoulder to host the Oscars or something like that. Can you, what was it in you? First of all, can you say what you did? And secondly, you made up some rules, which is something leaders do right, like you're just like, well, nobody told me I couldn't so I think I will. I'd love you to break that down a little bit because I think that's another way to kind of stand out from the crowd and get noticed.

George Kamel: Yeah, that's a great point. And I think you're right. I tend to just take things too far as far as like what we could do and I tend to break the rules and push the envelope and all of that stuff not out of a wanting to rebel but instead it's a vision of what could be, and my goal on that stage was what is going to get the laugh. It was a true sort of comedian's heart of what's gonna get the laugh, what's gonna connect with this audience, and what's gonna create a moment and so through that process I I would tap people on the shoulder that I trusted and say, hey you're designer. Can you help me design the slide? It's gonna be a really funny thing. Hey video guy. Can you just help me like during lunch and make this video? I have this idea that I think could be really funny.

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So what we would do is take these kind of zeitgeist of Ramsey as a whole and said what are the things that we all know to be true but no one is sort of saying out loud that will be funny without offending, you know, HR? I don't want to be in the HR office being like you can't say that but what is just over the line that we all know to be true. And so there was always those kind of moments where I'm quick to make fun of myself, which I think awards me the ability to make fun of others too. I'm you know, it's sort of an equal opportunity offender there. And so I always love that self-deprecation, but also like not taking ourselves too seriously, and so it became parody ad videos we would do fake sponsors. And so I would make these fake sponsorship

videos of, today's video is brought to you by, and it would be some internal thing that we all had this sort of awareness of that always got a laugh out of the crew. And we would we made up a Amusement park called Ramsey land when we were building this new building. I said, hey, they're gonna actually put an amusement park It's called Ramsey land Here's some of the rides and all of the rides had to do with funny internal things like procurement We all know the procurement team. They're very methodical, but goodness they can move slow so we called it the procurement plunge and we kind of had this pipe analogy and I was like sometimes stuff gets stuck in the pipes over in procurement and you know So there's just funny in really inside baseball stuff that no one would find funny except for the people at Ramsey.

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But all of that kind of elevated the whole experience to where people didn't just look forward to the bands. They look forward to the hosting and what the comedic bits we're going to be and the stuff that I was going to make fun of from the year passed, and so it just became outrageous and over the top and I think that made me want to up the ante every year. So one year, I wrote in on a camel we I was dressed as Aladdin it was it was the year that COVID happened. And so we made a whole video about how my one wish is that Battle of the Bands could still happen during COVID. And so we did it outside. We hired a camel I got on top of the camel it played Prince Ali as I wrote in and it was just these like what could just be a moment. And so that's how I've always treated everything is how can I take it to the next level? How can I make this more creative and connect with people on a deep level?

Carey Nieuwhof: And so you're doing that while your day job was still email marketing?

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George Kamel: Yes, that was the difficult part Carey, truthfully it became so every year the most stressful thing was Battle of the Bands because I knew how much of my life I would have to pour into this and how many extra hours I would have to pour into it, but it was also a joy and you know, you've had those things where you're like, I'm willing to spend four nights this week working on this so that would really it became it. Just got to the point where I couldn't do it anymore. Once I stepped into all the other hosting roles and personality roles. It just became too much to where I had to finally let go and delegate it. But it's still one of my favorite events we do all year and I try to make a cameo when I can.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's great. And you know, you're embracing or embodying what I think Seth Godin calls pick yourself.

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A lot of people are waiting to be picked, but you normally pick yourself. You went over and above any category anyone had seen for hosting an event like that, and made it amazing. And I'm just thinking for young leaders, you mentioned you get pitched every day. Yeah, we do. And sometimes I do see some of the pitches because they'll slide into Instagram and it's like, hey, I got a video company and we'd love to do your reels or hey, I'd love this. You know what no one's ever done?

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To my knowledge, maybe they have, and it didn't make it to me. If somebody had pitched me and said, hey, I have some expertise in video. I took five of your YouTube videos and condensed them into reels that I think will elevate your brand. Here's the link. And then they show me a finished product of the five reels.

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Guess what, my team would take a serious look at them. But if it's like, hey, we just think we could really help you is I don't know. So you're doing email marketing. How do you make the leap from Battle of the Bands to hosting something else?

George Kamel: So that became this, you know, once you I got tapped on the shoulder and they said hey, you're gonna backfill. I was doing a hybrid email and social role for our friend Christy Wright with her Business Boutique brand at the time. And so that became a transition plan of okay, we need someone to backfill George now and then we need George to step into Ken's role and so became this hybrid where you're still doing your full-time job while training for the next one.

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And if you've ever been in that season a lot of leaders are working multiple jobs and they know this life well, but that was a difficult season. It's a scary season because you have a lot to prove. You know, when someone says I believe in you now, it's like oh crap, they believe in me, you know, there's a moment of wow, that's so special and then there's the oh gosh. I got a really step into this well, and so I started preparing for my first ever hosting of an event. And so I would be in the conference center and our old conference center there would be seven people in the audience from our team kind of watching me audition for this as I was introducing a fake speaker to the stage and in doing a fake introduction and transition and closed for the event and sponsor pitch and you know, it's almost embarrassing to do that with seven people in the crowd you feel like a crazy person, but that's what it took to get the chops just

to get to that point and my first of ever event I thought they were gonna put me in front of like 50 people.

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Carey, it was 5 ,000 people at this huge church in Orlando with Dave Ramsey, big money event. And that was my first, it was kind of an audition gig. It was basically like, hey, if this goes well, you got the job.

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And I remember I walked on stage right before we started and Dave Ramsey walks up to me.

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And the first thing he does is he unfurls my collar of my suit jacket, which is just all mangled up. And I was very unprofessional. And he's just helping me out like a dad who's kind of disappointed. Just, you know, it was a very sweet moment. And I was like, oh gosh, I need this night to go well. And truthfully, looking back, if you watch the tape, it's embarrassing, but it was enough to get the job. And I've gotten better since then, hopefully, as I then hosted another 100 events over four years at Ramsey.

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Carey Nieuwhof: And what was the bump up from host to full-blown personality sitting in with Dave filling in for Dave hosting your own show hosting your own channels basically full-fledged personality?

George Kamel: Yeah, even that transition like we've talked about before. It was one opportunity and I just tried to make the most of that and so my first real opportunity was hosting our borrowed future podcast series. I had this dream of hey Ramsey needs to get like we do caller-driven shows. What if we did a narrative podcast that really dove deep into a topic? And so we had this kind of student loan crisis that we were looking into that and I auditioned again to sort of be the host because I had hosted stuff on stage never had done of real podcast for us.

Carey Nieuwhof: So it was your idea though, and then you auditioned to be the host.

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George Kamel: We had the, I'm trying to remember, yes, we had this idea of the narrative podcast and then it was perfectly aligned with Anthony O'Neill our friend was doing this book called debt-free degree. And so we were like this is great. It's

gonna all line up at the same time. And so I was one of the people to audition to host it and I guess I won the audition and so I did a test and they went. Yeah, I think he could he could carry this podcast. And so I was not a personality for the podcast. I just sort of carried along with all the narrative pieces and transition pieces. And again, it was long nights and weekends working on that podcast because I wanted it to be excellent and that turned into hosting our Ramsey education curriculum for the students out there. Our personal finance curriculum is now in 48% of high schools. So I got to host that and bring a lot of humor to those scripts.

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And it was, I think, over like 130 scripts or something wild just for all of the transitional pieces and elements and things that were needed for that.

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So I put my whole soul into that. Then there was the Fine Print Podcast where I wanted to dive deep into all of the financial system that is designed to keep you broke. And at the time of that launch, they had knighted me personality over the summer of 2021. And so it wasn't just the Fine Print. It was the Fine Print with George Kamel for the very first time. My name was attached to something as the personality. And it wasn't because of just the opportunities that I seized with excellence. It was also because I had diligently followed the Ramsey principles. I had diligently created content that connected with our tribe in new and fun ways.

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You know, you know my wife and I Whitney and we followed the principles. We paid off our house on our early thirties, and we've been preaching this debt-free lifestyle for so long that it almost became. It wasn't really a decision. They just had to relent and go like okay, he's a personality. Let's just call it what, like there was probably some leaders Carey, in the building who were like just they gave up they gave in and just went let's let him do it and I think that level of persistence and Excellence over time in relational, you know, emotional intelligence and relational Equity. I had built with so many people on this team. All of that plus God is what helped me step into this role, you know, eight nine ten years into this place and so it's been an amazing journey and I truly am so grateful and humbled by every step of the way.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, I want to underscore that too because it seems like an overnight success. But again before you really got the title of personality you were eight years into the job you'd executed the you know Breaking Free from debt. So I think you were 32 or 33 when you paid off your house, you and Whitney did, which is amazing. Dave saw that he writes about that in the introduction to your book

Breaking Free from Broke, which is incredible. And you know, the other thing too is you were hustling it wasn't like. Well, you know, I only have 37.5 hours a week. So just, you know, delete 20 hours and I'll do this thing you were hustling and it's kind of that side hustle, you know, a lot of people call that entrepreneurship. Did you ever get to the point where it felt like it was too much and you wanted to quit because it was demanding because you're goals were demanding evenings and weekends or how did you and Whitney approach that because you got married in the midst of it. You became a dad over the last couple years, too. So, yeah.

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George Kamel: Well, you know and you know this care you talk about this a lot and in your recent books and burnout like there were times and seasons especially in book writing that crushed me I mean times where it's like my wife is not a fan of. She loves me but she does not like me right now because of my lack of time management Which I've I need to I have learned from you I need to implement more from you, Carey, on that in that regard You're so good at that and I've told you when you came to speak it to our Ramsey team You hit me square in the face with your great talk on that But that's been a real challenge for me this past year stepping into fatherhood and now becoming an author and you know What it takes to write a book and so it was nights and weekends and sorry I'm too focused or too frazzled to help with this thing or go do that thing or do that social obligation and so that's been a really tough challenge for us and now being on the other side We're very grateful and my wife now sees the fruits of you know, all the work that was put into that.

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But that's been kind of the new challenge for me is not what's the next thing and next book and I want to go do this now. It's how do I just be present? How do I be content? How do I slow down instead of how do I speed up? Because both in our financial goals, in our career goals. Everything was just what's the next thing? Okay. What's the next thing? All right, we're gonna do this. Then we're gonna pay off the house. Then we're gonna end my it was just a list of productivity and I've realized I'm not good at rest. I don't know how to say no and so this is the new chapter. I'm in now into fatherhood where I'm like, I just need to put my phone down and stare into my daughter's eyes for an hour and just play with her and that's not productive, but it's exactly what we both need in this moment. And that's truly been the biggest challenge for me stepping in a 2024 is just learning to slow down after a crazy time.

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Carey Nieuwhof: I think one of the tensions, I had a conversation with Craig Groeschel recently about this, but there is that tension between driven this and resting well and it's because you can go too far on driven this and you end up burning out you can go too far and resting well where you lose your edge and then it's like what am I retired at 35 or you know, what does that look like? I know this is very recent for you. But what do you learning about that or let me ask this question? Do you know what's driving your ambition?

George Kamel: Oh. That's a great question. You know, my personality the way I'm wired. I'm an Enneagram 2. And all I want is to have people like me and to be you know adored and not be rejected. And so that will for a long time that was the ambition behind that was sort of the mask behind wanting to entertain and get the laugh it was.

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Listen, I'm not the tallest guy in the room. I'm not the smartest or best-looking guy in the room. But if I can try to make someone laugh, I can get them to like me. And so for a long time growing up, you know, since I was eight years old, that's what you you know these patterns show up in life later on and so now I'm realizing I'm hopefully maturing away from the wrong motive of I just want them to like me and instead it's how can I just add value? How can I bring this person a moment of joy without really any motive behind it? I don't care if they like me or not.

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I just want to serve because I'm wired to serve That's what I've been trying to move into, there's probably unhealthy moments in certain scenarios where you don't do it for the right reason But I found that I get the most joy at most energy and least resentment when I do it for those reasons alone I've just gone there's no ulterior motive here.

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And so that's been a learning curve for me. But behind the ambition now, it's become more than me, you know as you get married as you become a dad as you realize that, you know life is short and family has health problems you sort of have those realization moments where you go, okay, we've done the thing. We have a great career. We have the money now what else and as I talk to finance creators Carey, because I'm in that space. I'm realizing the question that has been coming up for me in my mind for those people and for myself is and then what if right like that's such a crazy question to ask is you make a million dollars and then what you have the vacation home, and then what? Because what I've realized is It's never enough for

those people. The scoreboard is always moving. The goalpost is always shifting a little bit because once you have 10 million you go, what's it going to take to get to 20 million? What will that do?

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I've realized that there's not much underneath all of that and that is sort of shaken me to my core and it makes me thank God that I know him and that I'm a Believer because I think of Faith underpinning is so crucial to helping ground you to where you don't just float off into space with that mentality of you know, what's more what is more even mean when is enough enough and then what and so that's the question I've been asking for myself lately and of other people.

Carey Nieuwhof: Any idea what the answer to that question might be or where the answer is pointing?

George Kamel: Well, I think if you go deep enough, it becomes pretty existential and you start to go like what is the meaning of life, Carey? And what am I on this Earth to do and what will have made me look back at my life and go like that was a life well spent well done faithful servant and so it it begs those deeper questions, which I think is important, you know when you start to think about legacy and now that I'm a dad and what am I going to leave in this kid and to this kid? Like those are real questions now that were just hypothetical six months ago. And so I truly think the work I've done, you know, the impact, I just want to create a ripple effect, I think is my goal.

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I'm okay being forgotten, because I know, you know, 100 years from now, how many people are going to know who I am? How many people are going to know Carey Nieuwhof? Probably a lot more will know Carey Nieuwhof 100 years from now.

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Carey Nieuwhof: I'm with you on that.

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George Kamel: But you know, there's going to be 17 million podcasts out there. We'll just be one or two of them. And so it sort of helps ground me and keep me humble to go like, I am worthy and I am loved, but if I was gone today, the world would go on without me. Like that's a beautiful posture to take. And there's such a tension in there of feeling like nobody is put on this earth to do what I'm meant to do. And also I'm replaceable. Like God could use anyone else to be the vessel. And so

I think that's such a beautiful posture, but also a very troublesome one. And I know we talked about this you interviewed Dave and he talked about handing over the Dave Ramsey Show in making it the Ramsey Show and succession and what that means and so I'm only 34 and so I hopefully have a lot of time left on this Earth, but truly I just think what's the impact I can have today because if I think I'm gonna have 40-year impact, it hurt boggles my mind, but I just think what can I do today that can have a ripple effect into tomorrow a month from now a year from now and you see those stones start to skip that becomes bigger than you. I think that's a beautiful way to look at life, and I'm trying to do that every day.

Carey Nieuwhof: I think it's to your credit that you're asking those questions at 34. I don't think a lot of people get to them until they're late 40s or 50s and some people never get to those questions.

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So, you know as you're talking about that like yeah your debt-free and you probably have a little bit of money in the bank, etc. Etc. Right and now you're like wait a minute. I'm supposed to be working till I was 62 to pay everything off. Right, like that's kind of the world that we've grown up in and it's really interesting, you know, nine years on this podcast almost a decade you can kind of tell what questions I'm asking personally by the questions I'm asking guests. And you reminded me that if you go back I can't date this exactly but maybe five or six years ago on the podcast as I was just entering into my you know early to mid-50s. I started asking guests who had made it financially. Why do you keep working? Why do you keep working? And there are always different answers and it was a really interesting question as I entered my 50s.

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Because I always assumed, well, you work because you have to make money. And then eventually you get to the point where the house is paid off and this is done. And then you're like, why do people keep working? And I would say, as I've tried to answer that question in my 50s, I've landed in a very similar place to you, which is the word that I think of for the next two decades or beyond is contributing.

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I want to be contributing. And what that is, it gives my life purpose every day. Right now, it means I can bring great conversations like this one to a good size audience. It means I get to write pieces that hopefully help people in their practical leadership and ministry. It means I get to speak to leaders around the world, doing a lot of global travel this year, and I get to make a difference, hopefully in some way in their

lives. And that brings me a ridiculous amount of joy. And the money secondary it just it doesn't matter as much anymore. What really matters is the meaning and the purpose behind every day. Does that resonate?

George Kamel: That's beautiful. Well, and you said a keyword there that I want to call out because I think it's what every leader should aspire to and you kept saying I get to. And so many people out there, it's all I have to everything's obligation. Everything is sort of an obstacle to overcome and you've gotten to a point because of your work ethic over such a you're just diligent consistent over a long period of time that you've changed your sentences to I get to it used to be like I have to go do that speaking gig I have to go meet with that person. And now it's I get to go do that speaking. I get to do this podcast. And I think that's something that most people aspire to it their finances with their career, you know and money as I see it has become an obstacle for most people instead of what I want it to be for them, which is a tool a tool that helps them live a life they're not exhausted by a life that they always wish they could have lived and give the way they would they wish they could give that's the part that people have either lost. They've lost hope that it's possible for them or they don't know how to do it the right way. They don't know what's next and they're sort of paralyzed by it. But I love that sense of, I get to, because I think Dave Ramsey would say the same thing like I don't have to do the show I get to do this. I love doing this I come in every day and you know, Dave hasn't had to work in a long long time. And so the fact that he shows up every day takes three hours of calls goes to all the meetings runs a huge company is just mind-boggling to me.

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Carey Nieuwhof: No, it really is, you know, and it was funny because there's nothing like 20 years of ministry to beat any financial goals out of you that you once had. And it did a really good job of that because it becomes about serving people. And then when I started this chapter of my life nine years ago, I remember one of the early values I would say to my team is we are never going to be in a position where we have to do something, where I have to take that speaking opportunity because otherwise we can't pay the bills or we have to take this podcast sponsor. We fired podcast sponsors. We've dropped them because we made a mistake on calling who was a good partner. We've left money on the table.

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And, you know, I think if you have that perspective that this isn't something we have to do and don't put yourself in a position where you're doing things that are against your conscience, against your belief or against even your sense of integrity, now we're proud of the partners we have on the podcast.

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I love the speaking events that we get to do. And you got there very early in life much earlier than most people and hence your new book, right Breaking Free from Broke, which I want to get into. I want to talk a little bit about money and particularly being young and dealing with money. But before we leave this topic entirely, any other advice to the young leaders listening who are looking for that break that you got or something like that any other thoughts about Do's or don'ts that they should bear in mind.

George Kamel: Hmm. Well, I would say that opportunity and success is a lot more about EQ than it is IQ and too many people, you know, we're getting the seventh degrees in college and they're just in this education vortex instead of just getting out there and learning how to connect with people on a in a real way instead of in a formulaic transactional way. Like we're losing that relational component in our society because of the internet and social media and at the same time it's easier to connect with people thanks to the internet and social media. So I think learning how to do that well and add value. Is the biggest thing and also there's this concept Carey, that work is evil. There's just anti-work culture and I want to be my own boss and I want to be an entrepreneur and working for the man is evil and if you're a nine to five or you're you're not you're never gonna build wealth and I'm here as a nine to five or as a W-2 employee telling people you can have a great life entrepreneurship is not for everyone. Trust me. There's some people who should not be running their own business.

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And so I just want to tell them it's okay to not jump to the next thing and the next thing every year. It's okay to just plant roots and commit to something that you believe in and that's what happened at Ramsey. I've been here ten years. I've had six jobs I might be the millennial with the longest-standing career at one company. I know being in here ten years Most people they're jumping ship every three every three months for the next gig that pays a thousand dollars more Yeah, and I think one of the reasons I'm here is because of my stick-to-itiveness where I went no I want to stay here for a long time and build relationships I mean some people here I've known for a decade or more now and it's been a beautiful thing versus Restarting at a new company or a new startup just to make an extra buck and it's one of the reasons I think I've found the success and joy that I have in my work is because of just that commitment.

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And so I think you gotta commit, you got to persevere. You gotta be persistent with the right EQ and do it the right way by adding value to leaders and the people that you look up to and I can't imagine not being successful. That's a foolproof plan right there. If that doesn't work DM me and tell me what went wrong.

Carey Nieuwhof: What are some EQ tips that you see other leaders your age or a bit younger missing?

George Kamel: I think humility is a big part of EQ. If you don't have humility, I think you've already lost. When you come in a room acting a certain way acting like you know it all even if you are a prodigy-level genius, you're not gonna last in that room long. No one's calling you on the weekend to hang out so they can tell you all the things that you got wrong or how it could be better. So I think coming at it with humility with a posture of, you know, an attitude that is yes and is also really important the EQ leaders that I know they never just shoot things down. They seek to understand they really want to know where you're coming from. They value your input instead of kind of making an afterthought. Which is what happens sometimes. When they do speak they asked really good questions. They never just speak to speak. I mean Proverbs talks about this. That's what fools do they just open their mouths. And so I think having something to say and not feeling like you need to fill air because that's how you stand out. That's a that's a really big one for leaders that I look up to and things that I've been trying to work on. And so I think that's what EQ comes down to there's a level of humility. There's a level of openness to ideas, there's a level of caring to where it's not just hey did you get that task done? It's hey how are the kids doing? How's Mia doing? I know she had that rash, has that been healing up? Leaders that do that, you're like oh my gosh this person's on another level.

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Like we get the business done but can they also be a person and be a friend? And so I think those are the best leaders I've seen. They see that opportunity in someone, they believe in those people and they have that posture of humility. They ask great questions and it's more than just about work. And those are the people that I've seen win in the long term. You can win in the short term just by being rock and roll business and getting the numbers but you don't survive long term if you don't have those qualities.

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Carey Nieuwhof: So you wrote a new book. Congratulations. It's a major feat. Absolutely. It's called Breaking Free from Broke. How do you angle money? Like there's so many money books out there and Ramsay has a lot. What's different about

Breaking Free from Broke? Tell us what makes your book a little bit different than maybe some of the other books that people would have read on money.

George Kamel: Well, as you know The Total Money Makeover is the 800-pound gorilla in the room when it comes to personal finance books or 10 million copies sold, you know, so it's sort of like the Canon has been written. And so that posed me with a great challenge to go like I'm not gonna just write a book about the baby steps that has been done. What can I bring to the table? That is fresh That's Unique that's going to connect with new audiences that's going to maybe convince the tribe that has been hanging on to those credit cards for a little longer than they should even though they mostly follow the Dave Ramsey way.

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And so I needed to do something really fresh and I thought what can I bring to the table? And that was this creatively exposing the system. And the villains that are out there from a consumer Advocate standpoint and doing it with more research than we've ever done with more humor than we've ever done in a more relevant way than we've ever done really speaking to where people are at having so much empathy that I'm not talking down to you. I'm not yelling at you. I'm just that snarky friend who's telling you the truth and it's things for a second but then you're laughing and we're having a drink talking about what the next step is we're going to take. And so as you know, when you write a book, there's a lot of things you hope for there's the reviews that you hope come through and like I hope people understand what I'm saying, and that's not taking out a context or this doesn't come across this way and I'm proud to say the reviews have been pouring in and it has been overwhelming.

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Not just how positive they are, but people that are 17 years old are latching on saying thank you for helping me avoid mistakes that could have cost me years of my adulthood. Then someone who's 51 is on the phone in tears drawn on my live stream for the book launch saying I'm 51, I thought there was no hope for me. Thank you for telling me that it's still possible and showing me a way out and so I didn't want to write a book for a certain.

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Yes, it's gonna connect with Gen Z and Millennials. If you don't connect with old bald white guys, no offense Dave Ramsey if you're listening, you know, I thought maybe they'll connect with a with a younger white guy with hair and hipster glasses and so it's been really encouraging to see people message me saying hey I'm not even three chapters in I've cut up all of my credit cards. Thank you for showing me how to live

with that one. Thank you for showing me how to get rid of the student loan or live or go to school without getting one in the first place. And so those kinds of messages. Give me so much joy and hope that what I wrote on the page is actually connecting in the way. I wanted it to.

Carey Nieuwhof: One of the things that is I think true and I'm not a cynic and I have never experienced you as a cynic George but the system is kind of designed to keep you broke. Isn't it? Like in what ways is that true? I mean your bank wants to charge you fees. They want to make a lot of money and they want to make sure that you don't quite pay off that balance every month, etc. Etc. And oh we can make a 30-year mortgage. No problem. We'll take care of that for you, you know more interest for them. How is the system designed to keep you broke and enslaved?

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George Kamel: Well Carey, as I started doing research for this it was amazing how Things started with good intentions back in the day. And so I talked about the path that most of us took which is our parents didn't have it amazing. They wanted a better life for us. So they said get good grades get a further education. Go to college go to one of your dreams, the dream degree and take out as much money as you need to make it happen to fund this operation on the way. We're told. Oh and by the way, you now need a credit score to live your adult life and to get the credit score a best way to do it open the credit card and just put gas in normal lifestyle stuff on it. So now we're racking up credit card debt. Hoping to pay it off. We're building our credit score which involves taking on more debt to get a better score and then playing the game perfectly to get a better score to get more debt, which is insane.

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Now we're racking up student loans. Oh, and by the way, we can't afford the car that we deserve or that we need or that our parents told us was for safety and reliability. Now we have a car payment stacked on top of that.

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Then what happens when you graduate? You're like, well, I'm an adult. I'm a college graduate. I need to buy a house. Only poor people rent, Carey.

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So I'm now forced into buying a house, even though I'm broke, with no savings, ton of debt, no down payment. But I'll just do one of these first-time homebuyer programs and put almost nothing down and we'll figure it out later. And so now

you're stacked with debt and you're looking at other options to get out of this. So you're looking at HELOCs, which is just more debt tied to your house. You're looking at 401k loans, robbing what little retirement you have in order to move debt around. And you're looking at debt consolidation and debt relief and debt settlement. And every word has to do with debt.

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And that's when I realized debt is a thief. It's stealing from our joy. It's stealing from our paychecks and it's time to stop and once I actually went through that process because I'm not here on a Mountaintop from the tower. I had 40 thousand dollars in Consumer Debt. I have the student loans. I had multiple credit cards thinking I was winning and it left me broken anxious and cynical toward adulthood and that was back in 2013 Carey right before we met I was on this journey going this can't be it like this American dream is not it.

Carey Nieuwhof: What was your total net worth negatively in 2013, approximately?

George Kamel: I mean, I about had nothing in the bank Carey. So it was my debt was it was negative 40,000 dollars and then you can you know, plus whatever I had in the bank at any given moment, which was probably enough to cover bills and that's it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, so it was it was tough. You could have been a caller to Dave Ramsey. Hi, oh, I'm 21, 22 help me out here.

George Kamel: He would have said, sell your degree. I would have said I can't do that. Unfortunately. Wish I could.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, let's talk about credit score because that is something you talked about a lot on the air. So does Dave, so do others. How do you get, I want to talk about how housing and inflation and how expensive everything is and what that makes realistic for leaders because you got a lot of ministry leaders here. They're not making big bank day-to-day their paycheck isn't as big as it could be if they were in the open market credit score. How do you get a house if you don't have any debt to prove that you're credit worthy?

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George Kamel: Yeah, this one I have a lot of empathy for because it's the one thing people go, listen, George, I'm on board and I can do the no car payment, I'll pay cash, but getting a house, I have to have a credit score. And I thought that way for a long time until it was time for me to buy a house with no credit score. And it was shockingly easy to where I went, oh my gosh, was I lied to? Like, why did we

perpetuate this myth? And all it took was a process called manual underwriting. And so automated underwriting is how most mortgages are written. And it's you enter in the person's information in the system, it spits out the credit score, and the lender goes, OK, we can do this. The risk is not enough to warrant saying no, given the loan. With manual underwriting, it takes a real person looking at your tax returns and your utility bills and going, this person has the income to support this, they have a low debt-to-income ratio, and they pay bills on time.

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So it really was not rocket science to get approved and it really didn't take that long and it didn't cost me more. That's another myth that it's going to cost you way more. I did a 15-year fixed rate mortgage. We had over 20% down and they gave me a great rate back in 2019 when we got our mortgage without a credit score. And so I'm here to tell you. I'm not the only one this isn't like a weird one-off situation because I'm the Ramsey guy. They didn't know or care and many people have done this without a credit score and survived to tell the tale. So that's one of the biggest myths out there and I've rented cars, I've rented hotels, I've done all kinds of things without a credit score. I have great insurance rates. And so all this mythology I break it down in the book and I tell people how to live without it was step by step plans for every single piece because I was just tired of all the objections. I went, listen you can't argue with me after this.

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Carey Nieuwhof: Hmm Yeah and see that's really interesting. The other thing to pick up on is that you have a paid for house, but you bought it in 2019. So you just aggressively paid it down quickly.

George Kamel: That was the strategy my wife and I pre-decided by asking some revolutionary questions. Like what could we do if we didn't have a house payment in our early 30s, like what could that make possible? What kind of options would we have? And so that was really our driver and we know we wanted to have kids one day now, we have a little girl and she's being raised it with a totally debt-free household and it's just a beautiful thing to not have money fights in the house and instead, we just get to focus on hey, how do we want to give this month? How do we want to spend this?

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Because we have the margin to do that and so we didn't do it because Dave Ramsey said I have to pay off my mortgage in 26 months.

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Carey Nieuwhof: No, he would have been happy with 15 years.

[01:00:33.700]

George Kamel: Exactly. Yeah, 15 or less. He'd be like, all right, you're doing well, my man. And so it was an aggressive goal for us. I know we're weird. And for some people, it's going to take 5, 10, 15 years. But it's amazing when you do a 15 year fixed rate mortgage, and it's not too much of your world, you end up paying off that mortgage in 15 years. Worst case, and you save hundreds of thousands of dollars in interest.

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Carey Nieuwhof: So was it rice and beans? Or like, what were some of the strategies that got you to pay it off in 26 months?

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George Kamel: Well, luckily, you know, when you get to that baby step, it's baby step six in the Ramsey plan. And so you're out of debt, you have an emergency fund. We were investing 15% already into retirement accounts. And whatever money was left over every single month, we would just throw at the house. And it was really simple. We didn't follow any of these like TikTok strategies about how to pay it off early. We just literally paid extra on the principle along with our normal mortgage payment.

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And we set a goal every month. So maybe it was hey this month, we're gonna try to put a thousand dollars extra and we're gonna try to consistently make that payment and if we can put a 1500 extra the next month that's going to be even better. And so watching that come down, following a spreadsheet showing us how much less interest we're paying, how much interest we're saving, and our debt payoff goal speeding up super encouraging. And we've seen that I'm not that special now. We're seeing debt-free screams carry from people in their 20s and 30s who are just living on less than they make living modestly still enjoying life going on vacations and paying off their house early because they saw their parents struggle into their 60s hanging on to the mortgage and the HELOC and the second mortgage and they're going I don't want to live with that kind of stress.

[01:02:06.100]

I know in Canada too. It's a tough thing. I mean the numbers are very different in Canada. And so I feel because we're starting to get more calls from Canada. Carry. God bless y'all. I don't know what's happening over there. But we need you we need your help.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's a little crazy. I'll tell you it's a little crazy because housing prices are just through the roof and there's been about a 25% correction over the last few years, but you also bought at a very critical time 2019 before the craziness of covid. So there's thousands of people listening to this right now who haven't purchased they've never bought a house. They're renting, rents gone up to two three four five thousand dollars a month. They're trying to save and now the average house is somewhere between 600,000 and a million dollars depending on their market.

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How has the advice changed over the last few years? Because I find that one to be really tough. And let's take family money out of the equation. Okay, you're on your own. Here are your bootstraps. What advice do you have for people living in the new financial reality?

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George Kamel: Man, well, I know it's tough, especially for like when I see the Canadian numbers, it truly hurts my heart. And it's even harder out there than in America. But you know, I have a whole section in the mortgages chapter on this, because I have such empathy for that person. I wanted to speak directly to them and say, hey, I know you're a hopeful homeowner and I know it feels more hopeless than ever. And here's the numbers. I'm not trying to downplay it. It's harder than when our parents got a house. And I know this is not a hate on boomers because houses were cheap and they walked uphill both ways.

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I understand. They had a hard life too. But the numbers are astounding as far as how fast homes have appreciated in value versus how quickly our incomes have appreciated in value. So there is one good thing there we can control; our income. We can't control house prices. But if you're making 30,000 you might be able to get a side hustle and up to 60, or switch career paths entirely. Or maybe you'll be married soon and you'll have dual incomes. How amazing would that be? And so where you are right now is not where you might be three to five years from now. Your income is gonna go up you may get married and have a dual income. You can always adjust your expectations. Yes, you might need to go further outside of the city. It's going to

be a half-hour commute and you can afford the condo or townhome. It doesn't have all the features you want but get in the game when you financially can and when that means is you're out of debt, you have an emergency fund now we're diligently saving up that down payment to where we can get this house the right way.

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And what I'm seeing Carey is people getting freaked out and they're jumping into houses. They can't afford taking on a half-million dollar mortgage because I'll never be able to buy well now they're calling the show saying should I sell because I'm so stressed out. I can't pay all the bills. I still have debt. I can't say for the future. I'm going this house was supposed to be a blessing and it's become a real burden. And so it's not worth your piece or your patience to jump in a house before you're ready. Even if it means it's a 10-year Journey for you.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, and I'm definitely, you know, one of the people who is part of the problem or at least, you know born in a different decade than a lot of listeners, but we bought our first house in 1997 and I don't even want to say what we paid for it because can't buy shoe box for that these days so it's not fair, but that was a lot of money for us. I was making almost nothing in ministry. My wife was working very part-time because we had two young kids Etc. And I remember almost all of our furniture was hand-made.

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And when we first got married, it was like, well, we borrowed a sofa from somebody and then we got this coffee table. None of it matched and it wasn't really fancy.

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And then gradually, little by little, over the decades and years, we would just buy some furniture when we had some extra money, et cetera.

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Do you find that expectations have changed so much because we didn't have social media? I mean, it was only the people. I didn't have an image to project. I didn't have people to impress. And we always drove a little less car than our friends. We had a little less house than our friends. We didn't have as nice of furniture. We didn't take as nice a vacation. But fast forward that kind of discipline and we did not do it perfectly, but in your 50s.

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We now have more margin than a lot of the people that we started out with just because we tighten that belt so much in our 20s and 30s. And I'm not claiming we got it. All right, we got a lot of stuff wrong happy to talk about that on another day. But do you find that the expectations that social media and the whole world looking in on you has probably elevated people's expectations to well if doesn't have the granite countertops and it doesn't have the nice kitchen island and it's not this color and then I don't want it.

George Kamel: Oh, man, you're spot on here. I mean, I have a lot of empathy for those people because HGTV ruined us and thanks Chip and Joanna for getting us to expect way too much. Our standard of living is increased. I mean, yeah, we all now need an iPhone every two years. We need the newest iPhone because that and so you just think about that alone.

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Plus we can't live in the old, you know, the nasty old shiny wood grain walls. We need updated, you know, we need esthetic, Carey. We need to have a piece one environment and a nice environment and I'm not shaming people for having that standard of living but you got to understand where your parents are at today could take you 20 to 30 years to get to.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, that's what we expected. I mean I thought hey maybe in our 50s, we'll have the stuff. We really want and in between then, you know, we'll figure it out now came a little bit earlier than that, but still yeah, I've found we just had no expectation of having anything nice for years when we were first married.

George Kamel: That's a hard one to do and you're right. Social media is made it worse because back in the day you only knew what your neighbor was driving.

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And now on Instagram, I know where Carey's been last weekend and you just see the grill. He's got that nice big green egg and he was just in Cabo and oh my gosh, how is he affording that? Are they deeply in debt? Are they doing really well? And it's this comparison culture that we live in and you know, your inputs really matter. Those social media inputs, whatever you're watching, listening to, comparing your life to, it's never healthy. No one has ever looked at someone else's life because here's one thing. You'll either go, and I think Craig Groeschel has a great quote on this, it'll either make you feel superior or inferior. That's the problem with comparison.

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So you either go, wow, we're not doing as bad as Carey or man, it's not fair they're doing so well. I mean, isn't he like a pastor? You know, there's all these kinds of questions that bubble up that really just point to our own human ugliness and selfishness. So it's hard. I'm not saying it's easy to turn down those inputs and turn off the comparisons, but I will say your life is so much better when you don't care what other people think. That is a superpower in today's world.

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To not have that be a part of your day-to-day of comparing your life to others and I think it's really hard to get to that takes a real place of maturity and wisdom to be okay driving the crappy car because you're working on paying off the debt and your friends are going to give you crap for it. And you either find new friends or you tell them you laugh it off and go. Yeah. I'm doing this Ramsey plan make fun of me all you want but I got no payments, you know, that's the real flex I think, as these Generations come up, the new flex is going to be I got no payments. And right now the flex is look at all the stuff I have even if it means I'm secretly drowning in debt and stress. That's the problem. We're not mad at nice stuff. We you know, when we say rice and beans people think we mean forever know the quote is live like no one else so later you can live and give like no one else.

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Sacrifice now so you can have a big beautiful tomorrow down the road. And so the Ramsey plan is two years of sacrifice so we can have the next 30 years of peace and no payments and options and margin and meaning and joy and that that part has been misconstrued and I think delayed gratification is at the core of that and if my generation, if older Generations, younger Generations, if we can all grasp that concept of delayed gratification, we would be in a much better place emotionally and financially.

Carey Nieuwhof: The other thought I've read recently and I forget it could be James Clear. It could be Morgan Hassel or someone. I just can't think of in the moment but it's like, envy is a problem. I mean, it's a sin you and I share the same Faith. It's sin Etc. But if you're going to Envy someone or want what they have, you should think do I want their entire life?

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Because what you're enjoying, you're enjoying their car, or their house, or their condo, or their vacation, or their food processor, or whatever it is. So you're envying a little tiny slice, or their work ethic, or the fact that they just published a book or whatever that is. But the question is, would you sign up for their whole life? Because

that might have come at a great cost. That could come at a relational cost. That could come at a personal cost, great sacrifice. There could be a whole lot of stuff way out of whack that you don't even know about. And I thought that's a really good thing. Choose your heroes carefully. Choose the people you follow carefully.

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Any other thoughts on money tips for next -gen folks?

[01:11:13.800]

George Kamel: Well, I opened the book with a with a great CS Lewis quote that I think sums it up and it's all about swimming upstream. I think I have that. Do you have the book behind you?

Carey Nieuwhof: Got it right here. I'll read it to you. I'll read it to you. I'll do the narration. I see Voltaire. Oh, yeah the introduction. It's called average sucks. Of course, that's what Dave Ramsey wrote. But here it is, "When the whole world is running toward a cliff he who is running in the opposite direction appears to have lost his mind." CS Lewis.

George Kamel: That sums it up right there. I feel like a crazy person in today's world Carey, posting on social media saying hey guys, the credit card companies are not your friend. You should cut them up and stick to using your own money and paying now and they're all like kill him, no, he's coming out for our credit cards. I mean, I'm like you would think I'm coming after their their freedoms as Americans Carey.

[01:12:12.400]

And so the aggressiveness toward, you know, just becoming sheep and just wanting to you know be blessed by these debt companies is outrageous to me. And so when I tell people to live counter-culturally and you know, which I feel like is what the Bible calls us to with our life and part of that is with our money is to go against the grain and be transformed. And so a big part of that is going is this system really blessing my life. Is it gonna allow me to make the king Kingdom impact I want to make by being over leveraged by playing this game by having payments and I found in every scenario every situation. Nobody's ever been blessed by having to pay monthly payments and this happens with personal finances. It happens with churches, you know, my church that I go to they acquired 7 million dollars in debt as they merged with another church and they decided hey, we're paying a million dollars to A lender every year with the payment and interest what could we do with an extra million dollars if we didn't have this payment?

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And they challenged the congregation and some of the leaders. And they went, we're going to pay this thing off. And Carey, they did it in a year. They paid off \$7 million in a year. And now the church has so much margin and options.

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They're creating ministries for foster care families. They're creating automotive repair shops for single moms to gift them new cars. And they have a wraparound ministries for addiction.

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And there's all these amazing things that we're able to do because we don't have debt. And so even in the faith space, the leadership space, the personal finance space, it just gives you more margin and options and peace when you don't owe anyone money. And so the book is there to convince you that number one, it's possible for you, regardless of your age. That number two, you can rise above the broken system. And number three, that your life's going to be so much better because of it, regardless of what culture is telling you.

[01:14:03.400]

Carey Nieuwhof: What is the hope for that 51 year old who came in on the live show in tears? Like we've got some who haven't read the book. Most people haven't read the book, obviously. What would you say the 51 year old or the 61 year old who's still got the HELOC the home equity line of credit. The mortgage probably went into more debt to help their kids get an education their kids are in debt and who maybe don't make a lot of money, you know, they're in ministry. What would you say to those people who are listening?

George Kamel: Well, I'd say a few simple things and it may sound right coming from a 34 year old but, you know people call us from all over the world and they trust us with their questions regardless of my age and experience and background, but after helping many people on the air, here's what I found resonates the most. Number one, I tell them it's not all your fault, but it's your responsibility.

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Yeah, and the sooner we can drop the victim mentality and the victim baggage and pick up this victim mentality that I believe God is instilled in each one of us. The sooner we can have that freedom. And number two. It's not too late. Your past and your mistakes and your age and well, I'm close to retirement and I haven't saved

anything. Well, the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The next best time is today. And so what are we going to do today instead of wallowing in shame and regret and baggage and mistakes? Because we've all been there if you're over 12 that makes you an adult who's made some money mistakes. And so it's okay, but you can't just keep beating yourself up and said you got to go. What's the right next step? So it's not all your faults. It's but it's your responsibility. It's not too late and there is hope for you yet.

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And I know that because I've seen it. I see the 60 year old call in and say, we just got ahold of this plan at 55. My husband and I have paid off our mortgage and we're gonna be able to retire with dignity now thanks to you guys. And we say, we didn't do, you did the hard work, not us, we're not the heroes. And so it's a beautiful reminder of the agency and autonomy we have over our financial destiny and what is possible when we truly are willing to transform, when we're truly, we wanna have that paradigm shift. We're gonna believe something different about ourselves and the world. We're gonna act differently. That gives you this magical thing called hope. And I think it's what the world is begging for right now.

[01:16:19.700]

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, the book is called Breaking Free from Broke, The Ultimate Guide to More Money and Less Stress. It's available everywhere. George, I am so grateful for you. And there's a lot of other areas we could have gone into but we'll save that for round two down the road. If people want to track with you and all the awesome things you are doing where is the easiest place for them to connect with you now?

George Kamel: Absolutely. Well, I'm always hanging out on Instagram @GeorgeKamel. That's k a m e l, like the animal. Love connecting with folks on there. Especially you are amazing listeners. I've a deep affinity for your show in particular Carey, and your listeners. They're amazing leaders out there and you've been doing such a great job and if they want to check out the book it's in bookstores as well Ramseyolutions.com. And we even made it to Canada, Carey. I'm proud to say people are posting pictures from Indigo bookstores saying hey, I got the book. It's on the show. And so the principles will apply, the actual scenarios and data points, may be a little different but I think the heart of the message will still resonate regardless of where you live in the world and it's been so fun launching this thing and truly it's the Dave's generosity of his platform that he's given to us so freely, so it's been a fun ride.

Carey Nieuwhof: Congratulations George. Thanks for helping us get started in those first few fledgling years of this podcast and it's just an honor to have you as a guest who's accomplished so much over the last decade appreciate you a lot man and got a lot of good things to come.

George Kamel: Thank you, Carey. You've been a great friend and I've always believed in you from day one. I went this guy's going somewhere and look at you now.

Carey Nieuwhof: Thanks, George.

George Kamel: Thanks Gary man. I love backstory episodes like that. We've got show notes for you. You can get those at careynieuwhof.com/episode643, transcripts as well. And hey, do not miss The Art of Leadership Live. It's my first ever live leadership conference. I'm hosting it in Dallas, Texas limited number of people.

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And make sure you check out Subsplash because 17,000 churches are using them to develop app-based technology on so many notes. Cut through the noise and make disciples. Go to subsplash.com/carry to get \$500 off when you sign up. Well, next episode, Andy F. Downs comes in for a massive check-in. We cover everything that's different in our life. A moving to New York and we talk about singles how churches are letting Down single women a new take on sexual purity and a whole lot more also coming up John Tyson, Scott Galloway, Lee Strobel, Katie Cole. Well, we got another AI episode coming up plus Will Guidara is back, and a whole lot more on the podcast. And one more thing. There is so much noise out there. Would you like to get a curated email every Friday from me? It's called On The Rise and in it I link to about a half dozen things that really caught my interest that week some of the most notable curious interesting things. I've found on the internet. You can go to ontherisenewsletter.com to get that content. You can start today. It's absolutely free easy to subscribe easy to unsubscribe and I'd love to see you there man. If you enjoyed this episode, please share it with a friend.

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And you can simply do that by texting the link to a friend or you can share it on social media or whatever you happen to do. I'm Carey Nieuwhof on most channels. In the meantime, thank you so much for listening and I hope our time together today helped you identify and break a growth barrier you're facing.