

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT



Announcer: The Art of Leadership Network.

Annie F Downs: I am a single Christian woman who goes to church and I have a lot of single Christian audience members who want help and who want some hope. In fact, we just surveyed them and so this is a survey of 700 people Carey, and when we said what are the biggest problems being single the number four thing was lack of support from our church community. Yeah, and that's after like loneliness, and dating apps are hard, and then it's like and we feel like our church doesn't support us when we asked do you feel supported by your church? 65% of the of the single said no or not really.

Carey Nieuwhof: Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast, so good to have you here. It's Carey here and I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life and leadership. Well, we're sitting down with the one and only Annie F Downs.

[00:01:00.000]

Catching up on all things Annie, talking about well a big missed opportunity for church leaders, which is not a single people. How the church is kind of letting them down and a whole lot more. So today's episode is brought to you by the Art of Leadership Live. Man, I'm doing my first-ever live leadership conference Dallas Texas this September, early bird pricing is available for a very limited time. You can apply to attend by going to theartofleadershiplive.com. And by Gloo. With Gloo's free texting service that takes only five minutes to send that last-minute update, create a devotional, rally your volunteers, or even get more people praying. When you sign up you get unlimited free texts forever. Go to gloo.us/freetexting to sign up.

So we sit down today with Annie F downs and as you know, she's a New York Times bestselling author a speaker successful podcast host, my goodness, we talk all about like how many podcasts do you actually have Annie? And she's got a network and everything. And well, she's a great friend. She's a co-founder of the That Sounds Fun Network, which includes her aptly named flagship podcast, That Sounds Fun.

[00:02:10.900]

She is the author of multiple bestselling books, including Chase the Fun, That Sounds Fun, 100 Days to Brave, and Remember God. And she shoots straight. So we talk all

about her life. We do a big life update because she's splitting her time between New York and Nashville now. We talk about being single at 43, a new take on sexual purity, finishing well, and lessons from, get this, 100 million podcast downloads. That is really hard to do. And so we talk about what she's learning, all of that, and a whole lot more. Speaking of learning, if you're on my email list, you're among the very first to hear the news. I've got my first live conference. I'm doing it in Dallas, Texas, this September. It's three days. It's called the Art of Leadership Live.

[00:02:55.200]

And there are going to be three transformative days. Don't think a whole bunch of Talking Heads and eight hours of content. That's not it at all. There will be some content very selected strategic content, but I want to focus on your spiritual and emotional health as a leader. I want to help you with your strategic church growth, How do you do it and not lose your soul, and how do you create a healthier future for leaders and church members? So this is not an event where you'll sit down and listen to Keynote speaker after keynote speaker eight hours a day. I'm gonna do a little bit of teaching then we're going to interact then we're going to get to know each other. Then we're gonna have some free time where we can really just connect organically and you can figure out how to apply what you're learning. It's as much about building community and that's why it's with a very select and limited group of leaders.

[00:03:45.300]

So you'll be able to have the safe unfiltered conversations you can't have anywhere else. So it's different than other events and you'll leave having set up the foundation. You need to grow your church and Leadership and have a blast while doing it. We're gonna have some fun. So if you're interested go to theartofleadershiplive.com to learn more and secure your spot today. I would actually love to see you there live and then if you're like most pastors or church leaders, you're longing for more connection with your people. You're wondering how you can keep people encouraged and on message throughout the week and up-to-date on the latest events and connected through prayer. So you're emailing, you've done social, you're blogging, and you know, they all have one thing in common.

[00:04:32.700]

A lot of people don't read your message. Well, what if I told you there is a communication method that has a 98% open rate?

[00:04:40.200]

And better yet, what if I told you you're probably already an expert? That's where free texting comes in from our friends at Glue. You'll get access to a platform that lets you send unlimited free text to your people with text in just five minutes. You can send that last minute update, create a devotional, rally your volunteers, or get more people praying. It's your choice. So when you sign up, you'll be able to send unlimited free texts forever. You can go to gloo.us/freetexting and sign up today. And now my conversation with Annie F. Downs.

Carey Nieuwhof: Annie, welcome back.

[00:05:18.000]

Annie F Downs: Oh, it's such an honor to be back Carey. This is so fun. I love chopping it up with you. So I'm thrilled to be here.

Carey Nieuwhof: I love it too and no moss grows under your feet. So we have so much to catch up on both personally, but also for the leaders listening, I know a lot of them follow you, you are honestly just burning it up. I look at your stuff on social and one of my top questions is how does she get it all done? I mean now you have two homes, you're launching a podcast every other day, plus you have the podcast network and you're writing books and you're on a health kick and all this stuff. So, can you give us the 30,000 foot view catch up?

[00:05:58.500]

Annie F Downs: Yes, so this year for the first time in 2024. I'm actually living part-time in New York city so we can talk about that if you want to. I'm based in Nashville. My office is still in Nashville the real answer to how we get it. All done is I have the best team around. I mean this is true for you and I both is having people around you that that can help execute the vision. That means that I don't have to execute every part of the vision I get to create and share and then I have a lot of people who help me execute which is really incredible. It's the idea that the Lord would call people to partner in the calling he's giving me is feels like such an honor, you know. Yeah, so that's a 30-foot where I'm riding a book this year. I'm working on it. I'm I haven't written a nonfiction memoir and about six years five years and I've been writing devotionals. We just had a Let's Read the Gospels guided journal come out. I've been writing kids books and like you said making podcasts and posted online. And so I haven't done the long form writing in a long time.

[00:06:57.600]

I'm still teaching and speaking a lot. And so it's fun to kind of, fun is a strong word to use. It's been something to kind of restretch that muscle and get it back. I mean, it

feels just like a muscle you haven't worked out in a couple of months and you're like, oh, man, I can't walk right. That's kind of how I feel sitting at my computer writing right now.

[00:07:15.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: I am just sitting down to write my sixth book. And I thought about it yesterday. I'm like, it has been five years since I wrote the first draft of *At Your Best*. That was two years in the making, came out in 2021. But you're right. I'm like, do I remember how to do this? Like, it's just, it's work, man.

[00:07:34.000]

Annie F Downs: It is work. It is such a grind and it pays off beautifully, but it takes a lot too. And for you and I, Carey, well, I'll speak for myself. But I think this is mirrored in your life.

Carey Nieuwhof: You can include me.

Annie F Downs: When I, when we wrote books in 2019 that came out in 2021. Our lives were not moving at this speed and social media did an operate the way it does now and podcasts didn't have the life cycle that they do now and so my world is very different than the last time I wrote a book and so I'm really learning, how do you write a book that is impactful when it comes out and 18 months versus what I can put on Instagram this afternoon or put on a podcast in a week. And so it's and it's a different thing than it was in 2019 for me and I would assume for you too.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. It really has to be Evergreen, you know, if you're gonna write that, you know how to come out of covid book. It's got a 12-month shelf life, you know, or if it's on Trends or something, but I'm really, you know at that my age and Stage I'm really thinking about long contributions, about something that's got a shelf life that lasts a while because you're right. We have, like just this morning, I saw something that was sort of a breaking story by the time this hits the air. Nobody will remember and it'll be gone but I'm like, okay. I just sat over there in that chair shot a quick Instagram reel on it. That's about all I have to say on it. It would have been a blog post six, seven years ago. Now, it's just a quick reel. I had it done in three minutes. I thought about it for a day. I'm like, I know what to say about it. It's just whether to stream online or not online, but like you can't write books on. Well people do write books on that have a very very short shelf life and I'm more interested for the book form and the legacy project like *At Your Best*. I honestly feel and *Didn't See it Coming*. My last two books are not time bound and I want to write something that is this one might be a little more time bound. I don't want to say what it is. I'm not ready to answer publicly, but it's been a chronic problem for

decades. It will probably be a chronic problem for decades. So I can hopefully speak into it. Do you know, is it a memoir style book that you're working on?

[00:09:46.400]

Annie F Downs: Yeah, mine always come out that way because I'm just a storyteller of my life.

[00:09:49.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: That's how you write.

[00:09:50.900]

Annie F Downs: And so, but I'm like you, you know, it's so interesting because I think this is a great conversation for our friends listening to have because your audience are in general, high achievers and people who make a lot of good things. And there is this narrative of, I've got to write a book. Like if I'm actually a top tier pastor, I've got to write a book. If I'm actually a respected speaker, I've got to write a book. If I'm actually a known podcast, I've got to write a book. And I'm just not sure that's true anymore. There are, when people come to me and say, I want to write a book, I say, don't tell me about the book. Tell me about the content. And I can tell you where I actually think you should release that.

[00:10:29.600]

Because if it's timely, or if it is for 22-year-olds, or if it's a legacy and you want to write one book one time, write the book. There are a million ways to get a book out right now. You don't need a traditional book deal though. I'm very grateful that that has been part of my career but there's just so many ways to and so in my invitation to people often is don't tell me you want to write a book tell me you have a story to tell and let's figure out the best medium to get that book to get that story out to the people.

Carey Nieuwhof: I love that I was telling you before we hit record. I just got back this week from a month on the road. And literally it took me hours to unpack all of the mail unsolicited that came in and when I was done I had a pile of books on the desk. That was literally this tall just stacked.

[00:11:16.300]

And I look through them all and there are a couple of gems in there like couple of really good books some special a lot of it I haven't read yet. But I talked to Cal Newport about this recently too and he is convinced that publishing has just become

this churn factory and we have a lot of friends in publishing and I know you're listening. So hey, we'd have this conversation with you. No problem. We love you and not all of them are just great ideas like it used to yeah, it just it just used to mean more. So how would you know that? I mean you are somebody who's a New York Times best selling author, you've read and numerous books for those and there's a lot of ambitious like wannabe writers out there. How do they know whether they have a book? What is Annie's like current criteria for a book?

Annie F Downs: And thank you for saying that about that. I've published multiple books because I want to say all this with the filter of I have a privileged point of view because I have gotten to do it and so I totally recognize that there will be people who are like, Annie, now you're saying that, but you've already gotten to do it. We hear you.

[00:12:19.900]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, but that's helpful. You know what? When I was in law when I was 25, I saw the top of the legal field and I went, that's it? Really? That's all that's there? And then it was easy to walk away when I felt the call into ministry. It wasn't that hard. Like I got to see the top and it made it less attractive. And I think if God hadn't given me that experience, I would have been the pastor called out of law school to go into ministry if I hadn't worked in it for a year. And I think I've always would have been like, what could my life have been if I was a lawyer? It would have been so much better.

[00:12:52.600]

And now I'm like, it's not all that it's cracked up to be. Right?

Annie F Downs: That's exactly right. So when I'm talking to someone about the story they want to tell, my first question is like, do you just want a book that your kids and your grandkids can hold that is your story?

[00:13:08.700]

If so, write the book. I would give anything to have a book by my grandparents my parents and I just went through doing the Storyworth program where they where they retell some of their stories from their childhood. I'm so excited that we have it. I wish I had that for my grandparents. We do have one ancestor. That's four generations before me who wrote about being who wrote a book about being a missionary in China and it is a treasure in our family that they were like living in China in the late 1800s early 1900s, treasure, absolute treasure. So if you want to make one of those write a book go to Amazon and get it someone in your church or

your community can design the cover like we can get it done. That's not the thing. So the line I would say, the line I would draw is encouraging people, like if you want a traditional book deal because you want to be published and you want all this and you want this whole world then what is the story you want to tell? What do you have to say right now that you feel as like your unique story that no one else is telling now. There's nothing new Under the Sun so someone just wrote a book about Jacob. Someone else is gonna write a book about Jacob. That's not that's not the line but it is, okay, what do you feel like God is stirring in you that you think if I sat down and wrote this this would help people be who they want to be? And so then they would come to you or to me or to their the elders that lead their Church their spouse their friends and say hey, I've got this thing. I want to tell people what's the best way to get it to people are we okay if it comes out in two years or do we need to go ahead and say it this summer?

[00:14:44.100]

You know, so that's part of it is when do you need to say the thing? And then also, who needs to hear it? So when does it need to come out and who needs to hear it? And once you get down that path, you kind of go like, oh, it needs to get out now and 20-year-olds need to hear it. I need to make a video. I need to make a reel. I need to make a YouTube series. Oh, it's it doesn't matter when it comes out. This is a long play and I want to help people do their devotions every day. Well, then that's probably a book that you can try to get a traditional deal with. And you could be our next author of My Upmost First Highest by Oswald Chambers, a book that everybody wants to hold and read at some point every day.

[00:15:21.600]

And so I think that to me, that's kind of the line that I've always experienced, Carey, is like, when does it need to get out and who is it for? And that'll kind of help you know what the medium is.

[00:15:32.300]

Carey Nieuwhof: I think that's really good advice. And you know, I always loved I'm an idea person I love stories but I really love ideas. If you have that idea that really is you're right. There is nothing new under the sun It's not like, you know other people have written time management books some great ones. I contributed in the field from what I thought was a unique angle. It's you know, the feedback is it seems to be unique angle. I'm really grateful for that. But like that's my shot at time management. Now, I'm on to another issue. So, you know, I think issue-oriented. If you've got a unique perspective that is more than just a sermon series you preached for six

weeks that you're going to bookify with a ghostwriter. I think you're probably onto something.

Annie F Downs: Oh, you better say that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, did I say that?

Annie F Downs: I do think the days of that book that you just described are probably coming to an end.

[00:16:21.800]

The six weeks series that leads to a ghost writer and I don't know that that I don't know that we're in that season anymore. I'm grateful for some of those.

Carey Nieuwhof: Tell me why. I've been picking that up for a long time. I get a lot of those books and I'm like...

Annie F Downs: Do you see a decrease in how many are showing up in your mailbox or no?

Carey Nieuwhof: Not necessarily, no, I still see quite a few of them, which is interesting. Now that depends who's sending what and lots of devotionals, etc. Etc, which can be great, but it just seems like the market's flooded with that right now.

Annie F Downs: Yep. That's right. And I think I mean an observation that may or may not be true. It's just an anecdotal observation of mine is it seems that Publishers are happy to do more Niche projects that don't they'd rather do 10 Niche projects and two massive projects.

[00:17:12.400]

And so that gives a lot of space to some of our friends who, who are like, yeah, I can probably sell 10,000. I don't know that I'll sell 100,000, but I can sell 10,000 of this because of the response to the sermon series or because of the response to this set of reels I did or because of the response to a YouTube video. And so I do think there is some space for that.

[00:17:32.200]

It just feels like within a world where deconstruction is again, it seems to have a resurgence in my purview. And there seems to be a lot of people who want what is very valuable and very helpful. If they can hear your sermon, I'm not sure they're going to buy your book. I think they'd rather just hear your sermon. They're going to listen to the sermon series because they need help.

[00:18:00.200]

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm gonna watch a sermon series. I'm not going to buy the book. I'll say something very positive. The thing that I think there is an infinite market for is someone who is willing to do years and decades of homework on a particular subject. So, you know, you know, I say this we're talking about John Tyson before we started to record John's one of those people he is doing decades of homework and now he's well into his 40s and those reps are paying off. John Mark Comer, Rich Villodas, I mean, there's a lot of other people Ruth Haley Barton, sort of on that whole subject of rest and Sabbath Etc. If you find a field a subject and this is for all the 20 year olds 25 year olds.

[00:18:45.200]

Just do your push-ups, read widely, read stuff that will never get cited in a book, like soak yourself in a subject and what you will have its kind of like the Warren Buffett approach to knowledge, right? He just started investing value investing when he was young. He made most of his money after he was 65 and it compounds over time, right? So you get compounding interest in terms of expertise in a field. It's Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000 hours rule. So, you know, you stick to that lane and you read widely. You read the Ancients you read medieval stuff you read 18th century stuff you read current stuff. You read the science in a field you read the theology in a field and you pick a field with that spiritual formation Church growth Missy ology ecclesiology, whatever it happens to be

[00:19:35.200]

You're going to be a Leslie Newbiggin one day or you'll be a John Mark Comer one day. You have a shot at it with that kind of accumulated knowledge.

[00:19:41.400]

Annie F Downs: And I want people to keep writing books. I love books.

[00:19:43.800]

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh my gosh. Yes. We need more of that. I will buy every book like that.

[00:19:48.100]

Annie F Downs: Yeah, that's right. So I definitely don't want people to hear us say, don't write books. Just don't look for, how do I want to phrase this?

[00:19:56.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: The quick success. Is that it?

Annie F Downs: Yeah. That's it. Just like keep writing us books because I want to keep buying your books and reading your books. I mean, I am much like you, I get to read a lot of books. I mean, I don't have somebody on whose book I haven't read. And so I get to read a lot of books and I'm so thankful for it. So I want people to keep writing, but I'm also thankful that the season of quick fame in the Christian world, because you put a book out, seems to be ending, which is going to get us a continued improvement of the quality of content that is coming from our peers.

[00:20:29.000]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's fair. All right. You said something else that was really interesting. You said you have an amazing team.

[00:20:34.500]

Do you find, and this is a question that says a lot about the ask or not just the recipient of the question and you find you 10 to get in the way of your team and you've just got to let them loose? How did, what's your relationship with your team? Like I'm the vision Caster more and more of the ideas are coming from the team.

Annie F Downs: I'm trying to get there. I want to get there. I'm I'm learning how to do that. I'm kind of an accidental employer. That isn't what I said out to do and so I am learning but I have an incredibly gifted COO in Ashley Warren and so that helps a lot that I have someone who is I mean she worked for Jenni Catron for a long time. And so you can't get a better a better mentor to one of your staff that Jenni Catron when it comes to leadership and how to you know, and so so that helps me a lot. It's unique right because for me because my brand is Annie F Downs. It is kind of hard for other people to make any content for me. I have to be the originator of the content and therefore often have to be the originator of the ideas. What I have seen us growing in is okay if I make this, if I record, if I write, if I create this thing, what can you do with it? And that's where the ideas seem to be multiplying right now. And so I think we're a step in the direction of them starting to bring even more ideas of hey, have you thought about if we made this because we're we're getting very good at where I'm I create one thing and they are very creative at all the ways that that one thing could exist.

[00:22:17.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm in a very similar space right now, it's funny, I had this idea, it's sort of an addendum to At Your Best that I developed this year and I'm like, I got to get this out to leaders. So I was going to shoot it in a month as a little video for people inside the Art of Leadership Academy that we could offer. And then the team said, whoa, whoa, whoa, there's one guy on the team, he doesn't like public accolades. But he was just like, I think we should wait with that and we can develop the ultimate guide to productivity or something like that and take all of your thoughts since the book was released and give it, and I'm like, I never would have thought of that. Like I would have just put a little video out there and that would have been it. So what is the key? You've mentioned your COO a couple of times, Ashley.

[00:23:02.100]

What is your key, what have been some keys to making that relationship work? Because the visionary operator thing to use Les McEwan's framework, doesn't always go well and a lot of people struggle with that, right? If you're the Visionary you want control. I'm definitely a recovering control freak. So how have you two made it work?

Annie F Downs: Yeah, I would love for someone to say I'm a recovering control freak. I can't wait for that day. I'm sure we're recovering yet. You know, I mean the honest answer is we fight for it. We don't fight but we fight for working. Well together. We are very honest. Our enneagram types is one of the ways that we like to talk about ourselves as she would identify as a two. I'm a seven. I do not like being trapped in anything. I do not like being felt like I'm being held back and often. What a team does is make your work better, but it also slows you down.

[00:23:56.000]

And so they're oftentimes where she has to be the messenger that we need to slow down. And and so one of the ways we have grown is instead of getting defensive about that. I remember hey, you've put her in this role because you need this so you can feel frustrated and also she's right. And there are times where where she can feel frustrated, but I'm right and so that's what we tend to say it we tend to say it pretty quickly. We meet one-on-one once a week and in that one-on-one is where we try to bring anything of scheduling wise and what we need to do and and here's what's going on with this employee. And here's what's good. Here's some things that are coming up that we need to make sure you have eyes on and then there's also like a how are we are. Is there anything you need for me? And I'll ask if there's anything she needs for me and so that helps a lot that helps our relationship that there is a standing once a week meeting where we get on the same page. And usually it's

either the very first thing we do in the week or the very last thing we do in the week, depending on my travel. Because that to me is the core meeting that has to happen for the other ones to be successful.

[00:25:08.500]

Carey Nieuwhof: Getting into the weeds a little bit, who prepares the agenda for that meeting? Do you do that? Does she do it? Is it a joint effort?

[00:25:15.100]

Annie F Downs: It's her. She does it. I do not even look at it until one and a half minutes before we open the meeting. So what we will talk about, like in our Friday afternoon meeting, she'll say, okay, on Monday we need to talk about this. We had a meeting today with my publisher, Baker, and in the meeting twice I said, hey Ashley, add that to our staff meeting on Monday. And so she handles the full agenda for our Monday staff meetings.

[00:25:40.700]

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay, you know what? I figured that was going to be the answer but I think that for leaders listening is a pivotal shift. For years I would set the agenda for every meeting and I found I became a much better leader when I let the team drive the agenda and it gives them ownership.

Annie F Downs: I don't know everything we need to talk about

Carey Nieuwhof: I have no idea what's really going on. Yeah, I'm like you, I'm the content person.

Annie F Downs: What is this? Yeah, this is great. I'm glad we're talking about this. I don't know what this is and it's and it's something that they have been working on or something. We need to look through and they think of so many things to add to the agenda that I would never think of so I need them to build it because they're teaching me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah as somebody who maybe did I hear you? Say you sort of have control tendency. Is that fair? Okay, what have been some keys to releasing some of that control?

[00:26:34.800]

Annie F Downs: I think seeing, and this is unfortunately only something that has come with time, is seeing the better output when I'm not in control has been really

helpful. To go like oh look, look at how much more I mean. It's what you led with Carey of like there's no moss under my feet. Well, that is because I'm not really in charge of anything anymore. I mean, I joke all the time when people are like you're the boss. I'm like, I am the lowest on the totem pole everyone. I don't control my calendar. I don't control, you know, like I I do what I am told now. I am the visionary. I am the one with the spiritual responsibility over our team and over what we make but they really do kind of run the ship and a lot of ways.

[00:27:19.500]

And so, that's one thing is I've seen that we do better and more consistent and an increase of amount of output when I am not controlling every piece of it. And also sometimes it makes me so mad and I do not like it and I get super frustrated. And so that's okay too. That's just me being the human person that I am that I go, oh, I'm so frustrated that I'm not in control of this because I can't believe we missed that or I can't believe we missed this. And also Carey, a thing that I think Jenni Catron taught me that I learned early is if I'm giving credit, it's you. If I'm giving negative feedback, it's often we. And if I'm celebrating anything publicly, it's we.

[00:28:02.700]

It is, so if I'm giving feedback to someone I say hey we missed something on that podcast we missed an edit. It is not you missed an edit because I didn't listen to it. So that's on me too. That's a we. And I think that helps with my control thing too of going like hey, you've got to let things go and also yet. It's a we, you're gonna be held responsible for that. And so that has helped me too and you know just maturing and years and in the Lord helps you to release control because I I want to do this job and this calling for as long as I can. I cannot do as much as possible if I'm in control of everything. It just isn't that is not proven true.

[00:28:45.300]

Carey Nieuwhof: It's like you can have control or you can have growth but pick one.

Annie F Downs: Yeah, and there's gonna be two points with both. You're choosing you're a Jonathan Pokluda often says you're picking your problems. You are picking your problems. If you let go of control and get and get growth and freedom for your team, you're picking some problems, but massive gain massive gain, and it also releases them to be who they are called to be in their calling and I live for that. I want people to feel alive and what God's called them to do and if they can do that Under The Canopy of AFD inc, I'm thrilled about that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Um, you've been on a little bit of a health journey lately you want to talk about that?

Annie F Downs: Yeah. I mean, I think this is all so so the real and I think we'll get there but one of the things we're building right now that I was so hesitant to build it was a community for singles.

[00:29:37.800]

And particularly Christian singles. And so I know we'll talk about that in a minute, but the health thing is connected to that because I have always thought, well, one day my life is gonna look different. Well, one day my life is, and I think that's how you live in your twenties and sometimes in your thirties of like, when I get married and have kids, when I do this, when I do that. And now I'm 43, not married yet, no kids.

[00:30:01.000]

And I'm starting to have a lot of conversations with my peers, people like John Tyson, and people like you. You're not that much older than me. I think we have really got to think about the second half of our lives. There are a lot of, I mean, John Mark Comer, as we were talking about, just released, he's doing these three mini books. You may be getting them too in your email. And he just released a second half of life, the two half of lives mini book.

[00:30:25.400]

And it is a real profound conversation happening amongst particularly my friends and I they're all in our 40s of like, how do we finish? Well, I went on a walk this morning with a female leader here in town in New York and we were talking about like, you know, what's interesting. Carey is, beyond and particularly in the woman space there's like In my stream, there's chaos or there's Beth Moore. There's some of these women they're a little bit older but we are just starting to see a globally known generation of Christian leaders have the opportunity to end well, We haven't been able to see that publicly. Right like we're going to see Louie Giglio and well, we are going to see Beth, TD Jakes. We are going to see Christine. So we're about to see them and well and then I'm right on the tails of that.

[00:31:13.200]

I am the next generation that I am Carey, and probably in the top three things. I'm committed to after Jesus. One of them is ending well and getting all the way to the finish line and not falling because of sin not falling because of disobedience and not falling because I didn't take care of myself. And that's body, soul and spirit. I mean, I

also saw a new counselor here in New York last Friday because I care about my emotional health being Tip Top for the second half of my life and I feel bad about my physical health, too of like I've said this a lot to people I do not want my body to give up before my calling is done. And so there's some things we can't control and some things we can't majority we can't but anyway, I can control my body being able to do everything. God could possibly hand me for the next 50 to 60 years. I want to be able to do and so what I can't control I'm working hard to control so that I am able at 95 to go like, man, I'm bored now. I finished my calling, but my body's still here. You know, I can still breathe. I'm still emotionally healthy, but I think I finished everything the Lord asked me to and then he just scoops me up like Elijah or Elisha, whichever one just scoops me up at the end.

[00:32:27.000]

Carey Nieuwhof: You know what? I am late to the party. I was around your age that I first started to take, even think about physical fitness. And I think it was exactly what you said. I'm sure at some point it's just gonna happen. Surprise, it does not happen. It gets worse. Like left to my own natural habits, you get worse with age. And you know, it's been, I started lifting weights a few months ago, got out of body weight training and just into lifting weights. And what a difference that's making. Just bought a new bike. I get it this weekend. I'm excited. Yeah, gonna get a few more thousand kilometers in the summer.

[00:33:07.600]

And I say to the coach. I hired a coach for this. It's like I don't I'm not trying to get on the front cover of GQ. I'm not trying to get into muscle magazine. That's not my goal. My goal is agility. My goal is, you know, we don't have grandchildren yet. I don't know whether we ever will but if I do I want to be on the floor playing with them and holding up over my head not like okay, that's right, you know, which is not easy to do.

Annie F Downs: This is not for anybody else but me. I'm not going to be the person that you'll see do before and after pictures. There's not a before I've been made for 43 years. There's not an after I'm hopefully me for another 60 years. And so I that's not what I'm not out here trying to tell men or women to change your body size necessarily. What I am saying is like are you doing everything you can do to finish well because from

[00:33:58.200]

Yeah from the people in their 70s down. We are all finishing publicly. No one finishes privately whether it's your Instagram following, your Facebook following, your

church, everyone's gonna finish publicly now and I want to finish publicly really well and so I'm like trying to shout from the rooftops. We have got to do everything we can to finish well for Our Generation because a lot of people are coming after us watching that.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay, that's huge just replay that like go back 15 seconds and play that four or five times and then continue with the interview. You're right. You're right. Once you have a little bit of a public profile. You can't finish privately anymore. And I love the way you frame it because I sit here and every time there's a new moral failure.

[00:34:44.500]

I'm just, my head sinks, my heart sinks, I'm like, are you kidding me, are you kidding me? And you play the, is there anyone left, right? Is there anyone left? But you're right. There are a generation of people who are gonna finish well.

[00:34:55.800]

You can add to the list already, Craig Groeschel, I think, is gonna finish well. Andy Stanley is gonna finish well. Ed Stetzer, I think, is gonna finish well. You know, you mentioned some others. They're gonna finish well, which is great.

[00:35:07.900]

And we need some role models. One of the things you've been thinking about is being in your 40s, your 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s. Do you wanna share some of that thinking about, because, and I wanna go there because we have a ton of young listeners listening to this podcast. If you told me, like, at 20, what does your life look like at 35? I'm like, man, I'll be so old. I have no category. I don't even know. 35 is like impossible to imagine. And 40, I don't know, I guess you're shriveled up and you're just in a walker or something. I have no idea, right? And what nobody, what I wasn't prepared for is how much life there is in your 50s and I assume in a little while in my 60s. So what are you thinking about in terms of decades?

Annie F Downs: You know, what's interesting is I went and saw, there is an Off-Broadway play right now called The Life and Slimes of Marc Summers. Do you remember Mark Summers from Double Dare and from Unwrapped on Food Network?

Carey Nieuwhof: Not really, no, different culture.

Annie F Downs: Okay. Yeah, he's a TV guy in the US for forever. He is doing seven Off-Broadway shows a week and he is 72 years old. And it is amazing. It's amazing to

see. Yeah, and so when he said that I saw the show Monday night, it's great if anybody's in New York, but between now and mid-June you should try to go see it, it is a great show. But here's what I put that together with something Christine Caine said to me a couple weeks ago at the If:Gathering. She said you're most impactful decade is your 60s and then the second most impactful decade is your 70s and the third most impactful decade is your 50s.

[00:36:40.700]

And so that has lit me up all over again because I'm like, okay, then I've got seven years til we're really running. I'm gonna do everything. Yeah, in some ways, this is a privileged point of view for us because we live in countries where long lifespans are assumed and so I totally recognize that there are some parts of our country and many other countries that don't have long lifespans, but given the shot to have a long life span that is your most impactful decades. And so I'm so in my brain, I think well, I got a lot of work to do in my 40s, but if we're just getting going let's run, like I want to be faster and the next three then I was in my first three of public ministry and of just being grown up just being a grown-up in ministry and being a grown up in the world. And so that's I've been thinking about okay. Truly I think about just about every day, Carey. I think what can I do today to make sure I'm Ready the day the clock turns to 50.

[00:37:38.100]

Like, how can I be ready? And because what I do now really matters. My work really matters. I believe in it.

Carey Nieuwhof: And what are you doing? How are you prepping for that? Seven years in the future.

[00:37:47.000]

Annie F Downs: I mean, so part of that is how you treat your body, body, soul and spirit. So when I'm in New York, I've been attending Tyson's church, Church of the City. And last Sunday, he said, don't spend the next 40 years maintaining a mediocre Christian life. And oh, that just, it just knocks me out. Because at some point you can start thinking, okay, I've got my faith life figured out. I'm done with the massive risks. I'm done with the, like, who am I going to be? For a lot of my peers, I'm done with figuring out who I'm going to marry and have kids with. And so all the big decisions are done and now we just go. And John was kind of pushing this, like, don't just go, like your spiritual life should keep growing and there is more to know about God. And so that's what I would encourage people is. What are you doing physically to make sure the decades ahead of you you're stronger than the decades behind you.

What are you doing emotionally to make sure the decades ahead of you are stronger than the decades behind you. What are you doing spiritually to make sure the decades ahead of your stronger? That's what I'm asking myself. So that looks like how I work out and how I eat that looks like talking to a therapist talking to a spiritual director and looks like all that and then what am I doing spiritually? Well, I'm that's what me and the Lord have talked about every morning. I'm going to church and my pastor between either pastor Kevin Queen in Nashville or Pastor John Tyson in New York. They are pushing me to not let me be mediocre for the back half of my life. And so but I don't know what that looks like quite yet, but I'm I'm probably moving part of my life to New York as part of it, but we will see.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah what was behind the move to New York?

[00:39:24.600]

Annie F Downs: You know I desire is part of it. I think God it was just really generous to me when you think about being my age and unmarried and that's not the life many Christians predict. Right, especially, I grew up in the southern Christian culture. And so no one tells you you're going to be single at 43. And so it feels a little bit like a gift the Lord handed me of like look what you can do because of the life that I've given you. Look what is possible. My agent says a lot, when something goes sideways she says, so what does that make possible? And so what is the life that God's given me, made possible that I can be a little bit of a dual citizen between Nashville and New York for 2024. I think God is up to some unique things here that I'm just starting to explore and hear about from the Christians and ministry here in the people who attend church and who are just faith people in the city.

[00:40:22.100]

And I mean, I'm very creative here and it was time to write a book and so it made a lot of sense to use some of my time to get to a place that really lights me up creatively so that I can jump back into writing.

[00:40:33.700]

Carey Nieuwhof: What was it about New York? I mean, it's New York. I mean, you could have gone theoretically to any city or you could have gone to Europe.

[00:40:41.800]

Why New York?

Annie F Downs: I think it is the size of it and the speed of it. I said to a friend just the other day that one of the things I love about New York is I'm always problem-

solving. Like that particular train station is closed and that's where I need to get off. So what am I going to do? Or I got on the wrong train. What am I going to do? Or ok, as I'm going home, my apartment is four flights up without an elevator. And so do I want to stop today and get a pack of La Croix or do I want to wait and do it with my groceries? Am I going to be able to carry all that? And so I like that I'm constantly problem-solving. It increases my creativity.

[00:41:15.500]

And so for me and I think Broadway, for me Broadway shows, and musicals, plays that really Sparks creativity and me and moves me a lot emotionally and spiritually I would say and so I did like a big sale of a bunch of clothes out of my closet last fall and just got like a little nest egg that I could use for Broadway shows and so I try to go once a week or so when I'm up here and so a lot of that is why I'm here, but I'm also still asking, Carey. I mean this is the fun thing. This is the growth of and not doing mediocre spirituality for the rest of my life is I don't know what God's up to. I know the invitation. I know what he's letting me do I don't know where this, I mean I cannot tell you for the life of me what 2025 looks like for me?

[00:42:01.400]

I have no idea. I have no idea. I know what 2024 looks like only because I've know how long I've agreed to live in this place in New York and I put furniture in it, you know, and so um, but after that, I don't know and so there is this newness with God that feels like he's like you want to do this again, you want to just jump and see what happens and what if you didn't know the future and what will we do and so it's been that and I'm grateful for it.

Carey Nieuwhof: So Nashville is pretty much still Bible Belt. Yes, New York anything but right what are so far, because you've been there not quite a year. Is that right, last summer?

Annie F Downs: October

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh yeah, so six months. So what would two or three top lessons be from six months in New York?

[00:42:48.700]

Annie F Downs: Yeah, there are so many people. I will give you mine.

[00:42:51.000]

Carey Nieuwhof: You can go anywhere with that. It could be a life lesson. I mean, give 10 if you got 10.

[00:42:55.800]

Annie F Downs: Yeah, no. But I feel like there are so many New York experts or big city or post-Christian city experts. And so I'll just make my observations have been, there is a cost to being a person of faith in New York that does not exist in other places that I lived. That's not true. They did not exist in Georgia or Tennessee. I lived for about a year in Edinburgh, Scotland. And this was true there, too. But it's not the cultural thing. And so it sets you apart in a unique way in a city of this.

[00:43:25.400]

Carey Nieuwhof: You're the weirdo. I'm Canadian. I get it. You're the weirdo. You're one of like 3%, 5%, 7, tops.

Annie F Downs: And you just meet a lot of people who put your decision about your faith life in the same category as their decision about what neighborhood they picked.

[00:43:41.200]

Oh, yeah, you picked to be a Christian. I picked to live on the Upper West Side. Oh, you picked to be a Christian. I picked to work in this field. I picked, you know, and so it is the life transformational truth of Christianity is not assumed by a lot of my neighbors. It is just another choice I've made. And the other thing if I could think of a third one the thing that is interesting, this is really moved me and a lot is there is a thing that happens in a city where everyone walks or rides Subways together that when you are around so many bodies, when you are really like embodying your person and you are like around so many other bodies all the time.

[00:44:25.200]

You have a new compassion for everyone. Everyone smells different, everyone looks different, everyone's working through different stuff. You're right up there. I mean there was this conversation. I had I'll tell you this quickly carry this conversation. I had with a man after the New York City marathon last fall and we were about six inches apart and full disclosure. I thought he was cute. And so I was like, I'll talk to this guy he's facing me and I'm not married yet, and he was married so that adjusted my conversation, but he said I said, how did you do? And he said I did all right. I mean we're just riding two train stops. He said I did all right. He said my wife had to go home yesterday and that's like okay wife, good fine, we still be friends. Um, he

said my wife had to go home yesterday because our daughter is sick, and she goes in the hospital tomorrow. So I'm flying home this afternoon.

[00:45:11.300]

I don't know his name. I don't know where he lives. And I said, I asked for his daughter's name and he told me. And I said, I'll pray for her every time I think of her. And he said, that would mean a lot. And he got off the train and I have no idea who he is or if I'll ever see him again. And that kind of stuff does not happen when I'm driving my Toyota RAV4 down Hillsborough Pike in Nashville.

[00:45:31.900]

And so I have a -

Carey Nieuwhof: I was going to say Nashville is a driving city, not a walking city.

[00:45:35.500]

Annie F Downs: Yes. And so we don't walk and bump into people. We don't have those run -ins with strangers that feel so sacred on the one train going downtown. You know? And so that has been a real beautiful thing I've experienced here is I think, man, what God could do, what he is doing through the believers here. It's amazing what's going on in the city. And so what he's doing through the believers here, even just on being on the subway is beautiful to see.

[00:46:03.200]

Carey Nieuwhof: Hmm, those are great lessons. And you know, I think when you're in isolation, it's easy to get cynical about people. It's easy to anonymize people Seth Godin who's in New York. He has this powerful piece, I'll see if we can link to it in the show notes. I included it in my newsletter and after we wrote it I reached out to him and I said man, this is just beautiful. It was about seeing 800 people and a day in New York and I'll send it to Annie and I'll try to include it in the show notes. It's so so rich, just about let's see 800 people in New York Seth Godin just because everyone's gonna be like, oh, where do we get to the show? Oh, yeah, Walking the City Walking the World. He wrote it in December "Last week I passed 800 people as I walked through New York." Do you want this? It's super short?

Annie F Downs: Yeah go.

[00:46:52.900]

Carey Nieuwhof: Can I share it? This is cool. "I decided to look at the folks. I was walking near of those 800 people not one was as conventionally attractive as a movie star, few looked like the images I saw on the billboards I passed, most wouldn't be cast in a commercial, perhaps 40 went to a famous college, maybe 10 played competitive sports. All of them were kinder and wiser than the typical TV character and cared very much about something important. They were older and younger than the average target market. Some carried canes wore glasses had hearing aids a few were in wheelchairs a bunch could run faster than I could every one of them new things I've never even thought about..." and it goes a bit longer so I'll conclude it here.

[00:47:33.900]

"But what we see when we look at media or a stack of resumes doesn't accurately represent the world as it is. We are all weird and that's okay." I just found that so powerful.

[00:47:44.200]

Annie F Downs: Beautiful.

[00:47:44.600]

Carey Nieuwhof: Does that sum up New York?

[00:47:45.800]

Annie F Downs: Yeah, absolutely. And you're right, it increases compassion. When I think about the work that I do and the people I want to serve, when I'm standing on a subway train, I think, am I doing anything to reach these people?

[00:48:00.200]

Am I like thinking of them?

Carey Nieuwhof: Does it change your heart for lost people in that way?

[00:48:05.600]

Annie F Downs: Yes. Yes. Because in Nashville, when you walk into a restaurant, I assume most people have some sort of working faith. I may be wrong, but they at least want me to assume that because it advances you. It is a privilege.

[00:48:19.100]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, that's right. It is for you in Nashville. I go to Crosspoint. Yeah.

Annie F Downs: I go to church. Yeah. And here, it does not advance you. And so my assumption on a train or in a restaurant is...

[00:48:33.200]

They don't know what I know. And they don't know who I know and and and and and what is mine to do and what is not mine to do and so but everywhere we go the Holy Spirit goes too, and so I just kind of when I get somewhere I go Holy Spirit, you just go for it. Whatever you got whatever you need to do in this building you go for it because I'm here too and I'm with you whatever you need me to do. And so I'm grateful for that.

Carey Nieuwhof: For all the church Planters. I have so much respect for people who go into a city like New York and pitch the tent, so to speak, what has it done for your understanding of church planting in New York, and I'm thinking about my in-person conversation with Tim Keller in 2020. We're in New York City to city offices. Probably. I don't know 30 40 floors up on this high rise right at 42nd, like just off Times Square and Tim and I are looking out the window.

[00:49:24.900]

And he's talking about 1% of the city going to church when he and Kathy arrived in 1989. And by the time he stepped out of the lead role at Redeemer not just him but a lot of other churches. He said planting Redeemer in New York gave other Church Planters the courage to come to the city too. And he said it went from 1% in 1989 to 4% of New York going to church, to an Evangelical church, in 2017. So if you think about an office of 100 people, you're one in the office suddenly, you're four that's an inflection point, a tipping point, right, but it's still colossally hard work when you just look at millions of people outside that window 30 stories up. You're like, holy cow, like what a work.

[00:50:07.500]

Talk about church planting in New York, because that's what John, your pastor, is doing, right?

Annie F Downs: It has been a beautiful thing to observe. I don't know that I know much to speak into, but I will tell you what I, who I have massive respect for are the men and women who come up here and do that, who pitch a tent, who plant a church, who start something from the ground up. And I have massive respect for the Lutheran pastors who have been in their church on the Lower East Side for 25 years. And that church building has existed for 200 years. You know, and the Catholic priests who are just serving their parish and just have been there forever. So it's both

and, right? Like, I have so much respect for the church planters who go like, I'll send out an Instagram post and see if anybody shows up and I will go sit at the same coffee shop every day and I will pray and see if God would introduce me. I think it's beautiful but, not but, I think it's beautiful and I super honor the people who are serving families that have gone to the same Catholic Church for eight Generations. Just hoping and believing that they're will be as real to them as it was to their ancestors and to the family before them. And that's a unique thing about New York is you have both of those some cities. You don't some cities you only have young churches that are 100 year old 100 years or younger and here you have churches that are 60 days and younger and 200 years and older and so it's just a beautiful, it is what the city is is you can find what you're looking for. Even in the kind of church you want to go to.

[00:51:46.200]

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow, give us a, while we're still doing a long update a canvas. How many podcasts are you on now? Because I think I've lost count. Oh my gosh. Like how many are you currently hosts?

Annie F Downs: Currently I create and our team creates three podcasts. We do the That Sounds Fun show which is our main podcast. That is the two-day two days a week interview show. We have Let's Read the Gospels that is every day of literally reading Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and then I do a podcast for kids called the mini BFF podcast. Annie's Mini BFF podcast and that is every Monday, we tell a gospel Bible story to kids and so I am on three but actually interestingly enough. We are stopping Let's Read the Gospels after May, we're doing it in August. Yeah, we're doing it in August. We have the Let's Read the Gospels guided journal came out in March and we're leading people to it for the first time in August and it literally just lays out how to read the gospels in 30 days and asks you some probing questions like a guided journal does.

[00:52:44.300]

And then in May, we're going to read the book of Acts and then we're going to stop. And then we'll finish it for now. I don't know what happens going forward.

Carey Nieuwhof: It just ran its course.

Annie F Downs: And we, you know, it is a passion project for me that my team has fallen in love with as well. And our goal was to do a year and we did a year and then it didn't feel like we were done. And so we've done January, February, March, we did one chapter a day instead of three chapters a day and just kind of slowed it down a little bit. And then in April, we're doing three chapters a day. So we'll get through the

whole thing, all four books in 30 days. And then in May, the book of Acts and then we're finished. And part of that, Carey, is because we make so many other shows.

[00:53:33.800]

And two Christmases ago, we did a big Advent thing. So my team worked over Christmas break and Christmas of 23, we had a podcast release every day. And so my team worked over Christmas break and I'm just unwilling to do that a third time. I'm unwilling to give them work when...

Carey Nieuwhof: Plus it's a ton of prep.

Annie F Downs: It's a ton of work. It takes seven of us to make every episode. And so from recording to when it is available to people and we share about it, it's seven people per episode. And so I want we take a good chunk of June off. My team gets two weeks. I take a whole month and we call it our summer Sabbath and we shut down no work is allowed you are in hugest of trouble's if you work during your Summer Sabbath.

[00:54:19.000]

And I wanted them to actually take it and I didn't give them that fully last year because we had a podcast every day and so my goal once we started once we knew we were gonna do a few more months in 2024 was, I want to do enough that we do what we've been asked to do and invited by God to do, and then I want my team to rest and to get a break from a daily podcast. So we will stop at the end of May and I don't know if we pick it back up, but we do not pick it back up in 2024.

Carey Nieuwhof: Okay, and then almost 100 million downloads on That Sounds Fun and a decade in, you and I started the same year. September of this year will be ten years.

Annie F Downs: That's wild, that's when if Gathering started, I've been looking back Jim...

Carey Nieuwhof: Tim Ferris started in 2014.

Annie F Downs: I'm like what was the Lord birthing in 2014?

Carey Nieuwhof: We weren't all messaging each other. Hey, you want to launch a podcast?

[00:55:12.600]

Yeah. So, congratulations on that.

Annie F Downs: Congrats to you too. You have been such a gift to so many of us. And so, I'm so grateful that you have done 10 years as well.

[00:55:23.000]

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, and no end in sight for this. You know, we found that sustainable rhythm. Started as bi-weekly, believe it or not. Those of you who were with us at the very beginning every other week, because I thought that's all I could do. And then I had so much backlog, it became one a week. And then we up did a number of years ago to six a month. And that's my absolute cap.

[00:55:40.800]

Annie F Downs: Yeah, that's great.

[00:55:41.400]

Carey Nieuwhof: That's a really good cadence for us. What are your top lessons from podcasting and 100 million downloads?

[00:55:49.200]

Annie F Downs: Yeah. I mean, the industry is changing really quickly. It's still Wild West -ish.

[00:55:54.300]

Carey Nieuwhof: Everyone's saying it's really changing right now. And I'm trying to put my finger on it because, I mean, there was the big metrics thing that happened a few months ago.

[00:56:02.200]

But hey, same number of listeners, just different counting.

Annie F Downs: There are a lot of celebrities who are starting to do shows. And as Jamie Golden from the podcast says, celebrities start on third base.

[00:56:11.300]

And so if Brad Pitt starts to show tomorrow, yeah, we're all gonna listen to the first six weeks because Brad Pitt we've never heard him talk as a person. Yeah, he's always been...

Carey Nieuwhof: Will Arnett, Sean Hayes, right.

Annie F Downs: Yeah, totally. Oh my gosh one of my favorite shows and if you find me laughing out loud outside, it's because I'm listening to SmartLess. Those guys are hilarious.

Annie F Downs: Yeah agree, I love it, it's funny. And so I think that's part of what we are working with is there are but I don't think the market is saturated. I think there's still a lot of space for people.

Carey Nieuwhof: You don't? You think there's still opportunity.

Annie F Downs: Yeah, I do. I think we're probably I would guess I can't be sure to carry. I guess we're half a decade from saturation. If we keep moving at this point at this clip and and there's a lot all the algorithms favor new shows. So new shows actually get a really good shot you and I have a much harder job to do as far as getting our show in front of people than someone who starts to show tomorrow or who started to show this year.

[00:57:08.500]

And so um, and so what I've learned from podcasting is it is a real sacred thing you what you and I are doing right now that we are in a lot of people's ears and in front of their eyes if they're choosing to watch and we, you know, we get to talk to people when they are falling asleep, and when they're grocery shopping, and when they're waiting in line, and when they're working out, and it just it's a real honor to get to do. I don't think the medium is changing. I think the biggest change we're seeing because That Sounds Fun Podcast Network we support and partner with 26 shows. And so we have a pretty good database of what's going on in the industry across those 26 shows because they're all in different categories what people want the most is more of the host. They want more of the host.

[00:57:56.400]

Carey Nieuwhof: Less of the guest, more of the host?

[00:57:57.800]

Annie F Downs: Yes, they are coming for the host.

[00:57:59.100]

Carey Nieuwhof: Tell me more. I've heard that and I'm like, no, the guests are more interesting.

[00:58:03.100]

Annie F Downs: Well, that's to you, they are, but even as I'm sitting here as the guest and as a fan of the Carey Nieuwhof show, I want you to be telling me what to do. I want you to tell me things jobs. I mean, people are coming here because of you. I'm just the sideshow, but they really show up every week because Carey Nieuwhof is a part of this. And so what we see a lot is that the shows where people are just themselves talking do really well. And, and especially in the face space, people are tired of seeing the same guest across 10 shows the week their book launches.

[00:58:37.300]

Carey Nieuwhof: They do make the circuit. That's right. And that's why on this show I try to go all over the place. That's right. That's why we're gonna get to the Single Purpose League, sort of the big thing to talk about but if it's the same talking points on every show, so I work really hard and I have enough I think street cred with the gas that they're willing to go off script and I think that has a more interesting.

Annie F Downs: I don't make time to do interviews right now, but when you and I started talking about single purposely girls like Carrie our pastor friends have to hear what is going on. What we are hearing from Christian Singles. I mean I came to you and said can we please at some point talk about this because you are the voice that speaks to our pastors.

[00:59:18.800]

Carey Nieuwhof: Let's go there great segue because single purpose League you did you and David Platt kick that off?

Annie F Downs: Yeah. I asked him to come on for a couple of reasons. So the backstory Carey is that I am a single Christian woman who goes to church and I have a lot of single Christian audience members who want help and who want some hope. In fact, we just surveyed them and we so this is a survey of 700 people Carey, and when we said what are the biggest problems being single? The number four thing was lack of support from our church community.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Annie F Downs: Yeah, and that's after like loneliness, and dating apps are hard, and then it's like and we feel like our church doesn't support us. When we asked do you feel supported by your church? 65% of the of the single said no or not, really.

[01:00:15.800]

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

[01:00:17.000]

Annie F Downs: And the thing you and I talked about is this is actually not a church pastor problem alone because my peers who are pastoring churches like David Platt, got married at 21 and the church was not 50% single like it is now. And so in seminary, they don't have classes on how to handle when your church is part married and part single.

[01:00:40.700]

And so this is -

Carey Nieuwhof: Didn't talk about it for 10 seconds. I can guarantee you.

Annie F Downs: This is not my pastor's problem is any more than it is my problem as the single person. Of course, churches need to adjust. But the thing I say to singles a lot, Carey, is like, this is not your pastor's problem. You need to remember that in all of his training or in all of her training. No one has told them how to expect to have a lot of unmarried adults in their church who do not know what to do with their sexuality. Who are trying to honor God but are 35, 45 who do not know what to do who are trying so hard to meet someone. Because in the same survey Carey we said, where are you meeting people? Remember they just said they don't feel supported by their church and two of the top 10 places they said they were meeting people is at church. And so they're still coming to church hoping to be seen and hoping to be careful every Pastor. I know if I said do you care about the singles in their church? Say yes Annie, of course I do. I care so much, tell me what they need.

[01:01:45.100]

They weren't trained in it. Like they were trained in how to talk about missions or how to talk about marriage or how to talk about a prayer life. And so it's just a really unique problem we have right now. So that's why we built single purposely is to kind of get them all get as many together as they wanted to we've had over 2,000 people join up. I mean last summer when I asked people when I said are you single will you give me your email address? 20,000 of them gave me their email address Carey. And I went oh, we've got a we've got a thing here. Yeah, and so single purposely the real goal. I mean the question we're asking is what is your purpose being single, and what is your single purpose? And can we help the singles? Because what I'm saying to them just, dear all of our pastor friends, let me tell you what I'm telling your single church people. I am saying, don't leave the church, solve the problem.

[01:02:36.100]

Don't leave the church, solve the problem. If your church does not have something for singles, go talk to someone. I was just in our Patreon right before we jumped on and a woman said, I'm at a new church, there isn't anything for singles, who do I go talk to? So the singles are getting willing to be like, hey, I want to be seen at this church, does the pastor even realize I want to be seen at this church? And I want to be a part of what's going on and I'd love for us to be supported as a community. And so it is also the church's responsibility to pay attention to who's sitting there. It is also the single person's responsibility to say, hey, we're sitting here and we need some support. Can you help us? Can someone talk to us about how to handle our finances?

[01:03:20.300]

Can someone talk to us about how to do friendship? One of the things you've seen in my life is I am friends with a lot of married men.

[01:03:28.400]

I mean lots of them and that is because we're all the same age and so can anyone teach from a stage, how do people do friendship well with with men and women who are not their spouse? Because certainly we should be allowed to be friends. If you can't be friends with anyone but your spouse that means single people will never be friends with married people. That seems like such a loss in community and village life. And so we're really trying to, my hope is that I am equipping our single Christian friends with tools and communication to go to their church and be a part of the solution to help their church serve the ever-growing amounts of singles in their 20s 30s 40s 50s.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh, absolutely.

Annie F Downs: That's our hope. Huge amount.

[01:04:16.700]

Carey Nieuwhof: Huge amount. So a couple of things one somebody said this to me and I can't remember the context but and I don't even know who they were talking about. So if you're listening, it's coincidental. And it was it was one of those things where I'm like never even thought about it. I didn't see it. I was blind to the bias. Yeah, almost every pastor of a large church is married and they pointed out one person who's single who's leading a mega church. And yeah, he's one of the only single guys and the fleeting comment was yeah. Generally it's always married people who are leading large churches. And I'm like, yes it is, but I never had that category. I mean, I was married five years before I really started leading a church. I was married

at 25 started church leadership at 30, and you just assume that singleness is a transitory condition. I think that if you really want to look under the rocks, in my head, I probably just assumed that singleness was a transitory condition. And I would preach that it's a calling. And sometimes it's better to be single than to be married because you can be focused and everything. But, you know, practically, I probably thought it's a transitory state. So I want you to comment on that and then tell me as a church leader what I'm missing, what I'm not seeing, and what I need to be attentive to.

[01:05:33.600]

Annie F Downs: Thank you for asking. For starters, I think an interesting thing that I'm discovering as I'm because here's the thing you know about me because we're friends. I don't want to talk about it. I don't want my singleness to be like my thing. I don't want that to be my thing. I don't want to be the poster child, because I'm a lot of things. But also, the Lord, I've just felt a new invitation in about the last year to be like, what if you just talked about it? So I'm just gonna talk about it. So as I've started talking about it and talking to a lot of my male friends who are pastors. There was this understanding at 21 or 22. Now, this is a sweeping statement. So before everybody blows up Carey's inbox, or you can email me at Annie@careynieuwhof.com. This is a sweeping statement, but a lot of my female peers that wanted to be in ministry, we thought get into ministry, look around and find a man doing ministry and ya'll will get married, right, like get into it and look around. What I am learning a lot of my male friend's thought was, find a wife and that will get you into ministry. The steps are reversed. Okay. I want to be able to lead Pastor. Okay, I'm gonna get married have kids, and then work up in my leadership.

[01:06:50.200]

And so what happened is the there was a not that anyone married the wrong person. That's not what I'm saying. But there was just two narratives going on particularly in the early 2000s. There was two narratives going on where men were thinking in order to do the ministry I want to do, I need to get married, and women we're thinking in order to get married, I need to do the ministry I want to do.

Carey Nieuwhof: Wow.

Annie F Downs: And you see that reflected and who is leading as you see the mission field flooded with women alone single women. And you see churches being led by married men. Right. And so um, and I love married men. I would like to have one of my own at some point. Like I want to get married right? Like I want our churches to be led by, I love the idea that most churches have fathers and mothers

leading who are not only fathering and mothering church, but they're fathering and mothering their family. I love that. I am pro -family. So I don't want anyone to hear any different. But it is interesting to pay attention to now and to go, oh man, in order to move up in leadership in a church, leadership is given most often to married men. And, okay. I mean, they're, again, sweeping, sweeping, sweeping.

[01:08:14.100]

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, I think that's largely true. You know, it's interesting looking back on it. When I was in seminary, I went to a bit of a liberal seminary, so I was the more orthodox person in the liberal seminary. But we had a couple of, of lifeline mentors, leaders. And one of the guys who reached out to me when he found out I actually believe the Bible and love Jesus was a guy in his 40s then. His name is Clyde and single, single his whole life.

[01:08:42.200]

And just such a powerful, went to his church first season when I wasn't preaching, built into my girlfriend, then fiancée, then wife, Toni and I, and God used him in such a powerful powerful way. And when I think about that that was more normative in my mainline upbringing than it is an Evangelical world. That's right. I'm not sure a guy like him would have a shot at leading a large influential church in, quote, evangelical world because he might never be called as a single guy but like deeply deeply formative in helping make sense of the chaos.

Annie F Downs: Oh, and so many good? Oh leaders that are married and see there's so many good single male leaders. I'm with you we could name off a few of them that are leading churches are leading parachurches really beautifully. And so um, so I'm grateful for that. So you asked what church leaders what they can do what they need to do.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, school me, tell me what we're missing.

[01:09:41.000]

Annie F Downs: I think, it does not take much to see someone. And so I think even language from the stage of hey, whether you're married or single today. Hey, whether you are you know, hey, if you're single we just want you to know we're so glad you're here and we are you know, I think it doesn't take much to see someone. and so just seeing them might really help and it could be as easy as even in a newsletter you send out going, hey, if you're currently unmarried, we'd love to hear how our churches serving you and what we could be doing to serve you better. Will you just email us? You know, like I know nobody's trying to start the pot because you are

pastors are getting plenty of emails on their own. But if you want to know there are places you can ask you can get on your Instagram and asked you can send out a newsletter. I mean you can do whatever you need to do to just ask the other thing that I think is so important Carey, is talking with single people about not having secret lives. And because it's real easy, especially as you get into your 30s, 40s and above, most singles live alone. They don't live with roommates because they're tired of having roommates. And a lot of secret life can happen there.

[01:10:51.500]

And it can get really dangerous as far as what you're doing sexually, what you're doing with your money, what you're spending your time on. You know, like it doesn't even have to be sinful. It could just be wasteful. It's a whole lot easier for me to waste time when I'm in a place by myself than when I've got two people watching me because they live in the house with me.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh yeah.

[01:11:08.700]

Annie F Downs: And so, you know, like Toni's not gonna let you probably lay on the couch for three days unless you're sick. But -

Carey Nieuwhof: That's a good point.

Annie F Downs: But if you were living alone and no one checked on you from Friday to Sunday. And so - There's a real, and there is a wide-sweeping sexuality problem. As far as we've got to start teaching single people what to do with their sexuality if we want people to follow what biblically how to handle your sexuality. Everyone in the Bible got married when they were like 20 or 13 or, you know. there aren't these great examples of people getting married at 50 for the first time and so there's just some space for some more public conversation, which is super awkward for people, and I understand it's awkward for everyone to some degree to be like we got to talk about how to hold the biblical truth and be a sexual person even if you are not married, what does that look like? And how do we do that? And the more we don't teach it the more someone else is teaching the Christians how to do it. If the church isn't teaching them somebody's teaching them.

Carey Nieuwhof: So give us if you can on the sexuality piece some unhelpful teachings and helpful teachings things. You've heard that you're kind of like, oh my gosh, are you kidding me? And then some actual helpful teachings.

Annie F Downs: You know, I think one of the unhelpful teachings is that marriage is the finish line and marriage is the goal because the reality is you and Toni are as called to sexual purity as I am. And so what if we taught sexual purity as a life thing whether you're having sex or not? You know, because even in marriage there is sexual purity between a husband and a wife.

[01:12:59.900]

And so often I feel like sex, and my experience was sex was taught as it's a gift from God, and da da da and sexual purity, and means nothing. And then when you get married, the gates are wide open.

[01:13:13.500]

And so it always sets up marriage as the finish line. Like if you can just crawl to the finish line instead of, what if from the minute that we started talking to teenagers about sexual purity, we were saying, hey, purity is a life choice, not a marriage choice. For your whole life, we want you to pursue purity. You will probably, if you get married, when you get married, you will have sex with someone. You will still have to choose a version of sexual purity. It will not be abstinence. It will be something else. And so I think there's a retraining around that teaching that doesn't make marriage a finish line. It makes marriage a switch in the conversation around sexual purity.

[01:13:58.000]

Carey Nieuwhof: That is such a helpful reframing. I've never thought about it that way before, so sexual purity. And of course, you know, if you're like, do you have you always believed in sexual purity in marriage and outside? Yeah, it's not, but it's a reframing that is so helpful. Does that help you be seen?

Annie F Downs: Yeah, because when the church will talk to me about that, when they'll talk to me about sex and sexuality, when the church will talk to me about loneliness, and when the church will talk to me about friendship between marriage and singles and singles to singles. But how did you friendship with other adults? Really? Well, those three things make me feel like oh, I don't have to solve this by myself because I didn't get to get married like the pastor did.

[01:14:44.100]

You know because a lot of it is like well, I guess I just need to figure that out because nobody who who's up there tells me how to do that. So I guess that's better figure it out. And then you get a lot of sources.

Carey Nieuwhof: What about more explicit guidance and instructions? So you mentioned Jonathan Pokluda, JP, very explicit in his teachings about, like to the point where I'm embarrassed to read them, blushing as I read them. I mean he is like right there in it and he's got young adults just hanging on all of that. What level of teaching on sexuality for singles and married people do you think it's helpful for pastors?

Annie F Downs: I mean, I think we're seeing it with JP is we are seeing how to 20-something Christians want someone to say, tell me yes or tell me no. Tell me what is, tell me what God says, and tell me, you know. And so what we traditionally think is, the less I say, the more attractive my message will be. And what JP is proving is the more I say, the more attractive the message is, right? And so I think you can, I mean, this traces, you have to go up the river about three miles on this, because, we have to go up the river to, okay, if I'm gonna get on stage and talk explicitly about sexuality in front of singles or in front of everybody, then I need to be real sure what our church's theology is around this. And what are we gonna say? What are, because what are we gonna say about people who live together in New York City versus people who live together in Birmingham? You know, is it the same or is it different? And what are we gonna say about people who are recently saved that live together and sleep together versus people who have long been saved and are choosing to sleep together, but it's a secret?

[01:16:33.400]

You know, like I mean it can get so complicated Carey.

Carey Nieuwhof: This is a Tuesday when this releases I have a whole new take on Sunday's message. No, no, do your homework, do your homework, do your homework, play the long game. Let's do some research.

Annie F Downs: But do not be afraid to jump in the pool. If you know your singles are there and you feel pulled to talk about it. You don't have to say it perfectly saying it at all gets a conversation started. I have not said everything with you today perfectly. This is not a perfect conversation. But my hope is that what we are talking about will get church pastors to go, I'm not saying he's right about that but you know what? We do have more singles than we did 10 years ago. Where did they sit? Do they serve anywhere?

Carey Nieuwhof: Singles, single again?

Annie F Downs: Oh, yeah, right divorce.

Carey Nieuwhof: You know what I found widowed all the as a pastor. Yeah, I found that that people generally if they'd been attending our church. We had a relatively low divorce rate. It seemed to be even with thousands of people it was like, oh I didn't you know happened rarely but people would often find us after divorce. So after the breakup, it happened they would find themselves at church. And that was true of women and men, and you know, if you really look at your church, the assumption is easy to say, oh we have big kids ministry, you know, 70% of our people are probably in some kind of husband wife kid relationship look a little deeper because that's not true. A lot of them are blended families now, a lot of single parent families so on and so on like like if you think about the Paradigm of one man one woman for life with children, that's probably less than 50% of your church.

Annie F Downs: And the beautiful thing Carey, is what actually makes churches richer in personality, richer in depth, is the variety of people. Like, there is something so beautiful to be learned from the singles, from the single again. I mean, there's just a, the more ingredients you add to the soup, the better the soup gets. And so my hope also is that the churches will, is that as our pastors start really deepening, so many pastors consider singles.

[01:18:44.100]

It is not that they, we're not going from zero to hero. There are so many pastors who do well for their singles. I'm thinking of like Ben Stewart at Passion City in DC. There are a lot of pastors who are seeing their single people in their church. As we're paying attention, one of the beautiful things we can do, is make sure we're talking about the soup that our church is, it's like we love that there are married and singles. We love grandparents and we love teenagers. But the truth is if 65% of the people who just took the survey of over 700 Christian singles. If 65 of them say that they do not feel supported by their church. Then we need we need to make some adjustments and ask some questions and even just getting curious will change that stat if the pastors of these 700 people who took the survey got curious in the next six months that would change that stat, even if they didn't have the right answer yet.

Carey Nieuwhof: So what are some other please don't do thats? And I would love more of?

Annie F Downs: Oh gosh, I mean, that's so personal to people I guess, but I guess if from a stage...

Carey Nieuwhof: Feel free to share yours, like stuffed up bugs you.

Annie F Downs: Yeah, I would say please don't, as best you can, don't treat marriage like it is the end goal, because it isn't for everyone. Not even everyone wants to be

married right now. I mean, there are a lot of people I know who go now I'm good. I'll just be single I'm and I'm not sure it's always the healthiest decision, but it's not everyone's desire. So assuming everyone's desire is to be married is not true. And so I would encourage pastors not to assume that everyone's trying to get to married, versus like how do we serve single people if they've chosen this life? Right, that happens a lot to me because everyone I talked a lot about wanting to get married people make a lot of assumptions about my desire to be a mother, and it's fine, but it is an assumption.

[01:20:33.300]

And so, just not assuming everyone wants their life place to change I think is important. Not assuming singles have a lot more time than married people is important. Sometimes we do. I am aware that my life has some realities and some space that some of my married friends don't, but I also have a busy life.

[01:20:51.100]

And so, I think not assuming like, well, if there are singles in our church, then they're on the welcome committee because they've got more time.

[01:20:59.200]

And that just isn't true, but I think everybody knows that. And I would say, you know, a good question to ask the singles, maybe not from stage, but maybe that are in your life is, do you want me to set you up? Do you want me to be looking for you?

[01:21:13.800]

Because a lot of times single people, we trust our community the most with our spiritual growth, with our day-to-day hanging out. And we would also trust our community with who they wanted to set us up with. And a lot of times married people seem afraid to do that.

[01:21:27.900]

Or they go, oh, I don't know anybody to do that.

Carey Nieuwhof: I would be afraid to do that, isn't that interesting?

Annie F Downs: Yeah, and a lot of times a way to help us feel really loved is to say hey if I thought of someone if I met someone would you want me to introduce you? And then the person can go no, I'm fine. This just happened to me. I just said to a guy, a friend of mine saw him on stage. And so I went up and talked to him. I'm friends

with the guy and I said, hey are you being set up right now? He said no. I've got a lot going on. I'm not really dating right now. Okay. I mean like the thing you have to trust is that the single is a healthy enough person that they will say back to you yes or no, you know like you don't have to say no for them. Trust that they are emotionally healthy enough and if they aren't that's on them that's not on you all as the very people that saw the single people but the encouragement I'm saying to single people to carry is is I learned this from a dating coach was don't ask, so if I wanted you and Toni to set me up, which you're always welcome.

[01:22:20.500]

I would not say hey, we all set me up. I would say hey, I want to go on a couple of dates in April. Can you set me up in April? Because what that does is instead of leaving you with this like, lingering thought of does my single Christian friend want me to find another single Christian friend for them? It goes like, oh gosh, if I who do I know in the next month? Well this guy that's a pastor in New Jersey is actually coming up to visit. I wonder if he would get coffee with Annie. Right, so it changes when you put a timeline on it. And it releases the stress on the married person a little bit. So that's what I was saying is ask the people around you, ask the singles around you. Do you want me to set you up? What can I be praying? What do you need from me as a married person and you're single life if we are part, I mean you have to be the same church, but if we're part of the same faith community we should be asking each other what we need. And so when it comes to singleness it is that too of like, hey, what do you need? And single people saying to their married friends, what do you need from me? Can I like watch the kids one night or can the three of us go to dinner? I mean, I had a long conversation with my book club because they all planned a vacation for them and their husbands. And I said, can I go? I know I don't have a husband but I'll pay for my own room. But I'm the only person in our book club not invited because I don't have a husband? Can I go?

[01:23:36.300]

They're like, oh my gosh, we didn't even think you'd want to go. We had no idea you'd think this was fun. And I was like, yeah, I don't mind. I won't do the stuff y'all do when you close the bedroom doors, but I'll be there.

[01:23:46.900]

I'll still eat guacamole with you, you know? And so it is on the singles in a lot of ways, Carey, to start communicating what we need and to start saying to our faith community, I would like to be seen here. But it helps a lot when the faith community,

particularly the married leaders of the faith community turn around and go, hey, I'm so glad you said that because I was thinking about that too.

[01:24:09.800]

Or I would love to talk to you about, you know, just kind of if we both face each other. I think it will help this growing community in the church feel really seen and empowered and helped be a part of growing the church in the future.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's good to know. What about singles ministries? Because you mentioned, you know, if you don't have one start one. I think a lot of churches probably don't or it's modeled after something someone created in the 90s.

Annie F Downs: Yeah, so it can be so weird.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah, yeah totally weird. Yeah. So what makes...

Annie F Downs: But I'll tell you, when we asked on the survey, where are you meeting people? The first place was church and the second church place they listed was singles ministries. So we're like I said the same thing to my team leader Katie Boatman who runs single purposely I said, Katie where are there single ministries? I didn't know that was happening anymore. I don't know many. I know I don't know many either because it at times can feel like a meat market with awkward, uncomfortable, unsafe people.

Carey Nieuwhof: You said that very tactfully.

Annie F Downs: Yeah. It's a it's a church. It's an each church needs to figure out. What to do problem? I don't know that there's a sweeping everyone needs a singles Ministry, but I know it the churches I go to, they both have events that are available for people that they say hey if you're not married come along and we're getting a bunch of people together who who want to go to something late at night, or who want to go to a baseball game, or whatever, you know, I mean, there are things that are tailored toward but not specific to.

[01:25:52.800]

And I think that helps. But there is, I mean, they still want, people want to meet a spouse at their church. When we said it, where do you want to meet somebody? They want to meet somebody. Me too. You should see me every Sunday. Carey, when people are raising their hands at worship, you know what I'm looking at? Their left hand. I mean, like me too. Me too. And so I'm looking at churches because I, where I go to church, I think, well, we already got the same teaching. I already know what you believe theologically to some degree. I know you're being mixed with a pastor.

And so I'm going to look at my church too. And so giving us a place now, that being said, have I ever gone to a singles thing? No.

[01:26:34.400]

I haven't. Would I? I don't know, but I do know that people are looking for a place where they feel invited and where they can be heard. And so maybe, I know that you know, here in New York, there's a small group that married couples run and they like chase after single people to be in it. Like hey, I would we would love for you to come. It's all people that are professionals that aren't married yet. Come eat dinner. We'll do dinner at our house on Wednesdays. And so I mean we they are a small group of singles, but it's because the married couple pursues singles in the church.

Carey Nieuwhof: Any final words on the Single Purpose League? Or what we can do better?

Annie F Downs: Oh, you know, anybody's welcome to join that's single that's listening, but that isn't what my hope is today. I really, Carey, you just are such a respected voice amongst pastors that when all this started popping off like it was, I kept thinking, I just want to make sure some pastors know.

Carey Nieuwhof: Oh yeah, I wish I had this 10 years ago when I was leading.

Annie F Downs: Yeah. Well, thank you. I am I am one single woman. I do not represent every single person on the planet. They're going to be a lot of single people who disagree with some of my thoughts and who would tell you to do something totally different. But what I will say to our friends listening is my biggest hope is that you will just see the single people in your community in a new way, and just kind of even reaching out with one conversation trust that they're grown-ups enough that they can say, no if they don't want to talk about it, or they can say no if they don't have anything to share about it.

[01:28:10.100]

But just seeing the single people in your life goes a really long way. It really does. And we're a vital part of the church too, you know? And so getting singles into the meetings where you're deciding things for the future of the church, I think is really important.

[01:28:28.100]

Carey Nieuwhof: Well, the other thing I would say too, just this thought about, you know, why does every pastor have to be married? Jesus and Paul did okay as single people, you know? So if you're a hiring committee, or you're on a board somewhere,

don't necessarily disqualify someone. I mean, you have such a vibrant preaching ministry too, at CrossPoint and all over the place. So I just think it's really good that we're getting this out there.

[01:28:52.400]

Annie F Downs: Yeah, thank you. It's just so, I mean, I... You know, I am so grateful that churches care. I think I think we do care. I think we do. I, as a Christian leader, I care that, like I told you on the subway, I'm looking around and I care, and so I am so sure that all the Christian leaders I know, I don't know a Christian leader who doesn't care about the people sit on their Sunday morning or following them on Instagram. And so maybe this will just start a few conversations not saying that we know every answer, but I'm happy to be a part of conversations.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm glad we're having this one and we've covered a lot 90 minutes with you feels like eight minutes. I don't know why it always does, I feel like there's so much but that's you know, we got some stuff for the next time. Tell me and anything else that we have not touched on for leaders.

Annie F Downs: No, I'm so grateful. Happy 10 years, Carey, thank you for serving the church.

Carey Nieuwhof: Thank you and to you too.

Annie F Downs: I just can't wait to get to heaven the Lord like pull up the map that shows us the impact Carey Nieuwhof made in the leadership of the church and just like, I just want to look at it. So I can't wait to see it. Thank you for what you do. I'm glad we're both gonna finish this thing really well in the next 50 to 70 years.

Carey Nieuwhof: And to you too, you know Annie you made a huge difference. I always enjoy our conversations. I love pulling, like, I feel like we could go another round or two on podcasting in the state of podcasting. It's awesome. I just have so much respect for you and really grateful for your ministry and your contributions. So there's about a million places on the internet. I know it all goes to your website, but if someone wants to really drill down, talk about Single Purpose League, where would you go?

Annie F Downs: Single Purpose League is patreon.com/anniefdowns is the best place to go for that. But everything is linked at [Anniefdowns.com](https://anniefdowns.com), f as in fancy, and that's my socials as well. So that's where you find me Annie F Down.

[01:30:43.100]

Carey Nieuwhof: Annie, thank you so much.

Annie F Downs: Thank you, Carey. Well, that was a wonderful, wide-ranging conversation. I hope you enjoyed it. Hey, we have got show notes for you. We're doing some new show notes. You're going to see some changes coming down the pipe. But in the meantime, you can go to careynieuwhof.com/episode644 or better yet, sign up on my email list. The easiest way to do it, because you'll also get my newsletters, go to ontherisenewsletter.com and then you'll never miss an episode. And we are starting to include transcripts on that email that we send out whenever we launch one of these and that way you'll never miss a thing.

Today's episode is brought to you by the Art of Leadership Live. It's my first live event, different kind of event, lots of community, lots of connection and some very strategic content. It's a curated group. If you want to apply to attend, go to theartofleadershiplive.com, very limited, not even 200 seats. So hurry now while you can still get in.

And with Gloop's free texting service. It only takes five minutes to update your church on whatever and when you sign up you get unlimited free texts forever. Go to gloop.us/freetexting to sign up.

Next episode Jon Tyson coming up, man, that was a good one. We talked about secularism how to respond to the cultural obsession with identity and a lot more. Also coming up Prof G, Lee Strobel, Katie Cole, Tara Lee Kabul Rich Burch is back. You guys always loved him. Ken Blanchard, Will Guidara, and a whole lot more. So thanks so much for staying to the end and let me tell you if you enjoyed this episode. We have curated a little podcast Network called The Art of leadership Network. You can get leadership conversations and advice from people like Rob Meter, Toni Nieuwhof, Brad Lomenick, Adam Weber, Chris Cook, Jenni Catron, and a whole lot more. Follow the Art of Leadership Network on Instagram, you'll get instant access to whatever happens to be published, whenever it's published.

Thank you so much for listening everybody. Hey, if you enjoyed this episode, please leave a rating and review tell your friends send a link. It really helps us get the word out there. And when you do that we get to get the best guest possible kind of like today's episode. Thank you so much for listening and we'll catch you next time. I hope our time together today has helped you identify and break a growth barrier you are facing.