

Speaker 1:

Well, hey friends, people ask me all the time, what are you spending your time talking about, particularly in this pandemic. More than I ever would have dreamed, I'm hearing about succession and I'm having people call me sooner than they thought they would ready to talk more than they ever thought they would. And it's not people who are ready to hang it up or quit right away. It's just people who've realized, my goodness, life is more fragile than I realized. My goodness, I need to be securing a future for my church or my school long before I'm done serving it. Today on the podcast, you're in for a real treat. My good friend, Tim Harlow is joining us. And he's going to be talking about how he's thinking about finishing out his career. Now Tim's not ready to stop. Tim's not in a place where he's announcing a retirement, but man, what a cool insight into honest thinking about how a guy who has rounded third base in his career is making the run toward home with some intention that he didn't have before the pandemic. It is an honor to sit with so many pastors as they plan their finish line run and allow us to come alongside and counsel them. So I hope you'll listen in to Tim and the amazing work that God's done at his church Parkview, which was only about 100 people when he got there and pre-COVID was probably flirting with about 10,000 in weekly attendance. So listen in, hope you can learn something. And if you'd like to talk about succession, you are not alone. The conversation's growing. Keep listening for more conversations this year.

Speaker 2:

Since succession is a topic close to our hearts at Vanderbloemen, we want to offer a free copy of William Vanderbloemen's book, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, to one of our listeners today. *Next* is packed with research interviews and practical solutions for creating a succession plan that works. If you're interested in entering email us at support@vanderbloemen.com with the subject line, free book. We'll email you back if you're our lucky winner. Without further ado, here's today's podcast.

Speaker 1:

Well, Hey everybody, thanks for joining us for another one of our series. We're dropping as we try and go down the Netflix route of podcasts and drop a whole season at once. And as we're recording this, the working title is, wow, succession got here faster than I thought it would. And today I've got my dear friend, Tim Harlow with me. Tim has not really succeeded. He has not retired-

Speaker 3:

I haven't succeeded in anything.

Speaker 1:

Hasn't succeeded in anything. That's awesome.

Speaker 3:

Great intro.

Speaker 1:

Thanks for coming on, I appreciate it.

Speaker 3:

You bet. I've got to succeed somewhere.

Speaker 1:

There you go. Hey, take a minute and tell people who you are, your story because man, I'm just learning every day it's a church out there and a lot of people don't know a lot of people.

Speaker 3:

Yeah. And that's true. I find the same thing, William. Came here 31 years ago to a small church of about 150. Here is the South suburbs of Chicago, which is very unique, 80% ex Catholic or current Catholic, a lot of blue collar, white collar mix they're the bears people that you used to watch on Saturday Night live. And I couldn't love them anymore. I mean I'm from Oklahoma that was not my background. So it took me a while to figure out who this crowd was. And it took me a while to help get this church transitioned into a place where it cared about the loss. But for the last 20 years, we've been on a first 10 years were rough and the last 20 years have been a really really fun ride.

Speaker 1:

And you got a few more than 100 people now, right?

Speaker 3:

Yeah, yeah. A few more. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

So pre pandemic, like give me a.

Speaker 3:

eight or 9,000. Yeah. Something like that.

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 00:04:00] thousand over a few campuses-

Speaker 3:

Three campuses. Yeah. Working on our fourth. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. I think if I remember right, you were talking about opening a campus in a bar [crosstalk 00:04:11] and I think as we record this in Illinois, it's legal to go to a bar, but not to a church, so there you go. [crosstalk 00:04:21]

Speaker 3:

Yeah, that's actually not true because the Supreme court overturned that whole thing. But so we are having services with a lot of social distancing, but yes, we we'll probably be... We're going to be live streaming into the bar well before we actually start a campus in there, and it's a unique situation. I mean, the owner's are part of Parkview and it's big. It's not really a bar. It's more of a banquet hall, but I'm excited about the model. That's one reason I won't retire yet is because I want to help the church find new models. Our last campus costs us \$12 million and it's going great, I'm so glad we did it, but that's just not a viable model. So I really want the church at large to figure out. And obviously COVID is

going to force that in a lot of directions, but I'm excited. I'm still excited about a bunch of stuff. Even as a 59-year-old guy who's been here for 31 years.

Speaker 1:

So you're excited, the church is growing. You're enthusiastic. You're expanding. What in the world [inaudible 00:05:27] the first session of counseling, so why are we here today? Are we talking about succession?

Speaker 3:

Well, I'll tell you how this makes me feel, okay counselor? The thing that probably rocked my world more than anything else was, I mean, maybe five, six years ago, I was with a friend, Roger Storms, out in Chandler, Arizona. He was 62. I was preaching for him that weekend and he said, "Hey man, I'm going to be looking for somebody. I think I'm done." And I was like, Roger, I mean, he's such a great spiritual man and he's done such a great job and I'm like 62, tell me about it, man. And his words, his direct quote was, "I just don't think I can push the rock up hill anymore." And from that point, I'd seen Bob Russell step away earlier than I thought he would. I'd seen some other guys step away earlier than I thought they would.

Speaker 3:

And I kind of started talking to myself and my eldership about maybe it's not as far as I think I'm going to make it. I had this goal of making it 40 years, trying to follow in Rick Warren's footsteps. And David was King of Israel for 40 years. And that would have taken me to 67. And I don't think eight more years is going to be healthy for me or the church. And so I started looking at some models and I really became a student, thanks to you, especially of succession and what's going on. And knowing that we probably didn't have the person on staff, it made it a little bit of a different angle for us to take. And so we started looking at it, our friend Kenton Beshore, my daughter's on staff out at Mariners, and he mentored me in this whole process. And you helped him through that whole process. And I just kind of followed along in his timeline and started looking at what he was doing and started talking to you and started thinking and praying and trying to get our leadership ready for the fact that 67 probably wasn't a reality. And if 65 is a reality, it's going to be different than it is now. It's going to have to be.

Speaker 1:

Well, first of all, Roger and Nancy, I think is his wife's name, right?

Speaker 3:

That's right. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

They are so close to Jesus and they are doing a good job, they handled their succession very, very well. We did some initial planning with them, lots of fun and-

Speaker 3:

Pushing the rock up the Hill, man. I mean, that's what it is.

Speaker 1:

That's what I hear from so many guys that I get led into these conversations with it's, I still like preaching. I don't think I have the energy for all the other stuff and that's a lot of the job. And you guys broke some ground, we've been quiet about it to not make your church freak out, but I think when you guys came to us and said, can you help us walk this path? It was like, this is probably a 10-year arrangement. I'm like, oh, I never thought of a 10-year relationship for succession. And it's just been really cool to be able to take a long, slow walk together and not knowing where it ends or where the handoff is, but knowing that it's-

Speaker 3:

It has been. It has been for us too, man. And you know how much... I hope you know how much you mean to me and my elders to help us walk through this thing. Because I mean, in walks COVID-19, in walks all of these other things that are going on when we brought on a teaching pastor that is remote, Todd Clark, he's doing a great job, but he's remote. So it's a different kind of thing. And my job we've morphed it multiple times along the way, but the end goal is that the church gets the best thing that it needs. And at some point they're... At this point they're telling me, "Oh no, you're it Tim. We need you." But at some point they need a young leader. And now that we're moving into this digital revolution thing, those of us whose VCRs are still flashing 12 o'clock, we're struggling a little bit with the whole deal and it's got to be a thing where new solutions to the new problems are going to come from a new generation. And I really believe that's going to be important.

Speaker 1:

So, so tell me, I know, but I'd love for you to share what you can with people listening today, what in 2020 changed your view or outlook or pace around succession?

Speaker 3:

I mean, for one thing, the fatigue that everybody feels. I mean, I don't care if you're a 30-year-old senior pastor you're listening to, whoever you are, we all feel 2020 fatigue. And so you start getting fatigued, you start thinking, do I have it, can I handle it? And I was getting to the point, I'm not there now, but I was getting to the point where I told my executive pastor and my team, I just don't think... I'm okay. But there's not a lot of margin if something else breaks. I mean, was it just the pandemic, it was the political upheaval. It was the racial thing. You know I tried to do some things to bring racial justice.

Speaker 3:

And of course I got beat up for it. And if I would have said nothing, then I would have got beat up for it, and all of those things, they just fatigued us. So everybody's tired. And if you're tired and you're 60, almost 60, you're like, okay. If you're tired and you're 40, I would look at this as, okay, I'm excited about the new future, the new challenge. But dude, I have morphed so many times in my 30 year history as a senior pastor, we went to a mega church and then we went to a multi-site and I mean, I would just get something figured out and then the world would change the model of what we were supposed to do. And to think about what that looks like going forward is quirky because nobody knows what it is. And that doesn't energize me. If I can just be honest. I'm super type A, I love to solve problems. I'm all about that, but it doesn't energize me like it used to when I look over the horizon.

Speaker 1:

So you have done an amazing job of looking over the horizon at Parkview over the years. And when I set out to write this first book... Gosh, almost six years ago now, seven, when we started thinking about it.

The whole goal was just to make succession a legitimate conversation among pastors, because it used to be the dirty secret. Are you seeing as you look out on the horizon, is this a conversation that is getting normal?

Speaker 3:

It's so normal. It's the only thing anybody's talking about. I mean, I was at a gathering recently that was only pastors of the large churches, and we spent an enormous... And there was some of the newbies in there, Kyle Idleman was in there, Ashley Woolridge is in there, some of the ones who had taken over. And then there were a bunch of us that are the ones that are thinking about it. And the guys that were never thinking about it and always looked at everyone else like they were crazy, were starting to think about it. So it's not... And again, I mean, sure part of that's 2020 and burnout, and we're going to get through all that. Nobody's going to dump their church in the middle of this stuff that's going on.

Speaker 3:

But I think at some point we also are spiritual enough as leaders of churches to go... Maybe the best thing for the church would be if somebody led them, it might not feel like it at the moment, but it's time. It's like my kids at Christmas time, they've got kids, I've got my sixth grandchild on the way. They're starting to make their own Christmas tradition. And at some point as the patriarch of this deal, I need to like my father-in-law and my father and parents, and in-laws before me, I have to let them go do their thing. And I am a father figure to a lot of the people in the congregation, but I'm also a grandfather figure to a lot of people in the congregation.

Speaker 3:

And I think the people that I'm the father figure for are going to be sad if and when I walk away. But the ones that I'm the grandfather to are going to say, yeah, we probably need to take this. I mean, it's scary to look at the average age of the church. And when I was 30 and they said the average age of the church is 10 years on both sides of you, I was like, all right, this is cool. And when I was 40, it was great. As I hit 60, it's a lot of gray hair and no hair starting to show up out there. And I feel like I connect with those, with the younger people, with my kids' generation and your kids' generation, I feel like I connect with them, but I also believe a whole lot of things that I tell myself that probably aren't true. Like how good looking I am.

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 00:15:02] your kids, family traditions that they're establishing, is one of those traditions to do like 32 Christmas Eve services?

Speaker 3:

That may be why they want to start their own because by the time I get to Christmas, I'm a zombie. Yeah, I'm a nightmare.

Speaker 1:

I take no calls from pastors the three days following Christmas. It takes three days to get up and tune so.

Speaker 3:

You should just put your... You should turn your phone off. That's the truth, yeah.

This transcript was exported on Jan 20, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Speaker 1:

It will take you three days to get out of this tune. Call me back on the 28th.

Speaker 3:

That's perfect. I will pray that you're resurrected, amen.

Speaker 1:

So one of the things that was kind of cool that we've discovered as we've done succession with you guys, and we now build it in and we use succession planning is not just to ask, like one of the reasons is that people will come up to you say, "Aw, pastor Tim, you're doing such a good job. You should just stay." Like, that's what they told Brett Farve, too. So, but one of the reasons I see that happening is the people on the board are getting older, too.

Speaker 3:

That's exactly right.

Speaker 1:

[crosstalk 00:16:13] Wants to admit that this is actually happening to all of us at the same time.

Speaker 3:

And we are. And I love my guys for that. I mean, I love my eldership for that, because we've recognized that, we've pushed those buttons. We've got some things. Part of it is you got a team and you're like, we want to accomplish some things. And there's some theological things we want to work out around women in leadership and some other things that we want to really nail down before we're all gone. And so we really want to do that, but yeah, we're all friends and we've all gotten older together and we've brought some newer ones on. But you know, the future is not from that group of people that just can't be.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. I'm already seeing your newest elders amazing and part of that younger generation. So I don't say this really to brag on you guys, certainly not brag on us, but more to encourage people who are watching this because we're airing it in January, which is kind of, especially after 2020, now we're sitting here filming in December right before you start your 9 million Christmas Eve services. And I'll tell you what I'm really kind of afraid of and I hope I'm wrong. I'm afraid that by the time this airs, people are going to go, I thought it was all going to be over when 2020 went away.

Speaker 3:

Oh no. Yeah. I mean, Carrie wrote a blog about that today. [crosstalk 00:17:35]

Speaker 1:

You know January through March are going to be tough.

Speaker 3:

And hello, where am I at? In Chicago okay, where January, February, and March are tough already. There's no sun going to shine until like May or June and it's cold and it's nasty and the vaccines out, but I don't get it yet. And I'm not going to get it for a while. I'm anticipating that. I mean, the mental health thing is a big problem. And obviously, it's not going to go away for a while. And some of the stuff that the addictions and the things we've learned to do or not do over the last year while we've been cooped up are not going to be easy to solve.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. Well, that's the reason I want to have this conversation because some guys are out there and they're watching this in January and they're feeling down because they feel down and you're feeling up. I'm the hope dealer for the church. I'm supposed to be slinging hope. And I feel that that's okay. And maybe it's time to be thinking long, long. Long-term. One thing I've discovered with pastors that are doing well through this is, they're really taking a much longer view of the problem than just how do we contain it for this long? How do we open up 50 more seats? How do we... Like the long view.

Speaker 1:

So, let's go back to you looking on the horizon. When you think about the horizon and you look up then you say, here are the things I'm recognizing in myself that tell me it's time to get serious about this conversation. What would you share that might be a help to people who are wondering, do I have a January hangover or is it really time to be thinking about succession.

Speaker 3:

That's a great question, man. I've done burnout. I did that probably '03, and I didn't didn't blow anything up, but I really hit that wall and had to get a lot of counseling and had to figure out what was going on. So I'm pretty comfortable with the fact that... And I have a counselor and a psychologist and all those kinds of things. Pretty comfortable with the fact that I can know where I'm at, mentally and psychologically and spiritually, those gauges that Hybels used to talk about. I mean, it's still really important to me. I can see that grid up in front of me and I'm pretty good at knowing whether I'm just low or not. I mean, like you said, three days after I'm going to be low. My father-in-law is on his death bed.

Speaker 3:

I'm going to be alone at Christmas time because my family doesn't live here. There's a lot of signs that I can read and I can go, okay, I get why I'm feeling that way. But the thing that struck me is, okay, if another problem happens and I don't have margin for it, where am I going to go? And why don't I have margin for it? And how can I solve that? And that's not a succession issue. It's a management issue. I mean, for probably every pastor listening to me, it means yeah, way to go. We all did a heroic job preaching way too many times and trying to do all these things to survive 2020. Now we need to get back to some reality, we need to bring in a teaching team.

Speaker 3:

We need to do the things we need to do to balance those things out. So I think what the danger of this is, is I don't want somebody out there going, I'm a little low, I'm a little blue. I'm 45. Should I be thinking about succession? Yes. You should be thinking about succession, but you should be thinking about, what that looks like 15 years from now. And what do you need to do to get to that point? Are you developing? I mean, the guys that I know that are scaring themselves because they're leaving earlier, earlier than

they thought, they're going to leave by the time they're my age are the guys who have the next person on staff and they know they have the next person on staff and they've decided, like Dave Stone did, like Bob Russell did, to say, I'm not going to lose this guy behind me because I hang on too long.

Speaker 3:

So maybe that's maybe that's where it's got to be. Maybe I've blown it and not doing that with video campuses. We didn't set that system up. So I don't think anybody should take burnout or a low spiritual point in their life as a, "Man, I need to get out of here." Because you and I both know that the stats are terrible on how many pastors quit and walk away too early. And I wouldn't want anybody to hear this and think, well, maybe I should walk away sooner than I thought I was going to. What I would say is let's make sure that we make the church be healthy. And if you think it's time to walk away, then go through the process, start talking to people, start getting other people involved and talk about it. So that as time goes on, you can make this a healthy transition because we've all seen people do it the other way. And the church has decimated.

Speaker 1:

Well, and what you're saying reminds me of what I've told people over and over, and obviously I don't say it enough because people keep making this mistake. Never, ever, ever quit on Monday. Never quit on Monday. Don't even call me on Monday. I don't know if I've told you this before, but churches hire us to find their key staff, their pastor, that sort of thing. But that means people who might be thinking about a change will call us just to let us know what's up. The number of times people contact us like that. Like, oh, I think it might be time for a change, the number of times it happens on Monday is greater than all six other days combined. No lie.

Speaker 3:

I have not heard to say that, but totally believable.

Speaker 1:

I've written on it like biology people say Monday is not a good... You're getting back into your rhythm. You've been-

Speaker 3:

Don't cut your hair when you were pregnant, everybody knows that. Don't cut your hair when you're pregnant. It's the same thing.

Speaker 1:

My friend Dave [inaudible 00:23:39] says the only people that get hurt on roller coasters, are the ones who try and get out early.

Speaker 3:

And that's a timeshare analogy, but yes, you're absolutely right.

Speaker 1:

Just don't do it on Monday. And I stretch that metaphor to say, know what your Monday is. I'm not just talking about a day of the week, but when [inaudible 00:23:58]. Like for me it's 3:00 PM, don't make any career decisions at 3:00 PM. I stumble out of my office toward the coffee maker at 3:00 PM.

Speaker 3:

I agree.

Speaker 1:

That's when Jesus died 3:00 PM. It's a tough hour. [crosstalk 00:24:11].

Speaker 3:

You're right. That's why I work out in the late afternoon. I don't understand people that work out in the morning, my brain works in the morning.

Speaker 1:

You know, I've talked to a friend of mine, Doug Ferguson, was the exec pastor at Menlo Park Church for a long time. And he's the guy who recruited Ortberg from Willow. And I said, how in the world did you talk him into leaving Willow? And he said, "Oh, that was easy. I just watched the weather forecast for Chicago and I called [inaudible 00:24:40] every bad Monday."

Speaker 3:

And that was a lot of them.

Speaker 1:

And it worked. Know what your Monday is, and don't decide then.

Speaker 3:

An answer to your question though, there's another side of this, too. And you're the one that brought it up. So I'll give it back to you, but famous pastors have said, there's no retirement in the Bible. And you're the one that pointed out to me that's not true. The high priest who was supposed to do 25 years and be done and then work with the rest of the team, but turn over the leadership and you can use any illustration you want. You go back to your Brett Farve illustration, you could go to any number of sports analogies, whatever you want to do, but there's a time that's probably before you think there's a time when you need to be stepping aside and turning over the leadership to somebody who's got a better energy to push the rock up the hill. Doesn't mean you can't still help and do whatever you need to do, like the high priest did or go do that in another... I mean, I'm not going to retire retire.

Speaker 3:

I'm not going to play golf and fish for another 20 years. I want to figure that out. I was inspired by Gordon McDonald when he was on with Carrie Newhoff who somehow, and you got to dig into this for us, he kind of just had this thing he threw out where he said, "I decided to get out of church leadership at 60 because I had these other things I want to do." And you look at Gordon McDonald now in the last 20 years of his life and how sad would it have been if you hadn't let go of the high priest of one congregation so that he could go do the other things that God had in store for him.

Speaker 1:

He's almost had an apostolic run the last 20 years.

Speaker 3:

I think apostolic is a great word. And I mean, we don't really want to look at that, but at a mega church with a lot of campuses, I guess I have an apostolic role, but I think that there is more for me, doesn't mean I'm not part of Parkview. It just means I think there's more for me that I can do and I can be involved in.

Speaker 1:

Well, it's just a different role. I am old school. I like war road when I was a senior pastor and, but went to a seminary on site, that's unheard of these days. But at Princeton, where I went back in the day before I was there, like in the '50s and '60s, you couldn't join their faculty until you'd log 25 years of pastoral ministry experience. And that was the next step was you teach other people how to [crosstalk 00:27:22] move. That was the old Presbyterian model. Go do your time. And then you can teach people about it, not just some theory of books and things.

Speaker 1:

So I think people are discovering that though, that there is this other role and it's not different. And the timing, people are listening to this and think William's trying to talk me into retiring and sit around. Like no no, you mentioned Kenton, man, that timeline moved around it was like nailing jello to a wall to get that timeline. [crosstalk 00:27:53] And the timeline [inaudible 00:27:55] has moved and shifted over the years. You mentioned Brett Farve, this is risky because it's December and there's a lot of football left, but I think it's funny that Brett Farve has been my illustration forever. And now this year you've got Aaron Rogers who kind of got ticked that they drafted a quarterback and he's found [crosstalk 00:28:12] and he's having a killer year. So too close to home for the Bayer Spans, but-

Speaker 3:

Well, Yeah, we don't care what happens at Green Bay. It's just a funny illustration. I mean, there's a time and a place.

Speaker 1:

Yeah, the time is [crosstalk 00:28:28] and we'll have to have it nailed down to have the conversation. I think that's the important thing. So-

Speaker 3:

And you mentioned something in your interview with Carrie Newhoff about the humility thing, and it's hard for a guy who does public speaking, everyone's worst nightmare. And that's what we do. And we do it on behalf of God. It's hard for us to find the humility to be able to step back, but I would just encourage everybody on here. The guys, men and women in leadership who couldn't find the humility to say, you know what, I might be over the hill. They're the ones that have blown everything up. And either that, or somebody had to force them out. And it was just devastating on the church. So have the humility to have the people around you that you can ask the hard questions of.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. Well, and that's where we're trying to be this sherpa up a mountain, just kind of show you that you got to do the summiting. I'm not going to do it for you, but I have been up the hill and I can show you where the potholes are and that sort of thing. And one place that I think people-

Speaker 3:

So do you think I can get a job at Princeton? I'm thinking that might be probably never would happen.

Speaker 1:

They could use [inaudible 00:29:43] well, so one area that I just want to touch on as we round things out in humility, and this really didn't have anything with you or Parkview, but a lot of people that are in leadership right now, I'm yet to meet the pastor who says, you know what I want to do. I'm 55 years old. I'm going to spend the last leg of my ministry completely ruining this work I've been trying to pull my license. I'm going to blow it up. I'm going to stay too long. But one of the lies of the enemy is that you can't ask for financial help from your board because a lot of people like the pastoral life is kind of hand to mouth life. I mean, it doesn't matter what size church or what... It's just more zeros. If I mean more people more, it's all just... So I'm finding in my succession work with boards, that if there is a way to gracefully introduce the idea of the board, look, the only thing that's keeping this from happening is financial constraint. The board's like, well, that's easy. We can't let this screw up because that's going to be way more expensive than paying pastor a little bit more for a period of time. And I would just urge anybody who's out there wondering, like, I don't even know how to do that. Reach out to me, reach out to our team, we'll send some resources your way on how to talk to the board and you're not alone. It's okay to ask for that kind of help and-

Speaker 3:

I think in most businesses, you walk into the CEO, you walk into the C-suite and you kind of know what's going on. And when you know, you've been there for a while and you know. I mean, there's a severance package. There's something that's going to be talked about. It's going to be discussed. And boy, that's just not something that anybody's used to. And almost every one of the guys that I know that has walked away early, has been blessed by their church, but they didn't really know it was going to happen until the end. They just kind of got down to the end and they're like, you know what guys I'm done and their board came around them. I think planning ahead can be a really big deal. And I know we're talking to a lot of people who are pastoring churches where they don't have a lot of money, and there's not a whole lot of things that they can figure out how to do.

Speaker 3:

I would still really encourage you to talk to your board, have open conversations about when this might happen and what might this look like? The value of compound interest, I heard you say this on that interview as well. I mean you said, go get a financial planner when you're 30 and have the church pay for it. I mean, those kinds of things if... I'll just say it this way, if this church would have stuck a little bit of money back 30 years ago and started doing some things 30 years ago, there wouldn't be any discussion. 30 years of compound interest would be an awful lot. So now we have to figure out other ways and the sooner you get that done the better. And plus I would also say there are other things out there.

Speaker 3:

There are other ministries. There's other places that need you. Just don't hang on too long, for God's sake for the kingdom sake, don't hang on too long for a paycheck. I mean, there's a very famous

succession that I won't mention, the guy was a little bit older than me. And he told me, somebody came to me and said, "Hey, if you could walk away right now, would you?" And he said, "You know I would." He had the guy on staff. He said, "You know, I would." And so that person went to their board and said, "Hey, you know what, he's probably ready to do this. Let's make some things happen." And they did. And he stepped down and the succession happened and the place is going great. And it's really about dialogue. It's about dialogue for a pastor within yourself, where do you find your self worth? Because I know when I walk away from here and nobody's asking me to preach anywhere and all of my identity is wrapped up in this thing that I've been doing, and it's not there anymore, I know that's going to be hard. I'm going to accept that reality for the sake of the church. I gave 31 years so far, and it will be many more for this place. I'm just not going to screw it up.

Speaker 1:

That's good. That's good. Well, I think, I didn't realize how much board members are willing to try and make those things happen. Yesterday, let's just say we're filming this in December, Auburn fired their football coach, Gus Malzahn, and they fired him knowing that they would then have to pay him \$21 million just to let him go. But he realized it was better for their football program to pay him and go on and move on to the next thing. Don't think that people that are willing to do that don't understand the mechanics of a much smaller thing for [inaudible 00:34:40] house. I mean, yeah yeah.

Speaker 3:

That's absolutely true. Absolutely true. And you know, for 21 million I'll walk away.

Speaker 1:

Oh, is that the number? Okay, let me get that.

Speaker 3:

Yeah, I think that's my number. When you talk to my board, let them know that.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. We'll put the number and [crosstalk 00:34:55]

Speaker 3:

I've got a great eldership. I'm not worried about this process. [crosstalk 00:35:02]

Speaker 1:

They're godly guys in their hoot, and yeah. [crosstalk 00:35:06]

Speaker 3:

But we've been talking about it already for several years. If you get down to go back to Roger, I don't know how long they've been talking about it at Chandler, but you get to 62 63 and all of a sudden one day you just walk in the elders and go, I think I'm done. I can't push a rock up the hill anymore. They're going to just be wide-eyed and not have any idea what to do. It's much better to be having the conversations along the way. What do you think? How's it looking? What's your family situation like? That's quirky for me because I don't have any family that live here. I mean, yeah, you start looking at some realities and start asking those questions and having those conversations.

Speaker 1:

It's so true Tim and, and anybody out there who's embarrassed to have that conversation with a board, you're going to come off as a stronger leader for bringing it up because your board people are thinking about it. Whether you know it or not, they are, and they're afraid to bring it up because you might be their spiritual father. You might be that person who led them to Jesus and wow, man, I can't bring that up to pastor, but I guarantee you will come off better. So it was when we'll be doing a "Wow, your succession went so well." Who knows when you'll have succeeded.

Speaker 3:

Someday I'm going to succeed, I promise you.

Speaker 1:

One day you'll succeed but it's a real honor to get to walk alongside you on this long path that we're still figuring out.

Speaker 3:

[crosstalk 00:36:30] Yeah, thank you my friend.

Speaker 1:

And being gracious enough to take time and frankly, be honest with us about a process that you're not through yet and don't know [inaudible 00:36:43].

Speaker 3:

Yeah, appreciate you. [inaudible 00:36:44].

Speaker 1:

And thanks to all of you who are listening. This is a developing conversation. Every year, we learn a little bit more about it. One thing we learned last year is don't release a new book during a pandemic. So our updated [crosstalk 00:36:58] In our updated version Next came out last year with very little fanfare. You'll hear more about it this spring, but you can go to nextpastor.com and find that. And of course, if you want show notes and links to Parkview and see all the great things that are going on there, just go to vandercast.com and give us your email. We'll put you on a list that won't beat you up with offers for Ginsu knives, but just gives you the show notes. So, yeah, Tim, thanks for being-

Speaker 3:

\$21 million 21, that's all. Yeah. [crosstalk 00:37:29].

Speaker 1:

Blessings to all of you, hang in there. This too will pass.

Speaker 3:

See you.

Speaker 2:

This transcript was exported on Jan 20, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

At Vanderbloemen, we're so passionate about succession planning that we literally wrote the book on it, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*. What started as the desire to help pastors feel more comfortable bringing up the important topic of succession has developed into helping churches, schools, nonprofits, and values-based businesses plan for the future and build lasting legacies. Be sure to get your copy of *Next* at nextpastor.com. And if we can help you through your succession planning, please head to our website and reach out to our team. We would be honored to journey through this season with you. Thanks for listening.