

Doug Smith ([00:07](#)):

Hey, leader and welcome to episode number 344 of the L3 Leadership Podcast, where we are obsessed with helping you grow to your maximum potential and to maximize the impact of your leadership. My name is Doug Smith and I am your host, and today's episode is brought to you by my friends at Beratung Advisors. If you're new to the podcast, welcome. I'm so glad that you're here and I hope that you enjoy our content and become a subscriber. Know that you can also watch all of our episodes over on our YouTube channels to make sure you're subscribed there as well. And if you've been listening to the podcast for a while and it's impacted your life, it would mean the world to me if you would leave us a rating and review on Apple Podcast or Spotify, or whatever app you listen to podcast through that really does help us to grow our audience and reach more leaders.

Doug Smith ([00:46](#)):

So thank you in advance for that. Well, in today's episode, you'll hear my conversation with Lee Kricher and we talk about all things leadership succession. And what I love about what Lee says in this conversation is, no matter where you are in your leadership journey, you need to be thinking about succession. And so I think you're really gonna be challenged by this. And Lee is no stranger to the podcast. He's been on several times. In fact, he was one of the first interviews back in episode number 38. So if you enjoy this, you can go back and listen to that as well. And if you don't know much about Lee, let me tell you a little bit about him. Dr. Lee Kricher is the president of the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation providing vision and oversight to the mission of the pl, which brings together leaders for the good of their city in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Doug Smith ([01:26](#)):

Lee is also the founder of Future Forward Churches and the author of two books for a New Generation and Seamless Pastoral Transitions where he talks about the dramatic transformation of the church. He pastored from an aging dying church into a growing multi-generational church. Lee previously served as Vice President of Leadership Development for Development Dimensions International, and as regional vice president for Linkage Inc. Here earned his bachelor's degree from Geneva College, a Master's degree from Fuller Theological Seminary, an MBA from the University of Pittsburgh, and a doctor of ministry from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. And again, we talk about all things leadership succession. And for the first time ever, I take Lee through the lightning round and you're gonna love that. But before we dive into our conversation, just a few announcements. This episode of the L3 Leadership Podcast is sponsored by Beratung Advisors.

Doug Smith ([02:13](#)):

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the podcast. I was just sharing with you before we hit record that, uh, you were one of the first episodes. You were episode number 38 of L3 Leadership Podcast. It was almost a decade ago, which is crazy to think about <laugh>. And, uh, man, we've developed quite a relationship, uh, from that point on. And you're now the president of the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation here in Pittsburgh and doing great things in our city. And so welcome back to the podcast.

Lee Kricher ([03:34](#)):

Oh, thank you, Doug. It's my pleasure. And, uh, we have become great friends and, uh, for those who listen to you regularly, uh, it's great. I was, it was great to see you the other day at Light of Life where your leadership was in action. And so you're not just a student of leadership, but you are a leader and a leader of leaders. And uh, it's great to have seen how God has blessed and used you and it's great to be with you today.

Doug Smith ([04:00](#)):

Oh, thanks Lee. And for those listening, when we initially did interview, you were the pastor of, uh, I don't know if it was Amplify at the time, was it may have, was it still Pittsburgh East?

Lee Kricher ([04:10](#)):

I think at that time it was Pittsburgh East Community Church. And then once we added several campuses that were not in the eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh, we renamed the church. Amplify Church.

Doug Smith ([04:22](#)):

Yeah. So just to catch our listeners up, So Lee founded a church that was originally called Pittsburgh East, and they've since rebranded Amplify, uh, he also worked for an international, uh, leadership development company called ddi. And then, uh, for, uh, a period of time, and then he came back and turned around the church, which was probably the focus of some of our earlier episodes. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But since our last episode, you've handed off the church, uh, to your successor Jason Howard, and, uh, the church is thriving and you've been getting a lot of attention and interest from pastors and leaders of organizations asking you, Hey, how did you actually have a successful transition? And so it seemed like you got so much attention that you actually wrote a book, which is gonna be the topic of what we talk about today. So you wrote a book called the, the Seamless Seamless Pastoral Transitions. And if you're listening to this, whether or not you're a pastor, I would, I would say this could also be titled Seamless Leadership Transitions, but yes, that's the focus today. And le just give us an overview, you know, why did you write this book and, and what are you hoping that leaders get out of it?

Lee Kricher ([05:22](#)):

Well, I think the first book I wrote for a New Generation was because I was getting so many questions about how our church was transformed from an aging dying church to a multi-generational church. And then once I handed the church off to a Next generation leader, which was about three and a half years ago, I started to get a lot of questions. Cuz there's so many leaders who are approaching that age where they really need to think about it really almost every age you need to think about it. But uh, particularly they're saying, how did you actually, uh, mentor and prepare this next generation leader? And how did you hand things off in a way that went so smoothly? And so that's why I wrote this book that I put into it. Everything I know about the topic.

Doug Smith ([06:08](#)):

Yeah. Um, so you in it, so I, I think I heard the statistics, I don't remember if this was from you or another leader, but at least in the church world, about 10% of successions are actually successful, which is a horrendous stat, and that leaves churches in really, really bad positions. And in the book you actually talk about six pitfalls, uh, to avoid or six pitfalls that, you know, interrupt, transition. And, you know, I'd love to go through all of them, but, um, the first one, let me just go back. The first one is just staying too long and I can you just talk more about this? You just mentioned, you know, you should pretty much be thinking about transition at every age, which few reader do. Can you talk more about how to know when to think about it and how do you know if you're staying too long?

Lee Kricher ([06:50](#)):

Well, I think that the, uh, most important thing is to recognize our mortality. I recommend even relatively young pastors to work with their board to identify an emergency successor because what happens for many churches, there is a really big change in their momentum and their mission when there's a unnecessary gap in time between the outgoing and the incoming pastor. So seamless, seamless pastoral transition is all about eliminating that unnecessary gap in time. And so even with an emergency successor that's been approved by the board, if something happens with the, um, with the outgoing pastor that's unexpected, then there is a pastor who can step in at the moment. And the congregation does not experience that gap in time.

Doug Smith ([07:40](#)):

Wow. Do you have, and you did that relatively quickly when you came back, what was the, the time period between when you came back to Amplify and when you actually named Jason? Not just as the, to my understanding, he wasn't just the emergency successor, he was like the successor. Uh, what was that period of time?

Lee Kricher ([07:55](#)):

Yeah, I came, um, I came back into full-time ministry at age 50. And so within I think four years I had Jason named as the emergency successor and he had been with me all four of those years. So I was able to invest what I could in him, and yet the board didn't name him as the permanent successor for a few years after that. Um, but again, so I'm in my early fifties and identifying an emergency successor who, and to no one surprise ended up being my permanent successor.

Doug Smith ([08:33](#)):

Yeah. And do you have any advice for leaders out there looking, uh, for an emergency slash successor? What traits did you look for? How did you end up actually knowing Jason was the one?

Lee Kricher ([08:44](#)):

Well, I think, and back a little bit to your earlier question of waiting too long of the case studies that I wrote about in the book, the average age of the, um, outgoing pastor when they did the formal handoff was approximately 65. Uh, so it ranged from early fifties to early seventies, but right around the mid sixties was the average age. That doesn't mean that's right for everybody, but at some point there is a time where you need to say, is the wellbeing of the church, especially the ability of the church to reach the next generation, would that be better served by a next generation leader? And to postpone that into your mid seventies, late seventies, early eighties, mid eighties, late eighties, almost always the church ages out along with the pastor. And so there are many reasons pastors don't, that they do stay too long.

Lee Kricher ([09:42](#)):

But I think if you love your church, you have to really start to pray and think about who could I hand this off to? Now, sharing leadership is a critical issue. If you, I had one pastor who said, um, or two different pastors, one, one who said, First of all, there's no one anywhere in our church who has any leadership capacity. And so there's nobody for me to invest in. Well, that's almost like David's father who pulled everybody aside who he thought was worth nesting in except the one that God said <laugh> is worth investing in. And you know, the, unfortunately we don't have Nathan's around or Samuel's around to point out our Davids, but we have to identify there are Davids in your midst if you're willing to look. And then sharing leadership is important. Another pastor said, I am called to preach and I will preach every weekend, every Sunday service.

Lee Kricher ([10:39](#)):

I'll go on vacation in between Sundays. I will preach every Sunday till the day I go to be in heaven. Well, you're not sharing leadership and so you'll never have a successor. So just assume that you're gonna die and the church will be left holding the bag and they'll have to figure out who that successor will be. Um, now there are times that maybe there is no one internally that you really can raise up. It doesn't give you a reason to not shared leadership. But there are times that maybe that the right person is external to the organization. And there's many ways that you can go about identifying that. But if ideally you can identify someone internally and the church can get to know them and the church can see the kind of relationship you have with them, and then when it comes time to hand things off, it's seamless. That's pretty powerful. And I think the greatest biblical example of any leadership transition is Moses is handing off to Joshua. And that's exactly how it happened.

Doug Smith ([11:41](#)):

Do you have any, any thoughts on, on timing? So I'm thinking of Jason in your, your instance. So he was a young leader, you named him the emergency successor, you know, it was clear the potential was there. And I forget, wasn't it like 14, 14 years from the time he was like named emergency? What was the time period there?

Lee Kricher ([11:57](#)):

Well, I, it was probably about 10 years from the time you name him, but he was, he was with me on staff for 15 years before he became the senior pastor. Um, and if he didn't have ans in his pants, he probably would've been, uh, there a couple more years. But we, we had some, uh, great fellowship over when the timing of the transition would take place. And he pretty much said, Hey, uh, well we had some external consultants who came in and said, You know what? Your church is ready whenever you're ready. Um, and Jason said, I'm ready <laugh>. So we actually ended up moving it up a couple of years, but there's a little bit of, uh, of intense fellowship over the timing. And you know what, that's the thing. There's nothing easy about leadership transition. The emotions particularly of the outgoing and the incoming pastor, um, are not easy to deal with.

Lee Kricher ([12:49](#)):

But God calls us to be able, if, if we don't have the maturity as Christian leaders to deal with our emotions, then shame on us, um, even if it's not easy. And so, um, I think, you know, when you talk about things that go wrong too often, uh, handoffs go wrong because of egos and it's the big ego of the outgoing pastor, you know, who can't let go or the big ego of the incoming pastor who can't patiently or

respectfully, um, wait till the right time and all of a sudden things come, come apart at the seams when they don't have to.

Doug Smith ([13:26](#)):

So goodly, I mean yeah, that's what I was curious about. You know, you have a young leader that knows, Hey, I can take this over. And oftentimes young leaders want your role anyway as it is, as a young leader. And, and oftentimes they probably think they're ready before they are. So what I'm hearing you say, at least the way it worked with you and Jason was it was just open conversations that were continual. And it sounds like it was also helpful to bring in a third party. Is that something you'd also recommend for churches?

Lee Kricher ([13:51](#)):

Yeah, and, and we brought in a third party. We had, you know, one of the great books on leadership Pastoral transition is by Vander Bluman and by, and we actually reached out to both of both of them and had input from both of them. And we really weren't asking them to, uh, intervene between us or to, to mediate between us. We were just saying, Help us to build a strong and healthy plan. And so I think it's great to have some external support and some help, and they were, they did help to prompt, uh, us to reconsider the timing of the plan. And, uh, that's what caused us to need to really, uh, work through, uh, some of the specifics. And I've, I've seen other case studies where, uh, pastors who weren't willing to let go lost an absolutely amazing successor who the church loved, totally unnecessary just to hang in there a little longer. Um, and I sometimes were incoming pastors were too disrespectful and too impatient, and they ended up losing the opportunity to be that successor because they started to undermine the outgoing pastor in one way or another and actually ended up like an olem in a way. Uh, and that's, that's just it. Yeah. The outgoing pastor can't be a Saul, um, who is threatened by the incoming leader and the incoming pastor can't be in em, who, you know, who who has to push the other one out.

Doug Smith ([15:24](#)):

Yeah. Talk about the, the senior leader. One of your other pitfalls that I love is, is handing off the baton without taking another, And I think, you know, you mentioned ego, but I also think, you know, you had a unique experience in the fact that you led the church, went to a whole different organization, led a different organization, and then came back and led. But, um, and then you out, you, you can, I would love for you to share your story of how you got to the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation, but I think there would be so much fear on the senior leader thing of, Hey, if, if I don't have this church, if I don't have this organization to lead, who am I? And, and what am I gonna do? Can you share your story and your advice to leaders thinking like that?

Lee Kricher ([15:58](#)):

Yeah, it's, Moses had the advantage over us in that right after he handed off, he died

Doug Smith ([16:04](#)):

<laugh>.

Lee Kricher ([16:07](#)):

So if we're handing off, let's say at age 65, which is when I handed off our church, you're looking at 15, 20, 25 more years of fruitful ministry. God's invested so much in you. And so for the pastor who just

says, Okay, I'm leaving, but they don't identify the baton that God is handing them, then they will have a very, very, very difficult time letting go because your identity is still as senior pastor of that church, you get so much of your value or self, self worth and self, um, uh, you, you know, the feelings that you have about your success are so tied up with those people coming up with you after Sundays and saying, That message changed my life and I am so I can't imagine life without you as my pastor. Those things, those are a huge part of our life. So to let go, it's kind of like the, you know, the person who is a trapeze artist, you have to know that there's some, uh, something coming that you're gonna grab a hold of before you let go of the other.

Lee Kricher ([17:13](#)):

And so I think it's whether it's years, uh, certainly a year or two before you hand off prayerfully discerning, I, I went to a, a life coach who really helped me to discern what my next season of ministry would be. Out of that I started Future Forward Churches, which uh, really is a nonprofit that helps churches and church leaders to navigate through, uh, church revitalization or leadership transition. But I knew that that would be a place where I could really sink my teeth into something new and serve God without regretting having let things go. Interestingly enough, within, uh, within about six months of when I handed things off to Jason, um, the door opened for me to lead an amazing not-for-profit in Pittsburgh called the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation. We bring leaders together for the common good of our city. And it really has been, in the almost three years that I've been there has been such a perfect fit, you know, like, uh, for exactly who God has wired me to be. And interestingly enough, had I not handed things off a little earlier than I was planning, that opportunity would have opened up when I could not have taken it. Wow. And so there's all kinds of things to trust that God has something absolutely amazing and rewarding for you, but you've got to work at identifying what that is and not wait until after you hand things off and deal with all the emotions of loss.

Doug Smith ([18:45](#)):

Yeah. So what I'm hearing you say is there is life on the other side of transition and it could be extremely just as fulfilling or as significant and really you just have to trust God and be open to it and even be willing to, to get help and input into that like a life coach. It sound like was really helpful. And I was gonna mention this later, but I do know you do some consulting with churches and so you mentioned Future Forward churches. If someone's listening to this and you know, by the end of the episode they're saying, Well, you know, hey, I'm starting to think through. Or maybe for the first time I'm thinking through transition, I would love Lee's input on that. How can people connect with you?

Lee Kricher ([19:17](#)):

I think just go to future forward churches.com, um, and future forward churches.com has some free resources for navigating, uh, leadership transition and navigating pa um, church revitalization. And I think you'll find some really great things. Carrie ov uh, is on there some information that, you know, a session I did with Jason about this topic and some articles that you may find helpful. And there's also a way to get in touch with me if you just wanna talk through what your situation, you're

Doug Smith ([19:50](#)):

Situ. Yeah. And so we talked about your other side that, you know, you found another baton to, to pick up after your succession, but can you talk about landing the plane with the succession once you hand off? One of the pitfalls is <laugh>, I love trying to undo the transition. Um, can you talk about what

boundaries you've set in place once you hand off the church to ensure that you know, you don't have to get back involved? Or why is that a pitfall?

Lee Kricher ([20:14](#)):

I do think that the moment that the official handoff takes place, you need to move on with your life and ministry. If you start to look back, uh, to me it's like when you return a rental car and you drive over those spikes and the sign says severe damage will occur if you back up. Severe damage will absolutely occur in every case I've seen. Um, one was a, a pastor who felt that he wasn't being honored enough by the incoming pastor. And so after a year or so, there's actually a congregational meeting where the incoming pastor was apologizing to the outgoing pastor for, uh, not honoring him sufficiently enough. He was just trying to make peace for the outgoing pastor. And the outgoing pastor, uh, ended up saying, No, that apology is not enough. I'm starting a new church down the street. Anybody here wants to come with me, come.

Lee Kricher ([21:08](#)):

And to me that person would've said if one of their associate pastors had started a new church down the street with members from their church, they would've said that was the height of unethical behavior. And, but they probably didn't realize that they were doing <laugh>. Their, theirs was the height of unethical behavior to start this church after they had publicly handed off the church to their successor. Um, so yeah, going back is unwise. And so to me, my role, uh, is very simple. I am a prayerful cheerleader for my successor. People know not to come and criticize him and people know I'm not gonna criticize him. Um, and we have a fantastic relationship, but it's not because I'm looking over his shoulder and giving him advice every day about what he's supposed to be doing. It's, it's his turn to, to lead this amazing church called Amplified Church.

Doug Smith ([22:13](#)):

So good. Lee, uh, one of the other pitfalls was failing to address financial realities. Can you, can you say more about that when it comes to transition?

Lee Kricher ([22:22](#)):

Well, interestingly enough, um, pastors often as a lot of people do, they, they fail to plan for their financial security at, at retirement. Um, to be actually complicated even more, some pastors actually opt out of social security so they don't even have that modest income to look forward to. So you have a pastor in their, in their sixties whose salary is the highest it's ever been and to provide for their themselves and their families. Um, they're looking, How am I gonna do that for the next 15, 20, 20 plus years? And so the way that they do that, if they haven't planned, is that they stay, stay much longer than just the, for the wellbeing of the church with a, they would never admit it. But a primary reason is to keep that income coming in. It's, it's, it's not something God would be pleased with, but it's, it's a reality. And I do think that many boards of churches fail a huge responsibility that in a pastor's late forties, early fifties, that either the board or a a member of the board works with the pastor to make sure that they will be secure, uh, financially by the time they're in their mid sixties or so. So the choice to stay is not forced by finances.

Doug Smith ([23:45](#)):

That is so good. Um, one of the other pitfalls, it goes back to selection, uh, is choosing a clone. And you and I both deal with leadership, study leadership, organizational leadership. And it does seem like for

different seasons, different organizations need different leaders. Uh, and the temptation with the pitfall is that we wanna choose someone just like us cause we think that's what the church needs. Can you talk about why that's a pitfall? And, and you and Jason, I I know you both, again, not as well as you know each other, but it does appear that you guys are pretty much opposites in a lot of ways and and compliment each other very, very well. Was that, was that challenging for you? Talk about, you know, choosing a clone and, and finding the right leader.

Lee Kricher ([24:24](#)):

Well, early in Jason's ministry I was, uh, trying to get him to do the right thing, which is to be me <laugh>. And so, um, I really wanted him to adjust his speaking style, his leadership style, in every possible way. Uh, and at some point we just were able to have the discussion that he was saying, it's not working. And to me it's, it's kind of like when Saul finally said to David, He can go to fight Goliath, but only as long as you wear my armor <laugh>. And it's like, David tried it on, he said, It's not gonna work for me, King Saul. Uh, and so when you try to force your successor to wear your armor to be you, it's, it's a recipe for failure and it's, it's logical. I, oh, to me, our church rebounded from a hundred some people to almost 2000 people.

Lee Kricher ([25:18](#)):

Uh, and the average age dropped by almost 20 years. So that's was under my leadership. So the church loved me as a leader, so the next person should be as much like me as possible. I mean, it's not an illogical thought and the board was pretty much the same. We need somebody just like you cuz the board is of course, loyal, um, to the outgoing pastor. But I do find that, particularly in Jason's case, when he, we, we set him free, uh, from trying to be me when he is, uh, worked, uh, to lead our city campus. And that campus grew to several hundred people, very healthy and very much under his style of leadership. And it was proof that God can bless different styles of leadership. And the most important thing for me was just to have that conviction that he was the right person. And as a result, I let go of that idea of having to form him in my image. And so he's end up doing quite well. And I do believe in studies have shown that different seasons of church life required different styles of leadership. And so I think the new this seas current season of amplified church is much, um, more served by adjacent and who God created him to be than it would be by me just hanging in there or trying to force someone to be like me.

Doug Smith ([26:47](#)):

Yeah. It's been a great joy watching both of you. Just, it's been fun watching him thrive and, and his new role and, and to see you and get to see you in action on a consistent basis at the pl f and with future forward churches has been a joy. I am curious, you know, you talked about naming an emerging successor, letting people see that early on, um, being together in leadership. Just in your, whether in your experience or with working with other churches, have you seen transitions where they just go external and find an external candidate go well in hiring a third party firm? Does that ever go well? Do you have any advice for, you know, is it better to go internal or external? Any, any thoughts there?

Lee Kricher ([27:25](#)):

Yeah, actually one of the case studies in the book that's a great example of seamless leader tra leadership transition, um, happened actually more than one, uh, by identifying an external candidate, someone who was not on church staff, someone who was not well known by the congregation. Uh, and in that situation then you need, I still think there should be an overlap of time. The shortest one in the,



of the case studies I did was approximately six weeks long were both the outgoing and incoming pastors were both employed by the church. The congregation saw them side by side and the congregation knew without a doubt that their beloved outgoing pastor was blessing this incoming pastor. And that's a, that's very powerful. And so, uh, yeah, it doesn't have to be an internal person. Uh, if, if you are sharing leadership internally in raising up leaders, at least you have a, the option for it to be an internal person. But either way, the importance of having some kind of overlap where the outgoing pastor is blessing and commissioning the incoming pastor, I think it's critical for the health of the church.

Doug Smith ([28:36](#)):

Yeah. And in processing that decision, Hey, do we have someone internally or do we need to like look externally? Is that, is that a senior leader? Uh, is that their decision to make or thought should they process that with their leadership team? Is that something they should just process with their board? Any any thoughts there?

Lee Kricher ([28:52](#)):

I, I think it happens in different ways and in some churches they're working with not just their board, but also a bishop or an external authority who needs to be a part of the process. Um, for me, I was, I prayerfully considered and watched and saw the growth of Jason and I just came to believe that this was God's plan for our church and I presented that to our board and they unanimously approved it, um, for my good friend and your good friend Jay Pa who's in heaven now. Um, when he was preparing for his handoff, he actually raised up a number of, or had a number of potential leaders go through, um, a leadership assessment that was done by ddi, the company that I worked for at one point. And the results that leadership assessment helped the board NJ to really identify who among the potential candidates would be the most effective.

Lee Kricher ([29:52](#)):

And they picked Scott Stevens, who was absolutely amazing. And again, he wasn't, he was not a clone of J in any way, but he definitely, uh, take, took Northway into their new season. And then about nine or 10 years later, he identified his successor, Dave D'Angelo, who now is taking Northway into it's next season. And so that's, uh, I think Northway Christian community here in Pittsburgh as one of the great, great examples of, uh, leaders who hold their leadership with open hands, who raise up other leaders and then hand things off at the appropriate time, all for the wellbeing of the church.

Doug Smith ([30:37](#)):

Lee, this has been so good, and again, we're discussing Lee's book, Seamless Pastoral Transitions. Again, I could also just say leadership transitions, not just pastoral. Really encourage you to get a copy of this book. Again, like Lee said, it doesn't matter what age you're at, you should start thinking about succession. And even if you're not in a senior role, you still need to be thinking about raising up leaders behind you that could take your job. So critical subject. And Lee, I want to move into the lightning round cause I don't even think we had a lightning round, uh, when I first interviewed you. Before we do, is there anything else you wanna share with leaders when it comes to succession?

Lee Kricher ([31:08](#)):

Um, not, not particularly just that no matter who you are as a leader, uh, obviously you should have, uh, you know, if you're a Timothy, you should have appall in your life. If you're appalled, you should have a Timothy or several Timothy's in your life. So a great question to reflect on is who am I being mentored

by and who am I mentoring? Because the answers to those questions say a lot about who you are as a leader and any kind of leadership transition that's coming. And that is for, as you said, more than churches. The principles that I wrote about would apply in a corporate setting, in a nonprofit setting. Uh, and yet all my case studies are in churches. So I call it a seamless pastoral transition. But anyone going through leadership transition, the principles that we find through the scriptures and through especially the example of Moses and Joshua are absolutely critical and valuable.

Doug Smith ([32:05](#)):

Yeah, and not to put you on the spot, but uh, you know, we mentioned that you worked at ddi, which worked with corporations all over the world, you know, one of the biggest leadership development companies globally. Uh, are you, are you open to working with nonprofits and, uh, for profits as well if they're listening to this? Or is it just strictly churches with your

Lee Kricher ([32:22](#)):

Capacity? Yeah, I'm, I'm pleased to do so because I've held senior leadership roles in corporate setting, in, uh, church settings and also now in a non-for-profit setting. So I can relate pretty clearly with almost any leader in the situation that they're in. Um, but I find that so many of these leadership principles are universal.

Doug Smith ([32:45](#)):

Yeah. So we'll include links to all the ways to connect with Lee if you're interested in that. We encourage you to take advantage of that. And that'll all be in the show notes. So with that said, just a few lightning round questions for you, Lee. Let's have some fun on your,

Lee Kricher ([32:58](#)):

Your trade bar ing around. Questions

Doug Smith ([32:59](#)):

<laugh> my trademark? Yeah, they've shifted a little bit, but, uh, but a few. But what is the best advice you've ever received and who gave it to you?

Lee Kricher ([33:07](#)):

Well, I think the best advice I think of is make every choice with your legacy in mind. Make every choice you make with your legacy in mind. And I heard that from Andy Stanley when we were a part of his church when we lived in Atlanta and I was still, um, uh, in, in the corporate world.

Doug Smith ([33:30](#)):

I've never heard that before. That is so good. Um, it may be the same thing, but if you could put a quote on a billboard for everyone to read, what would it say?

Lee Kricher ([33:37](#)):

It would say, make every choice in life with your legacy in mind, but underneath it would say, Lee Kreiter, because I've adopted what you

Doug Smith ([33:45](#)):

<laugh>, I'll give you full credit for that if I post it. Um, you've, uh, you're clearly a student of leadership. You've probably read a billion leadership books in your lifetime. There are one or two books that have really impacted you either recently or all the time in the leadership space that you'd recommend.

Lee Kricher ([34:03](#)):

I think one book, uh, Good to Great by Jim Collins just had a very profound effect on me as a leader. At the time I read it, I was a corporate leader, but then I carried it into the church and I've carried it with me in the nonprofit world. And I really believe that that whole principle that we shouldn't settle for good. And I think the only way we can really do that is by not trying to be great at a hundred things, but by pairing down the number of things that we focus on. But with the right number of things we're focusing on, we can do great things.

Doug Smith ([34:40](#)):

Is there anything about your journey that, that people may not know that you think they should know?

Lee Kricher ([34:45](#)):

By the way, one other book that Oh yeah. Comes to mind is Necessary endings by Henry Cloud, Dr. Henry Cloud, and especially for outgoing leaders to really deal with the emotions of letting go. Fantastic book necessary endings.

Doug Smith ([35:03](#)):

Yeah, I'll second that. I mean for both of those, but necessary endings was a game changer for me, uh, as well. So, um, yeah. What do you wish people knew about Lee Kreiter that they may not know?

Lee Kricher ([35:14](#)):

Well, probably that even though I've made some very bold and risky decisions in my life, um, even though I always did them believing it was God's will, I never could say God told me I never was a hundred percent sure. And if you wait till you're a hundred percent sure that God's telling you to do something, you'll probably be paralyzed and do very little in life. Um, so I always have acted believing that I was doing the right thing, uh, in the, in major career moves. Um, but then trusting that if I did the wrong thing thinking I was doing God's will, he would somehow bail me out. Mm-hmm.

Doug Smith ([35:51](#)):

<affirmative> I'll uh, I'll add something too, just cuz I doubt this was shared the first time cause I didn't know you as well, but one of my favorite facts about Lee that you should know is when Lee got, was invited back to, to turn around his church, cuz it was, it was struggling at the time. Uh, you came back after much prayer and you actually did a sermon. What was the, the sermon entitled?

Lee Kricher ([36:11](#)):

Well, the sermon right before the congregational vote was 10 reasons You Should Vote No For Me as your incoming Pastor <laugh>. And it was, that was during David Letterman's time. And so it was a top, it was a David Letterman list and 10 reasons to Vote No, uh, I wanted to make sure that everybody was really clear that I wasn't coming back as the pastor. I was in the eighties and I wasn't coming back to keep things going the way they were. The church had one foot in the grave and we had to do some

dramatic things. And so, um, it it, it was a, a truly monumental sermon and 93%, I think of the people voted yes, that's amazing, but at least they knew what they were getting into.

Doug Smith ([36:55](#)):

So, hey, if any of you were looking for jobs or interviewing, that could be a great way <laugh> to put people in your interview. I love that.

Lee Kricher ([37:03](#)):

Let me just say, I still had my corporate job at the time and if they had voted me, um, I was very happy to return to that job. So I, I may not give that advice if you, depending on your circumstances.

Doug Smith ([37:18](#)):

That's beautiful. Uh, in this season of your leadership journey, is there anything keeping you up at night that challenges you?

Lee Kricher ([37:25](#)):

I really sleep pretty peacefully these days, but I do, I, my passion is to make an impact and I do wanna make sure that to whatever God has invested in me, I'm still making an impact from now till the rest of my life. I was on the phone today with Reed Carpenter who founded Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation, who founded the Amen to Action, um, movement, you know, that is feeding thousands and thousands of people and he's still going strong in his mid eighties influencing people in a positive way for Christ. And I wanna be the same way.

Doug Smith ([38:01](#)):

Yeah. You mentioned that you sleep good at night. I don't, this just came to mind when you said that, at least in my experience, observing your leadership, you pretty much always remain calm under pressure. I don't know if you're calm internally, um, but any advice, I think a lot of times, especially young leaders that are listening to this, we put, and this happened to me and led to a mental breakdown, was the amount of pressure that we put on ourselves. Especially when we're facing stressful situations. We don't sleep well at night where, you know, all the mental health issue leaders are facing now, anxiety, you know, and all of your experience now, you've been leading for decades now. Uh, any advice for leaders on how to, to deal with stress and and to be able to sleep all at night?

Lee Kricher ([38:40](#)):

Well, I think as a young leader, I, I was up all the time <laugh> because I thought it was all on my shoulders. And of course it is on your shoulders to some degree, but it's really on your shoulders to do the very best you can do in your current circumstances. And once you do that, at some point I learned to say, God, I have to put the outcome of this into your hands. Um, I can't, you didn't build me to carry this as a weight, as if everything depends on me making every right decision and, um, making every right choice, uh, because it's just, it's just not the way life is. And I think I used to think of God's will as being the kind of thing, whereas if you make the wrong turn, you're off course for the rest of your life. Um, but I think of it much more now like a gps where you turn the GPS on and it never says, Why the heck are you there, <laugh>? It just speaks you from exactly where you are. Wow. And take takes you to where you're supposed to be. And I think every day, every month, every season we are turning on the GPS and saying, God, you know where I am now, but where do you want me to go?

Doug Smith ([39:55](#)):

Yeah. You talked about getting off track. I don't often get to ask this question in interviews, but do you have a favorite failure or something that you went terribly wrong that either you learned, uh, you know, an invaluable lesson from, or that turned into a success in the end?

Lee Kricher ([40:09](#)):

Uh, yes. In my late twenties and early thirties, our church had grown from a bible study to about a thousand people. And I did take it all on my shoulders, a building project, the staffing, everything else. And I thought it was all on me and I did it to the detriment of any real focus on my marriage and my family. And I end up leaving the ministry the first time at that time because my marriage fell apart. And so, um, this idea that somehow, you know, my leadership requires me to steal the time from my marriage and my family if I'm gonna be a great leader, uh, was a was was false. And both things can be true. Um, fortunately we're heading next year into our 48th anniversary and so yes, um, we've been able to recover from that season and God opened the door for me to go to DDI where I became their vice president of leadership development and learned leadership in a way that has benefited me the rest of my life. So even after failure, god's not done with you? Absolutely. God is not done with you. But, uh, if you can avoid it <laugh>, especially the trauma that comes to with marriage or family trials and failure, then it's best to focus on that and don't leave it on the side and hope it all works out.

Doug Smith ([41:40](#)):

Wow. That's so good, Lee. You get to spend time with a lot of leaders. I I joke with everyone that, you know, once you transition from the church and we're taking over the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation, I think you met with every significant leader in the city of Pittsburgh. Again, like a a three week span. I was super impressed with your networking skills, but uh, you get to spend time with a lot of leaders. I'm just curious, is there a go-to question or two that you always ask when you get to spend time with someone that you look up to and admire in leadership?

Lee Kricher ([42:06](#)):

I, I pretty much will ask, um, if it's, if it's someone who I would look to as a mentor, I just ask them, you know, how do you see yourself leaving the kind of impact that God wants you to leave? If I'm talking to a leader who's, uh, looking to me as a mentor, I'll pretty much be asking them, Who are you mentoring? Who are you bringing alongside of you? Um, because there should be one or two or three people who every meeting you go to, you take 'em along, every conference you go to, you take 'em along, you know, you go out to dinner, you take 'em along, you're investing and, and they're, um, shadowing you in many ways. And that's to a great degree how your legacy will live on beyond you.

Doug Smith ([42:52](#)):

So good. I'm looking forward to this, this next question as a favor, but I wanna hear your answer. What's your biggest leadership pet peeve?

Lee Kricher ([43:01](#)):

Um, I think my biggest leadership pet peeve is when people who call themselves leaders take on the role of critics instead of take on the role of learners. And everybody needs to decide at some point in your, in your leadership, are you gonna be a critic or are you gonna be a learner? Cause you will not be both. And um, so to me, when I see someone who has decided they're going to be a critic, I feel bad for them, for the people they lead and for any future that they really have, um, and what they're gonna lead

behind. It's way too easy to descend into that role of critic. Um, but even the people who I would naturally tend to criticize, I say, God, what can I learn from that person? And when you're in a learning mode instead of a critic mode, the the sky is the limit.

Doug Smith ([43:52](#)):

Now, I don't know if you have a bucket list or not, but I do know you enjoy great experiences and, uh, I'm just curious, I've been asking people, what's something that you've done in your lifetime? It could be anything that you think everyone should experience before they die.

Lee Kricher ([44:05](#)):

Well, we, we love travel and so we just find that the travel we've done, we've, I think gone to, I know Linda has, I think both of us have gone to all 50 states and visited. Wow. Um, we've been to every continent except South America and Antarctica, which is, that's on our bucket list. But I do think that God's creation screams about his majesty and his reality. And as you travel around the world and meet all kinds of people and whether we've been in the Alps and I've been, uh, diving on the Great Barrier Reef and it's like, wow, God's creation is so amazing. And then when we think about our temporal and how temporal life is, it is absolutely impossible that heaven would be more boring than Earth. Hmm. And so I can't even imagine what heaven would be like when I've seen what I've been blessed to see here in God's creation.

Doug Smith ([45:05](#)):

And if you could go back and have coffee with yourself at any age, what age would that be and what would you tell that version of Lee if you would've actually listened that could have made a difference?

Lee Kricher ([45:14](#)):

Yeah, I probably, that would've been my late twenties and I would've said what I was saying earlier, paying attention to your family life is as important as, as your success in ministry. And I probably would've said, Oh, thank you very much. And then ignored it. But nevertheless, that that's what I would've tried to, to shake my younger self to, um, avoid hurting others.

Doug Smith ([45:39](#)):

And I'm, I'm sure I asked this in my first interview with you cuz this was one of the original questions, but you talked about make every decision with your legacy and mind. I'm just curious, as you've shifted into another season of leadership in your life, what do you want your legacy to be at this point?

Lee Kricher ([45:55](#)):

I think it pretty much is that I led well and that I, um, elevated countless other leaders to lead Well.

Doug Smith ([46:07](#)):

Anything else you wanna leave leaders with today?

Lee Kricher ([46:10](#)):

No, think I'd be with you. It's he and he and just know that he is.

Doug Smith ([46:16](#)):

Thank you so much, Lee. This was fantastic. I hope everyone goes out and buys a copy of your book and I hope the people will reach out to you, uh, to get some consulting cuz we all need to take transition seriously. So thanks again and hopefully we'll do it again sometime.

Lee Kricher ([46:28](#)):

Thank you Doug. God bless.

Doug Smith ([46:30](#)):

Well, hey, Leader, thank you so much for listening to my conversation with Lee. I hope that you enjoyed it as much as I did. You can find ways to connect with him and links to everything that we discussed in the show notes [l3leadership.org/344](https://l3leadership.org/344) and Leader is always the new year coming up. And I want to challenge you that if you want to tenax your growth in 2023, then you need to either launch or join an L3 leadership mastermind group. Mastermind groups have been the greatest source of growth in my life over the last seven years. And if you don't know what they are, they're just simply groups of six to 12 leaders that meet together on a consistent basis for at least one year in order to help each other grow, hold each other accountable and to do life together. If you're interested in learning more, go to [l3leadership.org/masterminds](https://l3leadership.org/masterminds). And as always, I like to end every episode with a quote, Dan Sullivan who said this recently. He said, You should never expect any opportunity to be given to you unless you give value to other people. And that's what we're all about here at L3 Leadership is adding value to people. Well, hey, we hope you enjoyed this episode. Know that Laura and I love you. We believe in you and we say it every episode. Keep leading, Don't quit. The world desperately needs your leadership. We'll see you next episode.