

Josh Gagnon ([00:00](#)):

And here's what I learned though, that God's delays are not God's denials and that God often prepares us in the field so that he can promote us to the, to the palace. And I had to understand that, like I had to understand that, that while I saw it as dead time, God was doing more in me in the last few years than he could have done through me. Had I not been through that Valley?

Doug Smith ([00:23](#)):

This is the L3 Leadership Podcast, episode number 259.

Doug Smith ([00:38](#)):

What's up everyone. And welcome to another episode 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 in today's episode, you'll hear my interview with Josh Gagnon. And I actually didn't know Josh prior to a friend connecting us. And I'm so grateful for the connection because I learned so much in this interview. And now I'm starting to follow Josh and everything he's doing in the leadership space, in the church space. And now it's just so much fun to learn from him. And you're going to love this conversation for those of you who don't know. Josh, let me just tell you a little bit about him. Uh, Josh is the founding and lead pastor of next level church, which is regularly recognized as one of the fastest growing churches in America.

Doug Smith ([01:19](#)):

He's known widely for his unique, authentic communication style that helps the hope found in Jesus relevant to people of every background, his latest book, it's not over released in February of 2020. And he and his wife, Jennifer raised their two sons in New Hampshire. And we spent a lot of the conversation talking about his new book. It's not over. And this is a book that I believe every leader needs to read because here's what I know leaders have dreams and they have visions. But oftentimes if they're going to see those come to pass their dream and their vision is going to die multiple times throughout their life. And it's what you do in the moments when your dream dies, that will determine whether or not you actually see it come to pass or not. And so this whole premise around it's not over and your best days are ahead of you. You're going to love hearing Josh talk about this leader, go out and check out the book. But before we dive into the conversation with Josh, just a few announcements.

New Speaker ([02:11](#)):

This episode of the podcast is sponsored by Beratung Advisors, the financial advisors at Beratung Advisors, help educate and empower clients to help make informed financial decisions. Find out how Beratung Advisors can help you develop a customized financial plan for your financial future. Please visit their website at beratungadvisors.com. That's beratungadvisors.com. Securities and investment products and services offered through Waddell and Reed, Inc., Member FINRA, and SIPC. Beratung Advisors, Waddell and Reed, and L3 Leadership are separate entities.

Doug Smith ([02:53](#)):

Hey leader, we tell you all the time here at L3 Leadership that you should never do life alone, but in community. And that's why I want challenge every single one of you to become a member of L3 leadership. When you become a member of L3 Leadership, you will have access to our community of leaders who are willing to encourage you, support you and hold you accountable for going after your goals. You will also have access to monthly live webinars that we do with nationally known leaders,

monthly Q and A and hot seat hours for our members where you can troubleshoot the issues that you're having with your goal and get live real time feedback on them to help you develop a plan to overcome those issues. You'll have access to every course that we ever create. You'll have access to every L3 One Day talk we've ever had, and so much more. And all this is available for just \$25 a month. In fact, we believe so much in the product that we are willing to give you your first month for just \$1 that's right. If you sign up today at l3leadership.org, your first month of membership is just \$1. Don't go another minute without having a community of leaders to what you can go to and grow with. Sign up today at l3leadership.org.

Doug Smith ([03:59](#)):

And with all that being said, let's dive right into the interview.

Doug Smith ([04:02](#)):

Well, Hey Josh, thank you so much for being willing to do this interview. And why don't we just start off with you just telling us a little bit about who you are and what you do,

Josh Gagnon ([04:08](#)):

Man. It's good to be with you. Thanks for having me excited to hang out. I am in new England right now. I started a church in 2008 called next level church. We started with 12 people and a dream in our heart least church region of America. Uh, and so it's definitely not the place they call it, the pastor's graveyard. And so I heard something like 93% of church plants die within the first three years. Yeah. But, but I don't know who really comes up with those stats. So I don't know. I don't know who of show true that is, but that's what I heard. And so, um, yeah, I passed her. I pastored at church. She started 2008. I was an underdog, never went off to Bible school, the typical way nobody ever said, like this, guy's going to go off and do big things for Jesus. I just wanted to start a church from my basketball playing friends. Wouldn't want to go. And, and, um, and we have many locations now, uh, all throughout new England and now in the South in Florida, uh, married to my wife, Jennifer, and we have two boys Malakai and Nehemiah. We made sure he named them Christian names. They can be really like Jesus. And then, yeah, we'll see if that was kind of corny to think that all kinds of Christians do that. So I like those names, but I do think it's kind of corny that we knew that. Uh, and, um, yeah, that's about it. I mean, I like, I like golf. I like my wife, uh, like I like the church I lead and um, I try to, uh, try to do life in an authentic way. Cause I think that's where we're most like Jesus.

Doug Smith ([05:38](#)):

Yeah. I mean, I definitely had that more into that story from being an underdog and starting with 12 people to where you are today. Uh, and I know you wrote a book recently called it's not over. And uh, and I know you basically talk, the whole book is about people's dreams and how to go after your dreams and what to pursue, what not to, why not to give up. And I just want to dive into this. So we'll just start broadly and then dive into a little bit of your story. Why did you write this book?

New Speaker ([06:01](#)):

Yeah, I wrote the book because when, well, let me, let me tell you really where the, where the, where the title of the book, the editors didn't, didn't take this, like, you know how, when you write a book, the editors go in and they take what they want, beat it up. I don't know. I don't know why they didn't take this part of the book because I thought this was, this was, this was on point, but whatever, they're the professionals, they like the book. And so they know what they're doing, but I'll tell you where the title

came from. My friend was a pastor of a church. Who's a pastor for two, for 20 years. Just a great, a great guy, very close friend of mine. And he made a horrendous mistake.

Josh Gagnon ([06:36](#)):

Um, a mistake that I don't condone, one that I think should end you up in prison and it did. And, um, um, for him being in prison, he made a horrible mistake and I'm of course no longer a pastor. And he went to prison and here I am watching this guy who made a about a 30 minute mistake, um, that now defines his forever and everybody swims downhill because now he's the pastor who made this horrible mistake and we don't want to be associated with him. I feel like when everybody swims downhill, it's the opportunity for Christians to swim up river, right? When every swim. So I was swimming up river and just loving on him. And so, uh, I was the first person to ever visit him in prison. And it's the first day he could have a visitor. I was there and we sat down and for two hours we talked about life and he was just like, I can't believe this.

Josh Gagnon ([07:22](#)):

How did I end up here? I have two daughters on my wife. Like I just, you know, the heaviness of that moment, we're sitting at table number seven and we're just talking. And then after we get done talking, I hug him and we're allowed to hug for three seconds and I just squeezed him. And I said, it's not over. And he said, I'm not sure. I believe that. And when I got to my car, I was driving home. And that those words were like, just so heavy on my heart that anybody could ever live truly believing their best days are behind them. And that their future is now simply just a shadow, living their futures now gonna have to live underneath the shadow of their past. Like I was so disrupted in my spirit. So as I'm driving, I'm seeing people pump gas. I'm seeing people ride bikes on the road.

Josh Gagnon ([08:09](#)):

I'm seeing people in their lawn. And I just felt like each person I saw I was carrying this spiritual weight of, of, of, of, of brokenness wondering, are they believing that like, what if we live in a world right now, which I'm not going to say, I think we do. We live in a world right now where most people, most people are just limping through life wounded by their past. I went to a zoo in Florida with my kids and they were like, dad, there's a bald Eagle. Come and see it. And I talk about this in the book and we run over to see the bald Eagle and it's just chilling on a stump. And I thought it was like a robotic one. At first I read a sign that said it's been injured and can no longer fly. And once again, I there, I just stared at this bird that was once the King of the sky.

Josh Gagnon ([08:58](#)):

It flies 10,000 miles. You think at 10,000 feet in the air, like when the, when the plane says you can now use electronic vise devices, that's what a bird, that bird look out your window. That's what the bird can see. 10,000 feet high spots. It's prayed from that distance. This King of the sky is now in a zoo, sitting on a stump, injured, wondering what it would be like to fly again. And once again, that heaviness of thinking, how many people, how many leaders are now living their life grounded yet God has called us to soar in the reason we live grounded is because the past has talked us out of the potential of the future. The truth is as none of us are born with a dream life, that's grounded, we are taught that our dreams should be grounded by the wounds of the past.

Doug Smith ([09:46](#)):

Wow. It's such a powerful premise. I'm curious to ask you, uh, my pasture, uh, you know, all throughout our twenties and constantly told us like, listen, if you have a dream and a God given dream, it's going to die multiple times. He said, I'm just telling you, there's going to be days where you just want to throw in the towel, give up. And so since we kind of started there one, have you ever experienced that the death of your dreams from church planting to where you are now and what was that experience like? And then from that, can you just encourage people who may be like your friend sitting in this place of my dreams dead. I thought, I thought God was going to use me in significant ways and now that's never going to happen. So I just might as well crawl into a hole and just stay there.

Josh Gagnon ([10:25](#)):

Yeah. I've never had a dream that didn't die or at least I've never, I don't know if I've ever had a dream that didn't seem to, I'll give you two of them really quick that it really close to my heart when I, so I told you I was, uh, I was, uh, I was a basketball player, just an athlete in school. I went to school so that I could play sports. And so when I went off to college, I played college basketball and I didn't go off the Bible school yet. When I came home, my mom said, Hey, there's a pretty girl at the church. You should go to church. I was like, fair enough. And so I go to church with my mom and, uh, trying to try and to see this pretty girl. Next thing I know I'm running the soundboard at the church.

Josh Gagnon ([11:02](#)):

I had never been to Bob's when running this sat, I never ran a soundboard, but we know in the church, if you have like fingers, you're the sound guy, right? It's like, you can do this. And so, you know, I'm running the soundboard, never been to Bible school. I'm sweeping for student, for youth group. We called it. I'm sweeping every, every, every Wednesday and getting the room ready. I'm just serving. And I felt like my heart for the things of God were just swelling. But every time I'd bring friends to church that were unsure. So they'd be like, yeah, man, it's not for me. And I'm not putting down that church at all, but it was not geared towards people who had never been inside of, of the gap of a gasoline. And it just wasn't geared for that, which is fine. Not every church needs to be.

Josh Gagnon ([11:45](#)):

That's, that's a vision thing for me. It just, it wasn't geared to that. And so, you know, I'd bring fat, fat friends and they were like, yo, I don't know. I'm not interested in that. And my heart started to break fast. So I started taking schooling online. I didn't tell anybody I was watching preaching online. Right. Never told it or not online on television. And I never told anybody and I'd be in my car, preaching the lights out, like just burning inside of me. I'm like giving altar calls. I'm crying at stoplights. Like nobody. And I'm like, no, you never heard preached a message in my life. God's doing this in me. So I say all that to say, we're on the 10th hole of a golf course with my pastor, just me and him. And this would be the first time I tell anybody in my life that I feel called and I'm taking Bible courses that I feel called to preach the gospel.

Josh Gagnon ([12:30](#)):

And I tell, I tell the pastor and I was running a drywall company at the time, my dad's. And he goes, I said, I really feel called. He goes, I think you should stick with drywall. So I'm like, man, I ever opened my heart up to tell us how to do it. And so that could have crashed the dream like that. That's a moment where that dream felt dead. Um, and now we pastor a church, you know, with a lot.

Doug Smith ([12:54](#)):

How did you respond to that? Cause some people that would cripple them and they would just stick with the drywall.

Josh Gagnon ([12:58](#)):

Yeah, it did cripple me. It, it embarrassed me. I'm a super insecure man. I struggled with insecurity. I've never felt good enough. I always feel unqualified. I am unqualified. Um, and so it, it wounded me. Um, but, but the thing about a God-sized dream is, is, is it doesn't go away, right?

Josh Gagnon ([13:17](#)):

So it didn't just go away because he spoke those words of death, a dream that was built inside of me, for me, by me, it can easily be put out by a little bit of scattered water from others, but a dream that's deep inside your soul. That's been birthed by God. It's something that, that, that, that, that the, the sprinkling of water from somebody's voice can't easily put out. Now we can distract us. It can discourage us and it can cause us to kick the can down the road and never step into it, but you're still gonna feel it in there. And so, um, you know, we, we, we continue to move forward and he's been the next level plenty of times. And it's kind of a joke, you know, we have thousands of people, so he's got great work. And so it's just kind of funny. He's like, do you bring them on stage and be like, what's up?

Doug Smith ([14:03](#)):

Yeah.

Josh Gagnon ([14:03](#)):

So that's next weekend. So we, uh, so that's the first thing about the book. It's not over another time. So this is another dream. And a lot of leaders can relate to this. That was that first dream felt that I had to keep pursuing it. And there was many times in the story of next level, I've cried in bathrooms. Wondering if it's all over, we haven't had resources to continue. Like, like don't, don't fear opposition embrace opposition, because any dream worthy of chasing is going to have the recipe of opposition that just comes with the, with, with, with, with a God-sized dream. And so, um, with the book it's not over here, we are now in new England least church region of the country and Asian reaches out to me and says, Hey, listen, if you ever thought about writing a book, I was like, yeah.

Josh Gagnon ([14:47](#)):

I mean, I make con I write content every weekend and people here for 30 don't remember it 10 minutes later, nice to put it on paper so that I like, Oh, it lives the weekend. You know? So we he's like, I'll get, you we'll get a book deal, God, blah, blah, blah. And so we go to every major publisher and every single publisher was like, no, no, no, no. Finally he gets back to me. He says, the last publisher said that every, no, every leads dried up. He's like, we're not getting the book deal. I'm like, why? He's like they say, because you're in new England, it's the least rich region of America. And they sell the least amount of Christian books in that region. They're afraid of signing an author in that area. And I was like, man, and man, I tell you that's when it felt dead.

Josh Gagnon ([15:27](#)):

Right. So a year later, uh, I think a year later, um, another agent reaches out, Hey, have you thought about writing a book? I read that email and I did not get back to that for one year. For one year. I didn't get back to that email. But yet once again, that fire in me wouldn't go out. So a year later now I finally write back to, to Alex who's who's, who's my agent. I write back to Alex and I said, okay, I'm interested

in talking now. He said, what took you so long? I said, I didn't want to face the fear of rejection and failure again. Like I can remember when I found out that everything was a no, the first time I cried, I didn't tell my wife. I was embarrassed. I felt like a failure. I really believed it was of God.

Josh Gagnon ([16:07](#)):

And when nothing opened up from it, I couldn't understand. Like I shook me and he's like, well, listen, let's go after it again. And then this next time we got six offers from all the biggest Christian publishers. And here's what I learned though, that God's delays are not God's denials. And that God often prepares us in the field so that he can promote us to the, to the palace. And I had to understand that, like I had to understand that, that while I saw it as dead time, God was doing more in me in the last few years, then he could have done through me. Had I not been through that Valley? Like the book, it's not over it, wasn't going to be that book. It wasn't even that wasn't even the book we tried to get done a few years ago. It was a completely different book that would have stunk.

Josh Gagnon ([16:51](#)):

But this book now is such, it's a better book because I allowed God to do something in me. So I would just say to all leaders, I think we have to embrace the seasons in the Shepherd's field. And, and here's the thing it's in the Shepherd's field prepared for what God has already prepared for us. And I often forget that because I think I belong in the palace. I think that I've been gifted for the palace, but the reality is it's it wasn't that David's giftedness. It wasn't that David wasn't gifted for the palace. It was this. It was that he had to embrace the shepherd field in order to get to that place. And so never underestimate what God's doing in you in every season so that he can someday do through you, what you would only imagine he would do. And I love this part. If we're going to talk about David, let me throw this in right quick. I love this part. This is for all leaders listening that want to move on to something different someday. Okay, don't miss this. This is for every leader. It's not been in a book. This is not book stuff. This is, this is just a thought for every leader that ever wants to think they want to move on to something different than what they're doing right now.

Josh Gagnon ([17:57](#)):

I love this. The Bible says that when David left the shepherd field to go to his brothers, to the battlefield, the Bible says that first he found someone to care for the sheep. Then he went to the field to visit his brothers. And we know he took down Goliath. So remember this never leave the assignment God has you in right now, unless you find someone else to care for it. Tend to what God's called you to now, and then got to move you to something different.

Doug Smith ([18:26](#)):

You, uh, you mentioned several times throughout, you know, when you were just sharing the stories that you've battled with insecurity. And I don't think there's a leader on the planet that hasn't, uh, you know, now you've written the book, right? You've proved the critics wrong. You, right. You got over you overcame rejection, but I'm just curious. Uh, what are you, what have you learned and what are you learning about overcoming insecurity as a leader?

Josh Gagnon ([18:47](#)):

Yeah, I haven't overcome insecurity as a leader. Um, um, I mean, I feel insecure every time I see a leader with a lot of hair, uh, to be honest, cause I don't have any, anything like that. And so like, I'm still trying to figure out how to lead in my own skin. Like, you know, I look at, it's so hard in the, in the media day

and age we live in with, with preachers online with, with comparing everybody all the time. And you know, the moment you go on Instagram, you see everybody else's preaching clips and you can feel not good about your own it's it's a day and age where we're so easy to feeling secure for me. What I, what I'm pressing into more is just realizing that God has created me uniquely. And if I embrace that, I am created uniquely by God.

Josh Gagnon ([19:31](#)):

I can be unique in what he's called me to do. And he hasn't called me like my friend, my friend, I'm not going to drop names, but I've got friends and pastors and leaders that are pastoring the largest churches in America. Well guess what? Or writing the bestselling books in America. Well guess what? That just may not ever be something that I do. And I think it's when you feel okay saying, God, if that's not what you have for me, that's not what I want for me. That's how I started overcoming security. It's it's by, it's not, it's not by chasing down what others are accomplishing. It's about finding security and what God's called me to accomplish. There are so many leaders out there in today's day and age that are trying to chase down, being the next Michael Todd, right? The next guy who's blowing up on Instagram out of nowhere.

Josh Gagnon ([20:16](#)):

But the next Steven Furtick who 10 years ago blew up or you name it and these are friends. These are great. Great, great. Well, Steven is, these are great, great, great men of God that I admire. And I, I celebrate what God's doing. They are blowing up for Jesus and God is using them in magnificent ways, but it's not for me now to wait for my next chance or my opportunity to do that. And I think if leaders stop chasing down what others are doing and just say, God, use me how you want to use me.

Josh Gagnon ([20:42](#)):

I promise that the recipe of every leader that leaders are chasing down at recipe of that leader, that they're chasing down was a broken heart, submitted to what God had for them. And that's why God's using them in that way. So I say, I would say for me, it's helped me to just simply say whatever, God, I don't have someone I'm trying to be like, I don't have somewhere. I'm trying to go. I don't have something I'm trying to accomplish. Other than just use me. God will be faithful every day. I'll just send to stay faithful. And I'll let you worry about the fruitfulness and where you take it.

Doug Smith ([21:15](#)):

I love that. And I feel like those insecurities in comparison can lead to external pressure, but you also lead an organization. That's grown a lot in the past decade. And I'm just curious, you know, leadership comes with a lot of stress, a lot of weight, a lot of responsibility. Uh, I'm sure you've had sleepless nights with that. I'm just curious. What do you do to actually handle all of that?

Josh Gagnon ([21:35](#)):

Yeah. I have a great team and I know that sounds cliché, but honestly I have surrounded myself. I'm not that sharp. I'm just really not like I get around other guys that are doing what I'm doing and I'm like, don't compare yourself. Like I know I can hit a driver better than them on the golf course, but I know I can do much else better than them. Right. So for me, it's like I have. I have adopted the, the, the, the truth of surrounding yourself with people that are just better, uh, better at what you're not good at. Right? So, so I surround myself with those types of people. So on our team, man, we just got some really sharp people that carry the burden with me. And I haven't always been good at carrying the burden and

the sleepless nights, but you know, things like this virus that we've all gone through, man, if it's taught us anything, it's taught us like this is God's kingdom, that this is God's church and that this is still what he's in control of.

Josh Gagnon ([22:26](#)):

And if it's taught me anything, it's taught me that I can let go of what God has, has allowed me to manage. And remember that he's still the owner of it. It's when we try to own what he's called us to manage that we carry a burden that we shouldn't carry, um, of a hero of mine, friend of mine, you know, mentor, uh, Gordon McDonald. He's in his eighties now he's written some great books and we're just super close. And uh, I got together with him. I was super stressed a couple of years ago and he looks at me, he goes, Josh, he's, you know, looks across the table. He goes, do me a favor. I said, what's that? He goes open up your hands. So I opened up my hands. He goes just like that. I'm like, all right, I know you're getting old, but I think you just finally lost it. You know, you just go, Hmm. I bet that's how your father in heaven likes to see them. I bet that's how he likes to see your hands when it comes to the things he's asked you to manage. And I thought, all right, I'll get better.

Josh Gagnon ([23:31](#)):

And so, you know, open hands when it comes to what God's called us to manage, recognizing that he's the owner of it. We're just the manager of it allows that burden to get placed back on the owner's shoulders and not on the managers.

Doug Smith ([23:43](#)):

Can you, can you speak more about that into go and letting your team, what have you learned about building great teams and leading it? And I'm just curious, you know, um, if you have a great team around you, what do you primarily focus on? Like what are your top responsibilities?

Josh Gagnon ([23:55](#)):

Yeah. Culture. Um, and so I think, I think the reason we have a great team, I do think we have a great staff. Um, we focus more on culture than we do vision. I think one of the difficulties within the church or any organization for a long time was vision, vision, vision, vision, everybody's writing books on vision, have a vision. And for me, I think vision is pointless outside of a culture that can carry it. Right? So culture would be the foundation of vision stands on. You can tell me where you want to go and you can tell me your dreams. You can tell me your hopes. You can tell me how you're going to get there and the vision you have. And so we get around as leaders and we say, listen, we've got to give a talk on the vision. You've got to tell them the vision we basically were saying was, we're going to inspire them.

Josh Gagnon ([24:36](#)):

We got to inspire them with where we're going. For me, culture is the actual ingredients that, that, that can find or, or, or, or, or that pulls together, um, the vision. And so for me, it's the land, the language we use it for me. It's, it's, it's the yes culture. Uh, for me, it's the, it's the culture of honors. The culture of respect. It's the culture of, of you never present a, a problem unless you have a solution and all sorts of cultural things that we built within the ingredients of who we are. Now we can say we're heading somewhere, but we actually have the tires on the vehicle that can get us there. And I think for a long time, we talk about mission. We talk about culture. Well, Oh, I'm sorry. We talk about mission. We talk about vision. Well fine. But culture, culture is the ingredients that helps get you there. So I would say, uh, we focus really, really hard on, on building a culture, which has allowed us to build a strong team.

Doug Smith ([25:34](#)):

Yeah. And tactically on building the culture. What are some things that you do to build that culture? Is that weekly staff teachings, is it, I'm just curious from a tactical level.

Josh Gagnon ([25:42](#)):

Yeah. So you would hope so. So tactically, yes. We have three meetings or, or team, you know, team meetings, but I would say this and I don't want to sound like cliché. I don't want to make it too. I don't want to make it too abstract. So, so forgive me for doing so. But when you build a strong culture through those meetings, you would hope 10 years later, um, the culture support stealth daily every minute, every moment of every day. Right? So you would hope that tactically, yes. We still have staff meetings and we still teach culture, but really how do we keep the culture moving? We've taught it, we've ingrained it within the, within the hearts of those that are here. So when you're walking down the hall, you pick up the piece of paper because it's part of our culture. When you're walking down the hall and you hear, if you were to hear the word, I can't, you would have someone coming and they would correct that culture.

Josh Gagnon ([26:33](#)):

And so I would say, it's just, it's just now it's who we are. So, so let me say it to you this way, many organizations need to develop the culture so they can become who they hope to become. Other organizations have a culture that when something from the outside steps in, it stands out, it stands out like a sore thumb. Right? For instance, if you were to go to Chick-fil-A, which I love Christian chicken, and if you were to order something and they were to say, and you would have say, thank you. And they would respond back. You're welcome. You immediately would hear that if you, if you go there enough, because it's outside of their culture, they respond. It's our pleasure, my pleasure. Right? Because culturally that's their language. So the moment someone were to say, you're welcome. It would stand out. And everybody in the entire Chick-fil-A organization or in that building would look over at them like what is wrong with them?

Josh Gagnon ([27:18](#)):

So what Chick-fil-A did is they had the practical, the practical moments that taught the culture. But then remember this, it's not always that hard because as soon once your culture becomes who you are now, it's actually easy to manage it because culture manages itself. When it's been ingrained within the organization. Deep enough. Now, everybody who knows the culture takes care of the culture. That's not that that takes care of those who are outside of culture, if that makes any sense. So right now we pretty much just let the work that we've done and yes, we continue to push in on it. Yes. We continue to spit truth in on it. But more than anything right now, you just stick out like a sore thumb. If you're not part of what it is we've created.

Doug Smith ([28:00](#)):

Wow. Um, before we go into the lightning round, I just want to shift gears a question. I've been asking leaders because I feel like this is what God's been doing with me about all year long. Is what are you learning about leadership and rest?

Josh Gagnon ([28:13](#)):

Yeah, so I was actually about two months, two or three months ago. I can't remember the exact year. It wasn't this year. I was outside of running and I was jogging and this book was coming out. It's not over

was, was being released. And, um, at the time I didn't even have an Instagram page. You know, now I've got all of that. I never wanted to build my own platform because I felt dirty doing it. Um, I wanted to, I just wanted to be faithful. Uh, I felt, felt kind of dirty, trying to be a guy, trying to build a platform. I want to God to build it. And now he's done a pretty good job of that as of now. Um, and I was running, I was feeling super insecure. I was feeling somewhat discouraged and I was just praying. And I said, God, would you speak to me?

Josh Gagnon ([28:59](#)):

Would you just speak to me now? Some leaders out there like, you know, you hear from God, like every day, super strong. Uh, I hear from God every day through the conviction of the spirit, speaking to me through the guidance of the spirit, but I'm talking like a God moment where like the God of heaven, you're sure that was from God. I don't get that every day. And I was running and I felt like, God said, funny, you'd ask. I felt like God said rest now. There's only been maybe 10 of those moments in my life. Maybe less where it was like, everything stopped for a moment. Like you just know, like God just spoke. I almost a point where you're like, was that audible? Like we're talking like a moment with God and it was rest. And I'm like, rest. I'm like, are you kidding me?

Josh Gagnon ([29:43](#)):

Like the book's coming out next week. I'm traveling the country, speaking everywhere, rest like you've got and I'm running and I'm frustrated now. Then I stop and I start looking up arrest. And of course, we come to the moment of scripture where Jesus says, come to me, all of you who are burdened and heavy and I will give you rest. And I looked up that word rest in. What I loved about that word was God wasn't telling me that I needed physical rest. If you look up that word, what it means is it means peace. It means peace. And so what God is saying, there's come to me. All of you who are wearing a heavy burdened, and I will give you peace, take upon my yoke, take upon my burden. And he says it again and I will give you peace. And so for me, um, what I'm finding as I'm leading this organization, as I'm writing this book is, is I don't need more sleep.

Josh Gagnon ([30:33](#)):

I need more peace. And the only way to receive more peace is by truly trusting, once again, that God is fully in control. Like if this book flops and I give it my all, now I'm not talking about sitting on our hands. Like, I'm totally against that. Like, I'm totally the guy that's like, listen, if you want to see something, go dig some ditches so that God can send rain. Like, like I always say this, pray with a shovel in hand at the end of the day, like, don't be the dude just praying for water. Neither dude, praying for water. Be the girl, praying for water with a shovel in hand. And so I'm simply not saying like, just go and just have peace in your hot chocolate with marshmallows in it and just wait for God to move. I'm saying, get out there, shovel, write a book hustle. But at the end of the day, if you're hustling, you're digging ditches. It's not up to you to send the rain. It's not up for you to God, for, to sell books. So live in peace, knowing, knowing that God will do what God will do in your life. Like God God's got this and if he doesn't do what you hoped he'd do, it's still okay. Because he's probably doing more in you now, then he's doing through you so that he can do more through you in another season.

Doug Smith ([31:42](#)):

Yeah. Before we dive into the lightning round, is there anything else you want to say about the book? Where can people find it and anything else you want to leave leaders with regarding it's not over?

Josh Gagnon ([31:50](#)):

No. Just you can buy it anywhere. Books are sold Amazon. It's a pretty good book.

Doug Smith ([31:54](#)):

Yeah. So we'll include links in the show notes. We encourage everyone listening to this, go buy a copy right now. And don't spy copy for yourself. Think of five other leaders that you would, uh, could impact with the book and get a copy for them as well.

Doug Smith ([32:06](#)):

So just with the time we have left, we're diving into the lightning round, just a bunch of fun questions. I love to ask readers. And the first one is what is the best advice you've ever received and who gave it to you?

Josh Gagnon ([32:14](#)):

Wow. All right. First thing that came to my mind was I was talking to Craig Rochelle. And, um, it was probably eight years ago. We were on the phone, uh, talking and he said, um, wherever you are be all there. And this wasn't a season where we had just planted the church. I was struggling to be a dad of a one year old and a two year old. Um, I felt like I'd be at home, but I wouldn't, I'd be there, but I wouldn't be there as leaders. We know what I'm saying. My mind is somewhere else and be wherever you are, be all there. And so I would say that that's the best, some of the best advice I've ever gotten as a leader, because it's allowed me to live in every moment. I think the greatest gift we can give anyone as a leader or as a person is our presence. I think our presence is the greatest gift we can give someone. Yeah.

Doug Smith ([33:02](#)):

Well, thank you for being all here for this interview. It's going awesome so far. Um, if you could put a quote on a billboard for everyone to read, what would it say?

Josh Gagnon ([33:11](#)):

It's not over.

Doug Smith ([33:14](#)):

That's awesome. Um, what is the best purchase you've made in the last year for a hundred dollars or less? Other than the book, "It's not Over"

Josh Gagnon ([33:27](#)):

The best purchase I've made would be sip worm, uh, for bass fishing. Uh, it's been killing it, forming there on the lakes.

Doug Smith ([33:37](#)):

I love it! Here's another one other than your own book. Uh, what's the number one book you give away? Most softener has impacted you lately.

Josh Gagnon ([33:45](#)):

Um, I love the book, but of course by Gordan MacDonald, he's a hero of mine. Um, ordering your private world, I'd say is the one that I've been giving away. I've always given away the most, um, drawn, uh, I'm drawing a blank on one that I'm reading right now that I really what's the book I'm reading now Water to Wine. Okay. Um, it's definitely like, it's one of those books that you have to filter your own beliefs through. Right. But I like those type of books. I don't like the books that just align with everything. I think I like the books that cause me to actually like, okay, this is good. There's a tension. So water to wine is something I'm reading right now. That's a, that's a on-point.

New Speaker ([34:24](#)):

If you've listened to podcasts, what are your go tos?

Josh Gagnon ([34:28](#)):

Oh, Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast. Uh, the Joshua Gagnon leadership podcast. Just kidding. That's it.

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

Hey, you can promote your own. It's great.

Josh Gagnon ([34:36](#)):

Uh, Adam Weber, I'm looking at my top ones right now. Carry new hops. Could close friend of mine. Um, Andy Stanley. Uh, and then I liked, I liked the crime ones. Like the, I like the crime ones. You guys like those, you get into any of those?

Doug Smith ([34:51](#)):

I have not. No. I recommend one. I'll download it today. What recommend your top crime podcasts?

Josh Gagnon ([35:01](#)):

Bear Brook. That's legit. It's a good one. And you get to have some podcasts on that, on that list. Right?

Doug Smith ([35:08](#)):

Are they like murder? Mysteries? Are they true stories? Like

Josh Gagnon ([35:11](#)):

Your stories, true stories. Watching life. It's like watching a 48 hours or unsolved mysteries. My parents used to watch that one. What music kept me up at night.

Doug Smith ([35:23](#)):

I'm with you, man. I couldn't sleep, uh, that in the Exorcist. I couldn't anyway. I don't know how I saw that move for. I was like 10, but anyway, um, what do you wish people knew about your journey that they may not know?

Josh Gagnon ([35:41](#)):

We worked really hard to get here. I think a lot of times people look from the outside and they think to themselves, like I want to do that, or I want to see that. And I think the closer I've had the opportunity of

getting to some of the people that we all look up to, the more you realize nothing's nothing's been handed. And the other thing is, is, is nothing's quick. Most people are like 30 year success stories or 10 year success stories. Uh, Bethel music is a big band in the Christian world. And I read something that it was like 15 to 20 years before they ever were known. And it's like, you know, we, we consider an overnight success story, you know? Um, and so I think, I think it's a whole lot of hard work and it's not an overnight success story. There's a lot of faithfulness, a lot of tears, a lot of brokenness, a lot of fight, a lot of moments of disbelief, a lot of moments of doubt, but it's getting up, you know, cleaning off your shoes and going to work again.

Doug Smith ([36:33](#)):

Yeah. Do you have a favorite failure in your journey that led to success in the long run?

Josh Gagnon ([36:41](#)):

I would say, uh, I would say just because we're thinking about the book, I would say failing on that first book led to this book, which I think God's been using it in big ways. Um, there was a time if you got 30 seconds, there was a time where I was in a meeting upstairs and I'm a pretty passionate person. Like I played basketball, I played sports. And when you get in the locker room, you like yell at each other, you know, all we got and I can't remember, it was about maybe eight years ago. Um, there was a weekend where the air conditioning went off and nobody was prepared in the stage stunk and everybody was, and I was so frustrated. I went into a, I called a meeting. And at the time we may have had only like 13 staff or something. I called the meeting.

Josh Gagnon ([37:23](#)):

I brought them in. I was like, this can't happen. What is going on? And I took like a board and I didn't like throw it at anyway, way hard down on the desk, you know? So mad, almost like a coach right now. My heart wasn't like impure, but I was just, and I got done that meeting. And one of my, uh, one of my executive team members said, pastor, we know your heart, but the bigger this gets, you have to remember, not everybody does. And so they see you in that moment as someone who's angry and uncontrolled and frustrated, but what they don't see, you cry, they don't see you praying. They don't see, they don't see the character. They just now see the person. So you have to be careful. I would say there's a pretty big failure that day. I should've never, I shouldn't, you know, I didn't do anything lacking integrity.

Josh Gagnon ([38:10](#)):

You know, I'm not, I didn't have this big moment, but, but I look at that a lot. And I remember that that's the moment I changed the way I led or I never, uh, I remembered that people have to have to see my character before they're going to trust me in my imperfections. And so I have to make sure that I lead people different. I can't lead the new hire the way I lead the person who's been here, 10 years person. Who's been here 10 years and knows my heart. And I could say on, we got to get, what are we doing? I could say that. And they're going to be like, you got it, man. Cause they know my heart. They know that I'm on the field, bleeding with them. But the new hire that I look at and say, come on, we gotta get better.

Josh Gagnon ([38:45](#)):

They're feeling feel very, and they're seeing me as upset and I'm not. So I had to learn in that moment that, that Josh, if you're gonna, if you're going to leave for the long run, you're going to have to make sure you lead people by the level they know your, they know your inner character.

Doug Smith ([38:58](#)):

You get to spend time with a lot of great leaders. You've mentioned several on the podcast. Do you have a go to question or two that you always ask? No matter who you get a meeting with?

Josh Gagnon ([39:06](#)):

I always ask about their heart. Like what's God teaching you. Um, how how'd you overcome insecurity or how are you overcoming insecurity? So I always ask questions. I never ask. And I mean this too, when I say the word, never, like I never asked ministry questions, never. I don't even care. Like I don't put don't even care.

Josh Gagnon ([39:26](#)):

What's working in California right now. Cause at the end of the day, then a matter to me, like I really don't even care. What's working up the road right now. If I'm being honest. Cause I'm just gonna, you know, I'm all about wisdom, but we're just going to keep doing what we're doing the best we can do it. What I care about is how to get to the end of this thing on it with a marriage that's still, you know, on fire with, with kids that still loves me and Jesus. I just want to figure out how to be whole as a man. I think the greatest problem we're ever going to face is, is leaders who, who are broken as men, but look whole as leaders. And I think that's a dangerous, dangerous reality to live in.

Doug Smith ([40:00](#)):

What's your greatest leadership pet peeve?

Josh Gagnon ([40:05](#)):

Um, bringing problems without solutions. So I can't stand being in meetings where everybody's talking about the problem, but nobody has a solution. So we have a rule on our team. You're welcome to bring problems, but you have to have two solutions for every problem. And they don't have to be the solutions we go with, but you're not going to show up empty handed. There's no, nothing worse than someone that sees all of the problems, but never has a solution. And so we want to create a culture. So my biggest pet peeve was B would be those, those, those problem finders, but not solution finders.

Doug Smith ([40:35](#)):

Do you have any unusual habits that make you successful?

Josh Gagnon ([40:40](#)):

I sleep like 19 hours a day and I'm only awake for not kidding. That's amazing. Teach me. Yeah, no, I, I don't know. I don't, I don't know what, when a leadership habits would be. I think, um, it's hard because I, I think that, uh, I just am who I am. Um, Leadership habits, you know, I would say, what am I in leadership habits if you were to ask and if I look into it, I would just say, um,

Josh Gagnon ([41:08](#)):

I'm a friend. I lead, I lead with who I am and I lead how I am. There was a day where I used to think I needed to, for instance, preach a certain way or have my message. Like Andy Stanley prepared 17 months in advance. And the more, the more I got to realize that I'm Josh Gagnon and I work more in the moment than I do out ahead when it comes to message preparation it's okay. So I would say when it comes to leadership, I'm the same way I'm kind of in the moment. Like I don't a habit I have is stepping in everybody's office and just asking how they're doing. And I kind of lead in those moments, like, like I don't necessarily have to call a meeting to lead, but I try to just get in every moment in everybody's life. And I just throw in little leadership things. So I think a habit I have is the day is a day of leadership. Opportunity. Not meetings are opportunities.

Doug Smith ([41:54](#)):

What's something you've crossed off your bucket list that everyone should do?

Josh Gagnon ([41:58](#)):

Iceland, Iceland. Everyone should go to Iceland. Everyone should go to Iceland. I was just talking about this morning, Iceland, if you haven't been Iceland, you probably have. You probably will miss out on some of the greatest views in swimming, in hot rivers and just beauty, beauty. So Iceland, I crossed off my bucket list.

Doug Smith ([42:21](#)):

What's one thing left on your bucket list.

Josh Gagnon ([42:26](#)):

I'm hunting elk. Nice. I want to, I want to go hunting for elk.

Doug Smith ([42:34](#)):

Love it. If you could go back with your 20 year old self, what would you tell a 20 year old Josh?

Josh Gagnon ([42:40](#)):

I would say you're going to overestimate what God can do in the immediate. And you're going to underestimate what God can do through a lifetime of faithfulness. I'm going to say, I'm going to say, I'd say Josh, would you calm down a little bit? You're psycho. Like God gave God. God gave you a dream. That's way too big for you to accomplish in a year. So why in the world are you putting the pressure on yourself to accomplish a new year? I would say calm down, calm down. You think everything's going to happen in the next six months, chill out, just be faithful. She has to be faithful. Just stay faithful and watch what God can do in a lifetime of faithfulness.

Josh Gagnon ([43:18](#)):

You're going to overestimate what he's going to do daily, but you're going to underestimate what he could do through a life of faithfulness daily.

Doug Smith ([43:26](#)):

And after a lifetime of faithfulness, looking back, what do you want to be remembered for?

Josh Gagnon ([43:29](#)):

=being a good dad? Being a good husband, being a good friend. I don't really, I don't really care if people thought I was a good preacher. Honestly, I don't really care. I mean, being a good leader, I'd like them to look back at me the office days and being like, you know, when I was broken in, my marriage was hurting. Um, this, this pastor who had a big staff came over like, you know, last year, uh, one of our new staff members, uh, basement was flooding and I went over and I helped shovel it out baskets and stuff. And he was like, I can't believe you'd be here.

Josh Gagnon ([43:58](#)):

And I was like, you're kidding me. Where else would I want to be? So I think, I think, I think the problem with celebrity preachers and pastors is they do, they become a celebrity in their own, in their own environment and that's dangerous. And I had no desire to be that. And I'm not that. Um, so I think when it's all over, I just want people to say like, you know, he was just a good friend. He was just a real authentic man. And in my kids, um, my kids love me and my wife loves me.

Doug Smith ([44:25](#)):

Anything else you want to leave leaders with today?

Josh Gagnon ([44:28](#)):

You doing better than you think you are doing better than you think you are. Stop putting all the pressure on yourself. Stop trying to stop, trying to accomplish today. What God's called you to accomplish in a lifetime of faithfulness and stuff. Giving up in the delay is, does delays are not God's denials.

Doug Smith ([44:44](#)):

Well, Josh, this was a great interview. I hope everyone goes out and buys your book. And I thank you so much for your time this morning. And thank you for being all here.

Doug Smith ([44:54](#)):

I'd like to thank our sponsor. Henny jewelers. They're jeweler owned by my friend and mentor John Henney, my wife, Laura and I both got our engagement and our wedding rings at Henny jewelers. And we absolutely love them. Not only do they have great jewelry, but they also invest in people. In fact, they give every engaged couple of books to help them prepare for their marriage. And we just love that. And so if you're in need of a good jeweler, check out Henne Jewelers hennejewelers.com.

Doug Smith ([45:25](#)):

I'd also like to thank our sponsor. Babb, Inc. Babb is an insurance broker, a third party administrator and consulting firm led by my friend and mentor Russell Livingston Russell was extremely passionate about developing the next generation of leaders, which is why he's partnering with us on this podcast. And he's also opened up his office is here in Pittsburgh to host our monthly leadership events. And we are extremely grateful for that. The nonprofit that I work at light of life rescue mission started using Bab as our insurance broker around three years ago. And we've had an unbelievable experience with them and we highly recommend them. So if you or your organization has any insurance needs, please check out and learn more about that at babbins.com. That's babbins.com.

Doug Smith ([46:13](#)):

Well, Hey everybody, thank you so much for listening to my interview with Josh. 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 at [inaudible] leadership.org forward slash two, five, nine, as always. If this episode made an impact on your life, please share it on social media and let us know what your key takeaways were and leave us a rating and review on iTunes. It really does help us grow our audience and reach more leaders. So thank you in advance for that. And as always, I like to end with a quote and I'll quote, John Maxwell and John Maxwell said this. He said, we can only improve what we are aware of. That's why it is so important to have people in your life who can help you make you aware of your blind spots. We all have blind spots and we need to surround ourselves with people who can tell us our blind spots so that we can grow and develop. So leaders, I hope you enjoy today's episode Laura, and I appreciate you so much and we will talk to you next episode.