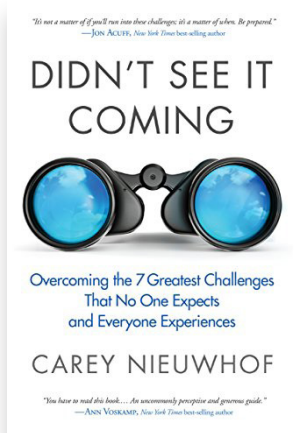


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Carey Nieuwhof is a speaker, podcaster, thought leader, and founding pastor of Connexus Church in Barrie, Ontario.

Didn't See it Coming

THE NUTSHELL

WaterBrook 2018

Introduction

Cynicism, compromise, disconnection, irrelevance, pride, burnout, emptiness—none of these need to be your final story. You can see them coming. You can identify them when they arrive, and when you name them, they lose some of their allure as well as their power.

PART I: CYNICISM

Most cynics are former optimists, as nearly everyone starts life with a positive outlook. How do you battle cynicism when discouragement and despair are once again knocking at your door? An incredibly effective antidote to cynicism is curiosity. Curious people are never cynical, and cynical people are never curious. Curiosity is a discipline, and it's a viewpoint. If you can adopt a curious outlook day after day, you will discover that cynicism never gets a toehold.

PART II: COMPROMISE

Lack of character kills careers, shatters families, ruins friendships, and destroys influence. Your lack of character will limit the intimacy, joy, and depth you experience with God and with people. Character, not competency, determines capacity. Here are three ways to change your character from the inside out.

Didn't See it Coming

- *Take Responsibility.* As soon as you start to admit that you're the problem, you start to make progress.
- *Make Your Talk Match Your Walk.* If you simply make your talk match your walk, the gap between who you are and who you want to be becomes smaller almost instantly.
- *Put Yourself First When It Comes to Personal Growth.* The time you spend working on your character is an investment that pays back in every aspect of your life.

PART III: DISCONNECTION

We all carry the illusion that we're deeply connected through our devices, yet at the same time our obsession with our own stories is leading us to ignore others and to refuse to confess our root problems. It's no wonder we feel so disconnected. Ditching technology is not the real solution to our problems.

Confession is a conduit to connection. The challenge is to stop blaming others and to take responsibility for your own sins. Once you begin confessing your sins, you'll begin to see yourself as the problem and God's transformation of you as the solution in your relationships. It will also reduce your self-absorption and self-justification. You will begin to develop a heart for others, which should transform your conversations and begin to foster better relationships. Life-giving conversation is a back-and-forth exchange in which people take an active interest in one another.

PART IV: IRRELEVANCE

In light of the fact that the next generation will almost always be better/faster/stronger, how do you fight irrelevance? You keep changing, learning, and evolving. Change staves off irrelevance. I know this sounds simple, but it's not, which is why so many people struggle with change. Change isn't easy at all, and there's something deep inside you that will keep resisting it. That's understandable but when you resist the status quo, embrace radical ideas and approaches, study the culture, and surround yourself with younger people, change becomes a way of life.

PART V: PRIDE

Pride is an obsession with self. Unaddressed pride will destroy many of the things you care about or know you should care about. It will leave a trail of destruction strewn with things you used to value or that a better version of you would treasure.

Nothing kills pride like humility does. Only humility can get you out of what pride got you into. Gratitude fosters humility because it moves you out of the role of the star in your story. The humble take the low place, intent on serving rather than being served. Humility also learns from others by

Didn't See it Coming

keeping its notebook open. Finally, humility pushes other people into the spotlight. It's never jealous. It delights in the success of others.

PART VI: BURNOUT

More than a few of you reading this know you are on the edge of the cliff we call burnout. What's so perplexing about burnout (and especially low-grade burnout) is that more than a few of the symptoms strike people as "normal." So how do you recover from burnout?

The anecdote for burnout is best summarized for me in a single sentence I developed as I worked through my recovery. Live in a way today that will help you thrive tomorrow. If I'm going to maintain wellness and avoid burnout again, I need to live in a way today that spiritually, emotionally, relationally, physically, and financially will help me thrive tomorrow. Nobody else is responsible for your health. You are. Pray, read your Bible, seek life-giving friendships, replenish your energy, eat right, work out, love deeply. These things nourish your soul. If you don't do them, nobody will.

PART VII: EMPTINESS

Jesus got to the essence of the frustration we all feel and proposed a rather radical solution: "If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it." In other words, the very thing we fear most—surrendering control of our lives—is the key to life. Wherever you find yourself spiritually, ask yourself this question: Which kingdom am I living for? Left unchecked, I will always live for the Kingdom of Me. Even as a Christian, I can let my prayer life and my overall life quickly become "My kingdom come; my will be done." If I pray for my will to be done, I get more of me. If I pray for God's will to be done—I get more of God. In all honesty, whose kingdom are you pursuing?

I encourage you to put Christ at the center of your mission. Maybe you already do that, or maybe you're not quite there yet. I know for sure that the emptiness inside you will go away only when you decide to stop making life all about you. You need a mission bigger than you.