

Holly Tate: [00:07](#) Welcome to the Vanderbloemen Leadership Podcast. I'm your host, Holly Tate, Vice President of Business Development here at Vanderbloemen. On today's episode of the Vanderbloemen Leadership Podcast, I get to talk with Shawn Lovejoy, Founder and CEO of [couragetolead.com](#).

Holly Tate: [00:22](#) Before we get started, though, we want to thank the team at Twelve:Thirty Media, who produced today's episode. Twelve:Thirty Media can help you transform the worship experiences at your church. So check them out today at [twelvethirty.media](#).

Holly Tate: [00:36](#) Now as CEO of [couragetolead.com](#), Shawn is passionate about coaching leaders, pastoring pastors, and helping them all conquer what keeps them up at night. Shawn previously served as founding and lead pastor of Mountain Lake Church in Cummings, Georgia. He was also the directional leader of [churchplanters.com](#) and leader of the Annual Velocity Conference.

Holly Tate: [01:00](#) He is also also the author of the Measure of Our Success and Impassioned Lead Pastors and Be Mean About the Vision: Preserving and Protecting What Matters. Shawn and I discussed how he began coaching leaders fulltime through [couragetolead.com](#) and what it looks like to have courage as a leader, biblical examples of leadership, and struggles that leaders face.

Holly Tate: [01:23](#) This interview is so much fun because Shawn has been a personal friend and a friend of Vanderbloemen for many years. So tweet your takeaways from today's show using #Vandercast and join our Facebook group where we post behind-the-scenes content. We'll post today's show notes, links to where you can register for the upcoming Courage to Lead live conference, and a behind-the-scenes video in the Facebook group. You don't want to miss it. Check out the Facebook group in today's show notes. Now without further ado, here's my conversation with Shawn Lovejoy.

Holly Tate: [01:57](#) Well, Shawn, thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to be with us today on the Vanderbloemen Leadership Podcast.

Shawn Lovejoy: [02:10](#) Great to be with you, Holly. You know you guys are some of my favorite people and favorite partners.

Holly Tate: [02:15](#) Well, we feel the same way. I feel like everyone should know who you are by now because you've been on our podcast before, you've been a partner of ours for a long time, and you have the claim to fame as William's first client. So I know he and you have a little bit debate about that, but but I'm on your side. You're first.

Shawn Lovejoy: [02:34](#) Yeah, he says I was his second and I say I was his first. So we're close either way.

Holly Tate: [02:40](#) Exactly. But for people who don't know about you yet, can you give us a little bit of background about who Shawn Lovejoy is and how you got to be leading Courage to Lead?

Shawn Lovejoy: [02:49](#) Sure. I like to refer to myself as a spiritual entrepreneur. I was a real estate developer, God called into vocational ministry, moved to Atlanta, started a church, 1999. I've been a church planter, mega church pastor, started coaching pastors in 2001. That whole enterprise became bigger than our church. I just knew at a certain point I was a pretty good pastor, I was a really good coach, and we made a prayer-filled decision to hand our church off.

Shawn Lovejoy: [03:20](#) Vanderbloemen helped us with that. We started coaching leaders full time almost five years ago. Now we coach ministry and marketplace leaders to greater health and growth, those are two things we're passionate about, through couragetolead.com.

Holly Tate: [03:36](#) That's awesome. And it's not just you. You've got coaches all over the country, right?

Shawn Lovejoy: [03:40](#) Yes, we do. We scaled it. One of the best things I did was I built this whole thing around my personality. But at the same time we have a process and a great system and we get to coach leaders all over North America.

Holly Tate: [03:53](#) That's awesome. Well, Shawn, I mean I've known you now for about seven and a half years, because that's how long I've been at Vanderbloemen. And so, that's how long I've known you. And it was really cool to watch you walk through ... Listening to the Lord and realizing, "Hey, it's time for me to step away from leading this church and step into my calling to really coach leaders." Now to be able to see you doing that in both ministry and marketplace is so cool to watch. We're just cheering you on from the sidelines all the time.

Shawn Lovejoy: [04:21](#) Well, thanks. You've had to be a courageous leader as well in many ways.

Holly Tate: [04:25](#) Well, that was a great segue because I wanted to just spend our time today really talking about this idea of courage and courageous. It's a word that I know is really big on your heart in the sense that you named your company Courage to Lead. So I want to talk about that concept of courage. How would Shawn Lovejoy define courage?

Shawn Lovejoy: [04:47](#) Yeah. Well, I actually spent a lot of time with this. If you're going to name an organization Courage to Lead, you better have a working definition of courage. And so, I spent a lot of time just researching what courage means to different people and from different resources. Probably my favorite definition of courage that I found out there early on was just the fact that courage being defined as the ability to do something that's difficult or scary or step outside your comfort zone, I eventually came to land on this definition. I believe courage is refusing to allow your emotions to paralyze you ...

Holly Tate: [05:27](#) Oh, man.

Shawn Lovejoy: [05:28](#) ... because anytime you do something scary, your emotions cause you to shrink back. [inaudible 00:05:37] one of my mentors, coaches is Sam Chan, in a Mexican restaurant in Buckhead, Atlanta, when he said to me these words, which I found out he stole from someone else later, but he said, "Shawn, change is hard because we often overestimate the value of what we have and we underestimate what we might gain by giving that up."

Shawn Lovejoy: [05:57](#) I was scared to death to hand off a healthy, great thing that I had birthed and pioneer something new. But I just believed there was just something in me that thought, "Man, maybe there's more out there, even more." And there has been, and I praise God I didn't let fear paralyze me.

Holly Tate: [06:15](#) That is amazing, I love that, of refusing to let your emotions paralyze you, or the emotion of fear. Is that what it was?

Shawn Lovejoy: [06:24](#) Emotions, period, because if you're honest, when you're thinking about doing something big, or let's say have a courageous conversation, let's say it's in your marriage. They're doing something that frustrates the heck out of you and you've got to figure out a way to talk to them about it. God, there's all these emotions and your mind's going crazy. You'll get

paralyzed and you'll avoid that conversation. But that's not good for your marriage either, or your staff, by the way, or your team, whatever it might be. So it's refusing to allow any emotion you feel to paralyze you from doing what needs to be done.

- Holly Tate: [06:58](#) That's so good. So in your experience coaching both ministry and marketplace leaders, are there any patterns you see where you see these amazing leaders who maybe from the outside are very successful in whatever that might look like, whether it's money or whether it's growth or attendance? Are there patterns that you see of areas where they're experiencing fear or letting their emotions paralyze them?
- Shawn Lovejoy: [07:25](#) Yeah. As a leader that leads a team, one of the most difficult things you'll ever do is wear that hat of being their boss and their buddy. And so, I feel like a lot of times we don't have the conversations that we need to have because we want to be liked. You could even take that as a parent to say, "I want my kids to like me." But I have to choose every day with a 21, 16, and a 15 year old? I have to choose to be respected over liked very often these days.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [07:58](#) But the worst thing I can do is just say the only things that make me popular. As a leader in a mega church or a multimillion-dollar company or a nonprofit, we shrink away from having the conversations that need to be had for fear that we're not going to be the most popular person in the room that day.
- Holly Tate: [08:19](#) So it sounds like having those difficult conversations are where you see patterns across the board, no matter what industry it's in, where leaders really struggle.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [08:27](#) Yeah. We work with a lot of leaders in fast-growing organizations, and they're processing out loud with me sometimes about a team member. My first question is always, "Have you raised this issue with them? Can I just tell you, four out of five, maybe nine out of 10 times?" They say, "No, no. No, I haven't talked like this to them." I'm like, "Well, why?" You owe them the integrity, if you're wrestling with it, to talk to them about it. But fear will keep us from doing that.
- Holly Tate: [09:00](#) Well, one phrase that you are famous for here at the Vanderbloemen team, I think everybody on our team has heard this before, is giving your last 10%. Can you talk a little bit about what that is and what that has to do with having courageous conversations as a leader?

- Shawn Lovejoy: [09:14](#) Yeah. I actually think I heard Patrick Lencioni say it the first time at a conference, and I thought, "Wow! That will preach." I took that and ripped it off and have made it better and written books about it and everything else. But most people say 90% of what they're thinking, but they hold back that last 10% out of fear of rocking the boat, out of fear of being fired, out of fear of not being popular, being awkward, whatever.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [09:38](#) I just made a commitment years ago to have the last 10% conversations in all my relationships. That includes my marriage, with my kids, with my parents. But it includes my team. I think you've heard me say this before, but probably everyone else hasn't. When I was a pastor, I told all my lead guys, I said, "Listen, I'm never going to go home and say something to my spouse about you that I'm not willing to say to you. That's how honest we're going to be with each other." It's a commitment I keep to my team today.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [10:11](#) But guess what I need from you? When I frustrate you, not if I frustrate you. I'm an eight on the Enneagram. We frustrate in our sleep.
- Holly Tate: [10:20](#) Me, too. Shawn, we've never made that connection before. We're eights.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [10:23](#) We frustrate people in our sleep, Holly.
- Holly Tate: [10:26](#) We do. Yeah. Everybody.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [10:28](#) So it's not if I'm going to frustrate you, it's when I frustrate you, I need you to come talk to me. Don't go talk to somebody else. Venting is not biblical, profitable, helpful. Come talk to me about it and let's work it out. Those are just some of the characteristics of a last 10% culture.
- Holly Tate: [10:48](#) Yeah. So what about that person out there that's listening right now, and maybe they're on staff at a church, maybe they're at a business, maybe they're running a nonprofit, and they're saying, "Shawn, that sounds amazing. I would love to be led by a leader who I can give my last 10% to, but I've tried that before and I've gotten in trouble, or I feel scared." What would you say to that person?
- Shawn Lovejoy: [11:10](#) Well, first of all, I tell senior leaders all the time, or really anyone who leads a team, you should not listen to most people in your organization.

- Holly Tate: [11:18](#) Wow! Tell me more.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [11:20](#) As a pastor, you shouldn't listen to most people in your church. You should only listen to people that you know love God, love the vision, and love you. They have to meet all three requirements. But if you find a few people that you know love God, love the vision, and love you, you need to listen to them.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [11:41](#) So if you're a second, third chair leader, what do you have to do to your leader to get them to trust you enough to speak the last 10%? You need to let them know with your words and actions that you love God, love the vision, and you love them. They've got to know you're for them. If they don't trust your heart and they don't believe you're for them, they're not going to listen to you. So you've got some work to do most of the time there to let people know that.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [12:09](#) Then when and if you share your last 10%, you need to overtly communicate that. "Hey, I want you to know I love you. I love the vision. I want you to know that I've prayed about this and I want what's best for you, and that's the only reason I'm sharing this," and then you share it. I tell leaders all the time that one of the reasons we are not courageous in our conversations is because we make their response our responsibility.
- Holly Tate: [12:36](#) That's good.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [12:36](#) We make their response our responsibility. But the truth is, in God's eyes, their response is not our responsibility. Our responsibility is to be a person of integrity and honesty. They've got to decide how they're going to respond. The truth is if I'm not honest with them, they may never find the help that they need to get better as a leader. So I've got to find the space and the environment, the timing and the tone to open up and be honest.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [13:01](#) Now I would just say this. If you've tried that a few times, it could be you, because you're viewed as that person that's not for them. But if you come to the conclusion, man, I've communicated, they know it, I've acted it, I love God, love the vision, love them, they still won't listen to me, I would not work on that team, to be honest with you, because life's too short. To be honest with you, great things are not ahead for that organization if you're working for an insecure leader that won't accept feedback from their team. It's not going good places.

- Shawn Lovejoy: [13:31](#) Why are most organizations not growing? Because they've chosen not to have courageous conversations, and the leader has nobody who can help him or her identify their blind spots. You and I both know, if you think about it in that way, that organization is not going anywhere special in the future-
- Holly Tate: [13:48](#) Nope.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [13:49](#) ... because you're creating yes men, yes women who carry out orders. There's not a collaborative environment. There's a fear-based environment. No one person's that good. No one person's that good. So I wouldn't be there for long if I didn't feel that there was that environment being fostered.
- Holly Tate: [14:07](#) That's so good. I know you just gave that some listeners today a lot to chew on, Shawn, and honestly maybe some freedom for some people who felt stuck or frustrated or confused or fearful. Then also challenge some leaders that are listening today who really need to be able to create cultures of feedback and be courageous as a leader and have those hard conversations. Then listen when someone's being brave and courageous enough to have that hard conversation with them. Sometimes I think, as leaders, we forget how much courage it takes. It really does.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [14:40](#) Yes, yes. I tell leaders all the time if you get defensive when someone tries to share that with you, one, you just shut down your best opportunity to get better. Two, you're creating a culture of fear and stagnation within your organization because none of us are going to get better.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [15:00](#) I really think discipleship is like me giving Holly permission to point out my blind spots and you giving me permission to point out yours. Like iron sharpens iron, one friend sharpens another. So we've got to cultivate that. We've got a mind for that on our teams. If we'll do that and create that kind of environment, man, that's when synergy and sparks fly and things get better, in my opinion.
- Holly Tate: [15:25](#) That's awesome. What are some other biblical examples of this concept of courageous leadership that you can give us today?
- Shawn Lovejoy: [15:32](#) Well, I think a lot of times we pray for protection, "God protect me," Acts chapter four. That's not what the early Christians prayed for. They said consider their threats and enable your servants to speak with boldness. So instead of praying for God's

protection, just pray for the courage and strength that you need to say it the right way.

- Shawn Lovejoy: [15:53](#) Now I will say this, okay? Jesus was also full of grace and truth. We teach this in our coaching when it comes to organizational health. Most of us are either truthers or gracers. To a fault, gracers avoid conflict like the plague, sweep everything under the rug. Truthers, on the other hand, we just say what needs to be said, and if they need counseling to get over it, so be it. That's their problem.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [16:19](#) But Jesus was full of both. He was full of grace and truth. My wife is a gracer and I'm a truther. So I've had to help her stretch that muscle to speak up more. If you're a gracer, you need to speak up more. If you're a truther, you need to shut up in the name of Jesus more, and you probably need to find a trusted gracer you can run things by.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [16:39](#) Once I've decided I'm going to go talk to a team member about something, or one of our coaches about something, or any human relationship about something, I'm not going to hide it from them. I'm going to go and talk to them. I will go and talk to my wife first. "Okay, baby. Here's this issue. I'm going to talk to them about this." She's a gracer. I'll run what I'm going to say through the filter of a gracer, and she usually says, "Whatever you do, Shawn, don't say it like you just said it."
- Holly Tate: [17:03](#) Yeah, especially as Enneagram eights, we need people like that in our lives who can help us soften that truth telling sometimes.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [17:15](#) So you do it the right way.
- Holly Tate: [17:15](#) [crosstalk 00:17:11]. Exactly. You have to do it the right way.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [17:15](#) You can be right and not be righteous about it.
- Holly Tate: [17:17](#) That's good. You can be right, but not be righteous. That's really good, Shawn.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [17:21](#) Yeah. I think both is required. Both is required. A lot of prayer, a lot of wisdom goes into that.
- Holly Tate: [17:28](#) Yeah, absolutely. Okay, so we've talked about when you're creating a culture of courage, we've talked about having courageous conversations. What are some other elements that you see in teams or leaders that are really living into this concept of being a courageous leader?

- Shawn Lovejoy: [17:44](#) Well, it flows over into decision-making. Hi, my name is Shawn. I'm a recovering perfectionist. I feel like every T has to be crossed, every I has to be dotted, every potential pitfall and potential way we could fail needs to be thought through before we move forward. It's paralysis by analysis. An organization cannot grow faster than the pace at which it makes decisions. Think about that.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [18:18](#) So my observation in working with a lot of fast-growing ministries, and now a lot of fast growing companies, they make as many or more bad decisions as stuck companies and churches. But they even correct those decisions more rapidly because they make that decision, too. All the churches we work with that are stuck, the companies we work with that are stuck, they overanalyze everything, and they're afraid to make a decision because of the way two or three people are going to respond. It paralyzes you. It paralyzes you.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [18:52](#) Remember, the definition of courage is refusing to allow your emotions to paralyze you. You're never going to get 100% buy-in. If Jesus didn't, hello? We wait until everybody's okay with it until we move forward. We're getting further behind every day.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [19:12](#) So you're not going to make the right decision the first time. Almost never. Almost never. But great organizations, that doesn't bother them. We're building the plane as we fly, and that's okay. As long as we don't hit the ground, we'll be all right.
- Holly Tate: [19:29](#) That's so good. Yeah. So conversations flows over into decision-making. Anything else you want to leave with us today as we think about creating a culture of courage?
- Shawn Lovejoy: [19:38](#) Well, obviously, I mean I run a coaching organization, so I think coaching and mentoring, outside perspective plays a large role in this. Success is found in many counselors, Proverbs says in about five or six places. So being able to talk things through and have someone challenge our thinking or inform the conversation, or, frankly, just give us permission, like you said, and provide accountability.
- Shawn Lovejoy: [20:06](#) Many, many times in my coaching conversations with leaders, I'll say, "Okay, I'm going to hold you accountable. This week, schedule a time. Go talk to them. Tell them what you told them. Season it with grace, but tell the truth."
- Shawn Lovejoy: [20:19](#) I'm a big fan of having a place in your life that's safe, by the way, where you can talk through these things that keep you awake at

night, and process them through and have someone to filter it, give you permission, but then hold you accountable to not playing the role of the victim, not sitting on it, not venting or gossiping about it, not whining about it, but taking action. I'm a big fan of that.

Shawn Lovejoy: [20:46](#) So I think every leader I have coached, I think every organization ought to be a learning organization. I can't tell you how many times I went into a ... You know some of my coaches-

Holly Tate: [20:56](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative), agreed.

Shawn Lovejoy: [20:56](#) ... people like Dan Reiland over at 12 Stone Church, one of my coaches for 20 years. I can't tell you how many times I went into that Starbucks with him with my tail between my legs, Holly, and not one time did I leave uninspired, and permission and courage. When you know you're not alone, somebody understands you, they believe in you, they're behind you, and you've talked it through and they're like, "No, you're not crazy for thinking that. You guys are ready for that. No, you can do that," is so powerful and so disarming when it comes to those paralyzing emotions.

Holly Tate: [21:38](#) It's so true, Shawn. And we've seen that work firsthand, especially in a succession conversation. We have a lot of clients where they'll go through ... Well, kind of vice-versa. Either they'll go through a coaching session with you, longterm, month after month of coaching with you, and realize it's time to think about retirement or moving on to the next thing, whatever succession looks like for them, and then you'll refer them to us for us to actually help them figure out what does that look like for the organization, and then vice-versa. We'll take an organization through succession and then refer them to you to have coaching, of figuring out, "What do I want to do next? Where has God gifted me? What do I feel called to?"

Holly Tate: [22:16](#) And so, thank you for all that you're doing to inspire leaders, because leadership is lonely. It's really lonely. And so, we're just so grateful for all that you're doing at Courage to Lead, to really inspire and challenge and equip Christian leaders from ministry to marketplace. You're having a gathering in a couple of months, right, there in Birmingham?

Shawn Lovejoy: [22:38](#) Yes, yes. I'm glad you asked.

Holly Tate: [22:39](#) Tell us about it.

Shawn Lovejoy: [22:39](#) I mean because I'm so passionate about courage, and I think the number one mistake leaders make is isolation, we have formed a leadership gathering for faith-based leaders, February 18th of 2020 at the Lyric Theater here in Birmingham, Alabama. My pastor and friend Chris Hodges is speaking. John Gordon's going to be there. He's mentoring a lot of the famous athletic teams, including the Clemson Tigers, Miami Heat, and others. Leonce Crump and myself. Lauren Sisler is going to be there, ESPN commentator, broadcaster. It's going to be a blast. We're going to be talking about courage.

Holly Tate: [23:16](#) That's awesome.

Shawn Lovejoy: [23:17](#) If you're feeling a little lonely out there, you're feeling a little discouraged, we would love to pump you up in 2020. I hope you'll come to Birmingham. Couragetolead.live for all the info.

Holly Tate: [23:27](#) Couragetolead.live. Then, you guys, Shawn has so many amazing resources on the Courage to Lead website. They have fantastic articles that they put out on a regular basis. Shawn, you've written multiple books on this topic. What are some other resources that you're working on besides the live events that you want people to know about?

Shawn Lovejoy: [23:45](#) Yeah, we're starting the year with kind of 21 Days of Growth. We're kicking that off January 1. I don't know when this will roll out. We'll roll out of that into our Courageous Experience in February. Then it gets into conference season for us. We grew by about 40% this year as an organization.

Holly Tate: [24:03](#) Congratulations. That's amazing.

Shawn Lovejoy: [24:05](#) Yes. So we're buttoning up a lot of things and we're building this plane as we fly. But we're excited about what God's doing and we're praying God will give us favor to coach more leaders than ever before, both in the marketplace and the ministry.

Holly Tate: [24:18](#) Well, we are excited to be along for the journey, cheering you on from the sidelines, and are so thankful for all that you do, Shawn.

Shawn Lovejoy: [24:25](#) Glad you're my friend, Holly Tate.

Holly Tate: [24:27](#) You too, and fellow Enneagram eight. I love that.

Shawn Lovejoy: [24:30](#) Yes.

Holly Tate: [24:31](#)

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Holly Tate: [25:03](#)

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