



TEL EPISODE #009:

The Carpenter with Jon Gordon

Show Notes: <http://www.theelpodcast.com/tel-009-carpenter-jon-gordon/>

Welcome to *The Entrepreneurs Library*, the only book-centric podcast that reviews all the top-selling business books and shares author's perspective, firsthand. This is your resource to finding the next great book that will enable you to grow personally and professionally. Welcome your host, Wade Danielson.

WADE: Thank you for joining us today on The EL. Today we have Jon Gordon, author of *The Carpenter*. Welcome, Jon, and thank you for joining us on The Entrepreneurs Library.

JON: It's great to be with you.

WADE: Will you take just a moment to introduce yourself and tell us just a little bit about you personally?

JON: Sure, my name is Jon Gordon. I'm a writer and a speaker. I've written a number of books, most notably *The Energy Bus: 10 Rules to Fuel Your Life, Work, and Team with Positive Energy*. But I think most importantly, I'm a husband and a dad to two children. They're now 16 and 14, which I think is my toughest job on the planet, but it's something I love to do. I work with a lot of professional sports teams, college teams, Fortune 500 companies, school districts, and really am passionate about developing positive leaders, organizations, and teams.

WADE: Excellent. Thank you for sharing that. Now let's jump right into your book, *The Carpenter*, which was just made available for purchase on May 27th, 2014. Jon, we're going to move quickly, but here are some of the top questions our listeners would love to get answered.

The first one is, what's the inspiration behind writing *The Carpenter*?

JON: Well, I had a carpenter come to my house during the Great Recession, and I asked him how business was. I expected him to say it wasn't good, the economy's

horrible, tough times, expected him to complain; he didn't do any of that. He said, "Jon, I've been busier than ever. This is the busiest I've ever been in my life."

And it hit me: average carpenters during this time, during this Great Recession, weren't doing well, but the great ones, the ones who stood out in the marketplace, they were thriving. And they would thrive in any economy. You see, he cared about his work, took a lot of pride in it, did great work, cared about his clients.

I started to think about what causes us to stand out. What separates the best from the rest? And I realized that the greatest success strategies of all are love, serve, and care. The book started with care, with the concept of those who care more, do more. They put their heart, their soul, and their effort into their work. So just by caring, you actually stand out in a world where most don't seem to care. And caring really is a strategy today.

So the idea of caring more, the idea of how to stand out in your work, was the inspiration behind writing this book. And then it evolved into a story. All my books are fables, and so the story came through in a way to teach these lessons.

WADE: Yeah, I love the story format. What would you say makes this book different from others regarding the same topic?

JON: I don't think that there's anything that really takes these concepts of love, serve, care, and really dive into them and talk about them in a meaningful way, to take such a simple, simple concept and yet make it succeed in a very complex world.

I really believe success is simple. I believe there's a lot of books out there where they make things complicated, but I think the key is to say, you know what? If we love what we do – and as Steve Jobs said, "The only way to do great work is to love what you do." And we serve others, and we see our job as to serve our team, to serve our clients, to serve the people we work with. It's not about them serving us. It's about being a leader and serving others, and only through service and sacrifice can you become great.

And then from there, to care and caring more in your work, caring what you produce. Every day you show up and say “You know what? I’m going to make this my masterpiece. I’m going to be a craftsman instead of a carpenter.” So really delving into these three words and how we make these a part of our lives and our work, that’s very different.

WADE: Very good. Excellent. Now that we know the purpose behind the book, let’s take a deep dive. This is my favorite part, where it gives you an opportunity to really – not that you have to go chapter by chapter, but take us as the future reader through the book and give us a great summary.

JON: Sure. I think I want to take you through some of the main principles in the book. The first principle of the book starts with designing your masterpiece. Before you build something, you must design it. You must decide what you want to build. You must have a vision for it. And then once you design it, then you can begin the building process.

So what does your life look like? What are you doing at your best? If you’re succeeding but you don’t have time for your family, you don’t have time for your kids, is that what your masterpiece really looks like? So you have to get very clear and say “This is what it looks like.”

I had to do that years ago when I was struggling with my work, I was unhappy with my job, and I was really miserable in many areas of my life. I remember saying, “What am I born to do? Why am I here?” So I started to ask these questions, “What legacy do I want to leave? What difference do I want to make?” And from that, writing and speaking kept on coming to me.

Now, I don’t believe these questions will always change your job search or your vocation, but in many ways it might cause you to tweak them. For instance, you may say “You know what? I’ve got to work out more. I’ve got to eat healthier if I want to create this masterpiece. I have to spend a little more time with my significant other and my kids as part of my masterpiece. I have to focus on my priorities a little more to create my masterpiece.”

So first and foremost, it starts with that design. Because once you know what you want to build, each day you can pick the right habits to help build it.

And then from there, the next chapter goes into being a craftsman instead of a carpenter. In the story, the carpenter says, “Hey, I call myself a carpenter, but I see my job as a craftsman.” Then Michael, the other main character, says “What’s the difference?” He says, “A carpenter builds things, but a craftsman creates a work of art. The world is full of carpenters, but the world needs more craftsmen.” It’s not about doing things the fastest and the cheapest; it’s about doing things the best.

And I believe if you really take pride in your work and you see yourself as a craftsman – in much the same way Apple has. Apple is focused on creating a craft in their design, in their products, and they really believe that that causes them to stand out. And they do. So we see the difference from a coach who’s a craftsman versus a coach who’s not. We see a coach that’s always learning and growing and improving. I work with a lot of these coaches.

I see in the schools I work with, there are teachers who are the Teacher of the Year. Every day they show up in the lounge and they’re talking to the other teachers saying, “Hey, what are you doing in your lessons? How did this one work? How did that story go? What did the kids learn with that?” So they’re learning every day and they’re striving to get better, where the other teachers are just sitting there complaining about the kids.

So we have the difference between people who are building and those who are building a work of art with their life and their work.

In addition to being a craftsman, then we move into the other parts of the book, which is the mindset and the belief to build something great. Optimism and belief has to be part of anything you’re building, because you will face challenges through the building process. I read a lot about belief and optimism and some really great ways to approach it from the right perspective, the right thoughts, the right thinking – which is really the heart of what I do in my work. It’s probably

what I'm most known for in terms of positive leadership and the positivity that helps us overcome all the negativity, adversity, and challenges to build something great. I'm not going to really go into all the specifics on that, but I think it's a really powerful part of the book.

And then from there we move into the three greatest strategies of all, and that is the love, serve, and care piece, which again I think is the most meaningful. And it's funny; everyone seems to be getting that from the book. Everyone's doing #loveservecare. People are sharing this message. I heard from Southwest that the leaders there, they already read it, they said, "Wow, this is phenomenal the way you put these together in such an easy, applicable way."

That's the thing. This is the kind of book where a leader can give it to their team and say "Hey, let's focus on this love, serve, care, and we'll stand out from anyone and everyone who doesn't practice these three principles."

WADE: Jon, I think we know the answer to this next question, because I think you just covered it – but if the reader could only take one concept, principle, or action item out of your entire book, what would you want that to be?

JON: I would have to go with care, as I said earlier. It would have to be caring more. We often talk about working harder. I was speaking to the Pittsburgh Pirates at their training camp, and I asked all the players, "Hey, do you believe you can work harder than you already are? Who thinks they can work harder?" And every player raised their hand. The coaches were flabbergasted. They're like, "What? We're paying you millions of dollars, and you believe you can work harder?"

And I said to them, you know what? To work harder, you have to care more. You have to care so much about what you're doing, you don't allow the distractions to keep you from being your best. You have to care so much about your work and your craft that everything else pales in comparison to the work that you're doing. You have to care about your people. If you care about them, guess what? They're going to care about their jobs. When we care about people, we build relationships with them; we build a great team through great relationships. It's essential.

And then when we care about our customers, they feel it, they know it. People want to do business with people who care about them. And I really believe that when you look at the great companies on the planet, they stand out by showing in unique ways that they care, from public supermarkets where if you don't know where something is and you ask one of their employees, they take you to the spot on the shelf. They have to walk you to the spot and show you. It's part of their DNA, it's part of what they do. It's part of Les Schwab Tire's DNA. They come sprinting outside when you pull up to their tire center, so you get out of your car and they're waiting right there for you.

So think about all the businesses we love. Think about all the people you do business with. There's some aspect and some unique way they show that they care. For instance, when I buy my suits, every time I buy a suit, Fitz who sells me the suits, he puts a little note card in the suit pocket. So I'm about to speak and I pull out the card; it says "Hey, I hope you're doing something positive right now." And again, it's his own unique way, but it makes me smile. And I'm not going to get my suits anywhere else. I'm going to get them from Fitz, because I know he cares about me.

WADE: Absolutely. Those are some great examples. What first turned you on to the theme of care?

JON: Well, it was that meeting the carpenter at my house that day and really thinking about caring and thinking about the businesses that stand out. Zappos does free shipping, and Apple, to me, they show they care by making products so simple that my 70-plus-year-old father actually can use an iPhone and it's pretty easy for him. But that's how they show they care. And they also care with the design that they do.

And then I was thinking about the football teams I work with and the coaches who care. Mike Smith with the Atlanta Falcons, they're a client, and he cares about his players. He walks into the treatment room after practice and visits the players when they're injured. Most coaches, when you're injured, they don't want to have anything to do with you. They're like, "Hey, if you can't help us win, just

stay away.” But coaches right there, showing his players that they care about them.

I worked with Billy Donovan this year, Florida Gators, and they got to the Final Four. I never saw a coach care more about his players than Billy Donovan. I work with Clemson Football and Dabo Swinney, and man, he cares about his players so much. The players know that he loves them.

So you just see over and over again this care theme come up. You think about the teachers who made a difference in your life – and I know the ones who made a difference in my life, they were people who cared about me. So I just started seeing care all over, and I really wanted to write a book that fleshed it out through a story – a meaningful story, a fun story, and a way that would take this concept and this process and bring it to life.

WADE: Great. Jon, do you have – and I ask this question because I want to give you an opportunity to brag on yourself, but do you have a favorite quote from your book, something that you wrote that just really resonated or hit you?

JON: There’s so many in *The Carpenter*. People are quoting a lot of them and tweeting a lot of them. We even made posters of them. But I think one of my favorites is “Don’t focus on building your business. Focus on using your business to love, serve, and care, and your business will grow exponentially.” I think so many times we focus on the numbers, we focus on the outcomes, and we forget to focus on the process.

I truly believe that if we focus on loving and serving and caring in our work, our business will just naturally grow. We won’t have to worry about it growing; it will just grow by focusing on people, by focusing on loving what we do, by focusing on serving and focusing on caring. We do those three things, our business will grow.

So I think that quote, in a nutshell, sums up the book, and I think it’s probably the most powerful from the book.

WADE: Great. Very good, that's perfect. If there was only one other book you could recommend to our listeners, and based off the fact that maybe it's created a paradigm shift for you and helped you move forward, what would that be?

JON: Are you asking about my other books, or just a book that I've read in general?

WADE: A book outside of what you've written, a book that you've read that has just created a huge paradigm shift.

JON: I was going to say, *The Energy Bus* created a huge change in my life, because that's the book I'm most known for, *The Energy Bus*. And that actually created a huge shift in my life when people started reading it, and then I started getting invited to speak everywhere. So that book's changed my life.

But I think in terms of books I've read – wow, there's been so many that have changed my life in so many different ways throughout the years. Richard Bach in *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and *Illusions*. I love that book. And *Tribes* by Seth Godin was really a great book as well. *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, believe it or not, years ago really impacted me in terms of wanting to be my own boss and the owner of my own company rather than trying to work for someone. I think that was something that really influenced me as well. And I love Max Lucado and his book *Traveling Light*, which is just a powerful book on getting rid of the baggage in our life that holds us back.

So there's just been so many books, and each book changes me in different ways. So I'm a huge believer in books. I'm reading *Who Is This Man?* right now by John Ortberg, and it's very powerful. It's talking about Jesus' impact on the world. No matter what someone's faith is or what they believe, it just talks about the impact that he's had on hospitals and schools and our charity system and serving the poor and all the things that we now accept as normal, but it was unheard of before Jesus. So reading that book, I'm going "Wow!" as I'm reading it. It's just a really powerful example of the world we're living in.



WADE: Excellent. Let's take that a step further, because Jon, you have multiple books; for the listeners that are entrepreneurial readers, what are your top 3 books that you would recommend, of yours, that you would recommend to our listeners?

JON: I was trying to think about the entrepreneur books for readers. Of mine for entrepreneurs, definitely *The Energy Bus*. So many entrepreneurs use that book for their business. It's about overcoming negativity, building a winning team, building a positive culture and a team environment. So to me, *The Energy Bus* hands down – it sells more than my other books combined, so it's already being used by a ton of entrepreneurs, and I got emails all the time.

I love *Training Camp*. *Training Camp* is about what the best do better, so it's the winning habits that separate the best from the rest. And yes, it's a story about an NFL undrafted rookie trying to make it in the league and on his team, but it's not really a sports story; it's really about a life story and what it takes to be your best. I've had a lot of entrepreneurs read that, use it for their marketing business, their up-and-coming company and so forth. So I think that's a great one.

And then a lot of entrepreneurs really like *The No Complaining Rule*, especially when you're starting a company and you want to build a great culture. *The No Complaining Rule* just says "Hey, we're going to be a company that focuses on solutions instead of complaints." And if you build that right culture from the very beginning, that culture will help you build your business.

WADE: Excellent, very good. Jon, thank you so much for your time. I did want to say before we depart, can you recommend the best way for our listeners to get more information on you, those books, and your most recent, *The Carpenter*?

JON: Thanks for asking. They can go to jongordon.com. Twitter is always great, too, [@jongordon11](https://twitter.com/jongordon11). Or the website for *The Carpenter* is carpenter11.com. Just carpenter11.com.

WADE: Okay, excellent.



JON: Take care.

WADE: Thanks again for listening in today. If you would like to get your hands on *The Carpenter* or any of the other resources mentioned by Jon Gordon, just look at the show notes at TheELPodcast.com.

Looking for your next book idea? Head over to TheELPodcast.com, where Wade shares his amazing resource, "The Top 10 Business Books Recommended by Over 500 Entrepreneurs," with you for free. That's TheELPodcast.com. Till the next time, keep it on the EL.

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