

Dylan Carnavale: Welcome to the Why God Why Podcast, brought to you by Browncroft Community Church. My name is Dylan Carnavale, I am the Browncroft staff and producer of the show. I am joined today by our host, Peter Englert, Director of Adult Ministries at Browncroft, and John lamaio, New York State Crew Director. Why God Why is a podcast where we ask 21st century questions about God that you never thought you could. Today's guest is Jason Romano, podcast host for Sports Spectrum, and today we are talking about why is forgiveness so difficult. Peter and John.

John lamaio: Wow. Yeah, this, I think, is a questions that even this week, as we record this podcast, and you're going to be listening to this a little later, but this week this question has gone viral across our whole culture really. The trial of a female police officer who shot an unarmed black man in his own home because she thought it was her home, and the brother of that man who was killed, just in an unbelievable way, forgiving that police officer, and then offering a hug in the courtroom setting. That just went viral. It was like something that you couldn't explain, and the conversation just abounded after about all sorts of things because of this one moment of forgiveness.

John lamaio: I think it's so rare in our culture right now. I think we're caught up in bitterness. And so this idea that we're talking about forgiveness, it's so applicable, and it's so needed in our culture. Peter, what do you think about this?

Peter Englert: John, I had no idea you were going to start there.

John lamaio: Really? Wow, okay. Well, cool.

Peter Englert: We just got like right into it.

John lamaio: Yeah, I love surprises. There we go.

Peter Englert: You know, but just kind of walking through that, and I'm interested ... I'll introduce our guest ... but I think the reason why that circumstance is so difficult is there are people that are asking for the justice side of that, and there are people seeing the forgiveness side, and again, I don't think that the gospel of Jesus calls us to choose. But I mean, again, I think that there's layers to forgiveness, and there's complications, and things like that. So that's such a great example.

Peter Englert: And I think about our guest today, Jason Romano, he wrote a book, Live to Forgive. We hope all of you check that book out. But he talks about something that many of us will deal with, whether it's a family member, a friend, but a specific relationship in his life where he had to practice forgiveness. So I do think that we talk about forgiveness on the larger level that you just talked about, but for many of us, we're struggling in forgiveness on the lower level, which there are people in our life that have been difficult. Some people who are listening

have been through having family members that went through addictions, and I think Jason has walked through this process in a good framework.

Peter Englert: So Jason, before we get started, John loves just to drop in like that. But why don't you give us a little bit of background. And before we go and hear your forgiveness story, just share about your journey in where you are right now, and how you got there.

Jason Romano: Yeah, John and Peter, thank you for having me on the podcast, it's really an honor. My journey starts and ends probably in a lot of ways with the word sports. As a kid, loved sports, grew up not as Upstate as where you guys are, but in the Albany area, a little town called Ravena, which is, I don't know three hours east of Rochester, and two hours north of New York City. It's funny, I was born in Penfield Memorial Hospital, I remember telling Peter this, so I have a little bit of root and history in the Rochester area. But I moved when I was six months old, so I have no memory of ever living there.

Jason Romano: But sports was always the dominant framework for my life, I remember loving it as early as three, four, five years old. Grew up in a family with two younger brothers, parents were divorced when I was six, so really have no memory of them being together. And that was a sort of staple in our life growing up as kids, as teenagers. Mom during the week, and then dad on weekends. Dad [inaudible 00:04:44] which is what a lot of this story will be about in terms of forgiveness, with alcoholism. It really started to take shape I think early seven, eight, nine years old. I remember him having some issues with that, not really understanding it, and it just kind of periodically got worse and worse as I got older, and certainly as he got older.

Jason Romano: But that was kind of the journey, and then as I got older, thankfully from my mom keeping us stable, giving us opportunities to kind of pursue things, sports being at the center of that, I really developed a love for sports and wanting to go into broadcasting. Hats why I kind of do what I do now, and did what I did for many years at ESPN, because I was able to pursue those dreams and goals, thankfully, from my mother.

Jason Romano: I went to college, graduated, worked in local radio. Then I got the job at ESPN in 2000, so 19 years ago. Married to my wife, Dawn, have a daughter, Sarah, who is now 15 and in 10th grade. And now, for the last two and a half years or so, been out of the ESPN world, even though I still live here in Connecticut, and working in the sports ministry world under the umbrella of a ministry called Sports Spectrum, and Pro Athletes Outreach. I do this podcast, and speak, and I have this book, and have been able to travel and really do some cool things, and watch God do amazing things in my life.

Jason Romano: I hope that kind of paints a broad stroke for you to start!

Peter Englert: No, it really does. Before we get into your forgiveness story, there's been, people use this phrase, time heals everything. I guess what I'm interested in, you wrote a book about it, and I think we'd be fooling ourselves to think that there aren't triggers and things like that. Can you tell me the process of forgiveness where you are now versus where you are before, and maybe some of the why's about that? I'm just curious how you might respond to that.

Jason Romano: The process of forgiveness now. I think now, I'd be lying to you if I said I didn't still struggle with it, and not specifically with the story that's in the book of me forgiving my dad. I just think from a human perspective, when someone hurts us, we get upset, we get angry, in some cases we get bitter. And I don't care if you're a believer or not, if you've been walking with the Lord for five minutes or five years, or five decades, we all struggle, I think, when we get hurt.

Jason Romano: I have a story that I may share, I may not share depending on how this conversation goes with some bitterness that I have struggled with recently with a friend of mine. So I think where I am now, I think I understand it, certainly a lot better. When you write a book about this topic, you do a lot of research, and you do a lot of self-examining. You do a lot of recalling, and kind of looking back at some of those times when you couldn't forgive or wouldn't forgive, and the bitterness that you really held onto for many years.

Jason Romano: So I think I understand it now, I recognize it. I think a lot of people don't even realize that they still struggle, or that they haven't forgiven someone. They think they have, but they haven't. And for many years, I think if you had asked me about the situation specifically with my father, I would have told you, "Yeah, I'm pretty sure I've forgiven him," but when I looked back, it was clear that I hadn't.

Jason Romano: The process now for me is understanding it a lot better than I did when I was going through it. Honestly, I never even thought about forgiveness for many years, it was just kind of, you know, it wasn't even there. It wasn't until six years ago now with my father where I chose to forgive him, and I understand now the power of forgiveness, and what that can do to a person's life.

John lamaio: Wow. Can we establish kind of a baseline here a little bit? Because I think when we throw around the word forgiveness, some of us conjure up different images in our mind. So when you specifically talk about forgiveness, what does that mean to you? How would you define that? I think the most popular phrase in our culture is forgive and forget, right? I mean, does it mean we just sweep things under the rug? What are we talking about when we talk about forgiveness?

Jason Romano: Yeah, I don't believe in the forgive and forget model. I think there's only one person that we can definitely say forget in the sense of what that might mean, and that's God, because of what scriptures say about casting it into the sea of forgetfulness and never having to worry about thinking about those things that

are in the past, once they're in the past, they're in the past. But we're humans, we're not God. So as humans, we never forget. I would not have written a book, 160 pages or 170 pages about forgiveness if I had forgotten once I had forgiven my dad. So I don't believe forgive and forget. We never forget.

Jason Romano: But I always say this, too, where reconciliation and maybe forgetting isn't always possible, forgiving is. So you asked the definition, and I've been think about this, because I don't even think, I read through my book a couple times recently, I don't think I ever define specifically what the definition of forgiveness it. I just kind of went through my journey, and explained the processes of how I kind of came to a place of forgiving.

Jason Romano: But I guess I'll start with stealing a quote from Lewis Smedes, who is an author and theologian, and I have this quote in my book, and I share it a lot when I speak and talk about this topic to different audiences. He says, "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner is you." So to me, that's the very definition of forgiveness, because when we forgive, so many people, including myself for many years, thought that it was about the other person because we're forgiving someone else. But truly when we forgive someone else, we're the ones that are truly experiencing ... I know I'm saying truly a lot, but we're experiencing freedom.

Jason Romano: Because when we don't forgive, we're stuck in bondage, we're stuck in this poison that's inside of us, and it's allowing ... it's almost like being wrapped in chains. So my definition of forgiveness in a lot of ways is setting a prisoner free, and in many ways, in most ways, if not all ways, that prisoner is ourselves.

Peter Englert: I do want to get to your dad's story, but you dropped this in. What's this recent story about bitterness that you want to share with us?

Jason Romano: I don't even know if I want to share it, to be honest with you, but I've been thinking about it. It's been on my heart for, I don't know how long it's been. Okay, I'll give you the CliffsNotes version, I'm not going to say the name to protect my friend's name here, because I haven't talked to him about sharing this story. But I will say, there is something that happened a couple years ago with a friend of mine who I have been friends with for probably 10 years prior to that, so a pretty long relationship. Someone from the church world, so I considered him a brother in Christ.

Jason Romano: There was a moment where I had wanted to work with him within a ministry in our church to help build up a ministry that was kind of there, but I wanted to kind of help take it to the next level. And you know, sometimes my personality can be a little dominating. I like to get in, and get dirty, and do things. I'm type A, and I definitely am an extrovert, I'm not an introvert. And he's quite the opposite, so I thought we would work well.

Jason Romano: I came in, and I realize now that I look back that I may have just sort of taken over, or taken control of it a little too much, didn't work hand in hand with the person. But that person responded in a way that I wouldn't have responded, at least I don't think I would have, in that, is where it was never revealed to me that I had done this wrong in sort of snatching up his ministry, which I think is what happened here. I didn't see the hurt and the pain that I caused him. But instead of him sharing that with me, he kind of kept that to himself, and in many ways, we haven't had a serious conversation or spent any real time together for two and a half years.

Jason Romano: So the relationship has really taken an effect on that, and I've been saddened by that. I've also struggled with pride, I think, to walk over to his house or share with him an apology because I kept thinking I didn't do anything that deserved an apology. I didn't even know if I did anything that deserved an apology. I still haven't been told to this day that I've done anything that hurt him. But it's clear that our relationship is on the brink. I mean, it's on the fence, and it's really not existent right now, and it makes for very awkward moment in church and very awkward moments in any kind of setting that we find ourselves in.

Jason Romano: I've been real saddened by it, to be honest with you, and it's been heavy on my heart, especially these last few months, and to the point where I know that I have done something wrong to hurt him, but it's still awkward for me to kind of try to find the right time and place to tell him. You know, I don't want to pull him aside in church and just make this a big thing in church. I'm trying to find time in person, and I haven't been able to do that.

Jason Romano: And yet, there's a pride in me that says, "I don't need to apologize for something that I don't think I did wrong." So that's a little bit of the story. I could go deeper, but I'm probably not ready to do that quite yet. But that just gives you an idea that even this guy who wrote this book on forgiveness, and people are calling, "Oh, he knows everything about forgiveness," well, yeah, I know everything about it because I still struggle with it, and so does everybody else. I think we all do. Just because I've written a book on forgiveness doesn't mean I don't have trouble forgiving others, and this is one where I'm having trouble asking for forgiveness, because I don't think I did anything wrong, and I'm also having trouble forgiving because I [inaudible 00:15:26] was to end a relationship that I had invested 10 years in, so I'm personally hurt by that too. So there's a lot there.

Peter Englert: Yeah, yeah. Well, let me ask you this. How do you with forgiveness or reconciliation, just even thinking about what you just said in that circumstance, how do you know that you're procrastinating the conversation you're supposed to have? Or you're prudent by waiting for the right timing? What does that look like? Because I'm sure some of our listeners are dealing with that. You know, I'm a type A, I think you're a type A, and I can see myself like, "We need to have this conversation right now," where probably the best thing to do is give it a little

time. Then there's other times where just even what you said, I really want to have this conversation, but there's things in the way.

Peter Englert: What's the difference between procrastination and prudence when it comes to that?

Jason Romano: It's such a fine line because, Peter, I mean, if I had known at that moment, in the month or two after that took place that I had done something, even if I didn't think I had done it, I would have apologized right away. I think I would have nailed this in the ground right away. I would not have let this fester for two and a half years, especially knowing that the relationship was going to destruct in the way that it has and fall apart. I would have gotten rid of that and done with that quickly.

Jason Romano: But at the same time, now that it's festered and it's probably been a year that this has been on my heart, which is really sad to say, and I still put it off because there is an absolute awkwardness that a lot of us struggle with to actually sit face to face with someone and have a conversation about real issues. A lot of us struggle with that within our own marriages, that we go through the day to day, and we have life hit, and happen, and things go on, and yet you know something's going on, and you want to bring it up, and you want to talk about it, but then you know it's like, "Eh, this might just make things worse. I'd rather not deal with it."

Jason Romano: There's a chapter in my book called Boxes in the Attic, and it references these feelings, these past hurts, these memories, most of them not so good that I had, and I would put them in this proverbial box and store it away in an attic and feel like I never had to bring it back out. And right now with my friend, I feel like that's what this is. I have these thoughts and these things, and it's in this box, it's in this attic, and I tried to store it away, along with the rest of my life, and yet, it's a box in the attic so it's still there. And eventually you have to pull it out, and open it up, and see what's inside of it.

Jason Romano: The sooner you can do that, the better. I'm certainly learning that now. I still haven't done it, and I've literally been thinking about this, Peter and John, for the last 36 hours, every moment of, "How can I do this and just get it done with?" And understand that for me, again, because forgiveness is for me, right? Getting this out is for me. If I talk to him, if he doesn't respond well, if he doesn't receive it, if something bad happens from it, then at least it's out and I've gotten it out there.

Jason Romano: In many ways, that was what happened with my dad. I finally just said, "I forgive you, Dad," at his lowest point, and it just felt right to get it out. Then whatever happened going forward from that moment was ... you know, forgiveness was laid out, because forgiveness isn't about the other person, it's not about what they deserve, it's about yourself. Because I am, in many ways I guess, living that

own bondage trap that I've talked about and preached for two years now, just in a different type of way, and certainly with someone that I wasn't as close to as my father. But I'm kind of struggling with that.

Jason Romano: So that's a fine line, man, it really is, because once we procrastinate and try to put something off, that box in the attic gets sealed up even more. It's literally just a box at first, and then suddenly ... all these other things in the attic. I'm using a really terrible metaphor here. But you might put it right behind all these things, and you don't even see it anymore, and it's almost nonexistent, but it's still there.

Jason Romano: Then when you pull it out, it makes it so much harder to open up because it's been sealed and put away. The longer you put this off on forgiving someone else, the ...

Peter Englert: Pause. Jason, can you say that last line? We lost it in Skype, and then unpause.

Jason Romano: Sure. Which part?

John lamaio: The longer you put this off, I think you said.

Jason Romano: Okay, I can do that. Here we go. The longer you put forging someone off, the more you procrastinate it, the harder it gets to actually come to a point where you can actually do it. It's very, very, very difficult if you keep putting it off. That's why I always feel like if you're hurt, address it right away. Address it, because the more you let it fester, the harder it becomes to actually have to pull that box out and deal with it.

Peter Englert: You know, I love listening to, because I feel like this is something new. I do want to just give you a few moments to share about the forgiveness journey with your dad. Because as many listeners know you, I'm sure that there's some that haven't met you. So just give us, as you said, the CliffsNotes version of your dad and how that kind of came to be with your forgiveness journey.

Jason Romano: So the relationship with my dad is, I always say it's confusing, complicated, so many different words, especially at my younger age of trying to understand what was happening. He was around, but he wasn't present. The alcohol was a big reason for that, if not the biggest reason for that. He chose the bottle over his family for many years. That choice of alcohol eventually turning into the disease of alcoholism led to two divorces, it led to broken relationships with me and my two brothers, his three boys.

Jason Romano: And for many years, I just kind of dealt with it. It was there, it was something that I didn't have a lot of ... I guess the best way to say it was when my dad was sober, we got along. When he was drunk, I was angry, and bitter, and hated

him, to be quite honest, for the choices that he had made. That festered for many, many, many years, into my 20s, into my 30s, and into my early 40s.

Jason Romano: But I had a life to live. So during my 20s, I got the job at ESPN, I got married. When I was 30, my daughter was born. And I had a life to live, I wanted to do and be the best dad that I could be because I didn't have a dad that was the best that he could have been. So those years in my 20s and 30s really were years to grow and develop as a man myself, without the guidance of a man who could show me how to do that in my dad.

Jason Romano: My dad lived a roller coaster life, as I say, of sober, and drunk, and sober, and drunk, and sober, and drunk. Through that, I developed a very large amount of anger towards him, and bitterness. Screaming, yelling, times where I wouldn't talk to him for six months to a year, holding grudges in many ways towards him for a lot of the pain that he had caused verbally, never physically, but verbally, causing a lot of pain, a lot of verbal abuse with myself, with my brothers, you know, my extended family, my grandparents, certainly my mom.

Jason Romano: That's where the bitterness came from, all of that, and why it was such a struggle. And in many ways, why I kind of thought ... See, I thought that I had forgiven my dad when I allowed him back into my life. But every single time he drank, and was drunk, and he would call me, I would lash right back out at him and scream at him, and yell at him, and want him to feel the pain that he was causing me.

Jason Romano: So now that I look back on it, it was clear I had not forgiven him. And it wasn't until his lowest moment at the end of his ropes, because he started suffering and going through a lot of depression as well as the alcoholism in his early to mid-60s, to the point where he almost ended his life. And thankfully, he didn't, and he survived, but he did try. It was at that moment, at that breaking point for his life that I saw a man broken, and started to have empathy towards him, and finally was able to tell him verbally, "Hey, I forgive you for anything and everything that's happened. Don't worry about everything and anything that's happened. But I truly do forgive you." I needed to do that for him, but I even more needed to do that for myself.

John lamaio: Wow. I mean, I just want to say that I appreciate your vulnerability so much, Jason. I mean certainly, you didn't have to even share your most recent story with us, and this process. You know, you could easily just keep it theoretical, and talk about this theory and be the expert in the book. But you let us into your life, and I just really want to say that I appreciate that. to me, that speaks of an authenticity in this journey, and it makes me respect you even more as someone who's speaking on this subject. So I just want to say that.

Jason Romano: Well, thank you.

John lamaio: Yeah.

Jason Romano: It's not easy. I mean, I think the one thing I have learned over the years is the more vulnerable I've been, and certainly that's ... My wife is quite the opposite, which is interesting because she is very private, and an introvert, and doesn't want to be on the stage at all. Peter had met my wife. And I am one that likes to sort of be out there, and share, and talk, and have conversations like this. But the vulnerability to me is just, it's being honest. Because we're all going through something.

Jason Romano: You know, if any expert, or superstar, athlete, or media spokesperson, or author, or whoever comes up there and says they got it all figured out, and here's what you need to do to have it all figured out, they're lying. They just are, I'm sorry. Because nobody has it all figured out, God has it figured out. We're just trying to do life together, and that's why we need each other, that's why I believe so strongly in vulnerability and transparency, because by hopefully me sharing this, somebody else is listening and saying, "Yup, I'm going through this too." That's the only reason, so it can help someone else.

Jason Romano: I appreciate listening to other people who re vulnerable and transparent because it helps me. So thank you for that, John, I really appreciate that.

John lamaio: Yeah, yeah. Well, I wonder if there might be some things, even through your journey with your dad that we could learn from as well, you know? It makes me think of what you're going through now, but even your journey with your dad. What are some of the points that you realized ... You talked about kind of alluding to you thought you'd forgiven him, but you realized you really didn't. What was the difference between the two? What was it that you realized in the moment of like, "Man, now, I realize I need to do this in order to say I've truly forgiven him"? Is there something there?

Jason Romano: Yeah, it's a great question. I think it's Ephesians 4:31 and 32, which I reference, I sign my books with it, I try to live by it. Paul's talking about letting all bitterness and anger and wrath be put away from you, along with malice, and then verse 32 it says forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. It also says be kind to one another, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. I think for me the difference was that part.

Jason Romano: I had never let that bitterness, and anger, and wrath be put away from me in the essence of what my dad was going through and putting us through, which really is selfish to say that, because my dad wasn't exactly living his greatest life, and he was putting himself through this mess just as he was putting it through us. But I couldn't let go of that bitterness, and anger, and wrath that Paul talks about in Ephesians.

Jason Romano: So I talked about I thought I had forgiven him, because all of this is taking place after my faith in Christ has taken place. I was 26, almost 27 when I ... I was 27, actually, almost 28 when I got saved, when I began this walk [inaudible 00:28:33] journey with God. So even after becoming a Christian and asking God for forgiveness, and understanding salvation and what the cross was about, and who Jesus was, and what forgiveness was about through the lens of Jesus, I still struggled with it.

Jason Romano: And like I said earlier, I still struggle with it to this day. The difference, I think, the bitterness, and the anger, and the wrath, and the clamor. I don't have a lot of bitterness towards anyone anymore. I think that was my biggest lesson with my dad. And you know what was a big part of that, John, was empathy. That was a game changer for me. I didn't have a lot of empathy for my dad, I just worried about what he was doing to me, how I felt, what the pain that I was going through was.

Jason Romano: To me, empathy is about seeing it from the other person's point of view, right? Finally, I had come to the point where I saw my dad in his worst state, and I started to have empathy for this man that I never had empathy for in my life in the past. That changed everything for me.

Jason Romano: So now, even in the midst of what I'm going through right now with my buddy, I do have empathy and I see it from his perspective. I haven't taken the steps to actually sit down and talk about it and have this forgiveness conversation with him, but I'm not bitter, I'm not angry at him. I mean, sometimes the bitterness comes up, but I'm not holding bitterness towards him because I just have empathy. I think when you have empathy for people, you cannot hold bitterness inside of you anymore. That's just my opinion. That was the big game changer for me.

Peter Englert: So as we kind of wrap this up, I'm wondering about the person ... So you know, we have people that probably don't attend church, or maybe are in the process of finding Jesus, and they have a lot of questions and that's why they're listening to this podcast. And I'd be lying to say that people from church, Christians have just nailed it, you know? Whether it's forgiveness, unforgiveness. So I'm out there, I'm bitter, and I'm hurt, I'm probably dealing with unforgiveness. Why should I pursue with all of these letdowns around me?

Jason Romano: Well, first of all because I believe He says that He's the way, the truth, and the life. So I have made it my calling, really, in the last three years, and even when I was at ESPN, to tell people about the saving grace that's found in Christ, and the hope that's found in Christ, and the understanding that your life may not get better, but man, you have abundant life when you're walking with Jesus, when you invite Him into your life. And He says that in John 14. He came as the way, as the truth, and as the light. No one can come to the Father except through Him.

Jason Romano: So there's this aspect of eternity that's at stake here, too, and that's something I've been thinking about a lot recently too, is this urgency to tell people about the gospel and who Jesus is, and understanding that there's a lot of exclusivity when it comes to Jesus. And we live in a sort of you do you, I'll do me world of everybody can kind of live the way they want, but that stems through forgiveness too. So following Jesus, to me, He knows what it's like to be hurt, He knows what it's like to be beaten. He was mocked, He was spit on, He was called all of these names. The religious leaders wanted to stone Him, called Him a crazy nut job.

Jason Romano: I mean, He knows what it's like to go through being hurt, and yet He's sitting on a cross about to die, and looking at the Roman soldiers who put Him up there, and says, "Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing." So Jesus, to me, exudes forgiveness. He lived it, and understands. So for us, I think when we choose to follow Christ, when we begin a relationship with Him, we begin to take on His nature, right? The righteousness of God. We become Christlike. And through that, we understand forgiveness, it is a process, and it takes a longtime I think for some people more than others, especially for me.

Jason Romano: But we begin to see as we are Christlike, how to live towards loving others, serving others, but even more importantly, forgiving others for the wrongs that have been committed. Because Jesus had every right to hold grudges. He was the Son of God, He was God in flesh, right? And He had every right to hold grudges towards people, and yet He's forgiving every single ... He says it in Matthew 18, forgive, 70 times 7, and he means every single time in the parable of the unforgiving debtor.

Jason Romano: So the reason, your question is why follow Jesus, well listen, He is the example of forgiveness. You know, there's levels. Why follow Jesus? Because He's the way, the truth, and the life. But if you're talking about this from a forgiveness perspective, and you come to Jesus every single morning asking for forgiveness because of the dumb things that we thought about or said or lived out in the wrong way, then He understands and He knows. And because He understands and He knows, that's to me why you would want to follow Him, and put your faith and trust in Him, because He understands what you're going through, and how hard and how difficult it is.

John lamaio: Wow. I also think of the people who are listening to this, and they maybe are in a similar situation to what you're describing with your friend right now, and they're going, "Okay, I realize I got to do this. In many ways, this totally bites. I don't want to do it, but I realize I got to do this." What first step would you tell them to take, in general? What's a step ... Sometimes that first step is the toughest. What step would you encourage them to take toward forgiveness?

Jason Romano: Well, in the book, it lays out sort of four steps. We don't really call them steps, but four ways to do this. The first one is to recognize that there is an issue going

on. Recognition is important, I think, and it's not necessarily a step, but that's what I'm realizing over these last few months, even in the last year. I've recognized that there's an issue here. Something's not right. And what am I going to do with that, right?

Jason Romano: The second one is evaluating the trauma, really kind of look introspectively and outside to what's going on here? What's the pain that was caused? And what's the pain that it's causing you? Transformation is really, I think, the step that you start to enter to a place of wanting to forgive. You know, when you're transformed from the inside out, Romans talks about that transformation, the transforming of the mind. Something happens, and you go from this and just thinking about and talking about it, to actually doing something about it. What that requires eventually is to have a conversation to say, "I forgive you." And not to hold that grudge. And that's important to say that.

Jason Romano: I want to be clear on something as we close here, too, John and Peter. Forgiveness does not always mean reconciliation. I think sometimes we paint this picture that when I'm forgiving someone, everything's fine, I forgive you too, "Oh, come here, give me a hug," we're all better and everything's great. But sometimes the damage is just too much. There are relationships where someone has done some very terrible things to another person, and so reconciliation is not possible in those situations. In fact, it's encouraged not to reconcile. You know, you have to build boundaries and keep separation properly.

Jason Romano: But where reconciliation isn't always possible, and Jesus talks about it and I just mentioned it, forgiveness is not just possible, it's required every single time. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Jesus says every single time we've been hurt, we are to forgive. So I think understanding and recognizing that, that if you are a follower of Christ, it's not an option. Again, that doesn't mean we're not going to respond that way. I mean, we all struggle. I'm struggling right now.

Jason Romano: But when you look at scripture, and you look at who Jesus was, he doesn't sugarcoat this. This is not an option. This is something we are all required to do every single time someone hurts us. I never said it was easy. I don't think Jesus said it was easy either, but it's required if you're a follower of Christ, to forgive. And when we don't, we're in essence, putting a hand to God and saying, "I got this. I'm good. I don't need you and I don't need to hear what you're saying." Again, that goes back to why we need forgiveness from God ourselves every day, because we sin against Him in ways we probably don't even realize sometimes.

Peter Englert: So usually end on a final question, but the question is what does Jesus have to do with this question. I feel like you've handled that really well for us. I would actually like us to go a different direction. John, is it okay for me to call Audible?

John lamaio: Hey, I did something crazy in the beginning, so feel free to do something crazy in the end. Go for it. That's great.

Peter Englert: First of all, this podcast is actually going to air on Thanksgiving Day.

Jason Romano: Is that right? Okay.

John lamaio: Happy Thanksgiving, everybody.

Peter Englert: Happy Thanksgiving.

Jason Romano: Happy Thanksgiving. My favorite holiday, by the way.

John lamaio: Wow, all right.

Peter Englert: You're favorite. So I ask this question knowing that probably some of you are listening to this spending time with family, but I also think we'd be remiss to not ask Jason this question. And there's no easy way to make this transition, but we are in Buffalo Bills country, and the Bills play the Cowboys, which are your favorite team.

Jason Romano: Yes! That's right.

Peter Englert: So I guess, maybe instead of the three of us answering the question what Jesus has to do with this, hopefully it's not sacrilegious, I think all three of us should answer the question what do we think is going to happen today with the Bills and the Cowboys? Is that all right, Jason?

Jason Romano: I mean, it's fine, but I'm probably giving it away, but we're taping this a few weeks before, and I can give you what I think is going to happen based upon the day that we're taping this interview. It could be a lot worse by the time Thanksgiving rolls around. So you can ask it, and if I give you an answer today, we have to preface it, a lot of things may have changed between now and Thanksgiving Day, but you can ask it if you'd like. Sure.

Peter Englert: Well, you know what? How about this? Our process is we'll start, and then you clean up. You can also talk about forgiveness. So I'm a Jets fan, don't hold it against me. I just, I know the Bills are winning, I just don't trust the turnovers, and for some of you, you're like, "Why are we talking about sports?" I mean, he's from Sports Spectrum, and John's a huge Bills fan. I think at the end of the day, no matter what, in the next few weeks, I think the Bills win 17-16. That's my guess. Low scoring, defensive game.

John lamaio: Wow. Wow. This really does, this is doing a number to my mind. So if I did a number to your mind in the beginning of the podcast, you found a way to do a

number to my mind in this one. So anyway, I was totally tracking with Jason, just thinking about the repercussions of the gospel, and you've gone and turned it into the Bills. So here we go, all right.

Peter Englert: But isn't that a place that you need it the most?

John lamaio: It is. Lord knows. And I've got some stories on that one, Jason, that I've used in sermon illustrations before. But anyway.

Jason Romano: Yes sir.

John lamaio: My son and I were just going over the Bills' schedule yesterday. My son is a Patriots fan, and so this causes a lot of-

Jason Romano: That's too bad.

John lamaio: Yeah, it causes some pain in our family.

Jason Romano: That's too bad.

John lamaio: But we're working toward forgiving each other, so it's a beautiful thing.

Jason Romano: That's good!

John lamaio: Yeah. We were going over the Bills' schedule yesterday. He thought that the Bills were going to be, he says 12-4 over the course of this year. I am far less gracious to the Buffalo Bills than that. And this was actually one that I circled on the calendar to him and said, "They're not winning that one." I said, "They're not going to get by the Cowboys." So I think it's Cowboys. It's Cowboys at home on Thanksgiving, I'm going 24-10, Cowboys.

Peter Englert: So Jason, we're not going to hold you to this, but you definitely have a lot of thoughts, and we want to give you room to talk about those thoughts.

Jason Romano: Well, I mean, we could go back to 1980, my earliest memory of the Dallas Cowboys at seven years old, and they beat the Seattle Seahawks 51-7 on Thanksgiving Day, I'll never forget it. And my brother fell, we were playing football in the living room, and he hit his head on the corner of a chair, and ended up getting like 15 stitches under his eye. I'd rather talk about the past Thanksgiving Day memories for the Cowboys, but it's weird playing Buffalo, first of all. I don't think the Cowboys have ever played Buffalo in a national ... I guess that's not true, they were on a Monday night game about 10 years ago, and played the Bills when Tony Romo was still quarterback, and won a game they should not have won. But it was a great win.

Peter Englert: Jason, I got to stop you for a second. I watched that game with Bills fans, and all three of them turned to me after they took that big lead and they said, "We're going to lose this game." Right after that last touchdown.

Jason Romano: Oh wow, okay.

Peter Englert: So anyways, keep going.

Jason Romano: Good. Well, I was going to say that's good, because I know Bills fans, listen, I've known a lot of Bills fans, I know a few Bills players, former players, and they have the best fans, let me just say that. They are as loyal and as devoted to their team, and as optimistic over their team as any team in the league, and they do it with a little bit of a class, a bit more classier way than some of these other loyal, devoted teams like the Eagles we'll just say publicly. But the Eagles have won a Super Bowl, so they have that now. The Bills have never won one, and I don't think this is going to be the year either.

Jason Romano: As much as I actually like watching the Bills, I think they're a lot of fun, I think they have some good young talent, and their quarterback, John Allen, is pretty good. But Dallas doesn't usually lose at home on Thanksgiving. You know, coming home after, it's a short week, the fans are hyped up, they're used to that setting. They did lose at home a couple years ago to the Chargers, and that was a little surprising, and they've had some bad ...

Jason Romano: That's why it's hard to answer this question because I just don't know where they're going to be. I think they'll be in the mix. They won their first three, then they lost two in a row, and I was kind of like, "All right, starting to lose hope here after I got a lot of hope." And the Bills, actually, at this point, have a better record than the Cowboys. But I still think Dallas is going to win. I can't pick against my team.

Jason Romano: We'll say, I don't think 24 is right. I think they'll actually score more points. They have a lot of offensive weapons, hopefully they're all healthy on Thanksgiving. So I'll say 31-20, Cowboys.

Peter Englert: You know, just to let everyone know, this is October 7th, Monday, October 7th.

Jason Romano: Okay. I didn't know if you were going to say that, yeah.

John Iamaio: Oh yeah.

Jason Romano: So the Cowboys at this point are 3-2, the Bills I believe are 4-1. Am I right on that?

Peter Englert: Yeah.

Jason Romano: So there's a lot of things that have to play out in between now and then before we get to Thanksgiving, but I still think the Cowboys have what it takes, I do. I just get so frustrated because that game they played the other day against the Packers, they just turned the ball ... they out-gamed them, I'm going into sports world here, they out-gamed the Packers by 300 yards, and lost by 10 points. It just doesn't make any sense.

Peter Englert: Yeah.

Jason Romano: But turnovers in football will do that to you. And I watched your whole Bills game, I watched the Bills play the Titans, and that was as ugly and boring a game as I've ever watched, but the Bills won. And my wife's a Titans fan, I was trying to get her excited, and I'm like, "13-6? What a terrible game this is to watch." So they're not a pretty team, necessarily, but that doesn't mean they're not good. They've just got to figure out a way to get wins every week.

Peter Englert: Jason, you know, who else could we talk about forgiveness, the Bills, and the Cowboys? We're so glad to have you on.

Jason Romano: There it is.

John Iamaio: That's going to be the title of the podcast, just so you know. It's going to be Forgiveness, the Bills, and the Cowboys.

Jason Romano: I love it.

John Iamaio: I love it.

Peter Englert: There's two Super Bowls, but I won't touch that [crosstalk 00:46:14]

John Iamaio: Well, yeah, exactly, yeah.

Peter Englert: Anyways, anyways. Thank you so much, Jason, for being a part of this. If you have any questions, you can go to WhyGodWhyPodcast.com. We are on social media. Sharing is caring, please share this on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, or review us on your podcasting app, that helps other listeners follow us. And we hope you have a wonderful day.