

Dylan Carnavale: Welcome to the Why God Why podcast, brought to you by Browncroft Community Church. My name is Dylan Carnavale, and I'm the Browncroft staff and producer of the show. Today I'm joined by Peter Englert, director of adult ministries at Browncroft, and John Iamaio, the 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 Stu Dante. He's a writer and speaker whose works have been featured on Christianity Today, The Witness, A Black Christian Collective, and Fathom Magazine. Today's topic: Why are institutions so patronizing towards young people? Peter and John, take it away.

John Iamaio: Wow. Well, here's the deal. I feel like our society has kind of a schizophrenic relationship when it comes to young people. That's my experience anyway. On one hand, young people are kind of idolized in our society. If you look in magazines, or remember those magazines, or whatever they were, Instagram, whatever. Your images that are set to attract people are all young people, right? So in one way, we idolize young people.

John Iamaio: On another level though, I feel like to be a young person today, in many ways, is also to be marginalized, to be kept on the outside, like your voice doesn't matter as much. That's the experience of a lot young people today, so that's why I think this topic is really pertinent. It goes across institutions, but I know we want to talk about it in the religious aspect as well. Like, how does this play out in a church setting? That's why I'm super excited to have Stu here with us. What are your thoughts, Peter?

Peter Englert: I'm going to sum up my thoughts by just, the cultural phenomenon, in two words, "Okay, boomer."

John Iamaio: Oh, yeah. I hear that one in my house all the time, actually.

Peter Englert: And you're not even a boomer, poor guy.

John Iamaio: No, that's not the point of it, though, I've been told by my kids.

Peter Englert: Well, anyways. But I think that with this topic ... I'll never forget what my friend Adam said about being a millennial. He's like, "I've never felt like people talk more about me than to me." I just think that that's powerful. The guest that we have on today, Stu Dante, I just think he brings a lot to this conversation. He's played football at Clemson, he's got his Masters of Theology from Reform Theological Seminary. When I think of the word savant, I just feel like I could ask him any question, and he picked this question, and he'd have a lot to say. I really became aware of him through some of his article that he was writing for Christianity Today. I felt like every two to three weeks there was this awesome article from him. So if you haven't read his articles, please, after the show we'll put them in the notes, you need to do that. But, I think Stu brings a unique perspective from playing football, from going to seminary, from working at a

church, just from every aspect. I think he's experienced this question, so I'm looking forward to it.

John lamaio: Yeah. Well, let's welcome our Renaissance man here, Stu Dante. Thanks for joining us, Stu. Great to have you here.

Stu Dante: Thank you so much. So great to be with you guys.

John lamaio: Yeah, yeah. Well, let's dive right on in. This was the question that you chose. That's always fun for us, when we have people that are like, "I'm really passionate about this topic. Let's talk about this one." That's fun, on our side, to have these conversations. When we're talking about from your vantage point, when we're talking about young people, because everybody has a different idea of what young people, what we're talking about in that regard. There's people all across the age spectrum that listen to this. Some are, "You young whippersnappers, 50 year-olds these days," it's like... But when we're talking about young people, in your mind, what are you talking about?

Stu Dante: Yeah. I think, for me, personally, as I've been researching this year because we never want to just lean on our own selves. We want to try and lean on some research. I've been reading, over the last few months, Joy Challenger. She did her seminary work at DU Divinity School and her, I want to say either her dissertation or thesis, it was one of them, it's called Infused: The Black Church and Black Millennials. One of the things she talked about is categorizing how do we think about young adults. Are they emerging adults? Are they adults? Are they millennial, Gen-Z, how do we categorize them? And I found hers helpful. People do, I guess, categorize people differently, but for me, when I think about, I think hers was 18-35, and I think others, like David Kinnaman, whose with Barna Group, I think, is 18-29 if I'm not mistaken.

Stu Dante: For me, I like that as well, but also I want to move it back a little bit as well because I used to be a middle school teacher, and I got sixth, seventh, and eighth graders that I were teaching that for young people, they are critically important as well. So for me, I guess, as I've been wrestling through [inaudible 00:05:40], I want to think from like 13 years old, look at it in different groups, 13-16, or 13-18, or 18-25, or 25-30, anywhere in that range of being in their life circumstances of being young, I think it matters from that wide of a spectrum, just because all of our worlds between those stages of life, those kind of [inaudible 00:06:12], 12, 13 years old to 16, or 16-18 and 18 to your college years of 22 and then 22-30, matters for us. So yeah, I'm thinking y'all get those from any of that young people, young adults anywhere from that range of 13, 14 all the way up to 30 years old.

Peter Englert: You know, Stu, I know you well enough, we're just going to go into it because you already brought it up, and one of the things that I love that you're talking about, in the year of or Lord, 2019, soon to be 2020, what are some

observations that you have of being, and I thought you mentioned this, an African American millennial trying to navigate, not just the age difference, but also just the talk about racism and prejudice and diversity, how are you managing that in this topic, not only with the research that you're doing, but also with your experience, because I just think you have a lot to offer to this conversation.

Stu Dante: Yeah, I would say I'm not an expert, so for me, I would need to take myself with a grain of salt, and I would point you in the right direction to the right people. [crosstalk 00:07:34]. Firstly, I think that's important, though. Like we have to listen to people who don't have PhDs, people who have PhDs, because all of our opinions matter, especially when it comes to we're trying to build a life together, so we have to hear from one another.

Stu Dante: For me, I think I have, over 2017 to 2019, I've gone through various church transitions. I was a part of the majority White Southern Baptist Reform Church and now I'm part of a Black church in the Progressive National Baptist Convention. So I have gone through ministry transitions, and that question would have been answered mighty very differently, given those particular social spaces. In 2017, if I was looking, I would have answered differently than now, but now, going through that journey, I think one of the big obstacles I'm seeing that we're facing is, I guess what David Kinnaman would bring up in their new book, shout out to David for sending me that book, Faith For Exiles-

John lamaio: And may I give him a shout out too. Even though he didn't send me the book, I bought it, and it's a really good book, so people should buy that one.

Stu Dante: Yeah. It's a really good book, really good book. I think in their book, in one of the early sessions when they're defining exile and digital Babylon, as they term our society now, one of the things they say that, the verdict is, many of the older generations, that they're trying to give young people in Jerusalem faith inside of a Babylonian experience.

Stu Dante: Now the distinction that they make between Jerusalem and Babylon is this kind of faith that's just simply, I think if I'm reading it correctly, this individualistic faith, societal relating to one another, this upholding the status quo and not really rocking the boat a lot, versus in Babylon, where I think Daniel White Hodge in Homeland Insecurity calls the wild, doing Christianity in the wild. I think I would agree with Kinnaman when he says that the older generations have a failure of discipleship, have a failure of formation, when it comes to asking the hard questions of our day and giving young people a faith that is living and not simply a dead faith that's just simply confined to how can you repeat the language of old, how can you do this, or how can you do that?

Stu Dante: I don't want to blame the older generation. I want to be careful not to blame the older generations for the struggles that we're facing today, because in some

sense, the struggles that we are faced today is a reflection of all of us in some sense. But not all of us in the same way. I am not a person that believes in the myth of the both side, or of equal moral blame for the situation that we face. The line of sin runs through each of us, but some of us, our sin is more powerful than others, and it relates to how that darkness in our own lives, our collective groups, shows itself and express itself in real legitimate ways and real legitimate lives.

Stu Dante: So I think one of the obstacles, yes, is the discipleship piece, but I think another obstacle, we can't just simply say okay, hey, yo, this is the only thing that's happened because in some sense, life is much more complex than simply one answer, especially when you're dealing with what we would deem to believe, problems or issues.

Stu Dante: So I think another issue that we're facing that would go in line with the discipleship piece is that a lot of times we're not [inaudible 00:11:46] space to people that's me and younger to honestly wrestle with the world that they have to live in, to honestly ask questions, and to be okay with us saying, you know, I don't know. Or, maybe even we were wrong on certain things.

Stu Dante: In my devotional that I just wrote, what's crazy is like today is day two of the devotional, and it's a reflection on young people. It tells the story of James and the Giant Peach, where I was reading this story of James and the Giant Peach, as I was putting my son down, I started putting him down at night, and as I put him down, we listen to audiobooks, just because he can't read. He's only 16 months, but just getting in the mode of listening or reading, so I listen to James and the Giant Peach. I don't know why I started listening to James and the Giant Peach, just random audiobook that came up, but there was this one thing that really hit me. So in this scene, James is sitting under the tree, and he was crying.

Stu Dante: [inaudible 00:13:09] if one knows the story of James and the Giant Peach, it's a story that tells of his adventures into the peach and back again, it's a narration of his journey, and in this particular scene he was now with his aunts, and he was crying under the tree. We can only imagine the pain and the struggles that James, as a child, pushed in that situation, would have felt. He's pushed into an environment that is not familiar to him. He's pushed into an environment where he's blamed for the situation that he is in right now, and you just simply sit in a pool of tears and dreaming at this point, of all the wonderful things that all the other kids all over the world were doing.

Stu Dante: And so, for me, it's like, we have to be honest about the reality that there are so many James all over our world who are pushed into circumstances that are not their own, oftentimes they're blamed and forsaken for the issues that they are facing and the ways of the world that are put on their shoulder, and all they have is their tears and their hopes and their dreams and their imagination of what possibly could be versus what they're going through right now. I hit that

scripture, and I think it was, if I'm not mistaken, Mark 10, where Jesus, the disciples, they see all the kids around them, and then they respond very sternly to the children, and Jesus just says quite simply, "Let the children come to me." And he embraces them. And he points to them, he redirects adults, to children. That's kind of crazy for us, because it's like, in our society, children, y'all need to listen to adults right now, etc., etc., etc. So now we call it young people are questioning authority, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So that may be legitimate, but they may be questioning authority for good reasons. Because they authority often time has been either illegitimate guiding, or illegitimacy of Hell, for the wrong reason, for the wrong ends. So Jesus embraces these children. Then encourages them, and he empowers them. Just imagine what it would mean for many of the young people today in our society to be embraced, to be encouraged, and to be empowered. But oftentimes it's not the case. That's not [inaudible 00:15:56]. If that is anything, the journey that takes us, not embracing and empowering and encouraging, but it's oftentimes demonizing, blaming, confining them to a space until they become mature to live out their own lives, we're protecting and confining rather than allowing them to blossom. I think that's a huge obstacle [inaudible 00:16:36] is that, based on context, I can only speak for the context outside myself [inaudible 00:16:42], but oftentimes, one of the biggest challenges is the way we are trained regarding how to do Christianity, how to do discipleship, what type of life Christianity should take on. If we're talking about race, if we think about race and Christianity, and this is just simply on an educational standpoint, I ain't even talking statistics, I ain't talking ideology or even analysis. Just simply the practice of reading. Okay, if we look back over the last year, and we say, okay, if we deem this situation or thing to be an issue, what over the last year have I read to help me wrestle through, not even get an answer, not even give answers, which everybody gives answers in a sense, and we need them, but who has been helping me wrestle through particular issues that I believe to be challenges and obstacles in our world. So if I look at, I think this is what Daniel Hill did in his book White Awake if I'm not mistaken, he said look at your library and ask the question: who are they socially? Looking very hard at that question, because it's a hard question to ask ourselves. Who are they socially? Who are they racially, et cetera, et cetera. If I can say okay, that the voices that are helping me wrestle through issues are pretty much the same voices, then I got to ask the question, what particular limitations do I bring to the table?

Peter Englert: So it's interesting, as you're talking, because what you've set up is you've set up... I love the phrase exiles in Jerusalem, because for a lot of our listeners, the Bible might be foreign to them, and what you're bringing up, if I'm a Gen-Z or if I'm a millennial, I feel out of place, but no one's invited me to the party. But John actually has a question right now.

John Iamaio: Wow. You knew that. Intellectually. You just read my mind. That's unbelievable. He's good. He's good. No, I actually do have a question, so Peter is very observant, I don't know, but one of the things, Stu, that was rattling around in

my mind, I love your paradigm there, of embrace, encourage, and then empower. I think that is a great paradigm. You talk about pouring into the lives of junior high students, man, that's amazing. I have a couple of junior high students in my house, so I know that's not an easy task for somebody to pour into the lives of junior high students, right?

Stu Dante: It's not.

John lamaio: No, that is hard work that's very undervalued, I think, in our society, in general. But when I think about that, I go, well there's somebody who has spent a lot of time investing in this generation, what do you think, when you're looking at this generation coming up, what do you think are some of the things that are most misunderstood about them? From the outside looking in, yeah.

Stu Dante: Yeah. I think one of the biggest things, I call this teaching, it was my head banging against the wall with this, is that adults are always right, on everything. That is one of the biggest, biggest mistakes we are making, is that to be old or elderly or older is that you're always right on everything. These young kids are not dumb. We may say that, okay, they are more lonely because of the social media world and disconnectivity that we face within our interpersonal relation with one another, but these kids are not dumb. These kids know what's going on, and I'm specifically talking about junior high kids. If we talking about people my age, I'm 27, and younger, and young dudes that I'm living life with, I'm talking about, I was not reading [inaudible 00:21:19] in college. If you don't know who [inaudible 00:21:22] is, listeners, you should definitely look up [inaudible 00:21:25]. He's an incredible thinker, incredible writer.

Stu Dante: When I was in college, even doing my degree in sociology, we were really dealing with some good stuff, but in my leisure time I wasn't reading anyone like [inaudible 00:21:41]. These young people are incredibly smart and they don't even, in some sense, they're not waiting for adults to get right, nor do I think they should. They're not waiting, because in some sense, as we're trying to, people who are older are trying to analyze situations, simply reflection, young people, their action is their reflection, and so action then becomes the practice by which one is able to reflect on the limitations and possibility of the type of form and shape life can take. So they're willing to ask harder questions, but also act while they're asking questions. They're very brilliant, incredibly brilliant, and that needs to be encouraged in them, that their brilliance needs to be encouraged, it needs to be empowered and embraced. Because we can't encourage and empower before we embrace. If we still like, they're going to be a threat to us in many ways they are, in a sense, because, even if I think about myself, there were moments when I think about ministry, when things are not right, it should be questioned, and we shouldn't say you don't go to that place, you don't question, you don't address that or even just let's take our time, let's take our time, let's take our time. The reality is that as we're taking our time, it's almost like, yeah, we're out in the ocean and we're in a storm, and we're trying

to get to shore, but one person is trying to analyze what tools we need to do to get to shore. Young people are like, hey, whatever we got, let's go. We're going to make do with what we go, and I think that's brilliant. That's amazing.

Stu Dante: One of the challenges though for young people, for us, is we also have to ask that question of our limitations as well. We can't just simply look at those who [inaudible 00:24:09] very important because people will hear that word, and it's like patronizing is a bad word, but in some sense, patronizing is a very honest word that we mean to use, especially how young people live in various institutions where they are alienated, is the definitions okay, [inaudible 00:24:37] kind or helpful on the one hand, but betraying a feeling or a sense of condescension. Patronizing is very important. On the one hand, it seems welcoming, but as we live, the reality is that oftentimes it's very condescending to us and to our reality and what young people have to offer and bring to the table.

Peter Englert: Sorry Stu, when you said condescension, I'm thinking about the student that sent this to their parents. I'm thinking of some condescending things, and I just want you to think about these phrases. So let's pretend I'm a parent talking to my kid. You don't have enough experience. You don't have any common sense. That's a great idea, but that's too idealistic. What do you say to the leaders that are in the forties and fifties and sixties, because I'll just be real with you right now, whenever someone comments on my age, I don't know if I'm allowed to say this on the podcast, I'm 33 years old, whenever someone comments on their age, and they don't have something legitimate, I'm like, you literally are not creative enough to disagree with me well, so you just picked my age. So coming back to your thought about condescension, what are some phrases that you see people saying that you're kind of like, why are you saying that?

Stu Dante: For me, it's not even phrases, but it's the way people relate, like their particular vibe. For example, say we have, and this is a very real ministry situation, I'm going to be honest, so I do a lot of studying and researching and writing, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, one of the biggest things, it's not even the phrases that get me, but it's the type of relating. Reading King and all these wonderful thinkers, like [inaudible 00:27:00] or theology, regarding [inaudible 00:27:05], Rowan Williams, or [inaudible 00:27:07], Peter Gomes, [inaudible 00:27:10], John Calvin, all these people, and when it comes to, okay, we want to become more diverse, all right. We want to become more diverse. The leaders not doing research, but on the other hand saying, okay, hey, we want to become more diverse, all right, that's one thing. Young people, incredibly gifted, smart, doing research, are living in a world that older people don't even, in a sense, they care, but not really.

Stu Dante: And yes, they have a lot on their plate, and I'm thinking specifically of leaders, pastors, ministry leaders, have a lot on their plate, oftentimes because of their proximity to their issues and social spaces. It's not as important as the budget,

or if it is as important as the budget, the budget matters more because the reality is that if you go to that space, your dealer's going to stop getting it, and they're going to leave the church. That's something we need to start talking about. How many leaders aren't addressing particular issues because of money, or the fear of losing money. I'm not going to get on that soapbox right now.

Peter Englert: It's a good soapbox. That's an entire podcast right there, that's a good one.

Stu Dante: I'm not going to get on that soapbox. I ain't no pastor right now. I've just been in the [inaudible 00:28:45] and some things may go on that I don't know, so I'm not going to get on that, but from what I observe, we need to talk about it.

Peter Englert: Let's do it.

Stu Dante: The reality is that we have ministry leaders that saying they want certain realities and when it comes to, okay, you say you want this and I done did a lot of this research, I done look at the numbers, I done trying to come up with a vision, a plan, and address issues, but it's like, okay, that was a good idea, but, yeah, no. What about this, or have you considered this? Or even, I asked one ministry leader one time, we was talking about race, white ministry leader, and I said, hey, tell me about your journey on race, and then it was said, I don't think I have a journey.

Peter Englert: Wow.

Stu Dante: But then the same person says, I believe race is becoming too much in your life, who said they don't have a journey on race. So it's stuff like that that just is like, yo, we allowed to say it's out of pocket, like that out of pocket, like you're tripping, for real, that just be honest. I don't have a journey, so therefore I need to have the level of humility and faith to believe that the same god that I pray to 6:00 in the morning is the same god that work with these young people when they're marching on the street. We need to be honest about that. Not even the phrases, but the way we perform how we think about young people, what we believe to be that which matters most. I'll never forget reading what Willie Jennings said in his wonderful article, To Be a Christian Intellectual. He says we seek to change in the world not because Karl Marx told us that we should, or we seek to change the world because we believe in a god who has changed the world and changed our lives and invites us into that change.

Peter Englert: Right. The Pentecostal-

Stu Dante: Huh?

Peter Englert: The Pentecostal in me wants to say Amen right now, so I just want to throw that out there.

Stu Dante: Yeah, I was raised Pentecostal, I'm still very much Pentecostal. So we got to realize that we don't seek the change. My undergraduate's in sociology, so I read Marx. I read all these wonderful thinkers. I don't know if people would call them wonderful, but what they were doing was trying to wrestle with the human question of, given the system of injustice within our world, how do we respond in such a way that we can make life more human for more people? How can we create a more loving and just world? Maybe people was wrong for the right reasons, if we believe them to be wrong in their analysis, that's a conversation for another day. The point I'm trying to make is we're reading the Bible, as young people, and we are reading theology, we are reading political science, we are reading the best of intellectual engagement with our world, putting in hours and hours and hours, just to have somebody tell us, well, good job, thank you, but that really doesn't matter.

Peter Englert: Let's do this, Stu, I feel like I've heard three sermons. This is great. Why don't we, with our closing moments and stuff like that, what do you think the good news is to this question, why are institutions so patronizing to young people? I just think as we close in the next four to five minutes, what do you think, to the older person, what's the good news, and then to the younger person, what's the good news, and then how do we move forward? I think that that's kind of a good way, and then we have a follow-up question to close the time in there. So yeah.

Stu Dante: Yeah, I think the good news is that we're still here. That young people are still engaging within institutions. The reality is that a lot of our institutions are, at least generationally, diverse in many cases. From a proximity standpoint, I'm not even talking about power, who gets to make decision-making, authority, but essentially that young people are still in our institutions, given the societal changes or setbacks or struggles that they are facing and that we are facing together, that young people are still there is a great, great sign to both.

Stu Dante: For me, I am neither an optimist. That's what Leslie [inaudible 00:33:53] say. I'm neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but Jesus Christ is the Lord. For me, I'm not an optimist regarding the challenges that we face in our society. The reality is that a lot of the things that we're talking about now, in this present moment, they were talking about 50 years ago, and how can we be so arrogant to believe that we are the people who can actually solve the problem that we are facing?

Stu Dante: Now, I want to be careful. Yes, that's arrogant on one hand. But we need to say we can actually be the people who can change it. So we need to be hopeful, in a sense that young people are still showing up. Now the challenges that young people, we are very integrated as far as intellectually, we're in our society socially and politically, so it needs to be areas where we can create a space of what [Lou Brotherton 00:34:51] call Shared Speech and Shared Action, so we need to create a space where we can have conversations that are honest, where the speech that we have is what Brotherton also calls fitting, free, frank, and

fitting, so we need to have free speech within these conversations that are frank and tell it like it is, but also fitting for the situation that we are facing. That, young people and older generations are in the same spaces as far as proximity, is good news for us and that tells us, in some sense, progress is never a straight line, but that we're showing up, we can move forward. It's going to be challenging, it's going to be tough, but we need to at least try to do that.

Stu Dante: Those who are ministry leaders, if a ministry leader is listening to this conversation, they leave this conversation, and the next week they don't hit up somebody young within their church, that is bad. I don't want to say that very, but right, that's horrible. That would be horrible. That would be bad. For real. Because young people, in their church, they need to have a voice, they need to listen. Be listened to as well as listen within conversations, and so we need to further our, I like to say that the type of discipleship that is needed today is a type of discipleship that is creative, but also constructive, that's thrilling but transformative. That's revolutionary and relevant, but also resourceful, that's rooted in tradition, historically, that reflects theologically but also is diverse ecumenically. That's also politically and socially democratic to create a more loving and just world for everyone. So we need to be conversing between those various worlds like John [inaudible 00:36:48] living between these two worlds, to really think about how can we be better Christians today and tomorrow. We should actually seek to be better people as Christians. If Christianity does not make us better people, Christianity should make us, our faith lingers on two things, loving God, and loving our neighbor. If we're loving our neighbor, we're trying to become better, and if we do that, we will be better people. I think that's good news for us.

John lamaio: As you're talking, I just happened to be at a conference this past week, and I was hearing Tim Elmore give a talk about Generation Z, and I don't know if you're familiar with his stuff, but he talked about his concept of reverse mentoring. It seems like what your challenge is to leaders right now, whether that's in the church space or other spaces, would be to take the opportunity to actually listen to people of that younger generation and to humble yourself in a way to say, I'm humble enough to receive instruction from you as well as to give instruction to you, and from that, we all grow. Which to me, it's such a beautiful picture of the future, I think. I kind of tend toward being a little more optimist maybe than you are, but I think if we lean into that, that could be paint a picture of the future that's actually a really, really beautiful thing.

John lamaio: We have one question that we always end this podcast with, and I feel like this has been so rich already that I have a lot more questions simmering, so we're just going to have to invite you back sometime, but the question that we always ask at the end is, what would Jesus say about this? So Peter and I, we always go first, because we believe that our guests are actually better at talking than we are, so Peter and I are going to go first, and then we'll let you back clean up, and you can correct any errors that we make.

Stu Dante: No, no.

John lamaio: Peter, you want to step up to the plate first and go for it?

Peter Englert: Sure, first of all, I got to say, go Clemson, like let's start there. That's what I'm talking about.

Stu Dante: Hey, let's go.

Peter Englert: As I was listening to Stu, it brought me back to Luke 2:52, where it describes Jesus's process of growing up. He grew in stature, in wisdom, in favor with God and man. So we talk about Jesus understanding our depression and our sadness, but Jesus lived through this. Jesus lived through relating to the older generation and younger generation, and his disciples, I think one of them's John, the younger, and so you think about this, Jesus positioned himself with all different groups of people, and the thing I'm leaving with this podcast from Stu is this, I'm leaving with, if you're not engaging younger and older people, and even if you're not engaging through reading people that don't vote like you, people that aren't your race, you're failing to be a good Christian, because I look at Jesus's life, and Jesus is with the Greeks, Jesus, his cross is carried by an Ethiopian, and the writers of Scripture thought that that was so important, and as we read the rest of the New Testament, and in some ways I look at what Stu said, we're still dealing with the same problems.

Peter Englert: There were Jews that thought they were superior to Gentiles, and how do you combat that? You combat that by spending time with people, you combat that by reading. Your bookshelf should represent your whimsy of getting to know people that you don't know or you disagree with. It should reflect his gospel of inclusion and welcoming that Jesus lived.

John lamaio: Yeah. I like that. I like that. You kind of hit on one of the points that I was thinking about actually, Peter, and that's that I think in the midst of this, I think it's important to look at who Jesus poured his life into, and when Jesus was pouring his life into people, like his twelve disciples were, it's not a knock against older people. I think in some ways many people consider me to be an older person now, but they were young guys that he poured his life into. I feel like I'm not as objective on this because in the last 19 years of my life I've been spending with college students, investing in the lives of college students. I find it fun. I love it. I think that's part of the thing too is Jesus calls us to invest in people, and it's not a chore to pour into the lives of the next generation. It's actually a privilege that we get to do that. Once we start thinking that we are the one with all the answers, everybody just has to listen to us, we can't learn from people who are younger than us. I think we fail to walk the life of Jesus. I think that's the challenge for all of us. I think you did that so well, Stu, challenging us to do that.

John lamaio: But how would you answer this question, Stu?

Stu Dante: Wow. Yeah. I'm a seminary student. I mentioned I'm a theology type. I got to quote somebody, but as I thought about the scriptures, two scriptures particularly, I'll say three, that I've resonated deeply with, is Nehemiah 5, Isiah 59, and Matthew 9, the backend of Matthew 9. So Nehemiah 5, when Nehemiah responds to the situation that his people are facing where they have [inaudible 00:43:09] challenges that are stressed upon them, so Nehemiah says, when I thought this over, I was very angry, and I brought charges against the officials. Boom, that's Nehemiah. That's what happened with Nehemiah. He thought it over, he realized, he looked around at the situation that was going on around him, he looked, he thought it over, he reflected, and he wants to respond in such a way that power is restored, dignity is restored, agency is restored, and life is more loving and just within the world.

Stu Dante: Then Isiah 59 is the same kind of situation, and then God responds, there was no one to intervene. I looked down in the situation and there was no one to intervene. So I brought victory with my own hand, and we see all of this kind of beautiful, glorious language regarding the type of intervention that God brings and the holistic reality of human life. Then we see Jesus is the very embodiment of what Nehemiah and Isiah was getting at. We see Jesus in Matthew Chapter 9, at the back end of Matthew Chapter 9, but Jesus went through all the cities and villages, and he preached the good news of the kingdom, and he healed all men of diseases and sicknesses, and he looks around and he looked with compassion because they were harassed and helpless.

Stu Dante: Now when I think about what Jesus would have thought about that, as I'm trying to reflect on what Jesus would have thought about that, I think it's very clear. Jesus saw that ministry and human life, ministry and message of Jesus, deals with the whole person inside of their real world, and their real situations, their real circumstances. And that the ethic of the religion of Jesus should be compassion among those who are harassed and helpless as we are the bearers of this message of healing, this message of freedom and liberation, this message of change in our own personal, spiritual, [inaudible 00:45:01] lives, and so we have to look at the way Jesus responded to the world, that Jesus was around, and then the way that the world will be, that we Christians believe, beyond Friday and Sunday.

Stu Dante: Sunday is coming. In some sense, we got to deal real honestly with challenges of Friday and the social political spiritual private and public dimensions of what it means to be crucified and for darkness to crowd the land and silence of Saturday to happen, but at some point, we got to hope people onto Sunday. You talk about Pentecostal, that's something that'll get me happy. We got to get people to Sunday, we got to get them beyond tragedy, beyond life in darkness, and I think that's what Jesus did. Jesus allowed us to sit in Friday and sit in Saturday, but realize that Sunday is coming, and when Sunday comes, this train

is moving, and you better hop on this train, and we want to hop on that train to glory, like much of the gospels, psalms, and spirituals would say.

Stu Dante: I think, when we think about Jesus, we have to realize that we have to preach and live and mobilize and educate and allow participation and make room where that encouragement, where that embrace, where that empowerment can take place in real ways that are both thrilling and transformative, like I said earlier. So Christian life should be thrilling, in the sense of, it's like what Rowan Williams says, he says in his book Being Disciples that, to be a disciple was to have two things: awareness and expectancy. To be in awareness of how to read our world in light of God, but also God in light of our world. So when you look at Scripture, that story is our story. In that story we see ourselves, but also how can we be aware of those around us, but also expectant, that when we look with an eye of awareness, we will see God at work within our world. Like Fred Rogers. The Holy Spirit is always one in us, in places where God is active in our world, so we should be that way as well.

Peter Englert: There is no better way to close this podcast than Fred Rodgers. I just love that. If you are listening to this podcast, make sure you check out our website at whygodwhypodcast.com. If you're looking at this, you can follow Stu on Instagram, Twitter. Right now, we're recording this before Christmas. He has an advent out. This will probably air in January, so we want you to do that. Remember to review the podcast on Apple iTunes. That helps more people find us. Remember, sharing is caring, and from the rest of us here at the Why God Why Podcast, this is Peter Englert signing off for John Iamaio, Dylan Carnavale, and Stu Dante. Thank you so very much. Have a great day. Bye bye.