

Announcer:

Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. A podcast all about leadership, change, and personal growth. The goal? To help you lead like never before, in your church or in your business. And now your host, Carey Nieuwhof.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well hey everybody, and welcome to episode 249 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. Well we got a fascinating conversation today with Kara Powell and Steve Argue from Fuller Youth Institute. They've got a brand new research project, really, on what it is like and what you need to do as a parent when your kids get a little bit older. You can grow with your kids through all the different stages.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I don't know about you but I always thought like, "Okay, at 18 you're kind of done as a parent." Well as a dad parenting kids in their 20s now, I promise you you're not done. And they may be off the payroll, they may be all those things, but I'll you they've got some incredible wisdom and insight. And if you're parenting young children, listen in, listen up, because you're gonna learn a lot about how to position yourself well for those later years.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And of course if you're in student ministry or you work with kids, you're gonna love this. So Steve is brand new to the podcast, Kara is back on the podcast. But that's my interview with them today. Another leader that I really highly respect, and who has helped thousands of church leaders is Tony Morgan. And he is the founder and principal strategist, the lead strategist for The Unstuck Group. And Tony has done a lot of research. He's helped thousands of churches get through the fact that they're plateaued or declining.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I sat down with Tony and had a conversation with him about this assessment that they've been offering to churches for free for years. And I said, "What is the data telling you?" So he has a model where churches go through seven distinct life-cycles from start up to death. And I said, "Okay, so now you've heard from thousands of churches, what are you learning about where the average church leader gets stuck?" Here's his answer.

Tony Morgan:

Yeah, so Carey you know we measure seven stages in our lifecycle, and it's all the way from launch stage through life support. But interestingly enough of those seven phases the number one area where we see churches getting stuck is in the maintenance season. In fact, 60% of churches that have taken The Unstuck Church Assessment have landed in the maintenance phase.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Curious about where your church would land on that assessment? Well you can take it for free. Head on over to [theunstuckgroup.com/Carey](https://theunstuckgroup.com/Carey). C-A-R-E-Y. That's [theunstuckgroup.com/Carey](https://theunstuckgroup.com/Carey). And you can take the free assessment and figure out which of the seven life stages your church is at. And The Unstuck Group has helped thousands of churches get unstuck. So what they do is they help you assess your ministry health. They help you create strategic plans. And even structure your staff toward the strategy, and help you follow through you.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) And the process helps you get unstuck and move towards success in reaching people that you so desperately wanna reach. So once again, head on over to [theunstuckgroup.com/Carey](http://theunstuckgroup.com/Carey) to see how The Unstuck Group can help your church get unstuck. And also, have you checked out Rethink Leadership yet? We are super excited to be doing what I think will be the best Rethink Leadership so far. May 1st through 3rd in Atlanta, Georgia. We just announced the final speaking lineup, so head on over to [rethinkleadership.com](http://rethinkleadership.com) and get in before it's too late.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) So we've got Horst Schultz. He's the founder of Ritz Carlton, Nona Jones from Facebook, Kevin Jennings from Junction 32, a startup in Nashville that's doing incredible work in the social media world. Danielle Strickland, Dharius Daniels, myself, Jon Acuff, Brad Lomenick, and so many more. And we're talking leadership for two full days. We have a VIP reception Tuesday night. If you register now you'll get in on that.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) So head on over to [rethinkleadership.com](http://rethinkleadership.com) before it's too late. Join me in Atlanta May 1st through 3rd. We would love to host you and your team. Your senior leadership team of senior pastor, executive pastor, campus pastor, at this year's Rethink Leadership. Well I am really excited for today's guest. Kara Powell is the Executive Director of the Fuller Youth Institute. Steve Argue is Associate Professor of youth, family, and culture. Kara has been called one of the 50 Woman to Watch by Christianity Today.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) And what I always joke with these guys about is, you do actual research. Like, it's fascinating to see what they're learning about how you can grow with your kids as they get older, and what that means for ministry. So without further ado, my conversation with Kara Powell and Steven Argue.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Well Kara and Steven welcome back, and welcome to the podcast. It's good to have you guys.

[Steve Argue:](#) Thanks Carey.

[Kara Powell:](#) It's great to be here.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) In beautiful sunny Pasadena, California. Is that where we find you?

[Kara Powell:](#) Today it is a beautiful day. Blue sky, nice and sunny, green trees.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) People in California last week, and I know this will air later, were freaking out because it rained for a week. I was getting texts from friends and they didn't know what to do.

[Kara Powell:](#) Oh yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) I'm like, "Give me a break, we had a foot and a half of snow. Leave me alone."

[Kara Powell:](#)

Many Californians realize they had holes in their roof when it rained that long. Because all of the sudden there were all sorts of roof leaks that had to be patched up.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Well we're gonna talk about your latest project. Kara, I don't know how many times you've been on. Three times? I think. This is number four. Something like that.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Sure, that sounds about right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Yeah, yeah. But you do real research. Like there's some PhDs in the house, and you guys are doing a great job at the Fuller Youth Institute of actually researching subjects, and doing data points, and figuring out what's going on in culture. So lots of parents listening. Lots of young adults listening. Some of whom don't have kids of their own but they're like, "How do I do parenting at this stage?" Talk to leaders about the top pain points you think most parents and kids feel.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

And you can go right through as you do with your research into the young adult years. I'm parenting a 27 and 23-year-old. So speak right into that scene. What is showing up in early 21st Century culture as the emerging pain points for kids and parents, regardless of the age.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Part of what I love about being at Fuller Seminary is we have a number of schools, including of School of Theology, and our School of Psychology. And I love learning from my faculty colleagues at both of those schools. And what they have helped Steve and I understand is that, really, young people are searching for three things. Young people are driven by three quests. First a question for identity. They're wondering, "Who am I?" Second, a quest for belonging. They're wondering, "Where do I fit?" And third, they're driven by a quest for purpose. They're wondering, "What difference do I make?"

[Kara Powell:](#)

So identity, belonging, purpose. That's what drives young people. Now I think if we're honest, those are certainly the quests that drive each of us. I'm a few decades older than the average 20-something, and those are what are driving me in many ways today also. I think for young people those questions are a rolling boil. And for those of us post 30, those questions are often more simmering. But one of the things that's fascinating to me as a parent myself is the way that parenting also triggers some of those identity, belonging, purpose questions.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Carey, you talked about your two sons who are in their 20s. Dave and I, we have three kids who are currently 18, 16, and 12. And our 18-year-old is a 12th grader applying for college. And I was just telling a friend on a walk this morning, "I think my son's process of applying to college is bringing out more of a temptation for me to compare myself with others than anything I've experienced in at least a decade."

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Wow.

[Kara Powell:](#) And Nathan so far has heard from one college, and it was a rejection. And it was my Alma Mater.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Oh, boy.

[Kara Powell:](#) So he was rejected from my Alma Mater. And Nathan's doing totally fine with it, but I'm the one that has to wrestle with some identity and purpose questions. Let's just say that my spiritual direction appointment a few days after Nathan got that email had a lot of content for me to process about my own, especially identity and purpose quest. So Steve and I think that's what all generations are searching for. Young people are searching for identity, belonging, purpose in capital, bold letters. And as parents, our teenagers and our young adults, and even our elementary aged kids, they often prompt or heighten those questions in us too.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) That is really interesting. And you know what, I'm going back a few years to the college application process and resonating with what you're saying. And there is a certain pride. Some of that is healthy, some of that is not healthy in where your kids land in life, or their, quote, status in life, or how they make you feel. And you're right, that is probably, in not always the best way, a healthy thing.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Steve, what would you add to that in terms of pain points for young adults or for parents, and how that's manifesting itself?

[Steve Argue:](#) Yeah, I think Kara and I talk about this all the time as we are trying to engage our journeys as parents. I have three daughters who are 24, 22, and 19. So I'm a little bit ahead of Kara. But Jen, my wife and I are in the same journey trying to think these things through. And I think what's interesting is we all sort of share in this is that we don't live our lives in this independent individualistic sort of way. There is this interdependence and this relationality that's associated.

[Steve Argue:](#) So we do feel the choices, and the pains, and the hopes of our kids in very, very real ways. And I think a lot of times, especially as parents, we often direct our attention toward our kids, trying to think about what they need and how we can help them, that we don't really critically reflect on maybe what's going on inside of us. So I think there's something to pay attention to in our own thinking. It's interesting that when Kara told me about her son not making it into college, one of the first questions I asked her was, "How are you doing?"

[Steve Argue:](#) And that wasn't because it was about Kara, but I think from one parent to another we recognize that there is this primal level of realizing that it affects us in some ways. And that in many ways turns into reactive parents if we're not aware of it, in that we will make decisions not recognizing that maybe it comes from our own fears and our own anxieties more than really out of helping our kids, even though that's what we want for them.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) I think it's really thoughtful that you guys started there with maybe the not very articulated issues, but they're still issues.

[Steve Argue:](#) Yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) I don't think anybody's like, "No, not in my house." Right? Not in my life. What are some of the presenting pain points, like in terms of ... like you hear about social media, you hear about communication, you hear about online porn, all that stuff. So what would be some other things that are just like, boom, this is now part of the parenting-child game. Even though it's not a game.

[Kara Powell:](#) There's some interesting trends when it comes to risk behaviors in teenagers and young adults. There's something to celebrate, and that many risk behaviors for today's young people are down. In particular partying, premarital sex, engaging in alcohol and drug use. Those are all at least slightly down with today's young people.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Wow.

[Kara Powell:](#) And we celebrate that. What's heartbreaking is the risk behaviors that are up. And the risk behaviors that are up tend to be suicide, depression, anxiety. So one way to interpret that is that the risk behaviors, the pain points that young people experience in community with others are actually down. You have sex with others, you party with others. The risk behaviors that young people tend to experience on their own, the stress, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, depression, those are up.

[Kara Powell:](#) So we are getting more and more questions here, FYI, about mental health. I know it's a pressing issue for schools. The state of California just legislated that every middle school and high school student on the back of their school ID has the National Suicide Hotline phone number, so that every teenager is carrying it around so that they know what to do. And it's interesting, when I share that with audiences usually the audience erupts in applause, because they sense that need in young people.

[Kara Powell:](#) So I would say that mental health is a huge issue. And doing a lot of college tours with my son, every college campus is talking about that. I wish the church was talking more about that. And Steve and I wish families were talking more about that. Having honest conversations about any overwhelming stress, depression, anxiety, that young people, or parents, or grandparents are feeling these days.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) I wanna follow up. But Steve, what would you say about that?

[Steve Argue:](#) Yeah, a couple of things. One, I think we see that young people are growing up in a world that is increasingly unstable. We all grew up in school having fire drills. Our kids have grown up practicing lock downs. So I just think there's some

very, very interesting ways in which the world is shaping, and forming, and turning that raises a lot of anxiety, as Kara mentioned, for young people. And yeah, the anxiety and depression is just through the roof. I would say the other thing is, as one author put it, we're sort of in a scholastic arms race with parents.

[Steve Argue:](#)

That we are trying harder and harder to get our kids to get the education that they need to succeed in the world that they are entering into, that we are literally running and trying to perform earlier and earlier in order to make it to the college that they think they need to get into, to get the job that they need to get into. So we're asking teenagers what they want to be when they grow up, and the path that they need to take in order that they somehow will make it to wherever they're supposed to be at this magical age when they're gonna be an adult.

[Steve Argue:](#)

So kids feel this incredible pressure. A lot of them don't even really know what they want because their lives have been scripted by parents who are deathly afraid that their kids won't succeed. So that pressure is lesion. It's just multiplied in multiple ways. And I think that kids are really feeling that.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Steve, that's so good, and so true, and it resonates at a deep level. I wanna go back, Kara, to what you were saying about mental health and anxiety. How do you have that conversation with your kids? Middle school, teenage years, young people years. How do you have that conversation?

[Kara Powell:](#)

Yeah. If you're a parent, how you have that conversation with your kid?

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Is that what you're asking? Yeah. The good thing about us parents is we get to see our kids more than anybody else. And I think more parents feel like they can tell when their kid is just a little bit not themselves. They have a sense if their kid isn't sleeping enough, or maybe sleeping too much. They can tell when their kid is overly wrought about something. So one of the things that has shifted for me, elementary age versus adolescence, is when our kids were in elementary school I could talk to them about pretty much anything at any time.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Now that they're in adolescence, I have to wait until their mood is right. So sometimes I'll wanna talk to my kid about something as I'm tucking them in, and I can just tell, "Nope, not the right night." Which is hard for me because I'm a list person, so I like the idea of crossing that off.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Yeah.

[Kara Powell:](#)

But I think for a parent, if you're seeing any sign that your child is acting a little bit abnormal, then look for the right moment and either you ... I sometimes bring it, based on what I've seen in the news. Gosh, I was reading today in the

news ... Or, for your listeners, I was listening to a podcast today that was talking about how so many young people are feeling a lot of stress. And then start maybe with school. What are you seeing at your school? And see if they'll talk about other kids.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) So don't start with them? The opening question isn't, "Are you suicidal?"

[Kara Powell:](#) Yeah, yeah, yeah..

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) This isn't the opening question.

[Kara Powell:](#) Yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah.

[Kara Powell:](#) What are you seeing at school? Gosh, how about your friends? So get a little bit closer. And then, especially if the mood feels right, then ask about them. And maybe volunteer, "I've noticed that your eyes are just looking really tired. You seem a little bit more pale, and I don't think you're sleeping as much as you used to. How are you doing?" And see how they respond. But again, the mood's gotta be right, and I would start by talking about teenagers in general, teenagers at their school. 20-somethings, and then move it in concentric circles to talking about them.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Steve, you're nodding a lot.

[Steve Argue:](#) You know, I would just agree. I think that's great advice. I think that there's what we know as parents, but I think as our kids get older there's also the volitional piece. I think parents need to be curious and constantly not assume that we see in our kids, or even their friends behaviors, and understanding what that means. To kind of say, "I just noticed this." Or, "What do you think happened here?" Or, "Tell me about the weekend." Or, "It seems like this topic came up, what do you think about that?"

[Steve Argue:](#) But then I think the other piece is, I think parents just need to be courageous and go there. I think sometimes we're afraid as parents that if we raise the topic, that all of the sudden it'll be put in their heads, and we don't wanna go there. Or we're afraid we're not gonna have the right answer, or response. And I think what happens is, is the more that we have taboo things that we talk about, the less we talk about them, and then it gets harder to talk about those things. So I think sometimes we just have to step into that space and say ...

[Steve Argue:](#) Our kids aren't gonna say, "Hey, dad, I wanna talk to you about suicide." I think it's gonna be us taking those steps that open up those conversations. Even in FYI we say this often, parents have to go first. We have to take that step, and step into those conversations courageously. Knowing full well that it's a risk, but I think it's a good risk.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

No, I think that's good. I remember a few years ago having a conversation with one of my grown sons. And it was about a subject that we didn't see eye to eye on. And we kind of both ... It was just one of those moments while we were at a coffee shop where I said ... Here's the problem that usually develops at this stage, "I don't know whether I said it, or he said it. It's like you either always talk about it every time you talk, or you never talk about it. And those are the pulls you have to avoid.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

So it's not like every time you see them, it's like, "How are you now? How are you now?" Because that's gonna freak them out. On the other hand, the verboten topic, the topic you never talk about, well that's not healthy either. So it almost has to be normalized. And I like your idea about starting almost with a funnel, "Hey, I was listening to a podcast, reading a book, or talking to someone. That someone else's story saw this on the news. What are you seeing?" And then, "How are you?" Really, really good progression.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Now, one of the things that also has changed in the last 10 years is everybody's got the internet in their hand. And so it used to be ... And I've been really curious about this from an even sociological standpoint. You used to get parenting advice from your mother and grandmother, or your father, or your grandfather, because those are the people you knew. Or a neighbor, or an uncle, or a friend, or something. But like, our universe wasn't very big, and you might have to parenting books on your shelf.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

And now you have the internet. And talking to young parents, they're like, "Yeah, we never asked our mom what she did with her baby, because of course that was back in the 80s. It was a stone age. Nobody does that anymore." And I think, maybe a bit of a characterization, but the truth is there. Kids have Google. So are they still turning to adults for advice? Do they wanna turn? Where are they going for answers to this? Are they going to peers? How's that happening?

[Steve Argue:](#)

Yeah, so there are different pieces of research, and it also depends on what type of information they're looking for. But one of the things that I think generally we can say is that a lot of times they are doing exactly what you're saying, Carey. They're going online and they're going to their friends.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Yeah.

[Steve Argue:](#)

And while these can be useful resources, we know that the World Wide Web isn't exactly the bastion of perfect information. There's connection associated with that, but also isolation. There's misinformation. And so there's some challenges with that. And then at the same time, going to peers, I think they go to them for a lot of empathy and understanding, which is great. But I think we also recognize the fact that peers talking to peers don't have the privilege of having more lived life. They can't really peek around the corner as to what's next, or that type of thing.



[Steve Argue:](#) I say this with deep respect, it's sometimes the blind leading the blind, right? Because they're both trying to figure things out, and it doesn't necessarily work that way. What I'd say about this is I don't think this is out of protest to adults. I think that part of growing up for young people is sometimes situated in this idea that, "Well, I'm supposed to figure it out myself because that's what adults do." I've been interacting with my daughters about this, and I recently had a conversation with my daughter Kara about this.

[Kara Powell:](#) Not named after me, just to clarify.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Just so you know.

[Kara Powell:](#) We have the same name spelled the same way, but he and Jen named Kara a lot of time before we even met.

[Steve Argue:](#) Exactly.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) But it's a good name.

[Kara Powell:](#) It is a good name.

[Steve Argue:](#) Yeah, it is a good name. We love it. She tried something and didn't ask us for help. That's fine, she can do what she wants to do, and that's part of her process. But I did ask her, I'm like, "I think we could've helped you with that. We could've probably given you some insights in that." And she's like, "Well, I'm trying to become an adult. I'm trying to figure this out myself." So I think that what young people are sometimes wrestling with is, how do I be independent? But then how does that move to interdependence?

[Steve Argue:](#) Asking for advice doesn't mean that you're less of an adult, in some ways it can actually be helpful. So I think they're trying to find their way and trying to be adult-like, but that doesn't always work. And at the same time I think we have to just be honest as leaders, in companies, as parents, as ministry leaders, and maybe ask the question, "Why don't young people reach out to us?" Sometimes adults are just too busy and stressed out themselves. So the stress in our own lives leaves little room for real conversation, or advice giving, or listening associated with that.

[Steve Argue:](#) And as Kara mentioned before, I think we're seeking out our own questions, and questioning our questions of identity, and belonging, and purpose. So I think that young people, with regards to the internet, have access to a lot of information, but what I think they really need access to is wisdom.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) What do parents do that shuts down the dialogue? What are some things that parents would typically do that just, you kid's never gonna talk to you when you do that?

[Steve Argue:](#) Well we talk a lot about the, I think sometimes parents and adults in trying to relate to young people will say, "When I was your age ..." And then they go into some sort of montage about their age, and everything associated with that. And I think that as adults sometimes we think those are bridge-builders, but for young people it's a bit of a barrier.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Okay.

[Steve Argue:](#) And the operative word there is when, right? When you were my age it was like, the 80s, right? Or the 90s. Think about what you wore back then. Things have changed. The internet wasn't even around. The news cycle was completely different. So there's a distancing effect that sometimes comes with that, because I think that sometimes adults think that because they were teenagers or 20-somethings once, they understand teenagers and 20-somethings today. And we just need to realize that, that's not necessarily the case.

[Steve Argue:](#) It's crucial for us to recognize that when we are teenagers, and when we are in our 20s, actually has a dramatic effect on the experiences that we have, the pressures we feel, and that type of thing. Now that doesn't mean we can't talk to each other, but I think in some ways it's recognizing the difference before we step into saying that we can completely understand where they're coming from.

[Steve Argue:](#) And that difference that allows us to maybe, again, take a curious approach, and to ask them, "Well tell me what it's like for you. How are you wrestling with that? What's it like for you to work through that in your life? It might be different than mine." And then that way I think it allows us to truly understand where young people are coming from rather than assuming.

[Kara Powell:](#) If I can I answer that question autobiographically, one of my current goals for myself as parent that is born from where I think I'm weak and where I blow it, is I wanna be a more empathetic parent. Just last week Dave and I were trying to have a conversation that we knew was gonna be kind of tough with our 16-year-old. And we started the conversation, and it went south quickly. So we said, "Why don't you go to your room, and let's try again in 10 minutes."

[Kara Powell:](#) So, she came out of her room in 10 minutes, and it went south even more quickly. And there were tears, and it was just terrible. And I'm getting frustrated and Dave was getting frustrated, and so we just agreed to end the conversation at that point. So Krista went into her room. I pulled out my laptop because when I don't know what to do I feel better when I work. That's not a healthy thing, that's a subject for another podcast, Carey.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Understood.

[Kara Powell:](#) It's kind of my coping mechanism. So I pulled out my laptop and I was actually looking at some summaries of this book *Growing With*, that Steve and I have written, and it was talking about the importance of empathy. And I all of the

sudden realized that's what I was blowing with Krista. Like, the marketing materials for our book convicted me of how I had blown it with my own 16-year-old. So I shut my laptop, I went into her room, and I said, "I'm so sorry, Krista, I was not empathizing with you."

[Kara Powell:](#)

And what I thought to myself, I didn't say to her is, the topic of this conversation pokes at some of her insecurities and anxieties, and I wasn't sensitive to that. I was viewing it as neutral topic, and it was not a neutral topic for her. And we believe that you can't journey with someone if you're judging them. And I ended up judging Krista instead of journeying with her. And so I apologized, she forgave me, we agreed to have a conversation in a few days later. And a few days later she, Dave, and I were finally ... 3rd times the charm, able to have the conversation.

[Kara Powell:](#)

But it was all because I wasn't empathizing, putting myself in her shoes, understanding her beliefs that were influencing her behavior. So that is the mistake that I'm aware of that I make regularly as a parent, that I'm trying to work on.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Thanks for being so honest. Yeah, it's fun when your own marketing materials convict you. It's even better, my kids have done this where they quote me to me.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Gosh.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Yes.

[Steve Argue:](#)

Yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Next, next.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Yup.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

So you do have this new book, really it's a research project that in-part is expressed through a book, that you've titled Growing With.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

And, I don't know, its interesting. We talk about we live in a culture that talks about delayed adolescence, failure to launch, that is 30 the new 20? And you've got thoughts on that inside the book. But are you sort of attacking the idea that at some point you're done parenting? Is that part of this research project?

[Kara Powell:](#)

Yes. In a word, yes we are.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Yeah.

[Kara Powell:](#)

I was thinking recently about a friend of my mom's who was in her 60s, and took her 80-year-old dad to the beach. So the 60-year-old went out into the water, was maybe up to her shoulders, and left her 80-year-old dad on the sand sitting on a towel. And all of the sudden the 60-year-old turned back to look at the beach and make sure her dad was okay, and her dad was gesturing wildly, like, "Come back in, come back in, come back in." And so she thought, "Oh, my goodness, he's having a health issue."

[Kara Powell:](#)

So as quickly as she could she got out of the water, ran up on the sand, got to her dad, was panting, and said, "Are you okay? Are you okay?" The 80-year-old said to the 60-year-old, "Yeah, I just thought you were out a little bit far, so I wanted you to come in." And-

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

That's amazing.

[Kara Powell:](#)

If you're a parent I think you get it. Once you become a parent, you're a parent for the rest of your life. So the question isn't whether or not we're parenting, it's what kind of parenting we're doing, and what kind of parent is best for our kids. I feel like parenting is one of God's best curricula for me to grow. Parenting is constantly teaching me new things about myself, my sins, as well as my strengths.

[Kara Powell:](#)

So what Steve and I want is as parents grow with their kids, it's not just good for our children, our teenagers, and our young adults. It's good for us too because we, as parents, we maintain a posture of growth and development that changes us also.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Yeah, Steve, any thoughts on parenting and the whole journey with that?

[Steve Argue:](#)

Yeah. I think we have to remember that the parenting journey is not static, it's dynamic. It's constantly changing. And we know this, I think, through experience. But I think somewhere along the way we kind of get rigid. We lose the sense of the fact that our kids are changing. And I think that they're looking for different types of parents, as they grow we need to keep growing as well. So that's the vigilance that comes with parenting. But it's sometimes hard because we're tired and we're stressed, but it's really what makes all the difference, we think.

[Kara Powell:](#)

And it's natural that what worked with our kid last year, or last month, we think we can keep doing. But our kids are growing and changing, and so we need to. So yeah, parenting just keeps us on our toes because our kids aren't static, so parenting can't be static.

[Steve Argue:](#)

Yeah, that's a great point. Sometimes we think that we only change the things that we've done wrong, but I think we have to actually change the things that we do right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Well you got a fascinating chapter at the beginning of section called Growing Up Today, and you talk about ... We touched on it a little bit, but how different the world is for kids. And you make some interesting claims, like why 14 is the new 24. Why 28 is the new 18. And then wasn't there, why 30 can't be the new 20? Can you walk us through some of those ideas? Because we're getting older and younger at the same time. It's weird.

[Steve Argue:](#)

Yeah, it is. It is weird. And I think it's sort of the world that we live in. Today we just look at the young person experience, and we recognize the fact that life is moving faster for them. There's actually this acceleration that's happening of what's expected, and what they need to accomplish, and what they need to get done. So this is having an effect I think on their identity, and belonging, and purpose. There's also less institutional support.

[Steve Argue:](#)

As much as there is support for them, we're finding that sometimes these institutions aren't necessarily thinking about the particular needs of our kids or of young people. So this is creating a problem where they feel like there's not really much of a safety net below the risks that they're taking. There's also greater racial and ethnic diversity that factors into the way they think about the world, who their neighbors are, who their friends are, and how they think about that.

[Steve Argue:](#)

We mentioned it before that young people are reporting more anxiety and depression, which is factoring in not only to their own lives but their friends as well. Families are working harder to make it. This isn't just about young people, this is really about family systems that are having to work harder and harder to put food on the table, to make it in our economy. And education is also the gateway to a better life, but we're also seeing that it's more expensive.

[Steve Argue:](#)

We've actually changed our language at FYI where we don't say a junior is in their third year, because that may not be the case. We know that the typical four-year college experience is rare, as it's taking longer, as young people are having to work extra jobs to pay for tuition. And at the same time they know that they need this in order to make it in our world. So they also have more opportunities. This isn't all bad. But with these opportunities it can be inspiring for them, and at the same time it can be a bit terrifying for them because now they have more options that they have to navigate.

[Steve Argue:](#)

And they're being asked over and over again, "What do you wanna be when you grow up? What are you going to do after college? What are you going to do with your future?" So I think as they're marinating in this environment, and pressure, and anxiety ... One study said that 13 to 17-year-olds are more likely to report feeling extreme stress than adults. So they're experiencing this for the first time and it's new, and it's pretty challenging for them.

[Steve Argue:](#)

So in our book Growing With we just talked about how it's important for us to remember that for teenagers in our families and communities, 14 starts to feel

like the new 24. The responsibilities and the pressures that maybe we had when we were 24, they're feeling at a younger and younger age.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Yeah, and what's interesting is, building on that, there's this gas pedal that Steve described, but then there's simultaneously this brake pedal. It's fascinating the trends that are happening with young adults these days, 20-somethings. Census data is showing that young people are getting married five years later, having babies five years later, finishing school five-ish years later, becoming independent later, financially independent later.

[Kara Powell:](#)

So the markers that have traditionally marked adulthood are being crossed about five or more years later. So that's where we say that 14 is the new 24, but also 28 is like, 18 for a lot of young people. Which is challenging for parents, it's challenging for churches. Because churches have tended to be set up for children's ministry, student ministry, college ministry, and then young married's ministry.

[Kara Powell:](#)

But now there's this gap between college and married, or not so young marrieds, that churches aren't really being agile and responding to well enough, yet. So that's part of what Steve and I hope comes from this book also.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

So this idea, I guess if I wanna summarize it, see if I got it accurately, is that you're exposed to a lot of information. You mentioned technology in the book, so that kind of grows you up fast. Online exposure to porn, puberty comes a lot earlier, you can find out anything you want, even things you shouldn't know, at a much younger age. And that seems to be happening. So all of the sudden ... I think there's a line in the book that talks about clutching your teddy bear, and the next thing you know you're thrust into the world.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

So that's going faster and yet the markers ... Whatever those five markers are into adulthood. I think it's graduated college, own a home, married, kids. There's one other, whatever that is. But, that you've got those markers. That's happening later and later. So there's this gap. There's this multi-decade gap that you guys have done some really good and helpful research on.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Yeah. And if you've ever driven with one foot on the gas pedal and one foot on the brake pedal, it's a hurkey-jerky ride.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Yeah.

[Kara Powell:](#)

And that's what a lot of young people are experiencing, which causes parents to experience that also.

[Steve Argue:](#)

So sometimes what young people hear is that, 30s the new 20. Like, somehow you've got more time to figure this out. And I think there's two sides of this that we address in the book. And I think we're really thinking through in ministry context, and also just family context as well. And that is, is that I think there

needs to be some grace towards young people. Recognizing the fact that in order to be a contributing member adult in society, it just takes longer to prepare because of the education and some of the skills that are needed for our technological world.

[Steve Argue:](#)

And at the same time we don't wanna communicate the message that the 20s are kind of like the teens. That you can just meander your way through this crucial decade in life. In fact, some researchers would say this third decade of life is really a decade of investments. Where we're asking some really hard questions about, who are the people that I want to spend time with? What do good friendships look like? What does it mean for me to take steps toward the vocation that I feel called to? As I think about maybe settling down someday in romantic relationships, what is a good and healthy relationship? What does family mean to me?

[Steve Argue:](#)

So I think as adults, and as parents, and as leaders, one of the things that we have to do, and I think we can support those in their 20s, is actually help them think about this decade as a decade of investment rather than just another decade where I can try a bunch of things and hopefully land in the place where I wanna be when I'm 30. Because we have a lot of 30-year-olds that are looking back on their 20s lamenting that they weren't further along than they'd hoped to be. So I think that...

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Is that why 30 can't be the new 20? Because-

[Steve Argue:](#)

Yeah. 30 can't be the new 20 exactly for that reason. Because we want ... when someone gets to 30 we would hope that they would be at a place where they're really moving forward in this trajectory of their lives. And that's something that we want. We've seen in emerging adult literature that most emerging adults want this as well. They want to be on their way by 30. In their minds 30's a bit of a magic number for them, for whatever reason that is.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

No, that's super helpful. Yeah. And it was the first time your research and your writing on it really made me think, "Yeah, there is that early onset of adulthood, and then the delayed entry into adulthood," which is a really helpful way of framing it. It almost creates this two-decade span of time where we're neither in both, right?

[Steve Argue:](#)

Yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Just really, really interesting.

[Steve Argue:](#)

And I love the way you said that. I think that when we think of it as two decades we realize that, that's a huge amount of investment and time.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Oh, my gosh. That's the difference between 20 and 40, 40 and 60. Like, there's a lot of life in there.

[Steve Argue:](#) Exactly. And I think that past thinking, especially with youth ministry and that type of thing, we've already thought adolescence as this transition period. Two decades is not a transition period. Two decades needs investment and attention.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Theoretically that's a quarter of your life.

[Steve Argue:](#) Yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Right? If you wanna look at it that way.

[Steve Argue:](#) Yeah, right.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) The gears are turning. One of the top adjectives used to describe teenagers, young adults, is entitled. Would you agree with that?

[Steve Argue:](#) No.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Okay.

[Steve Argue:](#) No.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Oh, two no's. Two no's. Two out of two dentist surveyed said no.

[Steve Argue:](#) Yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) So what's the story behind that?

[Steve Argue:](#) Yeah, I think we just sort of wince when we hear young people characterized that way because I think entitled sounds like they're just taking longer to make the markers of adulthood, and it's their choice. Like somehow they're just pushing it off. And I think what we're realizing is that we just have to remember that every older generation has to admit that the younger generation inherits the world that's given to them. So it's not just their choice, it actually is the world and the environment that they're navigating.

[Steve Argue:](#) So today's teenagers and young adults I think are sort of misunderstood for their attitudes and actions, because the world is different and it's more challenging than ever before. But I think when we look deeper at what's going on here you're gonna see that these attitudes and actions have some logical steps associated with them because young people are trying to navigate this. So take for example, we always hear sometimes that young people they're entitled, they just move from job to job, and they're not really committed to anything.

[Steve Argue:](#) And I think we just need to look at the current landscape and say, current teenagers and young adults are not as loyal to companies because they see generations that have gone before them that parents have been laid off, or the



pension is dried up, or there isn't one anymore. In addition, I think that the promise of a well paying job after college isn't there anymore. As a matter of fact, the new first job is the unpaid internship. So think about what that does to the psyche of a young person.

[Steve Argue:](#)

So they're forced to use multiple jobs and have side hustles to pay rent, and sort of make it. So the flightiness that sometimes is perceived by adults is actually young people trying to hustle in a world that really gives them no guarantees. As a matter of fact, some older leaders always talk about, "You need to have this work-life balance," right? But if you're a contract employee that does graphic design or you work for a company, you're expected to deliver on a deadline, and there is not a 8:00-5:00 anymore.

[Steve Argue:](#)

There is no break between work and life. There is you being on call 24/7, getting things done or you don't get paid. So the work-life balance, that's not even on the radar of an emerging generation because they're just trying to make it. I think if we wanna be self-reflective, maybe in church context, perhaps it would be interesting to consider how we actually contribute to the problem, or how we can help it. Churches are experts at the unpaid internship, right?

[Kara Powell:](#)

We are so good at that. We are great at that.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

You can volunteer.

[Steve Argue:](#)

Or offering just enough part-time where you would get more hours out of them, but we don't have to pay insurance. Or we expect expert resumes, but we want entry-level wages. So perhaps the good news here is that we can reconsider how we create a culture that invests for the long haul and in each other. And as leaders, especially in the ministry world, what if we were to develop pastors rather than produce free agents? I would love that.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

What do you mean by that?

[Steve Argue:](#)

I just think that if we use them, they're going to use us. Nobody makes commitments to each other, and we look for the next best thing. But if I say to you, "I'm committed to you, are you willing to be committed to me? Let's stick this out for the long haul. Let's see what we can build together." I think that's a different way of going about employment, and the ways that we think about relationships with one another.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Oh, wow. So we have a lot of church leaders listening. And you identify ... you call them millennials and then iGENs. IS that a different term for GenZ? What others call GenZ?

[Steve Argue:](#)

Yeah, yeah. I'm glad you raised this, and I think it's important for us, and we always think about this, is how we define our terms, right?

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah.

[Steve Argue:](#) This term, millennial, is often spoken by certain adult circles with an eye roll. They're usually blaming millennials for wrecking office culture, the housing market, the avocado supply.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) That's funny.

[Steve Argue:](#) All of the above. But I think if we listen closer we recognize that when people say millennial, they're basically saying young people. So anybody that's younger than me. And maybe some darker sort of ways, millennial means other. It's a way of labeling a whole group of people. So I think we've been more sensitive to that. Sociologically we recognize that millennials we're really born between 1980 and 2000. So right now their age is 19-39. 39, that's pushing 40.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) You're not a kid.

[Steve Argue:](#) No, you're not a kid.

[Kara Powell:](#) No, no.

[Steve Argue:](#) Anymore. And there's a cohort that's coming behind millennial that some call GenZ. Some call them iGen. And they're born about 1995-2000, it depends who you talk with. So this cohort is really either entering college, or they're entering the workforce right now. And someone argued that this is truly the first generation that's had the connectivity of the internet, and especially of the smart phone. That's created some interesting dynamics about the way one accesses information, the way one relates, the way one goes about everyday activities, et cetera, et cetera.

[Steve Argue:](#) So I think it's important for us to remember, again, when a young person grows up has an effect on their cohort. I think we have to be careful with these terms though, that we don't use them to generalize or over label. They just give us some context. So in a lot of our thinking we prefer to think about development terminology. So we think of the teenagers. We're all familiar with that. That's 13 to 18-years-old.

[Steve Argue:](#) Then really the term that is used in a lot of academic circles is this idea of emerging adulthood, emerging adults. They're really 18 to 29-years-old. And an emerging adult doesn't feel like an adolescent anymore. They're obviously much older than teenagers, but they don't necessarily feel like adults yet. So, as you mentioned, this two-decade, or this development space are just loaded with more opportunities, and more choices, and more stress than ever.

[Steve Argue:](#) And I think that young people's emerging lives and experiences need leaders, and adults, and parents to embrace this ever-changing dynamic that they're a

part of to give them more specific support rather than just generalizing them as millennials, or young people, or that type of thing.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) So in the book, just to defining terms, but I think it's very helpful. Most people divide two categories, teenagers, young adults, but you have three. Do you wanna just go through those real quick? And then I wanna talk to you about why we're not reach any of these categories.

[Kara Powell:](#) Yeah.

[Steve Argue:](#) Absolutely.

[Kara Powell:](#) Yeah. Yeah, so most people, both practitioners as well as academics will think in terms of teenagers, or young adults, or emerging adult. But as Steve and I have done research, reviewed research, and spent a whole bunch of time with teenagers and young adults, we felt like that's not nuanced enough. And instead of two stages, we suggest in the Growing With book that there are really three stages.

[Kara Powell:](#) The first stage is the Learner Stage, and that's ages 13-18. Typically, say, a high school-ish student. And a young person in that stage is experiencing rapid physical, emotional, relational, intellectual, spiritual growth that brings all sorts of new questions, interests, friendships to that young person. A super exciting stage. But often right around age 18, that young person transitions into what we call an Explorer. That's the second stage, the Explorer Stage.

[Kara Powell:](#) And that's for 18 to roughly 23-year-olds, and please hold these age ranges with a grain of salt. Every young person's a little bit different. A young person age 18-23's often venturing away from home for the first time, or away from home-oriented routines. They're pursuing new goals, relationships, beliefs. They're in school, training, the military, the workforce. They're excited about the future, but really unsure about themselves. Yet it's this season of exploration.

[Kara Powell:](#) And then the third stage for 20-somethings, ages 23-28, is what we call Focusers. A focuser is a young person who's gaining a clearer sense of who they are. They've made educational, vocational, relational, and spiritual choices that open up new opportunities and close others. And some focusers are really excited where they're at, maybe even feel ahead. Others are struggling because they maybe feel a little bit behind. But as Steve and I spent time with young people, we really think there's learners, ages 13-28. Explorers ages 18-23. And then focusers ages 18-23. And each one needs a different style of parenting, and a different type of response from the church.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Isn't that interesting? Yeah, and that resonates as a dad, piloting ... Or, not piloting anymore, but growing with my kids. That totally resonates with those phases. So let's talk about churches because even in the larger age gap that we talked about roughly, when kids become independent, 18-ish, where they make

up their own mind about whether they're going to church or not when they head off to college or into the marketplace.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Right through to pretty much 40 the top of the millennial generation, bottom part of GenX, there's just a hole with churches. So in many, many cases, not all but many, why is that huge cohort disappearing from church? I know, that's a whole other podcast. Whole other book.

[Kara Powell:](#) See our book Growing Young.

[Steve Argue:](#) Yeah.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Or look at this it this way, why are millennials in that generation that follows them raising new challenges for the church. How is that challenging as church leaders?

[Steve Argue:](#) Yeah, so maybe we can come at this in a couple of different directions. One is, I believe, and I think that Kara and I believe, and FYI believes that there are multiple narratives associated with young people and their faith journeys. Often times what we hear are the negative narratives of young people leaving the church, young people not caring about faith. There's a lot more nones and dones, et cetera, et cetera. And that is a narrative that we need to pay attention to.

[Steve Argue:](#) But there is another narrative, and the other narrative are that young people are discovering faith. They're discovering God in some unique and original ways. And sometimes I wonder if the church is blind to the positive narrative because they're only holding on to the metrics that they want for basically measuring faithfulness. And a lot of times that defaults to attendance. "They're not showing up in my church where I can count them, therefore they are not caring about church. And they need to somehow come back."

[Steve Argue:](#) That's a narrative. I don't think it's the best one, but I do think it's there. I just think we need to realize that, that narrative can't eclipse this other narrative that there are some exciting things that are happening.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) No, that's fair.

[Steve Argue:](#) So I think that's one thing. And then the other thing is this, that I do think because of the changing experience of young people, especially emerging adults, this 18-29 and maybe even older experience is, is that churches, as Kara mentioned earlier in the podcast, have sort of fallen into this structural design where we are hind and quartered by age and marital status. So once we do that we have a problem because we have a group, this cohort of especially those in their 20s, that are single, that want to be single, that are looking for friendship, they want to be invested in the community.

[Steve Argue:](#)

But because they don't fit the way a program is set up, they don't know where they fit. And one of the ways that I like to share it with leaders about this is kind of through a metaphor. It's this idea of the DTR, or defining the relationship. Maybe you've had this, or some of our listeners have had this, maybe you're in the middle of it right now and I'm making you anxious as I say the DTR. But it's really when you have this relationship with someone, and it's progressing, and it's getting deeper. And you get to that point where you have to say, "Who are we together? What can I expect of you? And what can you expect of me?"

[Steve Argue:](#)

And if we can define that, there's a place to go. We either move forward or we decide not to, but at least it's defined. If we don't have the define-the-relationship moment, what happens is, is that we live in ambiguity and the relationship ultimately falls apart. And I think what's been misunderstood about young people "leaving the church" is that they're leaving the church out of protest, and we would argue that's it more likely that they're leaving the church out of ambiguity because they don't know what the relationship they have is with their churches.

[Steve Argue:](#)

So if we actually maybe think about that and say, "Hey church, what can we expect of you?" Or the church says, "Here's what we see in you." I think that if that relationship is defined, we can move in a better direction. And let me say one more thing. I also think there's a problem for the way that we engage young people. When I was a pastor at a church, part of my responsibility was to think about this college age group. And they were so excited because they're like, "Finally we're gonna have a college age ministry."

[Steve Argue:](#)

Well as I talked with students, and as I thought about it, I just said, "No, we're not gonna have that form of programing." And you would've thought that I had basically torn the heart out of anybody's hopes and aspirations that we would ever save a younger generation. But here's the deal, I knew that as soon as I created that program that I would be doing what these young people, and actually what the leadership wanted. And that was replicating youth group again.

[Steve Argue:](#)

Now if we're gonna define the relationship, I don't want those in their 20s to think that the way you relate to the church is the way that you did in high school. I want you to relate to the church as a growing 20-something that's moving toward adulthood. So what does programing look like for that? Maybe it's not programming at all. As a matter of fact, the older that we get, we hope that we're not making them dependent on programs, but they're actually finding agency. They're actually making their own groups.

[Steve Argue:](#)

They're pursuing God in their unique ways. And that we are actually resourcing young people in their direction, rather than making them dependent on our organizations again. So I think there's just some challenges that we need to think about in our own assumptions about what we're trying to do with young people, and how we're measuring success in that area.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Okay, so I'd love for you guys, as we wrap up, just to ... because you talk a lot about parenting and the whole thing in the book, but from two perspectives. Number one, if you're in that Explorer Stage, or the Focus Stage, or millennials, they're moving into this new reality. What are some tips for them in navigating that? And then flip it, and talk also about, okay, we're parenting kids in these stages, from the teens into early adulthood. Because we have just about everybody listening.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

We've got a lot of explorers and focusers listening, and millennials listening. And then we got some of their parents listening too. So that'd be interesting as we close this to talk about some do's and don'ts from the young adult perspective, and then from the parent's perspective.

[Steve Argue:](#)

Yeah. I guess what I would say to emerging adults is a couple of things. First of all, what we hear time and time again from you is that you constantly feel like you're behind. That you wish you were further along than you were, and there's a lot of guilt and shame associated with that. And I think that maybe what you need to hear, first and foremost, is you don't have to feel that way. That part of your journey does take longer. I know people place expectations on you, but I think you are where you are and you can always take a next faithful step.

[Steve Argue:](#)

And we would encourage you to continue to think about how you use this decade to invest in who you want to become. And if you have faith, who God wants you to become. And we think that there's room for that. I think if you do have faith, I think I've talked with a lot of emerging adults who feel that somehow that if they question their faith, if they have different views as to what it means for them to walk or follow God, that somehow that they are unfaithful.

[Steve Argue:](#)

And what we would say is, that's part of your journey. That faith actually has this verb quality to it, where we don't just have faith but we faith. We call that faithing. And when we think of it that way then faith is something who we possess, it's actually something that we process and is growing trying to, in many ways, follow Jesus into the complexities of our world, which we believe the Gospel can handle. So if you feel like you've got questions or you feel stuck, recognize that, that is not an act of unfaithfulness.

[Steve Argue:](#)

It actually quite could be an actually of faithfulness, because you're on the verge of discovering something new. Something that you have to pay attention to, and something that maybe God is trying to show you. And I would just say that you are probably gonna be misunderstood sometimes, but just recognize the fact that there's a lot of us that are cheering for you, recognizing that those are the important steps that you're taking. So maybe those are just a couple of things I'll start with, that I wanna encourage you with.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

I don't know that, that's age specific. That's just great advice. Wow, thank you.

[Kara Powell:](#)

I kind of have a lump in my throat.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah, I do too.

[Kara Powell:](#) If I could just add one aspect that I certainly see is important for young adults, emerging adults, is so many of them are wrestling with questions about their vocation. And their longterm employment is kind of this intersection of the identity, belonging, and purpose angst that we talked about at the start of this podcast. And one of the things that we see so often in young people is how the church can be a great place to ignite a vocational spark. That young people who aren't sure about their future path, they volunteer in the church in a particular role and they realize, "Oh, I love teaching."

[Kara Powell:](#) Or, "I love the business side of operating a coffee house." Or, "I love working in tech at the church. And all of the sudden as they explore their gifts and their passions through the local church, or a local philanthropy, nonprofit, they start to take important steps down God's longterm path for them. So what Steve and I would say, and we say in our Growing With book, is the church is a perfect lab for young people to experiment with their vocational calling.

[Kara Powell:](#) So if you're stuck vocationally think about a church, or a ministry, or a nonprofit that you can volunteer in and build some vocational muscles, and see what that might lead to.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Any final word for parents?

[Kara Powell:](#) Yeah. And really, we wrote Growing With more for parents than any other group, so it's appropriate that, that's the final word. With the three stages, learners, explorers, and focusers, each stage requires a different kind of parenting. So the type of parenting that's important for a learner is a parent who's a teacher. A teacher-parent is somebody who's really pretty hands-on with their kids. Helping their kid be self-motivated, training them in the right practices, and disciplines to help them succeed. But is staying pretty close to their kid .

[Kara Powell:](#) But then as your parent transitions into that guide stage, somewhere around 18 or so, guide parents give their new young adults more room. And just like a good guide does, if they're touring a mountain or touring a neighborhood with folks, they try to have a sense, "When do I need to step in and give more direction? And when can I step back because my young person's got this? When's the terrain rocky and I need to get more involved? And when can I step back?"

[Kara Powell:](#) So I think in some ways that guide stage when your kid is 18-23 arguably requires the most savvy, and the most intuition to know how involved to be, because you're kind of in this in between stage. The good news is though research indicates that for a lot of families, that parent-child relationship improves in this stage.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) Yeah.

[Kara Powell:](#) So for your listeners who are having a rocky adolescence right now, having a rocky time with your adolescent, there's hope that when your child moves into that explorer phase the relationship can get better. And then lastly for that young person who's a focuser, what Steve and I believe is that a parent who grows with is a resourcer. A resourcer who's ready to give their child the resources ... I don't necessarily mean financial, that's not at all what we mean.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) No, no, no.

[Kara Powell:](#) But the advice and council that their child needs, generally when their child seeks it, and points them to other resources that can be valuable for their kid. And this stage requires a lot of accepting your child's choices even if they're not what you would wish for your child. One of the parents that we interviewed, we interviewed many, many, many parents for this research. And one of the parents we interviewed of a child in this stage said sometimes she feels like a bobble-head parent.

[Kara Powell:](#) That when her child is telling her something that feels a little outrageous, she knows she probably shouldn't object so she just kind of nods along like a bobble-head would. And she said that buys her time to think, and it buys time for the child to experience the consequences of their choice. It leads to a better conversation later. And that parent has learned, "I shouldn't react, I should just listen and try to understand my child's perspective instead of stepping in."

[Kara Powell:](#) And that's what a lot of resource parents do, is they listen, try to understand perspective, and when the child seeks advice, offer it. So those are what we think are the three stages of parents. First teaching, then being a guide, and then lastly as you grow with your resourcer.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#) I love it.

[Steve Argue:](#) I think some of the biggest conflict happen when we get our signals crossed. When our learner kids need a teacher parent but we're something else. So this is where if we can pay attention to where our kids are at, I think that we can support them in the best way. The other thing I would add to this, and I know that Kara would agree with as well is, parenting can feel really lonely sometimes. You feel like you're the only one, or that you're only going through this, or that your kid is the only one that's crazy.

[Steve Argue:](#) And I think that part of the thing that we need to do as parents, especially as our kids get older and we don't have the natural connections of a game at high school, because now they're beyond high school or whatever, is really being intentional about our relationships. And maybe from one dad to all the dads out there, dads, we have to do a better job of connecting with each other. I think the females, the mothers in this world are leading the way on that. We have a



lot to learn. And I would just, I think dads can sometimes ... we can just be some of the loneliest people in the world.

[Steve Argue:](#)

So I think having someone else that we can process with and really think about, what does it mean for us to be fathers of our growing kids? Is crucial, because our kids need us to grow with them. They really do.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

If people wanna get the book, obviously where books are sold. But you got something else that's kind of fun too for people. So tell them about it, and a website where they can go.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Well, Carey, we count you as a dear friend, and we love your listening tribe. So Steve and I wanted to offer something special to all your listeners, that if your listeners go to [growingwithbook.com/Carey](http://growingwithbook.com/Carey), C-A-R-E-Y. That's [growingwithbook.com/Carey](http://growingwithbook.com/Carey), they can get a free book chapter from our new Growing With book, and working with others at Fuller we've developed a new Growing With Parenting Quiz. It's 10 questions, super short. But any listener can take the quiz and figure out, is their child a learner? Is their child an explorer? Is their child a focuser?

[Kara Powell:](#)

And then what do they need to do as a parent to better parent their child in that stage? So it's a quick way for any parent to get better at growing with their kid. And we offer that for free at [growingwithbook.com/Carey](http://growingwithbook.com/Carey) also.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

I'm gonna go take that one as soon as it goes live, yeah.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Yeah, you should and then Toni can. You can compare results. It'll be great.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

I love the research you do. I love the way that you're just committed to the family, to the next generation, and I love getting to work with you guys through Orange as well. That's always a lot of fun with Reggie, and that's how we first connected. But thank you guys. Congrats on the book. Thanks for being with us today.

[Steve Argue:](#)

Thanks, Carey.

[Kara Powell:](#)

Our pleasure and honor, you're the best.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

Well you are gonna want more, and the good news is we've got show notes, we've got transcripts, we've got social shareables that you can share with friends on Twitter and on social media. Head on over to [careynieuwhof.com/episode249](http://careynieuwhof.com/episode249). I would love to see you over there. And that's sort of your portal into my world. That will get you into my blog, into my books, and all the other stuff. Plus the whole back catalog of this podcast as well.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

If you cannot spell my name, you would be the only person in the world who can't do that. Kidding. You can go to [leadlikeneverbefore.com](http://leadlikeneverbefore.com) and then just

search Kara Powell and you will see all of the show notes for the episodes that she's been on. Everything we talked about in this episode is linked there. And don't forget to check out [theunstuckgroup.com/Carey](http://theunstuckgroup.com/Carey), C-A-R-E-Y, to get your free church health assessment. It's absolutely free, find out where your church is at. The Unstuck Group has helped thousands of churches get unstuck.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

And would love to have you at Rethink Leadership this year in Atlanta May 1st through 3rd, head on over to [rethinkleadership.com](http://rethinkleadership.com). Join me and an incredible cast of leaders as we do a deep dive, not only into content that's brand new, but into analyzing the issues that are really plaguing church and leadership today. Would love to have you in on that conversation May 1st through 3rd in Atlanta, Georgia.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

And hey, we're back next week with a fresh episode with Gary Chapman. Yeah. I did this interview. It's funny, we work way ahead on this show. I think like, a year ago almost. No, not quite. But anyway, the five love languages guy. The guru, Gary Chapman is here next week on the podcast. Here's a fascinating clip from one of my favorite interviews.

[Gary Chapman:](#)

Until it dawned on me one day that I had a very selfish attitude, and I was not following the example of Christ who said about himself, "I did not come to be served, I came to serve." And I thought, "Wow," and I just said, "God, that's the attitude I want." That when I adopted that attitude and started reaching out to her and saying, "How can I help you? How can I make your life easier? How can I be a better husband?" She gave me answers.

[Gary Chapman:](#)

What happened in her within three months, she started asking me those kind of questions. When you got it going this way, you're gonna have the marriage you wanted. A loving, supportive, caring marriage. It all has to do with the attitude.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

And that's next week on the podcast. Hey guys, thank you so much for sharing. Thank you so much for leaving ratings and reviews. And thanks for being you. You guys make this so awesome. I am on the road a lot. Hey, I'm gonna be at South By Southwest. Can you believe that? I'm gonna be at South By Southwest in, well, this weekend. I'm speaking Saturday at that even. If you happen to be there, come by and say hi. I'm speaking Saturday afternoon all about the key issues, the success killers that take leaders out.

[Carey Nieuwhof:](#)

It is such a privilege to be at South by, so if you're there or in Austin, shout out and say hello. That's Saturday March 9th. And yeah, soon we'll have a speaking calendar up for where I'm gonna be so we can connect with you in person this year. And I was just, by the time this airs, was in Las Angeles with Brian Houston recording his TV show as well, Let's Talk. So we'll be seeing you there as well. So a lot going on. I'm super excited to be able to do this week after week with you. Thanks for making it so rewarding, and I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer:

You've been listening to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. Join us next time for more insights on leadership, change, and personal growth to help you lead like never before.